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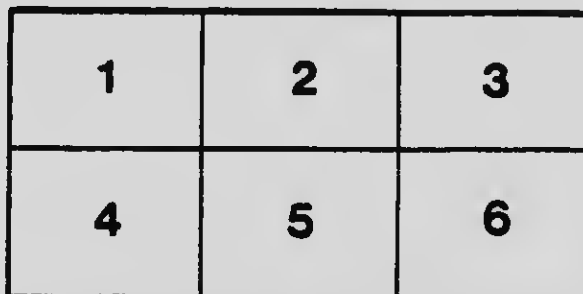
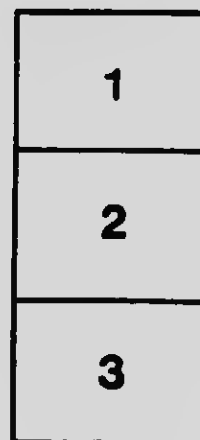
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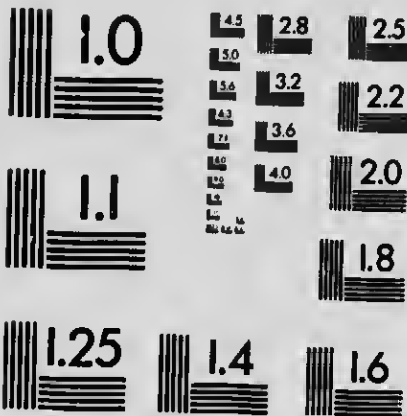
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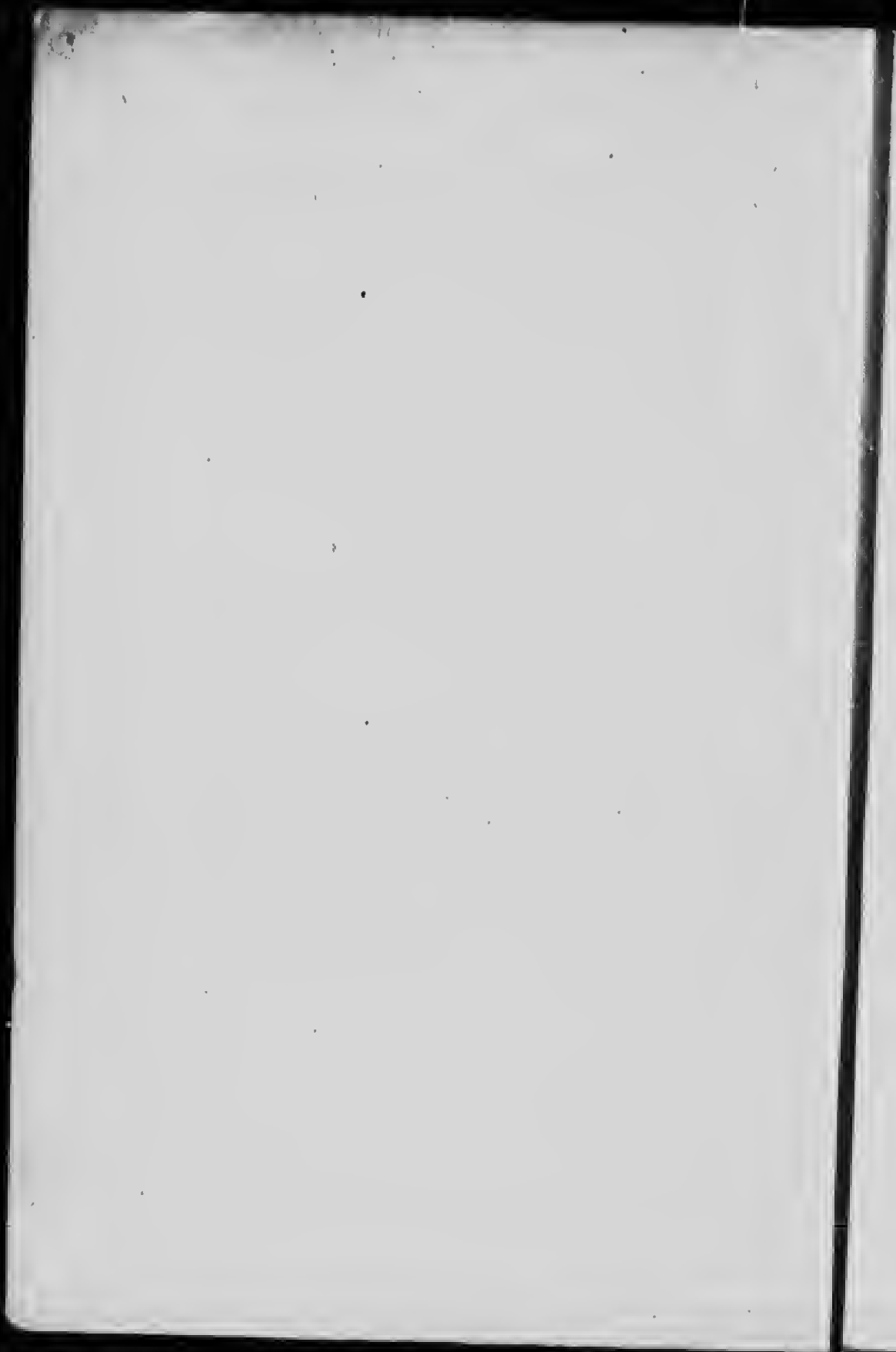
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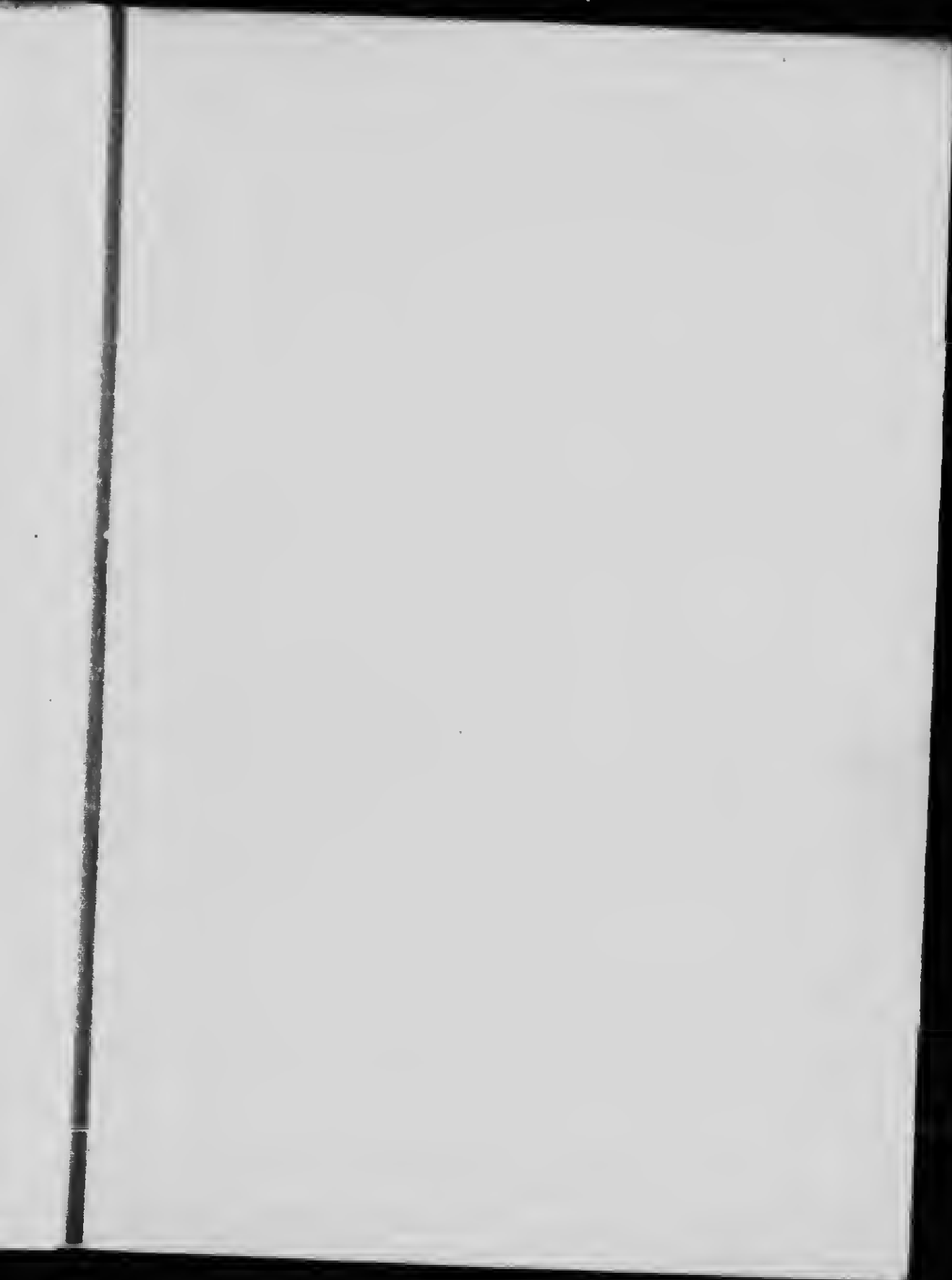
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THE PIPER AND THE REED

*Know you a garden near the road?
Its walls are very high;
A gift of dream on me bestowed,
And covered with the sky:
There one may walk and talk and talk,
Forgetful of aught else but friends,
When twilight into evening blends.*







Succisa gvar.

Robert Newman.

THE PIPER AND THE REED

BY

ROBERT NORWOOD

AUTHOR OF "THE WITCH OF ENDOR," "HIS LADY
OF THE SONNETS," ETC.

