



DAYBREAK

FREDEGOND SHOVE

"

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1922

MR

TO MY SISTER

ERMENGARD MAITLAND

I wish that I had something better
to give you, but all that I ever
have will be less than the least of
your thoughts.



ERRATA

Page 36, lines 13 and 14 should read
“The clocks in the house chime
On the day’s steep,”

Page 30, line 8, for “tremble” read “tumble.”



River, river, flowing thro'
The dim conduits of my brain ;
Deep, deep, hidden strain,
Memory—and forecast too—
River tide that won't cease—
Well, well, upspring,
Flood the meadows, make peace,
Make peace with each thing.
Speak for me, flood-tide,
Wash out the words, vain,
Wild, empty words ; take
All forts in this brain.
Storm, passion, song, sight,
New draughts of new light,
Burn, shine, flow, fill
All the bare places up :
Brim over thought's cup.
River, river, flow till
All wickedness is still.

LITURGY

I

O deliver me, deliver me from my own self,
From treachery, from fear, from hate ;
It seems so long that I have been laid up on the shelf
Like a broken cup or a too, too brittle plate ;
Take me, O take me ; wash me with your beams ;
O good Lord, deliver me,
Deliver me from the horror and from the dishonour
of my dreams ;
Set me free.

II

At Easter Christ rose up out of the sepulchre and from
the sheet,
From bitterness, from hate, from death ;
He rose as an example of the assured, the fleet,
The strong and the possessor and the stainless faith.
Show us, O show us how the earth bore that flight ;
O deliver us from this—
From the tumult, the battle, from the axe and from
the night ;
Gloria in excelsis.

Wherefore, I beseech you that are the beginning and
the end,
Show me thy splendour in the appearance of its
shape
And come to me at my calling by the wicket like a friend,
Giving me the vision which is the only escape ;
Not that I may maunder and may wonder and may dream
But that I may give clothing and food,
Beauty to my descendants and water to my team,
In the name of all good."

REVELATION

Near as my hand
The transformation: (time to understand
Is long, but never far,
As things desired are :)
No iceberg floating at the pole ; no mark
Of glittering, perfect consciousness, nor dark
And mystic root of riddles ; death nor birth,—
Except of heart, when flesh is changed from earth
To heaven involved in it : not at all strange,
Not set beyond the common, human range ;
Possible in the steep, quotidian stream,
Possible in a dream ;
Achieved when all the energies are still,—
Especially the will.

THE SEARCH

My tears force me to fail,
Christ, finding thee ;
My sighs make such a gale,
Love blinding me ;
I wander and I wail
Lost, hiding me ;
And then I hear the quail
Cry, chiding me.

NIGHT AND MORNING

I

The flowers of the world
 Appear before my eyes,
They shiver and shake dew
 Upon me as they rise ;
Perfection in them all
 Shows how they are designed
With silken tresses on
 The curtain of the wind.

II

The fishes of the sea
 Surround my sleeping head ;
The candles in their tails
 Throw shadows on the bed ;
Transcendently alight
 They glide into my brain
And in among my thoughts
 They set a coral train.

But then the birds begin
 To cry upon my sleep,
And by their wings to chase
 The beauties of the deep ;
The loveliness of air,
 The colours of the day
Persuade me to arise
 And wash my dreams away.

THE MIRACLE OF THE FLOWERS

The flowers that have sight
Of all this world's waste
Blow and break and shed their light
Upon the unchaste,
The cruel and the coarse.
O how dare these press
So near earth's firmament whose source
Is fiery holiness?

WINTER

How clearly winter shows
 The beauty of the street ;
How pure, how fine he blows
 The unsubstantial sheet
Of half transparent glass
 That is the frosted sky ;
How pale he paints the grass
 Where fallen petals lie.

SNOWDROPS

“When did you first see snowdrops?”

“The day that I was born,
With candles by the cradle
And frost upon the lawn,
Icicles on the laurels
And nothing yet begun
Except the march of snowdrops
Behind the winter sun.”

