

DEVICES AND LINEAR

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Devices and
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DEVICES AND DESIRES

BY

FRANCIS CHARLES MAC DONALD

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To
Henry Welty Coulter
this after many years.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Solillo	13
I	
Optima Memoriae	14
Reminiscence	17
Mist	18
Reprieve	19
Notice	20
I. M.	22
In the Graveyard, Princeton.....	24
Paganism	25
The Sweet-Meat Vender.....	26
The Native Christian, to his Forsaken God...	29
A Garden Song for the North Country.....	30
Nocturne	31
Branch of Palm.....	32
Mango Song	33
Among the Ruins.....	34
"There's Rosemary"	37
On the Caribbean, before Kingston.....	40
Dawn	44
Weather	45
Island Magic	46
The Sorrowful Dead.....	47

	PAGE
Royalty	50
Easter at Sano	52
April Afternoon	53
Memorials	54
Another Note of Spring.....	55
Reinanzaka: the Hill of Whispers.....	56
On the Fly-leaf of a Manual of Arms.....	57
The Wise Crow	58
The Spring Drive	59
Ginza in War-Time	60
Scenario	63
Vladivostok Harbour	68
The End of a British Seaman.....	69
To Sylvia, from Omsk.....	70

II

Of the Ambulance	75
France	76
Russia	77
Italy	78
America	79
She Sees the Departure of the Ships.....	80
“Dulce et Decorum”	81
The Difference	83
1917—1920	84
On a Certain American Soldier.....	88
Armistice	90

III

The Joke	91
An old Song of Spring	93
Inconstancy	95
Bob White	96
To an Alchemist	97
The Old Sail-boat	98
On an Uncertain Day in Winter	99
The Ecstatic Lover	100
The Cynical Lover	101
The Happy Bachelor	102
Song for Gay Music	104
In August	105
Inhibition	106
In the Lanes	107
"Out of what Earth and Air"	108
The Quarry	110
Finality	111
Advice	113
The Visitor	114
The Eternal Hope	115

IV

The Daughter of Herodias	119
Black Dog Care	122
The Merry Life	123
Elemental	125

The Nightmare	126
Spring Song	128

V

Nox Irae	130
Mood after Music	134

Devices and Desires

Solillo

(for Schuyler Jackson)

Solillo is not built of towers:

Narrow the dwellings here, and low;
And slowly, slowly come the hours
To meet us, homing as we go
Along the streets of flowers.

Solillo knows a sky more fair

Than folds across the breast of earth:
At night the generous stars prepare
The whole of all their golden worth
To pour upon the air.

And when the stars are lost in light,
And moons have melted into noon,
Solillo still and cool and white,
Turns to the shadow of the Moon
That haunts the gates of night.

Whatever season comes to pass,
Beauty is born each hour anew:
The lights that glow upon the grass
Summer nor winter can subdue:
Seasons and souls are true:

Season and soul together stand:
Poet and hero reign; and we,
Looking beyond what we have planned,
Descry in dim futurity
Our undiscovered land. . . .

I

Optima Memoriae

Now if I could unlock the past
And all the tokens, duly set
With every circumstance, forget,—
The rubbish memory has amassed,—
These for her pride, these for regret,
These for her desperate penitence,—
Yet save in charity three things
Of good report, to be at last
My soul's immortal evidence :

What dreams I'd brush aside and cast
Away what wild imaginings!
Pleasure that stood me in ill stead;
Love that prevailed not; hope that led
To no fulfilment; projects vast
That neither peace nor profit brought;
Vain purpose, and the vexing thought
Of heaven and hell, and all the fears
That haunted me,—how many years!
Of God hid in the shadow there
To catch me sinning, unaware. . . .

However deep the shadows lay
Against my search, I'd know the way;
For childhood, leading like a star,
Would guess the rapture from afar:
The smile I saw upon my mother's face,
(So long ago, I have forgotten how
She looked then, and I would remember now!)
That said, "No matter what you do, however base
You may be, or however high you climb,—
Love if honour be yours, love if disgrace,—
My love shall follow you!" Ah, now, from Time,
If in God's providence such favours be,
I'd beg that guerdon for eternity!

Once was an hour . . . so swift it came,
And touched me, passing like a flower, a flame,
A breath! . . . that thrilled my heart and gave a
voice

To all my yearnings, mute so long;
That bade me see the glad world and rejoice
And sing! Untutored was the song,
Soon ended; but I was a poet then,
Crowned and anointed. Not again
The spirit came. I would recall
The song to-day, that I might sing once more
To myself only, for old sake, before
I come upon the silence of the night.
For when the shadows of the cypress fall
Thickly about me, and there is no light,
No voice, to guide, I would remember how
That day the laurel felt upon my brow!

Once, within a desolate place,
Broken, I cried aloud for grace;
Silence and night surrounded me,
Immortal, in eternity.
I waited, desperate, for a space.
A light, a voice! I slipped my fear
Back into time; my sight came clear
To heavenly vision, and I saw!
And with the joy of comradeship
His name came bravely to my lip:
His, whom we name but do not know,
And have misjudged a fear, an awe,
A scourge! I did not find him so!
There is not very far to go
Before the grave shall cumber me:
I would remember now, against the day
I stand once more within the uncounted, slow,
And timeless pauses of eternity,
The light I saw, the voice I heard, the way
My soul, scarce knowing what befell,
Was lifted in a miracle!

I may not choose; but, Memory!
Befriend me in eternity!

• Reminiscence

The grass is deep as ever on the hill;
There lies the Kiskiminetas, a gleam
With an old sunset; there the dusky stream
Of Loyalhanna whispers and is still;
There is the haunted house. The ghosts that fill
The shadows draw me to a school-boy dream, . . .
Was that Bob White? What made the hoot-owl
 scream?
What stirred the menace of the whippoorwill?

Among the trees glimmer the lights of school . . .
Why is the gang so late? When reckless Bob
Moved the adventure, every heart was bold:
Shall we waste midnight for a silly rule?
Come, ghosts, and gather here on Locust Knob;
Yonder's the moon, just half a century old!

Mist

Where little Aughwick's deeper pools are spread
The white mist rises from the meadow-land,
Stealing from tree to tree, slow, sinuous, bland,
Till hedge and house are covered, shop and shed;
Then mellowed with pale moonlight overhead
Crawls to the churchyard wall, where, like a band
Of Death's unsleeping, silent watchmen, stand
Broken, forgotten, gravestones of the dead. . . .

I know not why my fancy haunts the place:
Grandsire and grandam, whom I never knew,
Lie all neglected in their sunken plot. . . .
Over my shoulder is a gloomy space
Of shadows, with no starlight breaking through. . .
I whisper, but the shadows answer me not.

Reprieve

Last night at midnight wakened by the shock
Of sudden sound within my room I heard
The quiet, measured steps of one who stirred
At watch about my bed. The fatal clock
That rang the hour could not outring the knock
Upon the door, the harsh, insistent word,
The struggle, the victory, the doom deferred
With sharp denial, and the straining lock. . . .

I beat my brain with question, while the hour
Before the dawn drew out the weary length
Of darkness,—till day's answer took my breath:
Here by my bedside power has striven with power,
And Death and Time have measured strength with
strength,
And Time held back my soul once more from Death!

Notice

This is the city of youth,—
Old grey-beard, get you gone!
Set your pack of threadbare truth
On your back, and let the dawn
Find you many a league away:
Youth awaits another day;
Woe is on you if you stay!

For this dawn about to break
Will so dazzle your old sight
That the sun you will mistake
For the very dead of night;
And the breath of it, the breeze
Blowing freshly pole to pole,
Clearing worlds of old disease,
Will be stifling to your soul.

You will never learn the way
Men must go from place to place;
What your old directions say
Will not help your feet to trace
Any dear, familiar track
Through the windings of the town;
Nor your ancient almanack
Tell when stars go up and down. . . .

Yonder, see, they rise,—afar,
On the dim horizon's line:
Towers beneath a setting star:
City, that, of yours and mine.
Soon will break the alien dawn,—
We must pack and go, forsooth. . .
You are old now,—get you gone,
Grey-beard! This is the city of youth!

I. M.

Deal bravely with him, Death!
He did not fear thee,
Nor cry with coward breath
When he came near thee.
Then he no more than we
Divined thy being:
We are more blind, but he
Sees with thy seeing. . . .

Why was it Death preferred
Him, the new-parted?
Listen . . . I hear his word
Low and light-hearted
Lingering still,—the jest
But touched with laughter:
He did not tire,—but rest
Is his, hereafter. .

Tire? He? The plashy field,
His man to cover. . .
Mud-crusted, heavy-heeled. . .
O, valiant lover
Of Princeton! Hear her name
All through the breathless
Long pauses of the game!
Now he is deathless.

It was but yesterday
He met with sorrow,—
A bitter game to play
Through a long morrow:
No thousand friends to go
Mad with their cheering. . . .
But surely praises flow
Now in God's hearing. . .

So clean of limb and soul,
So surely-minded!
The years were his, the goal
His. . . . We are blinded
With too much grief, and vain
Our grieving o'er him:
Swiftly, out of brief pain,
Peace lay before him. . .

And of that peace we know
Only the seeming:
Sleep,—and the deeper flow
Of truer dreaming. . .
But his a braver faith,—
He was no craven!
Deal bravely with him, Death,
In thy far haven. . . .

In the old Graveyard, Princeton

Now to this quiet place the living come
To make their question of the faithful dead.
Eager each name and epitaph is read;
And many a deed recorded, like the drum
Before a battle, stirs the blood, and dumb
White marble speaks for spirits long since fled.
"I served the State," and "I for freedom bled,"
"I taught the Word of God," some say; and some
In humbler fashion served the lives of men. .
But all of them have this as well to say:
"Let not our limits hold your ventures back!
Know that we come beyond the rest; and then
With higher aim upon the upward track
Leave us at greater distance every day. ."

