

Amores

By

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TO

OTTOLINE MORRELL

IN TRIBUTE

TO HER NOBLE

AND INDEPENDENT SYMPATHY

AND HER

GENEROUS UNDERSTANDING

THESE POEMS

ARE GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

AMORES

TEASE

I WILL give you all my keys, You shall be my châtelaine, You shall enter as you please, As you please shall go again.

When I hear you jingling through All the chambers of my soul, How I sit and laugh at you In your vain housekeeping rôle.

Jealous of the smallest cover, Angry at the simplest door; Well, you anxious, inquisitive lover, Are you pleased with what's in store?

You have fingered all my treasures, Have you not, most curiously, Handled all my tools and measures And masculine machinery?

Over every single beauty You have had your little rapture; You have slain, as was your duty, Every sin-mouse you could capture.

Still you are not satisfied, Still you tremble faint reproach; Challenge me I keep aside Secrets that you may not broach.

Maybe yes, and maybe no, Maybe there are secret places, Altars barbarous below, Elsewhere halls of high disgraces.

Maybe yes, and maybe no, You may have it as you please, Since I choose to keep you so, Suppliant on your curious knees.

THE WILD COMMON

THE quick sparks on the gorse bushes are leaping, Little jets of sunlight-texture imitating flame; Above them, exultant, the pee-wits are sweeping: They are lords of the desolate wastes of sadness their screamings proclaim.

Rabbits, handfuls of brown earth, lie Low-rounded on the mournful grass they have bitten down to the quick. Are they asleep?--Are they alive?-- Now see, when I Move my arms the hill bursts and heaves under their spurting kick.

The common flaunts bravely; but below, from the rushes Crowds of glittering king-cups surge to challenge the blossoming bushes; There the lazy streamlet pushes Its curious course mildly; here it wakes again, leaps, laughs, and gushes.

Into a deep pond, an old sheep-dip, Dark, overgrown with willows, cool, with the brook ebbing through so slow, Naked on the steep, soft lip Of the bank I stand watching my own white shadow quivering to and fro.

What if the gorse flowers shrivelled and kissing were lost? Without the pulsing waters, where were the marigolds and the songs of the brook? If my veins and my breasts with love embossed Withered, my insolent soul would be gone like flowers that the hot wind took.

So my soul like a passionate woman turns, Filled with remorseful terror to the man she scorned, and her love For myself in my own eyes' laughter burns, Runs ecstatic over the pliant folds rippling down to my belly from the breast-lights above.

Over my sunlit skin the warm, clinging air, Rich with the songs of seven larks singing at once, goes kissing me glad. And the soul of the wind and my blood compare Their wandering happiness, and the wind, wasted in liberty, drifts on and is sad.

Oh but the water loves me and folds me, Plays with me, sways me, lifts me and sinks me as though it were living blood, Blood of a heaving woman who holds me, Owning my supple body a rare glad thing, supremely good.

STUDY

SOMEWHERE the long mellow note of the blackbird Quickens the unclasping hands of hazel, Somewhere the wind-flowers fling their heads back, Stirred by an impetuous wind. Some ways'll All be sweet with white and blue violet. (Hush now, hush. Where am I?--Biuret--)

On the green wood's edge a shy girl hovers From out of the hazel-screen on to the grass, Where wheeling and screaming the petulant plovers Wave frightened. Who comes? A labourer, alas! Oh the sunset swims in her eyes' swift pool. (Work, work, you fool--!)

Somewhere the lamp hanging low from the ceiling Lights the soft hair of a girl as she reads, And the red firelight steadily wheeling Weaves the hard hands of my friend in sleep. And the white dog snuffs the warmth, appealing For the man to heed lest the girl shall weep.

(Tears and dreams for them; for me Bitter science--the exams. are near. I wish I bore it more patiently. I wish you did not wait, my dear, For me to come: since work I must: Though it's all the same when we are dead.-- I wish I was only a bust, All head.)

DISCORD IN CHILDHOOD

OUTSIDE the house an ash-tree hung its terrible whips, And at night
when the wind arose, the lash of the tree Shrieked and slashed the wind, as
a ship's Weird rigging in a storm shrieks hideously.

Within the house two voices arose in anger, a slender lash Whistling
delirious rage, and the dreadful sound Of a thick lash booming and
bruising, until it drowned The other voice in a silence of blood, 'neath the
noise of the ash.

VIRGIN YOUTH

Now and again All my body springs alive, And the life that is polarised in my eyes, That quivers between my eyes and mouth, Flies like a wild thing across my body, Leaving my eyes half-empty, and clamorous, Filling my still breasts with a flush and a flame, Gathering the soft ripples below my breasts Into urgent, passionate waves, And my soft, slumbering belly Quivering awake with one impulse of desire, Gathers itself fiercely together; And my docile, fluent arms Knotting themselves with wild strength To clasp what they have never clasped. Then I tremble, and go trembling Under the wild, strange tyranny of my body, Till it has spent itself, And the relentless nodality of my eyes reasserts itself, Till the bursten flood of life ebbs back to my eyes, Back from my beautiful, lonely body Tired and unsatisfied.

MONOLOGUE OF A MOTHER

THIS is the last of all, this is the last! I must hold my hands, and turn my face to the fire, I must watch my dead days fusing together in dross, Shape after shape, and scene after scene from my past Fusing to one dead mass in the sinking fire Where the ash on the dying coals grows swiftly, like heavy moss.

Strange he is, my son, whom I have awaited like a lover, Strange to me like a captive in a foreign country, haunting The confines and gazing out on the land where the wind is free; White and gaunt, with wistful eyes that hover Always on the distance, as if his soul were chaunting The monotonous weird of departure away from me.

Like a strange white bird blown out of the frozen seas, Like a bird from the far north blown with a broken wing Into our sooty garden, he drags and beats From place to place perpetually, seeking release From me, from the hand of my love which creeps up, needing His happiness, whilst he in displeasure retreats.

I must look away from him, for my faded eyes Like a cringing dog at his heels offend him now, Like a toothless hound pursuing him with my will, Till he chafes at my crouching persistence, and a sharp spark flies In my soul from under the sudden frown of his brow, As he blenches and turns away, and my heart stands still.

This is the last, it will not be any more. All my life I have borne the burden of myself, All the long years of sitting in my husband's house, Never have I said to myself as he closed the door: "Now I am caught!--You are hopelessly lost, O Self, You are frightened with joy, my heart, like a frightened mouse."

Three times have I offered myself, three times rejected. It will not be any more. No more, my son, my son! Never to know the glad freedom of obedience, since long ago The angel of childhood kissed me and went. I expected Another would take me,--and now, my son, O my son, I must sit awhile and wait, and never know The loss of myself, till death comes, who cannot fail.

Death, in whose service is nothing of gladness, takes me; For the lips and the eyes of God are behind a veil. And the thought of the lipless voice of the Father shakes me With fear, and fills my eyes with the tears of desire,

And my heart rebels with anguish as night draws nigher,

IN A BOAT

SEE the stars, love, In the water much clearer and brighter Than those
above us, and whiter, Like nenuphars.

Star-shadows shine, love, How many stars in your bowl? How many
shadows in your soul, Only mine, love, mine?

