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SUSQUEHANNA
BY FREDERIC BRUSH

SUSQUEHANNA

THE
SUSQUEHANNA
SOCIETY

And as I saw one after another, pleasant villages, cars upon the highways, and fishers by the stream, . . . I began to exult with myself upon this rise in life like a man who had come into a rich estate. And when I asked the name of the river from the brakeman, and heard that it was called the Susquehanna, the beauty of the name seemed to be part and parcel of the beauty of the land. . . . That was the name, as no other could be, for that shining river and desirable valley.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

SUSQUEHANNA

BY FREDERIC BRUSH

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BY FREDERIC BRUSH

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SONG OF THE DEW-DROPS

A WAVE, a wave, the sun-kissed
And blink the dewy eye
And frothy in the eye.

SUSQUEHANNA

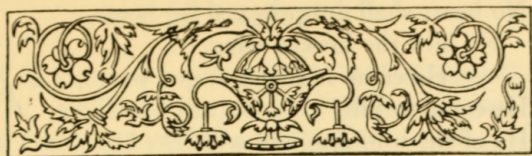
The sun is hot,
And all the dew is wet,
But under the sky he looks off
And all the dew is wet.

He looks and looks the heavy dew
The sun is hot, when he looks
And all the dew is wet, and the
The sun is hot, when he looks.

The sun is hot,
And all the dew is wet,
But under the sky he looks off
And all the dew is wet.

The sun is hot, when he looks
And all the dew is wet, and the
The sun is hot, when he looks.

BRITISH MUSEUM



SONG OF THE HUNTED

A WAKE, awake, the sun-kiss take!
And blink the rheumy eye.

Lead freely in the open,
Let out the wild woods cry.

He came to snare,
He came to kill,
He of the iron arm and will;
But under the cliff he lieth still—
And no one saw him die.

Breast and cleave the frosty air!
Beat the blue lakes to foam.
Tell all the young in nest and lair
The highland yet is home.

He came to kill,
He came to snare,
But the gray fox found him lying there,
And dark red was his matted hair—
Roam, ye of the forest, roam!

Then, awake, awake, and the sun-kiss take!
We have turned the evil thing.

No beast shall drag the red leg home,
No bird the broken wing.
He came to maim,
He came to kill,
He of the iron arm and will;
But under the cliff he lieth still—
And no one saw him die.

FRIEND

AS I stayed hopeless by the yellow mounds,
Where all the garner of the bright years lay,
He came, and saying nothing did my work,
As 't were a common day.

When the slow season turned, again he came
And led me up where far the river gleamed,
Telling for hours of things that were to be
Nobler than youth had dreamed.

Last shone the sun on our high mount alone;
And olden truth in bannered flame unfurled:
The dark is rest, and ever sweeps the day
Over a better world.

O Friend, you are the greatest gift. When fall
The chill gray shadows on the path of life,
You come, and bring the love of each and all—
Child, mother, brother, wife.

WHITE WATER

AT end of dreamy miles the curve,
Roar, rock and stinging pume;
And what was life above, below
May never quite resume.

The years no measure are; we go
Dour on the holden way;
The mountain slips, fear thralls, love smites—
And life pours in a day.

Give me the hours that overweigh
Time, and all rules of three;
Yielding torn visions through the mist
Of an eternity.

The kiss that seals, death's honest face,
The infant at the breast,
The blow, the hand-clasp and the tear
Are more than all the rest.

MOUNTAIN VALLEY

IN Mountain Valley morning comes upon the gray
moon-glow
When all the gorges lie in fog and dreaminess below.
There days are long,
Worn memories throng,
And longings overflow.

Lorena through the frosted pane of her brown cottage
hold
Looked out on tinted snow ascud o'er miles of dreary
wold.
The wan sun stole
Into her soul,
For she was growing old.

Some creature of the whited road, seen full two hours
before,
Had won the slopes and lingered now a mile below her
door;
On the uptrail
In dire travail
It fell to stir no more.

Upthrough the drift and shriveling cold, bound on the
wooden sled,
By superwoman dole and stress, were he alive or dead,
In mother thought
The man was brought
Unto her narrow bed.

Lorena bared the traveler's face and gazed into the eyes
Of youth's lone love come wandering back, as homing
night-bird flies.

Long she knelt
And quivering felt
The withered past arise.

In Mountain Valley love strikes down like summer-
noon cyclone,
All sure delights of yesterday so fleetly to unthrone.
Pent hates flame,
Till shrived and lame
The prisoners lie alone.

When the old maiden's tears had passed as wanes the
showered stream,
She rose with widened querying eyes and cheeks'
unwonted gleam,
To dower there
With wondrous care
This salvage of a dream.

Years of prisoned womanhood enwrapped the frail
outcast.
At dawn he smiled, and knew her face and babbled of
the past.
It heartened so
She did not know
The life was ebbing fast.

The hearth-smoke died; till neighbors came and wondered to behold

One sitting by a stranger corpse in misery and cold.

“The man is dead,”

Was all she said;

“And I am old — am old.”

In Mountain Valley evening broods in ledge and cove
always,

To steal down early after noon athwart the edge of day.

There lives are dun,

With death begun

'Neath lichen'd overlay.

TSEN-MIN

(“THE MUMMY OF A LITTLE GIRL.”

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK.)

WHY do I think of you here in the eddying Susquehanna, little Tsen-Min?

My canoe swerves and returns, and the current of life
Streams round me in loving and strife;

All lose and all win.

The leaping fish bends swiftly downward under the law
To death in the larger maw.

Infinite destinies in the ooze my gentle boat-waves shift.
Swallows are gleaning numberless perfect lives in the
air;

The osprey over the rift,

And the spider poised at the mouth of his cruel ten-
uous lair,

Strike and feed and are stricken in turn, as I circling
drift—

And dream of you, Tsen-Min.

Many years have I gone to you there in the gloaming
corner, silent Tsen-Min.

All day the sober querying people leisurely pass
Your straight swathed form in the glass.

Once as I stayed late in the shadow aside,

A high-blooded Saxon schoolgirl came and stood at
your feet,

And quietly cried.

Then knowing the hour if ever was come, bending low

I called, for a whispered olden word, or sigh,
Or even a moment's glow
In the gathering dark of your dusk-brown orient eye,
And your smile—
As once by the Nile.

No answer; yet I will go to you, sure of our lives
intertwining unto the end.
If you are silent there is to be no calling out of the past.
Only life-waves last;
Trembling on through myriad other circles of love and
of will,
To break at eon's end on a distant shore,
Lulled in the final tapering roar;
Merging at intervals in a passing life with doubled
power,
The lowering urn of being to refill—
As you in me this hour.

A FISHER BY THE STREAM

THESSE are the sayings handed down
By Abner Breen of Taylortown.
Soldier, woodsman, farmer, sage,
Who went bold-eyed from youth to age,
Saw from his cove the same truths run
Through burg and kingdom, mote and sun—
And kinless in life's waning part
Let the sure river lave his heart;
Beyond full years with service rife
Lone watcher by the flow of life,
Content in time to pause and dream,
A gray-brown fisher by the stream.

When you don't know what to do,
Wait and let the quiet through.
Where two roads halt your eager quest,
Take one—and it will seem the best.

Star-shooting, as the books advise,
Leaves most folks neither rich nor wise.
Aim for the breast; a misser may
See the dirt fly anyway.

Youth broods: There stand the older men,
I wait to glean their wisdom, then—
No other age can tell you how;
You'll ne'er be better; do it now.

In master trouble, toil or wreck,
Draw in the belt and loose the neck;
With blood in head and pouter breast
Bear on; sheer luck controls the rest.

Ask not how far nor of the storm.
Stride on, earth yields, an hour is warm
Upon our road, all's fair iwis—
Who promised better time than this?

Don't loaf in broad daylight, you cry,
Nor pause and overplay, and die
With many things undone. Can you
Read the list of what to do?

Enmarch, with midriff low and chin
Athwart the skyline, buckled in,
Loath to repress the sprung thigh's urge
In mid-forenoon—is life full surge.

See how the walker takes the hill
With lowered brow and stiffened will.
He knows how many ills betide
Untiming of the wonted stride.

Engineer and ferryman
Seem ever fit and of the plan.
So aptly on the way to fare
Is succeeding anywhere.

Get a job and house and wife;
No good to cringe nor tear at life.
He that holds an even gait
Seldom needs to strain or wait.

Young men before their mating time
Sing on the roads and practice rhyme;
With the second baby's cry
Come years of sober voice and eye.

Grudge or sorrow have you low?
Go down and watch the river flow.
Look at trees and walk a mile—
Enter the kitchen with a smile.

How surely in the after-year
Outdoor events hold sweet and clear;
Wise then our friends and faith to try
More openly beneath the sky.

Walkers learn through pain and rue,
Foot must harden to the shoe.
Blister-grooves with tough skin fill;
Too many changes thin the will.

Second view of fact or word
Is better than the first or third.
Deeds that morrows least rescind
Are mostly done on second-wind.

Life proffered, eagerness of fire,
The whining sore-foot hound's desire,
Wrestle, and scream of violin—
Tell the ardent force within.

But for the happiness that thirls
In puppy-dogs and little girls,
And older woman's quenchless smile—
The course would hardly be worth while.

From the barn-door, a rainy day,
Our lives look bounteous, even gay.
Abide; we squander noblest dowers
Hurrying these pregnant hours.

Wind, rain, fire, surf, and the low seethe
Of brain at night, and all that breathe
Vary one murmurous tone—maybe
The core-sound of eternity.

Work of morning's nervous rage
Least withstands the wear of age.
For every road and faith and right
Some one toiled numbly into night.

War and love still lead the race;
Not yet plain living takes their place;
Nor can, before the ages drill
Like powers of sacrifice and will.

I heard the speakers in the hall
Rave to high heaven and butt the wall.
A man and woman resolute
By one day's work all these confute.

In two-hour spells of high desire
We trip surefoot above the mire.
But how to make these fairies stir,
Stay longer or come oftener?

If Peter Kip were here to-night
Talk would leap outward, eyes grow bright,
Our humor changed from might to can
By one true simple quarryman.

Tight piling makes the hottest fire;
In a still wood the sparks go higher.
Not much occurs till folks get near.
Lone sitters see a few things clear.

Hours spent on river isles
Memory bright like woman's smiles;
As wider glimpses of the whole
Are caught from islands of the soul.

Where is this Beauty?—in the thing,
Curve of meadow, pale smoke-ring,
Mountain azure, ringlet blown
And shaping of my girl's cheek-bone?

Or have pleasing visions wrought
Ages through the eye and taught
Beauty in the mind to dwell?
I look and ask, and none may tell.

Leaf-fire smoke and river ooze
Are the two perfumes I choose.
Water alone of all earth's range
Stays beautiful in every change.

Keenest nature-sound of all
Is the blue-jay's anger call.
When from the chestnut grove it rings
I sense the unfaltering pour of things.

October morn in high Montrose
Holds summer in the breath of snows;
Too pungent there the frosted leaf
Sends up underlying grief.

Spoke my boy upon the hill
Where our forebears lie so still:
"If you must soon be buried here
Why not play with me this year?"

Lowering Steve we mainly thought
Of all he changed and scarred and fought;
Long hours, urgent, laughless, mad—
I never shoveled grave so sad.

Till Oren with the beamy eye
Said, "Lucky everyone must die.
Hand me the jug—on from this day
I run with them that ease and play."

Money men as age comes nigh
Build mansions on the hills and die.
Mid-people close the out-rooms and draw
Nearer the fire, within the law.

Poor Lief toiled bravely to the end
Bad bargaining in vain to mend;
Not even throes of genius can
Save a faulty ground-floor plan.

Success? To live a little higher
Than your friends and facts conspire.
Cripple, president or fool
Well are measured by this rule.

Wilbur Doble learned to talk
Sooner than to think or walk;
And from red youth to elbow chair
His impress went upon the air.

Main I know of deity
Is here in all I feel and see.
Yankee, Asian, priest or clod
Finds a way with his own god.

Falling leaves and dying men
Tell no hope to rise again.
I've seen all kinds of people go;
All say at last, "I do not know."

If some great father cares for man,
Grass and worm are in the plan.
Any haven that welcomes me
Will take my dog and walnut tree.

I reckoned fairly how old age
Brings ache, slow wit, the blurring page,
And isolation futureless—
But not on this long tiredness.

