

**Song-Flame**

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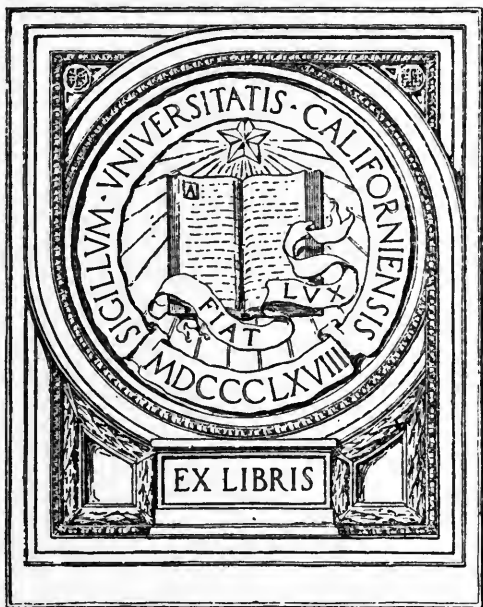
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## SONG-FLAME



# SONG-FLAME

*Poems*

*By*

AMY S. BRIDGMAN



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## Acknowledgment

Our thanks are due to the editors of *Life* and *The Youths Companion* for permission to reprint in this volume poems previously published in those magazines.

“Life burns us up like fire,  
And Song goes up in flame:”

— *John Hall Wheelock*





# DRAMATIC MOMENTS



## THE MEETING-PLACE

THE winds of the air were wrestling there,  
In the top of a tossing tree,  
And I cried "Delay!  
O spirits, stay!  
Tarry and talk with me!"

But, suddenly done, the winds were gone,  
And the tossing tree was still:  
They were driving a white cloud on and on,  
Over a green-topped hill;  
And I cried aloud,  
I cried to the cloud,  
As I had to the winds in the tree;  
"O cloud, delay!  
O white cloud, stay,  
Tarry and talk with me!"

But, suddenly gone, the cloud moved on,  
And the naked blue was there;

The winds were done, the cloud was gone,  
And all the hill lay bare;  
There was nought to see  
On bush or tree,  
And yet I swear,  
'Twas there, 'twas there,  
God tarried and talked with me!

## THE RIDING-MASTER

BEING once marooned, as it were, by chance,  
In a little provincial town of France,  
With the spirit of sport and leisure  
Strong in my veins,  
I said to myself, "How long I have wanted to  
    learn to ride,  
To really ride, not a half-hearted canter  
At which a little boy might banter,  
But a fearless seat  
On a long-limbed horse,  
Whose flying feet shall the flint-shards beat;  
Who needs neither whip nor spur,  
But who feels from the start, in his great  
    horse-heart,  
'I could leap to death for her!'"

There are such, you know, the "Witch Winnie"  
    kind;

And I said to myself,  
“That horse I’ll find,  
And a master to teach me;  
There’s a *pavillon* out at the edge of the town,  
This very day I’m going down!”

There I found both, — the man, and the horse,  
Perforce.

For I saw at a glance,  
That they must be together;  
Whether here or there,  
In ill luck or fair,  
That kind of a man and that kind of a horse  
Are always together,  
Perforce.

So I learned to ride;  
No longer my wish need be denied,  
Though, “My terms are high, Mademoiselle,”  
    he said,  
“*Je suis le grand artiste.*”

And when I read his name  
Forsooth,  
All Paris and London could vouch for the  
truth!

I never shall see that name again,  
Without the same keen stab of pain  
That pierced me then,  
For, after a fashion, a king of men  
He was, with a passion for art;  
A king, with a broken heart!

That's an absolute, literal, physical fact;  
Daily, hourly, he made fresh pact with Death,  
Holding him off, and barring the door,  
At the very utmost, for one year more.  
You see, when he first got into the race,  
He took and kept a tremendous pace;  
Success and money and fame were the stakes:  
And he won.

Then, some desperate breaks followed fast;  
Monte Carlo, a handsome wife,

A few, wild months of white-hot life,  
And the last, great plunge, sheer over the wall;  
A broken heart, and the loss of all.

And here he was, at the edge of the thing  
    once more,  
Once more, the king of the tan-bark ring,  
But, at times, with what ghastly face  
He set the pace!  
And I looked to see the long, lithe whip,  
Suddenly, out of a dead hand slip!

Oh, yes, I learned to ride,  
And a lot beside,  
As I sat my long-limbed horse!  
I saw remorse, oh, what remorse!  
What tragedy of heart and brain,  
In a man who could bridle and curb and rein  
Everything, but himself!  
And as I write, the same old pain  
That pierced me then,  
Strikes sharp again,



And the hot tears start,  
As I think of my master's mastered art;  
My king of men,  
And his broken heart!

## THE LIGHT-HOUSE KEEPER

“I HATE to wash! But it’s gotter be done!”  
He said,  
And his frank, young face glowed darkly red,  
With a smoldering fire that burned disclaim  
Of the task which put his strength to shame,  
And let him be seen by a stranger, there,  
With his hands in the suds.

“If ye care to go up,  
I can take ye, soon’s I git these out,”  
He offered, as if in doubt  
As to whether a city-woman would stay  
With a man who washed,  
While his wife was away.

“Thank you: I’d like to!  
May I turn the wringer?”

“Ef ye want ter! Ye see  
They came this morning to bring her,  
And it’s harder for her than for me.”

“Yes, there’d oughter be two, but there ain’t:  
I guess there’s no sense in makin’ complaint,  
But I haint been off this island, here,  
To stay a night, for more’n two year, —  
And then, my wife was sick in the hospital.”

‘Get good pay?’

“A little more’n a dollar a day:  
Fifty-seven by the month, with light and heat;  
Ye can barely make yer two ends meet.

‘Boarders?’ “No Miss, ye make me proud,  
But we can’t take nobody: t’aint allowed.  
It’s harder for her than for me, for a man  
*Has* to stand it: no woman can.

And she used to work in the city, ye know.  
There, thank ye! I’ll hang em out now — so.”

We hung out the clothes, then, climbing the  
tower,  
Scanned the wide, wide sky, where tempests  
lower,  
The foaming sea, and the cruel cliffs;  
Breathing the salt, and the spicy whiffs  
From the gay little garden, down below,  
Till, at last, heart-full, I turned to go.

\* \* \* \* \*

I added a bead to my rosary  
That night, in my safe serenity,  
As I prayed for the sailor on the sea,  
For the homeless, and lost, the weak, and the  
wild,  
The mourning mother, the motherless child:  
*“O God in Heaven, grant special grace  
To that lonely man, in that desolate place;  
He hates to wash, but there’s always one  
Who’s got to do what’s ‘gotta be done.’”*

## THE CHRISTENING

O LITTLE one,

I'm holding you, close-cuddled on my arm, —  
(What if I should forget the ritual  
In merely holding you!)

I am your father: you, my first-born:  
And your mother's dead.

O baby, can I remember anything but that!

'Sh! The droning voice begins, —  
(It's kind, though, baby, and she loved it:) —

*“Hath this child already been baptized, or  
no?”*

Why do they ask such silly things of you?  
They know the answer.  
It's the unanswerable we cry for,  
You and I:  
Reality concerns us.

*“For as much as all men are born in sin” —*

You weren't, my darling;  
Never mind the foolish words:

*“I beseech you to call upon God, the  
Father.”*

Oh, do I not call on Him,  
Through long nights and heartsick days!  
Who else can help us?

*“Grant this child that which by nature he  
cannot have.”*

It will be enough, Sweetheart,  
If you have half the sweetnesses your mother  
had.

The voice drones on —

*“And be made a living member of the  
same.”*

But she is dead!  
Why then should you, or I, be living?

Forgive the sudden fierceness, Dear,  
 ‘Sh! Don’t begin to cry.

He’s praying now: —

*“So give, unto us who ask  
 Let us who seek, find,  
 Open the gate unto us who knock.”*

O little one, all that’s for us!

We ask: we seek: we knock.

And now, keep very still,

While I put all my mind on promising for  
 you.

. . . . .

*“Now I have promised by God’s help” —*

I have:

But oh, my little one,

Will even that be potent without hers?

Who sponsored me?

Who, thus, for me, so fruitlessly renounced

“the desires of the flesh?”

I want her terribly!

And, little son, does any one of them  
Know fully what he means, I wonder, when he  
says, —

*“The world, the flesh, the devil?”*

Listen again:

*“May also be endued with heavenly virtues  
and everlastingly rewarded” —*

You will be, Love, if I can teach you as your  
mother would.

He wants your sweet name now: she chose it.

FELIX

*“And do sign him with the sign of the  
Cross.”*

And there I kiss you, Sweet, for her  
And for the agony she bore in bearing you.

He's saying now —

*“Manfully to fight under his banner  
And to continue Christ's faithful soldier.”*



Is that the rightful language of the Church?

Oh, shame, my baby, shame

To speak those words above your downy head!

Rather let all who pray, beseech that soldiers,

banners, fighting, — all,

Be banished from the earth

Before you come to manhood,

For you and I must knock where she may

open,

And she loved Peace.

So, little one,

I'm holding you close-cuddled in my arm;

He's done now:

Let us go!