When I move the oars, love, See how the stars are tossed, Distorted, the
brightest lost. --So that bright one of yours, love.

The poor waters spill The stars, waters broken, forsaken. --The heavens are
not shaken, you say, love, Its stars stand still.

There, did you see That spark fly up at us; even Stars are not safe in
heaven. --What of yours, then, love, yours?

What then, love, if soon Your light be tossed over a wave? Will you count the
darkness a grave, And swoon, love, swoon?

WEEK-NIGHT SERVICE

THE five old bells Are hurrying and eagerly calling, Imploring, protesting
They know, but clamorously falling Into gabbling incoherence, never resting,
Like spattering showers from a bursten sky-rocket dropping In splashes
of sound, endlessly, never stopping.

The silver moon That somebody has spun so high To settle the question, yes
or no, has caught In the net of the night's balloon, And sits with a smooth
bland smile up there in the sky Smiling at naught, Unless the winking
star that keeps her company Makes little jests at the bells' insanity, As if he
knew aught!

The patient Night Sits indifferent, hugged in her rags, She neither knows nor
cares Why the old church sobs and brags; The light distresses her eyes, and
tears Her old blue cloak, as she crouches and covers her face, Smiling,
perhaps, if we knew it, at the bells' loud clattering disgrace.

The wise old trees Drop their leaves with a faint, sharp hiss of contempt,
While a car at the end of the street goes by with a laugh; As by degrees
The poor bells cease, and the Night is exempt, And the stars can chaff The
ironic moon at their ease, while the dim old church Is peopled with
shadows and sounds and ghosts that lurch In its cenotaph.

IRONY

ALWAYS, sweetheart, Carry into your room the blossoming boughs of
cherry, Almond and apple and pear diffuse with light, that very Soon
strews itself on the floor; and keep the radiance of spring Fresh quivering;
keep the sunny-swift March-days waiting In a little throng at your door,
and admit the one who is plaiting Her hair for womanhood, and play
awhile with her, then bid her depart.

A come and go of March-day loves Through the flower-vine, trailing
screen; A fluttering in of doves. Then a launch abroad of shrinking
doves Over the waste where no hope is seen Of open hands:
Dance in and out Small-bosomed girls of the spring of love, With a
bubble of laughter, and shrilly shout Of mirth; then the dripping of tears
on your glove. DREAMS OLD AND NASCENT

OLD

I HAVE opened the window to warm my hands on the sill
Where the sunlight soaks in the stone: the afternoon
Is full of dreams, my love, the boys are all still
In a wistful dream of Lorna Doone.

The clink of the shunting engines is sharp and fine,
Like savage music striking far off, and there
On the great, uplifted blue palace, lights stir and
shine
Where the glass is domed in the blue, soft air.

There lies the world, my darling, full of wonder and
wistfulness and strange
Recognition and greetings of half-acquaint things, as
I greet the cloud
Of blue palace aloft there, among misty indefinite
dreams that range
At the back of my life's horizon, where the dreamings
of past lives crowd.

Over the nearness of Norwood Hill, through the
mellow veil Of the afternoon glows to me the old
romance of David and Dora, With the old,
sweet, soothing tears, and laughter that shakes the
sail Of the ship of the soul over seas where
dreamed dreams lure the unocaned explorer.

All the bygone, hushèd years Streaming back where
the mist distils Into forgetfulness: soft-sailing
waters where fears No longer shake, where the
silk sail fills With an unfelt breeze that ebbs
over the seas, where the storm Of living has
passed, on and on Through the coloured
iridescence that swims in the warm
Wake of the tumult now spent and gone,
Drifts my boat, wistfully lapsing after
The mists of vanishing tears and the echo of
laughter.

DREAMS OLD AND NASCENT

NASCENT

MY world is a painted fresco, where coloured shapes
Of old, ineffectual lives
linger blurred and warm; An endless tapestry the past has woven drapes
The halls of my life, compelling my soul to conform.

The surface of dreams is broken, The picture of the past is shaken and
scattered. Fluent, active figures of men pass along the railway, and I am
woken From the dreams that the distance flattered.

Along the railway, active figures of men. They have a secret that stirs in their
limbs as they move Out of the distance, nearer, commanding my dreamy
world.

Here in the subtle, rounded flesh Beats the active ecstasy. In the sudden
lifting my eyes, it is clearer, The fascination of the quick, restless Creator
moving through the mesh Of men, vibrating in ecstasy through the
rounded flesh.

Oh my boys, bending over your books, In you is trembling and fusing The
creation of a new-patterned dream, dream of a generation: And I watch to
see the Creator, the power that patterns the dream.

The old dreams are beautiful, beloved, soft-toned, and sure, But the
dream-stuff is molten and moving mysteriously, Alluring my eyes; for I, am I
not also dream-stuff, Am I not quickening, diffusing myself in the pattern,
shaping and shapen?

Here in my class is the answer for the great yearning: Eyes where I can
watch the swim of old dreams reflected on the molten metal of dreams,
Watch the stir which is rhythmic and moves them all as a heart-beat
moves the blood, Here in the swelling flesh the great activity working, Visible
there in the change of eyes and the mobile features.

Oh the great mystery and fascination of the unseen Shaper, The power of
the melting, fusing Force--heat, light, all in one, Everything great and
mysterious in one, swelling and shaping the dream in the flesh, As it
swells and shapes a bud into blossom.

Oh the terrible ecstasy of the consciousness that I am life! Oh the miracle of the whole, the widespread, labouring concentration Swelling mankind like one bud to bring forth the fruit of a dream, Oh the terror of lifting the innermost I out of the sweep of the impulse of life, And watching the great Thing labouring through the whole round flesh of the world; And striving to catch a glimpse of the shape of the coming dream, As it quickens within the labouring, white-hot metal, Catch the scent and the colour of the coming dream, Then to fall back exhausted into the unconscious, molten life!

A WINTER'S TALE

YESTERDAY the fields were only grey with scattered snow, And now the longest grass-leaves hardly emerge; Yet her deep footsteps mark the snow, and go On towards the pines at the hills' white verge.

I cannot see her, since the mist's white scarf Obscures the dark wood and the dull orange sky; But she's waiting, I know, impatient and cold, half Sobs struggling into her frosty sigh.

Why does she come so promptly, when she must know That she's only the nearer to the inevitable farewell; The hill is steep, on the snow my steps are slow-- Why does she come, when she knows what I have to tell?

EPILOGUE

PATIENCE, little Heart. One day a heavy, June-hot woman Will enter and shut the door to stay.

And when your stifling heart would summon Cool, lonely night, her roused breasts will keep the night at bay, Sitting in your room like two tiger-lilies Flaming on after sunset, Destroying the cool, lonely night with the glow of their hot twilight; There in the morning, still, while the fierce strange scent comes yet Stronger, hot and red; till you thirst for the daffodillies With an anguished, husky thirst that you cannot assuage, When the daffodillies are dead, and a woman of the dog-days holds you in gage. Patience, little Heart.

A BABY RUNNING BAREFOOT

WHEN the bare feet of the baby beat across the grass
The little white feet
nod like white flowers in the wind, They poise and run like ripples lapping
across the water; And the sight of their white play among the grass
Is like a little robin's song, winsome, Or as two white butterflies settle in the cup of
one flower For a moment, then away with a flutter of wings.

