

# **At Dawn and Dusk**

**Daley, Victor J. (1858-1905)**

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### Source Text:

Prepared against the print edition published by Angus and Robertson  
London, 1913

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All quotation marks are retained as data.

First Published:

Languages:

*Australian Etexts poetry 1890-1909 verse*

## **At Dawn and Dusk**

**London**

**Angus and Robertson**

**1913**

## To My Sister

*In memory of our young days ashine  
With dreams, when life was yet an opening rose,  
Take, Alice dear, this little book of mine,  
All made of dreams and dying sunset-glow,  
A lonely bird that singeth far apart—  
Yet shall sing sweeter in its home, thy heart.*

Almost all the verses contained in this volume were first published in the *Sydney Bulletin*. I wish to thank the editor and proprietor of this journal for their kindness in allowing me to reprint. Other verses appeared in the *Sydney Mail*, *Sydney Freeman's Journal*, *Melbourne Table Talk*, and *Melbourne Punch*. To these journals also my thanks are due.

V. J. D.

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# **At Dawn and Dusk**

## Dreams

I HAVE been dreaming all a summer day  
Of rare and dainty poems I would write;  
Love-lyrics delicate as lilac-scent,  
Soft idylls woven of wind, and flower, and stream,  
And songs and sonnets carven in fine gold.

The day is fading and the dusk is cold;  
Out of the skies has gone the opal gleam,  
Out of my heart has passed the high intent  
Into the shadow of the falling night—  
Must all my dreams in darkness pass away?

I have been dreaming all a summer day:  
Shall I go dreaming so until Life's light  
Fades in Death's dusk, and all my days are spent?  
Ah, what am I the dreamer but a dream!  
The day is fading and the dusk is cold.

My songs and sonnets carven in fine gold  
Have faded from me with the last day-beam  
That purple lustre to the sea-line lent,  
And flushed the clouds with rose and chrysolite;  
So days and dreams in darkness pass away.

I have been dreaming all a summer day  
Of songs and sonnets carven in fine gold;  
But all my dreams in darkness pass away;  
The day is fading, and the dusk is cold.

## Lethe.

THROUGH the noiseless doors of Death  
Three passed out, as with one breath.

Two had faces stern as Fate,  
Stamped with unrelenting hate.

One upon her lips of guile  
Wore a cold, mysterious smile.

Each of each unseen, the pale  
Shades went down the hollow vale

Till they came unto the deep  
River of Eternal Sleep.

Breath of wind, or wing of bird,  
Never that dark stream hath stirred;

Still it seems as is the shore,  
But it flows for evermore

Softly, through the meadows wan  
To the Sea Oblivion.

In the dusk, like drops of blood,  
Poppies hang above the flood;

On its surface lies a thin,  
Ghostly web of mist, wherein

All things vague and changing seem  
As the faces in a dream.

Two knelt down upon the bank  
And of that dark water drank.

But the Third stood by the while,  
Smiling her mysterious smile.

Rising up, those shades of men  
Gazed upon each other, then

Side by side, upon the bank,  
In a bed of poppies sank.

“What,” one to the other saith,  
“Sent *thee* through the doors of death?”—

“While life throbbed in every vein,  
For a woman I was slain.

“Love is but a fleeting spell,  
Hate alone remembers well.

“For my slayer I shall wait,  
And though he at Heaven's gate

“Stand, and wear an angel's crown,  
I shall seize and drag him down!”

So the stern shade made reply.  
Then the first that spake said: “I

“For a woman's sake, also,  
Slew myself—and slew my foe.

“Slew myself, that in no shape  
He my vengeance should escape,

“Till Oblivion swallow both:  
And I swore a solemn oath

“I would—hate remembers well—  
Hunt his spotted soul to hell.

“But I left, ere leave-taking,  
Round her throat a dark red ring.

“I shall know her—you shall note—  
By that red ring round her throat.

“Well I loved my fair, false wife,  
And perchance in this new life

“She may love me—we shall see—  
She shall choose 'twixt him and me.”

Softly did the other sigh:  
“My love's love will never die.

“Love is *not* a fleeting spell—  
Love, like hate, remembers well.

“Soon—mayhap on this dim shore—  
We shall meet to part no more.”

Then the first Shade spoke and said:  
“In this Kingdom of the Dead

“Let us, who so strangely meet,  
Pledge each other in this sweet

“Water, our revenge to wreak  
Side by side, and so to seek,

“Side by side, whate'er our fate,  
Those we love and those we hate.”

Kneeling on the dim shore then,  
Side by side, they drank again.

And they saw, like drops of blood,  
Poppies nodding o'er the flood,

And they gazed upon the thin  
Ghostly web of mist, wherein

All things vague and changing seem  
As the faces in a dream;

And by some enchantment weird,  
As they gazed thereon appeared

Unto each, down-bending low,  
Form and features of his foe,

For a moment, then were gone,  
And upon the meadows wan—

Half in Death and half a-swoon—  
Shone a pale and spectral moon.

Then these twain rose, drowsy-eyed,  
And departed side by side.

But the Woman Shade the while  
Smiled her cold, mysterious smile.

And her beauty made a light  
In that realm of pallid night

(Beauty laughs at worm and grave)  
Like the moon beneath the wave.

Back she flung her hair of gold,  
Glowing, gleaming, fold on fold,

Showing—all but these might note—  
The red ring around her throat.

But they passed with cold surprise,  
And unrecognising eyes.

Lightly laughed she then, and said:  
“In this Kingdom of the Dead

“Strange the sights that one may see!  
There go twain who died for me

“Seeking, through Creation wide,  
For each other—side by side!”

Then she wove a poppy crown,  
Placed it on her head, and down

On the river's margin sank  
Midst the poppies of its bank,

Saying: “In the world above  
Long he tarries, my true love.

“Here beside this river's rim  
I will sleep, and wait for him.”

## Love-Laurel

[IN MEMORY OF HENRY KENDALL.]

AH! that God once would touch my lips with song  
To pierce, as prayer doth heaven, earth's breast of iron,  
    So that with sweet mouth I might sing to thee,  
    O sweet dead singer buried by the sea,  
A song, to woo thee, as a wooing siren,  
Out of that silent sleep which seals too long  
    Thy mouth of melody.

For, if live lips might speak awhile to dead,  
Or any speech could reach the sad world under  
    This world of ours, song surely should awake  
    Thee who didst dwell in shadow for song's sake!  
Alas! thou canst not hear the voice of thunder,  
Nor low dirge over thy low-lying head  
    The winds of morning make.

Down through the clay there comes no sound of these;  
Down in the grave there is no sign of Summer,  
    Nor any knowledge of the soft-eyed Spring;  
    But Death sits there, with outspread ebon wing,  
Closing with dust the mouth of each new-comer  
To that mute land, where never sound of seas  
    Is heard, and no birds sing.

Now thou hast found the end of all thy days  
Hast thou found any heart a vigil keeping  
    For thee among the dead—some heart that heard  
    Thy singing when thou wert a brown, sweet bird  
Gray Æons gone, in some old forest sleeping  
Beneath the seas long since? in Death's dim ways  
    Has thy heart any word?

For surely those in whom the deathless spark  
Of song is kindled, sang from the beginning  
    If life were always? But the old desires—  
    Do they exist when sad-eyed Hope expires?  
How live the dead? what crowns have they for winning?  
Have they, to warm them in the dreamless dark,  
    For sun earth's central fires?

Are the dead dead indeed whom we call dead?  
Has God no life but this of ours for giving?—  
    When that they took thee by each well-known place,  
    Stark in thy coffin with a cold white face,

What thought, O Brother, hadst thou of the living?  
What of the sun that round thee glory shed?  
What of the fair day's grace?

Is thy new life made up of memories  
Or dreams that lull the dead, bright visions bringing  
Of Spring above! Are thy days short or long?  
Thou who wert master of our singing throng  
Mayhap in death thou hast not lost thy singing,  
But chauntst unheard, beside the moaning sea,  
A solitary song.

The chance spade turns up skulls. God help the dead  
And thee whose singing days have all passed over—  
Thee, whom the gold-haired Spring shall seek in vain  
When at the glad year's doors she stands again,  
Remembering the song-garlands thou hast wove her  
In years gone by: but all these years have fled  
With all their joy and pain.

\* \* \* \* \*

My soul laughed out to hear my heart speak so,  
And sprang forth skyward, as an eagle, hoping  
To look upon thy soul with living eyes,  
Until it came to where our dim life dies,  
And dead suns darkly for a grave are groping  
Through cycles of immeasurable woe,  
Stone-blind in the blind skies.

The stars walk shuddering on that awful verge  
From which my soul, with swift and fearless motion,  
Clove the black depths, and sought for God and thee;  
But God dwells where nor stars nor suns there be—  
No shore there is to His Eternal Ocean;  
A thousand systems are a fringe of surge  
On that great starless sea.

And thou wert not. So that, with weary plumes,  
My soul through the great void its way came winging  
To earth again. "What hope for him who sings  
Is there?" it sighed. "Death ends all sweetest things."  
When lo! there came a swell of mighty singing,  
Flooding all space, and swift athwart the glooms  
A flash of sudden wings.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dreamer of dreams, thy songs and dreams are done.  
Down where thou sleepest in earth's secret bosom

There is no sorrow and no joy for thee,  
Who canst not see what stars at eve there be,  
Nor evermore at morn the green dawn blossom  
Into the golden king-flower of the sun  
Across the golden sea.

But haply there shall come in days to be  
One who shall hear his own heart beating faster,  
Plucking a rose sprung from thy heart beneath,  
And from his soul, as sword from out its sheath,  
Song shall leap forth where now, O silent master,  
On thy lone grave beside the sounding sea,  
I lay this laurel-wreath.

## A Vision Of Youth

A HORSEMAN on a hilltop green  
Drew rein, and wound his horn;  
So bright he looked he might have been  
The Herald of the Morn.

His steed was of the sovran strain  
In Fancy's meadows bred—  
And pride was in his tossing mane,  
And triumph in his tread.

The rider's eyes like jewels glowed—  
The World was in his hand—  
As down the woodland way he rode  
When Spring was in the land.

From golden hour to golden hour  
For him the woodland sang,  
And from the heart of every flower  
A singing fairy sprang.

He rode along with rein so free,  
And, as he rode, the Blue  
Mysterious Bird of Fantasy  
Ever before him flew.

He rode by cot and castle dim  
Through all the greenland gay;  
Bright eyes through casements glanced at him;  
He laughed—and rode away.

The world with sunshine was aflood,  
And glad were maid and man,  
And through his throbbing veins the blood  
In keen, sweet shudders ran.

\* \* \* \* \*

His steed tossed head with fiery scorn,  
And stamped, and snuffed the air—  
As though he heard a sudden horn  
Of far-off battle blare.

Erect the rider sat awhile  
With flashing eyes, and then  
Turned slowly, sighing, with a smile,  
“O weary world of men!”

For aye the Bird of Fantasy  
Sang magic songs to him,  
And deep and deeper still rode he  
Into the Forest Dim.

\* \* \* \* \*

That rider with his face aglow  
With joy of life I see  
In dreams. Ah, years and years ago  
He parted ways with me!

Yet, sometimes, when the days are drear  
And all the world forlorn,  
From out the dim wood's heart I hear  
The echo of his horn.

## Aphrodite

ON a golden dawn in the dawn sublime  
Of years ere the stars had ceased to sing,  
Beautiful out of the sea-deeps cold  
Aphrodite arose—the Flower of Time—  
That, dear till the day of her blossoming,  
The old, old Sea had borne in his heart.  
Around her worshipping waves did part  
Tremulous—glowing in rose and gold.

And the birds broke forth into singing sweet,  
And flowers born scentless breathed perfume:  
Softly she smiled upon Man forlorn,  
And the music of love in his wild heart beat,  
And down to the pit went his gods of gloom,  
And earth grew bright and fair as a bride,  
And folk in star-worlds wondering cried—  
“Lo in the skies a new star is born!”

O Beloved, thus on my small world you  
Rose, flushing it all with rosy flame!  
Changing sad thoughts to a singing throng,  
And creating the earth and the sky anew!  
As Love you appeared—and, lo, you are Fame,  
And, all my follies and sins despite,  
You yet, Beloved, may see my light—  
Small, but a star—mid the stars of song.

## The Rajah's Sapphires

IN my garden, O Beloved!  
Many pleasant trees are growing,  
Peach, and apricot, and apple,  
Myrtle, lilac, and laburnum.

Fair are they, but midst them lonely,  
Like an exiled Eastern Princess  
In a strange land far from kindred,  
Stands a lonely fair Pomegranate.

Dreaming of its native Orient  
Always is the fair Pomegranate,  
And beneath it I lie dreaming  
Of thine eyes and thee, Beloved!

Overhead its red globes, gleaming  
Like red moons, old tales recall of  
Eastern moons and songs of Hafiz—  
Nightingales, and wine, and roses.

And at times it seems a mystic  
Tree Circéan, whose red fruit is  
Broken hearts of old-time lovers,  
Thus their secrets sad revealing.

And within each red sun-cloven  
Glossy globe, like little rosy  
Hearts within a great heart glowing,  
Glow translucent seeds of crimson.

Like the fruit of the Pomegranate  
Full of little hearts my heart is,  
And the little hearts so glowing  
They are thoughts of thee, Beloved!

Haply these at times are woven  
In with dreams of the Pomegranate;  
Thus, perchance, I dreamt the wondrous  
Dream within a dream here written.

In his palace-hall, methought, I  
Saw a splendid Indian Rajah;  
Fame and Fortune were his vassals,  
But his heart was sad within him.

Round him stood his chiefs and captains.  
“Great art thou,” they cried, “O Rajah!

And thy hand is strong in battle.”  
But he smiled not at their speeches.

Silently through his Zenana  
Passed he, glanced with cold and careless  
Eyes at women, fair as houris  
Seen in visions bred of hasheesh.

Like to dawn, and noon, and starry  
Night—like all the moods of passion—  
Were they, rose-and-white Circassians,  
Amber Hindoos, dark-eyed Persians.