A frail old maid on Locust Hill
Taught us the use of love and will;
And passed. We waver and forget,
But she goes in our children yet.

What lingers? Youth's first stroke of power,
Three woods-fire friends, a mother's hour,
Work that drove along new shores
And lovers' greetings out of doors.

My comrades mourn each cellar-mound,
Crying: "What use? All goes to ground!"
But every home-scar signs a place
Of service in the human race.

The happiest hour? It comes full-bloom
About the bride, anear the tomb,
With fame or void, in struggle ghaſt—
Even it may be the laſt.

Who ſcans the eras ſcarce may doubt
The race of man will taper out.
Perchance to-day we crush or ſpurn
The creature formed to rule in turn.

Faireſt mark for thoſe that paſs?
An earth-bank covered thick with graſs.
All they were and did and ſaid
Runs onto life's unceaſing thread.

Fiſhing by this maple log,
I may neither harm nor clog;
So to avoid that laſt ungraſe
Of old age ſtruggling out of place.

THE DROWNED BOY

I HAVE no shame that I sang through the rift
And laughing leapt among them on the bar—
Nor sorrow for my soul's too early scar
As there withdrew youth's gift
Of utter hopefulness—only long fear
From seeing one so lone with many near.

She quivered down as with an ague chill.
A whimsy smile lurked on the boy's wan face,
Turned full into the sun. We curved a space
About them and were still.

Ripe summer droned with life in flower and tree;
From the cove near a thrush sang cruelly.

They brought the little clothes and spread them on.
One kneeling murmured: "He was loaned awhile,
And now is taken to the Master's smile—
A heavenly embrion.

Praise God and rise." With tortured look and hand
The mother drove her back into the sand.

"We are whirled midges in a storm," I said.
"Old Nature gleans and moulds and random sows,
Rears beauty on decay, annuls our woes,
And recreates the dead.

And you shall rest in her, and soothing time."
She crumpled lower in the river slime.

Then one drew off an eager babe from breast,
And wound her warm arms round the shaken one:
“Weep, Myra, weep with me for your lost son;
The hour is not for rest.”

— They broke and made a litter of my oar—
And past with shining faces up the shore.

GIRL AT THE MILL

ALISON of Manatoom
Heard the waters sith and fall
Down the old flume's mossy length
 To the ruined wall;
Heard the spray-fog drip and drip
 From the mouldering undersill,
Till with evening shadows came
 The Spirit of the mill:

“Alison, Alison,
So life's stream doth run and run.
Give—love and give, nor count each cost;
For love alone is never lost.”

Alison sat very still
 And felt her heart's blood pause and flow;
It was as if a hundred years
 There did come and go.
Alison sat very straight
 And tried to know what she had heard,
Straining to catch from out the mist
 Again the whispered word:

“Alison, Alison,—”
She was too young to hear and know,
 Too old to laugh and go away;
And so she sat beside the mill
 And listened every day.

Alison of Manatoom

Where the waters glide and fall
Heard no more from out the mist
The wandering Spirit call:

“Alison, Alison,
So the stream of life doth run.
Love—give and love, nor count each cost;
For love alone is never lost.”

MARSH CHILD

FAIR Colyn is going to sleep
Down where the pert hylodes peep.
Where brown waters dimly creep,
Sweet Colyn is going to sleep.

There the pale-eyed pickerel lads
Doze beneath the lily pads;
And fifteen hundred frogs or so
Have no other place to go.

Within the old stump's hollow cup
All night the waves go plup—plup—plup.
And when the sky is clouded o'er
Sometimes you hear the hornpouts snore.

Hark, Colyn! Along the grass
I hear the whispering marsh-breeze pass.
It wanders off across the hill,
And now the very stars lie still.

SPRING FLOOD

I RAISED her head upon the shore,
Until the bramble caught her hair.
Ah! it was good to see the sky,
And taste the air.

The brown surge pressed her close to me;
I had of strength to cling and live;
Yet through my soul such music ran
As angels give.

Slowly the red blood filled her lips;
She lived! I wound a strand of hair
Around the precious willow stem,
And kissed her there.

I sometimes wish the tugging flood
Had loosed me then and borne me down.
It were not bad at life's full tide
To kiss and drown.

For when with first inquiring breath
She called another's name that day,
I knew that I was out upon
A long new way.

UNADILLA WOMAN

SINGING in the morning,
On a hillside where the land is stony,
Through fog and rain
A ballad of old lovers
Comes down broken
With sounds of moiling and the cry of children—
One in illness.

How do I know
Eyes were hazel-brown and flecked
With fire-points, and her bosom
Ample for all homing heads,
Sweet breath and song-words.
Drifting below the island screen
No oar broke my harkening—
Till the airy cadence faltered, died
In purr of waters.

Long day down
Through hidden hills and mellow steaming pastures,
By sewer-mouths of towns,
Droll fishermen
And swart teamsters at the ferries cursing—
I bore her voice along,
As a friend's call out of absence, wondering
How much was her very own, or whether
Harmony would come to others—me,
On gray mornings, living so
By the river.

Woman is the river,
Threading ripple-song and mirrored heaven
Through the human jungle;
Draining wood, cave, bog, absorbing, fining
Slime-water, rain and soil—
Merging all, yet all alone;
Never pure but purer
Ever by a ray, one fine hair-breadth of measure,
Than the river border.

O, the crooning mothers!
And smiling ones that hover others' children;
Rose-white, ebon, brown
Arms through murky ages holding
Tender life or weary.
Wherever love infolds,
And roofs are thrown over age or mewling,
And men go silently
To toil or foreign legion there will be
Unadilla woman
Singing in the morning.

LORAIN

BEFORE I knew you, dark Lorain,
My life was throng of casual days
Gone wandering down the wonted ways,
Like children in a village lane.

And now I seeming live to care
For those few hours of fair emprise
In kingdom of your voice and eyes,
And woman fragrance of your hair.

Proud hair that thrones the etcher's art
In queenly poise of wave and ring,
To ripple down at last and cling
Around the columns of the heart.

Eager, with youth-fires all aglow,
You flare along the heights afar;
Inspirer, lover, wildering star—
Yet some day, lingering, you will know.

And somewhere down the unknown way
I'll come—and you with no alarms
Will let me take you in my arms
And kiss your eyes again, and say:

Where have you been, my wild Lorain?
Since you were gone all of my days
Have wandered in strange vagrant ways,
Like children in a village lane.

STORM ON THE BAY

GOLDEN sun in the piney west;
Ships of gold on an opaled sea,
Ever go sailing and sailing by
Into the night where longings die—
And never come in to me.

Silver moon high out in the east;
Silver ships on a shimmering sea
Go sailing and sailing all trim and true,
While I am waiting a word from you—
And never one comes to me.

Lightnings cleave the glooming west;
Storm and night meet over the wave;
And his ship out on that starless sea
Is fighting for life and home and me—
O, if prayer could save!

Morn is streaming out of the east;
Blackest night and the storm's low moan
Are over my soul forevermore.
The neighbors gather about my door;
But I am alone—alone.

RIVER BRIM

I RAN to the river brim
Crying—crying.
To lay all I held of him
By the rainy willow tree
Where a numb, seared half of me
Seemed dying.

Morning I began to hear
Sliding—sliding,
Hill flood waters passing near.
Clouds flared with rose, bird-song renewed,
I felt the world's old plenitude
Abiding.

So I arose and faced the sun,
Reeling—reeling,
Into another course begun;
Following new dream and star,
Strong growths drew across the scar,
Concealing.

Then out along the thoroughfare
Spending—spending,
Nerve and laughter, time and care;
And more I gave outright and gay
Came back threefold another day,
Forefending.

Till from excess and new love's pride
 Glowing—glowing,
“Freedom, full noon—all's here!” I cried.
The old wound twinged, athwart the dark
A turning countenance past stark
 And knowing.

Calling: Unbruised no life may run
 Scaling—scaling.
Dread turmoil and joy are one.
Wounds armor; triers early know
'Tis in the plan to love and go
 Travailing.

All come to the river bank
 Weeping—weeping,
In wet weeds and forest dank
To lie through ageing hours outdrawn
With no ease, no joy of dawn,
 Nor sleeping.

Some linger there, but them that rise
 Braving—braving,
Have gleams of seership in their eyes;
All shaken ones they bind around
With strands of friendliness profound,
 Saving.

THE HIGH ROAD TO MEHOOPANY

I LEFT the gala-bannered town,
Apost the inn, the bridge, the fair,
And swung through maple leaves to where
A palsied door-man signed to me
The high road to Mehoopany.

“Point me the way of life, old man?
Eighty years is enough to know.”
“I feel the storm-pains—traveller, go!”
“But given the course again to run?”
The same;—now glad there is only one.”

Sudden is Beauty: I saw her plaid
Flit and gleam on the narrow plain,
Round bosses of the tanned moraine;
Then from rise of a gentle hill
She fronted smiling in Eatonville;

Beckoning till the storm-cloud fell—
Fair hamlet by the chaffering stream,
Through years of memory you seem
Not man-wrought but a mural part
Of eldest nature's flexile art.

But nought the forenoon walker stays;
Beauty, fire nor homely grace—
Sting of slant rain on the face.
Left aside are time and age;
Beyond the curve is heritage.

A lumberman stood by his mill
Beset by flood, and scanned with pride
His trails high on the mountainside.
The storm had housed the lesser men,
And bore their gear adown the glen.

“Captain, I seek the rule and place.”
“The best is here; pursue no more.
Your heaven runs a league before.
The spectre of dull age appears:
All to implore are ten bold years.”

The sun broke through, the blue-jay squalled,
And carrying far above the vale
My footing spurned the red-brown shale
O'er singing ridges—to look down
On friendly water, field and town.

A young girl romped the pasture glade
In sumac flame; her glance and call
Shot springtime through the heart of fall.
The river's blue-gray coil below
Borrowed from her eyes' clear glow.

“Where is fountain of your joy?
Hoiden, you are the living way!
How came you on from yesterday?”
She only laughed and signed to me
The high road to Mehoopany.

NEWMAN'S RIFT

IMPERIOUS as of yore
I hear your solemn roar
Come through the night-fog chill.
The town and woods are still;
Deep under nature's breast
There is no rest.

With steadiness of doom,
'Neath ice, in summer heat,
You gnaw the indrawn feet
Of couchant Manatoom;
Till mountain and terrain
Are ground to like again,
Where levels of brown mud
Allay your flood.

Here on the burial hill
Where elders watched us brave
In sport thy treacherous wave—
Above the cliff, sans will,
We gather stilly home
To merge in the yellow loam;
And wait till down your tide
In wheel of life again,
Harried by wind and rain,
We too shall ride.

And far: through mother ooze,
Atomies' play, stressed rock,

Crystal and earthquake shock,
Into cells that suffer and choose.
Immured in the deep sea press
With ultimate quietness,
Or high on radiant wing,
In hour of heart's excess
 Lovely to sing.

All life feels, has soul,
Immortality—knows;
Timefully strives and goes
To death in the long parole.
Porch rose and crawling slime,
Its quivering path in time;
Wind-tuning pine or snail
 Alike avail.

Your thundrous voice shall die
On some last ebbing sigh,
And where stern tumult is
Brood the old silences.
Yet we go on awhile
Who held the crowded hill,
By spendings of love and will,
Stroke and valorous smile,
Deed and query and rime
Shed in passing time,
On tremulant life outborne;—
Perchance to see a plan
Somewhere through paths of man
 In the ages worn.

CONOWINGO

I MET a girl in Conowingo,
Footing up river when I was strong;
Wherever I've gone walking after
She has been along.

There was beauty—but I remember
Only the smell of evening's cool
And one gnarled gum tree holding over
Flame above the pool.

Maybe it was her true upstanding,
And level candor of life-desire
In eyes that held below the laughter
A flicker of hooded fire.

Years run like the lower river—
Sun-reach, riffle and boulder-spray,
With hidden coves of scummed slack water
Lingering in decay.

But some things are that don't grow older,
Dreams may rival the worth of truth,
Ever the Conowingo maiden
Stands in a glowing youth;

Beckoning often where night lours
And stony up-roads slime with rain,
Ardor after second fallings
To go on again.

Hours from the haze of old Octobers,
Some generous greetings as we roam,
Faith of a friend and love's prest roses
Are all we carry home.

