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ADELAIDE CRAPSEY

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ADELAIDE CRAPSEY



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FOREWORD

Adelaide Crapsey, daughter of Algernon Sidney and Adelaide Trowbridge Crapsey, was born on the ninth of September, 1878. She died in her thirty-sixth year on October the eighth, 1914. Her young girlhood was spent in Rochester, New York, where her eminent father was rector of St. Andrew's Parish. At fourteen she entered the preparatory school of Kemper Hall, Kenosha, Wisconsin, from which school she graduated at the head of her class, in 1897. She entered Vassar College the same year, graduating with the class of 1901.

Two years after her graduation she began her work as a teacher of History and Literature, in Kemper Hall. In 1905 she went abroad and became a student in the School of Archaeology in Rome. The following year she assumed the position of instructor in Literature and History in Miss Lowe's Preparatory School in Stamford, Conn., but in 1908 on account of failing health she was compelled to abandon teaching for a time. The two succeeding years she spent in

Italy and England, working on her *Analysis of English Metrics*—an exhaustive scientific thesis relating to accent—which years before she had planned to accomplish as her serious life work.

In 1911 she returned to America and became instructor in Poetics at Smith College. The double burden of teaching and writing proved too much for her frail constitution, and in 1913, gravely ill, she was obliged to abandon definitely and finally both activities. The rest is a silence broken only by the remarkable verses of her last poetic phase.

These are the bare biographical facts in the life of Adelaide Crapsey, but it would be an injustice to the reader not to attempt to render some sense of her personality, all compounded of beauty, mystery and charm. I remember her as fair and fragile, in action swift, in repose still; so quick and silent in her movements that she seemed never to enter a room but to appear there, and on the stroke of some invisible clock to vanish as she had come.

Although in Meredith's phrase "a man and a woman both for brains," she was an intensely feminine presence. Perfection was the passion of her life, and as one discerns it in her verse, one marked it also in her raiment. In the line

"And know my tear-drenched veil along the grass"

I see again her drooping figure with some trail of

gossamer bewitchment clinging about or drifting after her. Although her body spoke of a fastidious and sedulous care in keeping with her essentially aristocratic nature, she was merciless in the demands she made upon it, and this was the direct cause of her loss of health. The keen and shining blade of her spirit too greatly scorned its scabbard the body, and for this she paid the uttermost penalty.

Her death was tragic. Full of the desire of life she yet was forced to go, leaving her work all unfinished. Her last year was spent in exile at Saranac Lake. From her window she looked down on the graveyard—"Trudeau's Garden," she called it, with grim-gay irony. Here, forbidden the work her metrical study entailed, these poems grew—flowers of a battlefield of the spirit. But of her passionate revolt against the mandate of her destiny she spared her family and friends even a sign. When they came to cheer and comfort her it was she who brought them cheer and comfort. With magnificent and appalling courage she gave forth to them the humor and gaiety of her unclouded years, saving them even beyond the end from knowledge of this beautiful and terrible testament of a spirit all unreconciled, flashing "unquenched defiance to the stars."

This collection of her verse is of her own choosing, arranged and prepared by her own hand. She wrote gay verse in the earlier days before the

shadow fell upon her, but her rigorous regard for unity banished it from this record of the fearful questioning of her spirit.

This "immortal residue" is full of poignancy and power. The heart is stricken with her own terror at the approach of

"The despot of our days the lord of dust."

The book which is her funeral urn will be found to hold more than the ashes of a personal passion, it contains

"Infinite passion, and the pain of finite hearts that yearn."

CLAUDE BRAGDON.

Rochester, N. Y.

October 1915.

PREFACE

Adelaide Crapsey was, over a term of many years, an eager student of the technical aspects of English poetry. She died on October eighth 1914, after having completed two-thirds of her *Analysis of English Metrics*—an exhaustive scientific thesis relating to accent—which, years before, she had planned to accomplish as her serious life work. Though her mind was intensely preoccupied with the technical and analytical aspects of prosody, still the creative, artistic side of her nature was so spontaneously alive, that she accomplished a very considerable volume of original poetry—almost as a by-product of her study in metrics.

In the gay and somewhat insouciant period of her early days, she could write finished verse with the ease and readiness that the majority of people reserve only for the most commonplace of prose. I have actually known her to produce the book of an acceptable operetta over the week-end! That early work is gone. It lives only in the memory of those who happened to be near her at the time.

