



LIFE AND LIVING



AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR



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LIFE
AND
LIVING

A Book of Verse

by

*Amelia Josephine
Burr*



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TO MY FATHER AND MOTHER



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L I F E A N D L I V I N G

I have pressed the grapes of my heart to make the wine.
I have ground the wheat of my spirit to make the bread.
I have called on the Lord of my garden, Love Divine,
To hallow the table's head.

Come who will, sit down at my board and sup.

(He blesses the bread and the wine; do you hear? do you
see?)

You who behold only the loaf and the cup,
Take what you find of good, and in charity go —
But you who see by faith and by love who know,
Abide, and share a sacrament with me!

A SONG OF LIVING

BECAUSE I have loved life, I shall have no
sorrow to die.

I have sent up my gladness on wings, to be
lost in the blue of the sky.

I have run and leaped with the rain, I have
taken the wind to my breast.

My cheek like a drowsy child to the face of
the earth I have pressed.

Because I have loved life, I shall have no
sorrow to die.

I have kissed young Love on the lips, I have
heard his song to the end.

I have struck my hand like a seal in the
loyal hand of a friend.

I have known the peace of heaven, the com-
fort of work done well.

I have longed for death in the darkness and
risen alive out of hell.

Because I have loved life, I shall have no
sorrow to die.

A SONG OF LIVING (continued)

I give a share of my soul to the world where
my course is run.

I know that another shall finish the task I
must leave undone.

I know that no flower, no flint was in vain
on the path I trod.

As one looks on a face through a window,
through life I have looked on God.

Because I have loved life, I shall have no
sorrow to die.

MARY OF EGYPT

IN Alexandria, long ago
There lived a woman, the legends tell.
Her eyes were too sweet and her voice too low
And she sold a ware that was ill to sell.
As she went wandering up and down
The busy streets of the sea-port town,
The young would stare and the old would
frown
At the sound of her silver ankle-bell.

HEADY as wine was the ware she sold;
In passion's ways she was all too wise,
But the heart in her bosom was bitter cold
And her costly kisses were empty lies.
Power was the breath of her nostrils fair.
She wove the spell and she set the snare
To see a strong man pant like a hare
In the subtle trap of her wanton eyes.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

BUT there came a day in the fragrant spring
When her heart was heavy with formless
fears;
When weary she turned from the very thing
For which she had bartered her brightest
years.
She walked alone by the murmuring shore,
And the lips that had lured at the open door
Were wistful and chaste as a maid's once
more,
And the wanton eyes were soft with tears.

SHE spied of a sudden a man who came
Along the road by the rippling bay.
She fell with a sigh to the oft-played game
And she lifted her eyes in her wonted way.
She looked him through with her wonted smile
Of a seraph musing on something vile —
For the fettering ways of long-used guile
Cannot be burst in a day.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

INTO her darkened eyes he gazed,
Deep, deep in.
And Mary the harlot stood amazed —
Her tempting smile grew tense and thin —
Under the paint could be seen a flow
Of passionate colour come and go,
For she felt her heart like an ember glow,
The heart where no fire had ever been.

“**S**TRANGER, stranger, what is your name
“And come you hither from over the
sea?”
“Mary, Mary, hither I came
“When I heard your spirit calling me,
“From the tawny hills of Palestine
“Where over the olives the white stars
shine,
“And sweet is the breath of the blossom-
ing vine
“In the valleys of Galilee.”

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

SHE swayed to him softly, her eyes were
bright,

Swift and sobbing her breath she drew.

“Stranger, where do you sleep tonight?”

“Under the tent of blue.

“A hole for the fox, for the bird a nest,

“But never a house where my head can
rest.”

She parted the folds of her silken vest.

“Stranger, here is a rest for you.”

HE looked at her and his eyes were deep,
Drowning deep as the midmost sea.

Her spirit stirred in its life-long sleep.

“Givest thou me no more?” said he.

“Ask, my lord, to thy heart’s desire —

“Nothing in vain shall thy love require,

“For I who was ice am a flaming fire.

“What wouldst thou have of me?”

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“NAUGHT will I of all this,” he said.

“Give me thy love alone.”

“I’ll give thee my life in a kiss,” she said.

“Why dost thou stand like carven stone?

“I dare not touch thee, woman to man —

“Yet . . . here am I for thine arms to
span

“In the way that was sweet since the
world began —

“Take me, hold me, I am thine own!”

SADLY, sadly he turned aside

As if he saw not her pleading hand.

“Nay, but I’ll follow thee far and wide

“Though thy way lead over the desert sand!

“Cruel thou art and hard to read —

“Carest thou naught for my bitter need?”

“Mary, I give thee love indeed,

“Only thou canst not understand.”

* * * * *

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

MARY of Egypt walked by the sea;
Her lids were heavy with tears and wine,
And she saw a ship that rocked at the quay
Spreading the sail for the far blue brine.
The Captain smiled when he saw her there,
And blew a kiss to the harlot fair.
“Where are you bound, sir Captain—
where?”
“To the land of Palestine.”

MARY of Egypt leapt from the shore
As the ship cast off her ropes from the
land.
The captain paled and the captain swore,
But he held her safe by the small soft hand.
“Girl, are you sick of life,” he cried,
“To spring to peril as groom to bride?”
“Die I must unless I ride
“To the port where your course is
planned!”

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“**H**OW will you pay your passage-fee?”
“ Silver and gold I left behind —
“ Will you not take me for charity?”
“ Charity’s cold — I have in mind
“ A pleasanter coin for you to pay.”
Loathing she shrank from his touch away,
But if she would go she must needs obey
And give him his will when he said “ Be
kind!”

SO at length to her goal she came —
Weary and long was the way for her!
Sick and haggard with grief and shame,
Driven by hope with a scarlet spur.
Pilgrims passing, she followed them
Up to the city Jerusalem,
Where shone like the pearl of a diadem
The Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

WHAT should she do in the house of God,
A painted woman of life amiss?
Of all the ways that her feet had trod,
There was none that led to a door like this.
But just as she turned from the door aside
She saw the Face that had been her guide,
And with pity and yearning His eyes were
wide,
And tender the mouth that refused her kiss.

SHE sprang to the threshold and strove to
pass,
But an unseen barrier stayed her feet.
It seemed the portal was closed with glass.
The call of His eyes was strong and sweet,
But He came no nearer, He lent no aid
In her wild vain struggle. At last, dismayed,
Weary and angry and sore afraid
She turned again to the crowded street.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

MARY of Egypt cleft the crowd
With eyes that only one face could see.
Her beauty with pain was fierce and proud,
She seemed the queen of a lost country.
And all her thought was a desperate cry —
“ Is there never a sure swift way to die
“ For one so weary of life as I?
“ What is the world to a thing like me? ”

OUT of the throng there came a hand —
Trembling it caught at her broidered
sleeve,
And she saw beside her a young man stand
Stammering, “ Lady, give me leave! ”
And the look she knew in his eyes stood
plain,
The flame she had striven to light in vain
In the Stranger's eyes — and a new sick pain
She felt through her heart like a sword-
blade cleave.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

HE was so young and his look so pure,
For all the flush of his passion's fire!
'Twas his untried youth that had felt her
lure
As a young bird stoops to the fowler's wire.
"Tell me, when have you trod before
"The thorny road to a harlot's door?"
"Not till the sight of you smote me sore
"Did I know the sting of a man's desire."

"THEN God be thanked it was I who came
"In the hour when your boyhood was
left behind —
"A broken creature who knows her shame.
"Look in my eyes and be not blind —
"Read the truth with never a lie,
"Read the sorrow of which I die,
"Strangle your madness and bid goodbye
"To Mary of Egypt and all her kind.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“**F**OOL though I be, I am wise in this,
“ Poor battered plaything of all men’s
touch!
“ There’s nothing on earth so cheap as a
kiss,
“ And nothing that costs so much.
“ There’s a gnawing worm at the heart of
lust,
“ And the wanton’s power is a pinch of dust.
“ Trust me, boy, while you still can trust —
“ Youth is so easy to smutch!

“**O** SPENDTHRIFT morning that comes
not back!
“ O treasure I held so cheap!
“ I scorned the wearisome homely track,
“ And the tears of the heart are mine to
weep.
“ Waste not your manhood — there waits
for you
“ A girl whose world like your own is new.
“ Take her a heart that is clean and true,
“ And the troth that you give her, keep.”

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

THERE in the street of Jerusalem
He knelt to her as she turned to go
With a reverent kiss on her garment's hem,
But her heart was too sore to know.
She only knew she had seen the blaze
Fade and die from his clear young gaze.
Weary and faint she went her ways
Musing what death should end her woe.