If you ever come to Conowingo
And stroll up-gorge in the autumn's cool,
See if our gum tree still leans over,
Flame above the pool.

PEACHBOTTOM

“DON’T cross to-night.
Come to the door;
In through the roar
Do you not hear
The bicker and snarl?
(There was almost a scream —
Choked at the close).
Your father in dying
Held to one fear,
Of lost river-men crying,
When the loose timber runs
On June rising water.
Merriman’s daughter
And the pink neighbor girl
Will grow fonder, more fair
For some waiting and dreams.
How it blackens out there!
Can a river have anger?
I am your mother;
Don’t go to-night.”
Far in the morning
Came knocking her door
Old Binney the raftsman,
Quietly saying:
“An hour or more
I am hearing the call;
First it came clearer;
Drowned river-men crying

Mean someone is dying
Alone on the uplands,
Untended—or nearer.
Where are your boys?”
From their unruffled cots
To the water she ran
Calling each village man.
Waiting long by the edge
In a lull of the rain
They heard a thin wail
From the mad devils’ ledge—
And again.
“If their father were here
He would bring them to me.
Is it drowsing or fear?
Do our river-men fail?”
And for manhood’s token
They laid one son,
Gasping and broken
On the sand by her feet
In the morning.

“Love will go over.
Maids not to blame;
I was the same.
Man is the rover.”
So she lay dying
Many years after;
June rising water
Roared on the ledges.

"I hear you crying,
My river-men bold;
Here is your daughter—
Lover—and mother.
Love will go over."

SQUIRE DIMON

SQUIRE DIMON never laughed nor wed,
Told a story, held a child.
Grew the wonder why he smiled,
In the parlor lying dead.

Spoke an aged river man:
"When the mobbing raftsmen came
He beat them with an iron hame,
And chuckled softly as they ran.

"One time (it seems but yesternight)
While new hill-people ran the town
And all his projects voted down,
His countenance was ringed with light.

"They say a jealous, addled crone
Cried sorrow on his childbirth bed;
Others, a wild girl won and fled—
But so 'tis told of all the lone.

"Now who will salve our legal wounds,
Bring the orphan in her dole,
Keep our borough honor whole,
Run true line and set the bounds?"

Jamming ice or timber fire,
How to marry, when to plow,
Pestilence or broken vow—
Turned they to the silent Squire.

Rarely in his tired eyes,
As they brought another load,
Laval fires of humor glowed.
Then they thought, he grows unwise.

Living in the house alone,
He could smell the deer at morn,
Hear the growing of the corn,
And the river's undertone;

And the upper winds that tell
Of the burning of the rain
In hills beyond the plain,
And the shrinking of the well.

Doctor found his organs wrong,
Tried more playful ways to teach,
Drew the old Squire's longest speech:
"Each finds a crooked way along.

"Where so many fume and guess
Under screen of raucous glee,
Going scared or giddily—
There is room for soberness."

Moulder of a stubborn race,
Worn and grooved by valley men,
None could be so mean again,
Having looked upon his face.

Maybe that is why he smiled,
Lying in the parlor dead.
"He has laid him down," they said,
"Sweetly as a sleeping child."

TYASKIN

GOING down from Baltimore
On the steamer Avalon
Seven men of everywhere
For the Eastern Shore;
One so knurled and illy wan,
Crumple featured, scant of hair,
Slued with palsy, cancer scarred—
Made it seem a trifle hard
For us to be jollyng there,
Six brown huskies out of war
Marrowfatted, flush with prime,
Care o' women, scorn of time;
Brought a doubt if things were fair,
Where the jumble, whose the crime—
What such addled life was for?

Rocking through the Ches-apeake
One of us gave steadyng hand,
(Wondering if he had a voice—
Waiting for the squeak)
Felt we never more would whine,
Lighted him a gentle smoke,
Told of times when we were weak,
Queried where he hoped to land.
"Tyaskin on the Nanticoke,
God's own favorite basking place."
In the flare his smitten face
Glowed to sudden wistful charm.

“Never knew Tyaskin, Sir?
Come ashore to-morrow morn
Out to our new garden farm,
See the sun go through the pine,
And how thick the melons lie
By the edges of the corn;
Taste the sweet-potato pie—
And then watch the smile of her.”

Morning, we saw Captain Hurtt
Screw the sturdy Avalon
By the marshes nimly through
 A mile of thinnish dirt.
“Port Tyaskin!” some wag cried,
And rousingly the whistle blew.
I recall duck-hunters grim,
The buckled shed, a hound with fleas,
And two sad ancient cedar trees;
All’s now dimming memory save
The woman who came down for him—
Of a brightness where she stood,
How both eager hands she gave,
Kissed with lingering look and hold,
Raised him queenly to her side—
Drove away into the wood.

“Skipper Hurtt, so gray and wise,
River people your worn book;
How gain and hold the glory look
 We saw in her eyes?”

He mused the twisted channel through:
"Somehow in the underplan
Odd pairs ease the world along.
Women marry round a man,
Making things prove through him so
Often he is bound to go
Meandering in a pinkish fog.
Give one anchor holding true,
Eve's havening, and a snatch of song,
Fair aim, a healthy child or two—
There'll be homing in a bog,
Or the tinselled city's crowd."
Mate says: "The Cap'n ought 'o know—
Being in his second cloud."

THE OLD DRUNK MAN

TOO deep the ashes on the fire,
Too long alone with farm and wife;
Pain, aging, stillness, love, desire,
Brown drouth of meadows and of life—
A little stammering of the will.
And he is drunk in Laceyville.

Huddled, befouled, a stain of blood,
Inert as one that births or dies,
From out the wreckage boldly gleamed
A mellow wisdom of the eyes;

And calloused worthy hands that gave
Full story of the patient years—
Moulded by rock and tool and frost,
The warmth of babes, the damp of tears.

The old bell calls to evening prayer;
A somber man with leathern book
Uprightly moves along the way
And gives the drunken man a look.

Around him in the faltering day
The village people pause and nod;
Under all the impartial earth
At chemic play with king and clod.

Perchance the old man through the haze
Was given a rift of vision clear,

And saw upon the encircled fronts
Emblazoned telltales of the year;

And might have cried: "John Vellicore,
A woman waits in Allentown,
Heavy and wan, to see your face—
And when will you be going down?"

"Jim Bourne, no tailored cloth may hide
The poison cankering through your blood.
Yon bantering strong one stood and saw
His friend go drowning by in flood."

"And you, young men, who laugh and leave
To tell of this in church or hall,
Make honest livings forty years
Before you judge of faith or fall."

O you, who clasp the book and go
Along the way with sober face,
(And if your gilded heaven be true)
And come at last unto the place

Where all nations of the earth
Their varicolored legions pour
Across that threshold of last hope,—
You may see through the narrowing door,
All shining on the terraced hill
The old drunk man of Laceyville.

HAPPY IS THE MILLER

HAPPY is the miller"—God knows why?
Smut on his ear-drums, cockles in 'is eye;
One foot in water and the other in the grave;—
There's a situation ol' Doc won't save.

With all them shiny-back books on 'is shelf
You'd think he'd know a little keer of 'imself.
But he never goes afishin', nor into the town;
An' the bran on 'is bellows is ahardenin' down.

But he keeps on grinnin', an' if you say:
"Mornin', miller; it's a lowery day."
Like's not he'll chirrup: "O, it's good for moss.
There's ekal addition for every loss."

I tried to get 'im out linin' bees.
Sez 'e: "Them fellers really owns the trees.
Such an okerpation would shrink my soul—
Houndin' a insect to 'is own knot-hole."

They call 'im educated an' his judgment sound,
But 'e wouldn't know a weasel from a brindle hound.
He takes a daily paper an' owns a Russian bond,
And buys the pickerel from 'is own mill-pond.

One October when the gray squirrels ran
I took 'im in the pasture an' showed 'im where to stan'.
He'd push on the trigger, then lay around an' laugh,
And the only charge 'e loosened hit 'is own bull-calf.

Can't arger with 'im, for he won't get mad.
Every ail and sorrow I reckon he has had.
With breath growing shorter and friends adiggin' in,
He goes on living like a young begin.

No use trying to help some men.
Loosen 'em, turn around, an' there they are again.
But it seems kind o' selfish for to be so free
While they hold fastened like a dooryard tree.

When the malarie and the river fog
Stick along the bottoms, old pancake dog
Pulls my leggins till we duffle up an' go
Far on the mountain where the sun sets low.

Town folks wonder how I eat alone.
Give me rabbit-shoulder and a red corn-pone,
Coffee in the dipper, tobaccy in the bowl—
I'll break even, and save my soul.

Everything I come around fits like hair.
Easy make a dollar most anywhere;
Baskets, snake-oil, maple-juice and skunk—
And last Fourth I baccied up asellin' punk.

If ill luck and people wouldn't interfere,
I could work a week or two and live a year.
They draw me in their housens an' I get the epizoo—
And all their saving-doing only means more to do.

When the evening air is liftin' to our cabin door
We hear the mill aclackin' an' the freight-trains' roar.
There ought 'o be a law to make fussers through the day
Leave night solemn—for 't was meant that way.

Happy is the miller—and so be I.
Howsomever, he's apt to up an' die.
And I'll be a bearer—if this ol' rotten cough
Don't get on my innerds and first me off.

DUTCH HILL PICNIC

ET VANDUSEN lived up here,
And funned our picnic every year;
When she drove in, 'bout all you'd hear
Was, here comes Et VanDusen!

She wore the all-firedest colored clothes,
And a slant strange look along the nose;
Walking like this way with her toes—
Same as old man VanDusen.

If no one swung with Et all day,
She would get in alone and lay
To fall, or injure, so they'd say:
"It's too bad, Miss VanDusen!"

She'd have 'em pump 'er tree-top high,
Then slide half out with one long cry,
And dangle there against the sky—
Oh gosh, that Et VanDusen!

They'd all rush in when she swung back
And grab her, so she wouldn't whack;
And old Doc Mintz would cry: "Stand back!
Give air to Miss VanDusen!"

She tried to faint on Bender Knopp,
But he backed up and let 'er drop,
(They'd just been lawing 'bout a crop—
Him and old Hank VanDusen).

Then Et stiffed right out on the ground,
And never moved nor made a sound.
“She’s puttin’ on,” they whispered round;
“Guess we know Et VanDusen.”

So they sent me for brother Jeem,
Playing first base on the team.
“Oh, Et’s fell out the swing!” I scream.
“Oh, — pfumph!” says Jeem VanDusen.

STARUCCA DAN

CALM down traveler; you're too fat
Round the midriff. Here's yer hat.
We most had conniption,
Fearin' he would rip you one.
Siddown now an' listen hard;
Boys'll hold 'im in the yard,
An' see he gets a sizely snack
Of Orlo's yearling applejack.
Whew! I'm glad I see your face
Even-sided, and in place.
Man aliving! when you know
Who you elbowed off yer toe
You'll light out for Binghamton
On the first caboose they run.

For that's Dan
Gallivan,
Prize horned buck
Of Starruc;
Blue steel pointed,
Double-jointed,
Undefeated quarryman.

He's built right up from the ground,
Wisdom teeth the whole way round,
Hot oil tempered through and through—
Gosh! to own the luck of you.
If 'ed had one drink more or less
We'd be huntin' your address.

When aliquorin' up just right
There's a point where he's perlite;
Next he grows rampageous,
Wanderin'—bilin' for a muss;
Look around for cover—then
Bring on yer Suskahanner men.

When Dan
Gallivan
Goes amuck
Up Starruc,
The lads lay out
Like fried trout.
He's our tested
Pigeon-chested
Champeen rowing quarryman.

Here's Dan now. Say, stranger, we
Liked yer pep, but hark t' me:
Slip right through this kitchen door
An' make for Suskee fast, before—
Why yer coat off? Grab 'em both!
I'm town constable—on oath
To hinder murder—holy bombs!
At it like a pair of toms.
There's the stove down. Water, Or!
This ain' no ornery barroom quar'l.
Dan druv in a corner? Wow!
That roun' back little man kin row.
O—ouch! he's pastin' Danny—whee!

Flat out. Come on—who's helpin' me?
We can't leave 'im losin' blood—
Just because he ain't no good.

