

MARGARET

AN IDYLL

George Manville Acklow.

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APOLOGIA

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APOLOGIA.

I

*Forgive me, THOU, that wraith and dream
Should solace where the Present falls,
And past days be more dear than these
On which a paler sunshine falls.*

*The Past I love, the Past I was,
THOU knowest,—naught is Past to THEE.
Forgive these fancies that I voice,
For they are heart and life of me.*

*Since in this struggle and this fear
Through all I feel Thy healing power,
Let pass these dreamings of a dream,
These shadows of a vanished hour.*

*They spring from weakness.—We are weak,
And fain would grasp the flowing years
And hold them by us, as a shield,
To fend the soul's sad rain of tears.*

*Still, THOU that knowest, judge, and keep
The balance of the ill and well:
We cannot know, we may but hope
To grasp the Heaven from the Hell.*

*So being, if the singer sing,
Make THOU his singing not in vain,
And lead his spirit's backward quest
To find therein some hidden gain.*

APOLOGIA

II

*The goal we seek is far beyond,
We think to near it day by day,
But short our stumbling steps and weak
Amid the shadows of the way :*

*And two great shapes there are that wend
Beside our path, from birth to tomb,
—Love, with unfathomable eyes,
Death, with stern features veiled in gloom.*

*The one we dread that he should lure
Our steps aside with mystery,
The other, lest he hurl us down
Unready, ere we reach to THEE.*

*With dark to set us round about,
With Love that smiles and beckons us,
And Death that, silent, frowns a threat,
What wonder we should falter thus.*

*But, THOU, give strength to grasp their hands,
The hand of Love, the hand of Death,
That leaning on them we may walk
With eyes uplift and larger faith.*

APOLOGIA

III

*THOU hast not said we may not pause
To pluck the flowers that blossom here,
Nor that Thy voice will sound the less
If earthly music we hold dear.*

*Though some hold sin lies hid between
The flowers, and in the minstrelsy ;
—That Beauty takes us by the hand
To lead us far apart from THEE.*

*And such would have us journey mute
And wander blind the ways along ;
Nor list to those who, gone before,
Fill yet the echoes with their song.*

*But still some are who cannot think
That flower and music are not Thine,
Who hope the Beauty and the Light
Thy very handmaids, half divine.*

*And these, who find Thy hand in all,
In song and blossom as in soul,
Look none the less toward the end,
And to Thy presence as the goal.*

APOLOGIA

IV

*Of one that sings the song is glad,
He sees a triumph faint and far ;
Another, gazing on the Earth,
Makes music of the things that are ;*

*While some will hymn of THEE, and find
The forecast of Thy glories fair ;
But those, whose eyes are backward turned,
Sing sadly of the things that were.*

*For these a world, the world that was :
The things that might be fade and die,
And those that shall be stand apart,
Ensbrouded till Eternity.*

APOLOGIA

V

*It is not mine, mid murk and maze,
To straighten skeins of tangled doubt;
Nor from the mists of primal myth
To grope the hidden truth-light out.*

*Not mine to question of the Sphinx,
To read her riddles graven deep,
Nor set the prisoned lightning stir
The forces that she holds asleep.*

*Not mine to sing her children's deeds,
Nor trace their surge from age to age,
Nor yet to figure wild and white
Fore-glimpses of their heritage.*

*But mine it is with simple breath
To chant a vespers dim and low,
And sing with weak and wistful lips
A morning's song at afterglow.*

*At eve to gaze toward the east,
Whence rose the light that now has passed;
To sing until there answer me
My brother-spirits through the Vast.*

APOLOGIA

VI

*The solemn day comes, dull and white,
To shew the pathway's rugged trend,
While in the misty distances
Gloom vague forebodings of the end.*

*Below, and passed, the pleasant vales,
The lanes where summer lingers late;
Above, the void, the lonely cold,
The clouds that veil the open gate.*

*So, day by day, I silent climb
Between the summit and the fall;
Till each day's journey seems of each
Both copy and original.*

APOLOGIA

VII

*But when o'er day the great calm dark
Forgetfulness, her mantle, flings,
And tired steps may rest awhile,
And shadows are more real than things,*

*Then, as I wait, there comes to me
Some breath of love, some tender sound,
That sets my weary spirit free
To wander by the holy ground.*

*There is a light of other suns,
A long-dead summer mocks the years,
And phantom voices round me sob
An endless music in my ears.*

*The sweet shades thrill my heart and brain
Like fingers plucking at a lute,
With throbs of pain, so exquisite,
That lips must sing, or heart break, mute.*

*And I, who in the day stand lone
And cold, where deep and steep confer,
At dark weave round me of the past
This vision-veil for comforter.*

AN OLD SONG

AN OLD SONG.

I

THE tender dark brings harmony
To wrap the discords of the day,
And through its passing song I hear
Some faint notes falling, far away.

I know them; and the veil divides
To let them fill my heart and brain,
Till drifting in a tide of sound,
She comes before my eyes again.

AN OLD SONG

II

*There is a blaze of tangled lights,
Some music, which her fingers form,
Some misty faces ; and through all
A flower-sad wind breathes, sweet and warm.*

*And round us streams a wordless song,
—As clear and radiant as a star,—
That isolates from lesser things,
And sets the spirit-gates ajar.*

*No straining hands, no locked embrace,
Yet she, somehow, is part of me,
And I of her ; and we are one,
For Time and for Eternity.*

AN OLD SONG

III

*Oh human soul, that can but faint
When higher glories enter in,
—Too weak to bear the greater light,—
I hold inconstancy no sin!*

*For one such hour leaves dull and dead
The dazzled overburdened soul:
—We are not gods, that we can feel,
Unmoved, the seas of Heaven roll!*

*Nay more,—that one great hour absolves
From every sin, to-be and past,
Which lesser souls must expiate
In agony, with tear and fast.*

*Then while the night brings sight of her,
And breathes that song for me again,
No need for givenness for the past,
But rather, wonder at my pain.*

BEHIND THE TOWN

'BEHIND THE TOWN.

I

O *NCE* more our reeling chariot turns,
To leave the glaring day aside ;
And once again the darkness sets
The gates of memory open wide.

I wander wistful through, and find
The outskirts of an ancient town,
In Summer's lap, and overhead
A long-set sun shines cloudless down.

BEHIND THE TOWN

II

*Beyond the house-bid mazy street
There lies a spread of tree and plain,
Where, fading to a lighter blue,
The sky bends down to earth again :*

*Across the flat a river loops
With silver flashes, faint and far,
And hedgerows cut the widths, to meet
Dark copses where small hamlets are ;*

*And soft field-spaces, billowing
With subtle movement, end to end,
Fling spray of sunshine in and out
The willows at the water's bend ;*

*And through the heart of all, a road
Unwinds dull white amid the green ;
Where, lingering on from noon to night,
Pale shadows clothe the hours between.*

BEHIND THE TOWN

III

*A bridge of flame we wander by,
—For all the west is dying fire,—
And down its after-slopes, that sink
In dark of tangled bough and brier*

*Toward the gold-girt western bush,
Whereto the path's veiled curvings tend;
So through a world of gloom and glow
Our silent dreamy way we wend.*

*There are tall poppies blushing fire,
And shell-pink roses, half asleep,
And here and there a sudden snow
Of marguerites massed myriad deep.*

*(And Margaret her namesake flower
Will at her bosom set and wear,
And cluster others like pale stars
To glimmer in her dusky hair.)*

*The rough oaks rustle as we go,
They whisper as we pass them by,
And in the dim mysterious shade
There comes the murmur of a sigh.*

*We linger still along the gloom,
We two, and find the sadness sweet,
And sweetness sad, as love must do,
Since GOD gives but the incomplete.*

BEHIND THE TOWN

IV

*For in the dim fair dawn of earth,
Each son of GOD, with perfect soul,
Oblivious of his brother-sons,
Lived calm sweet life, himself the whole.*

*And blissfully, apart from all,
Complete and faultless, each abode.
So, wrapped in peace, serene and young,
The tearless earth through sunshine rode.*