Paganism

The tide is coming from the sea, and brings
A cool sea-savoured breath of air. The cry
Of homeward boatmen flags as night draws nigh,
And each, forgetful of his traffic, sings
Low-toned, monotonous chants of happy things. . .
From far-off rice-fields, throug the dusky sky,
The crows are wheeling templewards, and fly
To shelter with the gods on reverent wings. . . .

High in the heavens, above my town of trees,
The stars flash forth. . . O, heart,—let sorrow go!
To-night the gods of my lost mother-land
Are near me,—all her kindly deities
Of star and stream and wilderness. They know
The prayer I make,—they hear and understand!

The Sweet-Meat Vender

(Bangkok)

Above the town the terrible sun
Burned all the hours out, one by one;
The full-fed river marked them well;
And with the changing of the tide
A sampan slipped from the farther side,
Heavy with savoury things to sell;
And shrill the vender's coaxing voice
Rose up above the harbour's noise:

“Come and buy!

Friend of the homing seaman I,—
Swatow, Amoy, Hailam, Hong Kong!—
Here is the cheer for which you long:
Confections of such mealy paste
As foreign countries never taste;
Sauce of the sea-fish, briny still;
And curries of a tropic will;
Syrops of old Ayuthian brew,
And fruit the Sumray gardens grew. . . .
Ah, these cocoanuts of mine,
Packed with meat and soaked with wine!
Sugar-cane from Kanburee,
Fresh and succulent,—buy of me!
None has better store than I,—
Come and buy!”

The great pagoda stood intent
Before the final sacrament:
Circled in flame the last hour died;
The crows, grown pious in their quest,
Came to the Buddha's roof for rest,—
So were the thieves beatified!
Mingled still of honey and gall
Rose the same rich, persuasive call:
“Come and buy, O, come and buy!
Like the temple crows am I,
Going with the day to rest. . .
Good people, outland fare is best!
. . . Here are messes, China-made,
Rice and spices, green as jade;
And fish from the Singora shore,
Sun-dried upon a salty floor;
Wines that no local vintage gets,—
And long Manila cigarettes. . . . !
From Singapore the Rajah sent
A fleet of such advertisement. . .
New-fangled things for kings to try. . .
Come and buy, O, come and buy!”

Now, lo! the moon has builded high
A peacock-palace in the sky,
And in the magic of her light
The trees lie silvery in the stream. . .
Magnolias, moving in a dream,
Offer their incense to the night. . .
While faint and far, half-lost among
The echoes, hear the new-set song!

“Worth was the toil, for such an hour. . .
Out of the day has come the flower. . .
Richer the guerdon than the gold:
Now for the night which dawn foretold!
Night and rest, O, night and rest,—
Life is good, but love is best;
Life’s a breath, but love’s a song;
Life is short, but love is long;
Night is short, but love is fair;
Home is far, but love is there. . .
Night and rest, night and rest,—
Night and home and love are best!”

The Native Christian to his Forsaken God

Poor god,—would thou wert God, to shield my
Love,

Who loves not Christ! For me, strip body bare,
Whip soul abroad, leave neither heaven above,
Nor earth, nor ultimate hell, to be my share;
I care not for thy wrath: to me thy name
Is but the name of a forgotten god;
Having denied thee, now I shall not shame
My soul with protests, to escape thy rod!

But, for my Love, hast thou no power to build
Another heaven, as beautiful, as high,
As God's, whom they have brought us over sea?
Earth has grown dark with pity; heaven is filled
With presage. . . Now, low at thy feet I lie:
For her, be God! Do what thou wilt with me!

A Garden Song for the North Country

(Siam)

Out in the Chieng Mai gardens,
When the night came on,
The air was like the air
Of an Eden dawn.

Out in the Chieng Mai gardens,
When the night was mute,
Floated the plaintive note
Of a beggar's flute.

Out in the Chieng Mai gardens,
When the moon was new,
Glimmered the Spirit of Palm,
The Soul of Bamboo.

Out in the Chieng Mai gardens,
In the branch of a Tree,
Orion was held by a dream
Of captivity.

Out in the Chieng Mai gardens,
O sacred Tree!
By the light of thy branch of stars
I found Charity!

Nocturne

(Bangkok)

There's a jewelled cross hung low in the sky,
And a jewelled cross on the darkling tide;
A light breeze falls from the trees, to die
In the shadows that wait by the water-side. . . .
But it scatters the jewels far and wide
From the cross in the tide as it trembles by.

In the cross of stars no loss is felt;
But the shadows that wait by the water shrink,
And the greater stars grow faint, and melt
In an eddy of stars, by the water's brink;
In the water beneath me swirl and sink
The three small stars of Orion's belt!

Branch of Palm

(Northern Siam)

I have no way to guess
Whose is the mound
Here in the wilderness
My feet have found;
Tall stand the trees around,
Stately, sedate;
Old rituals abound
Inviolate. . .

Palm to the heart of palm,
Teak unto teak,
Breathe the authentic calm,
Superbly meek;
Waters, high-crested, seek
To vail their pride,
From lowly creek to creek
Pouring, full-tide.

Who in this place of peace,
Watery, dim,
Waits long for his release?
Unknown, for him
I break the budding limb
Of a young tree:
One grace, in all this grim
Sobriety.

Mango Song

Smell o' mangoes, mellow in the tree,—

See them, hanging ready to fall,

Breaking with beauty, falling to me:

Mine are the mangoes, one and all!

(Waiting, waiting,

Under the branches. .)

Mellow mangoes, dropping on the lawn,—

Hear them falling, all through the night;

Waking so early, out with the dawn,

Gather my mangoes, golden-bright!

(Gathering, gathering,

Under the green tree. . . .)

Drowsy mangoes, dropping in the stream,—

Hear them falling, all through the day;

Sleeping so early, far in a dream

I and my mangoes float away. . .

(Floating, floating,

Far from the low bank. . . .)

Flaming mangoes, dropping in the Deep,

Falling, floating, far from the Shore. . . .

When shall I waken out of my sleep?

O, for the mangoes, mine no more! . .

(Searching, searching,

Hard by heaven-gate!)

Among the Ruins

(Northern Siam, Winter, 1919)

I

Here is a temple, old, so old,
The country folk remember not
The years; Time shall the secret fold,—
For even History has forgot.

The bullock-driver whom I ask
For dates of founders wonders why
Strangers go mad,—resumes his task,
And drives his team unheeding by.

The yellow, time-encrusted priest
Shows one bleak tooth and says that he,
Deep in the wisdom of the East,
Cannot bephrase antiquity. . . .

II

The high towers crumble as I look;
And Buddhas rot in every niche:
It is not writ in any book
Oblivion could be so rich. . .

Gold of forgotten mines was here,
And ruby once with emerald flashed;
By altars, dull this many a year,
Cymbals and gongs of silver clashed;

And kings went up by flowery stairs
To hear the holy oracle,—
Where now one priest, with toothless prayers,
Chants to a tinkling modern bell.

III

I climb from dragon-fenced porch
By broken turrets to the roof,
From which of old, with gong and torch,
The evil world was held aloof.

The sacred tree has rooted there
And overturns a sacred shrine;
And here beside a shattered stair
A god is rescued,—by a vine!

Is this the lot of saint and knave?
Do good and evil take no heed?
A thieving creeper comes to save
A godhead in his hour of need!

IV

For such as I, who ask a sign,
Must this the only answer be?
And ever must the Buddha's shrine
Be ruined by the Buddha's tree?

Faith after faith has flourished here,
Nor wrath nor pity been preferred;
And still from fruitless year to year
Prayer shall be offered,—and unheard!

Unheard? I may not say as much!
Near by I see the Christian cross:
Shall Buddha perish at the touch,
Nor Christ be poorer for the loss?

V

The light across the paddy-field
Fades in a glory, and I go,—
Glad of a mystery unrevealed,
Glad of a truth I may not know!

“There’s Rosemary”

Like a white flower afloat on deep
Mysterious waters of the night,
Heavy and odorous, half-asleep,
Between the stream and the moonlight :

Such, now I fancy, such thou art,
O, long-lost city of my birth,
Still the fair city of my heart,—
One perfect city of the earth!

. . . Could I from usual modes escape
And of my love my skill inform,
Out of my memories I might shape
Temples and towers, white and warm,

With roofs resplendent in the sun;
And thatch a thousand cottages,
All bamboo-built, and every one
Embowered in richly-blossomed trees;

And grow palm-gardens by the flanks
Of many-branchèd, mighty streams,—
Dark, languorous waters, by whose banks
A universe is lost in dreams;

And set a fleet of boats afloat,
Giving to each a lazy oar,—
Fill them with mellow fruit and boat
My delicate cargoes, shore to shore;

And fix a firmament of stars
In constellations new, and gay
Bedeck with planets all the bars
And tangles of the milky way;

And for Orion's belt emboss
A new design to dazzle night;
And touch the symbol of the Cross
With deeper mysteries of light;

And show the way the Buddha went,—
By more than foot-prints in the stone. . .
(Since the long way to His content,
To me, for ever is unknown. .)

. . . Or nearer yet, of dearer days
And fonder memories far, I might
A broad-verandahed mansion raise,
And to its cordial rooms invite. . . .

Or to the lawns, beneath the shade
Of mango-branches, low with fruit,—
To many a flowery esplanade. . . .
And paradises, absolute!

There should magnolias be. The scent
Clings to my English fairy-tales,
As if from out the Orient
Came argosies of English sails. . .

(O, could I listen once again!
There is a grave upon a hill,
Mournful in sunshine or in rain. .
No more: the magic tones are still. .)

