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SONNETS AND  
POEMS    
BY ELEANOR  
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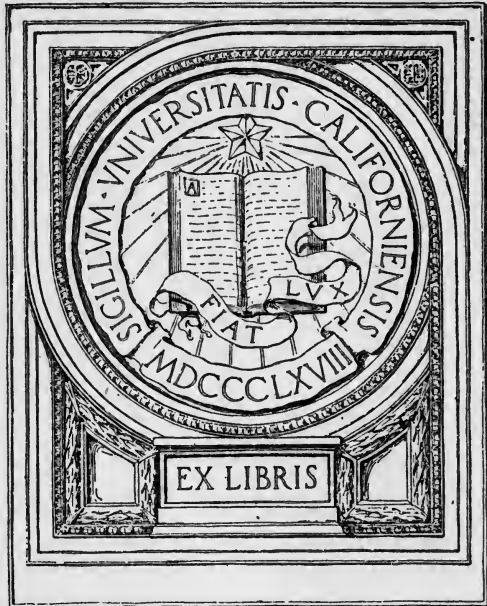
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¶ Some of these poems have appeared in *The Athenæum*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, *The Englishwoman*, *Root and Branch*, *The Saturday Westminster*, and *The Vineyard*: by the courtesy of whose editors they are reprinted in this volume.



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SONNETS. I.



MAN cannot be a sophist to his heart,  
He must look nakedly on his intent,  
Expose it of all shreds of argument,  
And strip it like a slave-girl in the mart.

What though with speckled truths and masked con-  
He still deceives awhile the outer sense? [fessions  
At barely half his honesty's expense  
Still earns the world's excuse for the world's transgres-

[sions ?

His conscience cannot play the marshland elf,  
Confusing that poor midnight wanderer,  
His soul, with floundering lights and errant gleams.  
O what damnation man would deal himself  
If meeting her beyond his uttermost dreams  
He still could face his soul and lie to her.

II.

O spare me from the hand of niggard love  
That grasps at interest on what it lends,  
And sets cold counsel as a guard above  
The hoard it calculates before it spends.  
Such misers of the riches of the heart  
Bear their untested treasure to the grave,  
And miss the whole, striving to save the part,  
By the bare measure they have striven to save.

Is it for pride in saying at the end :  
See, Life ! I spent not all that thou hast given—  
Lo, this and this and this I did not spend !  
I stinted earth of bliss to add to heaven.  
Alas, poor fools ! life only gave ye this  
Because earth has such need of heavenly bliss.

## III.

Once, Love, be prodigal, nor look hereafter,  
 Not though experience unrolls the years  
 And bids thee count the cost of golden laughter  
 In the dull coinage of leaden tears.  
 O perjured wisdom! half-truth hedged with lies!  
 That makes a common stake of joy and pain,  
 When tears are man's most mortal certainties  
 And every instant's joy his heavenly gain.

Ah, mystery that sowed our breath and being,  
 What harvest wilt thou get of untilled powers?  
 Why didst thou give us sight if not for seeing?  
 Why if we dare not hear make hearing ours?  
 Or why in life's name this high passion of love  
 But in life's name its passionate height to prove?

## IV.

Wilt thou put seals on love because men say  
 Love is a thing that certain time will steal?  
 As well, since night is certain after day,  
 Might men their eyelids to the noontide seal.  
 Nay! even though that worn-out tale were truth,  
 And love, dear love, were time's assured dower,  
 What profit canst thou get of cheated youth  
 By paying usury before his hour?

I will not hear the sorry tune of time,  
 That bitter quencher of young blessedness.  
 Not to have proved young rapture is the crime,  
 Unproven it will be quenched no less, no less.  
 And thou wilt to the earth at last, time's scorn,  
 Relinquishing a crown thou hast not worn.

V.

When all is said, we can but turn our eyes  
In helplessness on the miraculous heart  
And secretly dream opportunities  
That shall its untried force in motion start ;  
But life that launched and left us lets us drift,  
Our mightiest dreams still lean on circumstance,  
The essence of pain and joy is in our gift  
But not its seasons of significance.

We cannot by the strength of our desires  
Compel our destinies ; we only feel  
That in our souls imperishable fires  
Are hungry for the anvil and the steel.  
But if life brings no metal to the flame  
What shall we fashion of it in life's name ?

VI.

Certain among us walk in loneliness  
Along the pale unprofitable days,  
Hazarding many an unanswered guess  
At what vague purpose wastes us on our ways.  
We know that we are potent to create,  
We say, I could be such or such or such,  
And lo, indifferent death swings back the gate  
And life has never put us to the touch.

So women with the aching will to bear  
Still to the barren grave must barren go,  
And men that might again like Titans dare  
Angelic secrets, die and nothing know.  
Alas ! why were we born to woe and bliss  
If life had no more need of us than this ?

## VII.

When I see two delay their wings at heaven  
 To scan the creeping audience of the earth,  
 I think the angelic hosts of life must even  
 Break into tears of fire or furious mirth,  
 That ever spirits nearly perfected  
 Should count the cost of knowing themselves sublime,  
 Setting the measurable years in dread  
 Against their single flash of measureless time.

So issues strange to nature are debated,  
 Woven in nets and beaten into bars,  
 While nature's issue stands unconsummated  
 Upon the very boundary of the stars;  
 And souls whose unity had been divine  
 Sundered shrink back from God's to man's design.