*Till GOD, who would have wider love,
Made other children, giving each
But half a soul;—the fellow half
Made woman.—So that man must reach*

*For perfectness, outside himself;
And searching, mingle with his kind,
And love and help them,—feeling still
His scantness,—till perchance he find.*

*Through grief and tears to struggle up,
And blindly grope where knowledge fails,
Till from the higher slope he see
His fellow soul across the vales.*

*Yet even then completeness lacks,
For human entity divides;
But GOD loves love, and with His smile,
A sweetness in the sadness bides.*

*So now the earth swings tearful on,
And cries of passion, sobs of pain,
Make gloom, but cannot drown the light,
The joy of those who find again.*

BEHIND THE TOWN

*Ye sons of GOD, the better part
Is ours, which shall not pass away;
—To weep and strive, and search and love,
And climb to Him as best we may.*

*I would not change my burning heart,
My withered garland, hardly won,
For your white crown of blissfulness,
As radiant as the changeless sun.*

BEHIND THE TOWN

V

*Along the pale horizon crawls
A mist of night from ledge to ledge ;
And, redly burning through the dusk,
One planet climbs above the edge.*

*Soft-veiled in dark, which now was flame,
The tired world lies back to sleep ;
And silence broods, until we hear
The pulses of the throbbing deep.*

*In arms of night close-clasped, the earth
Whirls heedless very near to GOD :
—So near, it is as through vast aisles
Of some dread sanctuary we trod.*

*With bended head and footstep slow,
(Oh mystery that love enshrouds!)
Minds pitiful for sleeping earth,
And hearts uplift like incense-clouds,*

*We wander softly, reverent
In all this holiness of rest,
Along the home-turn band in hand,
And know the quiet night is best.*

BEHIND THE TOWN

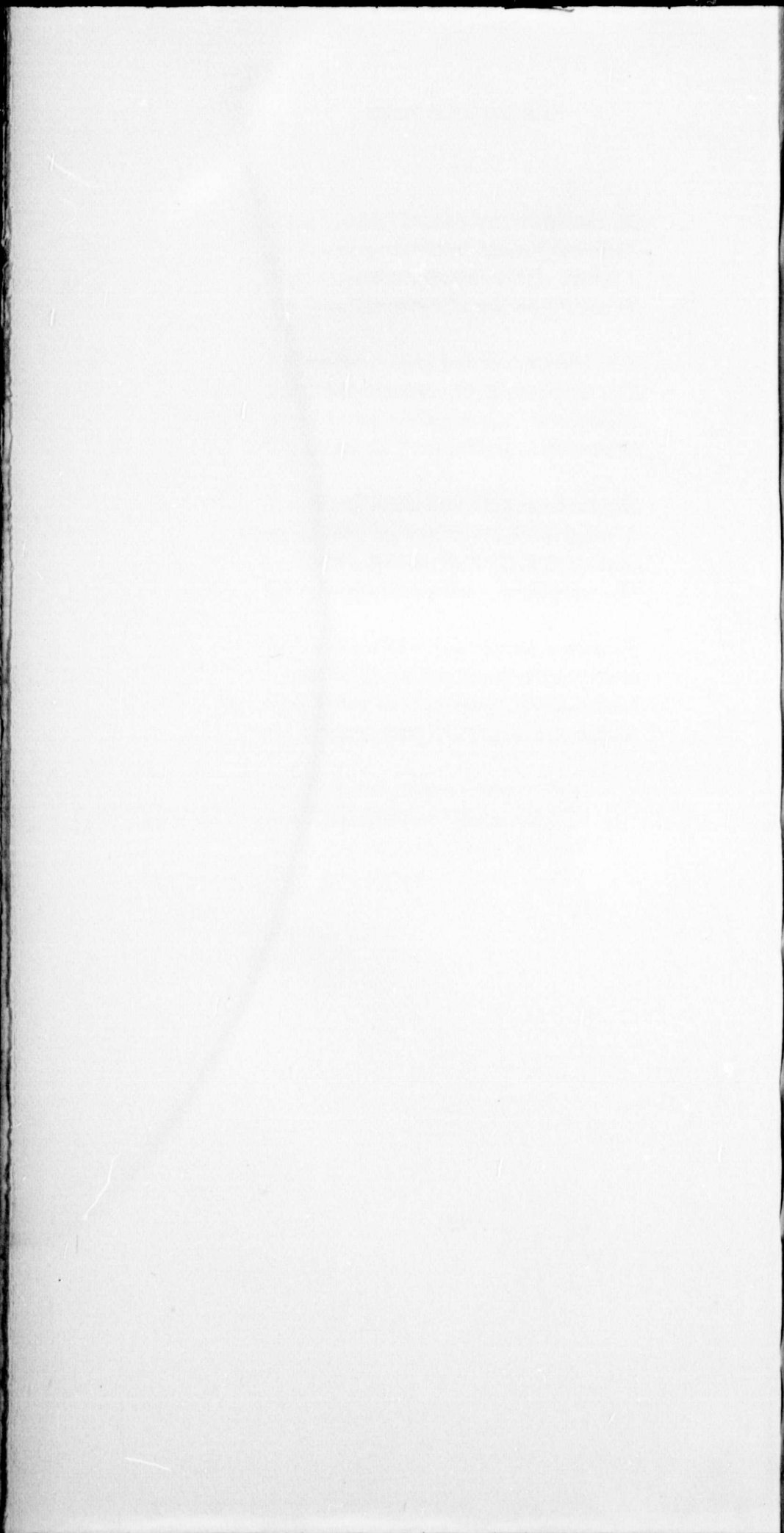
VI

*Oh, solemn row of scented limes
That sentry stand before her gate,
A patient sigh is in your leaves,
As wistful for her step you wait.*

*You love her too : but grudge me not
This long goodnight, since you may stay
About her all the summer night,
While I must leave her till the day.*

*Ah, you may stand and watch by her,
Through dark and moonlight and the dawn,
And on veiled eyes, caressing, breathe
The perfume of your souls outdrawn.*

*Then care not that her bended head
With fond arms on my breast I bind,
Since you rest here, and I am gone,
A dim pale shape that looks behind.*



THE RIVER

THE RIVER.

I

CALM grey old stream, that wanderest
The level land, with sedge at side;
Has envious Time no power to touch
The constant on-flow of thy tide?

*Thy waters, endless as the years,
As vain to hasten or to stay,
How many peoples have they seen
Like thy own mist-wreaths melt away!*

*The Kelt, the Briton,—earlier yet—
In the dim twilight of the race,
What nameless tribes have come and gone,
Nor stirred the peace of thy still face!*

*Thou knew'st the iron Roman well,
His castle stands in menace vain;
And where the Saxon brake and burnt,
Is now a sea of yellow grain.*

*The Dane, the Norman, all have passed,
And still thou art,—relentless stream,—
To watch our changing pageantry
Slip faded from thee like a dream.*

*And now we clothe thy banks with stone,
With arches stab thy passive breast:—
What matter! they, as we, shall pass,
And thou wilt have thy ancient rest.*

THE RIVER

*Bear with us then, for Time is thine ;
Our dust shall lie to clothe the mead,
Or spring in flowers to garland thee,
—A mystic scroll we could not read.—*

THE RIVER

II

*A golden light is in the world,
A soft wind slides across the sky,
From edge to edge the earth is glad,
The earth is glad, and knows not why.*

*The raptured river laughs a-light,
It frolics round the bridge's piers;
And from the cleaving oar it drips
In gems, to-day, instead of tears.*

*And we are forth, we sun-glad ones,
Amid the ripple and the reeds,
Past wail and willow, till we win
The freedom of the upper meads.*

*And there we cheat the miser year
To give a summer in a day,
From out the wreath of Time to pluck
And hide a perfect hour away.*

*Yet even so, among such joy,
We two must find a world apart,
And wander by green hedges dim,
Where frightened field-things stare and start.*

*And happiness, that solves in woe,
Thrills inward, like a voice of years;
Till pain becomes a sacrament,
And trembles on grey eyes in tears.*

THE RIVER

III

*There sleeps, not far, a little pool,
Hid fast by summer's veil of charm,
Where round an islet lovingly
The river bends a lazy arm.*

