



The Path of Dreams

Leigh Gordon Giltner

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Poems

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Louise Gordon Pittman

The Path of Dreams

POEMS

BY LEIGH GORDON GILTNER



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BY LEIGH GORDON GILTNER

TO THE MEMORY OF MY MOTHER

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To One Who Sleeps

(Obit, June 8th, 1894.)

*Tho' storm and summer shine for long have shed
Or blight or bloom above thy quiet bed,
Tho' loneliness and longing cry thee dead—
Thou art not dead, beloved. Still with me
Are whilom hopings that encompass thee
And dreams of dear delights that may not be.
Asleep—adream perchance, dost thou forget
The sometime sorrow and the fevered fret,
Sting of salt tears and long unbreathed regret?
Liest thou here thro' long sunshiny hours,
Holding sweet converse with the springing flowers,
Harking the singing of the warm sweet showers
That fall like happy tears ... dost hear
The birds that unafraid assail thine ear—
And yet art silent when I whisper? Dear,
Dost thou not hear?*

*Lying so low beneath the bending grass
In long, still smiling tranced for aye—alas!
Thou dost not harken when my footsteps pass.
If haply I some tender thing should tell
Thee of the springtime flowers thou once loved well—
Anemone and shining asphodel;
Should steal from Nature some enchanted lay,
Some bird-song lilted where green branches sway—*

*Heart-music that could stir thy heart alway;
Should call thee by the old fond name again,
Should tell thee all a heart's enduring pain
And long rememb'ring, would'st thou mute remain?
Alas! nor sigh nor song can thrill the ear
Tuned to Israfel's music in the sphere
Where things to thee erst dear no more are dear.
Thou dost not hear!*

THE PATH OF DREAMS

In Woodland Ways

Out of the poignant glare, the shadeless heat
Of summer noon, beseech thee follow me
Into the dim, dream-haunted secrecy
The cool, green glooms, the grottoed deep retreat,
Of yon old wood; down aisles of lichen'd trees—
Grey Merlins clasped by lissom Vivians
Of clinging vine—to cloistered sylvan glens,
Where Nature weaves her fairest mysteries.

Here let us rest a little—find surcease
For feet grown weary of the thridded street
That echoes ever to the ceaseless beat
Of human tread;—a brief while know the ease
Of dreamful rest, to slumb'rous languors stilled
On Orient rugs of dappled mosses spread
In nooks where blossom, purple, white and red,
The flowers Summer's lavish hands have spilled.

Wild woodland creatures near us unafraid,
Some strange enchantment doth the forest hold—
Was that a sungleam, or a wand of gold
By tricky Puck or wanton Ariel swayed?
Old oaks and beeches open wide their doors
And hamadryads veiled in golden sheen
Floating diaphanous o'er robes of green
Walk with still feet the forest's russet floors.

Lo, here are fairies hid in flower-bells,
There wood-nymphs fleeing from pursuing fauns,

And naiads fleshed with hues of rosy dawns
Lie dreaming by white streams in dusky dells;
We tread dim paths untrod by foot of man
And hark the horn of Dian ringing clear;
While faint, elusive, thin—now far, now near,
Meseems I hear the oaten pipe of Pan.

And while o'erhead the plaining wood-dove grieves,
The cardinal—a wingèd, scarlet flower—
Sprays all the air with song, a golden shower
Of flutes-notes sifting downward thro' the leaves.
Ah, sweet enchantment doth the forest hold,
For Nature's self doth haunt these woodland ways,
My fevered brow on her cool breast she lays
And care slips from me as a garment old.

Ashes of Roses

Skies glooming overhead,
Autumn winds sighing;
Bare yonder garden bed,
Flowers low lying.
All their rich radiance fled,
All their pale petals shed,
Wan wraiths of Summer sped,
In Autumn's closes;
Crimson and cream and gold
Strewn on earth's bosom cold,
Mingling with umber mold—
Ashes of roses.

See, in yon waning West
Rich roses blowing
On Heaven's palimpsest
God's message glowing;
Rose hues and amethyst
Drenched in purpleate mist,
Darkness with Day keeps tryst,
Night's curtain closes;
Quenched is the burning gold,
Shadowed the upland wold,
Day's fires grow dull and cold
Ashes of roses.

So on this heart of mine
Shadows are lying;
Lotus and rue entwine,

Dim dreams are dying;
 Stilled is the thrill divine,
 Spilled is the amber wine,
 Dimly the cold stars shine;
Wan age discloses
 All youth's bright blossoms dead,
 All love's rare radiance sped,
 All hope's pure petals shed—
 Ashes of roses.

A Challenge

To have lived, to have loved, to have triumphed!—what more
can the world bestow?

I stand at the close of the conflict, my foot on the neck of my
foe.

Prone in the dust lies the demon Despair, still shouting his
shibboleth

To the treacherous Amazon dark-browed Fate, and her grisly
comrade, Death.

To have lived! To have felt in my veins the surge of the rich,
red tide of life,

The quickening stir of the strong man's heart that thrills to the
sound of strife;

To have wrested success from defeat, to have striven, and
struggled, and won—

Shall this seem a small thing, think you, when the Battle of
Ages is done?

To have loved! To have known of all raptures, the rapture
supernal, divine,

To have felt the throb of your heart on my heart and the bloom
of your lips pressed to mine;

To have ranked with the gods on Olympus—myths tell us
immortal Jove

Cleft with his swan-wings the blue of the sky for boon of a
mortal's love....

I have lived, I have loved, I have triumphed! Let Death come, or
early or late!

I hurl my challenging gauntlet full in the face of Fate!

Fate may make wreck of a future—how can she alter the

past?

I have tasted the sweets of life's chalice—why shrink from the
lees at the last?

How should I cavil at aught that shall come—I stand with your
head on my breast—

I have fought as I might—I have gained *you*, beloved ... to
God's mercy the rest!

Tho' the heavens darken above me and the sky be shrunk as a
scroll,

In the wreck and ruin of riven worlds, should I falter, O Soul of
my soul?

Tho' the demon Despair, where he vanquished lies, still utter
his shibboleth—

I fling my glove in the face of Fate and smile in the eyes of
Death!

And Yet ...

Upon the meads where we were wont to stray,
'Guiling with springtime hopes the winter hours,
The Spring has smiled; yon slope that late gloomed gray
And sternly sad, 'neath April's tender showers
Grows green and glad again. The rippled grass,
A soundless sea o'er which white cloud-sails pass,
Breaks at my feet in billows foamed with flowers;
And blue-eyed myrtle blooms with lashes wet
Smile to me thro' their tears. The skies are blue,
And life is sweet to-day and hope seems true;
My heart is barren of its long regret—

And yet ...

The willow wears a wistful green. A dream
Of Summer warmth the wine-sweet breezes hold,
Fair wildings blow—bright buttercups agleam
Like shining sequins scattered on the wold,
And daffodills—a wealth of faery gold.
The building birds their coming bliss presage
With lilt and lyric brimming o'er the page
Of Nature's volume bound in green and gold.
Here 'mid the birds and blossoms 'neath the blue—
My heart unburdened of the old regret—
Let me forget long striving to forget;
For life is sweet to-day and hope seems true—

And yet ...