A LOST child plucked at her trailing dress,
Tear-stained, dusty, bewildered, wild.
She caught him up from the trampling press
And the little one clung to her neck and
smiled.
"Babe, thou art lost — more lost am I.
"Babe, thou art weary — wearier I,
"But Mary of Egypt must wait to die
"Till we find the mother who seeks her
child.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“NEVER this squandered body of mine
“ Innocent fruit of its own shall bear.
“ Jewels and gold on my breast may shine,
“ But never the gold of my babe’s bright
hair.
“ God of pity, what if I kept
“ This child who into my bosom crept —”
She looked at him, and behold he slept
Flushed and sweet as a rosebud there.

SHE hid his face from the passers’ gaze;
She veiled her head with her purple cloak.
She seemed a woman of ordered ways
Walking among her country-folk.
Wonder and rapture were all astir
Deep in the ravaged heart of her
When the street before her swam to a blur
As close at her side a woman spoke:

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“**M**OTHER, bearing thy joy and pride,
“ Pity a mother whose grief is sore.
“ My son this morning ran at my side —
“ Now he is there no more.
“ Parted we were in the market’s press.
“ Help a mother in her distress,
“ And Mary the Mother of Christ shall
 bless
“ The babe that love to thy bosom bore.”

“**W**HAT has love to my bosom borne
“ But the bitter fruit of a longing
 vain —
“ To walk alone in a way forlorn
“ With the ache of an endless pain? ”
“ Alas, was he false to his vows, thy man?
“ But that is their way since the world
 began —
“ We love as we must and they as they
 can,
“ And ’tis always the woman that wears
 the chain —

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“**B**UT he has left thee his better part,
“The open wound of thy grief to bind.
“For the sake of the babe on thy aching
heart,
“Help me my own dear babe to find!
“Little and helpless and all alone,
“Flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone —
“Help me, thou who hast also known,
“For with seeking and tears I am wellnigh
blind!”

“**W**HAT was he like, this child of thine?”
“Sunny his hair and fair to see,
“Curled like the tips of the tender vine
“In the vineyards of Galilee.”
She felt the heart in her stop and shift.
“Empty-handed Love bade me drift,
“Yet I yield unto Love the one good
gift
“That life has ever brought to me.”

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“MY boy, my baby!”
“Break not his sleep,—
“But take him, hold him, he is thine
own.”
“Woman, thou blessed! my prayers shall
leap
“Daily for thee to the heavenly throne.
“Tell me the name for which to pray
“To the Lord of Love thou hast served
today.”
“Name no name, but only say
“One who loveth, to Love unknown.”

MARY of Egypt turned again
To the Church of the Holy Sepulchre;
And there were women and there were men
Who signed the cross as they looked at her,
For Love had lighted the lamp of clay
And set a sign on her brow that day;
But naught she marked on her eager way,
The wanton turned to a worshipper.

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

“ONLY to lie in a coward’s grave,
“ Why should I leave a harlot’s bed?
“ Better to sweep the stones that pave
“ The road that His feet may tread.
“ Better to cleanse a little space
“ In the world I fouled with my long dis-
 grace —
“ All for the sake of a voice and face
“ That are God to me,” she said.

SHE cast her down on the threshold there,
She lifted neither her hands nor eyes.
Veiled in the dusk of her loosened hair
She lay on the stones as a mourner lies.
Love swept her spirit with cleansing flame;
Then into the flood of her prayer there came
A voice she knew, and it called her name.
“ Mary, Mary, arise.”

MARY OF EGYPT (continued)

BREATHLESS and hushed to her knees she
rose,

But she dared not look lest His eyes
might be

Sad and stern with the look that froze
Her passionate pleading beside the sea.
He spoke again, and his voice was sweet;
It threshed her heart of its last wild beat
As the husbandman winnows the perfect
wheat —

“Mary, come unto me.”

TERRIBLY fair as a fiery sword,
Stirring and sweet as a trumpet-blast,
Crowned with light she beheld her Lord,
And her soul was purged of the past.
In the light of the Face that her star had
been,

Lost were sorrow and self and sin,
And Mary of Egypt a saint went in
To the Love that she knew at last.

THE POPPIES

THIS is the garden of your joyous care,
Where such a little time before you died
You walked with pleasant pride
And pointed out your favourites, the rare
Tree roses, and the riotous delight
Of poppies, from the crimson to the white
Sounding the gamut of ecstatic hue.
So richly-coloured was all life to you!
You never called the world a vale of tears.
Such long and loving labour overgrown!
How soon the wild undoes your patient
years —
Not wholly; with each summer's weeds I
see
Poppies arise, self-sown.
They are your garden's immortality.

WHAT would be heaven for you? It com-
forts me
To picture you with leisure and with
strength

THE POPPIES (continued)

To bring to life at length
Your dreams of beauty — all your soul set
free

From the mean goading of necessity
And from the bodily pain
You bore so bravely, like a galling chain
That heavy grew and heavier each day.
When death struck these away

I knew the magnitude of your release
By your high look of peace.
God knows I had no lack of tears, but they
Were not for you. My sorrow was my
own.

I read, "*I will not leave you comfortless*
“But I will come to you.” I had not
known

The meaning of those words until your
death.

You were less near to me when I could
press

Your hand and feel your breath
Upon my cheek, than now. You seem so
near,

THE POPPIES (continued)

So full of life, so constantly more dear,
I feel it only needs to turn my gaze
To see you standing here
Among your flowers, as in other days.
Like little shouts of exultation sweet
The poppies at my feet
Loose to the wind their petals. Let them
die —
From them shall spring new beauty, by
and by.
They are not over-greedy for a pledge
Of immortality; they give their best
To earth — God knows the rest.
So did you tread your path across the edge
Of this our visible world. You did not
hoard
Your spirit's treasure for a world unseen,
Nor chaffer with your God for a reward
Ere you would serve. You did not even
trust
Your Master would be just.
You went your way generous and serene

THE POPPIES (continued)

And gave unquestioning all you had to
 spend,
As friend to friend.
If you had known that all should end in
 dust,
You would have thought it shame to drop
 your sword,
Because you fought your beasts at Ephesus
Not for yourself — for us,
Who loved in you the love of righteous-
 ness.
There is no soul that touched you in the
 stress
Of that great battle where you did your
 part
So gallantly, which you did not impress
With your own chivalry. In every heart
That knew you, there is sown
Some ruddy-blossomed seedling of your
 own.
Whatever Heaven there beyond may be,
This I can see.

THE POPPIES (continued)

IF this dear presence by my love discerned
Be your own self, the self I knew, returned
From larger life in some transfigured guise
Unseen by mortal eyes,
Or if it be your spirit as it grew
Unconsciously of my own self a part,
Could it be any nearer, if I knew,
Or dearer to my heart?
You are in God, as you have always been.
Although I find it sweet
To dream that I shall know you when we meet
In such a garden as you cherished here,
I will not wait until I die, my Dear,
For Heaven to begin.
Sweeter it is to know that I can give
Your deathless bounty to a world in need.
I sow you as the poppy sows her seed,
And in my love, you live.

FREE

WHY did I do it? God! why did I do it?
Lying awake here in a cheap hotel,
And she beside me, sleeping, wearied out
With pitiful brave efforts to be gay.
I know how brave they are, I tell myself
How brave they are, and yet they leave
me cold.
Her face is lax and faded as she sleeps,
All prettiness and youth gone out of it.
Although I cannot see it in the dark,
I know, for I have seen it many times —
So many times! How long ago it seems
She was a dream of infinite desire —
The symbol of a freedom I had lost.
Lost? Worse than lost. I had been
cheated of it,
Cheated by smug respectability
And law and custom and the other gods
Whose sacrifices are the lives of men.
Myself had clasped the fetters on myself —

FREE (continued)

That was, I think, what maddened me the
most.

My wife, my children, my position — all
That made men call me fortunate — my
God!

When I have seen the freight-cars clanking
by,

A ragged tramp holding his perilous place
Upon the truck, how often I have thought
“To be free like him! Oh, to be free like
him!

“To slam the ledger, never again to see
“Columns of figures blur before my eyes,
“To know the summits and the deeps of
life,

“To burn myself in the red flame of life,
“To drink myself to death with life,
maybe,

“But to be free, to live!”