*So vague the opening, and so small,
That there we linger, lost, unseen,
While laughing boatloads plashing pass
An oar's-length from our nest of green.*

*Tall ranks of rushes stand for walls,
An arch of oak-boughs renders dim,
And on the lily-paved floor
Strange fragrance floats from rim to rim.*

*Pale dusty sunlight struggles through
In golden pencils here and there,
And on its way it strikes to bronze
The darkness of my Margaret's hair.*

*Earth's quiet hangs amid the leaves ;
Our thoughts meet half-way, without speech ;
No sound to mar this sacred calm,
Where each full heart lies bare to each.*

*So pass dear hours ; and silence binds
The soul's near union nearer yet :
And each sweet moment thus apart
Is one more seal upon it set.*

*Without,—the sultry dome of noon,
The world, the worry and the stir :
Within,—the green, transparent shade,
The wonder and the peace of her.*

THE RIVER

IV

*How red and large the moon to-night!
How low it hangs upon the hill!
In solemn charm it seems to hold
The black oak-branches smooth and still.*

*There is an awe that might beseem
White altar-steps that none have trod,
All earth is solemn as a shrine
That waits the coming of its God.*

*What hush can be, that is not here,
Now dark sets every flower-soul free,
And spirits wend from air to air,
And draw us with their mystery.*

*The phantom fields lie pale and faint,
Between a shadow and a glow;
For dying day has left a light
Along the west, that cannot go.*

*The dusk hangs full of meadow-sweet,
The tired lilies lie in swoon,
And fuller sweeps upon the world
The magic of the mounting moon.*

*Yet is, among the stately reeds,
A dark of dreams and sad desire,
Where spaces of a purple sky
Set here and there strange gems of fire.*

*Calm water steals, as dim as death,
From dusk to dusk on either side;
We flow with it as silently,—
The river's will is ours for guide.*

THE RIVER

*The founts of darkness seem to spring
Between the boughs we glide toward,
With one long ripple, flaming, laid
Beneath them, like a silver sword.*

*Below this weird and sombre arch
What gate of further wisdom stands,
That here should come, unthought, unsought,
The first sweet clasping of our hands?*

*That we should stretch at once beyond
The bounds of low objective birth,
To be a part of Nature's soul
And fellow-beirs of all the Earth.*

*If dear before,—ah, dearest now,
This hour, this river and this gloom,
—Made deathless in the midst of death,
Eternal flowers above a tomb!*

THE RIVER

V

*I see thee now, dear stream of mine ;
—What are these thousand leagues of sea
To love which, cradled in thy arms,
Holds present every mood of thee ?*

*I see thee now : this sickly sun
That glares on us, stirs not thy rest ;
The summer dark still folds thee round
And veils thy dim mysterious breast.*

*Though in the east a glow of morn
May hang and lighten into grey,
And on thy waters there may brood
The spirit of a new-born day ;*

*Still,—o'er thy meadows lie as yet
The scents of night I know so well,
And round the vagueness of thy banks
The flowers droop silent under spell.*

*A sacred loneliness is thine
When faints thy faded morning-star ;
The peace of GOD, that at the dawn
Sets every other thing a-far.*

*In thy dark sleeping woods I stray,
I breathe the sweetness and the peace,
And in the shadows of thy shores
My captive spirit finds release.*

*Thy great still calmness flows through me,
Thy tireless patience folds me in,
Till in the holy rest that comes
My selfish sorrow seems a sin.*

THE RIVER

*Then flashing back to sudden day,
I wonder which of these was I;
—The one who watched thy magic dawn,
Or he beneath this doomful sky—.*

THE SILENT CITY

THE SILENT CITY.

I

DEAR City, set upon a hill
To crown the land with arch and spire,
And hold a wide presage of calm
Amid this sea of summer fire ;

Calm City, in whose narrow lanes
The cool of Springtime still prevails,
And in whose precincts' cloistered shade
The sultry glare of noonday fails ;

Among thy green and winding ways
The gleam of marble beckons through
To isolation and to peace
In depths made solemn by the yew.

No traveller turns, in thy still streets,
With any stir or hasty tread ;
Thy thousand citizens mark not
Our footsteps as we pass o'erhead.

Here rest the old, who now are young,
—For Death has shared his strength with them,—
And here the young, who now are old,
With all Death's wisdom in their ken ;

Here lie the throbbing hearts, all still,
The aching hands, unclasped from toil,
And for each weary back is set
The cool soft cushion of the soil ;

THE SILENT CITY

*—And every head that pillows here,
Grey-clad or gold, it does not boot,
Round each the yew-tree binds alike
The white crown of its growing root.*

THE SILENT CITY

II

*I love the legend of the Church,
Which tells, with happy childlike faith,
That when the soul of Mary passed,
Her body was not given to death.*

*But when, the morrow of their loss,
Her loving mourners came to pray
And lay flower-offerings by her tomb,
They found,—so runs it,—stirred away*

*The stone which they had set to close
The vault, now ravished of its gem
And void; and while they stood aghast,
Dismayed, there wafted faint to them*

*The sound of angel harps in praise
With myriad voices, sweet and far,
While all about flowed thick the scent
Of such flowers as in Heaven are,*

*—The breath of lily and of rose
And asphodel,—so exquisite
That tranced they stayed; until there fell
At the beloved Apostle's feet*

*The broider'd girdle she had worn
On earth,—a sign for them, that all
Their grief was vain, since she had swept
Up unto GOD, at Christ's own call.*

*Because the temple which had shrined
The SON Incarnate might not stay
To crumble here, and under go
The dread dispersion of our clay.*

THE SILENT CITY

*Then, comforted of this great grace
That GOD had in their loved one shewed,
They fared them home, with souls uplift,
To treasure her beatitude.*

THE SILENT CITY

III

*Yet even this white fragrant flower
Of ancient piety is grown
From fears, and blindness which can see
No other wisdom but its own.*

*—Oh, human hopes! ye will not rise,
But, tangled, cling to earth's dark lure,
Fain thus with tale and miracle
To keep a cherished body pure;*

*—Ye dread for strength and comeliness,
That they, at turning of their term,
In the vague vastness of the earth
Lie lost, bedfellows to the worm.*

*—Ye dare but know in dying, death,
And mark out in each change, decay;
Ye will not see that nothing fades
But passes to a higher way.*

*Ye mourn,—'It shall not help us then,
'The starry promise of our birth,
'Nor that we know, and call abroad,
'The master-secrets of the earth:*

*'It shall not better, that we weigh
'In balances the stars and sun,
'Nor that we watch with crystal eye
'A million atoms grow from one:*

*'It shall not stead us to have ruled
'Nor to have served, since false and just
'Are cast forth equal, side by side,
'In silence, and in nameless dust!'*

THE SILENT CITY

*Oh, poor blind hopes! When will ye bear
The wisdom of the crying soul,
That all ye fret for now will find
Completion as the ages roll!*

*Look through, and learn the life beyond,
By such small space apart from us,
And grow, until ye too may tread
A path as vast and luminous!*

THE SILENT CITY

IV

*Goes forth a dear one from our house
To fare him east, or voyage west,
We do not bind our doors with black,
Nor board a horror of his quest ;*

*But rather, counting small the days,
The leagues, that part, we look across,
And gladden more and more to near
The meeting that shall bless our loss ;*

*And joy to picture, in that hour
How love shall flow in fairer flood,
And closer than before shall bind
The bonds of fellowship or blood.*

*Yet if the door through which he stepped,
When wending forward from our sight,
Be this green mound,—what doubt may set
His footsteps in approachless night ?*

*Shall not his way be full as fair ?
Shall not the meeting be as sure ?
Or is the Faith we preach and pray,
But dread's self-dreading coverture ?*

THE SILENT CITY

V

*These carven miseries move in me
—These scythes and skulls and rhymes of woe—
A sad dim wonder how we fell
To such from things of long ago :*

*For even he, the ancient Greek,
—Whom we call Pagan,—did not spread
This robe of darkness over Death,
Nor mock the memory of his dead.*