## STUNNED

*Banana blossoms are purple.*

The "Transcript" said so,  
In a silly little line, near the bottom of the  
page:

It was wedged in, to fill up space, between  
"Submarine Warfare" and  
SPECIAL LUNCHEONS 50c

*Banana blossoms are purple.*

I laughed at its incongruity,  
Jeering at it aloud:

Then, eating up the whole page at once with  
my eyes,

As I always do,

I saw —

Your name!

Among the deaths!

*Banana blossoms are purple!*  
*And you are dead!*

\* \* \* \* \*

I'm rushing about under the stars —  
Anywhere — saying it over to myself:

What is it?

Oh, yes! Of course!

It's as old as the hills:

I knew it several hundred years ago!

*Banana blossoms are purple.*

## THE HALL BED-ROOM

THE woman above me 's sayin' her prayers;  
She's took off her shoes, and kneeled down by  
the bed.

I'd of thought she was drunk, a-stumblin' up  
stairs

And fumblin' her key in the lock,

That's what I'd of said,

'Ceptin' I saw her face oncet.

I wisht I could knock on the ceilin'

And tell her I'm here,

Feelin' so sick and so queer!

Maybe she'd know what to do:

She's been through it herself; I can tell:

Did she sell her soul and her body,

And go down to hell, like I did,

Or was she a wife

With a decent life and a decent man and a  
home?

\* \* \* \* \*

I hear her floppin' around on the floor,  
(She weighs a hundred-and-fifty or more!)  
An' every creak and squeak that she makes  
Sticks into me, like a hundred new aches,  
Sharp as pins, in a paper of pins.

My soul! It begins

To make me get faint and dizzy again,  
And then,

I'm back in the store, with the girls,  
And the pins, and the small-wares, and all:  
He's lookin' at me, and praisin' my curls,  
And I hear Mame call,

"Mr. Small! Mr. Small!"

And he comes over, near, —

\* \* \* \* \*

No, I'm not your dear!

And I'm not your sweetheart; you can't fool  
me!

I'm sick and I'm cold; don't you know?

Just look at the snow

Blowin' under the winder; the street lamp's  
a-flarin';

See how it makes  
 A pattern of flakes,  
 Like the lace hangin' up by my counter!  
 It takes two yards for a fichu:  
 Yes, Madam; one dollar.

\* \* \* \* \*

M-m-m did I holler?  
 Say, Nell, Jim's got a new mash!  
 Deliver or send? Ca-ash! Ca-ash!

\* \* \* \* \*

Oh, I wish she'd come!  
 P'raps she had a home:  
 And maybe she once had a daughter, like me;  
 Might be, Nell,  
 You can't never tell!  
 There, she's knocked a tumbler off of the  
     shelf, —  
 (Maybe she's gettin' the grip herself!)  
 How she thumps and bumps!  
 Her bed's right over my head:  
 I guess she's a Catholic!  
 M-m-m! but I'm sick!

'Spose she'd hear, if I should call?

Wisht I was anything at all:

Wonder what Jesus knows about me!

Ca-ash! Ca-ash! Ca-ash! I guess He don't  
trade in this store!

\* \* \* \* \*

I can't cry any more:

O Jim, Jim! Why wasn't it you and not him?

Then I wouldn't be here

So sick and so queer.

M-m-m, oh come! Oh, Somebody co---me!

## THE LIBERTY SILK

I SOLD it: I could have designed it:  
But you, — why, woman, to find it  
Was more than your wits could do!  
You mumbled, and tumbled, and fumbled,  
Threw down one,  
Picked up two,  
Till, at last, as the light was beginning to fail,  
And I desperately needed another sale,  
I spread it before you, —  
My beauty, my treasure;  
“Will this suit your pleasure?”  
I said, and grew red  
At the sacrilege: “*Pearls before swine!*”  
But your fat, red-faced husband was anxious  
to dine,  
And you, your fat self, were now in a hurry;  
And so, with my heart and my hands in a  
flurry,  
I measured and sold it: the whole piece was  
gone,



And my dream, my long hope of possession  
was done!

My lilacs, my springtime, my soft, shimmering  
green

That brought me sweet visions of things  
never seen

Through five, hungry years!

I choked back the tears

As you waddled away to the door.

I thought I should see it no more,

But to-night, coming down

Through the hot sickening town,

My heart cried aloud, "Ah, there, there you  
are!"

You were just stepping out of your great, gray  
car,

As fat, and as puffy, and stuffy as ever,

And your husband beside you, exactly as  
clever.

I'd have liked to tear it off from your back,

My silk you had spoiled!

My eyes turned black and burned with rage,  
That you, in your hateful, middle age,  
Should ruin my silk, my blossoming spring,  
That whispered my hope and my amethyst  
ring!

That you should wear it and put it to death  
With a hideous purple, that took my breath!

Why, woman, you haven't enough of a soul  
To see the starry heavens roll!

Color and line

And rare design, —

What are they to your heart?

Why, you haven't a part

In the world of art;

While I, — I adore,

Though I work in a store!

And you, — there you are,

In your great gray car! —

I could have designed it,

But you couldn't find it!

THE FIRST QUARREL

How the wire buzzes and chirps and hums!  
 I seem to have been here for ages,  
 Yet no answer comes.

\* \* \* \* \*

(*"I'll ring them again!"*) Oh, ten times again,  
 And then, a hundred, a thousand!  
 Keep on ringing!

\* \* \* \* \*

Stop your singing, you wire!

I'm a live wire myself,  
 I'm a-fire, a-tingle, a-tremble with one great  
 desire of forgiveness.

\* \* \* \* \*

O Central, hello; Is this line out of order?

\* \* \* \* \*

I'm on the border of madness;  
 I can hear other voices,  
 Happy ones, too, all tangled with laughter.  
 That's not what I'm after;  
 It's my husband's forgiveness.

If they only knew  
That I'm breaking my heart, while they joke!

If it broke, and you found me here, dead,  
Would you know, Love, somehow, would you  
know that I'd tried?

That I've cried all day?  
That my heart will burst?

I don't care now who was first  
Nor how 'twas begun.  
I'll be the one to say that I'm sorry.

\* \* \* \* \*

(*"They don't answer"*) Oh I cannot believe  
her!

(*"Hang up your receiver"*) No, no.  
Just try them again: they must be there.

Oh where, where, where are you, Jack?  
The room's growing black,  
And the world's going wrong!  
Why are they so long?

Oh, what's that? Hello! Yes, Hello!

Hello! Is that you Jack?

Oh, I've been on the rack;

So have you? —

I'm not through, I'm not through,

Don't cut us off!

\* \* \* \* \*

But he's coming back:

He's coming home! O Jack, Jack,

Never again such a day!

Such long-drawn pain,

Such agony: even over the wire

It seemed to be hours!

\* \* \* \* \*

Why, Gracious Powers!

It isn't hours at all;

As I'm alive, its now only five!

Six minutes ago, I gave the first call!

## THE POST OFFICE

It is a whirlpool; a quicksand, waiting to swallow me!

I have slipped shyly in to this great bustling place,

To post the first letter I have ever written to a man, —

(To a lover, I mean, for one does not count Brothers, or father, when one is young,

And a woman; —

One does not count them *men!*)

And I am afraid!

I was afraid before, — afraid to trust it out of my hands,

Afraid to put it into the lamp-post box;

I must even buy the stamp for it, myself,

With my own hands;

And now I am afraid to go to the window and ask for it.

If the letter goes, I can never be any more  
What I have been.

The written words, "*I love you,*" black and  
white,

Are there;

And the whirlpool is waiting to swallow me.

Tons of mail go through this door,

Mine will lie there among it,

Part of it:

Letters from wives; letters from other men's  
wives,

Letters from mothers to sons,

From sons to mothers;

Joys, crimes, griefs, mysteries; —

And, if I post mine, I shall be part of it,

I shall be no longer a girl,

Care-free!

I am being drawn into the waves:

I am afraid!

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Give me one two-cent stamp, please."*

## LUIGI AND BIANCA

## I

Do you remember, Love, that old clock-tower  
In Italy, whose gray, benignant face, —  
(In early days Time took such lazy pace!)  
Bore but one hand, to mark the passing hour?  
Enough: why should Bianca, in her bower,  
The single moments count? Her knotted lace  
Grew slowly, and the day must give her space  
For dreams of Luigi, while she wove her  
dower.

Not less a prodigal, Dear Heart, am I  
When you return! The happy moments fly:  
Well, let them fly! Luxurious is our store:  
We may be lavish, since we still have more!  
Why measure moments? Are you not to stay  
And bask with me, the whole, long, spendthrift  
day?



## II

BUT, when the creeping finger warns, "*At most  
One hour, one hour, before the day's eclipse!*"

When, wordless, waiting, while the low sun  
dips,

We closer lean, — my lace-frilled wrist, light-  
crossed

On yours, so brown, my other arm uptossed  
Warm, soft, and bare, to meet your finger-tips,  
Caressing some loosed lock that your dear lips  
Have fanned astray, — then, let there not be  
lost

One moment, tho' 'twere in that lovers'-land  
Where clock-towers bear but one slow-mov-  
ing hand!

Time's atoms, then, are gleaming diamond  
dust,

Each mote so precious that we may not trust  
Even honest men to enter, when we know  
That Night, arch-robber, comes, and you must  
go!

## JUDAS

Matt. 27 : 4

## I

*“And what is that to us? See thou to that.”*

O wretched Judas, sick with traitor's fears,  
Thy very wretchedness moves me to tears.  
And I believe that even when they spat  
On Jesus, pressing hard the thorny plat  
About his brow, amid infuriate jeers,  
And thrust His lingering life with cruel  
spears,

'Twas grief for thee, most heavy on Him sat!

