

A Jongleur Strayed eBook

A Jongleur Strayed by Richard Le Gallienne

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Page 1

INTRODUCTION

One Spring day in London, long before the invention of freak verse and Freudism, I was standing in front of the Cafe Royal in Regent Street when there emerged from its portals the most famous young writer of the day, the Poet about whose latest work "The Book Bills of Narcissus" all literary London was then talking.

Richard Le Gallienne was the first real poet I had ever laid eyes upon in the flesh and it seemed to my rapt senses that this frock-coated young god, with the classic profile and the dark curls curving from the impeccable silk "tile" that surmounted them as curve the acanthus leaves of a Corinthian capital, could be none other than Anacreon's self in modern shape.

I can see Le Gallienne now, as he steps across the sunlit sidewalk and with gesture Mercurian hails the passing Jehu. I can even hear the quick clud of the cab doors as the smartly turning hansom snatches from my view the glass-dimmed face I was not to behold again until years later at the house of a mutual friend in New York.

In another moment the swiftly moving vehicle was dissolved in the glitter of Regent Street and I fell to musing upon the curious interlacement of parts in this picture puzzle of life.

Here was a common Cabby, for the time being combining in himself the several functions of guide-book, chattel-mortgage and writ of habeas corpus on the person of the most popular literary idol of the hour and all for the matter of maybe no more than half a crown, including the *pourboire*!

Who would not have rejoiced to change places with that cabman! And how might not Pegasus have envied that cab-horse!

* * * * *

Now after all these years it has come to pass that I am to change places with the cabman.

Perched aloft in the driver's seat of the First Person Singular, it is my proud privilege to crack the prefatory whip and start this newest and best Le Gallienne Vehicle upon its course through the garlanded Via Laurea to the Sign of the Golden Sheaf.

Look at it well, Dear People, before it starts, this golden vehicle of Richard Le Gallienne.

Consider how it is built on the authentic lines of the best workmanship, made to last for generations, maybe for ever.



Take note of its springs so perfectly hung that the Muse may ride in luxurious ease, unjarred by metrical joltings as befits the Queen.

Mark the mirror smooth surface of the lacquer that only time and tireless labour can apply.

Before this Master Coach of Poesy the rattle-jointed Tin Lizzie of Free Verse and the painted jazz wagon of Futurism and the cheap imitation of the Chinese palanquin must turn aside, they have no right of way, these literary road-lice on the garlanded Via Laurea.

With angry thumb, the traffic cop Time will jerk them back to the side streets and byways where they belong, to make way for the Golden Coach of Richard Le Gallienne.



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OLIVER HERFORD

I

An echo from Horace

*Lusisti est, et edisti, atque bibisti;
Tempus abire, tibi est.*

Take away the dancing girls, quench the lights, remove
Golden cups and garlands sere, all the feast; away
Lutes and lyres and Lalage; close the gates, above
Write upon the lintel this; *Time is done for play!*
Thou hast had thy fill of love, eaten, drunk; the show
Ends at last, 'twas long enough—time it is to go.

Thou hast played—ah! heart, how long!—past all count were they,
Girls of gold and ivory, bosomed deep, all snow,
Leopard swift, and velvet loined, bronze for hair, wild clay
Turning at a touch to flame, tense as a strung bow.
Cruel as the circling hawk, tame at last as dove,—
Thou hast had thy fill and more than enough of love.

Thou hast eaten; peacock's tongues,—fed thy carp with slaves,—
Nests of Asiatic birds, brought from far Cathay,
Umbrian boars, and mullet roes snatched from stormy waves;
Half thy father's lands have gone one strange meal to pay;
For a morsel on thy plate ravished sea and shore;
Thou hast eaten—'tis enough, thou shalt eat no more.

Thou hast drunk—how hast thou drunk! mighty vats, whole seas;
Vineyards purpling half a world turned to gold thy throat,
Falernian, true Massic, the gods' own vintages,
Lakes thou hast swallowed deep enough galleys tall to float;
Wildness, wonder, wisdom, all, drunkenness divine,
All that dreams within the grape, madness too, were thine.

Time it is to go and sleep—draw the curtains close—
Tender strings shall lull thee still, mellow flutes be blown,
Still the spring shall shower down on thy couch the rose,
Still the laurels crown thine head, where thou dreamest alone.
Thou didst play, and thou didst eat, thou hast drunken deep,
Time at last it is to go, time it is to sleep.



Ballade of the oldest Duel in the world

A battered swordsman, slashed and scarred,
I scarce had thought to fight again,
But love of the old game dies hard,
So to't, my lady, if you're fain!
I'm scarce the mettle to refrain,
I'll ask no quarter from your art—
But what if we should both be slain!
I fight you, darling, for your heart.

I warn you, though, be on your guard,
Nor an old swordsman's craft disdain,
He jests at scars—what saith the Bard?
Love's wounds are real, and fierce the pain;
If we should die of love, we twain!
You laugh—*en garde* then—so we start;
Cyrano-like, here's my refrain:
I fight you, darling, for your heart.

If compliments I interlard
Twixt feint and lunge, you'll not complain
Lacking your eyes, the night's un-starred,
The rose is beautiful in vain,
In vain smells sweet—Rose-in-the-Brain,
Dizzying the world—a touch! sweet smart!—
Only the envoi doth remain:
I fight you, darling, for your heart.



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Envoi

Princess, I'm yours; the rose-red rain
Pours from my side—but see! I dart
Within your guard—poor pretty stain!
I fight you, darling, for your heart.

Sorcery

Face with the forest eyes,
And the wayward wild-wood hair,
How shall a man be wise,
When a girl's so fair;
How, with her face once seen,
Shall life be as it has been,
This many a year?

Beautiful fearful thing!
You undulant sorcery!
I dare not hear you sing,
Dance not for me;
The whiteness of your breast,
Divinely manifest
I must not see.

Too late, thou luring child,
Moon matches little moon;
I must not be beguiled,
With the honied tune:
Yet O to lay my head
Twixt moon and moon!
'Twas so my sad heart said,
Only last June.

The dryad

My dryad hath her hiding place
Among ten thousand trees.
She flies to cover
At step of a lover,
And where to find her lovely face
Only the woodland bees
Ever discover,
Bringing her honey



From meadows sunny,
 Cowslip and clover.

Vainly on beech and oak I knock
 Amid the silent boughs;
 Then hear her laughter,
 The moment after,
Making of me her laughing-stock
 Within her hidden house.

The young moon with her wand of pearl
 Taps on her hidden door,
 Bids her beauty flower
 In that woodland bower,
All white like a mortal girl,
 With moonshine hallowed o'er.

Yet were there thrice ten thousand trees
 To hide her face from me,
 Not all her fleeing
 Should 'scape my seeing,
Nor all her ambushed sorceries
 Secure concealment be
 For her bright being.

Yea! should she by the laddered pine
 Steal to the stars on high,
 Her fairy whiteness,
 Hidden in brightness,
Her hiding-place would so out-shine
 The constellated sky,
 She could not 'scape the eye
Of my pursuing,
 Nor her fawn-foot lightness
Out-speed my wooing.

May is back

May is back, and You and I
 Are at the stream again—
The leaves are out,
And all about
The building birds begin
To make a merry din:
May is back, and You and I
 Are at the dream again.



May is back, and You and I
Lie in the grass again,—
The butterfly
Flits painted by,
The bee brings sudden fear,
Like people talking near;
May is back, and You and I
Are lad and lass again.

May is back, and You and I
Are heart to heart again,—
In God's green house
We make our vows
Of summer love that stays
Faithful through winter days;
May is back, and You and I
Shall never part again.



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Moon-marketing

Let's go to market in the moon,
And buy some dreams together,
Slip on your little silver shoon,
And don your cap and feather;
No need of petticoat or stocking—
No one up there will think it shocking.

Across the dew,
Just I and you,
With all the world behind us;
Away from rules,
Away from fools,
Where nobody can find us.

Two birthdays

Your birthday, sweetheart, is my birthday too,
For, had you not been born,
I who began to live beholding you
Up early as the morn,
That day in June beside the rose-hung stream,
Had never lived at all—
We stood, do you remember? in a dream
There by the water-fall.

You were as still as all the other flowers
Under the morning's spell;
Sudden two lives were one, and all things "ours"—
How we can never tell.
Surely it had been fated long ago—
What else, dear, could we think?
It seemed that we had stood for ever so,
There by the river's brink.

And all the days that followed seemed as days
Lived side by side before,
Strangely familiar all your looks and ways,
The very frock you wore;
Nothing seemed strange, yet all divinely new;
Known to your finger tips,
Yet filled with wonder every part of you,
Your hair, your eyes, your lips.



The wise in love say love was ever thus
Through endless Time and Space,
Heart linked to heart, beloved, as with us,
Only one face—one face—
Our own to love, however fair the rest;
'Tis so true lovers are,
For ever breast to breast,
On—on—from star to star.

Song

My eye upon your eyes—
So was I born,
One far-off day in Paradise,
A summer morn;
I had not lived till then,
But, wildered, went,
Like other wandering men,
Nor what Life meant
Knew I till then.

My hand within your hand—
So would I live,
Nor would I ask to understand
Why God did give
Your loveliness to me,
But I would pray
Worthier of it to be,
By night and day,
Unworthy me!

My heart upon your heart—
So would I die,
I cannot think that God will part
Us, you and I;
The work he did undo,
That summer morn;
I lived, and would die too,
Where I was born,
Beloved, in you.

The faithful lover

All beauty is but thee in echo-shapes,
No lovely thing but echoes some of thee,
Vainly some touch of thy perfection apes,
Sighing as fair as thou thyself to be;



Therefore, be not disquieted that I
On other forms turn oft my wandering gaze,
Nor deem it anywise disloyalty:
Nay! 'tis the pious fervour of my eye,

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That seeks thy face in every other face.
As in the mirrored salon of a queen,
Flashes from glass to glass, as she walks by,
In sweet reiteration still—the queen!
So is the world for thee to walk in, sweet;
But to see thee is all things to have seen.
And, as the moon in every crystal lake,
Walking the heaven with little silver feet,
Sees each bright copy her reflection take,
And every dew-drop holds its little glass,
To catch her loveliness as she doth pass,
So do all things make haste to copy thee.
I, then, to see thee thus over and over,
Am wistful too all lovely shapes to see,
For each thus makes me more and more thy lover.

Love's tenderness

Deem not my love is only for the bloom,
The honey and the marble, that is You;
Tis so, Beloved, common loves consume
Their treasury, and vanish like the dew.
Nay, but my love's a thing that's far more true;
For little loves a little hour hath room,
But not for us their brief and trivial doom,
In a far richer soil our loving grew,
From deeper wells of being it upsprings;
Nor shall the wildest kiss that makes one mouth,
Draining all nectar from the flowered world,
Slake its divine unfathomable drouth;
And, when your wings against my heart lie furled,
With what a tenderness it dreams and sings!

Anima Mundi

Let all things vanish, if but you remain;
For if you stay, beloved, what is gone?
Yet, should you go, all permanence is vain,
And all the piled abundance is as none.



