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The Rainbow and the Rose by E. Nesbit

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The Rainbow and the Rose

I.

THE THINGS THAT MATTER.

Now that I've nearly done my days,
And grown too stiff to sweep or sew,
I sit and think, till I'm amaze,
About what lots of things I know:
Things as I've found out one by one---–
And when I'm fast down in the clay,
My knowing things and how they're done
Will all be lost and thrown away.

There's things, I know, as won't be lost,
Things as folks write and talk about:
The way to keep your roots from frost,
And how to get your ink spots out.
What medicine's good for sores and sprains,
What way to salt your butter down,
What charms will cure your different pains,
And what will bright your faded gown.

But more important things than these,
They can't be written in a book:
How fast to boil your greens and peas,
And how good bacon ought to look;
The feel of real good wearing stuff,
The kind of apple as will keep,
The look of bread that's rose enough,
And how to get a child asleep.

Whether the jam is fit to pot,
Whether the milk is going to turn,
Whether a hen will lay or not,
Is things as some folks never learn.
I know the weather by the sky,
I know what herbs grow in what lane;
And if sick men are going to die,
Or if they'll get about again.

Young wives come in, a-smiling, grave,
With secrets that they itch to tell:
I know what sort of times they'll have,
And if they'll have a boy or gell.
And if a lad is ill to bind,

Or some young maid is hard to lead,
I know when you should speak 'em kind,
And when it's scolding as they need.

I used to know where birds ud set,
And likely spots for trout or hare,
And God may want me to forget
The way to set a line or snare;
But not the way to truss a chick,
To fry a fish, or baste a roast,
Nor how to tell, when folks are sick,
What kind of herb will ease them most!

Forgetting seems such silly waste!
I know so many little things,
And now the Angels will make haste
To dust it all away with wings!
O God, you made me like to know,
You kept the things straight in my head,
Please God, if you can make it so,
Let me know something when I'm dead.

The confession.

I *haven't* always acted good:
I've taken things not meant for me;
Not other people's drink and food,
But things they never seemed to see.
I haven't done the way I ought
If all they say in church is true,
But all I've had I've fairly bought,
And paid for pretty heavy too.

For days and weeks are very long
If you get nothing new and bright,
And if you never do no wrong
Somehow you never do no right.
The chap that daresent go a yard
For fear the path should lead astray
May be a saint---–though that seems hard,
But he's no traveller, any way.

Some things I can't be sorry for,
The things that silly people hate:
But some I did I do deplore,
I knew, inside, they wasn't straight.
And when my last account is filed,
And stuck-up angels stop their song,

I'll ask God's pardon like a child
For what I really knew was wrong.

If you've a child, you'd rather see
A bit of temper, off and on,
A greedy grab, a silly spree---–
And then a brave thing said or done
Than hear your boy whine all day long
About the things he musn't do:
Just doing nothing, right or wrong:
And God may feel the same as you.

For God's our Father, so they say,
He made His laws and He made me;
He'll understand about the way
Me and His laws could not agree.
He might say, "You're worth more, My son,
Than all My laws since law began.
Take good with bad---–here's something done---–
And I'm your God, and you're My man."

Work.

When I am busying about,
Sewing on buttons, tapes, and strings,
Hanging the week's wet washing out
Or ironing the children's things,
Sweeping and dusting, cleaning grates,
Scrubbing the dresser or the floors,
Washing the greasy dinner plates,
Scouring the brasses on the doors---–

I wonder what it's all about,
And when did people first begin
To keep the dirt and wornness out
And keep the wholesome comfort in:
How long it is since women bore
This round of wash and make and mend,
And what God makes us do it for
And whether it will ever end!

When God began to do His work
He made a new thing every day---–
Even now He is not one to shirk,
But makes things, always some new way
He made the earth, and sky, and sun,
The creatures of the sea and wood,
And when his first week's work was done

He saw that it was very good.

But He---for all He worked so fast
To finish air, and wave, and shore,
Knew that this work of His would last
For ever and for evermore.
On Saturday night He was content,
He knew that Monday would not bring
Need for another firmament,
Another set of everything.

But though my work is easier far
Than making sky and sea and sun,
It's harder than God's labours are,
Because my work is never done.
I sweep and churn, save and contrive,
I bake and brew, I don't complain,
But every Monday morning I've
Last Monday's work to do again.

I'm good at work---I work away;
Always the same my work must go;
The flowers grow different every day,
That's why I like to see them grow.
If, up in Heaven, God understood
He'd let me for my Paradise
Make all things new and very good
And never make the same thing twice!

The jilted lover to his mother.

You needn't pray for me, old lady, I don't want no one's prayer,
I'm fit and jolly as ever I was---you needn't think I care.
When I go whistling down the road, when the warm night is falling,
She needn't think I'm whistling her, it's another girl I'm calling.

If I pass her house a dozen times, or fifty times a day,
She needn't think I think of her, my work lies out that way.
If they should tell her I've grown thin (for that is what they've told me)
This cursed weather counts for that, and not the girl who sold me.

And if they say I'm off my feed I still can tip a can;
If I get drunk what's that to her? I am not her young man.
I know I've had a lucky let-off---she ain't no class, she ain't,
For all she looked like a bush o' roses and talked like a story book saint.

I never give a thought to her. Don't worry your old head,
I've quite forgot her pretty ways and the cruel things she said,

There's lots of other gals to be had as any chap can see,
So you cheer up, you've got no call to go and pray for me.
But all the same, if you want to pray, you'd best pray God take care of them,
For if I catch them two together, by hell! I'll swing for the pair of them.

The will to live.

Since Faith is a veil that has nothing behind it,
And Hope wanders lost where no mortal can find it,
Since Love is a mirror we break in a minute
In snatching the image our soul has cast in it,
What is the use of the Summers and Springs,
The wave of the woods and the waft of the wings---–
Since all means nothing, and good things and ill
Make madness,---–a mirage tormenting us still?

Since all the fighting, the ardent endeavour,
The heart cast bleeding to feed the Ideal,
Are vain, vain, vain, and the one thing real
Is that all's vain, for ever and ever;
Why then, be a man and stand back from the strife,
Fall by the sword, but keep out of the snare;
Will but to be---–and be willing to bear
All that the gods may lay on your of life!

In the far East, where light ever dawns first,
There has man learned how the Fates may be cheated,
How by our craft may their strength be defeated,
Though all our best be no match for their worst!
Kill the desire that they set in your bosom,
Long not for fruit when you gaze on the blossom,
Dream not of flowers when you gaze on the bud,
Kill all the rebels that shout in your blood.
Sorrow and sickness, disease and decay---–
These toll the hours of Life's desolate day;
Hopes unfulfilled and forbidden delight
These are the dreams of Life's treacherous night.
So let me image an infinite peace
Touched with no joy but the ease of release.
Out of the eddies I climb and I cease
Keeping, in change for this man's soul of me,
Something which, by the eternal decree,
Is as like Nothing as Something can be!

Not to desire, to admit, to adore,
Casting the robe of the soul that you wore
Just as the soul casts the body's robe down.
This is man's destiny, this is man's crown.

This is the splendour, the end of the feast;
This is the light of the Star in the East.

So, Silence reconciles Life's jarring phrases
Far in the future, austere and august:
Meanwhile, the buds of the poplars are falling,
Spring's on the lawn, and a little voice calling:
"Daddy, come out! Daddy darling, you must!
Daddy come out and help Molly pick daisies!"
And, since one's here, and the Spring's in the garden
(How many lives hence will that thought earn pardon?)
Since one's a man and man's heart is insistent,
And, since Nirvana is doubtful and distant,
Though life's a hard road and thorny to travel---
Stones in the borders and grass on the gravel,
Still there's the wisdom that wise men call folly,
Still one can go and pick daisies with Molly!

The beatific vision.

Oh God! if I do my duty
And walk in the thorny way,
Will you pay me with heavens of beauty,
Millions of lives away?
Will you give me the music of heaven,
And the joy that none understands,
In place of what life would have given
If I had held out my hands?

I have lived in a narrow prison,
I have writhed 'neath a bitter creed,
And I dare to say that no heaven can pay
The renounced dream and deed,
But when my life's portal closes,
If you have no heaven to spare
God! give me a garden of roses,
And some one to walk with there.

II.

MUMMY WHEAT.

Laid close to Death, these many thousand years,
In this small seed Life hid herself and smiled;
So well she hid, Death was at least beguiled,
Set free the grain---and lo! the sevenfold ears!

Warmed by the sun, wooed by the wind's soft word,
Under blue canopy they hold their state:
For this, ah, was it not worth while to wait
Through all the centuries of hope deferred?

What could they know who laid the seed with Death
Of this Divine fruition fixed and planned?
Love---since Life parts us---lend my hand your hand
And look with me into the eyes of faith.

For here between your hand and mine there lies
A little seed we trust to Death to keep
Through unimagined centuries of sleep
Until the day when Life shall bid it rise.

Our harvest waits us. Who knows where or how,
What worlds away, wrapped in what coil of pain?
But Life shall bid us pluck gold sevenfold grain
Grown from the love she bids us bury now.

The beech tree.

My beautiful beech, your smooth grey coat is trimmed
With letters. Once, each stood for all things dear
To foolish lovers, dead this many a year,
Whose lamp of lighted love so soon was dimmed.
You have seen them come and go,
And heard their kisses and vows
Under your boughs,
The pitiful vows they swore,
Have seen their poor tears flow,
Have seen them part; to meet, and to return, no more!

