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Cross Roads

by Margaret E. Sangster

January, 2001 [Etext #2487]

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This etext was prepared by Judy Boss, Omaha, NE

CROSS ROADS

by MARGARET E. SANGSTER,

To My Father

NOTE

Some of the verses in this book have been printed by The Christian Herald, Good Housekeeping, Pictorial Review, New Fiction Publishing Company and the C. H. Young Publishing Company. I wish to acknowledge, with thanks, permission to reprint them.

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INDEPENDENCE DAY, 1919
SHADOWS
L'ENVOI

PREFACE

The candlelight sweeps softly through the room,
Filling dim surfaces with golden laughter,
Touching with mystery each high hung rafter,
Cutting a path of promise through the gloom.

Slim little elves dance gently on each taper,
Wistful, small ghosts steal out of shrouded
corners --
And, like a line of vague enchanted mourners,
Great shadows sway like wind-blown sheets of paper.

Gently as fingers drawn across your hair,
I see the yellow flicker of it creep --
And in a silence that is kin to sleep,
I feel a world away from pain and care.

Roads stretch like arms across the world outside,
Roads reach to strife, to happiness, to fame --
Here, in the candlelight, I speak your name,
Here we are at life's cross way, side by side!

OH, THERE ARE BROOKS THERE, AND FIELDS THERE AND NOOKS
THERE --
NOOKS WHERE A SEEKER MAY FIND FOREST FLOWERS;
BLUE IS THE SKY THERE, AND SOFT WINDS CREEP BY THERE,
SINGING A SONG THROUGH THE LONG SUMMER HOURS.

WOOD MAGIC

The woods lay dreaming in a topaz dream,
And we, who silently roamed hand in hand,
Were pilgrims in a strange, enchanted land,
Where life was love, and love was all a-gleam.

And old remembered songs came back to greet
Our ears, from other worlds of long ago,
The worlds that we of earth may seldom know --
And to those songs we timed our vagrant feet.

We did not speak, we did not need to say
The thought that lay so buried in our hearts --
The thoughts as sweet as springtime rain, that
starts
The buds to blossoming in wistful May.

We did not need to speak, we could not speak,
The wonder words that we in silence knew --
We walked, as very little children do,
Who feel, but cannot tell, the thing they seek.

Beyond a screen of bushes, bending low,
We knew that fair Titania lay at rest,
Her pillowed head upon her lover's breast,
Her kisses swift as birds that come and go!

And underneath a wall of mottled stone,
We knew the sleeping beauty lay in state,
Entangled in a mist of tears, to wait
The prince whose kiss would raise her to a throne.

Perhaps a witch with single flaming eye,
Was watching from beneath the hemlock tree;
And fairies that our gaze might never see,
Laughed at us as we, hand in hand, crept by.

Laughed at us? No, I somehow think they knew
That you and I were kin to them that day!
I think they knew that we were years away
From everything but make-believe, come true.

I think they knew that, singing through the air,
There thrilled a vague, insistent, harp-like call --
And that, where woodbine blazed against the wall,
You held me close and kissed my wind-tossed hair!

WATERIN' TH' HORSES

I took th' horses to th' brook -- to water 'em you know,
Th' air was cold with just a touch o' frost;
And as we went a-joggin' down I couldn't help but
think,
O' city folk an' all the things they lost.

O' cause they have their lighted streets -- their Great

White Way an' such,
O' course they have their buildings large an' tall;
But, my! they never know th' joy o' ridin' ter th'
brook,
An' somehow I don't envy 'em at all!

Perhaps I'd like it -- for awhile -- to hear th' songs an'
laughter,
But somehow, I don't know exactly why;
I'd feel th' country callin' me; I'd long again fer
silence,
An' fer God's mountains, blue against the sky.

I took th' horses to th' brook -- to water 'em you know,
Th' day was pretty as a day can be;
An' as we went a-joggin' down I couldn't help but
think,
O' city folk an' all they never see!

AT DAWN

I. THE CAVEMAN

I live! And the scarlet sunrise is climbing the
mountain steep,
I live . . . And below, in the caverns, the rest
of my clansmen sleep;
But I -- I am here, and chanting, I could slay a
beast with my hand,
And I thrill as the mist of the morning creeps up
from the rock-strewn land!

I live, I have strength for fighting -- and courage to
rend and slay,
I live! And my eyes are lifting to gaze at the new-
born day;
And I pause, on the way to my hewn-out cave,
though I know that she waits me there,
My mate, with her eyes on the scarlet dawn, and the
wind in her flame-like hair.

I live -- and the joy of living leaps up in my searching
eyes,
I live, and my soul starts forward, to challenge the
waking skies!
Far down are the torrents roaring, far up are the
clouds, unfurled;
And I stand on the cliff, exultant, akin to the waking
world.

The mists are gone, and an eagle sweeps down from

the mountain high,
And I wish that my arms were feathered and strong,
that I, too, might fly;
I live! I am one with the morning! Ah, I am a
MAN, and free!
And I shout aloud, and the scarlet dawn shouts back,
on the gale, to me!

II. THE PIONEER

I creep along, but silently,
For, oh, the dawn is coming;
I creep along, for I have heard
A flint-tipped arrow, humming;
And I have heard a snapping twig,
Above the wind's low laughter;
And I have known -- and thrilled to know,
That swift THEY followed after!

The forest turns from black to grey,
The leaves are silver-shining;
But I have heard a far-off call --
The war-whoop's sullen whining.
And I have been a naked form,
Among the tree trunks prowling;
And I have glimpsed a savage face,
That faded from me, scowling.

A rosy color sweeps the sky,
A vagrant lark is singing,
But, as I steal along the trail,
I know that day is bringing
A host of red-skins in its train,
Their tommy-hawks are gleaming --
I SEE THEM NOW; or can it be
The first pale sunlight beaming?

I creep along, but stealthily,
For, oh, the dawn is coming!
I creep along -- but I have heard
A flint-tipped arrow, humming. . . .
And yet, my heart is light, inside,
My soul, itself, is flying
To greet the dawn! I AM ALIVE --
AND WHAT IS DEATH -- BUT DYING?

III. THE FARMER

The dawn is here! I climb the hill;

The earth is young and strangely still;
A tender green is showing where
But yesterday my fields were bare. . . .
I climb and, as I climb, I sing;
The dawn is here, and with it -- spring!

My oxen stamp the ground, and they
Seem glad, with me, that soon the day
Will bring new work for us to do!
The light above is clear and blue;
And one great cloud that swirls on high,
Seems sent from earth to kiss the sky.

The birds are coming back again,
They know that soon the golden grain
Will wave above this fragrant loam;
The birds, with singing, hasten home;
And I, who watch them, feel their song
Deep in my soul, and nothing wrong,
Or mean or small, can touch my heart. . . .
Down in the vale the smoke-wreaths start,
To softly curl above the trees;
The fingers of a vagrant breeze
Steal tenderly across my hair,
And toil is fled, and want, and care!

The dawn is here!

I climb the hill;

My very oxen seem to thrill --
To feel the mystery of day.
The sun creeps out, and far away
From man-made law I worship God,
Who made the light, the cloud, the sod;
I worship smilingly, and sing!

* * *

The dawn is here, and with it -- spring!

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

It stands neglected, silent, far from the ways of men,
A lonely little cottage beside a lonely glen;
And, dreaming there, I saw it when sunset's golden
rays
Had touched it with the glory of other, sweeter days.

They say the house is haunted, and -- well, it is, I
guess,
For every empty window just aches with loneliness;
With loneliness that tortures and memory that flays;
Ah, yes, the house is haunted with ghosts of other

days.

The ghost of childish laughter rings on the narrow
stair,
And, from a silent corner, the murmur of a prayer
Steals out, and then a love song, and then a bugle
call,
And steps that do not falter along the quiet hall.

The story of the old house that stands beside the
glen?
That story is forgotten by every one; but when
The house is touched and softened by sunset's golden
rays,
I know that ghosts must haunt it, the ghosts of
sweeter days.

TO A PAIR OF GLOVES

Jus' a little pair o' gloves,
Sorter thin an' worn;
With th' fingers neatly darned,
Like they had been torn.
Jus' a little pair o' gloves,
Not s' much ter see. . . .
Not a soul on earth can guess
What they mean ter me!

Jus' a little pair o' gloves,
Sorter tossed aside;
Limp an' quiet, folded up,
Like their soul had died.
Every finger seems ter look
Lonely, an' my hand
Trembles as it touches them --
Who can understand?

Jus' a little pair o' gloves,
Ah, she tossed 'em there. . . .
Singin'-like, she turned ter go,
Didn't have a care!
Kissin' them? A prayer, a tear?
God, my head WILL bow --
Jus' a little pair o' gloves,
. . . . Empty, now!

PEAKS

A storm may rage in the world below,
It may tear great trees apart;
But here on the mountain top, I know
That it cannot touch my heart.

I have struggled up through the lightning's glare,
I have walked where the cliffs fell sheer
To a gorge below, but I breathed a prayer,
And my soul passed doubt and fear!

Here on the mountain top the air
Is clear as a silver song;
And the sun is warm on my unbound hair;
AND WHAT THOUGH THE WAY WAS LONG?

What though the way was steep and bleak,
And what though the road was hard?
I stand at last on the mountain peak,
With my eyes upraised to God!

A storm may sweep through the world below,
It may rend great rocks apart;
But here on the crest of the world I know
That it cannot touch my heart.

LIL' FELLER

When th.' sunshine's golden-yeller
Like th' curls upon his head,
Then he wakes -- th' lil' feller --
An' he jumps up, outen bed;
An' he scrambles fer his knickers
Flung, perhaps, upon th' floor,
An' he takes his hat (my old 'un),
An' he races through th' door --
An' I hear his voice, a-singin',
In his odd, ole-fashioned way,
'Cause he's glad -- th' lil' feller --
In th' mornin' o' the day.

Kinder makes me feel, well, lazy,
So I hurry up, outside,
Where th' mountains smile down, friendly --
And th' earth looks sorter wide;
An' I hear his voice a-callin',
Sayin', "Daddy, come an' see!"
An' I find him makin' gardens
Where a rock pile uster be --
An' I shout, "How goes it, sonny?"
An' my heart feels light an' gay,

Fer he's singin' -- lil' feller --
In th' mornin' o' th' day.

Lil' feller, an' his gardens!
It don't matter much ter him,
If th' hoein's hard an' tedgious,
An' th' crop he grows is slim;
Fer he loves ter be a-workin',
An' he loves ter see things start
Outer nothin'. . . . There's a garden
In th' rock-bed o' my heart
That he's planted, just by singin'
In his odd, ole-fashioned way --
'Cause he's glad, MY LIL' FELLER,
In th' mornin' o' th' day!

TO AN OLD SCHOOLHOUSE

Down by the end of the lane it stands,
Where the sumac grows in a crimson thatch,
Down where the sweet wild berry patch,
Holds out a lure for eager hands.
Down at the end of the lane, who knows
The ghosts that sit at the well-scarred seats,
When the moon is dark, and the gray sky meets
With the dawn time light, and a chill wind blows?

Ghosts -- well not ghosts, perhaps, but dreams --
Rather like wistful shades, that stand
Waiting a look or an outstretched hand,
To call them back where the morning gleams --
Dreams of the hopes we had, that died,
Dreams of the vivid youth we sold;
Dreams of a pot of rainbow gold --
Gold that we sought for, eager-eyed !

Dreams of the plans we made, that sleep
With the lesson books on the dusty rack,
Of the joyous years that will not come back --
That are drowned in the tears we have learned to
weep.

Ghosts did I call them! Sweet they are
As a plant that grows in a desert place,
Sweet as a dear remembered face --
Sweet as a pale, courageous star.

Where the sumac grows in a flaming wall,
It stands, at the end of a little lane,
And there do the children come again,
Answering, still, the bell's shrill call,
Just as we came, with their songs unsung,

And their hopes all new, and their dreams dew
kissed,
Brave as the sun in a land of mist --
JUST AS WE CAME WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG!

THE OLD SAILOR

I've crossed the bar at last, mates,
My longest voyage is done;
And I can sit here, peaceful,
And watch th' setting sun
A-smilin' kind of glad like
Upon the waves so free.
My longest voyage is done, mates,
But oh, the heart of me,
Is out where sea meets skyline!
My longest voyage is done. . . .
But -- can I sit, in peace, mates,
And watch the settin' sun?

For what's a peaceful life, mates,
When every breeze so free,
When every gale a-blowin',
Brings messages to me?
And is the sky so shinin',
For all it's golden sun,
To one who loves the sea, mates,
And knows his voyage is done?
And, can a year on land, mates,
Match with one day -- at sea?
Ah, every wind a-singin'
Brings memory to me!

I've crossed the bar at last, mates,
My longest voyage is past,
And I must watch the sunset,
Must see it fade, at last.
My steps are not so light, mates,
As they were, years ago;
And sometimes, when I'm tired,
My head droops kind of low --
Yet, though I'm old and -- weary,
The waves that dance so free,
Keep callin' to my soul, mates,
And thrill the heart of me!

THE RIVER AND THE TREE

"You are white and tall and swaying," sang the river
to the tree,
"And your leaves are touched with silver -- but you
never smile on me;
For your branches murmur love songs to the sun-
kissed turquoise sky,
And you seem so far above me that I always hurry
by!"

"You are laughing in your shallows, you are somber
in your deeps,
And below your shining surface there's a heart that
never sleeps;
But all day you pass me, dancing, and at evening
time you dream,
And I didn't think you liked me," sang the birch-
tree to the stream.

So they got a bit acquainted on a glowing summer
day,
And they found they liked each other (which is often
times the way);
And the river got so friendly, and it ran so very slow,
That the birch-tree shone reflected in the water down
below!

AUTUMN SONG

Let's go down the road together, you and I,
Let's go down the road together,
Through the vivid autumn weather;
Let's go down the road together when the red leaves
fly.
Let's go searching, searching after
Joy and mirth and love and laughter --
Let's go down the road together, you and I.

Let's go hunting for adventure, you and I,
For the romance we are knowing
Waits for us, alive and glowing,
For the romance that has always passed us by.
Let's have done with tears and sighing,
What if summer-time IS dying?
Let's go hunting for adventure, you and I.

Let's go down the road together, you and I --
And if you are frightened lest you
Weary grow, my arms will rest you,
As we take the road together when the red leaves fly.
Springtime is the time for mating?

Ah, a deeper love is waiting
Down the autumn road that calls us, you and I!