O terrible remorse, that woke too late!  
O merciless retort of poisoned hate!  
O stricken Judas-heart of sin and shame,  
I search the ages for the basic blame  
Of thy great crime, and this is plain to me:  
The Christ, Himself, shed His last tears for  
thee!

## II

WHY didst thou want the money? Who can  
say

What madman's fury sudden swayed thy  
heart?

Was it for Mary Magdalene? What part  
Had primal passions in thy black dooms-day?  
Couldst thou not leash them? Wert thou prey  
To some whirlwind emotion, sweeping chart  
And light and compass overboard, at start?  
Had no one trained thy youth to say its  
"Nay"?

O wretched Judas-heart, that broke in vain!  
I hear thee crying yet, in endless pain,  
From out thy lost, immemorable grave,  
To treason-tempted souls, "*Yourselves yet*  
*save,*

*Assured that Power nor Pity can undo*  
*One moment's awful climax laid on you!"*

## TO A PALM-LEAF FAN

O you bare, bleached, rattling thing,  
Among frowzy old hymn-books;  
You, who serve now as a screen for simper-  
ing girls,  
And now, across the aisle, to brush the flies  
from some bald crown, —  
With what a sudden stab of pain,  
I see you as you used to be!  
As I have seen you, part of tropic majesty!  
Lush, green things, growing, rank on rank, —  
Ripple of sunlight,  
Plash of pool,  
Blue heaven beyond your own broad benedic-  
tions: —  
O you, you bleached, bare, rattling thing,  
How like a mirror, do you show unto my heart  
What is, and what once used to be!

## IN THE CONVENT

O HEART-BREAK of tormenting strings!  
O beating of close-pinioned wings!  
O Mary-mother, if so be you'd have me stay  
Within this convent cage, yet one more day,  
Drive forth that vagrant minstrel from the  
gate!

Drive him away, or else, let wait  
For me, Beelzebub! I cannot pray  
With a violin! Send him away!

I have been here full fifteen feverish days,  
And, for such shelter, do I truly praise the  
saints;

But, Mary, just because my whole soul faints  
And falls, at thought of marrying that old  
man,

Am I proved but a girl: and, though I'll  
promise all I can,

I cannot choke off quite so soon  
My memories, — a golden moon,  
A garden, — oh those compelling strings,  
How do they tear at my poor pinioned wings!

How could you do it, Mary? When all's said,  
Were you a half-brained and half-hearted  
maid?

How could you marry Joseph, if, like me,  
You were but just nineteen? Why, do you  
think, if he

Should hunt me day and night, I'd yield,  
So long as stick or stone remained to shield  
me from his arms?

Not death alarms me half so much  
As would his touch;

Why, he is old and stained and gray,  
And I am May and flame and dew!

O Mary, what were you?

Not, not *Arlésienne*! Oh no:

Pomegranates of Provence, I'm sure, are red-  
der far

Than those of Palestine; the Pont du Gard  
You never saw, a-gleam, pale gold, at set of  
sun;

You never watched the swift Rhone run be-  
neath its fringed banks;

You never walked in Avignon, between the  
ranks

Of oleanders, flowering tall;

You never leaned far over some old wall  
And heard the lark mount up his stair of  
song

From out green meadows, all along

The dry, white road to Nîmes;

You did not dream, as I,

Beneath the sky!

Petrarch loved Laura here

And in the sunshine, warm and clear,

From out a nunnery did she cry,

Even as I. She was eighteen;

O Mary of the Sacred Heart, there must have  
been

How many maids like me!  
Can you have charity for all?  
We cry, and do you hear our call?  
Then, if so be you'd have me stay  
And cast out sin, send forth that violin!  
O Holy Mary, send him away,  
Or I cannot pray!



EARTH, SEA, AND SKY



## PLANTAGENET

FOR whom was thy yellow signal set,  
Bonny, young boy Plantagenet?  
Was it plucked on the moor, with a maiden  
    fair,  
And did she wear its mate in her hair?  
Or was it a mark that, through disguise,  
Might make thee known to prouder eyes, —  
Some princess-girl, in a dungeon hid,  
From thee by a cruel ban forbid?  
Or did she fling it in scornful jest  
And didst thou, prouder than the rest,  
Catch up the flower and pin it fast,  
Vowing to scorn her, too, at last?

My fancy lingers and marvels yet  
Around thy name, — “Plantagenet” —  
Is it only because thou wert, like me,  
A gypsy-spirit, gay and free,

Who, wandering forth at thy boyish will,  
Over the blaze of gorse-lit hill  
Didst pull a sprig, in simple sign  
That youth and a great world-joy were thine?

Oh, kings in books are little to me,  
I hold them in short memory,  
Henry's and Louis' may seldom find  
Their proper sequence in my mind,  
But thy musical name I can never forget, —  
Geoffrey, the first Plantagenet!

## FLOWERS OF FIRE

SCAEVOLA thrust his hand in flame,  
Scaevola won a Roman's fame,  
Flashing afar to this distant day  
And luring me on, with undimmed ray;  
For bravery never belonged to me,  
Yet do I follow him, fearlessly.

See how the leaping tongues of red  
Here in my gay nasturtium bed,  
Vividly darting, high and higher,  
Flicker and burn, like flowers of fire!  
When the wind blows the leaves apart,  
Follow the glow of the coal's deep heart.  
Now it grows paler, and fades away  
To the luminous yellow of early day,  
Or ashes of roses, splashed with brown,  
Or a delicate saffron, dying down  
To a ghost of flame, and, then, in the dew,

It suddenly blazes forth anew,—  
A triumph of scarlet, a brilliant flare  
Of wavering light, in the summer air.

Riotous, reveling flowers of fire,  
Vividly darting high and higher,  
Scaevola dipped his hand in flame;  
Fearlessly, recklessly do I the same!

## PHLOX

IN the evening damps,  
The silvery lamps  
Of the pale, pink phlox are flaring;  
The glaring day's done  
And I sit alone,  
Still sharing my garden's stillness and dreams,  
Till the soft, dark night  
Seems alight with the lamp of the phlox.

My mother rocks me again to rest  
On her breast:  
(These were her flowers, these old-fashioned  
things!)

And she sings:  
She has chosen the song that I long to hear; —

O dear, dear Mother,  
I see you the while,  
Your gentle smile,

Your grave, sweet eyes  
Grown Heavenly-wise;  
And, with your face,  
How my Garden of Dreams  
Now suddenly seems  
A hallowed place,  
Where we sit, you and I,  
In the evening damps,  
While the moths flit by,  
And the silver lamps gleam, and gleam,  
Still glimmer, and gleam  
As I dream!



## THE CHILD AND THE PHLOX

O TALL, pink phlox, as you blow and sway,  
It seems as if you must know the way  
You set my heart a-stirring, too!  
You are so human and knowing;  
Stop blowing, stop blowing, a moment,  
And talk, from your leafy stalk!

Tell me,  
Can you see at night,  
With your little bright eyes?  
Are you wise about fairies and night-moths  
and bats?  
That's what I want to be:  
Tell me.

And more: —  
Can you look through the door where the sun  
goes down?

Where does the westering daylight go?  
I want to know,  
And, every day, you lean that way  
As if you were trying to see  
What lies just beyond that dark pine-tree;  
I try, too, and I can't,  
Can you?

O tall, pink phlox,  
(This one that knocks so soft on my curtain  
                  here,)  
Come near, —

When you blow,  
Do you know what the wind is,  
And that it can make a line like lightning on  
                  the lake  
That lies over there like a looking-glass?  
When the swallows pass.  
And the bees brush by,  
I cannot guess why they hurry so:  
Do you know? Confess.

O tall, pink phlox,  
A thousand things I want to ask, —  
Most of all;  
Could you tell how to make me well?  
I'm tired of lying here  
Trying, and nobody knowing!  
Stop blowing, phlox, stop blowing and talk  
From your leafy stalk!

### GIRL-DREAMS

THE faint "roo-roo" of the pigeon's coo  
Disturbed my dreams;  
Then morning broke  
And I awoke, —  
Oh, who was with me?  
Who?

It seems  
That in a garden space,  
A greening, glimmering, flowery place,

I almost saw the face  
Of him who is to come, —  
My Love, the blossom of my soul,  
Before whom I am dumb,  
While dizzying years unroll  
Their silvered scroll.

In that sweet garden place,  
Almost I saw his face;  
Almost he spoke,  
Then I awoke  
To nothing but the pigeon's coo!

How shall I know him now?  
Who was it? Who?

## WAYFARERS

OUR roads forked there,  
Where the headland curves and swerves like  
    a scimitar  
Out to the bay:  
Our roads forked there,  
Though the foot can find  
But one highway.

The sweet of the fern, I can never forget,  
Nor the burning white sand, the wild tang of  
    the air;  
Bitter heart; salt sea, —  
Oh, I cannot forget,  
For our roads forked there!

## REGRET

We built a house together once,  
You, Love, and I:  
Our wall, a tattered cedar-branch;  
Our roof  
The sky.

The wide, green grass was all our floor,  
A brodered tapestry;  
Blue sea tapped gaily at our door,  
The birds and bees brushed by:  
You were the King,  
I was the Queen,  
Joy knew not how to sigh, —  
Oh, why did we tear the dear house down?  
Why, Love, why?