And in old winters, through your branches bare,
The north wind drove the blue home-scented smoke
That on the glowing Christmas hearth awoke
Where the old logs, with eager flicker and flare,
Sang their low crackling song
Of peace and of good will.
The old song is still,
The old voices have died away,
The hearth has been cold so long,
And the bright faces dimmed and covered up with clay.

And summer after summer wakes to glow
The ordered pleasance with the clipped box-hedge,
The drooping lilac by the old moat's edge,
The roses, that throw you kisses from below,

The orchard pink and white,
The sedge's whispered words,
The nesting birds,
All these return to revel round your feet.
And in the untroubled night
The nightingale still sings, the jasmine still is sweet.

My beautiful beech, I carve upon you here
The master-letter which begins her name
Through whom, to me, the royal summer came,
And nightingale and rose, and all things dear.
And, in some far-off time,
I shall come here, weary and old,
When the hearth in my heart is cold
And the birds that nest there flown;
I will remember this summer in all its prime
And say, "There was a day---
Thank God, the Giver, an unforgotten day,
When I walked here, not alone,
---O God of pity and sorrow, not alone!"

In absence.

Wake, do you wake in the dark in the strange far place,
Window and door not set like the ones we knew,
Leaning your face through the dark for another face,
Stretching your arms to the arms that are far from you,
Even as I, through the depth of this darkness, do?

Sleep, do you sleep in the house in the lonely land?
In the lonely room do you hear no steps draw near?
Do you miss in the darkness the hand that implores your hand,
See through the darkness your last dream disappear,
And weep, as I weep, in the outer darkness here?

Dream, do you dream? Nay, never a dream will stay,
Never a phantom is fond, or a vision kind.
Your dreams elude you and fly through the dark my way,
My dreams fly forth to you whom they may not find;
And we in the darkness weep, we weep and are left behind.

Silence.

So silent is the world to-night
The lamp gives silence out like light,
The latticed windows open wide
Show silence, like the night, outside:
The nightingale's faint song draws near

Like musical silence to mine ear.

The empty house calls not to me,
"Here, but for fate, were thou and she---"
Its gibe for once is checked. To-night
Silence is queen in grief's despite,
And even the longing of my soul
Is silent 'neath this hour's control.

Raison d'etre.

O *weary* night, O weary day,
When heart's delight is far away!

What is the day? A frame of blue
The vacant-glaring sun grins through.
What is the night? A sable veil
Through which the moon peers tired and pale.

O weary day! O weary night!
How far away is heart's delight!

Love hung the sun in his high place
To give me light to see her face,
And love spread out the veil of night
To hide us two from all men's sight.

O kindly night, O pleasant day,
Your use is gone---why should ye stay?
My heart's delight is far away,
O weary night, O weary day.

The onlooker.

If I could make a pillow for your head,
Soft, pleasant, filled with every pretty thought;
If I could lay a carpet where you tread
Of all my life's most radiant fancies wrought,
And spread my love as canopy above you,
Your sleep, your steps should know how much I love you.

But---as life goes, to the old sorry tune---
I stand apart, I see thorns wound your feet,
Your sleeping eyes resenting sun and moon,
Your head lie restless on a breast unmeet---
And say no word, and suffer without moan,
Lest you should guess how much you are alone.

The tree of knowledge.

I *plucked* the blossoms of delight
In many a wood and many a field,
I made a garland fair and bright
As any gardens yield.

But when I sought the living tree
To make new earth and Heaven new,
I found---alas for you and me---
Its roots were set in you.

Oh, dear my garden, where the fruit
Of lovely knowledge sweetly springs,
How jealously you guard the root
Of all enlightening things!

At parting.

And you could leave me now---
After the first remembered whispered vow
Which sings for ever and ever in my ears---
The vow which God among His Angels hears---
After the long-drawn years,
The slow hard tears,
Could break new ground, and wake
A new strange garden to blossom for your sake,
And leave me here alone,
In the old garden that was once our own?

How should I learn to bear
Our garden's pleasant ways and pleasant air,
Her flowers, her fruits, her lily, her rose and thorn,
When only in a picture these appear---
These, once alive, and always over-dear?
Ah---think again: the rose you used to wear
Must still be more than other roses be
The flower of flowers. Ah, pity, pity me!

For in my acres is no plot of ground
Whereon could any garden site be found,
I have but little skill
To water weed and till
And make the desert blossom like the rose;
Yet our old garden knows
If I have loved its ways and walks and kept
The garden watered, and the pleasance swept.

Yet---if you must---go now:
Go, with my blessing filling both your hands,
And, mid the desert sands
Which life drifts deep round every garden wall,
Make your new festival
Of bud and blossom---red rose and green leaf.
No blight born of my grief
Shall touch your garden, love; but my heart's prayer
Shall draw down blessings on you from the air,
And all we learned of leaf and plant and tree
Shall serve you when you walk no more with me
In garden ways; and when with her you tread
The pleasant ways with blossoms overhead
And when she asks, "How did you come to know
The secrets of the ways these green things grow?"
Then you will answer---and I, please God, hear,
"I had another garden once, my dear".

Song.

I *hear* the waves to-night
Piteously calling, calling
Though the light
Of the kind moon is falling,
Like kisses, on the sea
That calls for sunshine, dear, as my soul calls for thee.

I see the sea lie gray
Wrinkling her brows in sorrow,
Hear her say:---
"Bright love of yesterday, return to-morrow,
Sun, I am thine, am thine!"
Oh sea, thy love will come again, but what of mine?

Renunciation.

Rose of the desert of my heart,
Moon of the night that is my soul,
Thou can'st not know how sweet thou art,
Nor what wild tides thy beams control.

For all thy heart a garden is,
Thy soul is like a dawn of May.
And garden and dawn might both be his,
Who from them both must turn away.

Oh, garden of the Spring's delight!
Oh, dewy dawn of perfect noon!

I will not pluck thy roses white
Or warm thy May-time into June.

I can but bless thee, moon and rose,
And journey far and very far
To where the night no moonbeam shows,
To where no happy roses are!

III.

THE VEIL OF MAYA.

Sweet, I have loved before. I know
This longing that invades my days;
This shape that haunts life's busy ways
I know since long and long ago.

This starry mystery of delight
That floats across my eager eyes,
This pain that makes earth Paradise,
These magic songs of day and night--–

I know them for the things they are:
A passing pain, a longing fleet,
A shape that soon I shall not meet,
A fading dream of veil and star.

Yet, even as my lips proclaim
The wisdom that the years have lent,
Your absence is joy's banishment,
And life's one music is your name.

I love you to my heart's hid core:
Those other loves? how should one learn
From marshlights how the great fires burn?
Ah, no! I never loved before!

Song.

The sunshine of your presence lies
On the glad garden of my heart
And bids the leaves of silence part
To show the flowers to your dear eyes,
And flower on flower blooms there and dies
And still new buds awakened spring,
For sunshine makes the garden wise,
To know the time for blossoming.

Night is no time for blossoming,
Your garden then dreams otherwise,
Of vanished Summer, vanished Spring,
And how the dearest flower first dies.
Yet from your ministering eyes
Though night hath drawn me far apart
On the still garden of my heart
The moonlight of your memory lies.

To Vera, *who asked* A *song*.

If I only had time!
I could make you a rhyme.
But my time is kept flying
By smiling and sighing
And living and dying for you.
The song-seed, I sow it,
I water and hoe it,
But never can grow it.
Ah, traitress, you know it!
What is a poor poet to do?

Ah, let me take breath!
I am harried to death
By the loves and the graces
That crowd where your face is
That lurk in your laces and throng.
Call them off for a minute,
Once let me begin it
The devil is in it
If I can not spin it
As sweet as a linnet, your song!

The poet to his love.

All the flight of thoughts here, shy, bold, scared, intrusive,
Fluttering in the sun, between the green and blue,
Wheeling, whirling, poising, lovely and elusive,
How to cage the flying thoughts, my winged delight, for you?

Set a springe of rhyme, and hope to catch them in it?
Strew my love as grain to lure them to the snare?
Watch the hours built up, slow minute piled on minute?
Still the wide sky guards their flight, and still the cage is bare.

Gleam of hovering feathers, brushing me to flout me!
Wings, be weary! Rest! Who loves you more than I?
Caught? Oh fluttering pinions whitening air about me!

Rustling wings, and distant flight, and empty cage and sky!

The MAIDEN'S *prayer*.

Spring, pretty Spring, what treasure do you bring to me?
Green grass and buttercups, cherry-bloom and may?
Sunshine to be glad with me, and little birds to sing to me?
Warm nests to call me along the woodland way?

Spring, happy Spring, what wonder will you do for me?
Light the tulip lanterns, and set the furze a-fire?
Fill your sky with sails of cloud on waves of living blue for me?
Show me green cornfields and budding of the briar?

Spring, darling Spring, my days will not return to me,
You who see them fleeting, you, all time above,
You who move the whole world's heart, ah move one heart to turn to me,
---Bring me a lover, and teach me how to love!

Song.

"*Love* me little, love me long,"
Is the burden of my song,
And if nothing more may be
Little shall suffice for me.