## VIII.

Alas, that ever life's sleek counterfeit,  
 Convention, should usurp life's very throne,  
 Setting about the bitter and the sweet  
 Observances the soul disdains to own.  
 It muffles up with bland expedient tongue  
 The wise examination of the mind,  
 Bribing the old and threatening the young  
 And offering easy conduct to the blind.

A handbook of few rules for many cases,  
 One answer to more sums than it can prove,  
 With prizes for apt scholars in its paces,  
 A veil for knowledge and a ring for love;  
 And this smooth text for any questioning heart—  
 Know not, and be less than, the thing thou art.

## IX.

Love needs not two the render it complete,  
 O certainly love needs not even one!  
 Sweet singing wants no listener to be sweet,  
 And unseen light's still proper to the sun.  
 When sunlight falls upon unpeopled valleys  
 No presence can increase or dim its fall,  
 When nightingales sing in deserted alleys  
 No ear can make the night more musical.

If solitary into the light and song  
 I come, I know I have my treasure whole,  
 Yea, and still have it whole, although a throng  
 Runs after me down paths whereby I stole,  
 Yea, and still have it whole, though only one  
 Should follow me—or none, beloved, or none.

## X.

What is this anguish then that always stands  
 Mingled in love, if love be love's sole end?  
 O it is life still gasping his commands  
 And crying love therein to stand his friend.  
 Life drives us all whether we love or no,  
 We are life's purpose, he much less is ours,  
 And we like panting beasts in harness go  
 While his fierce needs make torments of our powers.

Only when love across the heavy fields  
 Divinely treads to labour with the clods,  
 He breaks the goad that life is glad to yield,  
 And lifts the yoke that bowed us to the sods:  
 Upstanding, we behold a God revealed,  
 And serve life's purpose not like beasts but gods.

XI.

A few of us who faltered as we fared  
 Love has returned for. Still he leads us on,  
 But where we walk the furrows are prepared  
 And sown and fruitful, and the sowers are gone.  
 O love, O love, the way too easy lies!  
 Life on the rough horizon yonder goes,  
 And when I call he will not turn his eyes,  
 But with my brothers sows, and reaps, and sows.

Life without love, O bitter, bitterest birth!  
 Love without life still leaves us in our need.  
 Ah, love, give up to me my patch of earth,  
 My pinch of seed! Hast neither earth nor seed?  
 Then whence these visions of thy presence born,  
 These shining visions of flowers and fruit and corn?

XII.

I hear love answer: Since within the mesh  
 Of blood and flesh you labour for awhile,  
 I, even I, must use you in the flesh,  
 Leavening it of all the world calls vile.  
 I am not nature's force. O, she will forge  
 Her indomitable end without my aid,  
 And men cry out on her with rising gorge  
 As though they were of other forces made.

Not being her bond-slave, I alone can give  
 Visions that are unmingled with her earth,  
 But since this present in her habit you live  
 I must meet nature to fulfil their birth.  
 Only when you and I come clear of the clay,  
 Beloved, I will fulfil them as I may.



## XIII.

Thy glance is lovelier than the glance of the moon,  
 Thy breath more heavenly than the breath of may,  
 When thou dost gaze my sight begins to swoon,  
 When thou dost breathe my own breath swims away.  
 O love, with strange clear light, with strange dim breath,  
 Thou dost pervade me, till all strength, all sense,  
 Dissolve, it may be as they will when death  
 Looses the soul from the body's impotence.

The stones I tread no longer solid are,  
 These narrow houses all are built of air,  
 Nay, are they on this star, or on that star  
 Distantly trembling? Am I here or there?  
 Love, love, I know not what is near and far,  
 I am with thee and thou art everywhere.

## XIV.

Now I have love again and life again  
 By either hand, and cannot join their palms;  
 For me they never will be one but twain,  
 And I from each accept the barest alms.  
 Life's dole I scatter publicly, love's lies  
 Unspent, unspent for ever in my heart—  
 Poor heart, poor beggar of bleak charities  
 From stores wherein it owns no proper part.

Each knows me for his almsman in distress  
 And brings his mercies to my famished door,  
 But love asks not who doth my body dress,  
 Nor life who stoops to clothe a heart so poor.  
 Why do ye always come in singleness?  
 Meet in me once, and I will want no more.

XV.

Farewell, you children that I might have borne,  
Now must I put you from me year by year,  
Now year by year the root of life be torn  
Out of this womb to which you were so dear,  
Now year by year the milky springs be dried  
Within the sealed-up fountains of my breast,  
Now year by year be to my arms denied  
The burden they would break with and be blessed.

Sometimes I felt your lips and hands so close  
I almost could have plucked you from the dark,  
But now your very dream more distant grows  
As my still aching body grows more stark.  
I shall not see you laugh or hear you weep,  
Kiss you awake, or cover up your sleep.

XVI.

O lovely life, how you have worn me out  
With asking naught and leaving me at large,  
Till my unmeasured strength begins to doubt  
If it could answer now your lightest charge.  
I am as weary as a child to-night  
And with my heavy lack of burdens bowed,  
And power and pride have ceased to stand upright,  
Wanting the cause to be powerful and proud.