## ILLIMITABLE

WHEN the fog shuts down,  
I like to play  
That my low peaks, a mile away,  
Are the Alps, with snowy crown.

The track of the sheep,  
Worn brown and bare,  
That winds and loses itself up there,  
Is the path where the chamois leap.

That green pine-branch  
Is a fir-tree tall,  
I can almost hear the waterfall  
And the roar of an avalanche.

When the fog shuts down  
You cannot see, —  
Why not pretend that Chamouni  
Lies just beyond our town?

## WILD POPPIES

KEEN little needles prick me,  
When I see poppies burning in the wheat,  
Scarlet, like coals whose flames break forth  
And leap and run exultant.  
Is it their pure brilliancy of color that so  
    quickens me,  
Or do they suggest wordless intensities,  
Passionate revolutions, vivid and far-reaching,  
Even as Paris sets one's nerves a-tingle?

## ALONE

THE sea is a gray-green glass,  
    With a flutter of white at the edge;  
The day, a forgotten rose,  
    Lying, rust-red, on the ledge;  
Gulls creak, as they dip to the sinuous sands,  
A bell booms, hollow and wide;  
O Love, this was our Paradise,  
But, yesterday, you died!



## INEFFABLE

THE wonder of a crested wave;  
The secret of a cloud;  
Who knows, who knows?  
And who can speak his thought of them  
aloud?

## THE SEA AIR

IT holds me, and folds me, and wraps me  
about,  
As a baby is lulled on the breast,  
And the rush and roar of the waves on the  
shore,  
Are a cradle-song of rest.

It lures me, and cures me, and closes my  
ears  
To clamorous crying within,  
And the tears, and the fears, and the hurrying  
years,  
I forget when the tide comes in.

## GRAY DAY

OVER gray sea, grayer wings;  
Colder heart, under cold sky;  
We are forsaken things,  
You, wide-winged gulls, you and I.

Mournfully wheel in your flight;  
Gray day grows grayer night,  
Mournfully cry, gray gulls, cry, cry;  
We are alone, you and I!

## LATE SUMMER

THE shallow pools in the bright beach-grass  
Are bluer than the sky:  
The tide is slowly slipping out,  
And the warm, brown marshes lie,  
All bare and open-bosomed,  
Beneath the burning sun:  
How wide and white that gull's wings are,  
That solitary one,  
Slow-circling 'gainst the dark-rimmed cloud,  
That leans along the north!  
How spicy-sweet the clethra smells,  
When goes the blithe breeze forth  
To stir the heavy golden-rod,  
Where myriad bronze wings rest!  
Ah, Summer's robes lie richly yet,  
On her faint-throbbing breast!

## IN EARLY MAY

A POIGNANCY of pleasure, like to pain,  
Half lights, half overshadows heart and brain,  
On shining days like this, when all the earth  
Is like a living jewel, cut by Mirth,  
And, yet, so subtly undercut by Death,  
That one, in contemplation, holds his breath,  
With fingered lip, half-tremblingly, afraid  
To say, which casts the light, and which the  
shade.

Bees hum, where cherry-blooms are white,  
and song  
Of birds, (each note a drop of joy, too long  
Pent up) is bubbling through the orchard  
trees,  
While, over dark plowed fields, the little  
breeze  
Blows tenderly a tawny purplish haze  
That drifts and settles light, on woodsy  
ways.

These madly lilting songs, this rapturous air,  
Hold such a magic power to stifle care;  
Things possible seem now so near, so clear,  
And dearest things are all so doubly dear, —  
Why, in such ecstasy, should filmy pain, —  
Haunting, vague, un-named, dim heart and  
brain?

Ah, in the question lies its own reply!  
Because, when all's summed up, I know that I  
Am I, and only that; not where I go,  
Nor whence my spirit came; because *to know*  
Is what Eve died for, and her children yet  
Forever lack: because the bounds are set,  
And firmly fastened by so frail a breath,  
And only God knows all of Life and Death;  
For this does poignant pleasure, like to pain,  
Half light, half overshadow heart and brain,  
On shining days like this, when all the earth  
Is like a glowing jewel, cut by Mirth;  
For this, is one half-tremblingly afraid  
To say what casts the light, and what the  
shade.

## THE CELLAR-HOLE

RANK old lilac-bushes with mouldy, gray-green  
leaves,  
Crowd and jostle around your brim;  
Mouldy gray-green leaves,  
Heart-based and narrow-tipped,  
Flutter, peep, and peer over the edge,  
Whispering to each other.

I know what they are talking about!  
Love-makings, and weddings that went on in  
the House;  
Bride's dresses, of white satin, and stiff!  
Oh, stiff enough to stand alone!  
How beautiful the bride's maids looked!  
There was a jealous lover, too;

And there were little delicate baby-things,  
Pale-blue embroideries, and gauzy bonnets, —  
I know those gossiping leaves!

But, deep down in your ragged hollow,  
Lie bits of plaster, sticks and stones,  
Broken latches, and rusty nails;  
They are all dumb, but they touch each other  
In mute commiseration and remembrance,  
Thinking of coffins, catastrophes and heavy  
    hearts,  
While the rank old lilac-bushes peer over your  
    brim,  
Whispering together.

## THE FIRST ROBIN

O ROBIN, robin, yellow-bill,  
From out the windy tree  
To me you call, — so blithe and gay, — to me!  
Across how many a snow-blown hill,  
Through meadows, bleak and frozen, still,  
You've come, my longing heart to thrill,  
With your glad prophecy!

O robin, robin, preen your coat,  
Burnish your rusty wing,  
And sing, my lusty, trusty prophet, sing!  
Each rollicking roulade, by rote;  
Shake out your message, note by note,  
From out your merry, minstrel throat,  
“ ’Tis Spring! Cheer up! ’Tis Spring!”



## BIRDS OF THE HEART

THE soft, gray stillness of the early dawn, —  
(When trees blur, mistily, against the sky,  
When, — smokeless, — drowsy chimneys wait,  
    un-warmed,  
And fogs go drifting by  
To drop again, reluctant, on the hollowing  
    hills,  
On silent mills,  
And homes of sleeping men,) —  
Seems, that soft, gray stillness seems  
A covert for all wingéd fancies rare,  
The brooding-place of dreams,  
The nest of timid hopes, a-twittering there, —  
Birds of the heart!

Alarmed by noisy day,  
They fly away!

## FROM MY WINDOW

TELL me, long ailanthus leaves,  
(Where the busy sunbeam weaves,) —  
What it is, you would be saying, —  
Waving, beckoning, leaning, swaying, —  
Dreamy, rhythmic, luring dancers;  
Comrades, brothers, necromancers,  
What enchantment would you do?  
What in me belongs to you?  
Tell me, tell me, flickering leaves,  
(When the sighing night-wind grieves),  
Tapping on my window-pane,  
Gleaming through lamplight and rain,  
Waving, beckoning, leaning, swaying, —  
Tell me what you would be saying;  
I am listening, I am here,  
Lean more closely, wave more near,  
All my soul your soul receives,  
Tell me, long ailanthus leaves.

## THE PHARISEE

AM I a Pharisee?

Well, maybe so:

At any rate, I know that unto Thee

I do give thanks,

Unblushingly,

That I am "not as other men;"

At least as some! Not in the ranks

Of those who never knew

Black maple buds from red

Or spruce from yew!

Black maple buds! again

The charm is said;

The words a magic hold:

An ebon candelabrum, tipped with gold,

I see against a pale-blue sky:

My heart forgets to beat

As on "that inward eye"

The vision comes! Ah, Sweet,  
The thought of them  
Brings back Jerusalem,  
And that rich mosque, where you and I  
Bowed to the Orient's mystery!

But, on red maple tops  
The Queen of Spring her coral necklace drops,  
And pale gray satin branches, lightly stirred  
By lilting robin, blithe bluebird  
And hosts of clamoring grackles, on the wing,  
Are her pavilioning.

What would it be to me  
Not to know the tulip-tree?  
The tupelo with its twinkling leaves?  
The aspen that grieves, still grieves  
For her far-off shame  
That Christ the Good in anguish came  
Dragging His cross of her wood?

Paulownia rare!  
How could I not care

To know that she  
Means royalty, —  
Russian princess of beauty and fame, —  
And that the tree from Japan came?  
Sycamore, hobble-bush, Judas-tree,  
All of these are dear to me,  
The gingko, the cedar, the Norway pines,  
The Grecian elm, with its wreathing vines,  
Little pink-fingered oaks and fragrant bay,  
Thorned holly, — Ah, why delay  
To name them further? I confess  
I'm nothing more nor less  
Than a Pharisee,  
For I could not be  
Content, un-shamed, to pass them by,  
Un-named.

Shrive me, O God, for I own that I  
Am found with these,  
The Pharisees!

## A MEMORY

MAGNOLIAS lift great cups of creamy white,—  
Brim-full of summer,—high in shining leaves,  
Whose very tipmost, topmost crown receives  
An arrowy shaft of light :

Jessamine below, and shadowy, perfumed  
lanes,

Where nodding oleanders, faintly pink,  
Blush into deeper stains,

As ragged, reckless briars, link by link,  
Bind fast the wild, lithe stems, with clasping  
chains.