But if you could crown with flowers
All my radiant, festal hours,
And console for hours of sorrow
Love me more with each to-morrow.

And if you would turn my days
To one splendid hymn of praise,
And set hopes like stars above me
Love me much, and always love me!

The magic flower.

Through many days and many days
The seed of love lay hidden close;
We walked the dusty tiresome ways
Where never a leaf or blossom grows.
And in the darkness, all the while,
The little seed its heart uncurled,
And we by many a weary mile
Travelled towards it, round the world.

To the hid centre of the maze
At last we came, and there we found---
O happy day, O day of days!
---Twin seed-leaves breaking holy ground.
We dropped life's joys, a garnered sheaf,
And spell-bound watched, still hour by hour,
Magic on magic, leaf by leaf,
The unfolding of our love's white flower.

La DERNIERE *robe de* SOI.

Oh, silken gown, all pink and pretty,
Bought, quite a bargain, in the City,
Your ill-trained soul full false has played me---
No Paris gown would have betrayed me.

You knew, my pretty silken treasure,
I must not wed for love or pleasure,
But for a settlement and title;
Yet you encouraged his recital!

He said---oh, faithless gown, you listened
While on your sheen two tear drops glistened---
He said . . . let love to music set it,
I'll never speak it---nor forget it!

"No, no!" I cried, I tried to save you---
False gown, you showed the tears I gave you!
You looked discreet when first I found you.
How could you let his arm go round you?

You darling dress---I'll smooth your creases,
I'll wear you till you drop to pieces;
But poor men's wives wear cotton only---
Dear gown---I hope you won't feel lonely!

The least possible.

Dear goddess of the shining shrine
Where all my votive tapers burn,
Where every gold-embroidered thought
And all my flowers of life are brought
---With many, alas! that are not mine---
What will you give me in return?

The bow in Bond Street---in the Park
The smile all worship on your lips,
The courteous word at dinner---dance---

But never a blush---a conscious glance;
At most, at Henley, in the dark,
Your fleet mistaken finger-tips?

Ah, just for once, once only, be
An altar-server---stoop and set me
Upon the altar richly wrought
Of your most secret flower-sweet thought:
One nightlight's flicker burn for me
Before you sleep and quite forget me.

En Tout CAS.

When I am glad I need your eyes
To be the stars of Paradise;
Your lips to be the seal of all
The joy life grants, and dreams recall;
Your hand, to lie my hands between
What time we walk the garden green.

But most in grief I need your face
To lean to mine in the desert place;
Your lips to mock the evil years,
To sweeten me my cup of tears,
Your eyes to shine, in cloud's despite,
Your hands to hold mine through the night.

Appeal.

Daphnis dearest, wherefore weave me
Webs of lies lest truth should grieve me?
I could pardon much, believe me:
Dower me, Daphnis, or bereave me,
Kill me, kill me, love me, leave me---
Damn me, dear, but don't deceive me!

St. Valentine's day.

The South is a dream of flowers
With a jewel for sky and sea,
Rose-crowns for the dancing hours,
Gold fruits upon every tree;
But cold from the North
The wind blows forth
That blows my love to me.

The stars in the South are gold
Like lamps between sky and sea;

The flowers that the forests hold
Like stars between tree and tree;
But little and white
Is the pale moon's light
That lights my love to me.

In the South the orange grove
Makes dusk by the dusky sea,
White palaces wrought for love
Gleam white between tree and tree,
But under bare boughs
Is the little house
Warm-lit for my love and me.

Chagrin D'AMOUR.

If Love and I were all alone
I might forget to grieve,
And for his pleasure and my own
Might happier garlands weave;
But you sit there, and watch us wear
The mourning wreaths you wove:
And while such mocking eyes you bear
I am not friends with Love.

Withdraw those cruel eyes, and let
Me search the garden through
That I may weave, ere Love be set,
The wreath of Love for you;
Till you, whom Love so well adorns,
Its hidden thorns discover,
And know at last what crown of thorns
It was you gave your lover.

Bridal eve.

Good-night, my Heart, my Heart, good-night---–
Oh, good and dear and fair,
With lips of life and eyes of light
And roses in your hair.

To-morrow brings the other crown,
The orange blossoms, Sweet,
And then the rose will be cast down
With lilies at your feet.

But in your soul a garden stands
Where fair the white rose blows---–

God, teach my foolish clumsy hands
The way to tend my rose.

That in the white-rose garden still
The lily may bloom fair
God help my heart and soul and will
To keep the lily there.

Love and life.

Love only sings when Love is young,
When Love is young and still at play,
How shall we count the sweet songs sung
When Love and Joy kept holiday?
But now Love has to earn his bread
By lifelong stress and toil of tears,
He finds his nest of song-birds dead
That sang so sweet in other years.

For Love's a man now, strong and brave,
To fight for you, for you to live,
And Love, that once such bright songs gave,
Has better things than songs to give;
He gives you now a lifelong faith,
A hand to help in joy or pain,
And he will sing no more, till Death
Shall come to make him young again!

From the Italian.

As a little child whom his mother has chidden,
Wrecked in the dark in a storm of weeping,
Sleeps with his tear-stained eyes closed hidden
And, with fists clenched, sobs still in his sleeping,

So in my breast sleeps Love, O white lady,
What does he care though the rest are playing,
With rattles and drums in the woodlands shady,
Happy children, whom Joy takes maying!

Ah, do not wake him, lest you should hear him
Scolding the others, breaking their rattles,
Smashing their drums, when their play comes near him--–
Love who, for me, is a god of battles!

IV.

"OUT OF THE FULNESS OF THE HEART THE MOUTH SPEAKETH."

In answer to those who have said that English Poets give no personal love to their country.

England, my country, austere in the clamorous council of nations,
Set in the seat of the mighty, wielding the sword of the strong,
Have we but sung of your glory, firm in eternal foundations?
Are not your woods and your meadows the core of our heart and our song?
O dear fields of my country, grass growing green, glowing golden,
Green in the patience of winter, gold in the pageant of spring,
Oaks and young larches awaking, wind-flowers and violets blowing,
What, if God sets us to singing, what save you shall we sing?
Who but our England is fair through the veil of her poets' praises,
What but the pastoral face, the fruitful, beautiful breast?
Are not your poets' meadows starred with the English daisies?
Were not the wings of their song-birds fledged in an English nest?
Songs of the leaves in the sunlight, songs of the fern-brake in shadow,
Songs of the world of the woods and songs of the marsh and the mere,
Are they not English woods, dear English marshland and meadow?
Have not your poets loved you? England, are you not dear?

Shoulders of upland brown laid dark to the sunset's bosom,
Living amber of wheat, and copper of new-ploughed loam,
Downs where the white sheep wander, little gardens in blossom,
Roads that wind through the twilight up to the lights of home.
Lanes that are white with hawthorn, dykes where the sedges shiver,
Hollows where caged winds slumber, moorlands where winds wake free,
Sowing and reaping and gleaning, spring and torrent and river,
Are they not more, by worlds, than the whole of the world can be?

Is there a corner of land, a furze-fringed rag of a by-way,
Coign of your foam-white cliffs or swirl of your grass-green waves,
Leaf of your peaceful copse, or dust of your strenuous highway,
But in our hearts is sacred, dear as our cradles, our graves?
Is not each bough in your orchards, each cloud in the skies above you,
Is not each byre or homestead, furrow or farm or fold,
Dear as the last dear drops of the blood in the hearts that love you,
Filling those hearts till the love is more than the heart can hold?
Therefore the song breaks forth from the depths of the hidden fountain
Singing your least frail flower, your raiment of seas and skies,
Singing your pasture and cornfield, fen and valley and mountain,
England, desire of my heart, England, delight of mine eyes!
Take my song too, my country: many a son and debtor
Pays you in praise and homage out of your gifts' full store;
Life of my life, my England, many will praise you better,
None, by the God that made you, ever can love you more!

Summer song.

There are white moon daisies in the mist of the meadow
Where the flowered grass scatters its seeds like spray,
There are purple orchis by the wood-ways' shadow,
There are pale dog-roses by the white highway;
And the grass, the grass is tall, the grass is up for hay,
With daisies white like silver and buttercups like gold,
And it's oh! for once to play thro' the long, the lovely day,
To laugh before the year grows old!

There is silver moonlight on the breast of the river
Where the willows tremble to the kiss of night,
Where the nine tall aspens in the meadow shiver,
Shiver in the night wind that turns them white.
And the lamps, the lamps are lit, the lamps are glow-worms light,
Between the silver aspens and the west's last gold.
And it's oh! to drink delight in the lovely lonely night,
To be young before the heart grows old!

The Lower room.

How soft the lamplight falls
On pictures, books,
And pleasant coloured walls
And curtains drawn!
How happily one looks
On glowing flame and ember;
Ah, why should one remember
Dew and dawn!

Here age and wisdom sit
Calm and discreet,
Life and the fruit of it
Are here in truth,
Whose gathering once was sweet---
Wisdom and age! Well met!
Yet neither can forget
Folly and youth!

Song.

The summer down the garden walks
Swept in her garments bright;
She touched the pale still lily stalks
And crowned them with delight;
She breathed upon the rose's head
And filled its heart with fire,
And with a golden carpet spread
The path of my desire.

