

Poems of Progress

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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PREFACE: LOVE'S LANGUAGE

When silence flees before the voice of Love,
Of what expression does that god approve?
Is dulcet song or flowing verse his choice,
Or stately prose, made regal by his voice?
Speaks Love in couplets, or in epics grand?
And is Love humble, or does he command?

There is no language that Love does not speak:
To-day commanding and to-morrow meek,
One hour laconic and the next verbose,
With hope triumphant and with doubt morose,
His varying moods all forms of speech employ.
To give expression to his painful joy,

To voice the phases of his joyful pain,
He rings the changes on the poet's strain.
Yet not in epic, epigram or verse
Can Love the passion of his heart rehearse.
All speech, all language, is inadequate,
There are no words with Love commensurate.

THE LAND BETWEEN

Between the little Here and larger Yonder,
 There is a realm (or so one day I read)
Where faithful spirits love—enchained may wander,
 Till some remembering soul from earth has fled.
Then, reunited, they go forth afar,
From sphere to sphere, where wondrous angels are.

Not many spirits in that realm are waiting;
 Not many pause upon its shores to rest;
For only love, intense and unabating,
 Can hold them from the longer, higher quest.
And after grief has wept itself to sleep,
Few hearts on earth their vital memories keep.

Should I pass on, across the mystic border,
 Let thy love link me to that pallid land;
I would not seek the heavens of finer order
 Until thy barque had left this coarser strand.
How desolate such journeyings would be,
Though straight to Him, were they not shared by thee.

Wert thou first called (dear God, how could I bear it?)
 I should enchain thee with my love, I know.
Not great enough am I to free thy spirit
 From all these tender ties, and bid thee go.
Nor would a soul, unselfish as thine own,
Forget so soon, and speed to heaven alone.

On earth we find no joy in ways diverging;
 How could we find it in the worlds unseen?
I know old memories from my bosom surging,
 Would keep thee waiting in that Land Between,
Until together, side by side, we trod
A path of stars, in our great search for God.

LOVE'S MIRAGE

Midway upon the route, he paused athirst
And suddenly across the wastes of heat,
He saw cool waters gleaming, and a sweet
Green oasis upon his vision burst.
A tender dream, long in his bosom nursed,
Spread love's illusive verdure for his feet;
The barren sands changed into golden wheat;
The way grew glad that late had seemed accursed.

She shone, the woman wonder, on his soul;
The garden spot, for which men toil and wait;
The house of rest, that is each heart's demand;
But when, at last, he reached the gleaming goal,
He found, oh, cruel irony of fate,
But desert sun upon the desert sand.

THE NEED OF THE WORLD

I know the need of the world,
 Though it would not have me know.
It would hide its sorrow deep,
 Where only God may go.
Yet its secret it can not keep;
It tells it awake, or asleep,
It tells it to all who will heed,
And he who runs may read.
 The need of the world I know.

I know the need of the world,
 When it boasts of its wealth the loudest,
When it flaunts it in all men's eyes,
 When its mien is the gayest and proudest.
Oh! ever it lies—it lies,
For the sound of its laughter dies
In a sob and a smothered moan,
And it weeps when it sits alone.
 The need of the world I know.

I know the need of the world.
 When the earth shakes under the tread
Of men who march to the fight,
 When rivers with blood are red
And there is no law but might,
And the wrong way seems the right;
When he who slaughters the most
Is all men's pride and boast.
 The need of the world I know.

I know the need of the world.
 When it babbles of gold and fame,
It is only to lead us astray
 From the thing that it dare not name,
For this is the sad world's way.
Oh! poor blind world grown grey
With the need of a thing so near,
With the want of a thing so dear.
 The need of the world I know.

The need of the world is love.
 Deep under the pride of power,
Down under its lust of greed,
 For the joys that last but an hour,

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There lies forever its need.
For love is the law and the creed
And love is the unnamed goal
Of life, from man to the mole.
Love is the need of the world.

THE GULF STREAM

Skilled mariner, and counted sane and wise,
That was a curious thing which chanced to me,
So good a sailor on so fair a sea.
With favouring winds and blue unshadowed skies,
Led by the faithful beacon of Love's eyes,
Past reef and shoal, my life-boat bounded free
And fearless of all changes that might be
Under calm waves, where many a sunk rock lies.

A golden dawn; yet suddenly my barque
Strained at the sails, as in a cyclone's blast;
And battled with an unseen current's force,
For we had entered when the night was dark
That old tempestuous Gulf Stream of the Past.
But for love's eyes, I had not kept the course.

REMEMBERED

His art was loving; Eres set his sign
Upon that youthful forehead, and he drew
The hearts of women, as the sun draws dew.
Love feeds love's thirst as wine feeds love of wine;
Nor is there any potion from the vine
Which makes men drunken like the subtle brew
Of kisses crushed by kisses; and he grew
Inebriated with that draught divine.

Yet in his sober moments, when the sun
Of radiant summer paled to lonely fall,
And passion's sea had grown an ebbing tide,
From out the many, Memory singled one
Full cup that seemed the sweetest of them all –
The warm red mouth that mocked him and denied.

HELEN OF TROY: ON THE ISLE OF CRANAE

The world an abject vassal to her charms,
And kings competing for a single smile,
Yet love she knew not, till upon this isle
She gave surrender to abducting arms.
Not Theseus, who plucked her lips' first kiss,
Not Menelaus, lawful mate and spouse,
Such answering passion in her heart could rouse,
Or wake such tumult in her soul as this.
Let come what will, let Greece and Asia meet,
Let heroes die and kingdoms run with gore;
Let devastation spread from shore to shore –
Resplendent Helen finds her bondage sweet.
The whole world fights her battles, while she lies
Sunned in the fervour of young Paris' eyes.

ON THE ISLE OF RHODES

The battles ended, ardent Paris dead,
Of faithful Menelaus long bereft,
Time is the only suitor who is left:
Helen survives, with youth and beauty fled.
By hate remembered, but by love forgot,
Dethroned and driven from her high estate,
Unhappy Helen feels the lash of Fate
And knows at last an unloved woman's lot.
The Grecian marvel, and the Trojan joy,
The world's fair wonder, from her palace flies
The furies follow, and great Helen dies,
A death of horror, for the pride of Troy.

* * *

Yet Time, like Menelaus, all forgives.
Helen, immortal in her beauty, lives.

LAIS WHEN YOUNG

Lais when young, and all her charms in flower,
Lais, whose beauty was the fateful light
That led great ships to anchor in the night
And bring their priceless cargoes to her bower,
Lais yet found her cup of sweet turned sour.
Great Plato's pupil, from his lofty height,
Zenocrates, unmoved, had seen the white
Sweet wonder of her, and defied her power.

She snared the world in nets of subtle wiles:
The proud, the famed, all clamoured at her gate;
Dictators plead, inside her portico;
Wisdom sought madness, in her favouring smiles;
Now was she made the laughing-stock of fate:
One loosed her clinging arms, and bade her go.

LAIS WHEN OLD

Lais, when old and all her beauty gone,
Lais, the erstwhile courted pleasure queen,
Walked homeless through Corinth.

One mocked her mien –

One tossed her coins; she took them and passed on.

Down by the harbour sloped a terraced lawn,

Where fountains played; she paused to view the scene.

A marble palace stood in bowers of green

'Twas here of old she revelled till the dawn.

Through yonder portico her lovers came –

Hero and statesman, athlete, merchant, sage;

They flung the whole world's treasures at her feet

To buy her favour and exalt her shame.

* * *

She spat upon her dole of coins in rage

And faded like a phantom down the street.

EXISTENCE

You are here, and you are wanted,
 Though a waif upon life's stair;
Though the sunlit hours are haunted
 With the shadowy shapes of care.
Still the Great One, the All-Seeing
Called your spirit into being –
Gave you strength for any fate.
Since your life by Him was needed,
All your ways by Him are heeded –
 You can trust and you can wait.

You can wait to know the meaning
 Of the troubles sent your soul;
Of the chasms intervening
 'Twixt your purpose and your goal;
Of the sorrows and the trials,
Of the silence and denials,
 Ofttimes answering to your pleas;
Of the stinted sweets of pleasure,
And of pain's too generous measure –
 You can wait the WHY of these.

Forth from planet unto planet,
 You have gone, and you will go.
Space is vast, but we must span it;
 For life's purpose is TO KNOW.
Earth retains you but a minute,
Make the best of what lies in it;
 Light the pathway where you are.
There is nothing worth the doing
That will leave regret or rueing,
 As you speed from star to star.

You are part of the Beginning,
 You are parcel of To-day.
When He set His world to spinning
 You were flung upon your way.
When the system falls to pieces,
When this pulsing epoch ceases,
 When the IS becomes the WAS,
You will live, for you will enter
In the great Creative Centre,
 In the All-Enduring Cause.

HOLIDAY SONGS

I

Sailing away on a summer sea,
 Out of the bleak March weather;
Drifting away for a loaf and play,
 Just you and I together;
And it's good-bye worry and good-bye hurry
And never a care have we;
With the sea below and the sun above
And nothing to do but dream and love,
 Sailing away together.

Sailing away from the grim old town
 And tasks the town calls duty;
Sailing away from walls of grey
 To a land of bloom and beauty,
And it's good-bye to letters from our lessers and our betters,
To the cold world's smile or its frown.
We sail away on a sunny track
To find the summer and bring it back
 And love is our only duty.

II

Afloat on a sea of passion
 Without a compass or chart,
But the glow of your eye shows the sun is high,
 By the sextant of my heart.
I know we are nearing the tropics
 By the languor that round us lies,
And the smile on your mouth says the course is south
 And the port is Paradise.

We have left grey skies behind us,
 We sail under skies of blue;
You are off with me on lovers' sea,
 And I am away with you.
We have not a single sorrow,
 And I have but one fear –
That my lips may miss one offered kiss
 From the mouth that is smiling near.

There is no land of winter;
 There is no world of care;

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There is bloom and mirth all over the earth,
And love, love everywhere.
Our boat is the barque of Pleasure,
And whatever port we sight
The touch of your hand will make the land
The Harbour of Pure Delight.

