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SONGS OUT OF DOORS

BY

HENRY VAN DYKE

1923

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I

OF BIRDS AND FLOWERS

THE VEERY

The moonbeams over Arno's vale in silver flood were pouring,
When first I heard the nightingale a long-lost love deploring.
So passionate, so full of pain, it sounded strange and eerie;
I longed to hear a simpler strain,--the woodnotes of the veery.

The laverock sings a bonny lay above the Scottish heather;
It sprinkles down from far away like light and love together;
He drops the golden notes to greet his brooding mate, his dearie;
I only know one song more sweet,--the vespers of the veery.

In English gardens, green and bright and full of fruity treasure,
I heard the blackbird with delight repeat his merry measure:
The ballad was a pleasant one, the tune was loud and cheery,
And yet, with every setting sun, I listened for the veery.

But far away, and far away, the tawny thrush is singing;
New England woods, at close of day, with that clear chant are ringing:
And when my light of life is low, and heart and flesh are weary,
I fain would hear, before I go, the wood-notes of the veery.

1895.

THE SONG-SPARROW

There is a bird I know so well,
It seems as if he must have sung
Beside my crib when I was young;
Before I knew the way to spell
The name of even the smallest bird,
His gentle-joyful song I heard.
Now see if you can tell, my dear,
What bird it is that, every year,
Sings _"Sweet--sweet--sweet--very merry cheer." _

He comes in March, when winds are strong,
And snow returns to hide the earth;
But still he warms his heart with mirth,
And waits for May. He lingers long
While flowers fade; and every day
Repeats his small, contented lay;
As if to say, we need not fear
The season's change, if love is here
With _"Sweet--sweet--sweet--very merry cheer." _

He does not wear a Joseph's-coat
Of many colours, smart and gay;
His suit is Quaker brown and gray,
With darker patches at his throat.
And yet of all the well-dressed throng
Not one can sing so brave a song.
It makes the pride of looks appear
A vain and foolish thing, to hear
His _"Sweet--sweet--sweet--very merry cheer." _

A lofty place he does not love,
But sits by choice, and well at ease,
In hedges, and in little trees
That stretch their slender arms above
The meadow-brook; and there he sings

Till all the field with pleasure rings;
And so he tells in every ear,
That lowly homes to heaven are near
In _"Sweet--sweet--sweet--very merry cheer." _

I like the tune, I like the words;
They seem so true, so free from art,
So friendly, and so full of heart,
That if but one of all the birds
Could be my comrade everywhere,
My little brother of the air,
I'd choose the song-sparrow, my dear,
Because he'd bless me, every year,
With _"Sweet--sweet--sweet--very merry cheer." _

1895.

THE MARYLAND YELLOW-THROAT

When May bedecks the naked trees
With tassels and embroideries,
And many blue-eyed violets beam
Along the edges of the stream,
I hear a voice that seems to say,
Now near at hand, now far away,
_ "Witchery--witchery--witchery." _

An incantation so serene,
So innocent, befits the scene:
There's magic in that small bird's note--
See, there he flits--the Yellow-throat;
A living sunbeam, tipped with wings,
A spark of light that shines and sings
_ "Witchery--witchery--witchery." _

You prophet with a pleasant name,
If out of Mary-land you came,
You know the way that thither goes
Where Mary's lovely garden grows:
Fly swiftly back to her, I pray,
And try to call her down this way,
_ "Witchery--witchery--witchery." _

Tell her to leave her cockle-shells,
And all her little silver bells
That blossom into melody,
And all her maids less fair than she.
She does not need these pretty things,
For everywhere she comes, she brings
_ "Witchery--witchery--witchery." _

The woods are greening overhead,
And flowers adorn each mossy bed;
The waters babble as they run--
One thing is lacking, only one:
If Mary were but here to-day,
I would believe your charming lay,
 _"Witchery--witchery--witchery." _

Along the shady road I look--
Who's coming now across the brook?
A woodland maid, all robed in white--
The leaves dance round her with delight,
The stream laughs out beneath her feet--
Sing, merry bird, the charm's complete,
 " _Witchery--witchery--witchery! _"

1895.

THE WHIP-POOR-WILL

Do you remember, father,--
It seems so long ago,--
The day we fished together
Along the Pocono?
At dusk I waited for you,
Beside the lumber-mill,
And there I heard a hidden bird
That chanted, "whip-poor-will,"
" _Whippoorwill! whippoorwill! _"
Sad and shrill,--" _whippoorwill! _"

The place was all deserted;
The mill-wheel hung at rest;
The lonely star of evening
Was throbbing in the west;
The veil of night was falling;
The winds were folded still;
And everywhere the trembling air
 Re-echoed "whip-poor-will!"
 " _Whippoorwill! whippoorwill! _"
Sad and shrill,--" _whippoorwill! _"

You seemed so long in coming,
 I felt so much alone;
The wide, dark world was round me,
 And life was all unknown;
The hand of sorrow touched me,
 And made my senses thrill
With all the pain that haunts the strain

Of mournful whip-poor-will.
"_Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!_"
Sad and shrill,--"_whippoorwill!_"

What knew I then of trouble?
An idle little lad,
I had not learned the lessons
That make men wise and sad.
I dreamed of grief and parting,
And something seemed to fill
My heart with tears, while in my ears
Resounded "whip-poor-will."
"_Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!_"
Sad and shrill,--"_whippoorwill!_"

'Twas but a cloud of sadness,
That lightly passed away;
But I have learned the meaning
Of sorrow, since that day.
For nevermore at twilight,
Beside the silent mill,
I'll wait for you, in the falling dew,
And hear the whip-poor-will.
"_Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!_"
Sad and shrill,--"_whippoorwill!_"

But if you still remember
In that fair land of light,
The pains and fears that touch us
Along this edge of night,
I think all earthly grieving,
And all our mortal ill,
To you must seem like a sad boy's dream
Who hears the whip-poor-will.
"_Whippoorwill! whippoorwill!_"
A passing thrill,--"_whippoorwill!_"

1894.

WINGS OF A DOVE

I

At sunset, when the rosy light was dying
Far down the pathway of the west,
I saw a lonely dove in silence flying,
To be at rest.

Pilgrim of air, I cried, could I but borrow

Thy wandering wings, thy freedom blest,
I'd fly away from every careful sorrow,
And find my rest.

II

But when the filmy veil of dusk was falling,
Home flew the dove to seek his nest,
Deep in the forest where his mate was calling
To love and rest.

Peace, heart of mine! no longer sigh to wander;
Lose not thy life in barren quest.
There are no happy islands over yonder;
Come home and rest.

1874.

THE HERMIT THRUSH

O wonderful! How liquid clear
The molten gold of that ethereal tone,
Floating and falling through the wood alone,
A hermit-hymn poured out for God to hear!

_O holy, holy! holy! Hyaline,
Long light, low light, glory of eventide!
Love far away, far up,--love divine!
Little love, too, for ever, ever near,
Warm love, earth love, tender love of mine,
In the leafy dark where you hide,
You are mine,--mine,--mine!_

Ah, my beloved, do you feel with me
The hidden virtue of that melody,
The rapture and the purity of love,
The heavenly joy that can not find the word?

Then, while we wait again to hear the bird,
Come very near to me, and do not move,--
Now, hermit of the woodland, fill anew
The cool, green cup of air with harmony,
And we will drink the wine of love with you.

May, 1908.

SEA-GULLS OF MANHATTAN

Children of the elemental mother,
Born upon some lonely island shore
Where the wrinkled ripples run and whisper,
Where the crested billows plunge and roar;
Long-winged, tireless roamers and adventurers,
Fearless breasters of the wind and sea,
In the far-off solitary places
I have seen you floating wild and free!

Here the high-built cities rise around you;
Here the cliffs that tower east and west,
Honeycombed with human habitations,
Have no hiding for the sea-bird's nest:
Here the river flows begrimed and troubled;
Here the hurrying, panting vessels fume,
Restless, up and down the watery highway,
While a thousand chimneys vomit gloom.

Toil and tumult, conflict and confusion,
Clank and clamour of the vast machine
Human hands have built for human bondage--
Yet amid it all you float serene;
Circling, soaring, sailing, swooping lightly
Down to glean your harvest from the wave;
In your heritage of air and water,
You have kept the freedom Nature gave.