Dancing girls with golden armlets,  
Golden rings around their ankles—  
Making music clear, melodious  
As the splash of crystal fountains

Heard in still, hot nights of summer—  
Danced the Lovers' Dance before him;  
But he heeded not their dancing,  
For his heart was sad within him.

Thence unto his treasure-chamber  
Strode he—there to gaze on gems that  
Rajahs dead had won and hoarded;  
Tragic-storied, splendid jewels—

Flashing diamonds, like fallen  
Stars, for whose bright evil beauty  
Blood in old days had been spilt that  
Should have made them burn like rubies;

Emeralds greener than Spring's garments,  
Pearls like unto tears of Peris  
Weeping by the gates of Eden;  
Opals with their fateful lustre.

Long on these, and countless other  
Many-coloured gems, the Rajah  
Gazed, but found no more delight in  
Their sun-flashing brilliant beauty.

He had dreamt a dream enchanting  
Of twin-sapphires, blue as Heaven,  
And his heart was filled with hunger  
And with yearning to possess them.

Therefore unto his Vizier he  
Told his dream, and gave command that  
He should seek the wide world over,

Till he found the wondrous sapphires.

Doth that sad Vizier still wander  
O'er the earth the sapphires seeking?  
Sooth, I know not—but I know that  
He will never find them, never.

For they were no cold, bright sapphires  
That the Rajah in his dream saw. . . .  
Waking from my dream I knew that  
They were thy blue eyes, Beloved!

## The Cruise of the “In Memoriam”

THE wan light of a stormy dawn  
Gleamed on a tossing ship:  
It was the *In Memoriam*  
Upon a mourning trip.

Wild waves were on the windward bow,  
And breakers on the lee;  
And through her sides the women heard  
The seething of the sea.

“O Captain!” cried a widow fair,  
Her plump white hands clasped she,  
“Thinkst thou, if drowned in this dread storm,  
That savèd we shall be?”

“You speak in riddles, lady dear,  
How savèd can we be  
If we are drowned?” “Alas, I mean  
In Paradise!” said she.

“O I've sailed North, and I've sailed South”  
(He was a godless wight),  
“But boy or man, since my days began,  
That shore I ne'er did sight!”

The Captain told the First Mate bold  
What that fair lady said;  
The First Mate sneered in his black beard—  
His eyes burned in his head.

“Full forty souls are here aboard,  
A-sailing on the wave—  
Without the crew, and, 'twixt us two,  
I think *they've* none to save—

“Full forty souls, and each one is  
A mourner, as you know.  
They weep the scuppers full; the ship  
Is waterlogged with woe.”

Again he sneered in his black beard:  
“The cruise is not so brief,  
But, ere we land on earthly strand,  
All will have found relief.”

“Nay, nay,” the Captain said, “First Mate,  
You have forgotten one

With eyes of blue; the tears are true  
From those dear eyes that run!

“She mourns her sweetheart drowned last year,  
A seaman *he*, forsooth!  
I would not drown for Christ his crown  
If she were mine, Fair Ruth!”

“Brave words! but words,” the First Mate cried,  
“Are wind! Behold in me  
The warmest lover and the last!  
Mine shall the maiden be.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Fair Ruth stood by the taffrail high,  
A cross dropped in the sea,  
If you lie here, my sweetheart dear,  
By this remember me!”

Fair Ruth stood by the taffrail high,  
A ring dropped in the sea:  
“Marry him not, ye false mermaids,  
Married he's now to me!”

The heavens flashed flame; a black cloud came,  
Its wings the sky did span,  
And hovered above the fated ship  
Like death o'er a dying man.

Bended the spars and shrieked the shrouds,  
The sails flew from the mast,  
And, like a soul by fiends pursued,  
The ship fled through the blast.

“More sail! more sail!” the First Mate cried  
(The Captain stood aghast),  
“More sail! more sail!” and he laughed in scorn,  
All by the mizen mast.

“O brethren dear, there's nought to fear,  
The steward told me so!”  
'Twas the parson meek who thus did speak,  
Just come up from below:

“And *were* there,” he said, with upraised head,  
And hands clasped piously,  
“I have a sainted spouse in Heaven—  
I trow she waits for me.”

Then grimly laughed the false First Mate

“Good parson, let her be!  
I've a wife in every port but *that*—  
And that we shall not see.”

“Oh, pardon seek!” cried the parson meek,  
“And pray, if pray you can,  
For much I fear, by your scornful sneer,  
That you are a sinful man.”

Then louder laughed the false First Mate,  
Louder and louder still,  
And the wicked crew laughed loudly too,  
As wicked seamen will.

“O Captain!” whispered a gentle dame,  
“When *shall* we see the land?”  
The Captain answered never a word,  
But clasped her by the hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

Day after day, night after night,  
On, on the ship did reel:  
The Captain drank with the second mate,  
The First Mate held the wheel.

Down came a black cloud on the ship,  
And wrapped her like a pall,  
And horror of awful darkness fell  
Upon them one and all.

The night had swallowed them utterly,  
None could his fellow see,  
But ghostly voices up and down  
Went whispering fearsomely.

No faint ray shone from moon or sun,  
The light of Heaven was gone,  
But ever the First Mate held the wheel,  
And ever the ship rushed on.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fair Ruth knelt down in that grim gloom,  
She prayed beneath her breath:  
“God carry me o'er this dread sea  
That seems the Sea of Death!”

She ceased—and lo! a lurid glow  
O'er that dark water spread,  
And in the blackness burned, afar,

A line of bloody red.

“What lights are yon?” the Captain said.

The First Mate answered then:

“No lights that ever shone upon  
The world of living men.”

“Down on your knees!” the parson cried;

“Thank God, for all is well!”

The First Mate laughed: “Those lights, they are  
The harbour lights of Hell.”

On flew the ship; to every lip  
An ashen pallor came,  
For all might see that suddenly  
The sea had turned to flame.

The lights were near; the Sea of Fear,  
Amid the silence dire,  
On that dread shore broke evermore  
In soundless foam of fire.

“Oh, what are yon gray ghosts and wan!”  
The parson cried, “who seem  
With coloured strings of beads to play,  
As in a dreadful dream?”

“Damned souls;” the First Mate said; “they sit  
And count, through endless years,  
The moments of Eternity  
On beads of burning tears.”

Then, “Who are you,” the parson said,  
“That talk so free of Hell?”  
“My name is Satan,” he replied,  
“Have I not steered you well?”

“Back—back the yards!” the Captain cried  
Then quoth the false First Mate:  
“Like many more who sight this shore,  
You back your yards too late.”

“There are the dear deceased you mourned  
With such exceeding zest;  
They call you—whoso freely goes  
E'en yet may save the rest.”

One pale ghost waved the vessel back  
With gestures sad and dumb—  
Fair Ruth has plunged into the sea,  
“My love, my love, I come!”

\* \* \* \* \*

All in a moment shone the sun,  
Blue gleamed the sky and sea,  
The brave old ship upon the waves  
Was dancing merrily.

And merrily to sound of bells  
To her old port full soon  
The *In Memoriam* that went forth  
Returned the *Honeymoon*.

There o'er their grog sea-captains still  
Her wondrous story tell,  
And how her Captain backed his yards  
A biscuit-throw from Hell.

## In a Wine Cellar

SEE how it flashes,  
    This grape-blood fine!—  
Our beards it splashes,  
    O comrade mine!—  
Life dust and ashes  
    Were, wanting wine.

Amontillado  
    Fires heart and eyes;  
Champagne the shadow  
    Of care defies;  
An El Dorado  
    In Rhine-wine lies;

Port has the mintage  
    Of generous deeds;  
Tokay scorns stintage  
    And richly bleeds;  
But this great vintage  
    The Wine-March leads.

Yet it is wanting  
    In poesy;  
No legends haunting  
    Its vassals be,  
No tales enchanting  
    Of chivalry.

Spain's grape hath stories;  
    Its blood the bold  
Conquistadores  
    Drank deep of old—  
A wine of glories,  
    A wine of gold.

Who drinks not sparing,  
    Beholdeth he  
The great Cid bearing  
    His banner free,  
Columbus daring  
    The unknown Sea,

And, haply biding,  
    In this dream-Spain,  
Don Quixote riding  
    Across the plain,

His squire confiding  
Beside his rein.

The wine of France is  
Aglow to-day  
With flash of lances,  
With feast and fray,  
And dark-eyed glances  
Of ladies gay.

See where together,  
A flagon near,  
Lie hat with feather,  
And long rapier—  
Fine courting weather,  
O Cavalier!

Bright Rhenish, gleaming  
Moon-white! Perchance  
Thy wave clear beaming  
Still guards Romance,  
Not dead, but dreaming  
In spell-bound trance!

Not in Rhine-water,  
But Rhine-wine fair  
Sir Rupert sought her  
(As bards declare)  
The Rhine King's daughter  
With golden hair.

Still 'neath its smiling  
Wave's amber rings,  
Men sweetly wiling  
From earthly things,  
Her song beguiling  
The Loreley sings.

Your cup, wild siren,  
That Deutschland drains—  
Her heart of iron  
Moved by your strains—  
No blood shall fire in  
Austrian veins;

Nor yours whose charm is  
Your topaz eyne,  
Nor yours whose armies  
In gold caps shine,  
Shall charm or harm us—

Eh, comrade mine?

No vintage alien  
For thee or me!  
Our fount Castalian  
Of poesy  
Shall wine Australian,  
None other be.

Then place your hand in  
This hand of mine,  
And while we stand in  
Her brave sunshine  
Pledge deep our land in  
Our land's own wine.

It has no glamour  
Of old romance,  
Of war and amour  
In Spain or France;  
Its poets stammer  
As yet, perchance;

But he may wholly  
Become a seer  
Who quaffs it slowly;  
For he shall hear,  
Though faintly, lowly,  
Yet sweet and clear,

The axes ringing  
On mountain sides,  
The wool-boats swinging  
Down Darling tides,  
The drovers singing  
Where Clancy rides,

The miners driving,  
The stockman's strife;  
All sounds conniving  
To tell the rife,  
Rich, rude, strong-striving  
Australian life.

Once more your hand in  
This hand of mine!  
And while we stand in  
The brave sunshine,  
Pledge deep our land in  
Our land's own wine!

## A-Roving

WHEN the sap runs up the tree,  
And the vine runs o'er the wall,  
When the blossom draws the bee,  
From the forest comes a call,  
Wild, and clear, and sweet, and strange,  
Many-toned and murmuring  
Like the river in the range—  
'Tis the joyous voice of Spring!

On the boles of gray old trees  
See the flying sunbeams play  
Mystic, soundless melodies—  
A fantastic march and gay;  
But the young leaves hear them—hark,  
How they rustle, every one!—  
And the sap beneath the bark  
Hearing, leaps to meet the sun.

O, the world is wondrous fair  
When the tide of life's at flood!  
There is magic in the air,  
There is music in the blood;  
And a glamour draws us on  
To the Distance, rainbow-spanned,  
And the road we tread upon  
Is the road to Fairyland.

Lo! the elders hear the sweet  
Voice, and know the wondrous song;  
And their ancient pulses beat  
To a tune forgotten long;  
And they talk in whispers low,  
With a smile and with a sigh,  
Of the years of long ago,  
And the roving days gone by.

## Brunette

WHEN trees in Spring  
Are blossoming  
My lady wakes  
From dreams whose light  
Made dark days bright,  
For their sweet sakes.

Yet in her eyes  
A shadow lies  
Of bygone mirth;  
And still she seems  
To walk in dreams,  
And not on earth.

Some men may hold  
That hair of gold  
Is lovelier  
Than darker sheen:  
They have not seen  
My lady's hair.

Her eyes are bright,  
Her bosom white  
As the sea foam  
On sharp rocks sprayed;  
Her mouth is made  
Of honeycomb.

And whoso seeks  
In her dusk cheeks  
May see Love's sign—  
A blush that glows  
Like a red rose  
Beneath brown wine.

## Years Ago

THE old dead flowers of bygone summers,  
The old sweet songs that are no more sung,  
The rose-red dawns that were welcome comers  
When you and I and the world were young,

Are lost, O love, to the light for ever,  
And seen no more of the moon or sun,  
For seas divide, and the seasons sever,  
And twain are we that of old were one.

O fair lost love, when the ship went sailing  
Across the seas in the years ago,  
And seaward-set were the eyes unquailing,  
And landward-looking the faces wan,

My heart went back as a dove goes homeward  
With wings aweary to seek its nest,  
While fierce sea-eagles are flying foamward  
And storm-winds whiten the surge's crest;

And far inland for a farewell pardon  
Flew on and on, while the ship went South—  
The rose was red in the red-rose garden,  
And red the rose of your laughing mouth.

But no word came on the wind in token  
Of love that lasts till the end; and so  
My heart returned to me bruised and broken,  
From you, my love, of the long ago.

The green fields seemed in the distance growing  
To silken squares on a weaver's loom,  
As oversea came the land-wind blowing  
The faint sweet scent of the clover bloom.

A rarer odour to me it carried,  
In subtle delicate way to tell  
Of you, ere you and the world were married—  
The lilac-odour you loved so well.

Again, I saw you beneath the blooms of  
Those lilac-trees in the garden old.  
Ah me! each tree is a mark for tombs of  
Dead dreams and memories still and cold.

And Death comes there with his breath scent-laden,  
And gathering gently the blossoms shed

(In guise of Autumn, the brown-browed maiden)  
With your and my dead buries his dead.

O, fairer far than the fair ideal  
Of him who imaged the foam-born Queen  
In foam-white marble—a dream made real—  
To me were you in those years, I ween.

Your lips were redder than night-shade berries  
That burn in borders of hedgerowed lanes,  
And sweeter far than the sweet wild cherries  
The June sun flushes with crimson stains.

And gray your eyes as a gray dove's wings were—  
A gray soft-shadowing deeps profound,  
Where thoughts that reached to the heart of things were,  
And love lay dreaming though seeming drowned.

Twin-tulip-breasted like her the tread of  
Whose feet made music in Paphos fair,  
The world to me was not worth a thread of  
Your brown, ambrosial, braided hair.