I long for the baby to wander hither to me Like a wind-shadow wandering
over the water, So that she can stand on my knee With her little bare feet in
my hands, Cool like syringa buds, Firm and silken like pink young peony
flowers.

DISCIPLINE

IT is stormy, and raindrops cling like silver bees to the pane, The thin sycamores in the playground are swinging with flattened leaves; The heads of the boys move dimly through a yellow gloom that stains The class; over them all the dark net of my discipline weaves.

It is no good, dear, gentleness and forbearance, I endured too long. I have pushed my hands in the dark soil, under the flower of my soul And the gentle leaves, and have felt where the roots are strong Fixed in the darkness, grappling for the deep soil's little control.

And there is the dark, my darling, where the roots are entangled and fight Each one for its hold on the oblivious darkness, I know that there In the night where we first have being, before we rise on the light, We are not brothers, my darling, we fight and we do not spare.

And in the original dark the roots cannot keep, cannot know Any communion whatever, but they bind themselves on to the dark, And drawing the darkness together, crush from it a twilight, a slow Burning that breaks at last into leaves and a flower's bright spark.

I came to the boys with love, my dear, but they turned on me; I came with gentleness, with my heart 'twixt my hands like a bowl, Like a loving-cup, like a grail, but they spilt it triumphantly And tried to break the vessel, and to violate my soul.

But what have I to do with the boys, deep down in my soul, my love? I throw from out of the darkness my self like a flower into sight, Like a flower from out of the night-time, I lift my face, and those Who will may warm their hands at me, comfort this night.

But whosoever would pluck apart my flowering shall burn their hands, So flowers are tender folk, and roots can only hide, Yet my flowerings of love are a fire, and the scarlet brands Of my love are roses to look at, but flames to chide.

But comfort me, my love, now the fires are low, Now I am broken to earth like a winter destroyed, and all Myself but a knowledge of roots, of roots in the dark that throw A net on the undersoil, which lies passive beneath their thrall.

But comfort me, for henceforth my love is yours alone, To you alone will I
offer the bowl, to you will I give My essence only, but love me, and I will
atone To you for my general loving, atone as long as I live.

SCENT OF IRISES

A FAINT, sickening scent of irises Persists all morning. Here in a jar on the table A fine proud spike of purple irises Rising above the class-room litter, makes me unable To see the class's lifted and bended faces Save in a broken pattern, amid purple and gold and sable.

I can smell the gorgeous bog-end, in its breathless Dazzle of may-blobs, when the marigold glare overcast you With fire on your cheeks and your brow and your chin as you dipped Your face in the marigold bunch, to touch and contrast you, Your own dark mouth with the bridal faint lady-smocks, Dissolved on the golden sorcery you should not outlast.

You amid the bog-end's yellow incantation, You sitting in the cowslips of the meadow above, Me, your shadow on the bog-flame, flowery may-blobs, Me full length in the cowslips, muttering you love; You, your soul like a lady-smock, lost, evanescent, You with your face all rich, like the sheen of a dove.

You are always asking, do I remember, remember The butter-cup bog-end where the flowers rose up And kindled you over deep with a cast of gold? You ask again, do the healing days close up The open darkness which then drew us in, The dark which then drank up our brimming cup.

You upon the dry, dead beech-leaves, in the fire of night Burnt like a sacrifice; you invisible; Only the fire of darkness, and the scent of you! --And yes, thank God, it still is possible The healing days shall close the darkness up Wherein we fainted like a smoke or dew.

Like vapour, dew, or poison. Now, thank God, The fire of night is gone, and your face is ash Indistinguishable on the grey, chill day; The night has burnt us out, at last the good Dark fire burns on untroubled, without clash Of you upon the dead leaves saying me Yea.

THE PROPHET

AH, my darling, when over the purple horizon shall loom
The shrouded mother of a new idea, men hide their faces,
Cry out and fend her off, as she seeks her procreant
groom, Wounding themselves against her,
denying her fecund embraces.

LAST WORDS TO MIRIAM

YOURS is the shame and sorrow But the disgrace is mine; Your love was dark and thorough, Mine was the love of the sun for a flower He creates with his shine.

I was diligent to explore you, Blossom you stalk by stalk, Till my fire of creation bore you Shrivelling down in the final dour Anguish--then I suffered a balk.

I knew your pain, and it broke My fine, craftsman's nerve; Your body quailed at my stroke, And my courage failed to give you the last Fine torture you did deserve.

You are shapely, you are adorned, But opaque and dull in the flesh, Who, had I but pierced with the thorned Fire-threshing anguish, were fused and cast In a lovely illumined mesh.

Like a painted window: the best Suffering burnt through your flesh, Undrossed it and left it blest With a quivering sweet wisdom of grace: but now Who shall take you afresh?

Now who will burn you free From your body's terrors and dross, Since the fire has failed in me? What man will stoop in your flesh to plough The shrieking cross?

A mute, nearly beautiful thing Is your face, that fills me with shame As I see it hardening, Warping the perfect image of God, And darkening my eternal fame.

MYSTERY

Now I am all One bowl of kisses, Such as the tall Slim votaresses Of Egypt
filled For a God's excesses.

I lift to you My bowl of kisses, And through the temple's Blue recesses Cry
out to you In wild caresses.

And to my lips' Bright crimson rim The passion slips, And down my slim
White body drips The shining hymn.

And still before The altar I Exult the bowl Brimful, and cry To you to stoop
And drink, Most High.

Oh drink me up That I may be Within your cup Like a mystery, Like wine
that is still In ecstasy.

Glimmering still In ecstasy, Commingled wines Of you and me In one fulfil
The mystery.

PATIENCE

A WIND comes from the north
Blowing little flocks of birds
Like spray across
the town, And a train, roaring forth,
Rushes stampeding down
With cries
and flying curds
Of steam, out of the darkening north.

Whither I turn and set
Like a needle steadfastly,
Waiting ever to get
The news that she is free;
But ever fixed, as yet,
To the lode of her agony.

BALLAD OF ANOTHER OPHELIA

OH the green glimmer of apples in the orchard, Lamps in a wash of rain! Oh the wet walk of my brown hen through the stack-yard, Oh tears on the window pane!

Nothing now will ripen the bright green apples, Full of disappointment and of rain, Brackish they will taste, of tears, when the yellow dapples Of autumn tell the withered tale again.

All round the yard it is cluck, my brown hen, Cluck, and the rain-wet wings, Cluck, my marigold bird, and again Cluck for your yellow darlings.

For the grey rat found the gold thirteen Huddled away in the dark, Flutter for a moment, oh the beast is quick and keen, Extinct one yellow-fluffy spark.

Once I had a lover bright like running water, Once his face was laughing like the sky; Open like the sky looking down in all its laughter On the buttercups, and the buttercups was I.

What, then, is there hidden in the skirts of all the blossom? What is peeping from your wings, oh mother hen? 'Tis the sun who asks the question, in a lovely haste for wisdom; What a lovely haste for wisdom is in men!

Yea, but it is cruel when undressed is all the blossom, And her shift is lying white upon the floor, That a grey one, like a shadow, like a rat, a thief, a rain-storm, Creeps upon her then and gathers in his store.

