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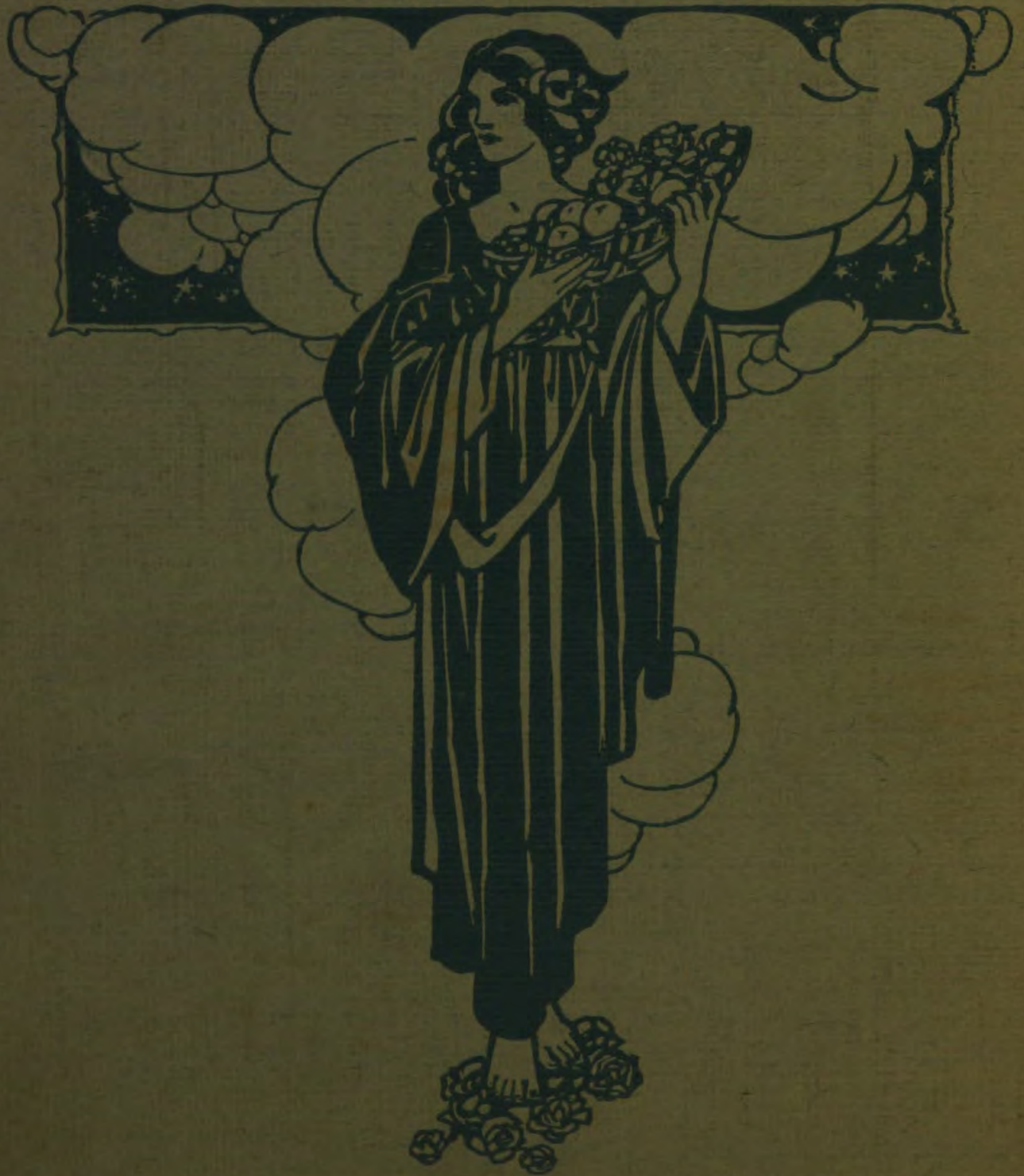
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♥ SHORTER POEMS ♥
♥ BY ♥
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI



♥ BLACKIE & SON LIMITED ♥



• HOPE •

• MEM- •





-ORY

LOVE



280 d. 346

HRISTINA
ROSSETTI 

“ Beautiful Poems ” Series

TENNYSON'S DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN
AND OTHER POEMS

TENNYSON'S GUINEVERE
AND OTHER POEMS

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: GOBLIN MARKET
AND OTHER POEMS

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI: SHORTER POEMS





Love, strong as Death, is dead

An End.

SHORTER POEMS
BY
CHRISTINA ROSSETTI



• ILLUSTRATED BY •
• FLORENCE HARRISON •

BLACKIE & SON LTD LONDON GLASGOW & BOMBAY •



Printed and bound in Great Britain



Contents

	Page
Mirage - - - - -	7
Twilight Calm - - - - -	8
The Queen of Hearts - - - - -	13
Jessie Cameron - - - - -	15
Noble Sisters - - - - -	20
Up-hill - - - - -	25
The Convent Threshold - - - - -	26
A Peal of Bells - - - - -	34
Song - - - - -	36
An End - - - - -	39
Remember - - - - -	40
Songs in a Cornfield - - - - -	41
The Ghost's Petition - - - - -	48
The World - - - - -	52
Winter Rain - - - - -	53
A Bird's-eye View - - - - -	55
Dream-love - - - - -	59
A Testimony - - - - -	62
Summer - - - - -	67
Last Night - - - - -	69
At Home - - - - -	71
One Day - - - - -	73
A Summer Wish - - - - -	75
Child's Talk in April - - - - -	77
Song - - - - -	79



THE hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream; and now I wake,
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt
For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake.



TWILIGHT
CALM



O H pleasant eventide!
Clouds on the western side
Grow gray and grayer hiding the warm sun:
The bees and birds, their happy labours done,
Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood
The stock-doves sit and brood:
The very squirrel leaps from bough to bough
But lazily; pauses; and settles now
Where once he stored his food.

One by one the flowers close,
Lily and dewy rose
Shutting their tender petals from the moon:
The grasshoppers are still; but not so soon
Are still the noisy crows.



BUT NOT SO SOON
ARE STILL THE
NOISY CROWS.

Twilight Calm

11

The dormouse squats and eats
Choice little dainty bits
Beneath the spreading roots of a broad-lime;
Nibbling his fill he stops from time to time
And listens where he sits.

From far the lowings come
Of cattle driven home:
From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats; and there
The owl opes broad his eyes and wings to sail
For prey; the bat wakes; and the shell-less snail
Comes forth clammy and bare.

Hark! that's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was young:
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain,
The passion of her strain;
And yet we little understand or know.
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein?

In separate herds the deer
Lie; here the bucks, and here
The does, and by its mother sleeps the fawn:
Through all the hours of night until the dawn
They sleep, forgetting fear.

Twilight Calm

The hare sleeps where it lies,
With wary half-closed eyes;
The cock has ceased to crow, the hen to cluck:
Only the fox is out, some heedless duck
Or chicken to surprise.

Remote, each single star
Comes out, till there they are
All shining brightly. How the dews fall damp!
While close at hand the glow-worm lights her lamp,
Or twinkles from afar.

But evening now is done
As much as if the sun
Day-giving had arisen in the East:
For night has come; and the great calm has ceased,
The quiet sands have run.





HOW comes it, Flora, that, whenever we
Play cards together, you invariably,
However the pack parts,
Still hold the Queen of Hearts?

I've scanned you with a scrutinizing gaze,
Resolved to fathom these your secret ways:
But, sift them as I will,
Your ways are secret still.

I cut and shuffle; shuffle, cut, again;
But all my cutting, shuffling, proves in vain:
Vain hope, vain forethought too;
That Queen still falls to you.