McCLELLAND, GOODCHILD & STEWART
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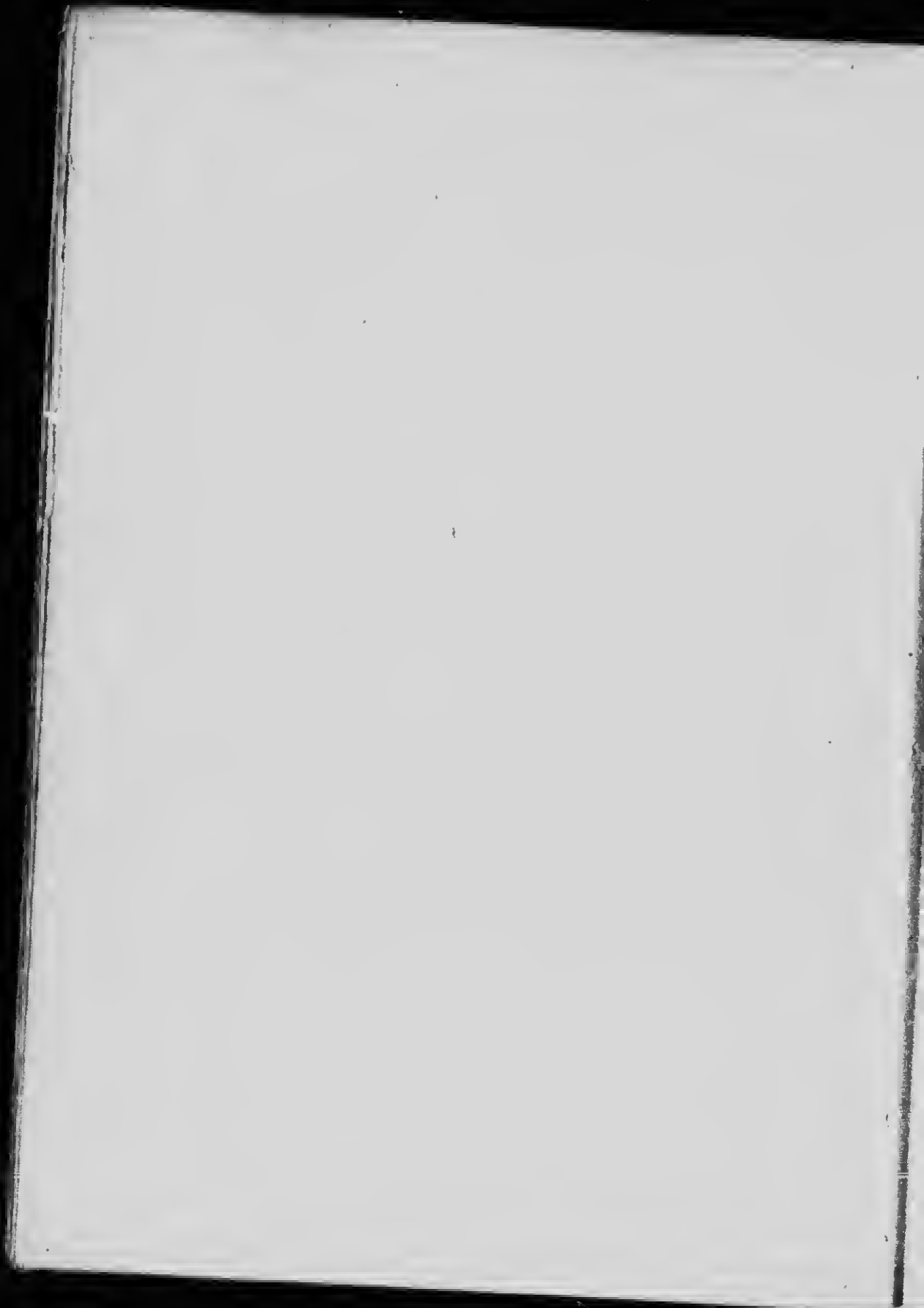
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L. L. H.



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THE PIPER AND THE REED



THE PIPER AND THE REED

I AM a reed—a little reed
Down by the river,
A whim of God whose moment's need
Was that the Giver
Might blow melodious and long
One cadence of eternal song.

Through me are blown
Wild whisperings of win'! from hills
No sun hath known.
The splendour that Orion spills
On purple space;
The golden loom of Leo's mane;
The scintillance of Vega's face;
Dim unto dark:
And great Arcturus' far refrain
Fades to a silence that is pain,
When, like a lark,
Riseth melodious and strong
That cadence of eternal song.
God is the Piper—I, the reed
Down by the river for His need.
One note in those vast melodies
Waited on me,
Or else the choral companies
Went silently
Complaining to the muted stars:
"What lack we yet that Discord bars
That infinite Processional?"

Or else the seraphim would call:
"Minstrels, your dulcimers let fall
And break the silvern psalteries!"

A little reed—a little reed!
And yet were silence of that song,
Failed I the river's pebbled brim,
Nor trembled never unto him—
The Piper! passing where we throng
Vibrant and ready for His need.

O Miracle!
He who in beauty goeth by
The marches of the meadowy sky,
A-piping on the many reeds
His canticle,
Paused in His playing;
For He found
An under-sound
Failed of the music that He made.
Wild winds went straying,
Like sheep lost on the daisied meads—
Scattered by Discord and afraid,
Lost from the fold
They knew of old.
My God had need
Of one more reed—
Had need of me
To make the perfect harmony.
I am that under-sound,

That needed note.
Eternally the Piper tried
Reed after reed until He found
Me growing by the river-side,
And laughing at the leaves that float
Forever down its burnished tide.

How frail my body is—how frail
And common of its kind;
A reed among a field of reeds
A-tremble to the wind—
The wind that threshes like a flail
Until my body bleeds!
Yet through me such wild music blows
The Piper laughs among the stars.
Know you the Piper? Little scars
Burn on His brow, each shoulder shows
Wounds of a knotted scourge that fell
To hurt Him from the hands of Hell!
Welcome, O Wind!
All hail, O Pain!
One little reed—one little reed,
To fill the Piper's far refrain,
Is broken till its body bleed;
Glad that the Minstrel Lord doth find
A tone of His eternal need.

ALDEBARAN

The minstrel tuned the triple strings—
His harp of many murmurings—
Then on a mighty chord began
A song of bright Aldebaran:

I

Aldebaran, Aldebaran,
One night I saw thee rise
Above the peaks of Ispahan,
Red on those purple skies.

Thou wast a royal ruby stone
Set in a diadem
Of some great god upon his throne,
Whose garment's ample hem
Was margined with the clustered spheres
Beyond a myriad of years.

Above thee soared the Pleiades,
Beneath, Auriga flared;
His vast melodic harmonies
Rigel with Algol shared:
Space trembled to the minstrelsy
Of Deneb and Alcyone.

II

Aldebaran, Aldebaran,
Betelguese sheathed his sword,
And in that cosmic cry began
The music of his word;
He spoke in syllables so strong,
Each sentence was an æon long:

"Thou art"—he thundered, "the first star
To lead earth out of mist,
When man looked up and felt afar
Urge of an ancient tryst
Made ere God lit the morning sun
To mark the length of day begun.

"Thou threshold of the Zodiac;
Thou portal of the Rooms;
Thou first step of the starry Track:
Thou shuttle of the Looms
Where Fate weaves threads of purest gold
To fashion God's wide garment-fold—

"Hail!"—and: "All hail!" from every sphere
That rolled across the void,
I heard, Aldebaran, with fear:
Each clustered asteroid
Flung back the tumult of that cry,
Like trumpet-voices through the sky.

III

Then Vega rose and on her lyre
Played tremulous vast chords,
Singing the infinite desire
Of those celestial lords
Who shouted when earth's loom was laid,
And through the warp God's shuttle played;

When through the loom of misted flame
The threads of God began
To weave a world; before there came
Adventuring of man
Upon the Path of life to find
Motions of eternal Mind.

She sang of forest and of fell,
Of mountain and of moor;
Caves and the caveman's battle-yell;
The song beside the door
Where women ground the meal and sung
Rhymes in their rude primeval tongue.

I saw the mammoth and the bear,
Like moving mountains, run
In terror from the flint-head spear,
Proving that man had won
Lordship of earth; and I made prayer,
Aldebaran, before thee there!

IV

Arcturus lifted high his horn
And blew a mighty blast.
The curtain of t'ie night was torn
To show the protoplast
Transfigured on the finer face
Of that far prehistoric race—

We, clumsy, call Lemurian!
A city lifted high
Its towered domes of daring man
Beneath a tropic sky,
With gates of gold that gleamed and shone
Brighter than portaled Babylon.

Men were as gods upon the earth,
The women were most fair;
Music was speech; a holy birth
Of art was cradled there—
For dreams took shape in pure jacinth,
Seraphic brows upon the plinth.

Reed instruments for dance and song;
Brave horns beneath the blue;
The sistrum and the thunder-gong;
The pipe and tabour, too;
And all the craft of minstrelsy:
Harp, sackbut, cymbal, psaltery,

Were fashioned. Then was genius stirred
To pre-Homeric lines,
And drama grew. On earth was heard
Praise of the fruitful vines,
Oil of the olive, barley-gold,
Leaping of lambs within the fold.

Told was the story of the stars,
And thine, Aldebaran,
When Jupiter was not, nor Mars;
When every shepherd-clan
Pointed and named the olden spheres
While Rome was in the womb of years.

V

Altair in Aquila stood forth
With flaming evil brow,
Looked from his tower to the north
And made an awful vow:
"I will destroy yon golden gates—
Hither to me, O shrouded Fates!

Hither to me and hide the sun,
Darken the noisy noon,
Snuff out the planets one by one,
Unleash the hot simoon;
Destroy the race Lemurian!"
And they obeyed. Aldebaran.

Thunder!

A woman by the well
Looked up wide-eyed and fell;
A shepherd leading forth his sheep,
Gasped, clutched his throat and found eternal sleep;
Ceased in the temple, horn and holy drum,
And all the vested choristers were dumb!

Rain as of fire!

The shivering of earth;
Dead is the baby at its birth—
With horror in her great dark eyes,
The new-made mother lifeless lies;
Two lovers in the spell of their first kiss
And whispered word, the dark abyss
Engulfs forever!

Night! Endless night!

There are no towers, temples, domes—
No palaces, no pillared homes;
And all that stately company
Are buried in a boiling sea!

Alas, for these, Aldebaran!
And woe to Altair and his hate!
Gone is the race Lemurian;
I weep, O Star, to sing their fate!