With you beside me in the desert sand,
Your smile upon me, and on mine your hand,
 Oases green arise, and camel-bells;
For in the long adventure of your eyes
Are all the wandering ways to Paradise.

Existence, in your being, comes and goes;
What were the garden, love, without the rose?
In vain were ears to hear,
 And eyes in vain,
Lacking your ordered music, sphere to sphere,
 Blind, should your beauty blossom not again.

The pulse that shakes the world with rhythmic beat
Is but the passing of your little feet;
And all the singing vast of all the seas,
 Down from the pole
To the Hesperides,
 Is but the praying echo of your soul.

Therefore, beloved, know that this is true—
The world exists and vanishes in you!
Tis not a lover's fancy; ask the sky
If all its stars depend not, even as I,
Upon your eyelids, when they open or close;
And let the garden answer with the rose.

Ballade of the unchanging beloved

(To I—a)

When rumour fain would fright my ear
 With the destruction and decay
Of things familiar and dear,
 And vaunt of a swift-running day
 That sweeps the fair old Past away;
Whatever else be strange and new,
 All other things may go or stay,
So that there be no change in you.



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These loud mutations others fear
Find me high-fortressed 'gainst dismay,
They trouble not the tranquil sphere
That hallows with immortal ray
The world where love and lovers stray
In glittering gardens soft with dew—
O let them break and burn and slay,
So that there be no change in you.

Let rapine its republics rear,
And murder its red sceptre sway,
Their blood-stained riot comes not near
The quiet haven where we pray,
And work and love and laugh and play;
Unchanged, our skies are ever blue,
Nothing can change, for all they say,—
So that there be no change in you.

Envoi

Princess, let wild men brag and bray,
The pure, the beautiful, the true.
Change not, and changeless we as they—
So that there be no change in you.

Love's arithmetic

You often ask me, love, how much I love you,
Bidding my fancy find
An answer to your mind;
I say: "Past count, as there are stars above you."
You shake your head and say,
"Many and bright are they,
But that is not enough."

Again I try:
"If all the leaves on all the trees
Were counted over,
And all the waves on all the seas,
More times your lover,
Yea! more than twice ten thousand times am I."
"Tis not enough," again you make reply.



“How many blades of grass,” one day I said,
“Are there from here to China? how many bees
Have gathered honey through the centuries?
Tell me how many roses have bloomed red
Since the first rose till this rose in your hair?
How many butterflies are born each year?
How many raindrops are there in a shower?
How many kisses, darling, in an hour?”
Thereat you smiled, and shook your golden head;
“Ah! not enough!” you said.
Then said I: “Dear, it is not in my power
To tell how much, how many ways, my love;
Unnumbered are its ways even as all these,
Nor any depth so deep, nor height above,
May match therewith of any stars or seas.”
“I would hear more,” you smiled . . .

“Then, love,” I said,
“This will I do: unbind me all this gold
Too heavy for your head,
And, one by one, I’ll count each shining thread,
And when the tale of all its wealth is told . . .”
“As much as that!” you said—
“Then the full sum of all my love I’ll speak,
To the last unit tell the thing you ask . . .”
Thereat the gold, in gleaming torrents shed,
Fell loose adown each cheek,
Hiding you from me; I began my task.

“Twill last our lives,” you said.

Beauty’s wardrobe

My love said she had nought to wear;
Her garments all were old,
And soon her body must go bare
Against the winter’s cold.



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I took her out into the dawn,
And from the mountain's crest
Unwound long wreaths of misty lawn,
And wound them round her breast.

Then passed we to the maple grove,
Like a great hall of gold,
The yellow and the red we wove
In rustling flounce and fold.

"Now, love," said I, "go, do it on!
And I would have you note
No lovely lady dead and gone
Had such a petticoat."

Then span I out of milkweeds fine
Fair stockings soft and long,
And other things of quaint design
That unto maids belong.

And beads of amber and of pearl
About her neck I strung,
And in the bronze of her thick hair
The purple grape I hung. . . .

Then led her to a glassy spring,
And bade her look and see
If any girl in all the world
Had such fine clothes as she.

The valley

I will walk down to the valley
And lay my head in her breast,
Where are two white doves,
The Queen of Love's,
In a silken nest;
And, all the afternoon,
They croon and croon
The one word "Rest!"
And a little stream
That runs thereby
Sings "Dream!"
Over and over



It sings—
“O lover,
Dream!”

Ballade of the bees of trebizond

There blooms a flower in Trebizond
Stored with such honey for the bee,
(So saith the antique book I conned)
Of such alluring fragrancy,
Not sweeter smells the Eden-tree;
Thither the maddened feasters fly,
Yet—so alas! is it with me—
To taste that honey is to die.

Beloved, I, as foolish fond,
Feast still my eyes and heart on thee,
Asking no blessedness beyond
Thy face from morn till night to see,
Ensorcelled past all remedy;
Even as those foolish bees am I,
Though well I know my destiny—
To taste that honey is to die.

O'er such a doom shall I despond?
I would not from thy snare go free,
Release me not from thy sweet bond,
I live but in thy mystery;
Though all my senses from me flee,
I still would glut my glazing eye,
Thou nectar of mortality—
To taste that honey is to die.

Envoi

Princess, before I cease to be,
Bend o'er my lips so burning dry
Thy honeycombs of ivory—
To taste that honey is to die.

Broken tryst

Waiting in the woodland, watching for my sweet,
Thinking every leaf that stirs the coming of her feet,
Thinking every whisper the rustle of her gown,
How my heart goes up and up, and then goes down and down.



First it is a squirrel, then it is a dove,
Then a red fox feather-soft and footed like a dream;
All the woodland fools me, promising my love;
I think I hear her talking—'tis but the running stream.



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Vowelled talking water, mimicking her voice—
O how she promised she'd surely come to-day!
There she comes! she comes at last! O heart of mine rejoice—
Nothing but a flight of birds winging on their way.

Lonely grows the afternoon, empty grows the world;
Day's bright banners in the west one by one are furled,
Sadly sinks the lingering sun that like a lover rose,
One by one each woodland thing loses heart and goes.

Back along the woodland, all the day is dead,
All the green has turned to gray, and all the gold to lead;
O 'tis bitter cruel, sweet, to treat a lover so:
If only I were half a man . . . I'd let the baggage go.

The Rival

She failed me at the tryst:
All the long afternoon
The golden day went by,
Until the rising moon;
But, as I waited on,
Turning my eyes about,
Aching for sight of her,
Until the stars came out,—
Maybe 'twas but a dream—
There close against my face,
"Beauty am I," said one,
"I come to take her place."

And then I understood
Why, all the waiting through,
The green had seemed so green,
The blue had seemed so blue,
The song of bird and stream
Had been so passing sweet,
For all the coming not
Of her forgetful feet;
And how my heart was tranced,
For all its lonely ache,
Gazing on mirrored rushes
Sky-deep in the lake.
Said Beauty: "Me you love,
You love her for my sake."



The quarrel

Thou shall not me persuade
This love of ours
Can in a moment fade,
Like summer flowers;

That a swift word or two,
In angry haste,
Our heaven shall undo,
Our hearts lay waste.

For a poor flash of pride,
A cold word spoken,
Love shall not be denied,
Or long troth broken.

Yea; wilt thou not relent?
Be mine the wrong,
No more the argument,
Dear love, prolong.

The summer days go by,
Cease that sweet rain,
Those angry crystals dry,
Be friends again.

So short a time at best
Is ours to play,
Come, take me to thy breast—
Ah! that's the way.

Lovers

Why should I ask perfection of thee, sweet,
That have so little of mine own to bring?
That thou art beautiful from head to feet—
Is that, beloved, such a little thing,
That I should ask more of thee, and should fling
Thy largesse from me, in a world like this,
O generous giver of thy perfect kiss?

Thou gavest me thy lips, thine eyes, thine hair;
I brought thee worship—was it not thy due?
If thou art cruel—still art thou not fair?
Roses thou gavest—shalt thou not bring rue?
Alas! have I not brought thee sorrow too?

How dare I face the future and its drouth,
Missing that golden honeycomb thy mouth?



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Kiss and make up—'tis the wise ancient way;
Back to my arms, O bountiful deep breast!
No more of words that know not what they say;
To kiss is wisdom—folly all the rest.
Dear loveliness so mercifully pressed
Against my heart—I shake with sudden fear
To think—to losing thee I came so near.

Shadows

Shadows! the only shadows that I know
Are happy shadows of the light of you,
The radiance immortal shining through
Your sea-deep eyes up from the soul below;
Your shadow, like a rose's, on the grass
Where your feet pass.

The shadow of the dimple in your chin,
The shadow of the lashes of your eyes,
As on your cheek, soft as a moth, it lies;
And, as a church, I softly enter in
The solemn twilight of your mighty hair,
Down falling there.

These are Love's shadows, Love knows none but these:
Shadows that are the very soul of light,
As morning and the morning blossom bright,
Or jewelled shadows of moon-haunted seas;
The darkest shadows in this world of ours
Are made of flowers.

After tibullus

Illius est nobis lege colendus amor

On her own terms, O lover, must thou take
The heart's beloved: be she kind, 'tis well,
Cruel, expect no more; not for thy sake
But for the fire in thee that melts her snows
For a brief spell
She loves thee—"loves" thee! Though thy heart should break,
Though thou shouldst lie athirst for her in hell,
She could not pity thee: who of the Rose,
Or of the Moon, asks pity, or return



Of love for love? and she is even as those.
Beauty is she, thou Love, and thou must learn,
O lover, this:
Thine is she for the music thou canst pour
Through her white limbs, the madness, the deep dream;
Thine, while thy kiss
Can sweep her flaming with thee down the stream
That is not thou nor she but merely bliss;
The music ended, she is thine no more.

In her Eternal Beauty bends o'er thee,
Be thou content;
She is the evening star in thy hushed lake
Mirrored,—be glad;
A soul-less creature of the element,
Nor good, nor bad;
That which thou callest to in the far skies
Comes to thee in her eyes;
That thou mayst slake
Thy love of lilies, lo! her breasts! Be wise,
Ask not that she, as thou, should human be,
She that doth smell so sweet of distant heaven;
Pity is mortal leaven,
Dews know it not, nor morning on the hills,
And who hath yet found pity of the sea
That blesses, knowing not, and, not knowing, kills;
And sister unto all of these is she,
Whose face, as theirs, none reads; whose heart none knows;
Whose words are as the wind's



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words, and whose ways,
 O lover, learn,
 Swerve not, or turn
 Aside for prayers, or broken-hearted praise:
The young moon looks not back as on she goes.
On their own terms, O lover!—Girl, Moon, Rose.

A warning

We that were born, beloved, so far apart,
 So many seas and lands,
The gods, one sudden day, joined heart to heart,
 Locked hands in hands,
Distance relented and became our friend,
And met, for our sakes, world's end with world's end.
The earth was centred in one flowering plot
Beneath thy feet, and all the rest was not.

