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The Collected Poems
of Laurence Housman

Sidgwick and Jackson
Limited: London 1937

Preface

THESE Collected Poems cover a period of fifty years. During that time my ideals, my literary tastes, and my convictions have changed considerably; and it may be well to state frankly that the attitude toward life which found sincere expression in *Rue* and *Spikenard* and other poems of the earlier period, is no longer mine. But though there has been a departure, in a theological sense, that departure has not left a blank; and in what I hold now to be truth, I have found more peace and unity of mind than I did in those earlier strivings to relate myself to things which I wished so much to be true. And though my convictions have greatly changed, I see no reason why those changes should not be brought into a collection; though this would not have been done had it not been asked for.

L. H.

To
C. H.

FROM FIRST TO LAST

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GREEN ARRAS

To a Child, Michael

CHILD of much joy, and of such meed of grief
As must be due,
Where mortals hold their fief,
To-day there falls, down with the falling leaf,
Out of the heavenly blue,
An Angel's name for you.
Heaven's Eye bade it go
To the little land below:
Light not, nor check not speed,
Till you come to a child in need,
Gazing with unlearned eyes
On a new world's surprise.

Michael, with his good sword,
Bends down to you;
His own name doth accord
For a crown to you.
Oh, Michael, fit these arms
With high angelic charms!
Thine eyes did see our earth
Come wailing to the birth,

At the Creative nod;
And in the deeps of space
Saw fall those tears of God,
Which, kindled at His Face,
Since the event
Shine, stars, amid our saddened element.

We look up to the stars:
God's grief wears steadfast still,
A peace amidst our wars,
A light upon our ill,
The shadow of His pain is our sea-guide
Across life's dubious tide:
Love wills, so suffering, to endure and to abide.

Michael, since thine angelic heart knows pain
So near the Father's side,
Touch now the little brain
With thy bright finger-stain;
And afterwards provide
Such heavenly griefs as unto us joys are,—
Light to his life, star calling unto star!

The Corn-keeper

A BLIGHT came into the corn by night;
He seemed an angel in God's sight.

All the corn-tops looked at him;
Dark he stood on the moon's rim.

Out of the farm a child's soul
Came, and into the moonlight stole.

Shadowy hands reached over the wheat
And fell upon the child-soul's feet.

' My body sleeps in a warm bed,'
He looked over the corn, and said;

' I am sent to gather dreams,
In among the white moonbeams,

' White moonbeams, all in a row:
I must be back at the first cock-crow.

' What shall I take, and put in the head
Of my warm body in his warm bed?

' I must fashion a dream for him,
Ready before the moon gets dim.'

Said the Blight, 'Then take my hand,
Come with me through the corn-land!'

'Is it not too far to go?
Shall I be back before cock-crow?'

'Not too far, and not too near;
I shall have hold of your hand, my dear.'

Said the child, 'Before I was born,
God was good to my father's corn,

'Night and day, from His Home's great height.
Are you the angel on guard to-night?'

Quoth the other, 'Wherever I go,
I am a sort of a scarecrow.'

Laughed the child, 'Why, that's fun, too!
Make my body to dream of you!'

But a thousand whispers of wheat,
Following after the child-soul's feet,

Cried, 'Turn back, lest the cock crow morn
While you are wandering over the corn!'

Then the happy soul of the child
Kissed them under their heads, and smiled,

Holding the Blight by both hands,
As they went up the corn-lands.

All of a sudden the cock crew hard,
And the watch-dog howled in the farm-yard;

But the child's body lay too still
For a dream to be under his brain-sill.

One corn-stem they gave him to hold,
A slender sceptre headed with gold.

Never a one of them all could know
Why the corn kept kissing him so:

No one knew how, before he was born,
God was good to his father's corn.

The Christ-bride

BOWED she was, as a burdened mule,
Wizened, and furrowed, and crutched beside:
'Ho!' cried the children, running from school,
'Gammer Garu, the old Christ-bride!'

So bent, so bowed was Gammer Garu,
Shadow made mist of the fair old face;
Jeering, gibing, none of them knew
In the age of the eyes what a smile had place,

'Gammer Garu! witch, Gammer Garu!'
By the village cross to the closed church door;
From many a scoff, and a stone or two:
Then back to the half-thatched hut on the moor.

After her, on to the sweet wild heath,—
'Gammer Garu! witch, Gammer Garu!'
She gazed on down to the hovel beneath;
'What grief,' she thought, 'if the bridegroom
knew!'

Oh, the smile, as she clicked the latch!
It lighted her face like an aureole;
But what a sight for the judges to catch:
Gammer Garu must have sold her soul!

What! is there room in this hutch for two?
Yes, for they sit down side by side:
Nearly blind is Gammer Garu,—
Gammer Garu, the dear Christ-bride.

A Song of the Road

SOFT by mound of barrow and croft,
Upward bend from the valleying ground
Evening's mistily-sandalled daughters,
Drowsily treading their westward round;
Birds awake by the wood-bound waters
Fill the heights and hollows with sound,

To the west of the hills glows a garden of rose,
And a breath of its fragrance is breathed upon me,
Warm with the heart of my dear, that is calling,
' Here, O my love, is a rose-bower for thee,—
Here where the silver waters are falling,
Terrace on terrace, toward the sea,'

Fallings of light, and of waters belong to her,
Staunching of wood-song through hollows of space;
Stars, like the Kings of the East, come and throng
to her,
Jewel for her foot falls the dew to its place.
But the sound of love's feet on the road is a song to her,
And the end of her prayer brings his face to her face.

Love-bound Time

*' So the worldforbids !
There, love, there,
Soft eyes and lids,
And cheek age-cold!
Here's white come unaware
In the soft-sheened hair.
I am young, you are old;
And the worldforbids!'*

LOVER'S tale of treasure trove.
Hear how once, in spells that wove
Day with night, stood Time-bound Love:

At his feet two dreamers lay;
One was golden-haired as day,
But the woman's hair was grey.

Yet across Love's bounden feet,
Like blown corn and meadow-sweet,
Did the gold and silver meet.

And Love sang a patient tune,
Lit with melodies of noon,
Under that late harvest-moon:

Love to His true worshippers:
Youth was his, and age was hers;
Time built up forbidding years.

Truer hearts were never found:
Star to star their search went round,
Met—and lo, Love's feet were bound.

' Yet for them in dreams that rhyme
Underneath Love's perfect chime,
They take hold on Love-bound Time.

' In my sleep-enchanted house,
Dreaming under fastened brows,
They fulfil their marriage vows.'

Thus sang Father Love, and drew
Tender hands across the two,
Saying, ' Is their dream not true ?

Truth to truth may faithless be,
Seeming seem more truth than she,
Being but the truth set free.

'Beauty may to beauty err,
Yet her counterfeit aver
All that beauty lost in her.

'Life may wound sweet life to death;
Joy teach joy she tarrieth;
Truest life least sorroweth.

'Things that are may all be naught.
Falsehood fact too loosely wrought.
Truth the still-born child of thought.

' So for these: in dreams that rhyme.
Underneath Love's perfect chime,
They have hold on Love-bound Time.'

Antaeus

DOWN in her darkness felt the Earth
The feet go by of one, whose birth
Claimed her his mother: when, as dumb,
Those footfalls stayed, she whispered from
The inmost places of her womb,
'How so, Beloved, art thou come?'
And he: 'Do not my feet lie bare
Upon thy breast? Thou knowest where
I am, sweet Mother, and of whom
I hail that speak. For, from thy loom
My raiment is; my locks are bound
With foster-brethren of the ground,
Sown by the burial of the rains.'

She said, 'Thou seest the level plains,
The hills, and the all-folding blue
Of heaven, and those high wells of dew
Wind-drifted o'er it chariot-wise:
Let me have speech of them, sweet eyes,
Yea, through thine eyes to me teach sight:
Lean near my heart, and tell me!'

'It is night,'

Antaeus answered, 'and the stars show fair.
Light-studded, harnessing the crystal air;
Wind stirs the tree-tops, but it stirs not these:
They look, and see my Father's palaces
Shine in blue fathoms underneath the bay:
There with long wands like pilgrims enter they,
And feast.'

Therewith he ceased;

And through her veiling leaves she felt his breath
And kisses on her, and made sure that death
Touched him not yet. Then said he: 'Strength
of thee

I come to draw, as the Hyblaeon bee
Draws honey in the brakes of Sicily.
Oft-times he comes, and each time finds fresh wells
Of sustenance on seaward-dipping fells:
So come I, Mother, to draw strength from thee.'
'Yea,' answered she, 'of me!'

Then silence, like a shroud between them, drew
His face from hers, till suddenly she knew
Trample, and tread, and fierce contending beat
Of terrible feet.

Then fear divine made manifest,
To loud heart-leapings in her breast,
A fierce earth-vintage that ran pressed,
Foot-beaten from her blood like wine:
With starting saps, and flame-like dew.
Lava of love, and travailing fire,
Strivings of fear, and strong desire,
She succoured the loved feet she knew:
Clasped them—and felt, at sudden spur, how sprung
Victory among
The enlacing limbs for him, and on the foe
Downfall and overthrow:
Lost them, and felt her son mown like a wave
Down to her breast; and, at each summons, gave
With panic-smitten heart: he rose, he dropt,
Leapt upward, overtopped
His fate, and cried victoriously in air.
She heard: another cry went strangling to despair;
Then, on a sudden, all the conflict stopt

Down, down, prone down,
Onto the dear brown
Breast from which he was born:
Bent, rent, all spent, the forlorn

Blind mother held him again;
Asking, ever in vain,
Of that Unknown, news of her own.
' Your form is fair,'
She sighed: ' there are flowers in your hair,
And the smell of your raiment is sweet.
I had hold of his feet.
He left me; I heard how his cry
Of conquest rang scaling the sky;
Then to my side
You dropped, you surrendered, you died.
You, I deem, were his foe,
You, and he laid you low:
You, whom I do not know.'

But when she drew him down
Into her earth-breast brown,
Heart knew heart. ' Oh! undone!'
She wept, ' You, you were my son!'

The Queen's Bees

I AM a poor man, and my lot
Is but this well-trimmed garden-plot,
With small bright borders set thick with stocks,
Where the red bean runs, and the larkspur rocks
To the great upstanding hollyhocks,
Those heavenward ladders by which in a row
Roses footing for angels go,
The larger, the farther down they grow.

I am a poor man; little ease
I get, or wealth from my toil with these;
Little market, and little money,—
Here where the Queen's gold-girdled bees
Come day by day to steal my honey.
Round their bodies hang girdles of gold,
At quest for the Queen their hearts are bold,
For every one in the land is told
They shall not be caught, or bought, or sold,
But shall carry back their store to the lips
Of our lady the Queen, where she sits and sips,
With a golden spoon in her finger-tips,
And gold hair flowing away to her hips,
18

I am the man on whom the Queen
Reached her lily-white hand to lean
Its weight, while high on her throne she sat,
Letting her red lips laugh at that;
And her mercy all men marvelled at.

I have a lily; great drops of dew
Every day stand in it anew,—
Five sweet diamond eyes they make,
Looking up from a milk-white lake;
Looking the whole bright day-long through,
Till the Queen's bees find a way thereto.

If I pour poison into its cup,
A hundred bees will carry it up,
By cedared terraces, alleys of pine.
And gardens purple with mulberry and vine,
Where the cone-thatched honey-cots build in a line.
They will carry it softly and well,
Lay it to rest in its waxen cell:
Then, when the Queen tastes—who can tell ?

Her lily-white hand that reached so low,
Her rose-red lips that were laughing so
Because of the favour they could bestow:

Shall I not on a certain day,
Lily-white hand and red lips repay.
Humbly, after a poor man's way?
I will sway her body to what I fashion,
I will kiss her throat and her waist with passion!
Her reins shall be moved because of me;
She shall tremble and struggle, and not be free
From a horror she knows yet shall not see!
One day—God's good—and the thing shall be!

Then would I give, ah! how much money,
To see her face as she tastes the honey?

The Dead Comrade

WE left it in the shadowed way—
 Shadow upon the fair slain head,
Whose dead face said to the young day,
 'How many deaths ere thou be dead?'
What part had you of yea or nay
 In man's blood then, when yours was shed?

How little we, few hours ago,
 Who watched the crawling miles of heat
 Lie strained and white before our feet,
Thought to be parted where a row
 Of small pines let their branches meet
Across the way we had to go.

'Twas but twelve paces through the cool;
 And yet you left the sunlight then
For ever; and had looked you full
 On earth, and friends' eyes; and with men
Had nothing more to do, so sped,
By that black arrow in your head.

How there we struck the ambushed foe
To ambush till God's Judgment Day,
Hard by the pine-trees in a row.

Served not to move you anyway.
Your voice seemed a great while ago
Down the white past; and all to-day,

As we rode on, the blanched way grew
Like years 'twixt me and that last look,
Half-startled, when the arrow took
And in a moment backward threw
Your body to the earth; and you
Became a shattered dream that shook
My blood, and passed a hand of age
Across my this day's pilgrimage.

After a mile I did not care
What the day's ending must needs bring;
Defeat or victory, all seemed bare
Of good, or any after thing.
The white dust lay upon your hair;
Deep in your temple was Death's sting.

To-day you talked, how gilded spurs
Would be a pleasant thing to feel
Full soon start ringing at your heel.

Now you lie dead among the firs:
Thus I, while grief's first year of years
Went by, and there began to steal

Forgetfulness of some met phrase,
Or trick of speech, across my love
That had so watched it in waste days.
Also when I drew off my glove,
To see my hand was flesh, not bone,
I could not knit it with your own.

Alas! (it seemed) how utterly
Was use flown from the love we knew;
So service had gone out of me
That there was nothing I might do.
Now soon the battle was to be:
You were not to be there. That grew

A double death: so dull of head
Was I, there scarcely went a thread
Of blood about me when they sprung
The cry of battle; and my tongue
Made a sad clapper to my wit,
That said, ' Now I must hit and hit

'These poor clowns' heads about, till cease
Of some sort come, and I get peace.'

Whereat—a wonder to behold—
Your face stood up against the light;
Dust on the hair, and the lips cold,
And the eyes covered up from sight.

Then rang, stark sudden in my ears,
Your voice amid the shattering spears;
Your fair hair waved, and down a glade
Of mown men went your fair white blade,
Pointing me which to strike: a look—
Your face became their Doomsday book,
Wherein, before each stroke, I read
The names of men to be made dead.

Now we sit victors of the day,
And my brain questions of the past,
If still, beside the shadowed way
You lie, as when I saw you last,
Having no part of yea or nay
With us, or what strange look locks fast
Its knowledge on this latter end
Of battle, and of me your friend.

Lord Paramount

(For two Drawings by C. H. Shannon)

ON all the township's weary face
One weight of heat, that falls and falls;
The water, stagnant to its place,
Sucks at the fever-stricken walls.

Dull grumblers from the loading crane,
The mill-hands loiter at the fence;
Above black barges stacked with grain
Stands the dark reckoner, Pestilence.

Oh, doubly bondsmen! while the day
A soft delirious murmuring yields:
While to the town gate comes the neigh
And whinny of the wind-combed fields!

But he, of whose broad lands the one
Lord Paramount, his head declines,
Drunk with the summer and the sun,
Amid the virgins of the vines!

The House-builders

I WATCHED where against the blue
The builders built on the height;
And ever the great wall grew
As their brown arms shone in the light.

Trowel and mallet and brick
Made a wedding of sounds in the air:
And the dead clay took life from the quick.
While strong arms girdled it there.

Hour by hour as they sped.
Their strength went into the wall;
And the scaffolding grew as it fed
On the sweat that their limbs let fall.

Did not the Tyrannies scoff,
In the halls of their heavenly wit,
On them the fathers thereof,
And on me the holder of it ?

For I was weary to death;
Weary of noise and light;
Weary of drawing breath,
And weary of having sight.

And I, at the death-wish then,
 Stood looking upon it all.
When one of the living men
 Fell screaming down from the wall.

Once he turned where he fell.
 And then lay still on his side
(I looked at him out of hell),
 And his strong throat sobbed as he died.

Ah! had I but laid my heart
 On his for a moment's beat,
Pressed palm upon palm apart,
 And covered his feet with my feet,

Had I but taken his head
 To mine, and willed my will,
I could have lain there dead,
 And he have been living still!

When wilt Thou grant, O Lord,
 The gift that I let go by,
When I would not steal reward
 From under a dead man's eye?

failure

WHEN you are dead, when all you could not do
Leaves quiet the worn hands, the weary head,
Asking not any service more of you,
Requiting you with peace when you are dead;

When, like a robe, you lay your body by,
Unloosed at last—how worn, and soiled, and
frayed!—

Is it not pleasant just to let it lie
Unused and be moth-eaten in the shade ?

Folding earth's silence round you like a shroud,
Will you just know that what you have is best
Thus to have slept unfamous from the crowd;
Thus, having failed and failed, to be at rest ?

Oh, having, not to know! Yet oh, my Dear,
Since to be quit of self is to be blest,
To blot the world, and leave no imprint here,—
Is this not best ?

MENDICANT RHYMES

Mendicant Rhymes

POOR rhymes a-begging came,
In vain I bade them go:
'Begone!' quoth I, 'you're lame'
And, sad, they owned it so,—
Was that to say them no ?

The more by that same token
Each sought to be my guest,
'Our feet,' said they, 'are broken;
Thus far we've limped our best.'
'Lie down,' I said, 'and rest!'

Such feet, and so much begging,
By such hard roads to boot,
Had made it weary legging:
The poorest fare would suit.
They entered and took root.

I set them by the ingle;—
Poor cheer! the fire was low
(Enough where one lives single
For one to roast the toe):
Stirring, I made it glow.

Then upon sorry faces
I turned at gaze to scan
What guests I had, what places
Had bred them, maid or man.
And lo! a gypsy clan!

Aliens and outlaws mostly,
A breed well used to tramp;
But with them some stood ghostly,
And one, lit by the lamp,
Who bore a pastoral stamp.

Young Corin was his name;
Beside him Chloe stood;
Her cheek glowed red with shame,
And, hide it though she would,
All torn her dainty snood.

Ah, thicker far than water
The blood that in them ran :
She was a woodman's daughter,
And he a child of Pan:
Full well I knew the man!

'Good folk,' quoth I, 'you're foreign:
Here's none I'd wish to know!
What do I care for Corin?'
And Corin answered slow,
'You cannot let me go!

'The oft-told tales of lovers
Are not the tales we know:
New dust the old dust covers,
Now with new things to show
We let the old song go!

'So to the heart that hearkens
The ancient tune wears thin;
Far heaven above him darkens,
Near grief becomes his kin:
He lets the new song in.'

Strangers? It seemed they knew me—
The frail, the halt, the blind!
So, sheltered, sang they to me,
Each as he had a mind,
While outside sang the wind.

Night passed: at break of day
I turned them out of doors.
'Now must we go,' quoth they,
' To rest our aches and sores
At hearths less cold than yours.'

Oh, other hearths, I think,
Less cold the earth may show!
Yet, till the mountains shrink
And rivers cease to flow,
A-begging these shall go!

Corin and Chloe

POOR Chloe by the water cries,
 'Ah, Corin, let me go!
Another day, another way,
 I will not say thee no!
Hast thou the will to do me ill,
 And win me to my woe ?
I loved thee well, I was not wise:
 Ah, Corin, let me go!'

Poor Corin by the water cries,
 'I cannot let thee go!
Thy tears and sighs inflame mine eyes
 More than thy breasts of snow.
So wins my will to have its fill
 On fears that in thee grow,—
Alas, for thee, alas, for me,
 I cannot let thee go!'

This is the way of man with may:
 'Ah, Corin, let me go!'
Then blood must rise because she flies
 From—what, she dares not know.

'Another day, another way!'—
She pleads her tale of woe;
And Corin by the water cries,
'I cannot let you go!'

So all of you that be poor maids.
If ye would love poor men,
And in kind glades and closing shades
Would meet to part again,—
Keep down your sighs and show brave eyes,
Else you will come to woe,
When Corin by the water cries,
'I cannot let you go!'

The Huntress

O HUNTRESS soul, with leash and thong
Hold thou the many-footed pack:
Hark, through the brake what clamorous song
The mountains echo back!

And clear and far the notes are borne,
And up the ridges of the fells
A rumour runs with rising morn
That of the huntress tells;

Till from the tangle of the brake
The startled quarry leaps to view.
And all the baying woodlands quake
Quick to thy loud halloo.

And lo, thy sovereign hand hath cast
Loose to the herd its high control.
And like a wind thy heart at last
Bends breathless to the goal.

And swift, and swift, from dale to hill,
Now hidden close, now clear to view,
On drives and strives the chase, and still
The huntress heart goes too;

Till under hollow heats of day,
The hounds have rest; and, at the goal.
Weary they render up their prey
To thee, O huntress soul!

Young Bloods

THE edge of night was dark and damp:
 Before the break of day,
We three stole from the empty camp.
 And followed to the fray.

Michael chose the sorrel,
 And John was for the bay;
And, little loath to follow,
 I mounted on the grey.

Through the thick fern we stumbled on,
 Slow crept the morning light.
'We shall be whipped for this,' said John,
 'Or each be made a knight!'

Michael rode the sorrel,
 And John was on the bay;
And, eager for the quarrel,
 I pricked upon the grey.

Low in the whins a first bird sung,
 By wood-ways fresh with green,
When through the fog that round them hung
 The sluggard foe was seen;

Their steeds stood all at tether,
 We laughed, shook rein, and ran:
The three of us together
 Made but a single man!

And one of us cried, Michael!
 And one of us, Saint John!
But I cried, Saint Mary!
 So fair to look upon.

Michael and John leaned out of Heaven,
 And Mary gave the light,
When, all three lances even,
 We broke them into flight.

The mists were close to blind them,
 They were but mortal men;
And we thundered hard behind them,
 And shouted fit for ten.

But swift—for so God willed it—
 The sun his beams arrayed,
And smote the world and filled it,
 And lo—the flight was stayed!

And one of us cried, Michael!
And one of us, Saint John!
But I cried, Saint Mary!
So fair to look upon.

Then saw we pacing at our side
Three strangers passing fair;
And easy, easy went the stride
Of feet that trod on air:

Bright Bodies, how their raiment shone!
Their heads were lost in light.
'We shall be whipped for this!' said John,
'Or each be made a knight!'

On Lansdown Hill

HERE Sir Bevil fell with his men,
The right hearts for the wrong cause:
Perished the pick of a county then,
For Charles, breaker of laws.
In a wrong fight fell a good knight:
So a good night to Sir Bevil!
Who gained his laurel in an ill quarrel,
And whose cause went to the devil.

Many a cause has gone to him
That's better there left sleeping:
But the man who gave for it life and limb
Earth holds in holier keeping.
Wrong has its say, and folly its day,
And high blood holds revel:
But good, I trust, has charge of the dust
Of the men who fell with Sir Bevil.