CROCUSES

But later crocuses
Came thirstily to hold
In smoothly pleated cups
The February gold ;
There were some yellow ones,
Some white, some veined with puce,
Some purple and some freaked
Like the pale fleur de luce.

THE WILLOW TREE

There is a willow tree
Grows in the fountain's bed ;
He has a sooty trunk,
He has a grizzled head.
The wizened snowflakes find
A shelter in his twigs
And at his knotted skull
The last woodpecker digs.

DISEMBODIED

The dark wind knows no rest
 (That is the night's child);
With torn and ragged vest
 With sobs and manners wild
This spirit of distress
 Questions and moans and runs
About the country eaves,
 The saddest of God's sons.

JOY IN PRISON

O love, look in, look in,
 Before the day is done ;
This dusty prison Sin
 Has never seen the sun,
This dreary cell Decay
 Is foul for want of air ;
Haste, love, for your delay
 Is captive Joy's despair.

O Joy, awake, arise,
 And spread your glassy wings ;
When love has bathed your eyes
 Behold the spirit's things
Subject to no quick death,
 Untrammelled by desire :—
O hasten, Joy, Love's breath
 Shall fan your evening fire.

SEPARATION

(written for an old song tune of the 17th. century)

“Where shall I seek my soul, oh Lord,
That thou didst steal from me?”
The flesh that weepeth here alone
Doth ask continually.

“Hast thou conveyed him to the spheres
To dwell beside the sun,
Or hast thou cast him into a cloud
That captainless doth run?”

“I ask it not from vanity
That doth so waste the breath,
But rather that I may not be
Quite unprepared for death.”

So crieth she incontinent
That so desireth to find
The soul, as rivers clasp the sea
And are in love enshrined.

“Just one embrace before we part
For all eternity;
For I remember how at birth
Thou consecratedst me,

And filléd all my members with
The murmur of thy streams,
While I did cloud thy heavenly form
With sweet terrestrial dreams.

Had we together journeyed then
What music had we made,
Creating with each other's tools
Such shapes as could not fade.

But thou didst vanish with the day
And left me deaf and blind,
To seek my future in the world
And grow another mind,—

A sense of unimportant things
And a desire for thee,
Whose touch alone could give me sight
And set my powers free.

Didst thou, wherever first thou wert,
Thus hunger for thy friend?
And dost thou think that God will let
Us join before the end?

No lover ever longed so much
As I do long to hold
Thy ghostly shape, and fill my cup
With thy aërial gold.

Yet thou perhaps knowest not the need
Of my consoling tears,
And findest pearls enough for thee.
To pluck among the spheres.

Or likelier thou art still asleep
In ether wrapped around,
Nor knowest how thy God doth choose
To keep thee spell-inbound.

And thou may'st wake in a thousand years
When I am turned to clay,
And rising seek for another bride
With whom thou think'st to stay."

A COMPLAINT

Tell me what is cruelty,
 (For which no beauties can atone)?
Cruelty is the human heart;
 Life's kernel is a stone.

Tell me what breaks cruelty
 That groans but never cracks with pain?
Pity alone can break the heart
 And turn the stone to rain.

O then what is this pity
 (For which alone the hard heart breaks)?
Pity is God in his mercy
 And he died for our sakes.

LOVE AS HE IS IN THE
WORLD

I

Poor Love has no clothes,
He cannot dress
To meet the winds of
Everlastingness ;
Naked, ashamed, he goes
Barefoot, on the snows ;
Poor Love has no clothes
For his nakedness.

II

Poor Love has no food,
He may not eat ;
They will give him no bread
That dine on rich meat ;
Empty, forlorn, in chains,
He lies in his pains ;
Poor Love has no food
At all to eat.

III

Poor Love has no bed
 He gets no sleep,
 While others lie and snore
 He stays to weep ;
 Love, weeping all alone,
 Sits upon a stone ;
 Poor Love has no bed
 And gets no sleep.

IV

One day he shall be clothed
 In Paradise,
 The spirit of the sun
 Shall wash his eyes,
 One day he shall be fed
 And sleep upon a bed ;
 When he is with God
 Among the skies.