She tossed it off as the fleeting expression of a moment, and took no slightest care to preserve it. But several of those early poems stick persistently in my mind over the years, and though I have no copy and cannot quote them accurately, I still believe them worthy of a permanent form. That delightful quality of camaraderie, her quick, bubbling humor she retained to the end in conversation; the sadder, sombre questioning of her inner life attained expression only in the poetry she has left.

These poems, of a gossamer delicacy and finish, are the stronger for the technical knowledge behind them. Likewise, her technical work possessed the more vigor because it was not the result of mere theoretical analysis, but also of the first-hand knowledge gained through her own creative achievement. In each field she spoke with the authority that experience in the other gave. Her studies in prosody were too technical for comprehension by the lay reader. It is through her creative work that she will be remembered, though she herself considered this the slightest part of her accomplishment.

As her study in metrics was astoundingly objective and coldly unreflective of any emotional mood, so her own poems were at the other extreme, astoundingly subjective and descriptive of a mental state that found expression in no other

form. They are heart-breakingly sombre; but they are true.

Adelaide Crapsey, by nature as vivid and joyous and alive a spirit as ever loved the beauty of life, like Keats and Stevenson, worked doggedly for many years against the numbing weight of a creeping pitiless disease. In her last year, spent in exile at Saranac Lake, forbidden the strength-sapping work that her metrical study entailed, she was forced to lie and look into space—and these poems grew. Her window looked down upon the Saranac graveyard, "Trudeau's garden," she gaily called it; but its meaning struck home. "To the Dead in the Graveyard Underneath my Window," was among the papers she left behind.

The verse form which she calls "Cinquain" she originated herself. It is an example of extremest compression. She reduces an idea to its very lowest terms—and presents it in a single sharp impression.

In spite of the fact that many of these poems were left only in their first rough draft, they are marvelously perfect. A fastidious distinction marks all of her work—all of her life—it was the most characteristic feature of a very rare nature.

JEAN WEBSTER.

Vassar Miscellany

March 1915

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PART ONE

BIRTH-MOMENT

Behold her,
Running through the waves,
Eager to reach the land:
The water laps her,
Sun and wind are on her,
Healthy, brine-drenched and young,
Behold Desire new-born;—
Desire on first fulfilment's radiant edge,
Love at miraculous moment of emergence,
This is she,
Who running,
Hastens, hastens to the land.

Look . . . Look . . .
Her brown gold hair and lucent eyes of youth,
Her body rose and ivory in the sun . . .
Look,
How she hastens,
Running, running to the land.

Her hands are yearning and her feet are swift
To reach and hold

She knows not what,
Yet knows that it is life;
Need urges her,
Self, uncomprehended but most deep divined,
Unwilled but all-compelling, drives her on.
Life runs to life.
She who longs,
But hath not yet accepted or bestowed,
All virginal dear and bright,
Runs, runs to reach the land.

And she who runs shall be
Married to blue of summer skies at noon,
Companion to green fields,
Held bride of subtle fragrance and of all sweet
 sound,
Belovéd of the stars,
And wanton mistress to the veering winds.

Oh, breathless space between:
Womb-time just passed,
Dark-hidden, chaotic-formative, unpersonal,
And individual life of fresh-created force
Not yet begun:
One moment more
Before desire shall meet desire
And new creation start:
Oh breathless space,
While she,

Just risen from the waves,
Runs, runs to reach the land.

(Ah, keenest personal moment
When mouth unkissed turns eager-slow and
tremulous
Towards lover's mouth,
That tremulous and eager-slow
Droops down to it:
But breathless space of breath or two
Lies in between
Before the mouth upturned and mouth
down-drooped
Shall meet and make the kiss.)

Look . . . Look . . .
She runs . . .
Love fresh-emerged,
Desire new-born . . .
Blown on by wind,
And shone on by the sun,
She rises from the waves
And running,
Hastens, hastens to the land.

Belovéd and Belovéd and Belovéd,
Even so right
And beautiful and undenied

Is my desire;
Even so longing-swift
I run to your receiving arms.
O Aphrodite!
O Aphrodite, hear!
Hear my wrung cry flame upward poignant-
glad. . . .
This is my time for me.
I too am young;
I too am all of love!

1905.

THE MOTHER EXULTANT

Joy! Joy! Joy!
The hills are glad,
The valleys re-echo with merriment,
In my heart is the sound of laughter,
And my feet dance to the time of it;
Oh, little son, carried light on my shoulder,
Let us go laughing and dancing through the
 live days,
For this is the hour of the vintage,
When man gathereth for himself the fruits of
 the vineyard.