ASTROLABIUS: (THE CHILD OF ABELARD AND HELOISE)

I wrenched from a passing comet in its flight,
By that great force of two mad hearts aflame,
A soul incarnate, back to earth you came,
To glow like star-dust for a little night.
Deep shadows hide you wholly from our sight;
The centuries leave nothing but your name,
Tinged with the lustre of a splendid shame,
That blazed oblivion with rebellious light.

The mighty passion that became your cause,
Still burns its lengthening path across the years;
We feel its raptures, and we see its tears
And ponder on its retributive laws.
Time keeps that deathless story ever new;
Yet finds no answer, when we ask of you.

II

At Argenteuil, I saw the lonely cell
Where Heloise dreamed through her broken rest,
That baby lips pulled at her undried breast.
It needed but my woman's heart to tell
Of those long vigils and the tears that fell
When aching arms reached out in fruitless quest,
As after flight, wings brood an empty nest.
(So well I know that sorrow, ah, so well.)

Across the centuries there comes no sound
Of that vast anguish; not one sigh or word
Or echo of the mother loss has stirred,
The sea of silence, lasting and profound.
Yet to each heart, that once has felt this grief,
Sad Memory restores Time's missing leaf.

III

But what of you? Who took the mother's place
When sweet expanding love its object sought?
Was there a voice to tell her tragic lot,
And did you ever look upon her face?
Was yours a cloistered seeking after grace?
Or in the flame of adolescent thought
Were Abelard's departed passions caught
To burn again in you and leave their trace?

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Conceived in nature's bold primordial way
 (As in their revolutions, suns create),
 You came to earth, a soul immaculate,
Baptized in fire, with some great part to play.
 What was that part, and wherefore hid from us,
 Immortal mystery, Astrolabius!

COMPLETION

When I shall meet God's generous dispensers
Of all the riches in the heavenly store,
Those lesser gods, who act as Recompensers
For loneliness and loss upon this shore,
Methinks abashed, and somewhat hesitating,
My soul its wish and longing will declare.
Lest they reply: 'Here are no bounties waiting:
We gave on earth, your portion and your share.'

Then shall I answer: 'Yea, I do remember
The many blessings to my life allowed;
My June was always longer than December,
My sun was always stronger than my cloud,
My joy was ever deeper than my sorrow,
My gain was ever greater than my loss,
My yesterday seemed less than my to-morrow,
The crown looked always larger than the cross.'

'I have known love, in all its radiant splendour,
It shone upon my pathway to the end.
I trod no road that did not bloom with tender
And fragrant blossoms, planted by some friend.
And those material things we call successes,
In modest measure, crowned my earthly lot.
Yet was there one sweet happiness that blesses
The life of woman, which to me came not.'

'I knew the hope of motherhood; a season
I felt a fluttering heart beat 'neath my own;
A little cry—then silence. For that reason
I dare, to you, my only wish make known.
The babe who grew to angelhood in heaven,
I never watched unfold from child to man.
And so I ask, that unto me be given
That motherhood, which was God's primal plan.'

'All womankind He meant to share its glories;
He meant us all to nurse our babes to rest.
To croon them songs, to tell them sleepy stories,
Else why the wonder of a woman's breast?
He must provide for all earth's cheated mothers
In His vast heavens of shining sphere on sphere,
And with my son, there must be many others –
My spirit children who will claim me here.'

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'Fair creatures by my loving thoughts created –
Too finely fashioned for a mortal birth –
Between the borders of two worlds they waited
Until they saw my spirit leave the earth.
In God's great nursery they must be waiting
To welcome me with many an infant wile.
Now let me go and satisfy this longing
To mother children for a little while.'

SLEEP'S TREACHERY

As the grey twilight, tiptoed down the deep
And shadowy valley, to the day's dark end,
She whom I thought my ever-faithful friend,
Fair-browed, calm-eyed and mother-bosomed Sleep,
Met me with smiles. 'Poor longing heart, I keep
Sweet joy for you,' she murmured. 'I will send
One whom you love, with your own soul to blend
In visions, as the night hours onward creep.'

I trusted her; and watched by starry beams,
I slumbered soundly, free from all alarms.
Then not my love, but one long banished came,
Led by false Sleep, down secret stairs of dreams
And clasped me, unresisting in fond arms.
Oh, treacherous sleep—to sell me to such shame!

ART VERSUS CUPID

[A room in a private house. A maiden sitting before a fire meditating.]

MAIDEN

Now have I fully fixed upon my part.
Good-bye to dreams; for me a life of art!
Beloved art! Oh, realm serene and fair,
Above the mean and sordid world of care,
Above earth's small ambitions and desires!
Art! art! the very word my soul inspires!
From foolish memories it sets me free.
Not what has been, but that which is to be
Absorbs me now. Adieu to vain regret!
The bow is tensely drawn—the target set.
[A knock at the door.]

MAID (aside)

The night is dark and chill; the hour is late.
(Aloud)
Who knocks upon my door?

A Voice Outside

'Tis I, your fate!

MAID

Thou dost deceive, not me, but thine own self.
My fate is not a wandering, vagrant elf.
My fate is here, within this throbbing heart
That beats alone for glory, and for art.

Voice

[Another knock at door.]

Pray, let me in; I am so faint and cold.
[Door is pushed ajar. Enter CUPID, who approaches the fire with
outstretched hands.]

MAID (indignantly)

Methinks thou art not faint, however cold,

But rather too courageous, and most bold;
Surprisingly ill-mannered, sir, and rude,
Without an invitation to intrude
Into my very presence.

CUPID (warming his hands)

But, you see,
Girls never mind a little chap like me.
They're always watching for me on the sly,
And hoping I will call.

MAID (haughtily)

Indeed, not I!
My heart has listened to a sweeter voice,
A clarion call that gives command—not choice.
And I have answered to that call, 'I come';
To other voices shall my ears be dumb.
To art alone I consecrate my life –
Art is my spouse, and I his willing wife.

CUPID (slowly, gazing in the grate)

Art is a sultan, and you must divide
His love with many another ill-fed bride.
Now I know one who worships you alone.

MAID (impatiently)

I will not listen! for the dice is thrown
And art has won me. On my brow some day
Shall rest the laurel wreath--

CUPID (sitting down and looking at MAID critically)

Just let me say
I think sweet orange blossoms under lace
Are better suited to your type of face.

MAID (ignoring interruption)

I yet shall stand before an audience
That listens as one mind, absorbed, intense,
And with my genius I shall rouse its cheers,
Still it to silence, soften it to tears,
Or wake its laughter. Oh, the play! the play!
The play's the thing! My boy, THE PLAY!!

CUPID (suddenly clapping his hands)

Oh, say!
I know a splendid role for you to take,
And one that always keeps the house awake –
And calls for pretty dressing. Oh, it's great!

MAID (excitedly)

Well, well, what is it? Wherefore make me wait?

CUPID (tapping his brow, thoughtfully)

How is it those lines run—oh, now I know;
You make a stately entrance—measured—slow—
To stirring music, then you kneel and say
Something about—to honour and obey –
For better and for worse—till death do part.

MAID (angrily)

Be still, you foolish boy; that is not ART.

CUPID (seriously)

She needs great skill who takes the role of wife
In God's stupendous drama human life.

MAID (suddenly becoming serious)

So I once thought! Oh, once my very soul
Was filled and thrilled with dreaming of that role.
Life seemed so wonderful; it held for me
No purpose, no ambition, but to be
Loving and loved. My highest thought of fame
Was some day bearing my dear lover's name.
Alone, I oftentimes uttered it aloud,
Or wrote it down, half timid, and all proud
To see myself lost utterly in him:
As some small star might joy in growing dim
When sinking in the sun; or as the dew,
Forgetting the brief little life it knew
In space, might on the ocean's bosom fall
And ask for nothing—only to give all.

CUPID (aside)

Now, THAT'S the talk—it's music to my ear
After that stuff on 'art' and a 'career.'
I hope she'll keep it up.

MAIDEN (continuing her reverie)

Again my dream
Shaped into changing pictures. I would seem
To see myself in beautiful array
Move down the aisle upon my wedding day;
And then I saw the modest living-room
With lighted lamp, and fragrant plants in bloom,
And books and sewing scattered all about,
And just we two alone.

CUPID (in glee aside)

There's not a doubt
I'll land her yet!

MAIDEN

My dream kaleidoscope
Changed still again, and framed love's dearest hope –
The trinity of home; and life was good
And all its deepest meaning understood.

[Sits lost in a dream. Behind scenes a voice sings a lullaby,
'Beautiful Land of Nod.' CUPID in ecstasy tiptoes about and clasps
his hands in delight.]

Another scene! a matron in her prime,
I saw myself glide peacefully with time
Into the quiet middle years, content
With simple joys the dear home circle lent.
My sons and daughters made my diadem;
I saw my happy youth renewed in them.
The pain of growing old lost all its sting,
For Love stood near—in Winter, as in Spring.

[CUPID tiptoes to door and makes a signal. MAIDEN starts up
dramatically.]

'Twas but a dream! I woke all suddenly.
The world had changed! And now life means to me
My art—the stage—excitement and the crowd –
The glare of many foot-lights—and the loud
Applause of men, as I cry in rage,
'Give me the dagger!' or creep down the stage
In that sleep-walking scene. Oh, art like mine
Will send the chills down every listener's spine!
And when I choose, salt tears shall freely flow
As in the moonlight I cry, 'Romeo! Romeo!
Oh, wherefore art thou, Romeo?'

Ay, 'tis done
My dream of home life.

ART VERSUS CUPID

CUPID

It is but begun.

MAIDEN

The heart but once can dream a dream so fair,
And so henceforth love thoughts I do forswear;
Since faith in love has crumbled to the dust,
In fame alone, I put my hope and trust.

[CUPID at the door beckons excitedly. Enter lover with outstretched arms.]

CUPID

Here's one who will explain yourself to you
And make that old sweet dream of love come true.
Fix up your foolish quarrel; time is brief –
So waste no more of it in doubt or grief.

[The lovers meet and embrace.]

CUPID (in doorway)

Warm lip to lip, and heart to beating heart,
The cast is made—My Lady has her part.

CURTAIN

THE REVOLT OF VASHTI

(FROM THE DRAMA OF MIZPAH)

AHASUERAS

Is this the way to greet thy loving spouse,
But now returned from scenes of blood and strife?
I pray thee raise thy veil and let me gaze
Upon that beauty which hath greater power
To conquer me than all the arts of war!