Even so the wild-woods of Manhattan
Saw your wheeling flocks of white and gray;
Even so you fluttered, followed, floated,
Round the _Half-Moon_ creeping up the bay;
Even so your voices creaked and chattered,
Laughing shrilly o'er the tidal rips,
While your black and beady eyes were glistening
Round the sullen British prison-ships.

Children of the elemental mother,
Fearless floaters 'mid the double blue,
From the crowded boats that cross the ferries
Many a longing heart goes out to you.
Though the cities climb and close around us,
Something tells us that our souls are free,
While the sea-gulls fly above the harbour,
While the river flows to meet the sea!

December, 1905.

THE RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

I

Where's your kingdom, little king?
Where the land you call your own,
Where your palace and your throne?
Fluttering lightly on the wing
Through the blossom-world of May,
Whither lies your royal way,
Little king?

_Far to northward lies a land
Where the trees together stand
Closely as the blades of wheat
When the summer is complete.
Rolling like an ocean wide
Over vale and mountainside,
Balsam, hemlock, spruce and pine,--
All those mighty trees are mine.
There's a river flowing free,--
All its waves belong to me.
There's a lake so clear and bright
Stars shine out of it all night;
Rowan-berries round it spread
Like a belt of coral red.
Never royal garden planned
Fair as my Canadian land!
There I build my summer nest,
There I reign and there I rest,
While from dawn to dark I sing,
Happy kingdom! Lucky king!_

II

Back again, my little king!
Is your happy kingdom lost
To the rebel knave, Jack Frost?
Have you felt the snow-flakes sting?
Houseless, homeless in October,
Whither now? Your plight is sober,
Exiled king!

_Far to southward lie the regions
Where my loyal flower-legions
Hold possession of the year,
Filling every month with cheer.
Christmas wakes the winter rose;
New Year daffodils unclose;
Yellow jasmine through the wood
Flows in February flood,
Dropping from the tallest trees

Golden streams that never freeze.
Thither now I take my flight
Down the pathway of the night,
Till I see the southern moon
Glisten on the broad lagoon,
Where the cypress' dusky green,
And the dark magnolia's sheen,
Weave a shelter round my home.
There the snow-storms never come;
There the bannered mosses gray
Like a curtain gently sway,
Hanging low on every side
Round the covert inhere I bide,
Till the March azalea glows,
Royal red and heavenly rose,
Through the Carolina glade
Where my winter home is made.
There I hold my southern court,
Full of merriment and sport:
There I take my ease and sing,
Happy kingdom! Lucky king!_

III

Little boaster, vagrant king,
Neither north nor south is yours,
You've no kingdom that endures!
Wandering every fall and spring,
With your ruby crown so slender,
Are you only a Pretender,
Landless king?

_Never king by right divine
Ruled a richer realm than mine!
What are lands and golden crowns,
Armies, fortresses and towns,
Jewels, sceptres, robes and rings,--
What are these to song and wings?
Everywhere that I can fly,
There I own the earth and sky;
Everywhere that I can sing,
There I'm happy as a king._

1900.

THE ANGLER'S REVEILLE

What time the rose of dawn is laid across the lips of night,
And all the little watchman-stars have fallen asleep in light,

'Tis then a merry wind awakes, and runs from tree to tree,
And borrows words from all the birds to sound the reveille.

This is the carol the Robin throws

Over the edge of the valley;

Listen how boldly it flows,

Sally on sally:

_ Tirra-lirra,

Early morn,

New born!

Day is near,

Clear, clear.

Down the river

All a-quiver,

Fish are breaking;

Time for waking,

Tup, tup, tup!

Do you hear?

All clear--

Wake up!_

The phantom flood of dreams has ebbed and vanished with the dark,
And like a dove the heart forsakes the prison of the ark;
Now forth she fares thro' friendly woods and diamond-fields of dew,
While every voice cries out "Rejoice!" as if the world were new.

This is the ballad the Bluebird sings,

Unto his mate replying,

Shaking the tune from his wings

While he is flying:

_ Surely, surely, surely,

Life is dear

Even here.

Blue above,

You to love,

Purely, purely, purely._

There's wild azalea on the hill, and iris down the dell,
And just one spray of lilac still abloom beside the well;
The columbine adorns the rocks, the laurel buds grow pink,
Along the stream white arums gleam, and violets bend to drink.

This is the song of the Yellow-throat,

Fluttering gaily beside you;

Hear how each voluble note

Offers to guide you:

_ Which way, sir?

I say, sir,

Let me teach you,

I beseech you!

Are you wishing

Jolly fishing?

This way, sir!
I'll teach you._

Then come, my friend, forget your foes and leave your fears behind,
And wander forth to try your luck, with cheerful, quiet mind;
For be your fortune great or small, you take what God will give,
And all the day your heart will say, "'Tis luck enough to live."

This is the song the Brown Thrush flings
Out of his thicket of roses;
Hark how it bubbles and rings,
Mark how it closes:

_Luck, luck,
What luck?
Good enough for me,
I'm alive, you see!
Sun shining,
No repining;
Never borrow
Idle sorrow;
Drop it!
Cover it up!
Hold your cup!
Joy will fill it,
Don't spill it,
Steady, be ready,
Good luck!_

1899.

A NOVEMBER DAISY

Afterthought of summer's bloom!
Late arrival at the feast,
Coming when the songs have ceased
And the merry guests departed,
Leaving but an empty room,
Silence, solitude, and gloom,--
Are you lonely, heavy-hearted;
You, the last of all your kind,
Nodding in the autumn wind;
Now that all your friends are flown,
Blooming late and all alone?

Nay, I wrong you, little flower,
Reading mournful mood of mine
In your looks, that give no sign
Of a spirit dark and cheerless!
You possess the heavenly power

That rejoices in the hour.
Glad, contented, free, and fearless,
Lift a sunny face to heaven
When a sunny day is given!
Make a summer of your own,
Blooming late and all alone!

Once the daisies gold and white
Sea-like through the meadow rolled:
Once my heart could hardly hold
All its pleasures. I remember,
In the flood of youth's delight
Separate joys were lost to sight.
That was summer! Now November
Sets the perfect flower apart;
Gives each blossom of the heart
Meaning, beauty, grace unknown,--
Blooming late and all alone.

November, 1899.

THE LILY OF YORROW

Deep in the heart of the forest the lily of Yorrow is growing;
Blue is its cup as the sky, and with mystical odour o'erflowing;
Faintly it falls through the shadowy glades when the south wind is blowing.

Sweet are the primroses pale and the violets after a shower;
Sweet are the borders of pinks and the blossoming grapes on the bower;
Sweeter by far is the breath of that far-away woodland flower.

Searching and strange in its sweetness, it steals like a perfume enchanted
Under the arch of the forest, and all who perceive it are haunted,
Seeking and seeking for ever, till sight of the lily is granted.

Who can describe how it grows, with its chalice of lazuli leaning
Over a crystalline spring, where the ferns and the mosses are greening?
Who can imagine its beauty, or utter the depth of its meaning?

Calm of the journeying stars, and repose of the mountains olden,
Joy of the swift-running rivers, and glory of sunsets golden,
Secrets that cannot be told in the heart of the flower are holden.

Surely to see it is peace and the crown of a lifelong endeavour;
Surely to pluck it is gladness,--but they who have found it can never
Tell of the gladness and peace: they are hid from our vision for ever.

'Twas but a moment ago that a comrade was walking near me:
Turning aside from the pathway he murmured a greeting to cheer me,--
Then he was lost in the shade, and I called but he did not hear me.

Why should I dream he is dead, and bewail him with passionate sorrow?
Surely I know there is gladness in finding the lily of Yorrow:
He has discovered it first, and perhaps I shall find it to-morrow.

1894.

II

OF SKIES AND SEASONS

IF ALL THE SKIES

If all the skies were sunshine,
Our faces would be fain
To feel once more upon them
The cooling splash of rain.

If all the world were music,
Our hearts would often long
For one sweet strain of silence,
To break the endless song.

