

A black and white portrait of an elderly man with white, wavy hair and glasses. He is looking slightly to the right with a gentle expression. He is wearing a dark sweater over a light-colored collared shirt. A small, ornate brooch is pinned to the collar. The background is dark and out of focus.

# The Quest

John G. Neihardt

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## THE QUEST

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# THE QUEST

BY

JOHN G. NEIHARDT



excelsior editions

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*To*

THE WOMEN OF MY FAMILY

"MIGHTY GIVERS, MEAGRE TAKERS,  
MOTHER, SISTER, WIFE."

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## NOTE

IN selecting the material for this volume, chiefly from my three former collections of lyrics, *A Bundle of Myrrh* (1907), *Man-Song* (1909), and *The Stranger at the Gate* (1912), it has been my intention to include only those poems which, having been read widely, have won approval.

The careful reader will doubtless note that the present arrangement of the poems is not arbitrary, having been determined in accordance with the succession of attitudes toward life incident to growth out of the erotic period into manhood. Such a reader, therefore, will not pass judgment on the whole book according as his temperament and individual experience have prepared him to like or dislike any isolated section; rather, he will be likely to appraise the volume as an organic thing.

I have retained all but five poems of *A Bundle of Myrrh*. That sequence seems to have become fixed in the consciousness of many, and its continuous appeal would seem to testify to its veracity as one record of a common human experience. That cycle and the subsequent group of

poems ending with "Nuptial Song" cover the erotic period, the desires of which are justified in the normal experience of parenthood celebrated in the next sequence, *The Stranger at the Gate*. Thereupon follow poems variously concerned with one man's attitude toward his art, his fellow men, and Nature, together with some of his hopes and guesses concerning his probable relation to the cosmos.

A number of poems not hitherto collected are included in this volume.

J. G. N.

1916.

# CONTENTS

## A BUNDLE OF MYRRH

	PAGE
LINES IN LATE MARCH . . . . .	5
THE WITLESS MUSICIAN . . . . .	7
THE SOUND MY SPIRIT CALLS YOU . . . . .	9
AT PARTING . . . . .	12
LONGING . . . . .	14
SHOULD WE FORGET . . . . .	16
COME BACK . . . . .	17
IN AUTUMN . . . . .	18
THE SUBTLE SPIRIT . . . . .	20
CHASER OF DIM VAST FIGURES . . . . .	21
THE TEMPLE OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS . . . . .	23
WHEN I AM DEAD . . . . .	27
IN DEJECTION . . . . .	28
A FANCY . . . . .	30
RETROSPECT . . . . .	31
RECOGNITION . . . . .	33
CONFESSION . . . . .	35
WEARY . . . . .	36
IF THIS BE SIN . . . . .	37

	PAGE
LET DOWN YOUR HAIR . . . . .	39
THE LYRIC NIGHT . . . . .	41
TITAN-WOMAN . . . . .	43
THE MORNING GIRL . . . . .	45
THE CITY OF DUST . . . . .	47
THE FOOL'S MOTHER . . . . .	49
LET ME LIVE OUT MY YEARS . . . . .	50
PRAYER OF AN ALIEN SOUL . . . . .	51
THE ANCIENT STORY . . . . .	54
THE LAST ALTAR . . . . .	56
RESURRECTION . . . . .	58

A VISION OF WOMAN

A VISION OF WOMAN . . . . .	63
WOMAN-WINE . . . . .	72
EROS . . . . .	75
GÆA, MOTHER GÆA! . . . . .	77
NUPTIAL-SONG . . . . .	81

THE STRANGER AT THE GATE

THE WEAVERS . . . . .	87
THE STORY . . . . .	90
THE NEWS . . . . .	94
IN THE NIGHT . . . . .	96
BREAK OF DAY . . . . .	99
SONG TO THE SUN . . . . .	102
END OF SUMMER . . . . .	104

## CONTENTS

xi

	PAGE
HYMN BEFORE BIRTH . . . . .	106
TRIUMPH . . . . .	109
THE CHILD'S HERITAGE . . . . .	111
LULLABY . . . . .	113

### THE POET'S TOWN

THE POET'S TOWN . . . . .	117
THE POET'S ADVICE . . . . .	126
HARK THE MUSIC . . . . .	129
APRIL THE MAIDEN . . . . .	130
APRIL THEOLOGY . . . . .	131
MORNING-GLORIES . . . . .	134
INVITATIONS . . . . .	136
AND THE LITTLE WIND— . . . . .	138
PRAIRIE STORM RUNE . . . . .	141
PRAYER FOR PAIN . . . . .	146
BATTLE-CRY . . . . .	148
THE LYRIC . . . . .	150
LONESOME IN TOWN . . . . .	151
MONEY . . . . .	153
SONG OF THE TURBINE WHEEL . . . . .	154
THE RED WIND COMES! . . . . .	156
CRY OF THE PEOPLE . . . . .	159
O LYRIC MASTER! . . . . .	161
KATHARSIS . . . . .	163
THE FARMER'S THANKSGIVING (1914) . . . . .	165
THE VOICE OF NEMESIS . . . . .	167
ECHO SONG . . . . .	170

	PAGE
FOUNTAIN SONG . . . . .	172
OUTWARD . . . . .	173
THE GHOSTLY BROTHER . . . . .	175
WHEN I HAVE GONE WEIRD WAYS . . . . .	179
ENVOI . . . . .	181

**A BUNDLE OF MYRRH**  
**A SEQUENCE OF SONGS AND CHANTS**

*“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,  
Fair as the moon,  
Clear as the sun,  
And terrible as an army with banners?”*

## PRELUDE

*I would sing as the Wind ;  
As the autumn Wind, big with rain and sad with pre-  
natal dread.*

*I would sing as the Storm ;  
As the Storm whipped by the lightning and strong with  
giant despair.*

*I would sing as the Snow ;  
Wailing and hissing and writhing in the merciless grasp  
of the Blizzard.*

*I would sing as the Prairie ;  
As the Prairie droning in the heat, satisfied, drowsy and  
mystical.*

*For I am a part of the Prairie,  
Kin to the Wind and the Lightning.*

*I love as the Prairie might love ;  
As the Storm would hate, I hate.*

*I feel the despair of the Storm,  
Rejoice with the joy of the River.*

*Even as these would sing in their differing moods, I sing !*

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# THE QUEST

## A BUNDLE OF MYRRH

### I

#### LINES IN LATE MARCH

I WHISTLE; why not?  
Have I not seen the first strips of green winding  
up the sloughs?  
Have I not heard the meadow-lark?  
I have looked into soft blue skies and have been  
uplifted!

Where are the doubts and the dark ideas I entertained?  
What have I caught from the maple-buds that  
changes me?  
Or was it the meadow-lark — or the blue sky —  
or the strips of green?  
The green that winds up the sloughs?

I sought the dark and found much of it.  
Is there in truth much darkness?

Have the meadow-larks lied to me?  
Have the green grass and the blue sky testified  
falsely?

I want to trust the sky and the grass!  
I want to believe the songs I hear from the fence-  
posts!  
Why should a maple-bud mislead me?

## II

### THE WITLESS MUSICIAN

SHE is my violin !  
As the violinist lays his ear to his instrument  
That he may catch the low vibrations of the  
    deeper strings,  
So I lay my ear to her breast.  
I hear her blood singing and I am shaken with  
    ecstasy ;  
For am I not the musician ?

She is my harp — I play upon her.  
I touch her, and she trembles as a harp with the  
    first chord of a revery.  
I lay my hands upon her with that divine thrill  
    in my finger-tips,  
That reverent nervousness of the fingers,  
Which a harpist feels when he reaches for a  
    ravishing chord,  
Elusive chord from among the labyrinthine  
    strings.

I am a musician for the first time!  
I have found an instrument to play upon!  
She is my violin — she is my harp!

A song slept in her blood.  
None had found it — and it slept.  
Lo! I — even I who am so poor in power,  
Who was a pauper in conception of harmony,  
I have awakened by chance the slumbering song!

I am lost in the spaciousness of it;  
I am only a part of the song which I have  
awakened mysteriously.

Lo, I, the witless musician!  
I have wrought even as Masters of Melody,  
Even as Masters of Song!

### III

#### THE SOUND MY SPIRIT CALLS YOU

I WOULD I knew some slow soft sound to call you :  
Some slow soft syllable that should linger on the  
lip  
As loath to pass, because of its own sweetness.

I cannot shape the sound — tho' I have heard it ;  
Heard it in the night-wind and the rush of the  
rain !  
Heard it in the dull monotony of the dozing noon !  
Heard it among the leaves when Winds were  
fagged at nightfall !

Kind as the shade, this sound :  
Kind as the dull blue shade that blade-like cuts  
A kingdom of coolness from the cruel Noon :  
Soft as the kiss of the Stream to the drooping  
Leaf ;  
Sad as the pale Sun's smile over the Blizzard's  
bier ;

Deep and resonant as distant thunder after a day  
of heat;  
Mystic as the dream of the illimitable Prairie  
under the August glare;  
Mysterious as the blue haze in which the turbid  
River dwindles to a creek !

I cannot speak the language of the Hills.  
I am unskilled to sing the notes of the June South-  
wind.  
The Noon croons not with such a tongue as mine.  
Yet — even tho' I be dead, this sound shall call  
you for me !  
In the still blue nights — listen ! and you shall  
hear it !  
In the burst of the storm it shall be as a whisper  
to you !  
The Morning shall sing it for you and the Sunset  
paint its meaning,  
Even upon a background of burning gold, and  
from the palette of the Rainbow !

I would that my tongue could shape this sound  
my spirit calls you.  
It would be as a rose-leaf becoming vocal ;  
As a honeycomb talking of sweetness !

THE SOUND MY SPIRIT CALLS YOU 11

And it would pass slowly and gloriously as a sunset  
passes;  
Gloriously and lingeringly it would die away,  
Leaving upon my strangely nervous lips  
The faint suggestion of a fragrance.

## IV

### AT PARTING

No more from light to light, from gloom to gloom,  
Shall you grow up about me, making bloom  
Each individual moment like a rose.  
From morning to the quiet evening's close,  
From dusk unto the coming of the sun,  
I feel the hours grow empty one by one.

And yet in spite of our diverging ways,  
You have a place in all my nights and days.  
The lonely dusk, enchanted by the moon,  
Shall sing you to me with a quiet tune.  
When skies grow soft and blue in after days,  
Then shall I feel your pure, calm, searching gaze.  
And ever when the Green World wakes in dew,  
It shall be fragrant with the soul of you.

So Night shall be my servant, and the Day  
Shall conjure back that which has passed away ;

That ever luring and elusive thing —  
A song that I conceived, but could not sing;  
A dream I dreamed, but waking could not live;  
Sweet wine for which my goblet was a sieve!

V

LONGING

Oh hold no more the prize of wealth before me,  
Nor hope of praise;  
Nor talk of things men toil for, to deplore me  
My dream-filled days!

Give me a fastness distant from the city,  
The human sea  
Which I would hate, were not I forced to pity,  
Because akin to me.

There in the wilds with only you to love me  
And none to hate,  
I could feel Something good and strong above me,  
More kind than Fate.

The Wind would take my hand and lead me kindly  
Through the wild;  
And teach me to believe in beauty blindly,  
Like a child.

I could forget the aches of hope and failing,  
That with slow fires consume  
This fevered flesh that goes on groping, wailing  
Toward the gloom.

**LONGING**

**15**

**Far from the bitter grin of human faces  
I could sing :  
Robed in the vast and lonesome purple spaces  
Like a king.**

## VI

### SHOULD WE FORGET

I WONDER if the skies would be so blue,  
Or grass so kindly green as 'twas of old,  
Or would there be such freshness in the dew  
When purple mornings blossom into gold :  
I wonder would the sudden song of birds,  
Thrilling the storm-hushed forest dripping wet  
After a June shower, be as idle words,  
Should we forget.

I wonder if we'd feel the charm of night  
Divinely lonesome with the changing moons ;  
Or would we prize the intermittent light  
Burning the zenith with its transient noons.  
I wonder if the twilight could avail  
To charm us, as of old when suns had set,  
If all these many dream-sweet days should fail —  
And we forget.

## VII

### COME BACK

COME back and bring the summer in your eyes,  
The peace of evening in your quiet ways;  
Come back and lead again to Paradise  
The errant days!

Of old I saw the sunlight on the corn,  
The wind-blown ripple running on the wheat;  
But now the ways are shabby and forlorn  
That knew your feet.

Forget the words meant only by my lips!  
Could you not understand  
The language of my fevered finger-tips  
When last you took my hand?

VIII  
IN AUTUMN

DREAR, dull autumnal rain,  
Skies washed to gray;  
Winds sighing like an unfleshed ancient pain;  
Uncanny day!

A time for tears and musings on the past,  
For vain regret;  
A time to dream of joys that could not last  
But mock us yet.

A time to dream of winter and to mourn;  
To hear sad tunes;  
To yearn unto the far and shadowed bourne  
Of perished Junes.

Yet not for me this drear autumnal mood,  
This winter fear;  
I view from no dull mental solitude  
The aging year.

For me — the memory of sun-shot days,  
Nights kind and warm;  
Moons purpling the weird star-enchanted haze;  
The April storm.

The rain's drone on the roof, the wind's lament  
Among the trees;  
These make me hear through days of warm content  
The hum of bees.

Because I see with eyes that saw your face  
As none had seen;  
And hear with ears that heard you — every place  
Is summer-green.

And I shall hear the robin through the fall  
And in the snow;  
Because you live and breathe and love in all,  
Where'er I go.

## IX

### THE SUBTLE SPIRIT

I **BUILT** a temple for my spirit's home;  
I filled it with myself — and it was fair.  
From its dream-pavement to its dream-reared  
dome  
No spirit but my own existed there.  
About the walls I wrought with doting care  
Huge fancies alien to the world of men,  
Vague daubs and vast of youth and light and air.  
Sublimely isolated in my spirit's den,  
I lived and toiled and dreamed, and hoped — and  
then — and then —

Another spirit entered, subtle, slow,  
Like summer coming when the winter flees,  
With eyes that had the soft, warm, quiet glow  
Of some calm evening of a day of ease:  
And that was you! I felt, upon my knees,  
A swift, mysterious spreading of the place!  
My poor walls seemed to hold infinities  
Too vast for peace! I fell upon my face  
And worshipped you at last, the spirit of the  
place!