Look, little son, look;
The grapes are translucent and ripe,
They are heavy and fragrant with juice,
They wait for the hands of the vintagers;
For a long time the grapes were not,
And were in the womb of the earth,
Then out of the heavens came the rain,
The sun sent down his warmth from the sky,
At the touch of life, life stirred,
And the earth brought forth her fruits in due
 season.

I was a maid and alone,
When, behold, there came to me a vision;
My heart cried out within me,
And the voice was the voice of God.
Yea, a virgin I dreamed of love,
And I was troubled and sore afraid,
I wept and was glad,
For the word of my heart named me blesséd,
My soul exalted the might of creation.
I was a maid and alone,
When, behold, my lover came to me,
My belovéd held me in his arms.

Joy! Joy! Joy!
Now is the vision fulfilled:
I have conceived,
I have carried in my womb,
I have brought forth
The life of the world;
Out of my joy and my pain,
Out of the fulness of my living
Hath my son gained his life.

Look, little son, look;
The grapes are ripe for the gathering,
The fresh, deep earth is in them,
And clean water from the clouds.
And golden, golden sun is in the heart of the
grapes.

Look, little son, look;

The earth, your mother,
And the touch of life who is your father,
They have provided food for you
That you also may live.

The vineyards are planted on the hillside,
They are the vineyards of my beloved,
He chose a favorable spot,
His hands prepared the soil for the planting:
He set out the young vines
And cared for them till the time of their
bearing.

Now is his labour fulfilled who worked with
God.

The fruit of the vineyard is ripe,
The vintagers laugh in the sun,
They sing while they gather the grapes,
For the vintage is a good one,
The wine vats are pressed down and running
over.

Joy! Joy! Joy!
Now is the wonder accomplished;
Out of the heart of the living grape
Hath the hand of my beloved
Wrung the wine of the dream of life.

Beloved,
My little son's father,

Together we have given life,
And the vision of life;
Shall we not rejoice
Who have made eternal
The days of our living?

Look, little son, look:
The grapes glow with rich juice,
The juice of the grape hath in it
The substance of the earth,
And the air's breath;
It hath in it the soul of the vintage.
Put forth your hand, little son,
And take for yourself the life
That your father and your mother
Have provided for you.

Joy! Joy! Joy!
The hills are glad,
The valleys re-echo with merriment,
In my heart is the sound of laughter,
And my feet dance to the time of it;
Oh, little son, carried light on my shoulder,
Let us go laughing and dancing through the
live days,
For this is the hour of the vintage,
When man gathereth for himself the fruits of the
vineyard.

1905.

JOHN KEATS

Meet thou the event
And terrible happening of
Thine end: for thou art come
Upon the remote, cold place
Of ultimate dissolution and
With dumb, wide look
Thou, impotent, dost feel
Impotence creeping on
Thy potent soul. Yea, now, caught in
The aghast and voiceless pain
Of death, thyself doth watch
Thyself becoming naught.
Peace . . . Peace . . . for at
The last is comfort. Lo, now
Thou hast no pain. Lo, now
The waited presence is
Within the room; the voice
Speaks final-gentle: "Child,
Ever thy careful nurse,
I lift thee in my arms
For greater ease and while
Thy heart still beats, place my

Cool fingers of oblivion on
Thine eyes and close them for
Eternity. Thou shalt
Pass sleeping, nor know
When sleeping ceases. Yet still
A little while thy breathing lasts,
Gradual is faint and fainter; I
Must listen close—the end.”

Rest. And you others . . . All.
Grave-fellows in
Green place. Here grows
Memorial every spring's
Fresh grass and here
Your marking monument
Was built for you long, long
Ago when Caius Cestius died.

CINQUAINS

1911-1913

NOVEMBER NIGHT

Listen . . .

With faint dry sound,

Like steps of passing ghosts,

The leaves, frost-crisp'd, break from the trees

And fall.

RELEASE

With swift
Great sweep of her
Magnificent arm my pain
Clanged back the doors that shut my soul
From life.

TRIAD

These be
Three silent things:
The falling snow . . . the hour
Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one
Just dead.

SNOW

Look up . . .
From bleakening hills
Blows down the light, first breath
Of wintry wind . . . look up, and scent
The snow!

ANGUISH

Keep thou
Thy tearless watch
All night but when blue-dawn
Breathes on the silver moon, then weep!
Then weep!