Go, dreams and memories, go! I fain
Would waken, waken and forget;
Here are the grey skies and the rain,
Bare trees in windy gardens set;

And straight long streets where people pass,
Traffic and chatter, till they seem
Themselves but shadows in a glass,
Or figments of another dream.

Another dream! Ay, dreaming still!
. . . . Grey towers upon an autumn sky;
Dream-locked on an enchanted hill,
While yonder all the world goes by!

O, flower-like city of the past!
O, little town of towered halls!
Ye are the two where, first and last,
The day rose and the twilight falls. . .

The day rose on a sunny strand
Where joys at end were joy's increase;
The evening falls, and through the land
I hear the folding wings of peace.

On the Caribbean Sea, Before Kingston

Two bars of cloud,
Long, level, angry browed,
Hang over Kingston as the sun
Touches the mountains, and the day is done,—
Kingston, that lies
Indifferent to the skies,
Warm, silent, beautiful, adream
In the late light that floods now like a stream
Of amber haze
Through all her dusty ways.
Sad fading beauty, that will dim
When the sun sinks beyond the mountains' rim;—
Poor broken town
Of shattered houses, down
Whose melancholy vistas pass
Children of Fate, like figures in the glass
Of prophecy!
Destiny shadows thee:
Arisen as thou art to-day,
There stand the mountains still, there lies the bay,
Waiting the hour
When once again their power
Shall be unloosed, and all their might
Falling upon thee, sink thee in the night.

My head is bowed. . . .

But the two bars of cloud
Catch the sun's light that lowers nigh
And suddenly blaze across a brazen sky!
Blaze, glow, and melt
Into a radiant belt,
So greatly fashioned, shining bright,—
Archangel's girdle, thrown upon the night!
Strange jewels these
Upon what stranger seas!
Sapphire and amethyst and pearl
And opal, dropping in a ruddy whorl
Of gold,—a mine
Of fabulous design!
From which the poet or the king
Might figure crowns to wear or songs to sing!

But more, yet more,
Beyond all jewel-lore,
The precious things before the bars
Of night are strewn and cover up the stars!
I have no name
For orange that is flame,
For flame that flakes to ashen gray
And trembles liquidly and fades away. . .
Such a high red
Befits the morning's bed;
Outreds the ruby and the rose;
And here the Tyrian splendour spreads and
grows. . . .

Soul, on thy guard!
Lo, jasper here, and sard,
And emerald! In the mass
Up-piled, the Rainbow and the Sea of Glass!
The sea runs wine. . . .
Across this hand of mine
Falls blood, as from a cup. . .
I dare to lift my thirsting spirit up!

After such sight
Mine eyes long for the night. . .
Above the ship's unsteady mast
On toward the sunset, lo! the moon has passed,
And opened there
Pale, patient, chary, rare,
Cold, cold, her quieter array,
Her humbler beauty and her tenderer sway
Of light! O dream
Of God! The two clouds seem
The entrance now to high estate,
And bar, be sure, the way to the straight gate.

We may not pass;
But here we may amass
Glories; and we may gather here
Splendours: may praise and love and fear.

Kingston, beyond
The bay, lies still and fond;
Dies half the light at last, and stars
Newly-articulate shine by the cloud-bars. . .
Poor shattered town
Of houses broken down. . . .
By whom? Of age-old graves unsealed. . .
By whom? Why question love or wrath revealed?
Say, merely chance,
Or luckless circumstance:
Eternal struggle of sea and' land:
Men perish so: we may not understand.
Another day
Shall come and pass away,
And all this blazonry and bloom. . . .
Kingston, beneath the stars, awaits the doom. . .

Dawn

(At sea, approaching Oahu)

Out of the sea
Uprise majestically
Precipitous peaks of cloud, afar,
Bleak and austere under a fading star.

Before the sun
Exhausted heralds run:
Stars die upon the stairs of dawn,
And the gray moon into gray day is drawn.

There is no sound
The serious earth around,
Save the grave music of the sea,
And the great winds that blow eternally!

Weather

(Honolulu)

Manoa rains, Nuuanu rains,
Have joined against the window panes,
And down from Tantalus I see
Another rain rush rapidly. . .
And somewhere over Diamond Head
Hang heavier rains as yet unshed,
And desperate clouds go hurrying by
To break in rains on Waianae. . .

Manoa blooms in rainbows now;
Nuuanu drips from every bough;
And Honolulu in the sun
Is laughing that the rain is done. . . .
And as the final showers low
Across the farther waters go,
They catch the colours of the sun,—
Their solace for oblivion.

Island Magic

(On Tantalus, Oahu)

Nymph nor faun has pastured here,
Satyr never came this way;
In such groves for very fear
Pan himself had gone astray;
Nightingale was never heard,
Stag was never given chase;
Surely other Magic stirred
In the stillness of the place!

Winds that sweep the world away
Falter here and fall asleep;
Suns that lead the rains astray
Draw them here from all the Deep;
Stars that ever all the night
Keep their solemn stately pace;
Moons, fulfilled of long delight. . . .
Work their Magic in the place.

Hush! I hear a whisper now:
Leaf on leaf is all astir;
Every blossom, every bough
Answers to the whisperer. . . .
Birds, enchanted, on spread wings,
Hang where branches interlace. . . .
What invisible, holy things
Work their Magic in the place?

Cloud and fog enfold the heights;
Rainbows droop across the vale. . . .
Whence come all the radiant lights
Riding down the azure trail?
Sunset on Kaena Head? . .
Nay,—no sun gave such a grace!
Ghosts of gods for ages dead
Work their Magic in the place.

Look! the night has fallen now;
Darkness deepens at my feet;
I, who have no magic, how
Shall I match them when we meet?
Winds are up and shake the world,—
Here I stand and pray a space. . .
Darkness upon Darkness hurled
Works black Magic in the place!

The Sorrowful Dead

(Honolulu)

I

Over Leahi the night falls;
Far, far south Kahiki calls.

Shimmering water by the shore
Foams and breaks for evermore.

Pu-u Ohia, amethyst,
Droops and fades in rain and mist.

Awawaloa, hooded, pale,
Leans against the northern gale.

To Honolulu night-fall brings
Melancholy shades of kings.

Over the Pali wailing ghosts
Of slain men rise up in hosts.

Down Nu-u-anu hear the sound
Of dead feet on the wet ground.

2

*"What malihini goeth there,
White of skin, and false as fair?"*

Out of the North Wind once he came,
Bearing gifts of death and shame.

*"What malihini passeth now,
With slant eye and sullen brow?"*

Out of the West Wind he was born,
Bearing gifts of pride and scorn.

*"Sons of our women, are there none
Worthy of the fame we won?"*

Are there no spirits in the gloom
Chanting their heroic doom?

*"Shadow of shadow, ghost of ghost,
Of their death they make no boast!"*

All is forgotten but the name:
Let the gods allot the blame.

3

*"Can the winds bear us on strong wings? . .
Men were we,—heroes and kings!"*

Winds that are mighty sweep the skies,
But far south Kahiki lies.

*"Let the winds bear us, star to star,
Where our great forefathers are. . . .*

"Farewell, Oahu,—ours no more!"
Winds blow strong above the shore. . .

Over Leahi the night falls;
Far, far south Kahiki calls.

Royalty

(For Sarah Morris)

If I were the Queen of China,
Ever so great and grand,
I'd go to the Desert of Gobi,
And sit me down in the sand,
And call all the camels together
To eat from my queenly hand:

And I'd write to the Queen of Russia
To drop all her worries and cares
And pay me a royal visit
For the sake of the desert airs,—
Away from friends and family
And manners and fuss and chairs:

And as we'd be talking we'd notice
A runaway rickshaw-man,
Draw up with a silvery lady
Who carried an ivory fan:
And I'd cry to the Queen of Russia,
"It's the beautiful Queen of Japan!"

I'd order a thousand muffins,
And a hundred jars of jam,
And while we'd be licking our fingers,
And crying, "How neat I am!,"
We'd see a big elephant coming,
Conveying the Queen of Siam!—

And we four queens together
 Would gossip over our tea
Till the moon came up, and the camels
 Were sleeping so peacefully!—
There in the Desert of Gobi,
 Those three queens—and me!

Easter at Sano

We came to Sano beaten by loud brawls
Of ugly weather. Over us in our flight
Dusk fell to darkness, and the hostile night
With rain enclosed us, as with watery walls;
Through which our headlights bored, like starry
awls

Point-broken at the inch's end. The spite
Of Spirits was against us, and their might
Had monstrous voice in winds and waterfalls. . . .

The Spirits fled before the scouts of day. . .
I woke with windows open to the lawn:
White lay the plum-bloom on the springing sward.
I climbed the slopes, I saw the pall of grey
Lift from the plains,—and lo! the glass of dawn!
Fuji, perfect in victory,—Conqueror! Lord!

April Afternoon

I can make rhymes about you, while the rain
Drips from the slate to little garden pools:
I can sit here and count the instant gain
Of one more syllable in a line for fools. . . .
Your shadow once was light upon the way
I walked, and my own shadow was as yours;
But neither shadow found a word to say,
And shadow-begot-and-born no love endures.
I might have flashed my winter into spring
With blossom and song in gardens of my heart:
Perhaps,—but since it were a terrible thing
Wrong-guessing of hearts and seasons, for my part
I chose to lift my shadow and begone.
Here the rain trails no shadows on the lawn.

Memorials

Lovers may pipe a sentimental eye
When robin or thrush has startled memories;
Hearing the hungry grunting of a sty
I have been won to lost divinities:
It takes no flower to bear the odour here
Of flowers I have attended years ago:
A neighbour's orgy, reeking of stale beer,
Has agonized the savour of old woe;
I need no waning moon, nor stars' eclipse,
That I may dream of beauty gone to mould:
A dog may howl of broken fellowships,—
A crow call up more grief than heart can hold.
I saw an ugly gas-tank by a tree:
Oceans were drained and lands dissolved for me.