## X

### CHASER OF DIM VAST FIGURES

CHASER of dim vast figures in the mist,  
Drawn by far cries, an alien to content,  
Builder of burning worlds that passed in gloom,  
Vain architect of great sky-spaces, filled  
With unreal suns uncurtaining the day  
That fell again in dismal night — 'Twas I !

A pygmy in all else but daring dreams,  
A grasper after monstrous shadow-shapes,  
With stars for eyes and mass of cloud for cloak  
And dreams for blood and winds of night for voice ;  
I sought, they fled ; and wailing after — I !

And wailing after — I : for somewhere lurked  
The awful form of Beauty Absolute ;  
A pagan goddess, vast of limb and thigh,  
With burning hills for breasts, and for a face  
Dim features dazzled with an inward sun ;  
A form of classic curves, voluptuous slope  
Of neck and shoulders downward to the breasts ;  
Arms warm and languid as the soul of Love  
And scintillant as rockets of the dawn !

And at her feet I dreamed to lay my head,  
A pygmy worshipper, who could not reach  
Unto the ankles mountain-high, where blazed  
Circles of jewels like chained satellites,  
To touch which with my finger-tips were death!

And I would guess sweet guesses — how her hair  
Made sunlight upward where my eyes saw not;  
How sweet the thunder of her beating heart  
And terrible! I sought and found her not.

Yet everywhere I saw her with my soul:  
Saw her in girlhood, strolling with the Spring;  
And in the sultry summer sunsets saw  
The glory of her searching woman-eyes,  
That made me sing strange songs of sweet despair.  
And I have watched her hair trail down in flame  
The vapor plains and mountains of the West!  
Thus loving what was not, the dreamer — I!

And as I reached my eager arms to clasp  
The prodigy that fled — *you* filled them full,  
And in my hair I felt your fingers move,  
And felt your woman's lips about my face,  
And felt your cool cheek on my fevered cheek.  
So I have lost the wish to dream again.

## XI

### THE TEMPLE OF THE GREAT OUT- DOORS

Lo! I am the builder of a temple!  
Even I, who groped so long for God  
And laughed the cackling laugh to find the dark-  
ness empty,  
I am the builder of a temple!

The toiling shoulders of my dream heaved up the  
arch  
And set the pillars of the Dawn,  
The burning pillars of the Evening and the Dawn,  
Under the star-sprent, sun-shot, moon-enchanted  
dome of blue!

And I, who knew no God,  
Stood straight, unhumbled in my temple:  
I did not fear the subtle Mystery of the Darkness,  
And I was only glad to feel the miraculous rush of  
sunlight in my blood!

I did not bend the knee.  
I was unafraid, unashamed, careless and defiant.

I was a laughing Ego that felt within itself the  
thrill of potential godhood :  
I stood as in the centre of the Universe and  
laughed !

And in my temple there were songs and organ  
tones,  
And there was a silent Something holier than  
prayer.  
I heard the winds and the streams and the sounds  
of many birds :  
I heard the shouting of storms and the moaning of  
snows ;  
I heard my heart, and it was lifted up in song.  
The Wind passing in a gust was as though an organ  
had been stricken by the hands of a capricious  
Master !

There was movement in the air, motion in the  
leaves, a stirring in the grass,  
Even as of the reverent moving about of a congrega-  
tion.  
Yet I stood alone in my temple ; I stood alone and  
was not afraid.

But once a Something glided into my temple  
And I became afraid !

THE TEMPLE OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS 25

As the Moon-Woman of the Greeks the Something seemed,  
Lithe and swift and pale,  
A fitting human sheath for the keen chaste spirit  
of a sword!  
And then it seemed my temple was too small.  
The Presence filled it to the furthest nook!  
There was no lonesomeness in any cranny!

I knelt — and was afraid!

I felt the Presence in the winds;  
I heard it in the streams;  
I saw it in the restless changing of the clouds!  
I tried to be as I had been, unbending, not afraid  
— godless.

Subtle as the scent of the unseen swinging censer  
of the wild flowers  
That Presence crept upon me!

I fled from the terrible sunlight that burned the  
dome of my temple!  
Childlike I hid my head in the darkness!  
But I am not alone.

Where I have laughed defiantly into the blind  
emptiness,  
*Something moves!*

I have placed my irreverent hand upon a Something in the Shadow!

I tremble lest the Thing shall illumine itself as the Dawn;

I tremble lest at last I must see God —

*See God and laugh no more.*

## XII

### WHEN I AM DEAD

WHEN I am dead, and nervous hands have thrust  
My body downward into careless dust;  
I think the grave cannot suffice to hold  
My spirit 'prisoned in the sunless mould!  
Some subtle memory of you shall be  
A resurrection of the life of me.  
Yea, I shall be, because I love you so,  
The speechless spirit of all things that grow.  
You shall not touch a flower but it shall be  
Like a caress upon the cheek of me.  
I shall be patient in the common grass  
That I may feel your footfall when you pass.  
I shall be kind as rain and pure as dew,  
A loving spirit 'round the life of you.  
When your soft cheeks by odorous winds are  
fanned,  
'Twill be my kiss — and you will understand.  
But when some sultry, storm-bleared sun has  
set,  
*I will be lightning if you dare forget!*

XIII  
IN DEJECTION

THIS thing I hold so closely in my arms,  
Feeling its heart leap strongly at my kiss,  
Its eyes closed gently like two cloud-veiled stars,  
Its breath like some soft night wind on my neck;  
What is it? This soft thing I hold so closely?

Ah, head, like some pale flower asleep in shade,  
Ah, breast, at which my passionate hands have  
thrilled,  
O languid arms and white hands veined with blue,  
A little while and these may be a lump  
To make me shudder with a dismal dread!

O precious Thing of Flesh!  
Let me exhaust the softness of your cheek  
With one long desperate kiss, as one who drinks  
The final maddening drop before the cup  
Be shattered into dust! O let me breathe  
Your breath that I have made more quick and  
warm,

As one who drowns and takes the latest gasp !  
The time may come when my fond touch shall fail  
To cause your sigh, and my hot kiss be vain  
To make your blue-veined temples throb as now.

I see your sunken eyes, your rose-like cheek  
Burned black with agony ! And I shall be  
So jealous of the ground that shall embrace you,  
So jealous of the grass that grows above you,  
So jealous of the silence that enfolds you.

## XIV

### A FANCY

IF I should die, and some strong Voice should say,  
Unto my soul lost in the vast black deep,  
"Where wouldst thou take, O Soul, thy future  
way,  
Wouldst still live on in pain, or fall asleep?"  
It seems that I would answer: Let me creep  
Into the roots of some rose she loves well;  
Grow upward with the sap of June and steep  
The petals with this love I cannot tell;  
Breathe out these dreams in perfume that could  
speak  
My longings for her, for which words are weak!  
Thus grow one swift, soft summer day, then feel  
The pang of plucking through my fibres reel!  
I would not then go wailing after light;  
I would not feel the terror of the night;  
I would not weary of the endless rush  
Of mad blind cycles through the awful hush!

## XV

### RETROSPECT

WHEN first I looked upon your face  
It seemed to me it was not new;  
It seemed from some far-distant place  
I but remembered you :  
For some sweet subtle feeling told  
That we two once had loved of old.

The clear-cut curve of lip and chin,  
The low fond voice, the gentle way ;  
By these I knew that we had been  
Fond lovers in our day :  
It seemed I heard you singing still  
To me by some Thessalian rill !

Perhaps I was a shepherd lad  
And you a shepherd maid ;  
And oh ! what kisses sweet we had  
The while our two flocks strayed —  
Strayed off with distant bleat and bell  
Along some green Achæan dell.

Perhaps I was a bard and wrought  
Some golden martial story,

How Helen loved, how Hector fought,  
My harp a-thrill with glory :  
Again you bring those mystic years,  
I hear your praise, I feel your tears.

The golden God sat in my shell  
And Venus breathed in you ;  
Did I not sing both wild and well ?  
Did I not warmly woo ?  
Perhaps we swooned to some sweet wrong  
That thrilled us like a battle song !

O let us take the ancient way,  
The way we knew of old  
Ere Time flew o'er and made us gray,  
Ere Death had made us cold :  
Again the old sweet way begin ! —  
How can it lead us into sin ?

## XVI

### RECOGNITION

WHAT far-hurled cry is this — what subtle shout  
That drives the winter of my spirit out  
With trumpets and the cymballed joy of spring?  
No more am I the shivering beggared thing  
That dreamed of summer in a bed of snow!  
Hark how the scarlet trumpets madly blow  
A glad, delirious riot of sweet sound!

O I have found  
At last the one I lost so long ago  
In Thessaly, where Peneus' waters flow!  
For thou wert Lais, and of yore 'twas thus  
That thou didst speak to me — Hippolochus!  
And I have not forgot.

Still dreaming of the old impassioned spot,  
I passed through many pangful births in Time,  
Weaving in many tongues the aching rhyme  
That groped about and cried for thee in vain!  
Of many deaths I passed the gates of pain;  
And down to many hells the bitter ways

I trod, still seeking for the ancient days.  
Through many lands in many women's eyes  
I longed to overtake thee with surprise.

O the long ages that I sought for thee!  
Hast thou kept pure the ancient drink for me?  
Who touched with careless lips my goblet's brim,  
Daring to dream the vintage was for him?  
Half jealous of those lips of dust am I!

O let us journey back to Thessaly,  
And from faint echoes build the olden song!  
Hast thou forgotten, through these ages long,  
The tinkle of the sheep-bells and the shrill  
Glad oaten reeds of shepherds on the hill?  
Our days of sultry passion and the nights  
That flashed the dizzy lightning of delights?

At last I feel again thy finger-tips!  
Be as a purple grape upon my lips,  
Made sweet with dew of dreams, and wholly mine!  
O let me drink the sweet forbidden wine  
Crushed out with bruising kisses! Death is near,  
And I shall lose thee once again, my dear!

The dust of ages chokes me! Quick! The wine!  
Lift up the goblet of thy lips to mine!

The bony Terror! Hark his muffled drums! —  
*Let us be drunken when the Victor comes!*

## XVII

### CONFESSION

My love is like the snarl of haughty drums  
And blare of trumpets, when a great one comes  
Down some thronged breathless city thorough-  
fare :

And yours is like a song that fills the air  
Of evening when the dew has made it sweet  
And Peace walks through the dusk with quiet  
feet.

My love is like the visual shout of red  
That threads the drowsing of a poppy bed  
In summer, when the sun makes heavy heat :  
And yours is like the white flower, cool and sweet,  
That fills the kind shade with a pleasant scent,  
Unshrivelled by the sun and well content.

My dreams come robed in scarlet flame to me  
And lead through gardens of strange phantasy  
My fevered feet ; where heavy odors cling  
And birds of blood-red plumage nest and sing  
Delirious loves, mad doubts and sacred trust,  
The pathos and the joy of human dust.

## XVIII

### WEARY

My brain is weary with the whirling day !

Snatch me away !

Away from cold, sane living, quiet breath !

I ne'er have seen the proof of human laws :

Only the warm vast Cause

Shall lead me to your arms, your lips, your  
breast !

Teach me to wrest

The sweetness out of living unto death !

I only know I draw a fevered breath,

I only know my eyes are fagged and dim —

Fill up my soul with beauty to the brim !

I am so weary, and your mouth is red —

Pillow my head !

## XIX

### IF THIS BE SIN

CAN this be sin ?  
This ecstasy of arms and eyes and lips,  
This thrilling of caressing finger-tips,  
This toying with incomparable hair ?  
(I close my dazzled eyes, you are so fair !)  
This answer of caress to fond caress,  
This exquisite maternal tenderness ?  
How could so much of beauty enter in,  
If this be sin ?

Can it be wrong ?  
This cry of flesh to flesh, so like a song ?  
This fusing of two atoms with a kiss,  
Hurled to the black and pitiless abyss ?

Can it be crime  
That we should snatch one happy hour from  
Time —  
Time that has naught but death for you and me ?  
(How soon, O Dearest, shall we cease to be !)  
And could one frenzied hour of love or lust  
Augment the final tragedy of dust ?

E'en though we be two sinners burned with bliss,  
Kiss me again, that warm round woman's kiss!  
Close up the gates of gold! I go not in —  
If this be sin.

## XX

### LET DOWN YOUR HAIR

UNBIND your hair, and let its masses be  
Soft midnight on the weary eyes of me.  
I faint before the dazzle of your breast ;  
Make shadow with your hair that I may rest,  
And I will cool my fevered temples there :  
Let down your hair.

Ah — so ! It falls like night upon a day  
Too bright for peace. It is a cruel way  
That leads to this, alas, which is but pain.  
I am athirst — your tresses fall like rain ;  
Ah, wrap me close and bind me captive there  
Amid your hair !

How much my soul has given that my flesh  
Might lie a thrall in this enchanted mesh !  
Something I grope for that I used to hold ;  
Something it was bought dearly — cheaply sold ;  
Something divine was strangled unaware  
Here in your hair !

But no — I will not grieve — will not complain.  
Let your hair fall upon me like night rain  
And shut me from myself, and make me blind !  
How can I deem this bondage aught but kind ?  
And yet — I cannot sleep for some dumb care  
Here in your hair.

## XXI

### THE LYRIC NIGHT

O GIRL, if you could die before the dawn  
Makes shoddy this the garment of our dream,  
Above your shapely form of chiselled ice  
I could weep tears of gladness, seeing how  
The bitter freeze of death had chastened you !

But Day will come a-knocking at the blinds,  
Flooding the secret nooks of our delight.  
The night lamp's glow, conniving at our joy,  
Shall struggle vainly with the virile Dawn,  
Sending a loathsome odor from its grease;  
And all the gaud and tinsel of this dream  
That now seems gold, shall be a mockery !

Oh I could smile upon you here in death,  
For Death is chaste and wise and very kind ;  
But my soul aches that it must see you walk  
To-morrow in the vulgar gaze of Day,  
Lifelike, yet dead — so dead to what you were.

