

THE DIVINE VAGABOND

BY
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TO
LITTLE BELOVED CHANDRALEKHA,
OLD WISDOM ON YOUNG SHOULDERS,
WHO TOLD ME THE STORY OF THE SECRET LINK,
AND INSPIRED ME TO WRITE IT IN VERSE

2nd Sept. 1950

FOREWORD

For over half a century the poetry of England and the United States has been balefully influenced by the prevailing materialism of the age. They remind me of our Indian ants who bite the yellow rind only, and never penetrate into the sweet pulp. The Poetry of today with its rhythms and imageries appeals mainly to the mind. Not that they are not exquisite in their way; they certainly do give delight. Yet nevertheless it can be said of these poets:

'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
That miss the many-splendored thing.

Of course here and there are a few exceptions, like Alice Maynell Francis Thompson, A.E. Yeats, Cousins, and a few others. But in the main, I who love poetry greatly have felt a profound dissatisfaction with the poems I have read. It is the same with the poetry of Spanish America and Brazil, and without any depreciation of the artistic value of French poetry, we can say that the poetry of France for several centuries has never touched that "other world," as did Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats.

When young Harindranath Chattopadhyaya published, when he was nineteen, his first book of poems, *The Feast of Youth*, Dr. J. H. Cousins, who wrote the foreword, began by regretting that young Indian poets were not writing in the Indian vernaculars, but at the end of the foreword he had to admit that our poet is "a true bearer of the Fire." It is this striking quality of his poems, written in such excellent English, that made Lawrence Binyon, himself a poet, say of our poet, "He has drunk from the same fount as Shelley and Keats." It was at the same time that "Q" (Quiller-Couch), who had read some of the poems, said regarding the admission of our poet as a research scholar in the University of Cambridge, "We would have given Shelley and Keats a chance. Why not this young poet?"

From the first poems of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya which I read, I felt at once that here was the voice of ancient India speaking in fine English, without losing in the least the true quality of Indian civilization and culture. Such a fine critic of literature as Sri Aurobindo (himself a poet), wrote "We may well hope to find in him a supreme singer of the vision of God in Nature and Life and the meeting of the divine and human which must be at first the most vivifying and liberating part of India's message to a humanity that is now touched everywhere by a growing will for the spiritualizing of the earth-existence."

Harindranath, as he is known to his friends, has a remarkable creative quality which has manifested itself not only in the usual verse forms. He created a play, *Abu Hassan*, the tale taken from the Arabian Nights, mostly versified, which was staged in Madras. The lyrics were to Indian tunes. And the dramatist in his play "The Sleeper Awakened," did a

rare and venturesome thing in bringing in a certain number of actors as Brahmins who sang English verse to ancient Vedic meter. With many others I witnessed this play, which held us all thrilled with delight because of its intense charm and rollicking fun.

Not the least of our poet's creations as revealing India are the few Verse-Plays, wherein he dramatizes incidents in the lives of the famous Hindu saints Tukaram, Raidas, the Cobbler Saint, Pundalik, and the saintly woman, Saku Bai.

When a few months ago Harindranath brought me this book of poems written in 1934, my instant reaction was that it should be published by the Theosophical Publishing House, as on three previous occasions. I am most glad to give all assistance to our poet's genius in his message, in whose wake no one else in India has followed.

The soil of India is steeped with a certain atmosphere of mysticism and spirituality which is at the basis of her ever-changing but undying life. It is something of this life that pervades the mind and heart of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. In these days of India's life as a great young nation among the many nations of the world, where we in India are proclaiming that India has a message for the whole world, one priceless element of that message is revealed in the many works of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. I can only say that if anyone wants to discover a little of the hidden secret of India, about which many have written but few have truly revealed, here is a poet who reveals something of that secret.

C. JINARÂJADÂSA

PRELUDE

I am a vagabond, but never ask me
From where I came.

I only know that I came like a shadow,
I'll pass like a flame.

Every man that you meet on the roadway
And in the street,
Without his knowing hides a great vagabond's
Tune in his feet.

What is the sun but a vagabond's laughter?
What are the stars but a vagabond's tears?
And the wide world is a wandering vagabond
Looking for someone through the long years.

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THROUGH CONTRARIES

If I am to believe that He controls
The destiny of dust,
Unseen maneuverer of mortal souls,
Then I must needs lay my implicit trust
In the wise pattern shot with light and shade:
To grow afraid
Or wince at circumstance were to insult
His wisdoms which to us seem difficult.

Since who am I to doubt,
Prevaricate or insolently ask?
Both the enkindled flame and the flame put out
Are twin-appearances of one same mask
Hiding His face,
Dark, undiscovered fountainhead of grace.

The universe is His unique attire
Donned in a feast of forms . . . Lo! He has wed
A mother's laughter to the funeral-pyre
On which her babe lies dead.
Across eternity He walks alone,
Robed in a state of master-ease,
Behind variety, rich monotone,
Between brief ever-changing contraries.

No shape but casts a shadow, and no breath
But serves a milestone-mark
Measuring the inescapable road of death
Betwixt the light and dark.
Thus, with my head low-bowed,
Unquestioning and uncomplaining man,
I let myself be moved like to a cloud
Blindly across the heaven of His wide plan.

EMBARKING-TIME

Beloved, my life grows deeper and vaster
Beneath thy transfiguring touch;
In gradual depth I will grow to a master
And shall be acknowledged as such!
Through airs that are dead and through clouds that are vapid,
My flight grows more and more certain and rapid,
The wings of my spirit move faster and faster,
I am conscious, at least, of so much!

With many a guerdon thy hands have booned me,
Beloved! with many and many a gift;
In what a brief while thou hast wrought me and tuned me
Lyre-like to a fire-like note to uplift
The music of being, intense though desireless,
Whose rhythm is happy and mighty and tireless,
Strengthening my substance,—now nothing can wound me,
No arrow of time, be it ever so swift.