Mayhap you loved me at one time truly,  
And I was jealous, and you were proud;  
But mine the love of the king in Thule,  
*Till death;* and yours—sleeps well in shroud.

So night came down like a sombre raven,  
And southward ever the ship was borne,  
Till glad green fields and lessening haven  
Grew faint and faded like ghosts at morn.

As fields of Heaven eternal blooming,  
Those flowerful fields of my mother-land  
In midnight visions are still perfuming  
All wild waste places and seas of sand.

And still in seasons of storm and thunder,  
In strange lands under your land and mine,  
And though our ways have been wide asunder,  
In calm and tempest and shade and shine

Your face I see as I saw the last time—  
As one borne space-ward on wings of light,  
With eyes turned back to a sight of past time,  
Beholds for ever that self-same sight.

But scorn has died on your lips, and through you  
Shines out star-bright an immortal grace,  
As though God then to His heaven drew you,

And sent an angel to take your place.

I plucked one rose from the tree you cherished,  
My heart's blood ebbing has kept it red,  
And all my hopes with its scent have perished;  
Why mourn them now—are the dead not dead?

And yet, God knows, as this rose I kiss, you  
May feel the kisses across the sea;  
And soul to soul for the larger issue  
Your soul may stand with the soul of me,

Unknown to you—for the strings of Being  
Are not so easily snapped or torn;  
And we may journey with eyes unseeing  
On paths that meet in the years unborn.

Farewell, dear heart. Warm sighs may sever  
Ripe lips of love like a rose-leaf curled,  
But you remain unto me for ever  
The one fair woman in all the world.

## Villanelle

WE said farewell, my youth and I,  
When all fair dreams were gone or going,  
And Love's red lips were cold and dry.

When white blooms fell from tree-tops high—  
Our Austral winter's way of snowing—  
We said farewell, my youth and I.

We did not sigh—what use to sigh  
When Death passed as a mower mowing,  
And Love's red lips were cold and dry?

But hearing Life's stream thunder by,  
That sang of old through flowers flowing,  
We said farewell, my youth and I.

There was no hope in the blue sky,  
No music in the low winds blowing,  
And Love's red lips were cold and dry.

My hair is black as yet, then why  
So sad! I know not, only knowing  
We said farewell, my youth and I.

All are not buried when they die;  
Dead souls there are through live eyes showing  
When Love's red lips are cold and dry.

So, seeing where the dead men lie,  
Out of their hearts the grave-flowers growing,  
We said farewell, my youth and I,  
When Love's red lips were cold and dry.

## The Voice of the Soul

IN Youth, when through our veins runs fast  
The bright red stream of life,  
The Soul's Voice is a trumpet-blast  
That calls us to the strife.

The Spirit spurns its prison-bars,  
And feels with force endued  
To scale the ramparts of the stars  
And storm Infinitude.

Youth passes; like a dungeon grows  
The Spirit's house of clay:  
The voice that once in music rose  
In murmurs dies away.

But in the day when sickness sore  
Smites on the body's walls,  
The Soul's Voice through the breach once more  
Like to a trumpet calls.

Well shall it be with him who heeds  
The mystic summons then!  
His after-life with loving deeds  
Shall blossom amongst men.

He shall have gifts—the gift that feels  
The germ within the clod,  
And hears the whirring of the wheels  
That turn the mills of God!

The gift that sees with glance profound  
The secret soul of things,  
And in the silence hears the sound  
Of vast and viewless wings!

The veil of Isis sevenfold  
To him as gauze shall be,  
Wherethrough, clear-eyed, he shall behold  
The Ancient Mystery.

He shall do battle for the True,  
Defend till death the Right,  
With Shoes of Swiftmess Wrong pursue,  
With Sword of Sharpness smite.

And, dying, he shall haply hear,  
Like golden trumpets blown

For joy, far voices sweet and clear—  
Soul-voices like his own.

So welcomed may he join the Throng  
Upon the Shining Shore,  
As one who, after wandering long,  
Returneth home once more!

## Cares

HAVING certain cares to drown,  
To the sea I took them down:

And I threw them in the wave,  
That engulfed them like a grave.

Swiftly then I plied the oar  
With a light heart to the shore.

But behind me came my foes:  
Like a nine-days' corpse each rose,

And (a ghastly sight to see!)  
Clutched the boat and girmed at me!

With a heavy heart, alack,  
To the land I bore them back.

Not in Water or in Wine  
Can I drown these cares of mine.

But some day, for good and sure,  
I shall bury them secure,

Where the soil is rich and brown,  
With a stone to keep them down,

And to let their end be known,  
Have my name carved on the stone;

So that passers-by may say,  
“Here lie cares that had their day,”

And sometimes by moonlight wan,  
I may sit that stone upon—

With a spectre's solemn phlegm—  
In my shroud, and laugh at them;

Or—who knows, when all is said?—  
Maybe weep because they're dead.

## Poncé De Léon

BY a black wharf I stood lately,  
When the night was at its noon;  
Keen, malicious stars were shining,  
And a wicked, white-faced moon.

And I saw a stately vessel,  
Built in fashion quaint and old;  
From her masthead, in the moonlight,  
Hung a flag of faded gold.

Black with age her masts and spars were,  
Black with age her ropes and rails;  
Like a ghost through cere-cloths gazing  
Shone the white moon through her sails.

Not a movement stirred the stillness,  
Not a sound the silence broke,  
Save alone the livid water  
Lapping round her sides of oak.

Then to her unseen commander  
Spake I, as to one I knew—  
“Don Juan Poncé de Léon,  
I have waited long for you.

“Take me with you, I implore you!  
Take me with you on your quest  
For the Fount of Youth Eternal,  
For the Islands of the Blest.”

Then above the bulwarks ancient  
I beheld a head arise;  
And the moon with ghastly glimmer  
Lit its sad and hollow eyes.

“Grieved am I, señor, and sorry,”  
Very courteously it said,  
“That I may not take you with me—  
But I only take the Dead.

“These alone may dare the voyage,  
These alone sail on the quest  
For the Fount of Youth Eternal,  
For the Islands of the Blest.”

## Death

THE awful seers of old, who wrote in words  
Like drops of blood great thoughts that through the night  
Of ages burn, as eyes of lions light  
Deep jungle-dusks; who smote with songs like swords  
The soul of man on its most secret chords,  
And made the heart of him a harp to smite,—  
Where are they? where that old man lorn of sight,  
The king of song among these laurelled lords?  
But where are all the ancient singing-spheres  
That burst through chaos like the summer's breath  
Through ice-bound seas where never seaman steers?  
Burnt out. Gone down. No star remembereth  
These stars and seers well-silenced through the years—  
The songless years of everlasting death.

## Life

WHAT know we of the dead, who say these things,  
Or of the life in death below the mould—  
What of the mystic laws that rule the old  
Gray realms beyond our poor imaginings  
Where death is life? The bird with spray-wet wings  
Knows more of what the deeps beneath him hold.  
Let be: warm hearts shall never wax a-cold,  
But burn in roses through eternal springs:  
For all the vanished fruit and flower of Time  
Are flower and fruit in worlds we cannot see,  
And all we see is as a shadow-mime  
Of things unseen, and Time that comes to fle  
Is but the broken echo of a rhyme  
In God's great epic of Eternity.

## Christmas in Australia

O DAY, the crown and crest of all the year!  
Thou comest not to us amid the snows,  
But midmost of the reign of the red rose;  
Our hearts have not yet lost the ancient cheer  
That filled our fathers' simple hearts when sere  
The leaves fell, and the winds of Winter froze  
The waters wan, and carols at the close  
Of yester-eve sang the Child Christ anear.  
And so we hail thee with a greeting high,  
And drain to thee a draught of our own wine,  
Forgetful not beneath this bluer sky  
Of that old mother-land beyond the brine,  
Whose gray skies gladden as thou drawest nigh,  
O day of God's good-will the seal and sign!

## Questions

SOUL, dost thou shudder at the narrow tomb?  
Heart, dost thou dread to moulder in the dust—  
To meet the fate that all things mortal must,  
Strength in its pride, and beauty in its bloom?  
What have ye done to merit nobler doom?  
How used one life that ye for more should lust?  
Time in his course doth all things downward thrust:  
The unborn generations wait for room!  
Blind we were born, blind die: yet we must still  
Take God to task with Whither? Whence? and Why?  
What if God, giving us our wish and will,  
Said, “Judge thyself” to each! Who dares reply?  
He knows the end who made the perfect plan—  
Hell were too small if man were judged by man.

## The Gods

LAST night, as one who hears a tragic jest,  
I woke from dreams, half-laughing, half in tears;  
Methought that I had journeyed in the spheres  
And stood upon the Planet of the Blest!  
And found thereon a folk who prayed with zest  
Exceeding, and through all their painful years,  
Like strong souls struggled on, 'mid hopes and fears;  
“Where dwell the gods,” they said, “we shall find rest.”  
The gods? What gods, I thought, are these who so  
Inspire their worshippers with faith that flowers  
Immortal, and who make them keep aglow  
The flames for ever on their altar-towers?  
“Where dwell these gods of yours?” I asked—and lo!  
They pointed upward to this earth of ours!

## The Gleaner

METHOUGHT I came unto a world-wide plain  
Where souls stood thick as grain at harvest-tide,  
And many reapers, full of pious pride,  
With rapid scythe-sweeps mowed them down amain;  
And zealous binders bound them up like grain  
In sheaves: the reapers at each onward stride  
Trode many souls down. These the binders eyed  
With careless looks or glances of disdain.  
But, following slow, a patient Gleaner came  
And gathered all the Binders cast aside,  
And made fair sheaves thereof. Whereat I cried:  
“Why gather these? Who art thou? Name thy name!”  
The Gleaner in a sad, sweet voice replied:  
“The outcasts' Saviour—for these, too, I died.”

## Love

LOVE is the sunlight of the soul,  
That, shining on the silken-tressèd head  
Of her we love, around it seems to shed  
A golden angel-aureole.

And all her ways seem sweeter ways  
Than those of other women in that light:  
She has no portion with the pallid night,  
But is a part of all fair days.

Joy goes where she goes, and good dreams—  
Her smile is tender as an old romance  
Of Love that dies not, and her soft eye's glance  
Like sunshine set to music seems.

Queen of our fate is she, but crowned  
With purple hearts-ease for her womanhood.  
There is no place so poor where she has stood  
But evermore is holy ground.

An angel from the heaven above  
Would not be fair to us as she is fair:  
She holds us in a mesh of silken hair,  
This one sweet woman whom we love.

We pray thee, Love, our souls to steep  
In dreams wherein thy myrtle flowereth;  
So when the rose leaves shiver, feeling Death  
Pass by, we may remain asleep:

Asleep, with poppies in our hands,  
From all the world and all its cares apart—  
Cheek close to cheek, heart beating against heart,  
While through Life's sandglass run the sands.

## Passion Flower

CHOOSE who will the wiser part—  
I have held her heart to heart;

And have felt her heart-strings stirred,  
And her soul's still singing heard

For one golden-haloed hour  
Of Love's life the passion-flower.

So the world may roll or rest—  
I have tasted of its best;

And shall laugh while I have breath  
At thy dart and thee, O Death!

## To My Lady

WHEN the tender hand of Night  
Like a rose-leaf falls  
Softly on your starry eyes;  
When the Sleep-God calls,  
And the gate of dreams is wide,  
Wide the painted halls,  
Dream the dream I send to you  
Through your spirit's walis!

Dream a lowly lover came,  
Lady fair to woo;  
Dream that I the lover was,  
And the lady—you;  
Dream your answer was a kiss,  
Warm as summer dew—  
Waking, in the rosy dawn,  
Let the dream be true!

## The Hawthorn

BY the road, near her father's dwelling,  
There groweth a hawthorn tree:  
Its blossoms are fair and fragrant  
As the love that I cast from me.

It is all a-bloom this morning  
In the sunny silentness,  
And grows by the roadside, radiant  
As a bride in her bridal dress.

But ah me! at sight of its blossoms  
No pleasant memories start:  
I see but the thorns beneath them—  
And the thorns they pierce my heart.

## Spring Dirge

A CHILD came singing through the dusty town  
A song so sweet that all men stayed to hear,  
Forgetting for a space their ancient fear  
Of evil days and death and fortune's frown.

She sang of Winter dead and Spring new-born  
In the green fields beyond the far hills' bound;  
And how this fair Spring, coming blossom-crowned,  
Would cross the city's threshold on the morn.

And each caged bird in every house anigh,  
Even as she sang, caught up the glad refrain  
Of Love and Hope and fair days come again,  
Till all who heard forgot they had to die.

And all the ghosts of buried woes were laid  
That heard the song of this sweet sorceress;  
The Past grew to a dream of old distress,  
And merry were the hearts of man and maid.

So, at the first faint blush of tender dawn,  
Spring stole with noiseless steps through the gray gloom,  
And men knew only by a strange perfume  
That she had softly entered and withdrawn.

But ah! the lustre of her violet eyes  
Was dimmed with tears for her sweet singing maid,  
Whose voice would sound no more in shine or shade  
To charm men's souls at set of sun or rise.

For there, with dews of dawn upon her hair,  
Like a fair flower plucked and flung away,  
Dead in the street the little maiden lay  
Who gave new life to hearts nigh dead of care.

Alas! must this be still the bitter doom  
Awaiting those, the finer-souled of earth,  
Who make for men a morning song of mirth  
While yet the birds are dumb amid the gloom?

They walk on thorny ways with feet unshod,  
Sing one last song, and die as that song dies.  
There is no human hand to close their eyes,  
And very heavy is the hand of God.

## Fragments

*These broken lines for pardon crave;  
I cannot end the song with art:  
My grief is gray and old—her grave  
Is dug so deep within my heart.*

### I.—Her Last Day

IT was a day of sombre heat:  
The still, dense air was void of sound  
And life; no wing of bird did beat  
A little breeze through it—the ground  
Was like live ashes to the feet.  
From the black hills that loomed around  
The valley many a sudden spire  
Of flame shot up, and writhed, and curled,  
And sank again for heaviness:  
And heavy seemed to men that day  
The burden of the weary world.  
For evermore the sky did press  
Closer upon the earth that lay  
Fainting beneath, as one in dire  
Dreams of the night, upon whose breast  
Sits a black phantom of unrest  
That holds him down. The earth and sky  
Appeared unto the troubled eye  
A roof of smoke, a floor of fire.