I dropped her once, prepense; but, ere the deal
Was dealt, your instinct seemed her loss to feel:
"There should be one card more,"
You said, and searched the floor.

The Queen of Hearts

I cheated once; I made a private notch
In Heart-Queen's back, and kept a lynx-eyed watch;
Yet such another back
Deceived me in the pack:

The Queen of Clubs assumed by arts unknown
An imitative dint that seemed my own;
This notch, not of my doing,
Misled me to my ruin.

It baffles me to puzzle out the clue,
Which must be skill, or craft, or luck in you:
Unless, indeed, it be
Natural affinity.





“There should be one card more,” you said

The Queen of Hearts.





JESSIE, Jessie Cameron,
Hear me but this once," quoth he.
"Good luck go with you, neighbour's son,
But I'm no mate for you," quoth she.
Day was verging toward the night
There beside the moaning sea,
Dimness overtook the light
There where the breakers be.
"O Jessie, Jessie Cameron,
I have loved you long and true."—
"Good luck go with you, neighbour's son,
But I'm no mate for you."

She was a careless, fearless girl,
And made her answer plain,
Outspoken she to earl or churl,
Kindhearted in the main,

Jessie Cameron

But somewhat heedless with her tongue
 And apt at causing pain;
 A mirthful maiden she and young,
 Most fair for bliss or bane.
 "Oh long ago I told you so,
 I tell you so to-day:
 Go you your way, and let me go
 Just my own free way."

The sea swept in with moan and foam,
 Quickening the stretch of sand;
 They stood almost in sight of home;
 He strove to take her hand.
 "Oh, can't you take your answer then,
 And won't you understand?
 For me you're not the man of men.
 I've other plans are planned.
 You're good for Madge, or good for Cis,
 Or good for Kate, may be:
 But what's to me the good of this
 While you're not good for me?"

They stood together on the beach,
 They two alone,
 And louder waxed his urgent speech,
 His patience almost gone:
 "Oh say but one kind word to me,
 Jessie, Jessie Cameron."—
 "I'd be too proud to beg," quoth she,
 And pride was in her tone.

Jessie Cameron

17

And pride was in her lifted head,
And in her angry eye,
And in her foot, which might have fled
But would not fly.

Some say that he had gipsy blood,
That in his heart was guile:
Yet he had gone through fire and flood
Only to win her smile.
Some say his grandam was a witch,
A black witch from beyond the Nile,
Who kept an image in a niche
And talked with it the while.
And by her hut far down the lane
Some say they would not pass at night,
Lest they should hear an unked strain
Or see an unked sight.

Alas for Jessie Cameron!—
The sea crept moaning, moaning nigher:
She should have hastened to begone,—
The sea swept higher, breaking by her:
She should have hastened to her home
While yet the west was flushed with fire,
But now her feet are in the foam,
The sea-foam sweeping higher.
O mother, linger at your door,
And light your lamp to make it plain;
But Jessie she comes home no more,
No more again.

Jessie Cameron

They stood together on the strand,
They only each by each;
Home, her home, was close at hand,
Utterly out of reach.
Her mother in the chimney nook
Heard a startled sea-gull screech,
But never turned her head to look
Towards the darkening beach:
Neighbours here and neighbours there
Heard one scream, as if a bird
Shrilly screaming cleft the air:—
That was all they heard.

Jessie she comes home no more,
Comes home never;
Her lover's step sounds at his door
No more for ever.
And boats may search upon the sea
And search along the river,
But none know where the bodies be;
Sea-winds that shiver,
Sea-birds that breast the blast,
Sea-waves swelling,
Keep the secret first and last
Of their dwelling.

Whether the tide so hemmed them round
With its pitiless flow
That when they would have gone they found
No way to go;
Whether she scorned him to the last
With words flung to and fro,

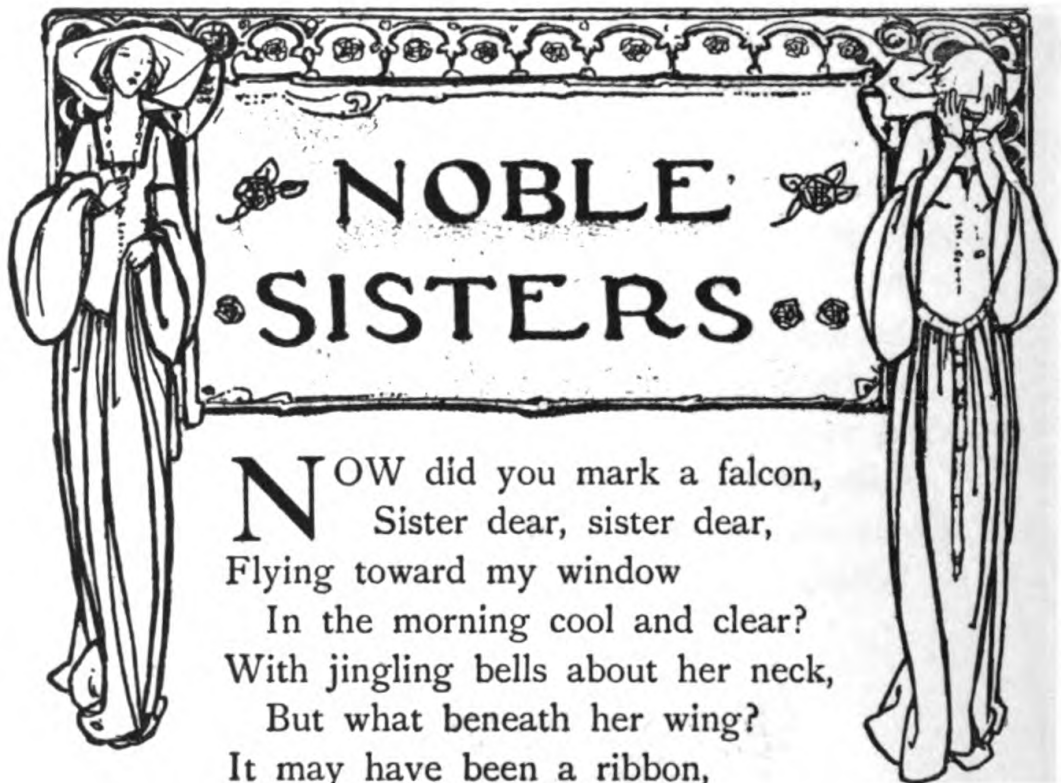
Jessie Cameron

19

Or clung to him when hope was past,
None will ever know:
Whether he helped or hindered her,
Threw up his life or lost it well,
The troubled sea for all its stir
Finds no voice to tell.

Only watchers by the dying
Have thought they heard one pray
Wordless, urgent; and replying
One seem to say him nay:
And watchers by the dead have heard
A windy swell from miles away,
With sobs and screams, but not a word
Distinct for them to say:
And watchers out at sea have caught
Glimpse of a pale gleam here or there,
Come and gone as quick as thought,
Which might be hand or hair.





NOW did you mark a falcon,
Sister dear, sister dear,
Flying toward my window

In the morning cool and clear?
With jingling bells about her neck,
But what beneath her wing?

It may have been a ribbon,
Or it may have been a ring.—

“I marked a falcon swooping
At the break of day:

And for your love, my sister dove
I frayed the thief away.”—

“Or did you spy a ruddy hound,
Sister fair and tall,
Went snuffing round my garden bound,
Or crouched by my bower wall?