VI

And for a while the court was still,
Tense, waiting on the harpist's will,
From lord and lady to the King.
One spoke: "It was an evil thing!"
One: "Hush! He is about to sing."

The jester shook his golden bells,
And laughed: "A pretty tale he tells
Of Altair and Aldebaran;
Faith! Never since court-fools began
Was heard the like.—Lemurian!"

A bishop raised his mitred head:
"It was the Flood, I think"—he said.
"Aye, even so"—replied a priest:
"Was not that city in the east?
Altair?—Apocalyptic Beast!"

Then spake the King upon his throne:
"Never such harping have I known;
It is a right majestic tale—
How poetry and song prevail
On sword and shield and burnished mail!"

Again the minstrel tuned the strings—
His harp of many murmurings—
Again on softer chord began
The song of bright Aldebaran:

VII

Aldebaran, Aldebaran,
Last night I saw thee glow
In Taurus—open like a fan—
Above a world of snow.

The joyous bells were ringing wide
Their plangent silver chime,
Proclaiming: "It is Christmastide!
Now is the time, the time,
The Holy Babe was brought to birth,
And Lord Messiah came to earth!"

Wast thou not then that eastern Star
The Magi did behold,
Who journeyed from a city far
To offer gifts of gold—
The Star of Jesu, leading them
To little white-walled Bethlehem?

Aldebaran, Aldebaran,
Across the crystal sky
A shout of angel-song began:
"Glory to God on High,
On earth be peace! Now is the morn
In which Emmanuel is born!"

They sang the end of every woe,
The tale of every tear.
I saw a host of singers go
Bravely against the fear
That held men in the thongs of Fate
Through æons of the hell of Hate.

Before thy lance Altair went down,
Lemuria arose
Restored to temple, palace, crown;
With gates that never close;
And all her shining company
Renewed their art and minstrelsy.

The babe was in his mother's arms,
His face was like the Christ;
And that lost lover knew the charms
Of her who kept the tryst;
The woman filled her water jar,
The shepherd led his sheep afar.

And then I knew, Aldebaran,
Lemuria is one
With all the domes of daring man
That glitter to the sun;
That age by age one broad highway
Leads up the host to fuller day.

**There shall no lost tall towers be,
No idle aim of art;
No useless joy of minstrelsy,
No ever-empty heart;
No utter silencing of song,
No comrade absent from the throng.**

**Through pain and trial of the tears,
Lead up the host, O Star!
Lead up, lead up, until the years
Have glorified the scar
That burns upon the brow of man,
Aldebaran, Aldebaran!**

COMRADES

COME dear Comrade, let us sing—
Not to any tightened string
Struck by harpers when they play—
Let us, like the morning wind,
Shout with an unfettered mind
Anthems of the common day.

Challenge, as the waves the shore,
Whoso limits what we pour,
Protestant of any strain
Other than old minstrels know;
Follow where the spume flakes blow
Down the world and back again.

We will run the glad earth round,
Splinter with a lance of sound
Cliffs that front the swelling tide;
Till the mute soul is set free
Unto love and liberty,
Unafraid and satisfied.

We will let the fancy run,
Climb into the setting sun—
Leap from it upon the moon—
Laugh at all the broken bars
Down betwixt us and the stars,
Vainly builded by the noon.

Play, my Comrade, through the trees
Luting ancient litanies;
Laugh with every fronded fern;
Sit with daisies in the grass;
Let the river hold a glass
To your eyes, and look and learn.

Gaily go upon all roads,
Not like cattle pricked with goads;
For the towered town To-Morrow—
Walled with pearl and chrysolite—
Lies beyond the tarn of Night,
Past the broken bridge of Sorrow.

AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC

**I AM a priest upon whose head
God long ago poured holy oil;
He gave to me a Word and said:
"With this thou shalt mankind assoil!"**

**Since I went forth God to obey,
Life has revealed me many things—
I find it very hard to say
What is most dear: The task that brings**

**Bread to the eater, or the rest
That follows toil; the love of friends,
Of books, of song,—each is most blessed
And always with contentment blends.**

**A stone, a faggot or a flower;
A bird in rapture of its flight;
December-snow or April-shower;
The velvet vastness of the night,**

**When Mother Moon has left the stars
And with the winds gone gossiping—
Or leans upon the gate that bars
Dawn from untimely entering.**

These hold for me unending charm,
Fill me with wonderment and awe
That men should ever think of harm,
Fencing their lives about with law.

The world is such a lovely place—
A jewelled pendant on Love's chain!
I marvel that a human face
Should pale with anger or with pain.

I marvel at the cry for bread
That thunders round the waking world;
The tumult of the legion's tread
That shakes the earth, as souls are hurled

In battle to destroy the souls
God grew in His great garden, when
He won past all His other goals—
Triumphant at the birth of men!

Who can behold the dance of Dawn—
Juggling with stars like tinselled balls,
Vestured in mantle of a wan,
White glory whose dim splendour falls

Upon the mountains; and not feel
Himself transcendant? Who can hear
Clangour of wild birds and the peal
Of matin-bells across the clear,

Blue sky, commingling with the shout
Of children on their way to school,
And fail at once to be about
God's business?—As within a pool

You are reflected, Nature shows
The miracle of what you are—
The highest that Creation knows:
Lord of the earth and every star!

I am a priest upon whose head
God long ago poured holy oil;
He gave to me a Word and said:
"With this thou shalt mankind assoil!"

I come from out the Holy Place
With benediction for the earth,
To wipe the tears from every face
And tell the fallen one his worth.

My business is to be a priest
Whose holy task is to forgive,
To bid the beggar to the feast,
To touch the dead and make them live.

I know not any fear of thrones,
No claim of Scribe and Pharisee;
My word is set to many tones
Of lute and harp and psaltery.

I have no temple and no creed,
I celebrate no mystic rite;
The human heart is all I need
Wherein I worship day and night:

The human heart is all I need,
For I have found God ever there—
Love is the one sufficient creed,
And comradeship the purest prayer!

I bow not down to any book,
No written page holds me in awe;
For when on one friend's face I look
I read the Prophets and the Law!

I need no fountain filled with blood
To cleanse my soul from mortal sin;
For love is an unbounded flood—
Freely I go to wash therein.

Love laughs at boundaries of wrath
And is as infinite as God;
Breaks down each wall, finds out each path
Where wilful, straying feet have trod.

Love is the Word God gave and said:
"With it thou shalt mankind assoil!"
Then forthwith poured upon my head
Anointing of His holy oil!

O LITTLE PALE PILGRIM OF DREAMS

O LITTLE pale pilgrim of dreams!
Do you know the names of the flowers,
The ferns by the pools and the streams,
The kisses of God in the showers;
Do you hear His "Hello" on the hills
Where a wind comes out of the cloud,
And fail of the magic that fills
Companions who meet in the crowd?

Thou slow of the heart to believe—
Thou blind of the eyes to behold!
Let go of the things that deceive,
Vain baubles of silver and gold;
Come out and be one with the throng—
Your brothers who wait by the way—
And sing the new Liberty Song
At the wide-flung doors of the day.

Companion of flower and fern,
A brother of Christ and the clod,
And one with all spirits that yearn
The realized image of God;
The centuries wait for thy wings,
And æons have followed thee far:
Lay hold of the sceptre of things,
Thou lord of the atom and star!

A SONG OF EVOLUTION

I WILL sing of Evolution:

A song of the atom—

A song of the star—

A song of the soul!

God is the name of two Lovers

Each other eternally wooing:

Love and Life!

Love is all light and is lonely

Until He finds Life;

Life too is lonely

Until in her seeking

Love has been found.

Over the peaks and the plains

Of an infinite universe

These Lovers are ever

Each other finding and losing:

Whenever they meet there is birth,

Whenever they part there is death!

Birth and Death!

What does it mean we are born?

What does it mean that we die?

I make answer:

That which of Love and of Life is begotten

Fails as to form of itself only—

Not Self but its eidolon fails—

So Love and Life part to prepare for Self new forms;

Birth is a form of the Self once more appearing—

Self who is child of these Lovers eternally wooing!

How many births, deaths have we known!
Eternally going out of the urge of Love for Life,
We are the Sons of the Highest!

Atom and star and flesh,
These are but forms of the Soul;
Amœba, mastodon, man,
But forms of the Soul forever ascending!

The Soul is more than the form,
Abides there merely a moment;
The Soul is a pilgrim
Housed for the night in a hostel:
New habitations meet for his needs are provided,
Yea, they are builded by Love and by Life—
Builded by them for their Only Begotten.

A SONG OF THE TRINITY

I BELIEVE in one God the Almighty:

Love is the Father Eternal:

Life is the Mother,

Infinite Spouse of the Father;

Soul is the Son forever ascending!

Love, Life and the Soul—

These Three forever existing—

Love, Life and the Soul!

A SONG OF THE FATHER

I AM Love!

None is before Me—

I am the All!

I am the Lover of Life

By whom my Son is begotten:

This is my Son—

The Soul in whom I am well pleased.

Or ever the stars were hung in their purple places;
Or ever the moon grew languid with love for the earth;
Or ever the day flamed forth on the hills
In eager pursuit of the reluctant arms of the night:
Life cradled our Son in the atom
We fashioned and floated on waves of ether—
Cradled our Son and waited till æons went by
Fulfilling the passive, soft years of his childhood—
Waited until he builded strange cities by rivers
That flowed from the gold of the sands of the desert—
Waited until his white body was nailed on a cross
In pledge that Love is the Lover of Life and Father of the
Soul!

A SONG OF THE MOTHER

I AM Life!

Love only precedes Me!

Long ere the pollen grew gold on the bee
Flitting from flower to flower,
Laden with honey;
Long ere the song of the bird
Chorused back to the choirs of winds
Coming down from earth's altars, the hills;
Long ere the lamb bleated back to the dam
Through the void and the waste
Of the upland pastures:
Love found Me and I found Love!

On my breast have I carried the Soul,
Have laid him to rest at the end of a day
With a dream and a song through the dream!
How oft he has risen—
Awaked at my word,
Reclothed by my hand!
How oft have I let him go free
To the toys and the tasks,
While he grew in stature and wisdom!
Dear is my Son in the strength of his great grow-
ing Godhood!

