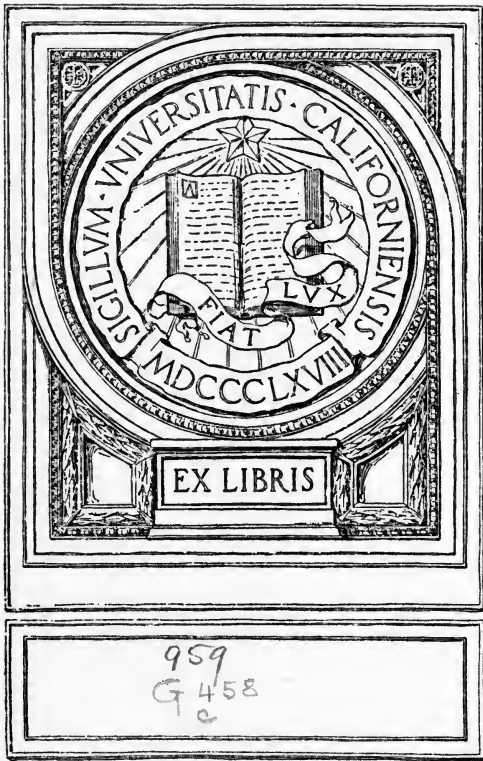


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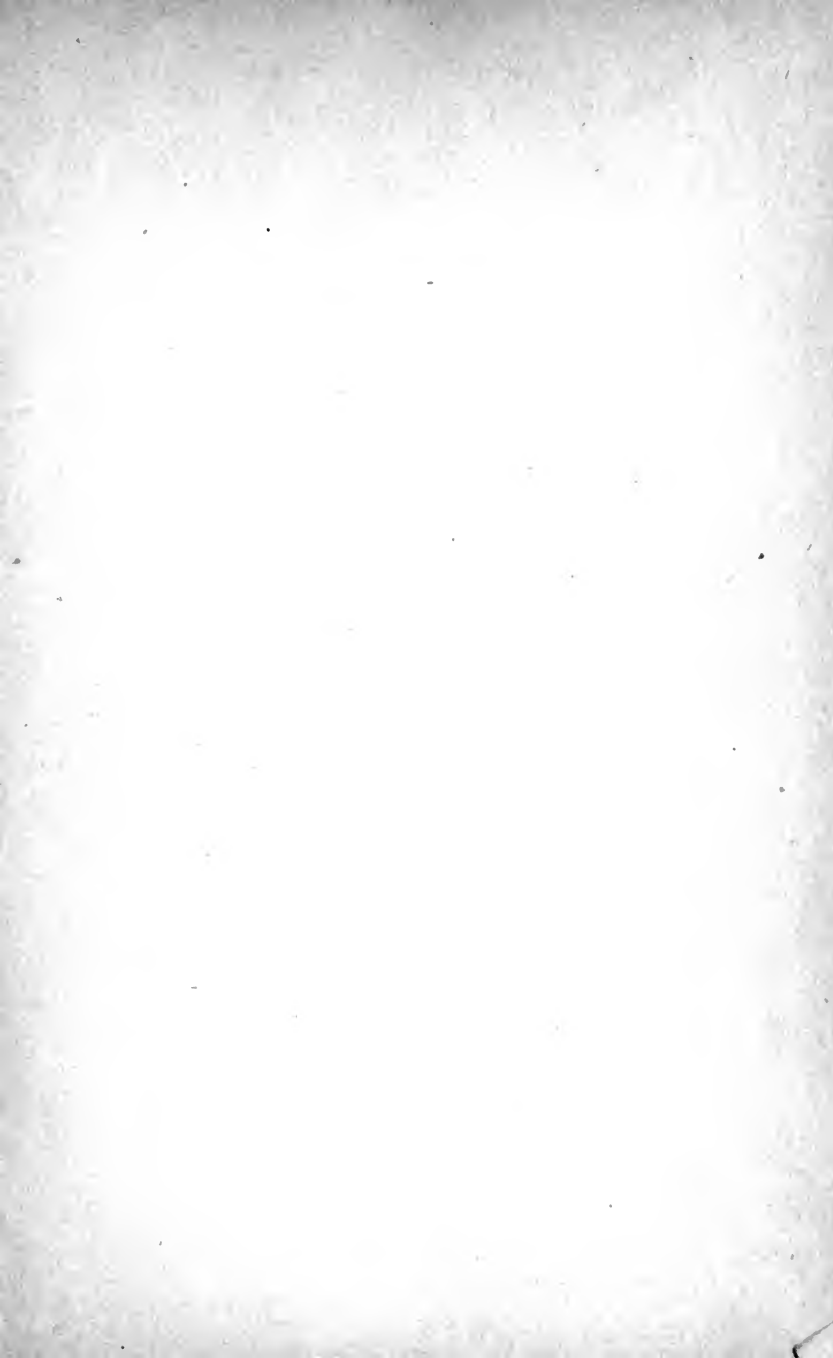
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CRACK O' DAWN
FANNIE STEARNS DAVIS



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CRACK O' DAWN



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TORONTO

CRACK O' DAWN

BY

FANNIE STEARNS DAVIS

(MRS. A. McK. GIFFORD)

AUTHOR OF "MYSELF AND I"

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CALIFORNIA

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1915

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Thanks are extended to the publishers of The Atlantic Monthly, The Century, Harper's Magazine, Poetry (A Magazine of Verse), The Yale Review, The Country Gentleman, and The Youth's Companion, for their permission to reprint in this volume poems copyrighted by them in 1913, 1914.

CRACK O' DAWN

CRACK O' DAWN

CRACK o' dawn! Red sun looks in
Through my curtains white and thin.
Sun looks in, and I look out
At the sweet world spread about.
Silver dew on lilac-tree,
Meadow-larks desiring me,
Hills that sleep along the dawn,
Sense of wise stars just withdrawn,
(Serious stars that hide away
In the hot blue halls of Day.)

No one sees me as I run
Clear to meet the clear-eyed sun.
No one hears me laugh and sing
Many a dawn-swept dancing thing.

No one knows my prayers are made
Out of dew-pearl and leaf-shade,
Out of lark-song and sky-breath;
Simplest challengers of death.

Crack o' dawn. The City still
Sleeps behind my daisy-hill;
Very dull, with shutters locked.
Though the red sun knocked and knocked
They would never ask him in.
But the bull-mouthed whistles' din
Breaks their heavy dreams apart;
And they groan, and stretch, and start
Grumbling up.