The darkness is conscious that it is thy ray-time,
Already thy lustres are streaming apace,
All life is becoming a diamond daytime
With one orb in the heavens, thy magical face.
With a poise of repose for constant neighbor,
All labor is rapture, all rapture is labor,
In eternity, time is only my playtime
Since now I belong to thy love and thy grace!

High vision to me groweth common as sparrow,
As frequent as grass, as familiar as mud:
The springtides of myriad centuries narrow
Themselves in my heart, thy all-mastering bud.
Whatever in nature is lovely and tender
Occurs through my Nature's immortal surrender
To thee, O triumphant! whose white-fire-arrow
Hath stained the dawn-sky with my life's red blood.

My seal of achievement is yonder sun-setting
Whose sovereign color has set a mark
On all past sorrow and past regretting,

On all that was only a glare of the dark.
Beloved, I am sure . . . and the boat is ready,
The sail in the wind keeps silent and steady,
On the dark rich waters of God, forgetting
All distance and time, behold I embark!

WHITE-FIRE

Who said my love was cold, apart,
Who dares to challenge the Divine?
Say, can the love within your heart
Bear the white flame that burns in mine?

It is not distant and aloof
As stars at midnight you behold
Through the blue slits along your roof,
Far and immeasurably cold.

I am the richest fire of love
That lit your body long ago. . . .
Like a warm cascade from above
I pour into your world below.

I rush across the mountain-rim
In liquid rapture, and possess
The bride of life in every limb
And hold her in a swift caress.

Ten million million bodies' lust
Would turn to ashes in my fire.
What can your drowsy world of dust
Know of my masterful desire?

I kiss each tiny speck and grain
Until they glow in rapture whirled:
I am the fire that comes again
And yet again to wed the world.

IMMORTAL DESTROYER

All things the Master can destroy
And make the centuries disperse
Full of the self-same generous joy
That went to build the universe.

Holding the heaven in His hand
With graceful and untrembling ease
He can withdraw its wonder, and
Crumple its blue serenities.

Say, is there aught He cannot do?
Behold, with just one fleeting glance
He can exile each drop of dew
And stop the midnight's purple dance.

The Lord of Life is Lord of Death,
Controller of all form and name.
Lo, He can with a single breath
Extinguish time's poor candle-flame.

RAW MATERIAL

Had it not been for human grief
God-woods could not have known a leaf.
Had it not been for human sorrow
Today could not have met tomorrow.

Man is an earthen pitcher wrought
To shape upon his wheel of thought:
The weakness in the clay that lingers
Strengthens the conscious Potter's fingers.

EXCHANGE

Nobody has given up
Anything for you,
Each has brought an empty cup
For the honey-dew
Of your tender, silent-sweet
Smile that conquers strife:
Each has placed before your feet
But a hollow life.

What a pale and fugitive
Offering is ours;
Master! what have we to give
But life's faded flowers,
And poor broken lamps of clay
With their glimmers shed:
Shadows of a bygone day.
Music of the dead?

We have only brought our pain
Like a desert bare,
You have showered your gracious rain
Cooling all the air
Of a lifetime that was spent
In a barren way;
You have given hue and scent
To its desert-clay.

We have brought you sin and strife,
Scar and sore and burn,
Guerdon of eternal life
Has been your return:
Dreams that cry and thoughts that drift
We have brought you, yet
You have given us the gift
Swiftly to forget.

We have brought the poison-bowl
Of lives undivine,
You have changed each to a soul

Flooded with your wine:
Yea, for every hurt and bruise,
Every broken power,
Love of human loves! you choose,
To return a flower.

And behold, for every dark
Doubt that lurks in us
You return a magic spark
That soon works in us
Miracles of light on light
As the days go no:
When we bring to you our night,
You return us dawn.

Who are we to ever deem
We have given aught?
You who dwell beyond our dream,
Far beyond our thought,
High beyond all human speech,
And our huge conceit!
Can we ever hope to reach
To your lotus-feet?

We have brought you all the mud
With its flowerless gloom,
You have slowly made it bud,
Bud and break and bloom:
We have brought you hearts of grief,
Shame and misery,
You have opened them to leaf
On your magic tree.

Nobody has given up
Anything for you!
Each has brought a hollow cup
Stained and broken, too!
You accept it with a smile,
Make it whole again,
And within a little while
Flood it with your rain.

WING-INTOXICATED

My will is like an olden
And lonely standing hill:
God's solitary eagle
Of vision proud and regal
With pinions wide and golden
Is monarch of my will:
My will is like an olden
And lonely-standing hill.

My love is like a boundless
Ever-unclouded sky:
No shade shall ever trample
Its azure, deep and ample,
Below, time is a soundless
And ineffectual cry:
My love is like a boundless
Ever-unclouded sky.

My soul is like a lonely
Ripe lustre-warmth that leavens
Millenniums of greyness,
And mortal far-awayness,
Keen as a star when only
One star is in the heavens,—
My soul is like a lonely
Ripe lustre-warmth that leavens.

My hope is like the playing
Of some ecstatic flute,
When, in unruffled weather,
Sweet angels meet together
In heaven, holidaying
In childhood absolute:
My hope is like the playing
Of some ecstatic flute.

My prayer is like a branching
Giant-aspiring tree:
Rich with the bloom-and-wing-time,

God's everlasting springtime
Which ne'er hath known the blanching
By winters that might be:
My prayer is like a branching
Giant-aspiring tree.

My faith is like a mountain
That rises higher and higher,
Nothing dare overcome it,
Since there, upon its summit,
Playeth the deathless fountain
Of death-consuming fire:
My faith is like a mountain
That rises higher and higher.