VASHTI

My beauty! Ay, my BEAUTY! I do hold,
In thy regard, no more an honoured place
Than yonder marble pillar, or the gold
And jewelled wine-cup which thy lips caress.
Thou wouldst degrade me in the people's sight!

AHASUERAS

Degrade thee, Vashti? Rather do I seek
To show my people who are gathered here
How, as the consort of so fair a queen,
I feel more pride than as the mighty king:
For there be many rulers on the earth,
But only ONE such queen. Come, raise thy veil!

VASHTI

Ay! only ONE such queen! A queen is one
Who shares her husband's greatness and his throne.
I am no more than yonder dancing girl
Who struts and smirks before a royal court!
But I will loose my veil and loose my tongue!
Now listen, sire--my master and my king;
And let thy princes and the court give ear!
'Tis time all heard how Vashti feels her shame.

AHASUERAS

Shame is no word to couple with thy name!
Shame and a spotless woman may not meet,
Even in a sentence. Choose another word.

VASHTI

Ay, SHAME, my lord—there is no synonym
That can give voice to my ignoble state.
To be a thing for eyes to gaze upon,
Yet held an outcast from thy heart and mind;
To hear my beauty praised but not my worth;
To come and go at Pleasure's beck and call,
While barred from Wisdom's conclaves! Think ye THAT
A noble calling for a noble dame?
Why, any concubine amongst thy train
Could play my royal part as well as I –
Were she as fair!

AHASUERAS

Queen Vashti, art thou MAD?
I would behead another did he dare
To so besmirch thee with comparison.

VASHTI (to the court)

Gaze now your fill! Behold Queen Vashti's eyes!
How large they gleam beneath her inch of brow!
How like a great white star, her splendid face
Shines through the midnight forest of her hair!
And see the crushed pomegranate of her mouth!
Observe her arms, her throat, her gleaming breasts,
Whereon the royal jewels rise and fall! –
And note the crescent curving of her hips,
And lovely limbs suggested 'neath her robes!
Gaze, gaze, I say, for these have made her queen!
She hath no mind, no heart, no dignity,
Worth royal recognition and regard;
But her fair body approbation meets
And whets the sated appetite of kings!
Now ye have seen what she was bid to show.
The queen hath played her part and begs to go.

AHASUERAS

Ay, Vashti, go and never more return!
Not only hast thou wronged thine own true lord,
And mocked and shamed me in the people's eyes,
But thou hast wronged all princes and all men
By thy pernicious and rebellious ways.
Queens act and subjects imitate. So let
Queen Vashti weigh her conduct and her words,
Or be no more called 'queen!'

VASHTI

THE REVOLT OF VASHTI

Poems of Progress

I was a princess ere I was a queen,
And worthy of a better fate than this!
There lies the crown that made me queen in name!
Here stands the woman—wife in name alone!
Now, no more queen—nor wife—but woman still –
Ay, and a woman strong enough to be
Her own avenger.

THE CHOOSING OF ESTHER

(FROM THE DRAMA OF MIZPAH)

AHASUERAS

Tell me thy name!

ESTHER

My name, great sire, is Esther.

AHASUERAS

So thou art Esther? Esther! 'tis a name
Breathed into sound as softly as a sigh.
A woman's name should melt upon the lips
Like Love's first kisses, and thy countenance
Is fit companion for so sweet a name!

ESTHER

Thou art most kind. I would my name and face
Were mine own making and not accident.
Then I might feel elated at thy praise,
Where now I feel confusion.

AHASUERAS

Thou hast wit
As well as beauty, Esther. Both are gems
That do embellish woman in man's sight.
Yet they are gems of second magnitude!
Dost THOU possess the one great perfect gem –
The matchless jewel of the world called LOVE?

ESTHER

Sire, in the heart of every woman dwells
That wondrous perfect gem!

AHASUERAS

Then, Esther, speak!
And tell me what is LOVE! I fain would know
Thy definition of that much-mouthed word,

By woman most employed—least understood.

ESTHER

What can a humble Jewish maiden know
That would instruct a warrior and a king?
I have but dreamed of love as maidens will
While thou hast known its fulness. All the world
Loves Great Ahasueras!

AHASUERAS

All the world
FEARS GREAT Ahasueras! Kings, my child,
Are rarely loved as anything but kings.
Love, as I see it in the court and camp,
Means seeking royal favour. I would know
How love is fashioned in a maiden's dreams.

ESTHER

Sire, love seeks nothing that kings can bestow.
Love is the king of all kings here below;
Love makes the monarch but a bashful boy,
Love makes the peasant monarch in his joy;
Love seeks not place, all places are the same,
When lighted by the radiance of love's flame.
Who deems proud love could fawn to power and splendour
Hath known not love, but some base-born pretender.

AHASUERAS

If this be love, I would know more of it.
Speak on, fair Esther! What is love beside?

ESTHER

Love is in all things, all things are in love.
Love is the earth, the sea, the skies above;
Love is the bird, the blossom, and the wind;
Love hath a million eyes, yet love is blind;
Love is a tempest, awful in its might;
Love is the silence of a moon-lit night;
Love is the aim of every human soul;
And he who hath not loved hath missed life's goal!

AHASUERAS

But tell me of thyself, of thine own dreams!
How wouldst thou love, and how be loved again?

ESTHER

Who most doth love thinks least of love's return;
She is content to feel the passion burn
In her own bosom, and its sacred fire
Consumes each selfish purpose and desire.
'Tis in the giving, love's best rapture lies,
Not in the counting of the things it buys.

AHASUERAS

Yet, is there not vast anguish and despair
In love that finds no answering word or smile?

ESTHER

So radiant is love, it lends a glow
To each dark sorrow and to every woe.
To love completely is to part with pain,
Nor is there mortal who can love in vain.
Love is its own reward, it pays full measure,
And in love's sharpest grief lies subtlest pleasure.

AHASUERAS

Methinks, a mighty warrior, lord or king
Must in thy fancy play the lover's part;
None else could wake such reverential thought.

ESTHER

When woman loves one born of lowly state,
Her thought gives crown and sceptre to her mate;
Yet be he king, or chief of some great clan,
She loves him but as woman loves a man.
Monarch or peasant, 'tis the same, I wis
When once she gives him love's surrendering kiss.

HONEYMOON SCENE

(FROM THE DRAMA OF MIZPAH)

AHASUERAS

What were thy thoughts, sweet Esther? Something passed
Across thy face, that for a moment veiled
Thy soul from mine, and left me desolate.
Thy thoughts were not of me?

ESTHER

Ay, ALL of thee!
I wondered, if in truth, thou wert content
With me--thy choice. Was there no other one
Of all who passed before thee at thy court
Whose memory pursues thee with regret?

AHASUERAS

I do confess I much regret that day
And wish I could relive it.

ESTHER

Oh! My lord!

AHASUERAS

Yea! I regret those hours I wasted on
The poor procession that preceded thee.
Hadst thou come first, then all the added wealth

Of one long day of loving thee were mine –
A boundless fortune squandered. Though I live
To three score years and ten, as I do hope,
In wedded love beside thee, that one day
Was filched from me and cannot be restored.

ESTHER

And then to think how frightened and abashed
I hung outside thy gates from early morn,
Not daring to go in and meet thine eyes,
Till pitying twilight clothed me in her veil,

And evening walked beside me to thy door.

AHASUERAS

So it was thou, fair thief, who stole that day,
And made me poorer, by—how many hours?

ESTHER

Full eight, I think. They seemed a hundred then,
And now time flies a hundred times too fast.

AHASUERAS

Then eight more kisses do I claim from thee,
This very hour—first tithes of many due.
I shall exact these payments as I will,
And if they be not ready on demand,
I'll lock thee in the prison of my arms,
Like this—and take them so—and so—and so!

ESTHER

But kings must think of other things than love
And live for other aims than happiness.
I would not drag thee from thy altitude
Of mighty ruler and great conqueror
To chain thee by my side.

AHASUERAS

Such slavery
Would please me better than to conquer earth
Without thee, Esther. I have stood on heights
And heard the cheers of multitudes below;
Have known the loneliness of being great.
Now, let me live and love thee, like a man,
Forgetting I am king –
I am content.

ESTHER

Content is not the pathway to great deeds.
As man, I hold thee higher than all kings;
As king, thou must stand higher than all men
In other eyes. Let no one say of me:
'She spoiled his greatness by her littleness;
She made a languorous lover of a king,
And silenced war-cries on commanding lips –
With honeyed kisses; made her woman's arms
Preferred to armour, and her couch to tents,

HONEYMOON SCENE

Until the kingdom, with no guiding hand,
Plunged down to ruin.'

AHASUERAS

Thou wouldst have me go –
So soon thy heart hath wearied?

ESTHER

My heart is bursting with its love for thee!
Canst thou not feel its fervour? But great men
Need wiser guidance than a woman's heart.
My pride in thee is equal to my love,
And I would have thee greater than thou art –
Ay, greater than all other men on earth –
Though forced long years to feed my hungry heart
On food of memories and wine of tears,
Wert thou but winning glory and renown.

AHASUERAS

Thou art most noble, Esther; thou art fit
To be the consort of a king of kings.
But I have chewed upon ambition's husks
And starved for love through all my manhood's years;
And now the mighty gods have seen it fit
To spread love's banquet and to name thee host,
May I not feast my fill? O Esther, take
The tempting nectar of those lips away
And give me wine to rouse the brute in me,
To make me thirst for blood instead of love!
Wine! Wine! I say!

ESTHER

Ahasueras, wait!
Methinks good music is wine turned to sound.
Here comes thy minstrel with an offering
Pressed from the ripened fruit of my fond heart.
Mine own the words and mine the melody
And may it linger longer in thine ear
Than on thy lip would stay the taste of wine.
Sing on!

MINSTREL

When from the field returning,
Love is a warrior's yearning,
Love in his heart is burning,
Love is his dream.