Now wouldst thou rend our nearness, and again
 Bring distance back, and place
Poles and equators, mountain range and plain,
 Between me and thy face,
Undoing what the gods divinely planned;
Heart, canst thou part? hand, loose me from thy hand?
Not twice the gods their slighted gifts bestow;
Bethink thee well, beloved, ere thou dost go.

Primum Mobile

When thou art gone, then all the rest will go;
 Mornings no more shall dawn,
Roses no more shall blow,
 Thy lovely face withdrawn—
Nor woods grow green again after the snow;
 For of all these thy beauty was the dream,
The soul, the sap, the song;
 To thee the bloom and beam
Of flower and star belong,
 And all the beauty thine of bird and stream.

Thy bosom was the moonrise, and the morn
 The roses of thy cheek,



No lovely thing was born
But of thy face did speak—
How shall all these endure, of thee forlorn?
The sad heart of the world grew glad through thee,
Happy, men toiled and spun
That had thy smile for fee;
So flowers seek the sun,
So singing rivers hasten to the sea.

Yet, though the world, bereft, should bleakly bloom,
And wanly make believe
Against the general doom,
For me the earth you leave
Shall be for ever but a haunted room;
Yea! though my heart beat on a little space,
When thou art strangely gone
To thy far hiding-place,
Soon shall I follow on,
Out-footing Death to over-take thy face.

The last tryst

The cowbells wander through the woods,
'Neath arching boughs a stream slips by,
In all the ferny solitude
A chipmunk and a butterfly
Are all that is—and you and I.

This summer day, with all its flowers,
With all its green and gold and blue,
Just for a little while is ours,
Just for a little—I and you:
Till the stars rise and bring the dew.

One perfect day to us is given;
Tomorrow—all the aching years;
This is our last short day in heaven,
The last of all our kisses nears—
Then life too arid even for tears.

Here, as the day ends, we two end,
Two that were one, we said, for ever;
We had Eternity to spend,
And laughed for joy to know that never
Two so divinely one could sever.



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A year ago—how rich we seemed!
Like piles of gold our kisses lay,
Enough to last our lives we dreamed,
And lives to come, we used to say—
Yet are we at the last to-day.

The last, I say, yet scarce believe
What all my heart is black with knowing;
Doomed, I yet watch for some reprieve,
But know too well that love is going,
As sure as yonder stream is flowing.

Look round us how the hot sun burns
In plots of glory here and there,
Pouring its gold among the ferns:
So burned my lips upon your hair,
So rained our kisses, love, last year.

We saw not where a shadow loomed,
That, from its first auroral hour,
Our happy paradise fore-doomed;
A Fate within whose icy power
Love blooms as helpless as a flower.

Its shadow by the dial stands,
The golden moments shudder past,
Soon shall he smite apart our hands,
In vain we hold each other fast,
And the last kiss must come at last.

The last! then be it charged with fire,
With sacred passion wild and white,
With such a glory of desire,
We two shall vanish in its light,
And find each other in God's sight.

The heart on the sleeve

I wore my heart upon my sleeve,
Tis most unwise, they say, to do—
But then how could I but believe
The foolish thing was safe with you?
Yet, had I known, 'twas safer far
With wolves and tigers, the wild sea



Were kinder to it than you are—
Sweetheart, how you must laugh at me!

Yet am I glad I did not know
That creatures of such tender bloom,
Beneath their sanctuary snow,
Were such cold ministers of doom;
For had I known, as I began
To love you, ere we flung apart,
I had not been so glad a man
As holds his lady to his heart.

And am I lonely here to-night
With empty eyes, the cause is this,
Your face it was that gave me sight,
My heart ran over with your kiss.
Still do I think that what I laid
Before the altar of your face,
Flower of words that shall not fade,
Were worthy of a moment's grace;

Some thoughtless, lightly dropped largesse,
A touch of your immortal hand
Laid on my brow in tenderness,
Though you could never understand.
And yet with hungered lips to touch
Your feet of pearl and in your face
To look a little was over-much—
In heaven is no such fair a place
As, broken-hearted, at your feet
To lie there and to kiss them, sweet.

At her feet

My head is at your feet,
Two Cytherean doves,
The same, O cruel sweet,
As were the Queen of Love's;
They brush my dreaming brows
With silver fluttering beat,
Here in your golden house,
Beneath your feet.



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No man that draweth breath
Is in such happy case:
My heart to itself saith—
Though kings gaze on her face,
I would not change my place;
To lie here is more sweet,
Here at her feet.

As one in a green land
Beneath a rose-bush lies,
Two petals in his hand,
With shut and dreaming eyes,
And hears the rustling stir,
As the young morning goes,
Shaking abroad the myrrh
Of each awakened rose;
So to me lying there
Comes the soft breath of her,—
O cruel sweet!—
There at her feet.

O little careless feet
That scornful tread
Upon my dreaming head,
As little as the rose
Of him who lies there knows
Nor of what dreams may be
Beneath your feet;
Know you of me,
Ah! dreams of your fair head,
Its golden treasure spread,
And all your moonlit snows,
Yea! all your beauty's rose
That blooms to-day so fair
And smells so sweet—
Shoulders of ivory,
And breasts of myrrh—
Under my feet.

Reliquiae

This is all that is left—this letter and this rose!
And do you, poor dreaming things, for a moment suppose



That your little fire shall burn for ever and ever on,
And this great fire be, all but these ashes, gone?

Flower! of course she is—but is she the only flower?
She must vanish like all the rest at the funeral hour,
And you that love her with brag of your all-conquering thew,
What, in the eyes of the gods, tall though you be, are you?

You and she are no more—yea! a little less than we;
And what is left of our loving is little enough to see;
Sweet the relics thereof—a rose, a letter, a glove—
That in the end is all that remains of the mightiest love.

Six-foot two! what of that? for Death is taller than he;
And, every moment, Death gathers flowers as fair as she;
And nothing you two can do, or plan or purpose or dream,
But will go the way of the wind and go the way of the stream.

Love's proud farewell

I am too proud of loving thee, too proud
Of the sweet months and years that now have end,
To feign a heart indifferent to this loss,
Too thankful-happy that the gods allowed
Our orbits cross,
Beloved and lovely friend;
And though I wend
Lonely henceforth along a road grown gray,
I shall not be all lonely on the way,
Companioned with the attar of thy rose,
Though in my garden it no longer blows.

Thou canst not give elsewhere thy gifts to me,
Or only seem to give;
Yea, not so fugitive
The glory that hath hallowed me and thee,
Not thou or I alone that marvel wrought
Immortal is the paradise of thought,
Nor ours to destroy,
Born of our hearts together, where bright streams
Ran through the woods for joy,
That heaven of our dreams.



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There shall it shine
Under green boughs,
So long as May and June bring leaves and flowers,
Couches of moss and fern and woven bowers,
Still thine and mine,
A golden house;
And, perchance, e'er the winter that takes all,
I, there alone in the deep listening wood,
Shall hear thy lost foot-fall,
And, scarce believing the beatitude,
Shall know thee there,
Wild heart to wild heart pressed,
And wrap me in the splendour of thine hair,
And laugh within thy breast.

The rose has left the garden

The Rose has left the garden,
Here she but faintly lives,
Lives but for me,
Within this little urn of pot-pourri
Of all that was
And never more can be,
While her black berries harden
On the wind-shaken tree.
Yet if my song a little fragrance gives,
'Tis not all loss,
Something I save
From the sweet grave
Wherein she lies,
Something she gave
That never dies,
Something that may still live
In these my words
That draw from her their breath,
And fain would be her birds
Still in her death.

II

The gardens of Adonis

Beloved, I would tell a ghostly thing
That hides beneath the simple name of Spring;



Wild beyond hope the news—the dead return,
The shapes that slept, their breath a frozen mist,
Ascend from out sarcophagus and urn,
Lips that were dust new redden to be kissed,
Fires that were quenched re-burn.

The gardens of Adonis bloom again,
Proserpina may hold the lad no more,
That in her arms the winter through hath lain;
Up flings he from the hollow-sounding door,
Where Love hath bruised her rosy breast in vain:
Ah! through their tears—the happy April rain—
They, like two stars aflame, together run,
Then lift immortal faces in the sun.

A faint far music steals from underground,
And to the spirit's ear there comes the sound,
The whisper vague, and rustle delicate,
Of myriad atoms stirring in their trance
That for the lifted hand of Order wait,
Taking their stations in the cosmic dance,
Mate linked to mystic mate.

And perished shapes rebuild themselves anew,
Nourished on essences of fire and dew,
And in earth's cheek, but now so wistful wan,
The colour floods, and from deep wells of power
Rises the sap of resurrection;
The dead branch buds, the dry staff breaks in flower,
The grass comes surging on.

These ghostly things that in November died,
How come they thus again adream with pride?
I saw the Red Rose lying in her tomb,
Yet comes she lovelier back, a redder rose;
What paints upon her cheek this vampire bloom?
Beloved, when to the dark thy beauty goes,
Thee too will Spring re-lume?



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Verily, nothing dies; a brief eclipse
Is all; and this blessed union of our lips
Shall bind us still though we have lips no more:
For as the Rose and as the gods are we,
Returning ever; but the shapes we wore
Shall have some look of immortality
More shining than before.

Make we our offerings at Adonis' shrine,
For this is Love's own resurrection day,
Bring we the honeyed cakes, the sacred wine,
And myrtle garlands on his altars lay:
*O Thou, beloved alike of Proserpine
And Aphrodite, to our prayers incline;
Be thou propitious to this love of ours,
And we, the summer long, shall bring thee flowers.*

Nature the healer

When all the world has gone awry,
And I myself least favour find
With my own self, and but to die
And leave the whole sad coil behind,
Seems but the one and only way;
Should I but hear some water falling
Through woodland veils in early May,
And small bird unto small bird calling—
O then my heart is glad as they.

Lifted my load of cares, and fled
My ghosts of weakness and despair,
And, unafraid, I raise my head
And Life to do its utmost dare;
Then if in its accustomed place
One flower I should chance find blowing,
With lovely resurrected face
From Autumn's rust and Winter's snowing—
I laugh to think of my disgrace.

A simple brook, a simple flower,
A simple wood in green array,—
What, Nature, thy mysterious power
To bind and heal our mortal clay?
What mystic surgery is thine,



Whose eyes of us seem all unheeding,
That even so sad a heart as mine
Laughs at the wounds that late were bleeding?—
Yea! sadder hearts, O Power Divine.

I think we are not otherwise
Than all the children of thy knee;
For so each furred and winged one flies,
Wounded, to lay its heart on thee;
And, strangely nearer to thy breast,
Knows, and yet knows not, of thy healing,
Asking but there awhile to rest,
With wisdom beyond our revealing—
Knows and yet knows not, and is blest.

Love eternal

The human heart will never change,
The human dream will still go on,
The enchanted earth be ever strange
With moonlight and the morning sun,
And still the seas shall shout for joy,
And swing the stars as in a glass,
The girl be angel for the boy,
The lad be hero for the lass.