And thoughts like these
Hot in my brain, I would go home and
hear

The thin monotonous gossip of the day,

FREE (continued)

The endless petty round of household
wants,

Until at last I lay awake in bed
Hearing my heavy heart beat on and on —
As now I hear it — and beside me lay
My wife asleep — as *she* is sleeping now —
And just because I knew that was her
place

I shrank away, out to the very edge
Lest I should touch her — just as I do
now. . . .

Can this poor threadbare plaything be the
girl

Who shone upon me like the strip of sky
Between a prisoner's bars? So free she
was,

So virginal of body and of mind,
Light foot, light heart, a creature to awake
The hunter in a man. I hunted her,
And with her youth and all its reckless joy.
I hunted her, and with her strong romance
And passion like a torch. I hunted her,

FREE (continued)

Glad of her flight, her tremulous backward
glance,

Glad of her sweet shy trouble at my touch.
I would have spent the Indies' gold on her
And all the gems of the Arabian Nights.
I grudged the money that my household
cost,

Grew angry over little needless things
And made my children angry; and my wife
Never resented anything I said,
Only grew gentler and more wearisome
With little futile efforts to make peace
Between the angry children and myself,
With pitiful brave efforts to be gay —
But then I did not think that they were
brave,

Only how deadly tired I was of her
And of the life of which she was a part.
I hardly can recall how it began,
Taking a little here, a little there
Of all the money that went through my
hands —

But I remember well the day I knew

FREE (continued)

The thing could not be secret any more.
What should I do? Confess and beg for
 mercy,
Plead my long service and my stainless
 past,
Pray them to let me keep my place, and so
Commit myself forever to the life
That I had grown to hate? Forever lose
My one chance to be free? Body and soul
Sickened. . . . I went to her — I told her
 all
That I had done, said it was done for her,
And now there could be only death for me
Unless she held the door of freedom wide
For us together.

 With a little sob
She gave herself to me. We went
 away. . . .
How little it was like my eager dreams!
She only was a woman, after all.

FREE (continued)

OH, what a little sordid hell it is!
Not reckless glad adventure, not romance,
Not even passion — only furtive shifts. . . .
Dodging up streets to avoid a man I knew
When I could look the whole world in the
face —
Chained like a slave to poverty and her —
Why did I take so little in my haste?
Afraid of her, afraid of other men,
Most bitterly afraid of my own self —
Would prison be more horrible than this,
Lying awake here in a cheap hotel?
Why did I do it? God! why did I do it?

THE WISE

WE were so rich in wisdom, you and I.
Too well we knew love's necessary price,
And grudging the high god his sacrifice
We laid not hold on life lest we should die.

SMILING, we schooled our hearts that beat
too fast,
And dazzled by Truth's radiant nakedness
We hid it with a fair and seemly dress
Of chosen words — and thus our moment
passed.

DID we not well? I would that I might know
Your answer — but I know not where you
are.
You slipped from my horizon like a star
Without a sign — so long, so long ago.

THE WISE (continued)

I HAVE not failed of aught I strove to win —
And yet on windy nights awake I lie
In a numb wonder, while the hours plod by,
Thinking of you — and all that might have
been. . . .

THE FLIRT

BEAUTIFUL boy, lend me your youth to
play with;
My heart is old.
Lend me your fire to make my twilight gay
with,
To warm my cold.
Prove that the power my look has not for-
saken —
That when I will
My touch can quicken pulses and awaken
Men's passion still.

THE moment that I ask you need not grudge
me —
I shall not stay.
I shall be gone, ere you have time to judge
me,
My empty way.
I am not worth remembering, little brother,
Even to damn.
One kiss . . . oh, God! if only I were other
Than what I am!

A POINT OF HONOUR

YOU say that I have wronged you so.
You scourge me with your angry scorn
Because I loved a year ago
And now my love is all outworn.
Think of the wrong I spared you — this:
Swiftly and silently I fled,
Nor lingered for one lying kiss
After I knew that love was dead.

ACTORS

THE play is over. Still they stand embraced,
Lips upon lips and fingers interlaced.
Against her shaken bosom beats his heart,
But each unto the other's face is blind.
Their passion is a madness of the mind
Drunken with Dionysiac grapes of art.

AT PARTING

“GOODBYE—true friends we part; is it
not so?”

Yes . . . but perhaps some day
A whispered word — a ballad chanted low
As twilight gathers gray —
The soft touch of a hand
Will bring me back to you. You will re-
member
My look, my voice, this evening of No-
vember —
And you will understand.

AND then, as from your eyes the shadows fall,
(Dear eyes that are so blind!)
Will you not give me, recollecting all,
One tender thought and kind?
Nothing I ask beside;
Not even pity, for I would not grieve you.
Trusting my secret to the years, I leave you,
Silent and satisfied.

WASTE

I WONDERED why God let our pathways
cross

When I could only feel a sense of loss
Shroud me like shadow as she passed me by;
When I must hush the quick and blinding stir
That shook my soul at the mere name of
her . . .

The nights I lay in anguish, wondering why!

YET I was glad to serve her in small ways,
To hear her voice sometimes, to dare to
raise

My look to hers in humble reverence — yes,
I was content — wellnigh — to thus await
Her kindness, a poor beggar at her gate,
Clad in the rags of my own hopelessness.

WASTE (continued)

THEN, all at once, as if a cloud were rent . . .
Without a word, I turned. Reeling I
went,
As one who sees a vision and then dies.
But I — I live . . . and always in my sight,
Dusking the day and glimmering through
the night,
Her bravely lying lips — her tortured eyes!

VENGEANCE

FOR God's sake, do not turn aside, but stay
And hear me speak! Then you shall go
your way,
If so you will it, still my enemy.
No love was ever lost 'twixt you and me —
And truly hate with me was never lost,
Jealously garnered like a thing of cost
And hoarded in my bosom like — but wait;
Sit here and listen.

Though I cherished hate
I loathed the thing I nurtured, for it ran
Like fever through my veins; my heart began
Visibly to convulse my wasted side.
Then came the inward whisper — “If he
died. . . .

“If passing I might spit upon his tomb!
“Is there no fate to deal him sudden doom,
“To pluck him like an apple. . . .”

There I stayed.

VENGEANCE (continued)

Desire had given place to thought; dismayed
I looked upon my guest's unhallowed face.
How long it was ere action took the place
Of thought, no matter — but at last I found
A luscious apple, its red fragrant round
Mottled with gold; for such a perfect thing
Might Adam have lost Eden. This I bring
To the dark street beyond the Cattle-Gate
Where weary eyes 'neath faded garlands
wait

At open doors; to Tamar's house —

No, no!

Till I have done, I will not let you go.
Would I speak out, if you had cause to fear?
See, lay your hands about my throat, but
hear —

Then, close them if you will.

You know, I see,

What ware is sold in Tamar's house. From
me

She took the apple, swathed it in a veil
Of shifting colours like a snake's new mail
And laid it where a brazen censer's breath

VENGEANCE (continued)

Lapped it in soft gray essences of death;
While at the door I stood with dizzy eyes
Afraid to watch her at her mysteries
Yet held against my will. At last I laid
The finished venom in my bosom, paid
Tamar her price, and passed into the night.
The stars in heaven danced before my sight
For passionate triumph that at last I bore
Your doom within my grasp. Cast on the
floor

I lay all night awake, shrewd to devise
With what smooth words of kindness I
would rise

And proffer my peace-offering when you
passed

Upon the morrow. Both hands clutching
fast

The apple to my heart, toward dawn I slept.
High rode the staring sun when up I leapt.
I came too late, and missed you. There all
day

I waited. At the dusk, I went away.

VENGEANCE (continued)

There passed a second day that brought you
not

Where my worn eyes kept vigil strained and
hot

Till the last green had faded from the sky.

That night in sleepless dreams I saw you
die,

And strangled with wild laughter at the
sight.

That night . . . last night it was — only last
night!

This morning, then, I passed into the street.

In every casual step I heard your feet,

In every countenance I shook to trace

A sudden hateful glimmer of your face,

And as each tremor seized me, in my breast

I clutched the apple to the spot impressed

By that dread load, those burning nights and
days.

I sat beside the gate. The noonday haze

Wavered above the hot and dusty road;

Then sudden I sprang up as from a goad —

VENGEANCE (continued)

I saw you coming. Who like me should
know

That walk? — you stoop a little as you go —
Those folded arms, that pondering bent
head. . . .

I went to meet you. Drawing near, I said
(Calm, very calm — the apple scarcely moved
Within my garment), “You I have not
loved,

“And in my bitterness of soul too long

“Have I gone sorrowing. If mine the
wrong,

“Take now my peace-gift. With no thing
of price

“I seek to bribe you; let this fruit suffice,

“As wholesome as my friendship —”

God, the pain!