THE CITY --
TOWERS AND CANYONS, AND SLUMS,
MAN BUILT. . . .

AND SOULS,
GOD BUILT!

SCARLET FLOWERS

The window box across the street
Is filled with scarlet flowers;
They glow, like bits of sunset cloud,
Across the dragging hours.
What though the mist be like a shroud
What though the day be dreary?
The window box across the street
Is warm, and gay, and cheery!

The window box across the street
Is filled with scarlet flowers;
I almost catch their perfume sweet. . . .
Above the sound of tramping feet,
They sing of country bowers.
Against the house that looms so gray,
They smile in -- well, a friendly way.

A tired shop girl hurries by;
Their color seems to catch her eye;
She pauses, starts, and wistfully
She gazes up. It seems to me
That I can hear her longing sigh. . . .
A little shop girl hurries by.

A newsboy stops to sell his wares;
The crowds brush by him; no one cares
To buy his papers. But above
The scarlet flowers bravely grow
In token of the Father's love. . . .
The crowds brush coldly by below.

A blind man stumbles, groping past;
He cannot see their scarlet shine;
And yet some memory seems to twine
About his soul.

For, oh, he turns
As trusting as a child who yearns
For some vague dream, and smilingly
He lifts the eyes that cannot see. . . .
A blind man stumbles, groping past.

The window box across the street
Is filled with scarlet flowers;
They tell a secret, tender, sweet,
Through all the dreary hours.
And folk who hurry on their way
Dream of some other brighter day. . . .
The window box across the street
Is filled with scarlet flowers.

ON FIFTH AVENUE

I walked down Fifth Avenue the other day
(In the languid summertime everybody strolls down
Fifth Avenue);
And I passed women, dainty in their filmy frocks,
And much bespatted men with canes.
And great green busses lumbered past me,
And impressive limousines, and brisk little "lectrics.

I walked down Fifth Avenue the other day,
And the sunshine smiled at me,
And something, deep in my heart, burst into song.
And then, all at once, I saw her --
A woman with painted lips and rouge-touched
cheeks --
Standing in front of a jeweler's window.
She was looking at diamonds --
A tray of great blue-white diamonds --
And I saw a flame leap out of her eyes to meet them
(Greedy eyes they were, and cold, like too-perfect
jewels);
And I realized, for the first time,
That diamonds weren't always pretty.

And then I SAW THE OTHER ONE:
A thin little girl looking into a florist's shop
At a fragrant mass of violets, dew-purple and fresh.
She carried a huge box on her arm,
And a man, passing, said loudly,
"I guess somebody's hat'll be late today!"
And the thin little girl flushed and hurried on,
But not before I had seen the tenderness in her eyes --
The tenderness that real women show
When they look at vast rolling hills, or flowers, or

very small pink babies.

I walked down Fifth Avenue the other day.
(All the world walks, leisurely, down Fifth Avenue
in the summertime.)

FROM A CITY WINDOW

The dust is thick on the city street,
The smoke on the city sky
Hangs dense and gray at the close of day --
And the city crowds surge by
With heavy feet through the summer heat
Like a sluggish sullen tide; ...
But hand in hand through a magic land
We are wandering side by side.

For somewhere, dear, there's a magic land
On the shores of a silver sea;
And there is a boat with turquoise sails --
With sails that are wide and free;
A boat that is whirling through the spray,
That is coming for you and me!

Somewhere, dear, there's a singing breeze
That creeps through the laughing air
To the wide-flung boughs of a blue-black tree --
It touches your joyous hair;
And the touch of it is as soft and light
As a baby's lisping prayer.

Somewhere, dear, there's a bit of beach
Where the sand is warm and white;
Where the sky seems close and the drifting clouds
Are tenderly, warmly bright.
And there is a ship with turquoise sails,
With sails like a living light!

Ah, the ship is bringing us dreams come true,
And hopes that are all dew-kissed;
It is bringing us days that are all aglow
With scarlet and amethyst; . . .
Bringing us faith to find our way
Through a world that is wrapped in mist.

Our window looks on the city street,
We can glimpse the city sky;
But our hearts are gay at the close of day,
Though the tired crowds pass by
With heavy feet through the blinding heat,
Like a sullen, sluggish tide. . . .

For hand in hand through a magic land.
We are wandering side by side.

THE LADY ACROSS THE COURT

She only comes when night is near,
And stands a moment quietly
Beside her window, in the dusk --
She lives across the court from me --
And though I cannot see her eyes
Because she is too far away,
I somehow feel that they are kind,
And very soft, and widely gray!

Her hands are only dim white blurs,
That rest against the window pane;
And yet I know that they are firm,
And cool and sweet as April rain.
And, oh, I cannot help but wish
As, through the dark, I go to bed,
That they might rest a moment like
A little prayer upon my head!

She only comes when night is near,
I do not know who she can be;
I never see her anywhere
But just across the court from me. . . .
I am so small the curtains hide
The wistful smiles that I have smiled,
And yet I, somehow, think she feels
The love of me -- a lonely child.

TO A PORCELAIN PUPPY DOG

Oh, pudgy porcelain puppy dog from far-away Japan,
I saw you in a shop to-day where lonesomely you
sat
Upon a velvet cushion that was colored gold and
purple,
Between a bowl of goldfish, and a sleeping wooden
cat.

I wonder what you thought about as stolidly you sat
there,
A grin of faint derision on your pudgy porcelain
face;
I wonder if you dreamed about some cherry blossom

tea house,
And if the goldfish bored you in their painted
Chinese case?

I wonder if you dreamed about the laughter of the
geishas
As languidly they danced across the shining
lacquered floor,
I wonder if your thoughts were with a purple clump
of iris
That bloomed, all through the summer, by the
little tea house door?

I wonder if you hated us who passed, you by unheeding,
You who had known the temples of another, older
land?
And, oh, I wonder if you knew when I had paused
beside you
To pat you, porcelain puppy dog, that I could
understand?

COLORS

I love color.
I love flaming reds,
And vivid greens,
And royal flaunting purples.
I love the startled rose of the sun at dawning,
And the blazing orange of it at twilight.

I love color.
I love the drowsy blue of the fringed gentian,
And the yellow of the goldenrod,
And the rich russet of the leaves
That turn at autumn-time. . . .
I love rainbows,
And prisms,
And the tinsel glitter
Of every shop-window.

I love color.
And yet today,
I saw a brown little bird
Perched on the dull-gray fence
Of a weed-filled city yard.
And as I watched him
The little bird
Threw back his head
Defiantly, almost,
And sang a song

That was full of gay ripples,
And poignant sweetness,
And half-hidden melody.

I love color. ...
I love crimson, and azure,
And the glowing purity of white.
And yet today,
I saw a living bit of brown,
A vague oasis on a streak of gray,
That brought heaven
Very near to me.

POSSESSION
(A TENEMENT MOTHER SPEAKS)

Y' ain't as pretty as some babies are --
But, oh, yer mine!
Yer lil' fingers sorter seem t' twine
Aroun' my soul.
Yer eyes are bright, t' me, as any star,
Yer hair's like gol'.

Some people say yer hair is sandy-red,
An' that yer eyes is sorter wan an' pale,
An' that yer lil' body looks, well, frail. . . .
Y' ain't been fed
Like rich folks children are. . . .
It takes fresh air
Ter keep a baby fat an' strong an' pink!
It takes more care,
'N I have time ter give. . . .
An' yet, if God'll only let yer live --

When yer first came,
An' when I seen yer face, deep down inside
My heart I felt -- well, sorter broke an' tore,
'Cause when yer came ter me I like ter died,
An' I had lost my job, there at th' store.
I looked at you, an' oh, it wasn't pride
I felt, but bitterness an' shame!

An' then yer gropin' fingers touched my hand,
As helpless as a snow-flake in the air,
Yer didn't know, yer couldn't understand,
('Cause yer was new t' this cold-hearted land),
That life ain't fair!
Yer didn't know if I was good, 'r bad,
'R much ter see --
Y' only knew that I belonged, an' oh,

Yer trusted me!

Somehow, right there, I didn't stop ter think
That yer was white an' thin -- instead o' pink,
An' that yer lips, an' not yer eyes, was blue. . .
I got t' thinkin' how, when work was through
I'd sing t' yer, an' rock yer off t' rest.
I got t' thinkin' that I had been blessed,
More than th' richest girl I'd ever knew!
An' oh, I held yer tight against my breast,
An', lookin' far ahead, I dreamed an' planned
That I would work th' fingers off my hand
Fer you!
An' mother-love swept on me like a tide,
An', oh, I cried!

Some people say yer hair is sandy-red,
But they don't know;
They say yer eyes is sorter pale an' weak,
But it ain't so!
It's jus' because yer never been well fed,
An' never had a lil' cribby bed;
It's jus' because yer never had a peek
At th' blue sky --
That's why!

Yer ain't so pretty as some babies are,
But, oh, t' me yer like a silver star
That, through th' darkest night can smile an'
shine. . . .
Yer ain't as pretty as some babies are,
But, God, yer mine!

LIGHTS OF THE CITY

He was young,
And his mind
Was filled with the science of economics
That he had studied in college.
And as we talked about the food riots,
And high prices,
And jobless men,
He said:
"It's all stupid and wrong,
"This newspaper talk!
"Folk have no business to starve.
"The price of labor always advances,
"Proportionally,
"With the price of food!"

"Any man," he said,
A moment later,
"Can earn at least two dollars a day
"By working on a railroad,
"Or in the street cleaning department!
"What if potatoes DO cost
"Eight cents a pound?
"Wages are high, too. . . .
"People have no reason to starve."

I listened to him prayerfully
(More or less),
For I had never been to college,
And I didn't know much about economics.

But --
As I walked to the window,
And looked out over the veiled, mysterious lights
Of the city,
I couldn't help thinking
Of a little baby
That I had seen a few days ago;
A baby of the slums -- thin, and joyless,
And old of face,
But with eyes
Like the eyes of the Christ Child. . . .
A baby -- crying for bread --

And. . . . I wondered. . . .

STEEL

They think that we're just animals, almost,
We men who work with steel.
A lady visitor was here th' other day,
She looked at me, an' I could hear her say,
"My, what a life! I s'pose his only boast
"Is muscles!"
 She's wrong. We feel
A certain pride, a certain sort o' joy,
When some great blazin' mass is tamed an' turned
Into an engine wheel. Our hands get burned,
An' sometimes half our hair is scorched away --
But, well, it's fun!
 Perhaps you've seen a boy,
Who did hard work he loved, an' called it play?
Know what I mean? Well, that's the way we feel,
We men who work with steel.

A lady visitor was here th' other day;

She held her skirts right dainty in her hand,
An' as she passed me by, I heard her say,
"I wonder what he THINKS -- or if his head
"Is just a piece o' metal, too!" She said
It laughin'-like.

She didn't understand,
She couldn't know that we have dreams as grand,
As any SHE could have. We wonder where
Th' rivets that we make are goin' to,
An' if th' engine wheels we turn, will go
Through tropic heat, or if they'll plow through snow;
An' as we watch, we sorter grow to care
About th' steel. Why it's as shiny blue
As j'ew'ls! An' every bit is, well, a part
Of life to us. Sometimes my very heart
Thanks God that I've a man-sized job to do!

MUSIC OF THE SLUMS

I. THE VIOLIN-MAKER

Over a slum his sign swings out,
Over a street where the city's shout
Is deadened into a sob of pain --
Where even joy has a minor strain.

"Violins made," read the sign. It swings
Over a street where sorrow sings;
Over a street where people give
Their right to laugh for a chance to live.

He works alone with his head bent low
And all the sorrow and all the woe,
And all the pride of a banished race,
Stare from the eyes that light his face.

But he never sighs and his slender hand,
Fastens the cat-gut, strand by strand --
Fastens it tight, but tenderly
As if he dreams of some melody.

Some melody of his yesterday. . . .
Will it, I wonder, find its way
Out to the world, when fingers creep
Over the strings that lie asleep?

Or will the city's misery
Mould the song in a tragic key --
Making its sweetest, faintest breath
Thrill with sorrow, and throb with death?

Maker of music -- who can know
Where the work of his hand shall go?
Maybe its slightest phrase will bring,
Comfort to ease the suffering --

Maybe his dreams will have their part
Buried deep in the music's heart. . . .
Out of a chain of dreary days,
Joy may come as some master plays!

Over a slum his sign hangs out,
Over a street where dread meets doubt --
"Violins made," reads the sign. It swings
Over a street where sorrow sings.

II. THE PARK BAND

(Side by side and silent -- eagerly they stand --
Souls look out of tired eyes, hands are clasped
together,
Through the thrilling softness of the late spring
weather,
All a city slum is out to listen to the band.)

Young love and Maytime, hear the joyous strain,
Listen to a serenade written long ago!
You will recognize the song -- you who care must
know
Fear that blends with happiness, joy that touches
pain.

Rabbi with the grizzled beard hear adventure's story!
Hear the tale the music tells, thrilling with ro-
mance,
Hear the clatter of a sword, hear a broken lance
Falling from some hero's hand, red with blood-
stained glory.

(Tenements on either side, light-flecked in the gloam-
ing,
Tenements on either side, stark and tall and gray --
Ah, the folk who line your halls wander far away,
All a crowded city slum is a-gypsy roaming!)

Woman with the brooding gaze, hear the lilting
laughter
Of the children that you loved, feel their soft-
lipped kisses;
Think of all the little joys that a hard world
misses-
What though bitter loneliness always follows after?

Gangster with the shifty eyes, listen to the sighing
Of the hymn tune that you heard at your mother's
knee;
Listen to the restless ghost of the used-to-be,
Listen to a wistful ghost's empty-hearted crying.

(Tenements on either side -- menacing they stand --
Light-flecked in the softness of the late spring
weather. . . .
But young love and broken life are standing close
together,
And all a city slum is out to listen to the band.)

III. THE ORGAN MAN

He's very old, his music box is old and rusty, too,
And half the notes of it are harsh, and half of
them are slow;
One wonders if the coat he wears could ever have
been new --
And if the tune he plays was quite forgotten long
ago.

He finds a sunny place to stand, and lifts his bleary
eyes,
And smiles a bit -- a toothless smile half touched,
perhaps, with fear;
And though he cannot see them he is looking at the
skies,
As if he prays, but silently, for hope and faith
and cheer.

The foreign women pass him by, their tarnished coins
held tight,
They toss their heads and will not hear his music's
wistful hum --
But through each alley way and street, like moths
that seek the light,
With eager eyes and laughing lips the little chil-
dren come.