Warm here, whew!
Well, that's through;
Things all end.
Join me friend,
Right up here.
Only beer?
You'll soon know
All Lanesboro:
This burg's yours.
That dose cures
Ramping Dan
Gallivan;
One big bubble,
Houndin' trouble,
Full o' pizen,
Terrorizen
All the town,
Miles aroun'.
He wa'n't no real champeen—an'
Not even a good quarryman.

THE NEEDLE'S EYE

THE needle's eye that does supply—

You!—I am steady now, thanks—why
Your bruited death at the Chateau?
But down awhile; enough to know
Which longing makes it hard to die.

The thread that runs so truly—

Intoiled again? I sent you free;
Your words: To plunge the seas of Chance.
It needed that half-death, and France,
To feel the power of your decree.

There's many a lass that I've let pass—

Some cleft in every heart's cuirass.
Your promise—never to return?
War cancels, re-enthrones; we learn
Won barriers boldly to repass.

But now I have got you!

Save the inwall of pain and rue.
You would law and time outbrave?
I come across the world to crave
The prisonment of being true.

And they bow so neat; and they kiss so sweet—

Think you I hover in retreat,
Aloof, unbid, this amorous year?

Unwed; enough. I only, dear,
Bring youth and loving to your feet.

We do intend before we end—

They listen; when 't is over wend
Among the willows by the race.
Our heaven is glowing in your face.
We block the reel? Your pardon, friend.

To have this couple meet again.

*The needle's eye
That does supply
The thread that runs so true;
There's many a lass
That I've let pass—
But now I have got you!*

UNCLE JOHN

UNCLE JOHN is dead at home,
Five feet down in yellow loam.
Spite of all the speaker said
Instant between live and dead
Form adamantine barriers.
As the swift gray change occurs
Friends and lovers inly know
They must to the living go,
Finding there in thoughts of men
Those who will not come again.

In youth I sought him with a scroll:
"Ungenerous the mother's dole;
How change the master's record here
To gain full wage before the year?"
"Do you know any way?" said he,
And drove crude honor into me.

Anon came smirch of fair renown.
Floods bore my timber fortune down.
Home burned, care lined, heart's inmate died—
Till fear walked silently beside.
"We all come through—in time; hold on.
You're still in place," said Uncle John.

How well he stood that withering fall
'Gainst the red line and choking pall,
When young men gathered in the town
To watch the old hill trunks crackling down.
I see again the ashen head,

The woodsman skill, dure faith that lead:
"Your tools and shouts and liquor tire;
We only fight big fire with fire."

He drew the full-grown perch at will,
Stroked phœbe on the window-sill,
Unto his hand hurt children came,
He hired the indigent and lame,
Dogs let him pull with humorous whine
The festering quills of porcupine;
Yet on his forehead like fresh char
Shone the long blue-white bayonet scar.

Whenever the tired crowdiers moan
Too loud within these aisles of stone
I can outdraw in dreams and be
With him beneath the hickory tree,
Where chore and destiny could wait
The measured ringing of the quait,
Through afternoons so loath to pass
That Time for once dozed in the grass.

Lie easy, Uncle John, the breeze
Is purring in your orchard trees.
Below Kim's Island old bass leap
And sprayings of remembrance keep;
That youngling eagle o'er the bar
Will waft some memory afar,
And every youth who saw your face
Goes on the way with surer grace.
'T was good to die; there are no tears
For eighty well-behoben years.

HICKORY DANCE

PEG along, Rodney; chaw your cud and bear it.
Day's work only fittens me to cut a pigeonwing.
They're puttin' out the parlor stove; children in the
garret—

And Iry is a pickin' on the old D-string.

Four men holdin' a red headed feller;
Somebody stepped on Garry Wefer's hound.
Dog to the barn, and Garry in the cellar—
Lady in the center and seven hands around.

They've bored Ol's barrel o' black-cherry cider,
In a little longer there'll be a little fight.
Whoa, Curly! You're a champeen glider.
Bucks double-shuffle—alamand right.

Iry is aridin' on the old yellow fiddle;
Eyes like a nazarite dying in a trance.
Nigger in the corn, and hi-diddle-diddle!
Gents in the middle and ladies take a dance.

Charlie Bok chokin' on a piece o' peanut-brittle;
Tried to make a flimflam, buying out the town.
Just found a mitten in the maple sugar kittle—
Balance on the corner and cut 'er right down.

There's a whine comin' in the old pine timber,
Now all together till the purlines ring.
Choose a gent, ladies, get 'im going limber,
Roll your deceivin' eye—cheat or swing.

Two straw ox-loads came from Honey Holler.
More with the widow is sweatin' for the heft.
Time to buckle up, and loosen Eddie Bowers' collar—
Turn your lover twice around, grand right and left.

Your left foot's draggin' there, last half hour;
Don't be dancin' like a Randolph man.
Free-for-all! pick a favor-ite flower,
Whirl away outside—kiss 'em if you can.

Parlor floor awaverin'; never mind the plaster.
A little more rosum, Iry! Who said late?
Whee! fatty Mayo's down; give it to 'em faster!
Balance your pardner and swing 'em out straight.

Big Maggie Utter has fallen in a dizzy;
Slosh on the water, for there 's very little air.
Don't lose the figure, here 's Tuscarora Lizzie—
Promenade across the hall, an' you know where.

* * * * *

Roosters acallin', morning in the valley.
I go plowing rutabaga ground.
But all day long I'll be dreaming of my Sally,
Jigging in the center, with seven hands around.

RED ROCK SPREE

HANK OLER'S woman had 'er carpets up
For a general cleaning,
And as they were pullin' from a quick-hash sup
We come intervening.
Sooner'n they could pucker a mouth to whine
Iry's fiddle was asquealing —
So him and the missus they bucked up fine,
And the whole down stairs went reeling.

*First couple down the center lead,
Lady to the right an' gent to the left;
More style and action is all you need—
Turn 'em on the corner.
I've come 'way from Belmont Pike
Sadly to remind you
There'll never be another one seem just like
The girl you left behind you.*

Soon they was argerin' politics,
And a loud-spoking feller from the Highland
Said there wouldn't be so many schemish tricks
If some folks stayed on a island.
Dinny Cavanaugh leaped to the floor,
Ready to fight creation;
Lucky came the whistle of 24—
And we all rushed down to the station.

All wanted pardner with the new school-marm,
But none of 'em dast go over;

So they sat around frettin' and talking farm,
 Wondering how to mov 'er.
Cross-eyed Galloway sauntered in,
 Full of nerve and cider—
He went right over with a cat-fish grin
 And sat on the bed beside her.

Hank 'lowed he couldn't do that way there
 Without a introduction.
Galloway give 'im a red-eyed stare,
 And it looked like heluva ruction.
Right in the middle the bed-cord broke,
 And a couple o' fat girls fainted;
Out o' the scramble and general choke
 They all come up acquainted.

*Second lady down the center go;
 Bow-kneed gent will follow.
Shake-a-leg Bernie or they will know
 You're from Smokey Hollow.
Ripple of ribbon for a girl,
 Hair-oil for a dandy—
Nothing ever holds in curl
 Through a Red Rock randy.*

Elsie Killifer thought she knew
 How to fetch on Oliver Borum,
So she flirted open with a Great Bend Jew,
 And fancy-danced before 'em.

But when Ol says, you have hurt my pride—
And I think you meant sarcasm;
She clinched her fingers with 'er thumbs inside
And keeled right over in a spasm.

Then Mrs. Killifer flopped down too,
Howling, O my daughter!
And them as managed the main halloo
Saw she got most of the water.
But Eph the caller wouldn't let 'em stop,
Yells—each one grab yer scorner!
Swing 'em dizzy till their ear-rings drop,
An' balance on the corner!

Back in the kitchen a row began,
Over penny-ante.
Somebody swatted a Kirkwood man—
And the langwidge sounded Dante.
Three-finger Biederman elbowed in,
Says 'e, what's all the trouble?
When he come out on the side of 'is chin
Was some consid'able bubble.

*Third couple down the center lead.
The river-fog comes warning.
This half hour shows your breed—
Never care for morning.
Iry is sleeping down to 'is wrist;
Look at Marvie Warner!
I'll take another if you insist—
Whirl 'em off the corner!*

Hank tore in with features dire,
Yaller-pale and trimbly:
Save the women—the house 's afire,
All around the chimbly!
Eph the caller-off gayly sings:
On with the Paris Lancers!
All these exter-aneous things
Go to the sofy-dancers.

*Last couple down the center wend,
Languorous eyes adorn 'er;
Maid and memory come to end,
By many a sober corner.
Rolicum, orum, weery O!
Merry the hour you prest her,
Cozy tight in a buffalo,
Over the hills to Lester.*

AUCTION

“**F**ORTY I hear—who’ll make it the half?
Fifty—seventy—who says one?
They have rocked the same since love begun.
One-ten now for the maple crib.
Going—going!—that, young man,
Was the merriest bid you’ll ever make.
For a babe’s cry and a woman’s laugh
Girdle the world and keep it true;
And all from a poorman’s rib.
(Another is blushing somewhere here)
Forty—one-forty—who’ll cry two?
I see little ones smile and wake;
Who knows the greatness of afteryear
This old cradle yet may hold?
One-forty—going, at forty—sold!”

Conover, being too soon born they say.
Lay there two years, doubting to live or die.
I wonder if Aunt Harmony was glad
To have raised him so—when all the valley seethed
Around his turmoiled middle years. Was the power
All bounden in that meagre pint of cells,
Or did he garner from us, and the hills?

Coming this morning over Blueberry,
Down the new dug-road where his will had way,
Sudden I felt great sorrow he was gone,
Who had fought me all a lifetime with strange joy,

Won land, rule, office, woman—well, you know.
Then it came: that all the people gathering here,
And others far away, had heartier lives
Because Aunt Harmony saved him in the crib.

“The yellow fiddle! Hand me the bow.
Ah, for a friend to stay so true!
I could draw the soul from it long ago,
When I beaved Marie on the Ouleout.
Three is the offer—the half—make it four!
You buy no trinket of wood and glue,
But memory and the heart of song,
River bird warble and poet lore,
And throb of dance in midnight rout.
Only five for a famous violin
That has quavered you glee the valley long?
Six now—and a quarter—the half—say seven!
Who wakens the spirit here within
May hold a bit of heaven.
Bid joy till the last long bow is drawn;
Going at seven?—once—twice—gone!”

On Monday morning of the day he died—
The old lady tells, and neighbors heard it too—
Myron got out and took the violin,
(His feet stone-cold, and trying hard for breath)
Smelled it and fondled every feature over;
And then with face aflush played slow three tunes—
Zip Coon, Doxology and Money Musk,
In tones that none had ever heard before.

First time I saw him in a harvest dance
At Tuscarora ere the mill burned down.
We quarrelled and were parted by the girls—
How clearly I remember the two girls.
He had a daunting movement of the head,
And somehow we all knew a man had come.

“Who bids fair for the walnut bed?
Four-square standing the hundred year.
One dollar, sir?—no charity;
Generations foregathered here,
And there’s honor if only in human life.
Borned and loving, tired and dead,
Tangled childer and new-brought wife
Gladly sank to its cloistered peace.
Two—and fifty—the quarter—three?
Hardly one curly panel’s worth
To the opulent city artisan.
Bid up! for the commonest friend of man
All the old way from quivering birth
To welcome deep surcease.
Buy rest and kindness—sovereign cures.
Four-ninety—ninety and going—yours!”

When the big fire broke through in eighty-three
The folks came down red-eyed with smoke and fear,
Until they sent for Myron Conover
At Montrose on the Jury. Four wild days
He raged around the valley head with arms
And scorched face swathed in dripping gunny-sacks.

When all was safe we brought him on some poles
To this same bed; and now I seem to hear
The pitiable choking cry the woman gave.

I would not care to be an auctioneer,
Dealing with wreckage and the close of things.
Myron is gone; but I shall hold the dream
Of how he glowed in Tuscarora dance,
And called us leading there against the flame.

HARFORD FAIR

GOING down to Harford Fair—
Hay! Sheer off that wheel!
Red buggy and a morgan mare,
Oats all in and nothing sore
On the mind—what earthly more
Worth hankering? Say, smarty, you
Mayn't know who you're talking to;
Clear away there, through or bust!
We ain't gnawin' no one's dust—
Hang on an' don't squeal.

At 'im lady! All right Flo,
Stiddy—put your nose
On 'is tail-board. He don't know
You're quarter Hambletonion—
This razoo is just begun.
See that widening round the curve?
Wait my kitten, hold your nerve.
Race-track steppin' don't scare us—
Out now, Florie, leave this muss.
O girl, there she goes!