Kiss me again before the stars snuff out !  
Once more before the lyric Night be lost  
Amid the prosy droning of the Day !

## XXII

### TITAN-WOMAN

O GREAT kind Night,  
Calm Titan-Woman Night !  
Broad-bosomed, motherly, a comforter of men !  
Reach out thy arms for me  
And in thy jewelled hair  
Hide thou my face and blind mine aching eyes !

I hate the strumpet smile  
Of Day ! No peace hath she.  
Draw thou me closer to thy veiled face !  
For thou art womanlike,  
A lover and a mother,  
And thou canst wrap me close and make me dream,  
As one not cursed with light.  
I shall forget my flesh,  
This flesh that burns and aches  
And fevers into hideous, shameless deeds !

And in the sweet blind hours  
I shall seek out thy lips,  
I shall dream sweetly of thy Titan form ;

The languid majesty  
Of smooth colossal limbs  
At ease upon the hemisphere for couch !

And of thy veiled face  
Sweet fancies I shall fashion ;  
Half lover-like I seek thee, yearning toward thee !  
For I am sick of light,  
Mine eyes ache, I am weary.

O Woman, Titan-Woman !  
Though lesser ones forsake me,  
Yet thou wilt share my couch when I am weary.  
Thy fingers ! Ah, thy fingers !  
They touch me ! Lift me closer,  
Extinguish me amid thy jewelled tresses !

Thou wert the first great mother,  
Shalt be the last fair woman :  
White breasts of flesh grow cold, soft flesh lips  
wither :  
O First and Ultimate,  
O Night, thou Titan-Woman,  
Thou wilt not fail me when these fall to dust !

The moon upon thy forehead !  
The stars amid thy black locks !  
Extinguish me upon thy breast, amid thy tresses !

### XXIII

#### THE MORNING GIRL

LISTEN! All the world is still;  
One bleared hour and night is gone.  
See yon lonely moon-washed hill  
Lift its head to catch the dawn!

In the east the eager light  
Sets the curtained dusk a-sag;  
And all the royal robe of Night  
Frays cheaply — like a rag!

Once I felt a lifting joy  
When I saw the day unfurl,  
Watching, just a laughing boy,  
For the Morning Girl.

Oft I met her in the dew  
Face to face, her sapphire eyes  
Burning on me through the blue  
Of the morning skies.

And her pure and dazzling breast  
Made with joy my senses swoon,

As she burned from crest to crest  
Upward toward the noon.

Now no more I seek her shrine,  
Seek no more her golden hair  
Sparkling in the morning shine  
And the purple air.

Comes no more the Morning Girl,  
Glowing not now her golden head,  
When the clouds of dawn unfurl —  
Purple, yellow, red.

Now the waning of the night  
Means another day is near;  
Just a haggard splotch of light,  
A turning of the sphere!

Would that in the coming hour  
I might be that boy who knew  
Fragrant import of the flower,  
Lyric impulse of the dew!

XXIV  
THE CITY OF DUST

BEHOLD me — a shadow!  
The shadow of an ancient laughing thing!

Fallen columns disintegrated with time;  
Sacred mounds insulted with the growth of scorn-  
ful weeds;  
Shattered arches haunted by the lizard and the  
snake:  
This is my Babylon — the Babylon I built and  
feasted in!

O, but the wantonness of my Babylon!  
The princely prodigality of my Babylon!  
This was the throne — I sat upon it.  
I sat upon it and feasted mine ears with the  
haughty trumpets,  
Mine eyes with the scarlet and purple.

And once in this long fallow garden a lily grew:  
It was my lily — it grew for me.  
Weeds grow there now — they grow for me.

They grow there now and flaunt their ragged coats  
in the sun —

Ruffians and shameless !

If I weep above my fallen Lily, will it grow ?

The lizard flees from me and the snake hisses,  
And I am lonesome — lonesome in my Babylon.

How shall I pile up again the kingly walls ?

I cry out : my voice is as the yell of a jackal —  
impotent.

The Wind dances with the Dust athwart my tessellated courtyards ;

The Wind and the Dust — their music is a threnody.

How can I rebuild my Babylon ?

How conjure back the magic of the olden time ?

How can I rebuild my dust heaps into a city —

The City of My Ancient Dream ?

XXV

THE FOOL'S MOTHER

WHEN I — the fool — am dead,  
There will be one to stand above my head,  
Her wan lips yearning for my quiet lips  
That stung her soul so oft with bitter cries.  
And I shall feel forgiving finger-tips  
And I shall hear her saying with her sighs :  
“This fool I mothered sucked a bitter breast;  
His life was fever and his soul was fire :  
O burning fool, O restless fool at rest,  
None other knew how high you could aspire,  
None other knew how deep your soul could sink !”

And when these words above the fool are said,  
The others ranged about the room shall think :  
‘The fool is dead.’

## XXVI

### LET ME LIVE OUT MY YEARS

LET me live out my years in heat of blood !  
Let me die drunken with the dreamer's wine !  
Let me not see this soul-house built of mud  
Go toppling to the dust — a vacant shrine !

Let me go quickly like a candle light  
Snuffed out just at the heyday of its glow !  
Give me high noon — and let it then be night !  
Thus would I go.

And grant me, when I face the grisly Thing,  
One haughty cry to pierce the gray Perhaps !  
Let me be as a tune-swept fiddlestring  
That feels the Master Melody — and snaps !

## XXVII

### PRAYER OF AN ALIEN SOUL

O CENTER of the Scheme,  
Star-Flinger, Beauty-BUILDER, Shaping Dream !  
Now as the least in all thy space I stand  
An alien in a strange and lonesome land.  
I lift a little voice of pigmy pain ;  
I hurl it out — up — down — and shall I cry in vain ?  
Hear thou the prayer that struggles in this song —  
Let me not linger long !

I crave the boon of dying into life !  
Extend a pitying knife  
And let these flesh-gyves part, let me be free !  
Are we not kin ? Am I not part of thee ?  
Am I not as a ripple in a cranny of thy sea ?  
What part have I in sequent wretched eves,  
Blear dawns, dull noons, the budding and the  
    falling of the leaves ?  
Why must I drag about this chain of years,  
Long rusted red with tears ?  
Why must I crawl when I have wings to fly ?  
Behold thy child — the Winged One — it is I !

At times here in the dust  
I lift my head, I strive to sing — I *must* !  
The miracle of growing wraps me round !  
Light ! Sound !  
Form ! Motion ! Upward yearning ! Outward  
    reaching !  
A universal praying, dumb beseeching !  
I feel that I am more than flesh and futile,  
A being ultra-carnal, super-brutal !  
I understand these growing green beseechers,  
These hopeful climbers and these earnest  
    reachers !  
I understand their yearnings every one,  
How each tense fibre hungers for the sun !  
I lay my hand upon the sturdy weed  
Whose darkling purpose burst the prison-seed  
And cleft the mud and took its light and dew,  
Looked up, reached out, believed in life — *and*  
    *grew* !  
I know that we are kin ;  
That hope is virtue and that doubt is sin ;  
And o'er me comes a hungering for song :  
I lift my voice — I falter. Ah, the long  
Dumb years, the aching nights and days !  
And yet I raise  
My unavailing, immelodious cry.  
Thine erstwhile singing child — behold ! — 'Tis I !

In this strange wretched prison of the soul  
Shall I not lose my swiftness for the Goal?  
It seems I must  
At length become too much the kin of Dust.  
Ah me, the fever born of Hate and Lust!  
Ah me, the senseless unmelodic din!  
Ah me, the soul-hope sick with fleshly sin!

And in my prison ancient dreams grow up  
To fill with dust my cracked and thirst-betraying  
cup;  
Dreams mantled in the purple of dead glory  
That filled the æons out of reach of human story:  
Not always have I worn these dusty rags!

The Purpose of my being falters, lags,  
And I am sick, sick, sick to live again.  
Yet not because of this poor dust-born pain  
Do I cry out and grope about for thee.  
I hear the far cry of my destiny  
Whose meaning sings beyond the furthest sun.  
I faint in these red chains, and I would 'rise and  
run,  
O Center of the Scheme,  
Star-Flinger, Beauty-Builder, Shaping Dream!

## XXVIII

### THE ANCIENT STORY

It is the ancient story lived anew.  
Dost thou remember how the mighty Jew  
Spoke at the table of the Pharisee  
And puzzled all who heard Him; tenderly  
Forgiving her whose soul was red with sin  
And seared with lust? How that she entered in  
Where sat the Lord, and cast her down and wept?  
How to His feet she crept  
And washed them with her tears?

Howe'er that be,  
I have lived out this ancient tale with thee;  
Only I am the sinner, thou the saint.  
With heart bowed down and limbs grown  
strangely faint,  
I creep unto thy feet; cleanse off with tears  
The stains they got that followed all these years  
The guilty paths I made, the cruel ways  
That led unto a blood-red night of haze.  
They were my paths, and this for thee sufficed!

I gaze into thine eyes and see the Christ,  
Calm-eyed, great-souled, the Pitier ! I see  
How much and yet how little after me  
Thine aching feet have followed ! see how deep  
I grovel from the height that thou dost keep,  
A sinner, yet unsoiled.

Lift thou me there  
Unto the heaven of thy face and hair  
That shines for me far off as summer dawn.  
The night is gone !  
I feel the sunrise quicken in my blood !  
My soul leaps clean from out its lair of mud !

With nard I do anoint thee ; at thy feet  
I burn this myrrh of bitter and of sweet.

Lift thou me there  
Unto the heaven of thy face and hair,  
And make my soul complete !

## XXIX

### THE LAST ALTAR

EREWILE beneath the lightning flare of passion  
I saw huge visions flung athwart the gloom;  
I built me altars after pagan fashion  
And of my hours I made a hecatomb.

I wrought weird gods of night-stuff and of fancy;  
I sought their hidden faces for my law:  
My days and nights were filled with necromancy,  
And an Olympian awe.

O many a night has seen my riot candles,  
And heard the drunken revel of my feast,  
Till Dawn walked up the blue with burning sandals  
And made me curse the east!

For my faith was the faith of dusk and riot,  
The faith of fevered blood and selfish lust;  
Until I learned that love is cool and quiet  
And not akin to dust.

For once, as in Apocalyptic vision,  
Above my smoking altars I could see

My god's face, veilless, ugly with derision —  
The shameless, magnified, projected — *Me!*

And I have left my ancient fanes to crumble,  
And I have hurled my false gods from the sky;  
I wish to know the joy of being humble,  
To build great Love an altar ere I die.

### XXX

#### RESURRECTION

**THERE** — close your eyes, poor eyes that wept for  
me!

Pillow your weary head upon my arm.  
You need not clutch me so, I will not flee;  
Here am I bound by no mere carnal charm.

At last I am not blind, for I can see  
Through your mere flesh as only spirit can;  
I feel at last the world-old tragedy,  
The sacrifice of woman unto man.

In that far time when my first father sought  
To cool the strange mad fever in his veins,  
Seeing how fair the creature he had bought  
With straining sinews and wild battle pains;

Then was this moment of your anguish sown,  
And you have reaped but do not understand.  
How frail and thin your blue-veined hands have  
grown,  
How trustingly they clutch my guilty hand!

The story of the world is in your face;  
I gaze upon it, hearing through dead years  
The wailings of the women of the race,  
The melancholy fall of many tears.

In many a Garden of Gethsemane,  
Sweet with strange odors, redolent of bliss,  
Again is played the human tragedy  
With Judas waiting in the dark to kiss.

Not only upon Calvary has died  
The patient tortured Christ misunderstood;  
Over and over is He crucified  
Wherever man besmirches womanhood.

I who have laughed too long at sacred things,  
Who felt no god about me in the gloom,  
Now hear a Something mystical that sings  
Sweeter than love, yet terrible as doom.

In your frail face I see a glory grow  
That smites me, guilty, like a burning rod!  
I kneel before you, suppliant, and know  
That your thin hands may lead me unto God!

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## **A VISION OF WOMAN**

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### A VISION OF WOMAN

I LOVE you. Do you smile? Ah, well you may :  
You who have heard the beast in many men  
Mouth glibly that sweet spirit phrase so oft.  
It is a word you scoff at here, I know.  
And yet — when one dreams sleepless all the  
    night,  
Somehow a sense of the eternal things,  
Creeps in upon him, till the old beast sleeps,  
And spirits wise with time possess the hush.  
  
It seems a life has passed since yestereve ;  
'Twas then I met you — just a night ago.  
How little can a clock-gong measure dreams !

You sat beneath the tawdry glare of gas  
Among the weary painted woman-flowers,  
Exhaling sickly scents ; while to the tune  
Of shrill barbaric fiddles, squawking horns,  
And that piano the mulatto played,  
(Nay, smitten by the devil's dancing feet !)  
The haggard creatures wreathed the dizzy dance.

Sin errant rides for heavens built of mist ;  
But once, Oh, once Sin lead me to the goal !

I saw you — virgin-eyed and sunny haired,  
With cheeks whereon the country's kiss remained,  
And round you, somehow, the effluvium  
Of green things smiling upward in the day.  
Gazing upon you, over me there came  
The drone of cornfields in the warm damp night;  
Far, far away I saw the wheat a-shimmer;  
The smell of fresh-turned earth was everywhere!  
And oh your touch flung trooping through my blood  
Such dream-wrought throngs of maiden violets!  
So all my thirsty soul cried out to you,  
The one green spot in all that arid place.

And yet — I did not love you then as now.  
The smouldering ashes of old primal lusts  
The strident fiddles wakened, and the wine.  
It was a thirst for rivers of delight,  
A tiger hunger for the warm red feast.  
And so I bought you — paid the stated price —  
Washed out my scruples in a flood of wine.  
Then all the smell of violets died out,  
The visioned fields of happy growing things  
Went stifling hot, oppressive with the breath  
Of flowers that never blossomed in the day.  
And then when I had borne you from the place  
Of glare and noise, where painted lilies swayed  
Unto the shrieking hell-wind of the fiddles,

You flung aside those garish strumpet garments  
And stood before me !