The Master-Player

Mute was the mighty organ. None might break
The silence that had thrall'd it since was stilled
The master-hand beneath whose touch it thrilled
To music such as choiring seraphs make—
Until a mightier Master came to wake
Th' elusive chords and subtle harmonies
That lay imprisoned in the cold white keys
And once again the soul of Music spake.
Methought my soul's most perfect melodies
No hand again to sonance could evoke—
A silent harp whose potency none might prove—
But, lo! one came who swept its chords and woke
Celestial strains, divinest harmonies,
Responsive to the master-touch of Love.

Afterbloom

Gay was her garden as some gorgeous fabric
Weft on an Orient loom,
Star-set upon the sward quaint, old-time blossoms
Wrought broidery of bloom.

Verbenas, dahlias, asters, scarlet cannas
Like torches flaming tall;
(Methought the fair, old face, enframed in silver,
The sweetest flower of all!)

And one rare rose she watched each year with hoping
Till the dear eyes grew dim—

But ere a single blossom burst in beauty
God took her home to Him.

Yet when the Spring next woke the earth to laughter
And boon of blossom gave,

Starred was the rose with white, unearthly flowers—
We laid them on her grave.

* * * * *

And so, meseems, the buds we woo most fondly
Nor light nor perfume shed;

And Love's gold-hearted rose and Hope's star-flower
Oft bloom when we are dead.

To Bliss Carman

Great hearted brother to the wilderness,
Comrade of Wind and Sea! Interpreter
Of nomad Nature! Ere the quick'ning stir
Of Spring-sap thrills the wood from sullen stress
Of Winter's spell—away from throngèd press
Of urban ways thy wild feet wander far
Tracking the steps of some white Northern star
Whose rays are beacon to thy restlessness.
Weird mystic of the Northland's mystery,
Thou 'front'st the Unseen Shadow, nor dost fear
To meet the Scarlet Hunter on the trail;
Pagan as Pan; to all things sylvan dear,
Nature's own vagrant, buoyant, driftless, free—
All winds and woods and waters cry thee hail!

When Love Passed By

I dreamt of love in the golden glory
Of youth unshadowed by cloud or care;
Steeped in the love-lore of song and story,
I said, "My Love shall be wondrous fair."

I said, "Her hands shall be filled with flowers,
(My heart shall tell me when Love draws nigh!)
She shall steal sweet boon from the graceless hours,
Her eyes shall be blue as the cerule sky.

"Her hair shall be bright as the stars' gold gleaming,
Her lips shall be red with her heart's rich wine,
Her face shall be fair as my fondest dreaming,
Each pulse of my being shall call her mine!"

Then long for the voice of my heart I harkened,
Tranced in love's hoping—all hope else forgot—
I waited lonely; the daylight darkened,
The twilight deepened—but love came not.

Then One passed by in the dusking shadows,
The night's dusk shadows slept on her hair—
She passed like a gleam o'er the dew-drenched meadows,
And my heart throbbed fast—but she was not fair.

Her face was pale and her dark eyes pleading,
Her smile was wistful and gravely sweet;
She passed me by where I stood unheeding,
And dropped a violet at my feet.

She went her way o'er the silent meadows,
(Ah, traitorous heart that you tricked me so!)
I sat alone in the deepening shadows—
Love had passed by—and I did not know.

Hedonism

Since we must sleep the endless Sleep at last,
Since Life's grim juggernaut 'neath ruthless wheels
Crushes the heart; since Age like Winter steals
On Youth's fair-flowered fields with blighting blast—
Then to the gods our doubts and fears be cast!
Enough of Sorrow! Joyance is our due.
Gather the roses! Spurn th' envenomed rue.
Fling to the waiting winds the pallid past.
Steep thee in mellow moods and dear desires;
Pluck Love's flame-hearted flower ere it dies;
Cull nectared kisses sweet as morning's breath,
Warm Chastity at Passion's purple fires;
Nepenthe quaff—till drained the chalice lies.
After ... the shrouded sleep, the dreamless dark of Death.

Euthumism

If in the spirit glows no spark divine;
If soulless dust return to dust again;
If, after life, but death and dark remain—
Then it were well to make the moment thine,
Bacchante-steeping soul and sense in wine,
In lotus-lulling languors, fond desires
That heat the heart with fierce, unhallowed fires—
Till Pleasure, Circe-like, transform us into swine.
But if some subtler spirit thrill our clay,
Some God-like flame illumine this fleeting dust—
Promethean fire snatched from the Olympian height—
Then must we choose the nobler, higher Way,
Seeking the Beautiful, the Pure, the Just—
The ultimate crowned triumph of the Right!

Under the Leaves

The phalanxes of corn stand grim and serried,
Dull gold the sodden sheaves,
The violets that smiled with Spring are buried
Under the leaves.

Along the land the Winter's doom is creeping
All vainly Autumn grieves;
And she who made my heart's sweet Spring is sleeping
Under the leaves.

Carmen

Night in Seville, and the twinkle
Of stars in the far azure set,

The mandolin's torturing tinkle,
The click of the castanet!

Music and wine and low laughter,
Love and a torment of tune—

Hate and a poignard thereafter,
Under the yellow moon.

Here in the night I await her,
Under the slumberous moon;
Yearns my fierce spirit to mate her—
All my sick senses aswoon

Beneath the wild sway of her dancing
Passion and pride are at war;—

Thrall to her amorous glancing,
Grandee and toreador.

Carmen Gitana, behold her!
Bright passion-flower of the South;
Soft Southern languors enfold her,
Scarlet the bloom of her mouth;

Passionate, sensuous, cruel,
Raying warm laughter and light,

A ruby—a scintillant jewel—
Set on the brow of the Night!

Ah, the wild rhythm of her dancing!
Lithe with the jaguar's grace,

Ah, the sweet fire of her glancing,
The love-litten lure of her face!

And ah, in my fierce arms to hold her
This strange scarlet flower of the South.

Close to my heart-beat to fold her
Drinking the wine of her mouth!

Sweet, thou art weary with dancing,
Sick of the music and light

Praises and overbold glancing—
Steal with me into the night;

Out of the riot of laughter,
Out of the torment of tune—

Love and close kisses thereafter
Under the sensuous moon!

Carmen, my fierce arms enfold thee,
Bright passion-flower of the South,

Close to my hot heart I hold thee,
Crushing the flower of thy mouth.

Love—for the loving that swayed me,
Passion—for passion long past—

Hate—for the hate that betrayed me ...
My dirk in your side at the last!

To R. D. MacLean

If words were wingèd arrows tipped with flame,
Far-flying thro' the vast of time and space,
If Erato should lend me some rare grace,
Then might I dare to breathe in song your name.
Ah, Player-king, unmoved by all renown,
Acclaim and praise that wait upon your name,
You pluck a laurel from the wreath of fame,
Then, careless of the guerdon, cast it down.

Love and Death

Ever athwart Life's sunlit, upland ways
Falleth the shadow of impending Death,
And still Life's flowers beneath his blighting breath
To ashes wither, and to dust, her bays.
What were the worth of hard-won power or praise?
Awaits us all the grave-cell dark and deep,
The greedy grave-worm's maw, the awful sleep
When Death his cold hand on our pulses lays.
What then the end of action or of strife?
The sphinxèd riddle of the Universe,
Nature's unsolved enigma, who may prove?
Life's Passion Play all blindly men rehearse....
But yet our recompense for birth, for life,
For death itself, meseems, is deathless Love!

A Winter Landscape

A mystic world mantled in white simarre
Arachne-spun with argent woof; her wede
Starred with strange crystals wrought from frozen spar,
Sprent with pearl frost-flowers; girt with diamond brede,
Rubied with berries red as drops of blood,
Befringed with gelid, many-irised gems;
Broidered with lace weft of an elfin brood—
Hoar filagree to deck her garment hems.