If life were always merry,
Our souls would seek relief,
And rest from weary laughter
In the quiet arms of grief.

THE AFTER-ECHO

How long the echoes love to play
Around the shore of silence, as a wave
Retreating circles down the sand!
One after one, with sweet delay,
The mellow sounds that cliff and island gave,
Have lingered in the crescent bay,
Until, by lightest breezes fanned,
They float far off beyond the dying day
And leave it still as death.
But hark,--
Another singing breath
Comes from the edge of dark;
A note as clear and slow

As falls from some enchanted bell,
Or spirit, passing from the world below,
That whispers back, Farewell.
So in the heart,
When, fading slowly down the past,
Fond memories depart,
And each that leaves it seems the last;
Long after all the rest are flown,
Returns a solitary tone,--
The after-echo of departed years,--
And touches all the soul to tears.

1871.

DULCIORA

A tear that trembles for a little while
Upon the trembling eyelid, till the world
Wavers within its circle like a dream,
Holds more of meaning in its narrow orb
Than all the distant landscape that it blurs.

A smile that hovers round a mouth beloved,
Like the faint pulsing of the Northern Light,
And grows in silence to an amber dawn
Born in the sweetest depths of trustful eyes,
Is dearer to the soul than sun or star.

A joy that falls into the hollow heart
From some far-lifted height of love unseen,
Unknown, makes a more perfect melody
Than hidden brooks that murmur in the dusk,
Or fall athwart the cliff with wavering gleam.

Ah, not for their own sake are earth and sky
And the fair ministries of Nature dear,
But as they set themselves unto the tune
That fills our life; as light mysterious
Flows from within and glorifies the world.

For so a common wayside blossom, touched
With tender thought, assumes a grace more sweet
Than crowns the royal lily of the South;
And so a well-remembered perfume seems
The breath of one who breathes in Paradise.

1872.

MATINS

Flowers rejoice when night is done,
Lift their heads to greet the sun;
Sweetest looks and odours raise,
In a silent hymn of praise.

So my heart would turn away
From the darkness to the day;
Lying open in God's sight
Like a flower in the light.

THE PARTING AND THE COMING GUEST

Who watched the worn-out Winter die?
Who, peering through the window-pane
At nightfall, under sleet and rain
Saw the old graybeard totter by?
Who listened to his parting sigh,
The sobbing of his feeble breath,
His whispered colloquy with Death,
And when his all of life was done
Stood near to bid a last good-bye?
Of all his former friends not one
Saw the forsaken Winter die.

Who welcomed in the maiden Spring?
Who heard her footfall, swift and light
As fairy-dancing in the night?
Who guessed what happy dawn would bring
The flutter of her bluebird's wing,
The blossom of her mayflower-face
To brighten every shady place?
One morning, down the village street,
"Oh, here am I," we heard her sing,--
And none had been awake to greet
The coming of the maiden Spring.

But look, her violet eyes are wet
With bright, unfallen, dewy tears;
And in her song my fancy hears
A note of sorrow trembling yet.
Perhaps, beyond the town, she met
Old Winter as he limped away
To die forlorn, and let him lay
His weary head upon her knee,
And kissed his forehead with regret
For one so gray and lonely,--see,
Her eyes with tender tears are wet.

And so, by night, while we were all at rest,
I think the coming sped the parting guest.

1873.

WHEN TULIPS BLOOM

I

When tulips bloom in Union Square,
And timid breaths of vernal air
Go wandering down the dusty town,
Like children lost in Vanity Fair;

When every long, unlovely row
Of westward houses stands aglow,
And leads the eyes to sunset skies
Beyond the hills where green trees grow;

Then weary seems the street parade,
And weary books, and weary trade:
I'm only wishing to go a-fishing;
For this the month of May was made.

II

I guess the pussy-willows now
Are creeping out on every bough
Along the brook; and robins look
For early worms behind the plough.

The thistle-birds have changed their dun,
For yellow coats, to match the sun;
And in the same array of flame
The Dandelion Show's begun.

The flocks of young anemones
Are dancing round the budding trees:
Who can help wishing to go a-fishing
In days as full of joy as these?

III

I think the meadow-lark's clear sound
Leaks upward slowly from the ground,
While on the wing the bluebirds ring

Their wedding-bells to woods around.

The flirting chewink calls his dear
Behind the bush; and very near,
Where water flows, where green grass grows,
Song-sparrows gently sing, "Good cheer."

And, best of all, through twilight's calm
The hermit-thrush repeats his psalm.
How much I'm wishing to go a-fishing
In days so sweet with music's balm!

IV

'Tis not a proud desire of mine;
I ask for nothing superfine;
No heavy weight, no salmon great,
To break the record, or my line.

Only an idle little stream,
Whose amber waters softly gleam,
Where I may wade through woodland shade,
And cast the fly, and loaf, and dream:

Only a trout or two, to dart
From foaming pools, and try my art:
'Tis all I'm wishing--old-fashioned fishing,
And just a day on Nature's heart.

1894.

SPRING IN THE NORTH

I

Ah, who will tell me, in these leaden days,
Why the sweet Spring delays,
And where she hides,--the dear desire
Of every heart that longs
For bloom, and fragrance, and the ruby fire
Of maple-buds along the misty hills,
And that immortal call which fills
The waiting wood with songs?
The snow-drops came so long ago,
It seemed that Spring was near!
But then returned the snow
With biting winds, and earth grew sere,
And sullen clouds drooped low

To veil the sadness of a hope deferred:

Then rain, rain, rain, incessant rain

Beat on the window-pane,

Through which I watched the solitary bird

That braved the tempest, buffeted and tossed

With ruffled feathers down the wind again.

Oh, were the seeds all lost

When winter laid the wild flowers in their tomb?

I searched the woods in vain

For blue hepaticas, and trilliums white,

And trailing arbutus, the Spring's delight,

Starring the withered leaves with rosy bloom.

But every night the frost

To all my longing spoke a silent nay,

And told me Spring was far away.

Even the robins were too cold to sing,

Except a broken and discouraged note,--

Only the tuneful sparrow, on whose throat

Music has put her triple finger-print,

Lifted his head and sang my heart a hint,--

"Wait, wait, wait! oh, wait a while for Spring!"

II

But now, Carina, what divine amends

For all delay! What sweetness treasured up,

What wine of joy that blends

A hundred flavours in a single cup,

Is poured into this perfect day!

For look, sweet heart, here are the early flowers

That lingered on their way,

Thronging in haste to kiss the feet of May,

Entangled with the bloom of later hours,--

Anemones and cinque-foils, violets blue

And white, and iris richly gleaming through

The grasses of the meadow, and a blaze

Of butter-cups and daisies in the field,

Filling the air with praise,

As if a chime of golden bells had pealed!

The frozen songs within the breast

Of silent birds that hid in leafless woods,

Melt into rippling floods

Of gladness unrepressed.

Now oriole and bluebird, thrush and lark,

Warbler and wren and vireo,

Mingle their melody; the living spark

Of love has touched the fuel of desire,

And every heart leaps up in singing fire.

It seems as if the land

Were breathing deep beneath the sun's caress,

Trembling with tenderness,
While all the woods expand,
In shimmering clouds of rose and gold and green,
To veil a joy too sacred to be seen.

III

Come, put your hand in mine,
True love, long sought and found at last,
And lead me deep into the Spring divine
That makes amends for all the wintry past.
For all the flowers and songs I feared to miss
Arrive with you;
And in the lingering pressure of your kiss
My dreams come true;
And in the promise of your generous eyes
I read the mystic sign
Of joy more perfect made
Because so long delayed,
And bliss enhanced by rapture of surprise.

Ah, think not early love alone is strong;
He loveth best whose heart has learned to wait:
Dear messenger of Spring that tarried long,
You're doubly dear because you come so late.

SPRING IN THE SOUTH

Now in the oak the sap of life is welling,
Tho' to the bough the rusty leafage clings;
Now on the elm the misty buds are swelling;
Every little pine-wood grows alive with wings;
Blue-jays are fluttering, yodeling and crying,
Meadow-larks sailing low above the faded grass,
Red-birds whistling clear, silent robins flying,--
Who has waked the birds up? What has come to pass?