Passion is spent, and nothing was it spent on,  
And grief run dry of having no wounds to cure,  
And discontent that was the staff I leant on  
Is stifled by its final panting breaths.  
I have only patience left : such patience, sure,  
Is not life's child and mine, but mine and death's.

## XVII.

My little dream, my momentary dream,  
 My illimitable dream has slipt away.  
 It came not like the morning, but the gleam  
 In morning's van that is not night or day.  
 But since my walls of ignorance are broken,  
 Though on that desert knowledge builds no towers,  
 I cannot say of life, he has not spoken,  
 I cannot say of love, he has no powers.

I have seen apparitions. I have heard  
 Rumours within my soul's profoundest cave.  
 Movements remote and mighty have been stirred  
 In my ancestral blood, while from the grave  
 And womb of time strange thunders did arise  
 That shook the throne of thought with prophecies.

## XVIII.

Shall we not laugh together, you and I,  
 I being at last fulfilled, at last at rest  
 Within the strength of your beloved breast,  
 Shall we not laugh once at a day gone by  
 When, wan as things that lie below the earth,  
 Things choked and buried, sunless and unsought,  
 This richest life was only lived in thought,  
 Seed without fruit, unconsummated birth?

Love, in that time when you have called me yours  
 And have with kisses long outbreathed old fears,  
 Love, let me not remember these! these hours,  
 Save with one smile to drown their thousand tears.  
 Then fold me in your bosom so deep away  
 That memory cannot touch this loveless day.

# CHRISTMAS AND NEW-YEAR SONGS. ❧

## SIX GREEN SINGERS.



THE frost of the moon fell over my floor  
And six green singers stood at my door.

“What do ye here that music make?”  
“Let us come in for Christ’s sweet Sake.”

“Long have ye journeyed in coming here?”  
“Our Pilgrimage was the length of the year.”

“Where do ye make for?” I asked of them.  
“Our Shrine is a Stable in Bethlehem.”

“What will ye do as ye go along?”  
“Sing to the world an evergreen song.”

“What will ye sing for the listening earth?”  
“One will sing of a brave-souled Mirth,

“One of the Holiest Mystery,  
The Glory of glories shall one song be,

“One of the Memory of things,  
One of the Child’s imaginings,

“One of our songs is the fadeless Faith,  
And all are the Life more mighty than death.”

“Ere ye be gone that music make,  
Give me an alms for Christ’s sweet Sake.”

“Six green branches we leave with you ;  
See they be scattered your house-place through.

“The staunch blithe Holly your board shall grace,  
Mistletoe bless your chimney-place,

“Laurel to crown your lighted hall,  
Over your bed let the Yew-bough fall,

“Close by the cradle the Christmas Fir,  
For elfin dreams in its branches stir,

“Last and loveliest, high and low,  
From ceil to floor let the Ivy go.”

From each glad guest I received my gift  
And then the latch of my door did lift—

“Green singers, God prosper the song ye make  
As ye sing to the world for Christ’s sweet Sake.”

## IN A FAR COUNTRY.



WO strangers met on a mountain-side  
In a far country . . .  
The moon was young, the year was old,  
The airs of the night were bitter-cold,  
And their heavy cloaks their dress did hide.

One stranger did the other stay  
In that far country :  
“ What brings you into the icy dark  
With lifted eyes that only mark  
The lights of heaven, less light than day ? ”

The second said the first unto  
In the far country :  
“ Many the lights of heaven are,  
But I watch for the birth of one more Star  
Not yet arisen. And what do you ? ”

The first man to the other spoke  
In the far country :  
“ Even as you I wait the birth  
Of one new Light above the earth.  
What garb do you wear beneath your cloak ? ”

The second dropped his outer dress  
In that far country :  
He wore a sheep-skin frayed and thin  
Whose holes laid bare the shivering skin,  
And the wind made mock of his nakedness.

The other did his robe unfold  
In that far country,  
And plain to see in the starlight dim  
Were the furs and purple that covered him,  
They were so heavy and rich with gold.

The hand of each unto each did spring  
In that far country.  
“ Brother, why dared ye the night ? ” “ Because  
He, even as I, a Shepherd was.”  
“ I came, because He was a King.”

Handfast they watched the Birth on high  
In the far country.

*Shepherd and King forgotten be,  
But not that all men's Brother was He  
Who for all men did live and die  
In a far country.*

## A MANGER SONG.

**W**HENCE got ye your soft, soft eyes of the  
mother, O soft-eyed cow? We saw the  
Mother of mothers bring forth, and that was  
how. We sheltered her that was shelter-  
less for a little while,  
We watched the milking Babe at her breast, and we  
saw her smile.  
Even as we she lay upon straw, and even as we  
Took her sleep in the dark of the manger unfretfully,  
And when the dawn of the strange new Star discovered  
her thus,  
The ray that was destined for her and for Him fell  
also on us;  
The light passed into her eyes and ours, and full in  
its flood  
We were first to behold the first mothering look of  
the Mother of God.

## CHILD'S CAROL

**W**HEN there dawns a certain Star  
Comes a Stranger into the city ;  
The feet of prayer his dear feet are,  
His hands they are the hands of pity.

Every houseplace rich and poor  
Shall show for welcome a sprig of green,  
And every heart shall open its door  
To let the Stranger enter in.