Oh the grey garner that is full of half-grown apples, Oh the golden sparkles laid extinct! And oh, behind the cloud-sheaves, like yellow autumn dapples, Did you see the wicked sun that winked!

RESTLESSNESS

AT the open door of the room I stand and look at the night, Hold my hand to catch the raindrops, that slant into sight, Arriving grey from the darkness above suddenly into the light of the room. I will escape from the hollow room, the box of light, And be out in the bewildering darkness, which is always fecund, which might Mate my hungry soul with a germ of its womb.

I will go out to the night, as a man goes down to the shore To draw his net through the surfs thin line, at the dawn before The sun warms the sea, little, lonely and sad, sifting the sobbing tide. I will sift the surf that edges the night, with my net, the four Strands of my eyes and my lips and my hands and my feet, sifting the store Of flotsam until my soul is tired or satisfied.

I will catch in my eyes' quick net The faces of all the women as they go past, Bend over them with my soul, to cherish the wet Cheeks and wet hair a moment, saying: "Is it you?" Looking earnestly under the dark umbrellas, held fast Against the wind; and if, where the lamplight blew Its rainy swill about us, she answered me With a laugh and a merry wildness that it was she Who was seeking me, and had found me at last to free Me now from the stunting bonds of my chastity, How glad I should be!

Moving along in the mysterious ebb of the night Pass the men whose eyes are shut like anemones in a dark pool; Why don't they open with vision and speak to me, what have they in sight? Why do I wander aimless among them, desirous fool?

I can always linger over the huddled books on the stalls, Always gladden my amorous fingers with the touch of their leaves, Always kneel in courtship to the shelves in the doorways, where falls The shadow, always offer myself to one mistress, who always receives.

But oh, it is not enough, it is all no good. There is something I want to feel in my running blood, Something I want to touch; I must hold my face to the rain, I must hold my face to the wind, and let it explain Me its life as it hurries in secret. I will trail my hands again through the drenched, cold leaves Till my hands are full of the chillness and touch of leaves, Till at length they induce me to sleep, and to forget.

A BABY ASLEEP AFTER PAIN

As a drenched, drowned bee Hangs numb and heavy from a bending
flower, So clings to me My baby, her brown hair brushed with wet tears
And laid against her cheek; Her soft white legs hanging heavily over my arm
Swinging heavily to my movement as I walk. My sleeping baby hangs upon
my life, Like a burden she hangs on me. She has always seemed so light,
But now she is wet with tears and numb with pain Even her floating hair
sinks heavily, Reaching downwards; As the wings of a drenched, drowned
bee Are a heaviness, and a weariness.

ANXIETY

THE hoar-frost crumbles in the sun, The crisping steam of a train Melts in
the air, while two black birds Sweep past the window again.

Along the vacant road, a red Bicycle approaches; I wait In a thaw of
anxiety, for the boy To leap down at our gate.

He has passed us by; but is it Relief that starts in my breast? Or a deeper
bruise of knowing that still She has no rest.

THE PUNISHER

I HAVE fetched the tears up out of the little wells, Scooped them up with
small, iron words, Dripping over the runnels.

The harsh, cold wind of my words drove on, and still I watched the tears on
the guilty cheek of the boys Glitter and spill.

Cringing Pity, and Love, white-handed, came Hovering about the Judgment
which stood in my eyes, Whirling a flame.

.

The tears are dry, and the cheeks' young fruits are fresh With
laughter, and clear the exonerated eyes, since pain Beat through
the flesh.

The Angel of Judgment has departed again to the Nearness. Desolate I
am as a church whose lights are put out. And night enters in dreariness.

The fire rose up in the bush and blazed apace, The thorn-leaves crackled
and twisted and sweated in anguish; Then God left the place.

Like a flower that the frost has hugged and let go, my head Is heavy,
and my heart beats slowly, laboriously, My strength is shed.

THE END

IF I could have put you in my heart, If but I could have wrapped you in
myself, How glad I should have been! And now the chart Of memory unrolls
again to me The course of our journey here, before we had to part.

And oh, that you had never, never been Some of your selves, my love, that
some Of your several faces I had never seen! And still they come before me,
and they go, And I cry aloud in the moments that intervene.

And oh, my love, as I rock for you to-night, And have not any longer any
hope To heal the suffering, or make requite For all your life of asking and
despair, I own that some of me is dead to-night.

THE BRIDE

MY love looks like a girl to-night, But she is old. The plaits that lie along
her pillow Are not gold, But threaded with filigree, And uncanny
cold.

She looks like a young maiden, since her brow Is smooth and fair, Her
cheeks are very smooth, her eyes are closed, She sleeps a rare Still
winsome sleep, so still, and so composed.

Nay, but she sleeps like a bride, and dreams her dreams Of
perfect things. She lies at last, the darling, in the shape of her dream,
And her dead mouth sings By its shape, like the thrushes in clear evenings.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER

MY little love, my darling, You were a doorway to me; You let me out of the confines Into this strange countrie, Where people are crowded like thistles, Yet are shapely and comely to see.

My little love, my dearest Twice have you issued me, Once from your womb, sweet mother, Once from myself, to be Free of all hearts, my darling, Of each heart's home-life free.

And so, my love, my mother, I shall always be true to you; Twice I am born, my dearest, To life, and to death, in you; And this is the life hereafter Wherein I am true.

I kiss you good-bye, my darling, Our ways are different now; You are a seed in the night-time, I am a man, to plough The difficult glebe of the future For God to endow.

I kiss you good-bye, my dearest, It is finished between us here. Oh, if I were calm as you are, Sweet and still on your bier! God, if I had not to leave you Alone, my dear!

Let the last word be uttered, Oh grant the farewell is said! Spare me the strength to leave you Now you are dead. I must go, but my soul lies helpless Beside your bed.

AT THE WINDOW

THE pine-trees bend to listen to the autumn wind as it mutters
Something which sets the black poplars ashake with hysterical laughter;
While slowly the house of day is closing its eastern shutters.

Further down the valley the clustered tombstones recede, Winding about
their dimness the mist's grey ceremonies, after The street lamps in the
darkness have suddenly started to bleed.

The leaves fly over the window and utter a word as they pass To the face
that leans from the darkness, intent, with two dark-filled eyes That watch
for ever earnestly from behind the window glass.

DRUNK

Too far away, oh love, I know, To save me from this haunted road, Whose
lofty roses break and blow On a night-sky bent with a load

Of lights: each solitary rose, Each arc-lamp golden does expose Ghost
beyond ghost of a blossom, shows Night blenched with a thousand snows.

Of hawthorn and of lilac trees, White lilac; shows discoloured night Dripping
with all the golden lees Laburnum gives back to light

And shows the red of hawthorn set On high to the purple heaven of night,
Like flags in blenched blood newly wet, Blood shed in the noiseless fight.

Of life for love and love for life, Of hunger for a little food, Of kissing, lost for
want of a wife Long ago, long ago wooed. . . . Too far
away you are, my love, To steady my brain in this phantom show That
passes the nightly road above And returns again below.

The enormous cliff of horse-chestnut trees Has poised on each of its ledges
An erect small girl looking down at me; White-night-gowned little chits I see,
And they peep at me over the edges Of the leaves as though they would leap,
should I call Them down to my arms; "But, child, you're too small for
me, too small Your little charms."