White, single roses fleck the glistening hedge,—  
Gold-hearts with many a thorn,—

Two rice-birds flirt and flutter in green sedge,  
A floating cloud-scarf wraps the new moon's  
horn,

While, down the clayey road,

A negress old and bent, with heavy load,  
Comes hobbling, hobbling slow. The draw-  
bridge swings,  
And lazily a boat slips through; the rings  
Of ruddy silver widen round her wake,  
Until they slowly make  
A swishing murmur at the water's rim.  
There, Alligator, long, and black, and slim,—  
Just shows  
His ugly nose.

Pelicans call;

Close by the bayou's brim,  
One passion-flower twines, purple; over all,  
A sudden glow; ripples of violet light,  
Then, — Darkness! swift as dropping petals  
fall!

Louisiana night!

## THE ROADSIDE SYMPHONY

IF tones were colors, and this roadside stretch  
Could all be writ in chords, what were its key?  
What would its tempo and its rhythm be?  
Would some flute play the part of this pink  
vetch?

The 'cello, surely, were this cedar tree:  
The sumachs, trumpets; harps, to thrill you  
through,

These waving asters, or this gentian blue:  
Wild sunflowers tall, the fine high tracery  
Of violins; the golden rod, oboes,  
The thistle, too! But ruddy hips of rose  
And ferns and grasses,—ah, I must confess,  
How best it all were voiced, I cannot guess!  
But, if tone could be color, what a rare  
Symphonic poem were this roadside fair!



## A MODULATION

To Mr. Emil Liebling after Playing his  
"Momento Appassionato"

TRANSLUCENT, trembling, exquisitely fair,  
Mysterious and frail,—like Earth-freed things,  
First-poised, in Paradise, on new-found wings,—  
The strange night-blooming cactus, white and  
rare,

With penetrating perfume, wakens there  
From its charmed sleep. That bristling stem  
now flings

How proudly upward, yet how freely brings  
Its fleeting tribute to the tranquil air!

So, from the somber stalk of minor keys  
Have blossomed these white-petaled harmon-  
ies,

This palpitant corolla, too soon gone,

Through sequent grays and greens of sadder  
tone,

At last to silence, while the pulsing breeze

Still faintly throbs with fragrant memories.

## BIND-WEED

CONVOLVULUS a-closing! — so, with purple edge,  
Slowly, slowly, withers Day, along the rocky  
ledge;

Now all the world's a-fading! corolla shuts at  
last, —

Love, so, too, within my heart, I hold you fast!

## CONTENTMENT

Crackle fresh and faintly,

Coal upon the hearth!

Blow, biting wind,

About the window-pane!

Housed are we in cozy nook,

My Lois reads from leathern book

And summer blooms again!

## THE WIND-PRIEST

I hear the wind in the forest,  
Walking among the trees,  
Murmuring benedictions,  
Chanting elegies.

Oh, give me absolution,  
Brother Wind, shrive me clean!  
Listen to my confession  
Here in your temple green!

Too long have my feet been lagging,  
Heavy with city cares;  
Grant me full forgiveness,  
Penitent are my prayers!  
Too long have mine ears been deadened,  
Deaf to your hymning choirs;  
Brother Wind, breathe, and quicken  
Smoldering altar-fires!

Blow, blow thro' my soul in the forest,  
Sweep away "*what has been!*"  
Give to me absolution,  
Brother Wind, shrive me clean!



HERE AND THERE





## AT BRAS D'OR

Cape Breton fogs are blowing off  
Along Cape Breton shore;  
The wild bee-balm is reddening,  
And beautiful Bras d'Or  
Was never so blue, so beautiful,  
As it is this windy day,  
With rolling fog, and scarlet flowers  
And a heart that is gypsy-gay.

Cape Breton Pines are mournful-dark  
On green Cape Breton hills;  
The little gray sail of the fishing boat  
Suddenly swells and fills  
As the white fog drifts, and lifts, and blows,  
And lifts again. It clears —  
And my heart cries loud; my eyes are wet  
With sudden gypsy tears!

## GONDOMA

Velasquez, hundreds of years ago,  
Painted a portrait of Gondoma — so,  
A Spanish mantle about him thrown,  
A Spanish face with high cheek-bone  
And a pair of eyes, like an eagle's — keen,  
Alive, compelling. I have seen  
It but once, for a moment, or so it seemed,  
While mid the buzzing thron'g I dreamed  
A moment, only, of Spain, — and then,  
The click of a shilling, and England again.  
Yet it fixed, and will follow me all my days;  
Gondoma's face, with his eyes ablaze;  
A Spanish face, with a high cheek-bone,  
And a Spanish mantle around him thrown.  
Velasquez painted it, years ago, —  
As if one needed to ask, to know!

## IN DEVONSHIRE

Oh purple foxgloves, spired tall  
In Devon's deep, green lanes!  
Oh honeysuckles, white and gold,  
All fresh with Devon's rains,  
Ring out your bells, fling forth your fringe,  
Make holiday with me!  
The clacking rooks fly down the combe  
The gulls sweep out to sea,  
Clovelly's darling quaintness gleams  
Beyond the gnarled beech tree;  
My heart exults in Devonshire,  
Make holiday with me!  
Fling forth, oh honeysuckle fringe,  
Ring, foxgloves, spired tall;  
Across the downs of Devonshire  
The romping breezes call!

## AT BIRD ROCK, NORWAY

So dwelt a million, wingéd things within my  
heart;  
Shy loves and hopes, tender, confident thoughts  
of peace and home,  
Dear prophecies and visions.

When the whizzing, red terror of the rocket  
And the reverberation of the guns have died  
away,  
They will find their holes again,  
These poor frightened birds.  
But my nesting-places will remain vacant,  
Desolate,  
The cold, gray sea beating far below.

## PAESTUM

SUBLIME, alone, intransitive,  
Thy columns stand,  
The grandeur of old solitudes  
On either hand:

The same gray crags are looking down;  
The same blue sea,  
Beyond Salerno's curving shore,  
Spreads smilingly—

As blue as when the temple priests,  
With solemn strain  
And surge of great processional,  
Led forth their train.

To-day, the curled acanthus leaves  
Are springing free  
To add to mellowing yellow stone,  
Rich drapery;

And lithe green lizards sun themselves  
While they and I,  
In silence view the stately years,  
Long since swept by.

The same outreaching human heart  
Throbs now as then,  
The same divine Invisible  
Allures all men ;

Unchanged, the great gray crags look down :  
Unchanged, the sea :  
Paestum ! thy very vanished soul  
Lives on in me !

## IN GUERNSEY

WHEN death had come, I rose and ran away :  
I could not bear it, Love, to see  
The home, where you and I had dwelt  
So happily,

All desolate. I rose and ran away,  
And with the year am I returned.  
I could not brook another day,  
Nor have I learned

In any place, to live without you. Here,  
Where we did live, I come again ;  
The sea as blue, the crags as wild  
As they were then.

Our island is as green and fair, as gay  
Our carpeting of tangled flowers, —  
Here toils the path along the cliff  
Which we made ours :

The sea birds cry and quarrel, as of old,  
The waves, in booming caverns, roar,  
Then moan and sob, as if they knew  
That you no more

May come, no more may clamber up  
Along the rock, with laughing zest,—  
Behind this boulder's weathered brow  
We used to rest

In storms, and from this oaken bench,  
Rude-fashioned, used to watch the sun,  
Through cloudy curtains, dropping down the  
west

When storms were done:—

And now I reach the house: I lift the latch,—  
Oh Love, your roses bind it fast!  
Not even I, not even I,  
Who come at last,

May fare within. I try the farther door  
And here, here too, my Love, mine own,



With knotted coil, the passion flower  
So firm has grown,

That one must cut its tendril-clasp and hew  
An entrance. Oh, you jealous Rose  
And you, you watchful Passion-flower,  
Our lover knows,

I think, how well you have kept house for us!  
He knows that I have come again  
And that our arms are reaching out  
To him, as then.

## AT THE GRIMSEL HOSPICE

HERE should one have Heart's Dearest, hand in  
hand;

One cannot bear it all alone, this land  
Of terrible bare crags, of icy peaks  
And rushing water that forever seeks  
Its far-off level. Why, I tell you, Dear,  
The very rocks, themselves, daren't face God  
here,

But hide 'neath clinging lichens, where they  
may,

While tiny, tender flowers run all the way  
To meet the eternal glaciers, so to show  
How yet the earth-heart throbs beneath the  
snow.

Oh, then, Beloved, do I need you here,  
In these grim, deadly fastnesses of fear,  
To make with human kiss, forever mine,  
A warm security of Love divine.

## HOMESICKNESS

O OREGON breeze, blowing out of the West,  
How far, how far have you come,  
Over the fir-topped mountain crest,  
Across the curling ocean foam,  
Away and beyond where the strange birds nest,  
And the jungle tigers roam,  
From the mystical Orient, land of the Blest,  
To our tiny, trustful home.  
How far, how far have you come!

O Oregon breeze, blowing out of the West,  
How far, how far must you go  
Ere you come to the garden that I love best,  
Deep in New England snow!  
Its roses are meagre, 'twere well confessed,  
Narcissus is tardy and tarnished, I know:  
But oh, to be there, with my heart at rest  
Where the Eastern breezes blow,—  
Alas, how far to go!

## ASSISI

CONTEMPLATIVE, Assisi sits, all gray  
And sober, while the purple twilight stains  
To iridescence, Umbria's green plains;  
The night, a crystal orb, wherein to weigh  
Her past and present, in whose depths she may  
Gaze sibylline. The rush of pigmy trains  
Disturbs her not, for unto her remains  
The peace of Fra Francesco. It will stay:  
She reads her own assurance in his name  
And folds her brooding wings about his fame.