SURRENDER

I will cry out from my soul,
 Thy will be done!
All thy ways I will extol,
 Thy will be done!
Naught shall hinder, naught shall bar
My footfalls that journey far,
Since thou art my guiding-star:
 Thy will be done.

I will praise thee in all pain,
 Thy will be done!
Say again and yet again,
 Thy will be done.
Though the world with gloom be rife
And around me bitter strife,
I will cry out of my life:
 Thy will be done.

I will bend before thy seat,
 Thy will be done.
I will kiss thy holy feet,
 Thy will be done.
Even should the future spring
For my sake no blossom bring,
I will like a glad bird sing.
 Thy will be done.

I shall whisper night and day,
 Thy will be done.
Every second I will say,
 Thy will be done.
Even should my life be null,
Even should my sky be dull
And my soul a deathly lull:
 Thy will be done.

I have learned one note to strike,
 Thy will be done.
In both birth and death alike,

Thy will be done.
Whether it be light or shade,
Blossom-gift or dagger-blade,
Beloved! I am not afraid:
Thy will be done.

Through the months and passing years,
Thy will be done.
Through all laughters, through all tears,
Thy will be done.
Through all loves that meet and part,
Through each glad or broken heart
May the single sentence start:
Thy will be done.

Daybreak, noon and evenfall,
Thy will be done.
In the first bird's and last bird's call,
Thy will be done.
In the joys of dawn that sprout
And by evening are put out,
Let my soul arise and shout:
Thy will be done.

In all gladness and all grief,
Thy will be done,
In belief and unbelief,
Thy will be done.
In all fullness and all dearth,
In all sadness and all mirth,
In all heaven and on earth:
Thy will be done.

Thou art all-in-all to me,
Thy will be done.
Beloved! I belong to thee,
Thy will be done.
Thou wilt do as thou hast planned,
Thou hast taken me in hand,
On thy truth I take my stand:
Thy will be done.

DARK SONG

The lamp is ready,
But you forget
Your flame is not steady
As yet.

The shore is ready,
But you are caught
In the wild eddy
Of thought.

The hush is ready,
When will you tire
Of your dark, heady
Desire?

QUEST

Tireless I climb the thorny steep,
A world of roses staking.
My waking has become a sleep,
My sleep become a waking.

Towards the near yet distant goal
My feet go ever treading.
I seek the silence of the soul,
Which is a master-wedding.

Each pointed thorn upon the way
That bruises is but dating
My progress in the far-away
Beauty where you are waiting.

Something in me until the end
Will keep on ever humming:
“O mighty master! gentle friend!
Accept me, I am coming!”

Tireless I climb the kindling steep,
A shadow-world forsaking.
My waking state is now a sleep,
My sleep is now a waking.

INVITATION

Come in whatever form you like,
Come as the fiercely reddening storm,
Or as the cooling cataract;
In any form, O master!

I am prepared for anything
That comes from your unfaltering hand:
I will not moan or say a word,
I'll understand, O master!

Come in whatever form you like,
Or make me sing or strike me dumb:
In anyway, at any time,
But only come, O master!

RESTING PLACE

They are all tired of wandering:
Lone-languid winds of noon
And the long-drawn evening shadows
With the cold returning moon;
And between the morn and the mid-day
White-bodied clouds that roam
Are waiting to rest upon your breast
Which was always their real home.

They are all weary with wandering:
Long nights filled full of our tears
Which seek and seek but never find
The meaning of months and years;
And the star on star that twinkle
And whirl through the deepening gloam
Are waiting to rest, O love! on your breast
Which is surely their long-lost home.

Time, that old grey shepherd,
With gold-black sandals on,
Is weary of driving his sheep of hours
Across the wide meadows of dawn,
And our thoughts and dreams are tired
Under the sky's blue dome
And yearn to rest on your quiet breast
Which was always their only home.

UNIMPRISONED

All the chains have slipped and fallen,
All the prison-walls are cracked,
From the morning sky what glory
Pours down like a cataract. . . .
Suddenly to streams of splendor
Melt the stones so dark and firm.
We have in a sudden moment
Served out life's entire term.

No more shall we watch the twilight
Sadly from behind the bars,
No more feel the separation
From the high and distant stars.
No more shall we hear the tolling
Of time's ponderous prison-gong
Which have marked our creeping moments
Melancholily so long!

Hark! the prison-locks are opened
And the prison-gates unbarred.
No more shall we cast sad shadows
On the lonely prison-yard.
Brothers! no more shall we suffer
Prison-living cold and damp,
Nor compose life's master poem
By the flickering prison-lamp.

Come, the ancestors await us
In celestial voiceless bands:
They have brought us victor garlands
Shining whitely in their hands.
Silence blows her silver trumpets
To announce the great event
Of the world's swift liberation
From its old imprisonment.

LOYALTY

I will wait for you
Though you may not come,
Though the hours be lonely
And the night be dumb.

I will leave the door
Open wide
In case you wish some day
To step inside,

Even though small
And narrow be the room
And full of a sort of
Half-lit gloom.

I will light my little
Dim lamp of clay,
Hoping that you may arrive
Some day.

I will weave the garland,
Love! for you
Though you come not,—and yet
In case you do.

I will plant a tree
In my garden plot;
It will flower in the silence
At the thought

That you may come
Suddenly, at the end
Of this waiting on the edge
Of ages, friend!

WAYFARING

Deeper I grow and dumber
As the golden days go by,
For my life has reached its summer
Unfolding a fiery sky;
All outer clash and clangor
Are lost in a golden languor,
And nothing is now welcomer
Than this noonday silent and high.

And nothing is really deeper
Than the mood that thy traveler knows,
While treading the path that is steeper
The further he travels and goes.
While the naked noontide quivers
On the open fields and rivers,
And summer, the fiery reaper,
Goes reaping the heavenly glows.