He plays his ancient, shaky song, his mouth moves to
its sway,
He does not know the tune of it is old and out of
key;
For, through his eyes, a soul stares out that wanders
far away,
In some fair land of youth and love -- some land
that used to be.

The little children cluster close, bareheaded, bare of
limb --
They hold their ragged frocks and dance, they do
not care -- or know,
That they are like a garden place, a fragrant dream
to him,
Or that the tune he plays was quite forgotten long
ago.

"BE OF GOOD CHEER!"

Temptation came to me today,
And oh, I felt that I must stray
Down primrose paths, forgetting all. . . .
The city's fevered, siren call
Spoke to my soul, its whispered cry
Said, "Live, for Youth, too soon, will die!"

So all alone, when work was done,
I sought the park. The setting sun
Had left a bit of warmth for me --
I found a bench beneath a tree,
And sat and thought.

My life is hard,
Sometimes my heart seems battle-scarred,
With longings keen, and bitter fears,
And want, and suffering, and tears.

Temptation spoke, and Youth spoke back;
The night seemed cold and grimly black,
And every light was like a star
That cleft the sky -- they were so far,
So very far away! And I
Was lonely, there, beneath the sky. . . .

There used to be a little farm
A tiny place, remote from harm;
There used to be a mother frail
And sweet, with hair as silver-pale
As the faint moon. She heard me say
The words when first I learned to pray. . . .

Above me in the silent trees,
I heard the rustles of the breeze,
It sounded like her step, as light
As dreams across an endless night.
My mother --

Ah, the name so sweet,
Brought memories on noiseless feet,
And softly in the darkness, there,
I breathed my little childhood prayer. . . .

Do prayers have answers? As I prayed
A Presence came, and gently laid
A Hand upon my arm. I knew
That Someone kind, and good, and true
Was very near. Upon my soul
A peace swept down, and left it whole.
I felt a calm steal over me,
The same that stilled the troubled sea
Where Jesus walked.

My fears were laid,
Temptation left me unafraid.
And as I smiled, there in the park,
A voice spoke through the fragrant dark.
"Be of good cheer!" the words rang out
Like music through the city's shout.

And all the lights that I could see
Were stars of home, a gleam for me!

FROM MY ROOM

I love you, dear. . . .
Here, alone in my room tonight, it is all that matters,
Out through my window, vaguely hushed, the city
clatters,
Telling ever its tale of woe and mirth,
Sighing ever its song of death and birth,
Singing ever its potent, mad refrain,
Swept with tears and the bitter weight of pain.

Here in my room I kneel, alone, to pray,
But there seems very little, dear, to say
Even to God. So, kneeling by my bed,
I think dim thoughts, and dream long dreams instead.
Wide-eyed I kneel and watch the candle flame,
Making swift shadows on the wall; your name
Throbs in my heart, and makes my pulse to thrill --
Wide-eyed I kneel, with soul a-light, until
Somewhere a clock starts chiming. . . . It is
late. . . .
Out through the dark wan tenderness and hate
Press pale kisses upon the city's lips --
Dawn comes creeping, the weary nighttime slips
Furtively by, like some hurt thief with plunder. . . .
Dear, I cross to my window, and I wonder
Whether you are asleep, or if you lie,
Sleepless beneath the smoke-hung purple sky. . . .

Down in the streets the tired city vaguely clatters,

Here alone in my room I stand, and nothing matters,
Only. . . I love you!

THE BALCONY SCENES

The stage is set, like a garden,
And the lights are flickering and low;
And a Romeo with fat legs,
Is telling a Juliet with dyed hair and tired,
 disillusioned eyes,
That love -- real love -- is the only thing in the world.

And up in the balcony of the theatre
Where the seats cost twenty-five cents,
A slim little girl in a shiny serge frock,
And a boy with a wistful mouth
Are holding hands.
And as they listen, breathlessly, to the studied voice
 of the actor,
Their fingers are all a-thrill,
With the music of the ages.

A BOWERY PAWN-SHOP

A dusty, musty little shop set in a dingy street,
A doorsill old and scarred and worn by many tired
 feet,
A row of cases, vaguely glassed, a safe against the
 wall,
And, oh, the ache of many hearts -- the fabric of it
 all!

A violin with broken strings that fingers have
 caressed,
A diamond-set betrothal ring that lover's lips have
 pressed,
A high shell comb, a spangled fan, a filmy bit of lace,
A heart-shaped locket, ribbon-tied, that frames a
 laughing face.

A pair of blankets folded up, an overcoat, a shawl,
A tall old clock that might have chimed in some
 wainscoted hall,
And in the farthest corner, where the purple shadows
 lie,
The echo of a woman's sob, the phantom of a sigh.

Ah, wedding-rings -- a score of them -- not many of
 them new,

A grim revolver laid beside a baby's tiny shoe,
A satin coat, a ragged gown, a gold-clasped book of
 verse,
A necklace of bedraggled pearls, an empty silver
 purse.

A dreary weary little shop set in a sunless place.
A little shop where love has met with sorrow and
 disgrace. . . .
A row of cases, double-locked, a safe against the wall;
And, oh, the ache of countless hearts that lies
 behind it all!

SPRING IN THE CITY

I saw a crocus blooming in the park,
 I felt a hint of magic in the air,
 I heard faint music sighing everywhere,
And so, as all the world, grew softly dark --

I found again the hope that never dies,
 And hungrily, with out-flung arms, I came
 Once more to you. And when you spoke my
 name
I read springtime eternal in your eyes!

ROSE PETALS IN THE EARLY RAIN, FORGOTTEN DREAMS, AND A TORN SKETCH BOOK!

LI'L EMPTY CLOSET

There's a li'l empty closet in a li'l empty room,
 Where th' shadows lie like dust upon th' floor;
It uster be HIS closet not s' very long ago --
 That's why I don't go near it any more.
Every li'l hook is empty, 'ceptin' one, an' from it
 hangs
 (Th' whitest li'l ghost that ever grew
In a heart that's near ter breakin' with it's agony o'
 grief!)
 An empty flannel nightie piped with blue.

Jus' a li'l flannel nightie that was shrunken in th'
 wash,
 In spots th' blue has ran inter th' white;
But I've seen him in it, sleepy, when I tucked th'

covers in,
An' kissed him, soft, an took away th' light.
Jus' a li'l flannel nightie, hangin' empty on a hook,
As if it was ashamed -- or in disgrace --
Jus' a li'l flannel nightie an' it ain't no use no more,
But I couldn't bear t' take it from its place!

Jus' a li'l empty closet in a li'l empty room,
Where th' shadows lie like dust upon th' floor --
It uster be his closet, where I'd put his clothes away,
That's why I hate ter go there any more.
But I've left his li'l nightie hangin' on a single hook,
I sorter had ter leave it there, I guess;
Ah, that li'l empty closet in that li'l empty room
Is crowded -- crowded ful o' loneliness!

TWO LULLABYS

I. To A DREAM BABY

Oh, little child whose face I cannot see,
I feel your presence very near tonight,
I feel the warmth of you creep close to me. . .
The grey moths drift across the candlelight,
And tiny shadows sway across the floor,
Like wistful elves who do a fairy dance;
The wind is tapping softly at the door,
And rain is beating, like a silver lance,
Against the tightly curtained window pane.
Oh, little child whose face I cannot see,
The loneliness, the twilight, and the rain,
Have brought your dearness very close to me.
And though I rock with empty arms, I sing
A lullaby that I have made to croon
Into your drowsy shadow ear -- a song
About the star sheep and the shepherd moon!

II. POPPY LAND

Sleep, little tired eyes, close to the heart of me,
Sleep while the sun trembles low in the west;
You who are dream of my dreams, and a part of
me --
Sleep with your head lying warm on my breast.

Dear, there's a land that is filled with red flowers,
Poppies, they call them, that sway in the breeze;
Sometimes their petals, in soft scarlet showers,

Fall in warm drifts that are high as your
knees. . . .
Dear, in your dreams you will laugh as you roll
through them,
Waving your arms in an effort to creep;
Gently they nod as the wind sings its soul through
them,
Sleep, little tired eyes, sleep. . . .

Dear, in this land there's a sky like a feather,
Blue in some places, or white as a star;
And there's a fragrance -- a plant that's called heather
Grows in the spot where the butterflies are.
Dear, there are pastures as gay as glad laughter,
Dotted with hundreds of woolly white sheep,
Dear, you can pat them, for they'll follow after
You, as you sleep. . . .

Dream, little tired eyes, close to the breast of me,
Wander in fields where red flowers are gloaming;
All of my heart wanders with you, the rest of me
Watches your dreaming. . . .

I DREAMED YOUR FACE

I dreamed your face, one night, when Heaven seemed
resting,
Against the troubled fever of the earth;
I dreamed that vivid throated birds were nesting,
In trees that shook with elfin-hearted mirth.
I dreamed that star-like purple flowers were springing
A-throb with perfume all about the place,
And that there was a far-off sound of singing --
And then -- I dreamed your face!

I dreamed your face, and then I waked from
dreaming,
(The creeping dawn seemed very cold and bare!)
The rising sun seemed pallid in its beaming,
Because its coming did not find you there!
And I -- I rose despondent in the morning,
As one whose burning thirst has not been slaked;
I dreamed your face, a wonder world adorning,
And then -- I waked.

And so I went upon a quest to find you,
A quest that led through many bitter years;
I journeyed far with strands of love to bind you,
And found, not you, but bitterness and tears --
So I returned, discouraged, through the gloaming,
My shoulders bowed with weariness unguessed;

I came back, unsuccessful, from my roaming --
My sorry quest!

I had a bit of garden that I tended,
It helped me dream, again, my dream of you --
It was a joyous place of colors blended --
A place where pansies and Sweet William grew.
And one bright day I hummed as I was planting
A border row of flowers slim and fair,
And raised my eyes to see pale sunlight slanting
Across your hair!

ANSWER

I am myself -- you cannot take my dreams
And pull the filmy stuff of them apart!
I am myself -- and life IS what it seems.
I am myself, and love is in my heart!
You cannot make me think by fast set rule,
You cannot laugh beliefs like mine away,
Experience MAY be a bitter school,
And yet. . . . The golden sun shines every day,
And stars at night lend magic to the sky,
And all the world is vividly a-glow,
You cannot make me pause to question why
For we who dare to dream have learned to know!

THE WORLD IS RIGHT! There is a friendly One
Who smiles when we have tried to do our part --
I will not flinch, my journey's just begun. . . .
I AM MYSELF -- YOU CANNOT BREAK MY HEART!

A BABY'S HANDS

God made the rivers, the hills, and the seas,
God made the flowers, the grass, and the trees;
God made the clouds, and the waves, silver-crested,
Then God made the hands of a baby -- and rested!

How did He make them? Well, nobody knows --
Some say He dreamed of the bud of a rose,
And that He woke as the dawn swept away
Night in the dancing pink promise of day.

Maybe He thought of the light of a star,
(That's why He made them as soft as they are!)
Maybe He watched while a new butterfly,
Light as a sunbeam, went fluttering by.

Maybe He walked in a garden, dew-kissed,
That's why He made them as frail as the mist --
Then as He leaned from His heaven above,
God made them strong as His greatest gift -- LOVE!

God made the mountains -- we wonder at these --
God made the splendor of sunsets and trees;
God made vast mines where a world's wealth is piled,
Then God made the hands of a baby -- and smiled!

ALL ALONG THE BROAD HIGHWAY

All along the broad highway the little dreams were
growing,
White as hope, and red as life, and bluer than the
sea --

All along the broad highway I felt their petals
blowing,

Like a storm of fragrant snow across the lips of
me!

So I danced with joyous heart, and bent above them
singing.

So I skipped along the road and smiled into the
skies;

ALL ALONG THE BROAD HIGHWAY THE LITTLE DREAMS WERE
SPRINGING,
FRAGRANT AS THE DEW OF STARS AND GLAD AS BUTTERFLIES!

All along the broad highway I danced and sang unheeding,
Till One came with haughty step and traveled by
my side;

Traveled first beside my path then, suddenly, was
leading --

One who drew me after him and murmured, "I AM
PRIDE!"

All along the broad highway I hurried, ever faster,
Faster through the purple dust that blinded like
a mist,

Blinded me until I felt that only Pride was master,
(And I saw the little dreams through clouds of
amethyst!)

All along the broad highway I toiled, no longer
glancing

Anywhere but straight ahead . . . I had no
heart to sing --

All along the broad highway, my feet no longer
dancing;

Followed I the steps of Pride, and felt the thick
dust sting

In the tired eyes of me . . . the eyes too sad for
weeping!
Still I struggled -- struggled on until quite
suddenly --
All the strength that kept me up seemed drowsy,
almost sleeping --
And I paused with drooping head and lo, Pride
went from me!

All along the broad highway the silent dusk was
stealing,
Quite alone I stood and stared about me in the
gloom;
And the voice of me was still, and my heart was
kneeling
Like a weary pilgrim soul in an attic room.
And I stretched my empty hands to where the ghostly
lighting,
Showed a crumpled mist of blue, a heap of white
and red --
There along the broad highway like armies after
fighting,
All the gallant little dreams were lying gaunt and
dead!

MY MOTHER

My mother's kinder chubby -- she's fat, th' fellers
say --
My mother's kinder chubby, but I like her that a-way!
'Cause she's awful sorter jolly, an' she makes th'
bestest pies,
An' she laughs when I'm a-jokin' 'till th' tears are in
her eyes.
An' she pats me on th' shoulder when I'm feelin'
sad an' blue,
An' whispers, "Little feller, yer mother's proud o'
you!"

She don't wear silks 'at rustle, like Tommie's mother
does,
But I like her gingham better 'cause it's -- well, just
'cause it's hers!
An' she don't look young an' girl-like, an' her hands
are sorter red,
But, my, they're awful gentle when she tucks you
inter bed. . . .
She hasn't got a di'mond like th' lady crost th' street,
But she's got two great big dimples, an' her smile is
mighty sweet!

My mother's sorter chubby -- but say, her step is
light --
She's never cross 'r tired -- not even when it's night!
An' her shoulders JUST as comfy when yer heart is
feelin' sore,
When you wish you was a baby -- an' not a boy no
more --
Oh, her arms are cushion tender at th' twilight time
o' day,
Yes -- my mother's sorter chubby -- But I like her that
a-way!