AND FOR YOUR LOVE MY SISTER DOVE
I FRAYED THE THIEF AWAY



Noble Sisters

23

With a silken leash about his neck;
But in his mouth may be
A chain of gold and silver links,
Or a letter writ to me."—
"I heard a hound, highborn sister,
Stood baying at the moon:
I rose and drove him from your wall
Lest you should wake too soon."—

"Or did you meet a pretty page
Sat swinging on the gate;
Sat whistling whistling like a bird,
Or may be slept too late:
With eaglets broidered on his cap,
And eaglets on his glove?
If you had turned his pockets out,
You had found some pledge of love."—
"I met him at this daybreak,
Scarce the east was red:
Lest the creaking gate should anger you,
I packed him home to bed."—

"Oh patience, sister. Did you see
A young man tall and strong,
Swift-footed to uphold the right
And to uproot the wrong,
Come home across the desolate sea
To woo me for his wife?
And in his heart my heart is locked,
And in his life my life."—
"I met a nameless man, sister,
Hard by your chamber door:

Noble Sisters

I said: 'Her husband loves her much,
And yet she loves him more'.—

"Fie, sister, fie, a wicked lie,
A lie, a wicked lie,
I have none other love but him,
Nor will have till I die.
And you have turned him from our door,
And stabbed him with a lie:
I will go seek him thro' the world
In sorrow till I die."—

"Go seek in sorrow, sister,
And find in sorrow too:
If thus you shame our father's name
My curse go forth with you."





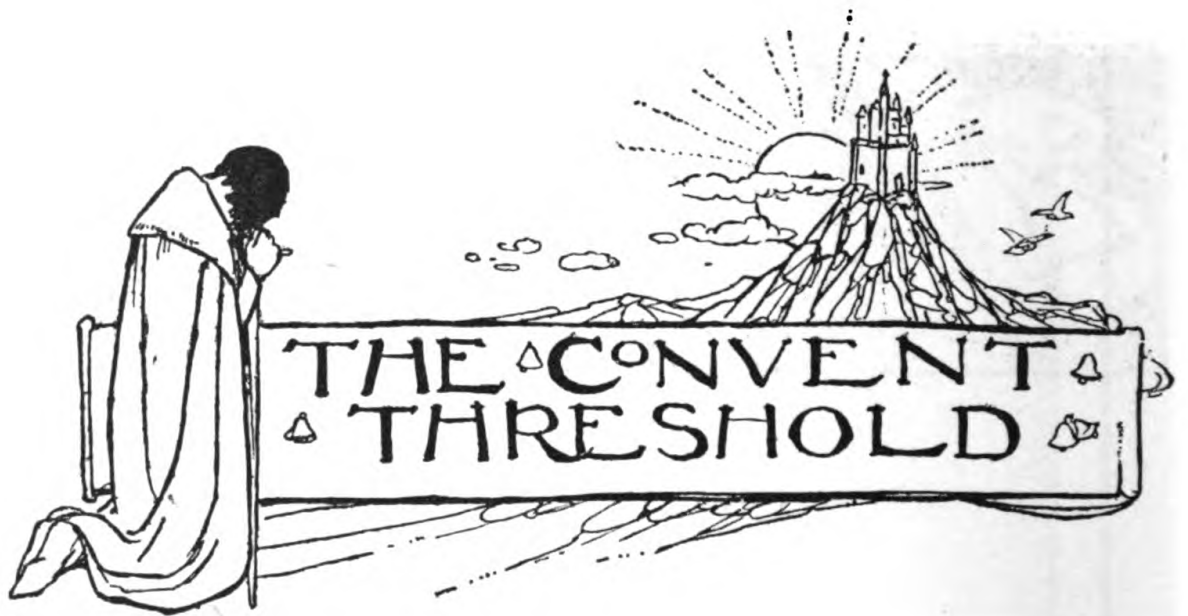
UP HILL

DOES the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

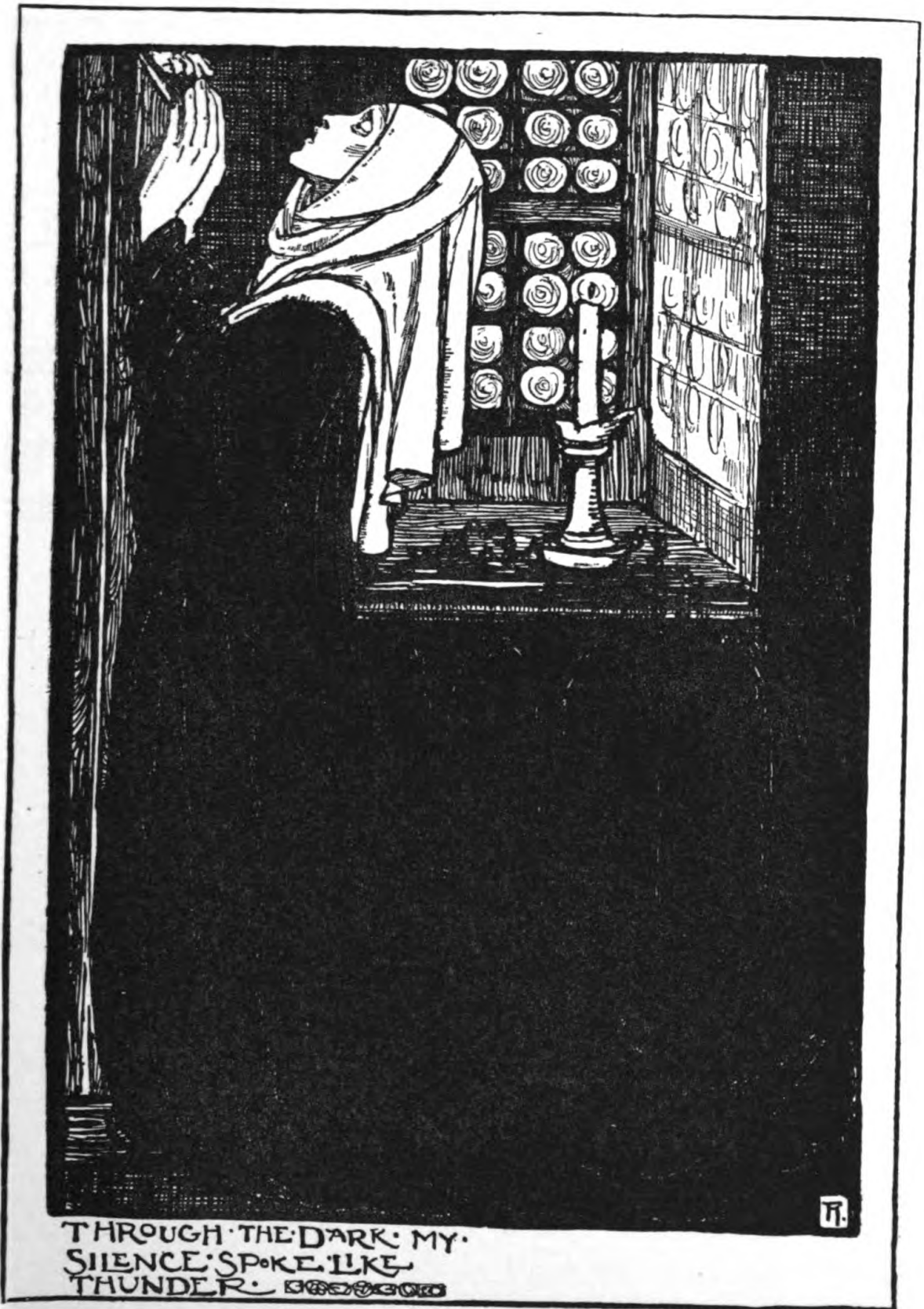
Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you standing at that door.

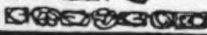
Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.