I will set my door ajar  
That he may enter if he please ;  
The eyes of love his dear eyes are,  
His brow it is the brow of peace.

Through the heart of every child  
And man and woman in the city  
He shall pass, and they be filled  
With love and peace and prayer and pity.

## THE MUMMERS.

**H**ERE'S greeting for the master,  
And for the mistress greeting,  
And greeting for each gallant lad  
And every pretty sweeting,  
And greeting for the little children  
Dancing round our meeting.




We be your servants all,  
We be merry mummers ;  
We know jolly winter's face  
Though we ne'er saw summer's ;  
We come in wi' the end o' the year,  
For we be Christmas-comers.

This here do be Saint George,  
This the heathen Paynim,  
Dragon he will drink your healths  
When Saint George has slain him,  
This do be a beautiful maid  
And a trouble 'twere to train him !

There's our mumming ended  
And nothing to distress ye—  
Surely, we be little loth  
Since so kindly press ye.  
Here's God bless ye, master, mistress,  
All the house, God bless ye !

## CRADLE-SONG SONG FOR CHRISTMAS

HILD, when on this night you lie  
Softly, undisturbedly,  
On as white a bed of down  
As any child's in London Town,  
By a fire that all the night  
Keeps your chamber warm and light :

Dream, if dreams are yet your law,  
Your bed of down a bed of straw,  
Only warmed and lighted by  
One star in the open sky.  
Sweet you'll sleep then, for we know  
Once a Child slept sweetly so.

### THE MOON UPON HER WATCH-TOWER.



THE moon upon her watch-tower  
With her golden eye  
Guarded the quarters  
East and West the sky.  
Just as midnight  
Was stepping past  
One drew his first breath,  
One drew his last.  
The moon upon her watch-tower  
Rang a soundless bell—  
It might have been for welcome,  
It might have been farewell.

### A BURYING.



SEE the twelve fair months go by  
Bearing a coffin shoulder-high.  
What, laughing? Pretty pall-bearers,  
Pitiless of the buried years,  
Have ye never a tear to shed  
Nor sigh to drop for the newly-dead,  
Nor marble grief to mark his grave?—  
No, none of these; but see, we have  
Green seed to mingle with his earth.—  
What, is not this a burying?—Nay, a birth.

“COLIN CLOUT, COME HOME AGAIN!”



THROUGH the grey and heavy air,  
Through the January rain,  
When old England nipped and bare  
Shudders with the load of pain

Wept upon her by the eyes  
Of sunless, sun-remembering skies :  
When the soul of man is fain  
Suddenly abroad to fare,  
Questing, questing everywhere  
The soul of beauty to regain,  
Dreaming like a boy to snare  
The great free bird no lure can chain,  
Following in a dull despair  
That cannot pierce their brief disguise  
Random flights of pallid lies  
Never fledged in Paradise :—  
Comes the sound of gathering cries  
Calling down the centuries  
Urgently with might and main,  
*“ Colin Clout, O Colin Clout !  
Colin, Colin, Colin Clout !  
England needs you, Colin Clout !  
Colin Clout, come home again ! ”*

Colin, can you never hear ?  
Colin, will you never rise  
From the narrow plot of rest  
That sang for joy of such a guest  
To fill its dust with melodies,  
And to make it year by year  
Such a place of golden cheer,

Of flowering deed and jolly jest,  
Of pastoral prettiness and the clear  
Summons to be sailing West  
Over oceans fabulous  
Leading on to stranger shores  
And distant ports adventurous—  
That with its music in your ear,  
Drawn from your own imagined stores,  
You care to give no heed to us  
Whose laughter has been soured by doubt,  
Whose hearts are hedged with many a fear,  
Who learn to hold our lives so dear  
That all their wealth has trickled out,  
Who joy and beauty hand in hand  
Have driven homeless from the land  
And put the old ideals to rout :—  
Yet even because, returning here,  
You needs must find your England thus,  
Let not her children call in vain,  
*“ Colin Clout, O Colin Clout !  
Colin Clout, come home again ! ”*

Hark ! I hear a shepherd's pipe  
With three notes of music wibe  
Discord from this troubled star ;  
I hear tumultuous gladness shake  
The marrows of the land awake,  
Wherein old slumbering visions are ;  
I hear the stirrings of a day  
When all the earth will smell of may,  
When eager men will fling aside  
Their garments of enlightened pride  
Where time the moth has had his way,

And don again the homespun dress  
Of England's ancient simpleness—  
O piping shepherd-reed at play,  
Blown with a poet's golden breath,  
How suddenly a heart as gay,  
As innocent, as full of faith  
As children's hearts are, 'gins to beat  
In the world's bosom at my feet!  
How all my sisters' eyes grow strong,  
And all my brothers' eyes grow sweet,  
And we who boast so loud to-day  
Above our self-created strife  
That we have lost our fear of death  
Lose suddenly our fear of life,  
And go with gladness down the way  
To meet whatever is to meet.