WINTER IN THE GARDEN

Sleep, sleep, sleep,
On sleep my heart is set,
The snow lies so deep
And I must forget,
“The dark mornings clear
With wind sobbing low
Shall bring you good cheer
That cherish sleep so.”

Sleep, sleep, sleep,
My heart is set on rest,
The snow lies so deep
Upon the earth's breast ;
When dark violet
And crocus appear
I cannot forget
Nor be of “good cheer.”

And when blackbirds sing
The whole twilight thro',
My heart knows the sting
Of grief and death too ;
Sleep, sleep, sleep,
On sleep my heart is set ;
The snow lies so deep
And I must forget.

THE HARP OF WONDER

I

O bleak, bleak, beyond avail
The singing of the autumn gale ;
O wild, wild, beyond divining
The far heights where those lights are shining ;
O cold, cold beyond redress
The void that cups my consciousness ;
O wide, wide and fatal these
The winds that ~~tremble~~ *tumble* in the trees.

II

Where—where—can it be ?
The spirit that I used to see ?
How, how can I know aught
When all is with such wonder fraught ?
Extreme cold, and extreme heat,
Seas, and clouds and worlds, a fleet
A fleet of worlds, a galaxy
Of quiet globes spinning in the sky.

III

Nothing, no rail, nothing sure,
But dangerous all, "All air is pure,
All water free, all light divine"—
Stop ; these are only words of mine :

Think, think of death ; hear how they drown
Scant voices rising from the town ;
Know—know—we know nothing—
Faith makes such a blessed glow,
Fires spring and genius burns,
Trees, bushes, fen, ferns
Glitter wildly ; is this right ?
Shall I follow this man's light,
Or fall, fall, fall alone,
Fall to weeping on that stone ?

IV

High, high, above my head
Shine the spirits of the dead ;
Sweet, sweet and holy-clear
Shake thin ether's lyre and spear.
Too far above the sky
For mortals to descry.
Hope burns her white ring ;
Hope is such a perfect thing ;—
Yes, now I must believe,
Only the dull-sighted grieve.

V

See, see how they whirl with fate
The dead leaves from their oaken gate ;
O torn, torn past belief
Typifying human grief,

While I speak of hope they fall
And are swept beyond recall.
So sometimes a world slips down,
A sick planet, neck and crown,
Down, down, it tumbles fast
Thro' the silences so vast :
No, Hope is too gaily said
With book-lore my brain is fed,
With flesh-faith my spirit stirred :
Spirit is a lovely word.
Yet once I come, come,
Shame turns my heart dumb,
Dumb things know best if they
Show faith the right of way ;
Fear never, never can
Take the truth away from man.
Only silent, only still
Can we touch it, feel, thrill,
Answer, know, hold truth
To our ghosts and have ruth,
Pity, peace, knowledge, love,
Drop to us from up above.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Thou liest within me as a shell
Lies in a pool,
Or as milk-wort were in Hell,
So fresh, so cool—
Or as an icicle all clear
And straight within—
Mirror of holiness and sheer
Contempt of sin.
And round about thee I have built
A fortress-yard,
A castle whose thick walls are guilt,
So proud, so hard ;
And many chambers where I walk
So hard, so proud,
And many parlours where I talk
So much, so loud.
But when these crumble in Hell's flame,
So swift, so strong,

There will be left my heart, the same,
 My heart, a song ;
I shall be gone and all my deeds,
 Myself—my year,
My hates, my angers and their seeds
 Will disappear.
Thou liest within the storm and art
 So safe, so still,
O Jesus of the human heart,
 Whom none can kill.

SUNSET

Heaven has diamond window-panes
Lit between flames of day and night ;
They shine, my soul ; look in, my soul,
God's palace is alight !
Here in the streets they hawk and yell ;
None see the rose of evening
Nor none the green October stars ;
No song-bells ring.

The earth has murky window-panes ;
The earth is sick ; O fevered earth,
To be so mad with marketing
When air is fey with holy mirth.

SOPS OF LIGHT

Stop still on the stair,
 (Draw in your breath) :
Love is the whole air,
 There is no death :
Set the jug aside
 For beams to fill :
Peace is the housetide ;
 Then be still.