The fashions of our mortal brains
New names for dead men's thoughts shall give,
But we find not for all our pains
Why 'tis so wonderful to live;
The beauty of a meadow-flower
Shall make a mock of all our skill,
And God, upon his lonely tower
Shall keep his secret—secret still.



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The old magician of the skies,
With coloured and sweet-smelling things,
Shall charm the sense and trance the eyes,
Still onward through a million springs;
And nothing old and nothing new
Into the magic world be born,
Yea! nothing older than the dew,
And nothing younger than the morn.

Delight and Destiny and Death
Shall still the mortal story weave,
Man shall not lengthen out his breath,
Nor stay when it is time to leave;
And all in vain for him to ask
His little meaning in the Whole,
Done well or ill his tiny task,
The mystic making of his soul.

Ah! love, and is it not enough
To have our part in this romance
Made of such planetary stuff,
Strange partners in the cosmic dance?
Though Life be all too swift a dream,
And its fair rose must fade and fall,
Life has no sorrow in its scheme
As never to have lived at all.

This fire that through our being runs,
When our two hearts together beat,
Is one with yonder burning sun's,
Two atoms that in glory meet;
What unimagined loss it were,
If that dread power in which we trust
Had left your eyes, your lips, your hair,
Nought but un-animated dust.

Unknown the thrilling touch divine
That sets our magic clay aflame,
That wrought your beauty to be mine,
And joy enough to speak your name;
Thanks be to Life that did this thing,
Unsought, beloved, for you and me,
Gave us the rose, and birds to sing,
The golden earth, the blue-robed sea.



The loveliest face and the wild rose

The loveliest face! I turned to her
Shut in 'mid savage rocks and trees;—
'Twas in the May-time of the year,
And our two hearts were filled with ease—
And pointed where a wild-rose grew,
Suddenly fair in that grim place:
“We should know all, if we but knew
Whence came this flower, and whence—this face.”

The loveliest face! My thoughts went around:
“Strange sister of this little rose,
So softly 'scaped from underground;
O tell me if your beauty knows,
Being itself so fair a thing,
How came this lovely thing so fair,
How came it to such blossoming,
Leaning so strangely from the air?

“The wonder of its being born,
So lone and lovely—even as you—
Half maiden-moon, half maiden-morn,
And delicately sad with dew;
How came it in this rocky place?
Or shall I ask the rose if she
Knows how this marvel of your face
On this harsh planet came to be?”

Earth's bluest eyes gazed into mine,
And on her head Earth's brightest gold
Made all the rocks with glory shine—
But still the secret went untold;
For rose nor girl, no more than I,
Their own mysterious meaning knew,
Save that alike from earth and sky
Each her enchanted being drew.



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Both from deep wells of wonder sprang,
Both children of the cosmic dream,
Alike with yonder bird that sang,
And little lives that flit and gleam;
Sparks from the central rose of fire
That at the heart of being burns,
That draws the lily from the mire
And trodden dust to beauty turns.

Strange wand of Beauty—that transforms
Old dross to dreams, that softly glows
On the fierce rainbowed front of storms,
And smiles on unascended snows,
That from the travail of lone seas
Wrests sighing shell and moonlit pearl,
And gathers up all sorceries
In the white being of one girl.

As in the woodland I walk

As in the woodland I walk, many a strange thing I learn—
How from the dross and the drift the beautiful things return,
And the fires quenched in October in April reburn;

How foulness grows fair with the stern lustration
of sleets and snows,
And rottenness changes back to the breath and the cheek
of the rose,
And how gentle the wind that seems wild to each blossom
that blows;

How the lost is ever found, and the darkness the door
of the light,
And how soft the caress of the hand that to shape
must not fear to smite,
And how the dim pearl of the moon is drawn from the gulf
of the night;

How, when the great tree falls, with its empire
of rustling leaves,
The earth with a thousand hands its sunlit ruin receives,
And out of the wreck of its glory each secret artist weaves



Splendours anew and arabesques and tints on his swaying loom,
Soft as the eyes of April, and black as the brows of doom,
And the fires give back in blue-eyed flowers the woodland
they consume;

How when the streams run dry, the thunder calls on the hills,
And the clouds spout silver showers in the laps
of the little rills,
And each spring brims with the morning star,
and each thirsty fountain fills;

And how, when the songs seemed ended, and all the music mute,
There is always somewhere a secret tune, some string
of a hidden lute,
Lonely and undismayed that has faith in the flower
and the fruit.

So I learn in the woods—that all things come again,
That sorrow turns to joy, and that laughter is born of pain,
That the burning gold of June is the gray of December's rain.

To A mountain spring

Strange little spring, by channels past our telling,
Gentle, resistless, welling, welling, welling;
Through what blind ways, we know not whence
You darkling come to dance and dimple—
Strange little spring!
Nature hath no such innocence,
And no more secret thing—
So mysterious and so simple;

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Earth hath no such fairy daughter
Of all her witchcraft shapes of water.
When all the land with summer burns,
And brazen noon rides hot and high,
And tongues are parched and grasses dry,
Still are you green and hushed with ferns,
And cool as some old sanctuary;
Still are you brimming o'er with dew
And stars that dipped their feet in you.

And I believe when none is by,
Only the young moon in the sky—
The Greeks of old were right about you—
A naiad, like a marble flower,
Lifts up her lovely shape from out you,
Swaying like a silver shower.

So in old years dead and gone
Brimmed the spring on Helicon,
Just a little spring like you—
Ferns and moss and stars and dew—
Nigh the sacred Muses' dwelling,
Dancing, dimpling, welling, welling.

Noon

Noon like a naked sword lies on the grass,
Heavy with gold, and Time itself doth drowse;
The little stream, too indolent to pass,
Loiters below the cloudy willow boughs,
That build amid the glare a shadowy house,
And with a Paradisal freshness brims
Amid cool-rooted reeds with glossy blade;
The antic water-fly above it skims,
And cows stand shadow-like in the green shade,
Or knee-deep in the grassy glimmer wade.

The earth in golden slumber dreaming lies,
Idly abloom, and nothing sings or moves,
Nor bird, nor bee; and even the butterflies,



Languid with noon, forget their painted loves,
Nor hath the woodland any talk of doves.
Only at times a little breeze will stir,
And send a ripple o'er the sleeping stream,
Or run its fingers through the willows' hair,
And sway the rushes momentarily agleam—
Then all fall back again into a dream.

A rainy day

The beauty of this rainy day,
All silver-green and dripping gray,
Has stolen quite my heart away
From all the tasks I meant to do,
Made me forget the resolute blue
And energetic gold of things . . .
So soft a song the rain-bird sings.

Yet am I glad to miss awhile
The sun's huge domineering smile,
The busy spaces mile on mile,
Shut in behind this shimmering screen
Of falling pearls and phantom green;
As in a cloister walled with rain,
Safe from intrusions, voices vain,
And hurry of invading feet,
Inviolate in my retreat:
Myself, my books, my pipe, my fire—
So runs my rainy-day desire.

Or I old letters may con o'er,
And dream on faces seen no more,
The buried treasure of the years,
Too visionary now for tears;
Open old cupboards and explore
Sometimes, for an old sweetheart's sake,
A delicate romantic ache,
Sometimes a swifter pang of pain
To read old tenderness again,
As though the ink were scarce yet dry,
And She still She and I still I.
What if I were to write as though
Her letter came an hour ago!
An hour ago!—This post-mark says . . .
But out upon these rainy days!
Come tie the packet up again,
The sun is back—enough of rain.



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In the city

Away from the silent hills and the talking
of upland waters,
The high still stars and the lonely moon
in her quarters,
I fly to the city, the streets, the faces, the towers;
And I leave behind me the hush and the dews
and the flowers,
The mink that steals by the stream a-shimmer
among the rocks,
The hawk o'er the barn-yard sailing, the little cub-bear
and the fox,
The woodchuck and his burrow, and the little snake at noon,
And the house of the yellow-jacket, and the cricket's
endless tune.

And what shall I find in the city that shall take
the place of these?
O I shall find my love there, and fall at her silken knees,
And for the moon her breast, and for the stars her eyes,
And under her shadowed hair the gardens of Paradise.

Country largesse

I bring a message from the stream
To fan the burning cheeks of town,
From morning's tower
Of pearl and rose
I bring this cup of crystal down,
With brimming dews agleam,
And from my lady's garden close
I bring this flower.

O walk with me, ye jaded brows,
And I will sing the song I found
Making a lonely rippling sound
Under the boughs.
The tinkle of the brook is there,
And cow-bells wandering through the fern,
And silver calls
From waterfalls,
And echoes floating through the air
From happiness I know not where,



And hum and drone where'er I turn
Of little lives that buzz and die;
And sudden lucent melodies,
Like hidden strings among the trees
Roofing the summer sky.

The soft breath of the briar I bring,
And wafted scents of mint and clover,
Rain-distilled balms the hill-winds fling,
Sweet-thoughted as a lover;
Incense from liliated urns a-swaying,
And the green smell of grass
Where men are haying.

As through the streets I pass,
With their shrill clatter,
This largesse from the hills and streams,
This quietude of flowers and dreams,
Round me I scatter.

Morn

Morn hath a secret that she never tells:
'Tis on her lips and in her maiden eyes—
I think it is the way to Paradise,
Or of the Fount of Youth the crystal wells.
The bee hath no such honey in her cells
Sweet as the balm that in her bosom lies,
As in her garden of the budding skies
She walks among the silver asphodels.

He that is loveless and of heart forlorn,
Let him but leave behind his haunted bed,
And set his feet toward yonder singing star,
Shall have for sweetheart this same secret morn;
She shall come running to him from afar,
And on her cool breast lay his lonely head.

The source



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Water in hidden glens

From the secret heart of the mountains,
Where the red fox hath its dens
And the gods their crystal fountains;
Up runnel and leaping cataract,
Boulder and ledge, I climbed and tracked,
Till I came to the top of the world and the fen
That drinks up the clouds and cisterns the rain,
And down through the floors of the deep morass
The procreant woodland essences drain—
The thunder's home, where the eagles scream
And the centaurs pass;
But, where it was born, I lost my stream.

'Twas in vain I said: "'Tis here it springs,
Though no more it leaps and no more it sings;"
And I thought of a poet whose songs I knew
Of morning made and shining dew—
I remembered the mire of the marshes too.

Autumn

The sad nights are here and the sad mornings,
The air is filled with portents and with warnings,
Clouds that vastly loom and winds that cry,
A mournful prescience
Of bright things going hence;
Red leaves are blown about the widowed sky,
And late disconsolate blooms
Dankly bestrew
The garden walks, as in deserted rooms
The parted guest, in haste to bid adieu,
Trinkets and shreds forgotten left behind,
Torn letters and a ribbon once so brave—
Wreckage none cares to save,
And hearts grow sad to find;
And phantom echoes, as of old foot-falls,
Wander and weary out in the thin air,
And the last cricket calls—
A tiny sorrow, shrilling "Where? ah! where?"