THERE'S blood between us, love, my love,
There's father's blood, there's brother's blood;
And blood's a bar I cannot pass:
I choose the stairs that mount above,
Stair after golden skyward stair,
To city and to sea of glass.

My lily feet are soiled with mud,
With scarlet mud which tells a tale
Of hope that was, of guilt that was,
Of love that shall not yet avail;
Alas, my heart, if I could bare
My heart, this self-same stain is there:
I seek the sea of glass and fire
To wash the spot, to burn the snare;
Lo, stairs are meant to lift us higher:
Mount with me, mount the kindled stair.



THROUGH THE DARK MY
SILENCE SPOKE LIKE
THUNDER. 

H



The Convent Threshold

29

Your eyes look earthward, mine look up.
I see the far-off city grand,
Beyond the hills a watered land,
Beyond the gulf a gleaming strand
Of mansions where the righteous sup;
Who sleep at ease among their trees,
Or wake to sing a cadenced hymn
With Cherubim and Seraphim;
They bore the Cross, they drained the cup,
Racked, roasted, crushed, wrenched limb from limb,
They the offscouring of the world:
The heaven of starry heavens unfurled,
The sun before their face is dim.

You looking earthward, what see you?
Milk-white, wine-flushed among the vines,
Up and down leaping, to and fro,
Most glad, most full, made strong with wines,
Blooming as peaches pearled with dew,
Their golden windy hair afloat,
Love-music warbling in their throat,
Young men and women come and go.

You linger, yet the time is short:
Flee for your life, gird up your strength
To flee; the shadows stretched at length
Show that day wanes, that night draws nigh;
Flee to the mountain, tarry not.
Is this a time for smile and sigh,
For songs among the secret trees
Where sudden blue birds nest and sport?
The time is short and yet you stay:

The Convent Threshold

To-day, while it is called to-day,
 Kneel, wrestle, knock, do violence, pray;
 To-day is short, to-morrow nigh:
 Why will you die? why will you die?

You sinned with me a pleasant sin:
 Repent with me, for I repent,
 Woe's me the lore I must unlearn!
 Woe's me that easy way we went,
 So rugged when I would return!
 How long until my sleep begin,
 How long shall stretch these nights and days?
 Surely, clean Angels cry, she prays;
 She laves her soul with tedious tears:
 How long must stretch these years and years?

I turn from you my cheeks and eyes,
 My hair which you shall see no more—
 Alas for joy that went before,
 For joy that dies, for love that dies!
 Only my lips still turn to you,
 My livid lips that cry, Repent.
 O weary life, O weary Lent,
 O weary time whose stars are few.

How should I rest in Paradise,
 Or sit on steps of Heaven alone?
 If Saints and Angels spoke of love,
 Should I not answer from my throne:
 Have pity upon me, ye my friends,
 For I have heard the sound thereof:
 Should I not turn with yearning eyes,
 Turn earthwards with a pitiful pang?

The Convent Threshold

31

Oh save me from a pang in Heaven.
By all the gifts we took and gave,
Repent, repent, and be forgiven:
This life is long, but yet it ends;
Repent and purge your soul and save:
No gladder song the morning stars
Upon their birthday morning sang
Than Angels sing when one repents.

I tell you what I dreamed last night;
A spirit with transfigured face
Fire-footed clomb an infinite space.
I heard his hundred pinions clang,
Heaven-bells rejoicing rang and rang,
Heaven-air was thrilled with subtle scents,
Worlds spun upon their rushing cars:
He mounted shrieking "Give me light";
Still light was pour'd on him, more light;
Angels, Archangels he outstripped,
Exultant in exceeding might,
And trod the skirts of Cherubim.
Still "Give me light", he shrieked; and dipped
His thirsty face, and drank a sea,
Athirst with thirst it could not slake.
I saw him, drunk with knowledge, take
From aching brows the aureole crown—
His locks writhed like a cloven snake—
He left his throne to grovel down
And lick the dust of Seraphs' feet:
For what is knowledge duly weighed?
Knowledge is strong, but love is sweet;
Yea all the progress he had made

The Convent Threshold

Was but to learn that all is small
Save love, for love is all in all.

I tell you what I dreamed last night:
It was not dark, it was not light,
Cold dews had drenched my plenteous hair
Through clay; you came to seek me there.
And "Do you dream of me?" you said.
My heart was dust that used to leap
To you; I answered half asleep:
"My pillow is damp, my sheets are red,
There's a leaden tester to my bed:
Find you a warmer playfellow,
A warmer pillow for your head,
A kinder love to love than mine."
You wrung your hands: while I like lead,
Crushed downwards through the sodden earth:
You smote your hands but not in mirth,
And reeled but were not drunk with wine.

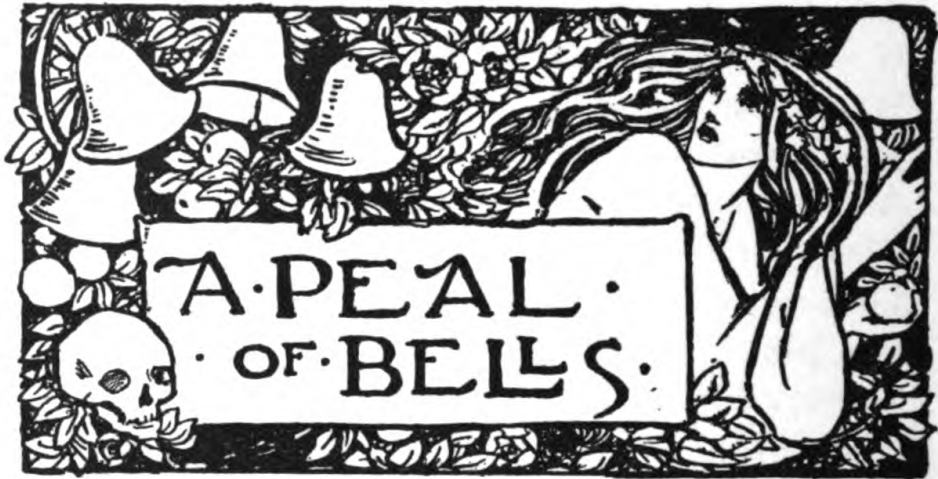
For all night long I dreamed of you:
I woke and prayed against my will,
Then slept to dream of you again.
At length I rose and knelt and prayed:
I cannot write the words I said,
My words were slow, my tears were few;
But through the dark my silence spoke
Like thunder. When this morning broke,
My face was pinched, my hair was gray,
And frozen blood was on the sill
Where stifling in my struggle I lay.

The Convent Threshold

33

If now you saw me you would say:
Where is the face I used to love?
And I would answer: Gone before;
It tarries veiled in Paradise.
When once the morning star shall rise,
When earth with shadow flees away
And we stand safe within the door,
Then you shall lift the veil thereof.
Look up, rise up: for far above
Our palms are grown, our place is set;
There we shall meet as once we met,
And love with old familiar love.





STRIKE the bells wantonly,
Tinkle tinkle well;
Bring me wine, bring me flowers,
Ring the silver bell.
All my lamps burn scented oil,
Hung on laden orange-trees,
Whose shadowed foliage is the foil
To golden lamps and oranges.
Heap my golden plates with fruit,
Golden fruit, fresh-plucked and ripe;
Strike the bells and breathe the pipe;
Shut out showers from summer hours—
Silence that complaining lute—
Shut out thinking, shut out pain,
From hours that cannot come again.

Strike the bells solemnly,
Ding dong deep:
My friend is passing to his bed,
Fast asleep;



Strike the bells wantonly

A Peal of Bells.



