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GUENDOLEN.

I.—SPELLBOUND.

This river in the gray marsh land,
Sluggish and dull goes slinking by,
As if the vanguard of the year
Had passed in silent mockery.

Spring makes no revel here to-day;
Only the halcyon sets his wing
Athwart the gloom, and utters now
That cunning laugh—a haunted thing.

II.—REVERIE.

Yet here is more than Rhine or Thames
Or lotused Nile or Assabet,
For here remembrance is come home
A little while to cheer regret.

It is not dream I love,—for dreams
But come when time is sinking low,
Pilgrims across the sunset hills
From vales of sleep whereto they go.

It is not rhyme I love,—for art
May falter on the brink of day,
And trade with grief, and barter tears
For bitter bread, and die with May.

It is—The goldenwings have sent
A far recall to hither bring
The idle days and leisurely,
Those truant vagabonds of Spring.

Their surging call is swift and far,
And after it I toil to come
Where all paths end in shining mist,
And forest-farers have their home.

III.—AN IDYLL.

Once more to yonder platform gray,
Deserted in the summer noon,
Thunders the inward-bound from Rye,
And you are here and it is June.

Down to the little wooden bridge
The river path (remember) leads,
Then through the meadow of coarse brakes
And tangle of wild vine and weeds.

A fence; and then a waist-deep field
To wade, where someone, as we pass,
Laughs at your girlish tiny fears
Threading that jungle of long grass.

The shore at last; and there our birch
Cools her slim bow within the shade.
Step so; your hand; now we're afloat;
Who does not know why June was made!

So we let slip the world for once,—

Ah, the long winds,—how they o'erbrim
The lonesome coigns of afternoon!
Before them old desires unweave,
And the green orchard floors are strewn.

Behind them lulls of nameless void
Fall on the eddying fields of grain,
Ruddy to harvest with still frost,
Old dawns, and sleep, and sunny rain.

Only athwart their drift bear down,
From undiscovered harbor dells,
The freighted royal bodes of rest
Beyond where spring the morning wells.

VI.—SEA JOURNEY.

Now, where unwinds that stream of sun,—
The island-moted summer-tide,—
Forth we, a-homing with the wind
For shelter twilights undescried!

Half close your eyelids: Fleet and far,
One crocus sail upon the blue,
We brush the skyline, homeward bound
For haunts of dream and dusk and dew.

Like molten sand of the sun's core,
Outwinds an ocean path for us,
Whose goal... Look there, the caverned fogs—
What dream pavilions ruinous!

Brave heart, my spirit of the sun,
A little while! and we shall come
Through the rock-barriered Fundy port
Into the Summer's Norland home.

The bank of mist rolls up and clouds
The twin cliff bastions; the surge
Goes daily through them searching far
Inland with immemorial dirge.

And there with music, to the shout
Of foam-devouring winds that ride,
With all the slumber in his heart,
Welaastook gets him to the tide.

VII.—VINLAND.

Steer in. There lies in open shine
A vinland bordered from the sea
With Autumn hills, where love no more
Shall beggar immortality;

So fair, the bargain-driving years
Loiter and gaze and half forget
To traffic there with lust and death
For the sad children of regret.

We take the inland trail with June,
Where go, on secret high behest,
The wan cloud-shadow-bearing winds,
Those weary gospellers of rest.

MARJORIE.

I.

*The lover of child Marjorie
Hath one white hour of life brim full;
Now the old nurse, the rocking sea,
Hath him to lull.*

Across the dark unlifting noon
I wandered lonely, having heed
Of nothing save the haunting rune
I could not read.

The world that day was bleak with grime;
The void of heaven, unenvied, dim
Beyond the narrow marge of time
Lay sheer and grim.

Above the vague unknown profound;
That universe of sunless North,
There seemed a boding; yet no sound,
No gleam, went forth.

So day wore down to darker day.
Thou canst not read, O my fond soul!
Thou art a dupe to scribes who play;
Put by the scroll!

Then strangely through the wards of gloom
There came that stir the sparrows know,
When April dawns put forth their bloom
Of gold and snow.

Across the cheerless afternoon
A belt of sun flamed forth and glowed,—
Made the spring weather one wind-strewn
Bright orchard road.

Through the glad fields I wandered then,
And caught an echoed cadence wild
Of that old rune which haunteth men,—
The sleep-beguiled,

The unfulfilled, the dream-distraught
And unabiding ghost of joy,—
That song the saints through ages wrought,
Nor storms destroy.