Gentle was he, and fair, and free,
And a good knight newly knighted;
And a good knight still he rests on the hill,
Now the rights he wronged stand righted.

Under the sky that saw him die
The old road runs level;
And level laws have done for the cause
That was backed by the brave Sir Bevil.

I would rather, I vow, be as these that now
Have done with their noise and nonsense—
Good lives thrown down for the cause of a crown,
Than be keeper of one king's conscience!
In a wrong fight fell a good knight:
So a good night to Sir Bevil!
Who won his laurel in an ill quarrel,
And whose cause went to the devil.

OVER the hill as I came down,
Across the flats where the peewits cry,
I heard the drums through all the town
Beat for the men that were to die.

Oh, blithely up the eastern street
Looked in with me the morning sun,
Up to the market-square where feet
Went marching all like one.

And dark against the high town-hall
The shadow of the shambles fell;
And clear beneath its gilded ball
The town clock tolled their knell.

Came rumours of the distant farms,
But from the townsfolk not a cry,
Though wives with babes upon their arms
Stared, and stood waiting by!

Oh, oft I come and oft I go,
And see those roofs against the sky:—
But not the place I used to know
Where simple hearts beat high.

Now like a wreck each homestead looks,
While on it sunlight falls in flood:
And all the peewits by the brooks
Are crying out of wasted blood!

The Settlers

How green the earth, how blue the sky,
How pleasant all the days that pass,
Here where the British settlers lie
Beneath their cloaks of grass!

Here ancient peace resumes her round,
And rich from toil stand hill and plain;
Men reap and store; but they sleep sound,
The men who sowed the grain.

Hard to the plough their hands they put,
And wheresoever the soil had need
The furrow drave, and underfoot
They sowed themselves for seed.

Ah! not like him whose hand made yield
The brazen kine with fiery breath,
And over all the Colchian field
Strewed far the seeds of death;

Till, as day sank, awoke to war
The seedlings of the dragon's teeth,
And death ran multiplied once more
Across the hideous heath.

But rich in flocks be all these farms.
And fruitful be the fields which hide
Brave eyes that loved the light, and arms
That never clasped a bride!

O willing hearts turned quick to clay,
Glad lovers holding death in scorn,
Out of the lives ye cast away
The coming race is born.

Deus Noster Ignis Consumens

To Him be praise who made
Desire more fair than rest:
Better the prayer while prayed.
Than the attained bequest!
Man goes from strength to strength
Fresh with each draught of pain,
Only to fail at length
Of heights he could not gain.

The soul of live desire,
How shall it mate with dust?
To whom was given fire,—
For ashes shall he lust?
Man's tenure is but breath,
His flesh, a vesture worn:
Let him that fears not death
Fear not to rest unborn.

The crown entails the curse;
Here all the fame that's won,
A harvest for the hearse,
Falls withered to the sun.

There, weary of reward,
The victor strips his wreath;
There, sick with deaths, the sword
Sighs back into the sheath.

Two Songs

I

SLEEP lies in every cup
Of land or flower:
Look how the earth drains up
Her evening hour!

Each face, that once so laughed,
Now fain would lift
Lips to Life's sleeping-draught,
The goodlier gift.

Oh, whence this overflow,
This flood of rest ?
What vale of healing so
Unlocks her breast?

What land, to give us right
Of refuge, yields
To the sharp scythes of light
Her poppied fields ?

Nay, wait! our turn to make
Amends grows due:
Another day will break,
We must give too !

II

QUICK, come away, Beloved, from sight!
The heavens are tired of holding the night.
One by one all the stars burn low;
New eyes are watching us: let us go!

Nay, but wait till the full dawn grows:
No blade of grass on the hillside knows!
Ah, but the stars will have told the dew.
And the dew will tell where our feet brush through.

If we had wings we would rise and rise,
Follow the stars when they close their eyes.
One by one all the stars burn low:
New eyes are watching us: let us go!

The Followers

IN the morning early.
 Laughter on his lips,
Through the dewdrops pearly
 Love comes and sips.

After him the herds are.
 After him the bees,
After him the birds are
 Tuning in the trees.

But when in the hollows
 Your feet trip the dew,
Love, he ups and follows:
 He goes after you!

/ *Bid Thee, Dear!*

I BID thee, dear, amend thy looks!
For thou hast beauty far more high
Than man may claim till all the brooks
And seas of love run dry.

I bid thee, dear, abate the charm
Which makes thee like a star to shine!
Lest, if I win such wealth, I harm
Its worth by wants like mine.

I bid thee, dear, dethrone thy heart,
If thou wouldst ever mate with me!
In such a heaven I have no part
Till I immortal be!

Nay, dear, I bid thee alter nought!
Ah, no! far rather let me die:
Let not Creation's topmost thought
Be changed for such as I!

Comrades

WE watched the heavens about us bend,
The starlit waters slept *hard by*.
'Doubt not,' I said, 'the gods descend
By stealth from yonder sky.

'Doubt not that they, though dwelling far,
Come to renew the ancient bond:
See, in those waters, how each star
Shapes like a pilgrim's wand.

'Who knows how close, perchance, hath brushed
In field or street some form divine?'
I ceased: the quick blood through me rushed:
A hand was laid on mine;

And in the dark I turned to see
Turn quick on mine a startled face,
And eyes that strove to read in me
The secret of my race!

Close overhead among dark boughs
The nightingale his burden dropt:
And under those dear lifted brows
The deep inquiry stopt.

No word was said, no sign was given:
 Silent, we heard the waters flow.
Ah, friend! had I the gift of heaven,
 Should I have let you go ?

The Cloak of Friendship

O MOVING friends, that unrevealed,
Through dusk, or dark, or break of day,
Bring seed to bless the common field
Where the worn ploughshare lifts the clay;

Who stand as shadows of a light
More fair than man hath wit to see,
Come from your homes of day and night
And lay the covering cloak on me!

And in that shelter let me share
The gifts of time which yet remain—
Ye that gave warmth and light and air,
And sought no recompense again.

So shall the friends I have not wronged
Take root within my life and grow—
This dust of life where once belonged
The hearts I sought to know.

The Woods of Sleep

BELOVED, each night your cry
 Troubles the woods of sleep:
'Find me before I die!
 Below me earth lies deep;
 When dawn comes, back I creep/

Fast for the goal I push;
 Each ghostly bramble clings,
And up, from every bush
 Against my face that swings,
 A night-bird beats its wings.

Crumbles the ground and breaks
 Beneath my hungry tread;
The paths are up—like snakes
 They glide away: and dead
 The starlight snaps its thread.

And still, with wasting cry
 Farther and farther gone,
Your voice: 'To-night, good-bye!'
 While, pale of face and drawn,
 Dark melts to hold the dawn.

Living and Dead

'I WOULD,' said the living man, 'that we yet might
sin:

I would, amid rust and rot, that a way led in!

If I unloosed the nails and raised the lid,

And opened the shroud,

And called on your name aloud—

Would you come when bid?'

'So do!' said the dead. 'What profit to you if I
did?'

'If you did,' said the living, 'could I not make you
content?'

'If you could,' said the dead, 'the veil of time would
be torn,

Dead men stand up like corn,

And the rocks be rent!

So far betwixt one and one

Is the bar;

If that were undone,

The war of the worlds were won.

As we make, as we mar and forsake,'

Said the dead, 'if we wake, we are!'

'I will undo,' said the living, 'the ill that I did.'
'Will you with tears warm through
And rekindle the clod?'
Said the dead, 'and gather anew
The winds at your nod,
And breathe into nostrils the breath
Drawn forth by death ?
If one least thing that you took,
That I gave, that was spent—
Nay, if but one look
You can save, it will make me content!
If you do, if you can
Heal the rod that you brake,
You are God and not man. . . .
Be that, for Love's sake!'

Envoy

Go: wait not on my call!
I am but a voice, a cry:
Wherever your foot may fall
On silence, there shall I lie.

Day after day will come:
Care not to think of me!
Close at your side, dear, dumb,
I, that have been, shall be!

Dumb at the doors of your heart:
Oh, wonder, world without end!—
Say, when at last we part,
Here you have found a friend.

The House-builder

IF the Lord build not the house,
 Lost is their labour that build it;
If the Lord keep not the city,
 Waketh the watchman in vain.
 Idly at cock-crow ye rouse
 For toil till your hand hath fulfilled it;
Breaking of bread is but pity,
 Soon shall ye hunger again.

Sleep, ye shall sleep; but within you
 Dwelleth the gift of the Lord:
 Ye shall have sons for reward,
And your seed upon earth shall continue.

So shall the breed of your race
 Be as shafts in the hand of a giant;
Happy is he and immortal
 Whose quiver is filled with their breath:
 He, unashamed of face,
 Stands to the foeman defiant,
Comes undismayed to the portal
 Dark with the shadow of death.

Sleep, ye shall sleep, but within you
Dwelleth the gift of the Lord:
Ye shall have sons for reward.
And your seed upon earth shall continue.

The Fellow-travellers

FELLOW-TRAVELLERS here with me,
Loose for good each other's loads!
Here we come to the cross-roads:
Here must parting be.

Where will you five be to-night?
Where shall I? We little know.
Loosed from you, I let you go
Utterly from sight.

Far away go taste, and touch,
Far go sight, and sound, and smell!
Fellow-travellers, fare ye well,—
You I loved so much!

Once, Always

IF once, ere I died,
 Ere the day laughed without me;
I had you by my side
 With your dear arms about me,
Then the bliss would run on like a tune
 For both hearts to remember;
Then I should be with you in June,
 You with me in December.

Song

IN a well, a well of flowers,
 Deep with dewdrops, lay me by!
Falling leaves shall tell the hours,
 And a pansy at each eye
 Shut my sorrow from the sky!
Since for thee my sweetness went,
 Earth in earth I wish to lie:
There above my discontent,
Though the flowers give forth their scent,
 None's to tell how sweet was I!
 How sweet was I!

There to hide what Love forgets,
 Little kindnesses will come;—
From my heart grow violets,
 Whence the morning bee bears home
 Sweets to fill the honeycomb.
But so still will I stay laid,
 Coming you shall find hard by
Basking lizards, unafraid
 Of a thing so all unmade,
 Though for thee a maid was I.
 A maid was I!

Annus Mirabili (1902)

DAYLIGHT was down, and up the cool
Bare heaven the moon, o'er roof and elm.
Daughter of dusk most wonderful,
Went mounting to her realm:
And night was only half begun
Round Edwardes Square in Kensington.

A Sabbath-calm possessed her face,
An even glow her bosom filled;
High in her solitary place
The huntress-heart was stilled:
With bow and arrows all laid down
She stood and looked on London town.

Nay, how can sight of us give rest
To that far-travelled heart, or draw
The musings of that tranquil breast?
I thought—and gazing, saw
Far up above me, high, oh, high,
From south to north a heron fly!

Oh, swiftly answered! yonder flew
The wings of freedom and of hope!
Little of London town he knew,
The far horizon was his scope.
High up he sails, and sees beneath
The glimmering ponds of Hampstead Heath,

Hendon, and further out afield
Low water-meads are in his ken,
And lonely pools by Harrow Weald,
And solitudes unloved of men,
Where he his fisher's spear dips down:
Little he knows of London town.

So small, with all its miles of sin,
Is London to the grey-winged bird.
A cuckoo called at Lincoln's Inn
Last April; in Soho was heard
The missel-thrush with throat of glee,
And nightingales at Battersea!

THE LITTLE LAND

The God at Play

(On a child playing by the water)

IN the hollow of his hand
My child holds a little land:
Lord of all that land is he!
There are hills and meadows green,
There a river meets the sea;
And between,
On a rock an island town
Takes its stand,
Looking down
Over all the pleasant lea.
And its ramparts are the band
Of a crown,
Steeple-crested, gemmed and grand,
Lording all that little land,
 So fair to see
In my child's hand!

Out to sea the fighting fleets,—
Round the walls the fighting men
Bannered go.
Faint from inland fold and pen

White flock bleats
And cattle low:
Autumn hoards, and summer heaps,
Ploughman ploughs, and reaper reaps,
Over sluggard winter leaps
Light-foot spring;
Peace is priest, and Plenty king,
Since a kind god wills it so,—
So to be from long ago,
In this lazy little land,
 So fair to see
In my child's hand!

Little land is all asleep,
Resting at the Sabbath-bell:
High upon its rocky perch,
Grounded deep,
Goes the gadding town to church,—
Goes to pray in pious speech,
Goes to let the preacher preach:
And as there folk sit and nod,
All the while a tired god
Lets the river rise and rise,
Sets the shoreward tide to flow
Up the land in soft surprise;

Ah, heigho!
How the happy sheepfolds go,
How the farms like islands show!
How of all the little land
Nothing soon is left to stand
Save the town, a place of woe,—
Spired crown and rampart-band:
This,—of all the little land
 So fair to see
In my child's hand!

The City of Sleep

MANIKIN, maker of dreams.

Came to the city of sleep:

The watch was on guard, and the gates were barred,
And the moat was deep.

'Who is on my side, who?'

Moonbeams rose in a row:

He tuned them loud betwixt town and cloud,
But his voice was low.

He sang a song of the moon

For loan of her silver beams;

Misty and fair, and afloat in air,

Lay the ladder of dreams,

He harped by river and hill;

And the river forgot to flow,

And the wind in the grass forgot to pass,

And the grass to grow.

He harped to the heart of earth

Where honey in hive lies sweet:

And that sound leapt through the gates, and crept

Through the silent street.

Manikin, maker of dreams,
He pursed his lips to pipe:
And the strange and the new grew near and true,
For the time was ripe.

He piped to the hearts of men:
And dreamers rose up straight,
To drift unbarred by the drowsy guard.
And beyond the gate.

He piped the dream of the maid:
And her heart was up and away;
And fast it beat and hurried her feet
To the gates of day.

He piped the dream of the mother,
The cry of her babe for food:
She rose from rest to give it the breast;
And that was good!

He piped the dream of the child:
And into its hands and feet
Came tunes to play of the live-long day;
And that was sweet!

He piped to the heart of youth:
And the heart of youth had sight
Of love to be won, and a race to run;
And that was right!

He piped the song of age:
And that was a far-off song,—
When life made haste and the mouth could taste:—
But that was wrong!

Manikin, maker of dreams,
Had piped himself to sleep:
The watch was on guard, and the gates were barred,
And the moat was deep!

The Elfin Bride

ACROSS the land, along the waste
That lies before the town,
A long procession, laggard-paced,
Of woods came marching down,
'A far way off we see she comes!' the happy people
cried;
And up within the steeple, how the bells rang for
the Bride!

'She's clothed in white, she wears a ring;
And oh, she shines like gold!
So red and gold and white a thing
Did any before behold?'
To kiss her feet the flood grew full, and every gate
flew wide,
And all the bells ran ringing down the hill to meet
the Bride!

Amid the scarlet of her lips
The laughter buds and brims;
And up the hill, as up she trips.
The royal river swims.
Her hair's a golden lattice blown out at either side,
And back the bells come ringing up the hill to bring
the Bride.

The king within his palace
Leaped up from off his throne,
And her lips were like a chalice
When he set them to his own.
'And you, my Love beloved,' he cried, but at the word
grew dumb.
'Have come, Beloved!' the bells replied, 'Have come,
have come, have come!'

She turned about, she beckoned back,
The wild-wood with her eyes;
The trees stood still upon the track,
The river ceased to rise.
'Go back,' she said, 'dear kinsmen, and range away
at will!'
And water-flood and wild-wood went thundering down
the hill.

Up over roof and rafter
She heard the iron birds
Tongue out, and fell from laughter
To little lisping words:
'And I, my Love beloved,' she cried, and then joy
held her dumb.
'Have come, Beloved!' the bells replied, 'Have come,
have come, have comeP

The Death of St. Christopher

CHRISTOPHER, who bore our Lord
On his shoulder through the ford.
After years (his great reward)

 One glad day lay down to die.
From his body, limb by limb,
Labour he put off from him,
 Till he heard a passer-by
 Stand before the ford and cry.

When he heard the summons sound,
Christopher rose up from ground;
Forth he went on duty bound,
 Murmuring: 'Lest I work amiss,
 Christ must give me strength for this :
 This my latest labour is!'

When he reached the ford at length,
 Spake the Voice of all his bliss,
Saying, 'Christ shall give thee strength!'

Humble, bowed, and very faint,
At His Feet fell down the Saint,
At His Feet fell down to pray,

'Lord, I have not strength to-day,
Thou must go some other way!
These old limbs can lift no more
That dread weight which once they bore.

In his face the Holy Child
Looked and smiled;
And His Voice grew full and wide,
Many waters multiplied,
Saying: 'Christopher, let be!
Since thou once didst carry Me,
I am come to carry thee.'

Very gently from his knees
Lifted him the Prince of Peace;
Wonderful and Counsellor,
In His Hands the Saint He bore;
He, the everlasting Lord,
Carried him across the ford.

Underneath, a level road
All the trodden waters flowed;
Not a wave was dispossessed
That the Heavenly Bearer pressed.
With the Saint upon His Breast.

'When,' said He, 'My weight did hurt,
Thou My beast of burden wert.
Now for thee, My child and lamb,
I the Beast of burden am,'

Cupid and Christ

QUICK came Cupid near to Christ,
At His Feet laid down his bow:
'See, Thy Love hath all sufficed!
Tempered in its heat and glow
Mortal hearts grow fired and iced:
Blunted, now, my weapons show.
Take my arrows, let me go!
Vainly now were hearts enticed,'
Christ said, 'No!

' Take thine arrows, take them up!
From My Feet take up thy bow!
All that thou hast doffed, now dup!
Little will My people know
How My Love hath drained their cup.
Shoot thine arrows, let them go!
On the hearts I cherish so
Thou mayst yet break fast and sup,'
Cried Cupid, 'No!'

'Ah!' spake Christ, 'and shall their shame
So make short thy little day ?
While I wait 'tis all the same:
If they yet can make thee gay,

Have thy pleasure, play thy game!
Little wounds shall lead the way
Where, at last, My Wounds may stay:
Flickering sparks may kindle flame.
Run, and play!"

Cupid, as the Other bade,
Took his arrows back, and played.
Every arrow that he sends
Mars a heart the Other mends!
But, ere forth upon that raid,
Once his heart on Christ's he laid,
Murmuring yet half-afraid:
'After, when the playing ends,
When grow well the wounds I've made,---
We'll be friends?'

Bonds

As a stream that runs to sea
Ever by its banks is led.
And by windings shepherded;
So, in bonds though bound I be,
I through limits reach to Thee.

These dear bonds wherein I chafe,
Wishing, 'Would that I were free!'
These it is which hold me safe,
Bringing me at last to Thee,
As the stream is brought to sea.

Shepherding its little streams,
Penning it from side to side,
Every bank a barrier seems:
Yet the stream would soon be dried
If the channel were too wide,

Here, fast bound by bank and fence,
Where I have not space to spread,
Still my body, chafed by sense,
Feels a spirit cross its bed,
As a stream goes current-led.

Human minds so move about.
Only if denied their grasp;
Only if fenced round with doubt,
Gain the everlasting clasp.
Only streams which fettered be
Fret their way at last to sea.

So, with limits for my guide,
Safe, I shall not wander wide;
But, where we are meant to meet,
Find in Thee the Life denied:
Falling low shall kiss Thy Feet,
Reaching far shall touch Thy Side.

Advocatus Diaboli

You are the Saint, the sinner I;
Yet both of us come here to die.
You did the right, and I the wrong,
I was the weak, and you the strong;
Yet, at our two extremes, we doff
Not much with this our taking off:
Diversely we learn not to grieve
For relics of the life we leave.
If distaste for the world were all
Man need acquire,—I, in my fall,
Have found as good a way to learn
As you the vanities you spurn.
I have gone through, with mother wit,
And tested all the cheats of it:
You gave your judgment at hearsay,
And passed by on the other way;
Forgetting, giving God His due,
You owed the Devil a duty too,—
The mere endeavour to be first
Exact about the thing you cursed!
With a too hungry ear you gleaned
God's ipse dixit on the fiend,

And cursed with sanctimonious awe
The features which you never saw.
Horns, hoofs, a tail, wings like a bat,—
Ex parte statements such as that,
Are fit description, you aver,
For bright down-fallen Lucifer!
Yet I might tell you other things
Of the far-shadowing of his wings;
Light's a strong thing, but darkness is
The nature of the Infinities.
Maybe light conquers where it pries,
But, where it cannot, darkness lies;
And if God is the Truth, the Light,
Satan is yet the Truth, the Night!

You are the strong, and I the weak,
Yet both have gained the goal we seek,
Brought by our Gods at this last hour
To frustrate the resisting power;
You, to reject the power of Hell,
I, to reject your Godhead. Well,
I am the weak, you are the strong:
Yet to my weakness shall belong
Its victory, its power to do
All that your strength has done for you:
For who stands single at the goal

He aimed for, justifies his soul!
Learn then, of Those where we belong,
Which is the Weaker, which the Strong!
I, the inert one, gravitate
Towards the greater bulk and weight,
While you toil up on troubled wings
To the minority of things!
Yet, let me say, lest I appear
To cast at you the covert sneer
You cast against the horns and hoof,—
Minority is no disproof:
Wisdom is not so strong and fleet
As never to have known defeat.
You cast it in the teeth of sin,
That Heaven's last trump is bound to win:
And he laughs best, so people say,
Who laughs the latest in the day.

You seek life: think you life is good,
The Tree of Knowledge fit for food?
Then should you not have been content
(Since life was God's experiment)
To show him honour by competing,
And prove the pudding in the eating?
But things, you say, have all gone wrong!
What? has the Devil proved too strong?

Was he not right, who held in scorn
The feast God set, to thrust his thorn
Into the sides of them that taste,
Bidding them from the banquet haste
For refuge under his large wings
From this conditional state of things ?

Conditional made absolute,
You, too, might relish fleshly fruit,
And gladly let your senses loose
To one long, luscious draught of juice,
Relieved to find Salvation meant
Old appetites made permanent!
You aim at Heaven for goal and prize:
Yet it is out of hoodwinked eyes:
Blinkered you watch life's transient hour
Of withering leaf and falling flower,
Where fagged-out vices prowl and perch,
Jackals and vultures to the Church!

The secret is, as I suspect,
Life's to attain, or to reject.
I taste, and say, upon the whole
I do not wish to have a soul.
You do not taste: yet take for text
"To be continued in our next!"

A *Garden Enclosed*

DEEP in this garden, closely fenced
And wardered by a myriad eyes,
A world from time and space condensed,
Feast for the weary idler lies,

Here at his earth-works plain to see
Laborious toils the Roman ant;
Greek-like the honey-laden bee
Mellifluous hangs from plant to plant.

The wary spider sports his thread
And devil-like receives his toll;
And underground with buried head
Grubs old mortality the mole.

Here wisdom waits the idler's look:
The mind is free to roam or halt;
The garden is my history book,
Its walls are my ancestral vault:

A book with fair devices strawed,
Lavish in rosemary and sage;
Where all the margin-paths run broad
Around the decorative page.