*For him, Death was a winged boy
With locks a-flow and eyes a-flame,
And light white feet, that knew the way
To lead the tired heart whence it came.*

*Yet we, who vaunt eternal life,
And ways, but now unveiled of GOD,
Up which, beyond, ourselves shall climb,
We carve such emblems on the sod*

*That holds our dearest, as shall quell
All peace to tears, all hope to loss,
And with a band of crape we blot
The record of loved lives across.*

*Ah! let the wind-flower have its way;
Let wild vines clamber at their will;
Set not a marble menace here
To keep dear dust in bondage still!*

*Ah no! Let Nature wrap them round
With all sweet wisdom that she knows,
And here for symbol twine the brier,
And there hang, starred with dew, a rose.*

THE SILENT CITY

VI

*Where rugged vasty oak-roots writhe,
—Far from the railed and marbled throng,—
In dimmer depths and stiller, lies
A moss-clad mound, some small yard long.*

*It shews no wordy scroll of deeds,
No quarterings to flame in gold,
But slanted low across its head
The rustling grasses fall and fold:*

*Here spring dim daisies, shy and small,
The bending bramble clings and wreathes,
And on us here a holy breath
From far and unknown spaces breathes.*

*We pause beside this nameless grave,
We feel it sacred more than those,
Whose soaring piles of masonry
Blaze to the world their sculptured woes.*

*What broken hopes are here enshrined!
What tears have fallen, all unseen!
—Their endless presence holds us rapt,
Where that bent mother's knees have been;*

*(And Margaret, all pitiful,
Steals slow my flower from out her breast
To lay it, with sweet reverence,
Where those pale trembling lips were pressed.)*

*Here calls the Future clear to us
To learn its meaning at our feet;
And with the warning of its voice
Our fingers and our faces meet.*

THE SILENT CITY

VII

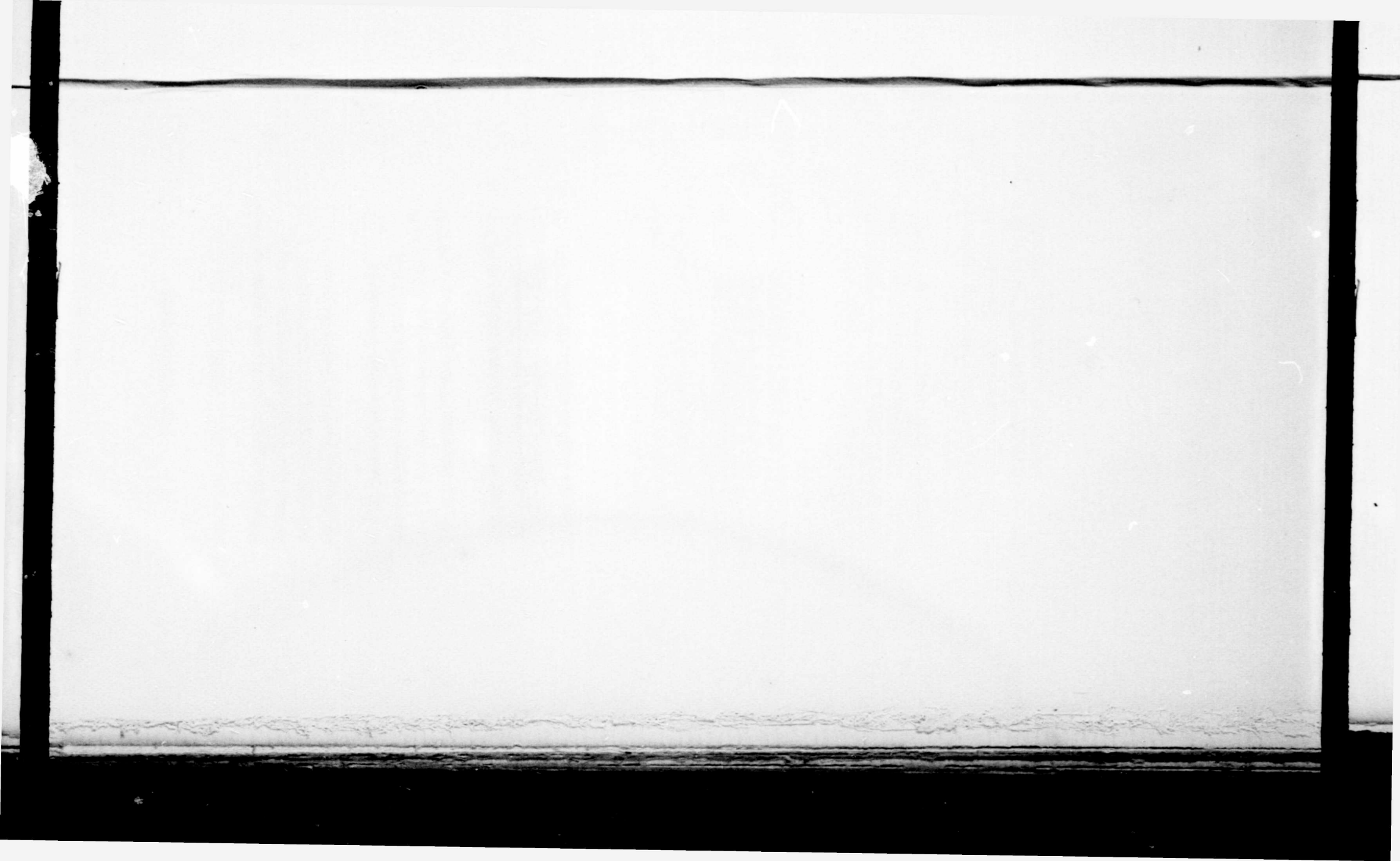
*From these green glades and groves of death
Which, life in life, we mingled through,
We seek the shining summer world
By creaking postern, framed in yew.*

*—Yet, outward wending to the light,
Her soft grey eyes are dim with tears,
And in the glow our brows are pale,
I do not know with hopes or fears.*

*We pass without, we leave aside
The coolness and the rest, for noon
Smites heavy here, and hand in hand
Upon the hills we stand with June.*

2

IN THE ROSE-GARDEN



IN THE ROSE-GARDEN.

I

SET round with ivy-matted walls
That close a world within their bound,
Flame roses, roses,—nothing else
Between the heaven and the ground;

Red fire and crimson splashed with white,
And palest yellow burning through,
With, underward the greenest shade
That ever Summer whispered to.

Soft flutings, and low murmurings,
Where blossom-bud and leaf entwine;
Warm scent and brown bees in the air,
And sunlight like pale amber wine.

By velvet lawn a dim path winds,
That in Queen Bess's days was old,
And crooked boughs let sunshine creep
To spangle mellow gloom with gold:

And just a lazy tinkling thread
Of water from a lichened lip
Fills carven marble, and o'erflows
Down one green side, with ceaseless drip:

About the base faint fern-fronds curl,
And sometimes a forget-me-not
Lifts wet blue eyes there, timidly.
—Hard by, of sleeping Time for got,

IN THE ROSE-GARDEN

*Time's former slave—a sundial, quaint
And olden,—lonely stands and lost,
Half strangled with embracing brier
And honey-suckle round it tossed.*

*Here is our kingdom; here, with pomp
Of flower-flame and with leafy state;
With roses for our vassalage,
And Time a subject potentate.*

*In this sweet pleasance is no Past,
No Future, nor no dying thing,
But one long summer peace for us,
And dream more dear than wakening,*

*—Where tall dark ivy-matted walls
Set deep our love within their bound,
And roses, roses, riot red
Between the heaven and the ground!*

IN THE ROSE-GARDEN

II

*Oh, golden leaves that whisper low,
Be very still, for she is here!
Sweet purple light that will not die,
Fade fast, my timid love draws near!*

*Down the deep pathways of the night
My tall pale Margaret will glide,
A slender form that rustles soft
Through bending roses to my side.*

*Soft wandering breezes, silent be!
Pale stars and little curvèd moon
Sink to the sun behind the west,
And leave my love and me alone!*

IN THE ROSE-GARDEN

III

*Few heart-beats since, we circled slow
'Mid panting breasts and languid eyes,
Where hundred lights and voices surged,
And brass blared brazen ecstasies.*

*But here, where roses droop their heads
And breathe their hearts out to the night,
The velvet darkness almost shrouds
My clinging Margaret from my sight.*

*And here we, exiled in the throng,
Have found a world in loneliness,
A sweeter music in the bush,
And more than light in a caress!*

IN THE ROSE-GARDEN

IV

*My love has roses in her hands,
White roses in her sweet soft hair,
And in the girdle at her waist
Faint other roses, happy there.*

*But happier yet is one sweet bud
That warm and soft lies bidden, pressed
Beneath the lace that jealous veils
The fluttering roundness of her breast.*

*And that dear bud is mine,—Ah me!
She draws it from its hiding-place,
And gives it, glowing with her life,
And lip-touched, as a crowning grace.*

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

I

A *PASSING* slant of fine white mist,
The child of dawn and sea-fed breeze,—
And then soft day breaks calm and grey
Across the greenness of the trees.