The larkspurs stood like sentinels
To greet her as she came,
Soft rang the Canterbury bells
The music of her name.
She passed across the happy land
Where all dear dreams flower free;
She took my true love by the hand
And led her out to me.

May song.

Birds in the green of my garden
Blackbirds and throstle and wren,
Wet your dear wings in the tears that are Spring's
And so to your singing again!
Birds in my blossoming orchard,
Chaffinch and goldfinch and lark,
Preen your bright wings, little happy live things;
The May trees grow white in the park!

Birds in the leafy wet woodlands,
Cuckoo and nightingale brown,
Sing to the sound of the rain on green ground---
The rain on green leaves dripping down!
Fresh with the rain of the May-time,
Rich with the promise of June,
Deep in her heart, where the little leaves part,
Love, like a bird, sings in tune!

V.

TO IRIS.

If I might build a palace, fair
With every joy of soul and sense,
And set my heart as sentry there
To guard your happy innocence---
If I might plant a hedge so strong
No creeping sorrow could writhe through,
And find my whole life not too long
To give, to make your hedge for you---

If I could teach the wandering air
To bring no sounds that were not sweet,
Could teach the earth that only fair
Untrodden flower deserved your feet:
Would I not tear the secret scroll
Where all your griefs lie closely curled,

And give your little hand control
Of all the joys of all the world?

But ah! I have no skill to raise
The palace, teach the hedge to grow;
The common airs blow through your days,
By common ways your dear feet go.
And you must twine of common flowers
The wreath that happy women wear,
And bear in desolate darkened hours
The common griefs that all men bear.

The pinions of my love I fold
Your little shoulders close about:
Ah--–could my love keep out the cold
And shut the creeping sorrows out!
Rough paths will tire your darling feet,
Gray skies will weep your tears above,
While round you still, in torment, beat
The impotent wings of mother-love.

To A *child*.
(Rosamund.)

The fairies have been busy while you slept;
They have been laughing where the sad rain wept,
They have taught Beauty to the ignorant flowers,
Set tasks of hope to weary wind-torn bowers,
And heard the lessons learned in school-rooms cold
By seedling snapdragon and marigold.
At dawn, while still you slept, I grew aware
How good the fairies are, how many and fair.

The fairy whose delightful gown is red
Across a corner of our garden sped,
And, where her flying raiment fluttered past,
Its roseate reflection still is cast:
Red poppies by the rhododendron's side,
Paeonies gorgeous in their summer pride,
And red may-bushes by the old red wall
Shower down their crimson petals over all.

Then she whose gown is gold, and gold her hair,
Swept down the golden steep straight sunbeam-stair,
She lit the tulip-lamps, she lit the torch
Of hollyhock beside the cottage porch.
She dressed the honeysuckle in fringe of gold,
She gave the king-cups fairy wealth to hold,

She kissed St. John's wort till it opened wide,
She set the yarrow by the river side.

Then came the lady all whose robes are white:
She made the pale buds blossom in delight,
Set silver stars upon the jasmine's hair,
And gave the stream white lily-buds to wear.
She painted lilies white, and pearl-white phlox,
White poppies, passion-flowers and gray-leaved stocks.
Her pure kind touch redeemed the most forlorn,
And even the vile petunia smiled, new-born.

The dearest fairy of all---green is her gown---
She kissed the plane-trees in the tiresome town,
She smoothed the pastures and the lawn's pale sheen,
She decked the boughs with hangings fresh and green,
She showed each flower the one and only way
Its beauty of shape and colour to display;
She taught the world to be a Paradise
Of changing leaf and blade, for tired eyes.

Then, one and all, they came where you were laid
In your strait bed, my little lovely maid;
The red-robed fairy kissed your lips, your face,
The white-robed made your heart her dwelling-place.
Into your eyes the green robed fairy smiled;
The golden fairy touched your dreams, my child,
And one, not named, but mightiest, made my Dear
The innermost rose of the re-flowered year.
May, 1898.

Birthday talk for A *child*.
(*Iris*.)

Daddy dear, I'm only four
And I'd rather not be more:
Four's the nicest age to be---
Two and two, or one and three.

All I love is two and two,
Mother, Fabian, Paul and you;
All you love is one and three,
Mother, Fabian, Paul and me.

Give your little girl a kiss
Because she learned and told you this.

To Rosamund.

And it is fair and very fair
This maze of blossom and sweet air,
This drift of orchard snows,
This royal promise of the rose
Wherein your young eyes see
Such buds of scented joys to be.
A gay green garden, softly fanned
By the blythe breeze that blows
To speed your ship of dreams to the enchanted land.

But I---beyond the budding screen
Of green and red and white and green,
Behind the radiant show
Of things that cling and grow and glow
I see the plains where lie
The hopes of days gone by:
Gray breadths of melancholy, crossed
By winds that coldly blow
From that cold sea wherein my argosy is lost.

From the Tuscan.

When in the west the red sun sank in glory,
The cypress trees stood up like gold, fine gold;
The mother told her little child the story
Of the gold trees the heavenly gardens hold.

In golden dreams the child sees golden rivers,
Gold trees, gold blossoms, golden boughs and leaves,
Without, the cypress in the night wind shivers,
Weeps with the rain and with the darkness grieves.

Mother song.

From the Portuguese.

Heavy my heart is, heavy to carry,
Full of soft foldings, of downy enwrapments---
And the outer fold of all is love,
And the next soft fold is love,
And the next, finer and softer, is love again;
And were they unwound before the eyes
More folds and more folds and more folds would unroll
Of love---always love,
And, quite at the last,
Deep in the nest, in the soft-packed nest,
One last fold, turned back, would disclose
You, little heart of my heart,

Laid there so warm, so soft, so soft,
Not knowing where you lie, nor how softly,
Nor why your nest is so soft,
Nor how your nest is so warm.
You, little heart of my heart,
You lie in my heart,
Warm, safe and soft as this body of yours,
This dear kissed body of yours that lies
Here in my arms and sucks the strength from my breast,
The strength you will break my heart with one of these days.

VI.

THE ISLAND.

Does the wind sing in your ears at night, in the town,
Rattling the windows and doors of the cheap-built place?
Do you hear its song as it flies over marsh and down?
Do you feel the kiss that the wind leaves here on my face?
Or, wrapt in a lamplit quiet, do you restrain
Thoughts that would take the wind's way hither to me,
And bid them rest safe-anchored, nor tempt again
The tumult, and torment, and passion that live in the sea?

I, for my part, when the wind sings loud in its might,
I bid it hush---nor awaken again the storm
That swept my heart out to sea on a moonless night,
And dashed it ashore on an island wondrous and warm
Where all things fair and forbidden for ever flower,
Where the worst of life is a dream, and the best comes true,
When the harvest of years was reaped in a single hour
And the gods, for once, were honest with me and you.

I will not hear when the wind and the sea cry out,
I will not trust again to the hurrying wind,
I will not swim again in a sea of doubt,
And reach that shore with the world left well behind;
But you,---I would have you listen to every call
Of the changing wind, as it blows over marsh and main,
And heap life's joys in your hands, and offer them all,
If only your feet might touch that island again!

Possession.

The child was yours and none of mine,
And yet you gave it me to keep,
And bade me sew it raiment fine,
And wrap my kisses round its sleep.

I carried it upon my breast,
I fed it in a world apart,
I wrapped my kisses round its rest,
I rocked its cradle with my heart.

When in mad nights of rain and storm
You turned us homeless from your door,
I wrapped it close, I kept it warm,
And brought it safe to you once more.

But the last time you drove us forth,
The snow was wrapped about its head,
That night the wind blew from the North,
And on my heart the child was dead.

The child is mine and none of yours,
My life was his while he had breath,
What of your claim to him endures,
Who only gave him birth and death?

Accession.

Once I loved, and my heart bowed down,
Subject and slave, for Love was a King;
He sat above with sceptre and crown,
Turning his eyes from my sorrowing.
The laugh of a god on his lips lay light---
His lips victorious that mocked my pain,
And I mourned in the cold and the outer night,
And my tears and my prayers were vain.

Now the old spell is over and done,
Myself I wear the ermine and gold,
My brows are crowned, I ascend the throne,
I have taken the sceptre and orb to hold.
I smile victorious, set far above
The music of voices that moan and pray,
My feet are wet with the tears of love,
And I turn my eyes away.

The destroyer.

Across the quiet pastures of my soul
The invading army marched in splendid might
My few poor forces fled beyond control,
Scattered, defeated, hidden in the night.

My fields were green, their hedges white with May,
With gold of buttercups made bright and fair,
The careless conquerors did not even stay
To gather one of all the blossoms there.

Only when they had passed, the fields were brown,
The grass and blossoms trampled in the mud:
The flowering hedges withered and torn down,
And no one richer by a single bud.

The egoists.

Two strangers, from opposing poles,
Meet in the torrid zone of Love:
And their desire seems set above
The limitation of their souls.

This is the trap; this is the snare,
This is the false, enchanting light,
And when it smoulders into night,
How can each know the other is there?

They own no bond of common speech;
Each, from far shores by wild winds brought,
Gropes for some cord of common thought
To draw the other within reach.

Each when the dark tide drowns their star,
Cries out, "Thou art not one with me:
One flesh we seemed when eyes could see,
But now, how far thou art! How far!"