A SONG OF THE SON

My cradle was the atom,
On the breast of the sea I slumbered
Through a long æonian night
And wakened on the morning of the world!

The fern and the shrub and the tree
Were my playmates—
The wind was my nurse
Singing me wild songs.

I stretched out my hands to the rain.
And grew glad in the sun;
I dreamed of my sisters the stars
Of my brother the moon.

I was housed with the cattle;
For them I opened the doors of speech,
Turned their dull dreams
To the words of a song.

To him of the fang I was Terror!
In the light of my face he was furtive,
Shrank back to his den—
Ceasing to tear with his teeth.

I had learned to stand on my feet.
To smite with my hands,
To hurl a huge stone
At python and tiger.

I roared with wild laughter!
In the light of my brother the moon
I danced with my mate
To the dance of my sisters the stars.

At dawn I went forth
To hurl with the hammer
Or thrust with the spear,
And grew heavy from hunting.

I returned to the cave
And saw her white body
Naked against the sun
Red in the west on the mountains.

I drew near to my Love
Who saw me and sang
The song of the hunter
Home from the hunting.

The Babe at her breast she held up
And danced in her arms for his father—
Danced till he croodled and crowed,
Dimpled with joy of his father!

For them I builded a hut
Of saplings and wattles,
And she with her fingers
Fashioned bowls from the clay.

We dreamed as we toiled,
We sang as we dreamed;
And ever the task
Took the form of our song:

We dreamed that the wilderness
Blossomed; that the meadows
Thickened with ripening corn
Yellow and green in the noontide.

We sang of the millet and wheat,
Of the barley and rye
And the purple grape-clusters
Hanging down from the vine.

We sang of the flax
And the oil of the olive
After the time of the sound
Of the flails on the floor.

We dreamed that a city
Rose out of the jungle—
A city of towers and walls,
Of palaces, statues and pictures.

So great was our love
That, though we died,
By birth we came back
To keep tryst with each other!

She was proud Semiramis;
Helen of Troy was she;
Hers was the song of Miriam,
And the red-wet hands of Jael!

Once was her dear name Sappho,
Singing the song of the cave—
Of him who hurled with the stone,
The hunter home from the hunting!

Where the Nile is an amber bow
She dreamed and waited for me
Coming down in my trireme of war,
Enslaved at her smile!

So through the ages we met,
So through the ages we parted:
Each time that we met
After the silence that sundered,

Fairer and fairer was she;
And I grew more like a god,
Cleansed and made strong by the tears
Shed for the sorrow we suffered;

Till one day we stood in a garden—
A little green garden of lilies
Hard by a Tomb that was open
Wide to the joy of the morning;

There in the hush of the gayspring
Breathing of dew-sprinkled lilies
White as the snow upon Hermon,
We knew that our Love was immortal

Out of the wildness
We had grown us a rose—
Out of its thorns
We had fashioned a crown!

TE DEUM

PRAISE God for all things:
Praise Him for birth,
Praise Him for death,
Praise Him for health,
Praise Him for sickness;
For sorrow and sin,
For gladness and gain,
For failure and loss,
For friend and for foe—
Praise God for all things!

God is the All,
So all must be praised
And welcomed and trusted
As angels from Him:
Angels of light,
Angels of darkness
Angels of joy,
Angels of woe—
Each as a messenger
Swift from His throne.

“Nothing can hurt you!”
Sings little Brother;
For each in its place
Serves but one end,
Namely, to shape you—
Fit you—complete you:

Till from the terror
And from the thunder
Grow through the gloom
Gleams of your Godhood!

Laugh at the voices,
Wailing in valleys
Like to Gehinnom—
Lurid with fires
Fed by the bodies
Of dead men forgotten!

Rise up and claim
All things as yours,
You who are God—
God in Becoming!

O WILL YOU COME WITH ME

O WILL you come with me away,
Brother—my Brother!
The night is spent, and breaks the day,
Brother—my Brother!
Have done with the dream and the pillowing stone!
Awake! Over vast spaces the winds are blown
To buffet and bear you from shadowing sleep.
Up the high places
Seraphim faces
Brighten and burn as the disk of the sun
Stands on the brow of yon mountain, to keep
Guard of your path till the journey is done!

THE KING OF GLORY

GIVE us this day a man so strong
He will not falter in his song,
Muting his instrument to please
The backward-glancing Pharisees.

He must be one to whom a child
Comes with sweet laughter, reconciled
From tears because he passes by
Like a white cloud in yonder sky.

Women shall claim him for a friend,
Hail him as brother, gladly spend
The price of spikenard for his head,
Weep at his tomb when he is dead.

From seat of customs or the nets,
Workshop or plough or minarets,
Men will respond to his clear call
And in his battles proudly fall.

This Lord must be no shrouded form
Of God Incarnate, but the norm
Of manhood for an eager age—
Our prophet, poet, teacher, sage.

If sin be missing of the mark,
Sped was the arrow in the dark:
With light shed from that Brother's face,
Each well-aimed bolt shall find its place.

Not to dead yesterdays, but now
Belongs that wide and august brow
From whose vast mind a word shall be
Spoken to set thought-forces free—

Thought-forces fettered by the ban
Of some far-thundering Vatican,
Which from the age of stone to this
Cramped them by every artifice.

He will lift up a mighty hand
Against oppression; will demand
From kings and councils an account
Of stewardship—of the amount

Taken by them in turn for toil
That starves the tiller of the soil;
Will seek to know the reason why
The millions in their hunger cry.

His clear, calm eyes will pierce excuse
Of man defending his abuse
Of power; like a two-edge sword
Will be dividing of his word.

He will not quote some ancient saw—
A text of scripture from the Law,
Nor will he seek by miracle
To blind all reason; he will tell

The tyrant and the turbaned priest:
"Because ye did it to the least
Of these my brothers, made their world
Hell—to that hell be also hurled!

"Forth from your lands into the street;
Huckster and harlot, beggar meet;
Lift from each head its crown of thorn,
And kiss those feet the nails have torn!

"Into the hell of every hate,
Vice and foul lust insatiate,
Descend and learn what ye have done,
Who from earth's children stole the sun;

"Stole field and forest, mountain, river—
Pretending that some royal giver
Bestowed them on your sculptored sires
Sleeping beneath their ancient spires!

"Ye who have taught that God is wrath;
Ye who have driven down the path
Of fear the frightened souls of men;
Ye who have made His house a den

"For thieves to bargain gold for grace:
Ye hypocrites with pious faces
And downcast eyes, your litanies—
Your candle-lights and threnodies

**“Rise not to Him who clothes the grass
With glory and whose holy Mass
Is in the olive and the vine—
Not in your wafer and your wine!”**

**Send such a man again on earth,
As He whom Mary brought to birth,
And whom the people in their pride
Rejected and then crucified!**

**Only, O God of stone and star!
We will not hale him to the bar
Of Pilate and Caiaphas;
We will lift up the gates of brass**

**And open wide our golden doors,
Proclaiming while his splendour pours
Over the world he comes to win:
“The King of Glory shall come in!”**

MATINS

Good morning, friend! What of the night?
Through yonder cloud one shaft of light,
Shot from the bow of Hunter Day,
Strikes on the world; his hound-winds bay
Down valleys where the wheat and rye
Their gold with green of forest vie.

Lift up your head! Behold how fair
Creation is: The ocean-air
Beats billowing upon the strand
Of endless leagues of summer land,
And freighted ships of scented bales,
Wild blossoms, spread their tinctured sails.

See how God with an artist's grace
Gives soul to every flower-face!
Beneath His touch a leaf is green,
A berry, red! Mark how, between
The captive daisies, come and pass
Phalanxes of the guarding grass!

The night was dark, you say: wild fears
Took shape on torrent-flood of tears;
Dim phantoms of the host of hate
Pursued you down the gulfs of fate,
Smiting you with their harpy-wings
Up steeps of weird imaginings!

My friend! Each in his turn has known
Night and her shapes of fear; the stone
Of striving Sisyphus has torn
All who have dared the mount of Morn:
The tree where Buddha's vision fell
Was planted in a pit of hell!

No soul has seen its promised land,
Who felt not first some Pharaoh's hand—
Behind achievement, stir and stress
Of desert-days and wilderness;
Learn by the way that Jesu trod
How from the brute man grows a god!

Who stands against you in your path
May reap with you your aftermath;
And less of bitterness than bliss
Is stored within a traitor's kiss:
The demon who holds back your soul
Will crown you victor at the goal!

The bugles blow, the trumpets call,
And at their sound the towers fall;
Beleaguered bastions are down
Within yon ancient fortified town:
Go up and let each cobbled street
Clang back to your triumphant feet!

A CRADLE SONG OF LIFE

LULLABY baby,
Hushaby baby!
After the day
Comes night with a dream!
Dear little hands,
Dear little feet,
Quiet at last;
Closed are the eyes:
Lullaby, hushaby baby!

When you awake
Will you forget
All the old toys,
The lessons you learned,
The bruises that hurt
When you fell down?

Uncouthly you sprawled
And frequently fell,
Learning to walk:
Was falling a sin,
Were bruises a shame,
Baby, my brave little baby?

What dreams do you dream,
What sounds do you hear
Out of the splendour—

Out of the wonder—
Out of the peace
Of Rest-A-While Land?

How little they know
Who call this a grave—
'Tis but a cradle,
And death is a sleep
From which you will waken
To try it again!

How little they know
Who prattle of sin,
And tell on their beads
Misereres for grace:
Baby must fall
That baby may rise!

Renewed by the rest,
Made strong by the dream,
More firmly your feet
Shall find out a way
Past the old blunders
Into the dawn!

Lullaby baby,
Hushaby baby!
After the day
Comes night with a kiss

Soft on the brow,
Hands and the feet—
Folding them,
Holding them—
Feet that are tired from falling;
Hands that are weary from failing;
Brow that is furrowed from weeping:
Brow, hands, feet—resting for mastery!

