

A Lover's Diary

Gilbert Parker

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Gilbert Parker

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INTRODUCTION

'A Lover's Diary' has not the same modest history as 'Embers'. As far back as 1894 it was given to the public without any apology or excuse, but I have been apologising for it ever since, in one way without avail. I wished that at least one-fifth of it had not been published; but my apology was never heard till now as I withdraw from this edition of A Lover's Diary some twenty-five sonnets representing fully one-fifth of the original edition. As it now stands the faint thread of narrative is more distinct, and redundancy of sentiment and words is modified to some extent at any rate. Such material story as there is, apart from the spiritual history embodied in the sonnets, seems more visible now, and the reader has a clearer revelation of a young, aspiring, candid mind shadowed by stern conventions of thought, dogma, and formula, but breaking loose from the environment which smothered it. The price it pays for the revelation is a hopeless love informed by temptation, but lifted away from ruinous elements by self-renunciation, to end with the inevitable parting, poignant and permanent, a task of the soul finished and the toll of the journey of understanding paid.

The six sonnets in italics, beginning with 'The Bride', and ending with 'Annunciation', have nothing to do with the story further than to show two phases of the youth's mind before it was shaken by speculation, plunged into the sadness of doubt and apprehension, and before it had found the love which was to reveal it to itself, transform the character, and give new impulse and direction to personal force and individual sense. These were written when I was twenty and twenty-one years of age, and the sonnet sequence of 'A Lover's Diary' was begun when I was twenty-three. They were continued over seven years in varying quantity. Sometimes two or three were written in a week, and then no more would be written for several weeks or maybe months, and it is clearly to be seen from the text, from the change in style, and above all in the nature of the thought that between 'The Darkened Way', which ends one epoch, and 'Reunited', which begins another and the last epoch, were intervening years.

The sonnet which begins the book and particularly that which ends the book have been very widely quoted, and 'Envoy' has been set to music by more than one celebrated musician. Whatever the monotony of a sonnet sequence (and it is a form which I should not have chosen if I had been older and wiser) there has been a continuous, if limited, demand for the little book. As Edmund Clarence Stedman said in a review, it was a book which had to be written. It was an impulse, a vision, and a revealing, and, in his own words in a letter to me, It was to be done whether you willed it or no, and there it is a truthful thing of which you shall be glad in spite of what you say.

These last words of the great critic were in response to the sudden repentance and despair I felt after Messrs. Stone and Kimball had published the book in exquisite form with a beautiful frontispiece by Will H. Low. In any case, it is now too late to try and disabuse the minds of those who care for the little piece of artistry, and since 1894, when it was published, I have matured sufficiently in life's academy not to be too unduly sensitive either as to the merit or demerit of my work. There is, after all, an unlovable kind of vanity in acute self-criticism as though it mattered deeply to the world whether one ever wrote anything; or, having written, as though it mattered to the world enough to stir it in its course by one vibration. The world has drunk deep of wonderful literature, and all that I can do is make a small brew with a little flavour of my own; but it still could get on very well indeed with the old staple and matured vintages were I never to write at all.

The King Whence art thou, sir? Gilfaron My Lord, I know not well.

Indeed, I am a townsman of the world.
For once my mother told me that she saw
The Angel of the Cross Roads lead me out,
And point to every corner of the sky,
And say, Thy feet shall follow in the trail
Of every tribe; and thou shalt pitch thy tent
Wherever thou shalt see a human face

A Lover's Diary

Which hath thereon the alphabet of life;
Yea, thou shalt spell it out e'en as a child:
And therein wisdom find.

The King Art thou wise?

Gilfaron Only according to the Signs.

The King What signs?

Gilfaron The first the language of the Garden, sire,
When man spoke with the naked searching thought,
Unlacquered of the world.

The King Speak so forthwith; come, show us to be wise.

Gilfaron The Angel of the Cross Roads to me said:
And wisdom comes by looking eye to eye,
Each seeing his own soul as in a glass;
For ye shall find the Lodges of the Wise,
The farthest Camp of the Delightful Fires,
By marching two by two, not one by one.

The King's Daughter.

THE VISION

As one would stand who saw a sudden light
Flood down the world, and so encompass him
And in that world illumined Seraphim
Brooded above and gladdened to his sight;

So stand I in the flame of one great thought,
That broadens to my soul from where she waits,
Who, yesterday, drew wide the inner gates
Of all my being to the hopes I sought.

Her words come to me like a summer-song,
Blown from the throat of some sweet nightingale;
I stand within her light the whole day long,

And think upon her till the white stars fail:
I lift my head towards all that makes life wise,
And see no farther than my lady's eyes.

ABOVE THE DIN

Silence sits often on me as I touch
Her presence; I am like a bird that hears
A note diviner than it knows, and fears

A Lover's Diary

To share the larger harmony too much.

My soul leaps up, as to a sudden sound
A long-lost traveller, when, by her grace,
I learn of her life's sweetness face to face,
And sweep the chords of sympathies profound.

Her regal nature calmly holds its height
Above life's din, while moving in its maze.
Unworthy thoughts would die within her sight,

And mean deeds creep to darkness from her gaze.
Yet only in my dreams can I set down
The word that gives her nobleness a crown.

LOVE'S COURAGE

Courage have I to face all bitter things,
That start out darkly from the rugged path,
Leading to life's achievement; not God's wrath
Would sit so heavy when my lady sings.

I did not know what life meant till I felt
Her hand clasp mine in compact to the end;
Till her dear voice said, See, I am your friend!
And at her feet, amazed, my spirit knelt.

And yet I spoke but hoarsely then my thought,
I groped amid a thousand forces there;
Her understanding all my meaning caught,

It was illumined in her atmosphere.
She read it line by line, and then there fell
The curtain on the shrine—and it is well.

LOVE'S LANGUAGE

Just now a wave of perfume floated up
To greet my senses as I broke the seal
Of her short letter; and I still can feel
It stir me as a saint the holy cup.

The missive lies there, but a few plain words:
A thought about a song, a note of praise,
And social duties such as fill the days
Of women; then a thing that undergirds

The phrases like a psalm: a line that reads—
I wish that you were coming! Why, it lies
Upon my heart like blossoms on the skies,

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Like breath of balm upon the clover meads.
The perfumed words soothe me into a dream;
My thoughts float to her on the scented stream.

ASPIRATION

None ever climbed to mountain heights of song,
But felt the touch of some good woman's palm;
None ever reached God's altitude of calm,
But heard one voice cry, Follow! from the throng.

I would not place her as an image high
Above my reach, cold, in some dim recess,
Where never she should feel a warm caress
Of this my hand that serves her till I die.

I would not set her higher than my heart,
Though she is nobler than I e'er can be;
Because she placed me from the crowd apart,

And with her tenderness she honoured me.
Because of this, I hold me worthier
To be her kinsman, while I worship her.