Before all life, beyond all death,
More keen than dawn, more still than dew,
There came a sound of woven breath
Where the wind blew.

Deep as the wells of night, yet bland
As the pale Northern plane whereon
The eerie dancers, hand in hand,
Shift and are gone,

Was the long reach of day wherein
I loitering betook me now,
While many a call flew clear and thin
From bough to bough.

She learned I know not where to sing,
My fair girl mother, (glad the while
Of the blue martins chattering,
Would croon, and smile.

I have forgotten rhyme and tune,
But not the dear untroubled way
Her face would lighten to the rune
At fall of day.

Once in her teens, I sometimes think,
She loved too well and lost too far
Some shy dark poet o'er the brink
Of night and war.

A child of Norland forestry,
Where snows and June lie verge to verge,
He tracked and knew the thrush's cry
By the sea surge;

From sunned forelands where roses bloom
He watched the storm-gulls wheel, and guessed
The immemorial foredoom
Of calm and quest.

Belike within his heart she lay
With frost and sun, as Mayflowers lie
In hollow banks of pine and May,
Nestled and shy,—

Or stirred, as a red leaf might brush
Through silence, frore and blue and deep,
Some morning when the year's long hush
Is fallen asleep.

Or it was noon beside the stream,
With ox-bells on the road far off,
Where the delaying dusty team
Drank at the trough.

And there he sang that old Norse croon
Of love to her, who reckoned not
Till the long days of many a June
That June forgot.

Or twilight heard the tasselled corn
Whispering idly husk to husk;
Then whippoorwills began to mourn
Across the dusk;

Earth eased her burden of old pain,
And every sound was far to them;—
Earth, with her one brown bird's refrain
For requiem.

And there he knew how bale and bliss
Divide the summer as twin shears,
When Marjorie with one long kiss
Unpent the tears!

The rune he sang, the rune she heard,
Died on the air in little space,
The hills of echo keep no word,
The wells no trace.

The shore at last ; and there our birch
Cools her slim bow within the shade.
Step so ; your hand ; now we 're afloat ;
Who does not know why June was made !

So we let slip the world for once,—
Fade with the whistle's fading scream !
And the delaying afternoon
Folded the reaches of the stream.

Her reeds to sleep the river sang ;
In clouds of sable tipped with flame
The starlings roe ; their stir of wings
Over the dusky marshes came.

IV.—HELEN IN SPARTA.

Then June took on the look she wore
When centuries ago the Isles
Were glad of Helen, and the sea
Moved as a dreamer wrapped in smiles.

What drew her from the olive shade
Of that high-reared new Spartan home,
Under the azure bay's white noon
Slowly along the beach to roam ?

What secret of the ageless wind
Aroused that immemorial strange
Desire above the surge, and stole
Through her dim pulse with subtle change ?

Was it that even then, ah, me !
Her whole heart's being had put forth
For that blue overworld, as one
Might journey to the dreamland North

Unknown, and sighting that far bourne,
The anchored isles whereto she pressed,
Baffled came back, a laden thing
With over-burden of unrest ?

As there, far gazing from the shore,
Straight-armed she clasped her bended knee,
Her queenliness was clothed upon
With Tyrian colours of the sea.

The old impassioned scorn of time
Thrilled in the corners of her mouth,
Her wide uncumbered brow was clear
And white like summer in the South.

Her tawny hair was knotted low,
Held by a shining arrow-bar,
As if already Troy had marked
Her beauty for a prize of war.

Of that fair land took no regard
Those wandering sea-gray eyes and wan,
But dreamed and dreamed far out the West,
As the gold afterlight drew on.

No whit they ken beyond the verge,
Yet shall their storied sea-glooms pale
A thousand summer-hearted years
Whose long desires fade by and fail.

She mused until her yesternight
Slept with Egyptian kings at ease,
And the far morrow lay becalmed
Among the boon Hesperides.

A wanderer's tale of some lone bird
Haunting its echo, scared and fleet
Through shadow-land, her life did seem,
Hot on the trail of Spring's retreat.

V.—WIND FLIGHT.

But lo, I dream ! And dreams are nought,—
Yet why did June remember her,
When here we drifted and you heard
The long winds of the marshes stir ?

For the sad children of regret.

We take the inland trail with June,
Where go, on secret high behest,
The wan cloud-shadow-bearing winds,
Those weary gospellers of rest.

Slow-footed by the river reeds,
They bend their aged journeyings ;
Their coming urges into flight
My long brown birch with swallow wings.