*Soft, calm and grey, till one long arm
Of sun-flame tears the veil in twain,
And, sudden, on the dusky earth
A thousand blazing glories rain.*

*The green breaks out and dazzles gold,
The pallid grey to crimson turns,
While round each glowing leaf and blade
A flickering jewel-halo burns.*

*And yet what stillness! Not a sigh
To break the wonder of the hour;
Nor one least breath to shake apart
Its dew-drop from the frailest flower!*

*And silver coolness with the calm,
For all the light, for all the fire;
Faint drifting scent from ground and tree,
That strains the heart with GOD-desire.*

*So, mantled in clear purity,
Another radiant week is born;
And clad in silence, crowned with light,
There comes to us the holy morn.*

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

II

*The crystal air throbs, streaked with gold :
Sweet creeping echoes kiss and part :
The silence lives and dies again,
With thrills and flashes in my heart.*

*One clear, clear, silver-singing bell,
With pulsing voice, with measured sound,
That stirs the calmness with its call,
Yet makes the calmness more profound!*

*Faint, sweet, and trembling sweeter yet,
With dreamy falls that linger long
And float across the distances
Like echoes of an angel song.*

*Oh silver voice, thou callest me
To yon grey porch amid the trees ;
Another too, thou callest there,
With thy insistent melodies !*

*Thou callest us, and we shall meet,
The glow of dawn on either face,
The wreath of worship on each brow
At entering the holy place.*

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

III

*Here is no gloom of glass-wrought saint,
No tangled marble floating high,
No massèd lights, no tropic flowers,
No organ's thunder-melody.*

*But here grey walls and narrow roof,
Rough benches, where the peasant kneels,
And through blank panes and open door
The glory of the summer steals.*

*A wind of morning wanders in;
It leaves its sweetness in the air,
And breathes a blessing as it stirs
The kneeling children's sunny hair.*

*Wet wild-flowers the bare altar deck,
A single priest kneels at the shrine,
Yet none the less the Lord is here
To greet us in the Bread and Wine.*

*And in the wonder of the hour,
As soul leans out, from sense apart,
This naked freshness makes us glad,
—We so seem nearer to His Heart!*

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

IV

*The high blue noon is golden-spread :
The earth is sun-washed, still as fair :
And once again the silver tones
From spire and bell-tower call to prayer.*

*The temple arches, vast and dim,
Bend o'er us bending worshippers,
And in the shadows of the roof
A little wind of music stirs,*

*That, deepening, crashes into flood
And myriad mellow waves of song,
As, solemnly, with chanted psalm,
The white procession moves along.*

*Fair banners, stiff with saint and gem,
Make rustle as they pass us by,
While, torch and censer round it borne,
The uplift cross comes flashing high*

*Past our dim corner, where in dusk
Of sacred shades and guardian glooms
Pale tattered flags of battle droop
Above their hero-bearers' tombs ;*

*Past carven oak of rood and screen,
Dark pannellings of desk and stall
That flame with many-quartered shields
And names of those whose name is all ;*

*To where the great high-altar lifts
Its white still saints and marble Christ
And light-starred maze of flowers, to wait
The Presence of the Eucharist.*

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

*The organ's soul-dividing voice,
Like prisoned angel's heavenward cry,
That wraps these pillars' branching beads
In veil of molten melody ;—*

*The tide of voices, full and deep,
That bears the strain it soars upon,
And, parting, battles to and fro
From antiphon to antiphon ;—*

*The seven flames of crimson fire ;—
The tabernacle's chased gold ;—
The mellow streams of pictured light
That pour through saint-spread windows old ;—*

*The misty, pungent, incense-cloud,
That dims the gleam of chasuble,
Of cope and cotta, and yet blends
Their beauty in one blessed whole ;—*

*The gentle chime of sacring bell ;—
The prostrate multitude, who bend
Adoring the great Mystery ;—
These are GOD'S fingers all, that rend*

*The soul from out its envelope,
To mount, to soar, on wings of prayer,
Till the dread bond that binds to earth
Seems frailer than a golden hair.*

*Up unto Him the free'd soul whirls,
To sweep with half-unveiled eyes
Through burning glories, which no tongue
May tell in any ecstasies.*

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

*Up, mid the awful flaming forms
Of archangels and seraphim;
To bear, and faintly understand,
Their dread unutterable hymn!*

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

V

*The foreguards of the darkness steal :
Dim eastward shadows vaguely bend,
And western crimson writes in fire
Of perfect day the perfect end.*

*Yet we who sing our even-song
Bathe our glad foreheads in the gleam,
For still the dying sun-glow mocks
These scattered stars of candle-flame.*

*And while the preacher's mellow voice
Rings deep with counsels and commands,
We two, who listen, drink his words
With burning hearts and meeting hands.*

*—Yet in this clasp no sacrilege,
No thought or feeling held from GOD,
But rather, thus before His Throne,
Our worship flows in fuller flood!*

*For here, in shade of dusk divine,
Between pale Hesper and the sun,
Is that sweet dimness, where may float
Two parted soul-selves into one.*

*Prophetic sweetness! Though it be
But few short minutes ; yet in these
To us, who worship him as one,
As one He gives His perfect peace.*

A GOOD-BYE

A GOOD-BYE.

I

*O*H calm avenger, Memory!
That turnest from the onward path
To wander back, and seek again
A purer, sweeter aftermath

*Of all the flowers that bloomed along
The path of Love; and set'st them by
To crown the heart with, in the dearth,
When all the wells of Hope are dry.*

*But not content with this, must bend
To pluck the barb, to weave the thorn,
Lest round some too-glad human heart
A painless garland might be worn.—*

*What price thou wilt, I pay it, glad
To have wherewith, and wear the wreath;
Because I love its fadeless flowers,
Held tighter by the thorns beneath.*

*Then since thou must, come, lead me where
The roses bloom, the roses fade,
The falling of whose withered leaves
A carpet for our parting made.*

A GOOD-BYE

II

*The tall straight rain stands sullenly,
Without a break; there is no sound
Save the dull patter on the leaves,
The thirsty sobbing of the ground;*

*And autumn eve makes misty murk,
Uplifting gloom about us two;
—Dark curtains set above, aside,
With phantom trees protruding through.*

*How fit we part in autumn rain,
Who met with laughing sun of spring,
Who loved through clear blue April's light,
And golden summer's murmuring.*

A GOOD-BYE

III

*Oh! dripping form that closely clings,
Oh! wild wet hair that chills my cheek,
Half-swooning eyes that do not see,
Sweet shivering lips that will not speak!*

*How can I go, oh throbbing heart,
And arms that press us into one,
If Death's cold breath thus drains your life
Ere yet our death-watch is begun!*

A GOOD-BYE

IV

*Oh dreadful hour, when Love's last words
Through choking sobs must rend their way:
When all the throbbing Present sinks
Into a passive Yesterday!*

*Dark solemn hour, too great for tears,
When dull eve blackens into night,
And all we love dies in the gloom,
And hope seems hopeless as the light!*