Sheer slanting down the sky an opal light
Pierces the snow-blur's veil of wannish gray,
In iridescent sheen, tingeing the dazzling white
With amethystine, gold or beryl ray.
Along the West the transient sunset gleam—
An ardor brief! Crimson on crimson grows
Till all the waning sky, incarnadine,
Glow like blown petals of a shattered rose.

Roses and Rue

I.

A swift thought flashed to my mind that day
When I first saw you, regally tall
'Mid a throng of pigmies—a very Saul—
How some woman's heart must admit your sway,
Some woman's soul to your soul be thrall;
(And though not for me were the rapture to prove you,
I thrilled as I thought how a woman might love you!)

Then—strange that our eyes for a moment should meet
And hold each other a breathless space,
That a light as of dawn should leap into your face,
That the lips that were stern should an instant grow sweet—
Ere you turned, at a word, with a courtier's grace.
(And I knew that tho' many a woman had loved you,
Till that moment, the glance of no woman had moved you!)

Then you stood at my side and one murmured your name,
The proud old name that you worthily wore,
And I drank the soul-chalice Fate's mandate upbore
To my lips, as the fire of your glance leapt to flame;
What need were of words? heart speaks heart evermore—
(And I knew that were mine but the rapture to prove you,
How deeply, how dearly one woman might love you!)

II.

Do I idly dream, as the village maid,

Who thinks, as she spins, of a princekin gay
On a prancing steed, who shall come her way
To woo her and win her and bear her away
Thro' the vasty depths of the forest shade
To a palace set in a sylvan glade,—
To love her for aye and a day?

Is it like that he with his princely pride—
The son of a proud old race,
Shall stoop with Cophetua's kingly grace
To lift me up to the vacant place,
To reign like a queen at his side?
Can the world afford him no worthier bride—
No bride with a queenlier grace?

Aye, a foolish dream for a sordid day
When men seek power—and women, gold—
Gone is the chivalrous age of old
When maids were loving and men were bold,
And good King Arthur held knightly sway!
Ah, love and knighthood were laid away
With the cuirass and helm of old.

* * * * *

But a horseman rides to the wicket gate—
All my pulses proclaim it he,
My knight who has parted the waves of the sea,
Who has cleft the wide world in his searching for me....
Fond, foolish, dreaming!—for surely Fate
Decrees him the winning a worthier mate
Than a simple girl like me!

Why does he come to me,
With his deep, impassioned eyes,
Stealing my soul from me?
Surely a high emprise
For such an one as he
To smile an hour on me—
To win a worthless prize,
Would he might let me be!
Proud am I—proud as he
For my name as his is old—
What should he say to me?
I have neither lands nor gold.
Ah, a merry jest 'twill be
To win my heart from me—
(The tale will be soon told!)
Would he might let me be!

IV.

Swept, swept away is my vaunted pride
On a flood-tide of tenderness;
I envy the dog that bounds to his side,
And the chestnut mare he is wont to ride
'Cross moor and mead when the day is fine,
As she lays her head in a mute caress
'Gainst the arm of *her* lord—and *mine*!

V.

Ah, silver and gold of the glad June morning—
Gold of the sunshine and silver of dew,
Dew drop gems all the meads adorning—
Are love and the rose-time a theme for scorning?

Roses, roses,—dream not of rue!
Am I not loved by you?

Antiphonal to sweet sylvan singers,
The brook with its maddening, gladdening rune!
And my lover's kiss still thrills and lingers,
Lingers and burns on my tremulous fingers!
Ah, birds in a very riot of tune
Pour out my joy to the heart of June!

He loves me—loves me! My heart is singing.—
(Heart, oh heart of my heart is it true?)
Song on my lips from my soul upriving,
A passion of bliss to the breezes flinging,
Roses, roses—nor dream of rue!
I am beloved by you.

VI.

To be his wife! Calm all my soul is filling,
A calm too deep for smiles—or even tears;
A perfect trust to slumber subtly stilling
My whilom doubts and fears.

Each little common thing to me seems rarer,
My life each day becomes more dear to me;
Love, am I fair? Ah, fain would I be fairer—
And yet more fair for thee.

Like to a priestess some loved shrine adorning,
I deck the charms but poorly prized, till late,
The beauty once I held too slight for scorning—
To thee, now consecrate!

As if some god of old had stooped to love me—
Some star had pierced my darkness with its ray—
I worship thee—an idol throned above me—
Forgetting thou art clay.

Rejoicing in the gift that God has given,
I may forget the Giver. Love, I fear
Lest I shall e'en forget to sigh for Heaven—
When heaven for me is here!

VII.

Strange that a love supreme
Should be swayed by a petty pride,
As a straw might turn aside
The swift onflowing tide
Of a mighty seaward stream!

I know that the fault was mine,
But I cannot, will not speak;
How should I, suppliant, meek,
His gracious pardon seek—
Tho' the fault were mine—all mine?

Aye, tho' my heart should break,
Something—or pride or shame—
Forbids me that I should claim
As mine the fault, the blame—
Aye, tho' my heart should break!

VIII.

Last night he came to me,
His dark eyes grave and sweet—

(Eyes that I could not meet!)
To crave my pardon—*mine!*
With that kingly courtesy
Which makes his least deed fine.

What fiend took hold on me?
I would nor speak nor heed,
Tho' he bent his pride to plead—
(He, all unused to sue!)
Though he sought full tenderly
For a pardon not *his* due.

Fool! to have played with fire—
Had I not full often heard
How when his wrath was stirred
It burst all bounds and leapt
Higher and ever higher
Like flames by the storm-wind swept?

Yet—tho' his face was white
With a passion that shook his soul—
Not once did he waive control,
Tho' his heart to its depths was stirred—
He leashed his wrath that night
Nor uttered one bitter word.

Pride held me stubbornly dumb,
Stilling what words I would say,
While I flung my heart's treasure away,
While I tampered with fire—to my cost;
Till I knew the ultimate end had come—
I had matched pride with love—and lost!

What poisoned pen has written
The words that bar my breath;
What hard, harsh hand has smitten
My soul with death?

* * * * *

*"Love, my love"—these the words I read—
"The vision and dream of a life have died.
Hurt to the heart by the words you said,
Angered, stung by a wounded pride,
Mad with the thought that your love was dead—
I have wedded a loveless, unloved bride—
Would I had died instead!"*

My heart refuses to understand
The words that burn my brain;
Palsied, stunned by a felling blow
Struck by a cherished hand,
I am all too numb for pain;
Dead to a deathless woe,
Helpless to understand,
Shall I ever feel again?

X.

Awake, alive to pain! The first steel gleam of morn
Stabs deep the heart I thought had shrunk to dust,
The love I prayed might die to loveless scorn
Awakes and cries ... Ah, God, how is it just
A fault so slight such meed of pain should pay,
That one mad word in pride and anger spoken

Should leave two lives forever crushed and broken,
Should plait a scourge to lash my soul for aye?

How can a just God see men suffer thus?—
Unheedful of the cosmic cry of pain,
Unmoved by all the pangs that torture us,
Knowing our prayers and tears alike are vain—
Like to a wanton boy who feels no thrill
Of pity for the weak his strength holds thrall,
Who pins a helpless butterfly against a wall,
Watching the bright wings flutter and grow still.

