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A PAGAN'S PRAYER.

O Mother, I have loved thee without fear
And looked upon the mystery of change,
Since first, a child, upon the closing year
I saw the snowflakes fall and whispered, "Strange!"

Because in these pale border lands of fate
Grief hath companioned me, I have not quailed;
And when love passed into the outer strait,
I have not faltered and thou hast not failed.

For I have lifted up my heart to thee,
And thou hast ever hearkened and drawn near,
And bowed thy shining face down over me,
Till I could hear thee as the hill-flowers hear.

And I have cried to thee in lonely need,
Being but a child of thine bereft and wrung,
Till all the rivers in the hills gave heed;
And the great hill-winds in thy holy tongue—

That ancient incommunicable speech
The April stars and Autumn sunsets know—
Soothed me and calmed with solace beyond reach
Of human ken, mysterious and low.

Then in that day when the last snow shall come
And chill the fair round world within its fold,
Leave me not friendless in the gathering gloom,
But gird thine arms about me as of old;

With sleep once more in thy compassionate hands,
Croon me a murmur as of many rills.
When I would rove the crimson valley lands
With all my vanished comrades of the hills.

When that great storm out of the dark shall drive,
And blur the sun, and bugle my release,
Let not thy weary earthling faint nor strive,
Faring beyond the tumult to thy peace.

BLISS CARMAN.

Christmas, 1891.



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