Last year's cotton-plants, desolately bowing,
Tremble in the March-wind, ragged and forlorn,
Red are the hillsides of the early ploughing,
Gray are the lowlands, waiting for the corn.
Earth seems asleep, but she is only feigning;
Deep in her bosom thrills a sweet unrest;
Look where the jasmine lavishly is raining
Jove's golden shower into Danaee's breast!

Now on the plum-tree a snowy bloom is sifted,
Now on the peach-tree, the glory of the rose,
Far o'er the hills a tender haze is drifted,

Full to the brim the yellow river flows.
Dark cypress boughs with vivid jewels glisten,
Greener than emeralds shining in the sun.
Whence comes the magic? Listen, sweetheart, listen!
The mocking-bird is singing: Spring is begun.

Hark, in his song no tremor of misgiving!
All of his heart he pours into his lay,--
"Love, love, love, and pure delight of living:
Winter is forgotten: here's a happy day!"
Fair in your face I read the flowery presage,
Snowy on your brow and rosy on your mouth:
Sweet in your voice I hear the season's message,--
Love, love, love, and Spring in the South!

1904.

HOW SPRING COMES TO SHASTA JIM

I never seen no "red gods"; I dunno wot's a "lure";
But if it's sumpin' takin', then Spring has got it sure;
An' it doesn't need no Kiplins, ner yet no London Jacks,
To make up guff about it, w'ile settin' in their shacks.

It's sumpin' very simple 'at happens in the Spring,
But it changes all the lookin's of every blessed thing;
The buddin' woods look bigger, the mountin' twice as high,
But the house looks kindo smaller, tho I couldn't tell ye why.

It's cur'ous wot a show-down the month of April makes,
Between the reely livin', an' the things 'at's only fakes!
Machines an' barns an' buildin's, they never give no sign;
But the livin' things look lively w'en Spring is on the line.

She doesn't come too suddin, ner she doesn't come too slow;
Her gaits is some cayprishus, an' the next ye never know,--
A single-foot o' sunshine, a buck o' snow er hail--
But don't be disapp'inted, fer Spring ain't goin' ter fail.

She's loopin' down the hillside,--the drifts is fadin' out.
She's runnin' down the river,--d'ye see them risin' trout?
She's loafin' down the canyon,--the squaw-bed's growin' blue,
An' the teeny Johnny-jump-ups is jest a-peekin' thru.

A thousan' miles o' pine-trees, with Douglas firs between,
Is waitin' fer her fingers to freshen up their green;
With little tips o' brightness the firs 'ill sparkle thick,
An' every yaller pine-tree, a giant candlestick!

The underbrush is risin' an' spreadin' all around,

Jest like a mist o' greenness 'at hangs above the ground;
A million manzanitas 'ill soon be full o' pink;
So saddle up, my sonny,--it's time to ride, I think!

We'll ford er swim the river, becós there ain't no bridge;
We'll foot the gulches careful, an' lope along the ridge;
We'll take the trail to Nowhere, an' travel till we tire,
An' camp beneath a pine-tree, an' sleep beside the fire.

We'll see the blue-quail chickens, an' hear 'em pipin' clear;
An' p'raps we'll sight a brown-bear, er else a bunch o' deer;
But nary a heathen goddess or god 'ill meet our eyes;
For why? There isn't any! They're jest a pack o' lies!

Oh, wot's the use o' "red gods," an' "Pan," an' all that stuff?
The natcheral facts o' Springtime is wonderful enuff!
An' if there's Someone made 'em' I guess He understood,
To be alive in Springtime would make a man feel good.

California, 1913.

THE FIRST BIRD O' SPRING

TO OLIVE WHEELER

Winter on Mount Shasta,
April down below;
Golden hours of glowing sun
Sudden showers of snow!
Under leafless thickets
Early wild-flowers cling;
But, oh, my dear, I'm fain to hear
The first bird o' Spring!

Alders are in tassel,
Maples are in bud;
Waters of the blue McCloud
Shout in joyful flood;
Through the giant pine-trees
Flutters many a wing;
But, oh, my dear, I long to hear
The first bird o' Spring!

Candle-light and fire-light
Mingle at "the Bend";
'Neath the roof of Bo-hai-pan
Light and shadow blend.
Sweeter than a wood-thrush
A maid begins to sing;
And, oh, my dear, I'm glad to hear

The first bird o' Spring!

The Bend, California, April 29, 1913.

A BUNCH OF TROUT-FLIES

FOR ARCHIE RUTLEDGE

Here's a half-a-dozen flies,
Just about the proper size
For the trout of Dickey's Run,--
Luck go with them every one!

Dainty little feathered beauties,
Listen now, and learn your duties:
Not to tangle in the box;
Not to catch on logs or rocks,
Boughs that wave or weeds that float,
Nor in the angler's "pants" or coat!
Not to lure the glutton frog
From his banquet in the bog;
Nor the lazy chub to fool,
Splashing idly round the pool;
Nor the sullen horned pout
From the mud to hustle out!

None of this vulgarian crew,
Dainty flies, is game for you.
Darting swiftly through the air
Guided by the angler's care,
Light upon the flowing stream
Like a winged fairy dream;
Float upon the water dancing,
Through the lights and shadows glancing,
Till the rippling current brings you,
And with quiet motion swings you,
Where a speckled beauty lies
Watching you with hungry eyes.

Here's your game and here's your prize!
Hover near him, lure him, tease him,
Do your very best to please him,
Dancing on the water foamy,
Like the frail and fair Salome,
Till the monarch yields at last,
Rises, and you have him fast!
Then remember well your duty,--
Do not lose, but land, your booty;
For the finest fish of all is
Salvelinus Fontinalis.

So, you plumed illusions, go,
Let my comrade Archie know
Every day he goes a-fishing
I'll be with him in well-wishing.
Most of all when lunch is laid
In the dappled orchard shade,
With Will, Corinne, and Dixie too,
Sitting as we used to do
Round the white cloth on the grass
While the lazy hours pass,
And the brook's contented tune
Lulls the sleepy afternoon,--
Then's the time my heart will be
With that pleasant company!

June 17, 1913.

A NOON-SONG

There are songs for the morning and songs for the night,
For sunrise and sunset, the stars and the moon;
But who will give praise to the fulness of light,
And sing us a song of the glory of noon?
Oh, the high noon, the clear noon,
The noon with golden crest;
When the blue sky burns, and the great sun turns
With his face to the way of the west!

How swiftly he rose in the dawn of his strength!
How slowly he crept as the morning wore by!
Ah, steep was the climbing that led him at length
To the height of his throne in the wide summer sky.
Oh, the long toil, the slow toil,
The toil that may not rest,
Till the sun looks down from his journey's crown,
To the wonderful way of the west!

Then a quietness falls over meadow and hill,
The wings of the wind in the forest are furled,
The river runs softly, the birds are all still,
The workers are resting all over the world.
Oh, the good hour, the kind hour,
The hour that calms the breast!
Little inn half-way on the road of the day,
Where it follows the turn to the west!

There's a plentiful feast in the maple-tree shade,
The lilt of a song to an old-fashioned tune,
The talk of a friend, or the kiss of a maid,

To sweeten the cup that we drink to the noon.
Oh, the deep noon, the full noon,
Of all the day the best!
When the blue sky burns, and the great sun turns
To his home by the way of the west!

1906.

TURN O' THE TIDE

The tide flows in to the harbour,--
The bold tide, the gold tide, the flood o' the sunlit sea,--
And the little ships riding at anchor,
Are swinging and slanting their prows to the ocean, panting
To lift their wings to the wide wild air,
And venture a voyage they know not where,--
To fly away and be free!

The tide runs out of the harbour,--
The low tide, the slow tide, the ebb o' the moonlit bay,--
And the little ships rocking at anchor,
Are rounding and turning their bows to the landward, yearning
To breathe the breath of the sun-warmed strand,
To rest in the lee of the high hill land,--
To hold their haven and stay!

My heart goes round with the vessels,--
My wild heart, my child heart, in love with the sea and the land,--
And the turn o' the tide passes through it,
In rising and falling with mystical currents, calling
At morn, to range where the far waves foam,
At night, to a harbour in love's true home,
With the hearts that understand!