O Dawn! Am I
Guilty of their sweat and sigh?
Am I cold and hard, to run
Free of foot to meet the sun,
While the bull-mouthed whistles roar,
And the drab-faced people pour

NO ONE KNOWS
MY PRAYERS ARE MADE

Herded down the blank gray street,—
Leaden eyes and leaden feet?

Could I help them if I too
Lost my sunrise leaves and dew?
If I made my own dreams gray
With the dust of day-to-day,
And forgot the stars, and fell
In that hideous barren Hell,
Where, I think, my soul would be
Hard for God Himself to see?

Once I was a pagan, wild
With the wonder of a child.
Once I thought the City too
Might go free of dawns and dew.
Oh, I thought them stupid folk,
With their crazy wheels and smoke,
Swarming babies, huddling halls,
Brazen laughter, sodden brawls,

And their blind souls,—blind, while I
Played the god with wind and sky.

Crack o' dawn! Red sun, I wake
Singing for your splendid sake;
Silent, for the City still
Drugged behind my daisy-hill.

Oh, but were I pagan yet!
God! could I forget! forget!

“I HAVE LOOKED INTO ALL MEN’S
HEARTS”

I HAVE looked into all men’s hearts.
Like houses at night unshuttered they stand,
And I walk in the street, in the dark, and on either
hand
There are hollow houses, men’s hearts.

They think that the curtains are drawn.
Yet I see their shadows suddenly kneel
To pray, or laughing and reckless as drunkards reel
Into dead sleep till dawn.

And I see an immortal child
With its quaint high dreams and wondering eyes
Sleeping beneath the hard worn body that lies
Like a mummy-case defiled.

8 " I HAVE LOOKED INTO ALL MEN'S HEARTS "

And I hear an immortal cry
Of splendor strain through the sodden words,
Like a flight of brave-winged heaven-desirous birds
From a swamp where poisons lie.

—I have looked into all men's hearts.
Oh, secret terrible houses of beauty and pain!
And I cannot be gay, but I cannot be bitter again,
Since I looked into all men's hearts.

PROFITS

YES, stars were with me formerly.
(I also knew the wind and sea;
And hill-tops had my feet by heart.
Their shagged heights would sting and start
When I came leaping on their backs.
I knew the earth's queer crooked cracks,
Where hidden waters weave a low
And druid chant of joy and woe.)

But stars were with me most of all.
I heard them flame and break and fall.
Their excellent array, their free
Encounter with Eternity,
I learned. And it was good to know
That where God walked, I too might go.

Now, all these things are past. For I
Grow very old and glad to die.
What did they profit me, say you,
These distant bloodless things I knew?

Profit? What profit hath the sea
Of her deep-throated threnody?
What profit hath the sun, who stands
Staring on Space with idle hands?
And what should God Himself acquire
From all the aeons' blood and fire?

My profit is as theirs: to be
Made proof against mortality:
To know that I have companied
With all that shines and lives, amid
So much the years sift through their hands,
Most mortal, windy, worthless sands.

This day I have great peace. With me
Shall stars abide eternally!

THE POET REBUKES HIS FLATTERERS

WHY will you trouble me with praise?

Give me no praise. These songs I found
Flashing like wings above my ways,
Or blown like leaves along the ground.

I caught a feather; crushed a leaf;
And you applaud me. Let me be.
You had no praise for that sore grief
Whereof I got the mastery.

You had no praise the time I fled
Down rustling corridors of fear:
You left me all uncomforted,
With only God to cry "Draw near!"

Look! at my side this moment stands
My friend, who suffers and is proud.

He chokes his Life between his hands,
Lest, hurt and crazed, it cry too loud.

He makes me hateful of my fame:
Hot-faced and humble: for he too
Speaks softly, radiantly my name,
And loves me till it stabs me through.

Have you no little word for him?
Can you not see how strong he is?
Oh, what is all my music dim
To such great reeling victories?

Leave off your praise. Smile not on me.
What say you? Are my songs so sweet?
They are but wind-blown wizardry.
Look there! His blood-stained hands and feet!

“AS I DRANK TEA TO-DAY”

As I drank tea to-day
With a dozen women, chattering, gay,
In delicate drooping gowns, in jewels like dew,
Laughing, light-voiced,—I thought of a certain
 hunger I knew
Hid in the heart of one, the merriest laugher there.
I saw three little dull threads in the lazy dusk of
 her hair;
Three little keen wrinkles about her beautiful
 shining eyes.
And I wished I were not so wise.

I wished that I did not know
Those symbols of pain:—that low
Under her pride and sweet warm-worded address
She was shaken with loneliness;

That the one great dream she had dared to dream
was a lie,
And half of her Life went wearying, "Let me die."

I wished that I could not hear
That murmur of mortal fear
Through the clink of silver and subtle whisper of
lace.
I dared not look in her face.—

Then I thought, (while I laughed aloud
With my cup at poise,) "Ah, the proud
Masques that we wear! We too,
All of us, dancing through
Some queer little pantomime each day,—
Jewelled and gloved, deft-spoken and gay,—
Ah, but God only hears
All of the follies and fears,
Meanness and courage, breathed out and in
Over these tea-cups' delicate din."

Then I looked in that woman's face
 Over its pearls and roses and lace,
 And I knew that I need not fear to see
 Those little dull threads, those wrinkles
 three,
 Or hear the cry of her life. I knew
 We were all of us crying too:
 Crying with wonder or weariness,
 Too much love or too little. Yes,
 It was Life, just Life that we hid away
 Under our gossip and glad array.
 And that woman's laughter and pride,
 Shielding her heart, half-crucified,
 Seemed bravely done,—although
 I thought, “Must Life hurt, hurt so?”

Till as I took her hand,
 Saying good-bye, the smooth words planned
 Choked in my throat. She stood there dumb,
 Folded my fingers and pressed them numb,

Knowing I knew.

Ah, yes! I knew!

All of us seeking, hungering, hiding too,
In delicate drooping gowns, and jewels like stars
and dew!

So we all went away:

A dozen women, chattering, gay.—

TO A COWARD

You have no right to spoil the sun,
Blacken the blue and blur the stars.
Is your fool's-face the only one
That ever pressed Life's prison-bars,
And found escape too bitter-hard?
And cursed the great cold Gaoler, God?
Then, crooked-lipped, pain-smirched and marred,
Shrieked to the peaceful folk who trod
The free street still,—“But look at me!
I am so hurt. God hates me so.
I know that all Eternity
Is foul and false and bleared. I know!”

How do you know? What right have you
To show your shameful coward's face?

Have you alone run ruined through
Hell's wide waste-hillocked torture-place?
Have you a blood-sealed pact with Pain?—
A secret tryst with Agony?
Has no one else dared death, to gain
The great brave soul, that wrests the key
Of Freedom from God's Hand?