There was no water in the land.  
Deep in the night of each ravine  
Men, vainly searching for it, found  
Dry hollows in the gaping ground,  
Like sockets where clear eyes had been,  
Now burnt out with a burning brand.  
There was no water in the land  
But the salt sea tide, that did roll  
Far past the places where, till then,  
The sweet streams met and flung it back;  
The beds of little brooks, that stole  
In spring-time down each ferny glen,  
And rippled over rock and sand,  
Were drier than a cattle-track.  
A dull, strange languor of disease,  
That ever with the heat increased,  
Fell upon man, and bird, and beast;

The thin-flanked cattle gasped for breath;  
The birds dropped dead from drooping trees;  
And men, who drank the muddy lees  
From each near-dry though deep-dug well,  
Grew faint; and over all things fell  
A heavy stupor, dank as Death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fierce Nature, glaring with a face  
Of savage scorn at my despair,  
Withered my heart. From cone to base  
The hills were full of hollow eyes  
That rayed out darkness, dead and dull;  
Gray rocks grinned under ridges bare,  
Like dry teeth in a mouldered skull;  
And ghastly gum-tree trunks did loom  
Out of black clefts and rifts of gloom,  
As sheeted spectres that arise  
From yawning graves at dead of night  
To fill the living with affright;  
And, like to witches foul that bare  
Their withered arms, and bend, and cast  
Dread curses on the sleeping lands  
In awful legends of the past,  
Red gums, with outstretched bloody hands,  
Shook maledictions in the air.

Fear was around me everywhere:  
The wrinkled foreheads of the rocks  
Frowned on me, and methought I saw—  
Deep down in dismal gulfs of awe,  
Where gray death-adders have their lair,  
With the fiend-bat, the flying-fox,  
And dim sun-rays, down-groping far,  
Pale as a dead man's fingers are—  
The grisly image of Decay,  
That at the root of Life doth gnaw,  
Sitting alone upon a throne  
Of rotting skull and bleaching bone.

\* \* \* \* \*

“There is an end to all our griefs:  
Little the red worm of the grave  
Will vex us when our days are done.”  
So changed my thought: up-gazing then  
On gray-piled stones that seemed the cairns  
Of dead and long-forgotten chiefs—

The men of old, the poor wild men  
Who, under dim lights, fought a brave,  
Sad fight of Life, where hope was none,  
In the vague, voiceless, far-off years—  
It changed again to present pain,  
And I saw Sorrow everywhere:  
In blackened trees and rust-red ferns,  
Blasted by bush-fires and the sun;  
And by the salt-flood—salt as tears—  
Where the wild apple-trees hung low,  
And evermore stooped down to stare  
At their drowned shadows in the wave,  
Wringing their knotted hands of woe;  
And the dark swamp-oaks, row on row,  
Lined either bank—a sombre train  
Of mourners with down-streaming hair.

## II.—Sunset

THE day and its delights are done;  
So all delights and days expire:  
Down in the dim, sad West the sun  
Is dying like a dying fire.

The fiercest lances of his light  
Are spent; I watch him droop and die  
Like a great king who falls in fight;  
None dared the duel of his eye  
Living, but, now his eye is dim,  
The eyes of all may stare at him.

How lovely in his strength at morn  
He orb'd along the burning blue!  
The blown gold of his flying hair  
Was tangled in green-tress'd trees,  
And netted in the river sand  
In gleaming links of amber clear;  
But all his shining locks are shorn,  
His brow of its bright crown is bare,  
The golden sceptre leaves his hand,  
And deeper, darker, grows the hue  
Of the dim purple draperies  
And cloudy banners round his bier.

O beautiful, rose-hearted dawn!—  
O splendid noon of gold and blue!—  
Is this wan glimmer all of you?  
Where are the blush and bloom ye gave

To laughing land and smiling sea?—  
The swift lights that did flash and shiver  
In diamond rain upon the river,  
And set a star in each blue wave?  
Where are the merry lights and shadows  
That danced through wood and over lawn,  
And flew across the dewy meadows  
Like white nymphs chased by satyr lovers?  
Faded and perished utterly.

All delicate and all rich colour  
In flower and cloud, on lawn and lea,  
On butterfly, and bird, and bee,  
A little space and all are gone—  
And darkness, like a raven, hovers  
Above the death-bed of the day.

\* \* \* \* \*

So, when the long, last night draws on,  
And all the world grows ghastly gray,  
We see our beautiful and brave  
Wither, and watch with heavy sighs  
The life-light dying in their eyes,  
The love-light slowly fading out,  
Leaving no faint hope in their place,  
But only on each dear wan face  
The shadow of a weary doubt,  
The ashen pallor of the grave.

O gracious morn and golden noon!  
With what fair dreams did ye depart—  
Beloved so well and lost so soon!  
I could not fold you to my breast:  
I could not hide you in my heart;  
I saw the watchers in the West—  
Sad, shrouded shapes, with hands that wring  
And phantom fingers beckoning!

### III.—Years After

Fade off the ridges, rosy light,  
Fade slowly from the last gray height,  
And leave no gloomy cloud to grieve  
The heart of this enchanted eve!

All things beneath the still sky seem  
Bound by the spell of a sweet dream;  
In the dusk forest, dreamingly,

Droops slowly down each plumèd head;  
The river flowing softly by  
Dreams of the sea; the quiet sea  
Dreams of the unseen stars; and I  
Am dreaming of the dreamless dead.

The river has a silken sheen,  
But red rays of the sunset stain  
Its pictures, from the steep shore caught,  
Till shades of rock, and fern, and tree  
Glow like the figures on a pane  
Of some old church by twilight seen,  
Or like the rich devices wrought  
In mediaeval tapestry.

All lonely in a drifting boat  
Through shine and shade I float and float,  
Dreaming and dreaming, till I seem  
Part of the picture and the dream.

There is no sound to break the spell,  
No voice of bird or stir of bough;  
Only the lisp of waters wreathing  
In little ripples round the prow,  
And a low air, like Silence breathing,  
That hardly dusks the sleepy swell  
Whereon I float to that strange deep  
That sighs upon the shores of Sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

But in the silent heaven blooming  
Behold the wondrous sunset flower  
That blooms and fades within the hour—  
The flower of fantasy, perfuming  
With subtle melody of scent  
The blue aisles of the firmament!

For colour, music, scent, are one;  
From deeps of air to airless heights,  
Lo! how he sweeps, the splendid sun,  
His burning lyre of many lights!

See the clear golden lily blowing!  
It shines as shone thy gentle soul,  
O my most sweet, when from the goal  
Of life, far-gazing, thou didst see—  
While Death still feared to touch thine eyes,  
Where such immortal light was glowing—

The vision of eternity,  
The pearly gates of Paradise!

Now richer hues the skies illumine:  
The pale gold blushes into bloom,  
Delicate as the flowering  
Of first love in the tender spring  
Of Life, when love is wizardry  
That over narrow days can throw  
A glamour and a glory! so  
Did thine, my Beautiful, for me  
So long ago; so long ago.

So long ago! so long ago!  
Ah, who can Love and Grief estrange?  
Or Memory and Sorrow part?  
Lo, in the West another change—  
A deeper glow: a rose of fire:  
A rose of passionate desire  
Lone burning in a lonely heart.

A lonely heart; a lonely flood.  
The wave that glassed her gleaming head  
And smiling passed, it does not know  
That gleaming head lies dark and low;  
The myrtle-tree that bends above,  
I pray that it may early bud,  
For under its green boughs sat we—  
We twain, we only, hand in hand,  
When Love was lord of all the land—  
It does not know that she is dead  
And all is over now with Love,  
Is over now with Love and me.

Once more, once more, O shining years  
Gone by; once more, O vanished days  
Whose hours flew by on iris-wings,  
Come back and bring my love to me!  
My voice faints down the wooded ways  
And dies along the darkling flood.  
The past is past; I cry in vain,  
For when did Death an answer deign  
To Love's heart-broken questionings?  
The dead are deaf; dust chokes their ears;  
Only the rolling river hears  
Far off the calling of the sea—  
A shiver strikes through all my blood,  
Mine eyes are full of sudden tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shadows gather over all,  
The valley, and the mountains old;  
Shadow on shadow fast they fall  
On glooming green and waning gold;  
And on my heart they gather drear,  
Damp as with grave-damps, dark with fear.

\* \* \* \* \*

O Sorrow, Sorrow, couldst thou leave me  
Not one brief hour to dream alone?  
Hast thou not all my days to grieve me?  
My nights, are they not all thine own?  
Thou hauntest me at morning light,  
Thou blackenest the white moonbeams;  
A hollow voice at noon; at night  
A crowned ghost, sitting on a throne,  
Ruling the kingdom of my dreams.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maker of men, Thou gavest breath,  
Thou gavest love to all that live,  
Thou rendest loves and lives apart;  
Allwise art Thou; who questioneth  
Thy will, or who can read Thy heart?  
But couldst Thou not in mercy give  
A sign to us—one little spark  
Of sure hope that the end of all  
Is not concealed beneath the pall,  
Or wound up with the winding-sheet?  
Who heedeth aught the preacher saith  
When eyes wax dim, and limbs grow stark,  
And fear sits on the darkened bed?  
The dying man turns to the wall.  
What hope have we above our dead?—  
Tense fingers clutching at the dark,  
And hopeless hands that vainly beat  
Against the iron doors of Death!

## “Unto This Last”

THEY brought my fair love out upon a bier—  
Out from the dwelling that her smile made sweet,  
Out from the life that her life made complete,  
Into the glitter of the garish street—  
And no man wept, save I, for that dead dear.

And then the dark procession wound along,  
Like a black serpent with a snow-white bird  
Held in its fangs. I think God said a word  
To death, as He in His chill heaven heard  
Her voice so sweeter than His seraph's song.

And so Death took away her flower-sweet breath  
One darkest day of days in a dark year, [dear  
And brought to that strong God who had no  
My own dear love. Ah, closed eyes without peer!  
Ah, red lips pressed on the blue lips of Death!

## The Nightingale

WHEN the moon a golden-pale  
Lustre on my casement flings,  
An enchanted nightingale  
In the haunted silence sings.

Strange the song—its wondrous words  
Taken from the primal tongue,  
Known to men, and beasts, and birds,  
When the care-worn world was young

Listening low, I hear the stars  
Through her strains move solemnly,  
And on lonesome banks and bars  
Hear the sobbing of the sea.

And my memory dimly gropes  
Hints to gather from her song  
Of forgotten fears and hopes,  
Joys and griefs forgotten long.

And I feel once more the strife  
Of a passion, fierce and grand,  
That, in some long-vanished life,  
Held my soul at its command.

Ah, my Love, in robes of white  
Standing by a moonlit sea,  
Like a lily of the night,  
Hast thou quite forgotten me?

Dost thou never dream at whiles  
Of that silent, templed vale,  
And the dim wood in whose aisles  
Sang a secret nightingale?

Whither hast thou gone? What star  
Holds thy spirit pure and fine?  
In this world below there are  
None like thee: and thou wert mine!

For a season all things last,  
Love and Joy, and Life and Death;  
Thou art portion of my past,  
I of thine, whilst Time draws breath.

Fades the moonlight golden-pale,  
And the bird has ceased to sing—

Ah, it was no nightingale,  
But my heart—remembering.

## The Two Keys

THERE was a Boy, long years ago,  
Who hour by hour awake would lie,  
And watch the white moon gliding slow  
Along her pathway in the sky.

And every night as thus he lay  
Entranced in lonely fantasy,  
Borne swiftly on a bright moon-ray  
There came to him a Golden Key.

And with that Golden Key the Boy  
Oped every night a magic door  
That to a melody of Joy  
Turned on its hinges evermore.

Then, trembling with delight and awe,  
When he the charmèd threshold crossed,  
A radiant corridor he saw—  
Its end in dazzling distance lost.

Great windows shining in a row  
Lit up the wondrous corridor,  
And each its own rich light did throw  
In stream resplendent on the floor.

One window showed the Boy a scene  
Within a forest old and dim,  
Where fairies danced upon the green  
And kissed their little hands to him.

Sweet strains of elfin harp and horn  
He heard so clearly sounding there,  
And he to Wonderland was borne  
And breathed its soft enchanted air.

Then, passing onward with the years,  
He turned his back on Elf and Fay,  
And sadly sweet, as if in tears,  
The fairy music died away.

The second window held him long:  
It looked upon a field of fight  
Whereon the countless hordes of Wrong  
Fought fiercely with the friends of Right.

And, lo! upon that fateful field,  
Where cannon thundered, banners streamed,

And rushing squadrons rocked and reeled,  
His sword a star of battle gleamed.

And when the hordes of Wrong lay still,  
And that great fight was fought and won,  
He stood, bright-eyed, upon a hill,  
His white plume shining in the sun.

A glorious vision! yet behind  
He left it with its scarlet glow,  
And faint and far upon the wind  
He heard the martial trumpets blow.

For to his listening ear was borne  
A music more entrancing far  
Than strains of elfin harp or horn,  
More thrilling than the trump of war.

No longer as a dreamy boy  
He trod the radiant corridor:  
His young man's heart presaged a joy  
More dear than all the joys of yore.

To that third window, half in awe,  
He moved, and slowly raised his eyes—  
And was it earth grown young he saw?  
Or was it man's lost Paradise?

For all the flowers that ever bloomed  
Upon the earth, and all the rare  
Sweet Loveliness by Time entombed,  
Seemed blushing, blooming, glowing there.

And every mellow-throated bird  
That ever sang the trees among  
Seemed singing there, with one sweet word—  
“Love! Love!” on every little tongue.

Then he by turns grew rosy-red,  
And he by turns grew passion-pale.  
“Sweet Love!” the lark sang overhead,  
“Sweet Love!” sang Love's own nightingale.

In mid-heart of the hawthorn-tree  
The thrush sang all its buds to bloom;  
“Love! Love! Love! Love! Sweet Love,” sang he  
Amidst the soft green sun-flecked gloom.