White little sheaves of night-gowned maids, Some other will thresh you out!
And I see leaning from the shades A lilac like a lady there, who braids Her
white mantilla about Her face, and forward leans to catch the sight Of a
man's face, Gracefully sighing through the white Flowery mantilla of lace.

And another lilac in purple veiled Discreetly, all recklessly calls In a low,
shocking perfume, to know who has hailed Her forth from the night: my
strength has failed In her voice, my weak heart falls: Oh, and see the
laburnum shimmering Her draperies down, As if she would slip the gold,
and glimmering White, stand naked of gown.

.
The pageant of flowery trees above The street pale-passionate goes, And
back again down the pavement, Love In a lesser pageant flows.

Two and two are the folk that walk, They pass in a half embrace Of linkèd
bodies, and they talk With dark face leaning to face.

Come then, my love, come as you will Along this haunted road, Be whom
you will, my darling, I shall Keep with you the troth I trowed.

SORROW

WHY does the thin grey strand Floating up from the forgotten Cigarette
between my fingers, Why does it trouble me?

Ah, you will understand; When I carried my mother downstairs, A few times
only, at the beginning Of her soft-foot malady,

I should find, for a reprimand To my gaiety, a few long grey hairs On the
breast of my coat; and one by one I let them float up the dark chimney.

DOLOR OF AUTUMN

THE acrid scents of autumn, Reminiscent of slinking beasts, make me fear
Everything, tear-trembling stars of autumn And the snore of the night in my
ear.

For suddenly, flush-fallen, All my life, in a rush Of shedding away, has left
me Naked, exposed on the bush.

I, on the bush of the globe, Like a newly-naked berry, shrink Disclosed: but I
also am prowling As well in the scents that slink

Abroad: I in this naked berry Of flesh that stands dismayed on the bush;
And I in the stealthy, brindled odours Prowling about the lush

And acrid night of autumn; My soul, along with the rout, Rank and
treacherous, prowling, Disseminated out.

For the night, with a great breath intaken, Has taken my spirit outside Me,
till I reel with disseminated consciousness, Like a man who has died.

At the same time I stand exposed Here on the bush of the globe, A newly-
naked berry of flesh For the stars to probe.

THE INHERITANCE

SINCE you did depart Out of my reach, my darling, Into the hidden, I see
each shadow start With recognition, and I Am wonder-ridden.

I am dazed with the farewell, But I scarcely feel your loss. You left me a gift
Of tongues, so the shadows tell Me things, and silences toss Me their drift.

You sent me a cloven fire Out of death, and it burns in the draught Of the
breathing hosts, Kindles the darkening pyre For the sorrowful, till strange
brands waft Like candid ghosts.

Form after form, in the streets Waves like a ghost along, Kindled to me; The
star above the house-top greets Me every eve with a long Song fiercely.

All day long, the town Glimmers with subtle ghosts Going up and down In a
common, prison-like dress; But their daunted looking flickers To me, and I
answer, Yes!

So I am not lonely nor sad Although bereaved of you, My little love. I move
among a kinsfolk clad With words, but the dream shows through As they
move.

SILENCE

SINCE I lost you I am silence-haunted, Sounds wave their little wings A
moment, then in weariness settle On the flood that soundless swings.

Whether the people in the street Like pattering ripples go by, Or whether
the theatre sighs and sighs With a loud, hoarse sigh:

Or the wind shakes a ravel of light Over the dead-black river, Or night's
last echoing Makes the daybreak shiver:

I feel the silence waiting To take them all up again In its vast completeness,
enfolding The sound of men.

LISTENING

I LISTEN to the stillness of you, My dear, among it all; I feel your silence
touch my words as I talk, And take them in thrall.

My words fly off a forge The length of a spark; I see the night-sky easily sip
them Up in the dark.

The lark sings loud and glad, Yet I am not loth That silence should take
the song and the bird And lose them both.

A train goes roaring south, The steam-flag flying; I see the stealthy shadow
of silence Alongside going.

And off the forge of the world, Whirling in the draught of life, Go sparks of
myriad people, filling The night with strife.

Yet they never change the darkness Or blench it with noise; Alone on the
perfect silence The stars are buoys.

BROODING GRIEF

A YELLOW leaf from the darkness Hops like a frog before me. Why should I
start and stand still?

I was watching the woman that bore me Stretched in the brindled darkness
Of the sick-room, rigid with will To die: and the quick leaf tore me Back to
this rainy swill Of leaves and lamps and traffic mingled before me.

LOTUS HURT BY THE COLD

How many times, like lotus lilies risen Upon the surface of a river, there
Have risen floating on my blood the rare Soft glimmers of my hope escaped
from prison.

So I am clothed all over with the light And sensitive beautiful blossoming
of passion; Till naked for her in the finest fashion The flowers of all my
mud swim into sight.

And then I offer all myself unto This woman who likes to love me: but she
turns A look of hate upon the flower that burns To break and pour her out
its precious dew.

And slowly all the blossom shuts in pain, And all the lotus buds of love
sink over To die unopened: when my moon-faced lover, Kind on the weight
of suffering, smiles again.

MALADE

THE sick grapes on the chair by the bed lie prone; at the window The
tassel of the blind swings gently, tapping the pane, As a little wind comes
in. The room is the hollow rind of a fruit, a gourd Scooped out and dry,
where a spider, Folded in its legs as in a bed, Lies on the dust, watching
where is nothing to see but twilight and walls.

And if the day outside were mine! What is the day But a grey cave, with
great grey spider-cloths hanging Low from the roof, and the wet dust
falling softly from them Over the wet dark rocks, the houses, and over
The spiders with white faces, that scuttle on the floor of the cave! I am
choking with creeping, grey confinedness.

But somewhere birds, beside a lake of light, spread wings Larger than the
largest fans, and rise in a stream upwards And upwards on the sunlight
that rains invisible, So that the birds are like one wafted feather, Small and
ecstatic suspended over a vast spread country.

LIAISON

A BIG bud of moon hangs out of the twilight, Star-spiders spinning their
thread Hang high suspended, withouten respite Watching us overhead.

Come then under the trees, where the leaf-cloths Curtain us in so dark
That here we're safe from even the ermin-moth's Flitting remark.

Here in this swarthy, secret tent, Where black boughs flap the ground, You
shall draw the thorn from my discontent, Surgeon me sound.

This rare, rich night! For in here Under the yew-tree tent The darkness is
loveliest where I could sear You like frankincense into scent.

Here not even the stars can spy us, Not even the white moths write With
their little pale signs on the wall, to try us And set us affright.

Kiss but then the dust from off my lips, But draw the turgid pain From my
breast to your bosom, eclipse My soul again.

Waste me not, I beg you, waste Not the inner night: Taste, oh taste and let
me taste The core of delight.

TROTH WITH THE DEAD

THE moon is broken in twain, and half a moon
Before me lies on the still,
pale floor of the sky; The other half of the broken coin of troth
Is buried
away in the dark, where the still dead lie. They buried her half in the grave
when they laid her away; I had pushed it gently in among the thick of her
hair Where it gathered towards the plait, on that very last day; And like a
moon in secret it is shining there.

