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poems by Aurelian



NDON: ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, W.

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POEMS BY AURELIAN



Aurelian, pseud.
POEMS BY AURELIAN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
G. T. W.

LONDON
ELKIN MATHIEWS, VIGO STREET
1906

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Introduction

IN introducing these poems of my late friend I would refer briefly to certain qualities of poetry which are admirably illustrated by the second stanza of Keats' lyric to Sorrow in "Endymion"—

“Oh, Sorrow,
Why dost borrow
The lustrous passion from a falcon eye?
To give the glow-worm light?
Or, on a moonless night,
To tinge by siren shores the salt sea spray?”

These lines are eloquent, with an eloquence unsurpassed in English poetry, of the exquisite suggestiveness and association of poetry. I would haltingly and in plain language explain something of what they mean to me. The apotheosis of sorrow in the first line humanizes the stanza by implication. Here, then, in the first three lines we have a vivid illustration of

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the associative power given to the imagination by poetry. By the apotheosis of sorrow; by the metaphorical application to man, the passion of man, fit victim for sorrow; by the thought of the soaring eagle that can gaze with undimmed eyes on the mid-day majesty of the sun—by all these Keats has, with lightest but surest hand, touched the chords of imagination. He has used a dozen words, not to speak to us, but to raise the lid of a mystical box from which are loosed winged spirits of beauty, imagination, and ideality. We are transformed when we read them; they belong to the language of some other world, where the action of the senses is always beautiful and never base. We think of sorrow objectively—of Niobe weeping for her children; of great, brave-hearted men whose ideals soared high above the plains of mankind, careworn and saddened almost to the death by their impotence against the evil of the world; of strong men weeping women's tears at the bedside of a dying child; of the bright, keen

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eyes of youth filmed over with a mist which will ever make their outlook on the world dimmer, will shade a little the sunlight and brightness of life. Then with workmanship of inimitable skill, so dainty, so delicate, yet so powerful, Keats transfers us from the vigorous scenes of action implied by the word "falcon:" to those places where grief loves to hide. The change of thought in the first three and last three lines is slight, but definite as the change between the "false" and the true dawn in the tropics. Even now man is not mentioned, nothing is said, but rather the imagination is forced to realize more vividly than words could describe that night and sorrow are twin sisters. The lustrous passion, subdued and conquered by sorrow, is given to "tinge by siren shores the salt sea spray"—most lovely line of all, with the sobbing alliteration adding music to the thought. What place more suited to sorrow than the seashore at night, the pallid phosphorescence of moonless surf, when the sight is dimmed as if by tears, when the ears

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are filled with the sound of restless weariness, when the senses are cognizant of loneliness, when in that loneliness our sorrow becomes dear to us even in its bitterness!

I do not claim more than a little of this power for my friend's poems, yet in them is to be found this delicacy of touch and exquisite use of metaphor. The best example, perhaps, is to be found in the apposition of "lilies slender, lilies pale" with "thy fingers fair and frail" in the Garden Song; in fact, that song has, I think, much of the suggestive and associative power of poetic metaphor of high order. It seems to me that in this daintiness of expression, this associative power—e.g., in the Moth Song—this aptness of epithet and writing in coloured words, the chief merit of this little family of poems rests. They have facility and felicity rather than power and purpose. I care not to criticize them further. He was my friend, and above all a man's poems show us his true heart.

As regards the morbid tendency in these

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poems, at times of depression Aurelian was a prey to the horror of God-abandonment, which is the gift of modern literature and higher criticism to those emotional intellects that do not themselves seek the foundations of belief, but gather their ideas loosely from those about them and from irrelevant study. In the same way he showed that emotional sympathy with the teachings and life of Christ which is often so eager in artistic natures, but which, strangely enough, seldom leads them to pay attentive study to the evidences of that life. It is as if their emotions and reason were wholly divorced in action, as if the latter rejects what the former admires, and *vice versâ*. One would expect reason to probe for the causes of such sympathetic admiration, but it is not so. The domination of religion frightens natures highly jealous of any imposition on their freedom, a freedom which in reality is a license to mood succeeding and antagonizing mood with such swiftness that there is no common basis to life, except

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undue sensibility. Yet once reason is joined to emotion in these natures, then we may expect to see an example of the noblest human character. But their youth is spent in a constant fluctuation from the realm of emotion to the realm of reason and back. The understanding, the strong purpose which forms the bond of union comes later in life. Had Aurelian lived, we should have got more stable and stronger examples of his undoubted genius. But at the time of his death he had not passed from the heights and depths of undirected youth.