On the roadway each grain of gravel
Sun-kissed, is a jewel of price
That flashes along my travel
With not the same lustre twice:
Between strange lights I go ranging
Whose colors are always changing
While my footfalls ever unravel
Thy road's long sacrifice.

The travel shall never exhaust me
Whose feet with white fire are shod,
With no one to greet or accost me,
The loneliest path I have trod:
I care not if sun rays blind me
For I have left seeing behind me,
And with deep closed eyes I have lost me
In an ultimate vision of God.

I can feel both my heart and my head glow
While I walk in the noonday heat,
But soon I will meet with the red glow

Of the evening cool and sweet.
But I who move higher and higher
Above earth's pathways of fire,
Shall behold in the lingering dead glow
A homage of stars at my feet.

Already the silence is swimming,
The starry silence of One
Whose cool white beauty is brimming
Beyond every setting sun:
Although I am drunk with its heady
Effulgence within, I am steady
And my lone lamp needs no trimming,
It will laugh when the day is done.

WING-ACHE

In several little ways
I err, I slip, I fall,—
O bring thy searching gaze
And help to show me all
My errors and my faults,
Be they or big or small,
My stumblings and my halts,
My ignorant delays.

Beloved, help me out
Of every bog and pit,
Nor let me roam about
But draw me bit by bit
Towards thy patient light,—
O let my lamp be lit
By thee in the black night
Of starless human doubt.

Let not the gaudy nautch
Of fleeting dreams attract
My soul into a blotch
Of darkness only cracked
By stormy lightning-fire,
For I have signed a pact
To dream by thee entire,
With thou by me to watch.

The lower nature still
Might struggle to rebel,
To hunger for a thrill
Of passing dreams that dwell
In earth's subconscious sleep,—
O make a citadel
Of all my life and keep
Thy vigil, holy Will!

I want to come to thee,
So near and yet so far!
There is a thirst in me

Whose quenching naught shall bar,
As wide as all the sky,
As lonely as a star
That glimmereth on high,
As mighty as the sea.

My love, I want to reach
Thy consciousness wherein
Each life of mine, and each
Death in the past, doth spin
A universe of gold
And silver discipline,
In timeless rapture rolled,
Surpassing human speech.

I am already stormed
By thee, O light of broad
Compassion! I have warmed
To thee, and felt this clod
Of body pass to sight.
To nothing less than god
Dost thou intend, my light!
That I should be transformed.

To thee I travel straight
Glad as an oriole,
Nor need to know the date
When it will reach the goal;
All is a running glow
Of deepening oversoul,—
The goal?— O love! I know
I have not long to wait.

The bell of silence rings
Announcing worlds that start
Like birds with fiery wings
Out of the visioned heart;
Calm orbs in clusters keep,
In ecstasy apart,
Chanting upon the deep
Of paradisaal springs.

The winged fires are buoyed
Along the mystic verge
Of the unending void
Aching with starry urge,—
Along the shores of limbs,
Thy silent glories surge
From shyly-shimmering rims
Of heavens unenjoyed.

In several little ways
I err and fall and slip,—
O bring thy tender gaze
To bear on me, and drip
Its honey on my pores,
In sweet companionship
Lead me unto thy doors,
Beloved of my days.

HERO

My faith in thee grows graver
With the dawning of each day:
And my feet grow firmer, braver,
As I travel on the way.
My Love! I never waver
Nor dally nor delay.

Unmindful of the gravel,
Fire-drenched with noonday heat
With hungers to unravel
The secret of my feet:
Towards thee straight I travel
And find it very sweet!

Beloved, I am bringing
Myself to thee more near,
My soul is hourly ringing
More certain and more clear.
A well of god is springing
Out of each drop of tear.

Since sometimes in my treading
The path I find the eyes
A sudden teardrop shedding
To take by sweet surprise
A waiting star whose wedding
Shall be in paradise.

My faith in thee grows truer
And taller than a tower;
My soul grows ever newer,
Re-born in deeper power:
My steps grow fewer, fewer
Towards thee every hour.

Behold me swiftly gliding
A-challenging the stark
Bare waters, smoothly tiding
O'er billows rough and dark,

Unto thy care confiding
My tempest-haunted barque.

Though shadows grey and umber
In light's apparent loss,
Like deep and deathly slumber
Brood heavily across
The waters, I outnumber
Their inky leap and toss

With my uncounted splendors
Flung o'er them far and wide,
Until each billow tenders
A truce on every side,
And silently surrenders
To silence like a bride.

No shadow ever hurteth
The light that is the whole
Horizon-calm which skirteth
The ocean of the soul:
Never thy love deserteth
The boat that seeks thy goal.

O let the darks grow thicker
Around the outer seas,
And let the gales blow quicker
And wilder if they please:
My soul without a flicker
Burns through the centuries.

Destruction is mistaken
If with its bleeding-black
Deluge it thinks to waken
Dread on my voyager's track:
Behold! I am unshaken
By its most dread attack.

My faith in thee shall shield me
Against the darkling horde;
Beloved, thou shalt wield me

Like an all-conquering sword,
And every moment yield me
A splendor unexplored.

MASTERHOOD

Nothing delights me or annoys
Which cometh from outside,
My kingly spirit now enjoys
A light that shall abide;
A white unfaltering light which beams
Outside small hates and hopes and dreams,
And reigneth in an equipoise
Immeasurable-wide.

Nothing shall hurt or break or mar
The joy which I contain,
Which never knew a wound or scar
Or yet a trace of pain!
An independent joy that grows
To greater fullness in repose,
A-glowing like a virgin star
On God's blue-pearly plane.