Then, Colin! then about your knees  
We'll lie and list such fantasies  
As keep the spirit bright and young  
And guard the edge of youth as keen  
As a new-tempered virgin sword;  
We will re-learn the magic tongue,  
And where the meadow-rings are green  
Re-seek Titania and her lord,  
For you will bring a flitting home  
Of vanished Folk to English loam;  
About our business we will go  
With holiday-hearts whose dancing beat  
Is measured to your piping sweet,  
And on your music great will grow  
In the redress of antique wrongs;  
And from the richest of your songs,  
O dreamer-lover, shepherd-knight,

Spell out a long-forgotten name,  
Re-kindling the expiring glow  
Of Chivalry's high beacon-light,  
Till by its heaven-pointing flame  
Our generations understand  
Their England is too fair a land  
To suffer ugliness and blight  
And the dishonourable bane  
Of serfdom's bowed and broken knee,  
Too fine a trading mart to be  
Where one may cause the many pain,  
And foul self-interest men empowers  
To turn to weeds what should be flowers.

For evil must be still to cope  
When Colin Clout comes home again,  
Because a world devoid of pain  
Would be a world made bare of hope,  
And both must act together till  
Slipt from its spiritual trance  
This globe is frozen to good and ill ;  
But ere the life here bound by chance  
Flows to its last significance,  
Colin ! bring home the dream we lost  
Because we grew too old for dreams,  
And bring again the golden barque  
With which in our high-hearted youth  
We sailed wild seas and perilous streams ;  
And find again a road we crossed  
In olden time and failed to mark ;  
And give us love of beauty back,  
And set us on the grassy track  
Of many an ancient-simple truth ;


Re-teach our voices how to sing  
Melodiously ; and bring, O bring  
The rustless lance of honour in  
For men to strive again to win,  
As in the days when knightlihood  
For life's most high expression stood,  
And man reached forth to touch that goal  
Not with his hands but with his soul.

Ah, Colin ! 'tis a twice-told tale  
How that the woods were heard to wail,  
How birds with silence did complain,  
And fields with faded flowers did mourn,  
And flocks from feeding did refrain,  
And rivers wept for your return.  
Singer of England's merriest hour,  
Return ! return and make her flower,  
Charming your pipe unto your peers  
As once you did in other years ;  
For we who wait on you, know this,  
Whatever tune your reed shall play  
Will hearken with as gladdened ears  
As Cuddy and as Thestylis,  
As Hobbinol and Lucida  
And all the simple shepherd-train,  
What time they gathered and ran, a gay  
Rejoicing happy-hearted rout,  
Across the sweetening meadow-hay  
Each calling other :

*“ Come about !*

*The time of waiting is run out,  
And Colin Clout, O, Colin Clout,  
Colin Clout's come home again ! ”*

BRONWEN OF THE FLOWERS.


RONWEN gathered wild-flowers  
Up-and-down the lane;  
Her gathering touch upon them  
Sweeter was than rain.

Now a blossom overblown,  
Now a bud begun—  
Her eye that lightened on them  
Was quicker than the sun.

One by one she named them,  
Oh, she did express  
In her pretty namings  
All their prettiness:

Some were fit for virgins,  
Some for merry dames,  
And the love with which she named them  
Was lovelier than their names.


JESSICA DANCES.

HEN Joy and Molly on the lawn  
Danced bare of foot like spirits of dawn  
Jessica watched in wonderment  
Until delight would not be pent,  
And shoe and sock she cast in mirth



And felt her naked toes touch earth.  
Swiftly the fresh green joy shot in  
Through the fresh young rosy skin,  
And in a golden glee the child  
Went dancing innocently-wild  
Up and down and round and round  
Like daisies covering the ground,  
Called sunward by the age-long spell  
No ages can destroy  
Of youth that never sighed or sinned,—  
While elfin Molly and fairy Joy  
Danced on like lilies in a dell  
Or harebells in the wind.

#### SYLVIA SINGS.


YLVIA said that day,  
“I’ll sing if you will play.”  
We could deny not anything,  
Not even deny to hear her sing  
Who like a little spirit lay  
Uncertain whether to flutter its wing,  
To go or stay.

So though it broke our hearts for pity,  
With hidden face one went  
To the tinkling instrument,  
And one with bended head  
Stayed by the bed,  
While the small voice sang over and over its ditty :—

“ ‘ *Manners make ladies, but not such as these,  
Manners make ladies, but not such as these.* ’  
Now again, please!  
‘ *Manners make ladies—  
But not such as these.* ’ ”

She breathed it long and long  
And ah, so low,  
Her tiny meaningless song,  
For she was pleased to please us so—  
But what we said  
Sitting beside her bed  
I do not know,  
There were so many tears to keep unshed.

## MYFANWY AMONG THE LEAVES.

YING leaf and dead leaf,  
Yellow leaf and red leaf  
And white-backed beam,  
Lay along the woodland road  
As quiet as a dream.

Summer was over,  
The year had lost her lover,  
Spent with her grief  
All along the woodland road  
Leaf fell on leaf.

Then came a shuffling,  
Such a happy ruffling  
Of the dried sweet  
Surf of leaves upon the road  
Round a baby's feet,

Year-old leaf ran after  
Three-year-old laughter,  
Danced through the air  
As she caught them from the road  
And flung them anywhere.

Old leaf and cold leaf,  
Brown leaf and gold leaf  
And white-backed beam,  
Followed down the woodland road  
Myfanwy in a dream.

FOR JOAN.



SHALL love no other child,  
Joan, as I love you;  
The second life our children build  
Remains for you to do.