The stanza of Keats already quoted was applicable to Aurelian in another sense. No man in these days is more lonely or under the dominion of sorrow than is the man of acute poetic sensibility with scarcely any blend of practicality. My friend was such a man, one to whom the concrete of life was scarce understood or even dimly realized, to whom the abstract was of extraordinary intensity. As such he was perhaps difficult to understand, for

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to him friendship could only exist on an ideal level of absolute trust, and a man had to be his friend or nothing, or even enemy. He gave the world he met good cause to distrust him; in fact, he flaunted before its face, made it painfully aware, rudely conscious of its own lack of intellect and appreciation of the beauties of life, was callously indifferent to its practical, hard striving. To him intention was everything, failure nothing. To desire to be faithful was to be accounted faith, any shortcomings to be attributed to his upbringing, to ill-fate, and to the misunderstanding of him to whom he attempted faith. But to his friends he was faithful in a degree far surpassing what would from his life have been prophesied. He was entirely unfitted for the business of life, believing it necessary always to use diplomacy with men of inferior intellect, where plain dealing would be better, leading a histrionic existence, until people wearied in wondering as to what character he would next assume. On the other hand, his

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trust in his friends was childish. He was easily guided by them, willing to do what pained him and he did not understand, merely because they wished it, being extraordinarily responsive to any show of affection towards him. In short, he had no middle nature. No man so boasted two soul-sides, one to face the world, one to show those whom he loved.

In his affections, too, he was very limited, focussing them on one or two of his fellow-creatures with ardent intensity, living his life and striving after his own lights to act as the loved one would have him act. To me he was a very lovable man. In addition, his society had an extraordinary charm for me, in that he had such a quick intellectual and moral sympathy, that he could assimilate those thoughts which are half felt and half expressed, rapidly to enlarge them by means of his own wider conception. As a listener he had the power of following the train of thought in the speaker's mind, so that it was never necessary to present

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him with what one might call the history or pedigree of a thought expressed. Hence we seldom had to waste language over foundations, but held argument for the sake of comparing ideas in what were to us the decorative beauties or finer issues of thought. He was in conversation a great precisian, went to such degree of accuracy as some would call hair-splitting, yet with a remarkable power of rapidly giving antithetical definitions of the words he used. At the same time his love of skilful phrase sometimes charmed him from true meaning, owing to the skill or music of the words alone. He was frequently divided between his worship of beauty and his reverence for accuracy, and his strength lay in his masterly combination of the two. This is perhaps less evident in his verse, though certainly well marked, for he had not the constant criticism and stimulus of a fellow poet, the inner circle of his friends being devoid of poetic power. He was undoubtedly a genius, having exceptional capacity of original

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combination of thought and word. Whatever subject he discussed, the fire of his personality would quicken it to some new revelation. Yet nearly all of his genius has run to waste. These few poems, which are not comparable in brilliancy to his conversation and argument, are practically all that is left. By these I hope he will become known to some who are interested in the strange, tropical youth of genius. To me, at least, they will ever be held dear, for of all men I have known I loved him the most. Strange that genius should be so unfitted to the world of men, that charity for such men as Aurelian still halts on the threshold of the world.

“How can I mourn,” says Thoreau, “who have not ceased to wonder?”

G. T. W.

1906.

Garden Song

Roses red and roses white,
And one more fair than they,
Eyes that shame the sudden light
When the sun-down—silver-bright—
Blossoms into day,
Grace the flower-face, that flashes
Glances under golden lashes,
Grave or gay.

Lilies slender, lilies pale,
And one more sweet than all.
What may words of mine avail
When thy fingers fair and frail
Hold my heart in thrall?
At their touch my senses quicken,
Soul and pulses surge and sicken,
Flame and fall.