So would April look  
If all the lure and wonder of that time  
Could flesh itself in woman ! And I knew  
'Twas thus of old the maiden Lais stood,  
Fresh from the wholesome fields of Sicily,  
Before Apelles quickened with his dream.  
A ghost of spring crept back into the world  
Haunting the hot, autumnal hollow of it.  
It seemed the time when maples ooze their sap,  
When humid winds of promise sing all night  
Beneath the stars that run aghast through mist :  
When rivers wake and burst their shrouds of ice  
To boom down swollen channels. Cherry bows  
Flung to the winds their odorous living snows,  
And apple blossoms drifted in the breeze,  
Pink as the buds that tipped your spotless  
breasts.

Up through the spring-sweet vistas of the dream  
Old Greece came back with all her purple bays,  
Her ships of venture and her fighting men,  
Her sculptors and her painters and her bards,  
Her temples and her ever-living gods,  
Her women whom to name must be to sing.

I touched you — and 'twas Helen that I touched ;

And in my blood young Paris lived again;  
And all the grief and gloom of Ilium,  
Her wailing wives enslaved to foreign lords,  
Her stricken warriors and her gutted fanes,  
Her song-built towers falling in the smoke,  
And all the anguish of her tragic Queen,  
Seemed naught for one round burning kiss from  
you!

You thought it was the wine; ah, so it was —  
The wine of woman fraught with life and death,  
The wine of beauty and the wine of doom.  
You laughed; and Greece with all her purple bays,  
Her gladness and her weeping went to dust;  
While through the panting hollow of the world  
A hot storm grumbled up. And we alone  
In some tremendous lightning-riven night!

But when the quiet came, and down the dark  
The awful music of our youth died out,  
And in the gloomy hollow lived no sound  
Except the sullen thunder of our hearts,  
Your languid kissing mouth seemed like a wound  
Wet with the blood of something I had killed!  
And while you stroked my dampened hair, and  
lispd  
Delirious nothings, over me there came  
The sad still singing of the things that are.

Close nestled in the hollow of my arm,  
You slept like any weary little girl,  
Unconscious of the ancient weight you bore.  
But I lay wakeful with the ghostly years.

Above the glooming surf of yesterdays  
The faces of all women that have been  
Bloomed beacon-like, and lit with ghastly glare  
The wreck-strewn coasts of the eternal sea !  
Faces of patient woe and wise with grief,  
Faces from which my mother gazed at me,  
Faces that were one face with that of Christ !  
And some with haggard unforgetting eyes  
Haunted far sea-rims, gray with ships of mist ;  
And some were drawn and white above the slain,  
With sick lips mumbling kisses of farewell ;  
And in them all the wistful mother-light.  
Once more for me the Carthaginian pyre  
Built day amid the dusk of sordid things ;  
And that sad Queen whom all the world shall love  
Because one man forsook her, far away  
Followed with tearless tragic eyes the sail  
That bellied skyward in a wind of Fate.  
And through the night the wail of Hecuba  
Brought back the Thracian sorrow, made it mine :  
While in the aching hush that followed it  
Red drop by drop I heard the Virgin's blood.

Fair Phryne came and bared her breast to me  
With ancient sorrow pleading in her gaze,  
And on her painted cheeks my sister's tears.  
And one with ashen face and tiger eyes  
Held huddled close the remnant of her brood.  
One, pale above a loom, with nervous hands  
Wove and unwove the shroud of each day's hope —  
The web of Woman's weaving. Hand in hand,  
The Roman wife, the subtle Queen of Nile,  
Walked down the night — one woman at the last.  
And haloed round with an eternal spring,  
Rode she with whom all men have sinned ; her face  
Foreshadowed with the doom that was to be :  
And aged with more than years, unqueened, and  
yet

Ten times the former queen, I heard her sob  
Amid the cloistral gloom at Almesbury.  
And oh, I saw upon a mystic sea  
A rose-souled lily fleshed into a girl,  
Tall as a fighting man and terrible  
With all the keen clean beauty of a sword,  
That one who took the luring mystic cup  
And drank of it, and thirsted evermore.  
From myriad graves they came, till night was day  
Lit with the radiance of them. Queens and slaves ;  
Sweet maidens with the life-dawn in their eyes ;  
Mothers with babes at breast, and painted harlots ;

Unsung forgotten daughters of the ground,  
Dumb under burdens, with dull questioning eyes  
That stared uncomprehending upon Fate.  
All lifted up imploring arms to me  
And over them a wind of music went,  
The crooning of the mothers of the Race.

The vision passed. Out in the quiet night  
Across the huddled roofs the clock-gong tolled.  
I raised the blind. The tremulous woman-star,  
Like a great tear moon-smitten, watched the town,  
And thin soft whispers prophesied the dawn.

Bathed in the pure light of the eternal stars  
You lay asleep — a chiselled Parian dream,  
A spotless vase of sleeping sacred fire,  
A still white awe! No vandal hand had filched  
The meaning from the breasts that might not  
know

The sad sweet thrill of nurture. With cool lips  
That yearned with primal worshippings, I kissed  
them;

And, though you slept, the tender mother arm,  
Wise with old memories, sought the restless babe.

God makes you mothers spite of milkless breasts!  
He only knows how sterile gardens dream

Of bloom flung riot: how through arid night  
The wooing rain comes kissing like a ghost,  
Unfruitful kisses!

Oh that you might know  
The cleansing wonder quickening in your blood,  
The sweet dream fleshing with the passing moons,  
The wild red pang, the first thin strangled cry  
From world to world, the great white after-peace!

Across the awful slumber of your face  
God moved amid the star-sheen. Something pure  
Wailed down the vast hushed hollows of my soul:  
Oh better that this lovely vase be shattered,  
Its sacred fire be spilled upon the night,  
Than that another sun should look upon it  
Defiled with heathen worship!

Yet 'tis said  
No thing of beauty ever is defiled,  
Somehow far off discordant sounds are wed,  
Somewhere far off the broken rays converge.

But oh, I saw you sitting in the sun  
Before a green-girt cottage with your babes;  
And grapes hung purple in the afternoon,  
And there were bees abroad and smell of fruit;  
And up the shimmering hillside went the man —

Stamped with the kinship of the giving Earth,  
The old Antæan wisdom in his heart —  
Glad in the flowing furrow turned for you.

See! stealing o'er the melancholy roofs  
The gray light, like the aching backward creep  
Of some familiar sorrow!

Oh the grapes  
That never sun shall purple!

It is day.

## WOMAN-WINE

### I

*ONCE again I see it, touch it,  
Fatal cup with many a name;  
Make it mine and madly clutch it,  
Drink its blasting draught of flame!*

*Cup of grief and cup of woe,  
Cup of ancient woman-wine:  
Victor in mine overthrow —  
It is mine!*

Awful burning lips of Thais,  
Kiss me back Persepolis!  
Break my heart — I'm Menelaus!  
Make me Paris with a kiss!

Smiling Thing with painted heart,  
Canker at the soul of Peace,  
Thou hast wakened by thine art  
All the wanton flutes of Greece!

Lest I kill thee in my fury  
Let the heaped white wonders speak:

Awe me as the ancient jury —  
Phryne, make me weak !

Asker, Taker, Devil-Woman,  
Hiss the hellish wish again !  
Death fleshed out to mask as human,  
Dancer for the heads of men !

Honied Wooer, Victor-Slayer,  
Sing me drowsy, take my sword !  
I am paid, O sweet Betrayer  
Awful as a battle-horde !

Ancient wine of gloom and glory  
Wets thy warm, red, wooing lips :  
All the scarlet Queens of Story  
Touch me through thy finger-tips.

## II

Nay ! In gentler, sweeter fashion  
How thy warm soul blossoms up !  
Martyr to the deathless Passion,  
Quaffer of the Iseult-cup !

Thou wert heart-sick Sappho, burning  
Downward to the stern gray sea.  
Thou didst soothe the Master, yearning  
For the hills of Galilee.

Thou the hopeful heart of sorrow  
Singing through the gloom of years;  
Light of every black to-morrow,  
Wise with yesterdays of tears.

Thou the doomed eternal Maiden,  
Wailing by the windless sea.  
Thou art Mary, sorrow-laden —  
Pray for me!

Pale night-weeper at the cross,  
Death for thee hath not sufficed;  
Trusting through the gloom of loss,  
Thou didst view the risen Christ.

Burden-bearer, Beauty-maker,  
Sacred Fountain of my life;  
Mighty Giver, meagre Taker —  
Mother, Sister, Wife!

*Oh, at last, my heart's Desire,  
Build the dream that shall endure!  
Fair white Urn of Sacred Fire,  
Burn me pure!*

*Cup of sweet felicity,  
Cup of ancient woman-wine!  
Vanquished in my victory —  
It is mine!*

## EROS

LURED as the Earth lures Summer,  
Wooing as Sunlight the Seed —  
I am the mystical Comer,  
I am the Will and the Deed !

Over and over forever  
The glad sad story is told ;  
Fleeing, escaping me never,  
I am your Shower of Gold.

Subtle as April creeping  
Flower-shod out of the South,  
I am the dream of your sleeping,  
Fever am I at your mouth.

I am the sap-lift singing  
The hope of a last glad birth :  
I am the May-Fog clinging —  
You are the Earth !

And mine are the pangful kisses  
That waken the Dream in the Dust ;  
Bringer of aching blisses,  
Cruel I seem as Lust.

I come like a wind of disaster,  
Flinging the whips of the rain;  
Oh, I am a pitiless Master —  
I am glorified Pain.

This is the Story of stories —  
(The Rain and the Seed and the Sod) —  
Awful with glooms and glories,  
These are the rites of the god !

But Oh, when the storm and its riot  
Sleeps in the after-hush,  
I am the dawn-filled quiet —  
I am the thrush.

I am the sun to cherish,  
I am the dew to feed  
You with your blooms that perish,  
Martyrs unto the seed.

Ancient and ending never,  
This is the Law and the Plan.  
*Oh, you are the Woman forever —*  
*I am the Man !*

### GÆA, MOTHER GÆA!

GÆA, Mother Gæa, now at last,  
Wearied with too much seeking, here I cast  
My soul, my heart, my body down on thee!  
Dust of thy dust, canst thou not mother me?

Not as an infant weeping do I come;  
These tears are tears of battle; like a drum  
Struck by wild fighting hands my temples throb;  
Sob of the breathless swordsman is my sob,  
Cry of the charging spearman is my cry!

O Mother, not as one who craves to die  
I fall upon thee panting. Fierce as hate,  
Strong as a tiger fighting for his mate,  
Soul-thewed and eager for yet one more fray —  
O Gæa, Mother Gæa, thus I pray!

Have I not battled well?  
My sword has ripped the gloom from many a hell  
To let the sweet day kiss my anguished brow!  
Oh, I have begged no favors until now;  
Have asked no pity, though I bit the dust;

For always in my blood the battle-lust  
Flung awful sword-songs down my days and nights.  
But now at last of all my golden fights  
The greatest fight is on me — and I pray.

Oh let my prayer enfold thee as the day,  
Crush down upon thee as the murky night,  
Rush over thee a thunder-gust, alight  
With swift electric blades! Nay, let it be  
As rain flung down upon the breast of thee!  
With something of the old Uranian fire  
I kiss upon thee all my deep desire.

If ever in the silence round about,  
Thy scarlet blossoms smote me as a shout;  
If ever I have loved thee, pressed my face  
Close to thy bosom in a lonesome place  
And breathed thy breath with more than lover's  
    breathing;  
If ever in the spring, thy great trees, seething  
With hopeful juices, felt my worship-kiss —  
Grant thou the prayer that struggles out of this,  
My first blood-cry for succor in a fight!

Alone I shouldered up the crushing night,  
Alone I flung about me halls of day,  
Unmated went I fighting on my way,  
Lured on by some far-distant final good,

Unwarmed by grudging fires of bitter wood,  
Feeding my hunger with my tiger heart.  
Mother of things that yearn and grow, thou art!  
The Titan brood sucked battle from thy paps!  
O Mother mine, sweet-breasted with warm saps,  
Once more Antæus touches thee for strength!  
My victories assail me! Oh at length  
My lawless isolation dies away!

For Mother, giving Mother, like the day  
Flung down from midnight, She who was to be  
Floods all the brooding thunder-glooms of me!  
And in the noon-glow that her face hath wrought,  
Stands forth the one great foe I have not fought —  
The close-ranked cohorts of my selfish heart.

Suckler of virile fighting things thou art!  
Breathe in me something of the tireless sea;  
The urge of mighty rivers breathe in me!  
Cloak me with purple like thy haughty peaks;  
Oh arm me as a wind-flung cloud that wreaks  
Hell-furies down the midnight battle-murk!  
Fit me to do this utmost warrior's work —  
To face myself and conquer!

Mother dear,  
Thou seemest a woman in this silence here;  
And 'tis thy daughter who hath come to me

With all the wise, sad mother-heart of thee,  
Thy luring wonder and immensity!  
For in her face strong sweet earth-passions brood:  
I feel them as in some wild solitude  
The love-sweet panting summer's yearning-pain.

Teach me the passion of the wooing rain!  
Teach me to fold her like a summer day —  
To kiss her in the great good giant way,  
As Uranus amid the cosmic dawn!

Oh, all the mad spring revelling is gone,  
And now — the wise sweet summer! Let me be  
Deep-rooted in thy goodness as a tree,  
Strong in the storms with skyward blossomings!  
Teach me the virile trust of growing things,  
The wisdom of slow fruiting in the sun!

I would be joyous as the winds that run  
Light footed on the wheatfields. Oh for her,  
I would be gentle as the winds that stir  
The forest in the noon hush. Lift me up!  
Fill all my soul with kindness as a cup  
With cool and bubbling waters! Mother dear,  
Gæa, great Gæa, 'tis thy son — Oh hear!

### NUPTIAL-SONG

Lo! the Field that slumbered,  
Sowed and winter-sealed;  
Thrall'd and dream-encumbered!  
Oh the maiden Field!  
Never Thunder roused her,  
Rain or yearning Fire;  
Never Sun espoused her,  
Virile with desire.

Yet betimes a vague thrill  
Running in a thaw,  
Hinted at the World-Will  
And the Lyric Law;  
Made her guess at splendor  
Bursting out of pain;  
Feel the clutching tender  
Fingers of the grain.