You would have been out-loved in one  
That never will be born,  
And the love that should my flower have grown  
Grows nothing but my thorn.

You for that unborn other's sake  
My deepest heart do clutch,  
But sometimes—sometimes all you take  
Hurts, for her sake, too much.

## A CHILD'S FEAR.



COME to your poor old Mother," she said  
Smiling, and gathered to her breast  
With her good hands her baby's head ;  
But the child's eyes looked out oppressed.  
"Not old—not old—it isn't true!  
Everyone may be old but you."

Old?—Old, you see, is much too near  
The half-imagined thing that takes  
Our Mothers where they do not hear  
Even when their baby wakes  
And cries for comfort in the gloom—  
Babies to cry, and Mothers not come!

Within the safe arms round her curled,  
"Oh," she half sobbed, "I wish you'd be  
The youngest person in the world—  
How old are you? not *old*?" begged she,  
And caught a little panting breath,  
Then lay quite still and thought of death.

## A CHRISTENING.



HIS day we are met to set a name  
On thy mysterious dust and flame,  
That in the years to follow, when  
Thy feet shall walk the ways of men,  
Thou mayst according to his plan  
Be known thereby to man,

O being undiscoverable!  
Thy name thyself will never spell.  
Whate'er thou art, whate'er wilt be,  
Man's tongue will never utter thee;  
Towering upon thy inmost throne  
Thou shalt of none be known.

We watch in wonder how thy brow  
Grows strange and silent in sleep, and how  
Even more silent and more strange  
Thy waking is that brings no change  
When thy dim dreams of slumber press  
To dimmer dreamlessness.

But looking with a love that seems  
To pierce thy undiscovered dreams,  
Within thy small unfolded being  
Some dream of our own making seeing,  
"All that she feels and dreams," we say,  
"We too will know one day."

Ah, even when human speech has come  
To make thy mouth no longer dumb,  
When quickened thought and sympathy  
Like angels look from either eye,  
Thyself will still be hidden as deep  
As now, awake, asleep.

We must our knowledge of thee still  
By nothing save by love fulfil,  
And with the dreamings of the heart  
Still guess at the dream of what thou art  
Which only of thee and God is known,  
Child whom this day names Joan.

## THE SINGER.

**H**AD a holy hour last night,  
The room her presence made so pure  
Was shaded in uncertain light,  
But oh, the light it held was sure.

There while about her golden head  
The shadows and the low light played,  
She eagerly and softly read  
The shining songs her soul had made.

Flower and shell and sand and sea,  
And flight of gulls against the sun,  
And many a friend, and many a tree,  
And youth begun and age nigh-done,

Death and life, and life and death,  
Divinely in her vision smiled ;  
She spoke them with the silver breath  
Half of angel, half of child.

Upon her bed I lay at rest,  
But once when kneeling by her chair  
I leaned my head beside her breast  
And heard the wordless singing there.

## THE GIRL WITH THE BALL.

**S**HE ran with her ball in her light dress floating  
and free, ♪ Tossing it, tossing it up in the  
evening light, ♪ She ran with her ball at the  
edge of the outgoing sea ♪ On sand which  
the dropping sun turned bright.

Over the sea hung birds more white than the skin  
Of the last few swimmers who took the waves with  
their breasts ;  
The birds dipped straight as her ball when a silver fin  
Glanced in the shallow crests.

She ran so swift, and suddenly stopped as swift  
To look at a shell, or splash up a pool in rain ;  
Wind blew, and she in the wind began to drift  
Foam-like, and suddenly ran again.

Children who played on the shore in the last of the day  
Paused and watched in wonder her rise and fall  
Like elders watching a child : she was younger than  
As she ran by the sea with her ball. [they

Her hair was loose and she had no shoes on her feet,  
And her image ran under her feet on the wet gold shore,  
She threw up her ball and she caught it, and once  
laughed sweet  
As though the world had never heard laughter before.

## THE STORY-TELLER.

**Q**VER the hearth on which we burned  
Brown beech-nuts, lichen-twigs, and cones,  
I sat beside her while she turned  
A forked wand within the pyre,  
Until two little spirits of fire  
Sprang from the hazel's withered bones.

Then, with her eyes upon her branch  
Pointed with ruddy nuts of flame,  
Like one who has no power to staunch  
The heart's-blood flowing from his side,  
She through her mouth undammed a tide  
Of legends that I could not name:—

Strange villages where damsels fished  
For lovers in a rainbow sea  
By night: a crazy man who wished  
To act like God, and very soon  
Out-freaked the fools that raked the moon:  
Gold underneath an apple-tree

Discovered by a thrice-dreamed dream:  
Half-tales, half-ballads—until the room  
Shook in its shadows with a stream  
Of pedlars, witches, cats in crowns,  
Denizens of enchanted towns,  
And kings confined in forests of gloom.



Her voice went up and down like wind  
That wanders lost among the eaves ;  
The flamelets on her hazel thinned  
And dwindled into smouldering eyes ;  
Her voice failed like the wind that dies,  
She threw a handful of black leaves

On the bright litter of the hearth  
And thrust her hazel's double spark  
Within. The smell of smoking earth  
Rose from the stones where ceased to burn  
The fiery lines of cone and fern  
And berry: the room was dumb and dark.