A GOOD-BYE

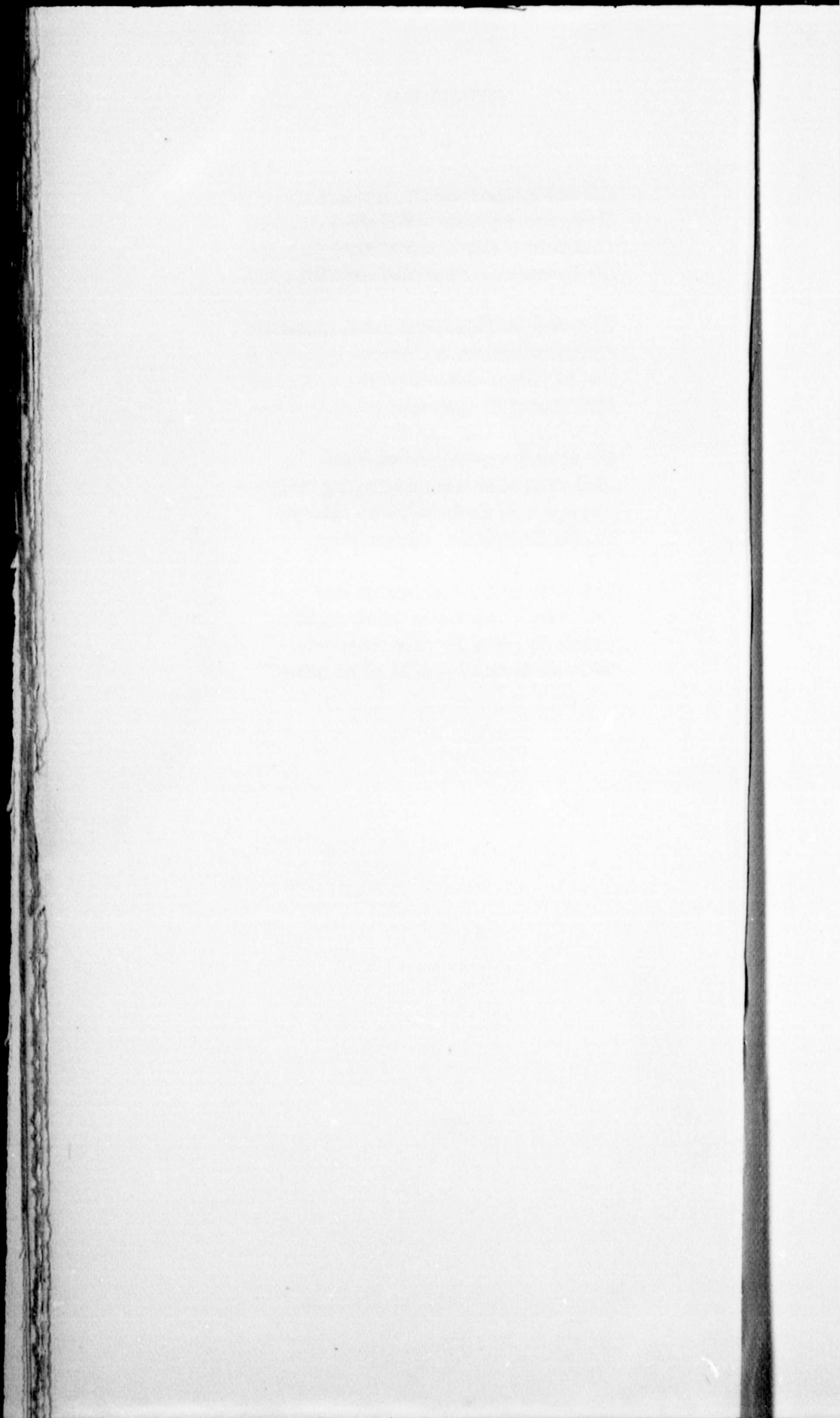
V

*Nor can we know, we two who part,
So close to emptiness and death,
That what is done is ever done,
And promises are worthless breath :*

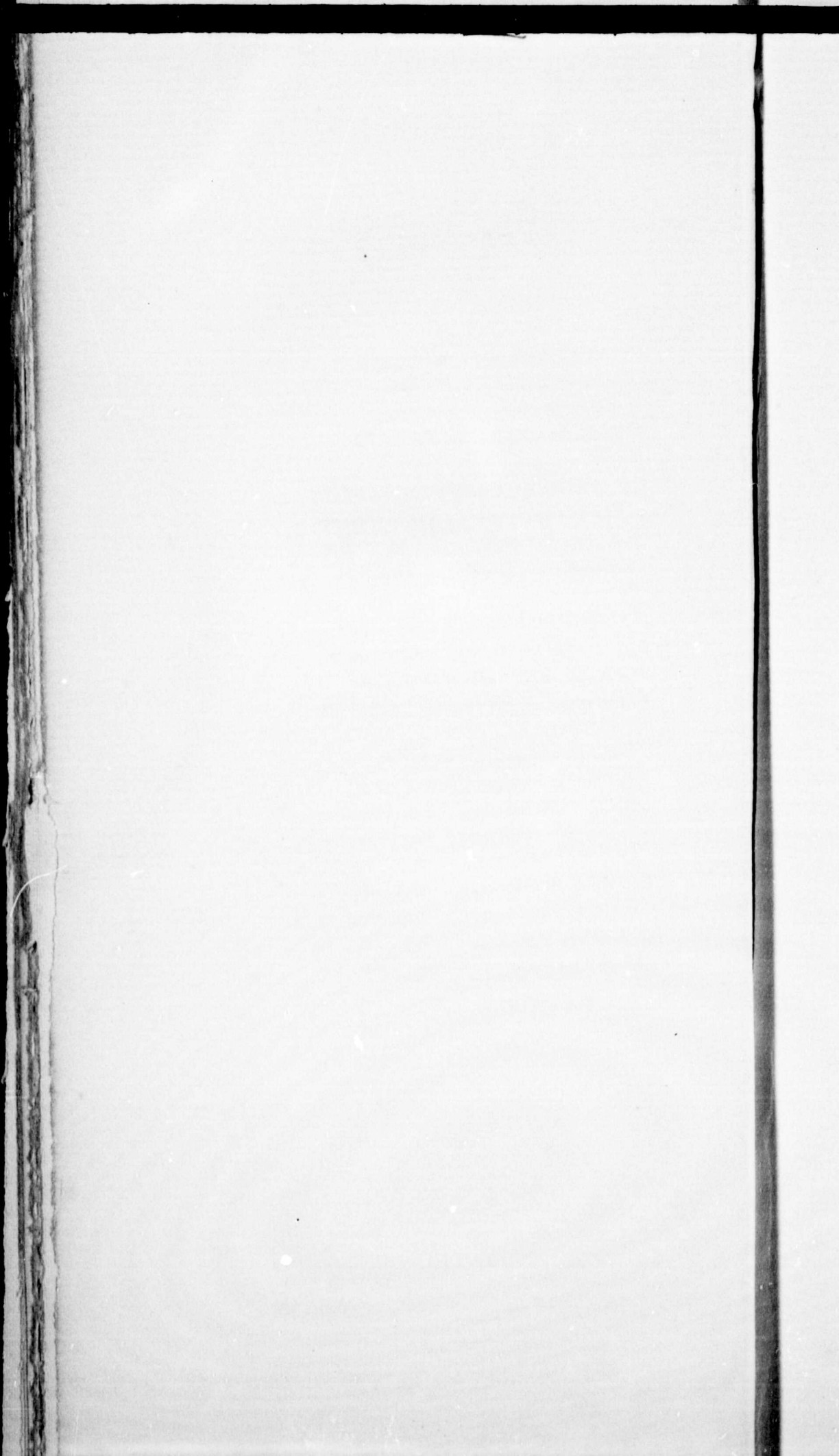
*That each least deed, each word, remains
Forever on the dial of Time ;
Nor all forgetfulness can rase
One letter of the tale sublime.*

*We can but see,—for we are blind
And wrapped in sense, we weeping things,—
Through what dark shadow we must go,
To find the light that wisdom brings.*

*So here we cling ; and here the soul
That found completeness breaks again ;
And in the gloom the faint heart sobs,
“Was all in vain ? — Was all in vain ?”*



TO MARGARET



TO MARGARET.