TRAPPED

Well and
If day on day
Follows, and weary year
On year . . . and ever days and years . . .
Well?

MOON-SHADOWS

Still as
On windless nights
The moon-cast shadows are,
So still will be my heart when I
Am dead.

SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS

“Why do
You thus devise
Evil against her?” “For that
She is beautiful, delicate;
Therefore.”

YOUTH

But me
They cannot touch,
Old Age and death . . . the strange
And ignominious end of old
Dead folk!

THE GUARDED WOUND

If it
Were lighter touch
Than petal of flower resting
On grass, oh still too heavy it were,
Too heavy!

WINTER

The cold
With steely clutch
Grips all the land . . . alack,
The little people in the hills
Will die!

NIGHT WINDS

The old
Old winds that blew
When chaos was, what do
They tell the clattered trees that I
Should weep?

ARBUTUS

Not Spring's
Thou art, but her's,
Most cool, most virginal,
Winter's, with thy faint breath, thy snows
Rose-tinged.

ROMA AETERNA

The sun
Is warm to-day,
O Romulus, and on
Thine olden Palatine the birds
Still sing.

“HE’S KILLED THE MAY . . .”

*“He’s killed the May and he’s laid her by
To bear the red rose company.”*

Not thou,
White rose, but thy
Ensanguined sister is
The dear companion of my heart’s
Shed blood.

AMAZE

I know
Not these my hands
And yet I think there was
A woman like me once had hands
Like these.

SHADOW

A-sway,
On red rose,
A golden butterfly . . .
And on my heart a butterfly
Night-wing'd.

MADNESS

Burdock,
Blue aconite,
And thistle and thorn . . . of these,
Singing, I wreathe my pretty wreath
O'death.

THE WARNING

Just now,
Out of the strange
Still dusk . . . as strange, as still . . .
A white moth flew. Why am I grown
So cold?

SAYING OF IL HABOUL

*Guardian of the Treasure of Solomon
And Keeper of the Prophet's Armour*

My tent
A vapour that
The wind dispels and but
As dust before the wind am I
Myself.

FATE DEFIED

As it
Were tissue of silver
I'll wear, O fate, thy grey,
And go mistily radiant, clad
Like the moon.

LAUREL IN THE BERKSHIRES

Sea-foam

And coral! Oh, I'll

Climb the great pasture rocks

And dream me mermaid in the sun's

Gold flood.

NIAGARA

Seen on a Night in November

How frail
Above the bulk
Of crashing water hangs,
Autumnal, evanescent, wan,
The moon.

THE GRAND CANYON

By Zeus!
Shout word of this
To the eldest dead! Titans,
Gods, Heroes, come who have once more
A home!

NOW BARABBAS WAS A ROBBER

No guile?

Nay, but so strangely

He moves among us. . . . Not this

Man but Barabbas! Release to us

Barabbas!

FOR LUCAS CRANACH'S *EVE*

Oh me,
Was there a time
When Paradise knew Eve
In this sweet guise, so placid and
So young?

THE SOURCE

Thou hast
Drawn laughter from
A well of secret tears
And thence so elvish it rings,—mocking
And sweet:

BLUE HYACINTHS

In your
Curled petals what ghosts
Of blue headlands and seas,
What perfumed immortal breath sighing
Of Greece.

PART TWO

TO WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Ah, Walter, where you live I rue
These days come all too late for me;
What matter if her eyes are blue
Whose rival is Persephone?

Fiesole, 1909.

THE PLEDGE

White doves of Cytherea, by your quest
Across the blue Heaven's bluest highest air,
And by your certain homing to Love's breast,
Still to be true and ever true—I swear.

HYPNOS, GOD OF SLEEP

The shadowy boy of night
Crosses the dusking land;
He sows his poppy-seeds
With steady gentle hand.

The shadowy boy of night,
Young husbandman of dreams,
Garners his gracious blooms
By far and moonlit streams.

EXPENSES

Little my lacking fortunes show
For this to eat and that to wear;
Yet laughing, Soul, and gaily go!
An obol pays the Stygian fare.

London, 1910.

ON SEEING WEATHER-BEATEN TREES

Is it as plainly in our living shown,
By slant and twist, which way the wind hath
blown?

ADVENTURE

Sun and wind and beat of sea,
Great lands stretching endlessly. . . .
Where be bonds to bind the free?
All the world was made for me!