#### THE REFLECTION.



HE had no life except to be what men  
Required of her to be.  
They came for sympathy, and came again  
For sympathy.

She never knew the way her heart to spare  
When they were hurt or worn,  
Whatever one may for another bear  
By her was borne.

They said, you give us of yourself so much !  
She heard them with a smile,  
Knowing she only gave to such and such  
Themselves awhile.

Their interests, their frets, their loneliness,  
Their sorrows and despairs,  
She wore for them—they saw her in no dress  
That was not theirs.

She learned to understand the solitudes  
When she by none was sought ;  
Men of themselves grow sick, and in those moods  
Needed her not,

Getting relief of others who gave things  
By their own purpose lit ;  
If she too had some freshness in her springs,  
None wanted it.

She grew accustomed to be quietly shut  
Away, was used to see  
Love limping dutifully in a rut  
That once ran free ;

She knew the signs when friends began to cast  
What they had asked her for—  
Some asked for much, some little, all at last  
Asked nothing more.

And when she died they sorrowed, it is true,  
But not for long, because  
They had seen some pale reflection that she threw,  
Not what she was.

## SOLITARY.

**H**E moved his fellow-men among  
And changed with them some forms of speech.  
His heart was separate from his tongue,  
They would not hear his heart beseech.

Their needs were very like his own,  
Quivering in bodies numb and dazed;  
They smiled and talked and felt alone.—  
Did not their hearts look on amazed?

## SPRING-DAWN.

**H**EAVEN, the Spring's coming true again!  
Easterly over the sky's spring-blue again  
Passes a pearly flight of cloud—  
Somewhere a dovecote is empty, surely!  
And all of its birds have flown in a brood  
Over the pure blue purely!

Westerly owl-grey gatherings  
Linger a little yet:  
Soon, owls! soon you will shrink  
Out of the sun, I think,  
Who even now turns silver-wet  
The last of your ghostly gatherings.

Back to your windy barns again,  
To your forsaken granaries,  
Haunting, hating breed of the Winter!  
For the grass in the mould begins to teem,  
By every gate where the cuckoo flies  
Primrose and fragile wind-flower enter,  
And, lovelier truth than any dream,  
Blue light is mirrored in ancient tarns again!

## THE WORLD'S AMAZING BEAUTY.



THE world's amazing beauty would make us cry  
Aloud ; but something in it strikes us dumb.  
Beech-forests drenched in sunny floods  
Where shaking rays and shadows hum,  
The unrepeated aspects of the sky,  
Clouds in their lightest and their wildest moods,  
Bare shapes of hills, June grass in flower,  
The sea in every hour,  
Slopes that one January morning flow  
Unbrokenly with snow,  
Peaks piercing heaven with motions sharp and harsh,  
Slow-moving flats, grey reed and silver marsh,  
A flock of swans in flight  
Or solitary heron flapping home,  
Orchards of pear and cherry turning white,  
Low apple-trees with rosy-budded boughs,  
Streams where young willows drink and cows,  
Earth's rich ploughed loam  
Thinking darkly forward to her sheaves,  
Water in Autumn spotted with yellow leaves,

Light running overland,  
Gulls standing still above their images  
On strips of shining sand  
While evening in a haze of green  
Half-hides  
The calm receding tides—  
What in the beauty we have seen in these  
Keeps us still silent? something we have not seen?

### THE WHITE BLACKBIRDS.

**A**MONG the stripped and sooty twigs of the  
wild cherry tree Sometimes they flit  
and swing as though two blossoms of the  
Spring Had quickened on these bleak  
October branches suddenly.

They are like fairy birds flown down from skies which  
no one knows,  
Their pointed yellow bills are bright as April daffodils,  
Their plummy whiteness heavenly as January snows.

Loveliest guests that choose our garden-plot for loitering!  
Oh, what a sudden flower of joy is set upon the hour  
When in their cherry cages two white blackbirds sit  
and swing.

## NIGHTINGALES.



THE nightingales around our house  
Among the lovely orchard boughs :  
Where the young apple-dawn too soon  
Turns whiter than the daylit moon,  
And 'mid its shadowy silver bowers  
The quince is flushed with heavenly flowers  
That opening poise as though for flight :  
The nightingales sing day and night,  
With piercing, long, insistent calling,  
And chuckle of sweet waters falling,  
And unimaginable trill  
That makes my heart beat and stand still.

Oh, even so, by night and day  
When first the earth broke into May  
Ere men shut thunder up in shells,  
They came and sang their miracles ;  
And so, in myriad Mays to come,  
When all those damnèd storms are dumb  
And only heaven's lightning crowns  
Her clouds of thunder on the Downs,  
They still will come, by night and day  
To sing the radiant Spring away,  
Till men lie crumbled with their towns  
And earth no more breaks into May.

## NIGHT-PIECE.

**N**OW independent, beautiful and proud,  
Out of the vanishing body of a cloud  
Like its arisen soul the full moon swims  
Over the sea, into whose distant brims  
Has flowed the last of the light. I am alone.  
Even the diving gannet now is flown  
From these unpeopled sands. A mist lies cold  
Upon the muffled boundaries of the world.  
The lovely earth whose silence is so deep  
Is folded up in night, but not in sleep.