Or, open to the skies, a vault
Where basking sunnily I lie,
And, negligent to Time's assault,
With foot in earth prepare to die.

As the Flocks for the Brooks

As the flocks for the brooks.
As the river for the sea,
So mine eyes long for thy looks,
I for thee.

As the sun drinks up the dew,
As the fire burns up the coal,
So Love strikes through and through
To my soul.

My spirit wastes like smoke,
My body burns like fire;
Denial was but cloak
To my desire.

Wherefore did strife seem good,
Or strength a goal to gain ?
When the fire came to the wood,
All was vain!

O Beloved, if thou get heat
By any pain in me,
Then is the pain most sweet:
Let it be!

Only make this be true.
And plain that I may see:
As the sun draws up the dew
Draw thou me!

When far, feel thou me near!
When heavy of heart, oh, haste:—
Drain me to death, for fear
Lest I waste!

Lest, betwixt lip and lip
Of loves that thirst and cry,
The cup of offering slip.
And I die!

How Love Puts Out Loves Dream

WHEN thou art with me, then my heavy brain
 Puts off its traffic, and resumes its rest;
And thought, which stood thine absence to sustain,
 Slacks its o'er-laboured head upon thy breast.
For where thou art not, fancy fills thy place,
 And mind rears up a monument to thee;
Since to have tidings of thy distant face
 My brain must ever at such building be.

Then thou dost wrong, sweet love, to draw so near,
 If, coming, thou a second self dost slay;
For I, at rest with looking on my dear,
 Must let that ghostly other slip away;
And thou, being with me, hast love's dream undone;
But, being absent, art increased by one.

Of a Cause that is Past Pleading

O LOVE, who know'st my cry and all my prayer,
Since my deep groaning is not hid from thee,
Why should my breath so smite an empty air,
Or words so brand the fire which burns in me?
Thou know'st: and be thou cruel, or be thou kind,
Both ways most bound at thy dear feet I fall:
For though I have not thee, thou hast my mind,—
New prayer can give thee naught, nor aught recall.

Oh, be not thou like those who at their ease
Observant of the player's pains do sit;
Or judges savage in their just decrees,
Who love the prayer, but love not granting it:
Nor be not like the gods—would have us cry,
Demanding more, that they may more deny!

The Soul's Complaint of Loves Absence

STRANGE children in my breast thine absence breeds,
Fierce ghosts of love insatiable as fire.
That break my slumber with their hasty greeds,
And rob my spirit of her clear desire,
And where I would not, there they lead my feet;
And what I wish not, therewith feast mine eyes;
Till to make bitter loneliness seem sweet
My flesh consents to what my soul denies!

O, dear, pure vision of all love on earth,
Why tarriest thou from me in any land ?
Return and rid me of this monstrous birth:
On my racked senses lay thy healing hand!
For, in my dreams, I give my faith the lie,
And shuddering wake and pray lest this be I!

Of Grief Wasted

LOVE, if my too sad singing hurts thy pleasure,
Learn how thy too long absence loads my grief!
For if with words my sorrow I could measure,
I might bring home my love to thy belief.
But now an alien strange of speech it strayeth,
And all unwelcome breathes into thine ear
Its tale of Time, where Time his tread delayeth,
Fast-rooted in the absence of my dear.

If by my will I could bid well be doing,
To win thy pleasure were my pleasure set:
Like leans to like: yet were I now not suing,
If love, by grieving, grieving could beget:
For this would be all Paradise to gain,
Could I but hear thy heart for mine complain.

Of Time Lost

THY will hath worn the travelling face of Time
And made his little moments seem an age:
Lest his first promise should fly up to prime,
Thy silence round his wings becomes a cage.
For thee his minstrel-sands have ceased to run,
And mute upon the wheel his note of noon;
Since, by the word once given but straight undone,
Thy lips have emptied his poor lips of tune.

So hath my love lost Time for thy dear sake,
While thou hast never yet found Time for me;
Time that I wish to give thou wilt not take,
Nor even to my hopes grant Time to be.
But thy dear fame, if I might make my verse
Keep Time with thee, all ages should rehearse.

Of Loves Freehold

WHILE I am warm, dear love, thine honours live:
So long as tongue can build a home for sound
To fill with thy repute, this will I give
That men may find thy name on holy ground.
Since Love, which sent thee hither to be loved,
Hath here set up his dwelling-place of clay.
As walls to hold his word my use is proved:
I do but worship as he bids me say.

So this it is which gives my love its right,
And, though my want endures, maintains my
worth,—
Within this temple to set up thy light
And sound thee to the common ears of earth:
Nor shalt thou lack that praise the gods devise,
Till in this house of clay Love buried lies.

Powers of Air

DEATH, with viewless nets, a snare
Spreads in air, to catch my breath:
Every time I laugh or sing,
Through his web a breath breaks wing.
Then, where that shows torn, he takes
Other web and mends and makes;
Till at last the time he spends
Bringeth fast his broken ends!

Love his viewless dart, despair,
Shoots in air to pierce my heart:
Every once that in my side
Beats my heart a dart goes wide.
Still with venom he anoints,
Each afresh a hundred points,
Still with art pursues his feat
To kill my heart upon its beat!

Breath and heart, at come and go,
Still combine to meet the foe.

Yet not long can breath be held.

Yet not long can heart be whole:

Death and Love will reach their goal.

Heart and breath surrender quelled:

Then they must to freedom fare—

Heart to dust, and breath to air!

How Love Cannot Release the Lover

Our, face of music, how canst thou be still,
Who art of melody the overflow ?
Since running water when it moves must trill.
So from thy looks such harmony doth go
That, though thou wouldst, thou canst not silent be;
And, though thou wilt not, still thou claspest me!

Ah, me! though thou canst keep thy flesh so fair
From touch of mine, thy beauty burns the air
And smites a withering solstice in my face.
Fast though I run, I still must lose the race:
No solitude in all the world have I;
Thy life, and not thy love, thou slay'st me by.

But in the midmost slumber of thy soul
I, as a dream, may find my life made whole:
For, though thou love me not, I must love thee!
About thy wanderings I am wind, and grass,
And stream; without me nowhere canst thou pass,
And nowhere rest, beloved, and I not be!

;

The Dream

IN a fire that flew by night,
 My delight
Came and murmured over thee,
'Dream of me, dream of me !'
In the stillness of thy room
Sleep took up her magic loom,
And with threads of slumbering fire
Wove desire across the gloom :
 Dream of me!

Soft airs of the burning south
 Touched thy mouth;
Sweet sounds murmured over thee,
'Dream of me, dream of me !'
All her fragrance to disclose,
At thy casement showered a rose;
And a sudden splash of scent
Loosed into the darkness went,
On what errand—ah, who knows ?—
 Dream of me!

Hand-like, as the touch that stings
 Silver strings,
Even so came sleep on thee:
' Dream of me, dream of me!'
There for sign thine arms lay wide,
Soft thy lips the darkness tried,
Till the dream that on thee lit
Drew me to the midst of it,—
Drew me wholly to thy side.
 Dream of me!

Rue

Rue

PART I

I

NEVER shall life clear utterance show
To melt the hearts of men:
Hark back three thousand years, and know
How tongues had labour then;

When God, Who gathers north and south
To marvel at His ways,
Opened of old the ass's mouth,
And filled it to His praise.

But when Love bowed His Body whole
To death, for the dark East,
Then hung before men's eyes a Soul
More dumb than any beast.

His lips, Who spake as no man spake,
Nothing at all availed:
They gave Him vinegar to take,
And wagged their heads and railed.

So ye, the seers, and ye that seek,
Fellows with Him must be:
Only the dumb of heart can speak,
Or the blind think they see.

II

LONG through the night the new-born lamb
Utters its first complaint;
Close to the body of its dam
The cry goes low and faint:

Till, as a breath at dawn, this birth
Which bears a twilight's span
Shall pass, and let alone to earth
The sorry needs of man.

Now, ere the covering darkness yields,
Lie down, dear lamb, lie down:
Better to die here in the fields
Than yonder in the town;

Where fast before the butchering knife
A dumb death thins the herd.
Oh, better now to part from life
While life seems worth a word!

Out on the downs the shepherds cry,
The silly sheep-dogs yelp:
Then, quickly ease my heart, and die,
Lest I should bring you help!

III

IF you must do the thing you fear,
I would I were the sin,
To knock against your heart, my dear,
Until you let me in!

To sleep with you, and wake with you,
Lie down with you, and rise,
And let you feel the sunshine through
My love upon your eyes.

Oh, many a time you may prevail
With God, and rise as white
As you lay down; yet you shall fail
Some solitary night!

Then, lest the want outlive the will,
How well would serve a friend
To devil for your heart until
You meant the thing to end!

For then, my dear, if I were there,
I would not be your foe:
You need but breathe the faintest prayer,
And I would let you go.

IV

AMID this grave-strewn, flowerless place
A dead man prays in stone:
Worn with the weather, how the face
Looks like a mask of bone!

From praying feet to praying hands.
Prayer will not let him go:
Still patiently his face withstands
God's everlasting No.

For still to all the plea he gives
God's word long since was said;
And still the foolish faith outlives
The mercy which lies dead.

The praying stone wears down to dust;
And every day that dies
It proffers with a piteous trust
The prayer that God denies.

v

DEAR love, when with a twofold mind
I pray for bitter grace.
And from my pit of torment find
Your breath upon my face.

And hear you without thought of fear
Bid me to guard you well.
And guide your footsteps to win clear—
When my feet walk in hell:

I wonder, how can God be glad
To hear men praise Him so,
Who makes His piteous earth so sad
A lot to undergo ?

Or does He too dip Feet in fire,
And share the thirster's thirst;
And find in each blind heart's desire
His own which hungered first?

VI

WHAT know ye of the wounds of Christ,
Ye friends for whom He died ?
For you at least the love sufficed,
When Love was crucified.

For you, whose feet He plucked from hell,
He perished not in vain:
For you, when that He died, He fell
That He might rise again.

I watch the wounds: for me how vain
The blood-drops from His side,
Poor God, Who perished in His pain,
Curst, spit upon, denied!

Little ye know the pangs He bore,
Ye friends whom Love forgave:
More bitter was the wound He wore
For souls He could not save.

VII

You hear a blind man preach the light
Wherein he never dwelt,
Because his hands can handle right
The darkness that is felt.

O Face of Love, to which I kneel.
What likeness lies between
This touch of hands outstretched to heal,
These lips that cry 'unclean'?

But when these hands have hold on fire,
And these lips fire for breath,
And life goes down to its desire
In the red pit of death:

Then, clear of sight in that far place,
I may lift eyes above,
And see you looking in God's Face,
O face I used to love!

VIII

Two masks my fate reserves for me,
Whichever way I fare:
Then, must the easier mask not be
The better one to wear ?

For here indeed the mask fits well;
But oh, the weary pact!
How I must mouth, and strut, and swell,
To while away the act!

But then, the ease to bitter breath,
The stay to wordy strife,
When I put on the mask of death,
And drop the mask of life!

And death will lay an easier grace
Than life around my head:
You will not understand my face
The better when I'm dead.

IX

You, the dear trouble of my days,
When life shall let me cease.
Turn once aside from kinder ways
And look upon my peace!

Let your feet rest upon my roof,
And for the love we bore,
Forgive the heart, so far aloof,
You cannot trouble more.

For, if the dead man had his will,
I doubt not he would rise,
And waste his soul in sorrow still
With looking on your eyes.

So come when you have lost your power,
And pardon my release:
And set your feet to rest an hour,
A seal upon my peace.

PART II

I

Now we are parted face from face
Each to a destined end,
I know that God shall find no trace
In you of me, your friend.

There where I trod the way was wide,
With room enough for two;
And yet I put you from my side,
That God might look on you:

And I have bowed Him from His height
To take this gift of me,
That pure and holy for His sight
I left you utterly.

For single as the Heart of God,
My heart that loved you well
Died for you all the while I trod
The downward path to hell.

II

THOU breast of all bright things, thou Earth,
Where I was lapped ere day
Drew me from darkness unto birth,
Fair mother of my clay,

Now night and day, where'er I go,
I seem to hear thee cry,
'O child, what hast thou learned to know
Of signs beneath the sky?'

And I bend down, and answer back,
'I learn there is no rest,
On sea or land, for those who lack
The covering of thy breast,'

Then she: 'What hast thou there, weak heart,
That will not let thee free?'
'Dear grief, from which I cannot part.
And love too strong for me!

'And dearer to my heart than rest
This love that burns like fire;
And closer than your breast the breast
Of grief for vain desire!'

III

THE land's arms loose me, and I taste
The full draught of the sea:
Out of the flesh and all its waste
A spirit plucks at me.

O spirit, brooding on the waves,
Blow through me with thy breath;
And bear me to the unmounded graves
Which thou hast smoothed for death!

And in the welcome of thy smile,
Old furrowed face of dearth,
Fold me, and let me for a while
Forget my mother earth.

IV

DARK to its nest the light has gone;
An unseen force prevails.
And hands of storm lay hold upon
The rigging and the sails.

High heaves the heart of night, and loud
The water sobs and breaks.
And overhead one helmet-cloud
Its cap of darkness makes.

Strong wants whereto the welkin moves,
They are but waifs like me;
And all a storm of severed loves
That strain across the sea!

v

THE death-white horses crest and turn.

 Their gleaming saddles glide:

Have I no senses to discern

 The riders as they ride ?

O death-white horse, in this dark race

 Outcresting all your crew,

With foaming flank, and furious pace,

 Who is it rides on you ?

Nay, follow not so hard on me,

 Who ride to death alone:

White horse, pace gently, lest I see

 Your rider overthrown!

VI

ACROSS these barren clods of clay
Whenever a wind blows.
Between them and the warmth of day,
Stir shadows of the rose.

There, while the roses dance in air
And light winds whisper round,
Below them shadows foot to share
A ghostly dance on ground.

How coldly feels that barren bed
Those motions of delight!
It cares not if the rose be red,
Or if the rose be white.

For be the roses white as snow,
Or be they red as shame,
With ghostly footprints to and fro
Their shadows walk the same.

'Alas!' complains the barren clod,
'Their dance is never done:
And all their duty is to nod
Between me and the sun,'

VII

LIVING, I feel the feet that tread
My burial-plot of ground,
As if they grudged the tired dead
A sleep that is too sound.

Tread softly, you, and you, for I,—
Truly I know you not!
Leave, where the dead man has to lie,
The quiet of his lot.

But if, at crossing of love's ways,
Feet from a distant land
Stood now, where after many days
I shall come, not to stand;

Then there would grow a light above
This darkness of my breast,
And I should know the feet I love
Had touched my place of rest.

VIII

How this sad place deserted grown
Speaks of an old despair:
In ghostly dints the weary stone
Is hollowed out with prayer;

As if each day, where lips of dearth
Cried for a barren clod,
Some want had worn the face of earth,
Since not the Face of God.

Who knows in what dark anguish ailed
Yon soul of flesh and bone ?
The prayer, because the spirit failed,
Hath carved itself in stone.

O hollow stone, of hollow prayer
You make a weary jest:
For prayers that failed did earth prepare
This hollow place of rest ?

IX

DEAR love, though here my rest is stone,
No Bethel have I seen;
In the thick darkness I alone
At Peniel have been.

There, at that hour which bade us part,
When flesh and courage failed,
Thine angel stood against my heart
And wrestled and prevailed.

So let the Power which binds my will
Now grant the wrestler's claim;
Let that strong love be in me still
Which makes my feet go lame!

Though on me life be like a rod
Where blossom cannot be,
Thou art the fairest deed of God
That I may hope to see.

But when the darkness riseth up,
And I lie down in pain,
And all the mirk is like a cup
For thirsty thought to drain:

Oh, then, dear vision of delight.
Beyond mine own control.
Thy darker angel comes by night
And tempts away my soul.

x

OF old betwixt the gods and earth,
High-headed, girt with cloud,
Dividing misery and mirth,
Old Atlas stood and bowed.

Close to the high celestial gate
He bent a drowsy brain :
While far below his feet set weight
On furrowed fields of pain.

The earth's far cry sang faint, and dim
Her face toward him grew:
His head was crowned with light; round him
The immortal laughters flew.

And yet he tired of that high place,
And thrust away the prize,
Lifting a dead, indignant face
Of stone toward the skies.

XI

HERE where the Rome of nations stands
On mounds of buried breath,
Sits one who holds in hollow hands
The keys of life and death.

Oh, heavy come the poor in heart.
And rich return they home;
Since well performs his proper part
The middleman of Rome!

About the holy beaten ground
The nations on their knees
Hark, while with apostolic sound
Loud creak the golden keys.

And, though the hingeless doors be dumb,
With solemn hand and show
The porter lets the weak man come,
And lets the strong man go.

But while he spreads his lavish hands
Across the hill-tops seven,
Dark Angelo like Atlas stands
Dividing earth from Heaven.

XII

GREAT Mother, dwelling in the shade
Of altars, over glooms
Monastic, where long prayer is made
By dead men out of tombs,

Thou hearest how thy barren sons
Plead for a land despoiled
Of corn and oil and wine, where once
They at the vintage toiled:

Therefore, to cheer their hearts, send down,
Even to the lowest place,
Thy mother-word from that fair Town
Where loves come face to face.

'Mid shadowing of celestial doves
Bring pity to the dead,
O Thou Madonna of the loves
Of hearts that could not wed!

But here, O Maiden of the East,
To me Thy voice is dumb;
Unto that final gathering-feast
Look not for me to come;

For I am bound to other marts
Where meagre are Love's doles.
And men lay by their broken hearts,
But not their broken souls.

XIII

IN sackcloth shrouds they rise from rest;
They pray from bleeding knees:—
Ah, Christ! what grapes of love grow pressed
Against the lips of these ?

Out of the smitten flesh and bone.
Old heats of earlier days,
A blood-red vintage fills with moan
The wine-press of Thy praise.

Which at Thy feast when lifted up
Before celestial eyes,
What ghosts out of the bloody cup,
What ghosts of men must rise!

In the Sistine Chapel

WHERE, perfected in flesh and bone.

Earth's crowned creation ends:

There with a universal groan

The cry of life ascends.

To Heaven's dark doors soul bound in sense

Has pushed its furthest cry,—

'Reach down, O Lord, and take us hence

That neither live nor die!

'Thou, that hast shaped our suffering thus,

Grant us this last relief:

Be sorry now, and loose from us

The glory and the grief!

'Since Thou hast given us to corrupt

Flesh and fair earth, now scan

Thy making, surfeited and supped,

Thy maggot-worker, man!'

O Counsel-Darkener, over me

Still let Thy glooms expand;

More darkness, Lord!—lest I should see

Thy Face, and understand!

XV

THE Tree of Life on Judgment Day

Hears speak the poison-tree:

' Within my sap came death to stay
When life first looked on me.

'But from Thy boughs there went a breath,
Thy shadow on me fell:
And nothing have I done for death,
Because I loved Thee well.

' So I was barren for Thy sake.
Though nothing else I did:
Here, Lord, as in a napkin take
The talent that I hid!

' Make Thine own usury, and shift
The burden of Thy breath;
Have back again Thy bootless gift,
Who gavest life to Death!'

XVI

AGAINST my flesh Love hangs to die
As on the accursed tree:
I am the rood where he lays by
His wronged humanity.

The wounds which pierce the hands of Love,
Driven by the hands of hate,
Stand also in my flesh to prove
The bitterness of fate.

Here Love lies dying on my breast,
His godhead all laid by:
Soon shall he enter into rest,
But, ah, no rest have I!

XVII

THIS is the grave which year by year
Gives up its ghostly dead:
Of all poor graves least rest is here.
Where Love laid down His head!

The heart's desire of heart-sick lands
How shall men leave alone?
Therefore they come with pious hands
And roll away the stone.

So year by year, as dawn brings gloom
To light, and earth waits dumb.
Uneasy from the open tomb
The ghostly Easters come.

PART III

I

O GHOSTLY dawn, that whitenest now
The chilly-breathing earth.
This face of life why liftest thou,
If death be brought to birth ?

Can there be any death to live,
Or any life to die,
Unknown to me, that thou canst give
To put my darkness by?

Pale mother, from between thy feet
Comes forth a still-born day,
Where life and I can never meet
Till light be put away.

II

LIFE flutters from the wooded brow,
A slow breath sadly drawn:
With grey wings beating comest thou,
Shy heron of the dawn!

And ever on from deep to deep
Of space the errand flies.
And breaks in starry pools of sleep
The dreams of lovers' eyes.

Then on until, where east is west,
Still westward called away,
On weary feathers sinks to rest
A tender-breasted day.

And once again I dream how light
Across the breasts of space
Goes moving onward into sight
Of one beloved face;

Till cold across the ashen east
Returns the grey-winged day;
And, beak and claws flushed red from feast,
There hangs a bird of prey!

III

PALE stranger, with the uplifted face
That seals its looks at me.
Come you to fill the empty place
Where Love was wont to be ?

In your dull heart without alarms
If any love abide.
Reach up and take me in your arms
And draw me to your side!

Say else, by what deep purpose stayed,
To what diviner end,
Goes this defeat, where fate hath made
A stranger of my friend?

For I am like a withered brook
Which water runs not through,
Since Death hath laid a dear rebuke
On all my thoughts of you.

IV

GHOSTS of sweet wants, ye touch and leave
An unresponsive breast!
Hearing you knock and go, I grieve,
But cannot give you rest.

Ye, while on earth the spring goes round,
Dear wants, can never die.
Now all my spring lies underground,
Therefore no wants have I!

Oh, fare ye well, and sup at life,
And find a better bed!
Here living is a weary strife
When all its wants are dead.



WHY dream for you, dear vanished friend,
The peace on earth denied,
Since life, to gain a broken end,
Has torn you from my side ?

The ramparts of the house of Death
Love cannot pierce or scale,
To tell with what a thirst for breath
The silent captives ail.

In that fixed prison-house of form,
All locked and barred about,
Perchance your living will is warm
And battles to be out!

VI

OUT of the heart of night a hand
Of darkness touched my side:
Light of my life, I saw you stand,
And dreamed you had not died.

'Oh, you look weary, you look old,
And heavy hangs your head:
Come from the night and from the cold,
And creep into my bed!'

The Fates that leagued against us still
Had fallen apart in fear,
When warm to all my weary will
I thought to draw you near:

But my quick soul, to love denied,
Smote on its doors in pain:
'Go back awhile, Beloved,' it cried,
'And die and come again!'

VII

THE Soul bereaved, the Flesh defiled,
 Made strife with Love, and said,
'Lord, is not mine the living child?
 And is not hers the dead?'

And while with piteous plea the two
 At hard contention warred,
To search the holier anguish through
 Up glanced the dreadful sword.

Then the sad Flesh, the far-defiled,
 Caught at Love's Feet, and said,
'Give her, give her the living child!
 And give me back the dead!'