THE MEETING

O marvel of our nature, that one life
Strikes through the thousand lives that fold it round,
To find another, even as a sound
Sweeps to a song through elemental strife!

Through cycles infinite the forces wait,
Which destiny has set for union here;
No circumstance can warp them from their sphere;
They meet sometime; and this is God and Fate.

And God is Law, and Fate is Law in use,
And we are acted on by some deep cause,
Which sanctifies I will and I refuse,

When Love speaks Love, the peaceful end of Laws.
And I, from many conflicts over-past,
Find here Love, Law, and God, at last.

THE NEST

High as the eagle builds his lonely nest
Above the sea, above the paths of man,
And makes the elements his barbican,
That none may break the mother-eagle's rest;

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So build I far above all human eyes
My nest of love; Heaven's face alone bends down
To give it sunlight, starlight; while is blown
A wind upon it out of Paradise.

None shall affright, no harm may come to her,
Whom I have set there in that lofty home:
Love's eye is sleepless; I could feel the stir

E'en of God's cohorts, if they chanced to come.
I am her shield; I would that I might prove
How dear I hold the lady of my love.

WHEN thou makest a voyage to the stars, go thou blindfolded;
and carry not a sword, but the sandals of thy youth.
Egyptian Proverb.

SEEK thou the Angel of the Cross Roads ere thou goest upon a
journey, and she will give thee wisdom at the Four Corners.
Egyptian Proverb.

PISGAH

Behold, now, I have touched the highest point
In my existence. When I turn my eyes
Backward to scan my outlived agonies,
I feel God's finger touch me, to anoint

With this sweet Present the ungenerous Past,
With love the wounds that struck stark in my soul;
With hope life's aching restlessness and dole;
To show me place to anchor in at last.

Like to a mother bending o'er the bed
Where sleeps, death-silent, one that left her side
Ere he had reached the flow of manhood's tide,

So stood I by my life whence Life had fled.
But Life came back at Love's clear trumpet-call,
And at Love's feet I cast the useless pall.

LOVE IS ENOUGH

It is enough that in this burdened time
The soul sees all its purposes aright.
The rest what does it matter? Soon the night
Will come to overwhelm us, then the morning chime.

A Lover's Diary

What does it matter, if but in the way
One hand clasps ours, one heart believes us true;
One understands the work we try to do,
And strives through Love to teach us what to say?

Between me and the chilly outer air
Which blows in from the world, there standeth one
Who draws Love's curtains closely everywhere,

As God folds down the banners of the sun.
Warm is my place about me, and above
Where was the raven, I behold the dove.

AT THE PLAY

I felt her fan my shoulder touch to-night.
Soft act, faint touch, no meaning did it bear
To any save myself, who felt the air
Of a new feeling cross my soul's clear sight.

To me what matter that the players played!
They grew upon the instant like the toys
Which dance before the sight of idle boys;
I could not hear the laughter that they made.

Swept was I on that breath her hand had drawn,
Through the dull air, into a mountain-space,
Where shafts of the bright sun-god interlace,

Making the promise of a golden dawn.
And straightway crying, O my heart, rejoice!
It found its music in my lady's voice.

SO CALM THE WORLD

Far up the sky the sunset glamour spreads,
Far off the city lies in golden mist;
The sea grows calm, the waves the sun has kissed
Strike white hands softly 'gainst the rocky heads.

So calm the world, so still the city lies,
So warm the haze that spreads o'er everything;
And yet where, there, Peace sits as Lord and King,
Havoc will reign when next the sun shall rise.

The wheels pause only for a little space,
And in the pause they gather strength again.
'Tis but the veil drawn over Labour's face,

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O'er strife, derision, and the sin of men.
My heart with a sweet inner joy o'erflows
To nature's peace, and a kind silence knows.

THE WELCOME

But see: my lady comes. I hear her feet
Upon the sward; she standeth by my side.
Just such a face Raphael had deified,
If in his day they two had chanced to meet.

And I, tossed by the tide of circumstance,
Lifting weak hands against a host of swords,
Paused suddenly to hear her gentle words
Making powerless the lightnings of mischance.

I, who was but a maker of poor songs,
That one might sing behind his prison bars,
I, who it seemed fate singled out for wrongs

She smiled on me as smile the nearest stars.
From her deep soul I draw my peace, and thus,
One wreath of rhyme I weave for both of us.

THE SHRINE

Were I but as the master souls who move
In their high place, immortal on the earth,
My song might be a thing to crown her worth,
'Tis but a pathway for the feet of Love.

But since she walks where I am fain to sing,
Since she has said, I listen, O my friend!
There is a glory lent the song I send,
And I am proud, yes, prouder than a king.

I grow to nobler use beneath her eyes
Eyes that smile on me so serenely, will
They smile a welcome though my best hope dies,

And greet me at the summit of the hill?
Will she, for whom my heart has built a shrine,
Take from me all that makes this world divine?

THE TORCH

Art's use what is it but to touch the springs
Of nature? But to hold a torch up for
Humanity in Life's large corridor,
To guide the feet of peasants and of kings!

A Lover's Diary

What is it but to carry union through
Thoughts alien to thoughts kindred, and to merge
The lines of colour that should not diverge,
And give the sun a window to shine through!

What is it but to make the world have heed
For what its dull eyes else would hardly scan,
To draw in a stark light a shameless deed,

And show the fashion of a kingly man!
To cherish honour, and to smite all shame,
To lend hearts voices, and give thoughts a name!

IN ARMOUR

But wherein shall Art work? Shall beauty lead
It captive, and set kisses on its mouth?
Shall it be strained unto the breast of youth,
And in a garden live where grows no weed?

Shall it, in dalliance with the flaunting world,
Play but soft airs, sing but sweet-tempered songs?
Veer lightly from the stress of all great wrongs,
And lisp of peace 'mid battle-flags unfurled?

Shall it but pluck the sleeve of wantonness,
And gently chide the folly of our time?
But wave its golden wand at sin's duress,

And say, Ah me! ah me! to fallow crime?
Nay, Art serves Truth, and Truth with Titan blows,
Strikes fearless at all evil that it knows.

IN THEE MY ART

In thee is all my art; from thee I draw
The substance of my dreams, the waking plan
Of practised thought; I can no measure scan,
But thou work'st in me like eternal law.

If I were rich in goodly title deeds
Of broad estate, won from posterity;
If from decaying Time I snatched a see
Richer than prelates pray for with their beads;

If some should bring before me frankincense,
And make a pleasant fire to greet mine eyes;
If there were given me for recompense

A Lover's Diary

Gifts fairer than a seraph could devise:
I would, my sovereign, kneel to thee and say,
It all is thine; thou showedst me the way.

DENIAL

But is it so that I must never kiss
Thee on the brow, or smooth thy silken hair?
Never close down thine eyelids with Love's prayer,
Or fold my arms about my new-found bliss?