A SONG OF THE ALL

BROTHER, my Brother! whoever you are,
Rocked in the atom and nursed in the star,
Swaddled in flesh by the great Elohim—
Lords of the Flame—and whose day is a dream
Known in the night: O my Brother, all hail!

Hither a prophet, a priest or a slave,
Came you, my Brother—a king or a knave,
Black man or red man or brown man or white,
Out of the land of an infinite light?
Here are my heart and my hand to you: hail!

Are you a liar, a sycophant's self
Sold for a shekel and pandering pelf?
Are you a snob or a murderer, thief,
Cringing to hell with the devil for chief?
Here are my robe and my crown to you: hail!

Greet you, my Brother! for I am all things—
Dust of the stars and the music of wings—
Eyes of the angels and Lucifer's mouth—
Wind of the North and a wind of the South—
Here are my sandals and staff to you: hail!

THE SLOW EMERGER

I AM the Slow Emerger:
Patience and wait for me,
Nor be afraid that I will fail you—
You holder of fair morning heights—
You dancing with the rosy dawn!

It has been long and hard for me,
This task of slow emergence from the clod.
Brute-shapes still prowl about me in the shadows,
Their fangs are sometimes fastened to my feet;
So that I cannot walk from pain of them,
So that I halt and cry out—lonely in the night!

Sometimes I see you, Woman—
You the watchful, waiting one of ages—
You with the dawn and godlike—
You past all torment that I know—
You the understanding.

Sometimes I see you in a shaft of light
Smiting the mists of valleys where I call,
Dividing them as with a two-edged sword
Swung by an angel! In that vision
Rage of tusk and tooth and fang
Falls like the waves in their wind-drifted foam
Upon the scarlet laughter of wild poppies!

I have deceived you;
You in turn have punished me—
Have punished me with a mere semblance of yourself:
A figure, rose-lipped, white fleshed,
With wild witcheries of ample breasts—
Limbs smooth and dimpled as for kisses—
A dear and tender fiction of yourself;
A fiction of yourself that did escape me,
Leaped up to claim those hills remote from me
Until I learned man must not chain a woman's soul!

O Woman, wait for me—
Be patient; for I strive
Out of the shadow
Where the brute
Still fastens with his fang
My bleeding feet—
My weary, stumbling feet:
Nor be afraid that I will fail you—
You holder of far morning heights—
You dancing with the dawn!

A SONG OF THE NEW GODS

THE gods of vast Valhalla
Are silent in their hall;
Zeus looks not from Olympus;
Jehovah's rod has fallen
And Buddha sleeps among his Poppies:
The old gods, the great gods,
Thunder and nod no more!

Yea, though we fiction them,
Pretending that their stone eyes stare—
That their ears of marble harken,
We know that all the gods of yesterday are dead!

Weep not for Apollo;
Sigh not for Cynthia;
Call not for Aphrodite
Coming from the foam;
Beat not the breast for Balder—
Balder the Beautiful,
Slain by dark Loki:
These were but dreams in the night
Of the day that is ours.

Sing for the day that is ours—
For the gods who are here,
Titans whose strength is greater
Than snake-strangling Hercules!

Sing for the gods of the oppressed,
The cleansers of slums,
The Christs of great Golgothas
Mounded of old wrongs
Hurting the people!

Sing for the smiters of tenements—
Lairs of disease, of the white death!

Sing for the slayers of sweat-shop owners—
The taskmasters of children!

Sing for the guardians of girls,
The saviours of modern Madonnas—
Custodians of wells unpolluted
For the renewal of men!

Sing for the wielders of axe and the hammer;
The gods of the crowbar and shovel;
For those who go down to the sea in ships,
Having their business in the great waters;

For those who find out a path
Which no fowl knoweth,
Which the lion's whelps tread not—
The veins of the silver and gold,
Of the carbonized sunlight and laughter!

Sing for the prophets of labour,
Rebukers of Ahab greedy of gardens
Delved and possessed by another!

Sing for the women who claim the lost title:
"Comrade and equal of Man,"
Women who strike from their sisters
Æonian fetters of custom,
Bidding them stand and be free from their masters!

Sing for the priests of the Lord's House,
Who lift up the vessels thereof with clean hands,
Knowing great Christ when He cometh,
Truthful interpreters of signs and of omens!

Sing for the harpers on highways
Who make the world dance to their song,
Turning the laughter of leaves into words!

Brother, this the world wonderful
Transcends Valhalla.
Everywhere falls the ambrosial
Smell of the garlands immortal;
Everywhere tones of an infinite
Iris-bow, bent for achievement,
Pass the promise of Noah—
Ours not promise, ours fulfilment!

This is the day of the ages,
Heaven is here for the claiming—
Now! Now! Rise up and take it.
"I said ye are gods"—?
I say you are gods—
Yea, you are more than God's Image,
You are God's Self! worship none other.

Have done with your idols,
The old gods, the dead gods!
Blow up the trumpets—
Beat on the cymbals—
Strike on the harpstrings—
Let sound the psalteries—
Thunder the tabour!

Shout with the Levites,
White-robed and ready,
Round the old world-walls!

Shatter with sound
Jericho! Jericho!
Topple its bastions,
Bloodstained and brutal,
Down to the dust
Drifting to deserts
Remote and forgotten!

Bring in the New Year,
Brothers, my brothers—
Proclaim this the Sabbath!

THE OPTIMIST

"THERE is no evil anywhere"—
Said I unto the priest
Who answered: "Life is cursed with care,
Sin makes of man a beast!"

"Care is not any curse"—I cried,
"To fail is not to sin."
"Wherefore upon the rood Christ died,
If not our souls to win?"

"Because a hero must face death,
If death be in the way."
And as I paused to take my breath,
The priest began to say:

"Son, you forget how Adam fell,
Losing his high estate;
And so God doomed him unto hell,
Save for the Master's fate."

"Yes, I forget—and gladly too—
That ancient Hebrew tale:
How God began a thing to do—
Can the Eternal fail?"

"Can He who rides upon the storm,
Who breathes and, lo, the stars!
Whose thought begets a flower-form,
With leaves for avatars;

"Can He who crowns the grass with dew,
And gems the wood with rain;
Fail of His purpose?"—My priest drew
His breath and spoke again:

"Alas, my son! Your words are wild
And far from holy faith;
Your reason is of one beguiled
By some infernal wraith—

"Do you not know the written Word
Tells of our father's fall?
Have you not seen, have you not heard
How death rules over all?"

"There is no death"—I quickly said;
And he: "But all must die!"
"Now is Christ risen from the dead!"
Forthwith I made reply.

"Now is Christ risen and become
Firstfruits of them that slept!"
And lo, the fluent priest was dumb—
He was like one who wept!

"Ah, you have suffered, you have sinned,
Have known the dark abyss,
Have felt upon the roaring wind
The phantom of a kiss;

"You have looked in a woman's eyes
Lit with her love of you,
And such a moment made you wise!"
He murmured: "It is true."

"Tell me, O priest, was it not worth
Eternity of hell,
When in your heart dear love had birth?"—
Tears from his closed eyes fell.

"Then your great moment gives the point
To what I said before—
There is no evil. You anoint
The spirit's open door—

"A dying body—set the seal
Of some old covenant,
As though the spirit did not feel
The Comrade-Visitant;

"As though the soul were not God's son
Knowing as he is known,
Who hath by cross and passion won
His place beside the throne!

"If all my life were in the dark
And dread of endless doom,
Think you that I should fail the spark
That gleamed athwart the gloom—

“My moment when I soared to bliss
Upon a woman’s lips
And that revealing word—her kiss—
Thrilled to my finger tips?

“Nay; by that instant I should know
Evil—so called—worth while,
Accept the challenge, forward go
Bravely against the mile;

“Till by degrees the lengthened space
Should give me stronger thews,
A firmer tread, a purer face,
A never-empty cruse:

“I then should reach a gentler hand
To cripples by the way,
Strike off the fetters, loose the band,
Turn night into the day.

“My tongue would be a tunèd reed,
My throat a silver horn,
My lips for fuller faith would plead
From even unto morn:

“I should not waste the miracle
Divine—the gift of speech—
With fancied images of hell—
This only would it teach:

**"If God with lilies keeps a tryst,
Then He will also keep
Faith with that moment of the Christ
Who walks upon the deep—**

**"Christ walks upon the deep with him
Who dares the rising wave,
And though his failing faith grow dim,
Finds love is strong to save;**

**"Knows love is strong to save and lift
The flagging feet that fail,
Hearing across the cloudy drift:
'Courage, O comrade, hail!'**

**"Who sees the Presence, finds the Face,
And hears the mystic word;
Who moves to his appointed place,
Like any homing bird;**

**"Who never doubts the highest peak
Of his transcendent hour,
And boldly ventures forth to seek
Fulfilment of his power:**

**"For him God waits beyond the sun,
His Christ of many scars,
To give for that which he hath done
A heritage of stars."**

REVELATION

ALL is revealed—naught is concealed!
Sudden and swift, like the feet of the spring;
Laughter of children in torrents of tears;
Breathing of blossoms from orchards that fling
Perfumes in prodigal scorn of the years
Empty of fruitage; like the touch of a hand
Soft and compassionate, known in the deep
Valley of Death; like the flame from the brand
Flung from a watchfire to frighten and keep
Back from the fold the striped Terror that stares:
All is revealed!

A SONG OF WORKERS

HAIL to the hodmen,
The builders of houses!
Hail to the navvies
Laying pipes for pure water!
Hail to the miners
Prisoned in pits,
Cleaving the coal,
Dauntless of death from the gases!

Here's to you, sailors,
Brave on the boisterous
Breast of the ocean,
Tanned by the sun and the tempest!
Here's to you, trainmen—
Couplers and stokers—
All you conductors—
You with your hand on the throttle!

Gloria! Doctors,
Nurses and mothers,
Teachers of children,
Patient with feet that are plodding;
Gloria! Students,
Lovers of nature,
And you scientists—
Priests of the veiled, vast Shekinahs!

A SONG OF BATTLES

You will not do this thing again!
What thing?