The rose in winter



When last I saw this opening rose
That holds the summer in its hand,
And with its beauty overflows
And sweetens half a shire of land,
It was a black and cindered thing,
Drearly rocking in the cold,
The relic of a vanished spring,
A rose abominably old.

Amid the stainless snows it grinned,
A foul and withered shape, that cast
Ribbed shadows, and the gleaming wind
Went rattling through it as it passed;
It filled the heart with a strange dread,
Hag-like, it made a whimpering sound,
And gibbered like the wandering dead
In some unhallowed burial-ground.

Whoso on that December day
Had seen it so deject and lorn,
So lone a symbol of decay,
Had dreamed of it this summer morn?
Divined the power that should relume
A flame so spent, and once more bring
That blackened being back to bloom,—
Who could have dreamed so strange a thing?

The frozen stream

Stream that leapt and danced
Down the rocky ledges,
All the summer long,
Past the flowered sedges,
Under the green rafters,
With their leafy laughs,
Murmuring your song:
Strangely still and tranced,
All your singing ended,



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Wizardly suspended,
Icily adream;
When the new buds thicken,
Can this crystal quicken,
Now so strangely sleeping,
Once more go a-leaping
Down the rocky ledges,
All the summer long,
Murmuring its song?

Winter magic

Winter that hath few friends yet numbers those
Of spirit erect and delicate of eye;
All may applaud sweet Summer, with her rose,
And Autumn, with her banners in the sky;
But when from the earth's cheek the colour goes,
Her old adorers from her presence fly.

So cold her bosom seems, such icy glare
Is in her eyes, while on the frozen mere
The shrill ice creaks in the congealing air;
Where is the lover that shall call her dear,
Or the devotion that shall find her fair?
The white-robed widow of the vanished year.

Yet hath she loveliness and many flowers,
Dreams hath she too and tender reveries,
Tranced mid the rainbows of her gleaming bowers,
Or the hushed temples of her pillared trees;
Summer has scarce such soft and silent hours,
Autumn has no such antic wizardries.

Yea! he that takes her to his bosom knows,
Lost in the magic crystal of her eyes,
Upon her vestal cheek a fairer rose,
What rapture and what passionate surprise
Awaits his kiss beneath her mask of snows,
And what strange fire beneath her pallor lies.



Beauty is hers all unconfused of sense,
Lustral, austere, and of the spirit fine;
No cloudy fumes of myrrh and frankincense
Drug in her arms the ecstasy divine;
But stellar awe that kneels in high suspense,
And hallowed glories of the inner shrine.

And, for the idle summer, in our blood
Pleasures hath she of rapid tingling joy,
With ruddy laughter 'neath her frozen hood,
Purging our mortal metal of alloy,
Stern benefactress of beatitude,
Turning our leaden age to girl and boy.

A lover's universe

When winter comes and takes away the rose,
And all the singing of sweet birds is done,
The warm and honeyed world lost deep in snows,
Still, independent of the summer sun,
In vain, with sullen roar,
December shakes my door,
And sleet upon the pane
Threatens my peace in vain,
While, seated by the fire upon my knee,
My love abides with me.

For he who, wise in time, his harvest yields
Reaped into barns, sweet-smelling and secure,
Smiles as the rain beats sternly on his fields,
For wealth is his no winter can make poor;
Safe all his waving gold
Shut in against the cold,
Treasure of summer grass—
So sit I with my lass,
My harvest sheaves of all her garnered charms
Safe in my happy arms.



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Still fragrant in the garden of her breast,
The flowers that fled with summer softly bloom,
The birds that shook with song each empty nest
Still, when she speaks, fill all the listening room,
Deep-sheltered from the storm
Within her blossoming form.
Flower-breathed and singing sweet
Is she from head to feet;
All summer in my sweetheart doth abide,
Though winter be outside.

So all the various wonder of the world,
The wizard moon and stars, the haunted sea,
In her small being mystically furled,
She brings as in a golden cup to me;
Within no other book
My eyes for wisdom look,
That have her eyes for lore;
And when the flaming door
Opens into the dark, what shall I fear
Adventuring with my dear?

To the golden wife

With laughter always on the darkest day,
She danced before the very face of dread,
Starry companion of my mortal way,
Pre-destined merrily to be my mate,
With eyes as calm, she met the eyes of Fate:
“For this it was that you and I were wed—
What else?” she smiled and said.

Fair-weather wives are any man’s to find, The pretty sisters of the butterfly, Gay when
the sun is out, and skies are kind; The daughters of the rainbow all may win— Pity their
lovers when the sun goes in! *Her* smiles are brightest 'neath the stormiest sky— Thrice
blest and all unworthy !!

Buried treasure

When the musicians hide away their faces,
And all the petals of the rose are shed,
And snow is drifting through the happy places,
And the last cricket’s heart is cold and dead;
O Joy, where shall we find thee?



O Love, where shall we seek?
For summer is behind thee,
And cold is winter's cheek.

Where shall I find me violets in December?
O tell me where the wood-thrush sings to-day!
Ah! heart, our summer-love dost thou remember
Where it lies hidden safe and warm away?
When woods once more are ringing
With sweet birds on the bough,
And brooks once more are singing,
Will it be there—thinkst thou?

When Autumn came through bannered woodlands sighing,
We found a place of moonlight and of tears,
And there, with yellow leaves for it to lie in,
Left it to dream, watched over by the spheres.
It lies like buried treasure
Beneath the winter's cold,
The love beyond all measure,
In heaps of living gold.

When April's here, with all her sweet adorning,
And all the joys steal back December hid,
Shall we not laughing run, some happy morning,
And of our treasure lift the leafy lid?
Again to find it dreaming,
Just as we left it still,
Our treasure far out-gleaming
Crocus and daffodil.



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The new husbandman

Brother that ploughs the furrow I late ploughed,
God give thee grace, and fruitful harvesting,
Tis fair sweet earth, be it under sun or cloud,
And all about it ever the birds sing.

Yet do I pray your seed fares not as mine
That sowed there stars along with good white grain,
But reaped thereof—be better fortune thine—
Nettles and bitter herbs, for all my gain.

Inclement seasons and black winds, perchance,
Poisoned and soured the fragrant fecund soil,
Till I sowed poppies 'gainst remembrance,
And took to other furrows my laughing toil.

And other men as I that ploughed before
Shall watch thy harvest, trusting thou mayst reap
Where we have sown, and on your threshing floor
Have honest grain within thy barns to keep.

Paths that wind . . .

Paths that wind
O'er the hills and by the streams
I must leave behind—
Dawns and dews and dreams.
Trails that go
Through the woods and down the slopes
To the vale below;
Done with fears and hopes,
I must wander on
Till the purple twilight ends,
Where the sun has gone—
Faces, flowers and friends.

The immortal gods

The gods are there, they hide their lordly faces
From you that will not kneel—
Worship, and they reveal,
Call—and 'tis they!
They have not changed, nor moved from their high places,



The stars stream past their eyes like drifted spray;
Lovely to look on are they as bright gold,
They are wise with beauty, as a pool is wise.
Lonely with lilies; very sweet their eyes—
Bathed deep in sunshine are they, and very cold.

III

Ballade of woman

A woman! lightly the mysterious word
Falls from our lips, lightly as though we knew
Its meaning, as we say—a flower, a bird,
Or say the moon, the stream, the light, the dew,
Simple familiar things, mysterious too;
Or as a star is set down on a chart,
Named with a name, out yonder in the blue:
A woman—and yet how much more thou art!

So lightly spoken, and so lightly heard,
And yet, strange word, who shall thy sense construe?
What sage hath yet fit designation dared?
Yet I have sought the dictionaries through,
And of thy meaning found me not a clue;
Blessing and breaking still the firmest heart,
So fairy false, yet so divinely true:
A woman—and yet how much more thou art!

Mother of God, and Circe, bosom-bared,
That nursed our manhood, and our manhood slew;
First dream, last sigh, all the long way we fared,
Sweeter than honey, bitterer than rue;
Thou fated radiance sorrowing men pursue,
Thou art the whole of life—the rest but part
Of thee, all things we ever dream or do;
A woman—and yet how much more thou art!



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Envoi

Princess, that all this craft of moonlight threw
Across my path, this deep immortal smart
Shall still burn on when winds my ashes strew:
A woman—and yet how much more thou art!

The magic flower

You bear a flower in your hand,
You softly take it through the air,
Lest it should be too roughly fanned,
And break and fall, for all your care.

Love is like that, the lightest breath
Shakes all its blossoms o'er the land,
And its mysterious cousin, Death,
Waits but to snatch it from your hand.

O some day, should your hand forget,
Your guardian eyes stray elsewhere,
Your cheeks shall all in vain be wet,
Vain all your penance and your prayer.

God gave you once this creature fair,
You two mysteriously met;
By Time's strange stream
There stood this Dream,
This lovely Immortality
Given your mortal eyes to see,
That might have been your darling yet;
But in the place
Of her strange face
Sorrow will stand forever more,
And Sorrow's hand be on your brow,
And vainly you shall watch the door
For her so lightly with you now,
And all the world be as before.
Ah; Spring shall sing and Summer bloom,
And flowers fill Life's empty room,
And all the singers sing in vain,
Nor bring you back your flower again.



O have a care!—for this is all:
Let not your magic blossom fall.

Ballade of love's cloister

Had I the gold that some so vainly spend,
For my lost loves a temple would I raise,
A shrine for each dear name: there should ascend
Incense for ever, and hymns of golden praise;
And I would live the remnant of my days,
Where hallowed windows cast their painted gleams,
At prayer before each consecrated face,
Kneeling within that cloister of old dreams.

And each fair altar, like a priest, I'd tend,
Trimming the tapers to a constant blaze,
And to each lovely and beloved friend
Garlands I'd bring, and virginal soft sprays
From April's bodice, and moon-breasted May's,
And there should be a sound for ever of streams
And birds 'mid happy leaves in that still place,—
Kneeling within that cloister of old dreams.

O'er missals of hushed memories would I bend,
And thrilling scripts of bosom-scented phrase,
Telling of love that never hath an end,
And sacred relics of wonder-working grace,
Strands of bright hair, and tender webs of lace,
Press to my lips—until the Present seems
The Past again to my ensorcelled gaze,—
Kneeling within that cloister of old dreams.

Envoi

Princesses unforgot, your lover lays
His heart upon your altars, and he deems
He treads again the fair love-haunted ways—
Kneeling within that cloister of old dreams.



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An old love letter

I was reading a letter of yours to-day,
The date—O a thousand years ago!
The postmark is there—the month was May:
How, in God's name, did I let you go?
What wonderful things for a girl to say!
And to think that I hadn't the sense to know—
What wonderful things for a man to hear!
O still beloved, O still most dear.

"Duty" I called it, and hugged the word
Close to my side, like a shirt of hair;
You laughed, I remember, laughed like a bird,
And somehow I thought that you didn't care.
Duty!—and Love, with her bosom bare!
No wonder you laughed, as we parted there—
Then your letter came with this last good-by—
And I sat splendidly down to die.