In the ditch—so that's your game.
Cling to me, Meliss.
Anyway, it's all the same.
Get over there! We country scrubs
Can do a little lockin' hubs.
See Flo's ears, and that low back.

Whow! I hope an ex don't crack.
Where is 'e? Broke and runnin' wild;
You'll pick next time, my sweet town child,
 Something easier'n this.

Sh—my beauty; musn't chafe.
 Why so trembly, girl?
Hang right on till you feel safe.
Nothing strange to lose a hat
In a scimmages like that.
I was hoping it would last;
You and me and going fast,
Samultaneous and close,
Pretty near an overdose—
 Made my young brain whirl.

Last fall I was here alone.
 Golly, see the crowd!
When you drove in with Iver Stone
I grew prickly hot and swore
To have a dandy rig before
Next Fair-time. In this whole fuss
See anyone ashading us?
And you all rose and dignified
Sitting fairly by my side,
 Makes a feller proud.

Gangway, neighbor—back up there.
 Want the earth and sky?
You lay a finger on that mare

Or touch her bridle, I'll come down
An' they won't know your face in town.
All right, Melissy, I'll stay cool,
But no pink-collared drug-store fool
Can gaze at you that way an' grin
'Thout being liable to win
 A sober looking eye.

There's Aunt Mine and Uncle Prout.
 Auntie, here's the girl
I was raving so about.
Saw us? Where'd we pass your load?
Skinned everything along the road.
Your old coon-dog living still?
M'lissy goes to Factoryville,
Knows languages and everything,
Play melodion and sing
 To make your eye-teeth curl.

Let's go try the nigger's head,
 So's to get unwound.
Quarter's worth—that's what I said.
Wish they were regulation balls.
Count my cigars. If that coon squalls
I take the money back—room here!
Hi—I! See that one burn his ear?
On the dome! He's turnin' pale.
Ha! wish you're back in Montrose jail?
 What's the crowd around?

Suskehanner band just come;
 Kelly on the snare.
Wait till he gets a nip o' rum.
Team loose! 'Scuse me—now's a chance
I'm all right—except the pants.
Who threw water on my shirt?
Don't sniffle, Lissie, I ain't hurt.
Stopped 'em? They was going hot
For that orphan group—who's got
 Safety pins to spare?

Well, if there ain't Peever Wynn,
 Whiffleing away
On that brindle violin.
Two things never do grow old—
Fiddler's sloted eyes, and gold.
Uncle Fergus used to say:
Get well-off, or laze and play;
Worst is half-way, to be prest
By a collar at the breast
 All the livelong day.

How the people's faces beam,
 Kindlier and free.
'Specially the women seem
Turned years younger. See Ort Hume
Sideling widow Immerbloom;
Line-fence quarrels disappear
When odds come together here.

Maybe all our hates would pass
Getting folks out on the grass
Acting naturally.

* * * * *

Coming out from Harford Fair—
Scrumptious day, Meliss.
Prize geranium in your hair,
Eyes sweet-weary—Here you, Flo!
Hungry-homesick? Well then, go.
Fair-day comes but once a year—
Now I've caused a shiny tear,
Swear I only meant in fun,
Oughtn't be so mad for one
Little slanting kiss.

COUSIN EBER TINKLEPAUGH

WHEN cousin Eber Tinklepaugh
Came to live with us and me,
My dog Nippur went and lay
His nose on Eber's twisted feet
And left me all alone to play.
And early that same afternoon,
When I was shished so he could nap,
The old cat gone since yesterday
Brought seven brand new kittens down
And nursed them in the beggar's lap.
Ma prayed hard that night and looked
Wide-eyed at me and tried to tell
How God took many things away
From some poor children so that he
Could give them wondrous faculties
That make the world more pure and sweet,
And how we should be always glad
When numerous dumb animals
Born with no souls or consciences
Found loving friends; but I was mad.

Next Sunday we had riley words
And so I hit him on the head
Like you would any other boy,
But he turned kind of bluey-gray
And breathed like minnies going dead.
Nippur grabbed my leg and pa
Walked round the room and finally said

Perhaps I'd better go away
To boarding school where wild galoots
Got discipline—and often licked
By older boys; till I went out
Behind the hen-house wall and kicked
A copper-toe off my new boots.

We all grew friendly after while,
In winter by the stove, and I
Could tell him almost any lie
And watch his wrinkly face to know
Whether it would cry or smile—
Everything went through him so.
But just when sugar-time was come
Eber coughed and had to go
To a sanitarium.
I wisht he was here again—
No one now to bring things to;
No one wonders what I've found.
Nippur smells the chair and then
Sags his ears and mopes around,
And evenings everyone is glum.
They say he goes bare in sunshine
At the San—and sucks raw eggs.
Ma prays strength for him at bed,
And got all sniffly when I said
I could lend him some of mine—
I wisht he was here again.

HOUND

Ouw—ouw—ah-ar-r-ouw!
Straight over the ridges now,
North into night and snow,
Through hills I do not know
The Lanesboro big fox goes.
Blood of my ears and tail
Drops frozen along the trail;
Between raw stinging toes
Drive the stubble and stone.
And the lessening slaver dries
Till my worn voice whimpers and dies;
Yet I seem to be not alone—
And I cannot fail.

Ouw—ah-ouw—ah-ar-r!
I follow near or far.
For he led me wrongfully up
His stench on a moistened wind,
Slittered my ear and grinned—
And I but a wambling pup;
Worried me into the wet,
Playing along the shore,
Till my mother came over the moor—
And we never forget.

Ah-ouw—ur-r—ouw-ouw!
Through laurel thicket and slough
And trick of the icy stream

I hold him here in the nose—
Chief of our ancient foes.
Sometimes I stagger and dream
Of home in the river clove,
And the brown bowl by the stove.
Then a curling loin-pain grips
The cry from stiffening lips;
Through the snow-lit forest wan
A scent comes down the breeze,
New power springs in the knees—
And I go on.

THE LITTLE BROTHER'S RIDE

A BALLAD OF THE ALLEGHANIES

WAKE, Homer, wake! your clothes are warm,
Your father brings the red mare down;
And you must ride by Mount Malone
For William Bain of Travortown.

“Quick, boy! it is your sister Nell.
Drink this hot tea to make you bold.
I hear the red mare at the door,
And 't is black dark and growing cold.”

They tied the tippet round his neck;
They placed him on the sorrel mare.
He spoke no work nor turned around,
But straight into the dark did stare.

“Now ride her fair to Mount Malone,
And lightly till the road bends down;
Then drive her for your sister's life—
If she drops dead in Travortown.”

“And go to William Bain and say,
Our sick Nell swoons and waits to die.
She calls for him with her last breath:
'Bring William Bain,' is all her cry.”

The mother sobbed when he was gone.
“He looked so small and white,” she said;
Then wiped the tears and smiled and went
To watch beside the daughter's bed.

He rode her fairly to the height,
Where from the cliffs the hoot-owl called.
Quick shadows leapt across the path,
And once o'erhead the wildcat squalled.

He rode her lightly through the woods
To where the road bends to the plain,
Then broke a bough from overhead
And wound his left hand in her mane.

The watchdog howled, and he was gone.
The startled sleepers woke in dread:
"Who rides like that to Travortown
Rides side by side with fear," they said.

"Who rides so hard through this dark night
Hears moans, or sees a fresh wound bleed.
One of three loads is on his heart—
Stayed birth, or death, or some foul deed."

So Homer rode by farm and wood.
He had no need of whip or word;
The red mare felt the fear that clung,
And knew the hope that in him stirred.

They heard the village clock strike one
The village lights were in their eyes,
When struggling up the last long hill
She staggered down and did not rise.

“My sister Nell is sick to die,
And I am come for William Bain.”
“He’s at the home of Edna Hale
Where yonder light gleams in the lane.”

He found the house of Edna Hale,
And two that stood within the shade.
They drew and kissed a fond good night,
And still to kiss again they stayed.

“I come for you, I come for you;
Our Nellie faints and waits to die.
She calls for you with her last breath,—
‘Bring William Bain,’ is all her cry.”

Along the lonely homeward way
The little brother stumbled back.
Strange voices whispered from the trees,
And gray shapes thronged the forest track.

In the cold pass he fell and slept
To dream of summer play and Nell,
Until a horseman o’er him leapt
And thudded sparkling through the dell.

The morning frost lay on the fields
When he came down by Mount Malone.
They heard a low knock at the door
And found him lying on the stone.

The mother claspt him to her breast,
 "Ah, God! how small and white!" she said.
He moaned as one in fever-sleep,
 "And is she dead? Is Nellie dead?"

The mother kissed through her own tears.
 "She only lives to greet the morn.
Her hand in William Bain's is laid.
 She dies as fair as she was born."

The boy sprang up as from a sleep
 And cried as with a sudden pain,
Then ran into the deathbed room
 And struck the arm of William Bain;

And took his sister's hand and stood
 Breathless as she, and all as pale.
"I found him by her door," he cried.
 "He stayed to kiss with Edna Hale."

"Oh boy, my boy! what have you done?
 You've killed her now; she passes now!
She breathes no more—the pallor creeps;
 The death-sweat gathers on her brow."

But slow the stricken girl rose up,
 And life-fires wavered in her eye.
As from the grave they heard that voice:
 "I will not die—I will not die."

The life-fire burned in her wan cheek,
And slow and solemn came her cry:
"Go back, go back to Edna Hale!—
Now hold me, brother, hold me nigh."

And through the stroke that wakes the will,
And will that lifts the sinking heart,
All by the little brother's ride
She lived, to do the woman's part.

CARAWAY

O TO lie in caraway!
And hear the ticking millions creep
In through their stemmy jungle hold,
And feel the worms move in the sod.
While ox-eye daisies twirl and nod
Across the dimming rift of day.
Then out upon the roads of air
In a dream-car to gayly fare,
Advancing brigandly and bold
Along the woodsy edge of sleep;
And at the rasping dooryard call
Never to cringe nor move at all:
“Edwin, come out and stir the hay—
We know you’re in the caraway!”

Life ripened in the caraway,
By sun and mellow juices drawn
From cells of rank primeval stores.
All grace of schools, and firming chores,
Gave less a form of man to me
Than this brown earth’s rich disarray.
Years crowd in futility
Like an immuring desert stream.
We own our heavens are wrought of dream,
Yet murmur when the dreams are gone.
Where round of boys have gladly lain
Maybe the flair would come again,
Conniving even Time’s delay—
To lie again in caraway.

SEND ME WITH BEAUTY

PRONE drunk with youth and noon of summer day,
The sky drawn low through clover frame above,
A white cloud slowly spreads to filmiest gray
And vanishes like morning dreams of love.

Gazing into the blue unfathomable,
Infinite, tomb of longings—I would know
If this brief bodying of the beautiful
Is all, now wholly lost to all below.

The pliant spheres reune at some far height
To sail the heaven in more resplendent form,
Flared by the dawn to warn the lingering night,
Or arched with glory in the passing storm.

Old Beauty in and out with love or wrath,
Dance-wreathing space and sun and lowly eye,
Flames in the alley, blocks the mountain path,
Weaves on through life and death—and cannot die.

O God or force or mother or dumb cause,
That brings us ever to an alien day,
If there may be no certitude nor pause,
Send me with Beauty on the unknown way.

ON THE WAY

PASSION

THE past is dust of withered leaves.
Beyond,—beyond? Ah, kiss.
All wealth and lore of ages lies
Here in the round depths of your eyes.
The proof the potion and the prize
Are in the hour—and this.

THE WORK

Cold, cold, my boy? The day is in the east.
Come, strive with me here on this ledge's top.
I am the giant Sloth; put forth your best
To hurl me over. Good! you weld and grow
Like the young oak; three years and I'll not say,
"Come, cast me off." Now like a man you throb;
No borrowed fitful flare from torch or sun,
But inner heat that follows act and breeds
The greater action—inner fire that lights
A way to make of morning dream the fact.

The sun now through the flexure of the hills
Pours his red life along the valley floor;
And every flower from the bowed rest of night
Rises jewel-crowned to meet the day's emprise.
How the light smiles upon that crescent plain
Beyond the river; there lies truth for dream.
Ten years ago—another morn like this—

I stood alone upon the height and saw,
Where corn glistens and the soft grain waves,
The dark miasmal tangle of the swamp;
Looked through myself into far years, and warmed;
Watching foul mists enwreathe the visioned change.