My half shines in the sky, for a general sign
Of the troth with the dead I
pledged myself to keep; Turning its broken edge to the dark, it shines indeed
Like the sign of a lover who turns to the dark of sleep. Against my heart
the inviolate sleep breaks still In darkened waves whose breaking echoes
o'er The wondering world of my wakeful day, till I'm lost In the midst of
the places I knew so well before.

DISSOLUTE

MANY years have I still to burn, detained Like a candle flame on this body;
but I enshrine A darkness within me, a presence which sleeps contained
In my flame of living, her soul enfolded in mine.

And through these years, while I burn on the fuel of life, What matter the
stuff I lick up in my living flame, Seeing I keep in the fire-core, inviolate, A
night where she dreams my dreams for me, ever the same.

SUBMERGENCE

WHEN along the pavement, Palpitating flames of life, People flicker round me, I forget my bereavement, The gap in the great constellation, The place where a star used to be.

Nay, though the pole-star Is blown out like a candle, And all the heavens are wandering in disarray, Yet when pleiads of people are Deployed around me, and I see The street's long outstretched Milky Way,

When people flicker down the pavement, I forget my bereavement.

THE ENKINDLED SPRING

THIS spring as it comes bursts up in bonfires green, Wild puffing of emerald trees, and flame-filled bushes, Thorn-blossom lifting in wreaths of smoke between Where the wood fumes up and the watery, flickering rushes.

I am amazed at this spring, this conflagration Of green fires lit on the soil of the earth, this blaze Of growing, and sparks that puff in wild gyration, Faces of people streaming across my gaze.

And I, what fountain of fire am I among This leaping combustion of spring? My spirit is tossed About like a shadow buffeted in the throng Of flames, a shadow that's gone astray, and is lost.

REPROACH

HAD I but known yesterday, Helen, you could discharge the ache Out of
the cloud; Had I known yesterday you could take The turgid electric ache
away, Drink it up with your proud White body, as lovely white lightning Is
drunk from an agonised sky by the earth, I might have hated you, Helen.

But since my limbs gushed full of fire, Since from out of my blood and bone
Poured a heavy flame To you, earth of my atmosphere, stone Of my steel,
lovely white flint of desire, You have no name. Earth of my swaying
atmosphere, Substance of my inconstant breath, I cannot but cleave to you.

Since you have drunken up the drear Painful electric storm, and death Is
washed from the blue Of my eyes, I see you beautiful. You are strong and
passive and beautiful, I come like winds that uncertain hover; But you
Are the earth I hover over.

THE HANDS OF THE BETROTHED

HER tawny eyes are onyx of thoughtlessness, Hardened they are like gems in ancient modesty; Yea, and her mouth's prudent and crude caress Means even less than her many words to me.

Though her kiss betrays me also this, this only Consolation, that in her lips her blood at climax clips Two wild, dumb paws in anguish on the lonely Fruit of my heart, ere down, rebuked, it slips.

I know from her hardened lips that still her heart is Hungry for me, yet if I put my hand in her breast She puts me away, like a saleswoman whose mart is Endangered by the pilferer on his quest.

But her hands are still the woman, the large, strong hands Heavier than mine, yet like leverets caught in steel When I hold them; my still soul understands Their dumb confession of what her sort must feel.

For never her hands come nigh me but they lift Like heavy birds from the morning stubble, to settle Upon me like sleeping birds, like birds that shift Uneasily in their sleep, disturbing my mettle.

How caressingly she lays her hand on my knee, How strangely she tries to disown it, as it sinks In my flesh and bone and forages into me, How it stirs like a subtle stoat, whatever she thinks!

And often I see her clench her fingers tight And thrust her fists suppressed in the folds of her skirt; And sometimes, how she grasps her arms with her bright Big hands, as if surely her arms did hurt.

And I have seen her stand all unaware Pressing her spread hands over her breasts, as she Would crush their mounds on her heart, to kill in there The pain that is her simple ache for me.

Her strong hands take my part, the part of a man To her; she crushes them into her bosom deep Where I should lie, and with her own strong span Closes her arms, that should fold me in sleep.

Ah, and she puts her hands upon the wall, Presses them there, and kisses her bright hands, Then lets her black hair loose, the darkness fall About her from her maiden-folded bands.

And sits in her own dark night of her bitter hair Dreaming--God knows of
what, for to me she's the same Betrothed young lady who loves me, and
takes care Of her womanly virtue and of my good name.

EXCURSION

I WONDER, can the night go by; Can this shot arrow of travel fly Shaft-
golden with light, sheer into the sky Of a dawned to-morrow, Without ever
sleep delivering us From each other, or losing the dolorous Unfruitful
sorrow!

What is it then that you can see That at the window endlessly You watch the
red sparks whirl and flee And the night look through? Your presence
peering lonelily there Oppresses me so, I can hardly bear To share the
train with you.

You hurt my heart-beats' privacy; I wish I could put you away from me; I
suffocate in this intimacy, For all that I love you; How I have longed for
this night in the train, Yet now every fibre of me cries in pain To God to
remove you.

But surely my soul's best dream is still That one night pouring down shall
swill Us away in an utter sleep, until We are one, smooth-rounded. Yet
closely bitten in to me Is this armour of stiff reluctancy That keeps me
impounded.

So, dear love, when another night Pours on us, lift your fingers white And
strip me naked, touch me light, Light, light all over. For I ache most
earnestly for your touch, Yet I cannot move, however much I would be
your lover.

Night after night with a blemish of day Unblown and unblossomed has
withered away; Come another night, come a new night, say Will you pluck
me apart? Will you open the amorous, aching bud Of my body, and loose the
burning flood That would leap to you from my heart?

PERFIDY

HOLLOW rang the house when I knocked on the door, And I lingered on the threshold with my hand Upraised to knock and knock once more: Listening for the sound of her feet across the floor, Hollow re-echoed my heart.

The low-hung lamps stretched down the road With shadows drifting underneath, With a music of soft, melodious feet Quickening my hope as I hastened to meet The low-hung light of her eyes.

The golden lamps down the street went out, The last car trailed the night behind; And I in the darkness wandered about With a flutter of hope and of dark-shut doubt In the dying lamp of my love.

Two brown ponies trotting slowly Stopped at a dim-lit trough to drink: The dark van drummed down the distance slowly; While the city stars so dim and holy Drew nearer to search through the streets.

A hastening car swept shameful past, I saw her hid in the shadow, I saw her step to the curb, and fast Run to the silent door, where last I had stood with my hand uplifted. She clung to the door in her haste to enter, Entered, and quickly cast It shut behind her, leaving the street aghast.

A SPIRITUAL WOMAN

CLOSE your eyes, my love, let me make you blind; They have taught
you to see Only a mean arithmetic on the face of things, A cunning algebra
in the faces of men, And God like geometry Completing his circles, and
working cleverly.

I'll kiss you over the eyes till I kiss you blind; If I can--if any one could.
Then perhaps in the dark you'll have got what you want to find. You've
discovered so many bits, with your clever eyes, And I'm a
kaleidoscope That you shake and shake, and yet it won't come to your
mind. Now stop carping at me.--But God, how I hate you! Do you fear I
shall swindle you? Do you think if you take me as I am, that that will
abate you Somehow?--so sad, so intrinsic, so spiritual, yet so
cautious, you Must have me all in your will and your consciousness-- I
hate you.