A Peal of Bells

35

There's plaited linen round his head,
While foremost go his feet—
His feet that cannot carry him.
My feast's a show, my lights are dim;
Be still, your music is not sweet,—
There is no music more for him:
His lights are out, his feast is done:
His bowl that sparkled to the brim
Is drained, is broken, cannot hold;
My blood is chill; his blood is cold;
His death is full, and mine begun.





SONG

OH roses for the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime;
But pluck an ivy branch for me
Grown old before my time.

Oh violets for the grave of youth,
And bay for those dead in their prime;
Give me the withered leaves I chose
Before in the old time.



GIVE ME THE WITHERED LEAVES. I CHOSE
BEFORE IN THE OLD TIME. ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

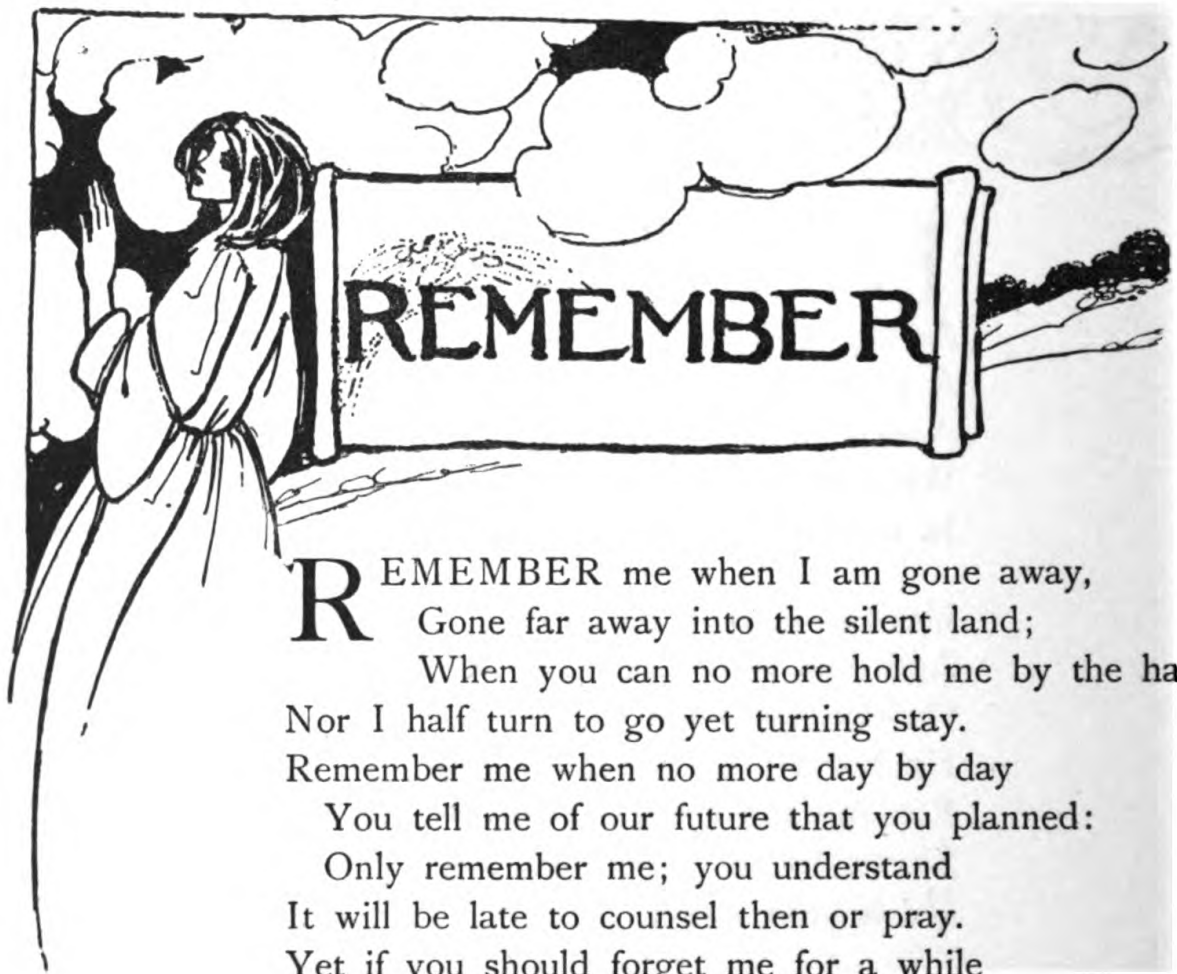




LOVE, strong as Death, is dead.
Come, let us make his bed
Among the dying flowers:
A green turf at his head;
And a stone at his feet,
Whereon we may sit
In the quiet evening hours.

He was born in the Spring,
And died before the harvesting:
On the last warm summer day
He left us; he would not stay
For Autumn twilight cold and gray.
Sit we by his grave, and sing
He is gone away.

To few chords and sad and low
Sing we so:
Be our eyes fixed on the grass
Shadow-veiled as the years pass,
While we think of all that was
In the long ago.



REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.



In the room centre stood her husband

The Ghost's Petition.





A SONG in a cornfield
Where corn begins to fall,
Where reapers are reaping,
Reaping one, reaping all.
Sing pretty Lettice,
Sing Rachel, sing May;
Only Marian cannot sing
While her sweetheart's away.

Where is he gone to
And why does he stay?
He came across the green sea
But for a day,
Across the deep green sea
To help with the hay.
His hair was curly yellow
And his eyes were gray,

Songs in a Cornfield

He laughed a merry laugh
 And said a sweet say.
 Where is he gone to
 That he comes not home?
 To-day or to-morrow
 He surely will come.
 Let him haste to joy
 Lest he lag for sorrow,
 For one weeps to-day
 Who'll not weep to-morrow:
 To-day she must weep
 For gnawing sorrow,
 To-night she may sleep
 And not wake to-morrow.

May sang with Rachel
 In the waxing warm weather,
 Lettice sang with them,
 They sang all together:—

"Take the wheat in your arm
 Whilst day is broad above,
 Take the wheat to your bosom,
 But not a false false love.
 Out in the fields
 Summer heat gloweth,
 Out in the fields
 Summer wind bloweth,
 Out in the fields
 Summer friend showeth,
 Out in the fields
 Summer wheat groweth:





But in the winter

When summer heat is dead
And summer wind has veered
And summer friend has fled,
Only summer wheat remaineth,
White cakes and bread.
Take the wheat, clasp the wheat
That's food for maid and dove;
Take the wheat to your bosom,
But not a false false love."

A silence of full noontide heat

Grew on them at their toil:
The farmer's dog woke up from sleep.
The green snake hid her coil.
Where grass stood thickest, bird and beast
Sought shadows as they could,
The reaping men and women paused
And sat down where they stood;
They ate and drank and were refreshed,
For rest from toil is good

While the reapers took their ease,

Their sickles lying by,
Rachel sang a second strain,
And singing seemed to sigh:—

"There goes the swallow—
Could we but follow!
Hasty swallow stay,
Point us out the way;
Look back swallow, turn back swallow, stop swallow.

Songs in a Cornfield

“There went the swallow—
 Too late to follow:
 Lost our note of way,
 Lost our chance to-day;
 Good-bye swallow, sunny swallow, wise swallow.

“After the swallow
 All sweet things follow;
 All things go their way,
 Only we must stay,
 Must not follow; good-bye swallow, good swallow.”

Then listless Marian raised her head
 Among the nodding sheaves;
 Her voice was sweeter than that voice·
 She sang like one who grieves:
 Her voice was sweeter than its wont
 Among the nodding sheaves;
 All wondered while they heard her sing
 Like one who hopes and grieves:—

“Deeper than the hail can smite,
 Deeper than the frost can bite,
 Deep asleep through day and night,
 Our delight.