Each calling, "Come! be mine! be wise!"
Stands obstinately in his place,
How can these two come face to face,
Till light spring from their meeting eyes?

Could both but once cry, "Far thou art,
But I am coming!" How the beat
Of waves that part them would retreat,
Resurge and find them, heart to heart!

The way of love.

The butterfly loves the rose,
He flutters around her bed,
Till the soft curled leaves unclose,
And she raises her darling head.

He whispers of dawn and of dew,
Of love, and the heart of love,
Of worship, timid and true,
And she takes no joy thereof.

But when, through the noon's blind heat,
The arrogant bee flaunts by,
She yields him her heart's hid sweet,
And he leaves her alone, to die.

The depth of her dying bliss
Her grief-white butterfly knows:
And the bee laughs low in the kiss
Of another, a redder rose.

To one who pleaded for candour in love.

Here is the dim enchanted wood
Your face, a mystery divine,
But half revealed, half understood,
Appears the counterpart of mine.

Beyond the wood the daylight lies;
Cruel and hard, it lies in wait
To steal the magic from your eyes
And from your lips the thrill of fate.

Ah, stay with me a little while
Here, where the magic shadows rest,
Where all my world is in your smile
And all my heaven on your breast.

Ah no!---–cling close, what need to move,
What need to advance or explore?
We came here blindly, led by love,
Who will not lead us any more.

Thank God that here we two have stood,
Thank God this shade was ours to win;
Time with his axe has marked our wood
And he will let the daylight in.

The enchanted garden.

Oh, what a garden it was, living gold, living green,
Full of enchantments like spices embalming the air,
There, where you fled and I followed---–you ever unseen,
Yet each glad pulse of me cried to my heart, "She is there!"

Roses and lilies and lilies and roses again,
Tangle of leaves and white magic of blossoming trees,
Sunlight that lay where, last moment, your footstep had lain---
Was not the garden enchanted that proffered me these?

Ah, what a garden it is since I caught you at last---
Scattered the magic and shattered the spell with a kiss:
Wintry and dreary and cold with the wind of the past,
Ah that a garden enchanted should wither to this!

The poor man's guest.

One came to me in royal guise
With banners flying fair and free
But many griefs had made me wise
And I refused to bow the knee.

Then one drew near who bore the flower
Of all the flowers of June and May;
But many griefs had lent me power
And I was strong to turn away.

Then came a beggar to my gate
With shoulders bowed to sorrow's pack,
So weary and so desolate
I had no heart to turn him back.

I let him share my board, my bed,
I warmed him in my shrinking breast,
I gave him all I had, and said:
"You, only you, have been my guest.

"Love passed in many a fair disguise
But never could an entrance win,
But you came in such piteous wise,
Poor friend, I could but let you in."

Low laughed my guest: "Kind friend!" said he,
And dropped the rags he was weary of;
And I, betrayed, saw over me
The terrible face of outraged Love.

In the shallows.

Among the shallows where the sand
Is golden and the waves are small,
I love to lie, and to my hand
How many little treasures fall!

What shells and seaweed grace the shore,
What happy birds on happy wings,
And for companions, what a store
Of humble, happy, living things!

Yet the sea's depths are also mine,
And in the old days I used to dive
Into the caves, where corals shine
And where the shimmering mer-folk live.
I am the master of the sea
In deeps where fairy flowers uncurl;
That treasure-house belongs to me,
Those amber halls, those stairs of pearl.

But now thereto I go no more,
Because of all the argosies,
Deep sunk upon the ocean floor,
Where all the world's lost treasure lies.
Where loveless laughter curls the lips
Of wild sea creatures at their sport
About the bones of noble ships,
My ships, that never came to port.

"*And the Rains descended and the floods came*."

Now the far waves roll nearer and more near,
The wind's awake, the pitiless wind's awake,
It shrieks the menace that I dare not hear,
Soon at my feet the angry waves will break
In desolating wrath---–and here I stand
Helpless my house is built upon the sand.

O you, whose house upon a rock is set,
Laugh, safe and sure, at threatening wave and wind.
You chose the better part and yet---–and yet,
There was no other ground that I could find,
And I was weary and I longed to raise
A house to guard my shivering nights and days.

And it was pleasant in the house I made,
While still the floods and winds were held asleep.
I blessed it at the dawn, at night I prayed
As though its dear foundations had been deep
Sunk in the rock. I whispered in surmise,
"What if winds never wake, floods never rise?"

And now the waves are near and very near,
And here I wait and wonder which may be

The wave in which my house will disappear,
My little house that loved and sheltered me,
Where joy still sings, her garland in her hand,
Built on the sand, oh God, built on the sand!

The star.

I *had* a star to sing by, a beautiful star that led,
But when I sang of its splendour the world in its wisdom said:
"Sweet are your songs, yet the singer sings but in madness when
He hymns but stars unbeholden of us his fellows of men;
Glow-worms we see and marshlights; sing us sweet songs of those
For the guerdons we have to give you, laurel and gold and rose;
Or if you must sing of stars, unseen of your brother man,
Go, starve with your eyes on your vision; your star may save if it can!"

So I said, "If I starve and die I never again shall see
The glory, the high white radiance that hallows the world for me;
I will sing their songs, if it must be, and when I have golden store,
I will turn from the marsh and the glow-worms, and sing of my star once more."
So I walked in the warm wet by-ways, not daring to lift my eyes
Lest love should drive me to singing my star supreme in the skies,
And the world cried out, "We will crown him, he sings of the lights that are,
Glories of marshlight and glow-worms, not visions vain of a star!"

I said, "Now my brows are laurelled, my hands filled full of their gold,
I will sing the starry songs that these earthworms bade withhold.
It is time to sing of my star!" for I dreamed that my star still shone,
Then I lifted my eyes in my triumph. Night! night! and my star was gone.

VII.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Come home, come home, for your eyes are sore
With the glare of the noonday sun,
And nothing looks as it did before,
And the best of the day is done.

You have played your match, and ridden your race,
You have fought in your fight---and lost;
And life has set its claws in your face,
And you know what the scratches cost.

Out there the world is cruel and loud,
It strikes at the beaten man;
Come out of the press of the stranger crowd
To the place where your life began.

The best robe lies in the cedar chest,
And your father's ring is here;
You have known the worst, come home to the best---
You will pay for it, never fear!

In every kiss of your sister's mouth,
In each tear from your mother's eyes,
You will pay the price of the days in the South
Where the far-off country lies.

Despair.

Smile on me, mouth of red---so much too red,
Shine on me, eyes which darkened lashes shade,
Turn, turn my way, oh glorious golden head,
My soul is lost, then let the price be paid!
Amid rich flowers your rosy lamplight gleams,
Amid rich hangings pass your scented hours,
And woods and fields are green but in my dreams,
And only in my dreams grow meadow-flowers.

I have forgotten everything but you---
The apple orchard where the whitethroat sings,
The quiet fields, the moonlight, and the dew,
The virgin's bower that in wet hedgerow clings.
I have forgotten how the cool grass waves
Where clean winds blow, and where good women pray
For happy, honest men, safe in their graves;
And---oh, my God! I would I were as they!

The temptation.

You bring your love too late, dear, I have no love to buy it,
I spent my love on worthless toys, at fairs you do not know;
I am a bankrupt trader---dear eyes, do not deny it,
I could have bought your love, dear, but that was long ago.

My soul has left me widowed, my heart has made me orphan,
Leave me---all good things, dear, have left me---leave me too!
For here is ice no tears of yours, no smiles of yours can soften:
Leave me, leave me, leave me, I have no love for you!

I have no flowers to give you, they grow not in my garden;
I have no songs to sing you, my songs have all been sung;
I have no hope of heaven, no faith in any pardon,
I might have loved you once, dear, when I was good and young.

I will not steal, nor cheat you; take back the heart you lent me.
O God, whom I have outraged, now teach me how to pray,
That love come never again so near me to torment me,
Lest I be found less faithful than, by Thy grace, to-day.

Second nature.

When I was young how fair the skies,
Such folly of cloud, such blue depths wise,
Such dews of morn, such calms of eve,
So many the lure and the reprieve--–
Life seemed a toy to break and mend
And make a charm of in the end.

Then slowly all the dew dried up
And only dust lay in the cup;
And since, to slake his thirst, man must,
I sought a cup that had no dust,
And found it at the Goat and Vine--–
Mingled of brandy, beer and wine.

The goat-cup, straight, drew down the skies
And lit them in lunatick wise:
What had been rose went scarlet red,
And the pearl tints grew like the dead.
And the fresh primrose of the morn
Was the wet red of rain-spoiled corn.

Now, with a head that aches and nods
I hold weak hands out to the gods;
And oh! forgiving gods and kind,
They give me healing to my mind,
And show me once again the lawn
Green and clear-gemmed with dews of dawn.

O gods, who look down from above
Upon our tangle of lust and love,
And, in your purity, perceive
The worth of what our follies leave:
Give us but this, and sink the rest--–
To know that dew and dawn are best.

De PROFUNDIS.

Now I am cast into the serpent pit
And, catching difficult breath
From the writhing, loathsome, ceaseless stir of it,
The venomous whispers of curling, clasping Death,

I lift my soul out of the pit to Thee
And reaching with my soul to where Thou art
Look down, seeing with free heart
The beast God gave my soul for company
Lie with companions fit;
And bid, with a good will,
The serpent-fangs of ill
Take their foul fill
Of the foul fell it wore.
Though a thousand serpent heads were raised to slay,
A thousand twisting coils writhed where it lay,
There lies the beast, there let it lie for me
And agonize and rave;
For Thou has raised my soul, Thy soul, to Thee!
Thy soul, dear Lord, Thou hast been strong to save!