\* \* \* \* \*

She stood upon a liliated lawn,

With dreamful eyes that gazed afar:  
A maiden tender as the Dawn  
And lovely as the Morning Star.

She stooped and kissed him on the brow,  
And in a low, sweet voice said she:  
“I am this country's queen—and thou?”  
“I am thy vassal,” murmured he.

She hid him with her hair gold-red,  
That flowed like sunshine to her knee;  
She kissed him on the lips, and said:  
“Dear heart! I've waited long for thee.”

And, oh, she was so fair, so fair,  
So gracious was her beauty bright,  
Around her the enamoured air  
Pulsed tremulously with delight.

In passionate melody did melt  
Bird-voices, scent of flower and tree,  
And he within his bosom felt  
The piercing thorn of ecstasy.

\* \* \* \* \*

The years passed by in dark and light,  
In storm and shine; the man grew old,  
Yet never more by day or night  
There came to him the Key of Gold.

But ever, ere the great sun flowers  
In gold above the sky's blue rim,  
All in the dark and lonely hours  
There comes an Iron Key to him.

And with that key he opes a wide  
And gloomy door—the Door of Fate—  
That makes, whene'er it swings aside,  
A music sad and desolate,

A music sad from saddest source:  
He sees beside the doorway set  
The chill, gray figure of Remorse,  
The pale, cold image of Regret.

For all the glory and the glow  
Of Life are passed, and dead, and gone:  
The Light and Life of Long Ago  
Are memories only—moonlight wan.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is no man of woman born  
So brave, so good, so wise but he  
Must sometimes in a night forlorn  
Take up and use the Iron Key.

## Lachesis

OVER a slow-dying fire,  
    Dreaming old dreams, I am sitting;  
The flames leap up and expire;  
    A woman sits opposite knitting.

I've taken a Fate to wife;  
    She knits with a half-smile mocking  
Me, and my dreams, and my life,  
    All into a worsted stocking.

## Symbols

'TIS said that the Passion Flower,  
With its figures of spear and sword  
And hammer and nails, is a symbol  
Of the Woe of our Blessed Lord.

So still in the Heart of Beauty  
Has been hidden, since Life drew breath,  
The sword and the spear of Anguish,  
And the hammer and nails of Death.

## At the Opera

THE curtain rose—the play began—  
The limelight on the gay garbs shone;  
Yet carelessly I gazed upon  
The painted players, maid and man,  
As one with idle eyes who sees  
The marble figures on a frieze.

Long lark-notes clear the first act close,  
So the soprano: then a hush—  
The tenor, tender as a thrush;  
Then loud and high the chorus rose,  
Till, with a sudden rush and strong,  
It ended in a storm of song.

The curtain fell—the music died—  
The lights grew bright, revealing there  
The flash of jewelled fingers fair,  
And wreaths of pearls on brows of pride;  
Then, with a quick-flushed cheek, I turned,  
And into mine her dark eyes burned.

Such eyes but once a man may see,  
And, seeing once, his fancy dies  
To thought of any other eyes:  
So shadow-soft, they seemed to be  
Twin haunted lakes, lit by the gleams  
Of a mysterious moon of dreams.

Silk lashes veiled their liquid light  
With such a shade as tall reeds fling  
From the lake-marge at sunseting:  
Their darkness might have hid the night—  
Yet whoso saw their glance would say  
Night dreamt therein, and saw the day.

Long looked I at them, wondering  
What tender memories were hid  
Beneath each blue-veined lily-lid;  
What hopes of joys the years would bring;  
What griefs? In vain: I might not guess  
The secret of their silentness.

What of her face? Her face, meseems,  
Was such as painters see who muse  
By moonlight in dim avenues,  
Yet cannot paint; or as in dreams,

Young poets see, but, when they try  
To limn in verse are dumb—so I.

Yet well I know that I have seen  
That sweet face in the long ago  
In a rose-bower—well I know—  
Laughing the singing leaves between,  
In that strange land of rose and rhyme—  
The land of Once upon a Time.

O unknown sweet, so sweetly known,  
I know not what your name may be—  
Madonna is your name for me—  
Nor where your lines in life are thrown;  
But soul sees soul—what is the rest?  
A passing phantom at the best.

Did your young bosom never glow  
To love? or burns your heart beneath  
As burns the rosebud in its sheath?  
I neither know nor wish to know:  
I smell the rose upon the tree;  
Who will may pluck and wear, for me—

May wear the rose, and watch it die,  
And, leaf by red leaf, fade and fall,  
Till there be nothing left at all  
Of its sweet loveliness; but I  
Love it so well, I leave it free—  
The scent alone I take with me!

As one who visits sacred spots  
Brings tokens back, so I from you  
A glance, a smile, a rapture new!  
And these are my forget-me-nots!  
I take from you but only these—  
Give all the rest to whom you please.

Sweet eyes, your glance a light shall cast  
On me, when dreaded ghosts arise  
Of dead regrets with shrouded eyes,  
And phantoms of the perished past,  
Old thoughts, old hopes, and old desire  
Gather around my lonely fire!

Farewell! In rhyme, I kiss your hand—  
Kiss not unsweet, although unheard!—  
This is our secret—say no word—  
That I have been in Fairyland,  
And seen for one brief moment's space

The Queen Titania face to face.

## Neaera's Wreath

NEÆRA crowns me with a purple wreath  
That she with her own dainty hands did twine;  
Gold-hearted blossoms and blue buds in sheath,  
Mingled with veined green leaves of the wild vine.

Then, bending down her bright head—ah, too nigh!—  
She asks me for a song: the daylight dies:  
The song is still unwritten: still I lie  
Watching the purple twilight of her eyes.

I am her laureate; therefore heart of grace  
I take to kiss her. Where was song like this?  
Love is best sung of in a loveless place,  
For who would care to sing where he might kiss?

## **Camilla**

CAMILLA calls me heartless: hence you see

Logic in love has little part.

How can I otherwise than heartless be

Seeing Camilla has my heart?

## Sixty to Sixteen

IF I were young as you, Sixteen,  
And you were old as I,  
I would not be as I have been,  
You would not be so shy—  
We should not watch with careless mien  
The golden days go by,  
If I were young as you, Sixteen,  
And you were old as I.

The years of youth are yours, Sixteen;  
Such years of old had I,  
But time has set his seal between  
Dark eyebrow and dark eye.  
Sere grow the leaves that once were green,  
The song turns to a sigh:  
Ah! very young are you, Sixteen,  
And very old am I.

Red bloom-times come and go, Sixteen,  
With snow-soft feet, but I  
Shall be no more as I have been  
In times of bloom gone by;  
For dimmer grows the pleasant scene  
Beneath the pleasant sky;  
The world is growing old, Sixteen—  
The weary world and I.

Ah, would that once again, Sixteen,  
A kissing mouth had I;  
The days would gaily go, I ween,  
Though death should stand anigh,  
If springtime's green were evergreen,  
If Love would never die,  
And I were young as you, Sixteen,  
And you were old as I.

## **Bouquet and Bracelet**

BOUQUET said: “My floral ring  
The homage of a heart encloses,  
Whose thoughts to you go worshipping  
In perfume from my blushing roses.”

Bracelet said: “My rubies red,  
Though hard the gleam that each exposes,  
Will last when flowers of Spring are fled  
And dead are all the Summer roses.”

Beauty mused awhile, and said,  
“Here's poesy!” and sighed, “Here prose is  
Bouquet! I choose the rubies red!—  
In Winter they will buy me roses.”

## Cupid's Funeral

BY his side, whose days are past,  
Lay bow and quiver!  
And his eyes that stare aghast  
Close, with a shiver.  
God nor man from Death, at last,  
Love may deliver.

Though—of old—we vowed, my dear,  
Death should not take him;  
Mourn not thou that we must here  
Coldly forsake him;  
Shed above his grave no tear—  
Tears will not wake him.

Cupid lieth cold and dead—  
Ended his flying,  
Pale his lips, once rosy-red,  
Swift was his dying.  
Place a stone above his head,  
Turn away, sighing.

# The First of May

## A MEMORY

THE waters make a music low:  
The river reeds  
Are trembling to the tunes of long ago—  
Dead days and deeds

Become alive again, as on  
I float, and float,  
Through shadows of the golden summers gone  
And springs remote.

Above my head the trees bloom out  
In white and red  
Great blossoms, that make glad the air about;  
And old suns shed

Their rays athwart them. Ah, the light  
Is bright and fair!  
No suns that shine upon me now are bright  
As those suns were.

And, gazing down into the stream,  
I see a face,  
As sweet as buds that blossom in a dream,  
Ere sorrows chase

Fair dreams from men, and send in lieu  
Sad thoughts. A wreath  
Of blue-bells binds the head—a bluer blue  
The eyes beneath.

This is my little Annie's face;  
My child-sweetheart  
Whom long ago I lost in that dark place  
Where all lives part.

Beside me still I see her stand,  
Who is no more.  
She walked with me through childhood, hand in hand,  
But at the door

Of youth departed from me. Fain  
Was I that day  
To go with her. Ah, sweetheart, come again  
This First of May!

## A Ghost

GHOSTS walk the Earth, that rise not from the grave.  
The Dead Past hath its living dead. We see  
All suddenly, at times,—and shudder then—  
Their faces pale, and sad accusing eyes.

Last night, within the crowded street, I saw  
A Phantom from the Past, with pallid face  
And hollow eyes, and pale, cold lips, and hair  
Faded from that imperial hue of gold  
Which was my pride in days that are no more.

That pallid face I knew in its young bloom—  
A radiant lily with a rose-flushed heart,  
Most beautiful, a vision of delight;  
And seeing it again, so changed, so changed,  
I felt as if the icy hand of Death  
Had touched my forehead and his voice said “Come!”

Ah, pale, cold lips that once were rosy-red!  
Lips I have kissed on golden afternoons—  
Past, past, and gone, and gone beyond recall—  
Breathing low vows beside the summer sea  
(Vows broken like the breaking of a wave);  
Ah, faded hair, whose curls I have caressed,  
And sworn the least of them was dearer far  
Than all the wealth of all the world to me!  
Ah, hollow, haunting eyes, within whose depths,  
Flower-like, and star-like, once my Fate I saw,  
Or thought I saw!—is there not any way  
To call back from its grave the Buried Past?

Dear! Though my vows to thee were all for-sworn,  
Too well, too late, I know I loved thee more  
Than mine own life—a life-in-death since then.  
Yet shall I nevermore in all the days  
And all the lives to come, if lives there be  
Beyond this life, beyond the weary earth,  
Kiss thee again upon the lips and hair,  
And call thee by the old caressing names,  
And feel thy true heart beating against mine,  
That was so false and would, too late, be true;  
For neither passionate prayer, nor burning tears,  
Nor incantations that might rend the rocks,  
Nor all the powers of hell, nor God Himself,  
May raise the Buried Past to life again.

For thou that wert art not; dead evermore—  
Dead evermore, too, that which once was I.

What exorcism will lay these haunting ghosts?  
None but a draught of the Lethean stream.  
Who drinks therefrom shall all things soon forget,  
Himself forgetting, too—the greatest good.

## Even So

THE days go by—the days go by,  
Sadly and wearily to die:

Each with its burden of small cares,  
Each with its sad gift of gray hairs  
For those who sit, like me, and sigh,  
“The days go by! The days go by!”

Ah, nevermore on shining plumes,  
Shedding a rain of rare perfumes  
That men call memories, they are borne  
As in life's many-visioned morn,  
When Love sang in the myrtle-blooms—  
Ah, nevermore on shining plumes!

Where is my life? Where is my life?  
The morning of my youth was rife  
With promise of a golden day.  
Where have my hopes gone? Where are they—  
The passion and the splendid strife?  
Where is my life? Where is my life?

My thoughts take hue from this wild day,  
And, like the skies, are ashen gray;  
The sharp rain, falling constantly,  
Lashes with whips of steel the sea:  
What words are left for Hope to say?  
My thoughts take hue from this wild day.

I dreamt—my life is all a dream!—  
That I should sing a song supreme  
To gladden all sad eyes that weep,  
And take the Harp to Time, and sweep  
Its chords to some eternal theme.  
I dreamt—my life is all a dream.

The world is very old and wan—  
The sun that once so brightly shone  
Is now as pale as the pale moon.  
I would that Death came swift and soon;  
For all my dreams are dead and gone.  
The world is very old and wan.

\* \* \* \* \*

The world is young, the world is strong,  
But I in dreams have wandered long.

God lives. What can Death do to me  
The sun is shining on the sea.  
Yet shall I sing my splendid song—  
The world is young, the world is strong.

## Song

WHAT shall a man remember  
In days when he is old,  
And Life is a dying ember,  
And Fame a story told?

Power—that came to leave him?  
Wealth—to the wild waves blown?  
Fame—that came to deceive him?  
Ah, no! Sweet Love alone!

Honour, and Wealth, and Power  
May all like dreams depart—  
But Love is a fadeless flower  
Whose roots are in the heart.

## A Sunset Fantasy

SPELLBOUND by a sweet fantasy  
At evenglow I stand  
Beside an opaline strange sea  
That rings a sunset land.

The rich lights fade out one by one,  
And, like a peony  
Drowning in wine, the crimson sun  
Sinks down in that strange sea.

His wake across the ocean-floor  
In a long glory lies,  
Like a gold wave-way to the shore  
Of some sea paradise.

My dream flies after him, and I  
Am in another land;  
The sun sets in another sky,  
And we sit hand in hand.

Gray eyes look into mine; such eyes  
I think the angel's are—  
Soft as the soft light in the skies  
When shines the morning star,

And tremulous as morn, when thin  
Gold lights begin to glow,  
Revealing the bright soul within  
As dawn the sun below.

So, hand in hand, we watch the sun  
Burn down the Western deeps,  
Dreaming a charmed dream, as one  
Who in enchantment sleeps;

A dream of how we twain some day,  
Careless of map or chart,  
Will both take ship and sail away  
Into the sunset's heart.