Must I unto the courses of my age
Worship afar, lest haply I profane
The temple that is now my holy fane,
For which my song is given as a gage?

Shall I who cry to all, Come not within
The bounds where I my lady have enshrined;
I am her cavalier"; shall I not win

One dear caress, the rich exchequer find
Of thy soft cheek? If thou command, my lips
Shall find surcease but at thy fingertips.

TESTAMENT

Why do I love thee? Shall my answer run:
Because that thou hast beauty, noble place,
Because of some sweet glamour in thy face,
And eyes that shame the clear light of the sun?

Shall I exclaim upon thy snow-white hands,
Challenge the world to show a gentler mien,
Call down the seraphs to attest, the sheen
Upon thy brow is borrowed from their lands?

Shall I trace out a map of all thy worth,
Parcel thy virtues, say, For this and this
I learned to love her; here new charms had birth;

I in this territory caught a bliss"?
Shall I make inventory of thy grace,
And crowd the total into common space?

CAPTIVITY

Nay, lady, though I love thee, I make pause
Before thy question, and know naught to say;
Art cannot teach me to define the way,
Love led me, nor e'en register Love's cause.

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It can but blazon in this verse of mine
What love does for me; what from Love it gains;
What is its quickening; but it refrains
From divination where thy merits shine.

Canst thou, indeed, not tell what wrought in thee
To bring me as a captive to thy feet?
Canst thou not say, 'Twas this that made decree

Of conquest; here thy soul with mine did meet?"
Or is it that both stand amazed before
The shrine where thou hast blessed and I adore?

O MYSTIC WINGS

O mystic wings, upbear me lightly now,
Beyond life's faithful labour to a seat
Where I can feel the end of things complete,
Where no hot breath of ill can scorch the brow.

O mystic wings of Art, about thee Truth
Makes atmosphere of purity and power;
'Tis man's breath kills the spring's soft-petaled flower

Ye give a refuge for the heart of youth.

Ye give a value for all loss in age,
When feeble eyes search for forgotten springs;
Ye fan the breeze that turns the moulded page,

And carry back the soul to ardent things.
Poor payment can I give, but here engage
I thee to be Love's airy equipage.

WAS IT THY FACE?

Was it thy face I saw when, as a child,
Night after night I watched one quiet star
Shine 'tween my curtain and the window-bar
Until I slept, and made my sleep more mild?

Was it thy influence outreaching then
To me, o'er untrod years, o'er varying days,
To give me courage, as from phase to phase
Of youth's desires I passed to deeds of men?

Was it because the star was hid awhile,
That I in blindness wandered from my path;
That I wooed Folly with her mumming smile,

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And sought for Lethe in a cup of wrath?
Another hand touched mine with sadness there,
And saved me till I saw thy face appear.

A WOMAN'S HAND

A woman's hand. Lo, I am thankful now
That with its touch I have walked all my days;
Rising from fateful and forbidden ways,
To find a woman's hand upon my brow;

Soft as a pad of rose-leaves, and as pure
As upraised palms of angels, seen in dreams:
And soothed by it, to stand as it beseems
A man who strives to conquer and endure.

A woman's hand! there is no better thing
Of all things human; it is half divine;
It hath been more to this lame life of mine,

When faith was weakness, and despair was king.
Man more than all men, Thou wast glad to bless
A woman's sacrifice and tenderness.

ONE FACE I SEE

One face I see by thine whene'er I hold
Converse with things that are or things that were;
Whene'er I seek life's hidden folds to stir,
And watch the inner to the outer rolled.

Dost thou not know her, O beloved one?
Hast thou not felt her sunshine on thy face?
In me hast thou not learned some signs to trace
Of that dear soul who calleth me her son?

Such as I was that in thy countenance
Found favour, from her it was gathered most.
To my mad youth her gentle surveillance

Was like a watch-fire on a rock-bound coast.
She drew about me motherhood, and thou
Hast with Love's holy chrism touched my brow.

MOTHER

She gave me courage when I weakly said,
O see how drifting, derelict, am I!
The tide runs counter, and the wind is high;
I see no channel through the rocks ahead.

A Lover's Diary

My arm is impotent; what worth to trim
The bending sails! Look, I shall quaff a cup
To Fate, while the wild ocean swallows up
The shipwrecked youth, the man who lives in him.

She said: But thou hast valour, dear, too much
For such as this; thou hast grave embassy,
Given with thy birth; would'st thou thine honour smutch

With coward failing? Dear son, breast the sea.
Firm-purposed from that hour, through wind and wave,
I brought my message till thou shelter gave.

WHEN FIRST I SAW THEE

When first I saw thee, lady, straightway came
The thought that somehow, somewhere, destiny,
Through blinding paths of happiness or blame,
Would bend my way of life, my soul to thee.

But then I put it from me: was not I
A wanderer? To-morrow I should be
In other lands—beside another sea;
Nay, you were but a star—gleam in my sky.

And so I came not in your sight awhile,
You gave no thought, and I passed not away;
But like some traveller in a deep defile

I walked in darkness even through the day:
Until at last the hands of Circumstance
Pointed the hour that waked me from my trance.

THE FATES LAUGH

I did not will this thing. I set my face
Towards duty and my art; I was alone.
How knew I thou shouldst roll away the stone
From hopes long buried, by thy tender grace?

What does it matter that we make resolve?
The Fates laugh at us as they sit and spin;
We cannot tell what Good is, or what Sin,
Or why old faiths in mist of pain dissolve.

We only can stand watchful in the way,
Waiting with patient hands on shield and sword,
Ready to meet disaster in the fray,

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Till Time has struck the letters of one word
Word of such high-born worth: triumphant Love,
Give me thy canopy where'er I rove.

AS ONE WHO WAITETH

As one who waiteth for the signet ring
Of his dear sovereign, that his embassy
May have clear passport over land and sea,
And make the subject sacred as his king;

As waits the warrior for a pontiff's palm,
Upraised in blessing o'er his high emprise;
And bows his mailed forehead prayerful-wise,
Sinking his turbulency in deep calm:

So waited I for one seal to be set
Upon my full commission, for a sign
That should make impotent man's I forget,

And make God's I remember more divine:
Which should command at need the homage of
The armed squadrons of all loyal love.

THE SEALING

But yestermorn my marshalled hopes were held
Upon the verge of august pilgrimage;
To-day I am as birds that leave the cage
To seek green fastnesses they knew of eld;

To-day I am as one who hides his face
Within his golden beaver, and whose hand
Clenches with pride his tried and conquering brand,
Ay, as a hunter mounted for the chase.

For, see: upon my lips I carry now
A touch that speaks reveille to my soul;
I have a dispensation large enow

To enfold the world and circumscribe each pole.
Slow let me speak it: From her lips and brow
I took the gifts she only could endow.