HONEYMOON SCENE

Talk not to him of glory,
Speak not of faces gory,
Sing of love's tender story,
 Make it thy theme.
Sing of his lady's tresses,
Sing of the smile that blesses,
Sing of the sweet caresses,
 And yet again
Sing of fair children's faces,
Sing of the dear home graces,
Sing till the vacant places,
 Ring with thy strain.
Yet as the days go speeding,
Shall he arise unheeding
Love songs or words of pleading,
 Strong in his might!
Helmet and armour wearing,
Hies he to deeds of daring,
Forth to the battle faring,
 Back to the fight.
Sing now of ranks contending,
Sing of loud voices blending,
Sing of great warriors sending
 Death to their foes!
Sing of war missiles humming,
Strike into martial drumming,
Sing of great victory coming,
 As forth he goes.
Back to the battle faring,
Back into deeds of daring,
 Back to the fight.

AHASUERAS

No less a lover but a greater man,
A better warrior and a nobler king,
I will be from this hour for thy dear sake.

THE COST

God finished woman in the twilight hour
And said, 'To-morrow thou shalt find thy place:
Man's complement, the mother of the race –
 With love the motive power –
 The one compelling power.'

All night she dreamed and wondered. With the light
Her lover came—and then she understood
The purpose of her being. Life was good
 And all the world seemed right –
 And nothing was, but right.

She had no wish for any wider sway:
By all the questions of the world unvexed,
Supremely loving and superbly sexed,
 She passed upon her way –
 Her feminine fair way.

But God neglected, when He fashioned man,
To fuse the molten splendour of his mind
With that sixth sense He gave to womankind.
 And so He marred His plan –
 Ay, marred His own great plan.

She asked so little, and so much she gave,
That man grew selfish: and she soon became,
To God's great sorrow and the whole world's shame,
 Man's sweet and patient slave –
 His uncomplaining slave.

Yet in the nights (oh! nights so dark and long)
She clasped her little children to her breast
And wept. And in her anguish of unrest
 She thought upon her wrong;
 She knew how great her wrong.

And one sad hour, she said unto her heart,
'Since thou art cause of all my bitter pain,
I bid thee abdicate the throne: let brain
 Rule now, and do his part –
 His masterful, strong part.'

She wept no more. By new ambition stirred
Her ways led out, to regions strange and vast.

Poems of Progress

Men stood aside and watched, dismayed, aghast,
And all the world demurred –
Misjudged her, and demurred.

Still on and up, from sphere to widening sphere,
Till thorny paths bloomed with the rose of fame.
Who once demurred, now followed with acclaim:
The hiss died in the cheer –
The loud applauding cheer.

She stood triumphant in that radiant hour,
Man's mental equal, and competitor.
But ah! the cost! from out the heart of her
Had gone love's motive power –
Love's all-compelling power.

THE VOICE

I dreamed a Voice, of one God—authorised,
Cried loudly thro' the world, 'Disarm! Disarm!'
And there was consternation in the camps;
And men who strutted under braid and lace
Beat on their medalled breasts, and wailed, 'Undone!'
The word was echoed from a thousand hills,
And shop and mill, and factory and forge,
Where throve the awful industries of death,
Hushed into silence. Scrawled upon the doors,
The passer read, 'Peace bids her children starve.'
But foolish women clasped their little sons
And wept for joy, not reasoning like men.

Again the Voice commanded: 'Now go forth
And build a world for Progress and for Peace.
This work has waited since the earth was shaped;
But men were fighting, and they could not toil.
The needs of life outnumber needs of death.
Leave death with God. Go forth, I say, and build.'

And then a sudden, comprehensive joy
Shone in the eyes of men; and one who thought
Only of conquests and of victories
Woke from his gloomy reverie and cried,
'Ay, come and build! I challenge all to try.
And I will make a world more beautiful
Than Eden was before the serpent came.'
And like a running flame on western wilds,
Ambition spread from mind to listening mind,
And lo! the looms were busy once again,
And all the earth resounded with men's toil.

Vast palaces of Science graced the world;
Their banquet tables spread with feasts of truth
For all who hungered. Music kissed the air,
Once rent with boom of cannons. Statues gleamed
From wooded ways, where ambushed armies hid
In times of old. The sea and air were gay
With shining sails that soared from land to land.
A universal language of the world
Made nations kin, and poverty was known

But as a word marked 'obsolete,' like war.
The arts were kindled with celestial fire;

Poems of Progress

New poets sang so Homer's fame grew dim;
And brush and chisel gave the wondering race
Sublimer treasures than old Greece displayed.
Men differed still; fierce argument arose,
For men are human in this human sphere;
But unarmed Arbitration stood between
And Reason settled in a hundred hours
What War disputed for a hundred years.

Oh, that a Voice, of one God—authorised
Might cry to all mankind, Disarm! Disarm!

GOD'S ANSWER

Once in a time of trouble and of care
I dreamed I talked with God about my pain;
With sleepland courage, daring to complain
Of what I deemed ungracious and unfair.
'Lord, I have grovelled on my knees in prayer
Hour after hour,' I cried; 'yet all in vain;
No hand leads up to heights I would attain,
No path is shown me out of my despair.'

Then answered God: 'Three things I gave to thee –
Clear brain, brave will, and strength of mind and heart,
All implements divine, to shape the way.
Why shift the burden of thy toil on Me?
Till to the utmost he has done his part
With all his might, let no man DARE to pray.'

THE EDICT OF THE SEX

Two thousand years had passed since Christ was born,
When suddenly there rose a mighty host
Of women, sweeping to a central goal
As many rivers sweep on to the sea.
They came from mountains, valleys, and from coasts,
And from all lands, all nations, and all ranks,
Speaking all languages, but thinking one.
And that one language—Peace.

'Listen,' they said,
And straightway was there silence on the earth,
For men were dumb with wonder and surprise.
'Listen, O mighty masters of the world,
And hear the edict of all womankind:
Since Christ His new commandment gave to men,
LOVE ONE ANOTHER, full two thousand years
Have passed away, yet earth is red with blood.
The strong male rulers of the world proclaim
Their weakness, when we ask that war shall cease.
Now will the poor weak women of the world
Proclaim their strength, and say that war shall end.
Hear, then, our edict: Never from this day
Will any woman on the crust of earth
Mother a warrior. We have sworn the oath
And will go barren to the waiting tomb
Rather than breed strong sons at war's behest,
Or bring fair daughters into life, to bear
The pains of travail, for no end but war.
Ay! let the race die out for lack of babes
Better a dying race than endless wars!
Better a silent world than noise of guns
And clash of armies.

'Long we asked for peace,
And oft you promised—but to fight again.
At last you told us, war must ever be
While men existed, laughing at our plea
For the disarmament of all mankind.
Then in our hearts flamed such a mad desire
For peace on earth, as lights the world at times
With some great conflagration; and it spread
From distant land to land, from sea to sea,
Until all women thought as with one mind
And spoke as with one voice; and now behold!

Poems of Progress

The great Crusading Syndicate of Peace,
Filling all space with one supreme resolve.
Give us, O men, your word that war shall end:
Disarm the world, and we will give you sons –
Sons to construct, and daughters to adorn
A beautiful new earth, where there shall be
Fewer and finer people, opulence
And opportunity and peace for all.
Until you promise peace no shrill birth-cry
Shall sound again upon the aging earth.
We wait your answer.'

And the world was still
While men considered.

THE WORLD-CHILD

At times I am the mother of the world;
And mine seem all its sorrows, and its fears.
That rose, which in each mother-heart is curled,
 The rose of pity, opens with my tears,
And, waking in the night, I lie and hark
 To the lone sobbing, and the wild alarms,
Of my World-child, a wailing in the dark:
 The child I fain would shelter in my arms.
I call to it (as from another room
 A mother calls, what time she cannot go):
'Sleep well, dear world; Love hides behind this gloom.
 There is no need for wakefulness or woe,
The long, long night is almost past and gone,
The day is near.' And yet the world weeps on.

Again I follow it, throughout the day.
 With anxious eyes I see it trip and fall,
And hurt itself in many a foolish way:
 Childlike, unheeding warning word or call.
I see it grasp, and grasping, break the toys
 It cried to own, then toss them on the floor
And, breathless, hurry after fancied joys
 That cease to please, when added to its store.
I see the lacerations on its hands,
 Made by forbidden tools; but when it weeps,
I also weep, as one who understands;
 And having been a child, the memory keeps.
Ah, my poor world, however wrong thy part,
Still is there pity in my mother-heart.

THE HEIGHTS

I cried, 'Dear Angel, lead me to the heights,
And spur me to the top.'
The Angel answered, 'Stop
And set thy house in order; make it fair
For absent ones who may be speeding there.
Then will we talk of heights.'

I put my house in order. 'Now lead on!'
The Angel said, 'Not yet;
Thy garden is beset
By thorns and tares; go weed it, so all those
Who come to gaze may find the unvexed rose;
Then will we journey on.'

I weeded well my garden. 'All is done.'
The Angel shook his head.
'A beggar stands,' he said,
'Outside thy gates; till thou hast given heed
And soothed his sorrow, and supplied his need,
Say not that all is done.'

The beggar left me singing. 'Now at last –
At last the path is clear.'
'Nay, there is one draws near
Who seeks, like thee, the difficult highway.
He lacks thy courage; cheer him through the day
Then will we cry, "At last!"'

I helped my weaker brother. 'Now the heights;
Oh, Guide me, Angel, guide!'
The Presence at my side,
With radiant face, said, 'Look, where are we now?'
And lo! we stood upon the mountain's brow –
The heights, the shining heights!

ON SEEING 'THE HOUSE OF JULIA' AT HERCULANEUM

Not great Vesuvius, in all his ire,
Nor all the centuries, could hide your shame.
There is the little window where you came,
With eyes that woke the demon of desire,
And lips like rose leaves, fashioned out of fire;
 And from the lava leaps the molten flame
 Of your old sins. The walls cry out your name –
Your face seems rising from the funeral pyre.

There must have dwelt, within your fated town,
 Full many a virtuous dame, and noble wife
 Who made your beauty seem as star to sun;
How strange the centuries have handed down
 Your name, fair Julia, of immoral life,
 And left the others to oblivion.

A PRAYER

Master of sweet and loving lore,
Give us the open mind
To know religion means no more,
No less, than being kind.

Give us the comprehensive sight
That sees another's need;
And let our aim to set things right
Prove God inspired our creed.