Her wide-horned plodding oxen homeward go,  
More faint, and fainter yet, her vineyards  
show;

Gray olive leaves grow black, the swallow flits:  
Contemplative and calm, Assisi sits.

## A SONG OF CAPRI

DEAR little goat-isle of Timberio,  
How long ago, oh long ago,  
Thy Roman lived his lordly day,  
With pomp and show!

Thy lover true, perhaps, in spite of sin,  
He may have been, he may have been,  
Thy beauty's slave, although his heart  
Was black within.

Twelve palaces he built for love of thee,  
(All splendidly, right splendidly,  
Among the rocky fastnesses  
Above the sea.

And yet, thine emperor loved thee not more  
    well  
(Nor felt thy spell, thy magic spell)  
Than they who dance upon his cliff  
The tarantelle:

Or I, an alien, glad where'er I go,  
For well I know, full well I know  
That I am happier here than he,  
Timberio!

Gold-blossoming broom is wealth enough for  
me,  
O dear Capri, O fair Capri,  
The purple of thy towering cliffs  
Due majesty;

Thy rosy oleanders, dark-topped pines  
And all thy vines, thy myriad vines,  
That yield among thy yellow fruits  
Their clear-red wines,

Thy singing birds, thy children gay and free,  
Do make of thee, indeed of thee,  
A pleasure ground, which I enjoy  
Imperially.

And in some far-off land where I may go,  
(We may not know, we cannot know,)

I may perhaps Timberio find  
And tell him so!

“*Addio!*” then, my path now turns from thee,  
Regretfully, regretfully,  
“*Addio!*” “*Bella!*” once again,  
“*Bella Capri!*”

## LAFFREY

THE dust of all the decades since thy death-  
less day

Lies deep on thee, O shabby little street!

Thy ragged, unkempt walls are squalid, poor  
and gray,

And,-all-uncaring,-countless, casual feet

Have trampled where he trod, — thine Eagle-  
Emperor! Still,

A sacred Something sits with brooding wings  
Above the spot, and, vibrant, beating back  
from hill

To purple hill, an echoing voice still rings;

“*Voilà!*” Uncaged, he holds the moment once  
again

In talon-grasp, almost Jehovah's place



Usurps! Supreme, once more, this soaring  
man of men

With great "*I am*" thrills through the narrow  
space.

Laffrey! My fancy paints no other hour so  
great

In all his hurtling flight. One royal tone:  
The soldiers swerve aside: Grenoble unbars  
her gate!

Immortal, — thy, Napoleon!

## "LES PENSÉES" DANS LES ALPES

I FOUND pale yellow violets and forget-me-  
nots to-day,

Far up the winding Furka pass, where, ter-  
rible and gray,

The great rocks crushed my soul: thy spirit  
blossoms there

They seemed, so exquisitely delicate and fair,  
And I was glad that thou cam'st thus to me,  
too much alone.

But yet, Beloved, surely thou and God must  
both have known

That even without the flowers, quick memories  
of thee would glow

And burn within me, were I freezing in the  
Alpine snow!

## THE ROUND OF THE EARTH

THE round of the earth, O God,  
The round of the earth!  
How does it look to Thee?  
The sordid, murky port,  
With crowding masts and funnels,  
And swarming multitudes of men;

Hillsides, where little rabbits  
    run along the road,  
And lavish rhododendrons drop  
    their pale corollas  
On the shadowed grass, in  
    unmolested drifts;  
Druid stone, and frowning prison wall,  
And all the million small  
    degrees of life between,

From North to South,  
From East to West, —  
The round of the earth,  
How does it look to Thee?

Seen on the level,  
When Love turns to Loss,  
And Peace to Pain,  
And Life to Death,  
And, back again,  
Death turns to Life,  
And Pain to Peace,  
The line sometimes  
    blurs confusedly,  
Breaks off, —  
Is it a firm-drawn circle, God?  
How does it look to Thee? —  
The round of the earth?

WAR, 1914-1918



## INTRIGUE

O you who "think in continents," who plan  
and plot in years,

What hell-fires have you kindled, what devil's  
brood of fears

And horrors have you loosed? To what un-  
holy league

Have you forsworn and sold your souls, you  
masters of intrigue?

God in His wrath shall smite you; how will  
you reckon then

Your conquests and ambitions, you guilty,  
lustful men?

You are cursed with orphan's crying, you are  
damned with widow's tears

O you who "think in continents," who plan  
and plot in years!

## BRENNER:\* A PORTRAIT

1914

THIS sculptor, whom the "Quarter" knew  
As a gentle soul,  
Splendidly true to his friends  
And his own ideal,  
With a very real view of art  
And its ends; —  
This artist, who, even in early days,  
Had won big praise  
From Rodin, and who knew in himself,  
That the praise was due, —  
This man, I say,  
Not fit for the field (something wrong with  
the heart,)  
Having been from the start  
Determined to yield all he had to France,

\* Michael Brenner is a younger brother of Victor Brenner, distinguished to the ordinary American for the "Lincoln penny." The two brothers are far apart in their artistic tenets, but the younger man's place is perhaps well indicated in the saying of a certain notable critic — "The only American sculptor of power in Paris at present is a Lithuanian."



Took his only chance; —  
Nine months at the line  
With the ambulance.

I wish you could see him now!  
Deep-furrowed brow,  
Hair at the temples gone snow-white,  
Turned in a night  
With the agonized fright  
Of an accident,  
When he seemed to feel  
His steering wheel  
Suddenly wrenched from his hand  
By the shock and block of an automobile  
Tearing across the sand.  
No fault of his, but of course his load  
Was overturned in the ruddy road.

He speaks as if shrieks  
Still rang in his ear, —  
So soft and low,  
If you did not know  
You could scarcely hear.

His eyes are caves where horror dwells,  
His cheeks are seamed with pain,  
And something about the whole man tells  
Of a soul, gone forth, to come again  
No more:

I knew him before  
In the "Quarter" years ago.  
But now, do you know  
Here in New York  
The sight of his face  
Follows my heart from place to place  
And I'll almost rejoice when I know he's gone  
(For his brief furlough will soon be done;)  
Back where his heart is, back to France  
At the firing-line, with the Ambulance!

TO A KING-BUZZARD, CAGED

1915

BIRD of the battle-field, portentous, grim;  
Your black cowl down upon your evil eyes and  
cruel yellow beak,  
What are you pondering there,  
Your feet firm-planted on your piece of bloody  
meat?

You who know more than we do,  
In your ghastly dignity, —  
Has some rumor of the Marne reached your  
covert ears?  
Do you dream of the Balkans and Gallipoli?

Bird of the battle-field, in seeing you,  
How does one yet more hotly long for Peace!

## LA CHIMÈRE DE NOTRE DAME

“*Le Penseur Maudit;*” “*La Chimère,*”

You know him, — the Gargoyle

The Prince among Horrors, who, silent, stone-  
carven,

Has looked down on Paris, for ages:

Yet, twice, has he spoken,

And twice, through the murk and the mist,

Have I captured his blasphemous mouthings;

Twice have I heard and translated his base  
maledictions:

Listen!

## I

FLOOD-TIME: 1910

EVIL am I, and I love visitations of evil!

Here from my vantage-point high, from my  
parapet leaning,

View I Parisians, and Paris, all flooded and  
frightened;

Parisians a-praying! Frivolity crying "De-  
liver!"

Ha! how I revel, I raven and revel above  
them!

Evil am I, and I love visitations of evil!  
Frenzy and famine, and flames of the Red  
Revolution

Gladdened me; grinning, I gloated on guil-  
lotined hundreds;

Long have I waited and watched on my  
wind-beaten elbows,

Now am I satisfied: swiftly, the swirling  
Seine swallows;

Bridges and steeples are tottering: Notre  
Dame below me;

Ha! how I revel, I raven and revel to feel it!

'*Time the Transmuter!*' He little has  
touched or changed me!

Evil I am, and I love visitations of evil!

## II

WAR-TIME, 1915

HA, ha! I revel afresh, for Paris is pray-  
ing  
As never before! War is abroad, and  
slaughter  
And rapine. Soldiers march, and babies  
are starving,  
Women are breaking their hearts, and I  
gloat, and I grin,  
For evil am I, and I love visitations of evil!  
Rumors of Rheims and its German-wrought  
wreckage and ruin  
Gladden me: Why not Notre Dame where  
the widows weep daily?  
When the Zeppelins whirl in the murk and  
the mist, I exult,  
I wish I could loosen my arms and wave  
them aloft,  
Crying, 'Here is the way, and here am I,  
*con-frères!*

I am the gargoyle, the ravening lover of  
evil!

Traitor am I unto France and I swear that  
I care not

By whose reeking hand evil comes,—so  
only it come!

For Evil I am and I love visitations of evil!

## "OF MY TWO EYES"

1916

*"That I may be avenged of my two eyes!"*

O Samson Agonistes, you, so strong,

So sadly shorn of strength, your own great  
wrong

You did avenge! Your grievance found re-  
prise

In what tremendous ruin! But, to-day, arise  
So many moans from such an anguished  
throng;

Their cries of suffering like a mighty song  
Of tragic woe must mount beyond the skies!