THE PLEDGE

O gifts divine as any ever knew
The noble spirits of an antique time;
As any poets fashion in their rhyme,
Or angels whisper down the shadeless blue!

A Lover's Diary

The priceless gifts of holy confidence,
That speak through quivering lips from heart to heart;
That unto life new energies impart,
And open up the gates of prescience.

O dear my love, I unto thee have given
Pledge that I am thy vassal evermore;
I stand within the zenith of my Heaven,

On either hand a starred eternal shore
I have come nearer to thy greater worth,
For thou hast raised me from the common earth.

LOVE'S TRIBUTARIES

I can say now, There was the confluence
Of all Love's tributaries; there the sea
Of Love spread out towards eternity;
And there my coarser touched her finer sense.

Poor though I am in my own sight, I know
That thou hast winnowed, sweet, what best I am;
Upon my restlessness thy ample calm
Hath fallen as on frost-bound earth the snow.

It hideth the harsh furrows that the wheels
Of heavy trials made in Life's champaign;
Upon its pure unfolding sunshine steals,

And there is promise of the spring again.
Here make I proclamation of my faith,
And poise my fealty o'er the head of Death.

THE CHOICE

If Death should come to me to-night, and say:
I weigh thy destiny; behold, I give
One little day with this thy love to live,
Then, my embrace; or, leave her for alway,

And thou shalt walk a full array of years;
Upon thee shall the world's large honours fall,
And praises clamorous shall make for all
Thy strivings rich amends. If in my ears

Thou saidst, I love thee! I would straightway cry,
A thousand years upon this barren earth
Is death without her: for that day I die,

A Lover's Diary

And count my life for it of poorest worth.
Love's reckoning is too noble to be told
By Time's slow fingers on its sands of gold.

RECOGNITION

As in a foreign land one threads his way
'Mid alien scenes, knowing no face he meets;
And, hearing his name spoken, turns and greets
With wondering joy a friend of other days;

As in the pause that comes between the sound
And recognition, all the finer sense
Is swathed in a melodious eloquence,
Which makes his name seem in its sweetness drowned

So stood I, by an atmosphere beguiled
Of glad surprise, when first thy lips let fall
The name I lightly carried when a child,

That I shall rise to at the judgment call.
The music of thy nature folded round
Its barrenness a majesty of sound.

THE WAY OF DREAMS

Since I rose out of child-oblivion
I have walked in a world of many dreams,
And noble souls beside the shining streams
Of fancy have with beckonings led me on.

Their faces oft, mayhap, I could not see,
Only their waving hands and noble forms.
Sometimes there sprang between quick-gathered storms,
But always they came back again to me.

Women with smiling eyes and star-spun hair
Spake gentle things, bade me look back to view
The deeds of the great souls who climbed the stair

Immortal, and for whom God's manna grew:
Dante, Anacreon, Euripides,
And all who set rich wine upon the lees.

THE ACCOLADE

Men of brave stature came and placed their hands
Upon my head, and, lifting shining swords,
Drew through the air signs mightier than words,
And vanished in the sun upon the sands.

A Lover's Diary

Glimpses I caught of faces that have come
Through crowding ages; whisperings of songs;
And prayers for the redress of human wrongs
From voices that upon the earth are dumb.

They were but shadows, but they lent me joy;
They gave me reverence for all who pace
The world with hands raised, evil to destroy,

Who live but for the honour of their race.
They taught me to strike at no idol raised,
Worshipped a space, then left to be dispraised.

FALLEN IDOLS

Stedfastness, shall we find it, then, at all?
Is it that as the winds blow north and south,
So must be praises from the loud world's mouth,
Which on its heroes in their glory fall?

Because the voice grows stiller, or the arm
No longer can beat evils back; because
The shoulders sink beneath new-rising cause,
And the fine thought has lost its moving charm;

Because of these shall puny sages shake
Their heads, and haste to mock the failing one,
Who in his strength could make the nations quake;

Prophet like Daniel, King like Solomon!
In this full time we have seen mockers run
About the throne of such as Tennyson.

TENNYSON

Who saith thy hand is weak, King Tennyson?
Who crieth, See, the monarch is grown old,
His sceptre falls? Oh, carpers rude and bold,
You who have fed upon the gracious benison

Scattered unstinted by him, do you now
Dispraise the sweet-strung harp, grown tremulous
'Neath fingers overworn for all of us?
You cannot tear the laurels from his brow.

He lives above your idle vaunts and fears,
Enthroned where all master souls stand up
In their high place, and fill the golden cup,

A Lover's Diary

God—blest for kings, with wine of endless years,
And greet him one with them. O brotherhood
Of envious dullards, ye are wroth with good.

THE ANOINTED ONES

Why, let them rail! God's full anointed ones
Have heard the world exclaim, We know you not.
They who by their souls' travailing have brought
Us nearer to the wonder of the suns.

Yet, who can stay the passage of the stars?
Who can prevail against the thunder—sound?
The wire that flashes lightning to the ground
Diverts, but not its potency debars.

So, men may strike quick stabs at Caesar's worth,
They only make his life an endless force,
'Scaped from its penthouse, flashing through the earth,

And 'whelming those who railed about his Gorse.
Men's moods disturb not those born truly great:
They know their end; they can afford to wait. A LOVER'S DIARY By Gilbert Parker

Volume 2.

DREAMS

And so life passed. I lived from year to year
With shadows, the strong warders of desire;
I learned through them to seek the golden fire
That hides itself in Song's bright hemisphere.

Through them I grew full of imaginings,
I made strange pictures, conjured images
From my deep longings; wrote the passages
Of life inwrought with half—glad wonderings.

For who can know a majesty of peace,
That wanders, ever waiting for a voice
To say to him, Behold, at last surcease

Of thy unrest has come, therefore, rejoice"?
Here set I down some dreams that come again,
Almost forgotten in my higher gain.

THE BRIDE

A ship at sea; a port to anchor in;

A Lover's Diary

Not far a starry light upon the shore.
The sheeted lightning, like a golden door,
Swings to and fro to let earth-angels in.

Most bravely has she sailed o'er every sea,
Withstood the storm-rack, spurned the sullen reef;
Cherished her strength; and held her guerdon fief
To him who saith, My ship comes back to me!

Behold, I sent her forth a stately thing,
To be my messenger to farthest lands,
To Fortunate Isles, and where the silver sands

Girdle a summer sea; that she might bring
My bride, who wist not that I loved her so
This is no bitter day for me, I trow!

THE WRAITH

A ship in port; well-crossed the harbour-bar;
The hawser swung, the grinding helm at rest;
Hands clasping hands, and eyes with eager zest
Seeking the loved, returning from afar.

And he, the master, holding little reck
Of all, save but the idol of his soul,
Seeks not his loving ardour to control.
Mark how he proudly treads the whitened deck!