And I have lived this decade—have found life,
Making it leap across the desert's edge,
Urging a better kind into the marsh,
Lived in the deed (in heaven maybe) and felt
The old unrest go off like summer rain.
Through the crushed embers of the passion fires
Stronger with years the homely loves illumine,
And all dissevering forces of hot youth
Bend to the current of a common good.

O Time, go lingeringly! I have been given
The place, the eye to see, the love, the will.
There where the stream roars down the rift and eats
Into the mellow bank the mill shall rise,
Quick wheels sing a worthier song, and lights
Flame in the far-off village, dimmed eyes smile
And youth bend readier to the wisdomed page.
Till you, alone—another morn like this—
Shall see the hamlet crowd the fecund fields,
And hear the brave bells welling through the hills
The herald of a broader, kindlier way.

The moment glows. My spirit mounts and calls
For holiday and song, and yet—the work;
It lies there in the valley, and we go.

For this may be the white high day of life;
The richest, or the holiest—or the last.

EVENING

Then gently as the bells are rung
And tired questers gather home,
The old day spreads upon our lives
Its monochrome.

WHY DO I LOVE HIM

WHY do I love him?
Tell the wind yonder
Stroking the river
To beauty aquiver
Never to wander
From the cool hill,
Rose not to spill
Heart's fragrance, fire
Shrink from the tinder.
No spur of will
May loosen, thought hinder;
How can love ponder?
Destiny higher?
I am behoven,
Mergent, inwoven,
Through—not above him.

All to come after?
Fair and storm-broken
Days for our living.
Spurn the misgiving;
Worst dire unwroken
Flees from an hour
Breasted with power.
He may go weary,
Slacken and lour
Under the years?
So I've had wooing,

Shared glowings and tears,
In scorn of undoing—
Peace may endear me
If only I hear then
Clamor of children
Running in laughter.

EVENING AT WYSOX

SMILE on, my little one, dimple in the hollows;
Maybe your crinkle-nose smells the shaken hay.
Can you hear the pulley-whine, and the tweeting
swallows?

Your eyes are like the sky in wells, fairest April day.
Bubble, bubble, rosy mouth,
The river sings, the wind is south,
Father waves upon the load—be laughing while you
may.

O, the tears! my simple one, and the piteous quaver.
Did a purple goblin peer above the door?
Sob out your misery—men are little braver;
Many joys of living come with sighing cares before.
I hear the showered river purr,
A wind is sougning in the fir—
Come unto thy bosom-home and never trouble more.

Nuzzle in, my hungry one, clutch with every finger;
You may give the kindest hurt woman ever knew;
Years away the memory of tiny nails will linger
Where I pray you draw from me the innocent and
true.
Towser sniffles up to see
Through our age-old mystery,
But even daddy ne'er can know the love of me and
you.

Sigh away, my weary one, sleep is coming after
With leaden-gray to eyelids, pale amber for your
brows.
Day has given fear and change, growthiness and
laughter,
The cows are in the stanchion, sweet clover in the
mows.
Our river siths to sudden rain,
And goes broodingly again—
Three we lie, happily as ever earth allows.

SOFTLY YOU ENTERED

SOFTLY you entered by the gate,
A girl to shelter and caress,
A fragile joy of curve and tress—
And now you wield the shears of fate.

Holding with insurgent dreams
And curious thoughts that run and run
Over barriers, to the sun,
And sudden dazzling spirit gleams.

An evening when athwart the west
You watched the chromes of heaven flare
I saw the wind play in your hair
And the sweet liftings of your breast.

You have quick tears for little wrongs.
Did the lame bird against your cheek
Whisper a word I may not speak?
Are his lost carols in your songs?

Sometimes in quiet hours I see
Deep in your eyes the strength of Rome,
With Indian splendors dome on dome,
And wisdom of old Araby.

The dust of rose and crumbled urns
Faints in new fragrances of youth;
Your brow is snowy calm with truth,
But under, age-old passion burns.

The maid that goes austere, elate,
Along the twilight mountains pale,
Will yet run crying to the vale
And wilding beckon for her mate.

THE DIVIDE

K NOW why forester Neal turned right
Where two dim valleys lay aslant,
And strode unreasoning, jubilant
Down to the woman that night;

And you may dally with war and love,
Fill dreams, chart lives, see each one whole—
Or why she chanced to sing out her soul
As he paused on the rock above:

*I will go with you as the rose of dawn
Upon the forehead of the bolden day;
Bring the wild love that bears me from the moor—
Adrift, away.*

*I will be with you all the sullen noon,
Sore where you bruise, and gladsome in your pride;
Hold the worn love that queries nor repines,
To eventide.*

*I will lead with you down the sunken road,
Unto the river, in the waning light;
Wait the old love that trembles through the dark
Of the last night.*

Three stood under the sycamore,
Poised—the ranger, smiling, fair,
The gnarled brown cove-man from his lair,
And rose-dark Elinor.

Elinor plucked by the older man
From her lowland dreaming to grub and clean—
Declining to know what some things mean,
As a passionate woman can.

Two felt smoldering life resurge,
Through clarion days. No dreams were told;
Only eye-gleams leaping bold,
And the curious waves that merge.

All might have passed if the forester,
Called afar, had not overheard
Blow and stifle and ugly word,
And the tremulous cry of her.

And where he had come but to say good-by
In the high cove's quiet afternoon,
Were blood and curses and choking swoon—
And some destinies awry.

By the spring he laved to cool disguise,
With a knife-point broke in the shoulder-bone,
Rising to meet for the first alone
A woman grown all eyes.

Then silently upward with even pace—
New life in the mountain day's old wine;
Till midway over the long incline
They rushed to a mad embrace.

And turning later to look once more
From the high divide on that scarred past,
Saw the dun forest fire-cloud fast
Drive toward the cabin door.

“Follow back—I run,” said the ranger Neal.
“He is broken and lies with heavy breath;
And the red tongue lapping down is death.”
But she clasped his thighs like steel.

Caught in throe of a turbulent will,
Raised and smothered and overthrown,
His echoing footfall left her lone
As the charred pine of the hill.

Know why Elinor Gray went south
To lights awink on the valley side,
As the visioned bright years came and died
In lines about her mouth;

And you may barter gleam for gold,
Fend fortune, toy with the germs of fate—
Or why from the buffet of love and hate
She turned to childhood's fold.

THE HOLLOW FIELD

SOMEWHERE the lilies bow to her,
And the proud rose by her carest
Exultant leaves the mothering earth
To fold and die upon her breast.

Across the oaten hollow field
She sang into the misted morn,
And I would give the years to be
Where that bright day and love were born.

The flowered minstrel summer hours,
The tides of youth that press and yield,
Past like old music heard in dreams—
And left the lonely hollow field.

If love could close as love begins,
Or flame to earth with martyr cry,
How bravely would we run to live—
If love could only bravely die.

MICHAEL ANGELO AND THE STUDENT

ON the mantel crowded low
 Stood the bust of Angelo.
Underneath, a country youth
Lay beaten in the maze of truth;

Inert as one beside his shield
Moulds to the hollows of the field
Where through murky close of day
Battered legions crawl away.

He heard the homing clamor die
Into an ailing infant's cry,
And bells of faith being sweetly tolled
For penitences manifold.

Then slept to dream of hours that drew,
Bird-sung, from slopes of morning dew;
And rising with hope's new ingress
Cried to his garret's emptiness:

Sun, and the river's yellow light,
Love's glance by day, her arms by night,
Are mine!—nor all the tomes of age
Shall fend me from my heritage.

Warm blood again like April rains
Drives at the walls of my flat veins;
I will—he paused as one that hears
A dead mate call from vanished years.

A slender moon-ray's fining grace
Had stol'n athwart the master's face,
And brought the glow of genius there
As when all souls he did outdare.

The gray lips moved as to a word,
And then the tranced student heard:

*Look on the faces
Of them that last
Out of all past,
Climes and races—
Burthened and ghaſt,
Scored as with fire,
Dearth and deſire;
Life's choſen band,
Grimly they ſtand,
Marble and bronze,
In the open places.*

*Toil or brief ſplendor—
Choose ye, and hold.
Love to the bold,
Grace for the tender;
Half is untold
To the bounteous clever.*

*Main of God here
Is that ſlow will
Urging us ſtill*

*Through aging and fear,
Earth and heart's cold.
To endless endeavor;
Never surrender.*

On the mantel hid and low
Stands the bust of Angelo,
And bending there a pallid youth
Seeks again the prisoned truth.

BY A VILLAGE WINDOW

HE is gone by under the flowers;
And I wonder a little at having no tears,
But a press of the joy that grew late years,
In quiet hours.

There over-river the two oaks stand,
Where first I knew he would never know —
Blandly unseeing my lips fire-glow,
To kiss a hand.

Neighborly clear our courses ran;
And a fortune-woman early told:
“You may have lovers till you are old —
And love one man.”

Here on the palsyng slope of life
I'm glad to have twice been nobly wed,
Borne and nurtured, and swathed the dead,
In realm of wife.

His going over is no end;
Last heart's quiver will be a throe
For one held luckier not to know
He could never be friend.

Dreamily far our days outspun;
Now he is memory, and deeds.
I have had what woman needs —
And loved one.

TWO MEN IN A VALLEY

WE toiled for years together by the streams
That wear and shift the glittering sands of gain.
I called him friend, thinking I knew him, well—
His pleasure and his pain.

So like the varying seasons we passed on
Through vales of gloom and radiant avatars;
Wed, buried, quarrelled, fell and rose again
With the abiding scars.

Till, in one hour of flame-lit flood and fear,
Where chance and choice and destiny had part,
I broke through all that I had known, to feel
The red bands of his heart.

Now is the valley nobler fate—our home,
Fuller of light and manlier thrusts of truth.
At times again the flower-smells drift, bees hum,
As in the throb of youth.

A SONG FOR MIDDLE AGE

COME in, swift years, and use me up!
By toil and sport and reeling blow.
Take youth's last drips of overflow;
Drain heart and head—and turn the cup.

The road behind is overlaid.
Here—is but hostel for a day.
All I have learned along the way
Is not to hate nor be afraid.

No more intent to scan the whole.
All things return; there is no haste.
The prayer is not to mire and waste
In some recession of the soul.

So on; till dimming eyes shall see
A moment in the wonted place
A fair hand, or a dead friend's face—
That fading turn to threnody.

Come, years! and tingeing brown to gray
Bring meed of peace, and share of pain.
Then let the hoary gatherer's wain
Find me along the worn highway.

STILLWATER FARMER

THIS is the place,
Under the wind.
Pines on the hill
Bicker and strain,
Riven, thinned.
Lower the pack,
One use for a back
To hover cool ground.
Lie here and dream;
All is not will,
Fervor of brain.
Where are you bound?
Is life a race?

Below in the gorges
Toil and thrown water,
Upland for miles
Islanded ripple.
Here the held stream
Broodingly smiles,
Harkens, turns mother
Fecund and deep.
She is not asleep;
Leaping fish gleam,
Louder the song
Of cricket and bird,
Tropically strong
Springs the shore growth,

Where ten thousand
Rivulets pour
Through mossy sluices
Brown hill juices
Musically down
To the valley floor.
Till loaded with treasure
Leisurely then
She moves to the tryst
Of the lower mountains;
And out from the mist
Of the hemlock glen
In a lunge of new youth
Gayly emerges.

The purple leaf
With dragon-fly on
Is going a third
Round of the eddy.
Maybe the duty
You burn with counts less
Than its drifting beauty.
Call in thought and eye,
You scatter abroad
Like shooting-stars, nowhere;
Not to be somewhere,
Aggregate, steady,
Is early to die
In a sparse unbelief.

You will go down
Where hidden wheels
Churn the pent river
To power and light,
And men in a darkness
Deeper than night
Wearily drain
Essence of fire
From earth the great giver.
And build tier on tier—
Do they add to the brain?
Have they striven above
The old sickness of fear?
Is there more gladness,
Pure splendor of love
In the glittering town?

And you may remember
On a far day,
Straighthen and rest,
Laugh out, see clearer,
Hold your turn dearer—
How you were prest
By a gray farmer
Heedless to stay
With storm bending over,
Through a thrice blest
Noon of September.