OH, LADY, LET THE SAD TEARS FALL

Oh, Lady, let the sad tears fall
To speak thy pain,
Gently as through the silver dusk
The silver rain.

Oh, let thy bosom breathe its grief
In such a soft sigh
As hath the wind in gardens where
Pale roses die.

DIRGE

Never the nightingale,
Oh, my dear,
Never again the lark
Thou wilt hear;
Though dusk and the morning still
Tap at thy window-sill,
Though ever love call and call
Thou wilt not hear at all,
My dear, my dear.

THE SUN-DIAL

Every day,
Every day,
Tell the hours
By their shadows,
By their shadows.

OLD LOVE

More dim than waning moon
Thy face, more faint
Than is the falling wind
Thy voice, yet do
Thine eyes most strangely glow,
Thou ghost . . . thou ghost.

AH ME. . . . ALAS. . . .

(He)

Ah me, my love's heart,
Like some frail flower, apart,
High, on the cliff's edge growing,
Touched by unhindered sun to sweeter showing,
Swung by each faint wind's faintest blowing,
But so, on the cliff's edge growing,
From man's reach aloof, apart:
Ah me, my love's heart!

(She)

Alack, alas, my lover,
As one who would discover
At world's end his path,
Nor knows at all what faëry way he hath
Who turneth dreaming into faith
And followeth that near path
His own heart dareth to discover:
Alack, alas, my lover!

PERFUME OF YOUTH

(Girl's Song)

In Babylon, in Nineveh,
And long ago, and far away,
The lilies and the lotus blew
That are my sweet of youth to-day.

From those high gardens of the Gods
That eyes of men may never see,
The amaranth and asphodel
Immortal odours shed on me.

In vial of my early years,
As in a crystal vial held,
What precious fragrance treasured up
Of age and agelessness distill'd.

Thine but to give. Give straightway all.
Yea, straight, mine hands the ointment rare
In great libation joyous pour!
Oh, look of youth. . . . Oh, golden hair. . . .

RAPUNZEL

All day, all day I brush
My golden strands of hair;
All day I wait and wait. . . .
Ah, who is there?

Who calls? Who calls? The gold
Ladder of my long hair
I loose and wait. . . . and wait. . . .
Ah, who is there?

She left at dawn. . . . I am blind
In the tangle of my long hair. . . .
Is it she? the witch? the witch?
Ah, who is there?

VENDOR'S SONG

My songs to sell, good sir!
I pray you buy.
Here's one will win a lady's tears,
Here's one will make her gay,
Here's one will charm your true love true
Forever and a day;
Good sir, I pray you buy!

Oh, no, he will not buy.

My songs to sell, sweet maid!
I pray you buy.
This one will teach you Lilith's lore,
And this what Helen knew,
And this will keep your gold hair gold,
And this your blue eyes blue;
Sweet maid, I pray you buy!

Oh, no, she will not buy.

*If I'd as much money as I could tell,
I never would cry my songs to sell,
I never would cry my songs to sell.*

AVIS

"Belle Aliz matin leva."

Avis, the fair, at dawn
Rose lightly from her bed,
Herself arrayed.
Avis, the fair, the maid,
In vestiment of lawn;
Across the fields she sped,
Five flowerets there she found,
In fragrant garland wound,
Avis, the fair, at dawn,
Five roses red.

Go thou from thence of thy pity!
Thou lovest not me.

DOOMSDAY

Peter stands by the gate,
And Michael by the throne.
“Peter, I would pass the gate
And come before the throne.”
“Whose spirit prayed never at the gate,
In life nor at the throne,
In death he may not pass the gate
To come before the throne”:
Peter said from the gate;
Said Michael from the throne.

GRAIN FIELD

Scarlet the poppies
Blue the corn-flowers,
Golden the wheat.
Gold for The Eternal:
Blue for Our Lady:
Red for the five
Wounds of her Son

SONG

I make my shroud but no one knows,
So shimmering fine it is and fair,
With stitches set in even rows.
I make my shroud but no one knows.

In door-way where the lilac blows,
Humming a little wandering air,
I make my shroud and no one knows,
So shimmering fine it is and fair.

PIERROT

For Aubrey Beardsley's picture "Pierrot is dying."

Pierrot is dying;
Tiptoe in,
Finger touched to lip,
Harlequin,
Columbine and Clown.

Hush! how still he lies
In his bed,
White slipped hand and white
Sunken head.
Oh, poor Pierrot.

There's his dressing-gown
Across the chair,
Slippers on the floor. . . .
Can he hear
Us who tiptoe in?