Nor Duty, nor Death, would have aught of me:
"He is Love's," they said, "he cannot be ours;"
And your laugh pursued me o'er land and sea,
And your face like a thousand flowers.
"Tis her gown!" I said to each rustling tree,
"She is coming!" I said to the whispered showers;
But you came not again, and this letter of yours
Is all that endures—all that endures.

These aching words—in your swift firm hand,
That stirs me still as the day we met—
That now 'tis too late to understand,
Say "hers is the face you shall ne'er forget;"
That, though Space and Time be as shifting sand,
We can never part—we are meeting yet.
This song, beloved, where'er you be,
Your heart shall hear and shall answer me.

Too late

Too late I bring my heart, too late 'tis yours;
Too late to bring the true love that endures;
Too long, unthrift, I gave it here and there,
Spent it in idle love and idle song;



Youth seemed so rich, with kisses all to spare—
Too late! too long!

Too late, O fairy woman; dreams and dust
Are in your hair, your face is dimly thrust
Among the flowers; and Time, that all forgets,
Even you forgets, and only I prolong
The face I love, with ache of vain regrets—
Too late! too long!

Too long I tarried, and too late I come,
O eyes and lips so strangely sealed and dumb:
My heart—what is it now, beloved, to you?
My love—that doth your holy silence wrong?
Ah! fairy face, star-crowned and chrismed with dew—
Too late! too long!

The door ajar

My door is always left ajar,
Lest you should suddenly slip through,
A little breathless frightened star;
Each footfall sets my heart abeat,
I always think it may be you,
Stolen in from the street.

My ears are evermore attent,
Waiting in vain for one blest sound—
The little frock, with lilac scent,
That used to whisper up the stair;
Then in my arms with one wild bound—
Your lips, your eyes, your hair.
Never the south wind through the rose,
Brushing its petals with soft hand,
Made such sweet talking as your clothes,
Rustling and fragrant as you came,
And at my aching door would stand—
Then vanish into flame.



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Chipmunk

Little chipmunk, do you know
All you mean to me?—
She and I and Long Ago,
And you there in the tree;
With that nut between your paws,
Half-way to your twittering jaws,
Jaunty with your striped coat,
Puffing out your furry throat,
Eyes like some big polished seed,
Plumed tail curved like half a lyre . . .

We pretended not to heed—
You, as though you would inquire
“Can I trust them?” . . . then a jerk,
And you’d skipped three branches higher,
Jaws again at work;
Like a little clock-work elf,
With all the forest to itself.

She was very fair to see,
She was all the world to me,
She has gone whole worlds away;
Yet it seems as though to-day,
Chipmunk, I can hear her say;
“Get that chipmunk, dear, for me——”
Chipmunk, you can never know
All she was to me.
That’s all—it was long ago.

Ballade of the dead face that never dies

The peril of fair faces all his days
No man shall ’scape: be it for joy or woe,
Each is the thrall of some predestined face
Divinely doomed to work his overthrow,
Transiently fair, as flowers in gardens blow,
Then fade, and charm no more our listless eyes;
But some fair faces ever fairer grow—
Beware of the dead face that never dies.

No snare young beauty for thy manhood lays,
No honeyed kiss the girls of Paphos know,



Shall hold thee as the silent smiling ways
Of her that went—yet only seemed to go—
With April blossoms and with last year's snow;
Each year she comes again in subtler guise,
And beckons us to her green bed below—
Beware of the dead face that never dies.

The living fade before her lunar gaze,
Her phantom youth their ruddy veins out-glow,
She lays cold fingers on the lips that praise
Aught save her lovely face of long ago;
Oblivious poppies all in vain we sow
Before the opening gates of Paradise;
There shalt thou find her pacing to and fro—
Beware of the dead face that never dies.

Envoi

Prince, take thy fill of love, for even so
Sad men grow happy and no other wise;
But love the quick—and as thy mortal foe
Beware of the dead face that never dies.

The end of laughter

O never laugh again!
Laughter is dead,
Deep hiding in her grave,
A sacred thing.
O never laugh again,
Never take hands and run
Through the wild streets,
Or sing,
Glad in the sun:
For she, the immortal sweetness of all sweets,
Took laughter with her
When she went away
With sleep.

O never laugh again!
Ours but to weep,
Ours but to pray.

The song that lasts

Songs I sang of lordly matters,
Life and death, and stars and sea;

Nothing of them now remains
But the song I sang for thee.



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Vain the learned elaborate metres,
Vain the deeply pondered line;
All the rest are dust and ashes
But that little song of thine.

The broker of dreams

Bring not your dreams to me—
Blown dust, and vapour, and the running stream—
Saying, "He, too, doth dream,
Touched of the moon."

Nay! wouldst thou vanish see
Thy darling phantoms,
Bring them then to me!
For my hard business—though so soft it seems—
Was ever dreams and dreams.

And as some stern-eyed broker smiles disdain,
Valuing at nought
Her bosom's locket, with its little chain,
Love's all that Love hath brought;
So must I weigh and measure
Thy fading treasure,
Sighing to see it go
As surely as the snow.

For I have such sad knowledge of all things
That shine like dew a little, all that sings
And ends its song in weeping—
Such sowing and such reaping!—
There is no cure but sleeping.

IV

At the sign of the lyre

(To the Memory of Austin Dobson)

Master of the lyric inn
Where the rarer sort so long
Drew the rein, to 'scape the din
Of the cymbal and the gong,
Toppers of the classic bin,—



Oporto, sherris and tokay,
Muscatel, and beaujolais—
Conning some old Book of Airs,
Lolling in their Queen Anne chairs—
Catch or glee or madrigal,
Writ for viol or virginal;
Or from France some courtly tune,
Gavotte, ridotto, rigadoon;
(Watteau and the rising moon);
Ballade, rondeau, triolet,
Villanelle or virelay,
Wistful of a statelier day,
Gallant, delicate, desire:
Where the Sign swings of the Lyre,
Garlands droop above the door,
Thou, dear Master, art no more.

Lo! about thy portals throng Sorrowing shapes that loved thy song: *Taste and Elegance* are there, The modish Muses of Mayfair, *Wit, Distinction, Form and Style, Humour*, too, with tear and smile.

Fashion sends her butterflies—
Pretty laces to their eyes,
Ladies from St. James's there
Step out from the sedan chair;
Wigged and scented dandies too
Tristely wear their sprigs of rue;
Country squires are in the crowd,
And little Phyllida sobs aloud.

Then stately shades I seem to see,
Master, to companion thee;
Horace and Fielding here are come
To bid thee to Elysium.
Last comes one all golden: Fame
Calls thee, Master, by thy name,
On thy brow the laurel lays,
Whispers low—"In After Days."

TO MADAME JUMEL

Of all the wind-blown dust of faces fair,
Had I a god's re-animating breath,
Thee, like a perfumed torch in the dim air
Lethean and the eyeless halls of death,
Would I relume; the cresset of thine hair,

Furiously bright, should stream across the gloom,
And thy deep violet eyes again should bloom.



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Methinks that but a pinch of thy wild dust,
Blown back to flame, would set our world on fire;
Thy face amid our timid counsels thrust
Would light us back to glory and desire,
And swords flash forth that now ignobly rust;
Maenad and Muse, upon thy lips of flame.
Madness too wise might kiss a clod to fame.

Like musk the charm of thee in the gray mould
That lies on by-gone traffickings of state,
Transformed a moment by that head of gold,
Touching the paltry hour with splendid Fate;
To "write the Constitution!" 'twere a cold,
Dusty and bloomless immortality,
Without that last wild dying thought of thee.

TO A BEAUTIFUL OLD LADY

(To the Sweet Memory of Lucy Hinton)

Say not—"She once was fair;" because the years
Have changed her beauty to a holier thing,
No girl hath such a lovely face as hers,
That hoards the sweets of many a vanished spring,
Stealing from Time what Time in vain would steal,
Culling perfections as each came to flower,
Bearing on each rare lineament the seal
Of being exquisite from hour to hour.

These eyes have dwelt with beauty night and morn,
Guarding the soul within from every stain,
No baseness since the first day she was born
Behind those star-lit brows could access again,
Bathed in the light that streamed from all things fair,
Turning to spirit each delicate door of sense,
And with all lovely shapes of earth and air
Feeding her wisdom and her innocence.

Life that, whate'er it gives, takes more away
From those that all would take and little give,
Enriched her treasury from day to day,
Making each hour more wonderful to live;
And touch by touch, with hands of unseen skill,
Transformed the simple beauty of a girl,



Finding it lovely, left it lovelier still,
A mystic masterpiece of rose and pearl.

Her grief and joy alike have turned to gold,
And tears and laughter mingled to one end,
With alchemy of living manifold:
If Life so wrought, shall Death be less a friend?
Nay, earth to heaven shall give the fairest face,
Dimming the haughty beauties of the sky;
Would I could see her softly take her place,
Sweeping each splendour with her queenly eye!

TO LUCY HINTON: December 19, 1921

O loveliest face, on which we look our last—
Not without hope we may again behold
Somewhere, somehow, when we ourselves have passed
Where, Lucy, you have gone, this face so dear,
That gathered beauty every changing year,
And made Youth dream of some day being old.

Some knew the girl, and some the woman grown,
And each was fair, but always 'twas your way
To be more beautiful than yesterday,
To win where others lose; and Time, the doom
Of other faces, brought to yours new bloom.
Now, even from Death you snatch mysterious grace,
This last perfection for your lovely face.



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So with your spirit was it day by day,
That spirit unextinguishably gay,
That to the very border of the shade
Laughed on the muttering darkness unafraid.
We shall be lonely for your lovely face,
Lonely for all your great and gracious ways,
But for your laughter loneliest of all.

Yet in our loneliness we think of one
Lonely no more, who, on the heavenly stair,
Awaits your face, and hears your step at last,
His dreamer's eyes a glory like the sun,
Again in his sad arms to hold you fast,
All your long honeymoon in heaven begun.

Thinking on that, O dear and loveliest friend,
We, in that bright beginning of this end,
Must bate our grief, and count our mortal loss
Only as his and your immortal gain,
Glad that for him and you it is so well.

Lucy, O Lucy, a little while farewell.

V

OTHER MATTERS, SACRED AND PROFANE

THE WORLD'S MUSQUETEER: TO MARSHAL FOCH

(Ballade a double refrain)

Marshal of France, yet still the Musqueteer,
Comrade at arms, on your bronzed cheek we press
The soldier's kiss, and drop the soldier's tear;
Brother by brother fought we in the stress
Of the locked steel, all the wild work that fell
For our reluctant doing; we that stormed hell
And smote it down together, in the sun
Stand here once more, with all our fighting done,
Garlands upon our helmets, sword and lance
Quiet with laurel, sharing the peace they won:
Soldier that saved the world in saving France.