GARDEN SONG

Sound of bee and voice of bird,
And one more clear than these.
Harmonies must fall unheard,
When thy shyly whispered word
 Issues its decrees ;
Fairer numbers never floated
From the Mavis, mellow-throated,
 To the breeze.

Garden sound and sight ; and yet
None so fair as thou.
Love, when summer's sun has set,
 Poppy, rose, and violet
 Fade, we know not how.
Touch me then, ere time dismiss me,
Roseleaf lips, you will not kiss me
 Then as now.

To M.

FAIREST and best, I will rebel no longer ;
The callous fates are deaf to any cry.
Let them prevail—for destiny is stronger
Than you or I.

And, come what may, my soul is still your
debtor.

No word of mine shall weary you anew.
I loved to lie in bondage, for the fetter
Was forged by you.

Heart's-dearest, I have lived my little hour,
And never more may meet in any place,
Pure as the dew and perfect as a flower,
Your faultless face.

TO M.

Your pardon, then, for all I left unspoken,
Or any word that had been best unsaid.
Forgive—and let the spirit you have broken
Be comforted.

Forgive me that I looked in sullen fashion
On love and all it carried in its train.
Absolve me of your infinite compassion
Yet once again.

The magic of your touch, the subtle wonder
Of form and voice and feature will abide
When sin has slain and time has trodden under
All else beside.

Ah, Love, were heart of mine as cold as ashes,
I still should see—unsullied as the dawn—
Your lustrous eyes, from which the silken lashes
Are scarce withdrawn.

TO M.

And, had I passed the season of December,
My lonely life would turn with less regret
To recreate the days that I remember,
And you forget.

Your soul is stainless. May the fates defend
you
From all those ills that make this earth a Hell.
God guard you, Love. I have but heart to send
you
A last farewell.

Disillusion

How long shall we seek after sorrow,
Our ills to allay ?

How long must our dread of to-morrow
Dismantle to-day ?

How long shall our hearts that are craven
Hope on against hope for a haven
In gods that are gilded and graven
And fashioned of clay ?

We hunger for profitless mercies,
With souls over-tame,
To offer deaf ears to their curses,
Blind eyes to their blame.

We prate of Messiahs descending
To man, ever marring and mending
An earth that knows naught of its ending,
Nor aught of its aim.

DISILLUSION

Do we dream that our Gods are eternal ?

Nay—look overhead :

Are the leaves of last summer still vernal,

Their blossoms unshed ?

Though regal the splendour they rode in,

Apollo and Isis and Odin,

Haled out from the halls they abode in,

Lie pallid and dead.

And desolate all the high places

That knew them of old ;

No murmur of worship, no traces

Of purple and gold.

Where the pæan arose and petition,

Grey time, the eternal magician,

Clothes over the haunts of ambition

With herbage and mould.

DISILLUSION

The power of the past and the wonder
Have vanished away ;
The mighty, whose threats were as thunder,
Whose wrath as the ray
That from out the high firmament flashes
When the hurricane clutches and clashes,
Are cold as their altars and ashes.
All things must decay.

Blind souls, leaden-fettered and narrow
As any there be,
Chirp and chatter of sparrow to sparrow
Were wiser than we.
On sand have we fastened and founded,
Earth-atoms who, foliage-surrounded,
Take the bough for a forest unbounded,
The twig for a tree.

DISILLUSION

For the creeds of our fathers are failing,
And time will dispel
The shadow of dread unavailing
The phantoms that dwell
In a faith that decreases and falters,
While death—casting dust on its altars—
Smiles scorn on its saints and its psalters,
Its Heaven and Hell.

As the legends of youth fall asunder,
Heart weary, we turn
Tired eyes to the truth that lies under ;
Yet what can we learn
Save that Fate has no future to proffer
To sage or to saint or to scoffer,
No crown save the shroud and the coffer,
The vault and the urn ?

DISILLUSION

The flames of the sunset afar lit
 Emblazon the West ;
Yet the sunlight gives place to the star-lit
 Sweet season of rest.
Let the darkness dismember the daytime,
Let the winter make mock of the Maytime,
To the weary of work and of playtime
 Deep slumber seems best.