Now an end of dreaming!  
Lo! the lover comes —  
Flame-wrought banners gleaming,  
Haughty thunder drums;

Joy- and sorrow-laden,  
Eager, wondershod !  
Sacrifice the Maiden  
On the altar of the god !

Though he come with terror,  
Though he woo with pain,  
Love is never error,  
Kisses never vain.  
Victress in her capture,  
Let the Maiden know  
All the aching rapture,  
All the singing woe !

Hark ! the regal Thunder !  
(Oh the huddled Field !)  
'Tis the Night of Wonder —  
Let the Maiden yield !  
Oh the quiet after  
All the singing pain !  
Oh the rippling laughter  
Of the nursing grain !

Older and yet younger,  
Sadder, and yet blessed,  
With a baby-hunger  
Tugging at her breast,  
She shall feel the Great Law —

*Love, and you shall grow.*  
 Give her to the wild Awe,  
 Let the Maiden know !

Sweeter than all other  
 Songs of lip or lyre —  
 Every Maid a Mother,  
 Every Man a Sire :  
 Joy beneath the pain warm,  
 God amidst the plan ;  
 Field unto the Rainstorm,  
 Maid unto the Man !

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**THE STRANGER AT THE GATE**  
**A LYRIC SEQUENCE CELEBRATING THE**  
**MYSTERY OF BIRTH**

*To Enid*

## THE STRANGER AT THE GATE

### I

#### THE WEAVERS

SUNS flash, stars drift,  
Comes and goes the moon;  
Ever through the wide miles  
Corn-fields croon  
Patiently, hopefully,  
A low, slow tune.

Lovingly, longingly,  
Labors without rest  
Every happy cornstalk,  
Weaving at her breast  
Such a cozy cradle  
For the coming guest.

In the flowing pastures,  
Where the cattle feed,  
Such a hidden love-storm,  
Dying into seed —  
Blue grass, slough grass,  
Wild flower, weed !

Mark the downy flower-coats  
In the hollyhocks !  
Hark, the cooing Wheat-Soul  
Weaving for her flocks !  
Croon-time, June-time,  
Moon of baby frocks !

Rocking by the window,  
Wrapt in visionings,  
Lo, the gentle mother  
Sews and sings,  
Shaping to a low song  
Wee, soft things !

Patiently, hopefully,  
Early, late,  
How the wizard fingers  
Weave with Fate  
For the naked youngling  
Crying at the Gate !

Sound, sight, day, night  
Fade, flee thence ;  
Vanished is the brief, hard  
World of sense.  
Hark ! Is it the plump grape  
Crooning from the fence ?

Droning of the surf where  
Far seas boom ?  
Chanting of the weird stars  
Big with Doom ?  
Humming of the god-flung  
Shuttles of a loom ?

O'er the brooding Summer  
A green hush clings,  
Save the sound of weaving  
Wee, soft things :  
Everywhere a mother  
Weaves and sings.

## II

### THE STORY

YEARLY thrilled the plum tree  
With the mother-mood ;  
Every June the rose stock  
Bore her wonder-child :  
Every year the wheatlands  
Reared a golden brood :  
World of praying Rachels,  
Heard and reconciled !

"Poet," said the plum tree's  
Singing white and green,  
"What avails your mooning,  
Can you fashion plums ?"  
"Dreamer," crooned the wheatland's  
Rippling vocal sheen,  
"See my golden children  
Marching as with drums !"

"By a god begotten,"  
Hymned the sunning vine,  
"In my lyric children  
Purple music flows !"

"Singer," breathed the rose bush,  
"Are they not divine?  
Have you any daughters  
Mighty as a rose?"

*Happy, happy mothers!  
Cruel, cruel words!  
Mine are ghostly children,  
Haunting all the ways;  
Latent in the plum bloom,  
Calling through the birds,  
Romping with the wheat brood  
In their shadow plays!*

*Gotten out of star-glint,  
Mothered of the Moon;  
Nurtured with the rose scent,  
Wild, elusive throng!  
Something of the vine's dream  
Crept into a tune;  
Something of the wheat-drone  
Echoed in a song.*

Once again the white fires  
Smoked among the plums;  
Once again the world-joy  
Burst the crimson bud;

Golden bannered wheat broods  
Marched to fairy drums;  
Once again the vineyard  
Felt the Bacchic blood.

"Lo, he comes — the dreamer —"  
Crooned the whitened boughs,  
"Quick with vernal love-fires —  
Oh, at last he knows!  
See the bursting plum bloom  
There above his brows!"  
"Boaster!" breathed the rose bush,  
"'Tis a budding rose!"

Droned the glinting acres,  
"In his soul, mayhap,  
Something like a wheat-dream  
Quickens into shape!"  
Sang the sunning vineyard,  
"Lo, the lyric sap  
Sets his heart a-throbbing  
Like a purple grape!"

*Mother of the wheatlands,  
Mother of the plums,  
Mother of the vineyard —  
All that loves and grows —*

*Such a living glory  
To the dreamer comes,  
Mystic as a wheat-song,  
Mighty as a rose!*

*Star-glint, moon-glow,  
Gathered in a mesh!  
Spring-hope, white fire  
By a kiss beguiled!  
Something of the world-joy  
Dreaming into flesh!  
Bird-song, vine-thrill  
Quickened to a child!*

### III

#### THE NEWS

LITTLE Breezes, lurking in the green-roofed covers,  
Where the dappled gloaming keeps the cool night  
dews,

Up, and waft the wonder of it unto countless  
lovers!

Set the tiger-lily bells a-tolling out the news!

Down the eager rivers make the glory of the story  
roll;

Waken joyful shivers in the green gold hush;  
Set it to the warble of the early morning oriole;  
Fill it with the tender, kissing rapture of a thrush!

Take a little sorrow from the night rain pattering,  
Drowning in a black flood stars and moon;  
Take a little terror from the zigzag, shattering,  
Blue sword-flash of a storm-struck noon!

Breathing through the green-aisled orchard  
chapels,

Learn the holy music of the world-old dream;  
Borrow from the still scarlet singing of the apples;  
Weave it in the weird tale's gloom and gleam!

Hasten with the woven music, make the Summer  
lyrical,

Sweet as with the odors of a southeast rain :

Set the corn a-chatter o'er the glad, impending  
miracle—

*A little Stranger whimpers at the Gate of Pain !*

#### IV

#### IN THE NIGHT

OVER the steep cloud-crag  
The marching Day went down —  
Bickering spears and flags,  
Slant in a wind of Doom!  
Blar in the huddled shadows  
Glimmer the lights of the town;  
Black pools mottle the meadows,  
Swamped in a purple gloom.

Is it the night wind sobbing  
Over the wheat in head?  
Is it the world-heart throbbing,  
Sad with the coming years?  
Is it the lifeward creeping  
Ghosts of the myriad dead,  
Livid with wounds and weeping  
Wild, unclesing tears?

'Twas not a lone loon calling  
There in the darkling sedge,  
Still as the prone moon's falling  
Where in the gloom it slinks!

Hark to the low intoning  
There at the hushed grove's edge —  
Is it the pitiless, moaning  
Voice of the timeless Sphinx ?

Woven of dust and quiet,  
Winged with the dim starlight,  
Hideous dream-sounds riot,  
Couple and breed and grow ;  
Big with the dread to-morrow,  
Flooding the hollow night  
With more than a Thracian sorrow,  
More than a Theban woe !

*Dupe of a lying pleasure,  
Dying slave of desire !  
Dreading the swift erasure,  
The swoop of the grisly Jinn,  
Lo, you have trammelled with dust  
A spark of the slumbering Fire,  
Given it nerves for lust  
And feet for the shards of sin !*

*Woe to the dreamer waking,  
When the Dream shall stalk before him,  
With terrible thirsts for slaking  
And hungers mad to be fed !*

*Oh, he shall sicken of giving,  
Cursing the mother that bore him —  
Earth, so lean for the living,  
Earth, so fat with the dead!*

Cease, O sounds that smother!  
Peace, mysterious Flouter!  
Lo, where the sacred mother  
Sleeps in her starry bed,  
Dreams of the blessed Comer,  
A white awe flung about her,  
Wrapped in the hopeful Summer,  
The starlight round her head!

V

BREAK OF DAY

SILENT are the green looms  
And the weavers sleep,  
Nestled in the piled glooms,  
Deep on deep.

Gaunt, grim trees stand,  
Etched on space,  
Like a mirrored woodland  
On a purple vase.

Faithful in the dun hour,  
Like a praying priest,  
Eagerly the sunflower  
Scans the East.

Corn rows, far-hurled,  
Mist-enthralled,  
Vanish in a star world,  
Sapphire-walled.

Leaning out of dim space  
Over field and town,

Some hushed mother face  
Peers, bends down ;

Veiled in gleam-blurs,  
Starry locked,  
Brooding o'er the dreamers  
Dawnward rocked.

Is a spirit walking ?  
On a sudden seem  
All the sleepers talking  
In a broken dream !

All along the corn rows,  
O'er the glinting dews,  
Hark ! A muffled horn blows  
Some wild news !

Listen ! From a plum-close,  
Like a troubled soul,  
Tremulous a voice goes —  
'Tis the oriole !

Star-lorn, staring,  
The East goes white !  
Is a Terror faring  
Up the steep of night ?

Boldly, gladly,  
Through the paling hush,

Wildly, madly,  
Cries a thrush!

Tumbled are the piled glooms  
And the weavers stir:  
Once again the wild looms  
Drone and whir.

Glowing through the gray rack  
Breaks the Day —  
Like a burning haystack  
Twenty farms away!

## VI

### SONG TO THE SUN

TREADER of the blue steeps and the hollows under,  
Day-Flinger, Hope-Singer, crowned with awful  
hair;

Battle Lord with burning sword to cleave the  
gloom asunder,

Plunger through the eyries of the eagles of the  
Thunder,

Stroller up the flame-arched air!

All-Beholder, very swift and tireless your pace is:  
Now you snuff the guttered moon above the gray  
abyss,

Moaning with the sagging tide in shipless ocean  
spaces;

Now you gladden windless hollows thronged with  
daisy faces;

Now the corn salutes the Morn that sought  
Persepolis.

Searcher of the ocean and the islands and the  
straits,

The mountains and the rivers and the deserts  
and the dunes,

Saw you any little spirit foundling of the Fates,  
Groping at the world-wall for the narrow gates  
Guarded by the nine big moons?

Numberless and endlessly the living spirit tide  
rolls,

Like a serried ocean on a pleasant island hurled!  
Sun-lured, rain-wooded, color-haunted wild souls  
Trooping with the love-thralled, mother-seeking  
child souls,

Throng upon the good green world!

Surely you have seen it in your wide sky-going —  
An eager little comrade of the spirits of the wheat;  
All the hymning forests and the melody of grow-  
ing,

All the ocean thunderings and all the rivers flow-  
ing,

Silenced by the music of its feet!

## VII

### END OF SUMMER

PURPLE o'er the tree tops  
Wild grapes sprawl;  
In the golden silence  
Few birds call;  
Heavy-laden Summer  
Ripens into Fall.

Weary with the seed pods  
Droop the hollyhocks;  
Up and down the wide miles,  
Corn in shocks;  
Silent is the Wheat Mother,  
And her merry flocks

Go no more a-marching  
Unto fairy drums.  
Hark! Is it the footfall  
Of the One who comes?  
Silence — save the dropping  
Of the purple plums!

Patient, stricken Summer  
Feels the Odic Fires,  
Awful in her ripe domes,  
Mystic in her spires.  
In a holy sadness  
Fruit the Spring desires.

Last of all the awe-moons,  
Three times three,  
Glimmers down the sun-track  
Slenderly —  
Omen of the Wonder  
Soon to be.

Does the darkness listen  
For a shout of Doom?  
Hist! Was it a thin voice  
Crying from a womb?  
Silence — save a dry leaf's  
Whisper down the gloom.

## VIII

### HYMN BEFORE BIRTH

SOON shall you come as the dawn from the dumb  
abysm of night,

Traveller birthward, Hastener earthward out of  
the gloom !

Soon shall you rest on a soft white breast from the  
measureless mid-world flight ;

Waken in fear at the miracle, light, in the pain-  
hushed room.

Lovingly fondled, fearfully guarded by hands  
that are tender,

Frail shall you seem as a dream that must fail in  
the swirl of the morrow :

Oh, but the vast, immemorial past of ineffable  
splendor,

Forfeited soon in the pangful surrender to Sense  
and to Sorrow !

Who shall unravel your tangle of travel, uncur-  
tain your history ?

Have you not run with the sun-gladdened feet of a  
thaw ?

Lurked as a thrill in the will of the primal sea-  
mystery,  
The drift of the cloud and the lift of the moon for a  
law ?

Lost is the tale of the gulfs you have crossed and  
the veils you have lifted :  
In many a tongue have been wrung from you out-  
cries of pain :  
You have leaped with the lightning from thunder-  
heads, hurricane-rifted,  
And breathed in the whispering rain !

Latent in juices the April sun looses from capture,  
Have you not blown in the lily and grown in the  
weed ?  
Burned with the flame of the vernal erotical rap-  
ture,  
And yearned with the passion for seed ?

Poured on the deeps from the steepes of the sky as a  
chalice,  
Flung through the loom that is shuttled by temp-  
ests at play,  
Myriad the forms you have taken for hovel or  
palace —  
Broken and cast them away !

You who shall cling to a love that is fearful and  
pities,  
Titans of flame were your comrades to blight and  
consume!  
Have you not roared over song-hallowed, sword-  
stricken cities,  
And fled in the smoke of their doom?  
  
For, ancient and new, you are flame, you are dust,  
you are spirit and dew,  
Swirled into flesh, and the winds of the world are  
your breath!  
The song of a thrush in the hush of the dawn is not  
younger than you —  
And yet you are older than death!

## IX

### TRIUMPH

SEE how the blue-girt hills are spread  
With regal cloth of gold;  
How, panoplied in haughty red,  
The frosted maples stand;  
The golden-rod, with torch alight,  
Makes glory up the wold —  
As though a monarch's bannered might  
Were marching up the land!

Now should ecstatic bugles fret  
The hush, and drums should roll;  
The shawms of all the breezes set  
The scarlet leaves a-dance!  
And now should flash in vatic rhyme  
The battles of the Soul —  
To welcome to the realm of Time  
The Vanquisher of Chance!