VIII.

AT THE GATE.

The monastery towers, as pure and fair
As virgin vows, reached up white hands to Heaven;
The walls, to guard the hidden heart of prayer,
Were strong as sin, and white as sin forgiven;
And there came holy men, by world's woe driven;
And all about the gold-green meadows lay
Flower-decked, like children dear that keep May-holiday.

"Here," said the Abbot, "let us spend our days,
Days sweetened by the lilies of pure prayer,
Hung with white garlands of the rose of praise;
And, lest the World should enter with her snare---–
Enter and laugh and take us unaware
With her red rose, her purple and her gold---–
Choose we a stranger's hand the porter's keys to hold."

They chose a beggar from the world outside
To keep their worldward door for them, and he,
Filled with a humble and adoring pride,
Built up a wall of proud humility
Between the monastery's sanctity
And the poor, foolish, humble folk who came
To ask for love and care, in the dear Saviour's name.

For when the poor crept to the guarded gate
To ask for succour, when the tired asked rest,
When weary souls, bereft and desolate,
Craved comfort, when the murmur of the oppressed

Surged round the grove where prayer had made her nest,
The porter bade such take their griefs away,
And at some other door their bane and burden lay.

"For this," he said, "is the white house of prayer,
Where day and night the holy voices rise
Through the chill trouble of our earthly air,
And enter at the gate of Paradise.
Trample no more our flower-fields in such wise,
Nor crave the alms of our deep-laden bough;
The prayers of holy men are alms enough, I trow."

So, seeing that no sick or sorrowing folk
Came ever to be healed or comforted,
The Abbot to his brothers gladly spoke:
"God has accepted our poor prayers," he said;
"Over our land His answering smile is spread.
He has put forth His strong and loving hand,
And sorrow and sin and pain have ceased in all the land.

"So make we yet more rich our hymns of praise,
Warm we our prayers against our happy heart.
Since God hath taken the gift of all our days
To make a spell that bids all wrong depart,
Has turned our praise to balm for the world's smart,
Fulfilled of prayer and praise be every hour,
For God transfigures praise, and transmutes prayer, to power."

So went the years. The flowers blossomed now
Untrampled by the dusty, weary feet;
Unbroken hung the green and golden bough,
For none came now to ask for fruit or meat,
For ghostly food, or common bread to eat;
And dreaming, praying, the monks were satisfied,
Till, God remembering him, the beggar-porter died.

When they had covered up the foolish head,
And on the foolish loving heart heaped clay,
"Which of us, brothers, now," the Abbot said,
"Will face the world, to keep the world away?"
But all their hearts were hard with prayer, and "Nay,"
They cried, "ah, bid us not our prayers to leave;
Ah, father, not to-day, for this is Easter Eve".

And, while they murmured, to their midst there came
A beggar saying, "Brothers, peace, be still!
I am your Brother, in our Father's name,
And I will be your porter, if ye will,

Guarding your gate with what I have of skill".
So all they welcomed him and closed the door,
And gat them gladly back unto their prayers once more.

But, lo! no sooner did the prayer arise,
A golden flame athwart the chancel dim,
Then came the porter crying, "Haste, arise!
A sick old man waits you to tend on him;
And many wait---a knight whose wound gapes grim,
A red-stained man, with red sins to confess,
A mother pale, who brings her child for you to bless".

The brothers hastened to the gate, and there
With unaccustomed hand and voice they tried
To ease the body's pain, the spirit's care;
But ere the task was done, the porter cried:
"Behold, the Lord sets your gate open wide,
For here be starving folk who must be fed,
And little ones that cry for love and daily bread!"

And, with each slow-foot hour, came ever a throng
Of piteous wanderers, sinful folk and sad,
And still the brothers ministered, but long
The day seemed, with no prayer to make them glad;
No holy, meditative joys they had,
No moment's brooding-place could poor prayer find,
Mid all those heart to heal and all those wounds to bind.

And when the crowded, sunlit day at last
Left the field lonely with its trampled flowers,
Into the chapel's peace the brothers passed
To quell the memory of those hurrying hours.
"Our holy time," they said, "once more is ours!
Come, let us pay our debt of prayer and praise,
Forgetting in God's light the darkness of man's ways!"

But, ere their voices reached the first psalm's end,
They heard a new, strange rustling round their house;
Then came the porter: "Here comes many a friend,
Pushing aside your budding orchard boughs;
Come, brothers, justify your holy vows.
Here be God's patient, poor, four-footed things
Seek healing at God's well, whence loving-kindness springs."

Then cried the Abbot in a vexed amaze,
"Our brethren we must aid, if 'tis God's will;
But the wild creatures of the forest ways
Himself God heals with His Almighty skill.

And charity is good, and love---but still
God shall not look in vain for the white prayers
We send on silver feet to climb the starry stairs;

"For, of all worthy things, prayer has most worth,
It rises like sweet incense up to heaven,
And from God's hand falls back upon the earth,
Being of heavenly bread the accepted leaven.
Through prayer is virtue saved and sin forgiven;
In prayer the impulse and the force are found
That bring in purple and gold the fruitful seasons round.

"For prayer comes down from heaven in the sun
That giveth life and joy to all things made;
Prayer falls in rain to make broad rivers run
And quickens the seeds in earth's brown bosom laid;
By prayer the red-hung branch is earthward weighed,
By prayer the barn grows full, and full the fold,
For by man's prayer God works his wonders manifold."

The porter seemed to bow to the reproof;
But when the echo of the night's last prayer
Died in the mystery of the vaulted roof,
A whispered memory in the hallowed air,
The Abbot turned to find him standing there.
"Brother," he said, "I have healed the woodland things
And they go happy and whole---blessing Love's ministerings,

"And, having healed them, I shall crave your leave
To leave you---for to-night I journey far.
But I have kept your gate this Easter Eve,
And now your house to heaven shines like a star
To show the Angels where God's children are;
And in this day your house has served God more
Than in the praise and prayer of all its years before.

"Yet I must leave you, though I fain would stay,
For there are other gates I go to keep
Of houses round whose walls, long day by day,
Shut out of hope and love, poor sinners weep---
Barred folds that keep out God's poor wandering sheep---
I must teach these that gates where God comes in
Must not be shut at all to pain, or want, or sin.

"The voice of prayer is very soft and weak,
And sorrow and sin have voices very strong;
Prayer is not heard in heaven when those twain speak,
The voice of prayer faints in the voice of wrong

By the just man endured---oh, Lord, how long?---
If ye would have your prayers in heaven be heard,
Look that wrong clamour not with too intense a word.

"But when true love is shed on want and sin,
Their cry is changed, and grows to such a voice
As clamours sweetly at heaven to be let in---
Such sound as makes the saints in heaven rejoice;
Pure gold of prayer, purged of the vain alloys
Of idleness---that is the sound most dear
Of all the earthly sounds God leans from heaven to hear.

"Oh, brother, I must leave thee, and for me
The work is heavy, and the burden great.
Thine be this charge I lay upon thee: See
That never again stands barred thy abbey gate;
Look that God's poor be not left desolate;
Ah me! that chidden my shepherds needs must be
When my poor wandering sheep have so great need of me.

"Brother, forgive thy Brother if he chide,
Thy Brother loves thee---and has loved---for see
The nails are in my hands, and in my side
The spear-wound; and the thorns weigh heavily
Upon my brow---brother, I died for thee---
For thee, and for my sheep that are astray,
And rose to live for thee, and them, on Easter Day!"

"My Master and my Lord!" the Abbot cried.
But, where that face had been, shone the new day;
Only on the marble by the Abbot's side,
Where those dear feet had stood, a lily lay---
A lily white for the white Easter Day.
He sought the gate---no sorrow clamoured there---
And, not till then, he dared to sink his soul in prayer.

And from that day himself he kept the gate
Wide open; and the poor from far and wide,
The weary, and wicked, and disconsolate,
Came there for succour and were not denied;
The sick were healed, the repentant sanctified;
And from their hearts rises more prayer and praise
Than ever the abbey knew in all its prayer-filled days.

And there the Heavenly vision comes no more,
Only, each Easter now, a lily sweet
Lies white and dewy on the chancel floor
Where once had stood the beloved wounded feet;

And the old Abbot feels the nearing beat
Of wings that bring him leave at last to go
And meet his Master, where the immortal lilies grow.

Via AMORIS.

I.

It is not Love, this beautiful unrest,
This tremor of longing that invades my breast:
For Love is in his grave this many a year,
He will not rise---I do not wish him here.
It is not memory, for your face and eyes
Are not reflected where that dark pool lies:
It is not hope, for life makes no amends,
And hope and I are long no longer friends:
It is a ghost out of another Spring
It needs but little for its comforting---
That I should hold your hand and see your face
And muse a little in this quiet place,
Where, through the silence, I can hear you sigh
And feel you sadden, O Virgin Mystery,
And know my thought has in your thought begot
Sadness, its child, and that you know it not.

II.