To a Cigarette

SWEET little roll of shredded leaf,
Incense of inner communings,
Mischance and hydra-headed grief
Show dimly thro' thy curling rings.
Of all the comforts I have met,
Commend me to the cigarette.

Type of our tiny human span,
The aims and powers that we invoke
We flourish, babble, toil and plan,
And—vanish like tobacco smoke.
Our little suns decline and set,
Short-lived as any cigarette.

TO A CIGARETTE

But if the garden of our days
Show little to the passing hours
Save blackened blossoms, ruined sprays,
Rank weeds and faded passion-flowers,
The venom'd edge of vain regret
Is blunted by the cigarette.

The ardent draught of amber wine
That scourges shadow from the heart,
The eloquence of apt design
In letters, melody or art,—
All these are sweet, but sweeter yet
The solace of the cigarette.

Poppy Dreams

THE Poppy's blood
Drawn from the bursting bud,
Black as a flood beneath a moonless night,
Has long withstood
Heart-wearing thoughts that brood
O'er every mood dismantled of delight.

Here is no stress
Of sterile wakefulness,
That savours less of solace than of tears ;
Here no domain
Of dilatory pain,
As heart and brain fall weary of the years.

POPPY DREAMS

Here lies the balm
Of contemplative calm ;—
No sound or psalm begotten of the earth ;—
In this our lot
The world is all forgot
For that lone spot where langour has its birth.

Cavernous bowers
Of heavy-scented flowers,
That drug the hours so that they can but creep ;
Music in guise
Of drowsy melodies,
Ridding our eyes of everything but sleep.

Cry out on God
In that His foot has trod
Deep in the sod the secret of our birth.
Call forth a curse
Against the universe,
Bid fate disperse and devastate the earth.

POPPY DREAMS

But praises shower
In that the Poppy's power
Can for an hour alleviate our grief ;
That it defies
Our deeper maladies,
That—in this wise—mankind may find relief.

Must we confess
That Heaven is pitiless,
Here our distress shall dwindle for a while.
Would we dispel
Our ills unbearable,
The pains of Hell shall shrivel to a smile.

I have grown old
In infamies untold :
Could I unfold the horror of my years,
My life would seem
More like a madman's dream
Lit by the gleam of phantasies and fears.

POPPY DREAMS

Malice and lust
Have turned my heart to dust,
Stirred by the gust of passionate disdain ;
Sordid and mean
With mysteries unclean,
And paths obscene where appetite was slain.

Age finds me worn,
Forsaken and forlorn.
My spirit, shorn of all the higher sense,
Can scarce express
Its depths of bitterness,
Its life a stress, its love a lewd pretence.

Yet having quaffed
The poppy-laden draught,
Safe from the shaft of manifold regrets
Comes memory, blent
With infinite content,
Sweet as the scent of withered violets.

POPPY DREAMS

What though its breath
Is redolent of death,
Shall we beneath the gyves of sorrows creep?
Sicken and shrink
While link is forged to link,
Until we sink into the longer sleep?
By this I yet
Can fancy I forget
The shame that set its brand upon my soul.
Death seems repose,
And life a faded rose,
And what man knows the purport of the whole?
He who descries
With penetrative eyes
The purpose wise that animates the earth,
May strive to save
His spirit from the 'grave,
And, like a slave, find labour nothing worth.

POPPY DREAMS

Fill not the air
With inefficient prayer ;
God has no care for mortals here below :
Vex not the skies
With lamentable cries :
Sad heart, be wise, and blunt the pangs of woe.

Foil them with this,
Which never works amiss :
The poppy's kiss shall dissipate the sting.
His way is best
Who turns his heart to rest
And feels his breast unstirred of anything.

In this my state
I placidly await
The harvest great that severs fruit from husk.
When that arrives,
Then—whatsoe'er survives—
My spirit drives into the outer dusk.