I rent apart my robe, and where had lain
My treasured vengeance was a gaping sore
That bled corruption which a demon tore
With white-hot claws from out my very
heart. . . .

Nay, but it was not triumph made you start

VENGEANCE (continued)

And loose your fingers from my throat just
then,

For in your eyes dawned pity!

When again
I felt the solid earth, and saw the street
With all its houses, and could hear the feet
Of those who passed nor seemed to mark us
twain,

I knew that from the whirlpool of my pain
I gazed on One, who though he had the look
Of you, was yet a Stranger. Then he took
The apple from my hand that clenched the
while

In agony beside me. With a smile
He passed upon his way. Silent I stood
As in a dream. The chaos in my blood
Was quelled in harmony; I felt no more
The rending anguish of that ghastly sore.
People in passing turned me kindly eyes
And I smiled back to them — the very skies
Drew up my soul through depths of blue su-
preme.

Marvelling in myself — “Was it a dream?”

VENGEANCE (continued)

I laid my hand where late the pain had burned
And this deep scar made answer. Then I
turned
To seek you through the city — Let there
be
Peace and the open heart 'twixt you and me
Till I may prove by deeds — why, what is
this?
Your hands outstretched? You stoop with
eyes like his,
The Stranger's, with a smile our strife to end
On this marred bosom? . . . oh, my friend
— my friend!

A SHADOWY THIRD

YOUR arms are strong,
And strongly beats the heart to which they
fold me,—
But stronger are the memories that hold me.
Sighing I long,
Not for your lips transfigured by their yearning,—
But for a quiet mouth to dust returning.
What can I give?
I have no longer anything you crave.
It all was cast with flowers into a grave.
You bid me live,
And in your pleading passionate life blooms
red —
But louder speaks the silence of the dead.

SLAVES

IF your heart were stilled tomorrow,
My heart must hold its grief unshed;
You will have no right to sorrow
When you are told that I am dead.

WITH an unremembering smile
Among our fellows we have met,
But when sleep strikes off awhile
The fetters — Love, do you forget?

DO you never seek me then,
And bittersweet with shame and tears
Seal upon my lips again
One moment out of all the years?

NOCTURNE

ALL the earth a hush of white,
White with moonlight all the skies;
Wonder of a winter night —
And . . . your eyes.

HUES no palette dares to claim
Where the spoils of sunken ships
Leap to light in singing flame —
And . . . your lips.

DARKNESS as the shadows creep
Where the embers sigh to rest;
Silence of a world asleep —
And . . . your breast.

SURRENDER

AS I look back upon your first embrace
I understand why from your sudden touch
Angered I sprang, and struck you in the face.
You asked at once too little and too much.
But now that of my spirit you require
Love's very soul that unto death endures,
Crown as you will the cup of your desire —
I am all yours.

CHIMERA

COME I from the darkness, into darkness go.
Whence I fare and whither, never you may
know.

As you turn to clasp me, you are left be-
hind —

Evermore to seek me, nevermore to find.

NOT for me the myrtle-wreath nor the mar-
riage ring,

Not for me the cradle nor little hands that
cling.

Mine the subtle glamour of imagined
charms —

Mine to be remembered in your young
bride's arms.

CHIMERA (continued)

NOT for me the hearth-side, not for me the
home.

Mine the waste of waters flawed with flying
foam,

Mine the windswept mountains, mine the
open sky —

Mine the voice you dream of as you die.

SAINT CLARA TO THE VIRGIN

AT last the day is done — God's poor are
fed —

The appointed prayers are said —

Now, since I cannot sleep, let me awhile

Speak unto thee

Who knowest all the inner thoughts of me

As might an earthly mother know — and
smile.

Mother of God, bless him who saved my
soul —

Bless Francis. Give him sleep! Thou
knowest well —

Who better? how he needs it. He believes

Because his spirit can his flesh control

That he is stronger than the heavy bell

That rings the Angelus from our chapel-
eaves,

Only an iron shell to sound aloud

God's praise! But we are wiser, thou and

I . . .

SAINT CLARA TO THE VIRGIN (continued)

Ah, when I think of him with sickness bowed
And I not by!

Surely he rests now . . . does the moon-
light creep

In at the window? Touch him, of thy
grace,

And turn away his face!

It harms the eyes, they say, shining on sleep.

What does he dream? — he never dreams of
me.

To him it would be sin ever to dream
Of mortal woman — sin and bitterness.

Never through me let him one sorrow
know!

Through me, whom he has touched only to
bless.

He found my life a chafing, troubled stream
And from its channel cleared the rocks away

That fretted soul and body into spray,
And bade my freed and quiet spirit flow

Deepening ever toward the eternal sea.

Star of the Sea, bend over him tonight

SAINT CLARA TO THE VIRGIN (continued)

And to his dreams disclose
Thy perfect loveliness,— the only sight
He longs for — and for me it will suffice
To know that he is entering paradise
Led by a vision of the Mystic Rose.
That day I saw him, when he broke the
bread —
I could not eat. I looked at him instead.
It seemed to me Christ burned behind the
veil
Of his dear face — thou knowest when he
speaks,
That kindling look? — but ah, he was so
pale,
With little shadowy hollows in his cheeks
And temples — and I thought — “*When he
is dead . . .*”
Mother of Mercy! who will close his eyes,
Those eyes of wonder? Fold upon his
breast
Those tender tireless hands, at last to rest?
Will only angels tend him when he dies?

SAINT CLARA TO THE VIRGIN (continued)

It needs a woman's touch — we know the
· cost

Of giving life . . . even the barren know
As Moses from his mountain saw outspread
The plains of milk and honey there below —
The Promised Land he never was to tread.
My children shall be prayers and holy deeds,
Tears wiped from weary eyes — abated
needs —

It is enough. A heart dare not desire
Heaven and earth at once . . . a little head
Ringed with a halo by our brother Fire
Warm on the hearth . . . and little hands
that clutch

Hampering my steps . . . so sweet . . . al-
most my hand

Outstretched could touch

The face that is all baby but the eyes

So wonderful . . . so wise. . . .

Mother, I know that thou dost understand
And smile . . . as I have smiled upon his
play. . . .

SAINT CLARA TO THE VIRGIN (continued)

My little dream-son . . . how at close of day
Hearing a step . . . he drops his toys . . .
and leaps

To the opening door . . . where . . .

With a smile, she sleeps.

A TYPE

SHE might have been a harlot or a saint
Had she been born in older, simpler days —
Or happy mother of a sturdy brood.
Now she tries on the vine-leaves and the paint
Before her mirror, and the aureole's rays,
And the rich dreams of fruitful womanhood,

NOTES the effect of each with curious eyes,
Then takes another pose. Void of desire,
She never will be rash enough to sin;
For motherhood she is too cold and wise;
The martyr-passion of a soul on fire
Never can glow in blood that runs so thin.

A TYPE (continued)

BLOOD? Is it blood that in her pulses stirs?
God knows what blues that vein upon her
breast,
For marble to the touch is not more chill.
There's nothing in that lovely shell of hers
To keep the promise by her smile expressed.
She lacks the power to love, had she the will.

MEN waste their kisses on her placid lips
Till they despise the spell that lures them
— then
You triumph, women who have watched
them pass!
Eager as homing, tempest-beaten ships
They seek your warm humanity again,
And leave her making eyes, the world her
glass.

ULYSSES IN ITHACA

ITHACA, Ithaca, the land of my desire!
I'm home again in Ithaca, beside my own
hearth-fire.
Sweet patient eyes have welcomed me all ten-
derness and truth,
Wherein I see kept sacredly the visions of our
youth —
Yet sometimes, even as I hear the calm
Deep breathing of Penelope at rest
Beside me — cravingly my empty palm
Curves to the memory of Calypso's breast.
Ah, wild immortal mistress! With a smile
You crowned my passion as a goddess can.
I would not, if I might, regain your isle —
Nor would I lose remembrance, being man.

ULYSSES IN ITHACA (continued)

ITHACA, Ithaca, the wind among the trees,
The peasant singing at his toil, the murmur-
ing of bees,
The minstrel plucking at the harp when cups
are on the board.
The measure of the martial dance, the rhyth-
mic shield and sword —
But oh, the sword-song broken in the beat,
The sword-song that I heard by Simois!
The high fierce cry of battle's crimson
heat —
Whatever else I hear, I lose not this.
No, nor that unimaginable song
When through my straining limbs the cord
cut far.
Pallas, I thank thee that the bonds were
strong —
Yet was the siren's music worth the scar!