'Dost thou believe the dead can rise,
 O Flesh? Then see thy son!
Love spake: and clear before her eyes
 Living and dead were one!

VIII

OUT of the earth which holds you bound
All spring comes back to me;
The honeyed world awakes at sound
Of life the quickening bee.

From the devourer comes forth meat,
And sweetness from the strong.
And honey from beneath my feet
Where you to earth belong.

O love, to you I bend and pray,
Who seeing, yet am blind,
Because I cannot put away
A dead face out of mind.

Through the dull mould of my desire
I search with hands that grope,
'Mid ashes of a buried fire,
For love, or faith, or hope.

So, lest I perish without end,
Having no wit to see,—
O ghost of all dead springs, O friend
Of Love, arise in me!

SPRING comes with silent rush of leaf
Across the earth, and cries,
' Lo, Love is risen!' But doubting Grief
Returns, ' If with mine eyes

'I may not see the marks, nor reach
My hand into His side,
I will not hear your lips that preach
Love raised and glorified.

' Except by all the wounds that brake
His heart, and marred His brow
Most grievously for sorrow's sake,
How shall I know Him now?'

Love came, and said, 'Reach hither, Grief,
Thy hand into My side.
Oh, slow of heart to win belief,
Seeing that for grief I died!

'Lo, all the griefs of which I died
Rise with Me from the dead,'
Then Grief drew near, and touched the side
And touched the wounds that bled,

And cried, 'My God, O blessed sign,
O Body raised, made whole,
Now do I know that Thou art mine,
Upholder of my soul!'

x

ME did self-love or love most move,
Strong will or weak desire?
Or was love laid on me to prove
How ice may vanquish fire?

Nay, still my heart cannot undo,
My lips cannot unsay
That bitter need I had of you
And could not put away!

But life from death strange virtue draws,
And, knit with new desire,
Still the love lives in me, though thaws
The ice, though faints the fire.

For life, which out of good or ill
Besought one kindred boon,
Here on death's wave how clear and still
The waters wash the moon!

XI

THE Earth her troubled seasons brings,
 Low at Love's feet she lays
The broken promise of her springs,
 Her tarnished summer days:

And says of all, 'Not here the gift:
 But out of all of these
Draw Thou, for one too weak to lift,
 An offering to Thy knees!

'And gather out of all the storms
 That flew to find them rest,
The loves that in a hundred forms
 Have strained toward Thy breast!'

XII

As by the motion of her arc
The moon draws up the sea.
So through the sense-defeating dark
Love's hold is laid on me;

Till in the strife of hearts that yearn
A hidden goal to gain,
I touch the keys of life, and learn
The mysteries of pain;

And find one law uplifted chief
All other laws above,
That Earth cannot contain its grief,
Nor Heaven contain its love.

There, when Love's moon unveils her snow
On Paradisal trees,
Timed to her beating heart must go
The beat of far-off seas.

And led by ways of death or birth
To live again or die,
Fashioned from all the griefs of earth
All loves as kindred lie.

So, clear of sight from this far place
Let me lift eyes above,
And see you looking in God's face,
O face I used to love!

SPIKENARD

Love Importunate

DARK was the night, and dark as night my heart.
When at my chamber door there knocked a hand.
Then, with glad start,
I rose, and oped:
Nay, not the one I hoped—
There Love Himself did stand.

Ah, me! those eyes I could not meet for shame, —
So, downward looking, saw the Feet that bled;
And knew He came,
Footsore and worn,
A Lover to man's scorn:
Yet could not give Him bread!

Grieved, from His Feet I feared to lift mine eyes:
Patiently there He stood while I stayed dumb.
Till with sharp sighs
I cried, 'Oh, sweet,
Oh, fearful, bleeding Feet
Of Love, why are Ye come?'

'One welcome lacking ever must I roam.
And footsore needs must be,' my Lord confessed:
'From many a home
A wanderer still,
Because your stubborn will
Denies my Heart its rest,'

Sadly I owned, nought had I here to give:
Nay, not a bed so made that He might lie.
Could one not live
From Love shut fast,
But to one's door at last
He needs must come to die ?

'Why, then,' quoth Love, 'didst thou so watch and
wait?
Whom Love hath made, loveless can find no rest.
In empty state
Can peace begin ?
Is not thy heart an inn
Which lacks the looked-for guest?'

'Yet there be other inns,' I sighed: 'fair boards
Where open hearts for Thee the feast prepare
Which peace accords!'

'Let it be so;
That feast I will forego!'
Said Love. 'Thou art My care,'

Ah, what He further spake I may not tell!
But in the very place where once lay sin.
Love deigns to dwell;
Nor may I doubt
The door which once shut out
Can closelier shut Love in.

Spikenard

As one who came with ointments sweet,
Abettors to her fleshly guilt.
And brake and poured them at Thy Feet,
And worshipped Thee with spikenard spilt:
So from a body full of blame,
And tongue too deeply versed in shame,
Do I pour speech upon Thy Name.
O Thou, if tongue may yet beseech,
Near to Thine awful Feet let reach
This broken spikenard of my speech!

The Mystery of the Incarnation

(A Disputation between Christ and the Human Form)

COMEST Thou peaceably, O Lord?

Tea, I am Peace!

Be not so fearful to afford

Thy Maker room! for I am the Reward

To which all generations of increase

Looking did never cease,

' Down from amid dark wings of storm

I set My Feet

To earth. Will not My earth grow warm

To feel her Maker take the form

He made; when now, Creation's purpose meet,

Man's body is to be God's Mercy-seat?'

Lord, I am foul: there is no whole

Fair part in me

Where Thou canst deign to be!

This form is not Thy making, since it stole

Fruit from the bitter Tree.

'Yet still thou hast the griefs to give in toll

That I may test the sickness of man's soul.'

Nay, Lord, my works are without worth;
I am afraid,
Lest I should mar the blissful Birth.
Quoth Christ, 'Ere seas had shores, or earth
Foundations laid,
My Cross was made!

'Nought canst thou do that was not willed
By Love to be,
To bring the Work to pass through Me.
No knee
Stiffens, or bends before My Sovereignty,
But from the world's beginning has fulfilled
Its choice betwixt the valleyed and the hilled.
For both, at one decree,
My Blood was spilled.'

Yet canst Thou wear these earth-worn hands ?
'These hands,' quoth Christ,
'Of them I make My need:
Since they sufficed to forge the bands
Wherein I hunger, they shall sow the seed!
And with bread daily they shall feed
My Flesh till, bought and bound, It stands
A Sacrifice to bleed.'

Lord, let this house be swept and garnished first!

For fear lest sin do there look in,

Let me shut fast the windows: lest Thou thirst,

Make some pure inner well of waters burst:

For no sweet water can man's delving win—
Earth is so curst!

Also bar up the door: Thou wilt do well

To dwell, whilst with us, anchorite in Thy cell.

Christ said, 'Let be: leave wide

All ports to grief!

Here when I come I will not be denied

The common lot of all that here abide;

Were I so blinded, I were blind in chief:

How should I see to bring the blind relief?'

Wilt Thou so make Thy dwelling? Then I fear

Man, after this, shall dread to enter here:

For all the inner courts will be so bright,

He shall be dazzled with excess of light,

And turn, and flee!

'But from his birth I will array him right,

And lay the temple open for his sight,

And say to help him, as I bid him see:

"Thisisforthee!"

The Swaddling Bands

O LOVE, when human sense first touched Thine Eyes,
Bidding them tell Thee nought, save through disguise
Of specious form, and close embodiment,
Seemed it not sad that life such darkness lent,
While to Thy new-born Brain the wonder grew
How earthly sight could so shut out the Heavenly view?

For Thou from the embrace of Mary's heart
Must turn and see her play her earthly part:
 Can that poor robe, and this meek suffering face,
 Cover the highly favoured, full of Grace ?
And can this weary elder Thou dost see
The Heaven-taught Joseph be ?
 And in this cabin'd space
 Of stable rock
 Does not the whole world flock
To worship at Thy Knee?

Now, this first time, Thine Eyes must look on walls:
 Where Thy Hands cannot reach,
 Hands stretch and do beseech;
Where Thine Ear cannot hear, Thine earth for succour
 calls!

O little Heart,
 Beat fast, and grow!
The whole world's smart
 Through Thee, one day, must flow.
O childish Ears, attend,
Being friend to all men's fears!
 O childish Eyes,
 Would Ye of man be wise,
Ye must the channel be to all men's tears!

So wait, and learn Thy strict estate,
Until to Thee this earth commits her fate!
 Each day a little knowledge brings:
 The shepherd's crook, the crown of kings,
In time shall prove Thee great,
When Hand and Head bear up their awful weight.
 Now round Thee, Holy Child,
 Life dawns in darkness mild:
Out in the star-eyed night a Herald sings
 Of Nature reconciled.
Thou canst not see that Star, nor hear those pastoral
 wings:
Yet first the shepherds come to gaze, and then the
 kings.

Love, the Tempter

OH, tempt not me! I love too well this snare
Of silken cords.

Nay, Love, the flesh is fair;
So tempt not me! This earth affords
Too much delight;
Withdraw Thee from my sight,
Lest my weak soul break free
And throw me back to Thee!

Thy Face is all too marred. Nay, Love, not I—
I did not that! Doubtless Thou hadst to die:
Others may faint for Thee, but I faint not.
Only a little while hath sorrow got
The better of me now; for Thou art grieved,
Thinking I need Thee! Ah, Christ, lest I fall
Weeping between Thy Feet, and give Thee all:
Ah, Christ, lest love condemn me unreprieved
Into Thy bondage, be it not believed
That Thou hast need of *me!*

Dost Thou not know
I never turned aside to mock Thy woe?

I had respect to Thy great love for men:

Why wilt Thou, then.

Question of each new lust—

'Are these not ashes, and is this not dust?'

Nay, Love, Thou hast not eyes

To see how sweet it is!

Each for himself be wise:

Mock not my bliss!

Ere Thou cam'st troubling, was I not content ?

Because I pity Thee, and would be glad

To go mine own way, and not leave Thee sad,
Is all my comfort spent?

Go Thine own ways, nor dream Thou needest me!

Yet if, again, Thou on the bitter Tree

Wert hanging now, with none to succour Thee

Or run to quench Thy sudden cry of thirst,

Would not I be the first—

Ah, Love, the prize!—

To lift that cloud of suffering from Thine Eyes ?

O Christ, let be!

Stretch not Thine ever-pleading Hands thus wide,

Nor with imperious gesture touch Thy Side!

Past is Thy Calvary. By the Life that died,

Oh, tempt not me!

Nay, if Thou weapest, then must I weep too,
Sweet Tempter, Christ! Yet what can , ' undo,
I, the undone, the undone,
To comfort Thee, God's Son ?
Oh, draw me near, and, for some lowest use,
That I may be
Lost and undone in Thee,
Me from mine own self loose!

Before Confession

As the foul flesh lays by the hindering robe,
Letting the water probe
 And purge each stain.
Till with that sweet medicinal receipt
From face to feet
 The body is made sane;
So, from my shamefaced soul, do I aside
All covering lay (who have so long denied
Thy cleansing Power), to be purified.

Late though I come, at last
The dress I cast
Of my deceit which hid, till late,
My soiled estate:
All that I did, I did in secrecy.
Lord, in my secret places cleanse Thou me!

As to the flesh laid bare, the water, led
By its own laws of life, bids cleansing spread
With subtle press and intimate caress,
And with compelling weight doth gravitate
Round all which passively submits thereto,

Leaving untouched no part;
So to my heart.
Stripped of itself, Thine utmost healing do!
So from its falsehood wash it with Thy truth:
And from lust-loving lave it in Thy ruth:
And with pure Waters pitiful, whose art
The virtue holds of an inborn embrace,
Wash Thou the soil of shame from off my face!

Against all outward secrecy I pray,
Let all such secrecy be put away!
Since Thou in all my secrets seest me,
Thine, not the world's, let all my secrets be!
So, in Thy secret Ear when they are named,
I shall be naked but yet not ashamed:
And my great gain be this dear privacy—
When I shut out the world, to shut in Thee!

To the Penitent Thief on Calvary

WHEN shame and darkness covered Him and thee,
What didst thou see,
O thou great penitent of Calvary,
That thou couldst beg this boon as thy reward
In anguish?—' When Thou comest to Thy Kingdom,
Lord,
Remember me!'

In that most darkest hour,
Of hatred born,
When Satan's power
Showed Love held up to scorn,
What way
To thee came strength to pray?—
'Lord, when Thy Kingdom cometh unto Thee,
Remember me!'

Above thy head the darkness did not rend
To kindle thought;
No healing sign was wrought
About that death-place of earth's dying Friend,
TO tell beholders, 'This is not the end!'

Thou through the veil
Didst gaze
Into the centre of all Time's amaze:
Thy tongue ere Easter greetings cried, 'All Hail!'

O tongue, whereon such fires of faith were found,
O most triumphant sound
Of prophecy that ever fell from man
Since Time began,
That, with its dying breath,
Hailed Life in death,
And named the Victor in the Victim bound!

Therefore to thee,
Strong Saint, I make my plea:
Pray lest I tempt my fate!
Lest with a soul too dead,
Drawn down to my last bed,
I have not eyes to see
Beyond my own gross darkness covering me!
Too late, too late,
For my sad soul's defence
Were death-bed penitence!

Only for thy clear soul that hour sufficed
To pierce the drift, and bid the darkness lift;
All we like thieves have stolen our days from Christ,
And think with late avowal that guilt to shift,
But at the last can bring no recompensing gift.

O Light in a dark place,
Show not too fair a light!
Lest thy strong suppliant face
Draw weaker souls to night;
And they, in their dark need,
Have no such light to plead.

Therefore my prayer to thee,
Pray thou for me,
Lest at the last
Self-knowledge hold me fast
To sins I see!
So, while I draw strong breath,
Pray lest I, brought to death,
Die, and fall short of thee!

Kingdom Come

O THOU, our Father, ere we came
To being, hallowed be Thy Name!
Thy Kingdom come: Thy Will be done,
Till Heaven and earth be joined as one!
For when Thy Will is wrought on earth
The second Christ will come to birth;
And this sad earth, which was His tomb,
Shall quicken as the Virgin's womb.
The rocks shall rend to give Him way
And bring the second Easter Day;
And east, and west, and south, and north,
His Sign, through all the world gone forth,
Shall rest upon both land and sea,
Making earth shine like Calvary.
And He shall reach out healing Hands
To gather nations and all lands,
And open wide, to welcome them,
The twelve gates of Jerusalem!

The Gardener

O LOVE, when in my day of doom
The stone of sense from off me rolls,
Then from this earth, a barren tomb,
Do Thou, the Gardener of souls,
Uproot and bear me in Thy Breast,
And plant me where it please Thee best!

*A Prayer for the Healing of the
Wounds of Christ*

Is not the work done? Nay, for still the Scars
Are open; still Earth's Pain stands deified,
With arms spread wide:
And still, like falling stars,
Its blood-drops strike the door-posts, where abide
The watchers with the Bride,
To wait the final coming of their kin,
And hear the sound of kingdoms gathering in,

While Earth wears wounds, still must Christ's
Wounds remain,
Whom Love made Life, and of Whom Life made
Pain,
And of Whom Pain made Death.
No breath,
Without Him, sorrow draws; no feet
Wax weary, and no hands hard labour bear,
But he doth wear
The travail and the heat:
Also, for all things perishing, He saith,
'My grief, My pain, My death,'

O kindred Constellation of bright stars.
Ye shall not last for aye!
Far off there dawns a comfortable day
Of healing for those Scars:
When, faint in glory, shall be wiped away
Each planetary fire,
Now, all the aching way, the balm of Earth's
desire!

For from the healed nations there shall come
The healing touch: the blind, the lame, the dumb,
With sight, and speed, and speech,
And ardent reach
Of yearning hands shall cover up from sight
Those Imprints of a night
For ever past. And all the Morians' lands
Shall stretch out hands of healing to His Hands;
And to His Feet
The timid, sweet
Four-footed ones of earth shall come and lay,
For ever by, the sadness of their day:
And, they being healed, healing spring from
them.
So round the Stem

And Rod of Jesse, roots and trees and flowers,
Touched with compassionate powers,
 Shall cause the thorny Crown
 To blossom down
 Laurel and bay.

 So lastly to His Side,—
Stricken when, from the Body that had died,
Going down He saw sad souls being purified,—
 Shall rise, out of the deeps no man
 Can sound or scan,
The morning star of Heaven that once fell
And fashioned Hell:—
 Now, star to star
 Mingling to melt where shadeless glories are.

O Earth, seek deep, and gather up thy soul,
And come from high and low, and near and far,
And make Christ whole!

Easter Light

MUCH to have lost and yet to find
New comfort with an open mind;
Grief to have known, and yet to be
Clear-eyed to all felicity:
These are the wells of life which give
Day to a darkness fugitive.

Such must that Easter light have been
When dawn on Calvary was seen,
And sleepless women, soon astir,
Came weary to the sepulchre.
And, as they marked its light increase,
They must have marvelled how such peace
Could meet them on a day so sad;
For, surely then, they also had
A foretaste, earned by sweet accord,
In the fair triumph of their Lord.
So, by the wisdom sorrow gives,
One may have said—'God's goodness lives!
Yea, though the form in dust is laid,
His Love lives still: be not afraid!'

Then, as an echo to that word,
Angelic was the voice they heard.
Bidding them seek no more in vain
The Living where the dead had lain.
And, looking back through that bright air
About them, did they wonder where
He then might be; and, with eyes dim,
Think the world void—not finding Him ?

Nay! rather must they then have seen
His Presence where His Peace had been,
For joy of Him all heaven was blue;
With news of Him the sparkling dew
Shot back a message to the sun;
Eager, the wind began to run
With a like burden on its breath;
And the lark sang, 'There is no death!'

And yet, beyond the shadowed hill,
There was the city sleeping still,
While from its blind walls girt about
The drowsy sentinels looked out,
And in the Temple on the height
The weary watchman quenched his light.

New Day was come; old Night was gone;
Yet in that city no light shone,
Save from the outer world what fell.
While men rose up to buy and sell.
And so through time the wonder goes
How Salem slept, and Christ arose!

Dedication

WHEN I have ended, then I see
How far my words come short of Thee,
Speech heavenly cannot live on earthly lips,
Pure thoughts borne down to language bear eclipse.

Ah, Christ, what harmony will that be then,
When, in Thy likeness, all the thoughts of men
 Grow satisfied, in silence serving Thee,
 For now, 'tis difference that makes us be
Each clamorous his own meaning to express:
But then all minds will wear the marriage-dress,
 Moving in meet processional degree.

O Christ, come quick, and from the body loose
The long distraction of each present use!
The hands that handle, and the lips that taste
Not at Thy banquet, work but so much waste,
And at sad lingering make heedless haste!

Some day, when love of self hath lost its lust
Of living in me, Thou wilt come, I trust,
And tread my heart to Paradisal dust:
Making me glad, in life's last evening-fall,
To know myself for nought, and Christ for all in all.

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THE HEART OF PEACE

The Call of the Blood

WHERE, among the midland hills.
Wooded blue the distance fills.
Years ere I became a man
Western ways my fancy ran:
Ere its tide was up to flood
Ever westward turned my blood.

Hills on which the day went down,
Mists that rose from Malvern town,
Severn's windings, Worcester's towers
Beaconed all my boyhood's hours:
Ere my feet could run a mile
How the distance seemed to smile!

Over highways far descried
East and west the world went wide;
But the steeps of rising day
Never won my heart away;
Twilight fell, and in my breast
Burned the fever of the west.

Oft-times since, from field and street
Westward have I turned my feet,
Facing, as the daylight fails,
The dark border-land of Wales—
Hills which keep with rugged face
Watch against an alien race.

Those dark hills, by blood embrued,
Hold embraced a deathless feud;
There embosomed, buried deep,
How the murdered ages sleep!
In the land for which I pine
Race is still the border-line.

Challenged by that stubborn face,
I confess my English race;
From my blood an answer runs—
'You I love, but not your sons!'
'Tis the west land, not its breed,
Spurs my eager feet to speed.

'Mid the silence of her hills
Soft and clear the curlew shrills,

Out across a driven sky
Wind-blown plovers beat and cry,
Still with passionate unrest
Guarding the unsheltered nest.

Wind and wasteland, sound and sight,
Minister to my delight;
Only at some lonely farm
Darts the look suspecting harm;
Only man, on man his mate,
Turns the counter-gance of hate.

English foot on field or hill
Seems to him invasion still;
Quick at sight his thought grows hot,—
You are that which he is not:
Though it held no horse before,
Taffy locks his stable door!

Ere you question, Taffy cries:
'I am telling you no lies!'
Ere you hint a disbelief,
Taffy swears he is no thief:
Loudly he, with braggart stir,
Boasts a blameless character,

Aye, ye hills, 'tis true indeed,—
I am of an alien breed;
All the wrong your bards have sung
Sharpens still the Welshman's tongue;
He, for fear lest foe go fed,
Puts no salt into his bread!

Blood, which is not mine to change,
Draws me west, but makes it strange:
From the hills which hem me round
Ever comes a warning sound:
'Till the friendly life-blood fails,
Keep you from the men of Wales!"

Evensong

WEARY pilgrim, rest thy powers!
Nature hath her reaping hours,
Thou, so rich in memories stored,
Blend thine own with Nature's hoard.
Other milestones distant far,—
See thy last in yonder star!

Where the roseate doors of rest
Open in the deepening west,
O'er thy quarters for this night
Hesperus upholds his light;
And the folding dusk shall bring
Sleep to be thy covering.

Pain and toil, as partners here,
Mingle for remembrance dear;
Couldst thou sever this from these,
Rest were robbed of half her ease;
Could thy heart forget the cost,
Labour done were labour lost.

Pilgrim, in thine evening skies
Thou canst make no stars arise;
Yet may Time, on gentler stream,
Gather and reflect the gleam.
Where the widening ripples yield
Gleanings from a distant field.

Here, in fellowship with thee,
Earth attains tranquillity:
Through the reaping-field of dreams
Evening draws her shadowy teams,
And a young moon, newly born,
Sets her sickle to the corn.

The Call of Winter

WINTER gives us warning:
The grass is grey below,
'Tis the first autumn morning.
And spiders' webs show.

The hollyhock that towers
Hangs heavy by the head,
In the cups of the flowers
Cold bees lie dead.

The tree-tops are thinning
Where the fruit stays thick,
And yellow leaves are spinning
To the dead from the quick.

'Tis the old trouble:
Southward goes the sun;
Here, in dust and rubble,
Summer fires are done.

But among the embers
Rake, and we shall find
Something of December's
Nearer to the mind.

Dearer to desire
 Shall the long nights be:
Light the winter fire;
 Come, and sit with me!