Give us the soul to know our kin
That dwell in flock and herd,
The voice to fight man's shameful sin
Against the beast and bird.

Give us a heart with love so fraught
For all created things,
That even our unspoken thought
Bears healing on its wings.

Give us religion that will cope
With life's colossal woes,
And turn a radiant face of hope
On troops of pigmy foes.

Give us the mastery of our fate
In thoughts so warm and white,
They stamp upon the brows of hate
Love's glorious seal of light.

Give us the strong, courageous faith
That makes of pain a friend,
And calls the secret word of death
'Beginning,' and not 'end.'

WHAT IS RIGHT LIVING?

What is right living? Just to do your best
When worst seems easier. To bear the ills
Of daily life with patient cheerfulness
Nor waste dear time recounting them.

To talk

Of hopeful things when doubt is in the air.
To count your blessings often, giving thanks,
And to accept your sorrows silently,
Nor question why you suffer. To accept
The whole of life as one perfected plan,
And welcome each event as part of it.
To work, and love your work; to trust, to pray
For larger usefulness and clearer sight.
This is right living, pleasing in God's eyes,
Though you be heathen, heretic or Jew.

JUSTICE

However inexplicable may seem
Event and circumstance upon this earth,
Though favours fall on those whom none esteem,
And insult and indifference greet worth;
Though poverty repays the life of toil,
And riches spring where idle feet have trod,
And storms lay waste the patiently tilled soil –
Yet Justice sways the universe of God.

As undisturbed the stately stars remain
Beyond the glare of day's obscuring light,
So Justice dwells, though mortal eyes in vain
Seek it persistently by reason's sight.
But when, once freed, the illumined soul looks out.
Its cry will be, 'O God, how could I doubt!'

TIME'S GAZE

Time looked me in the eyes while passing by
The milestone of the year. That piercing gaze
Was both an accusation and reproach.
No speech was needed. In a sorrowing look
More meaning lies than in complaining words,
And silence hurts as keenly as reproof.

Oh, opulent, kind giver of rich hours,
How have I used thy benefits! As babes
Unstring a necklace, laughing at the sound
Of priceless jewels dropping one by one,
So have I laughed while precious moments rolled
Into the hidden corners of the past.
And I have let large opportunities
For high endeavour move unheeded by,
While little joys and cares absorbed my strength.

And yet, dear Time, set to my credit this:
NOT ONE WHITE HOUR HAVE I MADE BLACK WITH HATE,
NOR WISHED ONE LIVING CREATURE AUGHT BUT GOOD.
Be patient with me. Though the sun slants west,
The day has not yet finished, and I feel
Necessity for action and resolve
Bear in upon my consciousness. I know
The earth's eternal need of earnest souls,
And the great hunger of the world for Love.
I know the goal to high achievement lies
Through the dull pathway of self-conquest first;
And on the stairs of little duties done
We climb to joys that stand thy test. O Time,
Be patient with me, and another day,
Perchance, in passing by, thine eyes may smile.

THE WORKER AND THE WORK

In what I do I note the marring flaw,
The imperfections of the work I see;
Nor am I one who rather DO than BE,
Since its reversal is Creation's law.

Nay, since there lies a better and a worse,
A lesser and a larger, in men's view,
I would be better than the thing I do,
As God is greater than His universe.

He shaped Himself before He shaped one world:
A million eons, toiling day and night,
He built Himself to majesty and might,
Before the planets into space were hurled.

And when Creation's early work was done,
What crude beginnings out of chaos came –
A formless nebula, a wavering flame,
An errant comet, a voracious sun.

And, still unable to perfect His plan,
What awful creatures at His touch found birth –
Those protoplasmic monsters of the earth,
That owned the world before He fashioned Man.

And now, behold the poor unfinished state
Of this, His latest masterpiece! Then why,
Seeing the flaws in my own work, should I
Be troubled that no voice proclaims it great?

Before me lie the cycling rounds of years;
With this small earth will die the thing I do:
The thing I am, goes journeying onward through
A million lives, upon a million spheres.

My work I build, as best I can and may,
Knowing all mortal effort ends in dust.
I build myself, not as I may, but must,
Knowing, or good, or ill, that self must stay.

Along the ages, out, and on, afar,
Its journey leads, and must perforce be made.
Likewise its choice, with things of shame and shade,
Or up the path of light, from star to star.

Poems of Progress

When all these solar systems shall disperse,
Perchance this labour, and this self-control,
May find reward; and my completed soul
Will fling in space, a little universe.

ART THOU ALIVE?

Art thou alive? Nay, not too soon reply,
Tho' hand, and foot, and lip, and ear, and eye,
Respond, and do thy bidding yet may be
Grim death has done his direst work with thee.
Life, as God gives it, is a thing apart
From active body and from beating heart.
It is the vital spark, the unseen fire,
That moves the mind to reason and aspire;
It is the force that bids emotion roll,
In mighty billows from the surging soul.

It is the light that grows from hour to hour,
And floods the brain with consciousness of power;
It is the spirit dominating all,
And reaching God with its imperious call,
Until the shining glory of His face
Illuminates each sorrowful, dark place;

It is the truth that sets the bondsman free,
Knowing he will be what he wills to be.
With its unburied dead the earth is sad.
Art thou alive? proclaim it and be glad.
Perchance the dead may hear thee and arise,
Knowing they live, and HERE is Paradise.

TO-DAY

I love this age of energy and force,
Expectantly I greet each pregnant hour;
Emerging from the all-creative source,
Supreme with promise, imminent with power.
The strident whistle and the clanging bell,
The noise of gongs, the rush of motored things
Are but the prophet voices which foretell
A time when thought may use unfettered wings.

Too long the drudgery of earth has been
A barrier 'twixt man and his own mind.
Remove the stone, and lo! the Christ within;
For He is there, and who so seeks shall find.
The Great Inventor is the Modern Priest.
He paves the pathway to a higher goal.
Once from the grind of endless toil released
Man will explore the kingdom of his soul.

And all this restless rush, this strain and strife,
This noise and glare is but the fanfarade
That ushers in the more majestic life
Where faith shall walk with science, unafraid.
I feel the strong vibrations of the earth,
I sense the coming of an hour sublime,
And bless the star that watched above my birth
And let me live in this important time.

THE LADDER

Unto each mortal who comes to earth
A ladder is given by God, at birth,
And up this ladder the soul must go,
Step by step, from the valley below;
Step by step, to the centre of space,
On this ladder of lives, to the Starting Place.

In time departed (which yet endures)
I shaped my ladder, and you shaped yours.
Whatever they are—they are what we made:
A ladder of light, or a ladder of shade,
A ladder of love, or a hateful thing,
A ladder of strength, or a wavering string.
A ladder of gold, or a ladder of straw,
Each is the ladder of righteous law.

We flung them away at the call of death,
We took them again with the next life breath.
For a keeper stands by the great birth gates;
As each soul passes, its ladder waits.
Though mine be narrow, and yours be broad,
On my ladder alone can I climb to God.
On your ladder alone can your feet ascend,
For none may borrow, and none may lend.

If toil and trouble and pain are found,
Twisted and corded, to form each round,
If rusted iron or mouldering wood
Is the fragile frame, you must make it good.
You must build it over and fashion it strong,
Though the task be hard as your life is long;
For up this ladder the pathway leads
To earthly pleasures and spirit needs;
And all that may come in another way
Shall be but illusion, and will not stay.

In useless effort, then, waste no time;
Rebuild your ladder, and climb and climb.

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Who is a Christian in this Christian land
Of many churches and of lofty spires?
Not he who sits in soft upholstered pews
Bought by the profits of unholy greed,
And looks devotion, while he thinks of gain.
Not he who sends petitions from the lips
That lie to-morrow in the street and mart.
Not he who fattens on another's toil,
And flings his unearned riches to the poor,
Or aids the heathen with a lessened wage,
And builds cathedrals with an increased rent.

Christ, with Thy great, sweet, simple creed of love,
How must Thou weary of Earth's 'Christian' clans,
Who preach salvation through Thy saving blood
While planning slaughter of their fellow men.
Who is a Christian? It is one whose life
Is built on love, on kindness and on faith;
Who holds his brother as his other self;
Who toils for justice, equity and PEACE,
And hides no aim or purpose in his heart
That will not chord with universal good.

Though he be pagan, heretic or Jew,
That man is Christian and beloved of Christ.

THE GOAL

All your wonderful inventions,
All your houses vast and tall,
All your great gun-fronted vessels,
Every fort and every wall,
With the passing of the ages,
They shall pass and they shall fall.

As you sit among the idols
That your avarice gave birth,
As you count the hoarded treasures
That you think of priceless worth,
Time is digging tombs to hide them
In the bosom of the earth.

There shall come a great convulsion
Or a rushing tidal wave,
Or a sound of mighty thunders
From a subterranean cave,
And a boasting world's possessions
Shall be buried in one grave.

From the Centuries of Silence
We are bringing back again
Buried vase and bust and column
And the gods they worshipped then,
In the strange unmentioned cities
Built by prehistoric men.

Did they steal, and lie, and slaughter?
Did they steep their souls in shame?
Did they sell eternal virtues
Just to win a passing fame?
Did they give the gold of honour
For the tinsel of a name?

We are hurrying all together
Toward the silence and the night;
There is nothing worth the seeking
But the sun-kissed moral height –
There is nothing worth the doing
But the doing of the RIGHT.

THE SPUR

I asked the rock beside the road what joy existence lent.
It answered, 'For a million years my heart has been content.'

I asked the truffle-seeking swine, as rooting by he went,
'What is the keynote of your life?' He grunted out, 'Content.'

I asked a slave, who toiled and sung, just what his singing meant.
He plodded on his changeless way, and said, 'I am content.'

I asked a plutocrat of greed, on what his thoughts were bent.
He chinked the silver in his purse, and said, 'I am content.'

I asked the mighty forest tree from whence its force was sent.
Its thousand branches spoke as one, and said, 'From discontent.'

I asked the message speeding on, by what great law was rent
God's secret from the waves of space. It said, 'From discontent.'

I asked the marble, where the works of God and man were blent,
What brought the statue from the block. It answered, 'Discontent.'