HEREDITY

You told me, last night,
In a strange and sudden burst of confidence;
That a New England ancestor of yours,
Had burned witches --
And at last I knew. . . .

Why your eyes are always so grim,
And why your mouth is cut,
In a straight line,
And why you can never see beauty and mirth
In the sweep of wind over a wheat field,
Or in the sunlight on a baby's hair.
At last I knew
Why you can never see romance
In the long gypsie trail,
Or magic,
In the still purple woods.

I knew why life,
To you,
Was something to be struggled with,
Not a glorious adventure;
And why death was the end of things,
And not the beginning.
And I knew at last,
Why you could never understand,
That tears may cover laughter,
And that laughter may be a veil
For tears.

You told me, last night,
That an ancestor of yours,
Had burned witches,
And, oh, as I sat in the candlelight,
Watching you,

I couldn't help wishing,
That somewhere behind you, in the shadows,

There was another ancestor --
A gay cavalier ancestor --
Who rode hard,
And fought with his sword,
And wore his hat, rakishly,
On the back of his head,
And knew -- love.

APRIL

I had not meant to love again -- all that was lost to
me,
For I had felt love's fear and pain, as well as ecstasy;
I closed my heart, and locked the door, and tossed
away the key.

All through the winter-time I sat before my flaming
fire,
And listened to the sleigh-bells chime, and watched
the flames leap higher,
To grasp at shadows, sombre-hued, with fiendish, red
desire.

And then mad April came again -- I felt the breezes
blowing,
And I forgot the fear, the pain. . . . I only knew
that, glowing,
In shady nook and garden spot, pale hyacinths were
growing.

And when across the perfumed lea (for nothing could
defeat him!)
My vagrant love crept back to me . . . I did not
mean to greet him;
But April opened up my heart, and, oh, I ran to
meet him!

THE DESERT PATH -- SEVEN SONNETS

I.

The camel tracks led whitely across the desert sand,
And one came riding after with furtive mystery;
Ah, one came swiftly riding, a dagger in his hand,

And he was bent on plunder -- a nomad thief was he!
He did not heed the starshine that glimmered from
on high,
For laden beasts had traveled along the lonely way.
He did not see the glory that swept the Eastern sky,
For he had far to journey before the dawn of day.

He followed through the desert, and then at last he
saw
An inn upon the outskirts of some small village place;
And there were camels resting before the stable
door --
He left his horse, crept nearer, with greed upon his
face;
And peering o'er the threshold, he saw that gold was
piled,
With precious stones and incense, before a little
Child.

II.

A thief he was by calling, who to the stable came,
A thief whose youthful fingers had learned to steal
their fill;
A thief he was who valued his heritage of shame,
YET STANDING BY THAT DOORWAY, HE DID NOT WANT TO
KILL!
A thief he was, but -- watching, -- he saw a Baby face,
And, bending near, a Mother, whose joy was undefiled;
And for one breathless moment across the stable
space,
The Baby's eyes gazed at him -- AND THEN THE BABY
SMILED!

A thief he was by calling, but there beside the door
He saw a Holy Vision -- he knelt and tried to pray --
And something, thrilling, whispered of love forever-
more --
And then he rose, half weeping -- and it was Christmas Day!
A thief he was by calling, who felt the Father's plan,
But back across the desert there silent rode a man!

III.

The years are met as milestones upon a winding road,
And some slip by like shadows, and some are fair
with flowers;
And some seem dreary, hopeless -- a leaden chain of
hours --
And some are like a heart-throb, and some a heavy
load,

The thief, a thief no longer, a lonely figure strode
Heart-weary down life's pathway, through tempest
and through showers,
But always prayed that somewhere among sweet-
scented bowers,
A Baby's smile might show him where happiness
abode.

For he was often hungry -- a thief, reformed, must
eat --
And there were folk who shunned him, and turned
his plea away;
And there were those who scourged him from out
the market place --
(They were the ones who told him to earn his bread
and meat!)
Yet ever he walked onward, and dreamed of some
fair day
When he would find the Christ-Child with love upon
His face!

IV.

Where work lay for the asking it seemed that men
MIGHT work,
But prejudice was rampant in every shop and field;
And, "What if you ARE trying, MY scythe you may
not wield!"
Men told the thief, who answered -- "Indeed, I will
not shirk!"
And carpenters and builders turned from him with
a smirk,
And farmers hurried by him to house the harvest's
yield.
And so he took his dagger, all rusted, and his shield,
And sought again the highway where thieves and
jackals lurk.

And yet the spark of manhood still flamed within his
heart,
And still he saw the Baby, beyond the stable door;
And oftentimes at even, as crimson daytime died,
He knelt, a sorry figure, from all of life apart.
And, "Oh, if I could see Him -- and feel His love
once more,
"If I could see Him smiling, I would not steal!" he
cried.

V.

It was a glowing ruby that caused the thief to fall,

But -- he was very hungry, and lonely, too, and cold;
And youth lay all behind him, a tattered funeral
pall,
For he was very tired, and he was growing old.
It was a glowing ruby that lay upon the breast
Of one who had not earned it, who wore it with a
sneer;
The thief was very weary, he only longed for rest;
He was too wan for caring, he was too numb for fear!

It was a glowing ruby -- he held it in his hand --
His hand was thin and withered, it shook beneath
the gem;
He took the vivid ruby, the ransom of a land,
And tied it firmly, tightly, within his garment's hem;
And then he shuffled forward, but like a thorn
within
His soul he bore the torment of bitterness and sin!

VI.

They caught him when the morning had tinged the
Eastern skies;
The gem was found upon him, as red as guilty blood;
He stood, his head sunk forward, with listless, shal-
low eyes,
And hopelessness submerged him like some unholy
flood;
A Thief he was by calling. The law? The law
was great;
What chance had he for pity? His fate was sealed
and done;
He was unclean, an outcast, a menace to the state;
A thing to be avoided, a stain against the sun!

They led him to his hearing, the hall was still and
light;
A judge was seated higher, who passed him with a
glance;
And suddenly, forgetting his weariness and fright,
The thief cried, leaping forward, "I did not have a
chance!"
The judgment hall was spacious, and coldly white
and wide --
And coldly came the sentence -- "He shall be crucified!"

VII.

They nailed him, God's creation, upon a cross of
shame;
They nailed him up with laughter, they heeded not

his tears;
And people looking at him were moved to soulless
jeers,
And agony was on him -- a searing, breathless flame!
And then, as he hung sobbing, a sudden feeling came
Of peace that, reaching toward him across the sound
of sneers,
Was like a burst of music that one more feels than
hears --
For, from somewhere beside him, a Voice had
breathed his name.

Ah, he was weak with anguish, and yet he turned his
head,
And saw a cross beside him, and on the cross a Form;
And he forgot the tumult, the horror and the storm --
And someone, down below him, said, "Look, the thief
is dead!"
But, safe from fear and torture beyond their scornful cries,
The thief had gazed at Heaven in Christ's triumphant
eyes!

SUMMER SONG

If I might go with my True Love,
To some far, dream-swept land,
I'd be content to sit all day
Upon the silver sand,
And watch the sea come creeping in,
The sighing, singing sea --
If I might go to some far land,
And take True Love with me!

If I could go with my True Love,
To some far, lonely place;
The world might well be lost, and I
Could look upon Love's face.
And wealth would seem a little thing,
While happiness might be --
If I could go to some far land,
And take True Love with me.

Ah, Love would smile, and ruffle up,
The hair above my brow;
And we would laugh at all that seems
So very sober, now.
And monkey-folk, and scarlet birds,
Would peer from every tree,
And try to understand the words
My True Love said to me!

If I might go with my True Love,
To some far, dream-swept land;
I would not miss the world, for I
Could always touch Love's hand,
And feel the magic of his lips --
Oh, by the singing sea,
And Eden-place would bloom a-new
For my True Love and me!

COMPREHENSION -- A MOTHER'S SONG

I KNOW HOW MARY FELT, THERE IN THE HAY,
MY LITTLE SON WAS BORN ON CHRISTMAS DAY!

I know, as she bent tenderly above Him,
She did not think of majesty or power,
For he was hers -- and she was there to love Him!
His hands, as pinkly tinted as a flower,
Seemed all too small to carve His deathless story --
What though a star gleamed glorious to guide
Him?
She snatched Him to her breast as if to hide Him
From harm, and fear, and even -- yes, from glory.

And when the wise men came to give their treasure,
She smiled at them as proud as any queen;
She scarcely saw the jewels in countless measure,
The gold that gleamed; her gaze was far, serene,
Upon the hills where shepherds watched, alone.
She did not think of crosses or of dying,
For He was just a drowsy baby, lying
Wrapped in her love -- A baby -- all her own!

I KNOW HOW MARY FELT, THERE IN THE HAY,
MY LITTLE SON WAS BORN ON CHRISTMAS DAY!

SINGING ON THE MARCH

God put a song into my heart one day,
A little song as light as ocean foam,
A little song of love and hope and home,
A little song to cheer me on my way.

And though I bowed beneath the load I bore,
I found that, when I sang, the way was bright,
And that my footsteps swifter grew, and light;
And all my life seemed fairer than before.

God has a song that fits in every heart,
And though that song may seem a tiny thing,
It is your task -- so forge ahead, and SING --
And you will find that you have done your part!

EASTER

He came to call last night --
And we began to talk, as young folk will,
Half carelessly, and half in awe, of God.
It was the springtime, and the night was still
And fragrant, all about us.
And the sod
Was fresh with tender grass,
And overhead a crescent moon shone bright.
And, "God," he said, "Has built the world on laws,
"Like some great watch, and every breathing space
"Is measured; and the system has no flaws,
"And nothing moves from its appointed place.
"God is the Master Scientist," he said,
His voice was bold and had a ring of truth --
But God seemed ponderous, and far away. . . .

And then a gentle breeze danced overhead,
And caused the timid, new-born leaves to sway,
And we began to talk of love, and youth.

And then, I sent him home, and went upstairs,
To my still room, and flung the windows wide;
And as I knelt to say my evening prayers
I saw the stars, far smiling, in the sky.
And, all at once, I knew the reason why
I worshipped God . . . knew why He had sent
His son to save the world from sin and shame;
And, suddenly, like some sweet, healing tide,
The meaning of my life swept over me;
And, through the dark, my groping soul could see
The Christ Who loved us, and was crucified.

And, as I knelt and watched the star's faint shine,
I felt God's hand, a moment, touching mine!

RESURRECTION

You took the lilt from my heart of hearts,
And the breath of song from my soul;
And the mind of me that had once been free
And buoyantly young, and whole;

Grew calm and still as a barren sea,
Where never a star beam shone,
A sea where never a ripple danced --
That reflected your face along.

I walked in a daze down well-worn paths --
Paths that your feet had trod;
I thought your thoughts and I spoke your tongue,
I knelt to your hostile God.
And the dreams that had been a part of me,
I tossed with a sigh away,
And left to rust in the misty dust
Of the land called Yesterday.

My hands lay folded in slim repose,
Quite as you bade them rest;
Folded, meek, o'er the leaden heart
That tortured my gypsie breast.
And I smiled with my lips -- my eyes were numb --
I smiled for I never knew,
That the mind of me was a lifeless sea,
Reflecting the face of you!

You took the lilt from my carefree life,
And the song from my singing heart;
But there came a day when the world grew gray,
When I knew that we must part. . . .
So I tore you out of your soul-bound shrine --
And, oh, though it caused me pain,
I raised my face to the sky and knew
That my song would come again!

THE QUEEN

"Barefooted came the beggar maid,"
So ran the minstrel's lay --
"Barefooted came the beggar maid
"Before the King Corpethua."
But, oh, her face was like a light,
Her hair was black as middle night,
And whispers ran from left to right --
"She is more beautiful than day!"

"In robe and crown the king stepped down,"
So ran the minstrel's lay --
"In robe and crown the king stepped down,
"To meet and greet her by the way."
And so the beggar maid became,
A Queen, but just a queen in name,
For, with her gypsie eyes aflame,
Her mirror heard her say --

I was a beggar maid, I used to lie
Silent and unafraid, beneath the sky,
And watch the stars -- my little sisters, they,
I used to wake at dawning time of day
To plunge my body in some mountain stream --
I was a beggar maid!

Is this a dream,
This golden crown I wear upon my head?
This robe of royal purple and of red,
This rope of pearls, this ring, these silken shoon?

Not long ago the silver crescent moon
Was like a hand that beckoned me to stray,
And cities seemed vast centuries away;
And as my feet -- swift feet, they were, and light --
Carried me through the wonder of the night,
I never thought of kings, or kingly power --
My life was all one splendid, singing hour!

I love my king -- He raised me from the dust,
And looked at me with wonder, and with trust;
My hair hung, tangled, to the waist of me,
He brushed it from my eyes, that he might see
Deep into them!

He set me on his steed,
He never knew my name, or asked my creed,
He just believed in me -- and told me so.
I love my king, I love him well, but, oh --
Once I wore poppies, red upon my brow,
(A crown seems very heavy to me, now,)
And once I wore, for all the world to see
A gown of rags. (Now, velvets stifle me!)
And once my hands (how soft they are!) were strong
To toil for me.

The days seem very long
While I must sit in state above the land --
I love my king . . . But does he understand?
I was a beggar maid, I used to lie
Silent and unafraid beneath the sky --
And, now that I am queen, my being longs
To hear, once more, the little slumber songs
Of night birds nesting in some forest tree --
I want to be myself, again, and free!
I want to climb the crest of some great hill,
And watch the sunset clouds, again, and thrill
Before the color of them! I would stand
Alone, once more, and see the wistful land
Take on the tint of twilight.

I would pray
My gypsy prayer, again, at close of day!

I love my king -- for he has given me

Rare pearls, the treasure of a sighing sea,
And rubies, red as sunset clouds a-glow
And opals like the wistful winds that blow
At twilight-time.

But I would wear, instead,
Wild forest flowers, twined about my head --
And I would dance, barefooted, on the sod,
An innovation to my pagan God!

Am I a queen? What is this crown I wear?
I tear it from my smoothly plaited hair --
I lay my ring, my rope of pearls, aside;
Am I a queen -- am I a monarch's bride?
The soul of me is still a gypsie thing --
I pull them off, the glowing gems, the ring. . . .

I love my king, I love him well -- but, oh,
GIVE ME MY RAGS, AGAIN, AND LET ME GO!

FRAGMENTS

A WITHERED ROSE

A book of verse,
And one withered rose
Between two pages. . . .

My love is as faded as the petals,
But still faintly fragrant
With sweet memories.