Then swift

To flee, beholds the door flung wide;
And feels the Gaoler's fingers lift
His face, and push his locks aside,
While through his soul's last desperate
dusk

The great slow Eyes stare deep, stare deep;
And Shame blows from him, like a husk
Of Horror; and clean glories leap
From those great Eyes to his, set free
From all the foul and false and marred:
—"Thou! Who hast earned Eternity!
Thou! With My Secret Keys to guard!"

You! What know you of God, and Life?
There festering to your prison-bars.
Be proud! When you have won that strife
You will not dare to curse the stars!

THE RECLUSE

I AM too much in love with loneliness.
To-night, with secret joy I shut my door,—
(This is a shameful thing that I confess,)
But I desired no footstep on my floor,
No friend to share my hearth-fire, and the still
Warm hours, before the midnight chime swings
clear,
And the small owlet hoots across the hill,
And I join hands with Sleep, cool-fingered, dear.

I had no need of talk or song; no need
Of love. Love would have hurt and frightened me.
The wind went by; I heard the lilac-seed
Dry-tipped, beat on the window stubbornly.
And I sat glad and silent and complete.
I had no need in all the world. My heart

Purred like the great gray cat. It seemed so sweet
To shut the door, on Life,—and sit apart.

Life! this is shameful! Call me out before
I die of loving loneliness too well.
Send hordes of beggars battering my door,
To keep me clear of happiness, and hell.
Send me great love to hurt me. Send me fear
And anger, God's fierce messengers,—for I
Am swooning, swooning, in my fire-light here.
Life! stab me! make me fight before I die!

RAIN IN THE NIGHT

OUT in the night the great good rain
Makes sweet the earth, makes strong the
trees.

—Let me be done myself with pain
And hot unhappy mysteries.

Let me not lie awake to-night
With dreams devouring all the gloom:
Wide mouths of hungry restless light
Gleaming and gaping round my room.

Dreams, from my soul's and body's stark
And hollow red-hot caves of fear.
(Oh, never a dream of leaves, a lark,
A dawn-wind, sea-tides salt and clear!)

—Out in the night the good rain goes,
Kind as my Mother used to be.—
Oh, if in Heaven my Mother knows,
God, send her back like rain to me!

RESTLESSNESS

LIFE with his chin on my shoulder

Whispers into my ear.

His voice is like winds, and cities,

And seas, and sorrow, and fear.

It troubles and wearies me always.

Nothing he says comes clear.

—Sharp chin on my aching shoulder!

Strange murmurous voice in my ear!

GHOSTS

I AM almost afraid of the wind out there.
The dead leaves skip on the porches bare,
The windows clatter and whine. I sit
Here in the quiet house, low-lit,
With the clock that ticks and the books that stand,
Wise and silent, on every hand.

I am almost afraid, though I know the night
Lets no ghosts walk in the warm lamp-light.
Yet ghosts there are; and they drift and blow
Out in the wind and the scattering snow.—
When I open the windows and go to bed
Will the ghosts come in and stand at my head?

Last night I dreamed they came back again.
I heard them talking; I saw them plain.

They hugged me and held me and loved me; spoke
Of happy doings and friendly folk.

They seemed to have journeyed a week away,
But now they were ready and glad to stay.

But oh, if they came on the wind to-night
Could I bear their faces, their garments white
Blown in the dark round my lonely bed?
Oh, could I forgive them for being dead?
I am almost afraid of the wind. My shame!
That I would not be glad if my dear ones came!

THE YEAR AFTER

Up and down my Garden the roses are a-revel;
Up and down my Garden gleam golden butterflies.
June-scent to the tree-tops floods the white air
 level,
And June-sun to the rose-roots thrusts fingers warm
 and wise.

O my red, red roses! my larkspurs and my lilies!
(Yellow lilies leaning in a tangle and a swoon,)
O, have you forgot me? for now the Garden still is,
And no one treads the warm path I knew by night
 and noon.

Red-rose-petals blowing, and rain-bleached in the
 grasses,—
Red-rose-petals slipping, slipping to be dead,—

Only wind may touch you: he hurts you as he
passes:

O, do you remember who kissed you once instead?

—Up and down my Garden my Spirit runs a-tiptoe,
Stroking all the roses, chasing butterflies.

But she may not gather one blighted bud. To slip
so

Empty from her Garden, blurs her shining eyes.

Spirit!—Spirit!—Spirit!—

Home, come home and leave them:
Leave the petals blowing like little weary flames.
Lest your ghostly presence, your pulsing shadow
grieve them:—

—Yet 'tis you, you only, who know their dear lost
names!

THOSE I LOVE

I COULD be glad and gay to-night
If those I love were gay.
But they have shadows o'er their sight
I cannot sweep away.

My body laughs and leaps and sings.
I could go proud and sweet.
But those I love have broken wings.
Dance not! Dance not, my feet!

I could have faith in God enough
To keep me joyfully.
But those I love must take the rough
Dark way of doubt. Ah me,—

Would God that they by trusting too
Gave me my right to Faith!
But how dare I drink heaven-dew
While those I love drink death?

ESCAPE

Now since I cannot make it out:

Why people love and lose and die;

Why there is agony and doubt,

And so much cause to brood and cry;

Oh, since I cannot understand

God's will for all the world, and me,—

I will go take the wind's cold hand,

And dance a little, foolishly.

The hills are green and simple folk;

The wind is quick with comrade-calls;

White wayside apple-trees, and smoke

Of woodfires, and bright waterfalls,—

They never bid me understand.

They never say, "You, too, must die."

I will go take the wind's cold hand.

God knows, I cannot always cry!

“WHAT IF I GROW OLD AND GRAY ”

WHAT if I grow old and gray
Who was once so gallant-gay?

When my goodliness shall pass
As the flower of the grass;
When there shall be none to claim
Friendship in my youth's dear name;
When my soul that leapt like fire
Limps, too dreary for desire;
When the door of Silence stands
Open to my fumbling hands;—
Though I almost make you cry,
(You, still young and passing by,)
Leave me proud and high and free.
Never dare to pity me!

For I make my journeying
Far from every sorry thing.
I have lived too glad to fear
Any hurt or horror here;
And I shall be glad once more
When the Silence swings its door,
And I enter in, and see.—

Oh, you must not pity me!

WIND

THE Wind bows down the poplar-trees,
The Wind bows down the crested seas;
And he has bowed the heart of me
Under his hand of memory.