Soldier that saved the world in saving France,
France that was Europe's dawn when light was none,
Clear eyes that with eternal vigilance
Pierce through the webs in nether darkness spun,
Soul of man's soul, his sentinel upon
The ramparts of the world: Ah! France, 'twas well
This soldier with the sword of Gabriel
Was yours and ours in all that dire duress,
This soldier, gentle as a child, that here
Stands shy and smiling 'mid a world's caress—
Marshal of France, yet still the Musqueteer.

Marshal of France, yet still the Musqueteer,
True knight and succourer of the world's distress
His might and skill we laurel, but more dear
Our soldier for that "parfit gentleness"
That ever in heroic hearts doth dwell,
That soul as tranquil as a vesper bell,
That glory in him that would glory shun,
Those kindly eyes alive with Gascon fun,
D'Artagnan's brother—still the old romance
Runs in the blood, thank God! and still shall run:
Soldier that saved the world in saving France.

ENVOI



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Soldier that saved the world in saving France,
Foch, to America's deep heart how near;
Betwixt us twain shall never come mischance.
Warrior that fought that war might disappear,
Far and for ever far the unborn year
That turns the ploughshare back into the spear—
But, must it come, then Foch shall lead the dance:
Marshal of France, yet still the Musqueteer.

WE ARE WITH FRANCE

We are with France—not by the ties
Of treaties made with tongue in cheek,
The ancient diplomatic lies,
The paper promises that seek
To hide the long maturing guile,
Planning destruction with a smile.

We are with France by bonds no seal
Of the stamped wax and tape can make,
Bonds no surprise of ambushed steel
With sneering devil's laughter break;
Nor need we any plighted speech
For our deep concord, each with each.

As ancient comrades tried and true
No new exchange of vows demand,
Each knows of old what each will do,
Nor needs to talk to understand;
So France with us and we with France—
Enough the gesture and the glance.

In a shared dream our loves began,
Together fought one fight and won,
The Dream Republican of Man,
And now as then our dream is one;
Still as of old our hearts unite
To dream and battle for the Right.

Nor memories alone are ours,
But purpose for the Future strong,
Across the seas two signal towers,
Keeping stern watch against the Wrong;



Seeking, with hearts of deep accord,
A better wisdom than the Sword.

We are with France, in brotherhood
Not of the spirit's task alone,
But kin in laughter of the blood:
Where Paris glitters in the sun,
A second home, like boys, we find,
And leave our grown-up cares behind.

SATAN: 1920

I read there is a man who sits apart,
A sort of human spider in his den,
Who meditates upon a fearful art—
The swiftest way to slay his fellow men.
Behind a mask of glass he dreams his hell:
With chemic skill, to pack so fierce a dust
Within the thunderbolt of one small shell—
Sating in vivid thought his shuddering lust—
Whole cities in one gasp of flame shall die,
Swept with an all-obliterating rain
Of sudden fire and poison from the sky;
Nothing that breathes be left to breathe again—
And only gloating eyes from out the air
Watching the twisting fires, and ears attent
For children's cries and woman's shrill despair,
The crash of shrines and towers in ruin rent.



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High in the sun the sneering airmen glide,
Glance at wrist-watches: scarce a minute gone
And London, Paris, or New York has died!
Scarce twice they look, then turn and hurry on.
And, far away, one in his quiet room
Dreams of a fiercer dust, a deadlier fume:
The wireless crackles him, "Complete success";
"Next time," he smiles, "in half a minute less!"
To this the climbing brain has won at last—
A nation's life gone like a shrivelled scroll—
And thus To-Day outstrips the dotard Past!
I envy not that man his devil's soul.

UNDER WHICH KING . . . ?

The fight I loved—the good old fight—
Was clear as day 'twixt Might and Right;
Satrap and slave on either hand,
Tiller and tyrant of the land;
One delved the earth the other trod,
The writhing worm, the thundering god.
Lords of an earth they deemed their own,
The tyrants laughed from throne to throne,
Scattered the gold and spilled the wine,
And deemed their foolish dust divine;
While, 'neath their heel, sublimely strove
The martyred hosts of Human Love.

Such was the fight I dreamed of old
'Twixt Labour and the Lords of Gold;
I deemed all evil in the king,
In Demos every lovely thing.
But now I see the battle set—
Albeit the same old banners yet—
With no clear issue to decide,
With Right and Might on either side;
Yet small the rumour is of Right—
But the bared arms of Might and Might
Brandish across the hate-filled lands,
With blood alike on both their hands.

MAN, THE DESTROYER



O spirit of Life, by whatsoe'er a name
Known among men, even as our fathers bent
Before thee, and as little children came
For counsel in Life's dread predicament,
Even we, with all our lore,
That only beckons, saddens and betrays,
Have no such key to the mysterious door
As he that kneels and prays.

The stern ascension of our climbing thought,
The martyred pilgrims of the soaring soul,
Bring us no nearer to the thing we sought,
But only tempt us further from the goal;
Yea! the eternal plan
Darkens with knowledge, and our weary skill
But makes us more of beast and less of man,
Fevered to hate and kill.

Loves flees with frightened eyes the world it knew,
Fades and dissolves and vanishes away,
And the sole art the sons of men pursue
Is to out-speed the slayer and to slay:
And lovely secrets won
From radiant nature and her magic laws
Serve but to stretch black deserts in the sun,
And glut destruction's jaws.



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Life! is it sweet no more? the same blue sky
Arches the woods; the green earth, filled with trees,
Glories with song, happy it knows not why,
Painted with flowers, and warm with murmurous bees;
This earth, this golden home,
Where men, like unto gods, were wont to dwell,
Was all this builded, with the stars for dome,
For man to make it hell?

Was it for this life blossomed with fair arts,
That for some paltry leagues of stolen land,
Or some poor squabble of contending marts,
Murder shall smudge out with its reeking hand
Man's faith and fanes alike;
And man be man no more—but a brute brain,
A primal horror mailed and fanged to strike,
And bring the Dark again?

Fool of the Ages! fitfully wise in vain;
Surely the heavens shall laugh!—the long long climb
Up to the stars, to dash him down again!
And all the travail of slow-moving Time
And birth of radiant wings,
A dream of pain, an agony for naught!
Highest and lowest of created things,
Man, the proud fool of thought.

THE LONG PURPOSES OF GOD

To Man in haste, flushed with impatient dreams
Of some great thing to do, so slowly done,
The long delay of Time all idle seems,
Idle the lordly leisure of the sun;
So splendid his design, so brief his span,
For all the faith with which his heart is burning,
He marvels, as he builds each shining plan,
That heaven's wheel should be so long in turning,
And God more slow in righteousness than Man.

Evil on evil mock him all about,
And all the forces of embattled wrong,
There are so many devils to cast out—
Save God be with him, how shall Man be strong?
With his own heart at war, to weakness prone,



And all the honeyed ways of joyous sinning,
How in this welter shall he hold his own,
And, single-handed, e'er have hopes of winning?
How shall he fight God's battle all alone?

He hath no lightnings in his puny hand,
Nor starry servitors to work his will,
Only his soul and his strong purpose planned,
His dream of goodness and his hate of ill;
He, but a handful of the eddying dust,
At the wind's fancy shaped, from nowhere blowing;
A moment man—then, with another gust,
A formless vapour into nowhere going,
Even as he dreams back into darkness thrust.

O so at least it seems—if life were his
A little longer! grant him thrice his years,
And God should see a better world than this,
Pure for the foul, and laughter for the tears:
So fierce a flame to burn the dross away
Dreams in his spark of life so swiftly fleeing:
If Man can do so much in one short day,
O strange it seems that an Eternal Being
Should in his purposes so long delay.



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Easy to answer—lo! the unfathomed time
Gone ere each small perfection came to flower,
Ere soul shone dimly in the wastes of slime;
Wouldst thou turn Hell to Heaven in an hour?
Easy to say—God’s purposes are long,
His ways and wonders far beyond our knowing,
He hath mysterious ministers even in wrong,
Sure is His harvest, though so long His sowing:
So say old poets with persuasive tongue.

And yet—and yet—it seems some swifter doom
From so august a hand might surely fall,
And all earth’s rubbish in one flash consume,
And make an end of evil once for all . . .
But vain the questions and the answers vain,
Who knows but Man’s impatience is God’s doing?
Who knows if evil be so swiftly slain?
Be sure none shall escape, with God pursuing.
Question no more—but to your work again!

BALLADE TO A DEPARTING GOD

God of the Wine List, roseate lord,
And is it really then good-by?
Of Prohibitionists abhorred,
Must thou in sorry sooth then die,
(O fatal morning of July!)
Nor aught hold back the threatened hour
That shrinks thy purple clusters dry?
Say not good-by—but *au revoir!*

For the last time the wine is poured,
For the last toast the glass raised high,
And henceforth round the wintry board,
As dumb as fish, we’ll sit and sigh,
And eat our Puritanic pie,
And dream of suppers gone before,
With flying wit and words that fly—
Say not good-by—but *au revoir!*

’Twas on thy wings the poet soared,
And Sorrow fled when thou wentst by,
And, when we said “Here’s looking toward” . . .
It seemed a better world, say I,



With greener grass and bluer sky . . .
The writ is on the Tavern Door,
And who would tipple on the sly? . . .
'Tis not good-by—but *au revoir!*

ENVOI

Gay God of Bottles, I deny
Those brave tempestuous times are o'er;
Somehow I think, I scarce know why,
'Tis not good-by—but *au revoir!*

BALLADE OF THE ABSENT GUEST

Friends whom to-night once more I greet,
Most glad am I with you to be,
And, as I look around, I meet
Many a face right good to see;
But one I miss—ah! where is he?—
Of merry eye and sparkling jest,
Who used to brim my glass for me;
I drink—in what?—the Absent Guest.

Low lies he in his winding-sheet,
By organized hypocrisy
Hurled from his happy wine-clad seat,
Stilled his kind heart and hushed his glee;
His very name daren't mention we,
That good old friend who brought such zest,
And set our tongues and spirits free:
I drink—in what?—the Absent Guest.



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No choice to-night 'twixt "dry" or "sweet,"
'Twixt red or white, 'twixt Rye,—ah! me—
Or Scotch—and think! we live to see't—
No whispered word, nor massive fee,
Nor even influenza plea,
Can raise a bubble; but, as best
We may, we make our hollow spree:
I drink—in what?—the Absent Guest.

ENVOI

Friends, good is coffee, good is tea,
And water has a charm unguessed—
And yet—that brave old deity!
I drink—in tears—the Absent Guest.

TOBACCO NEXT

They took away your drink from you,
The kind old humanizing glass;
Soon they will take tobacco too,
And next they'll take our demi-tasse.
Don't say, "The bill will never pass,"
Nor this my warning word disdain;
You said it once, you silly ass—
Don't make the same mistake again.

We know them now, the bloodless crew,
We know them all too well, alas!
There's nothing that they wouldn't do
To make the world a Bible class;
Though against bottled beer or Bass
I search the sacred text in vain
To find a whisper—by the Mass!
Don't make the same mistake again.