Another Note of Spring

Fly down the March wind, with the yellow dust
Enfolding you! For what does Virtue here?
Sitting by winter fires, because I must,
I grudge you fellowship for all the year!
But now, but now, the warm soft rains have come;
And if a wind belated carries snow
We match his burden with the bending plum.
Fly down, dull Virtue, like the puritan crow,
Down the March wind, black in the yellow cloud,
And nest on some bleak island off the shore
Where for all months the virtuous winds are loud,
And through all seasons piety makes a roar!
I know a place for April: there's a tree
All blossomy, shadowy, dreamy, showery, free!

Reinanzaka, the Hill of Whispers

(Tokyo)

(a sleepless night)

I see at midnight Reinanzaka climb
Her shadowy slope, and, as on mischief bent,
Pause in the moonlight, halving the ascent,
Herself to preen, herself with pantomime
To mock, grotesquely posing. All the time,
I hear the sinister echoes, never meant
For human ear, betraying the hill's intent
To masque herself for high fantastic crime.

What Reinanzaka does at last of ill
I dimly image. Palaces, I know,
She whispers to, through long-unopened gates;
And cottages she holds in confidence, to fill
With still conspiracies. . . The night is slow. .
Dawn, till these whisperings are done with, waits.

On the Fly-leaf of a Manual of Arms

By a Soldier who never went to the War
When I have done with Time and need no more
Count the poor mintage of the current days,
Nor spend them miserly from a shrunken store,
Regretful of youth's large, extravagant ways;
When I have done with place, and shall not care
To close my gate against the going out
Or coming in of ghosts, nor touch the air
With incense lest there be old sins about;—
Shall I forego the seasons utterly
And hear no echo of the spring's acclaim?
Nor sigh for one closed house that used to be
High altar of my gods, when winter came?
. . . . And of this war shall I have then no sense?—
Death grown improvident, obscene, immense!

The Wise Crow

When will the winter go?—

“Go, go!” mocks the old crow,
Perched in the cherry-tree over the snow;

“Winter will go some day;
March winds will blow away
Plum-bloom as well as snow;
Go, go!” mocks the old crow:

“Spring, summer, autumn, winter,
All go!”

When will the war have done?

“Done, done,” cries the black one,
High on the temple-roof, warm in the sun;

“War will have done some day;
Peace will have laid away
Soldier as well as gun;
Done, done!” cries the black one,—

“Strength, courage, honour, glory,—
All done!”

Why do you croak and caw?—

“Caw, caw!” laughs the outlaw,
Smug in the market-cart, pecking the straw:

“I too shall go some day
Ever so far away,—
Will you not follow? Pshaw!
Caw, caw!” laughs the outlaw:

“What will you do for wisdom?
Caw, caw!”

The Spring Drive

(1918)

I said to March: Who let you in
With your loud infernal din?
If you can't be quiet, go
To some bigger star and blow:
Here you take up so much room
The plums have no place left to bloom!

I said to March: Why do you come
Army-like, with trump and drum?
With such circumstance, you wake
Man's bitter, immemorial ache:
Wounds remembered stir his rage
To fight for quieter heritage.

I said to March: For God's sake now,—
Shattered bush and broken bough,
Tokens of your prowess, lie
By every garden wall, to die:
Blowing high your victory,—cease!
Let April bring the word of peace!

I said to March: Let April bring
Showers for a bowery blossoming;
Balm to mend the wounded boughs
Where birds may choose again to house;
. . . . Grass to cover with an arch
The boys who died! I said to March.

Ginza in War-Time

From Shimbashi to Nihónbashi
I walk the crowded mile,
And Ginza pours out all her stores
To dazzle and beguile.

So like a stream with ebb and flow
In counter currents mixed,
All day there rolls the flood of souls,
Unfathomed and unfixed. . .

The little mother with her child
Upon her back, asleep:
What whim bears her a passenger
From deep to answerless deep?

The student with his spectacles,
His tablet and his book:
When learning fails, what then avails?
Prayer-wheels or Pentateuch?

The laughing geisha,—humming-bird
With star-embroidered wings:
When laughter dies, will crashing skies
Blot out such futile things?

The tradesman bartering as he goes,—
The customer who waits :
They buy and sell,—who can foretell
Their bargain with the fates?

And such as I who loiter by,—
Do not the voices call?
“It’s home and home, , O ye who roam, ,—
Dear God, I need you all!

“The eddies of the Boulevards
No longer surge and roar :
The gentle stir of a backwater
On a melancholy shore;

“The tides of Piccadilly
Flow not so full to-day ;
The Corso bears a flood of tears ;
The lights have left Broadway ;

“The Nevsky Prospect is a stream
Whose sources none may guess ;
Nor what may be the final sea
Toward which the waters press.

“Shall Ginza then pour out her store
Your fancy to beguile,
Who give your sighs for butterflies,—
Go bankrupt for a smile?

“Come home and home, my sons who roam!
Dear God, I need you all!”
Over the gods of Ginza
I hear my own Gods call. . .

From Nihónbashi to Shímbashi
I walk a sorry mile:
Grim night comes down upon the town,—
Ginza ends here, meanwhile.

Scenario

(Tokyo)

I

O, Tokyo lights are low to-night
Under the spring-struck cherry-trees;
Stars in far sconces flare, to light
The ghostly companies.

For now the dead are come again:
O happy night! O night of dread!
Half-sick of living, I am fain
Of commerce with the dead.

I, who have served, would serve once more:
Nothing but words the new world needs:
I would the older day restore
When service lay in deeds!

My spirit goes among them, ay,—
Silent and reverent, even as they;
Once more I am a Samurai
Walking the Knightly Way!

The pines shadow the moat. I see
 The new raw city fade; I know
 The music that I hear; for me
 The old shrill trumpets blow. . .

For me the ages are withdrawn:
 I must bear well the sword and sword!
 I have to do, before the dawn,
 Rare service for my lord!

They pass and pass. Calmly I wait
 Till he shall bid me come away:
 Now from the Shogun's amber gate
 He calls . . . I cannot stay. . .

I follow, and we go apart;
 Above the trees the stars grow dim;
 There is no question in my heart:
 I can but follow him.

Beyond, I see the shadows stir;
 The pallor of a woman's face
 Gleams in the darkness, and for her
 Love hallows the dim place. . . .

Thy spirit's worth, O lordly soul,
 Is as a crown upon thy brow :
 She waits thee with her brimming bowl
 Under the cherries now ;

The sakè is her seal of will :
 Drink, with her fingers clasped in thine ;
 The flawless cup she can but fill
 Once with such dear-bought wine !

Lo, now the spring is nearly spent :
 The star-seared petals fade and fall :
 O, drink the double sacrament
 Before the trumpeters call !

Then pass, before the length of days
 Can turn thy heart aside, or tire ;
 While yet the shadow of thy praise
 Shelters her soul's desire. . . .

Nothing is she, and yet the host
 Who lift the sword to follow thee
 Will leave not such another boast
 For immortality !

O, dear, dear, of a maiden's worth,
 Her life has come to answer thine :
 She masks the dread of love with mirth,
 And pours her grief as wine. . .

O, light, light, have men reckoned her,
And light her laughter was to hear,—
But never again her heart shall stir
Either to love or fear. . . .

Nor joy shall shake her, nor the strain
Of music shall her spirit rouse,
Till the frail petals fall again
Under the cherry boughs. . .

Then shall she break all bonds and rise
To meet thee with the untarnished bowl.
Thine be the lordlier sacrifice,—
Hers is the loftier soul!

Edge of thy sword, strength of thy arm,
Faith of thy host, she may not be:
She weaves thee courage by a charm
And crowns thy loyalty. .

With sombre pomp the daimio sweeps
To die in battle at the dawn;
The geisha bows her head and keeps
Her cloak about her drawn. . . .

Were they but ghost and ghost, the twain
 Who pledged and parted here to-night?
 Lovers of blossoms, come again
 Down alleys of starlight?

How many centuries ago
 They parted thus when love was new!
 Doom sealed their youth, and better so,—
 For doom has held them true!

O, something longer let me wait:
 The wine, the chalice, he and she,—
 Once,—but love holds the solemn state
 For all eternity!

The dawn is grey, the clouds are low,
 The branches sag with fruitless flower:
 I call my spirit back. . We go
 Thoughtfully, like the hour. . . .

Vladivostok Harbour

(1919)

Here I lie on the windy hill
And, half in pity, half in scorn,
Watch the long streets of the city thrill
As night descends on the Golden Horn.

Row after row the lights come out;
Over the bay runs a starry trail:
The little boats all put about,
And scurry to port with shortened sail:

Beyond the island there, the sea
Dreams of the splendour of long suns:
Below, the gray ships silently
Sniff at the shadows with their guns.

The hard wind sweeps the barren stone;
The air grows cold. I must go down;
Yet scarcely dare to hear, alone,
The heartless laughter of the town.

Thistles are gay, but bear no figs;
Grapes are not gathered from the thorn;
Soldiers and prostitutes and pigs. . . .
Of such what destiny is born?

Deep in the heart of man and race
Purpose and faith must interlock:
Time will be tyrant for a space
And have his will of Vladivostok.

The End of a British Seaman

(Vladivostok)

From dead-march to quickstep

Or ever the hour began!

What was left on the hill-side

Was once a living man.

Whatever now the measures be,

He will not move again:

Dead marches of the winter wind,

Or quicksteps of the rain!