Seal Harbour, August 12, 1911.

SIERRA MADRE

O mother mountains! billowing far to the snowlands,
Robed in aerial amethyst, silver, and blue,
Why do ye look so proudly down on the lowlands?
What have their groves and gardens to do with you?

Theirs is the languorous charm of the orange and myrtle,
Theirs are the fruitage and fragrance of Eden of old,--
Broad-boughed oaks in the meadows fair and fertile,
Dark-leaved orchards gleaming with globes of gold.

You, in your solitude standing, lofty and lonely,
Bear neither garden nor grove on your barren breasts;
Rough is the rock-loving growth of your canyons, and only
Storm-battered pines and fir-trees cling to your crests.

Why are ye throned so high, and arrayed in splendour
Richer than all the fields at your feet can claim?
What is your right, ye rugged peaks, to the tender
Queenly promise and pride of the mother-name?

Answered the mountains, dim in the distance dreaming:
"Ours are the forests that treasure the riches of rain;
Ours are the secret springs and the rivulets gleaming
Silverly down through the manifold bloom of the plain.

"Vain were the toiling of men in the dust of the dry land,
Vain were the ploughing and planting in waterless fields,
Save for the life-giving currents we send from the sky land,
Save for the fruit our embrace with the storm-cloud yields."

O mother mountains, Madre Sierra, I love you!
Rightly you reign o'er the vale that your bounty fills,--
Kissed by the sun, or with big, bright stars above you,--
I murmur your name and lift up mine eyes to the hills.

Pasadena, March, 1913.

SCHOOL

I put my heart to school
In the world where men grow wise:
"Go out," I said, "and learn the rule;
'Come back when you win a prize.'"

My heart came back again:
"Now where is the prize?" I cried.--
"The rule was false, and the prize was pain,
And the teacher's name was Pride."

I put my heart to school
In the woods where veeries sing
And brooks run clear and cool,
In the fields where wild flowers spring.

"And why do you stay so long
My heart, and where do you roam?"
The answer came with a laugh and a song,--
"I find this school is home."

April, 1901.

INDIAN SUMMER

A silken curtain veils the skies,
And half conceals from pensive eyes
 The bronzing tokens of the fall;
A calmness broods upon the hills,
And summer's parting dream distils
 A charm of silence over all.

The stacks of corn, in brown array,
Stand waiting through the tranquil day,
 Like tattered wigwams on the plain;
The tribes that find a shelter there
Are phantom peoples, forms of air,
 And ghosts of vanished joy and pain.

At evening when the crimson crest
Of sunset passes down the West,
 I hear the whispering host returning;
On far-off fields, by elm and oak,
I see the lights, I smell the smoke,--
 The Camp-fires of the Past are burning.

Tertius and Henry van Dyke.

November, 1903.

LIGHT BETWEEN THE TREES

Long, long, long the trail
 Through the brooding forest-gloom,
Down the shadowy, lonely vale
 Into silence, like a room
 Where the light of life has fled,
And the jealous curtains close
 Round the passionless repose
Of the silent dead.

Plod, plod, plod away,
 Step by step in mouldering moss;
Thick branches bar the day
 Over languid streams that cross
 Softly, slowly, with a sound
Like a smothered weeping,
 In their aimless creeping

Through enchanted ground.

"Yield, yield, yield thy quest,"
Whispers through the woodland deep:
"Come to me and be at rest;
I am slumber, I am sleep."
Then the weary feet would fail,
But the never-daunted will
Urges "Forward, forward still!
Press along the trail!"

Breast, breast, breast the slope
See, the path is growing steep.
Hark! a little song of hope
Where the stream begins to leap.
Though the forest, far and wide,
Still shuts out the bending blue,
We shall finally win through,
Cross the long divide.

On, on, on we tramp!
Will the journey never end?
Over yonder lies the camp;
Welcome waits us there, my friend,
Can we reach it ere the night?
Upward, upward, never fear!
Look, the summit must be near;
See the line of light!

Red, red, red the shine
Of the splendour in the west,
Glowing through the ranks of pine,
Clear along the mountain-crest!
Long, long, long the trail
Out of sorrow's lonely vale;
But at last the traveller sees
Light between the trees!

March, 1904.

THE FALL OF THE LEAVES

I

In warlike pomp, with banners flowing,
The regiments of autumn stood:
I saw their gold and scarlet glowing
From every hillside, every wood.

Above the sea the clouds were keeping
Their secret leaguer, gray and still;
They sent their misty vanguard creeping
With muffled step from hill to hill.

All day the sullen armies drifted
Athwart the sky with slanting rain;
At sunset for a space they lifted,
With dusk they settled down again.

II

At dark the winds began to blow
With mutterings distant, low;
From sea and sky they called their strength,
Till with an angry, broken roar,
Like billows on an unseen shore,
Their fury burst at length.

I heard through the night
The rush and the clamour;
The pulse of the fight
Like blows of Thor's hammer;
The pattering flight
Of the leaves, and the anguished
Moan of the forest vanquished.

At daybreak came a gusty song:
"Shout! the winds are strong.
The little people of the leaves are fled.
Shout! The Autumn is dead!"

III

The storm is ended! The impartial sun
Laughs down upon the battle lost and won,
And crowns the triumph of the cloudy host
In rolling lines retreating to the coast.

But we, fond lovers of the woodland shade,
And grateful friends of every fallen leaf,
Forget the glories of the cloud-parade,
And walk the ruined woods in quiet grief.

For ever so our thoughtful hearts repeat
On fields of triumph dirges of defeat;
And still we turn on gala-days to tread
Among the rustling memories of the dead.

THREE ALPINE SONNETS

I

THE GLACIER

At dawn in silence moves the mighty stream,
The silver-crested waves no murmur make;
But far away the avalanches wake
The rumbling echoes, dull as in a dream;
Their momentary thunders, dying, seem
To fall into the stillness, flake by flake,
And leave the hollow air with naught to break
The frozen spell of solitude supreme.

At noon unnumbered rills begin to spring
Beneath the burning sun, and all the walls
Of all the ocean-blue crevasses ring
With liquid lyrics of their waterfalls;
As if a poet's heart had felt the glow
Of sovereign love, and song began to flow.

Zermatt, 1872.

II

THE SNOW-FIELD

White Death had laid his pall upon the plain,
And crowned the mountain-peaks like monarchs
dead;
The vault of heaven was glaring overhead
With pitiless light that filled my eyes with pain;
And while I vainly longed, and looked in vain
For sign or trace of life, my spirit said,
"Shall any living thing that dares to tread
This royal lair of Death escape again?"

But even then I saw before my feet
A line of pointed footprints in the snow:
Some roving chamois, but an hour ago,
Had passed this way along his journey fleet,
And left a message from a friend unknown
To cheer my pilgrim-heart, no more alone.

Zermatt, 1872.

MOVING BELLS

I love the hour that comes, with dusky hair
 And dewy feet, along the Alpine dells,
 To lead the cattle forth. A thousand bells
 Go chiming after her across the fair
 And flowery uplands, while the rosy flare
 Of sunset on the snowy mountain dwells,
 And valleys darken, and the drowsy spells
 Of peace are woven through the purple air.

Dear is the magic of this hour: she seems
 To walk before the dark by falling rills,
 And lend a sweeter song to hidden streams;
 She opens all the doors of night, and fills
 With moving bells the music of my dreams,
 That wander far among the sleeping hills.

Gstaad, August, 1909.

A SNOW-SONG

Does the snow fall at sea?
 Yes, when the north winds blow,
 When the wild clouds fly low,
 Out of each gloomy wing,
 Silently glimmering,
 Over the stormy sea
 Falleth the snow.

Does the snow hide the sea?
 Nay, on the tossing plains
 Never a flake remains;
 Drift never resteth there;
 Vanishing everywhere,
 Into the hungry sea
 Falleth the snow.

What means the snow at sea?
 Whirled in the veering blast,
 Thickly the flakes drive past;
 Each like a childish ghost
 Wavers, and then is lost;
 In the forgetful sea
 Fadeth the snow.

1875.