My bride, my bride, my lone soul's best beloved,
Come forth, come forth! Where art thou, Isobel?
Pallid, and wan! Lord, hath it thus befell

This is but dust; where has the spirit roved?
O death-cold bride! for this, then, have I strove?
O phantom ship, O loveless wraith of Love!

SURRENDER

A day of sunshine in a land of snow,
And a soft-curtained room, where ruddy flakes
Of fame fall free, in liquid light that slakes
The soft desire of one cold, paleface: lo,

Close-pressed sweet lips, and eyes of violet,
That are filled up as with a sudden fear
A storm's prelude upon the expectant mere.
Yet deep behind what never they forget,

Who ever see in life's chance or mischance.

A Lover's Diary

And he who saw, what could he do but say,
Fold up the tents; the camp is struck; away!

Vain victor who rides not in rest his lance!
Beside the hearthstone where the flame—flakes fell,
There lay the cold keys of the citadel.

THE CITADEL

A night wind—swept and bound about with blee
Of Erebus; all light and cheer within;
White restless hands that falter, then begin
To weave a music—voiced fantasy.

And life, and death, and love, and weariness,
And unrequital, thrid the maze of sound;
And one voice saith, Behold, the lost is found!
And saith not any more for joyfulness.

Out of the night there comes a wanderer,
Who waits upon the threshold, and is still;
And listens, and bows down his head, until

His grief—drawn breath startles the heart of her.
The victor vanquished, at her feet he fell,
A prisoner in his conquered citadel.

MALFEASANCE

Two of one name; they standing where the sun
Makes shadows in the orchard—bloom of spring;
She holding in her palm a jewelled ring,
He speaking on what evil it had done.

Raise thy pale face and wondrous eyes to mine;
Let not thy poor lips quiver in such pain;
Too young and blindly thou hast drunk the wine
Crushed from the lees of love. Be strong again.

Trail back thy golden hair from thy broad brow,
And raise thy lily neck like some tall tower,
That recks not any strife nor any hour,

So it but holds its height, heeding not how.
The noblest find their way o'er paths of ire
To the clear summit of God's full desire.

ANNUNCIATION

I think in that far time when Gabriel came
And gave short speech to Mary sweet and wise,
That when the faint fear faded from her eyes,
And they were filled up with a sudden flame

Of joy bewildering and wonderment;
With reverence the angel in her palm
Laid one white lily, dewy with the balm
Of the Lord's garden; saying: This is sent

For thine espousal, thou the undefiled;
And it shall bloom till all be consummate.
Lo, then he passed. She, musing where she sate,

Felt all her being moved in manner wondrous mild;
Then, laying 'gainst her bosom the white flower,
She bowed her head, and said, It is God's dower.

VANISHED DREAMS

Dreams, only dreams. They sprang from loneliness
Of outer life; from innermost desire
To reach the soul that now in golden fire
Of cherished song I pray for and caress.

I wandered through the world with longing gaze,
To find her who was my hope's parallel,
That to her I might all my gospel tell
Of changeless love, and bid her make appraise.

I knew that some day I should look within
The ever-deepening distance of her eyes;
For, in my dreams, from veiled Seraphim

Came one, as if in answer to my cries:
And passing near me, pointed down the road
That led me at the last to thy abode.

INTO THY LAND

Into thy land of sunlight I have come,
And live within thy presence, as a ray
Of light lives in the brightness of the day;
And find in thee my heaven and my home.

Yet what am I that thou shouldst ope the gate
Of thy most sweet completeness; and should spend
Rich values of thy life on me thy friend,

A Lover's Diary

For which I have no worthy duplicate!

Nay, lady, I no riches have to give;
I have no name of honour, or the pride
Of place, to priv'lege me to sit beside

Thee in thy kingdom, where thy graces live.
Wilt thou not one day whisper, You have climbed
Beyond your merits; pray you, fall behind"? Wish thy friend joy of his journey, but pray in secret
that he have no joy, for then may he return quickly to thee.
Egyptian Proverb.

DIVIDED

Divided by no act of thine or mine,
Forever parted by a fatal deed,
A fatal feud. Alas! when fathers bleed,
The children shall fulfil the wild design.

A Montague hath killed a Capulet,
A Capulet hath slain a Montague,
Twin graves, twin sorrows, and oh, mad to-do
Of vengeance! oh, dread entail of regret!

There lie they in their dark, self-chosen graves,
And from them cries Hate's everlasting ghost,
Blood hath been shed, and Love and ye are slaves,

Time wrecks, and freedom drifts upon life's coast.
Yet not for us the relish of that doom
Which found a throne upon a Juliet's tomb.

WE MUST LIVE ON

We must live on; a deeper tragedy:
To see, to touch, to know, and to desire;
To feel in every vein the glorious fire
Of Eden, and to cry, Oh, to be free!

To cry, Oh, wipe the gloomy stain away,
Thou who first raised the sword, Who gave the hilt
Into the hand of man. This blood they spilt
Our fathers oh, blot out the bitter day!

Erase the hour from out Thy calendar,
Turn back the hands upon the clock of Time,
Oh, Artificer of destroying War

Their righteous hate who bore us in our crime!
Upon the children! 'Tis the cold reply

A Lover's Diary

Of Him who makes to those who must not die.

YET LIFE IS SWEET

Yet life is sweet. Thy soul hath breathed along,
Thine eyes have cast their glory on the earth,
Thy foot hath touched it, and thine hour of birth
Didst give a new pulse to the veins of song.

Better to stand amid the toppling towers
Of every valiant hope; a Samson's dream,
Than the deep indolence of Lethe's stream,
The loneliness of slow submerging hours.

Better, oh, better thus to see the wreck,
And to have rocked to motion of the spheres;
Better, oh, better to have trod the deck

Of hope, and sailed the unmanageable years—
Ay, better to have paid the price, and known,
Than never felt this tyrannous Alone!

LOST FOOTSTEPS

Upon the disc of Love's bright planet fell
A darkness yestereve, and from your lips
I heard cold words; then came a swift eclipse
Of joy at meeting on hope's it-is-well.

And if I spoke with sadness and with fear;
If from your gentle coldness I drew back,
And felt that I had lost the flowery track
That led to peace in Love's sweet atmosphere:

It was because a woful dread possessed.
My aching heart the dread some evil star
Had crossed the warm affection in your breast,

Had bade me stand apart from where you are.
The world seemed breaking on my life; I heard
The crash of sorrows in that chiding word.

THE CLOSED DOOR

It is not so, and so for evermore,
That thou and I must live our lives apart;
I with a patient smother at my heart,
And thy hand resting on a closed door?

A Lover's Diary

What couldst thou ever ask me that I should
Not bend me to achieve thy high behest?
What cannot men achieve with lance in rest
Who carry noble valour in their blood?