We are the sport of some malignant Power
Who nails us to our crosses, hard and fast,
Who sees us flutter for a little hour,
Struggle and suffer ... and grow still at last;
Who hears untouched the ceaseless, cosmic groan
Wrung from his creatures' tortured lips away;
He will not hear or heed! What need to pray?
There is no hand to help. We stand alone.

* * * *

Father, forgive! I know not what I say,
Frenzied, tortured, torn on the rack of pain;
Teach these pain-writhen lips once more to pray—
Help me to trust again!

XI.

A year! How slight a space
When winged with ecstasy!
(An æon dark to me.)
He has brought her home—God lend me grace!

To-night in the throng I shall see his face—
He has long forgotten me.
A year! I have learned to smile,
I have taught my eyes to lie,
I have lived and laughed and sung—the while
I have only longed to die.

XII.

I have seen him once again,
There in the throng with his wife
(An eagle matched with a pitiful wren!)
Bitter in sooth has his portion been—
Chained to a clog for life!
Strange that our eyes as of yore should meet
And hold each other a breathless space,
That the dawn-light of old should illumine his face,
That the lips that were stern should an instant grow sweet,
Touched with the old-time tender grace.
But his eyes were haggard and old with pain
(Traitors to thwart his resolute will!)
They told me the struggle was vain—all vain!
He loves me—loves me still.

XIII.

Cruel! that I should be glad
That he loves and suffers still,
Yet how should my soul be sad
That his passionate, resolute will
Cannot crush the love that is stronger than he,
The love that is all for me!

The year has left its trace

(Cover it how he will!)

On the proud, impassive face
And I know how he suffers still—
Thrall to a love that is stronger than he,
A love that is all for me.

Surely, ah surely, I know
I who have known his love,
I who have loved him so,
What such a bond must prove,
Linked to a loveless, unloved wife,
Chained to a clog for life!

XIV.

She loves him not, they say,
Save for his lands and gold;
She is narrow, selfish, cold,
Stabbing and wounding his soul each day,
Growing further and further away
From the heart it was hers to hold.

Yet not all blameless he,
A woman is quick to feel
What man would fain conceal;
Surely she can but see
That naught to his life is she,
Nay—nor can ever be!

I am happier—happier far—than he;
He is meshed in a galling silken hold,
Bound with a jewelled band of gold;
While I, at least, am free.
And I know what his daily life must be.

Linked with a nature paltry, slight,
He with his generous, kingly soul,
Stung and goaded past all control
By a thousand petty barbs of venom and spite.

Once, but once have we met,
And we spoke of trivial things,
Of the changes a twelvemonth brings,
Of late Summer, lingering yet...
(Ah, how should a heart that has loved forget?)
Traitors ever to thwart his will
His eyes confirm what I half divine.
A bitter, bootless victory mine,
He cannot choose but to love me still!

XV.

Whose was the fault, the blame?
She has fled and left him free,
Free! but a stain of shame
Rests on the proud old name.
At a bitter cost she has set him free—
Free! with a blemished fame.

And he with the pride of his race,
With a resolute, calm control,
Locks in his heart the heart's disgrace,
Shows of his shame no subtlest trace,
Hiding the hurt of a stricken soul
'Neath the calm of a passionless face.

He had deemed it a cowardly thing to fly
While the village prated anent his shame,
And an added blot on his noble name

By his own hand to die.

But oft in the deep of night I hear
Borne on the wild night wind,
The beat of the mare's hoofs thundering past,
And my heart is clutched by an icy fear
Of a direful thing that may chance at last;
For ride he never so far, so fast—
Black Care rides hard behind.

XVI.

Last night as I stood in the gloaming's gray,
Ere the moon came into the sky,
He came to me for a last good-bye—
At last he is going away.

His face in the dusk showed stern and set,
Old and haggard and worn with pain;
"Dear, I may never see you again—
Mine but the meed regret!
How can I ask you to share my shame,
How can I give you my blemished name,
Yet how shall the heart forget?

Naught in my life save a dream have I,
A dream—a vision, too fair to be,
A rose that blooms 'mid the rue for me—
Naught but a dream ... Good-bye."

And then, ere he lifted his bridle rein
To ride away down the dark'ning land,
He bent and touched with his lips the hand
I had laid on the chestnut's mane.

XVII.

Something ... my senses will scarce recall ...
The horror they came in the night to tell ...
The mare had galloped riderless home,
Blown and bleeding and flecked with foam,
And they found him there by the sunken wall,
Hurt to the death by the desperate fall.
How it had chanced, he could only tell,
Ere the merciful numbness stole his brain;
How the chestnut rose to the leap and fell....
Then his senses closed on the shocks of pain.
He spoke, they told me, but once again—
To whisper my name with his struggling breath—
(Thank God, he suffered so brief a while)
Then peacefully sank on the breast of Death,
Dead, with his lips asmile.

* * * * *

How can I wish him alive again,
Lying so peacefully, placidly still,
With that carven smile on his marble face.
How can I pray that his heart should thrill
To waking and waking's pain?
Lying so peacefully, placidly still.
With the old, sweet smile on his quiet face,
Dead to the sting of a heart's disgrace....
How should I wish him a lesser grace,
How should I strive with a wiser Will?
Yet how can the heart that is reft divine
Death's mystical, measureless charity?
The cry of the stricken king is mine:

"Would I had died for thee!"

Severance

Not severed by long leagues of lonely land,
Nor sundered by wide wastes of sounding sea;
But ever side by side and hand in hand,
And yet—apart are we.

Spartacus

He stands storm-browed, imperial, chief
Of all Rome's gladiators; brave
Beyond all others; fearless in belief,
 A captive—but no slave.

His brow is like a god's—a brow of power,
Lips soft with human sweetness—ere the day
He entered the arena, and the hour
 He first beheld man's life-blood mixed with clay.

Felt rise within him bestial strange desires
And savage instincts in a brutal heart
That batted on men's blood; burned with unhallowed fires
 Of slaughter—till—a thing apart,
A hired butcher of his fellow men, he stands
Daring the fasting lion in his den,
Or some fierce gladiator on the blood-stained sands,—
 A savage chief of yet more savage men!

He stands, with massive throat and thews of steel,
While loud acclaims the listening heavens fill,
And Roman women smile. He does not know; or feel
 A moment's joy or one triumphant thrill.
He heeds them not. He sees as in a dream
His home and Cyrasella's citron groves;
A youth again, beside some purling stream,
 With gladsome heart and joyous pipe he roves.

He sees anon that gentle shepherd boy,
Who knew no harsher sound than plaining flute,

In the arena stand—Rome's sport and toy—

A bestial, blood-stained hireling brute....

Then swift thro' every throbbing, pulsing vein

The fierce unconquered spirit of old Sparta ran.

Rome's fiercest gladiator is to-day again

A Thracian—and a man!

The Dead Leader

After the waiting and the anguished weeping
He lies at rest at last.
How should we mourn him tranced in peaceful sleeping,
His pain all past!

The Right's Excalibur his strong arm wielded
A little space lies low;
The victor in life's sometime strife has yielded
To man's last Foe.

Late—all too late—our loyal tribute giving
A loyal, fearless soul!
He whom we honored late—so late—while living,
Lies dead beside the goal.

Yet this the solace of these long sad hours
While we who loved him weep,
We breathe an answering message in our flowers
To him who lies asleep.

To him whom soon the deep, cold earth must cover,
To him whose dying breath
Left to our hearts a message bridging over
The dark abyss of Death.