Our ship shall be of sandal built,  
Like ships in old-world tales,  
Carven with cunning art, and gilt,  
And winged with scented sails

Of silver silk, whereon the red  
Great gladioli burn,

A rainbow-flag at her masthead,  
A rose-flag at her stern;

And, perching on the point above  
Wherefrom the pennon blows,  
The figure of a flying dove,  
And in her beak a rose.

And from the fading land the breeze  
Shall bring us, blowing low,  
Old odours and old memories,  
And airs of long ago—

A melody that has no words  
Of mortal speech a part,  
Yet touching all the deepest chords  
That tremble in the heart:

A scented song blown oversea,  
As though from bowers of bloom  
A wind-harp in a lilac-tree  
Breathed music and perfume.

And we, no more with longings pale,  
Will smile to hear it blow;  
I in the shadow of the sail,  
You in the sunset-glow.

For, with the fading land, our fond  
Old fears shall all fade out,  
Paled by the light from shores beyond  
The dread of Death or Doubt.

And from a gloomy cloud above  
When Death his shadow flings,  
The Spirit of Immortal Love  
Will shield us with his wings.

He is the lord of dreams divine,  
And lures us with his smiles  
Along the splendour opaline  
Unto the Blessed Isles.

## Poppies

THESE are the flowers of sleep  
That nod in the heavy noon,  
Ere the brown shades eastward creep  
To a drowsy and dreamful tune—  
These are the flowers of sleep.

Love's lilies are passion-pale,  
But these on the sun-kissed flood  
Of the corn, that rolls breast deep,  
Burn redder than drops of blood  
On a dead king's golden mail.

Heart's dearest, I would that we  
These blooms of forgetfulness  
Might bind on our brows, and steep  
Our love in Lethe ere less  
Grow its flame with thee or me.

When Time with his evil eye  
The beautiful Love has slain,  
There is nought to gain or keep  
Thereafter, and all is vain.  
Should we wait to see Love die?

Sweetheart, of the joys men reap  
We have reaped; 'tis time to rest.  
Why should we wake but to weep?  
Sleep and forgetting is best—  
These are the flowers of sleep.

## Amaranth

ONCE a poet—long ago—  
Wrote a song as void of art  
As the songs that children know,  
And as pure as a child's heart.

With a sigh he threw it down,  
Saying, "This will never shed  
Any glory or renown  
On my name when I am dead.

"I will sing a lordly song  
Men shall hear, when I am gone,  
Through the years sound clear and strong  
As a golden clarion."

So this lordly song he sang  
That would gain him deathless fame—  
When the death-knell o'er him rang  
No man even knew its name.

Ay, and when his way he found  
To the place of singing souls,  
And beheld their bright heads crowned  
With song-woven aureoles,

He stood shame-faced in the throng,  
For his brow of wreath was bare,  
And, alas! his lordly song  
Sere had grown in that sweet air;

Then, all sudden, a divine  
Light fell on him from afar,  
And he felt the child-song shine  
On his forehead like a star.

So for ever. Each and all  
Songs of passion or of mirth  
That are not heart-pure shall fall  
As a sky-lark's—to the earth;

But the soul's song has no bounds—  
Like the voice of Israfel,  
From the heaven of heavens it sounds  
To the very hell of hell.

## The Little People

WHO are these strange small folk,  
These that come to our homes as kings,  
Asking nor leave nor grace,  
Bending our necks to their yoke,  
Taking the highest place,  
And mastery of all things?

Whence they come none may know,  
But a wondrous land it must be;  
Angels in exile they!  
Here in this dull world below  
Creatures of sinful clay  
We feel near their purity.

Clearer their young eyes are  
Than the dew in the cups of flowers  
Gleaming, when shines at dawn,  
Faintly, the morning's one star—  
Eyes whose still gaze, indrawn,  
Sees things unseen by ours.

Deep in those orbs serene—  
Little planets be-ringed and bright—  
Mysteries marvellous lie:  
Known unto us they might mean  
Faith, without fear, to die,  
All sure of the waiting light.

Dimpled their hands and small—  
Would ye, therefore, their might contemn?  
Seem they for play designed?  
Fate, and the Future withal,  
Weal, yea and Woe, of mankind,  
Lie hid in the palms of them.

Tyrants, whose terrible names  
Make men pale with affright intense,  
Worshipping, kiss their feet:  
Touch of their little hands tames  
Fiercest of hearts that beat—  
So mighty is Innocence.

These are the children dear,  
From a country unknown of charts:  
(Dim Land of Souls Unborn),  
Rosy as morn they come here,

Filling with joy forlorn  
Waste places in our hearts.

## A King in Exile

O THE Queen may keep her golden  
Crown and sceptre of command!  
I would give them both twice over  
To be King of Babyland.

Sure, it is a wondrous country  
Where the beanstalks grow apace,  
And so very near the moon is  
You could almost stroke her face.

And the dwellers in that country  
Hold in such esteem their King,  
They believe that if he chooses  
He can do—just anything!

And, although his regal stature  
May be only four-feet-ten,  
Think him tallest, strongest, bravest,  
Noblest, wisest, best of men.

Ah, how fondly I remember  
The good time serene and fair,  
In the bygone years when I, too,  
Was a reigning monarch there!

But my subjects they discrowned me  
When they'd older, colder, grown;  
And they took away my sceptre,  
And upset my royal throne.

Yet, although a King in Exile,  
Without subjects to command,  
I am glad at heart to think I  
Once was King of Babyland.

## Tamerlane

Lo, upon the carpet, where  
    Throned upon a heap of slain  
Blue-eyed dolls of beauty rare  
    (Ah, they pleaded all in vain!)  
Sits the Infant Tamerlane!

Broken toys upon the floor  
    Scattered lie—a ruined rout.  
Thus from all things evermore  
    Are—the fact is past a doubt—  
Hidden virtues hammered out.

Poet's page, or statesman's bust,  
    Nothing comes to him amiss;  
Everything he clutches must—  
    'Tis his simple dream of bliss!—  
Suffer his analysis.

O my little Tamerlane,  
    Infantile Iconoclast,  
Is your small barbaric brain  
    Not o'erawed by the amassed  
Wit and Wisdom of the Past?

Type are you of that which springs  
    Ever forth when comes the need,  
Overthrowing thrones and kings,  
    Faithless altar, sapless creed;  
Sowing fresh and living seed.

On the worn-out Roman realm,  
    In whose purple gnawed the moth,  
Thus its pride to overwhelm,  
    And its state to carve like cloth,  
Swept the fierce, long-sworded Goth.

Age preserves with doting care  
    Things from which life long has fled,  
Shrieks to see Youth touch a hair  
    On the mouldiest mummy-head—  
So Egyptians kept their dead.

Youth comes by with head high-reared,  
    Stares in scorn at these august  
Effigies by age revered—  
    Gilded shapes of Greed and Lust—

Shakes them into rags and dust.

Little Vandal, smash away!

Riot while your blood is hot!—

If into the world each day

Such as you are entered not,

It would perish of dry-rot.

## The Dead Child

ALL silent is the room,  
There is no stir of breath,  
Save mine, as in the gloom  
I sit alone with Death.

Short life it had, the sweet,  
Small babe here lying dead,  
With tapers at its feet  
And tapers at its head.

Dear little hands, too frail  
Their grasp on life to hold;  
Dear little mouth so pale,  
So solemn, and so cold;

Small feet that nevermore  
About the house shall run;  
Thy little life is o'er!  
Thy little journey done!

Sweet infant, dead too soon,  
Thou shalt no more behold  
The face of sun or moon,  
Or starlight clear and cold;

Nor know, where thou art gone,  
The mournfulness and mirth  
We know who dwell upon  
This sad, glad, mad, old earth.

The foolish hopes and fond  
That cheat us to the last  
Thou shalt not feel; beyond  
All these things thou hast passed.

The struggles that upraise  
The soul by slow degrees  
To God, through weary days—  
Thou hast no part in these.

And at thy childish play  
Shall we, O little one,  
No more behold thee? Nay,  
No more beneath the sun.

Death's sword may well be bared  
'Gainst those grown old in strife,

But, ah! it might have spared  
Thy little unlived life.

Why talk as in despair?  
Just God, whose rod I kiss,  
Did not make thee so fair  
To end thy life at this.

There is some pleasant shore—  
Far from His Heaven of Pride,  
Where those strong souls who bore  
His Cross in bliss abide—

Some place where feeble things,  
For Life's long war too weak,  
Young birds with unfledged wings,  
Buds nipped by storm-winds bleak,

Young lambs left all forlorn  
Beneath a bitter sky,  
Meek souls to sorrow born,  
Find refuge when they die.

There day is one long dawn,  
And from the cups of flowers  
Light dew-filled clouds updrawn  
Rain soft and perfumed showers.

Child Jesus walketh there  
Amidst child-angel bands,  
With smiling lips, and fair  
White roses in His hands.

I kiss thee on the brow,  
I kiss thee on the eyes—  
Farewell! Thy home is now  
The Children's Paradise.

## In Memory of an Actress

SAY little: where she lies, so let her rest:  
What cares she now for Fame, and what for Art?  
What for applause? She has played out her part.  
Her hands are folded calmly on her breast—  
God knows the best!

She has gone down, as all must go, to where  
The players of the past are lying low—  
Players who played their parts out long ago—  
With the life-hue still bright on lips and hair  
And forehead fair.

Cheek's colour, poise of head, and flash of eye  
Who will remember them when we are dead?  
Whom that is dead have we rememberèd?  
The end is one although we smile or sigh—  
We live; we die.

Bitter to some is Death, to some is sweet—  
Sweetest to youth and bitterest to age;  
But simple is the costume for the stage,  
The darkened stage of death, and very meet—  
A winding-sheet.

So we may fill our days with grief or mirth,  
Each as he pleases: but what boots it all,  
When on the coffin-lid the cold clods fall,  
Though we had been most eloquent on earth  
Or dumb from birth?

So, let her rest who perished in her prime:  
Surely through darkness she shall find the light  
And, though obscured to us in outer night,  
Shall play her part yet in a play sublime  
In God's good time.

## The River Maiden

HER gown was simple woven wool,  
But, in repayment,  
Her body sweet made beautiful  
The simplest raiment:

For all its fine, melodious curves  
With life a-quiver  
Were graceful as the bends and swerves  
Of her own river.

Her round arms, from the shoulders down  
To sweet hands slender,  
The sun had kissed them amber-brown  
With kisses tender.

For though she loved the secret shades  
Where ferns grow stilly,  
And wild vines droop their glossy braids,  
And gleams the lily,

And Nature, with soft eyes that glow  
In gloom that glistens,  
Unto her own heart, beating slow,  
In silence listens:

She loved no less the meadows fair,  
And green, and spacious;  
The river, and the azure air,  
And sunlight gracious.

I saw her first when tender, wan,  
Green light enframed her;  
And, in my heart, the Flower of Dawn  
I softly named her.

The bright sun, like a king in state,  
With banners streaming,  
Rode through the fair auroral gate  
In mail gold-gleaming.

The witch-eyed stars before him paled—  
So high his scorning!—  
And round the hills the rose-clouds sailed,  
And it was morning.

The light mimosas bended low  
To do her honour,

As in that rosy morning glow  
I gazed upon her.

My boat swung bowward to the stream  
Where tall reeds shiver;  
We floated onward, in a dream,  
Far down the River.

The River that full oft has told  
To Ocean hoary  
A many-coloured, sweet, and old  
Unending story:

The story of the tall, young trees,  
For ever sighing  
To sail some day the rolling seas  
'Neath banners flying.

The Ocean hears, and through his caves  
Roars gusty laughter;  
And takes the River, with his waves  
To roll thereafter.

But Love deep waters cannot drown;  
To its old fountains  
The stream returns in clouds that crown  
Its parent mountains.

The River was to her so dear  
She seemed its daughter;  
Her deep translucent eyes were clear  
As sunlit water;

And in her bright veins seemed to run,  
Pulsating, glowing,  
The music of the wind and sun,  
And waters flowing.

The secrets of the trees she knew:  
Their growth, their gladness,  
And, when their time of death was due,  
Their stately sadness.

Gray gums, like old men warped by time,  
She knew their story;  
And theirs that laughed in pride of prime  
And leafy glory;

And theirs that, where clear waters run,  
Drooped dreaming, dreaming;  
And theirs that shook against the sun

Their green plumes gleaming.

All things of gladness that exist  
    Did seem to woo her,  
And well that woodland satirist,  
    The lyre-bird, knew her.

And there were hidden mossy dells  
    That she knew only,  
Where Beauty born of silence dwells  
    Mysterious, lonely.

No sounds of toil their stillness taunt,  
    No hearth-smoke sullies  
The air: the Mountain Muses haunt  
    Those lone, green gullies.

And there they weave a song of Fate  
    That never slumbers:  
A song some bard shall yet translate  
    In golden numbers.

A blue haze veiled the hills' huge shapes  
    A misty lustre—  
Like rime upon the purple grapes,  
    When ripe they cluster:

'Twas noon, and all the Vale was gold—  
    An El Dorado:  
The damask river seaward rolled,  
    Through shine and shadow.

And, gazing on its changing glow,  
    I saw, half-sighing,  
The wondrous Fairyland below  
    Its surface lying.

There all things shone with paler sheen:  
    More softly shimmered  
The fern-fronds, and with softer green  
    The myrtles glimmered:

And—like that Fisher gazing in  
    The sea-depths, pining  
For days gone by, who saw Julin  
    Beneath him shining,

With many a wave-washed corridor,  
    And sea-filled portal,  
And plunged below, and nevermore  
    Was seen of mortal—

So I, long gazing at the gleam  
Of fern and flower,  
Felt drawn down to that World of Dream  
By magic power:

For there, I knew, in silence sat,  
With breasts slow-heaving,  
Illusion's Queen Rabesquerat,  
Her web a-weaving.

But when the moon shone, large and low,  
Against Orion,  
Then, as from some pale portico  
Might issue Dian,

She came through tall tree-pillars pale,  
A silver vision,  
A nymph strayed out of Ida's vale  
Or fields Elysian.

White stars shone out with mystic gleams  
The woods illuming:  
It seemed as if the trees in dreams  
Once more were blooming.