Pillowed high he lies
In his bed;
Listen, Columbine.
"He is dead."
Oh, poor Pierrot.

THE MONK IN THE GARDEN

He comes from Mass early in the morning

The sky's the very blue Madonna wears;
The air's alive with gold! Mark you the
way
The birds sing and the dusted shimmer of dew
On leaf and fruit? . . . Per Bacco, what a
day!

TO THE DEAD IN THE GRAVEYARD UNDERNEATH MY WINDOW

Written in a Moment of Exasperation

How can you lie so still? All day I watch
And never a blade of all the green sod moves
To show where restlessly you turn and toss,
Or fling a desperate arm or draw up knees
Stiffened and aching from their long disuse;
I watch all night and not one ghost comes forth
To take its freedom of the midnight hour.
Oh, have you no rebellion in your bones?
The very worms must scorn you where you lie,
A pallid, mouldering, asquiescent folk,
Meek habitants of unresented graves.
Why are you there in your straight row on row
Where I must ever see you from my bed
That in your mere dumb presence iterate
The text so weary in my ears: "Lie still
And rest; be patient and lie still and rest."
I'll not be patient! I will not lie still!

There is a brown road runs between the pines,
And further on the purple woodlands lie,
And still beyond blue mountains lift and loom;
And I would walk the road and I would be
Deep in the wooded shade and I would reach
The windy mountain tops that touch the clouds.
My eyes may follow but my feet are held.
Recumbent as you others must I too
Submit? Be mimic of your movelessness
With pillow and counterpane for stone and sod?
And if the many sayings of the wise
Teach of submission I will not submit
But with a spirit all unreconciled
Flash an unquenched defiance to the stars.
Better it is to walk, to run, to dance,
Better it is to laugh and leap and sing,
To know the open skies of dawn and night,
To move untrammelled down the flaming noon,
And I will clamour it through weary days
Keeping the edge of deprivation sharp,
Nor with the pliant speaking of my lips
Of resignation, sister to defeat.
I'll not be patient. I will not lie still.

And in ironic quietude who is
The despot of our days and lord of dust
Needs but, scarce heeding, wait to drop
Grim casual comment on rebellion's end;
"Yes, yes. . . . Wilful and petulant but now

As dead and quiet as the others are."

And this each body and ghost of you hath heard
That in your graves do therefore lie so still.

Saranac Lake, N. Y. 1914.

THE MOURNER

I have no heart for noon-tide and the sun,
But I will take me where more tender night
Shakes, fold on fold, her dewy darkness down,
And shelters me that I may weep in peace,
And feel no pitying eyes, and hear no voice
Attempt my grief in comfort's alien tongue.

Where cypresses, more black than night is black,
Border straight paths, or where, on hillside
slopes,

The dim grey glimmer of the olive trees
Lies like a breath, a ghost, upon the dark,
There will I wander when the nightingale
Ceases, and even the veiled stars withdraw
Their tremulous light, there find myself at rest,
A silence and a shadow in the gloom.

But all the dead of all the world shall know
The pacing of my sable-sandal'd feet,
And know my tear-drenched veil along the grass,
And think them less forsaken in their graves,
Saying: There's one remembers, one still
mourns;

For the forgotten dead are dead indeed.

NIGHT

I have minded me
Of the noon-day brightness,
And the crickets' drowsy
Singing in the sunshine. . . .

I have minded me
Of the slim marsh-grasses
That the winds at twilight,
Dying, scarcely ripple. . . .

And I cannot sleep.

I have minded me
Of a lily-pond,
Where the waters sway
All the moonlit leaves
And the curled long stems. . . .

And I cannot sleep.

ROSE-MARY OF THE ANGELS

Little Sister Rose-Marie,
Will thy feet as willing-light
Run through Paradise, I wonder,
As they run the blue skies under,
Willing feet, so airy-light?

Little Sister Rose-Marie,
Will thy voice as bird-note clear
Lift and ripple over Heaven
As its mortal sound is given,
Swift bird-voice, so young and clear?

How God will be glad of thee,
Little Sister Rose-Marie!

ANGÉLIQUE

Have you seen Angélique,
What way she went?
A white robe she wore,
A flickering light near spent
Her pale hand bore.

Have you seen Angélique?
Will she know the place
Dead feet must find,
The grave-cloth on her face
To make her blind?

Have you seen Angélique. . . .
At night I hear her moan,
And I shiver in my bed;
She wanders all alone,
She cannot find the dead.