O heavy-handed Wind, who goes
Hurting the petals of the rose;
Who leaves the grasses on the hill
Broken and pallid, spent and still!

O heavy-handed Wind, who brings
To me all echoing ancient things:
Echoing sorrow and defeat,
Crying like mourners, hard to meet!

The Wind bows down the poplar-trees
And all the ocean's argosies;
But deeper bends the heart of me
Under his hand of memory.

SORROW'S SHADOW

SOME days, when I am dressed in shimmer-stuff,
 With yellow roses at my breast and hair;
When just the air and sunlight seem enough
 To make the whole world delicately rare;
When people love me, and I them, and all
My heart is like a hill-brook's lilting call:

Then, if I pass her, in her dim black dress,
 With heavy eye-lids darkened by old tears,
I feel a sudden clutch of loneliness;
 I stare down vistas of unsparkling years,
And there behold myself, clad close in black,
With tired brows, thin hands, and aching back.

O Sorrow's Shadow! let me be awhile!
 Wreck not my happy yellow roses: set

No watch upon my sudden cry and smile.

Why should I not forget—ah, half forget!—
That Sorrow's Self will meet me some strange day,
And take my hand, nor let me dance away?

“I WENT DOWN INTO MY HEART”

I WENT down into my heart. It was hollow and
cold and deep.

There were statues standing apart in a folded icicle-
sleep.

There was beauty beneath their veils, wild beauty
and terror too;

But they were asleep, asleep, and knew not my
passing through.

I went down into my heart, to the altar the God
built there.

The lamp burned low to its death; the altar was
dusty and bare;

And the face of the God was blurred, and the gold
of his fringes dead.

I went thither to kneel and pray, but my prayers
were slow to be said.

40 "I WENT DOWN INTO MY HEART"

I came up out of my heart to the traffic and toil
of the day.

I had been but the wink of an eye, the tick of a
clock, away.

But I knew that I should not dare go back to my
heart once more

Till the statues waked with a cry and the God
gleamed out from the door!

SORROW IN SPRING

SORROW knocked at my door,
Sorrow sat by my bed.
I could not sing any more.
The bird at the green lane's head
Sings, and the Spring returns.
Primroses revel in dew.
Fire from the twilight burns,
Soft stars, trembling and new.

Children shout in the street;
Pedlars gesture and chaff;
Linden-branches repeat
Wise-wives' stories, and laugh.
River runs to the sea;
Boats swim brave on his breast.

(There is one boat whose free
Swan-wings surpass the rest.)

Would I might sail away!—
Lock my door in the town;
Lock in the dark old day
When Sorrow came in her gown
Heavy and soiled with ash:
Knocked, and entered, and sate.
My candles failed in a flash.
The bread was dust that I ate.

—Oh, to sing as of old!
Sing, with the dance of the day,—
Sing, with the waters cold
And the quick winds running away!
—Never, never, again.—
But I will be proud, not cry.
Sunshine, children, the strain
Of the harp-man loitering by,

I will not hurt you with tears.

Look! I will laugh!—

And lo,

Sorrow,—Sorrow,—she hears!

She smiles! and she rises to go!

WINGS

TAKE down your golden wings now from their hook
behind the door.

The wind comes calling from the west, and you
must fly once more.

Oh, mine are grown too old to fly, my crooked
wings and gray,

But yours are glad with ruffled gold, and you must
fly away.

I found you far across the moors beneath a thorny-
tree:

The eyes of you were wide as stars above a breath-
less sea:

But frail you were and faint you were, and nowise
gay and glad

Save for the leaping golden wings your slender
shoulders had.

And suddenly I led you home, and cherished you.

I wrought

Green robes like April willow-leaves. I coursed
the hills and sought

Strange jewel-seeds and pearly flow'rs to weave
about your hair.

Beneath my hand you bloomed and grew, fair as a
flame is fair.

I hung your wings behind the door lest you should
fly away:

(They being all of bubbling gold, but mine,—ah,
withered gray!)

I hung your wings behind the door, for secretly I
knew

Your golden wings, your wayward wings, they
bode their time for you.

And now, the cottage by the wood, its doorways
shall be dark.

You were its sunshine and its spring; its south
wind and its lark.

Your bed beneath the window-sill must lie un-
warmed, unpressed;
The briar-rose may bear no more her star-flowers
for your breast.

The dragon-flies across the pools may dart and
drowse all day,
Sapphire and stinging emerald, with slit wings
silver-gray;
The rabbit up the glen may leap, the rare thrush
ring his chime:—
But you will never come again for noon or twilight-
time.

—Take down your golden wings now from their
hook behind the door,
And tie them tight against your back, the bright
thongs crossed before.
The bright thongs strained across your breast to
keep them straight and true,
The golden wings, the wandering wings, that woke
my love for you.

The west wind calls, "Come forth! Come forth!"

Look once within my eyes.

Tell me, "I know you loved me well, but now the whole world cries!"

Tell me, "You have been kind to me, but ah, I cannot stay.

A million miles of sea and sun, they whisper me away."

That is enough. I ask no more. I grow too gray to fly.

I can but walk the sheltered woods to watch the year go by.

The little cottage, dawn and dusk, shall keep me warm. And you—

That I must give you back your wings too well, too well I knew!

O Face of Youth that lit my dusk! O Hand too light to hold!

How should you wait? The west wind cries, who cried to me of old.

Lean down. I tie the broad bright thongs to keep
them true and straight:

Your golden wings, your windy wings, that leave
me desolate.

THE UNBORN

WHEN out of the dark I come to you,
A faint new spirit, blank and blind,—
A bird too weak to search the blue,—
A ship too frail to take the wind,—

When out of the dark I come to you,—
(You having called me from that Place
Where I might sleep the aeons through,
Lapped in the drowsy dark of Space,)—

Then must you claim me for your own,
Who seem no more your own than light,
Across an upland pasture blown
In the great solitudes of night?

Body and soul, you live in me.
Yet strange am I, and wild, and new.
Oh, can your loving leave me free,
When out of the dark I come to you?—

THE MOTHER

AND now, they did not need her any more.
She heard below the shudder of the door,
The quick feet on the path, and she was fain
Only to snatch her sewing up again,
And sew, and sew, seam over feverish seam,
Hurrying in the dumb haze of a dream,
Thrusting away the moment when her hand
Should force her idleness to understand
That they were gone, all gone, and at the door
They would not call and claim her any more.

Young as the morning, they were gone away,
Whose kisses kept her hair from turning gray,
Whose laughter kept her ready. Wherefore now
Should not those wrinkles deepen in her brow,
And she shut up her heart, and learn to be
Of her bright self a queer dull travesty?