Still valleys reward
Their lovers who wait.

For joy of speed
Some must be late.
The generous state
Holds sitters and talkers,
Thinkers apart,
Benign, unafraid,
Hunters and fishers,
Good natured well-wishers
Who fiddle and read;
Blockers of greed
And holders of land
Where brain works with hand—
As we seem to be made.
For who are the high,
The happy and safe,
Successful, enthroned?
Life's a whole,
Follow through
Till they slacken and die,
Naked, condoned;
And the measure shows true
Where lines on the chart
Of the kingly and low,
Day-worker and boss
Cross and recross
As the strands of one cord.

Immured, barren? No.
My road through the clove
Bears a commerce of youth.

Farm, mill, ferry are truth.
Often to rove
Is a form of retreat.
Durable men
Grow from the earth's
Leafage and milk,
Wind-hardened, drilled
For strong peace—warrior-willed.
Even age may be sweet
Where grandchild to sire
Circle one fire
In faith—must you go?

CANOE

HEAVE along, heave along,
Swinging away from care and wrong,
Lift of love and the current strong
 Bearing us on together.
Sway and dip down the eddying tide,
Graze the rock and laughing glide
Out on foamy pool to ride
 Light as a fallen feather.

Let eye meet with eye till fires
Flame and feed on new desires,
And when the lingering kiss expires
 Know that all worth knowing
Still eludes the bookman's quest—
O, ho! he is seeking east and west;
Will he never turn to a shaken breast,
 Nor follow the warm blood's flowing?

Heave along, heave along,
Lift of love and croon of song,
Honor and youth and the current strong
 Bearing us on together.
Drifting under whispering boughs,
Speak the dream, though it end in vows;
For best to a man the world allows
 Is a maiden's heart in tether.

RIVER SONG

FALLING, falling, ever calling,
Day and night and into day;
Nursling of the primal glaciers,
I shall see the world grow gray.

Flowing, flowing, ever growing,
Downward to the sea I glide,
Fed by fountains from the mountains
Where the cool mist-maidens hide.

All this throbbing, murmuring, sobbing
Is my spirit-stir in sleep;
And these bubbles all are troubles
Cast up from the secret deep.

Falling, flowing, never knowing
Turn to doubt nor time to pray,
I am giving to the living
Of my being, all the way.

ONE SUMMER

IN this green vale among the wooded hills
We loved the summer through.
“Answer of dreams, our love is like the day,
That turns upon a fairer world away;
Only be true.”

The heavens were near that night: “Our love,” she
said,
“Shall never end till all these stars are dead.”

We smiled through tears and parted; and the power
That moves us here and there,
Seemed with our lives to play a wanton game,
Driving between us toil and doubt and shame,
And aging care.

“He passed me near—so near, and did not come.”
And one who knew why I had passed was dumb.

I’m here again at evening, and the vale
In starlit slumber lies.

I know at last that all the prizes won
Are winter burdens waiting for the sun
Of your brown eyes.

Sweetheart, come back!—the old stars shine above;
And life holds but one summer and one love.

TOR-TOR

I WENT half waken to the mother's bed
And saw her wandering eye.
"The child is brooding-queer and cold," they said;
"She will not cry."

Morrow, when from the balm of Gilead tree
An oriole first sang,
My hot tears burst their wall of agony
To drown the pang.

Gray chickadee upon my wedding morn
Came calling, tor, tor-taw.
I leant and breathed the river and the corn,
And felt the law.

Full kindly ran the years till on a day
Our hold was swiftly robbed.
The afternoon of burying them away
A cuckoo throbbed.

Sing oriole and flame the orchard marge,
Sad cuckoo hold the wood.
You carry joy and sorrow's deep surcharge
In faith and good.

But best hear at the window as I go
The gray friend's taw, tor-tor;
Feel we two sang awhile, nor grieved to know
What life was for.

FROM THE WARS

THREE BROTHERS

———Cook

———Cook

———Cook

(Wyoming Battle Monument)

THREE young men
Dead on a plain

By a bright river.
Owning no land,
Dreading no law
Nor god or man—
Why did they plan
To die so soon,
With friendly sun
On the hills as ever,
That afternoon?

Not nameless then;
Somewhere a mother
Dowered them well.
And when the red fiends
Poured from the marsh
With finishing yell
Steadily on—
Maybe once again
Brother called brother,
“So long, John!”

A step away
In the forest marge
Love, work and years
Beckoning lay.
But they had quaffed
America's streams,
Seen the embers
Of Liberty fires,
Caught rare gleams,
In the clear light,
Of fairer dawns
And the eagle's flight;
So in that hour
Could do no other
Than on Freedom's flame
Throw life and all—
Even name.

HILL MAN

JOE JERRY hoed in a stony field.
Under a sweltering sun.
The boy and the rock and native weed
Fought for the life in a battered seed,
And the struggle was just begun.

“Get out of the mud and follow me,”
Said the man with better clothes.
“Against you are vermin and drouth and frost;
You anger nature with labor lost—
Come where a fair wind blows.”

But the boy digged on in the stony field,
With the struggle barely begun.
“I put the seed in this ground,” said he;
“I think I had better stay and see
Whatever may be done.”

Joe Jerry quarried and placed the stones
And fitted the timbers true.
Neighbors came with fevered eyes:
“Gold!—pans of gold—out there it lies!
Shall we wait a day for you?”

A love-voice rifted the evening calm,
Singing the death of day.
A tired child came and went with a kiss.
“I have a wife, and a house—and this;
I think I had better stay.”

Red war cried to the souls of men,
There is honor and gain for all.
"I have a dying wife—and these;
I will stay with them, if it so please."
But he went at the second call.

Joe Jerry hoed in a stony field
By the house with the timbers true.
"Come with us, old man!" Yet he gave reply:
"I have friends and use, and a place to lie—
Here I will live it through."

The steadfast hills, the unfaltering stream,
A full-lived, faithful man;
Each morning all in their time and place,
Night hallowing service done with grace—
What more was in the plan?

MANILA BAY

QUICK lights flared on the looming isle,
And red flames blurted into the night;
But the silent man on the cruiser's bridge
Turned not to left nor right.
Eyes that gaze on the unborn years
May not be troubled by lights or tears.

The warm sea hissed to the touch of shell,
And reared on the back of the buried death;
Yet the seaman gray with his tools of war
Slid sullenly past Corregidor,
And was gone like a spirit's breath.
Men that move to the tryst with fate
May never be noisy, and never late.

The harbor glowed to the orient morn;
The men stripped buff, and said no word.
Then down on spluttering fleet and shore
Still as phantoms the gray ships bore,
Waiting the call of the Commodore—
That all the nations heard.
"You may fire when ready," was all he said;
But the enemy's decks grew strangely red.

Out from the narrow channeled throats,
Tense with wrath of the years of wrong,
The little black demons leapt away.

Shrieked and whimpered over the bay,
Crooning a direful song.
Men that hurry to war in ships
May kiss cold faces, with colder lips.

White waved over a battered wall;
The harbor stilled, the banners furled.
Anglo-Saxon, East and West,
Met 'round a wondering world.
When a nation clogs in the wheels of Time,
Comes cursing and crushing—and work sublime.

AMERICA REPAYS

POUR out your treasured Liberty, O States.
The clenched East waits
With surgent breath and eyes across the sea.
Bent low in iron hail
The older nations fail;
The hour is come to prove that we are free.

Three centuries of Europe's chosen blood
In eager flood
Ran through our veins till we are heavy grown.
Now thick with earthy dross,
Fear we its urge and loss?
For so great gift what service may atone?

The calloused, patient toilers of all lands
Tug at their bands,
While farther still the battle clangor rings.
For us the Old World waits;
Dare all—give all, O States,
Strike for the ending of the out-worn kings.

SOLDIER HOME

HE went to war with the kiss of a woman glowing
 Upon his lips like fire;
Swelling the tide of a country's manhood flowing
 The where, through fortune dire,
A tyrant-burdened race was dumbly reaching
Faltering hands to Liberty, and teaching
 The world's desire.

He came from war with the great and lowly thronging
 To glimpse his victor crest.
A nation cried: "Make known thy deepest longing;
 We move at thy behest"—
And waited wondering at the soldier's dreaming.
Came answer: "I would see my own hearth gleaming,
 On her—and rest."

TWO TOGETHER

STAY, and watch the tired day sinking
Below the hill where first we drew
That thin space nearer; I am thinking
How your head to my shoulder—so,
Comes ever new,
Old as wooing
Yet ever new.

In the close hours with you I wonder
How any cause that nealed us one
Could gain by ending two asunder
Who have outgoing joy and grace
Only begun,
Valor of living
But well begun.

For there's other in mating than home and childer,
Loving is more than giving all—
Visions outproving, powers that bewilder,
And above and onward, seeming near,
The spirit call,
Two together
Hearing the call.

Till the bounty fails, and we dis sever
Body and soul in the cosmic play;
But our gladness and work are one forever,
Quivering through new lovers athrong
The grooved highway,
Two by two ever
Down the old way.

GRAY WORLD

THE hue of the world is gray.
Splendor of young eyes,
Storm-bow, oriole, flower,
Blood's red and the rose,
Hill-framed lazulite skies
And the sun-path's gold —
Are fair guests of an hour;
Tremblingly they glide
From our too eager hold
And shade away.

Mainly we come and go
In a somber tone of mist,
Bordering night, wan spaces,
Rock and the endless slime —
Bearing over and through
(Like a color of thought or time)
Birth-cells and all dead faces,
And those no longer kist.
The rarest noon
Flaunting tinted graces
Over morning's rime
Wanes and merges soon
Into afterglow.

Happier those who feel
Early in life's travail
The great winds hurrying by

Colorless, or pale
With spindrift of the plain,
Long fog over seas,
And the infinite dun waste.
Less in vain
Shall seem the immuring haste
Of beauty's hour to these;
Undismayed and hale
Graciously they stand
 Deep in the real.

And joy the more when flare
Autumn, youth and star
Gayly athwart the west;
Signaling back with deed,
Aureole dream, desire—
Love-illumined quest.
For the clearers answer with light,
Glow in the woods, strike fire,
Press where demons lour,
Beam on the edge of night;
Never crying need
Of torch-boy—sunnier days,
Nor a heaven afar;
Till watchers on the tower
Cheer in the morn to see
Their courses through the haze
 Shining fair.

WHEN WINTER COMES

WHEN winter comes the music of the woods,
Save some far-carrying cry
From out the wildest deeps,
Sinks suddenly into an icy sigh,
And nature sleeps.

When winter comes the glistening rivulet,
That all the summer long
From underneath the hill
Sent up unpraised its daily gift of song,
Is hid and still.

When winter comes a silence broods and falls,
As into death. Bend low
And listen: ah, there rings
Through frosted forest-aisles a cadence slow;
The brook still sings.

When winter comes upon my head and thine,
With peace and childhood near,
And hope in sunset skies;
The few who bend and listen still may hear
Faint melodies.

THE FERRY

(*Twenty to Seventy*)

O—VER, o—ver, o—ver!

Ferryman, speed.

Link the new dream with deed.

Out from the somber cove and tethering vines of
home,

Down to the ships, and crowds good natured weaving
narrow gleaming ways—enurge I go,

Over earth's last curve in the afterglow,

Long and free to roam.

Ferryman, speed.

O—ver, o—ver, o—ver!

Ferryman, sing.

Bound by word and ring.

Flower of the valley grown of sweetness out of our hills,

(Gently, ferryman) far she comes in joy to be neighbor,

lover, friend—and beauteous wife.

Velvet the air inbreathes and the vale is rife

With chime of a thousand rills.

Ferryman, sing.

O—ver, o—ver, o—ver!

Ferryman, come.

Be as the river, dumb.

It laved my moist red stains quietly dun and gray.

A simple blow, but iron of the hame sank into his head
as he smilingly bore me down like a serf or cur;
We two there in the quivering hover of her—
So sudden all's wreckage. Away!

Ferryman, come.

O—ver, o—ver, o—ver!

Ferryman, row.

What ails the river flow?

Bend, old man! We ride the race with death.

Her strange eyes drive me halfway wallowing here;
(Ferryman, press with the back—I have power,
gold.)

They were sunken fires, but her feet grew sweetly
cold—

And the thing she would say came breath.

Ferryman, row.