ROSLIN AND HAWTHORNDEN

Fair Roslin Chapel, how divine
The art that reared thy costly shrine!
Thy carven columns must have grown
By magic, like a dream in stone.

Yet not within thy storied wall
Would I in adoration fall,
So gladly as within the glen
That leads to lovely Hawthornden.

A long-drawn aisle, with roof of green
And vine-clad pillars, while between,
The Esk runs murmuring on its way,
In living music night and day.

Within the temple of this wood
The martyrs of the covenant stood,
And rolled the psalm, and poured the prayer,
From Nature's solemn altar-stair.

Edinburgh, 1877.

THE HEAVENLY HILLS OF HOLLAND

The heavenly hills of Holland,--
How wondrously they rise
Above the smooth green pastures
Into the azure skies!
With blue and purple hollows,
With peaks of dazzling snow,
Along the far horizon
The clouds are marching slow.

No mortal foot has trodden
The summits of that range,
Nor walked those mystic valleys
Whose colours ever change;
Yet we possess their beauty,
And visit them in dreams,
While ruddy gold of sunset
From cliff and canyon gleams.

In days of cloudless weather
They melt into the light;
When fog and mist surround us

They're hidden from our sight;
But when returns a season
Clear shining after rain,
While the northwest wind is blowing,
We see the hills again.

The old Dutch painters loved them,
Their pictures show them fair,--
Old Hobbema and Ruysdael,
Van Goyen and Vermeer.
Above the level landscape,
Rich polders, long-armed mills,
Canals and ancient cities,--
Float Holland's heavenly hills.

The Hague, November, 1916.

FLOOD-TIDE OF FLOWERS

IN HOLLAND

The laggard winter ebbed so slow
With freezing rain and melting snow,
It seemed as if the earth would stay
Forever where the tide was low,
In sodden green and watery gray.

But now from depths beyond our sight,
The tide is turning in the night,
And floods of colour long concealed
Come silent rising toward the light,
Through garden bare and empty field.

And first, along the sheltered nooks,
The crocus runs in little brooks
Of joyance, till by light made bold
They show the gladness of their looks
In shining pools of white and gold.

The tiny scilla, sapphire blue,
Is gently seeping in, to strew
The earth with heaven; and sudden rills
Of sunlit yellow, sweeping through,
Spread into lakes of daffodils.

The hyacinths, with fragrant heads,
Have overflowed their sandy beds,
And fill the earth with faint perfume,
The breath that Spring around her she
And now the tulips break in bloom!

A sea, a rainbow-tinted sea,
A splendour and a mystery,
Floods o'er the fields of faded gray:
The roads are full of folks in glee,
For lo,--to-day is Easter Day!

April, 1916.

SALUTE TO THE TREES

Many a tree is found in the wood
And every tree for its use is good:
Some for the strength of the gnarled root,
Some for the sweetness of flower or fruit;
Some for shelter against the storm,
And some to keep the hearth-stone warm;
Some for the roof, and some for the beam,
And some for a boat to breast the stream;--
In the wealth of the wood since the world began
The trees have offered their gifts to man.

But the glory of trees is more than their gifts:
'Tis a beautiful wonder of life that lifts,
From a wrinkled seed in an earth-bound clod,
A column, an arch in the temple of God,
A pillar of power, a dome of delight,
A shrine of song, and a joy of sight!
Their roots are the nurses of rivers in birth;
Their leaves are alive with the breath of the earth;
They shelter the dwellings of man; and they bend
O'er his grave with the look of a loving friend.

I have camped in the whispering forest of pines,
I have slept in the shadow of olives and vines;
In the knees of an oak, at the foot of a palm
I have found good rest and slumber's balm.
And now, when the morning gilds the boughs
Of the vaulted elm at the door of my house,
I open the window and make salute:
"God bless thy branches and feed thy root!
Thou hast lived before, live after me,
Thou ancient, friendly, faithful tree."

February, 1920.

OF THE UNFAILING LIGHT

THE GRAND CANYON

DAYBREAK

What makes the lingering Night so cling to
thee?

Thou vast, profound, primeval hiding-place
Of ancient secrets,--gray and ghostly gulf
Cleft in the green of this high forest land,
And crowded in the dark with giant forms!
Art thou a grave, a prison, or a shrine?

A stillness deeper than the dearth of sound
Broods over thee: a living silence breathes
Perpetual incense from thy dim abyss.
The morning-stars that sang above the bower
Of Eden, passing over thee, are dumb
With trembling bright amazement; and the
Dawn
Steals through the glimmering pines with naked
feet,
Her hand upon her lips, to look on thee!

She peers into thy depths with silent prayer
For light, more light, to part thy purple veil.
O Earth, swift-rolling Earth, reveal, reveal,--
Turn to the East, and show upon thy breast
The mightiest marvel in the realm of Time!
'Tis done,--the morning miracle of light,--
The resurrection of the world of hues
That die with dark, and daily rise again
With every rising of the splendid Sun!

Be still, my heart! Now Nature holds her breath
To see the solar flood of radiance leap
Across the chasm, and crown the western rim
Of alabaster with a far-away
Rampart of pearl, and flowing down by walls
Of changeful opal, deepen into gold
Of topaz, rosy gold of tourmaline,
Crimson of garnet, green and gray of jade,
Purple of amethyst, and ruby red,
Beryl, and sard, and royal porphyry;
Until the cataract of colour breaks
Upon the blackness of the granite floor.

How far below! And all between is cleft

And carved into a hundred curving miles
Of unimagined architecture! Tombs,
Temples, and colonnades are neighboured there
By fortresses that Titans might defend,
And amphitheatres where Gods might strive.
Cathedrals, buttressed with unnumbered tiers
Of ruddy rock, lift to the sapphire sky
A single spire of marble pure as snow;
And huge aerial palaces arise
Like mountains built of unconsuming flame.
Along the weathered walls, or standing deep
In riven valleys where no foot may tread,
Are lonely pillars, and tall monuments
Of perished aeons and forgotten things.
My sight is baffled by the wide array
Of countless forms: my vision reels and swims
Above them, like a bird in whirling winds.
Yet no confusion fills the awful chasm;
But spacious order and a sense of peace
Brood over all. For every shape that looms
Majestic in the throng, is set apart
From all the others by its far-flung shade,
Blue, blue, as if a mountain-lake were there.

How still it is! Dear God, I hardly dare
To breathe, for fear the fathomless abyss
Will draw me down into eternal sleep.

What force has formed this masterpiece of awe?
What hands have wrought these wonders in the waste?
O river, gleaming in the narrow rift
Of gloom that cleaves the valley's nether deep,--
Fierce Colorado, prisoned by thy toil,
And blindly toiling still to reach the sea,--
Thy waters, gathered from the snows and springs
Amid the Utah hills, have carved this road
Of glory to the California Gulf.
But now, O sunken stream, thy splendour lost,
'Twi'x iron walls thou rollest turbid waves,
Too far away to make their fury heard!

At sight of thee, thou sullen labouring slave
Of gravitation,--yellow torrent poured
From distant mountains by no will of thine,
Through thrice a hundred centuries of slow
Fallings and liftings of the crust of Earth,--
At sight of thee my spirit sinks and fails.
Art thou alone the Maker? Is the blind
Unconscious power that drew thee dumbly down
To cut this gash across the layered globe,
The sole creative cause of all I see?
Are force and matter all? The rest a dream?

Then is thy gorge a canyon of despair,
A prison for the soul of man, a grave
Of all his dearest daring hopes! The world
Wherein we live and move is meaningless,
No spirit here to answer to our own!
The stars without a guide: The chance-born
Earth
Adrift in space, no Captain on the ship:
Nothing in all the universe to prove
Eternal wisdom and eternal love!
And man, the latest accident of Time,--
Who thinks he loves, and longs to understand,
Who vainly suffers, and in vain is brave,
Who dupes his heart with immortality,--
Man is a living lie,--a bitter jest
Upon himself,--a conscious grain of sand
Lost in a desert of unconsciousness,
Thirsting for God and mocked by his own thirst.