Hagar

To have known Heaven and then to walk in Hell!
Is it not hell to know his face no more,
Supplanted, spurned and thrust without his door.
Seeing another with my loved lord dwell
Sheltered within the tents of wedded love
While I must roam the desert of Despair?
Ah, God above me harken to my prayer!
Send down thy mercy on me as a dove
Folding its white wings on my tortured breast.
Let me not see the anguish of my child
With hunger torn, with thirst's consuming wild,
Strike us, oh God, into Thy deep dark Rest!
Lo! I have sinned. I kneel and kiss the rod,
But she, the wife, who cast us forth to die ...
I curse her not! Judge Thou between us, God,
Which in Thy sight is guiltier, she or I?

Water-Lilies

They float ethereal, unearthly white
Upon the bosom of the darkling mere,
 Raying the dusk with slumbrous silver light—
Eidolons of lost moons erst mirrored there.

Salvias

Wooing the wind's wild caresses,
Courting the sun's fierce flame—
Wantons in cardinal dresses
Flaunting their scarlet shame.

Yellow Jessamine

Like little yellow stars that, fallen down,
Hang pendulous, enmeshed among the boughs,
Mild golden radiances they gem the crown
Fair Summer sets upon her beauteous brows.

Sunflowers

They bloom in lowly places—
Unmeet for fairer beds—
Like swarthy Ethiop faces
With yellow-turbaned heads.

The Rose

All Orient odors, spikenard, balm and myrrh,
Perfumes of Araby and farthest Ind—

Sweet incense from the chalice heart of her
She pours upon the feet of every wind.

Circe

I.

Where fair Ææia smiles across the sea
To olive-crowned Italia, th' enchantress dwells—
A woman set about with dreams and spells,
Weird incantations, charms and mystery.
Most strangely pale and strangely fair is she—
Yet deadlier than the hemlock draught her smile,
Darker than Stygian glooms her subtle guile....
Drawn by her deep eyes' spell, across the sea
The Argive galleys wing, till beached they lie
Upon the fatal strand. The Greeks beguile
The hasting hours with revelry and wine
Within her halls.... Eftsoon strange sorcery
The Circe weaves. They who were men erewhile
Now grovel at her feet, transformed to swine.

II.

'Neath myriad mellow tapers' golden glow
A woman stands, proud, insolent and fair;
A single gem meshed in the dusk-dyed hair
Burns like the evening star descending low
Adown the dark'ning sky. Upon the snow
Of her full-blossomed breast deep rubies lie.
Her fragrant presence breathes sweet sorcery;
The shimmering saffron satin's flexile flow
Outlines each sinuous curve; a sensuous smile,
A touch that fires to flame each pulsant vein—

One draught of eyes more deep than depths of wine
The senses steal, the soul and brain beguile
Till all seem merged in feeling ... and again
A Circe's spells transform men into swine.

To A. M. M.

She is so shy, this little love of mine,
So pale and pure, almost I fear to speak
The love that thrills my every pulse like wine
Yet brings no answering flush to her fair cheek.

She is so calm that Passion's stirring strain
To chanson soft and low unbidden dies;
The while her longing lover sighs in vain
For one soft love-glance from her down-dropped eyes.

A lily she that from its garden bed,
Into the golden sunshine glad and sweet
Lifts to far sapphire skies its radiant head,
Unheeding of the base weeds at its feet.

Yet—should one loving reverently kneel
And draw the lily's close-shut leaves apart,
Perchance those waxen petals might reveal
Enshrined within, a glowing golden heart.

Loveless

As some poor starveling at a palace gate
Sees curtained gleams from banquet-litten halls,
Hears song out-ringing from the festal walls,
Scents viands that shall princely palates sate,
Yet in the outer gloom may only wait,
Crouched in the cold, thrice-thankful for some least
Mean morsel flung him from the plenteous feast—
Poor bondman to the ball and chain of Fate!
So, lonely at Love's outer gate I stand
And glimpse the brightness and the bliss within,
Where love-lit smiles transmute the dark to day—
I wait without—I may not enter in;
Long, wistfully, I gaze—then void of hand
And starved of spirit, sadly turn away.

Clytie—The Sunflower

(To F. H.)

In pale green twilight lands
Under the sea
Her rainbow palace stands,
Iris'd and opaline;
Agate and almondine,
Corals and pearly shells
Swept from deep ocean dells,
Strewing the silver strands,
Starring the golden sands
In the green twilight lands
Under the sea.

All thro' the dreamy day
Under the sea
Where the sea-maidens play,
Twining foam-garlands fair,
Girding their golden hair,
Clad in her moss-robe green
Veiled in her bright locks' sheen—
Where the dim seaweeds sway,
Trackless her white feet stray
All thro' the dreamy day
Under the sea.

Or like a star she glides
Over the sea,
Deftly her steeds she guides—

Gold-fish that glint and gleam,
Jewels alive they seem—
 Softly the surges swell,
 Rocking the rosy shell
Where the sea-maiden rides,
Wafture of wooing tides,
 Swift as a star she glides
 Over the sea.

One day she lifts her eyes
 Up from the sea
Where the great sun-god flies
Over the world afar,
Guiding his golden car—
 All his star brow aglow,
 All his bright hair aflow;
Dawn in his radiance lies,
Dusk at his coming dies—
 Hapless she lifts her eyes
 Up from the sea.

Swiftly his steeds speed on
 Over the sea,
Soon is the splendor flown,
Lone on the shore she stands.
Stretching imploring hands,
 Lifting impassioned eyes
 Where the last sun-gleam dies;
All the day's brightness gone,
Hapless she stands alone,
 Heedless the god speeds on
 Over the sea.

Ever her wistful gaze
Over the sea
Yearns on the sun-god's rays—
Till by some subtle power
Changed to a golden flower—
Still in her robe of green,
Crowned with her gold hair's sheen
Slight on her stem she sways ...
Yet does her yearning gaze
Follow the sun-god's rays
Over the sea.

In Bondage

What can it profit a man tho' he have the soul of a god
Sunk in the form of a beast, with a senseless simian face—
What can the world perceive of the subtler inward grace
Breathing upon the dust of the coarse clay clod?
What knows the world of me—the Me that is prisoned within—
Seeing only the self that sickens its sensitive eyes—
How can it know that this hateful mask hides not the sneer of
 Sin,
That this cloak of crass, crude flesh, is a trusty soul's
 disguise?

What can I hope to win? Which of the gifts men prize?
What can I have or hold of the bounteous boon I crave—
I, with the coarse stubbed hands, the dull and narrow eyes,
The low-browed leer of the brutal, base-born slave?
What can I know of Love? I, with my ape-like face,
Frighting the tender trust of the timorous, shrinking maid,
Who, drawn by my deep soul's spell, half-yields to the soul's
 embrace
Then looks on its hideous mask and trembles and flees
 dismayed.

Yet must the soul of fire chained to this cursed clay,
Galled by its fetters of flesh, seared with a thousand scars,
Shriek and struggle and beat its breast on its prison bars
Thro' the night's long dark of despair till the dawning of
 ultimate day,
Till the glow of that ultimate dawn transfigure the tortured face
And the sacred fire within crumble the coarse clay clod.

Till the Soul, breathed on by an unseen, unknown Grace,
Stripped of its bonds of flesh, stand face to face with its God!