ASHES OF LOVE

Dust on the letters you sent me
And I did not know that they had been forgotten.

Does it mean that I love again?

IT'S LOTS OF FUN --

It's lots of fun to play around,
To dance and sing;
And not be tied to anyone,
Or anything!

It's lots of fun to live my life,
Beneath the sky;

To have no one who owns the right
To question "Why"?

It's lots of fun to come and go,
Through storm and strife,
With no one by my side who hopes
To mould my life.

(But sometimes at the twilight time,
When night birds cry;
I dream, perhaps, that something fair
Has passed me by!)

And yet -- it's good to play around,
To laugh and sing;
And not be tied to anyone,
Or anything!

VALENTINE

I wonder if you know, up there in heaven,
That I have kept your roses, crumpled now.
I wonder if you guess that still I treasure
A faded ribbon that once touched your brow.
I wonder if you dream, as dusk is falling,
Of how I read that note you sent to me.
I wonder if you think, up there in heaven,
Of all the golden days that used to be.

I wonder if you smile up there in heaven,
And pass by, lightly, in your robes of white;
Or if you sometimes think of me a little.
You seem so near, so very near tonight.
I wonder if that last shy kiss I gave you
Can make you lonely, just a bit, for me.
I wonder if you long, up there in heaven,
For all the golden plans that used to be.

Do they have valentines up there in heaven?
A love like mine is surely strong to go
The little way from earth to where you wait me,
Although it be beyond the stars' faint glow.
I want you dear; my tired heart is calling;
My eyes are searching, though they may not see;
I wonder if you're lonely, there in heaven,
For all the golden dreams that used to be.

THE SACRIFICE

I started out in a cloak of pride,
With talent, too, that I did not hide;
I started out on Life's stony road,
Ambition's weight was my only load,
And the way seemed fair in the dawn's first glow,
And I hurried -- ran -- FOR I DID NOT KNOW!

Love smiled from a garden by the way,
And called to me, but I would not stray
From the road that stretched like a ribbon white,
Up endless hills to an endless night.
Love smiled at me, but I pushed ahead,
And love fell back in the garden -- dead --
But I did not care as I hastened by,
And I did not pause for regret or sigh. . . .
The road before was a path of hope,
And every hill with its gentle slope
Led up to heights I had dreamed and prayed
To reach some day --

Ah! I might have stayed
With Love and Youth in the garden gay,
That smiled at me from beside the way.

I plodded up, and the gentle hills
Grew hard to climb, and the laughing rills
Were torrents peopled with sodden forms;
The sky grew black with the threat of storms,
And rocks leaped out and they bruised my feet,
And faint I grew in the fever heat.
(But ever on led the path that lay
As grey as dust in the waning day.)
My back was bent, and my heart was sore,
And the cloak of pride that I grandly wore
Was rent and patched and not fair to see --
Ambition, talent, seemed naught to me. . . .
But I struggled on 'till I reached the top,
FOR ONLY THEN DID I DARE TO STOP!

I stood on the summit gazing down,
And the earth looked sordid and dull and brown,
And neutral-tinted and neutral-souled;
And all of life seemed a story told,
And the only spot that was bright to see
Was a patch of green that had bloomed for me
Where a garden lived in a spring long fled,
When Love stood smiling --

BUT LOVE WAS DEAD!

TO A CERTAIN ROOM

Your room is still the dainty little place,
That used to seem so much a part of you --
The draperies of faded rose and blue
Still hold a shadow of their former grace.
The windows still are hung with frosty lace,
And sometimes, when the moonlight glimmers
through,
I watch your mirror, half expecting to
See once again, reflected there, your face!

And yet, the little room seems much too neat,
It seems quite colorless, and very bare,
Because the filmy things you used to wear
Are laid away. Because the perfume sweet
That clung about you has been swept aside. . . .
Your room is there -- but, oh, its soul has died!

OTHER DAYS

I wonder if you ever dream of other days,
Because, sometimes, at twilight when the sunset
plays
Half wistfully across the polished oaken floor,
I see you smiling -- standing in your place once more.

(Do you remember little things we used to say?
They wouldn't mean so very much to us to-day. . . .
Do you remember how I wore a gown of blue,
Because it brought the haze of autumn clouds to you?
Do you remember how I said you didn't care --
And how you laughed at me and rumbled up my
hair?
Do you remember how the tears stood in my eyes
At your good-by when darkness overhung the skies?)

I wonder if you ever dream of other days?
Because, sometimes at twilight when the sunset plays
Half wistfully across your empty cozy-chair,
I turn and half expect to see you smiling there!

THIS IS TO YOU, DEAR,
TO YOU, UNKNOWING;
JUST AS THE SOUTH WIND
WISTFULLY BLOWING
TOUCHES SOME FLOWER --

SO IS MY SONG, DEAR,
THROUGH EVERY HOUR,
ALL THE DAY LONG, DEAR,
TO YOU, UNKNOWING!

AT TWILIGHT

You came to me through the candlelight,
When the world, outside, was grey. . . .
You came to me through the candlelight
When the day was done, and the misty night
Crept through the land.

 And your eyes were bright,
And they seemed to laugh and pray.
You came to me through the candlelight,
And you took my hands, and you held them tight,
And you didn't speak, but, dear, I KNEW --
And my heart and my soul were part of you.

You came to me through the candlelight,
When the world, outside, was grey;
And I looked in your eyes and, glowing there,
I saw a hope and I read a prayer;
And I knew, at last, that I didn't care,
If life were a troubled, weary way,
As long as I walked with you.
You came to me, at the close of day,
Through the candlelight -- when the world was grey --
And dreams of Heaven seemed strangely new. . . .
And I told you, dear, to stay!

THERE ARE SUCH WEARY LITTLE LINES

There are such weary little lines about the mouth of
 you,
Such tragic little mirthless lines -- they mock at
 dreams come true,
And twist your lips when you would smile, until all
 joy is dead,
And I, who want to laugh with you, am fain to
 weep instead!

There are such dreary little lines about the mouth of
 you,
They make me want to whisper that summer sky is
 blue,
And that the rain is like a lance of silver through
 the air,
And that the flowers in the lane are growing tall
 and fair!

There are such tired little lines about the mouth of

you --
As if you thought that life was cold and loving
friends were few. . . .
They are such lonely little lines I think that I, some
day,
Will creep close to you in the dusk, and kiss them
quite away!

THREE SONGS OF AWAKENING

1.

The flowers spring from the broken heart,
Of the frozen winter sod --
Rending their prison bars apart,
They smile in the face of God!

The birds sweep up to the wind-blown plain,
E'er ever the land knows spring;
To sway on a budding branch again,
To challenge the world, and sing!

And I with my tired eyes a-dance,
And my weary heart a-flame;
Have felt the call of the old romance,
And thrilled to a whispered name!

2.

I saw a sky as blue as eyes I know,
I felt a breeze, as soft as kisses, blow;
And, dear, I saw one golden sunbeam creep
From Heaven, lighting all the world below,
Like love that wakens, dewy-eyed, from sleep!

3.

We who have wondered know the answer, now;
For Spring stands, joyous, on the purple brow
Of the far hill; and doubt is swept away,
And all the mirth-mad world makes holiday!

We who have wandered long, and half afraid,
Find answer in each dreaming woodland glade;
HEARTS THAT HAVE BROKEN MAY BE BOUND TOGETHER,
WHEN SPRING HAS TRIUMPHED OVER WINTER WEATHER!

IN A CANOE

Starlight, and the silver lake
Clasp the skies --
And two nearer, dearer stars,
Your eyes!

Elfin voices seem to call
Through the night,
But your arms are warm, and they
Hold me tight.

Pallidly the moon slides down,
Hour by hour slips;
Ah, the deathless magic of
Your lips!

Dark the shadows as we creep
Past the shore --
Dear, that we might drift like this
Evermore!

CAPTIVE-HEART

Now that the day is done I am ready to greet you,
Smiling, the way that I know you would have me
smile;
I will open the door, and will run down the walk
to meet you,
As if I had missed you, dear, for a weary while!
I will listen, breathless, the while you tell of your
toiling,
All day long in the dust and the city's heat;
And, dear, you will never know that my blood is
boiling --
Back of the smile that is calm and tenderly sweet.

You will never know that the soul of me, dear, is
flying,
Out where the seagull dips in the ocean's foam;
You will never know that something of me is dying,
Every night as I smile and welcome you home.
You will never know that my heart is soaring above
you --
You will be content with my mask of a smile --
KNOWING I LOVE YOU!

EVENING SONG

I do not want to be worshipped,
From a distance;
Like some idol carved in wood,
Or stone.
I want to be loved
As every real woman
Wants to be loved!

And so. . . .
Lay aside the book that you are reading from --
What if Leander did swim the Hellespont?
And what if burning Sappho
Did sing?
What do I care for
Launcelot and Elaine,
Or Tristram and Isolt,
Or Aucassin and Nicholette?

Lay aside the book that you are reading from,
And cross the room quickly,
And take my cold hands between your two
Warmer ones. . . .
And here, in the vivid dusk,
We will make our own love songs!

AFTER A DAY OF WAITING

All day long I waited -- waited with soul aflame --
And then through the still of evening, humming a
tune, you came;
Came with a jest on your smiling lips, and eyes that
were all too gay;
And the light died out of my waiting heart with the
words that I could not say.

We laughed through the star-flecked twilight -- what
though my laugh was strained?
You, who were there beside me, laughed with a mirth
unfeigned!
And at last when I bade you leave me you went, and
you never knew
That with soul aflame I had waited, all through the
day, for you.

INTANGIBLE

Dear, you are like the summer dusk to me,

The summer dusk when all the world seems still;
When purple shadows creep along the hill,
And birds are softly crooning in each tree.
You are the gentle-cool-eyed mystery
Of twilight hours. Sometime I think you will
Melt from me out into the dark, until
You turn to star-shine, silvering the sea.

Dear, even when your head is on my breast,
You seem no nearer than a moonbeam thrown
Across my heart. Your fingers have caressed
My hair so lightly that I scarce have known
Their pressure. You are like that time when rest
Steals up so softly that one feels alone!

AT FIRST SIGHT

Seeing you once, how can I forget
That our eyes have smiled and our hands have met?
That our souls have known and our hearts have cried,
Though our lips were dumb.

Ah, the world is wide,

And love there is for us both to know --
But my eyes were dim as I watched you go!

You may wander far, you may come no more,
But you hold the key to the inmost door
Of my heart of hearts!

For our hands have met,

And our eyes have smiled, and I CAN'T FORGET!

FIVE SONNETS

I. THE COMING

I know that Love will come to me, some day,
Though I have never loved, or looked on Love;
I know that Love will wait beside the way
And smile at me. The tender skies above
Will be alight with all the joy of spring,
And flowers will lift their heads above the earth,
And some far bird will stay its flight and sing,
And fill the land with silver throated mirth.

I know that Love, at last, with smiling eyes,
Will pause beside my half-swung cottage door,
And I will lift my gaze, without surprise,
To see his shadow dance across the floor.

I know that Love will come to me, some day,
When springtime blossoms, shyly, into May!

II. REALIZATION

I know that you are not the one that I
Should fall in love with, for your eyes are blind
To all the things that make my world the kind
I want to live in. Often, when I cry
At some vague beauty that has caught my eye,
You laugh! You cannot dream the dreams I find,
In forest places where dim pathways wind
Up to the Heaven-land so far and high.

I know that I should never learn to care,
And yet, sometimes the blueness of your eyes
Can make me half forget the smiling skies. . . .
And, when I see the sunlight on your hair,
I do not stop to reason, dear, for oh --
My heart throbs faster, and I know -- I know!

III. THE RAIN OUTSIDE

You close beside me, and outside, the rain,
Which, stealing through the darkness of the night,
Seems tapping out with fingers softly light,
A world-old song upon my window pane --
A song of happiness with a refrain
That throbs in suffering. You hold me tight,
Your eyes, that search my own, are warmly bright,
Your lips touch mine again, and yet again!

Ah, what though years must pass, though you and I
May live our lives, quite silently, apart?
Whenever rain comes, when the day is through,
And, tapping on my casement, seems to sigh,
A dream will blossom, fragrant, in my heart,
A dream of youth eternal, and of -- you.

IV. I USED TO WRITE

I used to write so many songs of love --
I wrote them carefully, I did not know
That love was more than moonlight from above,
And pretty words set in an even row,
I held my pencil calmly in my hand,
And sang of arms and lips and tender eyes;
I wrote of love -- who did not understand --

And hoped that folk would think me very wise!

I used to write so many songs . . . To-day
My hands are folded, and I cannot sing,
I sit, instead, and watch the sunlight stray
Across my desk. And I am wondering
If God, who lights a million stars each night,
Laughed at the groping words I tried to write!

V. MOON-GLOW

I wonder if, dim centuries ago,
We watched the moon together, on some night
When stars hung very near, and softly bright?
I wonder if my tired head drooped low
Against your breast? And if you seemed to know
(As you know now) the dreams that, like a light,
Shone in my soul? For, dear, it seems so right --
So very right that you should hold me so!

Here, in the moonlight, there is nothing new,
The very arms that crush me to your heart,
Seem almost like a memory, a part
Of some vague yesterday that has come true --
I feel tonight as if I, dear, might start
A journey back, across the years, with you!

FORGIVEN

You left me when the weary weight of sorrow
Lay, like a stone, upon my bursting heart;
It seemed as if no shimmering tomorrow
Could dry the tears that you had caused to start.
You left me, never telling why you wandered --
Without a word, without a last caress;
Left me with but the love that I had squandered,
The husks of love and a vast loneliness.

And yet if you came back with arms stretched toward
me,
Came back to-night, with carefree, smiling eyes,
And said: "My journeying has somehow bored me,
And love, though broken, never, never dies!"
I would forget the wounded heart you gave me,
I would forget the bruises on my soul.
My old-time gods would rise again to save me,
My dreams would grow supremely new and whole.
What though youth lay, a tattered garment, o'er you?
Warm words would leap upon my lips, long dumb;

If you came back, with arms stretched out before
you,
AND TOLD ME, DEAR, THAT YOU WERE GLAD TO COME!

THE WRITING

Sometimes a mist of sunlight across a stranger's hair,
Sometimes the vague expression upon a stranger's
face,
Can make me feel your presence -- can fill a lonely
place
With dreams of life half realized. Faint music
through the air
Can make me hear your foot-fall, again, upon the
stair --
Sometimes a dancer moving with quite unconscious
grace,
Can make my pulse beat faster; and for a breathless
space
Can make me turn, expecting to find you standing
there!