I asked an Angel, looking down on earth with gaze intent,
How man should rise to larger growth. Quoth he, 'Through
discontent.'

AWAKENED!

Slowly the People waken; they have been,
Like weary soldiers, sleeping in their tents,
While traitors tiptoed through the silent camp
Intent on plunder. Suddenly a sound –
A careless movement of too bold a thief –
Starts one dull sleeper; then another stirs,
A third cries out a warning, and at last
The people are awake! Oh, when as one
The many rise, united and alert,
With Justice for their motto, they reflect
The mighty force of God's Omnipotence.
And nothing stands before them. Lusty Greed,
Tyrannical Corruption long in power,
And smirking Cant (whose right hand robs and slays
So that the left may dower Church and School),
Monopoly, whose mandate took from Toil
The Mother Earth, that Idleness might loll
And breed the Monster of Colossal Wealth –
All these must fall before the gathering Force
Of public indignation. That old strife
Which marks the progress of each century,
The war of Right with Might, is on once more,
And shame to him who does not take his stand.

This is the weightiest moment of all time,
And on the issues of the present hour
A nation's honour and a country's peace,
A People's future, ay, a World's, depends.

Until the vital questions of the day
Are solved and settled, and the spendthrift thieves
Who rob the coffers of the saving poor
Are led from fashion's feasts to prison fare,
And taught the saving grace of honest work –
Till Labour claims the privilege of toil
And toil the proceeds of its labour shares –
Let no man sleep, let no man dare to sleep!

SHADOWS

I am sorry in the gladness
Of the joys that crown my days,
For the souls that sit in sadness
Or walk uninviting ways.

On the radiance of my labour
That a loving fate bestowed,
Falls the shadow of my neighbour,
Crushed beneath a thankless load.

As the canticle of pleasure
From my lovelit altar rolls,
There is one discordant measure,
As I think of homeless souls.

And I know that grim old story,
Preached from pulpits, is not so,
For no God could sit in glory
And see sinners writhe below.

In that great eternal Centre
Where all human life has birth,
Boundless love and pity enter
And flow downward to the earth.

And all souls in sin or sorrow
Are but passing through the night,
And I know on some to-morrow
God will love them into light.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT

'Let go the Cross'--GERTRUDE RUNSHON.

I heard a strange voice in the distance calling
As from a star an echo might be falling.

It spoke four syllables, concise and brief,
Charged with a God-sent message of relief:

Let go the cross! Oh, you who cling to sorrow,
Hark to the new command and comfort borrow.

Even as the Master left His cross below
And rose to Paradise, let go, let go.

Forget your wrongs, your troubles and your losses,
For with the tools of thought we build our crosses.

Forget your griefs, all grudges and all fear
And enter Paradise--its gates are near.

Heaven is a realm by loving souls created,
And hell was fashioned by the hearts that hated.

Love, hope and trust; believe all joys are yours,
Life pays the soul whose confidence endures,

The blows of adverse fate, by larger pleasures,
As after storms the soil yields fuller measures.

Let go the cross; roll self--the stone--away
And dwell with Love in Paradise to-day.

SUMMER DREAMS

When the Summer sun is shining,
And the green things push and grow,
Oft my heart runs over measure,
With its flowing fount of pleasure,
As I feel the sea winds blow;
Ah, then life is good, I know.

And I think of sweet birds building,
And of children fair and free;
And of glowing sun-kissed meadows,
And of tender twilight shadows,
And of boats upon the sea.
Oh, then life seems good to me!

Then unbidden and unwanted,
Come the darker, sadder sights;
City shop and stifling alley,
Where misfortune's children rally;
And the hot crime-breeding nights,
And the dearth of God's delights.

And I think of narrow prisons
Where unhappy songbirds dwell,
And of cruel pens and cages
Where some captured wild thing rages
Like a madman in his cell,
In the Zoo, the wild beasts' hell.

And I long to lift the burden
Of man's selfishness and sin;
And to open wide earth's treasures
Of God's storehouse, full of pleasures,
For my dumb and human kin,
And to ask the whole world in.

THE BREAKING OF CHAINS

Between the ringing of bells and the musical clang of chimes
I hear a sound like the breaking of chains, all through these
Christmas times.
For the thought of the world is waking out of a slumber deep and
long,
And the race is beginning to understand how Right can master Wrong.

And the eyes of the world are opening wide, and great are the truths
they see;
And the heart of the world is singing a song, and its burden is 'Be
free!'
Now the thought of the world and the wish of the world and the song
of the world will make
A force so strong that the fetters forged for a million years must
break.

Fetters of superstitious fear have bound the race to creeds
That hindered the upward march of man to the larger faith he needs.
Fetters of greed and pride have made the race bow down to kings;
But the pompous creed and the costly throne must yield to simpler
things.

The thought of the world has climbed above old paths for centuries
trod;
And cloth and crown no longer mean the 'vested power of God.'
The race no longer bends beneath the weight of Adam's sin,
But stands erect and knows itself the Maker's first of kin.

And the need of the world and the wish of the world and the song of
the world I hear,
All through the clanging and clashing of bells, this Christmas time
o' the year;
And I hear a sound like the breaking of chains, and it seems to say
to me,
In the voice of One who spoke of old, 'The Truth shall make men
free.'

DECEMBER

Upon December's windy portico
The Old Year stood, and looked out where the sun
Went wading down the West, through drifting clouds.
'I, too, shall sink full soon to rest,' he sighed,
'And follow where my children's feet have trod;
Brave January, beauteous May and June,
My lovely daughters, and my valiant sons,
All, all save one, have left me for that bourne
Men call the Past. It seems but yesterday
I saw fair August, laughing with the Sea,
Snaring the Earth with her seductive wiles,
And making conquest, even of the Sun.
Yet has she gone, and left me here to mourn.'
Then spake December, from an open door:
'Father, the night grows cold; come in and rest.
Sit with me here beside this glowing grate;
I have not left thee; thou art not alone;
My house is thine; all warm with love and light,
And bright with holly and with cedar sweet.
My stalwart arm is thine to lean upon;
The feast is spread, I only wait for thee;
God smiles upon thy dead, smile thou on me.'
Then through the open door the Old Year passed
And darkness settled on the outer world.

'THE WAY'

However certain of the way thou art,
Take not the self-appointed leader's part.
Follow no man, and by no man be led,
And no man lead. AWAKE, and go ahead.
Thy path, though leading straight unto the goal
Might prove confusing to another soul.
The goal is central; but from east, and west,
And north, and south, we set out on the quest;
From lofty mountains, and from valleys low:—
How could all find one common way to go?

Lord Buddha to the wilderness was brought.
Lord Jesus to the Cross. And yet, think not
By solitude, or cross, thou canst achieve,
Lest in thine own true Self thou dost believe.
Know thou art One, with life's Almighty Source,
Then are thy feet set on the certain Course.

Nor does it matter if thou feast, or fast,
Or what thy creed—-or where thy lot is cast;
In halls of pleasure or in crowded mart,
In city streets, or from all men apart –
Thy path leads to the Light; and peace and power
Shall be thy portion, growing hour by hour.
Follow no man, and by no man be led.
And no man lead. But KNOW and go ahead.

THE LEADER TO BE

What shall the leader be in that great day
When we who sleep and dream that we are slaves
Shall wake and know that Liberty is ours?
Mark well that word—not yours, not mine, but ours.
For through the mingling of the separate streams
Of individual protest and desire,
In one united sea of purpose, lies
The course to Freedom.

When Progression takes
Her undisputed right of way, and sinks
The old traditions and conventions where
They may not rise, what shall the leader be?

No mighty warrior skilled in crafts of war,
Sowing earth's fertile furrows with dead men
And staining crimson God's cerulean sea,
To prove his prowess to a shuddering world.

Nor yet a monarch with a silly crown
Perched on an empty head, an in-bred heir
To senseless titles and anemic blood.

No ruler, purchased by the perjured votes
Of striving demagogues whose god is gold.
Not one of these shall lead to Liberty.
The weakness of the world cries out for strength.
The sorrow of the world cries out for hope.
Its suffering cries for kindness.

He who leads
Must then be strong and hopeful as the dawn
That rises unafraid and full of joy
Above the blackness of the darkest night.
He must be kind to every living thing;
Kind as the Krishna, Buddha and the Christ,
And full of love for all created life.
Oh, not in war shall his great prowess lie,
Nor shall he find his pleasure in the chase.
Too great for slaughter, friend of man and beast,
Touching the borders of the Unseen Realms
And bringing down to earth their mystic fires
To light our troubled pathways, wise and kind
And human to the core, so shall he be,

The coming leader of the coming time.

THE GREATER LOVE

Hear thou my prayer, great God of opulence;
Give me no blessings, save as recompense
For blessings which I lovingly bestow
On needy stranger or on suffering foe.
If Wealth, by chance, should on my path appear,
Let Wisdom and Benevolence stand near,
And Charity within my portal wait,
To guard me from acquaintance intimate.

Yet in this intricate great art of living
Guide me away from misdirected giving,
And show me how to spur the laggard soul
To strive alone once more to gain the goal.

Repay my worldly efforts to attain
Only as I develop heart and brain;
Nor brand me with the 'Dollar Sign' above
A bosom void of sympathy and love.

If on the carrying winds my name be blown
To any land or time beyond my own,
Let it not be as one who gained the day
By crowding others from the chosen way;
Rather as one who missed the highest place
Pausing to cheer spent runners in the race.
To do—to have—is lesser than to BE:
The greater boon I ask, dear God, from Thee.

THANK GOD FOR LIFE

Thank God for life, in such an age as this,
Rich with the promises of better things.
Thank God for being part of this great nation's heart,
Whose strong pulsations are not ruled by kings.

Our thanks for fearless and protesting speech
When cloven hoofs show 'neath the robes of state.
For us no servile song of 'Kings can do no wrong.'
Not royal birth, but worth, makes rulers great.

Thank God for peace within our border lands,
And for the love of peace within each soul.
Who thinks on peace has wrought, mosaic-squares of thought
In the foundation of our future goal.

Our thanks for love, and knowledge of love's laws.
Love is a greater power than vested might.
Love is the central source of all enduring force.
Love is the law that sets the whole world right.