To a Singer

Beneath thy Midas touch life's sullen grays
Are thrilled to sudden gold; as some far gleam
From wings of Helios athwart thy dream
Irradiates for thee earth's darksome ways.
Wild woodland voices ripple thro' thy lays;
Sweet silvern murmurs from some deep-delled spring,
Brook, tree and flower and each insensate thing,
The throstle's call, the calm of sun-steeped days,
A glint of sunshine on the swallow's wing,
Fern-filagrees, the drowsy drone of bee
Made drunk with draughts of purple wild-grape wine;
All these Orphèan music holds for thee,
And all thy days and dreams companioning
Walks Nature with her hand close-clasped in thine.

Blossom of Brine

Morn! and a white sail winging
Over the sunlit waves;
A song on the breezes ringing
Up from the coral caves
Where sea-nymphs, white arms lifting
Wreaths for the sea-god twine
Of the frail foam-flowers drifting
On the wave-crests—blossom of brine.

* * * * *

Night! and a dark rack flying
Over the sullen waves;
A dirge on the night winds sighing
Up from the cold sea caves
Where sea-nymphs white arms lifting
Wreaths for a pall entwine
For a still white face is drifting
On the wave-crest—blossom of brine.

A Memory

Strange that across the vast of varied years,
Fraught with life's wonted alloy—mingled joy and pain—
Sun-kissed with smiles or gloomed with mists of tears,
Old memories should wake to life again.

Old thoughts and dreams, words breathed by lips long dumb,
Songs sung by voices silent now for aye,
Like hosts of speechless spectres thronging come
Dim formless wraiths of each dear vanished day.

Strange that a fragment of a life replete,
A few brief hours as men measure time,
A chapter in life's book, closed now—yet vaguely sweet
As odor-laden zephyrs from some far-off clime—
Should drift across my heart while joysome memories rise
Of golden moments snatched from Arcady,
Of silver sails and opal-tinted skies,
Of viridescent earth and sapphire sea.

Of Lotus-land where pleasure dreamful lies,
Of kindred souls responsive each to each,
Of thoughts half hidden by deep-tinted eyes—
(Sweet traitors telling that denied to speech!)
The merest fragment of a life replete,
A sun-gleam 'mid existence's sombre grays,
Eyes, hands and hearts that for one moment meet
In strange, sweet yearning ... then—divided ways.

To Margaret

Maiden of varying mood,
Thalia thou hast wooed,
 Thespis thereafter,
Till 'neath thy lyric sway
Each heart must tribute pay—
 Tears blent with laughter.
So in the days to be
This do we crave for thee,
 Through life's hereafter,
Throughout the changing years,
May all thy griefs and tears
 Be blent with laughter.

Regret

Shimmer of rose and pearl,
 Sheen on an opal sky;
Day's crimson banners unfurl,
 Purple-pleached shadow-gleams die;
Dawn flowers bourgeoning fair,
 Meads with the dawn-dews wet;
Rare is the morn—ah, rare!
 But in the heart, regret—
A vague regret.

Clouds like the scattered snow
 Stippling a sapphire sky;
Fervor and heat and glow,
 Zephyrs that swoon and die.
Drowseth the nooning air
 On meads with red poppies set;
Fair is the day—ah, fair!
 But in the heart, regret—
And still ... regret.

Flashes of burning gold,
 Flushes of crimson light
Faint on a waning wold,
 Stealeth the silent night.
One from a casement bar
 Leaneth with lashes wet,
Watching the last wan star
 Fade like a heart's regret—
A vain regret.

"God Bless You, Dear"

Dear patient face and placid brow,
Dear lips that smiled despite of pain,
Brave toil-worn hands, so helpful now,
Sweet spirit free from earthly stain.

Within the doorway Mother stands,
The while a merry barefoot lad,
Across the springtime meadow-lands
Goes whistling schoolward, blithe and glad;
And where the pathway breasts the hill,
I stay my steps and turn to hear
Her loving voice, as lingering still,
She calls, "Good-bye! God bless you, dear."

Dear patient face and furrowed brow,
Dear lips that smile thro' all life's pain,
Brave toil-worn hands, so weary now,
Sweet soul unmarred by earthly stain.

Within the doorway Mother stands,
The while a man oppressed with care,
Across the waning Autumn lands,
Goes toil-ward, fain to strive and bear;
And where the pathway breasts the hill,
I stay my steps and turn to hear
Her trembling voice, as ling'ring still,
She calls, "Good-bye! God bless you, dear."

Dear peaceful face and placid brow,
Dear lips that smile secure from pain,
Brave toil-worn hands, soft-folded now,

Sweet spirit freed from earthly stain.

Within God's portal Mother stands,
The while a man forspent with care
Seeketh the far-off meadow-lands,
By faith made strong to strive and bear.

And as I breast life's weary hill,
I oft times pause—meseems I hear
The well-loved accents breathing still
The old fond prayer, "God bless you, dear."

Roses

"Where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?"—Rubàiyat.

A red rose burns upon his breast
Where erst a white rose lay;
Above his fervent heart-throb pressed—
The red rose of To-day.

What recks he of the flower that dies—
(For roses bloom alway!)
Low in the dust, forgotten, lies
The rose of Yesterday.

But yet, To-day's red rose must die,
(For roses fade alway!)
To-morrow crushed, forgot, 'twill lie—
A rose of Yesterday.

The Poet

One fluting on sad wolds Pan's flight left drear,
One crying down the wayward wind of Chance,
One piping unto feet that will not dance
And mourning unto ears that will not hear.

Shylock

Cold craft and avarice look from out his eyes,
His face with evil passion marred and seamed,
Looks frowningly upon a Christian world.
Behind that hateful mask a demon lurks
To urge the narrow soul to darksome deeds
Of violence and greed, of hate and ruth.
His God, a God of wrath, a tyrant force
To mete to helpless souls eternal doom;
A Juggernaut, a hard unsentient power,—
But yet less potent than the yellow gold
Those crooked talons clutch, and for the which
The miser Shylock fain would sell his soul.

Sonnet

(To Charles J. O'Malley.)

As when above orchestral undertone,
The plaining wail of muted violin,
The hushed oböe and the distant din,
Of muffled drum or viol's raucous groan—
Sudden arises one pure voice-like tone,
A silver trumpet's tongue that stirs the soul
To feel the theme, and the harmonious whole
A sonant setting seems for that alone;
So, high above earth's murmurous stir and strife,
Riseth thy voice in clear enringing song—
No minor plaint of dull despairing pain,
But one true note of hope that bids us long
For higher things; and all the din of life
Seems to subserve the sweetness of thy strain.

Antithesis

The poet wrought a song of sadness, fraught
With all the pain the world's sad heart hath proved;
He sang of doubt, and dreams that end in naught ...
Then, smiling, turned and kissed the lips he loved.

The poet wrought a song of joyance, thrilled
With all the peace the world's glad heart hath kept;
He sang of hope and happy dreams fulfilled ...
Then bent his face upon his hands and wept.

In Fortune's Twilight

The old house totters 'neath its weight of years,
Bowed, like the form of him who shelters there,
Old, friendless, lone—save for the wanton, Care,
Who flouts him, mocks his grief with gibes and jeers
And laughs to see his piteous hopes grow fears.
Not his the joy of placid, sun-crowned age—
His dim eyes falter as he scans the page
Of Life's worn album, blotted with his tears.
He sees in dreams the wife he loved—long dead;
The son—once proud to bear his father's name—
Who mixed his honest blood with dire disgrace;
The wayward girl who wrought her father shame ...
He sits alone with Care; the day has fled
And twilight falls, upon the furrowed face.