I

*Out of the west, dear, once again,
Across the sinking of the sun
A veil of purple rain is drawn,
And dimness falls: the day is done.*

*But with the darkness comes a scent,
—The jasmine's heavy clinging breath,
And some far music's drifting strain,
As weird and beautiful as Death.*

*And through its fading, faint I hear
The whisper of the tired world's sigh,
—The sob of welcome that it gives
When night's dark heralds wander by.*

*Thou, too, art with me as before:
Thy hand is lightly linked in mine,
And through our thrilling pulses throng
The callings of the dark, like wine.*

*Thy form, thy presence, and thy voice,
—Thy self—lives with me as I speak:
—And like a gossamer I feel
One loosened hair across my cheek.*

TO MARGARET

II

*And yet thy presence is a dream!
Thou art not here, we are apart!
The foolish phantasy fades now,
I conjured from a too-full heart!*

*Thou art not here: thou wouldst not be:
These vision-things of mine are vain.
And what to thee the buried past,
That I should bid it rise again!*

*Thou art not here: that is enough.
Thy head is on another's breast,
And round another's neck may cling
The white soft arms my lips have pressed.*

*Thou art not here: why should I stay
To prate of thee when that is said!
It is not meet my foolish heart
Should fetter living things to dead.*

*Thou art not here. I turn aside
And spurn the things I loved before,
Since earth is dust and emptiness,
And life is dark for evermore.*

TO MARGARET

III

*Oh Dear ! forgive me, that I speak
Thus madly of the days that were,
And cast a scoff at holy things
In words of sickness and despair.*

*Thou knowest that at measured times
A veil of darkness wraps me round,
And all the sorrows ever wept
Seem in my bursting bosom bound :*

*That then, in black woe vesting me,
To Misery I build a shrine,
And do her tears more reverence
Than ever priest to sacred Wine.*

*The mood will pass,—it passes now,—
The illness of a mind undone,
And what I fled from in the gloom
I live for, when the light is won.*

*Thou knowest dear ; for all that was
Is still in me, and more thereto,
Though grimmer, wilder are the ways
I wander upward through.*

*Yet white within me burns a fire,
A glory that shall make me whole,
—The master-key of mystery,
The knowledge of a woman's soul.*

*With that for guide, I climb alone ;
The lower things are less and less :
Far heights beyond thy ken I scale,
And swifter for my loneliness.*

TO MARGARET

IV

*It must be, dearest, that thy soul
Was joined with mine in aeons past;
And, following out some fate divine,
We sped, one spirit, through the Vast.*

*So, tracing out the bounded path,
We circled on, and fell apart.
— Thus I became the present man,
And knew the voidness of my heart.*

*I saw how maimed this life of mine,
And wondered where its complement
Lay bidden; till GOD let me see
Our paths again in one were blent.*

*Then light shone through the doubtful dark,
And from the bars of flesh once more
My prisoned spirit-self reached out
To meet completeness as before.*

*So from her sleep rose drooping Hope,
And fainting Faith drew fuller breath;
And both looked fearless on the deep,
Since Love can see beyond this death.*

*Thus dimly, to my searching eyes
His grander purpose was outlined;
And through the darkness fell His voice,
To help the faintness of my mind.*

TO MARGARET

V

*What then is this of which thou speak'st,
—Forgiveness, that thou askest me—?
—This were the last and lowest depth,
That I thy creditor should be;*

*To whom, if not the debt be paid,
There must at least be pleading speech.
—Ah, Margaret, where is the scroll
Shall tell us what each owes to each?*

*Then bear me love,—There is no debt,
Nor aught betwixt us to be paid;
All is my free-will offering,
Dear tribute on thy altar laid.*

*And what thou hast is ever thine,
Of none to cancel or redeem.
—Not GOD'S own hand can make undone
These things thou countest as a dream!*

TO MARGARET

VI

*This 'friendship' too, thou offerest?
A vain and empty bribe of words
To make forego the greater claim,
The empire that my love affords!*

*Lord of a rebel realm I reign?
What matter that,—a little thing—!
Space does not sunder sovereignty,
A king exiled is still a king!*

*Think'st thou that I, who once have ruled,
Will after serve, and humbly set
Another first? Ah no, indeed,
My kingdom once, my kingdom yet!*

*Though all the dear observances,
The rites of royalty be gone,
The whispered word, the kiss, the smile,
—Not these I found my empire on.*

*Thy mind, thy heart, thy waking soul,
These mine, and ever mine, shall be:
With these to guide I thread me through
The mazes of Eternity.*

*Remember, dear,—whatever pass,
Whatever alter, I am I;
Let withered world and system fail,
The self is soul, and cannot die.*

TO MARGARET

VII

*Indeed,—whene'er, with higher thought,
I put the worth against the cost,
My present self against my past,
I know it better to have lost.*

*For when the years have rendered dim
The death of parting and the pain,
Our clearer eyes look through the loss
And know in it eternal gain.*

*For Nature's self can only live
In dwindling or in growing great ;
And what can mortal love but tread
The narrow path of mortal fate ?*

*There is no level, fixed and firm,
To which to climb, and so abide ;
However mighty be the flow,
There comes the falling of the tide.*

*And love which fills its fulness here,
Which leads to and completes desire,
Has lived its life ; it can but droop
To seek the lower from the higher.*

*But love which, at its human birth,
Is banished out from human things
To wander in the soul's domain,
Takes to itself an angel's wings ;*

*And, grown eternal there beyond,
Comes back, a beauteous spirit-child,
To guide the groping spirit-self
Beyond the carnal and defiled,*

TO MARGARET

*By higher ways and loftier yet,
From sun to sun, from world to world,
Until before the Throne of GOD
The faultless soul-flower is unfurled.*

*Ah, what but death, if this small life
Be all complete and rounded in!
Its circlet lends us no escape
Whereby infinity to win.*

*For incompleteness is the step
Whereon to higher state we climb,
Wherefrom we touch Eternity,
And break the bonds of flesh and Time.*

*Then let this thing of dust and change
Not dread the death, not fly the rod;
But rather, let the shattered man
Foresbew the moulding of the God!*

TO MARGARET

VIII

*Think not, beloved, for these words,
The past is past without regret.
What time this forward vision fails,
I find but blackness round me set.*

*My soul strains out to find thy soul;
I curse the life that holds apart;
And all the heights I hope beyond,
I gladly barter for thy heart.*

*My sightless eyes would, yearning, pierce
This veil of darkness mocking me;
And vain I hold out, through the space
That sunders, arms a-stretch to thee.*

*If thou art glad, there is not one
To tell me, or to bid me smile;
And thy voice even may not reach
The fastness of this far exile.*

*Or art thou sad,—I cannot see,
Nor lift the sorrow round thee thrown:
I may but know thou canst not feel
The long damnation of the lone.*

*What love or loathing sways thy heart,
What grief or sickness bends thee low,
I, who of thee would beg the half,
I may not know,—I may not know.*

TO MARGARET

IX

*Yet vain my sorrow, vain my song,
Since Wisdom waits us at the end,
And, questioned, even now reveals
What long fore-casted years must send.*

*Ab vain, when spirit, reaching high,
Beholds the nearness of the gate,
Where, loosened from its chain, the soul
The last apocalypse may wait.*

*What need my words, when there we speak,
When there we see, when there we know,
And all this dream of men and time
Shall melt from us like autumn snow.*

*What need between us of farewell
What need to turn to yesterday,
Since long before this little life
Our souls were mingled on their way?*

*Let only that divine in us
With open eyes look on the Light
Wherein the Future and the Past
Are one, and Wrong blends into Right.*

*And though thine eyes to-day are veiled,
Hereafter thou shalt wake and see,
And in the meantime, Love and I
Will watch aside and wait for thee.*

SONNETS

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PULVIS FORMOSUS.

HER bed is shadowed by a cedar-tree
 And starred about with blossoms of the rose :
 There sings to her each flower-sweet wind that blows ;
 The moon and sun watch on her sanctity.