To Sylvia, from Omsk

(August, 1919)

(In the time of Admiral Kolchak)

Sylvia, in the birchwood here
Only the trees abide;
The nightingales are mute, the dear
White lilies all have died;
The elfin people, driven by fear,
Deep in the forest hide.

When I came up here yesterday
The world was grey with rain;
Green leaves were fallen about, and lay
Dead in the dripping lane;
. . . Whatever joy there was in May
August had slain! . . .

But now, to-night, the uncertain hour
Swings in a poise of flight;
The sun leans from a flaming tower
To touch the edge of night;
Gardens of cloud, in perfect flower,
Are walled with light. . .

*(Omsk with her squalour fiercely wrought
To beauty, only craves
Pleasure, however dearly bought:
There, among fools and knaves,
The Hero fills with one great thought
How many graves!*

(*Look,—now the futile street-lights gleam. . .*
The Admiral's window still
Turns darkened panes upon the stream;
Let Omsk be gay at will. . . .
He who is drunken with a dream
Must dream his fill.

(*O, thou, by braggart circumstance*
So bitterly beset!
So harried by the tricks of chance,
With treason darkly met!
Faith, courage, heavenly countenance,
Must serve thee yet!)

And as my feet crush through the grass,
The silvery, slender trees
Stop me with challenge: "Who would pass
Into the mysteries?
I halt and answer them,—"Alas!
Someone who sees

"Only the track of those who went
Beneath a mid-May star
And took with them to banishment
The loveliest things that are:
The birds' song and the lilies' scent. . .
Have they fled far?"

The trees fall back and I am free;
The challengers are still;
Woodcraft or witchcraft now for me,—
Come of it good or ill!
How far from Omsk a man must be
Astray . . . until. . .

Full floods the hour with sweet; I tell
The passion of early spring;
What is the bird that can so well
Regret and promise sing?
Can earthly lilies work this spell
By blossoming?

*(O, madness to be taken thus!
Yonder the bugles blow;
The August night is mutinous;
The Admiral's sentries go
With trusty guns . . . or treacherous. . .
No one can know!)*

The Omsky twilight dies at last;
The glimmering trees grow dim:
What was it brushed my arm and passed,
So gently, so swift of limb?
I cannot, though I follow fast,
Catch up with him.

Is this the place where yesterday
The solemn birches stood
Under the rainy sky, in grey
Autumnal attitude?
Is August conjuror of May
For any good?

Was it the future I would know
That passed me and denied
My question? Must the surety go?
Only the doubt abide?
Can darkling faith in honour so
Be satisfied?

What, in the mystery of the wood,
Of healing could I find
Would turn a world's despair to good,
Or broken fealty bind?
Wisdom, to deeper solitude,
Fled like the wind!

Past all discernment is the end
Set by the lords of fate;
The will of time can no man bend;
Impatient, we must wait
Till fortune fail at last, or mend,
Or mend too late.

'T was but a child's enchantment. I
Have come too far astray!
August, lest childlike faith should die,
Has tried the charm of May.
Now, childlike, I have questioned why,
And none will say!

*(Hero, whom men that know thee not
Have slain with bitter lies:
Thou, whom the Future has forgot:
Thou, whom the Past denies:
Still from thy window shines the light
That never dies!)*

I reach the town; the night-hawks hoot;
Winds of the steppes blow cold;
The sullen sentry stamps his boot;
I touch his palm with gold:
"Amerikansky,—hi! Don't shoot!"—
"Da, da!" Behold,

O, Sylvia, in the birchwood here
Only the trees abide!
The marvels of the earlier year
Have fled away or died:
Only dark night and death are near. . . .
And woe betide!

II

Of the Ambulance

Who brought the message? It was wrapped in flame
And no man brought it. Over sea it came
Swifter than death could come. High over head
The hot day reels and circles . . . *Who is dead?*

Where did he die? Somewhere there in France,
With wounded poilus in an ambulance;
Could no one help him? That I can not tell,—
They say they smashed the ambulance as well.

Who was he? Just a youngster in his 'teens:
The day grows steady now . . . I see . . . It means
Another lover of the world has died,—
To save the world, . . . All are not crucified!

France

Honour against dishonour sets a lance,
And Heaven defend in this all knightly worth!
Kingdoms have vanished utterly from the earth,
So sure is fate, before a favourite's glance;
Empires have rotted for a fool's mischance;
But now the Republic, capped for a jester's mirth
In the day of peace, rides to the battle forth,
And Honour bears upon her banner the shield of
France!

O, for the broken vineyard, trampled town,
For young lives ground in the red mill of war,
Make your lament and grant your gift of tears!
But never needs be pity for renown;
And the Republic lives for evermore,
Purged in the fire of these unquenchable years!

Russia

Here now is terror herself stricken with fear,
And Peace, gone mad, raises the cry for war;
While men, weary of hunger, and finding store,
Dole out starvation, niggardly, ear by ear;
And women, worn with watching, should they hear
Their children weep, know not the cause therefore,
But wake to watch again, and shut their door
Against all hope now, holding nothing dear.
Prophets fall out in rage to prophesy,
And bitter priests drop gall upon the Host;
Soldiers betray their fellows to the rope
The rack, the fire; patriots are glad to die
If dying they may but serve unreason most.
But the Dark People work and wait and hope.

Italy

Through the new land the ancient virtues throng.
Forgetful now of beauty and of grace
Men raise their antique valour to the place
From which it fell, and of heroic song
Make deeds heroic. To this hour belong
No folly of fear, no frenzy of disgrace:
Proper and sweet to die,—O, fair of face,
Beauty, no longer fatal, makes thee strong!
Tuscany calls to Naples, Genoa hears;
Sicily answers; Rome has not forgot;
Venice looks westward over the vexéd sea,
Fearless; Milan remembers other years;
And Piedmont cries, lest the Hun remember not:
Over the Alps there still lives Italy!

America

O, if our hearts be broken, never say!

We have loved laughter, we have loved delight,

We have spun joy upon the wheel of night,
And woven pleasure upon the loom of day;

We have got much gold out of our child's-play

To spend on harlots' progress; for the right

To our own pride we have been eager to fight

With bitter words. . . . Now let no words betray.

We have loved honour as well, nor ever made

Our gain the purpose of our liberty;

We have been moved to pity, not to fear,

And met the scorn of nations, blade for blade:

We loved the world so! Does one doubt it? See!

We never knew our own land was so dear!

She sees the Departure of the Ships

Did love lay a finger on my lips
 And bid me be still?
I saw the sea, I saw the great ships,
 And I had no will
To speak a word. Then I saw him go:
I never guessed it would happen so.

Did grief lay a charge upon my eyes
 And bid me not weep?
I heard the farewells, I heard the cries,
 And I could not keep
My face to the front! I could not stay:
Bewildered, tearless, I came away.

Did life set a fire within my heart
 And bid me not burn?
Far out toward the sea the ships depart:
 Wherever I turn
I am as one lost. No need had he
Of words or weeping; but what of me?

“Dulce et Decorum . . .”

Now it is done. Now let his name be graved
With many another name
Of those whom honourable death has saved
From life's inevitable shame.
Life would have been too strong for him. He braved
The lesser assault of fame.

I, who have seen him falter before the dawn
Of an uncertain day;
Cowering at crossroads, when he must begone,—
Confused, alarmed, astray,—
I know he must have laughed at doubts withdrawn,
Rejoicing to find his way.

I, who have seen him flush a falsehood, clear
From an unclouded eye,—
Making the truth a scarecrow for his fear,
And saving himself thereby;—
I know he must have thrilled to find how dear,
How true it was, to die!

Not long, not long. A minute or two, perhaps,
Clear-thinking and clean and true,
He saw the endless length of time elapse
And eternity come in view. . . .

“At last I shall be worthy of those other chaps!”
. . . Death did the thing to do.

Now he is dead,—lost, yet I hold him saved!

I cannot find death to blame.

All that he hated, all that he feared, he braved

In the swift escape from shame. . . .

In the roll of honour let his name be graved,

A most honourable name!

The Difference

Death makes no difference. He who died
Was brave and generous. To say less
Were niggardliness:
Less would have pleased him,—such his pride!

Now that so many die each day
This golden-hearted boy would want
His praises scant.
“Ah, but the others!” he would say.

But yesterday I got the news:
The boy is dead. How can it be
That here for me
There is no way that I may use

To question death? For, nothing said
Of this great lad were niggardliness;
And words are less!
Death makes no difference,—to the dead.

1917—1920

“A fellow’s got to be honest-to-God,
And decent, I guess;
And have the nerve to shoot his wad,—
Like a man. . . . No less. . . .”

“It’s fifty-fifty,—the chance is bad:
I wouldn’t like that!
With Mother moping about, and Dad
Wearing crape on his hat. . . .”

The car tore up the dusty road
Between fence and fence,
Shaking off town like a heavy load
From our confidence;

The moon hung low on the Cleveland Tower,
Sharp-edged as night came;
Then dropped into sunset, like a flower
Fallen into a flame;

A cool wind ran down from the hill
And ruffled the lake. . . .
I could not answer,—my heart was still
For his honest sake.

“And a fellow can’t be sure, you know,
What it’s all about:
He’s got to get ready to go,—and go!—
Without finding out. . . .”

The car swung round by the Kingston bridge,
Wild, blatantly loud:
Above the stream rose the quarried ridge
Like a pillar of cloud.

“A fellow might hate to go, like Hell!—
And never let on:
For instance, this! It’s like breaking a spell,—
I wish I were gone!”

We struck a road that ran due north:
One cloud entire
Flared with the sunset and went forth
Like a pillar of fire.

“And a fellow can’t say much. It’s not
The he-thing to do;
But somehow or other to-night I’ve got
To bicker with you. . .

“Just a little. It’s here, tied up in my chest,
And its got to come out:
I don’t like this girl-stuff. Most of the rest
Go loving about. . . .