For, though there rolls no gilded car  
That spurns the shaken earth,  
And shout no captains, flinging far  
The law to parlous spears;

With throbbing hearts for smitten drums,  
Up through the Gates of Birth —  
The Victor comes! The Victor comes!  
To claim the ripened years!

## X

### THE CHILD'S HERITAGE

Oh, there are those, a sordid clan,  
With pride in gaud and faith in gold,  
Who prize the sacred soul of man  
For what his hands have sold.

And these shall deem thee humbly bred :  
They shall not hear, they shall not see  
The kings among the lordly dead  
Who walk and talk with thee !

A tattered cloak may be thy dole  
And thine the roof that Jesus had :  
The brodered garment of the soul  
Shall keep thee purple-clad !

The blood of men hath dyed its brede,  
And it was wrought by holy seers  
With sombre dream and golden deed  
And pearled with women's tears.

With Eld thy chain of days is one :  
The seas are still Homeric seas ;

Thy sky shall glow with Pindar's sun,  
The stars of Socrates !

Unaged the ancient tide shall surge,  
The old Spring burn along the bough :  
The new and old for thee converge  
In one eternal Now !

I give thy feet the hopeful sod,  
Thy mouth, the priceless boon of breath ;  
The glory of the search for God  
Be thine in life and death !

Unto thy flesh, the soothing dust ;  
Thy soul, the gift of being free :  
The torch my fathers gave in trust,  
Thy father gives to thee !

## XI

### LULLABY

SUN-FLOOD, moon-gleam  
Ebb and flow;  
Twinkle-footed star flocks  
Come and go :  
Eager little Stranger,  
Sleep and grow !

Yearning in the moon-lift  
Surge the seas ;  
Southering, the sun-lured  
Gray goose flees :  
Eager with the same urge,  
You and these !

Canopied in splendor —  
Red, gold, blue —  
With the tender Autumn  
Cooing through ;  
Oh, the mighty cradle  
Rocking you !

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## THE POET'S TOWN

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## THE POET'S TOWN

### I

'Mid glad green miles of tillage  
And fields where cattle graze,  
A prosy little village,  
You drowse away the days.

And yet — a wakeful glory  
Clings round you as you doze;  
One living lyric story  
Makes music of your prose.

Here once, returning never,  
The feet of Song have trod;  
And flashed — Oh, once forever! —  
The singing Flame of God.

### II

These were his fields Elysian:  
With mystic eyes he saw  
The sowers planting vision,  
The reapers gleaning awe.

Serfs to a sordid duty,  
He saw them with his heart,  
Priests of the Ultimate Beauty,  
Feeding the flame of art.

The weird, untempled Makers  
Pulsed in the things he saw;  
The wheat through its virile acres  
Billowed the Song of Law.

The epic roll of the furrow  
Flung from the writing plow,  
The dactyl phrase of the green-rowed maize  
Measured the music of Now.

### III

Sipper of ancient flagons,  
Often the lonesome boy  
Saw in the farmer's wagons  
The chariots hurled at Troy.

Trundling in dust and thunder  
They rumbled up and down,  
Laden with princely plunder,  
Loot of the tragic Town.

And once when the rich man's daughter  
Smiled on the boy at play,

Sword-storms, giddy with slaughter,  
Swept back the ancient day !

War steeds shrieked in the quiet,  
Far and hoarse were the cries ;  
And Oh, through the din and the riot,  
The music of Helen's eyes !

Stabbed with the olden Sorrow,  
He slunk away from the play,  
For the Past and the vast To-morrow  
Were wedded in his To-day.

## IV

Rich with the dreamer's pillage,  
An idle and worthless lad,  
Least in a prosy village,  
And prince in Allahabad ;

Lover of golden apples,  
Munching a daily crust ;  
Haunter of dream-built chapels,  
Worshipping in the dust ;

Dull to the worldly duty,  
Less to the town he grew,  
And more to the God of Beauty  
Than even the grocer knew !

## V

Corn for the buyers, and cattle —  
But what could the dreamer sell?  
Echoes of cloudy battle?  
Music from heaven and hell?

Spices and bales of plunder,  
Argosied over the sea?  
Tapestry woven of wonder,  
Any myrrh from Araby?

None of your dream-stuffs, Fellow,  
Looter of Samarcand!  
Gold is heavy and yellow,  
And value is weighed in the hand!

## VI

And yet, when the years had humbled  
The kings in the Realm of the Boy,  
Song-built bastions crumbled,  
Ash-heaps smothering Troy;

Thirsting for shattered flagons,  
Quaffing a brackish cup,  
With all of his chariots, wagons —  
He never could quite grow up.

The debt to the ogre, To-morrow,  
He never could comprehend:

Why should the borrowers borrow?  
Why should the lenders lend?

Never an oak tree borrowed,  
But took for its needs — and gave.  
Never an oak tree sorrowed;  
Debt was the mark of the slave.

Grass in the priceless weather  
Sucked from the paps of the Earth,  
And hills that were lean it fleshed with its green —  
Oh, what is a lesson worth?

But still did the buyers barter  
And the sellers squint at the scales;  
And price was the stake of the martyr,  
And cost was the lock of the jails.

## VII

Windflowers herald the Maytide,  
Rendering worth for worth;  
Ragweeds gladden the wayside,  
Biting the dugs of the Earth;

Violets, scattering glories,  
Feed from the dewy gem:  
But poets are fed by the living and dead —  
And what is the gift from them?

## VIII

Never a stalk of the Summer  
Dreams of its mission and doom :  
Only to hasten the Comer —  
Martyrdom unto the Bloom.

Ever the Mighty Chooser  
Plucks when the fruit is ripe,  
Scorning the mass and letting it pass,  
Keen for the cryptic type.

Greece in her growing season  
Troubled the lands and seas,  
Plotted and fought and suffered and wrought —  
Building a Sophocles !

Only a faultless temple  
Stands for the vassal's groan ;  
The harlot's strife and the faith of the wife  
Blend in a shapen stone.

Ne'er do the stern gods cherish  
The hope of the million lives ;  
Always the Fact shall perish  
And only the Truth survives.

Gardens of roses wither,  
Shaping the perfect rose ;

And the poet's song shall live for the long,  
Dumb, aching years of prose.

## IX

King of a Realm of Magic,  
He was the fool of the town,  
Hiding the ache of the tragic  
Under the grin of the clown.

Worn with the vain endeavor  
To fit in the sordid plan;  
Doomed to be poet forever,  
He longed to be only a man;

To be freed from the god's enthralling,  
Back with the reeds of the stream;  
Deaf to the Vision calling,  
And dead to the lash of the Dream.

## X

But still did the Mighty Makers  
Stir in the common sod;  
The corn through its awful acres  
Trembled and thrilled with God!

More than a man was the sower,  
Lured by a man's desire,  
For a triune Bride walked close at his side —  
Dew and Dust and Fire!

More than a man was the plowman,  
Shouting his gee and haw;  
For a something dim kept pace with him,  
And ever the poet saw;

Till the winds of the cosmic struggle  
Made of his flesh a flute,  
To echo the tune of a whirlwind rune  
Unto the million mute.

## XI

Son of the Mother of mothers,  
The womb and the tomb of Life,  
With Fire and Air for brothers  
And a clinging Dream for a wife;

Ever the soul of the dreamer  
Strove with its mortal mesh,  
And the lean flame grew till it fretted through  
The last thin links of flesh.

Oh, rending the veil asunder,  
He fled to mingle again  
With the dread Orestean thunder,  
The Lear of the driven rain!

## XII

Once in a cycle the comet  
Doubles its lonesome track.

Enriched with the tears of a thousand years,  
Æschylus wanders back.

Ever inweaving, returning,  
The near grows out of the far;  
And Homer shall sing once more in a swing  
Of the austere Polar Star.

Then what of the lonesome dreamer  
With the lean blue flame in his breast?  
And who was your clown for a day, O Town,  
The strange, unbidden guest?

## XIII

*'Mid glad green miles of tillage  
And fields where cattle graze,  
A prosy little village,  
You drowse away the days.*

*And yet — a wakeful glory  
Clings round you as you doze;  
One living, lyric story  
Makes music of your prose!*

## THE POET'S ADVICE

### I

You wish to be a poet, Little Man ?  
More verses limping 'neath their big intent ?  
Well — one must be a poet if one can !  
But do you know the way the others went ?

Who buys of gods must pay a heavy fee.  
The world loves not its dreamers overmuch :  
And he who longs to drink at Castaly,  
Must hobble there upon a broken crutch.

One sins by being different, it seems ;  
At least so in our human commonweal.  
Who goes to market with his minted dreams,  
Must buy and bear the Cross of the Ideal.

Lo, tall amid the forest, blackened, grim,  
The lightning-riven pine ! — God-kissed was he.  
How all the little beeches jeer at him,  
Safe in their snug arrays of greenery !

And who shall call the little beeches mad ?  
Not I, who know how big are little acts.  
Want what you have, and cherish, O my Lad,  
The downright, foursquare, geometric facts !

## II

But — Oh, the ancient glory in your eyes !  
How bursts a dazzling wonder all around !  
Wild tempests of ineffable surprise —  
All color, dream and sound !

You lip the awful flagons of old time,  
And mystic apples lure you to the bite !  
Blown down the dizzy winds of woven rhyme,  
Dead women come and woo you in the night !

You tread the myrtle woods past time and place,  
Where shadows flit and ghostly echoes croon ;  
And through the boughs some fatal storied face  
Breathes muted music like a Summer moon !

I know the secret altars where you kneel.  
I know what lips fling fever in your kiss.  
That sorry little drab to whom you steal  
Is Queen Semiramis !

The Bacchanalia of the sap now reigns !  
Priapic fires burn yonder bough with blooms !  
Lo, goat-songs warbled from the vineyard fanes !  
Lo, Venus-nipples in the apple-glooms !

Ah, who is older than the vernal surge,  
And who is wiser than the sap a-thrill ?

Forever, he who feels the lyric urge  
Shall do its will !

Your rhymes ? — Some nimbler footed have been  
worse.

What broken trumpet echoes from the van  
Where march the cohorts of Immortal Verse !  
Well — one must be a poet if one can.

## HARK THE MUSIC

**HARK**, the music calling !  
From the earth it grows,  
From the sky 'tis falling,  
In the wind it blows !

Silver-noted star-gleams  
Through the moony glooms ;  
Golden-noted sunbeams  
Wooing cherry blooms !

Flying-fingered Winds smite  
Throbbing strings of rain ;  
Through the misty midnight  
Moans the Growing Pain !

Cradle-buds are shaken  
By a hand they know :  
Brother, Sister, waken —  
'Tis the time to grow !

### APRIL THE MAIDEN

LONGINGS to grow and be vaster,  
Sap songs under the blue;  
Hints of the Mighty Master  
Making his dream come true.

Sensing the northbound Wonder  
Arrows of wild geese flee;  
Bursting its bonds with thunder,  
The river yearns to the sea.

Gaunt limbs, winter-scarred, tragic,  
Blind seeds under the mold,  
Planning new marvels of magic  
In scarlet and green and gold!

Oh passionate, panting, love-laden,  
She is coming, she sings in the South —  
The World's Bride — April the Maiden —  
With the ghost of a rose for a mouth!

### APRIL THEOLOGY

Oh to be breathing and hearing and feeling and  
seeing!

Oh the ineffably glorious privilege of being!  
All of the World's lovely girlhood, unfleshed and  
made spirit,  
Broods out in the sunlight this morning — I see it,  
I hear it!

So read me no text, O my Brothers, and preach  
me no creeds;

I am busy beholding the glory of God in His deeds!  
See! Everywhere buds coming out, blossoms  
flaming, bees humming!

Glad athletic growers up-reaching, things striv-  
ing, becoming!

Oh, I know in my heart, in the sun-quicken-  
ed, blossoming soul of me,  
This something called self is a part, but the world  
is the whole of me!

I am one with these growers, these singers, these  
earnest becomers —

Co-heirs of the summer to be and past æons of  
summers!

I kneel not nor grovel; no prayer with my lips  
shall I fashion.

Close-knit in the fabric of things, fused with one  
common passion —

To go on and become something greater — we  
growers are one;

None more in the world than a bird and none less  
than the sun;

But all woven into the glad indivisible Scheme,  
God fashioning out in the Finite a part of his dream !

Out here where the world-love is flowing, un-  
fettered, unpriced,

I feel all the depth of the man-soul and girl-heart  
of Christ !

'Mid this riot of pink and white flame in this  
miracle weather,

Soul to soul, merged in one, God and I dream the  
vast dream together.

We are one in the doing of things that are done  
and to be :

I am part of my God as a raindrop is part of the  
sea !

What ! House me my God ? Take me in where  
no blossoms are blowing ?

Roof me in from the blue, wall me in from the  
green and the wonder of growing ?

Parcel out what is already mine, like a vender of  
staples?

*See! Yonder my God burns revealed in the sap-  
drunken maples!*

### MORNING-GLORIES

DISTANT as a dream's flight  
Lay an eerie plain,  
Where the weary moonlight  
Swooned into a moan ;  
Wailing after dead seed,  
Came the ghost of rain ;  
There was I a wild weed  
Growing all alone.

Like a doubted story  
Came the thought of day ;  
God and all his glory  
Lingered elsewhere,  
Busy with the dawn-thrill  
Many dreams away.  
Could a little weed's will  
Fling so far a prayer ?

Oh, the sudden wonder !  
(Is a prayer so fleet ?)  
From the desert under,  
Morning-glories grew !

Twined me, bound me  
With caressing feet !  
Wove song round me —  
Pink, white, blue !

As a fog is rifted  
By the eager breeze,  
Darkness broke and lifted,  
Tossing like a sea !  
Lo, the dawn was flowering  
Through the maple trees !  
Oh — and you were showering  
Kisses over me !

## INVITATIONS

### I

Oh come with me and through my gardens run,  
And we shall pluck strange flowers that love the  
    sun,  
Of which the sap is blood, the petals flame,  
The sweet, forbidden blossoms of no name!  
Oh splendid are my gardens walled with night,  
Dim-torched with stars and secret for delight;  
And winds breathe there the lure of smitten  
    strings,  
Vocal of the immensity of things!  
Come, Wailer out of Nothing, nowhere hurled,  
Frustrate the bitter purpose of the World!  
Thou shalt drink deep of all delights that be —  
So come with me!