Spirit of Beauty, mother of delight,
Thou fairest offspring of Omnipotence
Inhabiting this lofty lone abode,
Speak to my heart again and set me free
From all these doubts that darken earth and
heaven!
Who sent thee forth into the wilderness
To bless and comfort all who see thy face?
Who clad thee in this more than royal robe
Of rainbows? Who designed these jewelled
thrones
For thee, and wrought these glittering palaces?
Who gave thee power upon the soul of man
To lift him up through wonder into joy?
God! let the radiant cliffs bear witness, God!
Let all the shining pillars signal, God!
He only, on the mystic loom of light,
Hath woven webs of loveliness to clothe
His most majestic works: and He alone
Hath delicately wrought the cactus-flower
To star the desert floor with rosy bloom.

O Beauty, handiwork of the Most High,
Where'er thou art He tells his Love to man,
And lo, the day breaks, and the shadows flee!

Now, far beyond all language and all art
In thy wild splendour, Canyon marvellous,
The secret of thy stillness lies unveiled
In worldless worship! This is holy ground;
Thou art no grave, no prison, but a shrine.
Garden of Temples filled with Silent Praise,
If God were blind thy Beauty could not be!

February 24-26, 1913.

GOD OF THE OPEN AIR

I

Thou who hast made thy dwelling fair
With flowers below, above with starry lights
And set thine altars everywhere,--
On mountain heights,
In woodlands dim with many a dream,
In valleys bright with springs,
And on the curving capes of every stream:
Thou who hast taken to thyself the wings
Of morning, to abide
Upon the secret places of the sea,
And on far islands, where the tide
Visits the beauty of untrodden shores,
Waiting for worshippers to come to thee
In thy great out-of-doors!
To thee I turn, to thee I make my prayer,
God of the open air.

II

Seeking for thee, the heart of man
Lonely and longing ran,
In that first, solitary hour,
When the mysterious power
To know and love the wonder of the morn
Was breathed within him, and his soul was born;
And thou didst meet thy child,
Not in some hidden shrine,
But in the freedom of the garden wild,
And take his hand in thine,--
There all day long in Paradise he walked,
And in the cool of evening with thee talked.

III

Lost, long ago, that garden bright and pure,
Lost, that calm day too perfect to endure,
And lost the child-like love that worshipped
and was sure!
For men have dulled their eyes with sin,
And dimmed the light of heaven with doubt,
And built their temple walls to shut thee in,

And framed their iron creeds to shut thee out.
But not for thee the closing of the door,
 O Spirit unconfined!
 Thy ways are free
As is the wandering wind,
And thou hast wooed thy children, to restore
 Their fellowship with thee,
In peace of soul and simpleness of mind.

IV

Joyful the heart that, when the flood rolled by,
Leaped up to see the rainbow in the sky;
And glad the pilgrim, in the lonely night,
For whom the hills of Haran, tier on tier,
Built up a secret stairway to the height
Where stars like angel eyes were shining clear.
From mountain-peaks, in many a land and
 age,
 Disciples of the Persian seer
Have hailed the rising sun and worshipped
 thee;
And wayworn followers of the Indian sage
Have found the peace of God beneath a spreading
 tree.

V

But One, but One,--ah, Son most dear,
And perfect image of the Love Unseen,--
 Walked every day in pastures green,
And all his life the quiet waters by,
Reading their beauty with a tranquil eye.
To him the desert was a place prepared
 For weary hearts to rest;
 The hillside was a temple blest;
 The grassy vale a banquet-room
Where he could feed and comfort many a
 guest.
 With him the lily shared
The vital joy that breathes itself in bloom;
And every bird that sang beside the nest
Told of the love that broods o'er every living
 thing.

He watched the shepherd bring
His flock at sundown to the welcome fold,
The fisherman at daybreak fling
His net across the waters gray and cold,
And all day long the patient reaper swing
His curving sickle through the harvest gold.

So through the world the foot-path way he trod,
Breathing the air of heaven in every breath;
And in the evening sacrifice of death
Beneath the open sky he gave his soul to God.
Him will I trust, and for my Master take;
Him will I follow; and for his dear sake,
God of the open air,
To thee I make my prayer.

VI

From the prison of anxious thought that greed has builded,
From the fetters that envy has wrought and pride has gilded,
From the noise of the crowded ways and the fierce confusion,
From the folly that wastes its days in a world of illusion,
(Ah, but the life is lost that frets and languishes there!)
I would escape and be free in the joy of the open air.
By the breadth of the blue that shines in silence o'er me,
By the length of the mountain-lines that stretch before me,
By the height of the cloud that sails, with rest in motion,
Over the plains and the vales to the measureless ocean,
(Oh, how the sight of the greater things enlarges the eyes!)
Draw me away from myself to the peace of the hills and skies.

While the tremulous leafy haze on the woodland is spreading,
And the bloom on the meadow betrays where May has been treading;
While the birds on the branches above, and the brooks flowing under,
Are singing together of love in a world full of wonder,
(Lo, in the magic of Springtime, dreams are changed into truth!)
Quicken my heart, and restore the beautiful hopes of youth.

By the faith that the wild-flowers show when they bloom unbidden,
By the calm of the river's flow to a goal that is hidden,
By the strength of the tree that clings to its deep foundation,
By the courage of birds' light wings on the long migration,
(Wonderful spirit of trust that abides in Nature's breast!)
Teach me how to confide, and live my life, and rest.

For the comforting warmth of the sun that my body embraces,
For the cool of the waters that run through the shadowy places,
For the balm of the breezes that brush my face with their fingers,
For the vesper-hymn of the thrush when the twilight lingers,
For the long breath, the deep breath, the breath of a heart without care,--
I will give thanks and adore thee, God of the open air!

VII

These are the gifts I ask
Of thee, Spirit serene:
Strength for the daily task,
Courage to face the road,

Good cheer to help me bear the traveller's load,
And, for the hours of rest that come between,
An inward joy in all things heard and seen.
These are the sins I fain
Would have thee take away:
Malice, and cold disdain,
Hot anger, sullen hate,
Scorn of the lowly, envy of the great,
And discontent that casts a shadow gray
On all the brightness of the common day.
These are the things I prize
And hold of dearest worth:
Light of the sapphire skies,
Peace of the silent hills,
Shelter of forests, comfort of the grass,
Music of birds, murmur of little rills,
Shadows of cloud that swiftly pass,
And, after showers,
The smell of flowers
And of the good brown earth,--
And best of all, along the way, friendship and mirth.
So let me keep
These treasures of the humble heart
In true possession, owning them by love;
And when at last I can no longer move
Among them freely, but must part
From the green fields and from the waters clear,
Let me not creep
Into some darkened room and hide
From all that makes the world so bright and dear;
But throw the windows wide
To welcome in the light;
And while I clasp a well-beloved hand,
Let me once more have sight
Of the deep sky and the far-smiling land,--
Then gently fall on sleep,
And breathe my body back to Nature's care,
My spirit out to thee, God of the open air.

1904.

IV

WAYFARING PSALMS IN PALESTINE

THE DISTANT ROAD

Blessed is the man that beholdeth the face of a friend in a far country,
The darkness of his heart is melted by the dawning of day within him,

It is like the sound of a sweet music heard long ago and half forgotten:
It is like the coming back of birds to a wood when the winter is ended.

I knew not the sweetness of the fountain till I found it flowing in the
desert,
Nor the value of a friend till we met in a land that was crowded and
lonely.

The multitude of mankind had bewildered me and oppressed me,
And I complained to God, Why hast thou made the world so wide?

But when my friend came the wideness of the world had no more terror,
Because we were glad together among men to whom we were strangers.

It seemed as if I had been reading a book in a foreign language,
And suddenly I came upon a page written in the tongue of my childhood.

This was the gentle heart of my friend who quietly understood me,
The open and loving heart whose meaning was clear without a word.

O thou great Companion who carest for all thy pilgrims and strangers,
I thank thee heartily for the comfort of a comrade on the distant road.

THE WELCOME TENT

This is the thanksgiving of the weary,
The song of him that is ready to rest.

It is good to be glad when the day is declining,
And the setting of the sun is like a word of peace.

The stars look kindly on the close of a journey,
The tent says welcome when the day's march is done.