And yet, the smile they left her must not die;
For crying now, might she not always cry?
“O God!” she whispered, sewing, “keep me! Oh,
Thou only, over all the world, must know!”

THE CHILDREN'S PEDDLER

UP above the village roofs the white road climbs
away;

There among its maple trees the church stands cool
and gray,

And the Dead Folk all around have houses still and
sweet.—

But I—I go a-peddling on the dusty village
street.

Uphill, downhill, rain and sunny weather:

Right foot, left foot, (faith, it's hard on leather)!

Dolls and balls and kites and chains, knives and
knick-knacks—oh,

I'm the crazy peddlerman that all the children
know!

All the village children shout and tag me down the
street:

Bobbing braids and freckled cheeks and bare brown
dusty feet.

“Have you got the marbles with the twisty glass
inside?”

“Have you got the gun that popped?” “And oh,
the doll that cried?”

“Have you got a sailorman with wind-mill arms
and oars?”

“I must buy a league ball, and a book to keep the
scores.”

“Did you bring my box of paints?” They pull my
coat and tease:

“Show me how to fly my kite!” “And run my
jig-saw, please!”

Eager eyes and laughing lips and dancing dusty feet,
So they cry and chase me down the maple-shaded
street.

And the grown-up people smile from window-sill
and door,

“It’s the children’s peddlerman, come to town once
more.”

Oh, the grown-up people smile and tap their fore-
heads wise.

If they think me simple—well, I must be, in their
eyes!

But who’d peddle tins and tapes and soap and pious
books,

When there’s heaven paid him out for knives and
fishing-hooks?

Uphill, downhill, every sort of weather:

Right foot, left foot, (and it’s hard on leather)!

None too much to eat and drink, shabby coat to
wear;

No, it’s little wonder that the grown-up people
stare!

* * * * *

But above the village roofs the church stands cool
and gray.

There the Dead Folk lie at ease, and dream the
years away.

There beneath a sweetbriar bush are three gray
stones I know,
Worn alike, but one is tall, and two are small and
low.

When it's summer dusk along the lazy village street,
When the children loiter home with tired eyes and
feet,

And the grown-up people say, "You little drowsi-
head,

Put your playthings straight away and tumble into
bed!"

Then they never see me climb the steep white
crooked road.

Underneath the apple-tree I hide my peddler's load;

In the starry singing dusk I pass the churchyard
gate,
And beside the sweetbriar bush I stand alone and
wait.

Oh, there's nothing there to hear, nothing there to
see:

Only stars and village lights and tree that crowds
on tree.

No one answers when I speak; no one takes my
hand.

But I think they hear my voice; I think they under-
stand.

Uphill, downhill, every sort of weather:

Right foot, left foot, (mighty hard on leather)!

Dolls and bats and blocks and stamps, knives and
knick-knacks,—oh,

Just the crazy peddlerman that all the children
know!

EVENING SONG

LITTLE Child, Good Child, go to sleep.
The tree-toads purr and the peepers peep;
Under the apple-tree grass grows deep;
Little Child, Good Child, go to sleep!

Big star out in the orange west;
Orioles swung in their gypsy nest;
Soft wind singing what you love best;
Rest till the sun-rise; rest, Child, rest!

Swift dreams swarm in a silver flight.—
Hand in hand with the sleepy Night
Lie down soft with your eyelids tight.—
Hush, Child, little Child! Hush.—Good-night—

THE NEW HOUSE

My little House is very young:
No shadow makes it grave.
With blue-bird-chintz and roses hung
Its chamber windows wave.

Here never blind-eyed Grief has knocked
And entered groping in.
The doors, that seem so free, are locked
As yet to Death and Sin.

Here only happy wondering dreams
Walk nightly to and fro.
They are the friends of white moon-beams,
And simple as the snow.

My little House is very young
And very unaware
That dreams are wrought and songs are sung
In any subtler air.

Oh might I keep its blue-birds bright,
Its hearth still warm and gay!
Oh might my House but know delight,
And not be dark, some day!

TO YOUTH—IN SECRET JOY

SHUT out the wind, shut out the gloom,
Draw the gold curtains round the room:
The candle-light sees well that you
Are glad, as mortals may be. Through
Your heart a secret fragrance blows,
Like a June garden, when a rose
Leans to the wind: the light-lipped morn
Whispers, "So thou! so thou—art born!"

Oh, far away the haunted past
With all its lonely spaces, vast
And hollow as an echoing hall
Of hateful dreams, where you might call
And run, but never find the end,
Nor window-slit, nor face of friend.

And far away the future. Far
Its shadow as its saving star.
(In truth, what stars shall shine? to make
The sky still holy for their sake,
When earth seems faded, and you know:
“Soon I must go. Soon I must go.”)

So far—that dusk! Sit close,—and pray.
You have been very glad to-day.
Glad!—no one knows how glad. You keep
Your dear joy sacred as your sleep.
How could the hard world understand
The warm light tremor of your hand,
The flying flush, the dancing eyes,
And how your whole heart laughs and
cries?
—You would as soon men saw you lie
White in your star-lit room, as spy
This secret. No, you need not speak,
Nor move the hand that holds your cheek;

You need not whisper. Only pray,
Because you were so glad to-day.

For oh, you must remember this
Deep hour of hidden ecstasies,
Of fragrance and unearthly light,
Of sky-swept wonder when to-night—
Nay! but you know so well why you
Are glad! let only God know, too.

Only that you remember. Pray.
Sometime your Life may need this day!

FIRE FANTASY

FLAME flies up in the chimney black.
Here I lie and bid him come back.

Here I lie, on the fox-skin, white
As silver under the leaping light,—
White and furry and kind and warm.—
Out by the window scurries the storm.

“Flame! O crinkly curly Flame!
Where are you going? What is your name?
Is it a star you are flying to?
Stay and tell me, O You!—O You!”

But the flame he never, never comes back.
I lie and stare up the chimney black.

Out in the hall the great clock chimes.
His voice is solemn as holy rhymes
That good monks made in old cloister cells,
Somehow charmed to sing in his bells,
Out in the dark, all deep and low,
Like sea-waves swinging to and fro.

Here it is very still and warm,
But out on the window batters the storm.
If I were a ship, I would die to-night;
If I were a bird, I would freeze in my flight;
If I were a ghost, I would keep to my grave.
—But now, I watch how the wide flames
wave.

Now, I dream of a thousand things:
Summer, and sea-foam, and queens, and kings.

Flame flies up in the chimney black.
If I were a flame, would I ever come back?
If I got to a star, I would never come back.