You have not gone! The passing of every empty
day
Has only brought you nearer. Those things that
were a part
Of all we planned together are bits of you that stay,
To bruise my soul as sharply as any flame-tipped
dart.
Ah, time may hold its healing -- but years that pass
away
Cannot erase the writing you traced upon my
heart!

AT PARTING

Love of my life, the time has come for parting --
For, dearest, I must leave you while we care!
Leave you while tears of vain regret are starting,
While I can look at you and find you fair.
Could we endure a morn of bitter waking,
Could we accept a love that would seem less?
Dear, I must go the while my heart is breaking --
Go while my world is filled with happiness.

Love of my soul, our dream has been so flaming,
That, if we waited, it might smoulder down --
Leaving dead ashes only, ashes shaming

All that was vivid -- ashes dimly brown.
We will have memories as sweet as flowers,
We who have left, untouched, Fate's cup of woe;
Kiss me once more to bridge life's aching hours --
Love of my heart -- the time has come to go!

WHEN I AM OLD --

When I am old and drenched in worlds of sadness,
And wear a lacy cap upon my head;
When, looking past the future's singing gladness,
I linger, wistful, in the years long dead.
When I am old, and young folk all about me,
Speak softly of religion, WHEN THEY SPEAK,
When parties are a grand success without me;
And when my laugh is fluttering and weak --

Will I then be content to raise my glances,
Serenely to the cloud-entangled sky?
And will I be content to watch at dances,
Without a heartbreak, as the hours pass by?
Or when I see young lovers' fingers twine,
WILL I REMEMBER, DEAR, YOUR LIPS ON MINE?

THE REFUGE

We hurried, once, down the purple road,
When a storm hung low in the sky;
And we gained the door of Love's abode
As the silver rain flashed by.
Our steps rang out as we crossed the sill,
And the place was dimly bright,
And even our hearts seemed strangely still,
While our searching hands clasped tight.

We waited there while the wind moaned past
And the thunder crashed in the air;
And the door of Love's abode blew fast,
But we didn't know -- or care!
For we heard a song in the driving rain,
And the sky seemed warmly gray;
And the tempest rang with a mad refrain,
And the world seemed years away.

.

We have wandered far from the road of dreams,
We have crept from the house of love;
And the scorching sun of the noonday gleams
From the pitiless sky above.

But once, ah, once -- in that dusky place,
When the lightning flashed through the air,
I saw its flame on your upturned face,
And its glow on your vivid hair.

We have strayed away -- we have strayed away --
For the world is all too wide. . . .
But once I came through the stormy day,
And you walked, proud, at my side.
AND, OH, FOR THE FEEL OF THE RAIN AGAIN,
AND, OH, FOR THE PURPLE ROAD,
AND, OH, FOR THE JOY AND THE PAIN AGAIN,
THAT WE KNEW IN LOVE'S ABODE!

TO DREAM ALONE. . . .

How long the days may seem, how long each night,
(And yet, how short the evenings used to be!)
How strange it is that I can never see,
Warm pictures in the hearth that glows so bright.
We used to watch the laughing firelight,
And build dream castles in it -- Ah, but we
Built castles everywhere! And now the sea
Is swept between us. You have gone to fight.

And I -- I wait and try to dream alone,
And try to smile, to dance and laugh and sing;
And, somehow, cannot think of anything,
But just the thrilling roughness of your tone,
The light that lights your eyes, your lips that
cling,
And love -- the flame of love that we have known!

NOW I MAY SING OF SADNESS. . . .

Knowing, dear, that my whole heart lies at rest
Deep in the heart of you, I may sing a song
Telling the tale of bitterness and wrong. . . .
Knowing, dear, that my head lay on your breast
Only last night, I may sing of dreams that died,
And hopes that never were born, and faith betrayed,
Of weary feet that have left the road and strayed
Out of the narrow way, to pastures wide.

Dear, when my songs were gay, I did not know
Whether you cared. And so I had to sing
Gladly, to mask grim fear -- I had to bring
Sunlight to point the path that I must go!
Now that the clouds are silver sweet above,

I may sing songs of sadness. I am blessed
Knowing, dear, that my whole heart lies at rest,
Knowing, dear, that I have your love -- your love!

KNOWING THAT YOU HAVE WALKED HER MUDDY ROADS
WEARILY, AFTER BITTER TIMES OF FIGHTING;
KNOWING THAT YOU HAVE CARRIED HEAVY LOADS
OVER HER HILLS -- WHILE I, AT HOME, WAS LIGHTING
DIM YELLOW CANDLES ON THE MANTEL SHELF. . . .
KNOWING YOU SUFFERED AGONY AND LOSS,
UNDER THE VERY SHADOW OF A CROSS --
FRANCE HOLDS A BIT OF YOU -- AND OF MYSELF!

WHEN WAR CAME

War came, one day, and drew us close together,
Although it swept us many miles apart;
The love that lay as lightly as a feather,
Now rests, a precious weight, upon my heart.
And all the dreams I dreamed for just the dreaming,
Have taken on a meaning that is new;
And somehow all the lonely world is seeming,
To cry aloud my aching need of you!

Because you were so much a part of living,
Like sunshine and the freshness of the air,
The priceless gift of faith that you were giving
Seemed small to me. Scarce knowing you were
there
I took your heart-strings in my careless fingers,
And played a song as light as summer dew,
And yet, today, its wistful echo lingers
And fills an empty world with thoughts of you.

I did not think that I would ever miss you,
I did not dream the time would come to be
When I would long to touch your hand, to kiss you --
To hear your voice say tender words to me.
I did not know that I would wonder whether
My head would rest, once more, against your
heart. . . .
War came, my dear, and drew us close together,
Although it swept us many miles apart!

WHEN YOU WENT BY

I stood in the rain and watched you pass,
I stood in the blinding rain. . . .
And I thought of a fragrant summer night,
When the room was glowing with candlelight,
And a shower beat on the window glass
With a wonderful, low refrain.
I thought of your arms that held me tight,
And your eyes that were near and warmly bright;
I thought of -- all, as I watched you pass,
And my soul was wrung with pain.

"Tramp, tramp, tramp!" rang your column's tread.
"Tramp, tramp, tramp!" through the street.
(Ah, dear, it was summer once, and there
Were flower scents on the misty air --
Honeysuckle and mignonette, poignantly, sadly
sweet!)

"Tramp, tramp, tramp!" rang your column's tread,
And my eyes were dim as I bowed my head;
And my heart seemed broken and old and dead,
Under your marching feet.

I stood in the rain and watched you pass --
There in the autumn rain. . . .
And I thought, my dear, of the night when you
Had kissed me first. (Ah, your eyes were blue,
And very tender, and Heaven-true,
There in the candlelight!)

I thought of a misty summer night,
When a shower fell on the vivid grass
(There, through the rain, I watched you pass!)

I thought of a mystic summer night
That never may come again.

"TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP!" RANG YOUR COLUMN'S TREAD,
"TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP!" IN THE STREET;
AND I TRIED TO SMILE -- WITH A LIFTED HEAD --
BUT MY HEART LAY, CRUSHED, AT YOUR FEET!

IN MEMORIAM

To an American Aviator

He went to battle in the mist-hung sky,
Like some gold-hearted bird with pinions strong;
He went with courage, with a snatch of song,
In all his splendid youth! And God on high
Looked down with love to watch him dip and fly,
Then lifted him to where the brave belong.
He went to right a bleeding nation's wrong,
And proved that he was not afraid to die!

So we, who stare across the lonely hours,
Must only think of that great gift he gave;
Must think of other lives that his will save;
And know that, when the tender, healing showers
Have fallen in a stranger-land, the flowers
Will bloom, like prayers, upon a hero's grave!

A PEASANT GIRL SINGS

Somewhere, Out There, he is -- just a boy, that's all --
(Laughter sparkled in his eyes -- he was always
singing!)
Just a boy who answered when he heard his country's
call;
(Somewhere, Out There, he is -- how my thoughts go
winging --)
Ready to do or dare,
(Like sunlight was his hair,)
Just a boy, a laughing boy,
Somewhere, Out There.

Idle my wheel, to-day, hushed is it's spinning --
(Ah, but his eyes were blue -- blue as the sea --)
Somewhere, Out There, he is . . . Losing -- or winning!
(Boy with the carefree heart, come back to me!)
Blood red the cannon's flare,
(God, can you hear my prayer?)
Keep him, my boy, from harm --
Somewhere, Out There.

TOGETHER

THEY LAY TOGETHER IN THE SUN AND WAITED FOR THE END;
SIDE BY SIDE, TOGETHER, BEARDED FOE AND FRIEND;
JEAN FROM THE PLEASANT FIELDS OF SINGING, SOUTHERN
FRANCE,
JEAN FROM THE POPPY FIELDS SIGHING WITH ROMANCE;
FRITZ FROM A FATHERLAND HE BLINDLY LOVED AND SERVED,
FRITZ WHOSE SOFT-NOSED BULLETS HAD NEVER FLINCHED NOR
SWERVED;
AND PETER, WHOSE TIRED EYES WERE WIDE AND DEEP AND
BROWN,
PETER FROM DELANCEY STREET, IN NEW YORK TOWN.

They didn't speak, these three,
They didn't know each other's tongue;
And, then,

When men
Whose songs are nearly sung
Are lying side by side,
Their breathing not so . . . free,
The gulf is rather wide.

In the sun they lay there;
And Fritz's hair
Was very bright.
He was a foe
To kill on sight --
And yet the light
Upon his hair was so,
So very fair. . . .

Jean found himself remembering HER hair;
Of palest gold it was, a magic snare
To net men's soul in! She had bade him go,
Sobbing, "Je t'aime" -- which means, "I love you so!"
Her hair -- her hands -- her lips,
Red as a sunset cloud when daytime slips
Into the night. No, redder!

Like a flower

That blooms upon the earth for just an hour;
A poppy flower, fragile, soft. . . . HER LIPS
Red as the heart-blood of a man, that drips
Into eternity. . . .

Jean sighed,
And died.

PERHAPS HER LIPS WERE VERY NEAR -- WHO KNOWS?
WHEN EYES MUST CLOSE
AGAINST THE SUN, AND LIFE, WHO CARES?
ONE ONLY DARES
TO WONDER!

Fritz lay still.
He felt the strength, the faith, the stubborn will,
Drop from him like worn garments, till he lay
Half-frightened in the burning light of day.
He had killed many, yes. . . .
From under
His tunic, gropingly, he drew a cross;
He wondered would it make, for her, the loss
A little less?
Ah, to press
His bearded lips once more upon her cheek,
To hear her speak. . . .

Yes, he had killed, and killed --
And he had thrilled
To do it. . . .

But just to sit
Beside her, in the shade,
THAT had been paradise!
Her soft arms laid
About his throat. . . .
THEY STRANGLER HIM --
His eyes grew dim. . . .
He choked -- once . . . twice. . . .

Peter from Delancey Street, laughed with white-
lipped pluck.
"Dyin' side o' HIM!" he coughed. "Ain't it rotten
luck!
"Poor guy, they got him, though -- got him same as
me. . . ."
Peter, from Delancey Street, stopped talking suddenly.

He saw --
A candy store,
On the busy, smelly corner of a crowded city
slum;
He heard the hum
Of traffic in the street,
The sound of feet
Upon the pavement; and he saw,
Behind the counter there,
THE GIRL. She wore
Her hair
Plastered tight to her little shell-like ears.
He felt her tears
Upon his face
The night he told her that he'd left his place,
His steady paying job, to go and fight.

"Good night!"
He'd said to her.
"Somebody's gotta go!
Yerself, you know,
We gotta STIR
T'lick them fellers Over There!"
Her slicked-back hair
Had roughened up against his khaki sleeve,
And she had cried:
"Dear, MUST you leave?"
And he had dried
Her eyes, and smudged the powder on her
nose. . . .

"Here goes!"
Said Peter of Delancey Street.
He saw
A candy store --
A city slum, a girl with plastered hair,

Who waited there. . . .

THEY LAY TOGETHER IN THE SUN -- BRAVELY TO THE END,
SIDE BY SIDE, TOGETHER, BEARDED FOE AND FRIEND.
JEAN FROM THE POPPY FIELDS, SIGHING WITH ROMANCE,
JEAN FROM THE LAUGHTER-LILTING FIELDS OF SOUTHERN
FRANCE;
FRITZ FROM A FATHERLAND HE BLINDLY LOVED AND SERVED,
FRITZ, WHOSE FAITH, ALTHOUGH BETRAYED, HAD NEVER
FLINCHED OR SWERVED;
AND PETER, WHOSE TIRED EYES WERE QUESTIONING AND
BROWN,
PETER, FROM DELANCEY STREET, IN NEW YORK TOWN.

JIM-DOG

He wasn't, well, a fancy kind o' dog --
Not Jim!
But, oh, I sorter couldn't seem ter help
A-lovin' him.
He always seemed ter understand.
He'd rub his nose against my hand
If I was feelin' blue or sad.
Or if my thoughts was pretty bad;
An' how he'd bark an' frisk an' play
When I was gay!

A soldier's dog don't have much time ter whine
Like little pets a-howlin' at th' moon.
A soldier's dog is bound ter learn, right soon,
That war is war, an' what a steady line
Of men in khaki means.

(What, dogs don't know?

You bet they do! Jim-dog, he had ter go
Along th' trenches oftentimes at night;
He seemed ter sense it when there was a fight
A-brewin'. Oh, I guess he knew, all right!)
I was a soldier, an' Jim-dog was MINE.

Ah, what's the use?
There never was another dog like him.
Why, on th' march I'd pause an' call -- "Hey, Jim!"
An' he'd be there, his head tipped on one side,
A-lookin' up at me with love an' pride,
His tail a-waggin', an' his ears raised high. . . .

I wonder why my Jim-dog had ter die?
He was a friend ter folks; he didn't bite;
He never snapped at no one in th' night;
He didn't hate a soul; an' he was GAME!
An' yet . . . a spark o' light, a dartin' flame

Across th' dark, a sneaky bit o' lead,
An' he was . . . dead!

They say there ain't no heaven-land for him,
'Cause dogs is dogs, an' haven't any right;
But let me tell yer this; without my Jim
Th' very shinin' streets would seem less bright!
An' somehow I'm a-thinkin' that if he
Could come at that last stirrin' bugle call
Up to th' gates o' gold aside of me,
Where God stands smilin' welcome to us all,
An' I said, "Father, here's my dog . . . here's
Jim,"
They'd find some corner, touched with love, fer him!