Fate

Thro' countless æons sunless and remote
A Soul went searching for its spirit mate,
Thro' star-stained space, o'er wind-swept deep, afloat,
Forever desolate.

Anon, another spirit, lone of heart
Goes forth thro' voiceless void to seek its mate;
Eftsoon they meet, these twain, strike hands ... and part!
And this is Fate.

The Path of Dreams

Beside the stream that silverly steals on
To swell the song of that far-sounding sea
Which breaks upon the utmost shore of Thought,
They who have drunk at Song's immortal spring
Walk with glad feet the upland path of dreams
That whitely winds thro' long low-lying lands—
By one, yclept the Way of Fools—a plain
Of dust and ashes and of Dead Sea fruit;
But by another called the Path of Hope
That leads far up the slope of heart's desire;—
And haply both speak truth—for oft the way
Is set with stones that tear the climbing feet,
And oft for roses there is bitter rue,
And oft for singing there is idle scorn,
And sneers full oft for smiles. Yet well we know
The upland Path of Dreams that whitely winds
(Yclept or Way of Fools or Path of Hope)
Leads upward ever to the Hills of Song!

Beside the silent stream whose soundless tide
Sets ever to the unknown tideless sea
They who have drunk of Slumber's poppi'd draught
Walk with unsandalled feet the path of dreams
That winds thro' gray, low-lying fields of sleep
To dim dream shores girt with dim spectre-trees,
Swayed ever by the sweep of unseen wings,
Slow-stirring palms and arabesques of ferns
And fields of sombre bloom and scentless flowers

Not of their wonted hue, but dimly gray,
Where songless birds like shades of shadows flit,
And silent winds from popped meadows blow—
And here dear presences to us denied
By sterner Day, approach to cry us hail;
And here a little do we taste the joy
Of kisses dreamed on lips forever mute,
A little know the bliss of Hope fulfilled,
And dreams that seem as true as very Truth ...
Yet well we know that with the stir of dawn,
Waking, we must return from Sleep's far fields!
Beside the Lethean stream whose soundless tide
Sets ever to the unknown tideless Sea
That breaks upon the farthest unknown shore—
They who have quaffed dark Asrael's mystic draught
Walk with still feet the viewless Path of Dreams
That winds thro' long, low-lying fields of Sleep
To fields Elysian or Tartarian glooms;
And haply, longed-for presences denied
By sterner Life shall come to cry us hail,—
Bright radiances from realms of light eterne,
Or shadows from the shades of awful Dis—
But whether here we taste of Hope fulfilled,
Or find our dreams are but as drifted dust—
From dark of Dis or realms of Light eterne,
Full well we know we shall return no more!

An Autumn Song

The dim sun slips adown the sky
That dies from gold to gray;
The homing birds that Southward fly
To my heart's hailing make reply,
Piping "Good-bye, good-bye!"

Southward I turn my wistful eyes,
Southward, where all my treasure lies,
Whither the homing sparrow flies,
Piping, "Good-bye, good-bye!"

The chill blast sweeps the steely sky
That glooms a sullen gray;
Soft summer winds that Southward fly
To my soul's sighing make reply
Breathing "Good-bye, good-bye!"

Southward I turn my longing eyes,
Southward my yearning spirit hies,
Whither or bird or zephyr flies
Sighing "Good-bye, good-bye!"

Vain

Wreath of laurel and crown of bay
And the noisy trump of Fame,
Praise for the singer's deathless lay,
And a listening world's acclaim.

But the singer sits with his grief alone
Where love lies cold and dead.

The plaudits fall on a heart of stone;
The Soul of the song has fled.

Sartor Resartus

Ah, God be merciful to him who sees
Thro' ermined pomp and pageantry of kings,
Thro' regal mien and beauty's witcheries
The poor, weak, shrivelled soul that crouches hid
Within the body's hold! Thrice-cursed is he
Whose soul sees souls of others face to face,
Who strips the outer man like vestments off
And views the naked heart in all its shame
And poverty; who still must rend the veil
Of motive, purpose, false humanity
And futile pretense! God! to walk this world
Doomed still to see what others fain would hide,
Reading men's thoughts as scholars read the page
Of some old language dead to all save them;
Seeing beneath the tender woman flesh,
The woman-grace, the pleading woman-eyes,
The grisly skeleton, the hollow ribs,
The eyeless sockets and the grinning jaw;
Reading for aye the sneer beneath the smile,
The lie that lurks behind the seeming truth;
To know that such, or haply worse, am I,
A living lie, false prophet to myself,
Clothed on with shimmering robes of fallacy
And vain deceit! Ah God, where is the truth?
Are all men false or lies the fault in me
Who, vulture-like, seize only on the taint,
And leave the pure? If haply thus it be
In pity take away the subtle sight

That pierces thought. Give back the old fond faith,
The young belief in all humanity;
Hide from my view the canker in the rose,
The taint in truth, the blight upon the bloom.

Far better 'twere to drink the hemlock draught
And, happy, deem it nectar than to find
The drop of gall within the nectared cup.
Far better trust repaid with treachery
Than doubt confirmed! Ah, Thou all-seeing God
Who art the Truth, make me to see the truth;
Lift from my soul the shadow; in the room
Of doubt, send trust. Let me believe again;
Help me to see the highest in mankind!

Illumed

Like to a little child, whose straying feet,
Tracking the fox-fire's guiling glint and gleam,
Have wandered far afield by marsh and stream
While just before the wavering glimmers fleet
On and still on where sky and meadow meet,
Till, spent and fearful in the gathering gloom,
At last he sees the guiding light of home,
Where love awaits and mother-kisses sweet.
So was it mine through fens of doubt to stray
Pursuing still some fair ephemeron,
Or fleeting gleam, or shimmering fallacy,
Till through the deepening dusk a beacon shone
Set by the hand of Love to light the way
O Father, to implicit trust in Thee!

In the Play

In a painted "Forest of Arden," in the glare of the garish light,
In doublet and hose, be-powdered and rouged, you sigh to me
 night by night;

Attuned to the sway of your cadenced voice, as a harp to the
 wooing wind,

I thrill at the touch of your painted lips—for—"I am your
 Rosalind!"

Could you know that my art in seeming was a dearer thing
 than art,

That the love-words spoken nightly spring straight from a
 loving heart;

Could you know that my soul speaks to you—aye soul and
 spirit and mind!

When I gaze deep into your eyes and breathe—"And I am
 your Rosalind!"

To you 'tis a vain dissembling—a part of the work of the day,
And the words that your voice makes music, but the dull, dead
 lines of the play.

Little you care for the woman you woo, save as a foil
 designed.

To prove your skill as a lover—yet—"I am your *Rosalind!*"

I merge in the player, the woman! The actress good at her art
Must needs look well to each glance and tone, must needs
 play still her part—

Tho' the woman's soul that must else be mute; aye soul and

spirit and mind!

Cry to your soul in another's words—"And I am your
Rosalind!"

To E. P. B.

Imperial as that famed Elizabeth
Before whose feet a knight his cloak cast down—
A sovereign—altho' thine only crown
Love's roses 'twine for thee, Elizabeth.

Ah, maiden sweeter than morn's nectared breath,
Across thy path no regal robe I fling—
Only a living, loving heart I bring
To lay at thy dear feet, Elizabeth.

Through the Dark

Last night they laid me in my winding sheet,
Set burning tapers at my feet and head,
Decked me with wan white blossoms faint and sweet,
And told each other softly, "She is dead."