But there are no stars at all to-night.
Up in the sky there is never a light:
Only the souls of the flames, and they
Are thin and nervous, and scudding gray.
They blow, they blow, they shudder and blow.
The wind he hates them and hustles them so.

“Wind! O Wind!—Are you mad?” But he
Shrieks and is gone without answering me.

Flame flies up in the chimney black.
I am too sleepy to call him back.

Now it is time to go to bed:
Furry fox, my head to your head;
Long warm fox, my back to your back;
I stretch, I stretch, till my best bones crack.
—I am so still with sleep, and warm.
—Out on the window shivers the storm.

Sleepy fire, now purr and fall.
Great old clock in the dusky hall,

Chime for me; chime deep, chime low,
Like sea-waves swinging to and fro.

—I saw in my eyes a queer thing then.
There was a woman with two tall men.
She had a blue shawl over her head.
One of them wore a cloak, blood-red.
The other one had a sword. And she
Was fair as an old-time queen to see.
They had been travelling—far—so far—
—But oh, in my eyes a falling star!
Drowned in the sea.—And I saw a ship
With square sails over the sea's edge
slip,—
I wonder—wonder—where.—

Oh, then

I saw—gaunt hills, and a black old fen—
A wind-mill,—water. —I saw—I saw—
Sun-burnt boys and a stack of straw,
Yellow, yellow! and swallows flew—

—Was her shawl yellow, or was it blue,—
Over her head—?—

Oh, I am so warm.

Out on the window tumbles the storm.

I am so sleepy—the chimney is black—

Flame—flame—are you coming back?—

Have you found a star?—are you coming back—

Coming back—

Coming—back———?

AN OLD SONG

AND if I came not again
After certain days;
If no morning sun or rain
Met me on their ways;

If the meadows knew no more
How my feet go free,
And the folded hills forbore
Any speech of me;

If you did not find me here,
At the door at night,
And the cold hearth kept no cheer,
And the panes no light;— .

Oh, if I came not again,
Would you miss me much?
Would your fingers once be fain
Of my wandering touch?

Would you dream me at your side
In the waking wood,
Where the old spring hungers hide
In blue solitude?

Would you wonder where I passed,
Into joy or pain?
Oh, to know you cared, at last,
Came I not again!

HOME

HOME, to the hills and the rough, running water;
Home, to the plain folk and cold winds again.
Oh, I am only a gray farm's still daughter,
Spite of my wandering passion and pain!

Home, from the city that snares and enthralls me;
Home, from the bold light and bold weary crowd.
Oh, it's the blown snow and bare field that calls me;
White star and shy dawn and wild lonely cloud!

Home, to the gray house the pine-trees guard,
sighing;
Home, to the low door that laughs to my touch.
How should I know till my wings failed me, flying,
Home-nest,—my heart's nest,—I loved you so
much?

WILD WEATHER

THE sea was wild. The wind was proud.
He shook my curtains like a shroud.

He was a wet and worthy wind:
His hair with wild sea-crystals twined:
His cloak with wild sea-grasses green;
His slanted wings all gray and lean:
And strange and swift, and fierce and free
He cried, "Come out! and race with me!"

I snatched my mantle wide and red,
And far along the cliffs I fled.

The cliff-grass bowed itself in fear,
The gulls forgot what path to steer;
Below the cliffs the broad waves broke
In trampled ranks like fighting folk;

The ships with grisly sea-wrack blind,
Dead-drunken, cursed that chasing wind.

My lips with salt were wild to taste.
I leapt: I shouted and made haste:
Along the cliffs, above the sea,
With mad red mantle waving free,
And hair that whipped the eyes of me.

And there was no one else but he,
That great grim wind who called to me.

Oh, we ran far! Oh, we ran free!

DAWN-JOY

CLEAN, clean as crispèd water-cress
The dawn-taste of the wind!
I got me out with hastiness,
And not a look behind.

The sleep fell off my eyes like scales,
And off my feet like lead.
As thoughtless Things with hooves and tails,
I leapt, and tossed my head!

The sleep swept off my heart like mist
That blurs a sun-lit sea.
I felt the keen blood curl and twist
To every tip of me.

I felt as cherry-trees must feel
 When all their blossoms shake;
Or like the black-bird routs that reel
 Around a rushy lake.

I thought, "And so the Sun must thrill,
 Who strides upon his way,
And sees the hushed earth-hollows fill
 With living golden Day!"

I thought, "And God Himself must know
 A Joy ten thousandfold
More free and thirsty, when His low
 Dull earth grows glad and bold,

"And rocks and quivers in His hand,
 As I do, with the Spring
Across the wild green-gilded land
 Unloosed and glorying."

—Clean, clean as crispèd water-cess,
The dawn-taste of the wind.
My thoughts leapt high with heavenliness;
My feet came close behind!

“NOW I WILL SADDLE THE SWIFT BROWN
MARE”

Now I will saddle the swift brown mare,
And ride, and ride, to the sunset's death;
With the wind like the hands of a star in my hair,
And the white frost snatching my breath!

—Shut the door where the old books stand
Row on row in their musty cowls:
Monks, with a scourge and a cross in each hand:
Apes, and asses, and snakes, and owls!

—Shut the door where the Gossips sit,
Hugging the hearth, with their brew of tea:
Picking men's lives up, bit by bit,
Dropping them dourly and damningly.

—Shut the door where my own Moods lie

Faint and white on a silver bed:

Delicate damsels, dreams that die,

Petals from pale white poppies shed.

Oh, I will saddle the swift brown mare,

And ride, and ride, to the forge-fire-sky!

—Might I shoe her with stars that hang white-hot
there,

Cooled in the sea-troughs, hissing high!

Might I spur her with goads of the ice that grows

Sharp as steel on the mountain-lake!

Might I shout her the fierce gay song that blows

Out of the west where the sun-ranks break!

—Look, I am weary of "Thus,—and So,"—

Mantles that mildew and swords that rust;

Talk and trouble and meanness. Oh,

Why should I stay to be choked with dust?

78 "I WILL SADDLE THE SWIFT BROWN MARE"

So, I will saddle the swift brown mare,
And ride, and ride, to the red world's death.
With the wind like the hands of a star in my hair,
And the quick frost catching my breath!

TO THE NORTH

I GIVE three calls to the North.

Come forth!

Come forth!

Come forth!

Out of the black fir-forests, where snow
Hides in the hollow places; where blow
Late spring winds; and the rivers run
Ice-green, laughing with late spring sun;
Out of the sharp white nights, too still,
(Star upon star, as hill upon hill)
Oh, like the fierce-foot rivers, set free,
Come and awaken and trouble me!