Here, by her couch, there comes no thought to me
 Decay can touch her frail form's carven snows,
 Or the pure beauty of her limbs disclose
 Corruption, earth-like. Nay—*i* cannot be !

Wan, now, perhaps, or thin she is and pale,
 As if some breath of withering had blown
 Lightly on her, and sweet she slumbers prone.
 —As, 'twixt the pages of some old missale,
 A withered bud may lie, long hid, unknown,
 But still a flower, with perfume to exhale.

II.

AT THE FLOOD.

THE silent tide climbs full, and on it Night
Floats to the purple bases of the hills.
From seaward sweeps a salt strange smell that fills
The heart of things land-tethered with delight.
A single seagull wings a low slow flight
Into the sunset. The grey forest thrills
At some far whisper breathed through it, and stills
Its deep life murmur; dusk and dark unite,
And such a wide bush falls as should prepare
A white soul's birth whereof the world is fain
—A wave of longing even unto pain
For what is not nor shall be anywhere—,
. . . Then turns the tide, and in a pale despair
The stars look down on Night that came in vain.

III.

IN THE GARDEN.

THE currant-trees still form a narrow lane ;
Their fruit shines red in every shady place :
The lily-beds show many a timid face ;
The gravel path is fringed with raspberry cane,
Just as it was : the strawberries blush and wane
With each warm June : the autumns come apace,
And bid the branching peartrees interlace,
Bent down with burden. All these things remain ;
The wind and sunshine play between the leaves,
And rain comes pattering as it did of yore ;
Yet where is gone the light the garden wore ?
Across our green walk now the spider weaves
His webs in peace, and the lone cedar grieves
That Love seeks not his shade, as heretofore.

IV.

YOUTH'S DESIRE.

WHERE glassy waters coil and silent creep,
 With rich oakshadow on them barwise laid,
 Bestrew me rarest flowers that never fade ;
 Arch overhead a blue unfathomed deep,
 And breathe about the quiet airs that sleep
 In Alpine vale first touched with sunset shade ;
 Hang in the air some bird-song, madly made
 Of peace and longing. Then let angels sweep
 With censers of sweet incense, to and fro,
 Until the place is holy and made strange ;
 That there, with gift and garland, I may go,
 That blessed bower in purest heart to range,
 And, asking but her presence in exchange,
 Set forth the sweetest worship that I know.

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DAFFODIL AND ORANGE-BLOSSOM.

ONCE in a golden eve I heard you sing
 His dearest hymn to Love: a daffodil
 Lay in your breast and throbb'd upon its thrill,
 As Love, in answer, came on sudden wing.

Then many an eve as golden Love did bring
 For our delighting: on a golden stream
 Far splendid sunsets lingered into dream,
 And earth lay holy for our wayfaring.

And now—you bind the orange-blossoms on,
 And hide your blushes in the bridal veil;
 While I across an ocean bid you hail,
 And wish you God-speed. Ah! the gold is gone;
 But through these days that come so swift and pale
 My heart, for Love's sake, bids you benison.

ROADSIDE IMPRESSION.

A SHADE of desolation haunts the day :
 The airs are sorrow-laden embassies,
 That drape soft rain about the gaunt bare trees
 And wind the haggard face of earth with grey.

Along the quagmire of the bleak roadway
 Come drooping solemn figures, twos and threes,
 And a long shapeless burden borne of these
 Whose eyes are weary and whose white lips pray.

They go, I think, to foul with dust a head
 Which they have loved, and crowned for love with flowers,
 In days before there were these tears to shed :
 And with their dumb grief Nature's vast brow lowers
 As though the joy of all the world were dead,
 And even in me Life creeps with deadened powers.

VII.

MOONLIGHT.

I PASSED along the garden path last night,
Under the row of lindens by your door.
The moon was up, the same large moon of yore,
And on the rose trees shed a wasted white :
The windows flickered ghostly in its light
And phantom voices stirred the sycamore.
I watched until my heart was faint and sore,
Then made without :— I could not bear the sight

Yet, at the gate I turned, with hand on latch,
—A soft sound like your voice was in the breeze,
It almost seemed my eager eye could catch
A white gown's glimmer underneath the trees.
And so I hung, till moonlight overflowed
And emptiness behind the shadows showed.

VIII.

IN MEMORIAM W. C. F.

(Dead at school, aged 8.)

I *t fell as softly as the winter's snow :*
There was no sound of storm nor any stress,
No fevered daring of Death's mightiness,
No struggle for a strong man's overbrow :
—Just some few hours of moaning, soft and low,
Some hard-drawn breathing, quickly busbed, ah yes !
And then,—and then,—small white limbs motionless,
While we who wait must whisper as we go.

A face and voice we looked for lovingly
Lost from the fellowship of our small band :
One little ripple of Life's restless sea
Soothed into stillness by the Master's hand,
And missing here ;—but a white soul to stand
In the vast Temple of Eternity.

IX.

ANOTHER AUTUMN.

*'T*IS not that yellow hangs where now was green ;
That every breath blows bareness to the trees,
Nor that the fogs climb to the mountains' knees,
And smoky sunsets smoulder out unseen :
Nor yet that once again I stand between
The long slow wash of oily sullen seas.—
It is not this nor any one of these
That brings to life the dead things that have been.

*Alas! just now I found upon the shore
This little golden bloom which shines like flame
Here in my hand—. I do not know its name :
I only know that such a flower she wore
The day we parted, with life's sweetness o'er.
—I did not think Earth's flowers still bloomed the same!*

ROMANCE.

THERE must be somewhere such a golden world
 As we have looked on with Youth's dreamy eyes :
 —A world where all men growing old grow wise,
 And where all mystery is but wisdom furled.

Where every bud is fairer when uncurled
 In the full blossom; where, in varied guise,
 A present God walks through and sanctifies,
 Till Evil, spurned, in the Abyss is hurled.

Where too, for love, amid rose-broidered bowers,
 Forever maiden, linger women fair,
 With eyes like stars and soft dark wind-stirred hair,
 And slim white hands clasped full of lily-flowers ;
 While near, a faint sun floats in crystal air,
 And half-heard music drifts across the hours.

XI.

"TAM CARI CAPITIS."

*MY eyes henceforth shall shed no dew of tears ;
All need of weeping is for ever done.
There is not now, to see the pallid sun,
One thing whose loss my spirit hopes or fears.*

*No longer now between the tuneless spheres
Their thunder weaves a rhythmic benison,
Nor of Life's myriad voices is there one
That sings with any meaning in the years.*

*Nay, now, whatever passes, I can smile
With such a brow as smile the newly dead :
—The smile of patience with this dull exile
Of heights and deeps so paltry, fathomèd—
For dust is mingled with so dear a head
That earth is void which was so rich erewhile.*

XII.

DESTINY.

I

THE stream of life roars round me, and therein
I hold me strongly, head above the wave:
All past things dead, forgotten in their grave,
The present claims me with its ceaseless din.

Love too enfolds,—the love of kind and kin,
And new dear love, to help me and to save—;
Cheered with heart-fellowship, I am made brave
Some measure of more worthiness to win.

'But deep I know that at the very last,
When Life's loud tide beats no more in my brain,
When body and its busy deeds are cast
And happy soul its freedom may attain,
That I shall find you, as in days long past,
Waiting,—and then—we shall not part again!

XIII.

DESTINY.

II

YOU will stand starry on the silver stair
That hangs bridgewise between that life and this :
—This small round day, which is not all amiss,
But that it holds me—. Yes, you will be there,
With such sweet welcome as will straight repair
What we have suffered : one soft, clinging kiss
To heal the heart's earth-given cicatrice,
And hand in hand the new light we shall dare.

As once, with sunset for your throne and crown,
From far, upon the bridge I watched you stand,
Between the bustling darkness of the town
And the wide mystic light of meadowland.
Soul's bridge, and foot-bridge shining in the sun,
And some strange wisdom tells me they are one !

. And here the . .
Book of "Margaret an Idyll"
ends Written by George
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Maine, in the year one thous
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