MATING

ROUND clouds roll in the arms of the wind, The round earth rolls in a clasp
of blue sky, And see, where the budding hazels are thinned, The wild
anemones lie In undulating shivers beneath the wind.

Over the blue of the waters ply White ducks, a living flotilla of cloud; And,
look you, floating just thereby, The blue-gleamed drake stems proud Like
Abraham, whose seed should multiply.

In the lustrous gleam of the water, there Scramble seven toads across the
silk, obscure leaves, Seven toads that meet in the dusk to share The
darkness that interweaves The sky and earth and water and live things
everywhere.

Look now, through the woods where the beech-green spurts Like a storm
of emerald snow, look, see A great bay stallion dances, skirts The
bushes sumptuously, Going outward now in the spring to his brief deserts.

Ah love, with your rich, warm face aglow, What sudden expectation opens
you So wide as you watch the catkins blow Their dust from the birch
on the blue Lift of the pulsing wind--ah, tell me you know!

Ah, surely! Ah, sure from the golden sun A quickening, masculine gleam
floats in to all Us creatures, people and flowers undone, Lying open
under his thrall, As he begets the year in us. What, then, would you
shun?

Why, I should think that from the earth there fly Fine thrills to the
neighbour stars, fine yellow beams Thrown lustily off from our full-blown,
high Bursting globe of dreams, To quicken the spheres that are virgin
still in the sky.

Do you not hear each morsel thrill With joy at travelling to plant itself within
The expectant one, therein to instil New rapture, new shape to win, From
the thick of life wake up another will?

Surely, and if that I would spill The vivid, ah, the fiery surplus of life,
From off my brimming measure, to fill You, and flush you rife With
increase, do you call it evil, and always evil?

A LOVE SONG

REJECT me not if I should say to you I do forget the sounding of your voice,
I do forget your eyes that searching through The mists perceive our
marriage, and rejoice.

Yet, when the apple-blossom opens wide Under the pallid moonlight's
fingering, I see your blanched face at my breast, and hide My eyes from
diligent work, malingering.

Ah, then, upon my bedroom I do draw The blind to hide the garden, where
the moon Enjoys the open blossoms as they straw Their beauty for his
taking, boon for boon.

And I do lift my aching arms to you, And I do lift my anguished, avid breast,
And I do weep for very pain of you, And fling myself at the doors of sleep, for
rest.

And I do toss through the troubled night for you, Dreaming your yielded
mouth is given to mine, Feeling your strong breast carry me on into The
peace where sleep is stronger even than wine.

BROTHER AND SISTER

THE shorn moon trembling indistinct on her path, Frail as a scar upon the pale blue sky, Draws towards the downward slope; some sorrow hath Worn her down to the quick, so she faintly fares Along her foot-searched way without knowing why She creeps persistent down the sky's long stairs.

Some say they see, though I have never seen, The dead moon heaped within the new moon's arms; For surely the fragile, fine young thing had been Too heavily burdened to mount the heavens so. But my heart stands still, as a new, strong dread alarms Me; might a young girl be heaped with such shadow of woe?

Since Death from the mother moon has pared us down to the quick, And cast us forth like shorn, thin moons, to travel An uncharted way among the myriad thick Strewn stars of silent people, and luminous litter Of lives which sorrows like mischievous dark mice chavel To nought, diminishing each star's glitter,

Since Death has delivered us utterly, naked and white, Since the month of childhood is over, and we stand alone, Since the beloved, faded moon that set us alight Is delivered from us and pays no heed though we moan In sorrow, since we stand in bewilderment, strange And fearful to sally forth down the sky's long range.

We may not cry to her still to sustain us here, We may not hold her shadow back from the dark. Oh, let us here forget, let us take the sheer Unknown that lies before us, bearing the ark Of the covenant onwards where she cannot go. Let us rise and leave her now, she will never know.

AFTER MANY DAYS

I WONDER if with you, as it is with me, If under your slipping words, that
easily flow About you as a garment, easily, Your violent heart beats to
and fro!

Long have I waited, never once confessed, Even to myself, how bitter the
separation; Now, being come again, how make the best Reparation?

If I could cast this clothing off from me, If I could lift my naked self to you,
Or if only you would repulse me, a wound would be Good; it would let
the ache come through.

But that you hold me still so kindly cold Aloof my flaming heart will not
allow; Yea, but I loathe you that you should withhold Your pleasure now.

BLUE

THE earth again like a ship steams out of the dark sea over The edge of the blue, and the sun stands up to see us glide Slowly into another day; slowly the rover Vessel of darkness takes the rising tide.

I, on the deck, am startled by this dawn confronting Me who am issued amazed from the darkness, stripped And quailing here in the sunshine, delivered from haunting The night unsounded whereon our days are shipped.

Feeling myself undawning, the day's light playing upon me, I who am substance of shadow, I all compact Of the stuff of the night, finding myself all wrongly Among the crowds of things in the sunshine jostled and racked.

I with the night on my lips, I sigh with the silence of death; And what do I care though the very stones should cry me unreal, though the clouds Shine in conceit of substance upon me, who am less than the rain. Do I not know the darkness within them? What are they but shrouds?

The clouds go down the sky with a wealthy ease Casting a shadow of scorn upon me for my share in death; but I Hold my own in the midst of them, darkling, defy The whole of the day to extinguish the shadow I lift on the breeze.

Yea, though the very clouds have vantage over me, Enjoying their glancing flight, though my love is dead, I still am not homeless here, I've a tent by day Of darkness where she sleeps on her perfect bed.

And I know the host, the minute sparkling of darkness Which vibrates untouched and virile through the grandeur of night, But which, when dawn crows challenge, assaulting the vivid notes Of living darkness, bursts fretfully, and is bright:

Runs like a fretted arc-lamp into light, Stirred by conflict to shining, which else Were dark and whole with the night.

Runs to a fret of speed like a racing wheel, Which else were aslumber along with the whole Of the dark, swinging rhythmic instead of a-reel.

Is chafed to anger, bursts into rage like thunder; Which else were a
silent grasp that held the heavens Arrested, beating thick with
wonder.

Leaps like a fountain of blue sparks leaping In a jet from out of
obscurity, Which erst was darkness sleeping.

Runs into streams of bright blue drops, Water and stones and stars,
and myriads Of twin-blue eyes, and crops

Of floury grain, and all the hosts of day, All lovely hosts of ripples
caused by fretting The Darkness into play.

SNAP-DRAGON

SHE bade me follow to her garden, where The mellow sunlight stood as in a cup
Between the old grey walls; I did not dare To raise my face, I did not
dare look up, Lest her bright eyes like sparrows should fly in My windows of
discovery, and shrill "Sin."

So with a downcast mien and laughing voice I followed, followed the swing of
her white dress That rocked in a lilt along: I watched the poise Of her feet as
they flew for a space, then paused to press The grass deep down with the
royal burden of her: And gladly I'd offered my breast to the tread of her.

"I like to see," she said, and she crouched her down, She sunk into my sight
like a settling bird; And her bosom couched in the confines of her gown Like
heavy birds at rest there, softly stirred By her measured breaths: "I like to
see," said she, "The snap-dragon put out his tongue at me."