Our thanks for that increasing torch of light
The tireless hand of science holds abroad.
And may its growing blaze shine on all hidden ways
Till man beholds the silhouette of God.

TIME ENOUGH

I know it is early morning,
And hope is calling aloud,
And your heart is afire with Youth's desire
To hurry along with the crowd.
But linger a bit by the roadside,
And lend a hand by the way,
'Tis a curious fact that a generous act
Brings leisure and luck to a day.

I know it is only the noontime –
There is chance enough to be kind;
But the hours run fast when noon has passed,
And the shadows are close behind.
So think while the light is shining,
And act ere the set of the sun,
For the sorriest woe that a soul can know
Is to think what it might have done.

I know it is almost evening,
But the twilight hour is long.
If you listen and heed each cry of need
You can right full many a wrong.
For when we have finished the journey
We will all look back and say:
'On life's long mile there was nothing worth while
But the good we did by the way.'

NEW YEAR'S DAY

When with clanging and with ringing
Comes the year's initial day,
I can feel the rhythmic swinging
Of the world upon its way;
And though Right still wears a fetter,
And though Justice still is blind,
Time's beyond is always better
Than the paths he leaves behind.

In our eons of existence,
As we circle through the night,
We annihilate the distance
'Twixt the darkness and the light.
From beginnings crude and lowly,
Round and round our souls have trod
Through the circles, winding slowly
Up to knowledge and to God.

With each century departed
Some old evil found a tomb,
Some old truth was newly started
In propitious soil to bloom.
With each epoch some condition
That has handicapped the race
(Worn-out creed or superstition)
Unto knowledge yields its place.

Though in folly and in blindness
And in sorrow still we grope,
Yet in man's increasing kindness
Lies the world's stupendous hope;
For our darkest hour of errors
Is as radiant as the dawn,
Set beside the awful terrors
Of the ages that have gone.

And above the sad world's sobbing,
And the strife of clan with clan,
I can hear the mighty throbbing
Of the heart of God in man;
And a voice chants through the chiming
Of the bells, and seems to say,
We are climbing, we are climbing,
As we circle on our way.

LIFE IS A PRIVILEGE

Life is a privilege. Its youthful days
Shine with the radiance of continuous Mays.
To live, to breathe, to wonder and desire,
To feed with dreams the heart's perpetual fire;
To thrill with virtuous passions and to glow
With great ambitions—in one hour to know
The depths and heights of feeling—God! in truth
How beautiful, how beautiful is youth!

Life is a privilege. Like some rare rose
The mysteries of the human mind unclose.
What marvels lie in earth and air and sea,
What stores of knowledge wait our opening key,
What sunny roads of happiness lead out
Beyond the realms of indolence and doubt,
And what large pleasures smile upon and bless
The busy avenues of usefulness.

Life is a privilege. Though noontide fades
And shadows fall along the winding glades;
Though joy—blooms wither in the autumn air,
Yet the sweet scent of sympathy is there.
Pale sorrow leads us closer to our kind,
And in the serious hours of life we find
Depths in the soul of men which lend new worth
And majesty to this brief span of earth.

Life is a privilege. If some sad fate
Sends us alone to seek the exit gate;
If men forsake us as the shadows fall,
Still does the supreme privilege of all
Come in that reaching upward of the soul
To find the welcoming presence at the goal,
And in the knowledge that our feet have trod
Paths that lead from and must lead back to God.

IN AN OLD ART GALLERY

Before the statue of a giant Hun,
There stood a dwarf, misshapen and uncouth.
His lifted eyes seemed asking: 'Why, in sooth,
Was I not fashioned like this mighty one?
Would God show favour to an older son
Like earthly kings, and beggar without ruth
Another, who sinned only by his youth?
Why should two lives in such divergence run?'

Strange, as he gazed, that from a vanished past
No memories revived of war and strife,
Of misused prowess, and of broken law.
That old Hun's spirit, in the dwarf re-cast,
Lived out the sequence of an earthly life.
IT WAS THE STATUE OF HIMSELF HE SAW!

TRUE BROTHERHOOD

God, what a world, if men in street and mart
Felt that same kinship of the human heart
Which makes them, in the face of flame and flood,
Rise to the meaning of true Brotherhood!

THE DECADENT

Among the virile hosts he passed along,
Conspicuous for an undetermined grace
Of sexless beauty. In his form and face
God's mighty purpose somehow had gone wrong.
Then on his loom, he wove a careful song,
 Of sensuous threads; a wordy web of lace
 Wherein the primal passions of the race
And his own sins made wonder for the throng.

A little pen prick opened up a vein,
 And gave the finished mesh a crimson blot –
 The last consummate touch of studied art.
But those who knew strong passion and keen pain,
 Looked through and through the pattern and found not
 One single great emotion of the heart.

LORD, SPEAK AGAIN

When God had formed the Universe, He thought
Of all the marvels therein to be wrought
And to His aid then Motherhood was brought.

'My lesser self, the feminine of Me,
She will go forth throughout all time,' quoth He,
'And make My world what I would have it be.

'For I am weary, having laboured so,
And for a cycle of repose would go
Into that silence which but God may know.

'Therefore I leave the rounding of My plan
To Motherhood; and that which I began
Let woman finish in perfecting man.

'She is the soil: the human Mother Earth:
She is the sun, that calls the seed to earth.
She is the gardener, who knows its worth.

'From Me, all seed, of any kind must spring.
Divine the growth such seed and soil will bring.
For all is Me, and I am everything.'

Thus having spoken to Himself aloud,
His glorious face upon His breast He bowed,
And sought repose behind a wall of cloud.

Come forth, O God! though great Thy thought and good,
In shaping woman for true Motherhood,
Lord, speak again; she has not understood.

The centuries pass: the cycles roll along –
The earth is peopled with a mighty throng,
Yet men are fighting and the world goes wrong.

Lord, speak again, ere yet it be too late,
Unloved, unwanted souls come through earth's gate:
The unborn child is given a dower of hate.

Thy world progresses in all ways save one.
In Motherhood, for which it was begun,
Lord, Lord, behold how little has been done!

Poems of Progress

Children are spawned like fishes in the sand.
With ignorance and crime they fill the land.
Lord, speak again, till mothers understand.

It is not all of Motherhood to know
Conception pleasure or deliverance woe.
Who plants the seed should help the shoot to grow.

Better a barren soil than weed and tare,
Or sickly plants that die for want of care
In poisonous jungles, void of sun and air.

True Motherhood is not alone to breed
The human race; it is to know and heed
Its holiest purpose and its highest need.

Lord, speak again, so woman shall be stirred
With the full meaning of that mighty word
True Motherhood. She has not rightly heard.

MY HEAVEN

Unhoused in deserts of accepted thought,
And lost in jungles of confusing creeds,
My soul strayed, homeless, finding its own needs
Unsatisfied with what tradition taught.

The pros and cons, the little ifs and ands,
The but and maybe, and the this and that,
On which the churches thicken and grow fat,
I found but structures built on shifting sands.

And all their heavens were strange and far away,
And all their hells were made of human hate;
And since for death I did not care to wait,
A heaven I fashioned for myself one day.

Of happy thoughts I built it stone by stone,
With joy of life I draped each spacious room,
With love's great light I drove away all gloom,
And in the centre I made God a throne.

And this dear heaven I set within my heart,
And carried it about with me alway,
And then the changing dogmas of the day
Seemed alien to my thoughts and held no part.

Now as I take my heaven from place to place
I find new rooms by love's revealing light,
And death will give me but a larger sight
To see my palace spreading into space.

LIFE

On a bleak, bald hill with a dull world under,
The dreary world of the Commonplace,
I have stood when the whole world seemed a blunder
Of dotard Time, in an aimless race.
With worry about me and want before me –
Yet deep in my soul was a rapture spring
That made me cry to the grey sky o'er me:
'Oh, I know this life is a goodly thing!'

I have given sweet years to a thankless duty
While cold and starving, though clothed and fed,
For a young heart's hunger for joy and beauty
Is harder to bear than the need of bread.
I have watched the wane of a sodden season,
Which let hope wither, and made care thrive,
And through it all, without earthly reason,
I have thrilled with the glory of being alive.

And now I stand by the great sea's splendour,
Where love and beauty feed heart and eye.
The brilliant light of the sun grows tender
As it slants to the shore of the by and by.
I prize each hour as a golden treasure –
A pearl Time drops from a broken string:
And all my ways are the ways of pleasure,
And I know this life is a goodly thing.

And I know, too, that not in the seeing,
Or having, or doing the things we would,
Lies that deep rapture that comes from being
AT ONE WITH THE PURPOSE WHICH MADE ALL GOOD.
And not from Pleasure the heart may borrow
That rare contentment for which we strive,
Unless through trouble, and want, and sorrow
It has thrilled with the glory of being alive.

GOD'S KIN

There is no summit you may not attain,
 No purpose which you may not yet achieve,
 If you will wait serenely and believe
Each seeming loss is but a step toward gain.

Between the mountain-tops lie vale and plain;
 Let nothing make you question, doubt or grieve;
 Give only good, and good alone receive;
And as you welcome joy, so welcome pain.

That which you most desire awaits your word;
 Throw wide the door and bid it enter in.
Speak, and the strong vibrations shall be stirred;
 Speak, and above earth's loud, unmeaning din
Your silent declarations shall be heard.
 All things are possible to God's own kin.

CONQUEST

Talk not of strength, until your heart has known
And fought with weakness through long hours alone.

Talk not of virtue, till your conquering soul
Has met temptation and gained full control.

Boast not of garments, all unscorched by sin,
Till you have passed, unscathed, through fires within.

Oh, poor that pride the unscarred soldier shows,
Who safe in camp, has never faced his foes.

THE STATUE

A granite rock in the mountain side
Gazed on the world and was satisfied.
It watched the centuries come and go.
It welcomed the sunlight, yet loved the snow.
It grieved when the forest was forced to fall,
Yet joyed when steeples rose, white and tall,
In the valley below it, and thrilled to hear
The voice of the great town roaring near.

When the mountain stream from its idle play
Was caught by the mill wheel and borne away
And trained to labour, the grey rock mused
'Trees and verdure and stream are used
By Man the Master; but I remain
Friend of the mountain, and star, and plain,
Unchanged forever by God's decree,
While passing centuries bow to me.'