SIX SONNETS

I. SOMEHOW

Somehow I never thought that you would go,
Not even when red war swept through the land --
I somehow thought, because I loved you so,
That you would stay. I did not understand
That something stronger than my love could come,
To draw you, half-reluctant, from my heart;
I never thought the call of fife and drum
Would rend our cloak of happiness apart!

And yet, you went . . . And I -- I did not weep --
I smiled, instead, and brushed the tears aside.
And yet, when night-time comes, I cannot sleep
But silent lie, while longing fights with pride --
YOU ARE MY MAN, THE FOE YOU FIGHT MY FOE,
AND YET -- I NEVER THOUGHT THAT YOU WOULD GO!

II. I WONDER

I wonder if you dream, across the night,
When watchfires cut the vivid dark in twain,
Of long dim rooms, and yellow candlelight,
And gardens drenched in vaguely perfumed rain?
I wonder if you think, when shot and shell
And molten fire are singing songs of hate,
Of that last throbbing moment of farewell
When, in your arms, I promised you to wait!

I wonder, should grim death reach out his hand,
And speak, above the strife, of peace and rest;
If you, alone in that dark stranger land,

Would feel again my head upon your breast?
And if, as light and love and living slips,
Your prayer would be my kiss upon your lips. . . .

III. SOME DAY

Some day when on exultant feet you come
Back through the streets that echo at your tread --
My soul will thrill to hear the throbbing drum,
And yet, perhaps, I'll sit with drooping head,
Not caring, quite, to meet your steady gaze,
Not daring, quite, to look into your eyes;
Afraid because a weary stretch of days,
Each one a million years, between us lies.

My heart -- my heart is ever yours to hold,
And yet, while I have waited here for you,
You have seen faith betrayed, and brave youth sold,
You have seen meadows drenched in bloody dew --
It may have changed you, and your eyes may be
A little harder when they look at me!

IV. DREAM

Sometimes I dream that you are back with me,
And that with hands together clasped we go
Like little children, young and glad and free,
A-down a magic road we used to know.
Sometimes I dream your eyes upon my face,
And feel your fingers softly touch my hair. . . .
And when I wake from dreaming all the place,
Seems lonelier because you are not there.

What is a dream? Not very much, they say,
An idle vision made in castled Spain --
Well, maybe they are right. . . . And yet, today,
When all the warring world was swept with pain,
The suffering and sorrow ceased to be,
Because I dreamed that you were back with me!

V. UNDERSTANDING

Now, when I stand in some great crowded place,
I see the souls of other women stare
Out of their eyes -- And I can glimpse the care
And worry that has banished light and grace
From every life. Upon each woman-face
I see the mark of tears, the hint of prayer
That, one short year ago, had not been there --
I see what time will never quite erase!

Before you left, I did not notice eyes --
Because I knew that I might touch your hand,
I did not dream the dread that swept our land. . .
Ah, dear, the months have made me very wise!
Now, one with everything, I understand,
And heart meets heart and I can sympathize.

VI. THE WAKING

Now war is over and a world set free,
And youth returns, triumphant, to our land --
And dear-heart, you'll be coming back to me,
With eager lips, and tender outstretched hand!
You will be coming as you came of old,
At evening time, with laughter liting gay;
Glad of the little things that life may hold --
And I will meet you in the self same way. . . .

Yes, in the shadows by my oaken door,
I will be waiting as I used to wait --
And I will feel that you are come, before
I hear the clicking of the garden gate.
And, in the darkness there, my pulse will leap,
Reviving dreams that long have lain asleep!

AFTER PEACE

"I wonder what they're doin' home tonight?"
Jim said --
We sat there, in the yellow firelight,
There, in a house in France --
Some of us, maybe thinkin' of romance --
Some of us missin' buddies who was dead --
And some just dreamin'
Sorter hardly seemin'
Ter make th' dream come clear.

An' then -- Jim spoke --
"I wonder what they're doin' home ternight?"
Says Jim --
An' some of us felt, well -- as if we'd like
Ter smother him!
An' some of us tried hard-like not ter choke,
Th' smoke
Was pretty thick an' black!
A-thinkin' back,
Across th' ocean I could sort of see
A little house that means just all ter me
And, though nobody said a word I knew
Their thoughts was goin' on th' self-same track --

Thoughts do
Out here, in France.

Home -- HOME -- No wonder that we all was still --
For one of us was thinkin' of a hill,
With pine trees on it black against th' moon --
And one of us was dreaming of a town,
All drab an' brown --
An' one of us was lookin' -- far an' high
Ter some one who had gone back home too soon
To that real home that is beyond the sky.

Nobody of us spoke fer quite a while --
We didn't smile --
We just sat still an' wondered when there'd be
An order for ter send us home --
Back 'crosst the sea.
Th' war was won --
An' we was DONE!
We wanted faces that we loved an' knew,
An' voices too --

We sat an' watched th' dancin' fire fling
Its shadders on th' floor --
Bright shapes, an' dim.
An' then Jim coughed as if his throat was sore,
An' -- "Say -- let's sing!"
Says Jim.

FROM THE DECK OF A TRANSPORT

(A Returning Soldier Speaks)

I am coming back with a singing soul through the
surge of the splendid sea,
Coming back to the land called home, and the love
that used to be --
I am coming back through a flash of spray, through
a conquered tempest's hum,
I am coming back, I am coming back. . . . But,
God, do I want to come?

I have heard the shriek of the great shells speak to
the dawn of a flaming day;
And a growling gun when the fight was won, and the
twilight flickered gray,
I have seen men die with their chins raised high, and
a curse that was half a prayer --
I have fought alone when a comrade's groan was
tense on the blinding air.

I have tramped a road when a burning load was
strapped to my aching back,
Through miles of mud that was streaked with blood,
when my closing eyes turned back --
I have cried aloud to a heedless crowd of a God that
they could not know,
And have knelt at night when the way was bright
with a rocket's sullen glow.

I am going home through the whirling foam -- home
to her arms stretched wide --
I am going back to the beaten track and the sheltered
fireside,
With gasping breath I have sneered at death, and
have mocked at a shell's swift shirr,
And safe again, through the years of pain, I am
going back -- to HER!

I am coming back with a singing soul through the
surge of the splendid sea,
Coming back -- BUT MY SINGING SOUL WILL NEVER BE
QUITE FREE --
For I have killed, and my heart has thrilled to the
call of the battle hum. . . .
I am coming back to the used-to-be -- But, God, do I
want to come?

TIM -- MY BUNKIE

I met Tim th' other day
On Broadway;
Hadn't seem him since he fell,
Covered like with streaks of blood,
In th' Argonne's battle hell.

Tim an' me was bunkies; we
Marched together
Through th' water an' th' slime --
SUNNY FRANCE, HEY? We seen weather
That we hadn't dreamed COULD be
Anywhere or any time.
We had fought -- well, hand to hand,
Over miles o' broken land,
Through th' Vesle, an' by th' Aisne,
When th' shrapnel fell like rain --
Tim an' me was bunkies -- see?

Smilin' sort o' cuss was Tim;
Never seen th' beat o' him!

He could whistle when a pack
Was like lead upon his back;
He could smile with blistered feet;
Never swore at monkey meat,
Or at cooties, or th' drill;
Always laughin' -- never still --
That was Tim!

Say, th' fellers loved that boy!
Chaplain said that he "was joy
All incarnate --" Sounds all right,
But th' men said he was WHITE,
That meant most to us, I'd say!
Why, we never seen th' day
When he wouldn't help a guy.
If he had a franc he'd buy
Chocolate or chow for us,
Gen'rus little smilin' cuss --
That was Tim!

When THEY got him, I can see
Even now, th' way he slipped
To th' ground beside o' me.
Red blood dripped
From his tunic an' his chin,
But he choked out, "Fellers, win!
"Me, I don't much matter, GRIN!"

Sure we had ter leave him lay;
War is always that-a-way;
An' we thought o'course he'd die.
Maybe that's the reason why
We could fight th' way we did;
Why we found th' guns THEY hid;
Why we broke their line in two,
Whistlin' a tune HE knew
All th' time we pushed 'em back,
Crowdin' on 'em whack fer whack!

I seen Tim th' other day
On Broadway;
He had lef' one arm in France,
But his eyes was all a-dance
When he seen me face t' face.
"Say," he shouts, "ain't this SOME place?
Ain't it great th' war is through?
Glad I seen it, though; ain't you?"

Smilin' sort o' little cuss,
Meetin' me without a fuss --
Tim, my bunkie, livin'! . . . Tim!
That's him!

A PRAYER FOR OUR BOYS RETURNING

God, bring them back just as they went away;
A little wiser, maybe, but unchanged
In all the vital things -- let them today
Take up the lives that war has disarranged.
Let them renew the youth they laid aside
To fight their battles in the world of men,
God, bring to life their little dreams that died,
And build their altars new again, and then --

Give them the vivid youth that they have sought for
Through bloody mists on bloody fields of strife;
Show them the gallant truth that they have fought
for;
Show them, anew, the better things of life.
God of the hosts, blot out the months of pain --
And let them have their boyhood back again.
AMEN.

PARIS

I. AFTER PEACE

The city thrills once more to joyous singing;
Glad laughter sounds again upon the street,
And music throbs again, until young feet
Trip merrily upon their way; the ringing
Of hour chimes are gallant voices, flinging
Their challenges through each crowded space, to
greet
Old friends who linger where they used to meet
With other friends long gone. . . . The summer,
bringing

The light of peace, has seemed to fill the city,
With happiness that echoes far and wide
In sounds of joy; there seems no room for sorrow --
Yet, like a minor chord submersed in pity,
There steals above the music of tomorrow,
The weary footsteps of the ones who died.

II. THE RUE DE LA PAIX -- (A STREET OF JEWELS)

The windows glow with many jewels, with rubies

fire-entangled,
And glowing bits of emerald, and diamonds like
the dew --
But, Paris, can you quite forget the bodies lying
mangled
Beneath the snow on Flanders fields -- your lost
who call to you?).

The windows of each little shop are gay with gem-
like laughter,
With rings to fit milady's hand, and drops to deck
her ear;
(But, Paris, can you quite forget Verdun, and Ypres,
and -- after?
And, far beneath the sounds of mirth, one
wonders what you hear.)

The windows glow with countless jewels, the shop-
girls stop to wonder,
The little shopgirls who are still, so many, dressed
in black --
(But, oh, the saddened hearts of them no doubt are
lying under
Some sandy stretch along the Marne, where grim
defeat turned back!)

The windows gleam enticingly, and eyes light up to
see them,
For Paris thrills to loveliness, as Paris always
thrilled --
(Oh, God of beauty, touch the lives that war has
crushed, and free them
From broken dreams, an empty faith, and hopes
forever stilled!)

III. THE FLOWER WAGONS

Violets and mignonette, crowded close together,
Crowded close together on the corner of each street,
Through the chilling dampness of the misty weather,
Violets and mignonette -- ah, so close together --
Making all the Paris day colorful and sweet!

Roses faintly touched with pink; see, a soldier
lingers
Close beside the flower-stand, dreaming of the day
When she broke a single bud with her slender fingers,
Pressed it to her wistful mouth -- see, a soldier lingers
Dreaming of a summertime very far away.

Lilacs white and pure and new, fragrant as the
morning --

One pale widow, passing by, pauses for a space,
Thinking of the lilac tree that once grew, adorning
All a little cottage home, in life's fragrant morning;
Of a lilac tree that grew in a garden place.

Pansies for a thought of love, lilies for love's sorrow,
Bay leaves green as hopes that live, berries red
and brown;
Flowers vivid for a day, gone upon the morrow,
Flowers that are sweet as faith, that are sad as
sorrow --
Flowers for the weary souls of a weary town.

Violets and mignonette, crowded close together,
Crowded close together on the corner of each
street;
Singing of the summertime, through the misty
weather,
Violets and mignonette -- ah, so close together --
Making all the Paris day colorful and sweet!

IV. ACROSS THE YEARS

(Marie Antoinette walked down the steps of a certain
Chapel on her way to the guillotine.)

They say a queen once walked along the marble steps
with grace,
To meet grim death by guillotine -- a smile was on
her face,
A smile of scorn that lifted her above the howling
crowd,
A smile that mocked at pallid fear -- a smile serene
and proud.

Yes, it was Marie Antoinette -- she walked with
steady tread,
She sauntered down the marble steps with proudly
lifted head;
And there were those among the crowd who watched
with indrawn breath,
To see a queen walk out with smiles to keep a tryst
with death!

I stood beside those marble steps just yesterday, and
saw,
A bride upon a soldier's arm -- a poilu brave who
wore
A Croix de Guerre upon his breast -- and oh, they
smiled above

The busy throng that hurried by, unconscious of their
love.

And though, across the mist of years, I glimpsed a
fair queen's face,
A face that smiled, but scornfully, above her land's
disgrace --
I will remember, on those steps, the little new-made
wife,
Who came, her eyes all filled with trust, to keep
her tryst with life.

V. SUNLIGHT

The sun shines over Paris fitfully,
As if it really were afraid to shine;
And clouds of gray mist curl and twist and twine
Across the sky. As far as one can see
The streets are wet with rain, and suddenly
New rain falls in a straight, relentless line --
And silver drops, like needles, slim and fine,
Drip from the branches of each gaunt-limbed tree.

Ah, Paris, can the very wistful sky
Look down into the center of your heart,
That has been bruised by war, and torn apart --
The once glad heart that has been taught to sigh?
The sun is like your smile that flutters by
Like some lost dream, before the tear-drops start.

VI. THE LATIN QUARTER -- AFTER

They were the brave ones, the gallant ones, the
laughing ones,
Who were the very first to go -- to heed their coun-
try's call;
They were the joyous ones, the carefree ones, the
chaffing ones,
Who were the first to meet the foe, who were the
first to fall.

Artists and poets, they; the talented and youthful
ones --
All the world before their feet, their feet that loved
to stray;
We have heard about their lives; stories crude, and
truthful ones
Of the carefree lives they lived, in the yesterday.

Ah, the Latin Quarter now; boarded up, the most
of it,

Studios are bare, this year, and little models sigh,
For the ones who died for France, died and are the
boast of it,
Died as they had always lived, with their heads
held high!

But a spark of it remains, in forgotten places,
For I saw a blinded boy strumming a guitar,
Playing with his face a-smile, with the arts and
graces
Of a troubadour of old. He had wandered far.