The True Lover

So much have friends deceived me
And fickle lovers grieved me,
Of so much wealth.
And youth, and health
Hath travelling Time relieved me,
That being thereby set free,
Now back I come to Thee,

By such dark fates befriended.
Deserted, unattended,
O'er hard and rough
I've jogged enough,
Down ways that never ended.
So, footsore though I be,
Here back I come to Thee.

But wouldst Thou further ask me
Of my deserts, or task me
To show Thee why,
Abandoned, I
Seek *Thee*,—and so unmask me
Of any proof or plea
That brings me back to Thee:

Lord, in such uncouth places
Have I beheld kind faces.
Where dross for gold
Was bought and sold
Have met such kind embraces,—
Such memories, oh see!
Have brought me back to Thee!

For man, that was Thy making,
Sleeps long, but at awaking
Finds in his breast
Th' unbidden guest;
So, after all forsaking,
As blind men made me see,
Here back I come to Thee.

A thousand times man faileth,
Him trouble so assaileth;
Heart cries in haste,
' All flesh is waste!'
Yet here, too, love prevaieth.
So, when thereof I taste
In hearts that are not free,
To freedom's Home I haste;—
And back I come to Thee.

Song

DOWN to death, my dear, together
You and I a-drifting go,
Light on life as any feather
Lies on air. Reluctant? No!
Like two kites released from tether,
Wafted through delightful weather,
Down to death, my dear, together
You and I a-drifting go!

Henri Pol: Bird-lover

(Died June 15, 1918)

BON SOIR, bon soir, Monsieur Pol!
For they tell me now you are dead.
Go, then; and peace to your soul,
And warm like a nest be your bed,—
A warm, well-feathered, well-weathered nest,
To give rest to the bird-wise head!

In the place of the Tuileries
It is eleven by the clock,
And the birds wait in the trees—
They wait; but you do not come.
The small beaks sharpen and knock
On the boughs, and the quick throats trill,
And the bad little voices scold
Their lover because he is late
With the crumbs which he used to spill
In the pathway where others passed—
Because, in service grown old,
He has failed them at last!
Hark, how they chatter and fret
And complain!—mate clamours to mate,

Crying aloud for the crumbs
Which you gave, which they ate:
Day goes, another day comes—
Another: when will they forget ?

A week, may it be, or a moon,
Or will it run on to a year,
Till the world is again in tune,
And the gardens all full of song—
Babblers begging a boon ?
Will the legend of you last so long,
Will the tale be told to their young,
When you no longer appear?

Sweetly a story is told
How birds as they cross the brine
(Bound for the far-off land),
Veering away to the west
Out of the southward line,
Come to a watery shoal
Sunk in a sea of glass:
No place for a foot to stand.
They poise, they hover and quest
This way and that; but in vain!—
There can they find no rest,—
There having come, they pass.

But because in the days of old
Just there a rock rose dry
For hungry claws to take hold
And tired wings cease to fly,—
There, again and again,
They come; and the years pass by.

So, to the Tuileries,
Shall not the birds still come
When morning clocks strike eleven,
To sit and wait in the trees
For the legendary crumb,
And listen while old birds tell
Their tale which the tolling bell
Ever brings back to mind:
How to the ways of earth,
Wingless, grey-haired, and kind
To them in their feathered mirth,
Came daily with hands outspread
A gentle Angel from Heaven,
Who was known in the breaking of bread?

And you, Monsieur Pol,—you too,—
Have you a ghost that can walk?
Have you an ear that can hear
Your songsters who prattle and talk

Of you—still of you—still of you ?
Is there no room in the grave
For the seeing mind to remember
How boldly they used to behave
In spring, but how in December,
Cowed by the winter's cold,
When the sap of life ran dry,
When the little bodies were old,
And the wings too weak to fly,
They would come at your feet to lie,
So sure you would understand:
'See me, see how I die!
O friend, reach me a hand!'
And you would gather and fold,
And gently bear them away
From the bitter perishing cold
And blast of the winter's day,
To a corner remote and calm
By the side of your own fire;
And there in a hollowed palm—
With charity filled like balm—
Give them their hearts' desire.

O gentle lover of birds,
Out of your place of rest

Throw to the world a crumb
Of the love that was in your breast—
The love you bore for the dumb,
The compassion you had for the weak,
The broken, the frail, the meek,
When daily you used to come!

Man has learned how to fly!
His gods have given him wings,
And between them a heart of hate,
With a roaring fire for breath
To obey the bidding of kings ;
And out of a storm-rent sky,
And over a stricken earth,
He leavens the land with dearth;
Wherever he goes he stings,
And his droppings are bolts of death!

Unto his hand hath come
The fruit of a thousand sowings;
This is the feast he makes
Out of the grain he hath strown;
So now he beholds the sum
Of all his comings and goings;
Now in the bread he breaks
His kingdom on earth is known.

But when the Judgment comes,
And the Trumpet of Life is blown.
Surely you will arise
And stand among saints without shame.
Then shall the rabble and rout
Of the dead,—the slayer, the slain—
Watch you, patient and meek,
Gentle, tender, and wise,
Empty your pocket of crumbs,
Scattering food to your own,
Filling the hungry beak,
Calling your birds by name,
Choosing, and leading them out;—
There, with the banquet spread,
Unto your lovers made known
Once more in the breaking of bread.

The Living Miracle

HERE in a darkened church, in a vacant aisle.

Far from the market cries and the common ken,
A woman kneels and sees from the altar smile
A vision of Love new-born for the needs of men.

Effortless, lo, at a word, from realms divine

Enters the God,—and there, in visible Bread,
Stands to be taken: there, a bodily sign,
Gives Himself as food to the lips unfed.

Starved she takes, and straightway in spirit is filled,—

Lifted and crowned, communion holds with saints:
Glory about her, joy in her pathway spilled,
Heaven stands open, under her feet earth faints.

Back to her garret she goes with Heavenly spoil,—

Shapes, for a pittance,—nay, for a love unpriced!—
Seam by seam, through vigilant hours of toil,
Raiment for those who turn their backs on Christ.

You, who mock at her faith, what gift have you

Like to this which she bears in her heart all day?
Have you one miracle left that your hand can do,
Mighty in mercy as this,—till you raise her pay?

Here, in a darkened church, in a vacant aisle,
Far from the market cries and the common ken,
The woman kneels, and sees from the altar smile
A vision of Love new-born for the needs of men.

Easter Dawn

THE leaping heart which almost burst
For joy, the eager feet which ran,
Lo, these, though fain, were not the first,
When Love rose up and light began.

More swift with healing in His hands
Was He than man's most breathless speed;
There, while we haste, behold He stands,
Our risen Lord raised up indeed.

The brightness of His Father's face
No shades of darkness could enclose:
Before we sought His resting-place,
Swifter than light again He rose!

POEMS OF WAR-TIME

A *Goodly Heritage*

IN the palace of our Lord
Wise and lovely things lay stored.
Deeply hidden, fenced about:
God made man to search them out.
There, held safe from age to age.
Slept the goodly heritage.

Mind was given him for a key
To unlock the mystery;
Heart for courage, eyes for sight,
Hands to handle it aright:
Through the fastened gates the prize
Gleamed like peeps of Paradise.

There, to satisfy his need,
Man beheld new forms of speed,
Wondrous shapes in stone and steel,
Cube, and curb, and banded wheel,—
Steeds with fiery breath that run
Clad in traces of the sun:

Saw thick darkness change to light,
Feet up-mount equipped for flight,
Heaviest mass a lifted load,
And the world an open road,
Linking up from end to end
Man with fellow-man his friend.

In that vision blest his eyes
Watched the coming Paradise,—
City walls, whose upward span,
Statured to the scale of man,
Sheltered, amid streets of gold,
Fruits and fountains manifold.

So, for that far-distant day,
Sleep and sloth he put away;
For the gain of that great spoil
Body and brain gave up to toil;
In the palace of his Lord
Searched, and traced, and found reward.

Delving amid reefs and rocks,
He unloosed the magic locks;—
Wealth in mine and mountain stored,
Powers from deep waters poured,

One by one, with eager brain,
These he picked and made his gain.

Thus, with toil from age to age
Man brought home his heritage;
Wheresoe'er his shafts he drave,
Under wood, or wind, or wave,
Thence with ministry of might
Sprang new forms of life and light.

And of what his toil set free
Now he holds the mastery:
Now to heart and hand and eyes
Comes possession of the prize;
Now, as Time unbinds the spell,
Opens—lo, the pit of Hell!

• • • • •
Through the sundered gates, behold,
 Statured to the scale of man.
Shattered streets more red than gold,
 Blood where once sweet waters ran!

Under cannon-guarded walls,
 Maimed and bruised with bleeding breast,
Sisyphus his burden hauls
 Up to heights that win no rest!

Scorched with fire, and scourged with steel,
Blindly into darkness hurled,
Mad Ixion spins his wheel
Round a desolated world.

Here the Tree of Life gives out
Sickness from a leprous root;
Tantalus his lips of drought
Strains toward a poisoned fruit.

Shrinks the fountain from its springs,
Vintage all lies dead and done;
Icarus has filched the wings,
Phaeton drives the sun!

The Bands of Orion

DOWN steps Orion to the west,
High-headed, starry-eyed,
Watchful beneath his warrior-crest,
His sword upon his side.

Amid the unnumbered stars of night
He fills his measured space,
And covers under points of light
The fashion of his face.

He makes no gesture, gives no sign;
Yon form is all we know.
So, belt and scabbard used to shine
Millions of years ago.

Upon his brow endures no frown,
No tumult stirs his breast;
In martial stride he still goes down
With all his stars at rest.

Naught can they tell us by their light
What binds them to his car:
There, at the chariot-pole of night
He stands, a shape of war.

When Earth was young and Night was old.
That harness he put on;
And girt for war, with nails of gold
The belted warrior shone.

Now to the east he sets his heel,
Or now goes westward bound;
And still, like flies upon his wheel,
The stirless stars move round.

Across the regions of the night,
Across the darkened lands,
He travels on in changeless might,
And none may loose his bands.

Onward he goes with planted heel,
The charioteer of Mars;
The Kingdoms broken on his wheel
Are stirless as the stars.

The New Narcissus

WHILE war through Flanders sweeps in flood.

And death goes flaring by,
Above the steam and stench of blood
Spring larks are soaring high;

And in the pause you hear their song,
While underneath, at rest,
Amid those mounds of human wrong
The young lie in the nest.

Down-nodding to the pit of death
The daffodils are through,
And shake their petals full of breath
Above a breathless crew.

Blithely they quaff and cast away
Light from their golden eyes,
Where, blind to all the beams of day,
The new Narcissus lies:

Who, in that dark and dreadful hole,
Beheld a vision blest,
Saw the desire of his young soul,
And drank, and there found rest.

Within those eyes, beyond our ken.
Shut fast from present use.
The vision waits. There lie the men
Who kept the Christmas Truce.

Blind Love

'OH, why do ye stand so still, lad,
In yon strange cloak of green ?
And why have ye shut with a will, lad,
Them eyes as were once so keen?'

*'There's a grumble of guns on the hill) lass;
But under ',', where I lie.
The ground of my grave is still, lass;
And stiller beneath am I.*

'Ah, ye do well to be still, lad,
For weary your days have been,
With grumble o' guns on the hill, lad;
But why have ye got on green?'

*'In the country where I have been, lass,
All blotted with blood and clay.
It's a colour I haven't seen, lass,
For many a weary day'*

'Ah, well have ye done to cast, lad,
Your khaki coat for a green;
But why must ye still shut fast, lad,
Them eyes I have not yet seen ?

'What for do ye stand so blindly,
When it's you as I've longed to see?
If ye can't look at me kindly,
Why did ye come to me?'

*'Ah, sure, I'm back to the place', lass,
Where oft I've longed to be,
For a look at the bonny face, lass,
I'd be giving my eyes to see.*

*'So say a kind prayer for me, lass,
In a bed that's lonely and bare;
But how can I let ye see, lass,
The eyes,—when the eyes ain't there?'*

• • • • •

Blind Love, now tell me whether
A ghost finds what it seeks?
Two lovers stand close together,
And the tears run down their cheeks.

Corpus Christi

(How we kept the Feast at Karlsruhe)

BODY of Christ! The bells were loud,
And the streets were thronged, and a joyous crowd
Stood waiting therein for Thee to pass,
O Maker of men, who died for sin;
O Bread of the Mass, O Body of Christ!

Lives were heavy, and hearts were sore,
For over the world went the battle's roar;
But here were women with joy in their eyes,
And the place was happy with children's cries,
And hymns were singing: O Body of Christ!

Over the place broad wings came winging;—
Their hum was loud above tower and street.
What angels are these? What gift are they bringing,
O Prince of Peace, to lay at Thy Feet
In the sight of this crowd? O Body of Christ!

In honour of Thee the people meet:
In honour of Thee are the eagles fleet?
They open their talons, they let down death,
And a hundred bodies are empty of breath,
And four-score children. O Body of Christ!

'A tooth for a tooth, and an eye for an eye,'
Worshipping Thee, the eagles fly;
And because in Thee we have put our trust
(For righteous are we, and our cause is just),
This have we done! O Body of Christ!

For, God be our aid, we fight with a foe
Who to us and to ours did even so:
On us they came and slew in a night.
So we slay now in the noonday light
Their old and their young. O Body of Christ!

The better the day, the better the deed.
So let them go, and give ear, and take heed!
Now unto the day hath the doom sufficed,
O Corpus Christi! O Body of Christ!
O Love that died for a world in need!

The Crossway

I

As Christ for those who knew not what they did.
So these your sons, for you their Mother died.
Now in that wondrous gift your guilt lies hid,
And in their blood your blame stands sanctified.
O Land, behold your sons! O Sons, behold
Your Mother! Her proud heart, pierced by the
sword,
Still bleeds for you: still to the blood-stained mould
She stoops her eyes—but looks not at her Lord,

II

The Lord of Life, upon the day He died
For love, between two thieves hung crucified.
Of whom, with bitter railing, one spake thus:
'If Thou be Christ, now save Thyself and us!'
The other said: 'Alike condemned we be,
And suffer justly for our sins; but He
Nothing hath done amiss. Remember me,
Lord, in Thy kingdom come!' Whereat his eyes,
By pure humility and love made wise,
Saw out of Hell the gates of Paradise.

Now, of these twain, ye that would pray take heed,
And choose the prayer most fitted to your need!
Above the embattled nations Love still stands;
And to both sides He stretches out His hands.

The Crusader's Tomb

O NAMELESS warrior, whose feet
Have borne thee to thy goal,
Pray now for me, while dust and heat
Lie heavy on my soul!

Here, in what heritage of ease,
The years give rest to them,
Because of old those crossed knees
Knelt in Jerusalem!

And tell me, were her gates of pearl ?
And were her streets of gold ?
And did the Tree of Life unfurl
Leaves lovely to behold ?

Shone she with jewels round about
Her deeply-founded wall,
Making her very stones cry out
Of Love who died for all ?

And did the vision of that Mount
Kindle in thee such flame
That Grief forgot her old account
When home the warrior came ?

And did the face of past desire
Seem then an empty show.
Giving to lips which once were fire
A form more white than snow?

O dear acquaintance of that spot,
Befriend an exile's prayer!
So shall the heart that sees it not
Be as it had been there.

Let far-off good which was my trust
Bring healing to mine eyes,
Or make me even as the dust
In Holy Land that lies!

Armageddon—and After

WE fought at Armageddon for the freedom of the
world:

I fought, and you fought, and here our bones lie
mixed.

By the master-hands which held us, eastward and
westward hurled,

We were shattered, we fell down, for the place and
time were fixed.

Tell me, O brother Bone, what here remains to know:

Marched we as comrades then, or foemen, ere we
died?

Was it my hand or yours which dealt the blinding
blow:

Was it your hand or mine which turned the blow
aside?

Took I my brother's life: what better life was mine?

Fought I for freedom—of freedom so bereft?

Had I the clearer sight to read the Heavenly sign?

Had I the cleaner heart, to keep my hands from
theft?

We fought at Armageddon for the freedom of
mankind.

And while we fought, behind us freedom was bought
and sold!

The light that lit these sockets is out, and we are blind.

Now with blind eyes we read; now with dead hands
can hold.

Bone to my bone you lie, companion of my pains!

What link of life is this, which binds us wrist to
wrist?

These, brother, these are not links but only chains,

Worn by the living, that dying lips have kissed.

Millions we marched; and the rattle of the drums

Drowned the rattle of our chains, and the shouting
held our ranks.

For sweet to our ears was The conquering hero comes,'

And sweet to our hearts 'A grateful Country's
thanks,'

We fought at Armageddon for the brotherhood of
Man;

And safe within their fences the tricksters plied
their trade.

'Twas the old fight we fought; and it ends as it began:
The gamblers held their hands till the Last Trump
was played,

We fought at Armageddon for the freedom of man-
kind:

I fought, and you fought, and here our bones lie
strewn.

The flesh is stript from off us, the chains remain
behind,

And the freedom that we fought for is an un-
remembered tune,

BEAUTIFUL HEART

Beautiful Heart

I

RESTFUL he watches, and hears the trouble of sleep,—
Love, the shepherd of men, with his gaze set far:
Over the darkened fold and the herded sheep,
Round the breast of the world he watches a Star.

II

Under him earth moves slow; far *off* lies the dawn;
Comes no gleam as yet through the darkness felt:
Naught but yon Star for a sign; till (night withdrawn)
Faint on awakened Heaven the Star shall melt.

III

Heart, unto Love give all, and the rest is well!
Pain thou shalt know, and sorrow,—bear grief and
scorn;
Yet have the high Gods come for a shrine to the shell;
Thy flesh hath endured the birth for which Earth
was born!

• • • • •

IV

Beautiful Heart, no rest in the world for me!
Sleeping I find you not, and waking know you are gone.
Here is a door set wide for a coming that never shall be;
And all my world is a want for the heart that I rest
not on.

v

Beautiful Heart, ah! had you never been born
Thus attainless to me, Love would have spared me
this:—
Hunger, and thirst, and longing, the gentle light of
your scorn,
And coldly from mine your gaze turning away the bliss,

• • • • •

VI

Surely the ills of Earth are many, and meet to be borne;
Hunger, and thirst, and cold, man's body was made
to bear,
But oh, for the ills of Heaven!—the love that is paid
by scorn,
And beauty silent and flown from the heart that it once
spoke fair.

VII

Shall I go sadder now, O Beloved, that the world holds
thee,—

Breath of my bliss and pain? Was once to have known
thee loss?

Sadder I needs must go, since ever mine eyes now
see

Heights I may not attain, gulfs that I shall not
cross.

.

VIII

Beautiful Heart, the dawn awakens in gold,—
Light, with its handmaid air, comes glancing through;
Heaven his wealth flings wide. With joy untold,
Somewhere, far off in the world, day shines on
you.

IX

Love, like a mote, leaps forth to the morning beam,—
Down he glides, then up, and is off anew:
Butterfly Love, adrift on a golden stream,
Blessing the wide-eyed day that awakens you.

X

Beautiful Heart, as the eyes that are blind love light,
With the love of a waterless land ere the rains appear,—
So without comfort of thee I attain my right,
So shall my heart by its hunger to thine be near.

.

XI

Rises the lark with the dawn: dull earth at his feet
Wakes, and kindles, remote from the sounds that soar
Upward through light. But oh, more distant, more
sweet.

The voice of a love still heard—that I hear no more!

.

XII

Ah, Love divine, why then hast thou given me sense
To see, and hear, and clasp,—feel hunger and thirst?
Let me have help of these ere I vanish hence:
For man, though he love thee after, must love life first!

XIII

'Open thine eyes,' said Love, 'yea, tune thine ears,
Reach thy hand to the touch, and clasp, and be filled!

Till over the seas of desire, so tossed by fears,
Comes the spirt which rules when the waves are stilled,'

.

XIV

Beautiful Heart, in my solitude now what track
Can I trace, as day brings day with never a word ?
Now, when the voice is mute, how the hours come back
Of nights when you lay at my side, and no sound was
heard.

.

XV

Faces of careworn men that in field and street
Pass me with looks resigned, Love lend you grace!
You, as you pass unknown, have quickened my feet;
Early or late, we come to the resting-place.

XVI

Surely, by care man comes to the wished-for goal;
Where runs the furrow, the hope of the harvest lies.
Come, then, Care, be fellow to body and soul,
Till the day of the sheaves brings cover for breast
and eyes!

XVII

Doubtless Love shall return, in ways unguessed.
 Out of the past comes memory bearing sheaves;
 There when I turn, and heavy of heart seek rest,
 Birds of passage have hung all night in the eaves.

.

XVIII

Beautiful Heart, having held, can I let you go?
 Nay! for with vision clear I re-count my gain.
 Forth to the world's far ends the wind shall blow
 This shape of dust. But on it your touch will remain.

XIX

Oh, common dust, blown wide through the world's
 highways,
 Naught can I hold in scorn that I touch or see!
 May not some lover's arms,—some lover's gaze—
 Find you more fair than ever my love found me?

.

XX

Blindly I looked on light as I knelt at the sacred knees,
 And, gazing through eyes daubed thick with the
 healing clay, found Love!

For there, to left and to right, I saw men walking as
trees,
And one in their midst, O form most fair! O nest
for a dove!

XXI

High in the air, like clouds, an army of banners blew
Over the heads of women and men close-ranked for
fight:
Where thousands came marching as one, there first I
met you,—
And suddenly broke on my blindness a vision of
light.

XXII

I shall not see that City, made bright by the boughs
that wave
Green in the golden streets, when Nations come to be
healed:
But there, where the ransomed meet, they will march
by a dead man's grave;
And the light of the love they have found will shine
on the potter's field.

.

XXIII

Go, rejoice in thy strength, fair Branch, and with
lifted head

Join the glad throng of thy fellows, leap up into light
and air!

Here, for comfort at length, I have found me a
marriage-bed,—

Darkness, and no more pain,—a rest from the days
that were.

XXIV

Beautiful root of Life, made ready and quick to grow,
Take from me this gift,—dark mould and a bed of clay:
So shall you find it rife with the sheddings of long
ago,—

Autumn's fall, and the drift of a world that has learned
decay.

.

XXV

Sightless and scentless, here lie ghosts of lives that
like you

Had beauty of form and limb, and the grace of a
thousand dawns:

They, too, tasted the cool of a morning crowned with
dew,—
Heard, when the world first woke, the voices of
upland lawns.

.

XXVI

Few are the years thou hast known, O face of a
thousand springs!
Few are thy years, and yet this year to thy heart
comes grief.
Gentle to me in its stroke that breath of severance
brings
Down from thy boughs above, to my heart in the
mould—one leaf!

XXVII

Thou at my heart set safe, O Beloved, and I at thy
feet!
Grant me this lowest place: then take from me
All that thou hast of need,—convert into life and
heat
These ghosts of a day now gone, that Love sets
free!

XXVIII

Take, though nothing remains to give that is new!
This mould,
Bearing the taint of age, lies dark and sodden as
mud;
Yet once in a former time, it wore the colour of
gold,—
And red in the loud wind's rage these drippings of
autumn's blood.