“Now thy sleep no pang can break,
 No to-morrow bid thee wake,
 Not our sobs who sit and ache
 For thy sake.

Songs in a Cornfield

47

“Is it dark or light below?
Oh, but is it cold like snow?
Dost thou feel the green things grow
Fast or slow?”

“Is it warm or cold beneath,
Oh, but is it cold like death?
Cold like death, without a breath,
Cold like death?”

If he comes to-day
He will find her weeping;
If he comes to-morrow
He will find her sleeping;
If he comes the next day
He'll not find her at all,
He may tear his curling hair,
Beat his breast and call.





THE GHOST'S PETITION



THERE'S a footstep coming: look out, and see.—
“The leaves are falling, the wind is calling;
No one cometh across the lea.”—

“There's a footstep coming: O sister, look.”—
“The ripple flashes, the white foam dashes;
No one cometh across the brook.”—

“But he promised that he would come:
To-night, to-morrow, in joy or sorrow,
He must keep his word, and must come home.

“For he promised that he would come:
His word was given; from earth or heaven,
He must keep his word, and must come home.

“Go to sleep, my sweet sister Jane;
You can slumber, who need not number
Hour after hour in doubt and pain.



Better by far you should forget and smile

Remember.



The Ghost's Petition

49

"I shall sit here awhile, and watch;
Listening, hoping, for one hand groping
In deep shadow to find the latch."

After the dark, and before the light,
One lay sleeping; and one sat weeping,
Who had watched and wept the weary night.

After the night, and before the day,
One lay sleeping; and one sat weeping—
Watching, weeping for one away.

There came a footstep climbing the stair;
Someone standing out on the landing
Shook the door like a puff of air—

Shook the door, and in he passed.
Did he enter? In the room centre
Stood her husband: the door shut fast

"O Robin, but you are cold—
Chilled with night-dew: so lily-white you
Look like a stray lamb from our fold.

"O Robin, but you are late:
Come and sit near me—sit here and cheer me."—
(Blue the flame burnt in the grate.)

"Lay not down your head on my breast:
I cannot hold you, kind wife, nor fold you
In the shelter that you love best.

The Ghost's Petition

"Feel not after my clasping hand:

I am but a shadow, come from the meadow
Where many lie, but no tree can stand.

"We are trees which have shed their leaves:

Our heads lie low there, but no tears flow there;
Only I grieve for my wife who grieves.

"I could rest if you would not moan

Hour after hour; I have no power
To shut my ears where I lie alone.

"I could rest if you would not cry;

But there's no sleeping while you sit weeping—
Watching, weeping so bitterly."—

"Woe's me! woe's me! for this I have heard.

Oh, night of sorrow!—oh, black to-morrow!
Is it thus that you keep your word?

"O you who used so to shelter me

Warm from the least wind—why, now the east wind
Is warmer than you, whom I quake to see.

"O my husband of flesh and blood,

For whom my mother I left, and brother,
And all I had, accounting it good,

"What do you do there, underground,

In the dark hollow? I'm fain to follow.
What do you do there?—what have you found?"—

The Ghost's Petition

51

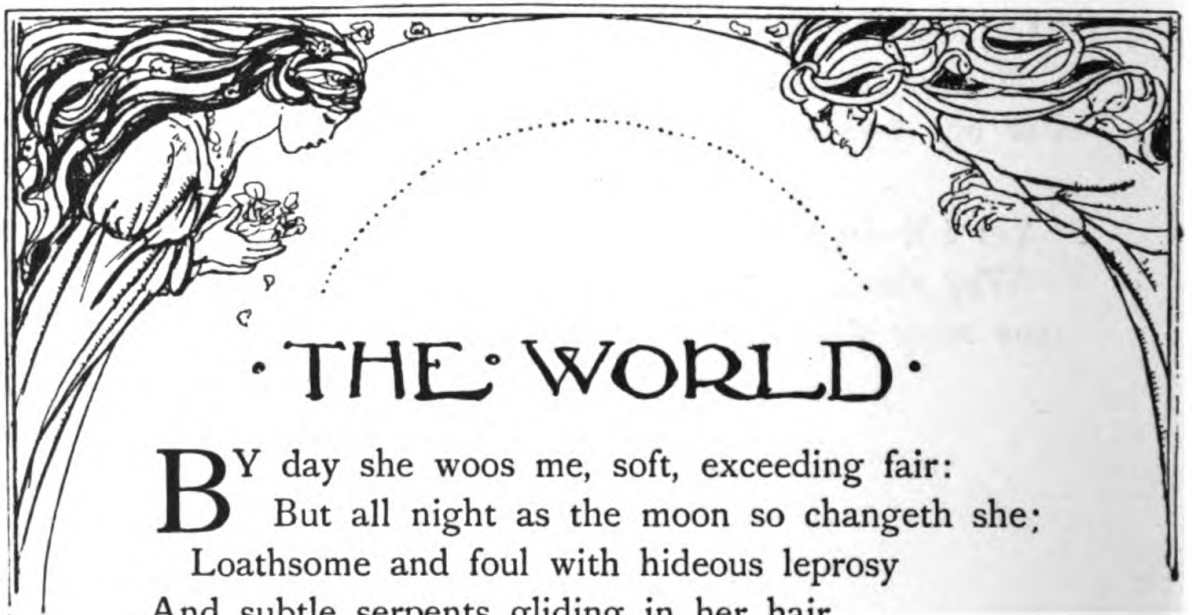
"What I do there I must not tell:
But I have plenty: kind wife, content ye:
It is well with us—it is well.

"Tender hand hath made our nest,
Our fear is ended, our hope is blended
With present pleasure, and we have rest."—

"Oh, but Robin, I'm fain to come,
If your present days are so pleasant;
For my days are so wearisome.

"Yet I'll dry my tears for your sake:
Why should I tease you, who cannot please you
Any more with the pains I take?"





• THE WORLD •

BY day she woos me, soft, exceeding fair:
But all night as the moon so changeth she;
Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.
By day she woos me to the outer air,
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety:
But thro' the night a beast she grins at me,
A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie: by night she stands
In all the naked horror of the truth,
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
Is this a friend indeed; that I should sell
My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?



All night as the moon so changeth she

The World.





EVERY valley drinks,
Every dell and hollow:
Where the kind rain sinks and sinks,
Green of Spring will follow.

Yet a lapse of weeks
Buds will burst their edges,
Strip their wool-coats, glue-coats, streaks,
In the woods and hedges;

Weave a bower of love
For birds to meet each other,
Weave a canopy above
Nest and egg and mother.