“I hate to think of the things there’ll be,
Like crew and football
And dances and parties and things,—and me
Not in it at all!

“And I have n’t done half I ought to, here :
When I think of it,—Lord!
Of Latin and Math, it seems so queer
How I used to be bored!

“There’s the fellows, of course,—but they’ll be
there!
Believe *me*, with gongs!
And the best ones sort o’ get devil-may-care,—
It somehow belongs.

“I’ve tried to be honest. I think I know
Myself pretty well;
And perhaps I really don’t want to go!
Don’t it beat Hell?

“That’s just with myself alone. I ain’t
Quite a hero yet. . .
And I never wanted to be a saint,—
And I might forget!

“But of course I’m going. The rest of the crowd
Have all of them signed :
But nobody says—at least not aloud—
What’s in his mind!

“And, well,—I want to see what it’s like!
To go for some town
While the shells fly round and the bullets strike,
And the planes go down. . . .

“But most,—how could you live, if the Hun
Got away with this stuff?
It would make all the splendid things we’ve done
Seem like nothing but bluff. . . .

“That’s it! That’s really the final test:
Those old boys were right,—
Washington and Lincoln and the rest,—
It’s better to fight,—

“And die,—than lose the right to these!”
We had come back again,
And the towers leaped up above the trees
Beyond Bayard Lane.

The lights were dim in the streets,—the stars
Prophetically bright;
He laughed,—“I wonder if one of ’em ’s Mars!
That red one! . . . Good-night!”

I shall not go by the Kingston way:
I shall turn, instead,
To the Lawrenceville road for my walk to-day
With him,—who is dead.

On a Certain American Soldier

(W. J. D.)

What Irish field
Rose to so great a yield?
Leinster nor Connaught grew such grain before,
Nor Munster held such harvest in her store!

Not the Red Branch
Bragged of a soul more staunch;
Nor Brian, crowned in Tara, ever gave
Heroic spoils of war to one more brave!

Boyne Water, red,
Among the vanquished dead
Swept no such lover of life; nor the employ
Of wilder geese predestined Fontenoy!

Atlantic flood
Tempered the fiery blood;
And western winds, like mighty hammers, wrought,
Compounding faith with courage and clear thought.

America sent
To France this compliment:
"Take of my best and bravest: let thy star
Of honour guide him: such my children are. . . !"

No subject he
For foreign minstrelsy:
No harp in Tara shall prolong his praise;
Nor wayside poet sing his length of days.

Rather shall he
Unsung, unhonoured be:
Till some new bard, for such high matter fit,
For his own folk shall make a psalm of it!

Fame shall enroll
No more courageous soul;
Quebec and Eutaw Springs and Monterey
And Gettysburg rehallowed were that day.

Death could not claim
The meed of such a name:
But spirits, whom death encumbered, rise to tell
What one man did that day at Saint Mihiel. . . .

France has restored
Our gift, as our reward;
Ours is the need! Of such we can but lend!
And Irish folk were wedded to this end!

Armistice

Men may forget the slaughter that was done,—
 Forget the slain, and, after all, forgive,
For, in the face of fortunes to be won,
 Anger is brief, and grief is fugitive;
Women may soon forswear the tears they shed,
 Deny the silent anguish of farewell,—
Schooling their easy lips to smile, instead,
 At other stories of what once befel;
City may vie with city, race with race,
 To cover up the ashes of this wrath;
And God himself come down from His high place
 To make ripe grain the battle's aftermath;
But from my dust shall grief be bred anew,
And anger thrive. *I shall remember you. . . .*

III

The Joke

Ranald of the Islands, Kedzie of the Kyle,
Stuart of the royal line,—
Something in a bonnet off, something in a smile
Quaffed in a cup of wine,—
(Then the pretty Shilladay
On an Irish holiday
Rose to be kin of mine.)

Hilton of the Midlands, Forman of the Fens,
Dickson out of County Down,—
Laughter, for the women's share,—loving, for the
men's,—
King's blood running to clown. .
(Then a little Berkshire lass
With her luck and a looking-glass
Came up to London town.)

Martyrs for the Covenant, martyrs for the Crown,
Preaching conventicle or Mass;
Dying on the hill-sides, dancing in the town,—
So did the centuries pass:
(Seeing right or wrong in it,—
Prayer or fight or song in it,—
Bible, or gun, or glass!)

Then they struck it westward, sails upon the sea,—
Some fetching psalms to sing;
Some because the honour of their company
Was not requested by the King!
(Others, of a harder lot,
Steerage, a Cunarder brought,—
Shamrock seed on the wing!)

Some of them were gentlemen, some of them were
sots,
Some of them were middling folk,—
Mouldering now in churches, or in weedy plots
Low under willow and oak. . . .
(Though they had no guess of me,
They have made the mess of me,—
Never laughing at the Joke!)

An old Song of Spring

O, ye who love me so,
The same glad hours .
Do I come bringing
That laughed a year ago,—
The same white flowers,
The same clear singing.

Robin shall now begin
His courting tune
And sing it sweetly,
That he his love may win
Ere cometh June
That cometh fleetly. . .

The water-sprites shall play
In pond and creek
With song and laughter,—
Dive madly in the spray
To hide and seek
And follow after. . . .

Now violets shall gleam
Across the grass
Fair-faced and slender. .
For lads to pick, and dream
Each of his lass,
And love grow tender. .

Skies shall be clear at dawn,
And warm at noon;
Night shall be tragic
For little stars, withdrawn
While the wise moon
Makes fuller magic.

Ye who have loved me so!
The same frail hours
Do I come bringing
That died so long ago!
The same blue flowers,
The same clear singing. . . .

Inconstancy

I sighed as the soul of April fled,
And a tear on my cheek
Told of the love I had borne the dead;
And I signed the cross and bowed my head
And was sad for a week.

With a carol and catch the May came in,—
Such a wonderful way!
That I solemnly chucked her under the chin,
And tuned me the strings of my violin,—
And was glad for a day.

Bob White

At dawn when first the fluttering gleam
Of the new sun announced the day,
There reached me, through a broken dream,

This oft-repeated lay :

(Too sweet for cry,
Too brief for song,
'T was borne along
The reddening sky)

Bob White!

Daylight, Bob White!

Daylight!

When evening with the fading glow
Of setting sun foretold the night,
Another song came, soft and low,

Across the dying light :

(Too sweet for cry,
Too brief for song,
'T was but a long
Contented sigh)

Bob White!

Good-night, Bob White!

Good-night!

To an Alchemist

(1500)

No ugly trifle do I bring
To beg thee turn to gold,
But that far dearer, priceless thing
Of which was Adam told. .

The love of her within my heart
Seems purest gold to me,
Yet much I fear lest still a part
Of baser metal be.

Do thou this treasure then behold,
And search with utmost care,
If there be dross amidst the gold
Which I have hidden there;

And if thou find an evil thing
I pray thee then to make
Thy crucible my harrowing.
Amen. For Jesu's sake.

The Old Sailboat

Dismasted, rudderless, sides agape,
She lies upon the beach, a wreck,—
She that was wont, a lovely shape,
To sail with beauty on her deck.

Beneath the moon, before the wind
She sped, and floods of silvery speech
Poured over her; yet now I find
Only the hulk upon the beach. . .

For they are gone, the house is gone;
Beauty has faded, lips are still:
The old boat on the beach alone
Lies in the shadow of the hill.

On an Uncertain Day in Winter

O purposeless dull day!—Gray Spring
Astray in wintry woods;
Or silvery Autumn borne on the black wing
Of laggard lifeless clouds!

O motionless grim cloud! Proud still
To fill a wintry sky;
Uncertain, though, to break upon the hill
Or blow a hurricane by!

Bereft of passion and inert,—
Yet shall the torrents come
And tempests blow. O happy day, thou wert
But with thy purpose dumb!

(And that my aimless life might break
Even in passion now!)
For lo, the winter has come back to take
Toll of the leafless bough;

To strike against the hill in sleet
And beat the world with rain:
I see Gray Spring on silent feet retreat
Down the far southern plain;

The Autumn of the clouds is torn
By passionate true wind;—
Would that such purpose might be lifted, borne
Into my heart and mind!

The Ecstatic Lover

Thine eyes were made for Beauty's eyes to see
Therein the state to which she might attain;
Thy lips were made for song, that Song might be
Fain of perfection, knowing that less were vain;
Thy body was made for grace, that Grace might
 come
To learn of thee how grace may gain in skill;
Thy mind was made for worth, lest Worth be dumb
Beyond thy silence, mute beyond thy will;
Thy youth was made for Youth, to be the door
That Age should pass through toward eternal youth;
Thy love was made for Love, that evermore
Love might be one with constancy and truth:
Life, growing old, shall beg thy life for breath,
And Death of thee shall learn the sting of death!

The Cynical Lover

You will remember me in curious ways
When I am dead. Turning a letter down
Upon your desk you will recall a phrase
I used once; or, in choosing a new gown
Of a gay pattern, you will suddenly turn
Saying, "I never could endure that shade!";
And clerks will wonder why your cheek should burn
So swiftly red. And sometimes, I'm afraid,
When your new lover praises you, his eyes
May show a light like mine, and if you wed
I shall be serpent in your paradise,—
Sharing incontinent in the bridal-bed.
Living I should be sorry to vex you so:
The chance is, being dead I shall not know.

The Happy Bachelor

I am a fool and a bachelor,
I have loved them all my life;
But I could never settle down
And pick one for a wife. . .

I met a man with a wife of his own,
A wife and children dear;
As I went that day on my lonely way
I thought that I could hear:

“O, he is a fool and a bachelor,
Would sweeten them to his taste;
Now the long run of his day is done,
And his youth has gone to waste!”