A Song of Yesterday

DEAREST, farewell—it seems an hour
Since first my lips in sport I set—
Light as the bee that sways a flower—
Upon your eyes veiled violet.
I have no jangling lute to fret,
Nor any jarring word to say ;
Though love has loosed us from his net,
Our love was with us yesterday.

All circumstance of dead delight,
All verdure of a vanished spring,
May surely moulder out of sight,
Secure from all re-harvesting.
Buds that the changing seasons bring
Burst from the winter-sodden clay,
Nor can we cleave to anything :
Our love was with us yesterday.

A SONG OF YESTERDAY

Poor drooping Cupid, dazed with pain,
Poor piteous lips that silence keep,
And eyes—effulgent once—now fain
To fall on silken-lidded sleep.
So be it. Let him slumber deep
And dream his little woes away
I have but few regrets to reap :
Our love was with us yesterday.

L'ENVOI.

Dearest, the same great ardent earth
Throbs beneath golden skies and grey :
Small cause have we to ban our birth :
Our love was with us yesterday.

Calvary

SOMETIMES I see—as when the lightning fills
With lurid fire the features of a plain—
The three gaunt crosses where the Lord was
slain,

Looming above the circuit of the hills,
Ominous as the fallen blood that thrills
The parching herbage with a purple stain ;—
His blood, whose passage thro' incarnate pain
Has healed us of immeasurable ills.

Dear dying Christ, my haggard heart has found
Something of solace in that Thou hast said,
“ Father, forgive them,” for my hands are red,
My brother's blood cries to me from the ground,*
And I am surfeited of sight and sound.
Ah, Christ, can even I be comforted ?

* Gen. iv. 15.

L'Envoi

AND so good-night. Forgive the feeble lute
Whose soul has furnished forth a foolish song.
Maytime and madrigal will pass ere long,
And sleep will proffer us his soft salute.
No sovereign balm, no hallowed interlude
May penetrate the heart of one who sees
His heritage of sterile servitude
Black with the breath of many infamies.

And so good-night, for all the birds are still
As the East darkens, and the West is grey.
And if my lute has spoken well or ill,
It matters not—we sing but as we may.
Plaintive the strain, perchance, for what am I ?
A toil-worn traveller striving up the height.
Others may win the laurel from on high ;
There is no crown for me ; and so good-night.

Moth Song

THE moth, forgetful of the beacon's breath,
Scourged of a deep desire that knows no name,
Flashes its wings and flings itself to death
For love of flame.

And thus the star of dawn—whose fervent ray
Is fraught with menace to the failing night—
Casts down its being to the crescent day
For love of light.

Sick of all dreams, I care not—no, not I—
If aught be well, if anything be true,
Save only this—so could I smile and die
For love of you.

Sunrise on the Sea

FAR in the dark a furtive flicker grows,
Widens and spreads, till all the East is grey,
And dawn—rose-red with presage of the day—
Loiters across the livid water-rows.

The sea-line brightens. Colour comes and goes
In cloud and foaming surge and flying spray,
While, thro' the glare that blurs the waves away,
The splendour of the sun-dawn overflows.

Now all the billows are ablaze. The sea
Revels in silver wonders and in gold,
And, tremulous with ecstasies untold,
Bends homage to her lord's ascendancy,
Captive to Fate's immutable decree,
But mutinous with glories manifold.

Faith

As a dead leaf from out a woodland dell,
Caught by the ruthless wind, is rudely whirled
Far down the dusty highways of the world,
So faith deserted me. How should I tell
Whose finger points to Heaven and whose to
Hell ?

Close round my heart the snake of doubt has
curled,

And all my early hopes to earth are hurled,
For I, long since, to faith have bade farewell.

Nor shall we meet again. Let men aver
This thing or that. Let wisdom speak or youth.
How should I know if snare it be or sooth ?
The mind of man is ever prone to err.
So deemed the jaded Roman arbiter
As moodily he muttered, "*What is truth ?*"

Daffodil Songs

THE meadow mould has sprung to gold,
The throstle calls his vagrant fellow,
On all the hills are daffodils,
And every field is flecked with yellow.

Pluck your daffodils at pleasure,
Spring is not for long ;
Though they muster beyond measure,
Fairer than a minted treasure,
Frailer than a song.