Mistake of owning overmuch:
Great palaces and princely halls,
Gardens of Babylon that hang
High on a many-terraced hill,
Created at the cost of slaves
Dead by the thousands; that some queen
Might gaze in rapture of her lord.

Strange how the saddened centuries
Stood clothed in garments red with blood
Poured from the veins of innocents,
Their mothers glad to give them birth,
Their fathers driven forth to slay
And to be slain on battle fields!

Why?—Why?
Because a few men sold their souls
For little heaps of minted gold—
Round pieces stamped with Cæsar's face
Or Alexander's awful brow—
Gold pieces whose possession gives
Command of battle ships and legions armed for enemies,
Raised up because of gold! gold! gold!

For when man gathers overmuch
God is exchanged for paltry dust;
And when God goes the devil comes
In panoply of armies:
Drums beating—
Trumpets blowing—
Flags fluttering—
Men hating, fighting, bleeding, dying;
Women wailing and beating their breasts;
Cities in conflagration;
Tall towers tumbling to an accompaniment of thunder,
Tumbling down among the statues and the pictures,
Silencing the song of the singers,
Making the beautiful ugly,
Smothering in wide encompassing smoke
The children—the glad, the wonderful children—
God's lilies of laughter—
His immaculate ones!

I tell you gold is the cause of war,
That war is the price we pay for gold—
Gold for which we give God!

You will not do this thing again!
What thing?
Mistake of owning overmuch.

CAN YOU FORGET

**CAN you forget the pyramids, Persepolis and Tyre?
Can you forget the barges on the Nile,
The sculptor with his chisel and his artist-soul a-fire
With a dream of Mother Isis and her smile?
His dream that made immortal
One pillar of the portal—
'Tis broken now but beautiful above the yellow Nile!**

**Can you forget the reedy pipes, the cymbals and the songs;
The sun upon the desert like a targe;
The shaking of the sistrum and the beating of the gongs;
The fury of the spear-thrust in the charge?
O leave your milk and honey,
Your little bags of money,
And dream the ancient dream again above the yellow Nile!**

BARTIMÆUS

BARTIMÆUS at the highroad,
Begging from the passer by
Just enough to stop his hunger—
Hear him cry!

Blind is he and lone and ragged,
With no friendly hand to lead—
And the sky all blue above him!
Hear him plead.

There are olives and pomegranates
Green and gold among the hills,
Miles of vineyards through the valleys
Fed by rills.

In the distance is a city
Walled and white beneath the sun,
Domed and delicate with towers—
One by one

Rising up like fingers lifted
High in a perpetual prayer
To Jehovah God who pities
Want and care.

Near the blind man, gray and broken
Is an ancient olive-press—
Blue and scarlet blossoms give it
Tenderness,

Weave a spell of summer-beauty
On each stained and splintered stone
Give the pile a royal grandeur
Of a throne.

On the road are many people—
Laughing as they hurry down
To the little homes that wait them
In the town.

Comes a merchant on his camel—
Silk from Araby he sells:
Listen to the rhythmic clangour
Of the bells!

Comes a priest back from the Temple,
Pondering the written Law,
Blind to all the lovely blossoms
In the awe,

In the testament terror
Of the lengthened scroll he reads;
While the beggar at the highroad
Vainly pleads!

Comes a wanton in her madness,
Drifting down the human stream;
In her eyes the haunting horror
O' a dream!

Comes a harpist gaily singing,
Brave above the smitten cords,
Glancing at the royal huleh
And the gourds.

Come two lovers from betrothal—
She is on a milk-white ass,
And he strides in strength beside her;
As they pass,

Bartimæus pleads for pity:
"Give the blind man of our all,"
Breathes the maiden, and the young man—
Straight and tall—

Gives three shekels to the beggar,
Turns and looks into her eyes;
Then they journey to their waiting
Paradise!

Strange!—That day three people only
Heard blind Bartimæus' cry—
These, and Jesus Christ of Nazareth
Passing by!

THE COCK

A cross within the portico,
And leaning near an oaken door
Through which the people come and go,
As they have never done before.

A cock upon the transverse beam
Is perched. Within the High Priest's hall
A man's voice rises to a scream:
"God's Face! I know Him not at all!"

A noise of laughter and of blows:
"Ha! Prophet, tell us—who smote Thee?"
"In sooth, this fellow Jesu knows!"
"Art Thou the Christ? Come answer me!"

The morning star pales in the sky—
The paschal moon dips down the hills—
The vineyards in the valley lie
Veiled in the mist of many rills.

A gleam of silver in the east;
The cock awakes and spreads his wings;
And he who of the day is priest,
This canticle of Jesu sings:

Wake up! Wake up! Jerusalem—
This is the day
That men will slay
The starry Son of Bethlehem!

Like one lone cedar straight and tall,
He stands within the High Priest's hall.
His hands are bound, His breast is bare,
There is no pity anywhere.
His eyes are dim—
They laugh at Him;
And since He will not to them speak,
A man now smites Him on the cheek!

Wake up! Wake up! Jerusalem—
This is the day
That men will slay
The starry Son of Bethlehem!
Above the burning coals there stands
One who is stretching forth his hands:
Three times has he his Friend denied
Who must this day be crucified!
Those eyes so dim
Have looked at him;
And he who thrice denied and swore
Is running blindly to the door!

Wake up! Wake up! Jerusalem—
The silver dawn
Is coming on—
A star hangs over Bethlehem!
A breath of buds is in the air;
The feet of Spring are on the stair,
Descending to her olive-press
From Winter's palace, and her dress

Is wrought with flowers
Of summer showers;
A tear of woe is in her eye—
She mourns that Mary's Son must die!

Wake up! Wake up! Jerusalem—
The night is spent—
Repent! Repent!
What do ye down in Bethlehem?
Cedron is calling soft and low;
Gethsemane will never know
Again the touch of Jesu's feet:
O Nazareth,
This day the death
Of Him who loved you is your loss—
I call this to you from His cross!

THE STREAM

How many Christs have we two crucified;
How many prophets have we sawn asunder;
What wild woe have we wrought: how deep, how wide
The wrong committed! In the sky God's thunder
Threatens, His lightning cleaves the clouds apart
To show an awful Face—
The Judge is in His place
Of Judgment! Oh, the love
That we have lost! Above,
Beneath and all around us sounds the cry
Of Rachel weeping over little hands
And little feet! Her babes are dead! You, I,
Alone are guilty; for while error stands
Must all the starry Christs be crucified!

Nay, do not hang your head:
Though Christs be crucified,
And Rachel's babes are dead,
One river floweth wide
Out of the urge of God;
Of that eternal stream—
Its mother-bosom broad
With vision and with dream—
Are you, Comrade and I!
Yea, all its ancient shores
That river runneth by
Have we touched. Where it pours
Past leagues of desert-sand,
Jungles and miry places,

Palms of an unknown land,
Ferns and their froned faces;
Have we gone forth from God!

Where slimy serpents crawl,
And crocodiles are torpid in the sun;
Where snarling tigers sprawl,
And elephants come slowly one by one
Down the yellow ridges
Of the banyan's broken bridges
To the river where the little shells are strawed;
Where chattering monkeys leap,
And the flamingo struts among the reeds;
Where parrots pause and peep,
And all day long the greedy ibis feeds:
We went flowing, flowing,
And eternally out-going
From the impulse of the mighty love of God!

Lift up your head, O my Brother, my friend!
Know that your shame is the shame of the stream—
Memory floods all its banks, but the end—
What is the end? 'Tis a realized dream
Dreamt in the depths of an infinite peace
Ere the first star of the morning arose
Over the earth! Since that river's release
From the pure spring, how it flows! How it flows,
Bears on its bosom the sorrows of man,
Sin and the wreckage of faith and of truth,
Lust and hot murder, the primitive ban:
"Eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"!

Yet that same bosom babe Moses did bare
Safe in his cradle of wattles! Its tide
Floated the tree on which Christ, crucified,
Bled for His love of the stream and His share
Of the Past!

Lift up your head and endure!
Are we not part of the All, and as pure?

THE ONE OBLATION

God does not need your virtue
Proclaimed in any place,
Who knows a better beauty
Than such a pious face!
The stars keep His commandments,
The suns observe His law
And all the countless comets
Bow down to Him in awe.

God does not want your temples,
Whose domes are in the sky;
With archangelic anthems
How dare we mortals vie?
One thing alone, my brothers,
Rivals that bliss above:
Not incense on an altar,
But man's oblation—Love!

A QUESTION

HAVE you Christ found—
Whose eyes are cold
And lips are set?
How you forget
That day of old,
When on the ground
He wrote one tender word:
"Let him who has not erred
Be first of these alone
To cast a stone!"

COMBATANTS

My God and I met at the ford—
Lightning of wrath was on His face,
And in His hand He held a sword!

He whom of old I had adored
Now challenged me! I paused a space—
My God and I met at the ford.

Dauntless I stood, and daring poured
Hot words of anger—stepped one pace;
And in my hand I held a sword.

Steel clashed on steel! Together warred
Comrades of old in that fell place!
My God and I met at the ford.

One moment's thrust and He had scored;
I of His mercy pleaded grace:
God smiled on me and dropped His sword!

ON THE WIDE, WHITE ROAD

The Question:

Minstrel with a song
On the wide, white road—
Loafing with the lilies of the June—
What makes you so strong
Underneath your load,
Lilting such a joyous little tune?

Tell me, little brother,
What I want to know—
Why your lips are tremulous with joy—
Why you, like a mother,
Soothe and love me so,
As she used to when I was a boy.

All the way behind
Fades into a dream
Hideous with faces in the gloom;
Phantom-terrors blind
With a lurid gleam
Glowing from Gehenna-gulfs of doom!

The Answer:

Comrade, I will tell you
How I laugh and sing,
Loafing with the lilies by the way.
Comrade, what befell you
That you missed the King
Crowned with purple pansies of the day?

Brother, Him I know—
Lord of earth and star—
Find Him with the ferns beside the pool;
All the splendours grow
Dim and fade afar,
When He walks at shut of day and cool.

Fear not to address Him—
Cosmic-Comrade He—
Lonely for the love He wants from you!
Up at once and bless Him—
Lift a jubilee
With the host of loyal hearts and true!