Ay, dumb and dead! Enshrouded, cold and stark
I lay where waned the tawny tapers dim,
Pulseless and pale; yet thro' the dreadful dark
I lived in thoughts of *him*.

The morning came. One who had loved me bent
Above my face with tears and bated breath;
Laid on my heart the roses *he* had sent—
And I—was glad of death!

Preluding

Frail fronds of ferns uncurling,
Blue iris flags unfurling,
Pale showers of blossoms swirling
Like clouds of wind-blown snow;
With fragile wildings playing,
Like two blithe children maying,
Across the glad meads straying,
 Together, dear, we go.

The silver clouds far-drifting,
Vague lights and shadows shifting,
The sungleams gold-dust sifting
Down thro' the latticed leaves;
Gray brooks the meadows lacing,
Young flow'rs the uplands gracing,
Her faery 'broidery tracing
 The skillful spider weaves.

From long, long day-dreams shaken,
The vivid violets waken;
His Southern haunts forsaken,
The bluebird flecks the sky;
Ah, breath of bloom-bright heather,
Ah, golden Maytime weather,
We drift in dreams together—
 Together, you and I.

The Heights of Silence

(Transcribed from "The Choir Invisible.")

Above the valleys, peopled, fair and warm,
Rise the bleak, silent uplands where abide
Wraiths of lost loves, love's recompense denied,
Unspoken, unconfessed, unsatisfied....
Cold, silent heights, engirt with zones of storm,
Where Love for aye unmated must abide.

The broad, sweet downward vistas of the flesh
Stretch fair and far; the calm white spirit-height
Is lone and chill; there dimly shines the light
Of sun and star that burns and beacons bright
Where Sin spreads still her guiling, glitt'ring mesh.
Ah, warm the valley! Lone and chill the height!

Yet he who wins the height's sublimity—
The silent height where loves un-lived abide,
Loves stainless, sublimated, purified—
Shall glimpse that land, to grosser view denied,
Where love and longing infinite shall be
Or ever stilled—or ever satisfied.

Andromeda

Bound ever to a great grey rock of Doom,
Striving with futile hands to rive the chain
Of woven fear, distrust and subtle pain,
While gaunt wolf-waves that leap from out the gloom
Of doubt's cold sea are snarling at my feet,
As nearer writhes the dragon of Despair
Foul with dank horrors of his caverned lair,
And like a clock of doom the dark tides beat...
I lift my eyes; Lo! sudden sweeps along
Thought's empyrean and the vast of dreams
One star-browed, Jove-like, human-orbed; meseems
His feet are winged with music, shod with song;
Ah, Perseus, should'st thou, pitying, leave the sky
To loose my bonds—then all the fear were gone,
Soul touching soul, trust from distrust were won,
Like god and goddess 'fronted, thou and I;
Despair were slain, closed the unequal strife,
Thy great soul's strength should make weak purpose strong,
Thy hand should lead me up the slopes of Song,
Thy winged feet guide me to the peaks of Life!

Requital

What tho' you loved me once? Man's love at best
Is but a mood—the fancy of an hour,
You held all faith and truth a theme for jest,
Love's recompense, a smile. You knew your power.

What tho' you loved me then? You went away
And left my life an arid waste of pain;
And now—your best years spent, your idols clay—
You stretch imploring arms to me again.

What tho' you love me still? What tho' you say
The current of your life toward mine is set,
As vagrant stars obey the planets' sway,
Or perfume clingeth to the violet?

What tho' I once loved you? See in yon West
Day's fires have burned to ashes cold and gray;
So in my quiet heart love's wild unrest
By its own flame consumed, is dead for aye.

When Fades the Light

When fades the light along the western sky,
When dies the last dim rose to subtlest gray,
When darkling mere and mead enshadowed lie,
And Night's wide arms enfold the wearied Day;
When tired lilies ring their vesper bells
And dusking leaves speak whispered orison,
When cassocked Twilight breathing benison
His rosary of flashing fireflies tells—
Then ends the day-long struggle. Strong no more
I drift far out on Fancy's phantom sea,
Setting full sail for that forbidden shore
Where waiteth Love for me.

* * * * *

When fades the light from out my dying eyes,
And soul and sense seem slipping soft away,
When Death's swift shallop launched on Lethe lies
Waiting to wing me to the unknown Gray;
When things of time and thought grow strangely dim,
And the pent spirit strains to loose its bands
Till from the fettered feet and helpless hands
Shall fall life's shackles pitiless and grim—
Then shall the conflict cease. Enchained no more
My soul shall sail the silent unknown sea
Until it touch the unforbidden shore
Where Love awaiteth me.

Butterflies

As if a bed of bloom had taken wing—
Bright marigolds, nasturtiums, zinnias gay—
They breast the breeze or, lightly poising, cling
To other flowers not animate as they.

In the Dark Forest

The long gray twilight falls and deeper glooms
Close round the graying wood that dimmer grows
As dies the Day's last yearning tint of rose,
And Dusk spins shadows on her eldritch looms.

The black bat flits, the eerie white moth flies—
Wan ghost of yesterday's bright butterfly—
The dusking forest pools uplooking lie
Like graveless dead men's staring, sightless eyes.

Ah, eerie, eerie is the lonely wood,
But lo! the faeries light their firefly lamps,
Elusive foxfire flames from marish damp;
Hastes to the morris-dance an elfin brood;
A far bell chimes, the cricket cheerly shrills,
The droning beetle sounds his hoarse bassoon
And hylas trill; eftsoon the rising moon
The ambient air to molten silver thrills.

Then all the lyric night is set to song!
The cuckoo calls, the plaining whippoorwill
Cries faint and far away; more distant still
The hoopoe, hid his marshy haunts among,
Wails with the cry of some lost soul in pain;
The nightingale engilds the pulsant dark
With golden-throated melody—but hark!
The night-jar's discord mars the perfect strain.

The night wears on, black shadows throng apace,
The wood is still, the moon grows wan and old,

White marsh-mists wreathe like clammy arms, death-cold,
And moth-wings like dead fingers sweep my face;
The bittern wailing leaves the sombre pool,
Voicing the world-old pain that never dies;
The owl with ghoulish laughter outward flies
Like some weird Vivien shrieking, "Fool!" and "Fool!"

Insatiate

What though she lieth mute on yonder hill?
Though ivy green and shadowy eglatere
Have held in tender fold through many a year
Her quiet grave, I fear her—fear her still.

He loved her once. Ay, though he hold me fast
And sear my lips with kisses burning-sweet,
No touch of mine can make his life replete
For man's first love is oftentimes his last.

A still face glimmers through my dreams for aye.
E'en when I strain him close with feverish grasp
Wan grave-cold fingers loose the clinging clasp,
And grave-cold lips my fervid kisses stay.

She lives incarnate in each flower fair,
Her eyes illumine the violets in my hand,
The golden-rod that lights the Autumn land
Seems but the scattered star-dust of her hair.

Love's perfect flower may never bloom for me—
For me his wife. For ah! I fear her still
Who lies forever mute on yonder hill.
He loved her once. Would God that I were she!

Table of Contents: Slight listing changes were made to match poem titles.

Page [29](#): Added opening parenthesis:

(And I knew that tho' many a woman had loved you,
Till that moment, the glance of no woman had moved you!)

Page [46](#): Added closing parenthesis:

(Thank God, he suffered so brief a while)

Page [70](#): Corrected wathway to pathway:

And where the pathway breasts the hill,

Page [79](#): Added a blank line after first stanza:

Piping "Good-bye, good-bye!"

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