But for fattening rain
We should have no flowers,
Never a bud or leaf again
But for soaking showers;

Winter Rain

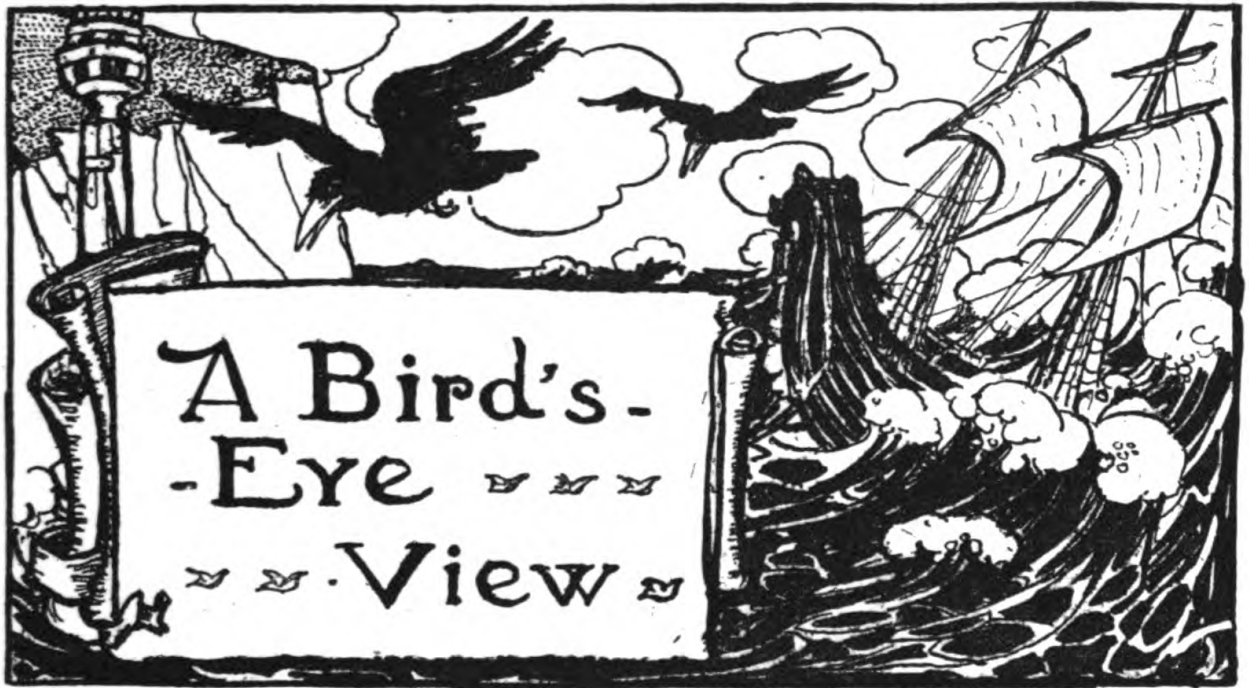
Never a mated bird
In the rocking tree-tops,
Never indeed a flock or herd
To graze upon the lea-crops.

Lambs so woolly white,
Sheep the sun-bright leas on,
They could have no grass to bite
But for rain in season.

We should find no moss
In the shadiest places,
Find no waving meadow grass
Pied with broad-eyed daisies:

But miles of barren sand,
With never a son or daughter;
Not a lily on the land,
Or lily on the water.





CROAK, croak, croak,"
Thus the Raven spoke,
Perched on his crooked tree,
As black as black could be.
Shun him and fear him,
Lest the Bridegroom hear him;
Scout him and rout him
With his ominous eye about him.

Yet, "Croak, croak, croak,"
Still tolled from the oak,
From that fatal black bird,
Whether heard or unheard:
"O ship upon the high seas,
Freighted with lives and spices,
Sink, O ship," croaked the Raven:
"Let the Bride mount to heaven."

A Bird's-eye View

In a far foreign land
 Upon the wave-edged sand,
 Some friends gaze wistfully
 Across the glittering sea.
 "If we could clasp our sister,"
 Three say: "now we have missed her!"
 "If we could kiss our daughter!"
 Two sigh across the water.

Oh, the ship sails fast
 With silken flags at the mast,
 And the home-wind blows soft;
 But a Raven sits aloft,
 Chuckling and choking,
 Croaking, croaking, croaking:—
 Let the Bridegroom keep watch keenly
 For this choice Bride mild and queenly

On a sloped sandy beach,
 Which the springtide billows reach,
 Stand a watchful throng
 Who have hoped and waited long:
 "Fie on this ship that tarries
 With the priceless freight it carries.
 The time seems long and longer:
 O languid wind, wax stronger;"—

Whilst the Raven perched at ease
 Still croaks and does not cease,
 One monotonous note
 Tolloed from his iron throat:
 "No father, no mother,
 But I have a sable brother:

A Bird's-eye View

57

He sees where ocean flows to,
And he knows what he knows too."

A day and a night
They kept watch worn and white;
A night and a day
For the swift ship on its way:
For the Bride and her maidens—
Clear chimes the bridal cadence—
For the tall ship that never
Hove in sight for ever.

On either shore, some
Stand in grief loud or dumb
As the dreadful dread
Grows certain tho' unsaid.
For laughter there is weeping,
And waking instead of sleeping,
And a desperate sorrow
Morrow after morrow.

Oh who knows the truth?
How she perished in her youth,
And like a queen went down
Pale in her royal crown:
How she went up to glory
From the sea-foam chill and hoary,
An innocent queen and holy,
To a high throne from a lowly?

They went down, all the crew,
The silks and spices too,
The great ones and the small,
One and all, one and all.

A Bird's-eye View

Was it thro' stress of weather,
Quicksands, rocks, or all together?
Only the Raven knows this,
And he will not disclose this.—

After a day and a year
The bridal bell chimes clear;
After a year and a day
The Bridegroom is brave and gay.
Love is sound, faith is rotten;
The old Bride is forgotten:—
Two ominous Ravens only
Remember, black and lonely.





YOUNG Love lies sleeping
In May time of the year,
Among the lilies,
Lapped in the tender light:
White lambs come grazing,
White doves come building there,
And round about him
The May bushes are white.

Soft moss the pillow,
For oh! a softer cheek;
Broad leaves cast shadow
Upon the heavy eyes:
There winds and waters
Grow lulled, and scarcely speak;
There twilight lingers
The longest in the skies.

Dream-love

Young Love lies dreaming;
But who shall tell the dream?—
A perfect sunlight
On rustling forest tips;
Or perfect moonlight
Upon a rippling stream;
Or perfect silence,
Or song of cherished lips.

Burn odours round him
To fill the drowsy air,
Weave silent dances
Around him to and fro:
For oh! in waking
The sights are not so fair,
And song and silence
Are not like these below.

Young Love lies dreaming
Till summer days are gone,
Dreaming and drowsing
Away to perfect sleep:
He sees the beauty
Sun hath not looked upon,
And tastes the fountain
Unutterably deep.

Him perfect music
Doth hush unto his rest,
And through the pauses
The perfect silence calms:





Young Love lies drowsing

Dream-love.

Dream-love

61

Oh! poor the voices
Of earth from east to west,
And poor earth's stillness
Between her stately palms.

Young Love lies drowsing
Away to popped death;
Cool shadows deepen
Across the sleeping face:
So fails the summer
With warm delicious breath,
And what hath autumn
To give us in its place?

Draw close the curtains
Of branched evergreen;
Change cannot touch them
With fading fingers sere:
Here the first violets
Perhaps will bud unseen,
And a dove, may be,
Return to nestle here.



A TESTIMONY



I SAID of laughter: it is vain.
Of mirth I said: what profits it?
Therefore I found a book, and writ
Therein how ease and also pain,
How health and sickness, every one
Is vanity beneath the sun.

Man walks in a vain shadow; he
Disquieteth himself in vain.
The things that were shall be again;
The rivers do not fill the sea,
But turn back to their secret source;
The winds too turn upon their course.

Our treasures moth and rust corrupt,
Or thieves break through and steal, or they
Make themselves wings and fly away.
One man made merry as he supped,
Nor guessed how when that night grew dim
His soul would be required of him.

A Testimony

63

We build our houses on the sand
Comely withoutside and within;
But when the winds and rains begin
To beat on them, they cannot stand:
They perish, quickly overthrown,
Loose from the very basement stone.

All things are vanity, I said:
Yea vanity of vanities.
The rich man dies; and the poor dies:
The worm feeds sweetly on the dead.
Whate'er thou lackest, keep this trust:
All in the end shall have but dust:

The one inheritance, which best
And worst alike shall find and share:
The wicked cease from troubling there,
And there the weary be at rest;
There all the wisdom of the wise
Is vanity of vanities.