And some nobility of high emprise,
Lady, couldst thou make possible in me;
If living 'neath the pureness of thy eyes,

I found the key to inner majesty;
And reaching outward, heart-strong, from thy hand,
Set here and there a beacon in the land.

THE CHALICE

Not by my power alone, but thou and I
Together thinking, working, loving on
Achievement-wards, as all brave souls have gone,
Perchance should find new star-drifts in the sky

That curves above humanity, and set
Some new interpretation on life's page;
Should serve the strivings of a widening age,
And fashion wisdom from the social fret.

Deep did Time's lances go; thou pluck'st them forth,
And on my sullen woundings laid the balm
Of thy life's sweetness. Oh, let my love be worth

The keeping. My head beneath thy palm,
Once more I lift Love's chalice to thine eyes:
Not till thou blestest me will I arise.

MIO DESTINO

Here, making count, at every step I see
Something in her, like to a hidden thought
Within my life, that long time I had sought,
But never found till her soul spoke to me.

And if she said a thousand times, I did
Not call thee, thou cam'st seeking; not my voice
Was it thou heard'st; thy love was not my choice!
I should straightway reply, That of thee hid,

Even from thyself, lest it should startle thee,
Hath called me, made me slave and king in one;
And when the mists of Time shall rise, and we

A Lover's Diary

Stand forth, it shall be said, Since Time begun
Ye two were called as one from that high hill,
Where the creating Master hath His will.

I HAVE BEHELD

I have beheld a multitude stand still
In such deep silence that a sudden pain
Struck through the heart in sharing the tense strain,
And all the world seemed bounded by one will.

But when precipitated on the sea
Of human feeling was the incident
That caught their wonder; then the skies were rent
With quivering sound, with passion's liberty.

So have I stood before this parting day,
With chilly fingers pressed upon my breast,
That my heart burst not fleshen bands away,

And my sharp cry break through my lady's rest.
I have shut burning eyelids on the sight
Of this dread time that scorches my sad night.

TOO SOON AWAY

Have I then found thee but to lose thee, friend?
But touched thee ere thou vanished from my gaze?
And when my soul is struggling from the maze
Of many conflicts, must our converse end?

Across the empty space that now shall spread
Between us, shall I never go to thee?
Or thou, beloved, never come to me,
Save but to whisper prayers above the dead?

Ah, cruel thought! Shall not Hope's convoy bear
To thee the reinforcements of my love?
Shall I not on thy white hand drop a tear

Of crowned joy, one day, where thou dost move
In thy place regally; even as now
I place my farewell token on thy brow?

THE TREASURE

And now when from the shore goes out the ship
Wherein is set the treasure that I hold
Closer than miser all his hidden gold,
Dearer than wine Zeus carried to his lip;

A Lover's Diary

My aching heart cries from its pent-up pain,
O Love, O Life, O more than life to me,
How can I live without the surety
Of thy sweet presence till we meet again!

So like a wounded deer I came to thee,
The arrow of mischance piercing my side;
And through thy sorrow-healing ministry

I rose with strength, like giants in their pride.
But now but now how shall I stand alone,
Knowing the light, the hope of me is gone?

DAHIN

O brow, so fronted with a stately calm,
O full completeness of true womanhood,
O counsel, pleader for all highest good,
Thou hast upon my sorrow poured thy balm!

Poor soldier he who did not raise his sword,
And, touching with his lips the hilt-cross, swear
In war or peace the livery to wear
Of one that blessed him with her queenly word.

Most base crusader, who at night and morn
Crying Dahin, thought not of her again
From whose sweet power was his knighthood born,

For whom he quells the valiant Saracen.
Shall I not, then, in the tumultuous place
Of my life's warfare ever seek thy face?

LOVE'S USURY

Here count I over all the gentle deeds
Which thou hast done; here summon I thy words,
Sweeter to me than sweetest song of birds;
That came like grace immortal to my needs.

Love's usury has reckoned such a sum
Of my indebtedness, that I can make
No lien large enough to overtake
Its value and before it I am dumb!

Yet, O my gracious, most kind creditor,
I would not owe to thee one item less
We cannot give the sun requital for

A Lover's Diary

Its liberal light; our office is to bless.
If blessings could be compassed by my prayer,
High heaven should set star-gems in thy hair.

THE DECREE

Last night I saw the warm white Southern moon
Sail upward through a smoky amber sea;
Orion stood in silver majesty
Where the gold-girdled sun takes rest at noon.

I slept; I dreamed. Against a sunset sky
I saw thee stand all garmented in white;
With hand stretched to me, and there in thy sight
I went to meet thee; but I heard thee cry:

We stand apart as sun from shining sun;
Thou hast thy place; there rolleth far and near
A sea between; until life's all be done

Thou canst not come, nor I go to thee, dear.
Methought I bowed my head to thy decree,
And donned the mantle of my misery.

'TIS MORNING NOW

'Tis morning now, and dreams and fears are gone,
And sleep has calmed the fever in my veins,
And I am strong to drink the cup that drains
The last drop through my lips, and make no moan.

Strength I have borrowed from the outward show
Of spiritual puissance thou dost wear.
Shall I not thy high domination share
Over the shock of feeling? Shall I grow

More fearful than the soldier, when between
The smoke of hostile cannon lies his way;
To carry far the colours of his queen,

While her bright eyes behold him in the fray?
Here do I smile between the warring hosts
Of sad farewells; and reek not what it costs.

SACRIFICE

And O most noble, and yet once again
Most noble spirit, if I ever did
Aught that thy goodness frowns on, be it hid
Forever, and deep-buried. Let the rain

A Lover's Diary

Of coming springs fall on the quiet grave.
Perchance some violets will grow to tell
That I, when uttering this last farewell,
Built up a sacrificial architrave;

That I, who worship thee, have love so great,
To live in the horizon thou may'st set;
To stand but in the shadow of the gate,

Faithful, when coward promptings cry, Forget.
Ah, lady, when I gave my heart to thee,
It passed into thy lifelong regency.

SHINE ON

Shine on, O sun! Sing on, O birds of song!
And in her light my heart fashions a tune
Not wholly sad, most like a tender rune
Sung by some knight in days gone overlong,

When he with minstrel eyes in Syrian grove
Looked out towards his England, and then drew
From a sweet instrument a sound that grew
From twilight unto morning of his love.

Go, then, beloved, bearing as you go
These songs that have more sunlight far than cloud;
More summer flowers than dead leaves 'neath the snow;

That tell of hopes from which you raised the shroud.
My lady, bright benignant star, shine on

I lift to thee my low Trisagion! HE that hath pleasant dreams is more fortunate
than one who hath a cup-bearer.
Egyptian Proverb.

SO, THOU ART GONE

So, thou art gone; and I am left to wear
Thy memory as a golden amulet
Upon my breast, to sing a chansonnette
Of winter tones, when summer time is here.