Amidst life's ocean, dark and rough,
I float, a kindled buoy,
No billow was yet strong enough
My balance to destroy.
An inner peace devoid of strife
Hath ever been my very life,—
Eternally my spirit-stuff
Hath been eternal joy!

On nothing outward I depend,—
Of that thou art aware!
Neither relation, foe nor friend
Can my true meaning share.
Since all the earth behind the veil
Of me, is but a sacred grail,
And all the heavens from end to end
Are but my act of prayer.

I am a giant self-suspense
Above all thee and me.
My consciousness is but a sense

Of immortality.
I am the timeless slowly hurled
Into this time-imposed world:
A singular omnipotence
Outrayed to me and thee.

I watch the herds of nights and days
Go by like drowsy sheep
Along the twilight-haunted ways
Of some untrodden deep:
Behind them all I burn in peace
Which golden-whitely stains their fleece,
A spaceless, bare and awful blaze
Wherein they drop asleep.

Of outer worlds I never ask
Support for my delight,
Fulfilling, as I do, my task
By a sheer will of white!
My real glory ever lurks
Behind my labors and my works,
The world is but a gaudy mask
Which hides my depth and height.

My ecstasy is all superb
Behind the little love
Of man and beast and bloom and herb,
Of water, tree and dove.
My millionth reflex in a glass
Grows visible in things that pass,
While naught that passes can disturb
My truth which broods above.

I am the secret law of laws
Who operate and fill
The universe with sound and pause,
Color and shadow still,
Who make the magic play called mind
For time's performance, while, behind
Its characters my light withdraws
Naked, without a thrill!

And yet the shadow of my sight,
Itself a vision, holds
Divine and intimate delight
While gazing on the golds,
The changing silvers, blues and greens,
Bright privilege of shades and sheens,
And its outgazing from my height
Fashions and breaks and molds.

Nothing delights me or annoys
Which cometh from outside,
Nothing supports me or destroys
The ecstasy I hide—
For I am in all things, and yet
Above them all, unknown, unmet
By aught which hath not drunk the poise
Of self, illumined wide!

EXEMPTION

Beloved, having tasted
The bitter cup of earth
I come to thee, a lover
Of heaven, and discover
That naught was ever wasted
That I had done since birth,
So fully having tasted
The bitter cup of earth.

The magic cup of pleasure
Pain-flooded to the brim,
For years I drained cup after
Strange cup of tears and laughter,
And now I come to measure
The golden wine of Him,
Who drank the cup of pleasure
Pain-flooded to the brim.

Through anguish and disaster
Arrives this lonely soul,
Along the way I scattered
My life which hardly mattered.
But now I am a master
Of happy self-control.
Through anguish and disaster
Arrives my lonely soul.

How often torn and tortured,
Yea, at the very root,
My life, which growing duller,
Each day was losing color!
But now it is an orchard
Of ripe and silent fruit,
The life which once was tortured
And wounded at the root.

Only thy love could pardon
Old ways that might have placed
My soul beyond redemption

Without its great exemption.
Behold, a budded garden
Where once there was a waste!
Only thy love could pardon
Thy love so wondrous chaste.

The past has been a very
Desert of suffering
Where all was dull and dreary
And all was bare and weary,
But now I am as merry
As any bird in spring.
The past had been a very
Desert of suffering.

Yet was I no exception
To life, nor something strange,
Since dark is mortal living
Until thy great forgiving,
And thy divine reception
Works the miraculous change.
Lo, I was no exception
To life, nor something strange!

For life is full of rancor,
Falsehood and greed and guile,
While it is lived without thee
Where mortals mock and flout thee,
Yea, and a poison-canker
Dwells in each human smile,—
For life is full of rancor
And bitterness and guile.

In what a subtle manner
The devil sets the snare
To draw and to inveigle
The soul's time-shadowed eagle
Making each life a banner
For hostile powers to bear.
In what a subtle manner
The devil sets his snare.

With what a gaudy glamour
Time in the world goes by;
How sorrowfully hollow
The life which mortals follow,
In love with clash and clamor,
In love with moan and cry:
With what a gaudy glamour
Time in the world goes by.

The soul goes wildly reeling,
How like a drunken thing!
How like a bird forgetting
That days are swiftly setting,
Wounded, yet scarcely feeling
The wound upon its wing!
The soul goes wildly reeling,
How like a drunken thing!

We choose the dark, exulting
In colored dreams of dust,—
When once thy love hath won us
And calmly re-begun us,
Say is it not insulting
To thee and to thy trust,
This treacherous exulting
In colored dreams of dust?

Lo, thou hast oped thy portal
Of splendours crystalline:
And he who fain would enter
Must dwell at the heart's centre,
And who would grow immortal
Must be entirely thine,—
Lo, thou hast oped the portal
Of splendors crystalline.

On earth the shadows revel,
Thy glory shines above!
Who wants the light must surely
Hold on to it securely,

One cannot serve the devil
And yet demand thy love,—
On earth the shadows revel,
Thy glory shines above.

When once the word is spoken.
And once the vow is made,
It must be kept and treasured
And by a lifetime measured,
For once that vow is broken
Thy promise is delayed,
And once the word is spoken
Thy laws must be obeyed.

Beloved, I have taken
An oath to be thine own.
O let me be one living
Expression of thy giving:
Within me rouse and waken
Thy melodies alone!
Beloved, I have taken
An oath to be thine own.

Nay, I will never hurt thee
Nor thy sweet light resist.
Upon thy guidance leaning
My life assumes a meaning,
Ah love, should I desert thee
I could no more exist
Nay, I will never hurt thee
Nor thy sweet light resist.

CHALLENGE

As the thunders of life grow louder
And the rain-glooms around grow graver,
I find that my heart grows prouder
And my journeying footfalls braver.
Since within me thou dost awaken
The storms are sorely mistaken
If they think that I shall be shaken
Or that my spirit shall waver.