ULYSSES IN ITHACA (continued)

ITHACA, Ithaca, and peace when day is done;
Life like a weary eagle folding wings at set
of sun.

The round of homely duties, the temperate
delight,

The simple pleasure of the day, the quiet rest
at night —

But I have known the thrill of danger's face;
Have launched my spirit as a spear is cast.
The world and hell have been my living-
place,

Who choose to die in Ithaca at last.

Odysseus has foregone the wanderer's
part —

But mighty Zeus! how good it is to know
That I have held a goddess to my heart
And fought heroic giants, long ago!

SYRINX

BLOW, Pan, blow! I am thy pipe,
Let me thy music be.
My lips for kisses were unripe,
But not for minstrelsy.
I could not love — I knew not how —
But see how I will serve thee now!
Take thy utmost will of me
In impulsive melody —
Silver treble, bass of gold,
Not a note is false or cold.
Play till music blend us two
As no embrace would ever do.
One only Syrinx — hold her fast!
Loves may come and go,
But thou wilt pipe unto the last.
Blow, Pan, blow!

THE DARK LADY TO
SHAKESPEARE

HATE me because I waked the worst in
thee —

Fling my discordant echoes down the
years —

Make bitterness of our brief ecstasy
And mockery of our passion and our tears —
Brand me as gypsy, wanton, what thou
wilt —

The hue of hell upon my beauty set —
Scavenge all tongues for words to paint my
guilt,

And yet . . . and yet
Speak truth, lover that was, and foe that is!
What is thy loss when balanced with thy
gain?

Was it all poison, Cleopatra's kiss?
Are not thy songs of me well worth thy
pain?

DARK LADY TO SHAKESPEARE (contd.)

If the high gods bade Time turn back his
book

And brought thee once again unto the day
That locked thine eyes and mine in our first
look,

Wouldst turn away?

Speak truth — wouldst turn away?

WHEN ANTONY WAS GONE

SO he was gone. Awhile she stood unseeing,
Swaying a little, whispering his name,
“Antony — Antony —” till all her being
Glowed with a pitiless fever of desire —
But now she was alone . . . and there was
fire
Behind her eyes — and in her temples, flame.

SHE raised her shaking palms and cried aloud:
“O Gods of Egypt, bring him —” but the
prayer
Was muffled on her lips as by a shroud,
And the warm hollow of her bosom deep
Where once his passion sang itself to sleep
Shivered as if a serpent glided there.

WHEN ANTONY WAS GONE (continued)

RED rose the moon. She saw its troubled
light

Like blood upon the drawn steel of the sea.
Over the fragrant languor of the night
Drifted an acrid sharpness, like the smoke
Of burning galleys. Through her teeth she
spoke —

“O Gods of Egypt, bring him back to me!”

DANTE, PAOLO, FRANCESCA

“**A**MOR, che a nullo amato amar perdona
“ Mi prese del costui piacer si forte
“ Che, come vede, ancor non m’abbandona.
“ . . . caddi, come corpo morto cade.”

NO greater sorrow than the memory
Of past delights in desert hours of grief?
That sword-linked pair had known their
perfect hour.
The spring’s quintessence glorifies a flower
And all the pulse of earth is in a leaf.
So in that quivering kiss were he and she.

DANTE, PAOLO, FRANCESCA (continued)

WAS it for pity of their fate you fell
Before those twain, Dante, as dead men
fall —
Or of your own, dreamer who stood aside
While Beatrice became the Bardi's bride?
They paid love's price with body, soul and
all,
And lo, love still is theirs, even in hell.

A SPRING SYMPHONY

Allegro Con Moto

THE touch of the springtime has broken the
ice of the pond —
It laughs and it sighs.
The trees of the bank and the clouds that go
sailing beyond
See themselves in its eyes.
A shimmer of topaz by day and of silver by
night
It trembles for joy at the touch of the wind
and the light.
Birds dip their wings there and ripples to
melody start.
Is it the springtime — or you — whose im-
perious wand
Has broken the ice of my heart?

A SPRING SYMPHONY (continued)

Andante Appassionato

THROUGH the dark you sought and found
me.

There is no word for us to speak —
Only your arms that close around me,
Only your cheek against my cheek,
Slowly toward each other turning
Sure as the skies turn. Look, there slips
A star from heaven — and now 'tis burning
Here, love . . . upon our lips.

Scherzo — Finale, Presto

LOVE me for a lifetime, love me for a day,
Little do I care.

Light across the meadows laughing comes
the May,
Spring is in the air.
Little lambs like daisies dot the fields with
white,

A SPRING SYMPHONY (continued)

The silliest sheep that grazes feels the world's
delight.

We are two white butterflies on the wind
astray,

Flying — who knows where?

Skies are blue above us, earth is green below,
Golden is the sun —

Golden as the cowslips where in merry flow
Little rivers run —

Golden as the beating of wild wings agleam,
Golden as our meeting, golden as our
dream —

Wild lover, child lover, kiss me now and go,
Ere the dream is done!

APRIL SONG

AWAY with tight-lipped prudence!
There's mirth in everything.
God must have laughed at students
When He was making spring.
As Brother Sun discovers
The green beneath the snow,
Bookworms are turned to lovers
Whether they will or no.

WHEN every twig is budding
Why should a heart be dry?
When woods with song are flooding
Let fancy sing and fly.
With limbs too light for Duty
Or Fear to catch and bind,
Here's April in her beauty,
The sweetheart of mankind!

APRIL SONG (continued)

FLING by your books to meet her.
Remember she is sent
To bear to those who greet her
A quickening sacrament.
Deny and scorn it never,
Or all your wit's but cold.
'Tis youth that lives forever
And life that grows not old.

THE TRAVELLERS

A NEEDLE of pine and a little red Leaf
(And the Leaf was very young)
Were tired of their trees and wheedled the
Breeze
Till free to the ground they flung.
"This is all very well," they exclaimed as
they fell;
"Mr. Breeze, you are more than kind!
"But it's not enough, for we understand
"There's nothing like seeing a foreign land
"To broaden a thoughtful mind."

"TRAVEL'S the thing," said the little red
Leaf
(For the Leaf was very young)
"To give *savoir faire* and a jaunty air
"And a foreign twist of the tongue."

THE TRAVELLERS (continued)

So the two that day without delay
Took passage aboard the *Chip*,
The staunchest boat of the Forest Line,
Ballast of moss and keel of pine,
Just ready to leave the slip.

“OH for a storm!” sighed the little red Leaf
(For the Leaf was *very* young)
He cried elate “This is simply great!”
When at first they pitched and swung.
Said the Needle in fright, “Waves inches
in height
“Are a terrible sight to see!
“Look — up on a foaming crest we go —”
But the little red Leaf had gone below
And wished himself back on the tree.

THE TRAVELLERS (continued)

THE Needle of pine and the little red Leaf
(The Leaf was incurably young)
Came back again from the perilous main
With a foreign twist of the tongue.
They were very *blasé* and *distingué*,
By home they were horribly bored,
And the little red Leaf was heard to declare,
“So silly, this talk about *mal de mer!*
“You ought to go, for really, you know,
“You can never be utterly *comme il faut*
“Unless you have been abroad!”

RAIN IN THE NIGHT

RAINING, raining,
All night long;
Sometimes loud, sometimes soft,
Just like a song.

THERE'LL be rivers in the gutters
And lakes along the street.
It will make our lazy kitty
Wash his little dirty feet.

THE roses will wear diamonds
Like kings and queens at court;
But the pansies all get muddy
Because they are so short.

I'LL sail my boat tomorrow
In wonderful new places,
But first I'll take my watering-pot
And wash the pansies' faces.

SHADOW FRIEND

A Lie-Awake Song

OUT in the street there is a light
That through my window throws at night
The shadow of a pine-tree on the wall;
And while I see it nod and play
And dance in such a jolly way,
It isn't hard to lie awake, at all.

I WISH there were a friendly tree
To keep the children company
That in the city have to lie awake.
I think their mothers ought to fix
Window-box vines that climb on sticks —
What pleasant little shadows they would
make!

OUR PILGRIMAGE

HOW sweetly runs the little road
Along the river toward Sainte Anne!
The world like one great garden glowed
The day our pilgrimage began.

THE cedar was more spicy-sweet;
Bluer and softer were the skies;
The very daisies at your feet
Were larger than in past Julys.

OUR silence was too dear for speech;
And when a little restless child
Stumbled, and caught a hand of each,
Your eyes grew deeper and you smiled. . . .