### II

I have a secret garden where sacred lilies lift  
White faces kind with pardon, to hear my shrift.  
And all blood-riot falters before those faces there;  
Bowed down at quiet altars, my hours are monks  
    at prayer.

There through my spirit kneeling the silence  
thrills and sings  
The cosmic brother feeling of growing, hopeful  
things :  
Old soothing Earth a mother ; a sire the shield-  
ing Blue ;  
The Sun a mighty brother — and God is in the  
dew.  
Oh Garden hushed and splendid with lily, star  
and tree !  
There all vain dreams are ended — so come with  
me !

### AND THE LITTLE WIND —

SAID a rose amid the June night to a little wind  
there walking

(And the whisper of the moonlight was no fainter  
than its talking):

"It is plainly providential," so remarked the  
garden Tory,

"That the ultimate essential is the gentle rose's  
glory.

Let the sordid delvers cavil! Through the world-  
fog sinking seaward

And the planetary travail God was slowly groping  
me-ward.

Weary ages of designing, æons of creative throes  
Spent the Master in refining sullen chaos to a rose!  
Shall He robe His chosen meanly? Look upon  
me; am I splendid?"

Here she stood erect and queenly, curled a lip and  
ended.

And the little wind there walking, not desirous of  
dissension,

In a gust of cryptic talking freely granted the con-  
tention.

Like the murmur of a far stream or a zephyr in the  
sedges,

Scarcely louder than the star-gleam raining silver  
on the hedges,

Came a whisper from the humus where the roots  
were toiling blindly :

“They enslave us, they entomb us! Is it just  
and is it kindly ?

Ours, forever ours, to nourish — oh, the drear,  
eternal duty ! —

That the idle rose may flourish in aristocratic  
beauty.

Not for us the wooing, tender moon emerges from  
the far night ;

Not for us the morning splendor and the witchery  
of starlight ;

Not for us the dulcet cantion of the rain to throb-  
bing lutes ;

And there’s no cerulean mansion for the roots.”

Now the little wind, demurely sympathetic, cogi-  
tated,

And declared the matter surely ought to be inves-  
tigated.

“Fie!” observed the fair patrician, “on their silly  
martyr poses !

Not content with their condition, always wanting  
to be roses !”

Whereupon a theophanic, superlunar phosphorescence  
Flung the haughty into panic, awed the humble  
to quiescence.  
'Twas the Vintner of the June-wine on his world-  
wide, endless vagrance;  
And he spoke the tongue of moonshine in the  
dialect of fragrance:  
"Brother, Sister, softly, softly! Gloom-  
ing though the way be,  
Who is low and who is lofty in the scheme of what  
you may be?  
Pride and plaint are irreligious. Root and  
blossom, lo! you plod  
Upward to some far, prodigious rose of God!"  
And the little wind, though slyly sleeping out the  
time of talking,  
Woke to praise the sermon highly, and continued  
with his walking.

## PRAIRIE STORM RUNE

### I

THE wild bee sips at the heat-drugged lips  
Of the passionless lily a-nod ;  
The sunflowers stare through the hush at the glare  
Of the face of their tutelar god, and the hair  
Of the gossamer glints in the listless air.

Ragged and grim on the parched hill-rim,  
The cottonwoods sulk in gray :  
The guiding word of the plowman is heard  
A dream-thralled mile away — half blurred,  
Wounding the calm as a blunted sword.

Prophecy's minister, dolorous, sinister,  
Hark to the rain crow ! Incredible story !  
For the clouds of fleece like banners in peace  
Pine for the winds of glory. Cease,  
Chanter of storm in the ancient peace !

The sick land lies as a man ere he dies,  
Loosing his grip in a hush profound ;  
Save when the hidden insects scream  
In jets of watery sound that seem  
Taunts of thirst in a fever dream.

## II

What mean yon cries where the flat world dies  
In hazy rotundity —  
Tumult a-swoon, silence a-croon,  
Lapped in profundity — bane or boon  
Or only the drone of a fever rune ?

No bird sings — but a grasshopper's wings  
Snap in the meadow.  
On the rim of the hill the cottonwoods spill  
Stagnant puddles of shadow; and still —  
The air is quick with a subtle thrill !

A cool fresh puff ! The meadows are rough,  
The cottonwoods whiten and whisper together !  
The plowman at gaze, knee-deep in the maize,  
Judges the weather. A plow horse neighs,  
Faint and clear as a horn of the fays.

Haunting the distance with taunting insistence,  
Fiery portents and mumblings of wonder !  
In gardens of gloom, walled steep with doom,  
Strange blue buds burst in thunder, and bloom  
Dizzily, vividly, gaudily, lividly —  
Death-flowers sown in a cannon-gloom !

## III

Lo, on a height hewn sheer out of night,  
Where Mystery labors,

Through the Hadean heath from an awe beneath,  
A sprouting of sabres lean from the sheath!  
And bursting the husk of the travailing dusk,  
The world-old crop of the dragon's teeth!

Banners of battle-might, spear-glint and sword-  
light  
Over the dream-vague, frowning battalions!  
Hark, the hoarse trumpets bray! Sensing the  
coming fray,  
Wraith-ridden, thunder-hoofed stallions neigh  
Terror into the glooming day!

A death-hush falls. The shadow sprawls  
Sick in the failing noon.  
The sun flies shorn, aghast, forlorn,  
Like a spectral moon surprised at morn.  
Deathly green is the meadow-sheen,  
Ghastly green the corn.

## IV

Hark — at last — the burst of the blast —  
The roar of the charge and howls of defiance!  
The cottonwoods, grim on the bleared hill-rim,  
Grapple with giants weird and dim —  
Titan torses, pedisonant horses —  
Gods and demons and seraphim!

Bloody light from the sword-slashed night —  
Shuddering darkness after !  
Terrible feet trample the wheat !  
Olympian laughter overhead !  
Over the roofs rumble the hoofs,  
Over the graves of the dead !

And yet — somewhere through the crystal air  
A golden rain is swelling the oats,  
And wild doves croon to the splendid noon  
Of love too big for their throats ; and there  
Never the beat of terrible feet —  
Somehow, somewhere.

Stark in the rain like a face of the slain  
The gray land stares in the fitful light.  
Is it a glimmer of some vague story —  
The corn's green might, the wheatfield's shimmer,  
The sunflower's glory ?

## V

The war wind fails. A gray cloud trails  
Over the sodden plain.  
Swift and bright, the arrowy light  
Smites the rear of the Rain in flight !  
And lo, on high, spanning the sky,  
The arch of a Victor's might !

Nothing is heard . . . Hark! — a bird  
Calls from a green-gloomed, dripping cover!  
Surely wrath rode not in the blast,  
But some inscrutable Lover passed,  
Aflame with the lust of the Dew for the Dust,  
Out of the Vast into the Vast.

The wild bee slips from the housing lips  
Of the lily a-nod.  
Odors sweet in the humid heat!  
A glimmer of God athwart the wheat!  
Aglow with prayer, the sunflowers stare  
At the face of their Paraclete.

### PRAYER FOR PAIN

I do not pray for peace nor ease,  
Nor truce from sorrow :  
No suppliant on servile knees  
Begs here against to-morrow !

Lean flame against lean flame we flash,  
O Fates that meet me fair ;  
Blue steel against blue steel we clash —  
Lay on, and I shall dare !

But Thou of deeps the awful Deep,  
Thou breather in the clay,  
Grant this my only prayer — Oh keep  
My soul from turning gray !

For until now, whatever wrought  
Against my sweet desires,  
My days were smitten harps strung taut,  
My nights were slumbrous lyres.

And howsoe'er the hard blow rang  
Upon my battered shield,  
Some lark-like, soaring spirit sang  
Above my battle-field ;

And through my soul of stormy night  
The zigzag blue flame ran.  
I asked no odds — I fought my fight —  
Events against a man.

But now — at last — the gray mist chokes  
And numbs me. *Leave me pain!*  
*Oh let me feel the biting strokes*  
*That I may fight again!*

### BATTLE-CRY

MORE than half beaten, but fearless,  
Facing the storm and the night;  
Breathless and reeling, but tearless,  
Here in the lull of the fight,  
I who bow not but before Thee,  
God of the fighting Clan,  
Lifting my fists I implore Thee,  
Give me the heart of a Man!

What though I live with the winners  
Or perish with those who fall?  
Only the cowards are sinners,  
Fighting the fight is all.  
Strong is my Foe — he advances!  
Snapt is my blade, O Lord!  
See the proud banners and lances!  
Oh spare me this stub of a sword!

Give me no pity, nor spare me;  
Calm not the wrath of my Foe.  
See where he beckons to dare me!  
Bleeding, half beaten — I go.

Not for the glory of winning,  
Not for the fear of the night;  
Shunning the battle is sinning —  
Oh spare me the heart to fight!

Red is the mist about me;  
Deep is the wound in my side;  
'Coward' thou criest to flout me?  
O terrible Foe, thou hast lied!  
Here with my battle before me,  
God of the fighting clan,  
*Grant that the woman who bore me  
Suffered to suckle a man!*

### THE LYRIC

GIVE the good gaunt horse the rein,  
Sting him with the steel !  
Set his nervous thews a-strain,  
Let him feel the winner's pain,  
Master-hand and -heel !  
Fling him, hurl him at the wire  
Though he sob and bleed !  
Play upon him as a lyre —  
Speed is music set on fire —  
*Oh, the mighty steed !*

Hurl the lyric swift and true  
Like a shaft of Doom !  
Like the lightning's blade of blue  
Letting all the heavens through,  
And shuddering back to gloom !  
Like the sudden river-thaw,  
Like a sabred throng,  
Give it fury clothed in awe —  
Speed is half the lyric law —  
*Oh, the mighty song !*

### LONESOME IN TOWN

THE long day wanes, the fog shuts down,  
The eave-trough spouts and sputters;  
The rain sighs through the huddled town  
And mumbles in the gutters.

The emptied thoroughfares become  
Long streams of eerie light;  
They issue from the mist and, dumb,  
Flow onward out of sight.

A crowded street-car grumbles past,  
Its snapping trolley glows;  
Again where yon pale light is cast  
The hackman's horses doze.

In vain the bargain windows wink,  
The passers-by are few:  
The grim walls stretch away and shrink  
In dull electric blue.

A stranger hurries down the street,  
Hat dripping, face aglow:  
O happy feet, O homing feet,  
I know where mine would go!

Far oh, far over hills and dells  
The cows come up the lane,  
With steaming flanks and fog-dulled bells  
A-tinkle in the rain.

## MONEY

A SON of Adam dug beside the way.  
"Why Brother, do you dig?" I stopped to ask.  
Standing at stoop and pausing in his task,  
From dreary eyes he wiped the sweat away.  
"I work for money." "What is money, pray?"  
"A foolish question, this you come to ask!"  
Yet in that gray and worry-haunted mask  
At hide-and-seek I saw my query play.  
  
"It is the graven symbol of your ache,"  
I said, "— the minted meaning of your blood;  
And he who works not, robs you when he buys!  
You are the vassal of a thing you make!"  
I left him staring hard upon the mud,  
The glimmer of a portent in his eyes.

### SONG OF THE TURBINE WHEEL

HEARKEN the bluster and brag of the Mill !  
The heart of the Mill am I,  
Doomed to toil in the dark until  
The springs of the world run dry;  
With never a ray of sun to cheer  
And never a star for lamp !  
It cries its song in the great World's ear —  
I toil in the dark and damp.

And ever the storm-clouds cast their showers  
And the brook laughs loud in the sun,  
To goad me on through the dizzy hours  
That the will of the Mill be done !  
And that is why I groan at work ;  
For deep down under the flood I lurk  
Where the icy midnight lingers ;  
While *tinkle, tinkle* the waters play  
Through starless night and sunless day —  
All with their crystal fingers.

Oh, the waters have such a rollicking way  
And they taunt me in my pain ;  
" 'Tis thou alone art sad," they say,

SONG OF THE TURBINE WHEEL 155

"Thy rusty whine is vain;  
For the grass is green and the skies are blue  
And a fisherman whistled, as we came through,  
A careless merry tune;  
And a bevy of boys were out with their noise  
In our flood made warm with June!"

And, bound as I am where the darkness lingers,  
I half forgive their careless way,  
Such soothing, tinkling tunes they play —  
All with their icy fingers.

### THE RED WIND COMES!

Too long mere words have thrall'd us. Let us  
think!

Oh ponder, are we "free and equal" yet?  
That July bombast, writ with blood for ink,  
Is blurred with floods of unavailing sweat!

An empty sound we won from Royal George!  
Yea, till a greater fight be fought and won,  
A sentimental show was Valley Forge,  
A mawkish, tawdry farce was Lexington!

No longer blindfold Justice reigns; but leers  
A barefaced, venal strumpet in her stead!  
The stolen harvests of a hundred years  
Are lighter than a stolen loaf of bread!

O pious Nation, holding God in awe,  
Where sacred human rights are duly priced!  
Where men are beggared in the name of Law,  
Where alms are given in the name of Christ!

The Country of the Free? — O wretched lie!  
The Country of the Brave? — Yea, let it be!

One more good fight, O Brothers, ere we die,  
And this shall be the Country of the Free!

What! Are we cowards? Are we doting fools?  
Who built the cities, fructified the lands?  
We make and use, but do we own the tools?  
Who robbed us of the product of our hands?

A tiger-hearted Tyrant crowned with Law,  
Whose flesh is custom and whose soul is greed!  
Ubiquitous, a nothing clothed in awe,  
We sweat for him and bleed!

Daft Freedom sings the glory of his reign;  
Religion is a pander of his lust:  
Surviving tyrants, he eludes the vain,  
Tyrannicidal thrust.

Yea, and *we* serve this Insult to our God!  
Gnawing our crusts, we render Cæsar toll!  
We labor with the back beneath his rod,  
His shackles on the soul!

He is a System — wrought for human hogs!  
So long as we shall hug a hoary Lie,  
And gulp the vocal swill of demagogues,  
The Fat shall rule the sty!