And all beneath those starry blooms,  
By bends and beaches,  
We floated on through glassy glooms,  
Down moonlit reaches.

Ah, that was in the glad years when  
Joys ne'er were sifted,  
But I on wilder floods since then  
Have darkly drifted.

Yet, River of Romance, for me  
With pictures glowing,  
Through dim, green fields of Memory  
Thou still art flowing.

And still I hear, thy shores along,  
All faintly ringing,  
The notes of ghosts of birds that long  
Have ceased their singing.

Was she, who then my heart did use  
To touch so purely,  
A mortal maiden—or a Muse?  
I know not, surely.

But still in dreams I see her stand,

A fairer Flora,  
Serene, immortal, by the strand  
Of clear Narora.

## A Picture

THE sun burns fiercely down the skies;  
The sea is full of flashing eyes;  
The waves glide shoreward serpentwise

And fawn with foamy tongues on stark  
Gray rocks, each sharp-toothed as a shark,  
And hiss in clefts and channels dark.

Blood-purple soon the waters grow,  
As though drowned sea-kings fought below  
Forgotten fights of long ago.

The gray owl Dusk its wings has spread;  
The sun sinks in a blossom-bed  
Of poppy-clouds; the day is dead.

## Sea-Gifts

*Give thou a gift to me  
From thy treasure-house, O sea!*

Said a red-lipped laughing girl  
While the summer yet was young;

And the sea laughed back and flung  
At her feet a priceless pearl.

*Give thou a gift to me  
From thy treasure-house, O sea!*

Said the maiden once again  
On a night of wind and rain.

Like a ghost the moon above her  
Stared through winding-sheets of cloud.

On the sand in sea-weed shroud,  
Lay the pale corpse of her lover.

Which is better, gain or loss?  
Which is nobler, crown or cross?

We shall know these things, maybe,  
When the dead rise from the sea.

## Day and Night

DAY goeth bold in cloth of gold,  
A royal bridegroom he;  
But Night in jewelled purple walks—  
A Queen of Mystery.

Day filleth up his loving-cup  
With vintage golden-clear;  
But Night her ebon chalice crowns  
With wine as pale as Fear.

Day drinks to Life, to ruddy Life,  
And holds a kingly feast.  
Night drinks to Death; and while she drinks—  
Day rises in the East!

They may not meet; they may not greet;  
Each keeps a separate way:  
Day knoweth not the stars of Night,  
Nor Night the Star of Day.

So runs the reign of Other Twain.  
Behold! the Preacher saith  
Death knoweth not the Light of Life,  
Nor Life the Light of Death!

## The Poet Care

CARE is a Poet fine:  
He works in shade or shine,  
And leaves—you know his sign!—  
No day without its line.

He writes with iron pen  
Upon the brows of men;  
Faint lines at first, and then  
He scores them in again.

His touch at first is light  
On Beauty's brow of white;  
The old churl loves to write  
On foreheads broad and bright.

A line for young love crossed,  
A line for fair hopes lost  
In an untimely frost—  
A line that means *Thou Wast*.

Then deeper script appears:  
The furrows of dim fears,  
The traces of old tears,  
The tide-marks of the years.

To him with sight made strong  
By suffering and wrong,  
The brows of all the throng  
Are eloquent with song.

## Voices

THERE are three mighty Voices that always  
Cry out to God to speed His Judgment Day.

The Voice of Devils, weary long ago  
Of dragging souls to Everlasting Woe.

The Voice of Saints who hear, while anthems swell  
In Heaven, the wail of sinners doomed to Hell.

The Voice of Man, sick of his desperate  
Long throwing 'gainst the leaded dice of Fate.

All things are weary of the strife and stress—  
In God alone is there no weariness?

## **The Ascetic**

The narrow, thorny path he trod.  
    “Enter into My joy,” said God.  
The sad ascetic shook his head;  
    “I’ve lost all taste for joy,” he said.

## **The Serpent's Legacy.**

AN apple caused man's fall, as some believe;  
But that old Snake, malevolently wise,  
A deadlier snare set when he left to Eve  
His tongue of honey and mesmeric eyes.

## His Soul

ONCE from the world of living men  
I passed, by a strange fancy led,  
To a still City of the Dead,  
To call upon a citizen.

He had been famous in his day;  
Much talked of, written of, and praised  
For virtues my small soul amazed—  
And yet I thought his heart was clay.

He was too full of grace for me:  
His friends said, on a marble stone,  
His soul sat somewhere near the Throne  
I did not know; I called to see.

His name and fame were on the door—  
A most superior tomb indeed,  
Much railed, and gilt, and filigreed;  
He occupied the lower floor.

I knocked—*a worm crawled from its hole:*  
I looked—*and knew it for his soul.*

## The Dream of Margaret

IT fell upon a summer night  
The village folk were soundly sleeping,  
Unconscious of the glamour white  
In which the moon all things was steeping;  
One window only showed a light;  
Behind it, silent vigil keeping,  
Sat Margaret, as one in trance—  
The dark-eyed daughter of the Manse.

A flood of strange, sweet thoughts was surging  
Her passionate heart and brain within.  
At last, some secret impulse urging,  
She laid aside her garment thin,  
And from its snowy folds emerging,  
Like Lamia from the serpent-skin,  
She stood before her mirror bright  
Naked, and lovely as the night.

Her dark hair o'er her shoulders flowing  
Might well have been a silken pall  
O'er Galatea's image glowing  
To life and love: she was withal—  
The lamplight o'er her radiance throwing—  
With her high bosom virginal,  
A woman made to madden men,  
A Cleopatra born again.

Hers was the beauty dark and splendid,  
Whose spell upon the heart of man  
Falls swiftly as, when day is ended,  
Night falls in lands Australian.  
Her rich, ripe, scarlet lips, bow-bended,  
Smiled as such ripe lips only can;  
Her eyes, wherein strange lightnings shone,  
Were deeper than Oblivion.

With round, white arms, whose warm caress  
No lover knew, raised towards the ceiling,  
She looked like some young Pythoness  
The secrets dark of Fate revealing,  
Or goddess in divine distress  
To higher powers for help appealing.  
This invocation, standing so,  
She sang in clear, sweet tones, but low:

*Soul, from this narrow,  
Mean life we know,  
Speed as an arrow  
From bended bow!*

*Seek, and discover,  
On land or sea,  
My destined lover,  
Where'er he be.*

*How shalt thou know him,  
My heart's desire?—  
His mien will show him,  
His glance of fire.*

*High is his bearing,  
His pride is high,  
His spirit daring  
Burns in his eye.*

*Birds have done mating;  
The Spring is past;  
My arms are waiting,  
My heart beats fast.*

“Oh, why,” she sighed, “has Fate awarded  
This lot to me whose heart is bold?  
My days by trifles are recorded,  
My suitors men whose God is gold.  
Oh for the Heroes helmed and sworded,  
The lovers of the days of old,  
Who broke for ladies many a lance  
In gallant days of old Romance!

“Would I had lived in that great time when  
A lady's love was knight's best boon;  
When sword with sword made ringing rhyme, when  
Mailed sea-kings fought from noon to moon,  
And thought the slaughter grim no crime, when  
The prize was golden-haired Gudrun.  
Then *I* might find swords, broad and bright  
And keen as theirs, for me to fight.

“But narrow bounds my life environ,  
And hold my eager spirit in.  
The men I see no heart of fire in  
Their bodies bear. My love to win  
A man must have a will of iron,  
A soul of flame. Then sweet were sin  
Or Death for him!” With ardent glance

Thus spake the daughter of the Manse.

Then, with a smile, she fell asleep in  
Her white and dainty maiden bed.  
The chaste, cold moon alone could peep in,  
And view her tresses dark outspread  
Upon an arm whose clasp might keep in  
The life of one given up for dead:  
And, as she drifted down the stream  
Of Slumber deep, she dreamt a dream.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a banquet rich and rare,  
The wine of France was foaming madly;  
The proud and great of earth were there,  
And all were slaves to serve her gladly,  
And yet on them with haughty air  
She gazed, half-scornfully, half-sadly;  
The Lady of the Feast was she—  
So ran her strange dream-fantasy.

A Prince was at her fair right hand,  
And at her left a famous leader  
Of hosts, with look of high command,  
And—blacker than the tents of Kedar—  
An Eastern King, barbaric, grand,  
Sat near—their Queen they had decreed her.  
Below the proud, the brave, the wise,  
Sat charmed by her mesmeric eyes.

Then thus she spake: “O Lords of Earth!  
Than you I know none nobler, braver;  
And yet your fame, and rank, and birth,  
And wealth in *my* sight find small favour,  
For all too well I know their worth—  
Long since for me they lost their savour.  
The Spirit, fit to mate with mine,  
Must be demoniac—or divine.

‘A toast!’ she cried. The gallant throng  
Sprang up, their foaming glasses clinking.  
“Satan! The Spirit proud and strong!  
The bravest lover to *my* thinking!  
The Wine of Life I've drunk too long:  
The Wine of death I now am drinking!” . . .  
“Our Queen she was a moment since—  
Bear forth the body!” said the Prince.

\* \* \* \* \*

A ghostly wind arose, all wet  
With tears, and full of cries and wailing,  
And wringing hands, and faces set  
In bitter anguish unavailing;  
It bore the soul of Margaret  
To where a voice, in tones of railing,  
Cried, "Spirit proud, thou hast done well!  
Thou art within the Gates of Hell!"

The soul of Margaret passed slowly,  
Yet bravely, through the Hall of Dread,  
The roof whereof was hidden wholly  
By black clouds hanging overhead.  
No sound disturbed the melancholy  
Deep silence—which itself seemed dead.  
No wailing of the damned was heard,  
No voice the fearful stillness stirred.

But that deep silence held in keeping  
The secret of Eternal Woe—  
That yet seemed like a serpent creeping  
Around the walls. It was as though  
The cries of pain and hopeless weeping  
Had died out ages long ago.  
No face was seen, no figure dread. . . .  
Were all the damned and devils dead?

No lustre known on earth was gleaming  
In that dread Hall, but some weird light  
Around the pillars vast was streaming,  
And down the vistas infinite;  
A light like that men see in dreaming,  
And, waking, shudder with affright.  
Its glare a baleful splendour shed  
For ever through the Hall of Dread.

Then suddenly she was aware  
That from the walls, and all around her,  
In motionless and burning stare,  
Millions of eyes glowed, that spellbound her:  
The everlasting dumb despair  
That spoke from them made Pity founder;  
And, as she passed along the floor,  
She trod on burning millions more.

For floor and pillar, roof and all,  
Were full of eyes, for ever burning—

'Twas these that lit the Dreadful Hall,  
    These were the damned beyond returning,  
Sealed up in pillar, floor, and wall,  
    Without a tongue to voice their yearning,  
Or grief, or hate, so God might know:  
Their eyes alone could speak their woe.

Her way lit by the weird light flowing  
    From those sad, awful eyes, she passed  
To where—her terror ever growing—  
    Upon a Throne, in fire set fast,  
And like a Rose of fire far-glowing,  
    She saw a Figure, Veiled and Vast.  
She trembled, for she knew full well  
She stood before the Lord of Hell.

And then, an instant courage taking,  
    She knelt before the burning throne,  
And, all her hopes of heaven forsaking,  
    She cried, “O Lord, make me thine own!  
For men, though they be of God's making,  
    I love not. Thee I love alone.”  
The figure veiled spake thus: “Arise,  
O Spirit proud—and most unwise!”

And as It spake, unveiling slowly,  
    A brow of awful beauty shone  
On Margaret's soul—yet Melancholy  
    And Woe Eternal sat thereon.  
But, lo! the form was woman wholly.  
    A faint smile played her lips upon,  
As in a voice low, sweet, and level  
She said: “My dear, *I* am the Devil!”

With one wild wail of bitter scorning  
    The stricken soul of Margaret fled,  
Sore harrowed by that dreadful warning;  
    And, shrieking, through the Hall of Dread  
She passed . . . and woke . . . and it was morning,  
    And she was in her own white bed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Soon afterwards, the tale runs, she  
Took veil within a nunnery.

## The Martyr

NOT only on cross and gibbet,  
By sword, and fire, and flood,  
Have perished the world's sad martyrs  
Whose names are writ in blood.

A woman lay in a hovel,  
Mean, dismal, gasping for breath;  
One friend alone was beside her—  
The name of him was—Death.

For the sake of her orphan children,  
For money to buy them food,  
She had slaved in the dismal hovel  
And wasted her womanhood.

Winter and Spring and Summer  
Came each with a load of cares;  
And Autumn to her brought only  
A harvest of gray hairs.

Far out in the blessèd country,  
Beyond the smoky town,  
The winds of God were blowing  
Evermore up and down;

The trees were waving signals  
Of joy from the bush beyond;  
The gum its blue-green banner,  
The fern its dark green frond;

Flower called to flower in whispers  
By sweet caressing names,  
And young gum shoots sprang upward  
Like woodland altar-flames;

And, deep in the distant ranges,  
The magpie's fluting song  
Roused musical, mocking echoes  
In the woods of Dandenong;

And riders were galloping gaily  
With loose-held flowing reins,  
Through dim and shadowy gullies,  
Across broad, treeless plains;

And winds through the Heads came wafting  
A breath of life from the sea,

And over the blue horizon  
The ships sailed silently;

And out of the sea at morning  
The sun rose, golden bright,  
And in crimson, and gold, and purple  
Sank in the sea at night;

But in dreams alone she saw them,  
Her hours of toil between;  
For life to her was only  
A heartless dead machine.

*Her* heart was in the graveyard  
Where lay her children three,  
Nor work nor prayer could save them,  
Nor tears of agony.

On the lips of her last and dearest  
Pressing a farewell kiss,  
She cried aloud in her anguish—  
“Can God make amends for *this*?”

Dull, desperate, ceaseless slaving  
Bereft her of power to pray,  
And Man was careless and cruel,  
And God was far away.

But who shall measure His mercies!  
His ways are in the deep;  
And, after a life of sorrow,  
He gave her His gift of sleep.