Then all unwarned, with a mighty shock
Out of the mountain was wrenched the rock.
Bruised and battered and broken in heart,
It was carried away to the common mart,
Wrecked and ruined in piece and pride.
'Oh, God is cruel,' the granite cried,
'Comrade of mountains, of stars the friend,
By all deserted, how sad my end.'

A dreaming sculptor in passing by
Gazed at the granite with thoughtful eye.
Then stirred with a purpose supremely grand
He bade his dream in the rock expand.
And lo! from the broken and shapeless mass
That grieved and doubted, it came to pass
That a glorious statue of priceless worth
And infinite beauty, adorned the earth.

SIRIUS

'Since Sinus crossed the Milky Way, sixty thousand years have gone.'—GARRETT P. SERVISS.

Since Sirius crossed the Milky Way
Full sixty thousand years have gone,
Yet hour by hour, and day by day,
This tireless star speeds on and on.

Methinks he must be moved to mirth
By that droll tale of Genesis,
Which says creation had its birth
For such a puny world as this.

To hear how One who fashioned all
Those Solar Systems, tier on tiers,
Expressed in little Adam's fall
The purpose of a million spheres.

And, witness of the endless plan,
To splendid wrath he must be wrought
By pigmy creeds presumptuous man
Sends forth as God's primeval thought.

Perchance from half a hundred stars
He hears as many curious things;
From Venus, Jupiter and Mars,
And Saturn with the beauteous rings,

There may be students of the Cause
Who send their revelations out,
And formulate their codes of laws,
With heavens for faith and hells for doubt.

On planets old ere form or place
Was lent to earth, may dwell—who knows —
A God-like and perfected race
That hails great Sirius as he goes.

In zones that circle moon and sun,
'Twixt world and world, he may see souls
Whose span of earthly life is done,
Still journeying up to higher goals.

And on dead planets grey and cold

Poems of Progress

Grim spectral souls, that harboured hate
Life after life, he may behold
Descending to a darker fate.

And on his grand majestic course
He may have caught one glorious sight
Of that vast shining central Source
From which proceeds all Life, all Light.

Since Sirius crossed the Milky Way
Full sixty thousand years have gone,
No mortal man may bid him stay,
No mortal man may speed him on.

No mortal mind may comprehend
What is beyond, what was before;
To God be glory without end,
Let man be humble and adore.

AT FONTAINEBLEAU

At Fontainebleau, I saw a little bed
Fashioned of polished wood, with gold ornate,
Ambition, hope, and sorrow, ay, and hate
Once battled there, above a childish head,
And there in vain, grief wept, and memory plead
 It was so small! but Ah, dear God, how great
 The part it played in one sad woman's fate.
How wide the gloom, that narrow object shed.

The symbol of an over-reaching aim,
 The emblem of a devastated joy,
 It spoke of glory, and a blasted home:
Of fleeting honours, and disordered fame,
 And the lone passing of a fragile boy.

* * *

It was the cradle of the King of Rome.

THE MASQUERADE

Look in the eyes of trouble with a smile,
 Extend your hand and do not be afraid.
 'Tis but a friend who comes to masquerade.
And test your faith and courage for awhile.

Fly, and he follows fast with threat and jeer.
 Shrink, and he deals hard blow on stinging blow,
 But bid him welcome as a friend, and lo!
The jest is off—the masque will disappear.

SYMPATHY

Is the way hard and thorny, oh, my brother?
Do tempests beat, and adverse wild winds blow?
And are you spent, and broken, at each nightfall,
Yet with each morn you rise and onward go?
Brother, I know, I know!
I, too, have journeyed so.

Is your heart mad with longing, oh, my sister?
Are all great passions in your breast aglow?
Does the white wonder of your own soul blind you,
And are you torn with rapture and with woe?
Sister, I know, I know!
I, too, have suffered so.

Is the road filled with snare and quicksand, pilgrim?
Do pitfalls lie where roses seem to grow?
And have you sometimes stumbled in the darkness,
And are you bruised and scarred by many a blow?
Pilgrim, I know, I know!
I, too, have stumbled so.

Do you send out rebellious cry and question,
As mocking hours pass silently and slow,
Does your insistent 'wherefore' bring no answer,
While stars wax pale with watching, and droop low?
I, too, have questioned so,
But now I KNOW, I KNOW!
To toil, to strive, to err, to cry, to grow,
TO LOVE THROUGH all--this is the way to KNOW.

INTERMEDIARY

When from the prison of its body free,
My soul shall soar, before it goes to Thee,
Thou great Creator, give it power to know
The language of all sad, dumb things below.
And let me dwell a season still on earth
Before I rise to some diviner birth:
Invisible to men, yet seen and heard,
And understood by sorrowing beast and bird –
Invisible to men, yet always near,
To whisper counsel in the human ear:
And with a spell to stay the hunter's hand
And stir his heart to know and understand;
To plant within the dull or thoughtless mind
The great religious impulse to be kind.

Before I prune my spirit wings and rise
To seek my loved ones in their paradise,
Yea! even before I hasten on to see
That lost child's face, so like a dream to me,
I would be given this intermediate role,
And carry comfort to each poor, dumb soul:
And bridge man's gulf of cruelty and sin
By understanding of his lower kin.
'Twi'xt weary driver and the straining steed
On wings of mercy would my spirit speed.
And each should know, before his journey's end,
That in the other dwelt a loving friend.
From zoo and jungle, and from cage and stall,
I would translate each inarticulate call,
Each pleading look, each frenzied act and cry,
And tell the story to each passer-by;
And of a spirit's privilege possessed,
Pursue indifference to its couch of rest,
And whisper in its ear until in awe
It woke and knew God's all-embracing law
Of Universal Life—the One in All.

* * *

Lord, let this mission to my lot befall.

LIFE'S CAR

'Hurry up!'
No lingering by old doors of doubt –
No loitering by the way,
No waiting a To–morrow car,
When you can board To–day.
Success is somewhere down the track;
Before the chance is gone
Accelerate your laggard pace,
Swing on, I say, swing on –
Hurry up!

'Step lively!'
Belated souls are following fast,
They shout and signal, 'Wait.'
Conductor Time brooks no delay,
He rings the bell of Fate.
But you can give the man behind,
With one hand on the bar,
A final chance to brook defeat,
And board the moving car.
Step lively!

'Move up!'
Make way for others as you sit
Or stand. This crowded earth
Has room for every journeying soul
En route to higher birth.
Ay, room and comfort, if no one
Took double share or space,
Nor let his greed and selfishness
Absorb another's place.
Move up!

'Hold fast!'
The jolting switch of obstacles
With jarring rails is near.
Stand firm of foot, be strong of grip,
Brace well and have no fear.
The Maker of the Car of Life
Foresaw that curve—Despair,
And hung the straps of faith, and hope
So you might grasp them there.
Hold fast!

OPPORTUNITY

Send forth your heart's desire, and work and wait;
The opportunities of life are brought
To our own doors, not by capricious fate,
But by the strong compelling force of thought.

THE AGE OF MOTORED THINGS

The wonderful age of the world I sing –
The age of battery, coil and spring,
Of steam, and storage, and motored thing.

Though faith may slumber and art seem dead,
And all that is spoken has once been said,
And all that is written were best unread;

Though hearts are iron and thoughts are steel,
And all that has value is mercantile,
Yet marvellous truths shall the age reveal.

Ay, greater the marvels this age shall find
Than all the centuries left behind,
When faith was a bigot and art was blind.

Oh, sorry the search of the world for gods,
Through faith that slaughters and art that lauds,
While reason sits on its throne and nods.

But out of the leisure that men will know,
When the cruel things of the sad earth go,
A Faith that is Knowledge shall rise and grow.

In the throb and whirl of each new machine
Thinner is growing the veil between
The visible earth and the worlds unseen.

The True Religion shall leisure bring;
And Art shall awaken and Love shall sing:
Oh, ho! for the age of the motored thing!

NEW YEAR

MORTAL:

'The night is cold, the hour is late, the world is bleak and drear;

Who is it knocking at my door?'

THE NEW YEAR:

'I am Good Cheer.'

MORTAL:

'Your voice is strange; I know you not; in shadows dark I grope.
What seek you here?'

THE NEW YEAR:

'Friend, let me in; my name is Hope.'

MORTAL:

'And mine is Failure; you but mock the life you seek to bless.
Pass on.'

THE NEW YEAR:

'Nay, open wide the door; I am Success.'

MORTAL:

'But I am ill and spent with pain; too late has come your wealth.
I cannot use it.'

THE NEW YEAR:

'Listen, friend; I am Good Health.'

MORTAL:

'Now, wide I fling my door. Come in, and your fair statements prove.'

THE NEW YEAR:

'But you must open, too, your heart, for I am Love.'

DISARMAMENT

We have outgrown the helmet and cuirass,
The spear, the arrow, and the javelin.
These crude inventions of a cruder age,
When men killed men to show their love of God,
And he who slaughtered most was greatest king.
We have outgrown the need of war!

Should men
Unite in this one thought, all war would end.

Disarm the world; and let all Nations meet
Like Men, not monsters, when disputes arise.
When crossed opinions tangle into snarls,
Let Courts untie them, and not armies cut.
When State discussions breed dissensions, let
Union and Arbitration supersede
The hell-created implements of War.
Disarm the world! and bid destructive thought
Slip like a serpent from the mortal mind
Down through the marshes of oblivion. Soon
A race of gods shall rise! Disarm! Disarm!

THE CALL

All wantonly in hours of joy,
I made a song of pain.
Soon Grief drew near, and paused to hear,
And sang the sad refrain,
Again and yet again.

Then recklessly in my despair,
I sang of hope one day.
And Joy turned back upon life's track,
And smiled, and came my way,
And sat her down to stay.

A LITTLE SONG

Oh, a great world, a fair world, a true world I find it;
A sun that never forgets to rise,
On the darkest night, a star in the skies,
And a God of love behind it.

Oh, a good life, a sweet life, a large life I take it,
Is what He offers to you, and me;
A chance to do, and a chance to be,
Whatever we chose to make it.

Oh, a far way, a high way, a sure way He leads us;
And if the journey at times seems long,
We must trudge ahead, with a trustful song,
And know at the end He needs us.