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

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THAT ONE SHOULD LOVE ME

THAT one should love me is enough,
Be my path smooth or be it rough;
Though on my head no splendours shine,
Love crowns me with the victor-vine.

If on my ears no plaudits fall
Proclaiming me from stall to stall,
Behind the scenes I wait my turn,
Who saw two eyes with longing burn.

Somewhere within that audience
Gleamed golden Love's magnificence;
I stood triumphant for a space
Held by the rapture on one face.

Out of the discord of to-day,
Hark how the well-tuned harp-strings play!
Peace, O my Soul! One song is true,
Though thunder-clouds conceal the blue.

Down in the lowest deep of hell
One word of love upon me fell;
Forthwith my flame-scarred face was bold,
Uplifted to a gate of gold.

Upon my path a phantom form
Threatened with terror as of storm,
Smote me with lightning; I was strong,
Hearing the cadence of a song.

A while within an awful wood,
Uncertain of the path I stood;
A shout of laughter from a tree
Where lurked a devil, frightened me.

Then there was whispering of leaves,
Soft as of swallows under eaves:
"I love you, love you!" Lo! a light
Sundered the murkiness of night.

Three times I fell, three times I rose
To face the menacing of foes—
What gave me strength again to stand?
Out of the dark I felt a hand!

Out of the dark and dread of death,
Upon my brow I felt a breath;
And by the brink of that abyss
The consolation of a kiss.

Past many moors of pain I trod
Impeded by the clinging clod,
Until within one waking morn
Love in response to love was born.

Love in response to love was mine!
The water-jar was filled with wine,
The broken cruse again restored,
And green had grown the withered gourd.

RAHAB

RAHAB hath vermilion lips,
Breasts of ivory, and her hips
Taper down to little feet
That go dancing on the street.

Gossips call dear Rahab bold;
Say her love is bought for gold,
Barters kisses for a purse:
Well, some women have done worse!

Saw you ever Rahab's eyes—
All the blue of Canaan's skies
Smiles a moment, and you see
Beauty's best in Galilee.

Heard you ever Rahab's song,
You would murmur: "Surely wrong
Lives not in that lovely voice—
I with Rahab will rejoice!"

I came up the winding way
Through the vines at shut of day
Out of Orphir, bearing balms;
And I saw among the palms

Rahab wistful by the wall:
She was slender, she was tall,
And I trembled as her eyes
Turned on me in swift surprise.

Tyrian purple was her gown;
Gold her girdle; and a crown
Made of myrtle held her hair
Oval on her forehead fair;

Little sandals shod her feet.
Rahab, smiling, murmured: "Greet
You, my brother! Are you come,
Laden with sweet spice and gum,

"Out of Orphir?" and I said:
"Rahab!" All the evening shed
Light and perfume on her face
Turned to me, I paused a space,

Breathless. Nothing I could say
But her name. A dear dismay
Of her beauty made me mute,
Like a stringless harp or lute!

Then she laughed at me and flung
High her hands! She tipped her tongue
Saucily and danced along—
Feet in fellowship with song.

I pursued her through the vines
Growing where the bank confines
Jordan; followed her until
I forgot my master's will—

Master of the Caravan
Out of Orphir! As I ran,
Love arose and went with me
Through the grapes of Galilee!

Little leaves laughed as I sped
After Rahab. Overhead
Two white doves were on the wing,
And I heard a throstle sing.

Where my feet fell on the brown,
Furrowed vineyard, shaken down
By her body from the vine,
Grapes were crushed to make me wine!

Day was gazing from the west
On high Hermon with confessed
Love of her whose ample brow
Crimsoned; and from every bough

Twilight twitterings were heard.
How my pulses leaped and stirred—
Wild with longing for her lips,
Like two red pomegranate pips!

I stretched forth my hands and cried:
"Rahab!" and she turned aside
From the vineyard where a wood
Near a purple wine-press stood.

There she paused and looked on me,
Laughing: "Boy, what do you see
In my eyes, you tremble so?"
"Fate!" I answered. "Could you know,

"Rahab, what is in my heart,
You would pity, you would part
With one kiss and one caress
Here beside the purple press!"

"Boy," she murmured, "gossips say
Rahab's poisoned lips will slay
Whom she kisses; that her breasts
Are two hidden adders' nests!"

"Though I die upon your mouth,
Kiss me, Rahab! for the drouth
Of the desert makes my soul
Empty as an empty bowl.

"Dreary days of journeying
Where the sands go billowing
Miles and miles beneath the sun
Leave me broken and undone.

"All my youth was in the sear,
Dim the eye and deaf the ear
Unto beauty until now;
Rahab, harken to my vow:

"Give me vision, give me sense
Of lost beauty's immanence—
Give me these and I will pay,
Careless of what gossips say,

"All you ask in turn for this:
Soul of you within one Kiss!"
Rahab's eyes were suddenly
Misted over, and to me

Came her whisper: "O my Heart!
Take the minstrel's gift—his art—
With my lips on yours; the price
Be your spirit's sacrifice—

"Pain of vision! You shall know
Summits of eternal snow,
Depths of fire! You shall be torn,
Twixt the twilight and the morn.

"By strange dreams of angel-faces
Bending from their starry places,
Blent with devils out of hell!"
Rahab kissed me—! Lo, there fell

Veils of violet and gold
From the sunset—fold on fold—
Till the tangled vines were caught
And with mist the fields were fraught;

Notes that I had never heard
In the tall bulrushes stirred,
Trembled from the swaying trees,
Fluting strange, wild melodies.

Rahab's kiss and tender glance
Taught me earth's significance;
Opened wide eternal doors,
Where the flood of beauty pours

Out of heaven! out of God!
Quickening the stone and clod,
Leaf and shrub and bird and beast
For the artist—nature's priest,

Sleepless when her altar lights
Burn through balmy summer nights,
Wakeful when upon the day
Pours the pollen smoke away!

.
Rahab kissed me by the press—
Bound me with dear Love's duress—
Laughed and clapped her hands in glee
Mid the grapes of Galilee.

ON GUARD

HALT! Who comes there?
Care.

Word, friend or foe!
Woe.

What is thy will?
Ill.

Who sent thee here?
Fear.

Where doth he dwell?
Hell!

Name me his mate!
Hate.

What is their palace?
Malice.

What are their crowns?
Frowns.

Show me the way!
Nay;

*One from above,
Greater than Wrath.
Stands in thy path.
Who is he?—Love!*

THE PLOUGHMAN

THE upper and the lower springs,
The summer-fountains fail;
A frowning sky his challenge flings
With thunder through the hail;
The autumn holds her mantle-folds
To veil a pallid brow—
She pities me and mourns to see
My pain upon the plough:
For I must down the furrow fare
And cleave the clod with sharpened share.

Witless of wind that finds my face,
I lean against the blast
And plough to my appointed place—
Yon sapling like a mast;
I plough this way till shut of day,
Steady upon the mark;
Reckless of cold, the handles hold
From dawn until the dark—
This thing my duty: cleave the clod,
Ploughing the field alone with God!

DEAR LITTLE MAID OF DREAM

**DEAR little Maid of Dream,
My heart, dear Heart, is breaking;
Things are not what they seem,
And sorrow comes with waking!**

**I yearn to hold you fast,
My Dream, but then comes waking;
The silver moment past,
And then—the sad leave-taking!**

**Dear little Maid of Dream,
My heart, dear Heart, is breaking!**

THE VIOLET TO THE ASTER

SAID the Violet to the Aster
All on a summer's day:
"Your colour is the same as mine,
Come marry me, I pray;
Your bridesmaids shall be lilies,
A rose the vested priest,
And harebells ring the changes
To call us to the feast."

Said the Aster to the Violet:
"What shall the dowry be,
And what my stated fortune,
If I should marry thee?"
"Your fortune?" sang the Violet,
"The fragrance of my breath!"
The Aster swayed and murmured:
"I will be yours till death!"

MAGIC

THERE is magic on the meadow
And a witch has won the wood,
Elfin laughter from the water
As it rolls a rhythmic flood;
For a spirit meets my spirit
With a flash of iris-wings,
And all the world's a garden
Glad with many blossomings!

THE KING AND THE MAID

"O LOVE"—cried the King
On a day in spring,
As he went through the leafy wood—
"I must be away
To the court this day!"
And he threw back the purple hood
From his royal brow
That was paling now
With the pain of the parting hour:
For the maid was dear,
And her lips were near
To his lips, like a crimson flower.

"I shall be alone
On a gilded throne
In the midst of my nobles all;
From my diadem
To my garment's hem,
I shall ache for your light footfall:
'Tis no little thing,
Dear, to be a king
With love of a man for a maid,
And to play the part
With an empty heart,
Like a scabbard without its blade."

But the maid was wise,
And her hazel eyes
Were brave with the light of her love:
"God save thee, my King,
From great suffering,
Grant thee of His grace from above!
Canst thou play thy part
With an empty heart,
If I fill it full to the brim
Of the wine of prayer
From the bowl I bear?"
And his eyes with the tears were dim!

"On that ivory throne
Shalt thou be alone,
If my thoughts are a-wing to thee;
If upon thy brow
That is paling now,
My lips mark where the crown shall be?"
So the King rode south
From her crimson mouth
Through the forest, field and the fells;
And his voice was strong
With words of a song
To a chime of the bridle-bells.

A WOMAN'S PRAYER

God of the heaven and earth,
Bring to the birth
Soul of the man that I love;
From the Above,

Send Him the light of Thy face;
Grant to him grace,
Brave in the battle, his shield
Never to yield!

God of the zephyr and gale,
That is a nail
Holding the hand of my dream
Hard to the beam!

God of the good Paraclete,
Both of his feet
Bleed while the sentinels toss
Dice near a cross!

God of the magic of morn,
Crimsoning thorn
Crowns him! Oh, hark to his cry:
"Sabachthani?"

God of the laughter and tear,
That is a spear
Stained with the red drops that start
Under his heart!

God of the glamour and gloom,
Into the tomb
Low is he laid; see, a stone
Leaves me alone!