For now is the time of the laying down of burdens,
And the cool hour cometh to them that have borne the heat.

I have rejoiced greatly in labour and adventure;
My heart hath been enlarged in the spending of my strength.

Now it is all gone, yet I am not impoverished,
For thus only I inherit the treasure of repose.

Blessed be the Lord that teacheth my fingers to loosen,
And cooleth my feet with water after the dust of the way.

Blessed be the Lord that giveth me hunger at nightfall,

And filleth my evening cup with the wine of good cheer.

Blessed be the Lord that maketh me happy to be quiet,
Even as a child that cometh softly to his mother's lap.

O God, thy strength is never worn away with labour:
But it is good for us to be weary and receive thy gift of rest.

THE GREAT CITIES

How wonderful are the cities that man hath builded:
Their walls are compacted of heavy stones,
And their lofty towers rise above the tree-tops.

Rome, Jerusalem, Cairo, Damascus,--
Venice, Constantinople, Moscow, Pekin,--
London, New York, Berlin, Paris, Vienna,--

These are the names of mighty enchantments,
They have called to the ends of the earth,
They have secretly summoned a host of servants.

They shine from far sitting beside great waters,
They are proudly enthroned upon high hills,
They spread out their splendour along the rivers.

Yet are they all the work of small patient fingers,
Their strength is in the hand of man,
He hath woven his flesh and blood into their glory.

The cities are scattered over the world like anthills,
Every one of them is full of trouble and toil,
And their makers run to and fro within them.

Abundance of riches is laid up in their treasuries,
But they are tormented with the fear of want,
The cry of the poor in their streets is exceeding bitter.

Their inhabitants are driven by blind perturbations,
They whirl sadly in the fever of haste,
Seeking they know not what, they pursue it fiercely.

The air is heavy-laden with their breathing,
The sound of their coming and going is never still,
Even in the night I hear them whispering and crying.

Beside every ant-hill I behold a monster crouching:
This is the ant-lion Death,
He thrusteth forth his tongue and the people perish.

O God of wisdom thou hast made the country:
Why hast thou suffered man to make the town?

Then God answered, Surely I am the maker of man:
And in the heart of man I have set the city.

THE FRIENDLY TREES

I will sing of the bounty of the big trees,
They are the green tents of the Almighty,
He hath set them up for comfort and for shelter.

Their cords hath he knotted in the earth,
He hath driven their stakes securely,
Their roots take hold of the rocks like iron.

He sendeth into their bodies the sap of life,
They lift themselves lightly toward the heavens.
They rejoice in the broadening of their branches.

Their leaves drink in the sunlight and the air,
They talk softly together when the breeze bloweth,
Their shadow in the noon-day is full of coolness.

The tall palm-trees of the plain are rich in fruit,
While the fruit ripeneth the flower unfoldeth,
The beauty of their crown is renewed on high forever.

The cedars of Lebanon are fed by the snow,
Afar on the mountain they grow like giants,
In their layers of shade a thousand years are dreaming.

How fair are the trees that befriend the home of man,
The oak, and the terebinth, and the sycamore,
The broad-leaved fig-tree and the delicate silvery olive.

In them the Lord is loving to his little birds,
The linnets and the finches and the nightingales,
They people his pavilions with nests and with music.

The cattle also are very glad of a great tree,
They chew the cud beneath it while the sun is burning,
And there the panting sheep lie down around their shepherd.

He that planteth a tree is a servant of God,
He provideth a kindness for many generations,
And faces that he hath not seen shall bless him.

Lord, when my spirit shall return to thee,
At the foot of a friendly tree let my body be buried,

That this dust may rise and rejoice among the branches.

THE PATHWAY OF RIVERS

The rivers of God are full of water,
They are wonderful in the renewal of their strength,
He poureth them out from a hidden fountain.

They are born among the hills in the high places,
Their cradle is in the bosom of the rocks,
The mountain is their mother and the forest is their father.

They are nourished among the long grasses,
They receive the tribute of a thousand springs,
The rain and the snow provide their inheritance.

They are glad to be gone from their birthplace,
With a joyful noise they hasten away,
They are going forever and never departed.

The courses of the rivers are all appointed;
They roar loudly but they follow the road,
For the finger of God hath marked their pathway.

The rivers of Damascus rejoice among their gardens;
The great river of Egypt is proud of his ships;
The Jordan is lost in the Lake of Bitterness.

Surely the Lord guideth them every one in his wisdom,
In the end he gathereth all their drops on high,
And sendeth them forth again in the clouds of mercy.

O my God, my life floweth away like a river:
Guide me, I beseech thee, in a pathway of good:
Let me run in blessing to my rest in thee.

THE GLORY OF RUINS

The lizard rested on the rock while I sat among the ruins,
And the pride of man was like a vision of the night.

Lo, the lords of the city have disappeared into darkness,
The ancient wilderness hath swallowed up all their work.

There is nothing left of the city but a heap of fragments;
The bones of a vessel broken by the storm.

Behold the waves of the desert wait hungrily for man's dwellings,
And the tides of desolation return upon his toil.

All that he hath painfully built up is shaken down in a moment,
The memory of his glory is buried beneath the billows of sand.

Then a voice said, Look again upon the ruins,
These broken arches have taught generations to build.

Moreover the name of this city shall be remembered,
For here a poor man spoke a word that shall not die.

This is the glory that is stronger than the desert;
God hath given eternity to the thought of man.

THE TRIBE OF THE HELPERS

The ways of the world are full of haste and turmoil;
I will sing of the tribe of the helpers who travel in peace.

He that turneth from the road to rescue another,
Turneth toward his goal:
He shall arrive in time by the foot-path of mercy,
God will be his guide.

He that taketh up the burden of the fainting,
Lighteneth his own load:
The Almighty will put his arms underneath him,
He shall lean upon the Lord.

He that speaketh comfortable words to mourners,
Healeth his own hurt;
In the time of grief they will come to his remembrance.
God will use them for balm.

He that careth for a wounded brother,
Watcheth not alone:
There are three in the darkness together,
And the third is the Lord.

Blessed is the way of the helpers,
The companions of the Christ.

GOOD TEACHER

The Lord is my teacher,
I shall not lose the way.

He leadeth me in the lowly path of learning,
He prepareth a lesson for me every day;
He bringeth me to the clear fountains of instruction,
Little by little he showeth me the beauty of truth.

The world is a great book that he hath written,
He turneth the leaves for me slowly;
They are inscribed with images and letters,
He poureth light on the pictures and the words.

He taketh me by the hand to the hill-top of vision,
And my soul is glad when I perceive his meaning;
In the valley also he walketh beside me,
In the dark places he whispereth to my heart.

Even though my lesson be hard it is not hopeless,
For the Lord is patient with his slow scholar;
He will wait awhile for my weakness,
And help me to read the truth through tears.

THE CAMP-FIRES OF MY FRIEND

Thou hast taken me into thy tent of the world, O God,
Beneath thy blue canopy I have found shelter,
Therefore thou wilt not deny me the right of a guest.

Naked and poor I arrived at thy door before sunset:
Thou hast refreshed me with beautiful bowls of milk,
As a great chief thou hast set forth food in abundance.

I have loved the daily delights of thy dwelling,
Thy moon and thy stars have lighted me to my bed,
In the morning I have made merry with thy servants.

Surely thou wilt not send me away in the darkness?
There the enemy Death is lying in wait for my soul:
Thou art the host of my life and I claim thy protection.

Then the Lord of the tent of the world made answer:
_The right of a guest endureth for a certain time,
After three days and nights cometh the day of departure.

Yet hearken to me since thou fearest to go in the dark:
I will make with thee a new covenant of hospitality,
Behold I will come unto thee as a stranger and be thy guest.

Poor and needy will I come that thou mayest entertain me,
Meek and lowly will I come that thou mayest find a friend,
With mercy and with truth will I come to give thee comfort.

Therefore open thy heart to me and bid me welcome,
In this tent of the world I will be thy brother of the bread,
And when thou farest forth I will be thy companion forever._

Then my soul rested in the word of the Lord;
And I saw that the curtains of the world were shaken,
But I looked beyond them to the stars,
The camp-fires of my eternal friend.

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