.

XXIX

What pale hand is this that touches my brow,
Coming so late to loose the bars of my cage?
'Back from life in the past, I bring to thee now
Peace, and the light thereafter—the gift of age,

XXX

'Life, once thine, comes now, when the fever is still,
Back on the flow of Time: so down to the stream,
Not as Narcissus, stoop and attain thy fill;
Look, and see how fair of face was the dream!'

.

XXXI

Here is to mark where the print of a foot has been;
So, on my heart, was set the seal of your worth.
Blessed, indeed, are the eyes in the things they have
seen!
Can I, Beloved, forget how the feet of a god touched
earth?

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

Eheu, Fugaces!

MARY,

FIRST PRINCESS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

(Born April 1605; died December 1607)

WHEN Stuart reigned, ere yet began
The struggle with the Puritan,
Ere King and Commons met for fight
O'er regal claim and chartered right,—
There fell a day when tidings spread
How for the royal marriage-bed
April had flowered; for surely then
Life was as blossom to man's ken
Around that birth; and who could see,
Where laughing courtiers stooped the knee,
How in the days so soon to be
Lay pains, and penalties, and dread ?

And so through chambers where more late
Her brother Charles encountered fate,—
Careless of how the seasons ran
Those toddling feet their race began,
And over hearts which paved a way
Balanced their weight with tender sway.

Her eyes the sunlight did absorb,
The spinning world became her orb
Of power—so fairy-like she lit
And played her little pranks on it;
And like a charioteer in chase.
Urging it still to swifter pace,
Cried to the rolling wheels below—
'I go, I go! Away I go!'

Two years, a spendthrift in her joy,
She made her father's Court a toy:
The wisest statesman was her fool,
A kingdom's rulers owned her rule
In laws delightful to obey,
When so like gossamer they lay
That by a breath goes blown away!

Alas, like giver and like gift!
Quick to alight, and quick to lift
And vanish from its fairy form
As snow-flake on the face of storm—
So came she and so passed: her feast
Of love, and life, and laughter ceased

All in a day; her little head
Down, down she laid upon a bed,
And tired of earth, rejecting care,
Fluttered her baby hands on air
And cried, in prophecy of woe,
'I go, I go! Away I go!'

With fluttered hands and words like wings,
Thus spake she her last soothsayings;
And on that head of spring-like prime
Light-handed brothers, Death and Time,
Shook down a single flake of snow.—
'I go, I go! Away I go!'

Warm snow-flake then lay kissed by cold,
While Earth her wintry message told;
'Ah! snow-flake, look not here for thaw
Nor any sunshine that can draw
Thy sweetness out! Turn back and blow
Into those pleasant fields where grow,
With wide and dew-embracing eyes,
The waiting flowers of Paradise:
Into their hearts let fall thy snow!'
'I go, I go! Away I go!'

So runs the tale: of all her pains
And pleasures this alone remains,—
This wing-like cry, this answering word
To some remote and secret bird
That, gazing with prophetic eyes
From the bright bowers of Paradise,
Saw in the dreadful years ahead,
Joy withered, mirth disowned and dead,
And beauty disinherited.
So with a heart of grace made wise
To perils undiscerned by man,
Quick at that fluted note she flies
The coming of the Puritan !
The grief, the gallantry, the grace,
The ghosts of her ill-fated race
And all its pageantry of woe,
Here mingled for a moment show,
While to the ear that hearkens cries
The seer in the babe's disguise
(Of crowns, so soon to be laid low!),
'I go, I go! Away I go!'

Through the fixed slabs of mouldered tombs
This single blossom breaks and blooms;

Crowned with that cry, it passes hence
Immortal in its transience.

So with eternal waft of wing
Fleets over earth the breath of spring.
And through each mood in motion free
Reveals its immortality.

'Withershins'

A Witchcraft Case of the Seventeenth Century

ONCE, upon the spring of day
On the summer side of May,
Good men faring forth to toil,
Ere the sun had warmed the soil.
Found an old crone, withered, worn,
Sitting by a field of corn.

There amid the springing green
Of the young blades she was seen
Bending an attentive head
To the new year's make of bread.
And wherever wheat stood high,
Testing it with careful eye
And brown fingers, lean and long,
Thus she crooned her wheat-ear song:

'When the corn turns withershins,
Short's the yield which there begins;
But when sun-gates bends the blee
Plenty shall the reaping be.

Only withershins be here:
Folks will starve and bread be dear!

So, with old eyes on the young
Blades of corn, she sat and sung.
And those good men, passing near,
Heard her song and shook for fear:
And, the better to win ease.
Haled her to the justices,—
All because on that May morn,
Weatherwise, she sang the corn!

So, for singing of that same.
Charged and tried, she went to flame.
And, to prove them right, that year
People starved, and bread was dear!

Oh, full many an English field
Have I walked, and watched the yield—
Starved and stunted, because still
'Withershins' is how men will:
'Gainst the light they sin and sin,
Turning to the dark within
(Each so set to have his way)
From the wholesome light of day!

And above the cornfield bends
An old crone, whose peaceful ends
Men must still traduce. Her ghost,
Wasted lives, and harvests lost,
Mark upon the fields of Time
How continuous a crime
Is the justice man has done
'Withershins'—against the sun!

The Iron Age

O YE, that seek through blood and tears
The justice which kind earth hath lacked,
Marvel not ye because man fears
To drop his old coercion act.

Whose record in the past was dark
Sees darkness in the future, too;
Because with iron he made his mark,
By that same brand he judges you.

The unborn age afflicts his mind,
Of powers misused he stands afraid;
Haunted he goes, and hears behind
The worn and wasteful past upbraid.

His stripes ye bear; but when ye gain
Your victory—then comes recompense,
And ye shall mend his muddled brain
With comfortable common sense.

*The Ballad of **Dead** Judge Jeffreys*

WILL this be true? Oh, it sounds like true!
Is Jeffreys dead at last?
They say that the breath he drew for death
Went out like a furnace blast.

They say he cried so horribly,
That no one durst come nigh;
But only a bat and an old grey rat
Sat up to see him die.

They came at morn and found him dead,
Alone on his truss of straw:
And the hair stood up on the corpse's head
At that which the dead eyes saw.

So horribly the dead eyes stared;—
That last sight had so frozen them,—
That not a man or woman dared
Reach out a hand to close on them.

And the body, so twisted and torn about
By all the fear and hate in him,—
When the women came to lay him out
They couldn't ever straighten him.

For out of the earth, like a great black mole,
The Devil had come from Hell for him;
And when the sexton went to toll,
The church-bell wouldn't knell for him.

So ill a death he had to die,
It surely had been kept for him:
And blind, indeed, had been the eye,
Had anybody wept for him!

Down in the ground where he now lies
The long safe grass shall cover him;
And every bird in air that flies
Shall pass with a wide wing over him.

Judge Jeffreys, Judge Jeffreys,
So now you're dead and done!
And freely again falls down the rain,
And easily shines the sun.

Concerning Kisses

KISSES, kisses, what are ye ?
Atoms of felicity;
Offshoots of a life that's fleeting.
Ages long a moment meeting,
Showing, in a nick of time,—
Better than in reasoned rhyme,
Or than any old wife's saying,—
Kindness more than wisdom's weighing
Counts, but cannot count the paying.
Youth and age herein are one,
And nothing's new beneath the sun.

Kisses, kisses, what are ye ?
Sweet to hear, and touch, and see.
Is it sense ye thrive upon,
Lacking which the rest were gone ?
Or, were man of sense bereft,
Would there still be kisses left ?
Oh, were I deaf, or dumb, or blind,
Should I yet not have a mind—
Kisses, kisses, with a will,
To receive and render still ?

Kisses, kisses, what say ye?—
Have ye any eyes to see:
Have ye hearts between your wings
As ye fly and leave your stings,
Playing, with such tender show,
Teasing games of touch-and-go?
Do the senses ye infect
Find reward in retrospect;
Or in foretaste, fancy free,
Miss the sweets of memory?

Kisses, kisses, ye can be
Fickle, faithful, bond or free;
Tongue-tied tales of love unchanged,
Trimming to a taste outranged,
Tenders taken on approval,
Fixtures subject to removal,
Wayside weeds, or planted plots,
Pick-me-quicks, forget-me-nots,
Weak as water, red as wine,
Nectar-draught or anodyne,
Mixture, taken as before,
Thrice a day,—or nevermore!

Kisses, kisses, off and be
What ye will,—the choice is free!
Sweets in surreptitious corners,
Lucky plums for good Jack Horners,
Honey-sweet or stony-hearted,
Welcome change or dear-departed,
Unforeseen or long-expected,
Modest, coy, demure, dejected,
Pretty poutings, dainty purses,
Nesting-places, covert curses,
Oft-times thefts, but sometimes prizes,—
Such a many makes and sizes:
Why should I the risk refuse,
If I still can pick and choose?

I have found in your embraces
Such avowals, such fair faces,
Such concealments, such disguises,
Such assurance, such surprises,
Such dear safety, such sweet dangers,
Such familiars, such kind strangers,—
Oh, if such sweet things were not,
Better man stayed unbegot,—
Courtship better unconceived
Than so robbed, bereft, and grieved!

When on Jordan's banks I stand,
Back to Life I'll kiss my hand;
When I draw my latest breath,
Then I'll blow a kiss to death.

The Old Moon

BEAUTIFUL old Moon! a sennight ago thou wast
young:

Now from west unto east the weight of thy head is
hung.

Ah, Moon, Moon! where in the world hast thou been,
To grow so old in a week? What in the world hast
thou seen?

And it seems that I hear her say, 'Two lovers lay
heart to heart,

Only a week ago; and now I have watched them part.'
Only a week ago? To me it seems as a year:

Autumn has gone, and winter has come; and the
woods are sere.

Ah, Moon, Moon! When thy head was turned to
the west,

There, on the heart of my love, surely my heart
had rest!

But now thou hangest thy head to the gleam of the
eastern sky;

And I dream and wish I were dead, so restless of
heart am I!

In a Garden

IN the twilight carols a bird. It is March here still:
The boughs hang bare, and the earth and the air
are chill;

And—had I my will—have I any song to be heard:
Any voice to make others rejoice—not a word? Not
a word!

His heart, out of gladness within, pours gladness
without.

No nook in this garden that hears him—no alley or
glade—

But sounds like the arbours of Eden while he is about:
His voice in the garden is God's, and has made me
afraid.

'Where are you? Where are you?' he cries. 'I am
here! I am here!'

Comes a voice out of cover responding:—alas, but
not mine!

I have eaten the bread of the wise, I am drunken
with care;

I know I am mortal. But he, that knows not, is divine.

The Two Loves

WHEN curfew-bells begin.
And the log-fire hisses,
I covered Jeannie in
From head to foot with kisses.

There, in the glow
And flicker of the ingle,
I gave her for to know
How a man loves single:

I gave her for to know,
When the heart needs mating,
How hard a road to go
Was the long lone waiting.

Her face was all a mist,
Her dear eyes tear-laden,
To find herself so kissed,
And man so love a maiden.

Ah! but she did love!
With kind lips so quiet,
While my heart above
Was all storm and riot.

And looking deep I saw,
 In all its woman's meaning,
How her heart would draw
 My heart to have its leaning.

For my heart was fain,
 Oh, fain to be a-mating;
But hers saw the pain
 Of the long lone waiting.

So there, in the light,
 Beside the dying ember,
I gave her all that night
 My kisses to remember.

.

A cold dawn came;
 Then parted our embraces;
We blew the ash to flame
 On tear-wet faces;

We drank the last cup
 And we shared the last platter;
And pale the light went up,
 And birds began to chatter.

And then she oped the door,
And there I left her standing,
As I went down to the shore
To the ship beside the landing.

And far out from sea
I saw the white shawl flutter,
As her hand waved to me
The thoughts she could not utter.

Oh! a man's love is strong
When fain he comes a-mating.
But a woman's love is long
And grows when it is waiting.

Corin at the Gate

To Eden fast-gated.
Heart-broken, belated,
Corin came weeping; ashamed was he.
On turret and border,
Attentive to order,
Stood watcher and warder, a wonder to see!

Quoth he, 'O ye Powers
Who stand in high towers,
And bring to yon bowers the captive set free,
Let your bright sentry
Oppose not my entry,
For Phillada yonder sits weeping for me.'

Questioned a hearer:
'From Eden what bearer
Of fables has told ye a wonder so wise?
What sorrow of mortals
Can enter these portals,
Or come to draw tears out of Phillada's eyes?'

'Nay, if ye show not,'
Quoth Corin, 'I know not

The way; yet the truth of it surely I know!

I that did treason

To love without reason,

Did yet for a season find pleasure below:

' Found it, and lost it—

For ever there crossed it

A shadow from realms where no shadow should be.

Paradise painless

Around her lay stainless;

Yet yonder was Phillada weeping for me!

Quoth Michael, 'O Corin,

Unfriended and foreign,

Foul are thy feet; with what eyes canst thou see?'

'One thing I see plainly,'

Quoth Corin, 'though vainly:

How Phillada's weeping is mainly for me!

' Love stays not her weeping,

Love holds in his keeping

Those eyes which unsleeping have pitied my pains;

Unslain by the glory

Which dazzles before me,

The love which she bore me for ever remains.'

'Her weeping is painless,'
Quoth Michael, 'and stainless
By grief is the fountain which brims in those eyes.
With laughter and singing
Her spirit up-springing
For ever goes winging its way to the skies,'

'Does life in this garden,'
Quoth Corin, 'so harden
Your hearts that ye read not her heart which is free ?
Eden prevents not;
Of love she repents not,
And gladly, not sadly, sits weeping for me.

' But since ye now spurn me,
To torment I'll turn me,
Where devils shall learn me how love was a lie.
But the dear heart ye cherish
Will dwindle and perish.
And Phillada's fountain will all run dry!'

Then Michael down-drifted,
And caught and uplifted

Corin the sinner from paths of pain:
Swift, ere he waited,
The portals un gated;
Like chiming of bells was the fall of their chain.

And lo, as they entered
Where Paradise centred,
A vision of light amid light made dim,
Lovely and painless,
By sorrow made stainless,
Yonder sat Phillada weeping for him!

· · · · ·
This is the wonder:
In Heaven, and under,
Sinner and saint in their loves agree.
While sinner goes bleeding,
All Eden is pleading;
And yonder sits Phillada weeping for me!

Signs and Wonders

IF of my love you seek a sign,
Her fair encountered face to know,
Oh, learn of other lips, not mine,
The marks by which to go!

So fair is she, so fair is she,
When down to evening sets the sun,
For fear lest parted they should be
His colour to her face doth run.

So sweet is she, so sweet is she,
That every air which round her blows
Hangs laden like a honey-bee,
As in her breast he comes and goes.

So fond is she, so fond is she,
That, every time we kiss and part,
More freely she bestows on me
The deep possessions of her heart.

So blind is she, so blind is she,
That, when beneath her looks I dwell,
A star-like gaze she bends on me,
And without measure loves me well!

If of that love you seek a sign,
That, mounting, you her heart may know—
Oh, ask of angels' lips, not mine,
The way by which to go!

The Prayer

PRAY thou for me.
Though I of Heaven am faithless:
Pray that thy power may be
Loosed, so that I go scatheless!
Not to the Fates above,
But to thine own heart, Love,
Pray till thy prayer remove
From me this danger:
So that I, loosed from thee,
Stand separate and free,
Reft of my deity,
To thee a stranger!

Song

OH, why wast thou my love?
And why was I thy lover?
I keep blue skies above:
But thou—dull earth for cover.
Then what had Fate to prove.
Save, oh!—the far remove,
Of what for me was once thy love
From what remains thy lover?

The Lover's Knot

A RIVAL'S worth I must admire,
Or not in rivalry persist:
Either must wish his virtues higher,—
Or wish that they did not exist.

Thy lover's truth I will adore;
Though she that loves him loves not me.
What? Wish him false? Then were I more,
Not less, departed, Dear, from thee!

For since thy beauty lives to make
Valiance more flourish,—evil die:
How can I wish thy heart should take
Delight in one more mean than I?

And what were meaner, Dear, than this,—
To win by wishing he were worse?
Oh, could I so attain thy kiss,
Then Paradise would prove a curse.

But since to bliss I may not win
Till from thy favour he remove:
This hope I'll cherish as my sin—
That he for thee too good may prove.

Old Swanage

I CAN remember the day
 (I've got the look on it still)—
I can remember when Swanage lay
 Like a grey cat under the hill.

Curled in close by the shore.
 There couldn't have been, all told
(If you went to count), not above fourscore
 Of houses, and all of 'em old:

All stone, all native rock,
 And the roofs grey tile or thatch;
And never a door where you had to knock,—
 You'd only to lift the latch.

New Town, it be all brick-red,
 And slippy wi' roofs of slate;
And Swanage do look to be off her head,
 'Er's been getting so grand o' late!

But I tell 'e them roofs won't last,—
 Nor never was meant to do.
Th' old roofs was here when the Spaniards passed
 In fifteen hundred and two!¹

¹ Local date.

But now—let 'em build their best—
 'Tis only built for the lease.
And when that falls in it falls; and the rest
 O' their doings be all of a piece.

It is only for show, not wear.
 Strange, that with none to see
But only ourselves, we took more care
 To have things as they'd ought to be.

'Twas quiet in these parts then,
 The months they left us alone;
And ne'er un about but Purbeck men
 Farming or working the stone.

Round under Tilly Whim rocks,
 Or out with nets in the bay,
Ye could hear at the quarries as clear as clocks,
 The stroke of their picks all day.

In summer we did have some
 Of the quality here for a spell.
And county families used to come
 And stay at the 'Vic' Hotel.

But they never troubled with we,
And we never troubled with 'en:
They'd go and they'd have their dip in the sea.
And be *off* on their own agen.

When winter blew over the down
There was never a stranger showed;
But once a week from Wareham town
Come the coach by the old Corfe road.

Us all knew all on us then;
And you never saw on the street
A body go by, one day out of ten,
As you hadn't been used to meet.

Ah, these were quietish parts,
And quietish folk were we,
When the only carts were the quarrymen's carts
Rumbling down to the quay.

We helped to build London town!
And don't it some'ow seem sad
That London folk should 'a' brought us down,
And broke up the homes we had ?

For we've changed, there isn't a doubt,
 Though still we quarry the stone;
But the trippers come in and the trippers go out,
 And 't isn't the place we've known.

There's only one thing that sticks,—
 The rookery up at the Grange.
They knows their own minds, they don't never mix:
 The rooks haven't made no change.

And here, inside o' my head,
 All looks as it used to do:
But come the day I'm counted for dead,
 Old Swanage 'll be dead too.

For I can remember the day
 (I've got the look on it still)—
I can remember when Swanage lay
 Like a grey cat under the hill.

Gaffer at the fair

THIS here day, it be fair day,
 And the lads be all on the green;
And the booths and the shows all standing in rows,
 With the cocoa-nut shies between.
There's roundabouts, and the showmen's shouts,
 And fiddlers all through the town;
And your heart goes up, lad,
 But my heart goes down.

The boxing-booths be full of youths,
 And the market a prickle o' horns,
And chap after chap climbs up to the trap
 Where a doctor's cutting their corns.
You hear the sound of the merry-go-round,
 And you see how the boats are swung;
And your songs are to sing, lad,
 But my song be sung.

There's flying leaps, and there's picture-peeps,
 And a lion as none can tame;
And, added to that, a lady so fat
 Her weight you never could name.

'Tis a jolly day for a holiday.
And that I don't deny;
But your days are to come, lad,
And my day's gone by.

And everywhere the fun of the fair
You can buy in ha'penny squirts;
And like a boy you make it a joy
To spatter the hats and skirts;
And each girl squeals to show she feels
It's a treat to be treated so;
Ah! your spirits be up, lad;
But my spirits be low!

I don't think as I used to think,
Nor do as I used to do;
But I still can drink as I used to drink,
A darned sight better than you!
You care a lot for the pewter pot,
But you're only the rag-tag sort;
A pint of stuff for you is enough,
But I'm for the double quart!

The Wisdom of the Ancients

OH, young blood when the fever's on
Goes paddling in the Rubicon;
And, wading deeply for a bit,
Haply he cures the fever-fit.

But old blood, when its fevers die,
Comes to a Rubicon run dry;
And, puzzled so much mud to find,
Regards it with a doubtful mind.

Yet like a mud-lark down he goes,
Paddles with contemplative toes;
And cries, 'Oh, what a dirty joy!
To think I did it when a boy!'

Then out of that infectious mud,
With yellow fever in his blood,
Mounts horse, and preaches from the saddle
How sad and bad it was to paddle!

The Marathon Race

(1908)

'REJOICE, we conquer!' So from Marathon word
Came, by the fleetest of foot, to the gates of Greece.
And the hills of Athens, the marble mother, were
stirred,
And the echo thereof to the life in her womb cried
'Peace!'

A bubble of wine from those lips, and a city was
drunk
With the sudden joy of a birth when its throes
are past:
Europe is saved from the flood, and Asia shrunk
Back to her borders for ever while Greece shall last!

While Greece shall last!—while joy for the strength
of a steed
And delight in the limbs of a runner inspire man's
will,
So long in our midst shall be found the Grecian
breed,
By the dark Semitic gods unconquered still.

O ghost of the great Pheidippides, hear that shout
 Ringing the vast arena! You they acclaim—
You, the runner of old, whose life went out
 In praise of your gods, young lord of the deathless
 name!

Heroes

FAIR is their fame who stand in earth's high places,
Leaders of men, strong-armed to break and bind.
Fairer the light which shines from comrade faces:
Those we have loved, and lost, and kept in mind.

These be our heroes, hearts unnamed in story,
Foot-firm that stood, and swerved not from the
right;
Though in the world's eyes they attained no glory,
Girt to their goal they gained the wished-for height.

Now for reward no after-age shall sunder
These from their right to rest without a name.
Wide are the wings of heaven which fold them
under,
Who to the Winds of God resign their fame.

Blow, ye great Winds! Where'er man's spirit labours
Breathe on his lips breath from the life they spent!
Comrades to all their kind, near friends and neigh-
bours,
There, where the work goes well, they rest content.

They are the race,—they are the race immortal,
Whose beams make broad the common light of day!
Though Time may dim, though Death hath barred
their portal,
These we salute, which nameless passed away.

THE LOVE CONCEALED

PART I

Sunrise at Katonah

COOL-BREATHING land of many a heart's desire,—

Not mine, not mine!—across your dawning hills
And resting lakes from eastward comes the fire
Of a new day; and all the listening air
Fills with the noise of birds—your native choir.

Ceaseless they sing; deep earth drinks up the dew,
The lakes their shadows; woods grow steeped in light;
Your upward face looks fair, your song rings true,
A melting loveliness, But not to you
Belongs the music of my memory—
Unending airs, which only death shall part;
Alien I stand, listening to strange delight.
While eastward—back to England—goes my
heart!