(Name that I cannot cry,
Face that my dreams deny,

Feet that strode swift,—and yet
Should I one hour forget?
Shot from your life to mine,
Blazing and barbed, the Sign?)

I give three calls to the North.

Come forth!

Come forth!

Come forth!

Here in my garden green
Lilacs whisper and lean.
Deep the grass at my door.
Shadows and songs fly o'er.
Out in the village street
Clatter of wheels and feet;
Children laughing, the chime
From the church-tower telling the time;
Hot May-sweetness, and I
Weeding my rose-beds, cry

Over the bristling hills to the North,
Hear me! Come forth! Come forth!

Can you not run down a mountain-side
Like a rude green river's rock-roughened tide?
Fly over forests of black-peaked firs
Like an eagle, proudest of voyagers?
Sweep like a notable wind to me,
Laughing and cold-lipped, to set me free?

How can I wait so long?
Till the bob-o'-link slackens his song;
Till the roses have blossomed and blown,
And the little round apples have grown
Green on my twisted tree?
Can you not set me free
Now, while I cry to you?
Now, while the sweet nights through
I lie in the dark and feel
Life like a mad flame reel

Over the floors of my heart?
Now, while the wild dreams start
Clamoring out of the night and noon,
Under the clear sun, under the moon,
Clamoring, while I go
Soberly to and fro?

How can I wait? I stand
And cry to you. Heart and hand
Reaches to you. Give heed!
I, in my garden, bleed
Small dark blood-drops of need.

—Great bees blunder and croon,—
Church-bell chiming high noon,—

O, like the fierce-foot rivers, set free,
Come! and awaken and trouble me!
Come! For I need you mortally!

I give three calls to the North.

Come forth!

Come forth!

Come forth!

UP ON THE MOUNTAIN

UP on the mountain, where nobody comes,
(But the wild wind walks, and the wild bee hums,)—

Up on the mountain, where nobody spies,
But the shy ones, the swift ones, soft-footed and
wise,—

There in the singing and coolness and height,
With the thrush-voice all day and the brook-voice
all night,—

There will I wander, and there will I rest,
As a deer in the fern, as a bird in the nest.

Far from the faces that stare and are blind;
From the cold hidden heart, and the cold crooked
mind,—

Up on the mountain where nobody sees,
I will sleep like a leaf of the green simple trees.

I will fold in my heart all my wonder, and sleep,
While the white stars drift, and the white hours
creep.

—And far from the wind and the stars and the hill
I will wake in the hot nights and smile and lie still,

As I feel on my eye-lids the hands of the night,
Like an echo of leaf-song, a star's straying light.

Oh, under the labor and blindness and heat
Shall be music to lure me and lighten my feet,—

Beating,

“Up on the mountain, where nobody comes,—
But the wild wind walks, and the wild bee hums,—
And the wild bee hums—”

“THE STARS GO BY”

UNDER the Lake he growls and he groans,
Tossing and twisting his frosty bones:
Grim old Giant!—but never we
Will chop the ice out and set you free;
 Never we, while the moon rides high,
 And the stars go by, and the stars go by,
 As over the gray-glass Lake we fly!

Nearer, nearer, the black shores swing.
Laugh and lean while the steel blades sing:
Laugh, and slip into silence.—See!
The world is aching with splendor! Free,—
Free of our bodies our light souls fly
Up, where the cold moon freezes the sky,—
Up, where the strange stars crowd into Space.—
Oh, have they stared into God's own Face?

Folding their flames in the Flame of God,
Over His terrible threshold trod?

Oh, we are thirsty of light,—of light,—
Space,—and silence—and God—to-night.
How can we hide them forever, deep
In our hearts from the dun days' struggle and
sleep?

Hide them, and know till we die, that we
Are free of the flames of Eternity,—
Freer than falling stars are free?

Ah, but our bodies grow stiff and cold:
Stars are shifting: the night is old.
We must come back out of Space, and see
How far it is to Eternity!

So, from the shadowy pine-tree-shore,
Back to our bodies! swing free once more!
Chase the blurred moon whisking away
Down at our feet in the mirror gray:

Laugh, and lean to the steel blades' song,
Flying along,—oh, flying along!

But—there's a star shoots over the hill.
Hush. For our souls are too thirsty still,
Thirsty, trembling with utter light.
Hush. We are going.

O Worlds, good-night!

STORM DANCE

THE water came up with a roar,
The water came up to me.
There was a wave with tusks of a boar,
And he gnashed with his tusks on me.
I leaned, I leapt, and was free.
He snarled and struggled and fled.
Foaming and blind he turned to the sea,
And his brothers trampled him dead.

The water came up with a shriek.
The water came up to me.
There was a wave with a woman's cheek
And she shuddered and clung to me.
I crouched, I cast her away.
She cursed me and swooned and died.
Her green hair tangled like sea-weed lay
Tossed out on the tearing tide.

Challenge and chase me, Storm!

Harry and hate me, Wave!

Wild as the wind is my heart, but warm,

Sudden and merry and brave.

For the water comes up with a shout,

The water comes up to me.

And oh, but I laugh, laugh out!

And the great gulls laugh, and the sea!

THE BLACK WITCH

YE have driven me out from your court and your
kirk,
From your market-square and your mill;
Ye have branded my name, ye have wasted my
work,
Ye have done me a deadly ill.

Ye have chased me to crags where the eagles cry,
And the sharp sun swallows the dew.
A Witch and a Devil's Wife am I?
Then why should I come to you?

The Black Plague walks in your shuddering street;
Your dead like herring lie thick.
With mantles over your mouths ye meet.
Ye take the dead for the quick.

God's Faith! My witchcraft could help you now:

My devils could daunt your death!

But I will stand under my rowan-bough

However ye waste your breath.

I will not come down, I will not come down,

Nor weave you one wizardry,

Though all the roofs o' the little red town

Go tumbling into the sea.

Though all the cracks o' the craggy Rock

Gape wide as the mouths o' Doom,

I will stand at the crest and make you a mock

Till ye long for the grave's gray gloom.

Black Plague! Black Plague! push open their
doors!

Lie down in their beds this day!

Heavy and hard are my ancient scores.

Black Plague! but we make them pay!

Oh, up and up in the face of the sun
My voice like a flame shall flee,
With Curse on you, Curse on you, every one,
Who wrought such a curse on me!

RIDE

LEAN in the saddle and look aside.

Ride!

Turn the flame of your face away.

It is white as a tree in May.

It is bright as a star at sea.

It is terribly dear to me.

Lean in the saddle and look aside.

Ride!