And yet, my heart arises from the dark,
Where it fell back in silence when you went
To seaward, and a sprite malevolent
Sat laughing in the white sails of thy barque.

'Twas not moth-wings dashing against the flame,
Burning in love's areanum; 'twas a cry

A Lover's Diary

Struck from soul-crossing chords, that, separate, frame

Life's holy calm, or wasting agony.
But now between the warring strings there grows
A space of peace, as 'tween truce-honoured foes.

THE THOUSAND THINGS

Here one by one come back the thousand things
Which made divinely sweet our intercourse;
Love summons them here straightway to divorce
The heart from melancholy wanderings.

Here laid she her white hand upon my arm;
To this place came she with slow-gliding grace;
Here smiled she up serenely in my face;
And these sweet notes she sang me for a charm.

I treasure up her words, and say them o'er
With close-shut eyes; with her again I float
Upon the Loire; I see the gems she wore,

The ruby shining at her queenly throat;
I climb with her again the Pyrenees,
And hear her laughter ringing through the trees.

THE SEA

I in my childhood never saw the sea
Save in my dreams. There it was vast and lone,
Splendid in power, breaking against the stone
Walls of the world in thunder symphony.

From it arose mists growing into mists
Making a cool white curtain for the sun,
And melting mornward when the day was done,
A moving sphere where spirits kept their trysts.

A ceaseless swinging with the swinging earth,
A never-tiring ebbing to and fro,
Trenching eternal fastnesses; a girth

Round mountains in their everlasting snow.
It was a vast emotion, fibre-drawn
From all the elements since the first dawn.

THE CHART

Then came in further years the virgin sight
Of the live sea; the sea that marches down,

A Lover's Diary

With sunny phalanxes and flags of foam,
To match its puissance with earth's awful might.

Far off the purple mist drew into mist,
As thought melts into endless thought, and round
The rim of the sheer world was heard a sound,
Floating through palpitating amethyst.

And through the varying waste of elements
There passed a sail, which caught the opposing wind,
Triumphant, as an army in its tents

Beholds the foe it, conquering, left behind.
And Life, I said, Life is but like the sea;
And what shall guide us to our destiny?"

REVEALING

The prescience of dreams struck walls away
From mortal fact, and mortal fact revealed,
With myriad voices, potencies concealed
In the dim birth-place of a coming day.

Even as a blind man's fingers wander o'er
His harpstrings, led by sound to dreams of sound,
Till in his soul an eloquence profound
Rises above the petulance and roar

Of the great globe: as in a rush of song
From feathered throats, one, in a mighty wood,
'Mid sweet interpositions moves along

The avenues of some predestined good;
So I, dream-nurtured, standing by the sea,
Made levy on the wonders that should be.

OVERCOMING

And God is good, I said, and Art is good,
And labour hath its rich reward of sleep;
And recompense will come for all who keep
Dishonour's ill contagion from the blood.

And over us there curves the infinite
Blue heaven as a shield, and at the end
We shall find One who loveth to befriend
E'en those who faint for shame within His sight.

And down the awful passes of the sky
There comes the voice that circumvents the gale;

A Lover's Diary

That makes the avalanche to pass us by,

And saith, I overcome to man's I fail.
And peradventure now, said I, the zest
Of all existence waits on His behest.

WHITHER NOW

But man's deliverances intervene
Between the soul's swift speech and God's high will;
That saith to tempests of the thought, Be still!
And in life's lazaretto maketh clean

The leprous sense. Ah, who can find his way
Among the many altars? Who can call
Out perfect peace from any ritual,
Or shelter find in systems of a day?

As one sees on some ancient urn, upthrown
From out a tomb, records that none may read
With like interpretation, and the stone

Retains its graven fealty to the dead:
So, on the great palimpsest men have writ
Such lines o'ercrossed that none interprets it.

ARARAT

What marvel that the soul of youth should cry,
Man builds his temples 'tween me and the face
Of Him whom I would seek; I cannot trace
His purpose in their shadow, nor descry

The wisdom absolute? What marvel that,
With yearning impotent, ay, impotent
Beyond all measure! his full faith was spent,
And for his soul there rose no Ararat?

Yet out upon the sun-drawn sensate sea
Of elemental pain, there came a word
As if from Him who travelled Galilee,

As fair as any Zion ever heard.
The voice of Love spoke; Love, that writes its name
On Life and Death—and then my lady came.

AS LIGHT LEAPS UP

As light leaps up from star to star, so mounts
Faith from one soul unto another; so

A Lover's Diary

The lower to the higher; till the flow
Of knowledge rises from creation's founts;

Until from human love we come to know
The august presence of the Love Divine;
And feel the light unutterable shine
Upon half-lights that we were wont to show,

Absorbing them. 'Tis Love that beckons us
From low desires, from restlessness and sin,
To heights that else we had not reached; and thus

We find the Heaven we dared not hope to win.
How clearer seem designs immortal when
Our lives are fed on Love's fine regimen

THE DARKENED WAY

It is no matter; thus the noble Dane,
About his heart more ill than one could tell;
Sad augury, that like a funeral bell
Against his soul struck solemn notes of pain.

So 'gainst the deadly smother he could press
With calm his lofty manhood; interpose
Purpose divine, and at the last disclose
For life's great shift a regnant readiness.

To-day I bought some matches in the street
From one whose eyes had long since lost their sight.
Trembling with palsy was he to his feet.

Father, I said, how fare you in the night?"
In body ill, but 'tis no matter, friend,
Strong is my soul to keep me to the end. DISTRUST not a woman nor a king it availeth nothing.
Egyptian Proverb.

WHEN thou journeyest into the shadows, take not sweetmeats
with thee, but a seed of corn and a bottle of tears and wine;
that thou mayst have a garden in the land whither thou goest.
Egyptian Proverb.

REUNITED

Once more, once more! That golden eventide!
Golden within, without all cold and grey,
Slowly you came forth from the troubled day,
Singing my heart you glided to my side;

A Lover's Diary

You glided in; the same grave, quiet face,
The same deep look, the never-ending light
In your proud eyes, eyes shining through the night,
That night of absence distance from your place.

Calm words, slow touch of hand, but, oh, the cry,
The long, long cry of passion and of joy
Within my heart; the star-burst in the sky

The world our world which time may not destroy!
Your world and mine, unutterably sweet:
Dearest, once more, the old song at thy feet.

SONG WAS GONE FROM ME

Dearest, once more! This I could tell and tell
Till life turned drowsy with the ceaseless note;
Dearest, once more! The words throb in my throat,
My heart beats to them like a muffled bell.

Change Time and Change! O Change and Time, you come
Not knocking at my door, knowing me gone;
Here have I dwelt within my heart alone,
Watching and waiting, while my muse was dumb

Song was gone from me sweet, I could not sing,
Save as men sing upon the lonely hills;
Under my hand the old chord ceased to ring,

Hushed by the grinding of the high gods' mills.
Dearest, once more. Those mad mills had their way
Now is mine hour. To every man his day.