God of the lily and vine,
Is he not mine?
Balms for his body I bear,
Myrrh for his hair.

Love! who rolled the stone away?
Bright as the day,
Shineth thy brow, and thy face
Gleams with a grace

Caught from the whispering wings
Of One who sings:
"There is no death!" Lo, the tomb
Breaks into bloom!

God of a woman's wide love,
Under, above,
Over the earth there is light
Sprung from the night;

Now is the heart of me filled,
Soul of me stilled;
Glad of Thy shepherding care,
Answering prayer!

FOEMAN

I STAND

With drawn sword in my hand

To face

You for a space—

You! You!

Comrade, can this be true

That I

Must yield or die?

Those eyes,

Gray like November skies,

I feel

Sharper than steel. . . .

One word

Before sword clash on sword

And stern

Wrath in us burn.

Recall

The swift footfall

And mirth,

When the awakened earth

Grew glad

Of what we had—

Love, life,

Not this tremendous strife.

Rose-red
Petals were shed
With bloom
Of lilies in that room,

Where we
Stood silently
And heard
Heart-music stirred

On chords
By minstrel Lords
Whose wings
Moved to the strings.

Why—why
Dared we to try,
To prove
Our love?

Wrong! Wrong!
When we knew song
And light
And spirit-might.

So now
With paling brow
And set
Hard lips, we two are met

To kill!
Ah, would your will
Make mine
As grapes bruised for the wine?

Seek you
To run me through?
I take
My sword and break

The blade—
Strike! I have made
Of it a cross,
Counting that loss

Which holds
Me from your garment-folds:
The sign
Proves me forever thine;

Proves that I give
Self that our love may live!

GERAINT

OPEN, dear Lady, the little red door—
The little red door to me!
Night is all cold and my feet are sore;
I have made a long journey.

Leagues have I travelled, the mountains crossed
Eager for love of thee;
Lady, I fear that thy love is lost:
Open thy heart to me!

Open thy heart and I will go in
The red door silently;
There I shall find what I seek to win,
Dear Lady, thy love for me!

GRIEF

My heart is pain,
My spirit dearth;
Tears are the rain
Upon the earth:
And all the over-clouded sky
Is not more darkened than am I.

A while ago
I watched the snow,
And laughed to see
Its witchery;
Now that your face is turned away,
Winter's white magic melts from day.

The casement wide,
This wan Yuletide,
I opened—heard
One little bird
A-piping on a crystallised bough,
But he will pipe no longer now;

For when he saw
The stricken awe
Upon my face,
He left his place
And winged into the upper air—
My visaged grief he could not bear.

A little child,
By me beguiled
But yesterday
From busy play,
This morning hurried from these eyes—
He could not look where courage dies!

Under the sun
Two selves are one:
Sorrow and I!
Oh, let me die,
And never meet the month of May—
Now that your face is turned away!

THE EMPTY ROOM

Out of the storm I hurry in
To find an empty room;
I call and call, but no footfall
Answers across the room:
Vainly your eyes I seek to win,
You are not here! O dear—my dear,
There is no sound and stir of you!
I know not what to do.

I know not what to do or say,
I stand with vacant stare
Upon the brink of pain to think:
"Love, whither dost thou fare?"
An echo answers: "Gone away!"
Your roses red their petals shed
Upon the book of verse I gave,
Like tears down on a grave!

LOVE ETERNAL

LET us walk together, lass,
(Lean upon me—so!)
Through the field of feathergrass
(How the daisies grow!)
Till we find the word to say
What is in our hearts to-day.

Yes, I loved you from the first.
Dear, there is surprise
Blent with hunger and with thirst
In your eager eyes,
And you whisper: "Is it true?"—
Knowing that I always knew!

Let me tell you how it came:
Voices through the room;
Then one spoke to me your name
(Take this wild rose bloom—
I will place it in your hair)
And of you I was aware.

"She is of a slender grace,
Like my Maid of dreams!"
To myself I said—"Her face
With that beauty gleams—
Beauty of that One I know
In the Land of Long-Ago!"

Did you, dearest, understand
Why the scarlet grew
On my forehead, when my hand
Your fair fingers knew?
Oh, the world went very still
While on me you worked your will!

Worked your will? Do not deny;
For your heart was wise—
Ah, you shake your head and try
Vainly to disguise
What was on your lips to say
When we met that fateful day!

For from all eternity
We are pledged to love,
Bound in all our lives to be
True to what above
All the turmoil and the din
Strives that starry tryst to win.

Sit with me upon this stone
Underneath the bough;
Let the blossoms to us blown
Learn our ancient vow—
Vow we made before the stars
Strove to break Night's prison-bars.

Lift your head and meet my gaze.
Do you not recall
Somewhere in a golden haze,
Vistaed vast, a hall
Paved with diamond and domed
Blue above a fount that foamed

With the water from the well
Guarded, so they say,
By the angel Israfel?
Water of eternal bliss
Sprinkled on the lips that kiss!

There we lived before the suns
Led the planets up;
There we pledged the winged Ones
In a crystal cup,
Ere we left that pillared home
Through the field of Time to roam.

“Why,” you ask me, dearest, “why
Did we leave that place—
Is it such a thing to die?”
Ponder for a space:
What if love must lose to gain,
Find eternal peace in pain?

"But I want the Ever-Now!"
Dear, do you not know
They who drive the patient plough
And the furrows sow,
Own the sinews of the strong—
Reap the harvest with a song?

"Let the scattered fragments be
Gathered from the feast,
Nothing lost"; thus speaketh He
Who is Love's High Priest,
And He knows who from a cross
Pledged return for every loss.

Thus, my Maid of long ago,
Here within the field
Let me tell what you would know:
How I came to yield
To your eyes, your lips, your hair,
When the guests were gathered there

In the room that day we met,
Found amid the talk
Light of ancient suns which set
Æons ere the chalk
Cliffs of Dover gleamed upon
Merchant-prows from Babylon.

Love and Life eternal are,
Fill unfathomed space,
Bind with rapture star to star,
Gleam from every face,
Soar with angels, plunge to hell:
Lucifer and Israfel!

So above the choric spheres,
At the knees of God
You and I beyond the years
Kissed, then clove the clod
With our spirit's sundered flame;
Till amid the talk your name

Fell seraphic, smote me through
With unearthly pain:
I was I and you were you—
Met on earth again,
Bound to live and bound to love
By that oath we made above!

AFTER THE FEAST

I HAVE drunk deeply of the cup,
Fared well and fed;
The guests with whom I sat to sup,
Are gone to bed:
A broken harp lies on the floor,
Its tangled strings will sound no more—
The wine-stained linen I deplore.

Here is a little trampled rose,
A violet;
Here is a hyacinth, and those
Are mignonette:
They looked so proudly from their place,
First at the feast—with tears I trace
Now but a vestige of that grace.

Upon the table is a crown—
Where is the King?
The little leaves that tremble down,
Cover a ring;
A vase of crystal shattered lies
Against a goblet, where the wise
Talked through the laughter. How time flies!

It is not very long ago,
Here in the hall,
When to the tapers' tangled glow
The rise and fall
Of voices over nuts and wine

Murmured like wind through leaf and vine;
And there was joy of me and mine.

I snuff the tapers one by one.
The darkness falls.
Alas, for feasting and for fun!
My madrigals
Are ended. I will not again
Sing. Sound of wind and weeping rain
Is now the interlude of pain!

Yet it was good to know the feast,
To be a guest;
Though at the table I was least
Among the best.
Blindly I grope unto the door,
Gather a flower from the floor—
I will come back here never more!

What! Never more go gladly back?
Ah, foolish me!
When down the winding starry track
The company,
With laughter their lord following,
Shall yet return to greet the King
Who claims the crown and wears the ring!

And though I have put out each light,
Gathered one flower,
Bravely I fare forth into night—

THE LONELY ROAD

O WILL you take the lonely road,
The upward road,
Among the many stars?
Its pavement is by Pain bestowed,
Your feet shall find the scars!
Your feet shall know the scars, my friend:
It is a path without a bend.

It leadeth not by pastures green,
Through meadows green,
Nor near the little hills;
Gaunt granite cliffs it runs between,
Dark Fear that chaos fills
With cloud and storm and shadowings
Of vigilant unfolded wings.

It windeth not along the streams,
The laughing streams;
It leadeth straight and far
Beyond the mirrored pool of dreams
In peril to a star:
Who comes this way must go alone,
Steadfast and strong nor making moan.

It is the path called Perilous,
Named Perilous,
The path that heroes tread
Who hear the cry: "O come with us!"—
Brave voices of the dead—

What is an hour,
A day, a year, if, after all
The silence, those dear comrades call,
And there is harping in the hall?

I wait the summons; gladly go
Against the rain;
They will be seated row on row
Here once again:
And in that brave, loved company
What song and laughter there will be,
When I resume my minstrelsy!

For they are compassed by a throng
Of Harpers harping to a song:

Follow afar
Past cliff and scar,
Finding your star!

Brave in the night,
Up to the light,
Proving your might!

Though the foot fail,
And the heart wail;
Though the brow pale;

Follow afar
Where the gods are,
Finding your star!

Along this way Lord Jesu went,
Christ Jesu went;
Hither came Socrates,
And all who were with tears forspent—
The shining companies
Of those who lifted high the heart
Beyond the lure of any mart.

And would you fare this lonely way,
This starry way?

Take but a scrip and staff,
With sandals for your feet, to-day;
Though fools in folly laugh,
Deriding that you leave the less—
Their idle dream of happiness!

If you would find the way of wings,
Wide-open wings,
That lift one to a star,
You must be free from hamperings
Of lock and bolt and bar;
Cast care of gold and silk aside
With pomp of place and rank and pride.

If on your path there be a cross,
A wayside cross,
With nails and sponge and spear,
A gambling Guard who turn to toss
Dice for the robe you wear;
Avoid not that appointed place,
Though thorns with crimson stain your face!

But if you take this road, my friend,
My wistful friend,
Your world will wake to song,
And all high, holy angels bend
To hail you of their throng:
And where the Sons Eternal are,
You shall be throned upon your star.