She laughed, she reached her hand out to the flower, Closing its crimson
throat. My own throat in her power Strangled, my heart swelled up so full
As if it would burst its wine-skin in my throat, Choke me in my own
crimson. I watched her pull The gorge of the gaping flower, till the blood did
float

Over my eyes, and I was blind-- Her large brown hand stretched over
The windows of my mind; And there in the dark I did discover Things I
was out to find: My Grail, a brown bowl twined With swollen veins that
met in the wrist, Under whose brown the amethyst I longed to taste. I
longed to turn My heart's red measure in her cup, I longed to feel my
hot blood burn With the amethyst in her cup.

Then suddenly she looked up, And I was blind in a tawny-gold day,
Till she took her eyes away. So she came down from above And emptied
my heart of love. So I held my heart aloft To the cuckoo that hung like
a dove, And she settled soft

It seemed that I and the morning world Were pressed cup-shape to take
this reiver Bird who was weary to have furred Her wings in us, As we
were weary to receive her.

This bird, this rich, Sumptuous central grain, This
mutable witch, This one refrain, This laugh in the fight,

This clot of night, This core of delight.

She spoke, and I closed my eyes To shut hallucinations out. I echoed
with surprise Hearing my mere lips shout The answer they did devise.

Again I saw a brown bird hover Over the flowers at my feet; I felt a
brown bird hover Over my heart, and sweet Its shadow lay on my
heart. I thought I saw on the clover A brown bee pulling apart The
closed flesh of the clover And burrowing in its heart.

She moved her hand, and again I felt the brown bird cover My heart;
and then The bird came down on my heart, As on a nest the rover
Cuckoo comes, and shoves over The brim each careful part Of love,
takes possession, and settles her down, With her wings and her feathers
to drown The nest in a heat of love.

She turned her flushed face to me for the glint Of a moment. "See," she
laughed, "if you also Can make them yawn." I put my hand to the dint In the
flower's throat, and the flower gaped wide with woe. She watched, she
went of a sudden intensely still, She watched my hand, to see what I would
fulfil.

I pressed the wretched, throttled flower between My fingers, till its head lay
back, its fangs Poised at her. Like a weapon my hand was white and
keen, And I held the choked flower-serpent in its pangs Of mordant anguish,
till she ceased to laugh, Until her pride's flag, smitten, cleaved down to the
staff.

She hid her face, she murmured between her lips The low word "Don't." I let
the flower fall, But held my hand afloat towards the slips Of blossom she
fingered, and my fingers all Put forth to her: she did not move, nor I, For my
hand like a snake watched hers, that could not fly.

Then I laughed in the dark of my heart, I did exult Like a sudden chuckling
of music. I bade her eyes Meet mine, I opened her helpless eyes to consult
Their fear, their shame, their joy that underlies Defeat in such a battle. In
the dark of her eyes My heart was fierce to make her laughter rise.

Till her dark deeps shook with convulsive thrills, and the dark Of her
spirit wavered like water thrilled with light; And my heart leaped up in
longing to plunge its stark Fervour within the pool of her twilight, Within her
spacious soul, to grope in delight.

And I do not care, though the large hands of revenge Shall get my throat at last, shall get it soon, If the joy that they are searching to avenge Have risen red on my night as a harvest moon, Which even death can only put out for me; And death, I know, is better than not-to-be.

A PASSING BELL

MOURNFULLY to and fro, to and fro the trees are waving; What did you say, my dear? The rain-bruised leaves are suddenly shaken, as a child Asleep still shakes in the clutch of a sob-- Yes, my love, I hear.

One lonely bell, one only, the storm-tossed afternoon is braving, Why not let it ring? The roses lean down when they hear it, the tender, mild Flowers of the bleeding-heart fall to the throb-- It is such a little thing!

A wet bird walks on the lawn, call to the boy to come and look, Yes, it is over now. Call to him out of the silence, call him to see The starling shaking its head as it walks in the grass-- Ah, who knows how?

He cannot see it, I can never show it him, how it shook-- Don't disturb him, darling. --Its head as it walked: I can never call him to me, Never, he is not, whatever shall come to pass. No, look at the wet starling.

IN TROUBLE AND SHAME

I LOOK at the swaling sunset And wish I could go also Through the red doors beyond the black-purple bar.

I wish that I could go Through the red doors where I could put off My shame like shoes in the porch, My pain like garments, And leave my flesh discarded lying Like luggage of some departed traveller Gone one knows not where.

Then I would turn round, And seeing my cast-off body lying like lumber, I would laugh with joy.

ELEGY

SINCE I lost you, my darling, the sky has come near, And I am of it, the
small sharp stars are quite near, The white moon going among them like a
white bird among snow-berries, And the sound of her gently rustling in
heaven like a bird I hear.

And I am willing to come to you now, my dear, As a pigeon lets itself off from
a cathedral dome To be lost in the haze of the sky, I would like to come,
And be lost out of sight with you, and be gone like foam.

For I am tired, my dear, and if I could lift my feet, My tenacious feet from off
the dome of the earth To fall like a breath within the breathing wind Where
you are lost, what rest, my love, what rest!

GREY EVENING

WHEN you went, how was it you carried with you My missal book of fine,
flamboyant hours? My book of turrets and of red-thorn bowers, And skies of
gold, and ladies in bright tissue?

Now underneath a blue-grey twilight, heaped Beyond the withering snow of
the shorn fields Stands rubble of stunted houses; all is reaped And garnered
that the golden daylight yields.

Dim lamps like yellow poppies glimmer among The shadowy stubble of the
under-dusk, As farther off the scythe of night is swung, And little stars come
rolling from their husk.

And all the earth is gone into a dust Of greyness mingled with a fume of
gold, Covered with aged lichens, pale with must, And all the sky has
withered and gone cold.

And so I sit and scan the book of grey, Feeling the shadows like a blind man
reading, All fearful lest I find the last words bleeding With wounds of sunset
and the dying day.

FIRELIGHT AND NIGHTFALL

THE darkness steals the forms of all the queens, But oh, the palms of his
two black hands are red, Inflamed with binding up the sheaves of dead
Hours that were once all glory and all queens.

And I remember all the sunny hours Of queens in hyacinth and skies of
gold, And morning singing where the woods are scrolled And diapered above
the chaunting flowers.

Here lamps are white like snowdrops in the grass; The town is like a
churtyard, all so still And grey now night is here; nor will Another torn red
sunset come to pass.

THE MYSTIC BLUE

OUT of the darkness, fretted sometimes in its sleeping, Jets of sparks in fountains of blue come leaping To sight, revealing a secret, numberless secrets keeping.

Sometimes the darkness trapped within a wheel Runs into speed like a dream, the blue of the steel Showing the rocking darkness now a-reel.

And out of the invisible, streams of bright blue drops Rain from the showery heavens, and bright blue crops Surge from the under-dark to their ladder-tops.

And all the manifold blue and joyous eyes, The rainbow arching over in the skies, New sparks of wonder opening in surprise.

All these pure things come foam and spray of the sea Of Darkness abundant, which shaken mysteriously, Breaks into dazzle of living, as dolphins that leap from the sea Of midnight shake it to fire, so the secret of death we see.