As the darkness around me grows dreader
And the gathering mists grow thicker
And the wakeful eyes grow redder,
My steps move quicker and quicker:
Since I have received thy pardon
The desert hath changed to a garden,
And my heart shall nevermore harden,
And my flame shall nevermore flicker.

Let the winds blow wilder and stronger,
I never will be overpowered,—
No, I am afraid no longer.
My love! I am no more a coward.
I am not afraid of the whitening
Swift fire of the fiercest lightning;
My soul hath experienced a heightening
And the being within me has flowered.

Let the waves grow greyer and rougher
And the ocean rise up like a giant,
Not a hair on my body shall suffer
Nor the waters be long defiant.
I have passed the last shadow of fearing
And am certain the shore is nearing,
Since thou, my beloved, art steering
And the waves to thy will are pliant.

Let the hail fall faster and faster
From a heaven of tragedy speeding,
Through thy grace I have grown to a master

Of all menace and sorrow and bleeding.
For within me a secret I hold now,
Changing life to a vision of gold now,
Through tests and through trials untold now
Thou seest me always succeeding.

Let the road grow steeper and steeper.
And the obstacles greater and greater.
My silence grows deeper and deeper,
And my travel grows straighter and straighter.
The goal may seem farther than ever,
But my travel shall tire me never,
To reach it shall be my endeavour
And I'll come to it sooner or later.

FIRE-IMAGERY

Billions of balls of fiery gold,
Unnumbered circles of silver-cold
Stillness: for whose delight are they rolled?

Or are they, perhaps, beyond our guess,
Maneuvers made in a game of chess
On the board of some high inwardness?

And I wonder if spaces are aware
Those mighty mysterious worlds are there
Laboring roundly everywhere?

Or is all space but an orchard mute
Where, independent of tree and root,
Ripens his fire-encinctured fruit?

Ah nay, perhaps they are eyeballs lent
Yon immemorial, smoothly-bent
Eyelid of one single firmament.

Or are they wonderful birds of light
Suspended aloft in a molten flight
That marks off for man his day and his night?

Or are they the lamps of One, lone-lit,
Each with a tranquil flame in it,
At the festival of the infinite?

Or they may be great shields of glares
Which, without a break, the timeless bears
Lest bleak time take it unawares.

Or are they flaming drops in a cup
By means of a magical power held up
Awaiting the hour when the gods shall sup?

Or are those orbs in the boundless sky,
Which dazzle the soul and dizzy the eye,
But the ageless wounds in some hero's thigh?

Or are they bubbles of time, blown first
When the invisible was universed,
Bubbles of fire that shall never burst?

Or are they but so many blinding rings
Worn, in his cycle-marryings
With the queen of light, by the king of kings?

Or are they but yellow and white and red
Wheels of some chariot swiftly sped
To the wedding of silence overhead?

Or are they at best but rapid dots
Or the myriad joyous points he jots
Down in a journal of his high thoughts?

All day and all night these eyes behold
Unnumbered miraculous worlds unfold;
For whose delight are they spun and rolled?

FUSION

My heart grows fuller like a cloud
Above a mountain-crest
With inliest weight of diamond bowed,
A mystery of rest.
Above a lonely mountain-range,
Secure upon a height,
See how its quiet edges change
In thine increasing light.

Starlike I hang in the unheard,
And twinkle through the dew
Of lampless distance, like a word
Of godhead coming through:
Nothing has ever reached as far
As its one-pointed thrill,
Beloved, since I am a star
Created by thy will.

A quivering color, in the void
Of centuries, I gleam
Which but thy whiteness hath enjoyed
In its unfathomed dream;
A color solitary, mute,
Whose reflex first began
To warm the sun, the bird, the fruit,
And the bright mood in man.

Through aeoned silences I float
A vibrant voice of fire,
An inextinguishable note
Awakened on thy lyre;
Through timeless time it speeds and goes
With all the sky for veil,
Echoed to music of the rose
Which flood both hill and dale.

Wakens in me the ancient me
Whose eyes begin to drowse
Upon an inward-heaving sea

Whose waves are shining vows,
Made at the vestal flame on high
With-thee as beauty's priest,
To pass into a state of sky
Lit to an inner feast.

Deeper and deeper grows the soul
To splendors that can awe.
Behold, it is its own control,
Its own unerring law:
Whether in travel or at camp
O'er paths untrod or trod,
It burneth clearly like a lamp,
A jeweled lamp of God.

OUT OF THE DARK

How rapidly my life has changed,
How swiftly I have climbed
A consciousness that is estranged
From beauty, human-timed;
That laughs today and dies tomorrow
Leaving behind a trail of sorrow;
All life, somehow, for me is now
Immortally arranged.

There was a time I used to pray
For many gifts from thee,
But thou didst only take away
Even what I had, from me;
Through bitter strife and dark denial,
Through broken life and deadly trial,
Didst lead my tread between the red
Of fire and ashes grey.

And, through sheer weariness of grief,
Through constant glooms, I passed
Into a state of unbelief,
Light's pitiful outcaste!
The sky with all its jeweled blueness
Seemed to my soul a huge untrueness,
And so I sought to drown my thought
In sorry things and brief.

I said, "All things are wearisome,
All things are fools of time!
And heaven is, at best, a dumb
Summit we dare not climb!
And there is no design or reason
In cloud or wood or changing season,
All these were meant as accident,
They come and go and come!"

I said, "Yon moon so white and cool
Is but a floated lie,
And so is all the starry pull

Connected with the sky!
Mere fleeting accidental poses
Are rubies, rainbows, rivers, roses,—
They peer and pass as in a glass,
Nothing is beautiful!”