CHIMES

I

The rose new-opening saith,
And the dew of the morning saith,
(Fallen leaves and vanished dew)
Remember death.

Ding dong bell

Ding dong bell

II

May-moon thin and young
In the sky,
Ere you wax and wane
I shall die:
So my faltering breath,
So my tired heart saith,
That foretell me death.

Ding-dong

Ding-dong

Ding-dong ding-dong bell

“Thy gold hair likes me well
And thy blue eyes,” he saith,
Who chooses where he will
And none may hinder—Death.

*At head and feet for candles
Roses burning red,
The valley lilies tolling
For the early dead:
Ding-dong ding-dong
Ding-dong ding-dong
Ding-dong ding-dong bell
Ding dong bell*

MAD SONG

Grey gaolers are my griefs
That will not let me free;
The bitterness of tears
Is warder unto me.

I may not leap or run;
I may nor laugh nor sing.
"Thy cell is small," they say,
"Be still thou captived thing."

But in the dusk of the night,
Too sudden-swift to see,
Closing and ivory gates
Are refuge unto me.

My griefs, my tears must watch,
And cold the watch they keep;
They whisper, whisper there—
I hear them in my sleep.

They know that I must come,
And patient watch they keep,

Whispering, shivering there,
Till I come back from sleep.

But in the dark of a night,
Too dark for them to see,
The refuge of black gates
Will open unto me.

Whisper up there in the dark. . . .
Shiver by bleak winds stung. . . .
My dead lips laugh to hear
How long you wait . . . how long!

Grey gaolers are my griefs
That will not let me free;
The bitterness of tears
Is warder unto me.

MY BIRDS THAT FLY NO LONGER

Have ye forgot, sweet birds,
How near the heavens lie?
Drooping, sick-pinion'd, oh
Have ye forgot the sky?

The air that once I knew
Whispered celestial things;
I weep who hear no more
Upward and rushing wings.

THE WITCH

When I was a girl by Nilus stream
I watched the desert stars arise;
My lover, he who dreamed the Sphinx,
Learned all his dreaming from my eyes.

I bore in Greece a burning name,
And I have been in Italy
Madonna to a painter-lad,
And mistress to a Medici.

And have you heard (and I have heard)
Of puzzled men with decorous mien,
Who judged—The wench knows far too
much—
And hanged her on the Salem green?

CRY OF THE NYMPH TO EROS

Hear thou my lamentation,
Eros, Aphrodite's son!
My heart is broken and my days are done.

Where the woods are dark and the stream runs
clear in the dark,

Eros!

I prayed to thy mother and planted the seeds of
her flowers,

And smiled at the planting and wept at the plant-
ing. Oh, violets

Ye are dead and your whiteness, your sweetness,
availed not. Thy mother

Is cruel. Her flowers lie dead at the steps of
her altar,

Eros! Eros!

With a shining like silver they cut through the
blue of the sky

Eros!

The dove's wings, the white doves I brought to
thy mother in worship;

And I said, she will laugh for joy of my doves.

Oh, stillness

Of dead wings. She laughed not nor looked.

My doves are dead,

Are dead at the steps of her altar. Thy mother

is cruel

Eros! Eros!

Hear thou my lamentation,

Eros, Aphrodite's son!

My heart is broken and my days are done.

CRADLE-SONG

Madonna, Madonna,
Sat by the grey road-side,
Saint Joseph her beside,
And Our Lord at her breast;
Oh they were fain to rest,
Mary and Joseph and Jesus,
All by the grey road-side.

She said, Madonna Mary,
"I am hungry, Joseph, and weary,
All in the desert wide."
Then bent a tall palm-tree
Its branches low to her knee;
"Behold," the palm-tree said,
"My fruit that shall be your bread."
So were they satisfied,
Mary and Joseph and Jesus,
All by the grey road-side.

From Herod they were fled
Over the desert wide,
Mary and Joseph and Jesus,
In Egypt to abide:

Mary and Joseph and Jesus,
In Egypt to abide.

The blessèd Queen of Heaven
Her own dear Son hath given
For my son's sake; his sleep
Is safe and sweet and deep.

Lully . . . Lulley. . . .
So may you sleep alway,
My baby, my dear son:
Amen, Amen, Amen.

My baby, my dear son.

TO MAN WHO GOES SEEKING
IMMORTALITY, BIDDING HIM
LOOK NEARER HOME

Too far afield thy search. Nay, turn. Nay,
turn.