The Motion of Spring

So now good-bye to frost and snow;
Kiss hand to heart, and forward go!
The springing year, in motions free,
Has turned to mirth and jollity.
Round the great earth the girdling hours
Of light have strung a chain of flowers;
And in her raiment nought remains
Of winter's wear, save such light stains
As choose to linger on the hills
Down which the snow in shattered rills
(Now that the sky's round is the sun's)
Off till another winter runs,

Oh, sure 'tis well, while life has will,
That nothing on its wheel stand still!
Over the fields the white lambs run,
Playing like snowballs in the sun,
Where all their bounding to and fro
Makes them not melt, but only grow,
The March wind casts his winter coat,
And summer's kiss is on April's throat:
Another kiss, and she is lying
A May-dream, covered with blossom, and dying:

One wind is down, another is up.
And the meadows are rushed by buttercup.

To the rested heart how the distance smiles!
In his feet are the sleeping miles;
In his dreams the day well-spent
Goes journeying on to the heart's content;
And though he never reach the goal,
There's lodging for it in his soul.

Your wise astronomer divines
The night-long heaven full of signs,
And there forecasts, now low, now high,
The moving tenants of the sky:
Which is the nearest star he knows,
Whether Arcturus wanes or grows,
And when the moon with curving lips
Kisses what planets to eclipse.
He probes, he tests, he prophesies;
And at his word suns sink and rise.
But all the siftings of his brain
To me seem less than scattered grain,
When Venus, with her widening eye
Awakened from a sleeping sky,

Stings into light the startled west,
Or Sirius with changeful breast,
Or Cygnus with his starlit wings,
That through a deathless silence sings;
Or when, through woods, the looping moon
Rests above the night-jar's tune;
Then what avail the powers of night
Except as they give sound or sight?
And what this life, 'twixt heaven and hell,
If not for sight, touch, taste, and smell?

Oh, if, as theologians rave,
Man's mind is crowned beyond the grave,
But not the senses he now owes:
Let me enjoy brief life with those!
Wisdom can wait, but not the charms
Of love, to whose containing arms
To-night I go. There, swift and brief,
Quickens our joy 'gainst coming grief,
Never to know—close heart from heart—
Which must the earlier be to part.
Like birds at cry runs on their fret
Of pleading, passion, and regret:
'O sweet, sweet, sweet! Not yet; not yet;
. . . Not yet!

Love at Dawn

How few are the times I have lain
In a bosom at dawn,
And, watching the stars fade out.
Had faith that for me
Came light bringing good!
How seldom, as darkness drew up,
Have I watched them return,
Confident, knowing that there
In the night lay rest—
That a love in whose life I had share
(Lips fast to the cup),
Waited, no phantom, to hold me again in her breast.

Dreams, oh, dreams!
But had I you dreaming, embraced—
Should not our dream be true, with never a break
To trouble the cause of our bliss—
Your care in my heart,
Your breath on my lips as a night-wind smooth to
the taste,
And, soft as a dew upon sun-warmed leaves, your kiss,
Hovering, ready to start
When, together, we wake ?

Mortal, as drops of dew, is the life we divide,
Each giving back the gleam
Of a separate sun.
But deep for each in its place
Is the single dream:
Reaching we touch—and it ends!
For the rainbow-dyed
Drops, as they meet, embrace,
Are joined—grow one!

Summer Night

LIGHT, like a closing flower, covers to earth her herds;
Out of the world we only watch for the rise of
moon.

Darker the twilight glimmers, dulls the warble of
birds,
Over the silent field travels the night-jar's tune.

Here, at my side, so bound that even your breath
I hear,

Face and form that I love, now with the night
made one,

Pray not for any star! Come not, O Moon, for fear
Lest in thy light the way be missed, ere the dream
be done!

Gather, come close, and be kind! Kiss, oh kiss, and
be warm!

What is here, O beloved, so like a sea without
sound?

Under the swathe at our feet, swifter than wings of
storm,

Summer speeds on her way: Spring lies dead in
the ground.

How like a folding flower clasped by a sleeping bee,
Life has hold of us now: and here in its midst
love lies.
O beloved, O flower of night, no morrow's morn shall
we see:
Between a dusk and a day we meet, and at dawn
Time dies!

The Old Lover

YOUR voice, that was sweet to the world, is alone with
me now;

No ear can remember, as mine can, the still sweet tone
That lifted, was held, and then fell again—no one
knows how.

But I, who am oldest of all men, have this for my own.

Beloved, though you loved me not, this then at last
is your fate,

That all which remains of you now makes my winter
its nest!

How patient you found me of old! for I had but to
wait

To make you all mine. 'They' are gone: I remember
you best.

Loves Revenge

WHAT shall I wish you ? An empty bed,
A cold thin sheet, and blanket none;
With nothing to warm you from head to feet,
As my kisses once would have done;
Till, wakeful lying, you wish yourself dead,
And looking out through an ice-bound air,
See a ghost pass—to life so lost,
That he heeds nor you, nor the biting frost,
Nor the shivering bents of grass that wave
Under his feet above his grave—
That, with this for gain, you may count the cost?

Ah, no! Have all that you wish—and more!
Silks, warm furs, rich piles of down,
And over your head a palace roof,
And bells to ring you from town to town!
Have all! And then, having counted up,
Fed on the sweet, and drained the cup—
If still you miss what was yours before,
'Tis all I ask—of our love the proof!

Fons Amoru

LOVE came,
I knew not whence nor why:
But surely there.
Where I
So long had waited
In despair.
Unloved and hated—
There to me,
As I stood breathless,
He, a flame
From darkness shaping,
Deathless came,
From night escaping—
Came and shone,
A light of loving-kindness,
Bright against the blindness
Of the sun!

.
Night down-going,
All behind him
Sank to darkness
In the over-flowing

Of his glory:
Vanished,
Parted . . .
Doubt was banished,
Trouble over.
Out to find him,
With a double-reaching
Of my hands,
And with so single-hearted
A beseeching
Of the lips and eyes
That had not seen nor tasted,
But for years
On want had wasted—
Now through tears,
Touch, taste, and sound,
Beholding,
Drawn, held, bound,
Beneath his close-enfolding,
Forced, compelled, surrendered,
All I had was tendered
To his keeping.
• . . . •
With a sound of weeping,
Now for ever

Flows and shines this fountain,
Wherein mingle
Joy and grief—
Now rising and up-leaping.
Flashing, shining:
Bending now, now falling—
All its upward strain
To light recalling;
Breaking, ending.

.

And for this bright beauty,
Here so broken,
Spent, and shattered—
Show to flattered fools the empty token
Of a life kept single,
Resting, sleeping . . .
Knowing nothing
In the quiet of its keeping,
Nothing—
About anything that mattered!

Thoughts Before Dawn

THIS breathing self, which moulds but is not me,
Cannot be self-contained, nor separate break
(To find no limit to its liberty)

From that quick-moving world of things whose make
So separate seems, I with all these am one;
And, as I watch rising or setting sun,
In me suns rise and set, days live and die—
An endless motion!

See, in yonder sky,
Where wanes one moon, what thousands more awake,
While memory, with rich breath at give and take,
Receives and renders life! Here I must be
Always unsatisfied, from having drunk
So deeply of a wave where moons have sunk—
Thirsting for moons which I shall never see!

Yet in my dreams they rise; their kingdoms come!
Oh, softly, upon a world where I lie dumb,
What breathing dawns shall break! My day goes by,
Fore-knowing, and fore-shadowed of its rest:
But those far suns are gathered to my breast,
As here, released from self, content I lie,
Watching an old moon reap a morning sky.

The Cup of Memory

So long, and of so much remembered, here talked the
old friends.

While round us, with birds in the branches, the garden
talked too.

Now into our memories beautiful silence descends:
No more is to tell of the times and the places lived
through.

A spark from each breath throws light to the faces
that gleam

Uplifted in shadow, while softly a bat ripples by—
Dim blossom of dusk. Even so, on the still-flowing
stream

Of unwithered summers, the swallows of memory fly,

It is not the staunching of song, nor the stillness of
leaf,

Now fallen on the garden, which slowly brings speech
to a close:

It is not for joy we are silent, for doubt, or for grief,
Or pain; or because we have emptied our hearts of
all those,

The rust of the sunset has deepened; and up into air
Blind twilight advances; and over her borders, un-
spilled.

From a heaven all brimming with stars, no star is
yet there:

The fall of the fountain has ceased, and the cistern
is filled.

Now or Never

GRASP, lover, grasp your nettle tight!
 Beneath the blossom may be stings
Which start and stab; but out of sight
 Within that flower are folded wings.
So now, ere these be set on flight,
Grasp, lover, grasp your nettle tight!

Those stings—which slightly touched give
 harm—
 If you but hold them fast enough,
Robbed of their points, shall all disarm;
 And, seeming though a little rough,
Reveal, beneath, the covert form,
So dear, and deep, and close, and warm!

The breeze of heaven blows so light,
 So light of head the blossom swings!
And there within, removed from flight,
 Still sleep the honey-laden wings.
So, in the safe and secret night,
Grasp, lover, grasp your nettle tight!

Oh! were man wise to crown his years
With all bright moments as they fly—
Rescue quick hope from fixing fears—
How many a death he would not die!
And with swift snatch from out the grave
His own and other souls would save!

Sun-shade

NEVER in his life has the sun seen shade.

Never in his life seen a shadow where it falls;
There, ever there, in the sun-swept glade,
It lurks below the leaf—behind bodies, under walls,
Creeps, clings, hides. Be it millions, be it one,—
The sun sees no shadow, and no shadow sees the sun.

Had the sun a mind, could wise men explain

This, that accompanies the forms he has made?—
This, lying under, so close beneath the grain,
Intangible, unseparate, which men call 'shade'?
Try, let them try, all they know, to make the sun
See the face of shadow! But it never can be done.

How could one explain? Has it substance, form,
shape?

Form? no: shape? yes: square, long, round.
Moves? yes: lives? no. Never to escape,
Where go the living, go the ghosts along the
ground:
Under foot, over earth, see where they run—
Taking, each and all of them, their pattern from the
sun.

So there go we, with our little ghosts below;
And they lengthen, or they shorten to the sun in
his degrees.
But what is there behind us the sun doesn't know;
And the patterns that he makes of us the sun
never sees.
Nor could anyone persuade him, by reason or by
rhyme,
That he, behind our backs, is making shadows all
the time.

What's the application? Suppose God sees
Not as we poor mortals, but rather like the sun;
That when we wring our hands, and weep, or go
upon our knees,
And pray for Him to save us, while we add 'Thy
will be done!'
Suppose that, all the time, we are only wasting breath,
And that God is like the sun, and knows nothing
about—death?

PART II

Little Self-love

COME, little self-love,
With your bat-like wings,
Your plaintive note,
And your tail that stings,
With your sweet affection
For number one,
And tears of self-pity
So ready to run
On a tender complexion
That fears the sun—
And the deep dejection
Of introspection
At recollection
Of what you have done,—

Come, and be happy,
Keep house with me!
For it's only with you
One can always agree,
When sniffy or snappy
One wishes to be:

When tiff or temper,
Fever or fret,
Furious passion,
Or passing pet
Beats and batters,
And tears one to tatters,
And taunts one with matters
One wants to forget:
Then is good reason
For coming together.
Then is the season
To clasp, and kiss,—
To be hand in glove,
And birds of a feather,
Where little self-love
Finds nothing amiss.

So come, and be cosy,
And sit at my feet!
There's nothing so rosy
As self-deceit:
Flatter my fancy!
Let us invent
Fables to fill us

With sweet content;
Repartees which
Never were said,
Jokes which didn't
Come into one's head,
Things so clever
That never were done
By anyone else
In the sight of the sun I

Life is never
So bright as it looks;
The clever endeavour
Of too many cooks
Has turned its broth
To a stodge of a stew;
But the taste of the modge
Is better when you.
With comforting croon,
Blow into the spoon,
And cook the account
To whatever amount
Pleases the piper
Who calls the tune.

Come, little itch,
With tickle and scratch,
Let's pitch on the plots
We mean to hatch;
While there are those
We can disappoint,
Or anyone's nose
To put out of joint,
Or something at which
We can have a fling—
Living in clover,
Caring for none,
Hiding our little head
Under our wing,—
Something left over
Remains to be done.

Charity, child,
Begins at home;
So kiss and cuddle,
And let us begin!
We'll stick to our mutton,
We won't care a button
What any or many
May lose or win;

Life is a puddle,
The world's in a muddle.
We won't care a penny,
We don't care a pin!

When the bee in your bonnet
Lies dead on the comb,
Let your epitaph on it
Be 'Home, sweet Home!'
Let morning untrammel
The wings of the lark;
But wiser the bat
For the ways of the dark.
(And the moral of that,
For concluding remark?)—
'Tis an eye for the little
Provides him with victual;
He strains at no camel,
He swallows his gnat;
Oh, sensible mammal!
And so he grows fat.

To My New House, Longmeadow

0 PRETTY house that's mine, how came you so?
Who was the little god that made you grow?
Money? And who made him? Why, who but I?
How? Standing on my head, with feet on sky;
And looking on the world thus upside down,
I laughed so much that few had heart to frown
On such an upturned fool—that, like a gnat,
Walked on the under-brim of God's best hat.
So, when I showed my wares—my point of view—
Men said, 'Let's have it!' aye, paid for it too!
Yet did not make it theirs: it was too fine
For daily use; therefore they left it mine.

So here's my point of view in brick and stone;
Not such a poor thing though my very own!
And round it lie three acres and a cow;
Albeit to mow or milk I know not how:
Therefore must pay some labourer to do
That task for me, and give *his* point of view.

Oh, nothing, nothing can we do alone,
With pen and paper, or with brick and stone!
Here in his study while the poet proses,
'Tis, at his press, the printer who 'composes';

And since black coffee wakes me up at night,
At dawn the milkman comes and makes it white:
This cure from care the little gods provide.
That I may drink it and be satisfied!

Oh, of an author's life is not this roof
The set-up type, and the corrected proof?

Johnnie Kigarrow

MY brother and I went down to Wales,
And listened by night to the Welshmen's tales.
I was but seven, and he was ten;
We sat on the knees of the farmer's men
After the long day's work was done;
And I was friends with the farmer's son.

His hands were rough, his arms were strong,
His mouth was merry and loud for song;
Each night, when set by the ingle-wall,
He was the merriest man of them all.

I, at clutch of his beard, would say
All the things I had done in the day—
Tumbled boulders over the force,
Swum in the river, and fired the gorse—
'Half the side of the hill!' quoth I.
'Tut!' cried he, 'and didn't you die?
How was it, then, you saved your marrow?
Didn't you meet with Johnnie Kigarrow?'
'No!' said I: 'and who will he be?
And what will be Johnnie Kigarrow to me?'

The farmer's son said under his breath:
' Johnnie Kigarrow will be your death!
Listen you here, and keep you still!
Johnnie Kigarrow bides under the hill;
Tulloch barrow stands over his head,
He shallows the river to make his bed,
Boulders roll when he stirs a limb,
And the gorse on the hills belongs to him!

'And if so be one fires his gorse,
He's out of his bed, and he mounts his horse;
Off he sets: at the first long stride
He's half-way over the mountain-side,
At second stride he's across the barrow,
And has you fast—has Johnnie Kigarrow!

Half I laughed, and half I feared,
As I up and tugged at the strong man's beard,
And bragged, as brave as a boy could be:
'So? But you see, he didn't catch *me!*'

Fear took hold of me! What had I done ?
High as the roof rose the farmer's son:
How the sight of him froze my marrow!
'I,' he cried, 'am Johnnie Kigarrow!'

Well—you wonder—what was the end?
Never forget—he'd called me 'friend.'
Mighty of limb, and hard, and brown,
Quickly he laughed and set me down.
'Heh!' said he, 'but your squeak was narrow,
Not to get caught by Johnnie Kigarrow!'

.

Now comes word, after years gone by,
No one knows how he came to die.
He strode out one night of storm:
'Get you to bed, and keep you warm!'
Out into darkness so went he.
Nobody knows where his bones may be.

Only I guess—if tongue let go
Truth that once—that perhaps I know . . .
Tulloch river, and Tulloch barrow,
Cover the sleep of Johnnie Kigarrow 1

The Witch

IN a hut, where the hazels bend and twitch
Over the banks where the five streams be.
Long days ago there lived a witch:
Oh! but an evil witch was she!
And here's the tale was told to me—
Was told to me, of her sin and blame,
And how she escaped the rope and flame;
And why the hangman's thumbs would twitch
If any thereafter named her name.

In the water-meads men watched her walk,
By the dykes where coots and herons be,
Nodding her head as if in talk:
Oh, but an evil witch was she!
And many a time the hovering hawk,
Out on the wasteland far away,
Quick from the hazard would turn about,
And hover over her head in doubt,—
Then *off* in quest for another prey.
And never a word would the woman say.

To wooded covers, when day was done,
Oft went she for cause unguessed;

And, at her step, not a rabbit would run,
And mother-birds were never distressed,
Nor called their young ones back to the nest.
Under her touch no woodland thing
Shrank; at her tread no snake would sting;
Everything living she seemed to know,
First would handle and then let go.

So word of it went, till traps were laid,
And, spying, they caught the witch at her trade;
Whom straight to the justices they led,
And three weeks later found her dead.
This is the tale of her sin and blame—
Was told to me when I was young:
If my telling be not the same,
Some evil witch has bewitched my tongue!

They closed her about with prison-bars,
Rounded her in for days of dearth,
With one small window that looked at the stars,
But oh, too high in the wall's dark girth
For any sight of the things of earth:
Tree-top, or hill-top, river, or plain.
Never in life should she see again.

But now and then, when a bright bird flew
Over the light her heart went too;
For having learned a secret lore,
Of secret knowledge she held store,
And after the sight of her eyes could go
By ways which only the wicked can know.

Off in the woods when the yaffle cried,
She was out and close at his side,—
Saw his feathers yellow and green,
Saw his eye all ruddy and keen,
Saw him waver, chuckle, and check,
Hang on the lichened branch and peck;
And sure, in fellowship, she pecked too,
And burrowed and tapped till the beak went through!

But how—you ask,—oh, how could it be,
Thus out of prison-walls to see?
Nay, but an evil witch was she!
Surely, there as she sat in the dark,
Her evil body became an ark;
And into it entered by twos and sevens
The shapes of things that are not Heaven's:
Clean or unclean let them be,
Paradise-gate they never shall see.

Day came up, and day went down,
Week into week had numbered three,
Before the market-cross of the town,
A scaffold was built for all to see;
And stands were selling at every stall,
And faggots were stacked by the market-hall.

Night came up, and day went down,
And only the evening star was high,—
No moonrise yet, when over the town
She looked her last on her bit of sky;
And all her birds had gone to bed,
Each little nestling weary of wing.
'Now never again shall I see,' she said,
'Or handle life in anything;
Till out of the flames wherein I die
Happen I'll see the swallows fly.'

Over the floor of her prison-house
Crept an invisible-footed mouse;
Here, there, she watched as it went,
And all her mind grew full of content:
Full of content in body and soul,
She watched its tail go into its hole.

Down, down, the long dead wall,
Where many had waited but none had escaped,
She went after it, dainty and small:
Saw in the dark how it stopped and scraped,
Saw where it lurked, saw how it ran
Under a table when supper began,
Saw it eat crumbs from the porter's floor,
Saw it run under the porter's door—
Over the cobble-stones, under the wicket:
Prison's a bubble, you've only to prick it!

And still no moon, no moonrise yet;
Away in the west the star had set,
And others were rising; all was still,
As two together ran under the grille—
She, the witch, and the little brown mouse,
Together out of the prison-house:
Together, together, with hearts made one,
And little invisible feet on the run;
Together, together, right under the wall
Where the faggots lay stacked by the market-hall.
Soft through the dusk a night bird's cry;
'Tweet, tweet!'—the cry of a bat;
A soundless shadow shot over the sky.
'My heart!' cried the witch,—'What's that?'

But her heart had become the heart of a mouse,
And she was out of the prison-house.

.

At morning they came, unlocked her cell,
And opened their eyes at what was there.
The gaoler only muttered, 'Well, well!'
But the cheated hangman cried, 'Oh, hell!'
They two were a sorry pair.
And long they stood and wondered apart—
What was that which lay over her heart?
They looked, but they dared not speak:
*A tuft of down,—white, speckled with brown,
And the bite of an owl's beak!*

Badcombe Fair-night

THE new moon was two nights away,
The sun two hours was down,
And all the starless heavens were grey
Above the fire-lit town.

The fair-folk tarried at the booths,
The tipplers at the inns;
The lasses in the lanes with youths
Lay down to share their sins.

I watched two out into the night;
And after, without haste,
Saw, when the street had spent its light,
His arm go round her waist.

Where lamps were none, and windows few,
And the town's glare grown dim,
I saw, together as they drew,
Her face go up to him.

They turned into the hawthorn way;
And where thick boughs can hide,
While two at love a-kissing lay,
Another crept beside.

And where four arms went each about.
And four lips fondly pressed.
Another arm came reaching out,
And a knife did the rest.

The dog's death struck into his heart,
Too quick for start or cry;
Atween the sweetness and the smart
Of a kiss I felt him die.

In, in, beneath the shoulder-blade,
And out, out, through the lung:
Into her breast, where's head was laid,
Red blood ran from his tongue.

The kiss that came so swift and warm
With a lover's melting breath,
Like sheet-fire in a summer storm
Went fledged out to death.

And the hawthorn scent that blew above
And fell about their feet,
When I had finished off their love,
Hung heavy as dead meat.

Then softly I got up, and slow
 Crept off, ere she began
To guess the truth; and left her so,
 In the arms of her dead man.

The earth, with darkness wrapped about,
 Did so her doom require:
In the black heaven no star was out,
 And the town was full of fire.

Brother Hands

'BROTHER' (said Hand to Hand), 'what hast thou
done?'

'Ask me nothing! Yonder the sun
Is redder than I, as he dips to the sea.
Ask nothing! I sought no help from thee.'

'Red Brother, red Brother, thy fingers drip!'
'What matter? They did not slack their grip.
Full may the field with harvest be,
Though through it the stream runs down to the sea.'

'Come, Brother, and out of the road
Help me to lift this heavy load!'
'What lies there, there let it stay,
To speak if it likes on Judgment Day.'

'Brother, but is not this the hair
That once we stroked, so golden fair?'
'Stroke it again, Brother! Have thy will!
There where it lies, it is golden still.'

'Red Brother, red Brother, keep not away!
Join, hold fast, yea, clasp me, and pray!'
'Clasped I thee, ere prayer was said,
Thou wouldst also, like me, be red.'

'O Brother, I fear!' 'Let go, let go!
Did Christ not say, "Let left hand know
Nothing of what right hand hath done"?
Go! Be blameless under the sun!