AH, never rang the bells so clear
As when together knelt we two!
God knows for what you thanked Him,
dear —
All my thanksgiving was for you.

THE DIFFERENCE

TWO butterflies met in a garden;
One, chrysalis-new in the sun,
Flew bold to the opening flowers —
The fairest and freshest he chose:
But the tattered gray wings of the other,
Their wildness of wandering done,
Were quietly, quietly folded
In the heart of a fading rose.

OVER THE PASS

WHERE the thin glacier-stream
Shivers in spray,
Under my stirrup
The world falls away.

ABYSSSES above me,
Abysses below,
Cold on my forehead
The breath of the snow,

LONELY I move
As a star through the sky.
It may be like this
At the moment I die.

A MOOD

THE wind goes clad in gray today;
His waving garments mark his way.
Across the plain's new green of grain
He passes, visible with rain,
Slowly, as he were sad.
Wild comrade of past play,
Where is the mirth you had
But yesterday?
The pattering shower his answer brings:
"Today I muse of ashen things —
"Of other, unforgotten springs,
"How faint — how far away!"

HERB OF GRACE

I DO not know what sings in me —
I only know it sings
When pale the stars, and every tree
Is glad with waking wings.

I ONLY know the air is sweet
With wondrous flowers unseen —
That unaccountably complete
Is June's accustomed green.

THE wind has magic in its touch;
Strange dreams the sunsets give.
Life I have questioned overmuch —
Today, I live.

THE PRICE

BEAUTY she had, and health ; a brilliant mind ;
A talent that the whole world would have
known.

All these and youth she flung away — oh,
blind!

Upon a man too weak to stand alone.

She dragged him from the slough where he
was mired

And set him clean in honourable ways,

But she is faded now, and dull, and tired —

Poor background, that he quite forgets to
praise.

See him, her patient martyrdom's one prize,
Whom to redeem she held the world well
lost —

The smug complacent face, the shallow eyes!

Was his salvation worth the price it cost?

What is in him that only she could see?

God, is she blind, this woman — or are we?

WEARINESS

MY mind was footsore
With running up and down in trodden
ways —
In the wilderness it rests.
My heart was dusty with words —
It bathes in silence.
The weeping willow shimmers with young
leaves,
And under the dry grass the new springs
green —
I do not care.
If out of the Impossible
Your face should dawn between me and the
pale sky,
I would shut my eyes.

BROTHER ANGELICO

THE wall is waiting for my colours; now
I close my eyes a moment. It is said,
“He always has to pray before he paints.”
Well, so I do. Not what they call a prayer,
And yet I think it comes as near to God
As any form of words holy with years
And sweetened with much incense. Near
to God —
Ay, near as rivers when they find the sea.
It was not always so. There was a time. . . .
I had a young man’s thoughts. How many
stripes,
How many fasts, how many sleepless
nights
Cold in a hair-shirt on a bed of ashes!
And all no use. I prayed — ah yes! my lips
Were dry with words — but . . . come a
breath of spring
Up from the cloister-garden — if I woke

BROTHER ANGELICO (continued)

To hear at dawn the music bubbling clear
From some small swelling throat — what
help in words?

Or when it was my turn to feed the poor
Who clustered at the gate, and while the
hands

Full-grown were busy with the dole of bread
The little fingers of some child would reach
Beyond the gift, seeking the hand that gave,
It seemed as if that little clinging touch
Sent a soft seeking flame through all my
veins

Straight to my heart, and there it burned
and burned.

I wondered how hell's fire could be so
sweet. . . .

And so I tried to seal my senses up
And crust my heart with hard indifference.
I painted, painted, painted — and was
praised —

Yet something in the calm unfeeling stare
My saints gave back for worship troubled
me.

BROTHER ANGELICO (continued)

I thought, " Perhaps a man in bitter need,
" Perhaps a woman who has lost a child
" Will seek the altar where this picture
hangs.

" What comfort could you ever give to
such? "

They did not answer — they could never
answer.

There was no life behind them. They were
cold,

Dull as the idols that the psalmist scorned.
Silver and gold wrought by the hands of
men,

Unseeing eyes and ears that cannot hear,
Borne on slim flower-stalks of straight-fall-
ing robes

That never knew a human body's warmth.
And slowly, slowly in my crusted heart
Weariness gathered like a hidden sore.

My windows could stand open to the spring
And I not care — and neither bird nor child
Could stir me. Then one day, I took my
pencil,

BROTHER ANGELICO (continued)

Sitting alone within my narrow cell.
I took it languidly — so little thought
Had I what was to come! The panel
waited,
And half unthinking, I began to draw
A woman's face — Saint Lucy's, it may be;
I have forgotten; 'tis no matter now —
But when I came to the complacent mouth
I smeared its shallow beauty swiftly out.
Again I drew, again effaced my work,
And then a sudden madness blazed in me.
I struck my hand against the window-bars
Till the blood came — then with the point
red-dipped
I drew again. . . . Oh, I can see it still,
The gracious holiness that smiled on me!
No — not a smile — a wise grave tender-
ness
More sweet than any smile. My hand went
on
As if a spirit held it — drew the throat,
The shoulder's flowing line of loveliness,

BROTHER ANGELICO (continued)

The shrine of the deep bosom — surely
there

Was an unrecognized memory of the breast
That gave me life, my fair young mother's,
dead

When I was still too new to life to guess
What dying meant. How else could I have
known?

And there upon that sweet and sacred curve
A little clinging hand — a baby's cheek. . . .
Unveiled, she shone upon my dazzled eyes,
She whom unwitting I had called to sight,
Life, Life incarnate. Make it plain who can
Or let it be as miracles must be,

An awful rapture beyond questioning —
But this I know. I bowed my head, I
swayed

Forward, half-fainting, toward the canvas
— then . . .

It was not canvas where my cheek found
rest.

And sweet — ah, sweeter than the harps of
heaven

BROTHER ANGELICO (continued)

And holier than all my thoughts of God
I heard her voice.

“ Why hast thou feared me, son?

“ Why hast thou fled from me, Angelico?

“ Rest on this bosom that has fed the world

“ And know that I am good. Lo, I am Life.

“ To some I seem a terrible goddess, fierce

“ And cruel — but they do not understand.

“ 'Tis their own hearts that scourge them
to their doom.

“ Unto those who see me as I am,

“ I am The Mother, and my Son is Love.

“ To see me as thou seest is to know me.

“ To understand through love is to possess.

“ No longer yearn for what thou hast for-
gone,

“ My mortal bounty. Thou hast chosen my
soul —

“ Translate that soul unto a waiting world.

“ Verily, verily, I say to thee

“ That there are many who have done my
work,

BROTHER ANGELICO (continued)

“Sown my seed and raised my fruit, who
wait

“For thee, unmated dreamer, to reveal

“The meaning of their labour and their
love.”

Like church bells far away I heard her
voice —

Then everything grew dark. After a time
Slowly my senses groped to earth again.

There was my cell — the same, yet not the
same.

The sky between my window-bars, the scent
Of roses, and the song of birds — the same,
Yet not the same. Yes, there was I, the
same

Yet not the same, never again the same,
For . . . there was — She. Reverently I
veiled

With blue and gold the glory of her bosom,
Save where the baby laid his hand and
cheek,

Gold of the sun, blue of the noonday sky,

BROTHER ANGELICO (continued)

And when my brothers saw her, one and all
They crossed themselves and cried, "Be-
hold Madonna,
"Mother of God!"

Was she not so — to me?

AH, now the power quickens in my hand!
My colours — I see Love who goes to
death
To pierce man's blindness with the soul of
life,
And at his wounded feet Life weeps, and yet
Sees through her tears, dawn . . . and an
opened tomb. . . .
So let me paint. Madonna, guide my hand!

ON THE FERRY-BOAT

IT'S thinking long I am, and my mouth is dry
with the fire of it.

(Circling over the water, hark how the gray
gulls call!)

And the bones in my body are gone to wax
with the wasting desire of it —

The scream of the waves and the gulls on the
beaches of Donegal.

IT'S thinking long I am, and my soul is sick
with the pain of it.

(Smell it! can you not smell it? the tide com-
ing in from sea?)

And I'm limp as a man from the rack with the
endless maddening strain of it —

Walking the treadmill here while my home is
calling for me.

ON THE FERRY-BOAT (continued)

IT'S thinking long I am of a boy who was
brave and merry —

A boy they called by my name, clear-eyed and
clean of the hand. . . .