At thine own elbow potent Memory stands,
Thy double, and eternity is cupped
In the pale hollow of those ghostly hands.

THE LONELY DEATH

In the cold I will rise, I will bathe
In waters of ice; myself
Will shiver, and shrive myself,
Alone in the dawn, and anoint
Forehead and feet and hands;
I will shutter the windows from light,
I will place in their sockets the four
Tall candles and set them a-flame
In the grey of the dawn; and myself
Will lay myself straight in my bed,
And draw the sheet under my chin.

LO, ALL THE WAY

Lo, all the way,
Look you, I said, the clouds will break, the sky
Grow clear, the road
Be easier for my travelling, the fields,
So sodden and dead,
Will shimmer with new green and starry bloom,
And there will be,
There will be then, with all serene and fair,
Some little while
For some light laughter in the sun; and lo,
The journey's end,—
Grey road, grey fields, wind and a bitter rain.

AUTUMN

Fugitive, wistful,
Pausing at edge of her going,
Autumn the maiden turns,
Leans to the earth with ineffable
Gesture. Ah, more than
Spring's skies her skies shine
Tender, and frailer
Bloom than plum-bloom or almond
Lies on her hillsides, her fields
Misted, faint-flushing. Ah, lovelier
Is her refusal than
Yielding, who pauses with grave
Backward smiling, with light
Unforgettable touch of
Fingers withdrawn. . . Pauses, lo
Vanishes . . . fugitive, wistful. . . .

THE ELGIN MARBLES

The clustered Gods, the marching lads,
The mighty-limbed, deep-bosomed Three,
The shimmering grey-gold London fog. . . .
I wish that Phidias could see!

THE CRUCIFIXION

*And the centurion who stood by said:
Truly this was a son of God.*

Not long ago but everywhere I go
There is a hill and a black windy sky.
Portent of hill, sky, day's eclipse I know:
Hill, sky, the shuddering darkness, these am I.

The dying at His right hand, at His left
I am—the thief redeemed and the lost thief;
I am the careless folk; I those bereft,
The Well-Belov'd, the women bowed in grief.

The gathering Presence that in terror cried,
In earth's shock, in the Temple's veil rent
through,
I; and a watcher, ignorant, curious-eyed,
I the centurion who heard and knew.

THE FIDDLING LAD

“There’ll be no roof to shelter you;
You’ll have no where to lay your head.
And who will get your food for you?
Star-dust pays for no man’s bread.
*So, Jacky, come give me your fiddle
If ever you mean to thrive.”*

“I’ll have the skies to shelter me,
The green grass it shall be my bed,
And happen I’ll find somewhere for me
A sup of drink, a bit of bread;
*And I’ll not give my fiddle
To any man alive.”*

And it’s out he went across the wold,
His fiddle tucked beneath his chin,
And (golden bow on silver strings)
Smiling he fiddled the twilight in;

And fiddled in the frosty moon,
And all the stars of the Milky Way,

And fiddled low through the dark of dawn,
And laughed and fiddled in the day.

But oh, he had no bit nor sup,
And oh, the winds blew stark and cold,
And when he dropped on his grass-green bed
It's long he slept on the open wold.

They digged his grave and, "There," they said,
"He's got more land than ever he had,
And well it will keep him held and housed,
The feckless bit of a fiddling lad."

And it's out he's stepped across the wold
His fiddle tucked beneath his chin—
A wavering shape in the wavering light,
Smiling he fiddles the twilight in,

And fiddles in the frosty moon,
And all the stars of the Milky Way,
And fiddles low through the dark of dawn,
And laughs and fiddles in the day.

He needeth not or bit or sup,
The winds of night he need not fear,
And (bow of gold on silver strings)
It's all the peoples turn to hear.

"Oh never," It's all the people cry,
"Came such sweet sounds from mortal hand";

And, "Listen," they say, "it's some ghostly boy
That goes a-fiddling through the land.

Hark you! It's night comes slipping in,—
The moon and the stars that tread the sky;
And there's the breath of the world that stops;
And now with a shout the sun comes by!"

Who heareth him he heedeth not
But smiles content, the fiddling lad;
"He murmurs, "Oh many's the happy day,
My fiddle and I together have had;
*And could I give my fiddle
To any man alive?"*

THE IMMORTAL RESIDUE

Wouldst thou find my ashes? Look
In the pages of my book;
And, as these thy hand doth turn,
Know here is my funeral urn.



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