Behold this army of the Armies' blind;

Once radiant youths, now set to grind,

Like you, in hopeless night, — behold, I say,

O Samson, and, if yet you live, go pray

That God, Himself, may righteous vengeance  
take,

And hurl down Dagon, shattered, for their  
sake!



## EASTER SUNDAY

1916

TO THE MEMORY OF M. PAUL SAVIGNY

THE chanting priest, the white-robed choir  
were nought;

Palms, lilies, incense, all, as well not there,  
For, looking up from briefly decorous prayer,  
I gasped, "*A map of Europe! Strange,*" I  
thought,

"*So, pulpit-hung!*" A flash: the gold-in-  
wrought,

Cross-broidered banner truly swung, till,  
where

Dim vision had astonished me, all fair  
The sacred emblem shone, and, shining,  
brought

A burning shame. "For what, for what," I  
cried,

"To-day, is Europe hanging crucified  
In bloody sweat? O Christ, must mankind see

In each two thousand years a Calvary?  
Must martyrs teach the mad world how to  
live?

Accused, what answer can we Christians give?"

## PORTENT

1917

MARCH winds beat and blow,  
And, just as if they, too, could know,  
My brave, green pines  
Brandish their arms  
In wild alarms, and frantic signs.

The breath of battle blows from far,  
To-morrow, we shall be at war!

*To-morrow we shall be at war!*

Ah, that is why,  
Against an angry, evening sky,  
That gaunt, old poplar wrings its hands;  
It understands; like me, it prays.

The breath of battle blows from far;  
To-morrow we shall be at war! At war!

## VIOLETS OF PICARDY

1917

O VIOLETS of Picardy,  
Again you wake, to war and woe,  
Beneath these sorrowing poplar trees,  
This gaunt and mournful row  
Of faintly glimmering April ghosts;  
Ghosts of a three-years pain:  
O violets, O violets,  
How can you bloom again?

Ashes have fed your folded flowers,  
Warm blood has stained their tender blue,  
And pleading eyes look up in ours,  
As we bend over you;  
Wide agony awaits you here,  
From heaven, the fires of hell will rain, —  
O violets of Picardy,  
How can you bloom again?

## “AND WOMEN MUST WEEP”

GRAY stocking, soon fashioned beneath my  
swift fingers,

As, ever more eager, my bright needles fly,  
You are finished now, but my sad thought lin-  
gers,

Tear-wet, I lay you by.

Where will you go, whose foot will you cover?  
What foe will he face, from what fury-swept  
hill?

My heart asks, gray stocking, asks over and  
over,

For my own boy's feet are still.

## ARISE

*“War is, will always be, a needful thing.”*

Some driveling idiot may, perhaps, say so,

But real, living, thinking men? Oh no!

Need war, when they have brawn and brain to  
bring

The “Deutschland” under seas; the skill to  
wing

The ambient air with whirring planes; to  
grow

Three blades of grass for one of old, and so,  
From wilful waste a sustenance to wring?

*Men can do what they want to do! Arise,*  
*Arise, then, thinking men, and in the eyes*  
*Of all the war-sick world, show forth this*  
*creed,*

Go publish big, that he who runs may read;

We can do what we want to do; release

The world from war; create a lasting peace.

## COLORS

WHEN we were children, we used to play  
The game of "Colors": one would say,  
"I'm thinking of something blue," or "green,"  
Or "of something gray;"

Then, the other would guess, "Is it *this* or  
*that?*"

"Grandmother's gown?" or "Harriet's hat?"  
Till, at last, with small shrieks of delight,  
We'd finish a round with, "Yes, that's right!"

\* \* \* \* \*

To-night, you are "somewhere in France," and  
I, alone,

Am playing a solitaire game of my own,  
A game of "Colors:"

"Something red;"

It's the cross, on the field of the wounded and  
dead,—

Pray God you're not there!

“Something white;”

A face upturned, in the cold moonlight;

“Something blue;”

O Love, its your eyes,  
As blue as the skies above,  
And you perhaps there in the trench below,—  
Could I only know, could I only know!

“Of something black;”

My sorrow, which yet would not call you back!

“And of something gray,”—

Ah, Love, how well you can guess it to-day!  
The grayest, grayest, grayest thing,  
That all my memories can bring;  
A gray street in Munich, the dawn's gray sky  
And a long procession clattering by;  
Gun-wagons, horses, helmeted men,  
All gray, all gray, and, suddenly, then,  
Just under my window, came riding one,



The grayest thing that a wizened sun  
Has ever seen.

With folded arms and staring eyes,  
A Spirit of Youth, grown old and wise,  
He gazed straight into the Future, away  
Where the "Land of the Deepening Shadow"  
lay, —

Was ever anything else so gray?  
It smothers and creeps like rolling smoke,  
And I struggle with tears that scald and  
choke!

\* \* \* \* \*

Just one more round, and then to sleep,  
For I must be brave; I must not weep;  
I must keep every ounce of strength for our  
"Day,"

And whatever woman's part I may play  
In the great World-game of Colors!

So; "I'm thinking of something gold."  
Do you know what it is, Sweetheart?  
Can you guess?

It's nothing greater, and nothing less  
Than the wonderful dawn of Peace to come;  
All wars ended, and you at home.

“I'm thinking of something gold;”

That's right! Game's over, dear Love!  
Good-night! Good-night!

## DRAFT DAY

1917

FALMOUTH fields are sweet with clover,  
Warm with sunshine, 'bright with dew,  
Yet a cold sea-fog drifts over,  
And from out the tender blue  
Comes the melancholy crying, crying,  
Of the gray sea-mew.

Sweet is Youth, yet cold To-morrow,  
Like a fog, lies drifting there,  
And a monstrous, gray-winged Sorrow  
Beats and circles on the air;  
Comes a sound of broken crying, crying,  
And an anguished prayer.

Falmouth fields are sweet with clover,  
They will smile and bloom again,

And the centuries will cover

All To-day's unmeasured pain;

O ye mothers, cease your crying! Dying

Shall not be in vain!

## CHRISTMAS

1917

O ALL you radiant angel-host,  
Smite hard your silver wires  
Wake all the vibrant voices  
Of Heaven's resounding choirs!

Sing, till the rocking universe  
Re-echoes to your song  
O ye thrice-radiant angels  
Of God's triumphant throng!

Else will no strain of "*Peace:*  
*Good-will!*"

Sweep over earth to-day,  
For our faint tunes are deadened  
By noise of battle-fray.

We have lost so many singing  
ones,

We have won such voiceless pain  
When shall we lift a chorus  
To reach your gates again?

Then sing, ye shining angels, sing,  
Lighten our heavy woe,  
Let Heaven's eternal Christmas  
Float down to us below!

DECEMBER THIRTY-FIRST  
1917

GRAY branches toss grayly, against a gray sky;  
The last, wan day of the year slips by, —  
Pallid, frightened, filmed with snow,  
She drops to the depths where the dead days  
    go.

A year of horror, crime and woe,  
Unspeakable, shuddering things, —  
Let her go!  
Pallid, frightened, filmed with snow,  
Ah, let her go, let her go!

## IN VAIN

1918

The robin twirls his clarionet.  
From out the apple-tree;  
Hepaticas have bloomed, and I know where  
The wind anemone  
Is trembling on her stalk again,  
The brook runs merrily,  
But Spring's allure is all in vain  
For I can only see  
The blue of shriveled violets in Picardy,  
In Picardy.

The robin twirls his clarionet,  
An April zealot, he;  
His lilting tune is gay, but yet, but yet  
He calls in vain to me!



## IN THE CHURCH

Lithe, and bronzed, and khaki-clad,  
You knelt in the pew before me, lad,  
You knelt, and you prayed, but I —  
I could not pray for thinking of you,  
And the things you are going forth to do;  
I bowed my head on my finger-tips,  
But I shamelessly watched your brave, young  
    lips  
Reading the Psalter for the day,  
And I marveled that you could so firmly say:

*“My soul is full of trouble, and my life  
draweth nigh unto hell.*

*I am counted as one of them that go down  
into the pit;—like unto them that are wounded  
and lie in the grave.*

*Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit in a  
place of darkness and in the deep.*

*Thou has put mine acquaintance far from  
me and made me to be abhorred of them.*