The garden's mien of tender green
Has presage of the early roses ;
The linnet's cry comes fleeting by
From where he haunts the orchard closes

DAFFODIL SONGS

The clover springs in careless rings ;
The blackbird sounds his whistle mellow ;
The whole earth thrills with daffodils,
And every field is flecked with yellow.

Pluck your daffodils at pleasure,
Spring is not for long ;
Though they muster beyond measure,
Fairer than a minted treasure,
Frailer than a song.

Song

WELL-WEDDED strains of harp and lute
Broider the hautboy's heavy drone,
Shrill-shaken fervour of the flute
And that impassioned undertone
Shed from the violin alone,
The pulsing passion of whose note
Vies with the rhapsodies that float
From out the throstle's honeyed throat.

And dulcimer, and cithern-string,
With all their like that art enrols ;
While—in the pulses wakening—
The softer murmur of citholes
Shall yield the secret of their souls ;
Faint as the whisper—half supprest—
Wherein the furtive fluttering breast
Of maidenhood is manifest.

Dora

WHERE an Eastern hamlet overlooks a valley,
Crowned with shifting clouds and lights that rise
and rally,

There it was we met. Ah me, how long ago!
Does our little stream still saunter musically
To the misty plains below?

On the tiny terrace to the mountain clinging
Many an hour I lingered, for the music ringing
From the little room that overhung the hill.
Even now—in dreams—my soul has heard thy
singing,
Tho' the voice—perchance—is still.

Turbulent my life, untouched of love or wonder,
Time tears down the rose and treads the roseleaf
under.

DORA

Yet— for me—the heart of passion has its seat
In a golden voice, that cleaves the void asunder,
Swells, and makes the silence sweet.

Such a voice was thine, a heritage from Heaven.
Though the bread of life be fraught with bitter
 leaven,

Yet there is a charm no sadness can alloy.
Where the one delight dispels the Sorrows seven,
There I touch the hem of joy.

Did I love you, Dora? Can a soul unshriven
Recreate the Eden that his life has riven?
God, of my misdeeds, will reckon first of all,
When the keys of Heaven to my hands were
 given,
That I laughed and let them fall.

A Journey's End

WHEN, surfeited with barren years,
I met your frank, untroubled face,
It was as when a sunbeam cleers
A tenantless and barren place.
Darkness ere many days are done
Will dispossess me of my sun,
For even now the parting nears,
Granting us but a moment's grace.

Once over, vainly shall I yearn
To recreate the scene anew—
The screw that beat beneath the stern,
The foam that boiled behind the screw,
The long hull, throbbing fore and aft
With tremors of the whirling shaft,
All these will vanish past return,
And, with them, all my heart—and you.

A JOURNEY'S END

Could I but die for you—no crown
Of happiness could prove so sweet.
Could I but cast existence down
To serve as carpet to your feet,
My life—for one who called me friend—
Would move exultant to its end,
My soul—as sense and spirit drown—
Might flutter to the mercy-seat.

The halo that my heart has found
I hardly care to understand.
Better to moulder underground
Than linger in some darkened land,
Where you may be by pity stirred
To offer me a kindly word ;
As when a master pats the hound
That lays its muzzle in his hand.

A JOURNEY'S END

The gods have laid before your feet
The fulness of a double dower :
Youth, pleasure, love and riches meet
About the beauty of a flower.
Nor can I claim that sullen fate
Has left me wholly desolate ;
No chance could make my life so sweet
As to have known you for an hour.

Therefore I would that I were deep
Down in the cold untroubled sea,
A moment's struggle ere I sleep,
Then—quiet to eternity.
Your friendship, dearest one and best,
Has filled me with desire of rest.
What fairer fate, if but you keep
A memory in your heart of me ?

A JOURNEY'S END

Time shortens. Wave responds to wave,
As stealthily the sea slips by.
Farewell, the gladness that you gave
Could scarce be meant for such as I.
That which you brought me, far above
All that I ever dreamt of—love—
I carry with me to the grave.
Fairest and best, good-bye ; good-bye.