Rest comes at last to the weary,  
And freedom to the slave;  
Her tired and worn-out body  
Sleeps well in its pauper grave.

But His angel bore her soul up  
To that Bright Land and Fair,  
Where Sorrow enters never,  
Nor any cloud of Care.

They came to a lovely valley,  
Agleam with asphodel,  
And the soul of the woman speaking  
Said—“Here I fain would dwell!”

The Angel answered gently:  
“O Soul most pure and dear,  
O Soul most tried and truest,

They dwelling is not here!

“Behold thy place appointed—  
Long kept, long waiting—come!—  
Where bloom on the hills of heaven  
The roses of Martyrdom!”

## His Mate

*It may have been a fragment of that higher  
Truth dreams, at times, disclose;  
It may have been to Fond Illusion nigher—  
But thus the story goes:*

A fierce sun glared upon a gaunt land, stricken  
With barrenness and thirst,  
Where Nature's pulse with joy of Spring would quicken  
No more; a land accurst.

Gray salt-bush grimmer made the desolation—  
Like mocking immortelles  
Strewn on the graveyard of a perished nation  
Whose name no record tells.

No faintest sign of distant water glimmered  
The aching eye to bless;  
The far horizon like a sword's edge shimmered,  
Keen, gleaming, pitiless.

And all the long day through the hot air quivered  
Beneath a burning sky,  
In dazzling dance of heat that flashed and shivered:  
It seemed as if hard by

The borders of this region, evil-favoured,  
Life ended, Death began:  
But no; upon the plain a shadow wavered—  
The shadow of a man.

What man was this by Fate or Folly driven  
To cross the dreadful plain?  
A pilgrim poor? or Ishmael unforgiven?  
The man was Andy Blane,

A stark old sinner, and a stout, as ever  
Blue swag has carried through  
That grim, wild land men name the Never-Never,  
Beyond the far Barcoo.

His strength was failing now, but his unfailing  
Strong spirit still upbore  
And drove him on with courage yet unquailing,  
In spite of weakness sore.

When, lo! beside a clump of salt-bush lying,  
All suddenly he found

A stranger, who before his eyes seemed dying  
Of thirst, without a sound.

Straightway beside that stranger on the sandy  
Salt plain—a death-bed sad—  
Down kneeling, “Drink this water, mate!” said Andy—  
It was the last he had.

Behold a miracle! for when that Other  
Had drunk, he rose and cried,  
“Let us pass on!” As brother might with brother  
So went they, side by side;

Until the fierce sun, like an eyeball bloody  
Eclipsed in death, was seen  
No more, and in the spacious West, still ruddy,  
A star shone out serene.

As one, then, whom some memory beguiling  
May gladden, yea, and grieve,  
The stranger, pointing up, said, sadly smiling,  
“The Star of Christmas Eve!”

Andy replied not. Unto him the sky was  
*All* reeling stars; his breath  
Came thick and fast; and life an empty lie was;  
True one thing only—Death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Beneath the moonlight, with the weird, wan glitter  
Of salt-bush all around,  
He lay; but by his side in that dark, bitter,  
Last hour, a friend he found.

“Thank God!” he said. “*He's* acted more than square, mate,  
By me in this—and *I'm*  
A Rip. . . . He must have known I was—well, there, mate—  
A White Man all the time.

“To-morrow's Christmas day: God knows where *I'll* be  
By then—I don't; but you  
Away from this Death's hole should many a mile be,  
At Blake's, on the Barcoo.

“You take this cheque there—they will cash it, sonny. . . .  
It meant my Christmas spree. . . .  
And do just what you like best with the money,  
In memory of me.”

The stranger, smiling, with a little leaven

Of irony, said, "Yea,  
But *there* it shall not be. With *me* in Heaven  
You'll spend your Christmas Day."

Then that gray heathen, that old back-block stager,  
Half-jestingly replied,  
And laughed—and laughed again—"Mate, it's a wager!"  
And, grimly laughing, died.

\* \* \* \* \*

St. Peter stood at the Celestial Portal,  
Gazing down gulfs of air,  
When Andy Blane, no longer now a mortal,  
Appeared before him there.

"What seek'st thou here?" the saint in tone ironic  
Said. "Surely the wrong gate  
This is for thee." Andy replied, laconic,  
"I want to find my mate."

The gates flew wide. The glory un beholden  
Of mortal eyes was there.  
He gazed—this trembling sinner—at the golden  
Thrones, terrible and fair,

And shuddered. Then down through the living splendour  
Came One unto the gate  
Who said, with outspread hands, in accents tender:  
"Andy! *I* am your mate!"

## The Old Wife and the New

HE sat beneath the curling vines  
That round the gay verandah twined,  
His forehead seamed with sorrow's lines,  
An old man with a weary mind.

His young wife, with a rosy face  
And brown arms ambered by the sun,  
Went flitting all about the place—  
Master and mistress both in one.

What caused that old man's look of care?  
Was she not blithe and fair to see?  
What blacker than her raven hair,  
What darker than her eyes might be?

The old man bent his weary head;  
The sunlight on his gray hair shone;  
His thoughts were with a woman dead  
And buried, years and years ago:

The good old wife who took her stand  
Beside him at the altar-side,  
And walked with him, hand clasped in hand,  
Through joy and sorrow till she died.

Ah, she was fair as heart's desire,  
And gay, and supple-limbed, in truth,  
And in his veins there leapt like fire  
The hot red blood of lusty youth.

She stood by him in shine and shade,  
And, when hard-beaten at his best,  
She took him like a child and laid  
His aching head upon her breast.

She helped him make a little home  
Where once were gum-trees gaunt and stark,  
And bloodwoods waved green-feathered foam—  
Working from dawn of day to dark,

Till that dark forest formed a frame  
For vineyards that the gods might bless,  
And what was savage once became  
An Eden in the wilderness.

And how at their first vintage-time  
She laughed and sang—you see such shapes

On vases of the Grecian prime—  
And danced a reel upon the grapes!

And ever, as the years went on,  
All things she kept with thrifty hand,  
Till never shone the sun upon  
A fairer homestead in the land.

Then children came—ah, me! ah, me!  
Sad blessings that a mother craves!  
That old man from his seat could see  
The shadows playing o'er their graves.

And then she closed her eyes at last,  
Her gentle, useful, peaceful life  
Was over—garnered with the past;  
God rest thee gently, Good Old Wife!

\* \* \* \* \*

His young wife has a rosy face,  
And laughs, with reddest lips apart,  
But cannot fill the empty place  
Within that old man's lonely heart.

His young wife has a rosy face,  
And brown arms ambered by the sun,  
Goes flitting all about the place,  
Master and mistress both in one;

But though she sings, or though she sighs,  
He sees her not—he sees instead  
A gray-haired Shade with gentle eyes—  
The good old wife, long dead, long dead.

He sits beneath the curling vines,  
Through which the merry sunrays dart,  
His forehead seamed with sorrow's lines—  
An old man with a broken heart.

## A Christmas Eve

GOOD fellows are laughing and drinking  
    (To-night no heart should grieve),  
But I am of old days thinking,  
    Alone, on Christmas Eve.  
Old memories fast are springing  
    To life again; old rhymes  
Once more in my brain are ringing—  
    Ah, God be with old times!

There never was man so lonely  
    But ghosts walked him beside,  
For Death our spirits can only  
    By veils of sense divide.  
Numberless as the blades of  
    Grass in the fields that grow,  
Around us hover the shades of  
    The dead of long ago.

Friends living a word estranges;  
    We smile, and we say “Adieu!”  
But, whatsoever else changes,  
    Dead friends are faithful and true.  
An old-time tune, or a flower,  
    The simplest thing held dear  
In bygone days has the power  
    Once more to bring them near.

And whether it be through thinking  
    Of memories sad and sweet,  
Or hearing the cheery clinking  
    Of glasses across the street,  
I know not; but this is certain  
    That, here in the dusk, I view  
Like shadows seen through a curtain,  
    The shades of the friends I knew.

Methinks that I hear their laughter—  
    An echo of ghostly mirth,  
As if in the dim Hereafter  
    They jest as they did on earth.  
The fancy possibly droll is,  
    And yet it relieves my mind  
To think the enfranchised soul is  
    So humorously inclined.

But hark! whose steps in the glancing  
Moonbeams are these I hear,  
That sound as if timed to dancing  
Music of gallant cheer!  
Half Galahad, half Don Juan,  
His head full of wild romance;  
'Twas thus that of old would Spruhan  
Come liltng, "We met by chance."

Sure never a spirit lighter  
At heart quaffed mountain dew;  
Never was goblin brighter  
That Oberon's kingdom knew.  
And though at this season yearly  
I miss the grasp of his hand,  
I know that Spruhan has merely  
Gone back to Fairyland.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shades grow dimmer and dimmer,  
And now they fade from view,  
I see in the East the glimmer  
Of dawn. Old friends, adieu!  
Sitting here, lonely hearted,  
Writing these random rhymes.  
I drink to the days departed,—  
Ah, God be with old times!

# Night

THE Night is young yet; an enchanted night  
In early summer: calm and darkly bright.

I love the Night, and every little breeze  
She brings, to soothe the sleep of dreaming trees.

Hearst thou the Voices? Sough! Susurrus!— Hark!  
'Tis Mother Nature whispering in the dark!

Burden of cities, mad turmoil of men,  
That vex the daylight—she forgets them then.

Her breasts are bare; Grief gains from them surcease:  
She gives her restless sons the milk of Peace.

To sleep she lulls them—drawn from thoughts of pelf—  
By telling sweet old stories of herself.

\* \* \* \* \*

All secrets deep—yea, all I hear and see  
Of things mysterious—Night reveals to me.

I know what every flower, with drowsy head  
Down-drooping, dreams of—and the seeming dead.

I know how they, escaped from care and strife,  
Ironically moralise on Life.

And know what—when the moon walks on the waves—  
They whisper to each other in their graves.

I know that white clouds drifting from stark coasts  
Across the sky at midnight are the ghosts

Of sailors drowned at sea, who yearn to win  
A quiet grave beside their kith and kin

In still green graveyards, where they lie at ease  
Far from the sound of surge and roar of seas.

I know the message of the mournful rain  
That beats upon the widow's window-pane.

I know the meaning of the roar of seas;  
I know the glad Spring sap-song of the trees;

And that great chant to which in tuneful grooves  
The green round earth upon its axis moves;

And that still greater chant the Bright Sun sings—  
Fire-crowned Apollo—the great chant that brings

All things to life, and draws through spaces dim,  
And star-sown realms, his planets after him.

I know the tune that led, since Life began,  
The upward, downward, onward March of Man.

I hear the whispers that the Angels twain  
Of Death and Life exchange in meeting—fain

Are they to pause and greet, yet may not stay.  
“Never!” “For ever.” This is all they say.

I hear the twitterings inarticulate  
Of souls unborn that press around the Gate

Of Birth, each striving which shall first escape  
From formless vapour into human shape.

I know the tale the bird of passionate heart,  
The nightingale, tries ever to impart

To men, though vainly—for I well believe  
That in her brown breast beats the heart of Eve,

Who with her sweet, sad, wistful music tries  
To tell her sons of their lost Paradise,

And solemn secrets Man had grace to know,  
When God walked in the Garden long ago.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yea, I have seen, methought, on nights of awe,  
The vision terrible Lucretius saw:

The trembling Universe—suns, stars, grief, bliss—  
Plunging for ever down a black abyss.

But more I love good Bishop Jeremy,  
Who likens all the star-worlds that we see—

Which seem to run an everlasting race—  
Unto a snowstorm sweeping on through space.

Suns, planets, stars, in glorious array  
They march, melodious, on their unknown way.

Thought, seraph-winged and swifter than the light,  
Unto the dim verge of the Infinite,

Pursues them, through that strange ethereal flood

In which they swim (mayhap it is the blood

Of Universal God wherein they are  
But corpuscles—sun, satellite, and star—

And their great stream of glory but a dim,  
Small pulse in the remotest vein of Him)

Pursues in vain, and from lone, awful glooms  
Turns back to earth again with weary plumes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Through glacial gulfs of Space the soul must roam  
To feel the comfort of its earthly home.

Ah, Mother dear! broad-bosomed Mother Earth!  
Mother of all our Joy, Grief, Madness, Mirth!—

Mother of flower and fruit, of stream and sea!—  
We are thy children and must cling to thee.

I lay my head upon thy breast and hear—  
Small, small and faint, yet strangely sweet and clear—

The hum and clash of little worlds below,  
Each on its own path moving, swift or slow.

And listening, ever with intenter ear,  
Through din of wars invisible I hear

A Homer—genius is not gauged by mass—  
Singing his Iliad on a blade of grass.

And nations hearken: his great song resounds  
Unto the tussock's very utmost bounds.

States rise and fall, each blade of grass upon,  
But still his song from blade to blade rolls on

Through all the tussock-world, and Helen still  
Is Fairest Fair, and Ajax wild of will—

An Ajax whose huge size, when measured o'er,  
Is full ten-thousandth of an inch or more—

Still hurls defiance at the gods whose home  
Is in the distant, awful, dew-drop dome

That trembling hangs, suspended from a spray  
An inch above him—worlds of space away.

Old prophecies foretell—but Time proves all—  
The day will come when it, like Troy, shall fall.

Lo! through this small great wondrous song there runs  
The marching melody of stars and suns.

\* \* \* \* \*

I know these things, yet cannot speak and tell  
Their meanings. Over all is cast a spell.

Secrets they are, sealed with a sevenfold seal;  
My soul knows what my tongue may not reveal.

\* \* \* \* \*

I love the Night! Bright Day the soul shuts in;  
Night sends it soaring to its starry kin.

If I must leave at last my place of birth—  
This homely, gracious, green, familiar Earth,

With all it holds of sorrow and delight—  
I pray my parting-hour may be at night,

And that her curtain dark may softly fall  
On scenes I love, ere I depart from all.

Then shall I haply, journeying through the Vast  
Mysterious Silences, take one long, last

Fond look at Earth, and watch from depths afar  
The dear old planet dwindling to a star;

And sigh farewell unto the friends of yore,  
Whose kindly faces I shall see no more.