GOOD WAS THE FIGHT

How have I toiled, how have I set my face
Fair to the swords! No man could say I quailed;
Ne'er did I falter; I dare not to have failed,
I dare not to have dropped from out the race.

Good was the fight good, till a piteous dream
Crept from some direful covert of despair;
Showed me your look, that look so true and fair,
Distant and bleak; for me no more to gleam.

Then was I driven back upon my soul,
Then came dark moments; lady, then I drew
Forth from its place the round unfathomed bowl

A Lover's Diary

Of sorrow, and from it I quaffed to you;
Speaking as men speak who have lost
Their hearts' last prize and dare not count the cost.

UNCHANGED

But you are here unchanged. You say not so
In words, but when you placed your hands in mine;
But when I saw the same old glory shine
Within your eyes, I read it; and I know.

And when those hands ran up along my arm,
And rested on my shoulder for a space,
A sacred inquisition in your face,
To read my heart, how could I doubt that charm,

That truth ineffable! I set my soul
In hazard to a farthing, that you kept
The faith, with pride unspeakable, the whole

Course of those years in which communion slept.
Your soul flamed in your look; you read; I knew
How little worth was I, how heavenly you.

ABSOLVO TE

I read your truth. You read What did you read?
Did you read all, and, reading all, forgive?
How I O little dwarf of conscience sieve
My soul; bare all before her bare indeed!

And, looking on the remnant and the waste,
Can you absolve me, me, the doubter, one
Who challenged what God spent His genius on,
His genius and His pride; so fair, so chaste?

I am ashamed. . . . And when I told my dreams,
Shaken and humble, Dear, there was no cause,
Your words; proud, sorrowful, as it beseems

Such as thou art. There never was a cause
Why you should honour me. Ashamed am I.
And you forgive me, bless me, for reply.

BENEDICTUS

You bless me, then you turn away your head
Never again, dear. I have blessed you so,
My lips upon your lips; between must flow
The river Oh the river! Thus you said.

A Lover's Diary

The river Oh the river, and the sun;
Stream that we may not cross, sun that is joy:
Flow as thou must; shine on in full employ
Shine through her eyes thou; let the river run.

O lady, to your liegeman speak. You say:
Dream no more dreams; yourself be as am I"
Your hands clasped to your face, so shutting out the day.

An instant, then to me, your low good-bye
Good-night, good-bye; and then the social reign,
The lights, the songs, the flowers and the pain.

THE MESSAGE

Oh, hush! you said; oh, hush! The twilight hung
Between us and the world; but in your face,
Flooding with warm inner light, the sovereign grace
Of one who rests the brooding trees among

Of one who steps down from a lofty throne,
Seeking that peace the sceptre cannot call;
And leaving courtier, page, and seneschal,
Goes down the lane of sycamores alone;

And, going, listens to the notes that swell
From golden throats stories of ardent days,
And lovers in fair vales; and homing bell:

And the sweet theme unbearable, she prays
The song-bird cease! So, on the tale I dare,
Your hush! your wistful hush! broke like prayer.

UNAVAILING

Never, you said, never this side the grave,
And what shall come hereafter, who may know?
Whether we e'en shall guess the way we go,
Passing beneath Death's mystic architrave

Silence or song, dumb sleep or cheerful hours?"
O lady, you have questioned, answer too.
You you to die silence and gloom for you:
Dead song, dead lights, dead graces, and dead flowers?

It is not so: the foolish trivial end,
The inconsequent paltry Nothing gone gone all;
The genius of the ageless Something spend

A Lover's Diary

Itself within this little earthly wall:
The commonplace conception, that we reap
Reward of drudge and ploughman idle sleep!

YOU SHALL LIVE ON

You shall live on triumphant, you shall take
Your place among the peerless, fearless ones;
And those who loved you here shall tell their sons
To honour every woman for your sake.

And those your Peers shall say, Others are pure,
Others are noble, others too have vowed,
And for a vow have suffered; but she bowed
Her own soul and another's to endure.

She smote the being more to her than all,
Her own soul and the world, a truth to hold,
Faith with the dead; and hung a heavy pall

'Tween her and love and life. The world is old,
It hath sent here none queenlier. Of the few,
The royal few is she, martyred and true.

"VEX NOT THIS GHOST"

Upon the rack of this tough world I hear,
As when Cordelia's glories all dissever—
Never never never never,
That wild moan of the dispossessed Lear.

O world, vex not this ghost, yea, let it pass,
The Spirit of these songs. The fool hath mocked,
The fool our woe upon us hath unlocked
From where the soul holds to our lips the glass,

To see what breath of life. O fool, poor fool,
Well, we have laughed together, you and I.
O fond insulter, in the healing pool

Of your deep poignant raillery I lie.
Let us be grand again, my fool. The throne
Is gone; but see, the coronation stone!

THE MEMORY

Know you where I, my royal fool, was crowned?
A rock within the great Egean? Where
A strong flood hurrieth on Finistere?
Where at the Pole our valiant men were drowned?

A Lover's Diary

Where the soft creamy wash of Indian seas
Spreads palmward? Where the sunset glides to dawn,
No night between? Where all the tides are drawn
To greet their Sun and bathe their Idol's knees?

Where was I crowned? Dear fool, upon a stone
That standeth where Earth's arches make but one,
Where all the banners of her soul were flown,

And trumpeted the legions of the sun.
The stone is left: 'tis here against the door
Of throne and kingdom. . . . Pray you, mock no more.

THE PASSING

A time will come when we again shall rail
Not yet, not yet. The flood comes on apace,
That deep dividing river, and her face
Grows dimmer as it widens pale, so pale.

Have we not railed and laughed these many days,
Mummers before the lights? Dear fool, your hand
Upon your lips Oh let us once be grand,
Grand as we were when treading royal ways.

Lo, there she moves beyond the river. Gone
Gone is the sun-lo, starlight in her eyes.
See, how she standeth silent and alone

Oh, hush! let us not vex her with our cries.
Proud as of old, unto my throne I go. . . .
Cordelia's gone..... Hush, draw the curtain so.

ENVOY

When you and I have played the little hour,
Have seen the tall subaltern Life to Death
Yield up his sword; and, smiling, draw the breath,
The first long breath of freedom; when the flower

Of Recompense has fluttered to our feet,
As to an actor's; and the curtain down,
We turn to face each other all alone
Alone, we two, who never yet did meet,

Alone, and absolute, and free: oh, then,
Oh, then, most dear, how shall be told the tale?
Clasped hands, pressed lips, and so clasped hands again;

A Lover's Diary

No words. But as the proud wind fills the sail,
My love to yours shall reach, then one deep moan
Of joy; and then our infinite Alone.