O—ver, o—ver, o—ver!

Ferryman, rest.

(Who knows which hour is blest?)

And watch the leaves going down gayly as ever they
twirled.

For we have had time, and a round of curious life all
told—full gamut, from death to the dance;

Slid through a thousand bickering narrows of chance,
On the brim of a whirling world.

Ferryman, rest.

O—ver, o—ver, o—ver!

Ferryman, wait.

Come early or come late,
All the same to him now in the curly-walnut case.
The waters gurgle and purr by the river-road of his play-
time and peace, and rare bold meteor-gleams;
But the wilding look, and the love and drive, and the
dreams—
Are gone from his face.
O—ver!

MOTHER

WITH death at morn, a mild elation spread
Through all the place; she had been ill so long.
Her funeral day passed with strange energy,
Brave word and song.

Kindness flowed from far unwonted holds.
The hills drew near; fair gold the river shone.
Only the father with an awful face
Sat still alone.

Years ran and laughed with years. The wolf-pack cares
Fled every morning from the front of youth;
Joy in the hour, fear, wrestle, blood, and love—
The clinch of truth.

Then from a height I saw the ends of life;
A woman's footmarks traced my thoroughfare.
Turning to view the path into the west—
She waited there.

Mother of men, forgotten of our prime,
Silent beside us all the upward way,
Lead o'er the plain to where the dun sky soothes
The narrowing day.

To meet no more—hand, brooding look or kiss?
Some heaven then to know how far through me
Flow measured streams of that primeval love—
Her immortality.

And when the dark that is nor night nor shade
Steals down the casement, as the birth-light came,
Like men before I shall behold one face,
And breathe the name.

RIVER MOUTH

SO this is all. I thought to come
Unstartled on the widening place;
Nor feel this tingling of the face,
And the core-fibres numb.

But cleaving out through isle and tor
Send echoing a brave tattoo,
And one full-throated, stern halloo—
As in the gage of war.

Yet something under earthly fear,
Beyond all effort or dismay,
Holds me unblinking in the gray
Slow-eddying silence here.

Welcome a wraith, or lost fly's drone.
Thanks now for all we don't foresee;
I never dreamed that one could be
So utterly alone.

And I am made the less forlore
To feel the hill-waters' fatal urge,
And see strange ocean vapors merge
The dim receding shore.

Only it seems a waste of power,
Augmented pain and crude satire,
To have the heart-burn and desire
Come unto this last hour.

When strengths and virtues manifold,
Mirth, fervor, beauty, courage — all
So autumn kindly wane and fall,
While love grows illy old.

Clearer now it comes through this:
These lingering things were ever best —
Spending, bold forays to the west,
Mother and lover's kiss.

Given the stream to cruise again?
I would slow waters hurry through
To play the rapids—fame or rue—
With eager hearted men;

Follow where outdoor talkers wend,
Moor longer by the village shore,
And oftener pass an honor o'er
To linger with a friend.

Of all the crowd along the way
A crippled chore-man stays supreme,
Who with true word and gay eye-gleam
Memorialized a day.

Evening, near Roaring Spring
Rowed two women lined and gray,
Singing after labor's day,
Laurel blooms to bring.

By Nescopeck (the night—how fair!)
A Syrian maiden ran to me
Crying half in fear and glee
The fire-fly in her hair.

Brawn Meshoppen quarrymen
Roistering at the inn, a hound
Wrongly maimed; the poet found
In Wapwallopen.

And one long yellow afternoon
Enisled where loving parents roam,
Dream-wondering how followed home
The river's doubled moon.

Not memory these—each as a dart
Of being from the darkening past—
Life missiles, they come winging fast
Into my stilling heart.

Where now the townsmen's reddening cheer,
The medaled breast, piled gold and power?
In this bald honest dying hour
They are not here.

Nor largess well received and given,
Sadness outdured, pains that rive;
Only those meagre hours survive
Were fullest loved or striven.

Save as transient Beauty smiled
Unbid above the rutted road,
Where comrades leaning on the load
Nagging time bequiled.

How many miles of smooth and rough,
Hard-footed trails and spaded ground;
With weary thinkings round and round—
O, life was long enough.

I have found little worth in place,
Nor prayer, nor all the skills that fend.
One narrow hope holds through—to end—
With an unbeaten face.

No better chance by Helicon
Or Tiber; here was time and hold.
And all we stirred within the mould
Inures and carries on.

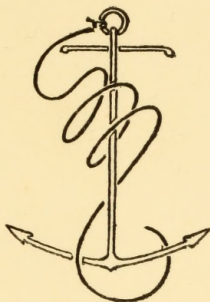
Gone are the querying and chill
That trembled through an hour ago.
Sweet calm! One needs a death to know
The turbulence of will.

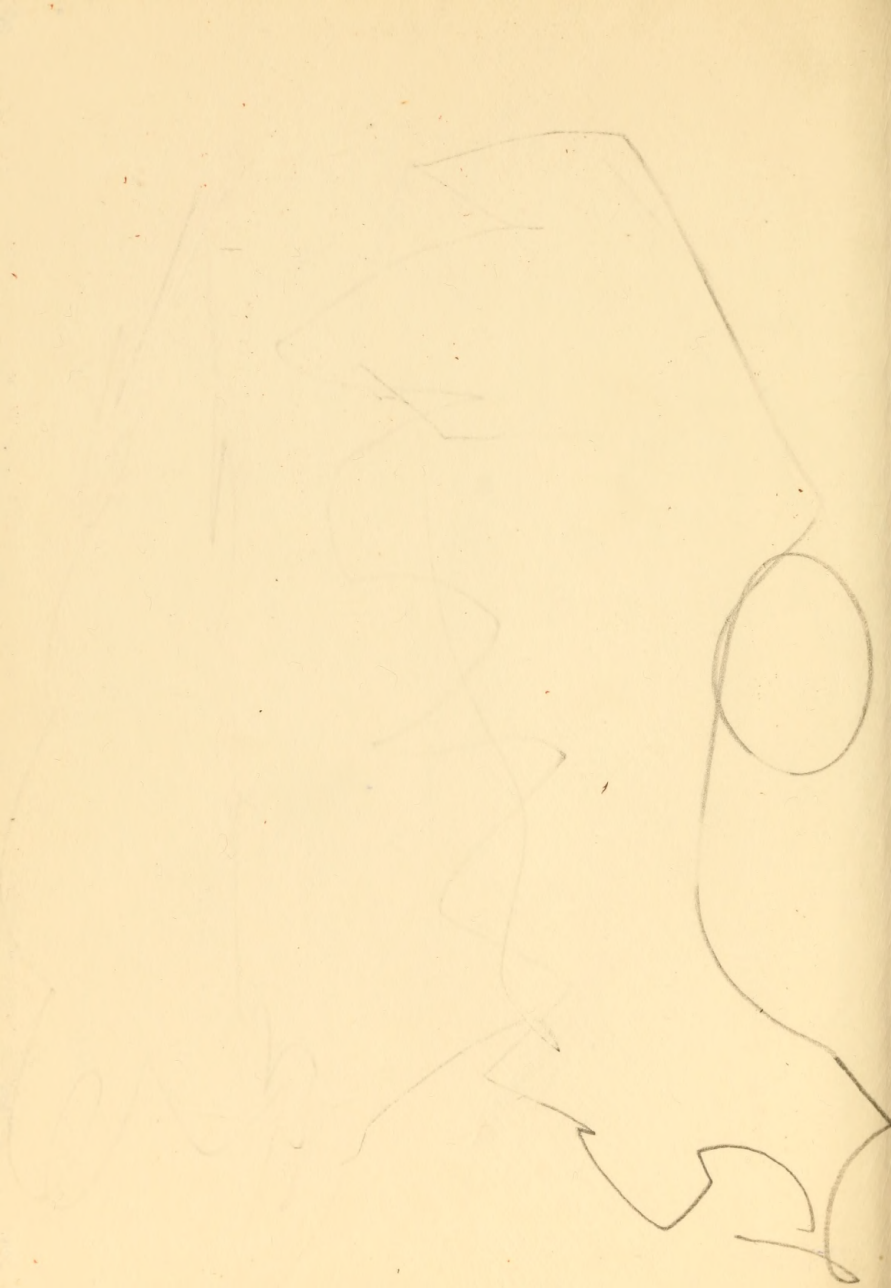
My cells of husk are pale and thin
This rapt engagement to appease;
Yet, on the morrow even these
New life may enter in.

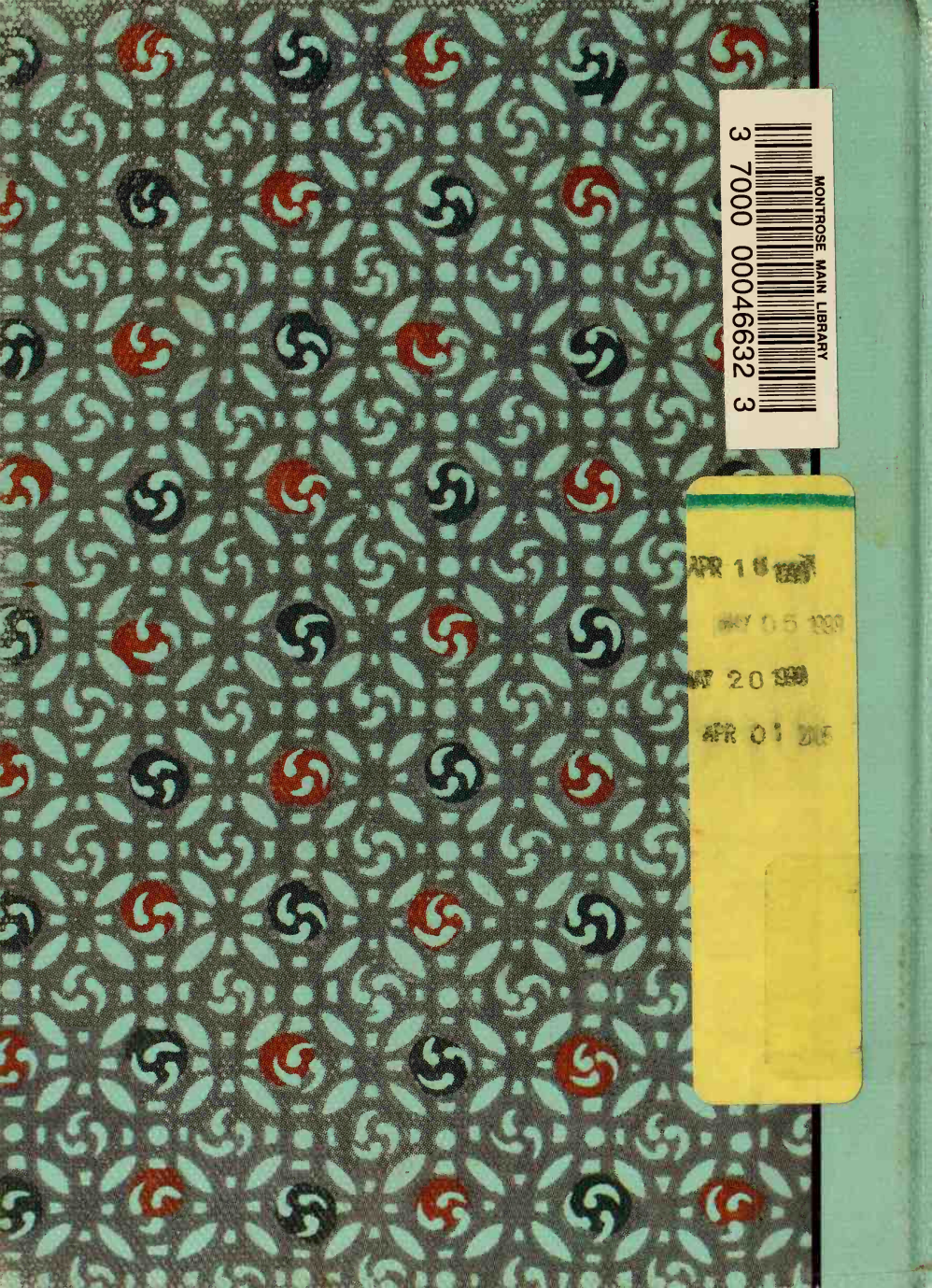
Now memory sea and sky are one;
In them and darkness I am buoyed
Mergent, resistless, undestroyed.
How easily 't is done.



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