## BEFORE WINTER.

**T**HE day is gone of the sun and the swallow  
And the glory on the trees :  
Before the gale the length of the pave  
The dry old corpse of a plane-leaf flees,  
And its step is harsh and hollow  
As it chatters into its grave.

The shivering dawn now hides and slouches  
Long in the cover of dark,  
Till up the sky, like a murderer pale,  
He drags at last a dull red mark,  
And the hound of the grey wind crouches  
And pants on his rusty trail.

## ON THE SNOW.



I KNEW no woman, child, or man  
Had been before my steps to-day.  
By Dippel Woods the snow-lanes ran  
Soft and uncrushed above their clay ;  
But little starry feet had traced  
Their passages as though in words,  
And all those lanes of snow were laced  
With runnings of departed birds.

## THREE MILES TO PENN.



T O-DAY I walked three miles to Penn  
With an uneasy mind.  
The sun shone like a frozen eye,  
A light that had gone blind,  
The glassy air between the sky  
And earth was frozen wind—  
All motion and all light again  
Were closed within a rind,  
As I by wood and field to Penn  
Took trouble in my mind.

The slopes of cloud in heaven that lay,  
Unpeopled hills grown old,  
Had no more movement than the land  
Locked in a flowing mould ;  
The sheep like mounds of cloudy sand  
Stood soundless in the cold ;  
There was no stir on all the way  
Save what my heart did hold,  
So quiet earth and heaven lay,  
So quiet and so old.



## WHEN YOU SAY.

**W**HEN you say, I still am young,  
You are young no more ;  
When, I'm old, is on your tongue,  
Age is still in store.

Youth and age will never grope  
To say what they may be :  
One only knows it has a hope,  
And one a certainty.

## THE OUTLET.

**G**RIEF struck me. I so shook in heart and wit  
I thought I must speak of it or die of it.  
A certain friend I had with strength to lend,  
When mine was spent I went to find my friend,

Who, rising up with eyes wild for relief,  
Hung on my neck and spoke to me of grief.

I raked the ashes of my burned-out strength  
And found one coal to warm her with at length.

I sat with her till I was icy cold.  
At last I went away, my grief untold.

TWO CHORUSES FROM "MERLIN IN  
BROCELIANDE."

I.



LIFE, what art thou? Springing water art  
thou: ♪ When the waters flash and spring,  
life, start thou!

When the spirit burns within the chapels  
The stones are quick with faith;  
When the branch hangs out its reddened apples  
The tree is strong with breath;  
When love's womb conceives the stirring blossom  
The heart is full of power;  
When youth leaps in the darkness of the bosom  
The body is in flower.  
When the fiery spirit deserts the chapels,  
Bury religion's corse;  
When the branch no more puts forth its apples,  
Fell the tree at the source;  
When love feeds itself and not its blossom  
The heart's core withereth;  
When youth makes no movement in the bosom  
The body is signed to death.

Life, what art thou? A golden fountain art thou:  
When the fountain springs not, life, depart thou!

II.

*First Voices.*

Saw ye the stars last night, all still,  
Remote, and bitter-cold,  
Who were too passionless to thrill,  
Being so wise and old?

*Second Voices.*

O saw ye not one star alight,  
A leap of silver fire,  
Did ye not see it sear the night  
And die of its own desire ?

*First Voices.*

Saw ye the ancient stars look on  
Locked in a chilly dream  
Which banished the awakened one  
Beyond their frozen scheme ?

*Second Voices.*

O saw ye not the ashen band  
Fade in the morning-gold,  
Who long had ceased to understand,  
Being so bitter-old ?

*All the Voices.*

Ye petrified on heavenly thrones,  
Was there not chaos once ?  
Ye did not keep your ordered zones  
When ye were raging suns !

Once flaming rivers were your breath  
And the wild hairs of your brow—  
Once ye were life, once ye were death !  
Ye are not either now.

## PEACE.

I.



AM as awful as my brother War,  
I am the sudden silence after clamour.  
I am the face that shows the seamy scar  
When blood has lost its frenzy and its glamour.  
Men in my pause shall know the cost at last  
That is not to be paid in triumphs or tears,  
Men will begin to judge the thing that's past  
As men will judge it in a hundred years.


Nations! whose ravenous engines must be fed  
Endlessly with the father and the son,  
My naked light upon your darkness, dread!—  
By which ye shall behold what ye have done:  
Whereon, more like a vulture than a dove,  
Ye set my seal in hatred, not in love.

II.

Let no man call me good. I am not blest.  
My single virtue is the end of crimes,  
I only am the period of unrest,  
The ceasing of the horrors of the times;  
My good is but the negative of ill,  
Such ill as bends the spirit with despair,  
Such ill as makes the nations' soul stand still  
And freeze to stone beneath its Gorgon glare.

Be blunt, and say that peace is but a state  
Wherein the active soul is free to move,  
And nations only show as mean or great  
According to the spirit then they prove.—  
O which of ye whose battle-cry is Hate  
Will first in peace dare shout the name of Love?



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POETRY BY PROVED HANDS, WAS PRINT-  
ED IN OXFORD AT THE VINCENT WORKS,  
AND FINISHED IN APRIL, MCMXVIII.   
PUBLISHED BY B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD  
STREET, OXFORD, AND SOLD IN AMERICA  
BY LONGMANS, GREEN & CO., NEW YORK.

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