I said, “All Nature is a flaw,
Which ought to disappear,
For Death alone doth wield a law
Unchallenged, old, austere.
Then unto whom is life appealing
In builded mosques and temples kneeling?
Why should it hide a hope inside,
Why should it feel such awe?”

But suddenly I felt thee pluck
My soul one sudden day,
Leaving me speechless as one struck
With lightning on the way.
A riper pain, a deeper grieving
Drove me into a firm believing,
In the wise plan thou hast for man
And that, indeed, was luck!

And now I have discovered thou
Chastisest to uplift,
And all past sorrow on my brow
Was but thy precious gift.
It was to draw me ever nigher
That thou didst lead me through the fire,
Beloved mine, my Love divine!
See, I have reached thee now!

I stand without the shadow-mask
Of outer dream and love,
And mine is but a simple task
Of looking up above
At thee, thy beauty and thy splendor
With all a child’s entire surrender,
Thou knowest, indeed, all that I need,—
I never need to ask.

Sometimes, beloved, I have thought
Thy countless gifts would bend
My human vessel fragile-wrought
And break it in the end,
And so I have cried out, O Giver!
Let not thy Grace flow like a river,
With such a gush and speed and rush
Lest I should bear it not.”

But gradually thou hast trained
My human heart to hold
The wondrous joy thou hast ordained
That never shall be told;
Untroubled, unexcited, speechless
I reach to raptures that are reachless,
And now I know the lambent-slow
God-power that I have gained.

ENTHRONED

It is time for You to enter
My heart and rest in it.
For already at its centre
Your diamond lamp is lit.
I have counted every beat
Of your slow-approaching feet
Towards the simple seat
Of my life where you will sit.

It is not a regal mansion
But a beggar's little room;
It will meet with rare expansion
When, in the golden gloom,
You enter, beloved mine!
Your presence, all-divine,
Shall convert it to a shrine
Thick-strewn with heavenly bloom.

In many a grey and numbing
Life-winter with its frost
I have waited for your coming,
O Love beyond all cost!
For I had known you when
Spirit was alien
To imaged worlds and men,
And knew you were not lost.

Before the first pale twinkling
Of star the heavens pearled,
Before the slightest inkling
Of God's created world,
When there was neither sky
Nor yet the firstling cry
Of beauty, you and I
Were in deep silence furled.

But when the lights were started
A-dancing on the deep,
Beloved One, we parted,

Twin portions of the sleep
Of time and cramping thought,
The seeker and the sought,
Twin-hungers in the nought
With fiery tears to weep.

We have looked for one another
In forms which scarce abide,
Sometimes as child and mother,
Sometimes as groom and bride;
Through passing joy and grief,
Through anguish and relief,
Through meetings all too brief
We have sought each other's side.

As a comrade or a lover,
As a brother or a son,
I have striven to discover
The counterpart, sweet one!
Through the nights and through the days
In a thousand different ways,
Through fulfillments and delays,
I have sought your union.

In deepest darkness groping,
Through deluge, blast and squall
I have ever sought you, hoping
To reach you once for all.
Now in the golden gloom
You come into my room,
Say, who has come to whom
And who has heard whose call?

It was time for you to enter
My heart and rest in it,
So now within the centre,
My Love, you calmly sit
As though you always sat
Upon my beggar's mat,
Out of me looking at
The jeweled Infinite.

ALL-ONENESS

Beautiful! I love thee dearly
With a love that grows and grows,
Though the world may deem it merely
Fleeting love that comes and goes.
In my heart I hold thee ever
Like an imaged light sublime,
And without the least endeavor
Hold thee inly all the time.

Life is now a daily diving
Into thy deep ocean-trance,
And, by slow degrees, arriving
At the spirit's blue expanse
That is rolling, ever rolling
Past our knowledge of thy love,
While thy heaven, soft-ensouling
Magic silence, hangs above.

Every day I sit before thee
By thy gazing aureoled,
Life! to say that I adore thee
Were to leave the truth untold.
For the truth is even richer
Than upon the surface seems,
For this body is the pitcher
From which thou dost pour thy dreams.

And my being is thy lyre
Struck by thee to music-dew,
Every drop a planet-fire
Pearly-mellowed in the blue.
All my spirit is a lightning
Flashed above dim worlds of change,
Like a naked laughter brightening
Over death's long mountain-range.

I am one perpetual kneeling
At thy silent sacred feet,
Bearing in my life a feeling

That is wonderfully sweet.
While, outside, the restless scoffer
Strives to hurl at me his dart,
Unto thee a faith I offer
Rooted firmly in the heart.

I WILL CRY OUT TO THEE

I will cry out to thee from the depth of my soul,

I will cry out to thee;

By crying to thee I will reach the goal,

I will cry out to thee.

Alone at thy door, O Divine, will I stand

With wounds on my feet and blooms in my hand,

Thou wilt deal me delight or wilt deal me dole,

I will cry out to thee.

Though the dawn be bright or the night be black,

I will cry out to thee.

Though the sky be blue or the rain-clouds crack,

I will cry out to thee.

I have journeyed, Beloved, mile after lone mile,

A pilgrim who seeks but a glimpse of thy smile,

And my journey has been o'er a broken track,

I will cry out to thee.

I have cried out to thee, my Love! from the first,

I have cried out to thee.

But my life in the past has been lonely and cursed,

I have cried out to thee.

I wanted to come to thee so long ago,

But my coming to thee has been sorry and slow,

So the thirst that I bring thee is no new thirst,

I will cry out to thee.

I will cry out to thee through all things that appear

I will cry out to thee.

I will cry out to thee through all music I hear;

I will cry out to thee.

Hereafter for me all ocean and sky

Shall be but a wonderful wandering cry,

Be the meeting with thee either distant or near,

I will cry out to thee.