Mary, Mother of God! give me strength to get
over the ferry,

To turn my back on the water and walk ashore
when we land!

EUTHANASIA

I GAVE you what myself I would desire,
Dumb, faithful friend!
Unto a life that had begun to tire,
A kindly end.
When joy was gone alike from work and play
Sound rest was yours,
Without the long slow torture of decay
That man endures.

WHEN I begin to find the world grown dim,
And chill the sun,
When weariness is lord of brain and limb,
And work is done,
When dead leaves clog the only path I see
To journey through —
May God as mercifully deal with me
As I with you!

GREATHEART

(To Robert Browning)

LOVER of earth, great-hearted son of joy,
His the triumphant fulness of delight,
Because life's cup, too bitter-sweet to cloy,
Can yield no dregs to him who drinks aright.
Let Beauty veil her strangely as she would,
To his clear eyes God glowed in everything,
And since the heart of man he understood
While men have hearts he will not cease to
sing.

THE PHARISEE SAVED

“**T**HANK God,” one said, “that Life has
mastered you,
“Broken the hardness of your self-control
“And swept you into living!”

Ah, I do —

I do thank God with all my quickened
soul.

FOR heart that beats again, for blood made
red,
For kinship with humanity restored,
For pride with sneering smile struck swiftly
dead,
I thank the Sender of the fiery sword.

FOR what estranges man from the Divine
But frozen heart and stony self-conceit?
The steps that are unsteady with life's wine
May stumble to the Master's very feet.

THE PHARISEE SAVED (continued)

FATHER, I thank thee for my weakness
known,

That shall be strength to serve my fellow-
men.

Silent my soul while I could stand alone —
Since I have fallen, I can pray again.

END AND BEGINNING

THE world of the elder gods is aflame. The
smoke of its burning,
Heavy with fumes of carnage, darkens the
shuddering skies.
Tortured flesh in ashes to tortured earth is
returning.
Baldur the Beautiful, rise!

RISE, for this is thine hour. The mighty
who said they had slain thee,
Stretch their stiffening hands to a redly
perishing prize.
Thou who hast bided thy time in the tomb
that could not retain thee,
Baldur the Beautiful, rise!

END AND BEGINNING (continued)

SPIRIT of light and freedom, behold thy
foundation is ready.

Dust and blood and tears, the glory of em-
pire lies.

Wonderful over the waste, strong as the
sun and as steady,

Baldur the Beautiful, rise!

A PRAYER OF TODAY

GOD of our world and all the worlds that be,
We turn to thee.
If plea of ours thy purposes could sway,
We would not pray;
But since thy will its hidden goal hath
wrought
Beyond our thought,
Father, we pray as did thy tortured Son—
Thy will be done.

BY wrath of man for very passion dumb,
Thy Kingdom come.
By lands left waste, and children desolate,
By lust and hate,
By tares and wheat alike trampled to mud,
Ashes and blood,
By cowardice, greed, cruelty and lies,
Let men grow wise.

A PRAYER OF TODAY (continued)

WE would not hear thy prophets — yea, we
slew
The ones who knew.
Now each must hear the cry in his own
breast
That gives no rest.
Must yield obedience to that master-cry
Although he die,
And through the tumult, as he may, divine
What cause is thine.

BY the stern brotherhood of grief and pain
Advance thy reign.
By honour that will pave the stricken field
But will not yield,
By larger mercy and by love more wide,
By death defied,
By faith which looks beyond the hour of
loss,
Burn out our dross.

A PRAYER OF TODAY (continued)

NOT for ourselves alone, nor for today
We die or slay.

A race unborn shall tread our blossoming
dust

In times more just.

God, give us courage and the seeing heart
To do our part,

And through all bitter blindness, do thou
still

Work out thy will.

THE ANGEL WITH THE SWORD

AROUSE thee, Peace, and take the sword of
power

The wanton hands of War have made their
own.

Wake from thy dreams! Behold, it is thine
hour.

War by his own excess is overthrown.

Wrench from his grasp what he has held
too long

And gird thee with the blade that none shall
draw

Save at thy word and for thy sake, when
wrong

Threatens the holy majesty of Law.

Unite the nations by a nobler tie

Than common fear or common power-lust.

The only cause wherein thy sons may die

Is, that a world of brothers may be just —

Till even justice be outgrown — until

The blessed anarchy of Heaven be gained,

When Love shall to the uttermost fulfil

Law's bidding, and exceed it, unconstrained.

WHILE WE HAVE WAITED

WHILE we have waited what each day
might bring
To all this wild tormented world of ours,
There never was a more ecstatic spring,
Nor sweeter jubilation of summer flowers.

NEVER amid the waking forest gleamed
The dogwood's pure exuberance more
white.
Never the honeysuckle hedges dreamed
In richer fragrance through the quiet night.

GOLDENROD foams in seas of sunny
spray;
Glad liquid twitterings hail the dark with-
drawn.
*What flower do Belgium's children pluck to-
day?*
Where do the birds of Poland greet the dawn?

IN THE FIELD HOSPITAL

SOME laughed, some groaned away their
pain; but he

Through all his agony no murmur made
Till as he passed into the Mystery
Under his breath he prayed:

*There is a little house beside the shore
Of the Soulange Canal. Geraniums red
Are bright about the pathway to the door
As if she beckoned with a smile, and said
"Oh, welcome home! I listened for your
feet!"*

*She planted them while I was gone, one
day. . . .*

*God who made life so sweet,
Let not this life of mine be thrown away!*

AN AMERICAN AT VERDUN

Good Friday, 1916

WELL, he is quiet now; let the guns roar,
They cannot hurt his ears. I only knew
He suffered by the tightening of his lips
At each new shock of sound. He never
told.
How young and clean and strong that
body was —
So fit for every gracious use of life;
And now it's fit for nothing but a grave.
Wasted — in a quarrel not his own.
He might have stayed at home across the
sea,
Getting and spending, creditable work
And harmless pleasure, love and wealth
and peace,
And all with honour. What wild wind of
folly

AN AMERICAN AT VERDUN (continued)

Caught him and drove him to an end like
this?

He knew that it was folly, when he first
Felt death was coming. Then I heard
him groan

(Under his breath — he did not know I
heard)

“O God, don't let me doubt that I did
right!

“Don't let me doubt! O God, don't let
me doubt!”

And all the while, doubt rankling in his
heart

Cold as a bayonet. But then he passed
Into delirium — spoke about his mother —
And cried out “I'm so thirsty!” like a
child —

And then, all of a sudden, his clouded eyes
Cleared and grew terribly beautiful, and he
said

“It's done! It's done!” And that was
how he died.

His mouth is smiling still. I shut the lids

AN AMERICAN AT VERDUN (continued)

Quickly upon his eyes. Perhaps they too
Have still their look, too beautiful to bear,
As if a broken door let God come through.
The pity of it — oh, the pity of it!
Dead for a dream. He did not need to die,
He threw away his life — just for a dream.
It seems as if I read something like that
Once . . . long ago . . .

Yes, Doctor. Here I am.

KITCHENER'S MARCH

NOT the muffled drums for him,
Nor the wailing of the fife.
Trumpets blaring to the charge
Were the music of his life.
Let the music of his death
Be the feet of marching men.
Let his heart a thousandfold
Take the field again!

OF his patience, of his calm,
Of his quiet faithfulness,
England, raise your hero's cairn!
He is worthy of no less.
Stone by stone, in silence laid,
Singly, surely, let it grow.
He whose living was to serve
Would have had it so.

KITCHENER'S MARCH (continued)

THERE'S a body drifting down
For the mighty sea to keep.
There's a spirit cannot die
While a heart is left to leap
In the land he gave his all,
Steel alike to praise and hate.
He has saved the life he spent —
Death has struck too late.

*Not the muffled drums for him,
Nor the wailing of the fife.
Trumpets blaring to the charge
Were the music of his life.
Let the music of his death
Be the feet of marching men.
Let his heart a thousandfold
Take the field again!*

THE WHITE COMRADE

PERHAPS they had no time to think of Him,
Those comfortable men, when business
urged;
And where the dusty whirl of pleasure surged
The memory of His face no doubt grew
dim —
But when they turned from safety and con-
tent,
Unflinchingly laid by
The tools of their prosperity, and went
To suffer and to die
For just a thought, a disembodied dream
That some call Nothing — when they knew
the wrench
Of raveled nerves, the squalor of the trench,
The dying look's reproach, the scarlet steam
Of battle hand to hand — amid that hell
Of agony, they looked into the eyes
They had not seen, in days when all was well.