Beware these legislators blue,
Pouring their moral poison-gas
On all the joys our fathers knew;
The very flowers in the grass
Are safe no more, and, lad and lass,
'Ware the old birch-rod and the cane!
Here comes our modern Hudibras!—
Don't make the same mistake again.



ENVOI

Prince, vanished is the rail of brass,
So mark me well and my refrain—
Tobacco next! you silly ass,
Don't make the same mistake again.

BALLADE OF THE PAID PURITAN

In vain with whip and knotted cord
The hirelings of hypocrisy
Would make us comely for the Lord:
Think ye God works through such as ye—
Paid Puritan, plump Pharisee,
And lobbyist fingering his fat bill,
Reeking of rum and bribery:
God needs not you to work His will.

We know you whom you serve, abhorred
Traducers of true piety,
What tarnished gold is your reward
In Washington and Albany;
'Tis not from God you take your fee,
Another's purpose to fulfil,
You that are God's worst enemy:
God needs not you to work His will.

Not by the money-changing horde,
Base traders in the sanctuary,
Nor by fanatic fire and sword,
Shall man grow as God wills him be;
In his own heart a voice hath he
That whispers to him small and still;
God gives him eyes His good to see:
God needs not you to work His will.

ENVOI

Dear Prince, a sinner's honesty
Is more to God, much nearer still,
Than the bribed hypocritic knee:
God needs not you to work His will.



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THE OVERWORKED GHOST

When the embalmer closed my eyes,
And all the family went in black,
And shipped me off to Paradise,
I had no thought of coming back;
I dreamed of undisturbed repose
Until the Judgment Day went crack,
Tucked safely in from top to toes.

“I’ve done my bit,” I said. “I’ve earned
The right to take things at my ease!”
When folk declared the dead returned,
I called it all tomfooleries.
“They are too glad to get to bed,
To stretch their weary limbs in peace;
Done with it all—the lucky dead!”

But scarcely had I laid me down,
When comes a voice: “Is that you, Joe?
I’m calling you from Williamstown!
Knock once for ‘yes,’ and twice for ‘no.’”
Then, hornet-mad, I knocked back two—
The table shook, I banged it so—
“Not Joe!” they said, “Then tell us who?”

“We’re waiting—is there no one here,
No friend, you have a message for?”
But I pretended not to hear.
“Perhaps he fell in the great war?”
“Perhaps he’s German?” someone said;
“How goes it on the other shore?”
“That’s no way to address the dead!”

And so they talked, till I got sore,
And made the blooming table rock,
And ribald oaths and curses swore,
And strange words guaranteed to shock.
“He’s one of those queer spooks they call
A poltergeist—the ghosts that mock,
Throw things—” said one, who knew it all.

“I wish an old thigh-bone was round
To break your silly head!” I knocked.



“A humourist of the burial-ground!”
A bright young college graduate mocked.
Then a young girl fell in a trance,
And foamed: “Get out—we are deadlocked—
And give some other ghost a chance!”

Such was my first night in the tomb,
Where soft sleep was to hold me fast;
I little knew my weary doom!
It even makes a ghost aghast
To think of all the years in store—
The slave, as long as death shall last,
To ouija-boards forevermore.

For morning, noon, and night they call!
Alive, some fourteen hours a day
I worked, but now I work them all.
No sooner down my head I lay,
A lady writer knocks me up
About a novel or a play,
Nor gives me time for bite or sup.

I hear her damned typewriter click
With all the things she says I say,
You’d think the public would get sick;
And that’s my only hope—some day!
Then seances, each night in dozens
I must attend, their parts to play
For dead grandpas and distant cousins.

O for my life to live again!
I’d know far better than to die;
You’d never hear me once complain,
Could I but see the good old sky,
For here they work me to the bone;
“Rest!”—don’t believe it! Well, good-by!
That’s Patience Worth there on the phone!



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THE VALIANT GIRLS

The valiant girls—of them I sing—
Who daily to their business go,
Happy as larks, and fresh as spring;
They are the bravest things I know.
At eight, from out my lazy tower,
I watch the snow, and shake my head;
But yonder petticoated flower
Braves it alone, with aery tread;
Nor wind, nor rain, nor ice-fanged storm,
Frightens that valiant little form.

Strange! she that sweetens all the air,
The New York sister of the rose,
To a grim office should repair,
With picture-hat and silken hose,
And strange it is to see her there,
With powder on her little nose;
And yet how business-like is she,
With pad and pencil on her knee.

Changed are the times—no stranger sign,
If you but think the matter over,
Than she, the delicate, the divine,
Whose lot seemed only love and lover,
Should to Life's rough and muddy wheel
So gravely set her pretty shoulder;—
(What would her dead grandmother feel,
If someone woke her up and told her!)
Yet bate not, through her dreary duty,
One jot of womanhood or beauty.

A woman still—yes! still a girl,
She changes, yet she does not change,
A moon-lit creature made of pearl
And filled with music sad and strange:
The while she takes your gruff dictation,
Who knows her secret meditation!
Most skilled of all our new machines,
She sits there at the telephone,
Prettier far than fabled queens;
Yea! Greece herself has never known,
Nor Phidias wrought, nor Homer sung,



Girls fairer than the girls that throng,
So serious and so debonair,
At morn and eve, the Subway stair;
A bright processional of faces,
So valiant—for all their laces.

The girls that work! that take their share
In Life's grim battle, hard and rough,
Wearing their crowns of silken hair,
Armed only with a powder-puff:
These, not the women of old time,
Though, doubtless, they were fair enough,
Shall be the theme for modern rhyme.
Nay! never shall our hearts forget
The flower face of Juliet,
Or Helen on her golden throne;
But there shall come a Homer yet,
A Shakespeare still to fame unknown,
To sing among the stars up there
Fair Helen, the stenographer,
Sweet Juliet of the telephone.

NOT SOUR GRAPES

I'm not sorry I am older, love—are you?
Over all youth's fuss and flurry,
All its everlasting hurry,
All its solemn self-importance and to-do.
Perhaps we missed the highest reaches of high art;
Love we missed not, and the laughter,
Seeing both before and after—
Life was such a serious business at the start!



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We've lost nothing worth the keeping—do you think?
You are just as slim and elfish,
And I've grown a world less selfish;
We look back on life together—and we wink.
Over all those old misgivings of the heart,
Growing pains of love and lover;
Life's fun begins, its fevers over—
Life was such a serious business at the start!

Garners full, life's grain and chaff we have sifted;
Youth went by in idle tasting,
Now we drink the cup, unhasting,
Spill not a drop, brimful and high uplifted;
And we watch now, calm and fearless, the years depart,
Knowing nothing can now sever
Two that life made one forever—
Life was *such* a serious business at the start!

BALLADE OF READING BAD BOOKS

O sad-eyed man who yonder sits,
Face in a book from morn till night,
Who, though the world should go to bits,
Pores on right through the waning light;
O is it sorrow or delight
That holds you, though the sun has set?
"I read," he said, "what these fools write,
Not to remember—but forget."

"Man drinks or gambles, woman knits,
To put their sorrow out of sight,
From folly unto folly flits
The weary mind, or wrong or right;
My melancholy taketh flight
Reading the worst books I can get,
The worst—yet best! such is my plight—
Not to remember—but forget."

"'Tis not alone the immortal wits,
The lords of language, pens of might,
Past masters of the word that fits
In their mosaic true and bright,
That aid us in our mortal fight,
And heal us of our wild regret,



But books that humbler pens indite,
Not to remember—but forget.”

ENVOI

“O Prince, ’tis but the neophyte
Who scorns this humble novelette
You watch me reading, un-contrite—
Not to remember—but forget.”

BALLADE OF THE MAKING OF SONGS

Bees make their honey out of coloured flowers,
Through the June day, with all its beam and scent,
Heather of breezy hills, and idle bowers,
Brushing soft doors of every blossoming tent,
Filling gold thighs in drowsy ravishment,
Pillaging vines on the hot garden wall,
Taking of each small bloom its little rent—
Poets must make their honey out of gall.

Singers, not so this craven life of ours,
Our honey out of bitter herbs is blent;
The songs that fall as soft as April showers
Came of the whips and scorns of chastisement,
From smitten lips and hearts in sorrow bent,
Distilled of blood and wormwood are they all—
Idly you heard, indifferent what they meant:
Poets must make their honey out of gall.



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You lords and ladies sitting high in towers,
Scarcely attending the sweet instrument
That lulls you 'mid your cruel careless hours,
Melodious minister of your content;
Think you this music was from Heaven sent?
Nay, Hell hath made it thus so musical.
And to its making thorns and nettles went—
Poets must make their honey out of gall.

ENVOI

Prince of this world, enthroned and insolent,
Beware, lest with a song your towers fall,
Your pride sent blazing up the firmament—
Poets must make their honey out of gall.

BALLADE OF RUNNING AWAY WITH LIFE

O ships upon the sea, O shapes of air,
O lands whose names are made of spice and tar,
Old painted empires that are ever fair,
From Cochin-China down to Zanzibar!
O Beauty simple, soul-less, and bizarre!
I would take Danger for my bosom-wife,
And light our bed with some wild tropic star—
O how I long to run away with Life!

To run together, Life and I! What care
Ours if from Duty we may run so far
As to forget the daily mounting stair,
The roaring subway and the clanging car,
The stock that ne'er again shall be at par,
The silly speed, the city's stink and strife,
The faces that to look on leaves a scar:
O how I long to run away with Life!

Fling up the sail—all sail that she can bear,
And out across the little frightened bar
Into the fearless seas alone with her,
The great sail humming to the straining spar,
Curved as Love's breast, and white as nenuphar,
The spring wind singing like a happy fife,
The keen prow cutting like a scimitar:
O how I long to run away with Life!



ENVOI

Princess, the gates of Heaven are ajar,
Cut we our bonds with Freedom's gleaming knife,—
Lo! where Delight and all the Dancers are!
O how I long to run away with Life!

TO A CONTEMNER OF THE PAST

You that would break with the Past, Why with so rude a gesture take your leave? None hinders, go your way; but wherefore cast Contempt and boorish scorn Upon the womb from which even you were born? Begone in peace! Forbear to flout and grieve, Vulgar iconoclast, Those of a faith you cannot comprehend, To whom the Past is as a lovely friend Nobly grown old, yet nobly ever young; The temple and the treasure-house of Time, With gains immortal stored Of dream and deed and song, Since man from chaos first began to climb, His lonely soul for sword. O base and trivial tongue That dares to mock this solemn heritage, And foul this sacred page! Sorry the future that hath you for sire! And happy we who yet Can bear the golden chimes from tower and spire In the old heaven set, And link our hands and hearts with the great dead That

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lived with God for friend, And drew strange sustenance from overhead, And knew a bright beginning in life's end; For all their earthly days Were filled with meaning deeper than the hour. Leave us our simple faith in star and flower, And all our simple ways Of prayer and praise, And ancient virtues of humility, Honour and reverence and the bended knee, Old tenderness and gracious courtesies, From Time so hardly won: But you that no more have content in these, From out our sanctuaries Begone—and gladly gone!