Let the window stand
 Open to tree ;
Light is the whole land
 And the whole sea :
The clocks in the house chime :
 ~~On~~ the day 's steep,
But the soul knows no time
 Nor any sleep.

MORNING IN NOVEMBER

A lovely woven cloud
Lies along the east,
The sun shut in this shroud
Sheds upon the least
Squat morning chimneys of the town,
The grey, the red, the mauve, the brown,
Such November beams
As crown childhood's dreams.

The voices of the trains
Sound forlorn and far
From the fens and plains
Where the rushes are ;
They bring remembrance of time
To this silver ring of rhyme.
And from the attic high
Looking down I see
The postman coming gently by ;
Has he one for me ?
A dream with a light scarlet seal,
What is this forecast that I feel ?

The shops begin to stir
The baker's dog to bark,
What silver harbinger
Has risen from the dark

Washing of the ocean's bed
What lovely stricken triton's head?

All night long the stars
Snowed among my dreams,
Through my spirit's prison bars
Flowed new tidal streams ;
I am, I was, and I shall be ;
What are these lights I see ?

Morning you are fine,
A pure harp of gold,
Happiness divine
Mystery untold—
Lie in the unbroken shell
Of the world I know so well.

TWILIGHT IN NOVEMBER

Rich chrysanthemums that drip
 Among the rusty palings. Brown
Burnished sheaf the frost must nip.
 Frost's a beggar to this town.

Sky that's as an eggshell green
 Merely glimmeringly known,
Since too lustrous to be seen
 Hidden like a jewel-stone.

Air as faint and pure as silk
 Lovely and strangely freaked
All with mulberries in milk
 Stained and with fine orange streaked.

Bells the disembodied breath
 Of our fear and our belief,
Flying, flying after death,
 Dying with the sapless leaf.

Voices fading on the peace,
 Children's voices hoarse with zest,
A moon cut out of candle grease
 Waxing in the sunset's breast.

All so shimmering and pale,
 All so fire-evoked and soft,
A fan painted by a gale,
 A bat's dream in an apple-loft,
Let them stay, O let them stay
 The jewelled embers of the day!

HOOPS AT DUSK

The west is changing, green succeeds on gold,
White stars begin to mount the bitter air,
 Slow dusk is coming on,
 Its velvet petals close
About the dying gardens and the roofs
Of sleepy cottages, with ivied eaves.

 These dahlias feel the dusk,
 Michaelmas daisies blue,
And marigolds hang down their coronals,
Rich with the last rays of the dying sun
 That has withdrawn its soul
 From the world's hollow cup—
Leaving this upland village to the care
Of candles and of fragrant autumn winds.

But children are about ;
They fill the air with screams,
And madly drive their iron hoops abroad—
The music of the hoops is wild as bells
 Sprinkled upon a storm,
 Or frantic as the tune
Of harp and pipe and concertina played
 In company by frenzied spirits were.

The common vales and hills
This elfin madness fills,
And scatters ringing splinters on the field
Among the breathing sheep in their dark fold ;
And yet the sound is sweet,
As sweet as echoes are.

The sound is purer, keener, than we dream
The voices of the stars in spring to be,
Keener and merrier
Than tune of scythes by night,
Sharpened among the virgin moon-daisies
Amid the shadows of a waving field ;
By its shrill alchemy
A ghost might well be called
Out of a stalk, and naked bid to weep
For hours on the still, forgetful grass ;
Or the green fairies might
Transcend their hidden cells
To lean on mushrooms in a frozen trance,
Bewitched by the cold magic of these hoops.

And now the light is done—
Its apple-coloured hue
Has faded from the kingdom of the sky,
Also the flowers in the garden shed
Their white and scarlet sheaves
Before the rising wind ;

Now children will be vanishing like moths,
Leaving a tide of echoes in their wake,
 And I shall dream all night
 Of tunes they played to me,
Of hills and valleys where the glow-worms wink
Among the serried shapes of the gay leaves ;
 And I shall think on elves
 In their enchanted towns.

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