THE WHITE COMRADE (continued)

Out of the marsh of death they saw Him rise
In the white robes that gladdened Galilee,
Walking the hot red waves of blood and
flame

As long ago He came
To those that laboured on a troubled sea.
And they, who had forgotten Him so long,
Remembered that those wounded hands were
strong

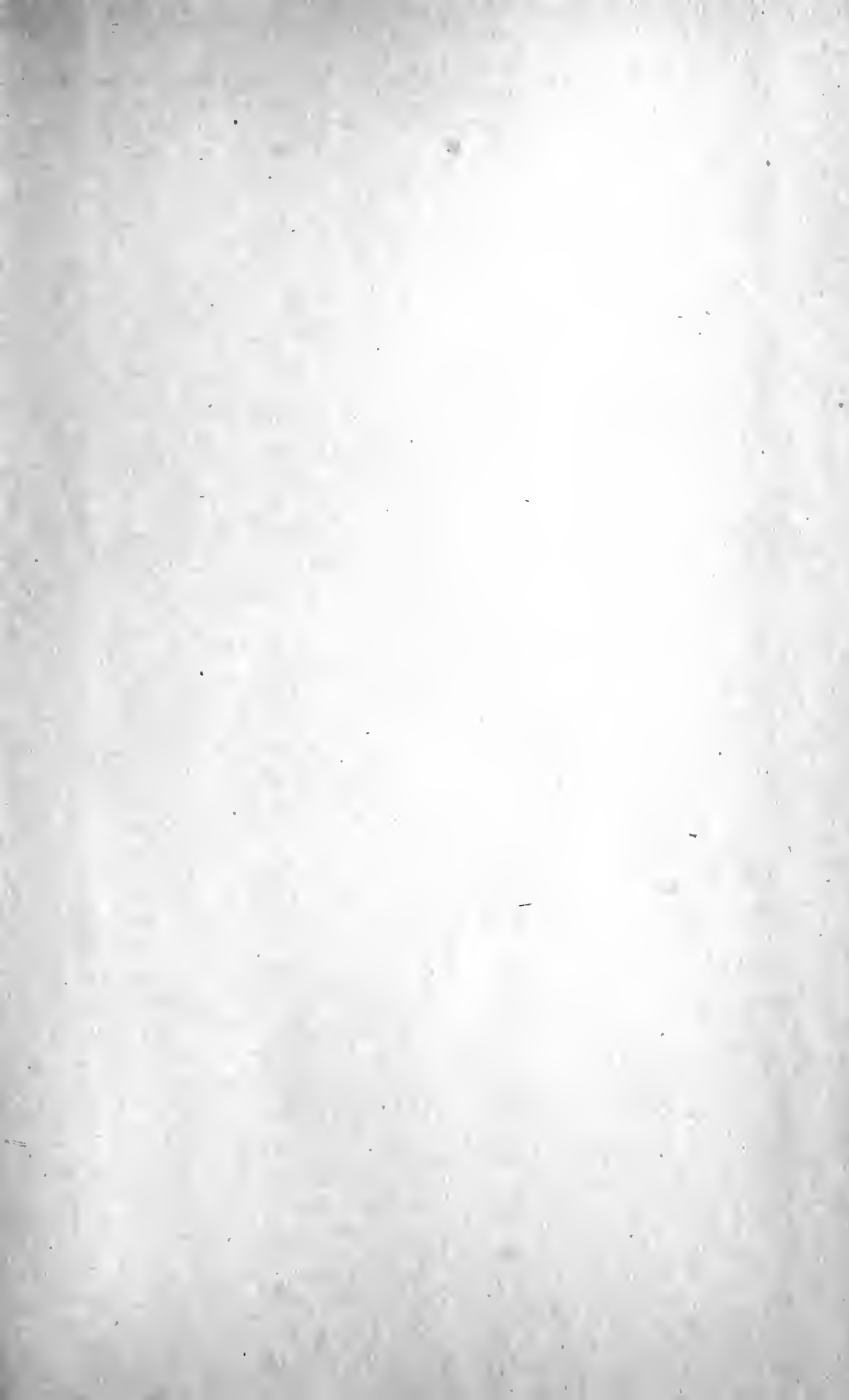
And infinitely kind. . . .

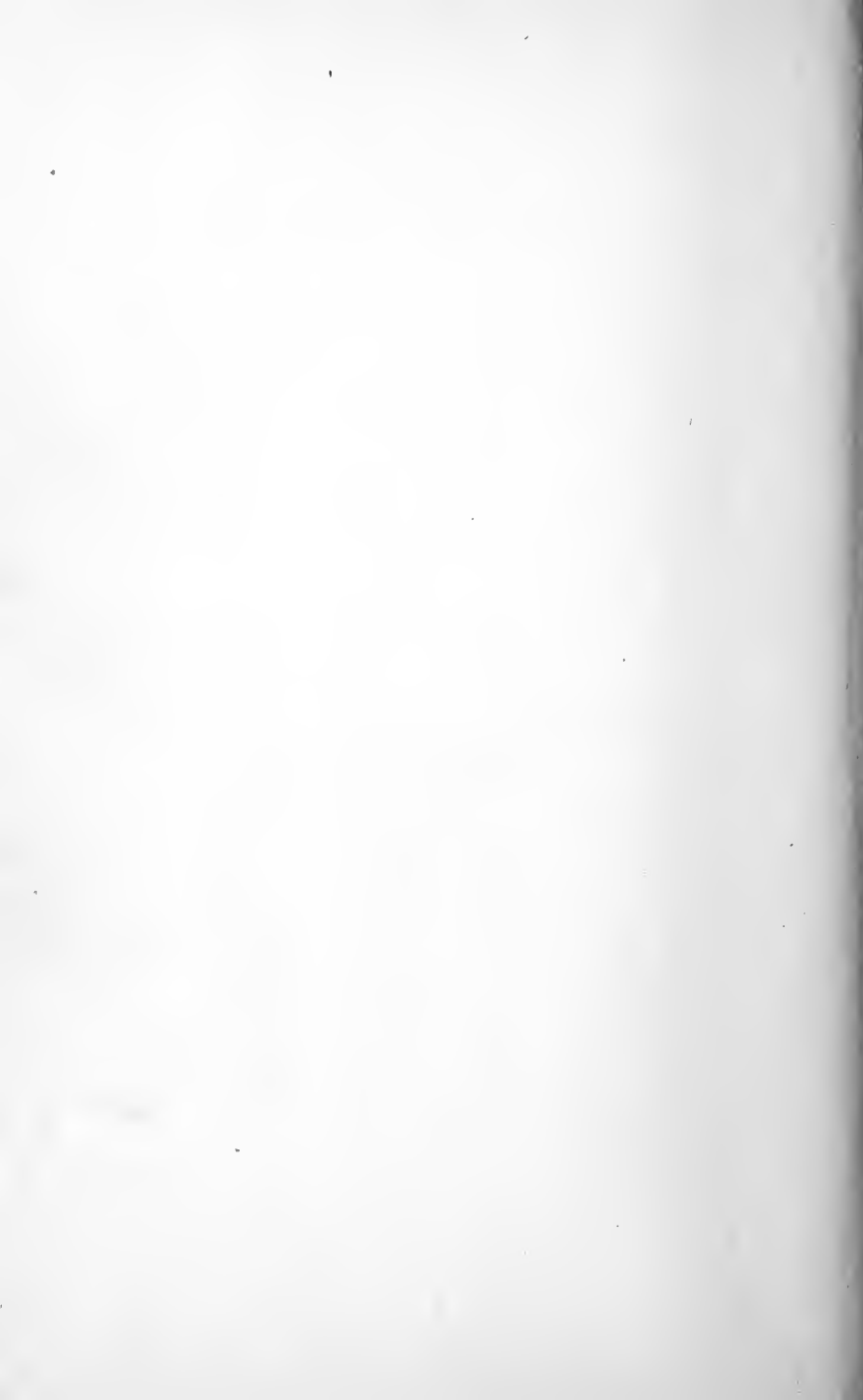
O Lord of Love! shall we not understand,
Who in our comfort are as grossly blind?
We prosper to the height of our desire —
How should our rich and busy hands require
Aught of the Wounded Hand?

Till comes a day when we are under fire,
Spent, bleeding, stripped of our complacent
pride,

And beaten to the last extremity.
Then, a living presence at our side,
White Comrade, we find — Thee.

Out of my living
Grew my songs.
Back I am giving
What life gave to me.
Unto the sower
The harvest belongs.
Earth keeps the vision
Of harvests to be.







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