Black-maned Balor is proud of you,

Racing down in the dawn-red dew;

Racing down with the dust behind,

(Crackling lash of the sun and wind,)

Black-maned Balor will never see
Here in the bushes the eyes of me,
Staring out like a fox in lair,
Hungering out through my clotted hair,
Pulling you from the saddle, down,
Down through the fern and the bracken
 brown,
Down, to the hollow where I lie,
Trembling to feel your face flash by.

Ah, but you must not see—not see!
You must never look once at me.

Days gone by, and I rode with you
Over the dust and under the dew:
Light and perilous, rash to ride,
Laughing, high as a hawk with pride.

Now I kneel in the brake and hide.

(Ride.)

Oh, if I might stand clear and cry,
“Look! It is I again! It is I!”
Swing you down from the saddle,—No!
Turn the flame of your face and go!
Watch the white clouds up in the wind;
Laugh for the keen miles cast behind.
Look not down at the burnt road-side.

Dogs that have bitten must slink and hide.
—God! that I loved you and hurt you! —See,
I will not ask for one look at me.
Safe as a star in the sky-ways wide
Ride!

Galloping hoofs on my heart, my pride.
Love of me, Love of me, lean aside!

RIDE!

ROMANCE

COME over the waters and find me!
The weeds by the wet shore bind me.
 The water-snakes float
 Round my slime-dragged boat,
And the clouds of the sun-dust blind me.

Come over the waters and hold me!
Hot fingers of Horror enfold me.
 My white swan lies dead
 In his nest blood-red,
But the marsh-geese chase me and scold me.

Come over the waters and woo me!
The rude Marsh-People pursue me.
 From tussock and brake
 They leer and they shake
Their hairy hands holden unto me.

Come over! Come over! Come over!
O Beautiful Sunrise Lover!
Come over the hill of the waters!
—I am one of a great King's daughters:
I am fair, I am sweet,
From my head to my feet;
I am young as the day;
Yet my heart grows gray
Ere the terrible charm be broken:
Ere the dawn-word swiftly be spoken:
 And my boat swing free
 To the clear blue sea,
And the sin of my race be wroken!

Come over! I cry unto thee.
I cover my face and sue thee.
The Marsh Men seize and enslave me!
Come over the waters and save me!

O MY LOVE LEONORE

O MY Love Leonore! O my lithe Lady!
Is it the Grave you are gracing to-night?
Is your breast cold now and covered with white?
Are you grown stiff, who were lissome and light?—

Are they the plain coffin-planks that you see,
Narrow for feet that were flying and free,
Rude for white hands that wove spells over me?—
O my Love Leonore,—O my lithe Lady?—

Is your cheek cool of the flush that I fanned?
Must you not dance now, nor once wave your hand?
Can you not laugh, through the small stones and
sand,—

O my Love Leonore! O my lithe Lady?—

—It is the Grave I am gracing to-night.
I am clay-cold now, and stiff-limbed, and white.
A great Lord, DEATH, hath me in this plight.

O my Love Leonore, O my lithe Lady,
If he, the great Lord, lays hands on your hand,
He will not help you to dance or to stand;
Nor from your eyes brush the small stones and
sand.

Therefore farewell. Whom he wooeth is won.
Therefore farewell. I am jealous of none.
Are not both dancing and dying soon done?
O my Love Leonore,—O my lithe Lady?—

THE CHANGELING

I HAVE two horns upon my head.
They please me, being garlanded
With creepy pine, and berries red
From some old secret hawthorn-tree.

I have two horns, and hoofs also:
Brown questing hoofs, that clip and go
Over the mountain, high and low,
From sky-crack to the droning sea.

My Mother would have shame of me
If she could see—if she could see
Those horns and hoofs that make too free
With what she bore and bred so straight.

She taught me to be still and good;
To walk demure as maidens should;
Wear dainty slippers, silken snood,
And not come loitering home too late.

But now I dance, I dance all night,
By faint star-light or fierce moon-light,
Over the mountain,—till the white
Dumb dawn comes fingering, soothing me.

With whom I dance, with whom I sing,—
Why need my Mother know this thing?
In my green chamber slumbering
She finds me sweet and white, when she

Strokes down my curls. She does not know
Two horns beneath her fingers grow;
Rough horns: and I have hoofs also,
Not feet like pale flow'rs on the floor.

THE CHANGELING
ANGELIC

Oh, if you met me on the hill,
Moon-maddened, dancing to my fill,
O Mother, could you love me still,—
This wild-heart thing you never bore?

HOOFS IN THE DARK

I WAKE in the night, and my heart says, "Hark!"
I lie like a corpse in my cool white place.
For hoofs go by in the dark, in the dark.
I turn on my pillow and bury my face.

The night is a tomb that smothers and sounds.
The night is a cavern uncressetted.
The blood in my ears like a mallet pounds.
My heart goes wild and my eyes see red:

Red and purple with prickling light,
Terrible broken light like glass.
For your hoofs go by in the breathing night,
And I dare not call you nor see you pass.

Loud on the bridge and up the hill,
Low and dull on the turfy lawn:
You ride with the wind, at the dark wind's will,
With the alien stars, an hour ere dawn.

* * * * *

When I am dead, and the tapers burn,
As stiff and pale in my place I lie,
What shall I do if I cannot turn
And bury my face when the hoofs go by?

What if my body rose in its shroud,
And leaned like a mist the casement through,
Being no longer mortal and proud,—
Questing you, calling you, claiming you?

Would you draw rein? Would you see my face
Wan with wonder and love and death
Shine out once from the window-space,—
Shine, then fade with the frost's white breath?

Would you draw rein? Who knows? The tide
Of my blood runs high, and my heart says "Hark!"
I have long to live, while you ride—you ride—
Out in the dark; out there in the dark.—

“WHAT I DESIRE TO SAY”

WHAT I desire to say will not be caught in words.

—I have been on the hills to-day, hearing strange
leaves and birds.

I have been on the city street, hearing the pave-
ments groan.

Now I am come again, glad of your face alone.

Here in the quiet house, where the soft night
walks through

Window and open door, whispering to me and
you,—

Here, where no stranger sounds than the far bell-
chimes come,—

Here, being most at peace, yet am I far from
home.—

Even as if the stars started and strained in
space,—
Even as if the winds shook Heaven's audience-place,
Pressing the sapphire walls, out, till they cracked
and rent,—
So in my side my heart strains through our still
content.

—You, that of all the world know the wild ways
I go,—
(You, flying farther yet, sweeping more high, more
low,)
Even to you, to-night, I must be dumb as death.
What I desire to say dies ere I give it breath.

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