If this were Love, if all this bitter pain
Were but the birth-pang of Love born again,
If through the doubts and dreams resolved, smiled
The prophetic promise of the holy child,
What should I gain? The Love whose dream-lips smiled
Could never be my own and only child,
But to Love's birth would come, with the last pain,
Renunciation, also born again.

III.

If this were Love why should I turn away?
Am I not, too, made of the common clay?
Is life so fair, am I so fortunate,
I can refuse the capricious gift of Fate,
The sudden glory, the unhoped-for flowers,
The transfiguration of my earthly hours?

Come, Love! the house is garnished and is swept,
Washed clean with all the tears that I have wept,
Washed from the stain of my unworthy fears,

Hung with the splendid spoils of wasted years,
Lighted with lamps of hope, and curtained fast
Against the gathered darkness of the past.

I draw the bolts! I throw the portals wide,
The darkness rushes shivering to my side,
Love is not here---–the darkness creeps about
My house wherein the lamps of hope die out.
Ah Love! it was not then your hand that came
Beating my door? your voice that called my name?

IV.

"It is not Love, it is not Love," I said,
And bowed in fearful hope my trembling head.
"It is not Love, for Love could never rise
Out of the rock-hewn grave wherein he lies."
But as I spake, the heavenly form drew near
Where close I clasped a hope grown keen as fear,
Upon my head His very hand He laid
And whispered, "It is I, be not afraid!"

V.

And this is Love, no rose-crowned laughing guest
By whom my passionate heart should be caressed,
But one re-risen from the grave; austere,
Cold as the grave, and infinitely dear,
To follow whom I lay the whole world down,
Take up the cross, bind on the thorny crown;
And, following whom, my bleeding pilgrim feet
Find the rough pathway sure and very sweet.
The august environment of mighty wings
Shuts out the snare of vain imaginings,
For by my side, crowned with Love's death-white rose,
The Angel of Renunciation goes.

Retro SATHANAS.

"*Refuse*, refrain: for this is not the love
The Annunciation Angel warned you of;
This is the little candle, not the sun;
It burns, but will not warm, unhappy one!"

"But ah! suppose the sun should never shine,
Then what an anguish of regret were mine
To know that even from this I turned away!
Candles may serve, if there should be no day."

"Nay, better to go cold your whole life long
Than do the sun, than do your soul such wrong:
And if the sun shine not, be life's the blame
And yours the pride, who scorned the meaner flame."

The old dispensation.

O *thou*, who, high in heaven,
To man hast given
This clouded earthly life
All storm and strife,
Blasted with ice and fire,
Love and desire,
Filled with dead faith, and love
That change is master of--–

O Thou, who mightest have given
To all Thy heaven,
But who, instead, didst give
This life we live--–
Who feedest with blood and tears
The hungry years--–
I make one prayer to Thee,
O Great God! grant it me.

Some day when summer shows
Her leaf, her rose,
God, let Thy sinner lie
Under Thy sky,
And feel Thy sun's large grace
Upon his face;
Then grant him this, that he
May not believe in Thee!

The new dispensation.

Out in the sun the buttercups are gold,
The daisies silver all the grassy lane,
And spring has given love a flower to hold,
And love lays blindness on the eyes of pain.

Within are still, chill aisles and blazoned panes
And carven tombs where memory weeps no more.
And from the lost and holy days remains
One saint beside the long-closed western door.

Outside the world goes laughing lest it weep,
With here and there some happy child at play;

A mother worshipping the babe asleep,
Or two young lovers dreaming 'neath the May.

Within, the soul of love broods o'er the place;
The carven saint forgotten many a year
Still lifts to heaven his rapt adoring face
To pray, for those who leave him lonely here,

That once again the silent church may ring
With songs of joy triumphant over pain--–
Ah! God, who makest the miracle of spring
Make Thou dead faith and love to rise again.

The three kings.

When the star in the East was lit to shine
The three kings journeyed to Palestine;

They came from the uttermost parts of earth
With long trains laden with gifts of worth.

The first king rode on a camel's back,
He came from the land where the kings are black,

Bringing treasures desired of kings,
Rubies and ivory and precious things.

An elephant carried the second king,
He came from the land of the sun-rising,

And gems and gold and spices he bare
With broidered raiment for kings to wear.

The third king came without steed or train
From the misty land where the white kings reign.

He bore no gifts save the myrrh in his hand,
For he came on foot from a far-off land.

Now when they had travelled a-many days
Through tangled forests and desert ways,

By angry seas and by paths thorn-set
On Christmas Vigil the three kings met.

And over their meeting a shrouded sky
Made dark the star they had travelled by.

Then the first king spake and he frowned and said:
"By some ill spell have our feet been led,

"Now I see in the darkness the fools we are
To follow the light of a lying star.

"Let us fool no more, but like kings and men
Each get him home to his land again!"

Then the second king with the weary face,
Gold-tinct as the sun of his reigning place,

Lifted sad eyes to the clouds and said,
"It was but a dream and the dream is sped.

"We dreamed of a star that rose new and fair,
But it sets in the night of the old despair.

"Yet night is faithful though stars betray,
It will lead to our kingdoms far away."

Then spake the king who had fared alone
From the far-off kingdom, the white-hung throne:

"O brothers, brothers, so very far
Ye have followed the light of the radiant star,

"And because for a while ye see it not
Shall its faithful shining be all forgot?

"On the spirit's pathway the light still lies
Though the star be hid from our longing eyes.

"To-morrow our star will be bright once more The little pin-hole in heaven's floor---

"The Angels pricked it to let it bring
Our feet to the throne of the new-born King!"

And the first king heard and the second heard
And their hearts grew humble before the third.

And they laid them down beside bale and beast and their sleeping eyes saw light in the East.

For the Angels fanned them with starry wings
And the waft of visions of unseen things.

And the next gold day waned trembling and white
And the star was born of the waxing night.

And the three kings came where the Great King lay,
A little baby among the hay,

The ox and the ass were standing near
And Mary Mother beside her Dear.

Then low in the litter the kings bowed down,
They gave Him gold for a kingly crown,

And frankincense for a great God's breath
and Myrrh to sweeten the day of death.

The Maiden Mother she stood and smiled
And she took from the manger her little child.

On the dark king's head she laid His hand
And anger died at that dear command.

She laid His hand on the gold king's head
And despair itself was comforted.

But when the pale king knelt in the stall
She heard on the straw his tears down fall.

And she stooped where he knelt beside her feet
And laid on his bosom her baby sweet.

And the king in the holy stable-place
Felt the little lips through the tears on his face.

* * * * * * *

Christ! lay Thy hand on the angry king
Who reigns in my breast to my undoing,

And lay thy hands on the king who lays
The spell of sadness on all my days,

And give the white king my soul, Thy soul,
Of these other kings the high control.

That soul and spirit and sense may meet
In adoration before Thy feet!

Now Glory to God the Father Most High,
And the Star, the Spirit, He leads us by.

And to God's dear Son, the Babe who was born
And laid in the manger on Christmas morn!

IX.

AFTER DEATH.

If we must part, this parting is the best:
How would you bear to lay
Your head on some warm pillow far away---
Your head, so used to lying on my breast?

But now your pillow is cold;
Your hands have flowers, and not my hands, to hold;
Upon our bed the worn bride-linen lies.
I have put the death-money upon your eyes,
So that you should not wake up in the night.
I have bound your face with white;
I have washed you, yes, with water and not with tears,---
Those arms wherein I have slept so many years,
Those feet that hastened when they came to me,
And all your body that belonged to me.
I have smoothed your dear dull hair,
And there is nothing left to say for you
And nothing left to fear or pray for you;
And I have got the rest of life to bear:
Thank God it is you, not I, who are lying there.

If I had died
And you had stood beside
This still white bed
Where the white, scented, horrible flowers are spread,---
I know the thing it is,
And I thank God that He has spared you this.
If one must bear it, thank God it was I
Who had to live and bear to see you die,
Who have to live, and bear to see you dead.

You will have nothing of it all to bear:
You will not even know that in your bed
You lie alone. You will not miss my head
Beside you on the pillow: you will rest
So soft in the grave you will not miss my breast.
But I---but I---Your pillow and your place---
And only the darkness laid against my face,
And only my anguish pressed against my side---
Thank God, thank God, that it was you who died!

Chloe.

Night wind sighing through the poplar leaves,
Trembling of the aspen, shivering of the willow,
Every leafy voice of all the night-time grieves,
Mourning, weeping over Chloe's pillow.

Chloe, fresher than the breeze of dawn,
Fairer than the larches in their young spring glory,
Brighter than the glow-worms on the dewy lawn,
Hear the dirge the green trees sing to end your story:---

"Chloe lived and Chloe loved: she brought new gladness,
Hope and life and all things good to all who met her;
Only, dying, wept to know the lifelong sadness
Willed, against her will, to those who can't forget her."

Invocation.

Come to-night in a dream to-night,
Come as you used to do,
Come in the gown, in the gown of white,
Come in the ribbon of blue;
Come in the virgin's colours you wear,
Come through the dark and the dew,
Come with the scent of the night in your hair,
Come as you used to do.

Blue and white of your eyes and your face,
White of your gown and blue,
Will you not come from the happy place,
Come as you used to do?
Tears so many, so many tears
Where there were once so few---
Can they not wash the gray of the years
From the white of your gown and blue?