Until, where those white spirits lead,
As if from their own Eld outblown,
Into the younger season, far
On the still weather's basking zone,

We voyage through mild September noons,—
God's leisure, where the great ripe sun
Burns in the crickets' heart for joy
Of their long idleness begun.

Until, as when there climbs and breaks
And throbs across the lyric year
One scarlet rapture on the hills,—
I touch your hand on the gunwale here !

VIII.—RHYME BUILDER.

Ah, dreams are nought ! And yet were I
A builder of great words in rhyme,
Another vision should go forth
To haunt the secret ways of time.

Where all the children of desire
Who questing roam the aisles of Spring,
With all the followers of dream
Who walk therein at dusk and sing,

Should hear a moving as of leaves
The air's caught breath, a-tremble, thrills,
When the first oriole has brushed
Their tiny sleep amid the hills,—

And know the rapture of her form,
Elusive in the undergold
Of that new twilight overstrewn
With songs and bloom and May grown old.

They should remember all the words
Of life but as a woven breath,—
Not years nor pain nor afterglow
But only love whose age is death.

They should take heed of no delight
In all the borders of desire,
Nor feel the cry of wild Spring birds
Flood the cool glades untamed as fire,—

Peering to trace her shadowy path
Through many a gloaming,—and forget
Her beauty was a tale in June,
In after ages of regret.

And all the lovers of old song,
Knowing a little respite then,
Should dream an unregardful dream
Of Helen or of Guendolen !

IX.—RETURN.

But now while lingers that one day
Beyond the goldenwing's recall,
I tarry and you do not come—
Down where the river brakes are tall.

BLISS CARMAN.

The eerie dancers, hand in hand,
Shift and are gone,

Was the long reach of day wherein
I loitering betook me now,
While many a call flew clear and thin
From bough to bough.

No word, no word of that wild croon
Came down the wind revealed and free,
Yet evermore the old dark rune
Kept haunting me.

Only 'twas changed to mild from sad,
Full of low calm and no more pain ;
Sweet-hearted rapture filled the glad
Unknown refrain.

It was as if, while June were young
And dream-desires forgot their doom,
One gathered apples in among
The drifts of bloom.

There by the woodside, blown and shy,
The windflowers and violets
Brake as the drenching evening sky
When one star sets.

Smiling within that elfin vale,
A child stood there, serene, alone ;
Her slim brown ankles in the frail
White windflowers shone.

I was so glad of her dear face,
I stooped and filled my arms with her ;
While the sun touched our forest place
Fir by dark fir.

Her grave entrancing eyes laughed up
Under my half bewildered rune :
Fill brim to brim a shallow cup
With the sea's croon ;

Harvest the wide midwinter plane
Of snowdust, moonlight, and wind-sighs ;
Bar up the portals of the rain
With low bird cries ;

Make the red wheeling sun to veer
A handbreadth on the woodland rim :
Then fail those gray sea-wells and clear
To fathom or brim.

The rune I sought and could not find
She read with that far look of hers,
Scrawled by the wind on leaves in blind
Dim characters.

How comes it, think you, the blurred scrip
Of April ever can uncurl
Its tiny tracery, and slip,
Furl after furl,

Into this bright October scroll
Margined with infinite desire,
Lettered in scarlet, where the soul
Of the text takes fire ?

II.

*The daughter of child Marjorie
Hath in her veins, to beat and run,
The glad indomitable sea,
The strong white sun.*

Yet, I remember all these years
(I was a little tiny girl)
How she would let me watch the spears
Of grass uncurl,

There in my hammock far from now,
With stars and buds a-swing through June,
Bending above me that pure brow,
An olden rune.

Divide the summer as twin shears,
When Marjorie with one long kiss
Unpent the tears !

The rune he sang, the rune she heard,
Died on the air in little space,
The hills of echo keep no word,
The wells no trace.

Singer and song, as driven leaves
Athwart the blue Autumnal morn,
Where the wan iron ocean heaves,
Are blown and borne.

Yet ever I shall go my ways,
Forgetting to what beat and surge
We are as gathered waifs and strays
On the wind's verge.

I shall be glad with frost and sun,—
The wind's strong valour and the sea's,
Thinking desire and doom are one
As God decrees.

BLISS CARMAN.

As these verses are printed exclusively for private circulation, it is particularly requested that you will guard against the appearance of any part of them in the public press. B. C.

Frederickton, N. B., Canada, October, 1889.