Opal Song

As in a couchant panther's eyes
The beaded pupil's sullen spark
Flickers and falters, flames and dies,
Scintillant now as fire-flies,
Now darker than the dark ;

So, stealthily, a furtive gleam
Crawls in the opal's milky shell,
Weird as the features of a dream
Wherein supernal splendours seem
Shot thro' with fire from Hell.

A soul within the stone—who knows ?
Few human souls make fairer show ;
Passion about them gleams and glows
Effulgently, yet, ebbing, shows
The sullen stone below.

Hope

How should I speak of hope, whose budding
years

Drew breath between the barren breasts of hate,
And, growing daily more disconsolate,
Fathomed the sterile bitterness of tears ?
Weary of every god the world reveres,
With hungry eyes I watch the turn of fate,
Stirred to forecast some life less obdurate,
Severed from all our hundred hopes and fears.

No, more, I may not even dimly guess
Whence I have come or whither I shall go,
Save for the hope that from the hands of woe
I shall in some wise win to happiness ;
But this dim sense I can no more express
Than spring's first bud,—curled numb beneath
the snow.

Charity

THE Saviour, Whose surpassing charity
In His last death-pang cheered the dying thief,
Has blessed all those who, in our season brief,
Succour the victims of adversity.

From childhood to the throes of Calvary
His Godhead suffered every stab of grief.
“ Who to the least of these afford relief,”
Mark ye His words, “ ye do it unto Me.”

Ah, kindly heart, compassion's crown of light
Sits well upon thee. Though this lower land
Has founded all its fantasies on sand,
Thou hast the everlasting shore in sight ;
Thou shalt—amid its glories infinite—
Have thy reward at the Redeemer's hand.

Weariness

THE passion-bloom ; the regal garden rose
Or lily, swaying listless on the stem ;—
Who has not turned his heart to one of them,
Desire, or love, or purity's repose ?
Yet, though the bud that braves the waning snows
Excels the glamour of the graven gem,
Grant me the poppy's drowsy diadem,
Ever more purple as the leaves unclose.

Purple as blood. Ah ! would to God my heart
Were done with blood, and pulse, and life, and
 pain,
Hope, and regret, and ruth, and yearning vain ;
The hand of death shall motion them apart,
And, though all life grew exquisite, no art
Should lure my weary soul to live again.

A Madman's Monody

Sick of the season of garnered sheaf,
Desolate hollow and faded rose,
When Autumn's whisper is one with grief,
I cast my eyes where the ocean shows
Turbulent billows that, joining hands,
Trample and leap on the curving sands,
And the ragged edges of sunken reef
That the nether hollows of surf disclose.

Pitiless mother, whose fervent breast
Throbs to the infinite pulse of pride ;
Thy million wonders are manifest.
What of the sorrows and skulls they hide ?
For never a beam from the vault of blue
Can shiver the least of thy surges through,
Nor ever a power of earth's unrest
Can fathom the heart of thy heaving tide.

A MADMAN'S MONODY

Spent seafarers whose souls have sped
'Mid the bitter kisses of salt sea-spume ;
Skeleton argosies, spar and shred,
Prisoned and piled in the lambent gloom ;
As a hungry usurer, grey and old,
Grips in his bosom his hoarded gold,
Thy covetous surges shroud their dead
Till time lies slain by the trump of doom.

Though I be curs'd among men, though God,
Searing my brow with the brand of Cain,
Has reached of His dominant hate a rod
To trouble the cells of my turbid brain,
Yet in the heart of the lucent deep
A worn wayfarer might compass sleep
For His sake only Who walked dry-shod
Over the waves of a wilder main.

A MADMAN'S MONODY

Sleep is at best but a little boon
For a man to seek of the gods sublime.
They slumber—surely—whose bones are strewn
Under the billows that close and climb.
None of the eloquent joys I crave,
Only the calm of a quiet grave
In depths, forsaken of sun and moon,
Where a man might rest till the end of time.

Spotless raiment and diadem,
Jasper threshold and crystal flood,
Glimmer of jewel and flash of gem,
Graven blossom and wreathen bud
Whose golden traceries coil and curl
On portals carved of a single pearl.
Say—what portion have I in them
Whose hands are sullied in human blood?