*I am so fast in prison that I cannot  
go forth."*

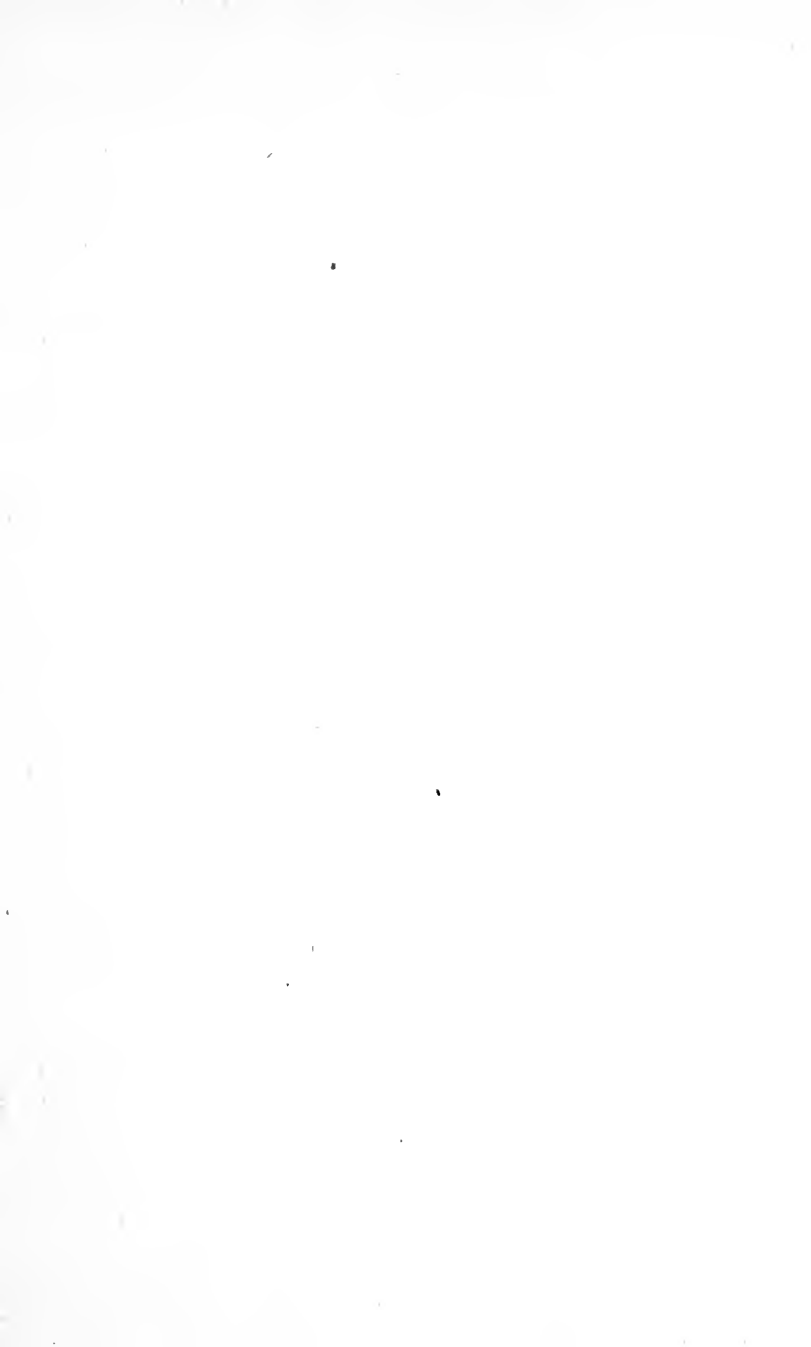
So, on to the end;

And you, who must go to the flame and the  
trench,

You read it through, and you did not blench!

Then I thought of David, so long ago,  
With his shepherd's sling and his face a-glow,  
Running to challenge Goliath of Gath;  
And my heart laid hold of a living faith:  
If God and a boy and a shepherd's sling  
Could do, of old, such a wonderful thing,  
Need we doubt who'll win in the War to-day,  
With such to fight and such to pray?

# LEAPING FLAMES



## OPPONENT

I SHALL have words that pierce like nails,  
I shall have hammers to drive them home,  
A hand, — and an aim, — that never fails,  
When the time's come.

You may sneer, and leer, and clench your fist,  
Let lies from your fierce lips fall;  
Truth's cold pique you will scarce resist, —  
Pinned to the wall!

I shall have words that pierce like nails,  
I shall have hammers to drive them home,  
A hand, — and an aim, — that never fails,  
When the time's come.

## TO HIS LOVE DID HE SAY:

I HAVE not words to tell thee all thou art,  
But, if by hap or chance, as such might be,  
Some stranger to thy charm should say, "Tell  
me!"

Unhesitant my answer. "*Straight depart  
To Pisa: seek no bargain-booth or mart  
But go to Niccolo's old Baptistry,  
Find out his echo's flower-like mystery!  
There lies a likeness to her gentle heart.*"

All pure, all sweet, all music, heaven-born:  
As clear as globe of dew in silver morn;  
All lovely — O beloved of my heart,  
Not Niccolo says fully what thou art!  
How shall I thank Good God enough, that He  
Gave thee, sweet echo of Himself, to me!

## MARGUERITE: A MAN'S CYCLE

*Un Peu*

A DREAM of her little hand,  
A rosebud that fell from her hair, —  
If she saw, would she understand?  
Would she know, or care?

*Beaucoup*

THE dream is long out of mind,  
Faint flame, in the heart of a boy,  
Forgotten, left behind,  
In this man-joy!

*Passionément*

ONE kiss, crushed swift, on her mouth, —  
Another against her soft breast, —  
I am parching, smitten with drouth,  
Till I give the rest!

*Pas du tout*

THE dream and the kiss are cold,  
The joy and the passion are dead, —  
Curse him, and her, and the gold,  
The gold she has wed!



## OBLATION

To THE mate who should have been mine  
To the love that should have been ours,  
I pour my heart's red wine,  
I strew its flowers.

I have swept my altar clean,  
Its flame is never dim  
Faithful, bright, unseen,  
It burns for Him.

“WHEN YOUTH THE DREAM  
DEPARTS”

OH to go back to the days when the Alpine  
snows

Gleamed, new, on my sight;  
When a rose was more than a rose  
And the whole round earth was a whispering  
lure of delight!

Oh, to go back!

JOY COMETH

CLOTHO, Lachesis, Atropos,  
What are you spinning to-day?  
My hand is tired, my feet are faint,  
But my heart is as gay, as gay

As a girl, running out to meet  
Her lover along the way;  
Hey, Clotho, Lachesis, Atropos,  
What are you spinning there, hey?

## PAUL

I FELT the air trembling with your soul,  
You could not speak, yet you said, "Good-  
bye!"

The sun shone brighter, the sky grew clear,  
The river was bluer; and I knew why.

My wild grief fell, like an arrow spent, —  
That was the moment when you went!

## THE DESERTED HOUSE

CLOSE-DRAWN shutters; fires gone out; the  
house is abandoned;  
Let us go.

Who dwelt here, has turned the bend in the  
road  
Let us arise and follow, for it leads to God.

## TO A TOLLING BELL

O HAMMERED strokes of a bell,  
You beat on my soul as you toll and toll,  
And your echoes roll, roll, roll,  
Till the world seems a well.  
And I'm drowned, in the sound  
Of a tolling bell:  
Toll. Toll.

## THE CANDLE

HE comes no more, along the trodden path,  
Skirting the deep pine-woods,  
And down the grassy lane;  
He comes no more, nor will he ever come  
Again.

The little candle that I used to set at night,  
So bright and constant then, is waxing dim;  
It will grow dimmer still,  
Will gutter and go out,  
A last, faint spark, against a thin, white  
rim;  
He will not come!  
God's candle shone for him.

## HOPELESSNESS

My heart is like the Wood at Fontainebleau;  
Its kingly trees and vistas wondrous fair,  
But weirdly, strangely silent, for no water-  
springs  
Or nesting birds are there!

## WHIM

A TWINKLE of sound in the marsh;  
A twinkle of light in the sky;  
The one is a frog, the other a star,  
And half-way between am I!

## VISION

TWO HAZARDED INTERPRETATIONS OF A MODERN  
 PAINTING IN THE GLAS-PALAST, MUNICH,  
 1914

## I

LIKE that, for one of us, some day!  
 That lonely gray,  
 That haloed Yesterday?  
 O Sweetheart, Love,  
 Whose lithe young limbs  
 I almost feel already  
 Mated to my own live flesh,—  
 Like that!

Roses are ours,  
 And Life and Love,  
 And always dear To-morrow!

\* \* \* \* \*

Listen,—I am praying now,  
 To you and God, who are so much the same:

*“Let us die young!”*

My closed eyes throb against the lids,  
The breath of rapture raises me;  
O Love, Beloved,  
Come!

## II

And may I ever hope for this,  
Across long years?  
Such peace, such saintliness?

Here is my naked body, Lord;  
My roses,  
All the fine intoxication of the wine of Youth!  
Let it be drained:  
Scourge me,  
But count it not too great a price  
If, at the end,  
I wear such aureole of years!



## THE JAR

THE hand and whirling wheel! With reverent  
thrill

Of keen delight I pause to drink my fill  
Of contemplation, as one might a long  
Cool draught, and feel myself, thereby, grow  
strong.

O wondrous jar! I love thy curving lip,  
Thy gradient, circling base, thy rounded hip,  
Thy rare, rich color, rolling over me  
As roll the tides of broad, incoming sea!  
I love thee subtly, but I love still more  
The dreaming soul that formed thee. O'er  
and o'er

He turned thee, skilful, primitive, direct;  
Wert thou insensate? Dids't thou not reflect,  
At last his face? O wondrous jar! Dids't  
feel

As I, the Hand and Whirling Wheel?

## COMMUNION

My neighbors see me drink the little cup of  
wine,

And eat the bread;

It witnesses, they say, that I am Thine;

But, when all's said,

The cup I drink with Thee, O wondrous Mas-  
ter mine,

No eyes can see;

'Tis poured and quaffed 'twixt Thee and me  
alone;

How bitter-deep the draught

May not be known!

O little cup of wine, the friendly neighbors see!

How slight a sign, how slight a sign,

Of that I drink with Thee!

## POETRY

Impassioned, radiant Vision,  
Elusive, compelling, sublime;  
Enamored of Rhythmic Beauty,  
Indifferent to Rhyme;

Her minister is Music,  
Her henchman, Soul's-desire;  
Not Heaven, itself, confines Her, —  
This Goddess, ringed with fire.





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