The last betrayal.

And I shall lie alone at last,
Clear of the stream that ran so fast,
And feel the flower roots in my hair,
And in my hands the roots of trees;
Myself wrapt in the ungrudging peace
That leaves no pain uncovered anywhere.

What---this hope left? this way not barred?
This last best treasure without guard?

This heaven free---–no prayers to pay?
Fool---–are the Rulers of men asleep?
Thou knowest what tears They bade thee weep,
But, when peace comes, 'tis thou wilt sleep, not They.

A *prayer for the king's majesty*.

22nd January, 1901.

The Queen is dead. God save the King,
In this his hour of grief,
When sorrow gathers memories in a sheaf
To lay them on his shoulders as he stands
Inheriting her glories and her lands---–
First gain of his at which his Mother's voice
Has not been first to bless and to rejoice---–
A man, set lonely between gain and loss.
(O words of love the heart remembereth,
O mighty loss outweighing every gain!)
A Son whose kingdom Death's arm lies across,
A King whose Mother lies alone with Death
Wrapped in the folds of white implacable sleep.
O God, who seest the tears Thy children weep,
O God, who countest each sad heart-beat, see
How our King needs the grace we ask of Thee!
Thou knowest how little and how vain a thing
Is Empire, when the heart is sick with pain---–
God, save the King!
The Queen is dead. The splendour of her days,
The sorrow of them both alike merge now
In the new aureole that lights her brow.
The clamour of her people's voice in praise
Must hush itself to the still voice that prays
In the holy chamber of Death. Tread softly here,
A mighty Queen lies dead.
Her people's heart wears black,
The black bells toll unceasing in their ear,
And on the gold sun's track
The great world round
Like a black ring the voice of mourning goes,
Till even our ancient foes
With eyes downbent, and brotherly bared head,
Keep mourning watch with us. This is the hour
When Love lends all his power
To speed grief's arrows from the bow of Death,
When sighs are idle breath,
When tears are fountains vain.
She will not wake again,

Not now, not here.
O great and good and infinitely dear,
O Mother of your people, sleep is sweet,
No more Life's thorny ways will wound your feet.

O Mother dear, sleep sound!
When you shall wake,
Your brows freed from the crown that made them ache
So many a time, and wear the heavenly crown,
Then, then you will look down
On us who love you, and, remembering,
The love of earth will breathe with us our prayer,
Our prayer prayed here, joined to your prayer prayed there:
Who knows what radiant answer it may bring?
"God save the King!"

The Queen is dead. God save the King!
From all ill thought and deed,
From heartless service and from selfish sway,
From treason, and the vain imagining
Of evil counsellors, and the noisome breed
Of flatterers who eat the soul away,
God save the King!

From loss and pain and tears
Such as her many years
Brought her; from battle and strife,
And the inmost hurt of life,
The wounds that no crown can heal,
No ermine robes conceal,
God save the King!

God, by our memories of his Mother's face,
By the love that makes our heart her dwelling-place,
Grant to our sorrow this desired grace:
God save the King!

* * * * * * * * *

The Queen is dead. God save the King.
This is no hour when joy has leave to sing;
Only, amid our tears, we are bold to pray,
More boldly, in that we pray sorrowing,
In this most sorrowful day.
God, who wast of a mortal Mother born,
Who driest the tears with which Thy children mourn,
God, save the King!

Look down on him whose crown is wet with tears
In which its splendour fades and disappears---–
His tears, our tears, tears out of all her lands.
The Queen is dead.
God! strengthen the King's hands!
God, save the King!

True love and new love.

Over the meadow and down the lane
To the gate by the twisted thorn:
Your feet should know each turn of the way
You trod so many many a day,
Before the old love was put out of its pain,
Before the new love was born.

Kiss her, hold her and fold her close,
Tell her the old true tale:
You ought to know each turn of the phrase,---–
You learned them all in the poor old days
Before the birth of the new red rose,
Before the old rose grew pale.

And do not fear I shall creep to-night
To make a third at your tryst:
My ghost, if it walked, would only wait
To scare the others away from the gate
Where you teach your new love the old delight,
With the lips that your old love kissed.

Death.

Never again:
No child shall stir the inmost heart of her
And teach her heaven by that first faint stir;
No little lips shall lie against her breast
Save the cold lips that now lie there at rest;
No little voice shall rouse her from her sleep
And bid her wake to pain:
Her sleep is calm and deep,
Call not! refrain.

Close in her arm
As though even death drew back before the face
Of Motherhood in this white stilly place,
The gathered bud lies waxen white and cold,
As ever a flower your winter gardens hold.
She bore the pain, she never wore the crown,

She worked the bitter charm,
But all she won thereby is here laid down
Renounced---–for good or harm.

Dream? Feed your soul
With dreams, while we must starve our hearts on clay,
Dream of a glorious white-winged sun-crowned day
When you shall see her once more face to face
Beside Christ's Mother in the blessed place!
But while you dream, they carry her from here,
The black bells toll and toll.
Oh God! if only she cannot see or hear,
Not hear those ghoul-like bells that crowd so near,
Not see that cold clay hole.

IN MEMORY OF

SARETTA *Deakin*.

Who Died on October 25th, 1899.

There was a day,
A horrible Autumn day,
When from her home, the home she made for ours
And that day made a nightmare of white flowers
And folk in black who whispered pityingly,
They carried her away;
And left our hearts all cold
And empty, yet with such a store to hold
Of sodden grief the slow drops still ooze out,
And, falling on all fair things, they wither these.
Tears came with time---–but not with time went by.

And still we wander desolate about
The poor changed house, the garden and the croft,
Warm kitchen, sunny parlour, with the soft
Intolerable pervading memories
Of her whose face and voice made melodies,
Sweet unforgotten songs of mother-love---–
Dear songs of all the little joys that were.
We see the sun, and have no joy thereof,
Because she gathered in her dying hands
And carried with her to the fair far lands
The flower of all our joy, because she went
Out of the garden where her days were spent,
And took the very sun away with her.

The cross stands at her head.
Over her breast, that loving mother-breast,
Close buds of pansies purple and white are pressed.
It seems a place for rest,
For happy folded sleep; but ah, not there,
Not there, not there, our hardest tears are shed,
But in the house made empty for her sake.
Here, in the night intolerable, wake
The hungry passionate pains of Love still strong
To fight with death the bitter slow night long.
Then the rich price that poor Love has to pay
Is paid, slow drop by drop, till the new day
With thin cold fingers pushes back night's wings,
And drags us out to common cruel things
That sting, and barb their stings with memory.
O Love---and is the price too hard to give?
Thine is the splendour of all things that live,
And this thy pain the price of life to thee---
The sacrament that binds to the beloved,
The chain that holds though mountains be removed,
The portent of thine immortality.

So, in the house of pain imprisoned, we
Endure our bondage, and work out our time,
Nor seek from out our dungeon walls to climb---
Bondsmen, who would not, if we could, be free.
Thank God, our hands still hold Love's cord---and she---
Do not her hands still clasp the cord we hold,
Drawing us near, coiling bright fold on fold,
Till the far day when it shall draw us near
To the sight of her---her living hands, her dear
Tired face, grown weary of watching for our face?
And we shall hold her, in the happy place,
And hear her voice, the old same voice we knew---
"Ah! children, I am tired of wanting you!"

Or, in some world more beautiful and dear
Than any she ever even dreamed of here,
Where time is changed, does she await the day
She longed for, and so little a while away,
When all the love we watered with our tears
Shall bloom, transplanted by the kindly years?
Dreaming through her new garden does she go,
Remembering the old garden, long ago,
Tending new flowers more fair than those that grow
In this sad garden where such sad flowers blow;
And, fondly touching bud and leaf and shoot,
Training her flowers to perfect branch and root,

Does she sometimes entreat some darling flower
To wait a little for its opening hour?
Can you not hear her voice: "Ah, not to-day,
While my dear flowers, my own, are far away.
Be patient, bud! to-morrow soon will come:
Ah! blossom when my little girl comes home!"

But now. But here.
The empty house, the always empty place---
The black remembrance that no night blots out,
The memories, white, unbearable, and dear
That no white sunlight makes less cruel and clear?
The resistless riotous rout
Of cruel conquering thoughts, the night, the day?
Love is immortal: this the price to pay.
Worse than all pain it would be to forget---
On Love's brave brow the crown of thorns is set.
Love is no niggard: though the price be high
Into God's market Love goes forth to buy
With royal meed God's greatest gifts and gain,
Love offers up his whole rich store of pain,
And buys of God Love's immortality.

For Dorothy, 18th August, 1900.

A *parting*.

I *will* not wake you, dear; no tears shall creep
To chill the still bed where you lie asleep;
No cry, no word, shall break the sanctity
Of the great silence where God lets you lie.
I will not tease your grave with flower or stone;
You are tired, my heart; you shall be left alone.
And even the kisses that my lips must lay
Upon the mould of the triumphant clay
Shall be so soft---like those a mother lays
Upon her sleeping baby's little face---
You will not feel my kisses, will not hear;
You are tired: sleep on, I will not wake you, dear!
But when the good day comes, you will hear me cry,
"Ah, make a little place where I can lie!"
And half awakened, you will feel me creep
Into the folds of your familiar sleep,
And draw them round us, with a tender moan,
"How could you let me sleep so long alone?"