'Or, if thou wilt, come, take my knife,
And cut me off, and save thy life!
Then, if thou stroke the hair of the dead,
Thou shalt not see the gold turn red.'

'Alas! Alas! Brother: this I must do!
O woe is me, I must part from you;
Lest in hell we both should burn,
For what lies dead here under the fern.'

The Drowned Lover

I

HERE, by the lonely shore
I have pitched my tent;
Only a slant of shingle, and sometimes sand,
Severs us bed from bed;
And the waves that roar
Over your resting head,
With its dreams all spent,
Hopeless, hollow with hunger, beat at the land.

Stone-cold, starved, shivering land,
Where nothing wakes,
Gaunt, and gutted by storm: above in the gloom,
All one way come flying
Dim flakes of spume,
And menacing sea-mews, this way and that way
crying,
Stretch their necks
And turn with a ghostly glide
Down to the gleaming hollows—wraiths to the tomb!
But here, in the door of my tent, a lamp stays lit;
And all night lonely I sit

By a shore that shakes,
Watching for wrecks,
With a heart that aches and aches,

Say, what sails,—what ranks upon ranks of oars,
What battered hulls — and within, what broken
 hearts—

Here lie sunk? O ghosts which haunt these shores
Shall not one arise ere the darkness pales—
Join, knit bone to bone of its shattered parts,
And, lifting, bear foam-bright to the foam above
Feet, and form, and face of the man I love?
Hark, in the storm-drunk night, how a sea-mew wails!

II

Into the shade of my tent
From the darkness without,
Into my tent, like a blade
Of silver dividing the night,—
Pale as a moonray peering thro' cloud to my sight,
Slender, lonely, and proud,
Here, to me waiting, with wonderful motion and light,
My lover comes up from the sea.
Dark to my search is the face;

But, delivered of doubt,
My lips with his lips grow one.
'Ah! where have you been,
Under the rocks and the caves
Where the blind things sleep,
Away from the sight of the sun?
Under the hurling of waves,
And the toss of the storm,
What, in your dreams, have you seen;
And—without me—what form,
Sleeping, has made you content?'

III

He turns, he looks:
And out of the dreary length
Of sea-dreams, heavy as lead,
Uplifts the ghostly strength
Of a drowning hand:
And from his lips comes a whisper of sound I
 know,—
The whisper of sea on sand. . . .
Then, out of the gloom,
Thick, and swift, and sudden, dim flakes of spume
Are flying;
And menacing sea-mews, wheeling and crying,

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Stretch their necks, and turn with a ghostly glide
Back to the gleaming hollows — wraiths to the
tomb! . . .

. . . And I wake: the tide
Is down; the grey ribbed sand
Stretches away and away, in a steely glare
Of thin salt-water, straining, band upon band,
Draining back to the sea from a shore swept bare—
And sea-weed, black on the sand,
Like a drowned man's hair!

Rainstorm

LIKE shaken boughs that meet on the winds of night,
In a forest beaten and bowed by rain and storm,
We two in the darkness touched; but I had no sight
Of the soul within, when your body to mine lay
warm.

The hair of the forest hung round us heavy and old;
And under the weight of its leaves a whisper told
Of love cast forth to a world where shone no light.

Love, like a blind shaft loosed: what hand for guide—
Who knows, who knows? In the darkness I hear
the shriek

Of a homeless storm, and of haggard sorrows that
ride

Through a dark and trackless waste, no goal to seek.
But loud, loud in my ears their cry—as they pass
Hopeless and homeless—here with me makes home!
They, through withered ages, as wind through grass,
Have gone, and as ghosts return, and restless roam.

In storm and darkness we met; in daylight part.
The trouble that bound us is over; and forth from
my side,

Like sword from sheath, you draw the pain of your
heart:

Darkly we stand at a distance where calms divide!
We sprang together and beat — wild spray upon
spray—

Branches grown heavy and blind with the tears of
night.

Wherefore to me did they come? Oh, take them
away!

Those tears of an alien world that have dimmed my
sight!

Lo, What is Love ?

Lo, what is Love but this ?—
That heart, and hands, and feet,
Past all division
And indecision,
Should clasping kiss, and meet:
Lo, what is Love but this ?

A torch of flaming fire,
Whose fuel of flesh is made;
A sweet oppression,
Of fierce possession,
All fire, and yet afraid:
Oh, what is Love but this ?

On me lift up thy rod,
Into me thrust thy sword,
Where in mute anguish
For thee I languish,
Who art my living God,
Who art my Lord!
Lo, what is Love but this ?

Beauty, which I then saw.
When first thy face met mine
That ere she knew me
So swiftly drew me
Unto her dread design,
Making her life my law:
Oh, what is Love but this ?

So that, without her, breath
Was but as want of air,
And each day's wearing
A dark despairing,
Of faring forth for death
Which lurketh everywhere.
Lo, what is Love but this?

Till Death shall say to Life,
'O sweet belated wife,
For whom, unmated,
So long I waited
At doors wherein dwelt strife,—
Oh, what is Love but this ?

'Put from thee this, and this,
Which stand 'twixt thee and bliss!

Heart, hands, and feet
To the winding-sheet,
Till in one bed we kiss!
Till face on face we meet.
Never more to get heat,
Where new day brings defeat:
Lo, what is Love but this?'

A Dead Warrior

HERE sown to dust lies one that drave
The furrow through his heart;
Now, of the land he died to save,
His own dust forms a part.

Where went the tramp of martial feet,
The blare of trumpets loud,
Comes silence with her winding-sheet,
And shadow with her shroud.

Counsel of man no more he takes,
No sword his hand need draw,
Across whose borders darkness makes
Inviolable law.

So, with distraction round him stilled,
Now let him be content!
And time from age to age shall build
His stirless monument;

Not here, where strife, and greed, and lust
Grind up the bones of men;
But in that safe and secret dust
Which shall not rise again,

The Loot of Luxor

DEAD Kings and Queens, give up your gold!
The tombs unseal, the dead arise;
No rest remains for those that hold
Treasure in earth, or riches prize.
Had you from these removed your trust,
Man might not have disturbed your dust.

How swept and garnished was the place,
For everlasting sleep composed!
In gold they covered up the face,
Coffer, and couch, and crown enclosed.
'Gainst Time himself this tomb was built;
And here his chariot-wheels lay spilt!

Here, under this bed-rock of Power,
Life, Beauty, Wealth their tribute stored;
In the day's light these had their hour,
Then passed, to own a stronger lord:
The demon, Power, here set his seal—
Saved death from dust, and turned his heel.

Still in dry places, seeking rest,
He roams the earth; and finding none,
Back to the unpropitious quest
Returns: the seals are all undone;
The book is open, names are read,
And back to life he calls his dead.

Dead Kings and Queens, who have not eyes
To see your resurrection day,
Oh, safe, oh, rich, in this your prize!—
Now thank the Gods that made you clay!
Blind to man's ruin 'neath sand and sun,
Ye cannot see what Power has done!

The Forsaken

O FATHER, Whose will was man's making,
What thing hast Thou made?—
Darkness of Heaven, and earth
 A mine for gems;
Waters the colour of jade;
 And the moving stems
Of woods that shake into leaf!
Me men worship, saying that I am Thy Son;
 And that Thou, for my sake,
Hereafter shall make them be one.
 But in me terror sits hidden—
In me is the grief
 Of the ever unknown.
 Self-slaying, I go to my grave,
 Worshipped of them that believe Thou hast sent
 me to save,
 And that I am Thy Son.
Lo, here is the blood of the Lamb:
Out of my heart drips the doubt—whether truly I am!

The Uncommercial Traveller

MAN trades for truth: in high experiment
He travels far; and journeying to a goal
Of unknown ends—under no visible star,
The wisdom sought can find. His restless soul
Goes by untrodden ways where treasures are—
Which though he track, he cannot have them whole.

'Try me, but trust me not!' those treasures seem
Ever to say. 'Here still is not the prize,'
Amid a rolling heaven of star-blind eyes,
Orion stands; and down the night-black stream
Cygnus sails onward, through an endless bound
Of space that holds no haven—lovely still;
Always afloat, a sign for mortal eyes
To dream on, in a world obscured by ill.

Here is no shore; here comes no rescuing boat;
Here is no harbour where safe anchorage lies.
The world is round; and round the world runs Time.
When that is done, the Traveller's goal is found;
And to his treasure-trove, empty of hand, he dies!

To a Rider Drowned at Sea

LEADER, and lover of speed and the level courses
Of crowded miles, on the plain where the goal-posts
stand,
Rider of horses, lord of the swift dark steed
Life, for a moment held in your sole command—
Here, in dusk is your goal: here dimly appears,
Bearing no garland aloft, your lintel of home;
Your day is done, and the rein
Of the rider has dropped from your hand.
Over your head unheeded (but loud in my ears)
Go the running feet of the foam,
And the sound of the wild sea-horses—
Riderless—galloping home!

To Thomas Hardy

THANKS: not for thoughts that give the mind more
mirth—

Or help us to be glad, and wish our day
Were but a little longer; or to say
' Life is worth living,' while on doubtful earth
Back to the homely dust man wins his way:
Not because we are happier, having read
Your book of life, when—all its pages turned—
Deeply our thoughts go back to find its dead
Are dearer than its living:

But to have learned

This help in grief—that life, though full of ill,
Storm-dogged, star-darkened, cannot break man's will.
Nor wrest him from that firm heroic mould
Wherein rich earth endued his mind of old!
' There, furrowed deep, the tilth by Fortune spurned:
Patience, endurance, kindness, courage still,
And pity—when life's fire to ash has burned.

The Life-boats

OVER the sea goes scarcely a breath,
 The water glides with never a fang;
 But down from the davits the life-boats hang,
Waiting—waiting for death.

Forth and back, with balanced weight,
 Thousands of useless miles they go,
 Making a beautiful empty show—
Waiting the fall of fate.

Then down, down, into the hollows below—
 When comes the cry, 'All hands to the boats!'
 And fear takes hold upon all men's throats—
Down like coffins they go!

Over the sea, now, scarcely a breath;
 Still in its coils the water glides:
 But there, out over the ship's white sides,
Are the life-boats—waiting for death !

The Web of Night

HALT, old friends, why further fare?
Here is proof enough to hand.
Forward fret the powers of air;
Flesh and bone, be wise and stand!
Feet and hands, and heart and head,
Halt, and let us make our bed!

Down the often-travelled track,
Westward still the burdened day—
Dust and heat upon his back—
Plods the never-changing way.
Now for dazzle-blinded sight
Dawns the star-embracing night.

Comrades, to this reach of rest,
Where we come at last to part,
Which has served the other best:
Brain or body, feet or heart?
Better, sure, than by his wits,
Man gets rest when down he sits.

Here, where light must bide its time
 In a world of wants unstayed,
Tongues will wag, and steeples chime,
 And day get dressed without our aid:
Blinds will up, and fears will wake;
But life of us no toll shall take.

Hands, be empty of your toil,
 Feet, put off your leathern loads,
Weaving brain, unwind your coil,
 Heart, for good, be quit of goads!
Here upon the heels of day
Night wheels her shining way.

Round the heavens is written plain
 How for death the warrant runs;
Yonder, in a boundless chain,
 Darkness holds a million suns,
Moons, and planets, trapped in light,
Strangling 'mid the web of night.

Post Mortem

HERE, to her chamber door,
Down, weary, spent with toil,
Heavy of heart, and footsore—
One that could go no more—
Came he, that was I:
Here, at the lintel leant,
Knocked, waited, tired, spent,
Listening with head bent:
So heard, presently,
Soft sounds cross the room,
Feet at the inner door;
Latch click, door sway,
Chink of light that made way
Open to a soft gloom—
And the world was worlds away!

She stood; I knelt.
Then she, sweet she,
Over my sunken eyes
Laid hands, and bade me rise.
And I, that had been he,
Poor he, that was blind

To the bliss that she meant,
In a darkness that was felt
To her kind shoulder leant;
And, on my face bent
To the unbelieved content—
Motionless, not to miss—
Felt her kiss.

O'er the sill,
Silently,
Hand in mine, she drew me in;
And on her bed, so still
That to lie in was no sin,
On that shore, the cease of ill,
Set me free.

Then she, sweet she;
'Come in my breast and be!'
Curtains drawn, doors shut,
Earth mute, Heaven aware:
So, held from head to foot,
Wound me in her dark hair.

Could I go one step,
One thought, from that breast,

Where slept
All my cares,
And all ills found rest,—
Such as none was known before ?
She of cures the dear adept,
Mingler of all parted pairs:
To that sweet nest I crept,
Sank, slept, and woke no more.

Here, over me in stone,
Life bereaved has her say;
Here below from ungrieved bone
Unvexed flesh melts away.
Farewell, as now I fare,
Parting friends, that once did bind me!
Earth, vapour, fire, and air,
Here, at ends of night and day,
Never more shall you find me.

PART III

The Plea

'GIVE up,' said Love, 'resign
Into my care, of all things that are thine,
Naught that would bring thee loss!
My yoke shall bind thee to no second cross;
Wounds, thorns, and stripes, enough of these I bore.
Not by My will into My world comes pain:
Where joy springs not, Love's seed was sown in vain.
What profit to me if sorrow be born again ?

'Nothing I seek, but only this of thee,
O close-shut heart!—unto thy heart the key!
What is this lock but grief—
These wards but doubt ?
What mean these bolts and chains? Is Love a thief?
Ah! if He were so, these might keep Him out.
But here's no thief—only a suppliant;
And what I ask, art thou not fain to grant?
How can these locks make less a common want?

'Hear, then, and have compassion on My plea!
From far away I lost My Heart to thee;

Not on hearsay, nor any sweetness known,
But—as I knew in form so like My own
Thy heart was fashioned, that where'er it went,
Till there it lodged it could not find content,—
Here what I lost I seek. And far-descried
(As in the sunken East the sun doth hide.
Waiting his rise), so, when I came thy way,
In thy dark shade I saw My hidden day.

' Why dost thou wait? How longer canst thou doubt?
Till in this lock the key is turned about,
Dear heart, from My own Heart I am shut out!'

Brother Hate

EVERY morning past my gate
Stiffly walks the man of hate,
One who cannot wish me well:
In his heart he carries Hell.

Which of us—in that fire—
Tortured by what dark desire.
Burns the better—he or I?
Which is there more like to die?

There I watch, of narrowed mind,
One so grudging to be kind,
That with every passing day
Good-will he throws away.

There, in his dark hate, I read
How, to loneliness decreed,
Stubborn-footed, narrow-eyed,
Goes the desert-heart of pride

But, if thus from him I learn,
Must I not the nearer turn
To that Lover, from whose Heart,
Fearful still, I stand apart?—

And, as on that hate I look,
Read therein the open book
Of another blinded soul—
One that wills not to be whole ?

Aye: because my pride is still
Harsh controller of my will,
Better 'tis for me each day
Not to wish his hate away.

Here alike, blind souls, we go:
I, his friend; and he, my foe.
Every morning past my gate,
There go I with Brother Hate!

Sure, if Hell were void of use,
For the slaves that Love would loose,
Could it show so stinging bright
Underneath the morning's light?

The Help-givers

(*E. T. and F. S., ob. February 1923*)

PRIDE held my will:
Too much was to disown.
Too many a need I still
Could not unsay:
High Help at hand,
I willed to stand alone;
Fearful for self, for self I would not pray.

Then came a day:
Judged and condemned, enduring without hope—
I learned how, near at hand, two prisoners lay
In separate cells, each waiting for the rope:
Fearful of that whose touch would put away
All griefs and fears.
And helpless I, to aid
Their hapless state—
Lighten, or lift from them that stroke of fate—
With heartfelt tears,
For those poor souls, I prayed,
That them from utter wreck
Some Help might save!

Then to my heart
There came a rending wave:
Across *my* neck
A sudden rope was flung;
Up went a light,
And I, of land, had sight,—
Where, dark against the sky, two murderers clung,
And in the baffling storm, hand over hand,
Hauled on the line
Which drew my feet to land!

Lord, in Thy Kingdom's day, remember them—
Whatever they did—who helped me, in my need,
To touch Thy raiment's hem!

The Real Presence

THIS love you gave to me
That bettered it might be,—
From you it went not when to me 'twas given.
Bestowed, it grows not less;
That you and I possess
This double-single is the gift of Heaven;

Also her secret. Here
Parting may not appear.
This building's one, whether your eyes or mine
Be windows thereunto:
Here wisdom, searching through,
Finds Love at home; into God's courts they shine.

So, in the broken bread,
Love by Himself goes fed,
And finds release in each life-healing deed;
And, through all hands which serve,
We take, taste, and preserve
That life of endless love which fits our need.

St. Francis of Assist

HERE, at the threshold of a single heart,
I stand and knock: on this side grief and sin,
Where, in self-love, each stands from each apart;
On that side charity, all bright within,

Where, down the centuries of this world's night,
Breeds, from one flaming heart, inlaid with song,
That tender and companionable light
Which in no other heart dared see more wrong

Than in his own. Oh, teach men so to see,
Blinded by Love! lend us like hands to grope,
And hold (past all belief in things that be)
Those things imaginable of human hope,

When blind Love reigns, making all men so blind
Each to the others' faults—and Earth so kind!

Love, at Times Banquet

LOVE, at Time's banquet, watched the cup go round.
The guests were many, but the fare was mean;
They drained the dregs, and licked the platter clean,
Then wanted more, where no more could be found.

Said Life to Love, 'They have no wine,' But He:
'What wouldst thou have Me do? 'Tis not My
hour;
Not till Time's revellers find his grape grown sour,
Having drunk all, will they want wine of Me,'

Life said, 'Their wine has failed them,' 'Not their
will,'
Said Love. Then she: 'And has *my* will no share?'
Smiling Love called the servers, and bade fill
The pots with water, then draw forth and bear
Unto the Ruler. So, a late-taught guest,
Time drank Love's draught, and said: 'This wine is
best!'

Emmaus

THEY, with a stranger, broke the bread:

'Do this; remember Me!'

And all at once they saw—not dead—

His true reality:

The outstretched hands, the love shed wide

Of Him that had, yet had not died—

And all the Life that was to be.

A Christmas Carol

WHEN Love on Earth set up His rest
 Within a safe and secret place,
His stronghold was a Virgin's breast,
His light her stooping face.

 Then oped the everlasting bars,
 Then sky-bells rang,
And all the lovers of the stars
 Came down and sang.

For since Love may not dwell alone,
 Around Him, in attendant train,
Those flaming fires which were His throne
 Fell down to earth like rain.

 O happy, happy falling fires,
 That from your height
 Into a world of blind desires
 Bring gift of sight!

The Word goes forth; and round Him drawn,
 Hark, in unending voice of song,
The birds of God's immortal dawn
 Sing, to sing out man's wrong.

O happy, happy birds of night!
That from your rest
Stoop down, and from the fields of light
Make earth your nest.

Around the stable shone that light,
Within the stall that song was heard,
But showed not there as stars to sight,
Nor sang like voice of bird.
The sound—a Maiden's heaving heart,
All full of grace;
The light, of Heaven's dawn a part,
Her stooping face!

The Father's House

(*'In My Father'' house are many mansions'*)

THOU art, Thyself, the Father's House; in Thee
Homes all the loveliness we wish to see,
And all the needs of lives that grow in grace,—
Ministering Mercy; Pity, with kind face;
Hope, with uplifted hands; Endurance strong;
Patience, the weaver; Love, that thinks no wrong;
Courage, that deals no wound, but rather bears;
Thought, heedful not of self, though full of cares;
Rejoicing Service, with wide hands set free,
In blithe obedience finding liberty;
Faith, the doorkeeper, watching far and long
For time-bound Truth; and Joy, with heart of song:
These are the tenants of that blest abode,
Whereof Thyself art, to Thyself, the road:
Home of man's heart! Oh, what a heart of home
Waits here for those which either rest or roam;
And from its open door what cheer lets loose,
Wherein dwells Love turned to domestic use—
A furnished world!

Here's bed, and here's good meat,
And company, and light, and genial heat,

And silent music of known hearts grown friends;
With Peace, the joiner, making sure amends
If aught seem lacking to confirm the plan,
And fit things perfect to imperfect man.
Herein, from limits he shall find release,
Then, back to limits, bring a mind at peace.
Thus are the mansions planned, affording each
That which he most requires to have in reach:
Windows made wide, for letting in the view,
Yet curtains to shut out the darkness too.
What needs it, then, to give this House its rest?
Why, nothing, but the well-expected guest,
For whom all these prepare! Who's that to be?
Nay, who but Everyman? The meanest, he
Is the most wanted; for his want is most,
Who travels footsore, or whose way is lost.
Lonely he goes, that in his own self hides
And in such narrow space for want provides,
Whose greater want is that communion dear,
Room within room, which all lies waiting here.
Oh, what a Builder was Thy Father proved,
When, to this many-mansioned House, He moved
His building-plant, — first planned it, and then
made;
Deep in dear earth the firm foundation laid,

Then watched it grow—walls, doors, and windowed
eyes—

Garden as well; for here lay Paradise
In germ, a grain enclosed, whence living bread—
Enchanted growth!—shall spring, and man be fed
Into one family, So did He build
This Home; and wishing then to have it filled
With guests, as many as the world has eyes—
That, communing, their kin might recognise—
Set up a sign thereon for all to see:
'These mansions furnished; not to let, but free!'

The Continuing City

I

GOD, who made man out of dust,
Willed him to be
Not for known ends, but to trust
His decree.

Here is man's city—a soul
Walled within clay;
Separate parts of one whole,
Bound, we obey.

All that yet waits to be known,
Could we discern—
More of life's meaning, if shown,
Less should we learn.

Eyes, though they doubt not the truth,
Light can make dim:
All life, to age from youth,
Brings us to Him,

Him whom we have not seen—
 Cannot yet know:
Human hearts stand between,
 His to foreshow.

Till we, through other eyes,
 At kindred calls,
See our own towers arise,
 And our own walls,

Where, conquering the wide air,
 Peopling its waste,
Citadels everywhere
 Like stars stand based:

Losing the soul, a soul
 Fresh-formed to find:
Rendering toward one goal
 Each separate mind.

II

Learn from my looks, O dear eyes!
 Come now, take rest
With the thought of you that lies
 In my breast!

Strange—for is not love strange?—
What I now see.
Some day, through many a change.
That shall you be!

All I can offer to you yet
Is this, my dear;
Truth it were folly to forget—
Yourself made clear.

This—for my trust has been in good—
To me was given:
I, on your city-walls, have stood
Nearer my heaven.

Vale!

ONCE I shall see you again, or twice.
Ere we part, my friend:
One more coming or two must suffice
To a whole life's end.

Then, shall I miss you so much ?
Or, fast as I hold you now,
Faster for ever find you in touch ?—
From the past, guess how!

Near or far, knit or apart—
Think of me well or ill;
Here in my lonely heart
You will be coming still:

Here, at the thought of your face,
Your hand will be at my door:
Quick! and my heart in its place
Upon yours evermore.

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