Man flourishes as a green leaf,
And as a leaf doth pass away;
Or as a shade that cannot stay
And leaves no track, his course is brief:
Yet man doth hope and fear and plan
Till he is dead:—oh foolish man!

Our eyes cannot be satisfied
With seeing, nor our ears be filled
With hearing: yet we plant and build
And buy and make our borders wide;
We gather wealth, we gather care,
But know not who shall be our heir.

A Testimony

Why should we hasten to arise
So early, and so late take rest?
Our labour is not good; our best
Hopes fade; our heart is stayed on lies.
Verily, we sow wind; and we
Shall reap the whirlwind, verily.

He who hath little shall not lack;
He who hath plenty shall decay:
Our fathers went; we pass away;
Our children follow on our track:
So generations fail, and so
They are renewed and come and go.

The earth is fattened with our dead;
She swallows more and doth not cease:
Therefore her wine and oil increase
And her sheaves are not numberèd;
Therefore her plants are green, and all
Her pleasant trees lusty and tall.

Therefore the maidens cease to sing,
And the young men are very sad;
Therefore the sowing is not glad,
And mournful is the harvesting.
Of high and low, of great and small,
Vanity is the lot of all.

A King dwelt in Jerusalem;
He was the wisest man on earth;
He had all riches from his birth,
And pleasures till he tired of them;
Then, having tested all things, he
Witnessed that all are vanity.







WINTER is cold-hearted,
Spring is yea and nay,
Autumn is a weathercock
Blown every way:
Summer days for me
When every leaf is on its tree;

When Robin's not a beggar,
And Jenny Wren's a bride,
And larks hang singing, singing, singing,
Over the wheat-fields wide,
And anchored lilies ride,
And the pendulum spider
Swings from side to side,
And blue-black beetles transact business,
And gnats fly in a host,
And furry caterpillars hasten
That no time be lost,
And moths grow fat and thrive,
And ladybirds arrive.

Summer

Before green apples blush,
Before green nuts embrown,
Why, one day in the country
Is worth a month in town;
Is worth a day and a year
Of the dusty, musty, lag-last fashion
That days drone elsewhere.





WHERE were you last night? I watched at the gate;
I went down early, I stayed down late.
Were you snug at home, I should like to know,
Or were you in the coppice wheedling Kate?

She's a fine girl, with a fine clear skin;
Easy to woo, perhaps not hard to win.
Speak up like a man and tell me the truth:
I'm not one to grow downhearted and thin.

If you love her best, speak up like a man;
It's not I will stand in the light of your plan:
Some girls might cry and scold you a bit,
And say they couldn't bear it; but I can.

Love was pleasant enough, and the days went fast;
Pleasant while it lasted, but it needn't last;
Awhile on the wax, and awhile on the wane,
Now dropped away into the past.

Last Night

Was it pleasant to you? To me it was:
Now clean gone as an image from glass,
 As a goodly rainbow that fades away,
As dew that steams upward from the grass,

As the first spring day or the last summer day,
As the sunset flush that leaves heaven grey,
 As a flame burnt out for lack of oil,
Which no pains relight or ever may.

Good luck to Kate and good luck to you:
I guess she'll be kind when you come to woo.
 I wish her a pretty face that will last,
I wish her a husband steady and true.

Hate you? not I, my very good friend;
All things begin and all have an end.
 But let broken be broken; I put no faith
In quacks who set up to patch and mend.

Just my love and one word to Kate—
Not to let time slip if she means to 'mate;
 For even such a thing has been known
As to miss the chance while we weigh and wait.



WHEN I was dead, my spirit turned
To seek the much-frequented house:
I passed the door, and saw my friends
Feasting beneath green orange boughs;
From hand to hand they pushed the wine,
They sucked the pulp of plum and peach;
They sang, they jested, and they laughed,
For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat.

Said one: "To-morrow we shall be
Plod plod along the featureless sands
And coasting miles and miles of sea."

Said one: "Before the turn of tide
We will achieve the eyrie-seat."

Said one: "To-morrow shall be like
To-day, but much more sweet."

At Home

“To-morrow,” said they, strong with hope,
And dwelt upon the pleasant way:
“To-morrow,” cried they one and all,
While no one spoke of yesterday.
Their life stood full at blessed noon;
I, only I, had passed away:
“To-morrow and to-day,” they cried;
I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
No chill across the tablecloth;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
To stay and yet to part how loth:
I passed from the familiar room,
I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
That tarrieth but a day.





I passed from the familiar room

At Home.





I WILL tell you when they met:
In the limpid days of spring;
Elder boughs were budding yet,
Oaken boughs looked wintry still,
But primrose and veined violet
In the mossful turf were set,
While meeting birds made haste to sing
And build with right good will.

I will tell you when they parted:
When plenteous autumn sheaves were brown,
Then they parted heavy-hearted;
The full rejoicing sun looked down
As grand as in the days before;
Only they had lost a crown;
Only to them those days of yore
Could come back nevermore.

One Day

When shall they meet? I cannot tell,
Indeed, when they shall meet again,
Except some day in Paradise:
For this they wait, one waits in pain.
Beyond the sea of death love lies
For ever, yesterday, to-day;
Angels shall ask them, "Is it well?"
And they shall answer "Yea".





LIVE all thy sweet life thro',
Sweet Rose, dew-sprent,
Drop down thine evening dew
To gather it anew
When day is bright:
I fancy thou wast meant
Chiefly to give delight.

Sing in the silent sky,
Glad soaring bird;
Sing out thy notes on high
To sunbeam straying by
Or passing cloud;
Heedless if thou art heard
Sing thy full song aloud.

Oh that it were with me
As with the flower;

A Summer Wish

Blooming on its own tree
For butterfly and bee
Its summer morns:

That I might bloom mine hour
A rose in spite of thorns.

Oh that my work were done
As birds' that soar
Rejoicing in the sun:
That when my time is run
And daylight too,

I so might rest once more
Cool with refreshing dew.





I WISH you were a pleasant wren,
And I your small accepted mate;
How we'd look down on toilsome men!
We'd rise and go to bed at eight
Or it may be not quite so late.

Then you should see the nest I'd build,
The wondrous nest for you and me;
The outside rough perhaps, but filled
With wool and down: ah, you should see
The cosy nest that it would be.

We'd have our change of hope and fear,
Small quarrels, reconcilements sweet:
I'd perch by you to chirp and cheer,
Or hop about on active feet
And fetch you dainty bits to eat.

Child's Talk in April

We'd be so happy by the day,
So safe and happy through the night,
We both should feel, and I should say,
It's all one season of delight,
And we'll make merry whilst we may.

Perhaps some day there'd be an egg
When spring had blossomed from the snow
I'd stand triumphant on one leg;
Like chanticleer I'd almost crow
To let our little neighbours know.

Next you should sit and I would sing
Through lengthening days of sunny spring:
Till, if you wearied of the task,
I'd sit; and you should spread your wing
From bough to bough; I'd sit and bask.

Fancy the breaking of the shell,
The chirp, the chickens wet and bare,
The untried proud paternal swell;
And you with housewife-matron air
Enacting choicer bills of fare.

Fancy the embryo coats of down,
The gradual feathers soft and sleek;
Till clothed and strong from tail to crown,
With virgin warblings in their beak,
They too go forth to soar and seek.

So would it last an April through
And early summer fresh with dew:
Then should we part and live as twain,
Love-time would bring me back to you
And build our happy nest again.



WHEN I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.





• HOPE •

• MEM •



-ORY

LOVE