. . . There was a girl up-country . . .
But she's been dead for years! . . .
She looked for love with open eyes,
And listened with eager ears. . .

I knew a girl from the Cabins,
Rose-white and blue and gold:
She teaches her children now to pray,
And her face is growing old. .

There was one with an eye for the soldiers,
And scorned a quiet life. . .
God knows she's had her trouble enough
Since she was a soldier's wife. .

One was a tall dark lady. . . .
Let the years be many or few
That are due me yet, I shall never forget. . . .
O, tall and dark were you!

I am a fool and a bachelor,
I have loved them all my life. . . .
But after that could I settle down
And take one for a wife?

I met a man with a wife of his own,
A wife and children dear:
As I went that day on my lonely way
I thought that I could hear:

“O! he is a fool and a bachelor!
Would sweeten them to his taste. . . .!”
No: but I'd break my heart again,
And let my youth go waste. . .

Song for Gay Music

Never was my heart awake,—
Never for a fancy's sake
Would I play at give and take;
Once upon a ship at sea
I heard a bell sound mournfully. . .
Nearer life came not to me.

Of my youth I took no toll:
Got no usury for my soul,—
Now heart-bankrupt and heart-whole:
Once through frosty window-glass
I watched the storms of winter pass. . .
Till the green came to the grass.

For my age a fire unlit,—
Fallow feeling, mouldy wit,
Empty spaces infinite;
Once I watched a summer go,
Days like ten-pins in a row,—
Till the hills were streaked with snow. . .

Would that for a whimsy's sake
I could get my heart to break!

In August

There may have been a time,
In March or May
Or last September,
When I could make a rhyme
At least half-gay. . . .
I don't remember.

Let me forget it: call:
"Over and done,
June and December. . ."
Was there no joy at all?
Yes,—there was one
I don't remember!

Inhibition

I cannot read to-night,—
 Little wild fancies haunt me.
Who are they in the dim light
 Crying they want me?
Ere I can rise to go
 Swiftly to find them,
Vanish they all, and throw
 Laughter behind them. . . .

I cannot think to-night,—
 Little sad memories flout me:
Where did she in her far flight
 Fare to without me?
Over what sea she went,
 What welcome met her. . . .
I have been long content
 So to forget her!

I cannot sleep to-night,—
 Little fair dreams prevent me;
Why come they, exquisite, white,
 Now to torment me?
Why should the season stir
 Me to old sorrow?
I have forgotten her.
 After to-morrow!

In the Lanes

In the lanes round Milnwood
In the new spring weather
I caught up with happiness,
And we walked together;
And we walked together
Half an April day;
Flying clouds made the weather
By the flowery way.

In the lanes round Milnwood
In the summer weather
I caught up with faithlessness,
And we walked together;
And we walked together
Half an August night;
Heavy clouds made the weather,
Hiding the starlight.

In the lanes round Milnwood
In whatever weather
Now I meet with loneliness,
And we walk together;
And we walk together,
Silent all the way,
Minding not of the weather,
Nor of night or day!

“Out of What Earth and Air”

Out of what earth and air
Can I fashion you?
For memory has no art
To bring back more than part
Of the one I knew. . .

And now I need you, all,
As in happier days;
Not just a tone, a touch,
Too little or too much
Of your words and ways. . .

God thought you, and his thought
Was our happiness:
A creature of His mind
Made manifest! . . . and, blind,
We have deemed you less. .

And so you passed at length
To a different state:
He thought of you elsewhere:
And my thought, for all my care,
Cannot recreate!

Only a touch, a tone,
And the vision fades;
To-night what secret star
Can tell me what you are?
. . Shade among shades!

In the deep skies, what Deep
Has encompassed you?
Less happy if you be,
Then better, Deity
Should forget you . . . too!

The Quarry

Love, if you be true love, save you while you may:
The terrible hounds of Pride are on your scent
to-day;
Run fleet and faint not,—take no time for breath:
Terrible Pride herself doth ride, to come in at the
death.

Love, if you be fond love, speed your flight away:
The ruthless hawks of Greed are in pursuit to-day;
Beak and claw are ready; they spare not weary
wing:
Ruthless Greed herself doth lead in such a flutter-
ing.

Love, if you be pure love, fold your heart and pray:
The treacherous mind of Lust hath set a snare to-
day;
Wary walk and whisper; falter not nor cry. . . .
God knows what will come of it if God should pass
you by.

Finality

Into the city of silence I came with a song:
I shall forget now all sorrow, I cried, and all wrong;
I shall forget now all dread,—the length of the night,
The passing of love, and the terrible end of delight. . .

I shall remember but joy: the coming of dawn,
The breath of the wind in the boughs when Winter
has gone;
The kiss of the girl of my heart when I thought
she was true;
The hand of my friend, and the wine, and the talk
of us two. . . .

There came to me then the remonstrant host of the
dead.

You have broken our rest; be silent, or go! they
said;
We had forgotten all things till the noise of your
song
Awoke us to memory again and the sense of our
wrong.

Here in the city of silence, if you would forget,
You needs must forget all things, and feel no regret;
Your girl played you false,—and what matter her
 lips were warm?
Day that came to you fair went out black with a
 storm. .

Spring had followed on winter, but winter once
 more
Fell on the heart of the earth and made you heart-
 sore. . .
Death sprang up by night between wine and your
 friend. . .
Love died at last, and delight had a terrible end!

Hush and forget,—for it gains you nothing to rave:
Quiet and rest may be had in the depth of the grave;
Hush and forget. . . One by one they were silent
 and crept
Into the graves. . . So I killed all remembrance. .
 and slept.

Advice

Seek not to number friend and friend,
Nor let their names by rote be said,
Lest ere thou comest to the end
One whom thou lovest most be dead!

I sat me down to muse, and count
Those whom the gods had granted me:
Writing his name, I paused: the fount
Of trust and fellowship was he. . .

My heart rose up: Thank God! I said;
Then wrote a dozen names beside. .
Ere I was done and gone to bed
They brought me word that he had died. .

I say their names, but only one
Was he, my friend! Ah, nevermore
The light of bright-returning sun
Shall lead my footsteps to his door!

The Visitor

The door is closed, yet in you come;
The clock strikes late, you do not go;
I shut my eyes, my lips are dumb,—
I have no charity to show. . .

My eyes are shut, but you I see;
My lips are dumb, with you I speak;
My heart is yours for charity. . .
Go, go, now, for my soul is weak

With watching, and I fain would sleep!
My bed is here, my prayers are said,
And must I still at midnight keep
This long communion with the dead?

Nay! Sleeping, I should dream of you;
Should see the gladness in your face;
Should old acknowledgments renew
And hold you in the old embrace. . .

Then stay, friend! there is much to say. . .
At best I can but think and rhyme
Of you, who died but yesterday
And have been dead so long a time!

The Eternal Hope

O forthright friend,
I wish you well
World without end.
You broke the spell
Of grief: farewell!

Grief had undone
Me utterly:
They died, each one,—
Battle and sea
Unfriended me.

Only high pride
Maintained me whole;
My lips denied
The clamorous dole
That filled my soul.

Indifferent
What fate designed,
No new content
Came to my mind:
My life was blind.

My grief could brook
No condolence,—
Sad by the book,—
Remote, intense,
Courting offense,

Till, presently,—you!
They were no less
My own, and true;
But you could bless
My loneliness. . .

Laughter again
Compelled me; earth
Grew starry then;
Suns proved the worth
Of natural mirth.

Midnight would fold
Darkly to hear
The things we told
Ear unto ear,
Ribald, severe.

Day made the sun
Our counsellor:
Wisdom would run
To fetch us more
Out of his store.

Desperate of bound
Our fancies ran
The world around. . .
Free, without ban,
Friendship began.

Nothing untold,
Nothing withdrawn:
Faith, growing bold,
Held us till dawn
Tintured the lawn.

Praise, promise, blame,
Lay beyond reach;
Silences came
Often to teach
And quicken speech.

Peculiar place
Of trust was yours:
Yours was the grace
Which truth ensures,
And ever endures.

Of all man's dust
Was this revealed:
Trust follows trust
In any field,
Fair, unconcealed.

Now by the shore
Your tall ship stays,
Calling once more
To your old ways.
Now end our days!

They shall not. Far
Your star may guide;
My destinies are
Dim, undescried;
But you abide.

Some day, where men
Forgather, we
Shall turn again
Unconsciously,
And hear, and see.

Friend, as we part
I need not tell
How all my heart
Wishes you well:
Good-bye! Farewell!

IV

The Daughter of Herodias

Daughter of Herodias, dance, dance!

You shall have a prophet's head for your reward,
perchance,—

Head of John the Baptist, rolling on a tray,

Staring eye and sunken jaw, to catch and cart away!

. Nay, I want no prophet's head,

Nor any prophet, live or dead;

Bid me dance and I will dance,—give me but your
soul instead!

. Dance then, dance! and the soul you want
entrance!

Daughter of Herodias, dance, dance!

. Daughter of Herodias, dance, dance!

You shall have a saint's head. . . . Do not look
askance!

Head of Simon Peter, the traitor and the fighter,

His would be a fine head, with halo and with mitre!

. Nay, I want no pale saint,

Arm rash, heart faint,

Give me but your soul, My Lord, and I will dance
without restraint!

. Dance, then, dance! My soul will take a
chance,

Daughter of Herodias! Dance, dance!

. . . . Daughter of Herodias, dance, dance!
You shall have a king's head, stuck upon a lance:
Saul, King of Jewry, anointed of the Lord,
Napoleon, with the world's blood red upon his
sword!

. Nay, I want no crown of gold,
Nor king of any story told,—
Just your soul shall be my bargain, as such things
are bought and sold!