A MADMAN'S MONODY

Debarred of heaven, to Him I call
Who feeds the horror of lower fire.
Passionless, pitiless Lord of all,
Who trod my spirit in blood and mire,
Cast me the grace of a quick release,
Strike out my life—as a king's caprice
Might strike the fetters from off a thrall,
Leaving him crowned of his heart's desire.

Yet, should the gates of the grave unbar,
Shall I have chosen my path aright?
Fated to wander in fields afar,
Quickened for ever, in death's despite,
Shall my soul, also, be undestroyed
Of Him Who cast to the lurid void
Lucifer, son of the Morning-Star,
The fire-crowned emulous lord of light?

A MADMAN'S MONODY

Far from the region of earth's misrule
The luminous hollow of ocean lies,
Her large embraces are bountiful,
Her lightest whisper is more than wise.
A little struggle for light and breath
And I lay my head in the lap of death,
While green sea-streamers, gentle and cool,
Shall kiss the fire from my fevered eyes.

No coil or clamour can reach me there,
And now, as my footsteps toward her tend,
The desolation of blank despair
Fails at the touch of my only friend.
It passes wholly, should once I be
Cradled and clasped of the kindly sea,
Wherein—untroubled of earth and air—
A wanderer wins to his journey's end.

Song

YOUR voice has power to raise my soul
From out the slough of baser sins.
Surcharged with comfort and control,
Its tone—compassionately clear—
Bids quiet fill the seat of fear.
So steals upon the wearied ear
The sob of far-off violins.

Your face has art to draw my heart
From out this vale of mire and tears
Unto a land that lies apart,
That knows not rancour nor regret,
Where sin may hide from sorrow yet,
And—for a little while—forget
The bitter void of barren years.

Sapphire Song

IN far-off fairyland mystic seas
Gleam in the light of a deathless May,
And the dim soul wakes
Of the elfin lakes
To a tremulous blue that the fitful breeze
In the fairy trees
Seems striving to wrest away.
From the elfin zone
By the breezes blown,
It hides in the heart of the sapphire stone.

Deep in the earth where the gnomes review
Sardius, jasper, and cinnabar,
In the great head-ring
Of the goblin king
There blazes a jewel whose lambent blue
Is the selfsame hue
As the lakes of the land afar.
And the lustre strown
On the goblin throne
Springs from the heart of the sapphire stone.

“ Unless ye be Converted, and
become as little Children.”

FROM the sting of disillusion,
With its whisper of dismay ;
From the hundred hidden curses
Of our life and its decrees ;
From the clamour and confusion
That discredits yesterday ;
God of over-subtle mercies
Dispossess my soul of these.

Led astray by self-reliance,
And impatient of control ;
Sick of discord and division,
I was easily enticed ;
And the eloquence of science
Has dispoiled me of my soul,
And the veil of erudition
Has obscured the face of Christ.

“ UNLESS YE BE CONVERTED ”

Wisdom's mysteries are fitter
For the man who finds them fair.
I was eager for her apple,
And it yielded to my grip,
But I found its savour bitter
As the waters of despair ;
And the fruit that ages dapple
Dust and ashes to the lips.

Kindly Christ, Thy speech was tender
To the wearied and the sad.
All my guiding stars have dwindled
And my altars lie defiled.
Hear my prayer, as I surrender
All my yearning, good or bad.
That my faith may be rekindled,
Make me as a little child.

Sonnet

HAS He not said, "Blessed are they that mourn,
For verily they shall be comforted"?

Who sees the death-white faces of the dead
Peer from the darkness, pallid and forlorn,
Must hold to this. Though joy be yet unborn,
Yea, though a stone be flung to us for bread,
His hand shall—one day—dry the tears we shed,
And rend the garments that our grief has worn.

Until that day His arm shall be our shield,
His will shall warder us from mortal scathe
Till dread has dwindled to a fitful wraith.
Is He not careful—as His word revealed—
To clothe the lustrous lilies of the field?
Content ye, then, oh! ye of little faith!

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