Behold potential plenty for us all!  
Behold the pauper and the plutocrat!

Behold the signs prophetic of thy fall,  
O Dynast of the Fat !

Lo, even now the haunting, spectral scrawl !  
Lo, even now the beat of hidden wings !  
The ghosts of millions throng thy banquet-hall,  
O guiltiest and last of all the kings !

Beware the Furies stirring in the gloom !  
They mutter from the mines, the mills, the  
slums !

No lie shall stay or mitigate thy doom —  
*The Red Wind comes !*

## CRY OF THE PEOPLE

TREMBLE before thy chattels,  
Lords of the scheme of things !  
Fighters of all earth's battles,  
Ours is the might of kings !  
Guided by seers and sages,  
The world's heart-beat for a drum,  
Snapping the chains of ages,  
Out of the night we come !

Lend us no ear that pities !  
Offer no almoner's hand !  
Alms for the builders of cities !  
When will you understand ?  
Down with your pride of birth  
And your golden gods of trade !  
A man is worth to his mother, Earth,  
All that a man has made !

We are the workers and makers !  
We are no longer dumb !  
Tremble, O Shirkers and Takers !  
Sweeping the earth — we come !

Ranked in the world-wide dawn,  
Marching into the day!  
*The night is gone and the sword is drawn*  
*And the scabbard is thrown away!*

## O LYRIC MASTER!

Our of thy pregnant silence, brooding and latent  
so long,  
Burst on the world, O Master, sing us the great  
man-song!  
Have we not piled up cities, gutted the iron hills,  
Schooled with our dream the lightning and  
steam, giving them thoughts and wills?  
Have we not laughed at distance, belting the  
earth with rails?  
We are no herd of weaklings. Lo, we are mas-  
terful males!  
We are the poets of matter. Latent in steel and  
stone,  
Latent in engines and cities and ships, see how  
our songs have grown!  
Long have we hammered and chiselled, hewn and  
hoisted, until  
Lo, 'neath the wondering noon of the world, the  
visible Epic of Will!  
Breathless we halt in our labor; shout us a song  
to cheer;  
Something that's swift as a sabre, keen for the  
mark as a spear;

Full of the echoes of battle — souls crying up  
from the dust.  
Hungry we cried to our singers — our singers  
have flung us a crust!  
Choked with the smoke of the battle, staggering,  
weary with blows,  
We cried for a flagon of music — they gave us  
the dew of a rose!  
Gewgaw goblets they gave us, jewelled and  
crystalline,  
But filled with the tears of a weakling. Better  
a gourd — and wine!  
O immanent Lyric Master, thou who hast felt  
us build,  
Moulding the mud with our sweat and blood into  
a thing we willed;  
Soon shall thy brooding be over, the dream shall  
be ripened — and then,  
Thunderous out of thy silence, hurl us the Song  
of Men!

## KATHARSIS

(1914)

### I

Who pray for calm, abhorring flood and fire,  
Would shun the purging and espouse the blight.  
Lo, in the marshland where the tempest's might  
Has raged not, how life's meaner forms aspire!  
How breeds and skitters in the fetid mire  
Spawn reminiscent of the primal light!  
What saturnalias of the parasite  
Where corpse-lights ape the elemental fire!

Disaster, riding on a thunder-smoke,  
Serpents of flame upon his forehead set,  
Hurls the black legions of cyclonic strife!  
We trace his progress by the shattered oak,  
Bewail the wasted centuries — and yet,  
The land shall quicken to a cleaner life.

### II

They hasten to the ancient bath again,  
And shall emerge unto a saner peace.

Lo, how they made a fetich of caprice,  
And worshipped with aberrant brush and pen !  
What false dawns summoned by the crowing hen !  
How toiled the lean to batten the obese !  
What straying from the sanity of Greece  
While yet her seers and bards were fighting-men !

A canting generation, smug in greed,  
With neurasthenic shudders, suavely wroth,  
Bemoans the ruin of Icarian wings !  
Lo, latent in its luxury, the Mede ;  
Potential in bland cruelties, the Goth —  
Stern teachers of the fundamental things !

## THE FARMER'S THANKSGIVING

(1914)

Not ours to marshal, rank on rank,  
The might a Kaiser wields;  
Not ours the harvest of the Frank  
On rifle-pitted fields:  
But we have fought, and we have won  
As never wins the sword;  
And now that our good war is done,  
We humbly thank the Lord.

Prepare the feast and let us sing  
Of how the foe we slew;  
How on a bleak frontier of Spring  
We ran our trenches true;  
How, trudging through the harrow smoke,  
Went forth our army leaders;  
And how the golden volleys broke  
From batteries of seeders.

The King Most High was our ally.  
What drilling and recruiting!

How thronged the glades and hills with blades !

What eagerness for shooting !

And when, midmost the June campaign,

Old Drought swooped in to plunder,

How charged the lancers of the rain !

What cannonade of thunder !

Well may we boast ; our wheaten host

Outnumbered all the Russians ;

Our plumèd corn might laugh to scorn

The Uhlans of the Prussians !

They seek a ghastly triumph now ;

Our victories are kinder.

God bless the good old twelve-inch plow

And automatic binder !

Lo, where like stacked triumphant arms

The corn shocks dot yon rise !

Let golden bombs on all the farms

Now burst in pumpkin pies !

And let us sing, for we have won

As never wins the sword ;

And now that our good fight is done,

Be praises to the Lord !

### THE VOICE OF NEMESIS

You knew me of old and feared me,  
Dreading my face revealed;  
Temples and altars you reared me,  
Wooed me with shuddering names;  
Masking your fear in meekness,  
You pæaned the doom I wield,  
Wrought me a robe of your weakness,  
A crown of your woven shames.

Image of all earth's error,  
Big as the bulk of its guilt,  
Lo, I darkled with terror,  
A demon of spite and grudge;  
You made me a vessel of fury  
Brimmed with the blood you spilt;  
With devils of hell for jury,  
You throned me a pitiless judge.

For ever the wage of sorrow  
Paid for the lawless deed;  
Never the gray to-morrow  
Paused for a pious price;

Never by prayer and psalter  
Perished the guilty seed ;  
Vain was the wail at the altar,  
The smoke of the sacrifice.

I come like a crash of thunder ;  
I come as a slow-toothed dread ;  
With fire and sword to plunder  
Or only with lust and sloth.  
By star or sun I creep or run,  
And lo, my will was sped  
By the might of the Mede, the hate of the Hun,  
The bleak northwind of the Goth !

Yet, older than malice and cunning,  
The love and the hate of your creed,  
I smile in the blossom sunning,  
I am hurricane lightning-shod !  
Revealed in a myriad dresses,  
I am master or slave at need.  
You grope for my face with your guesses,  
And kneel to your guess for a god.

I am one in the fall of the pebble,  
The call of the sea to the stream,  
The wrath of the starving rebel,  
The plunge of the vernal thaw :

The yearning of things to be level,  
The stir of the deed in the dream;  
I am these — I am angel and devil —  
I am Law!

## ECHO SONG

Lo, a wandering echo I,  
Flung afar, confused, forlorn;  
Yearning with a broken cry,  
Yet of mighty music born!

Echo from a Wonder-Horn  
That sends the music flying far,  
Blaring through the scarlet morn,  
Tinkling in the spangled star!

Where in all the songs that are  
May the echo cease to be,  
Filling out a wondrous bar,  
Blending with a melody?

Like a ghost there lives in me,  
Frustrate in my monotone,  
Something chanted by a Sea,  
Something out of vastness blown.

Lost, reiterant, alone,  
I grow weary, seeking long,  
Out of master-music blown,  
Homesick for the Mother-Song.

Yet — what though the way be long ?  
Hark the music flying far !  
Trumpets from the scarlet morn,  
Lyrics from the evening star !

Kin to all the songs that are,  
Of a mighty singing born,  
Sun and I and Sea and Star,  
Echoes from a Wonder-Horn.

## FOUNTAIN SONG

I AM the sprite of the fountain,  
Sprung from the gloom am I,  
Out of the womb of the Mountain,  
Big with the kiss of the Sky!  
I am the Fugitive Glory,  
Singing the strong soul's story.  
Twinkling, tinkling, glad to be  
Out of the prison of Earth set free;  
Dancing, mad with the cosmic tune,  
Laughing under the stars and moon —  
Back to the Ocean soon!

Back to the Sky and back to the Sea —  
Oh I was a prisoner long!  
But the love of the Vast was strong in me,  
I fed on the Dream of the Strong.  
And Oh while the slow gloom chained the Deed,  
I wrought my vision of silvery speed!  
And out of the dread hush round about,  
I fashioned a gladsome victor-shout!  
Sister of Wave and Cloud am I,  
And the world grows green as I pass by —  
Back to the Sea and Sky!

## OUTWARD

WHITHER away, O Sailor, say ?  
Under the night, under the day,  
Yearning sail and flying spray,  
Out of the black into the blue,  
Where are the great Winds bearing you ?

*Never port shall lift for me  
Into the sky, out of the sea !  
Into the blue or into the black,  
Onward, outward, never back !  
Something mighty and weird and dim  
Calls me under the ocean rim !*

Sailor under sun and moon,  
'Tis the ocean's fatal rune.  
Under yon far rim of sky  
Twice ten thousand others lie.  
Love is sweet and home is fair,  
And your mother calls you there.

*Onward, outward I must go  
Where the mighty currents flow.  
Home is anywhere for me  
On this purple-tented sea.*

*Star and Wind and Sun my brothers,  
Ocean one of many mothers.  
Onward under sun and star  
Where the weird adventures are!  
Never port shall lift for me —  
I am Wind and Sky and Sea!*

### THE GHOSTLY BROTHER

BROTHER, Brother, calling me  
Like a distant surfy sea,  
Like a wind that moans and grieves  
All night long about the eaves;  
Let me rest a little span;  
Long I've followed, followed fast;  
Now I wish to be a man,  
Disconnected from the Vast!  
Let me stop a little while,  
Feel this snug world's pulses beat,  
Glory in a baby's smile,  
Hear it prattle round my feet;  
Eat and sleep and love and live,  
Thankful ever for the dawn;  
Wanting what the world can give —  
With the cosmic curtains drawn!

*Brother, Brother, break the gyves!  
Burst the prison, Son of Power!  
Product of forgotten lives,  
Seedling of the final flower!*

*What to you are nights and days,  
Drifting snow or rainy flaw,  
Love or hate or blame or praise —  
Heir unto the Outer Awe?*

I am breathless from the flight  
Through the speed-cleft, awful night !  
Panting, let me rest awhile  
In this pleasant æther-isle.  
Here, content with transient things,  
How the witless dweller sings !  
Rears his brood and steers his plow,  
Nursing at the breasts of Now.  
Here the meanest, yea, the slave  
Claims the heirloom of a grave !  
Oh, this little world is blest —  
Brother, Brother, let me rest !

*I am you and you are I!  
When the world is cherished most,  
You shall hear my haunting cry,  
See me rising like a ghost.  
I am all that you have been,  
Are not now, but soon shall be !  
Thralled awhile by dust and din —  
Brother, Brother, follow me !*

'Tis a lonesome, endless quest ;  
I am weary ; I would rest.

Though I seek to fly from you,  
Like a shadow, you pursue.  
Do I love? You share the kiss,  
Leaving only half the bliss.  
Do I conquer? You are there,  
Claiming half the victor's share.  
When the night-shades fray and lift,  
'Tis your veiled face lights the rift.  
In the sighing of the rain,  
Your voice goads me like a pain.  
Happy in a narrow trust,  
Let me serve the lesser will  
One brief hour — and then, to dust!  
Oh, the dead are very still!

*Brother, Brother, follow hence!  
Ours the wild, unflagging speed!  
Through the outer walls of sense,  
Follow, follow where I lead!  
Love and hate and grief and fear —  
'Tis the geocentric dream!  
Only shadows linger here,  
Cast by the eternal Gleam!  
Follow, follow, follow fast! —  
Somewhere out of Time and Place,  
You shall lift the veil at last,  
You shall look upon my face;*

*Look upon my face and die,  
Solver of the Mystery!  
I am you and you are I —  
Brother, Brother, follow me!*

### WHEN I HAVE GONE WEIRD WAYS

WHEN I have finished with this episode,  
Left the hard up-hill road,  
And gone weird ways to seek another load,  
O Friend regret me not, nor weep for me —  
Child of Infinity !

Nor dig a grave, nor rear for me a tomb,  
To say with lying writ : "Here in the gloom  
He who loved bigness takes a narrow room,  
Content to pillow here his weary head —  
For he is dead."

But give my body to the funeral pyre,  
And bid the laughing fire,  
Eager and strong and swift as my desire,  
Scatter my subtle essence into Space —  
Free me of Time and Place.

Sweep up the bitter ashes from the hearth !  
Fling back the dust I borrowed from the Earth  
Unto the chemic broil of Death and Birth —  
The vast Alembic of the cryptic Scheme,  
Warm with the Master-Dream !

And thus, O little House that sheltered me,  
Dissolve again in wind and rain, to be  
Part of the cosmic weird Economy :  
And Oh, how oft with new life shalt thou lift  
Out of the atom-drift !

## ENVOI

OH seek me not within a tomb;  
Thou shalt not find me in the clay!  
I pierce a little wall of gloom  
To mingle with the Day!

I brothered with the things that pass,  
Poor giddy Joy and puckered Grief;  
I go to brother with the Grass  
And with the sunning Leaf.

Not Death can sheathe me in a shroud;  
A joy-sword whetted keen with pain,  
I join the armies of the Cloud,  
The Lightning and the Rain.

Oh subtle in the sap athrill,  
Athletic in the glad uplift,  
A portion of the Cosmic Will,  
I pierce the planet-drift.

My God and I shall interknit  
As rain and Ocean, breath and Air;  
And Oh, the luring thought of it  
Is prayer!

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Poetry



*The Quest* was a landmark publication in modern American poetry, bringing together those lyrical poems most near and dear to their creator, John G. Neihardt. Featured are the poet's favorite selections from his celebrated collections *A Bundle of Myrrh*, *Man-Song*, and *The Stranger at the Gates*. The poems, unfailingly insightful and contemplative, run the gamut of the epic poet's physical and metaphysical

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