. Dance, then, dance! May the price of souls
advance,
Daughter of Herodias! Dance, dance!

Daughter of Herodias, dance, dance!
You shall have a poet's head, brimming with ro-
mance,—
Lay his fair world waste at will, kill the loves and
graces,
And shout the ruin you have made aloud in public
places!

. Nay, no poet! He were game
For a common woman's shame;
You're the poet, saint, and prophet, you're the king
I want to tame!

. Dance then, dance! such a grace the devil
grants,
Daughter of Herodias! Dance, dance!

Daughter of Herodias, dance, dance!
Take the heads of all the fools in Italy and France,
All the fools in England, in Portugal and Spain,
Prussian fool and Russian fool, Hollander and
Dane. !
. Nay, but just one motley fool,
Heaven's outcast, devil's tool,—
Head and soul, your head and soul, for this I went
to dancing-school!
. Dance! Then dance! Here's to Death
and . . . Dalliance!
Daughter of Herodias! Dance! Dance!

Black Dog Care

Ho, shuffle along with shout and song
 Into the starless night,
With a wary eye on the passer by
 And the corners all in sight,
Lest unaware the Black Dog, Care,
 Come up behind and bite!

You have spent your tin on the landlord's bin :
 At the tables long and white
Was a merry gang whose laughter rang
 To the jests you made to-night ;
But yet, beware, lest the Black Dog, Care,
 Come up behind and bite!

You have made your jest of life's poor best,—
 God's faith and Love's delight ;
You have turned your joke on hearts that broke. .
 (Like your mother's, in the night)
O watch, lest Care, in the gas-light's glare,
 Come up behind and bite!

Run, run, I say, o'er the world away. . . .
 You have far to go to-night,
And jest and song may follow along.
 But this at least is right :
That Black Dog, Care, some time, some where,
 Shall come behind and bite!

The Merry Life

O, life is drink-and-bottoms-up,
And drink once more, my Hearty;
The end be but another cup
At such another party!

*But O, one happy night gone by!
What came of them, I wonder?
Good fellows all, we can but die,
And down we go, and under.*

O, faith is whine-and-make-believe,
And whine again, my Jocky!
Let parsons pule and mothers grieve,—
The road to Heaven is rocky:

*But O, it's gone for ever by:
What was it worth, I wonder?
Time was when God was in the sky,
And I was happy under.*

O, love is kiss-and-let-me-go,
And kiss again, my Beauty!
On starry nights when winds are low,
Such loving is but duty:

*But O, one starry night gone by!
What came of her, I wonder?
The earth is warm, the grasses high,—
May she sleep soundly under!*

O, death is dig-and-chuck-me-in,
And read the prayer-book after;
And never more the love and gin,
And never more the laughter!

But, O, if I should wake and cry

Would any hear, I wonder?

Would death relent and let me by,—

Or drag me deeper under?

Elemental

Of moist and dry, of hot and cold,
Lo, Thou hast made us in Thy mould:
As Thou hast willed it, we must live;
As Thou gavest us, so we give.

Thus, hot and cold, we turn to Thee
With question of infinity:
But, measuring stars from zone to zone,
Are nothing nearer to Thy throne.

Thus, moist and dry, we ponder here,
Computing hours from year to year;
But, reaching Time's extreme degree,
Add nothing to eternity.

Though Thou the weight of Time withhold,
Eternity has made us old:
Though Thou hast given us vision, we
Grow blind before infinity.

Of hot and cold, of moist and dry,
Thou hast devised us, and we die:
Darkly we hope that this our breath
Is not the whole of Life and Death!

The Nightmare

I went alone through lands unknown,
Companionless, and overhead
Were sallow skies, all tempest-blown,
While in the fields the corn lay dead. .

The grain lay dead, but growing still
In beauty and grace . . . I cannot say
How it might be, such marvels fill
My memories of that curious way. .

For always in the sallow skies
The sun was red, and shadows fell
From stars and moon; but weather-wise
I was, and thought it very well. . . .

The hills were low, and towering high
Dead flowers were blossoming in the night;
And rivers silently ran by
Under great forests, ghastly white. .

Through fair familiar towns I passed;
By bridges crossed a flowery bank
An hundred times; and faces, massed
In open windows, rank on rank,

Grinned at me hopelessly . . . I knew
Each one, the living and the dead:
And one I loved stood forth, and drew
Her face awry, and laughed and fled. . . .

Then to the journey's end I came;
Of phantoms there I saw but one,
Monstrous, in whose mad eyes the flame
Of murder blazed. . . I could not run. . .

Nor move my hand, nor cry for aid. .
I saw the long sharp sabre gleam:
I could not wait the stroke he made:
I never wakened from the dream. . . .

Spring Song

They buried me here by my dear. In spring

They buried me here,—in spring!

And I felt the ice melt in my heart, and the sting

Of the sap like a flood in my blood; and the ring

Of the roots lusty shoots came to startle me, still

In my bed with the dead; but the worms did me ill

As they wound round the Thing

That was I,—in spring

When they buried me here,—in spring!

They buried me here by my dear. In spring

They buried me here,—in spring!

And I heard every bird that was mating, wide-wing

On the delicate breeze; and the trees were aswing

As the melody fell on the blossoming boughs;

And the words of the birds were, "How foolish to

house

In a grave,—like the Thing

That was he!" In spring

When they buried me here,—in spring!

They buried me here by my dear. In spring
They buried me here,—in spring!
But my dear couldn't hear the sap flow, the birds
sing,
Nor the worms as they wound me around, nor could
fling
Me a sign she was mine in her death; for the lid
Of her coffin was off, and she could not keep hid
What she was,—just a Thing
Worse than I,—in spring
When they buried me here,—in spring.

Nox Irae

Will not the struggle end before the dawn?
 The rushing voice of all calamity
 That has befallen since the world began
 Foretells destruction to the world to-night:
 Tense with all terror, all presentment drawn
 Into the doom of earth and sky and sea,
 Here I have waited while the dark hours ran
 To ages, and life fought the long last fight.

I look upon the blackness of the lawn,
 Thick-strewn with wreckage of frail hapless trees,—
 Where I was used to fable that great Pan
 Met with the Dryads in the grey moonlight,—
 And wonder what will show there, when the dawn
 Makes clear at last the new-formed boundaries
 Of life and death, well-knowing that no man,
 No living creature, can endure the night.

The fatal influence of sun and star,
 The hostile powers that fill the void of space,
 Fall on my spirit, and I find no cry
 So piercing as to reach beyond their power:
 Across dark valleys, sweeping from the far
 Terrible horizons, without name or place,
 They come resistless, and the world must die,—
 All the world's mortal travail in an hour!

By these to woful end was Eden brought :
Through a long age of unrecorded days
At the high gates the tireless watch was kept
That Adam nor his sons might walk within ;
But when death flashed among the stars and caught
The Labourer from his barren fields, the blaze
Of flaming swords across the garden swept,
Consuming all the beauty that had been. . .

By these at last, when men, grown ill-content
With too much favour, followed evil ways,
Were floods piled up against them, and their line,
Full of the gust of life, to nothing brought ;
By these was ruin into Egypt sent :
Mothers of some made childless in those days,
And gardens fruitless of their corn and wine. . .
Reluctant dawn revealed what death had wrought.

By these did Sodom and Gomorrah fall,—
O, citizens of the plain, did any stand
By swaying windows, staring through the dark
On tortured gardens, perishing below ?
Did any wonder whether dawn would call
Peace to the tumult and bring back the land
Her beauty ? But the day rose on the stark,
Unpeopled plain, too desolate for woe !

By these the terror unto Jewry came,
When the graves yawned and dead men walked
about,
And in the sky stood out the crosses three
On the bleak hill beyond Jerusalem:
Burst heaven and earth to-gether into flame;
King Solomon's temple fell before the rout;
Tall cedars crashed within Gethsemane:
The Rose of Sharon broke upon the stem. .

By these, Pompeii, arrogant, was turned
To ashes and long lines of crumbling stone;
And Lisbon, laughing, swallowed in the sea,
And the warm island cities, with their bloom. . . .
O, while a thousand palaces were burned,
And towers and temples like dead flowers were
blown,
What palmy gardens shared their destiny? . .
Pride borne with beauty to a common tomb?

From all the city late I heard the sound
Of music and of laughter, and the throng
Of men and women, drunken after wine,
Rushed out to do high honour to their lust;
Until the stars fell, and the midnight bound
Their feet with fear, and put an end to song,
While the walls rocked above them for a sign,—
And all my flowers were mingled with the dust!

I cry farewell to roses, those that sleep
Yet in the bud; and so I cry farewell
To many an unborn generation now
Dead ere the bud; and so, despairing, cry
Farewell to all my garden! And I creep
Here to the window, heavy with dread, to tell
New sorrow over, as each bud, each bough
Breaks, till, at last, I too with them shall die!

Woe, woe, to all the earth on such a night!
The rushing voice of all calamities
That have befallen man since he was man
Cries out to me across the valley of woe. . .
There shall not come a dawn; never shall light
Shine on my garden, where tall hapless trees
Lie dead,—where I was used to talk with Pan
Among the flowers, now dead,—all dead, below!

Mood after Music

(For Aubrey Lee)

Go not, O dream of happiness,—not now,
O dream of my own house, of my own folk!
Here, though I am forsworn of every vow
Youth made for me, Music I dare invoke!
For dreams to pass, the World is all too wide,
And fancy on the Deep must surely fail:
With those whose doom is ever to abide
In far lands, Music can alone avail.
Late in this far counry there came a sound
Of slow rivers, and the stir of dark trees
Was round me in dim starlight, and I found
My soul filled with unbroken loyalties!—
Go not, O Music-born! So strangely come!
Many a year now this Music will be dumb.



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