Through the flaming hell of war -- wandered far and
home again,
To the corner that he loved when his eyes could
see;
And he played a jolly tune, he who may not roam
again,
Played it on an old guitar -- played it smilingly.

And I saw another sit at a tiny table,
In a dingy eating house; he had laughed and
drawn
Sketches on the ragged cloth, boasting he was able
Still to draw as well as most -- with two fingers
gone. . . .

VII. NOTRE DAME

Through colored glass, on burnished walls,
Soft as a psalm, the sunlight falls;
And, in the corners, cool and dim,
Its glow is like a vesper hymn.
And, arch by arch, the ceilings high
Rise like a hand stretched toward the sky
To touch God's hand. On every side
Is misty silence; and the wide
Untroubled spaces seem to tell
That Peace is come -- and all is well!

A slender woman kneels in prayer;
The sunlight slants across her hair;
A pallid child in rusty black
Stands in the doorway, looking back. . . .
A poilu gropes (his eyes are wide)
Along the altar rail. The tide
Of war has cast him brokenly
Upon the shore of life. I see
A girl in costly furs, who cries
Against her muff; I see her rise
And hurry out. Two tourists pause
Beside the grated chancel doors,

To wonder and to speculate;
To stoop and read a carven date.

In uniform the nations come;
Their voices are a steady hum
Until they feel some subtle thrill
That makes them falter, holds them still --
Bronzed boys, who shrugged and laughed at death,
They stand today with indrawn breath,
Half mystified.

 The colors steal
Into my heart, and I can feel
The rapture that the artists knew
Who, centuries before me, drew
Their very souls into the glass
Of every window. . . . Hours pass
Like beads of amber that are strung
Upon a rainbow, frail and young.

Through mellow glass, on hallowed walls,
The twilight, like faint music, falls;
And in each corner, cool and dim,
The music is a splendid hymn.
And, arch on arch, the ceilings high
Seem like a hand stretched toward the sky
To touch a Hand that clasped a Cross --
FOR FRANCE, NEW-RISEN FROM THE LOSS,
AND PAIN AND FEAR OF BATTLE-HELL,
KNOWS PEACE, AT LEAST, AND ALL IS WELL!

VIII. SUNDAY MORNING

The streets are silent, and the church bells ring
 Across the city like the silver chime
Of some forgotten memory. They bring
 The phantom of another, sweeter time,
When war was all undreamed. They seem to say,
 "Come back, come back, across the years of strife
"To One who reaches out a Hand today,
 "A Hand that brings your dead again to life!"

A little white-haired woman hurries past,
 A tiny prayer-book in one wrinkled hand;
Her eyes are calm, as one who knows at last
 What only age may really understand;
That, as a rainbow creeps across the rain,
The God of Paris smiles above its pain!

SCARS

Summer sweeps, like sad laughter, over France,
 Touching the fields with flower-tinted mirth;
 Bringing its wistful gladness to an earth
That has been stabbed with sorrow's bitter lance;
Bringing again the hint of old romance,
 Bringing again the magic of re-birth;
 Paying again the price that youth was worth --
OVER DIM WAYSIDE MOUNDS THE GRASSES DANCE!

Where there were shell holes summer sends, un-
 heeding,
 Blossoms to deck the broken country side;
Where, in another season, heroes, bleeding,
 Fell for the cause of righteousness, and died,
Green creeper twines its vivid arms, half-pleading,
 But there are scars that summer cannot hide!

FROM PARIS TO CHATEAU THIERRY

The road winds out its weary way,
 Where fields are torn with sorrow;
It is a road of yesterday,
 That dreams no fair tomorrow.

It is silent, saddened road,
 A lonely road to follow;
For in its dust red rivers flowed,
 And now, from every hollow,
The crows rise up in sullen flight
 The crows that, blackly flying
Against the skyline, speak of night,
 And bitterness, and dying.

It is a road that creeps around
 Farmhouses that lie broken;
That pauses at each shallow mound,
 At every blood-stained token.
A helmet by the way one sees;
 A pistol, bent and rusty;
And hung between two shattered trees,
 A coat mildewed and musty.
It is a sad, forgotten road,
 But oh, it tells the story
Of youth that bore another's load
 Without a thought of glory!
For every tattered homestead cries
 Of vengeance that descended;
And memory that never dies,

From hearts that stay unmended!

The road winds out its weary way,
A lonely way to follow;
And crows rise black against the day
From every tree and hollow.

A RUINED CHURCH

They could not take the living God away,
Although they left His altar blank and bare;
Their ruthless hands could never rend and tear
More than the walls, they could not hope to sway
The utter faith that is the nation's heart;
They could not bring a real destruction where
Hymn music had been softly wont to play!
They smothered beauty, and tore hope apart;
But in the house of One who is supreme,
The marks they left will now be sanctified;
The broken walls, when war is but a dream,
Will be a monument to those who died;
And every shell-torn scar will stand for One
Whose hands were scarred, the Christ men crucified!

I think, perhaps, the very morning sun,
Will slant more gently through the broken tower --
And, in good season, that some tender flower
Will bloom beside the ruined threshold, where
Folk paused before they entered in to prayer. . . .

CHILD FACES

Child faces saddened, older than they should be,
And wiser than a lived-out span of years;
One wonders what those self same faces would be,
If they had never looked on pain -- if tears
Had never been their portion; if the morrow,
Had never held the pallid ghost of care --
Child faces, graven deep with worlds of sorrow,
Until the light of childhood is not there!

Child faces, once a gleam with carefree laughter,
Wide eyes, where smiles like baby rainbows grew;
They are the heritage of ever after,
They are the dreams that never will come true.
They are the words of fate that have been spoken,
And when the tumult of the war is gone,

They will remind a world that hearts were broken,
For, in their souls, France goes to meet her dawn!

AFTER HEARING MUSIC COMING FROM A DEVASTATED FARMHOUSE

Just a little wisp of song played softly in the twilight,
Such a happy little song -- and oh, the dusk is gray!
Such a joyous little song, and oh, the night is
coming --
Coming with the bitter chill that marks the death
of day.

Almost like a dance it is, it holds no hint of sorrow,
Almost like a waltz it is, to set the pulse a-thrill;
Not a hint of tears in it -- and oh, the night is
coming --
Coming like a purple shroud across the purple hill!
Sad the little farmhouse is, the doors swing on their
hinges,
All the windows look like wounds, pitiful and bare,
And a shell has torn a gash in the broken roof of it,
But the music lilts along like a happy prayer.

Do pale ghostly fingers play on a ghostly violin?
(War has swept the countryside of the songs it
knew!)
Merry is the little tune -- not a wistful questioning --
Merry with a rosy thrill of a dream come true.

Just a little wisp of song played softly in the twilight,
Such a happy little song -- and oh, the dusk is gray!
Such a joyous little song, and oh, the night is
coming --
Coming with the bitter chill that marks the death
of day!

RETURN

Now that the tumult of the war is over,
The fairy folk are coming back to France;
They push their way through tangled grass and
clover,
To find the ring where once they used to dance.
They come half-wistfully, the little people,
Through broken town, and battered market place,
They come past shell-torn church with shattered

steeple,

They come as smiles come to a tear-stained face.

They come with packs of dreams, with love and
laughter,

They come with songs rolled snugly up in sacks;

They come with promises for ever after,

Tied neatly into bundles on their backs!

They bring the seeds of magic so that flowers,

The flowers of new happiness and mirth,

May bloom, once more, in sweet enchanted bowers,

Above the heart-ache of a tortured earth.

Now that the angry powder smoke has vanished,

The fairy folk are coming as of yore,

The fairy folk that hate and war had banished . . .

They pause beside a loosely swinging door,

To set it right on hinges that were breaking,

They lift an old rag doll with tender care,

And hurry on -- because their hearts are aching,

For one-time childish faces that were there.

They cross forgotten meadows in the gloaming,

Through forest aisles at even-time they creep;

Where trenches were, their little feet are roaming,

And where the heroes of the conflict sleep,

They stop, a moment, wistful -- and their singing

Dies down into the semblance of a prayer;

And tiny bells in far-off elf land ringing,

Sound, like a silver promise, on the air.

NOW THAT THE TUMULT OF THE WAR IS OVER,

ONCE MORE THE COUNTRY WAKENS TO ROMANCE;

FOR, THROUGH THE TANGLE OF THE GRASS AND CLOVER,

THE FAIRY FOLK ARE COMING BACK TO FRANCE.

THE PHOENIX

The ruined wheat fields lying in the sun

Will smile again, e'er many seasons pass;

The crooning breeze will sway the golden grass,

The way it did before a blazing gun,

Mowed down the meadow poppies in red heaps;

And battered villages will rise anew,

And homes will stand where one-time gardens grew,

And, in dim forests where an army sleeps,

The little birds will sing their evening songs,

The way they did before a blasting rain,

Of shrapnel cut their tiny nests in twain;

For France will rise, triumphant, from her wrongs --

Yes, France will rise once more in faith, and pave
Her roads anew with shattered stones of life,
Her songs will rise, once more, above the strife --
But what about the hearts that gave -- and gave!

A PRAYER ON EASTER FOR OUR BOYS
KILLED IN ACTION

Dear God, they will not come again, those lads of
ours,
Who went to fight with honor's foe across the sea --
Who died with eyes set straight ahead, amid the
showers
Of shrapnel, as they cleared a path to victory,
They will not come again . . . And it is Easter
weather,
And all the world is waking to the call of life,
But they lie sleeping, Over There, our lads, together,
Who died before their hearts could know the end
of strife.

Dear God, they will not come again, those lads of
ours,
Who left this land so gallantly to do their best --
And so I ask that You will send gay springtime
flowers,
To deck each shell-torn meadow where their bodies
rest.
I ask that You will let them hear the joyous singing,
Of some deep-throated bird whose heart tones
throb and swell;
God, let them feel the thrill that Easter time is
bringing,
That death is only life asleep -- and all is well!
AMEN.

INDEPENDENCE DAY -- 1919

Over the mists of a century they come, and their
tramping feet
Are light as the dust on the broad highway, or the
wind that sways in the wheat;
Out of the haze of the years between their shadowy
hands stretch wide
To welcome the heroes home again who have fought
for their cause and died.

They went to battle at Concord Bridge, and they fell
on Bunker Hill;
The odds were great, but they struggled on with a
stubborn Yankee will;
They lay in the fields at Lexington when the sun in
the west was red,
And the next year's violets grew on the spot where
their valiant blood was shed.

But they won in the end -- with their broken guns
and without much food to spare,
Won at the end of a bitter war, by means that they
knew were fair;
And some of them wandered back to their plows, and
some lay wrapped in the loam,
And slept the sleep of the fearless heart that has
fought at home -- for home!

Fought for their homes, at home, they did -- but these
other boys today
Fought for the homes of stranger folk three thousand
miles away;
FOUGHT FOR THE HONOR OF THE WORLD, and were not
afraid to die
In a muddy trench, in a foreign land, and under a
foreign sky!

They fought on the Marne, at Belleau Wood; they
swept through the mad Argonne;
Chateau-Thierry was theirs to take; they took it and
then surged on;
And now that the fight they fought is won, though
they lie in a far-off grave,
Their souls come back to the land they loved -- the
land that they LEFT to save.

And so, through the damp of the sorry sea, through
the wreck of the shell-torn plain,
They are coming back to homes they loved -- they
are coming back again!
And light as the wind that sways in the wheat, or
the dust on the broad highway,
They march to their rendezvous with the ones who
died in the yesterday.

SHADOWS

You come to me at twilight, when the others,
Are laughing in the fullness of their joy;
When glad-eyed women folk, when wives and mothers,
Are welcoming some other bronze-cheeked boy.

You come to me, all silent, in the gloaming,
A shadow form, with curly shadow hair --
And, dear, I somehow feel that you are roaming
Between two shadow worlds -- the Here and There.

They ask me, do those others, why I wander
Down dewy lanes, alone, at eventide --
They do not know my heart's a shadow -- yonder. . .
They do not know that part of me has died.
They do not know that your dear presence stands
Just out of reach with misty, wide-flung hands!

L'ENVOI

Only we two, dear . . . and the candlelight,
Seems to be softer than it was before,
Country and city, vivid dream lands, war --
Dear, they are very far from us to-night!

Woven of promise from life's golden loom,
Pale threads of light have bound us heart to heart;
Laughter and sorrow -- they are things apart --
ALL OF OUR WORLD IS IN THIS LITTLE ROOM.

Outside the branches sway, and winter weather
Sweeps, with a cry of triumph, through the land
Dear, it is springtime, when you touch my hand --
Only we two, and magic, here together!

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more, above the strife --

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And all the world is waking to the call of life,

But they lie sleeping, Over There, our lads, together,

Who died before their hearts could know the end

of strife.

Dear God, they will not come again, those lads of

ours,

Who left this land so gallantly to do their best --

And so I ask that You will send gay springtime

flowers,

To deck each shell-torn meadow where their bodies

rest.

I ask that You will let them hear the joyous singing,

Of some deep-throated bird whose heart tones

throb and swell;

God, let them feel the thrill that Easter time is

bringing,

That death is only life asleep -- and all is well!

AMEN.

INDEPENDENCE DAY -- 1919

Over the mists of a century they come, and their

tramping feet

Are light as the dust on the broad highway, or the

wind that sways in the wheat;

Out of the haze of the years between their shadowy

hands stretch wide

To welcome the heroes home again who have fought

for their cause and died.

They went to battle at Concord Bridge, and they fell

on Bunker Hill;

The odds were great, but they struggled on with a

stubborn Yankee will;

They lay in the fields at Lexington when the sun in

the west was red,

And the next year's violets grew on the spot where

their valiant blood was shed.

But they won in the end -- with their broken guns

and without much food to spare,

Won at the end of a bitter war, by means that they

knew were fair;

And some of them wandered back to their plows, and

some lay wrapped in the loam,

And slept the sleep of the fearless heart that has

fought at home -- for home!

Fought for their homes, at home, they did -- but these

other boys today

Fought for the homes of stranger folk three thousand

miles away;

FOUGHT FOR THE HONOR OF THE WORLD, and were not

afraid to die

In a muddy trench, in a foreign land, and under a

foreign sky!

They fought on the Marne, at Belleau Wood; they

swept through the mad Argonne;

Chateau-Thierry was theirs to take; they took it and

then surged on;

And now that the fight they fought is won, though

they lie in a fa