I will cry out to thee in day-breaking light,

I will cry out to thee.

I will cry out to thee in the deepening night,

I will cry out to thee.
I will cry out to thee in the glow-worm and star,
In all shadows that brood and all colors that are;
In the sunseting red and the moonrise-white,
I will cry out to thee.

I will cry out to thee even when thou art dumb,
I will cry out to thee.
I will cry out to thee though no answer come,
I will cry out to thee.
It may take but a moment for thee to engage
My soul in thy service, or, perhaps, an age,
But to cry out to thee is not wearisome,
I will cry out to thee.

Whatever the hour of night or of day,
I will cry out to thee.
Through the noonday's gold, or the evening's grey,
I will cry out to thee.
But my cry will not ever be stormy or wild,
It will always contain the true note of a child,
Of a child who but cries and has nothing to say,
I will cry out to thee.

Though ages and ages may pass me by,
I will cry out to thee.
Though centuries bloom in thy gardens and die,
I will cry out to thee.
Though nobody listen, I will cry still
From the depths of my being, my God, until
My cry is a silence, my silence a cry,
I will cry out to thee.

Whatever may happen, whatever betide,
I will cry out to thee.
I will cry out to thee from deep down inside,
I will cry out to thee.
With a cry I will storm thee some day and win,
Thou wilt open the door and invite me in,
I will cry out to thee as no man ever cried,
I will cry out to thee.

TRANSFIGURATION

Wisdom hath taken ignorance to wife
And with his first caress has made her flower
Into the deathless beauty that is life,
Into the shining silence that is power.

 And now her blue-black mouth,
Carven of venomous shadow, is rose-flushed
With living nectar quenching all her drouth;
 See how the blood has rushed
Into her naked bosom lighting it
Into a color which on earth was never lit.

Keen youth leaps timeless out of time grown old,
Red springtide is an essence in the blood,
And what was grey and barren turns to gold,
And what was desert-soil begins to bud;

 All life takes on a tone
Of such delight as never seems to end,
A river is released out of the stone,
 And under heaven's bend,
Earth, that was but a ball of mud and mire,
Changes into a carnival of luscious fire!

A joy with deep humility endowed,
A whelming love which hardly speaks a word;
A rainbowed glory hangs from cloud to cloud
And a new music occupies the bird;

 Nature is now estranged
From her dim past of death and incompleteness;
Her pale recurrent processes are changed,
 And even in the fleetness
Of things which seem to fade and disappear
The outline of true immortality grows clear!

I hear some lone and mighty organist
Full, unpremeditated numbers play
In moon-mad waters, in the mountain-mist
And the blind depths of stark and ignorant clay,

 Breaking its bonds of sleep;
There is another whistling in the wind,

Another-mooded music on the deep,
Austerely disciplined,
Through the wild wandering of every wave
From age to age, into a note supremely grave.

The grain of life is severed from the chaff,
The wine of truth hath drenched these lips that sing;
A pure austerity which knows to laugh,
A calm aloofness that, in everything,
Dwells as a myriad one;
And everywhere I send my flowing song,
Like to a cataract of melting sun
And planet sped along
The lonely ways of time, I do discover
That every waiting breath of life has found its lover.

The soul comes out of its blind chrysalid
In magic colors burning through the skies,
And the bright-winged flame within it hid
Flares on the emptiness like a surprise
And takes an easy flight;
Leaving the shadow of mere earth, it goes
Back once again towards the stainless light
That opens like a rose,
There, in the floated wideness, bare and broad,
The vast unconsciousness of god that he is god.

O what transfiguration, love! is this
Which worketh with the swiftness of desire;
My soul is like an everlasting kiss
Whose ecstasy is incense rising higher
At every breath of breath,
With dream-enjoyed elysian perfumes rife;
Your touch of mercy hath not stricken death
But changed it into life,
Weaving its discords with a fluent ease
Into the golden harmony of harmonies.

The crowded longings, of a bygone time,
(Through which how many youthful hearts are aged!)
Now seem to me a gaudy pantomime

By some black-mobled shadow poorly staged;
 And every moan I moaned
Was as a celebration of untruth,
Lo! by inconscient nature well-nigh stoned
 To countless dyings, youth
Continues in a tragic world of tears,
Revolving idly through dank mists of mournful years.

Even as a wave is spilt upon the sand
In a large sweep of wastage, ocean-plucked,
And swiftly disappears, leaving a bland
Brief rainbow where the grains and pebbles sucked
 The vagabonding wave,
Youth leaps out of a sea of deep delight,
Part of God's ocean magical and grave,
 And passes out of sight
Into the stretching sands of wasted hours
Which burningly drink up its free unmeasured powers.

See how the myriad boats of lives are tossed
Upon the whirl of uncontrolled pleasure
Since, through long storms of selfhood, they have lost
The secret of the ocean and its measure
 Calm, mighty and superb;
The sky of time unfolds to grey and black
Of never-ending tempests that disturb
 Life's lonely ocean-track,
And will not wear the golden calms again
Until they weep to God in a great mood of rain.

O world of agony and wretchedness!
How long will you in lampless glooms be veiled?
How long will you be held in a caress
Of storm and deluge, thunderous and galed?
 Surely you were not meant
Only for falsehood, darkness and disease,
O world? for lo, your heart is innocent
 Under the tragedies
Which weigh you down, the greed, the hate, the guilt
Out of whose squalidness your structure seemeth built.

Nay, you shall rise again, and resurrect
Into the pristine splendor that was yours;
New-hearted men shall waken and erect
Wonderful beauty on your hundred shores:
 Mansions of love and dream,
Sweet cities out of stillness, aureoled
And wrought to minarets and spires that gleam
 Like to unbodied gold,
The kingly substance of the many-willed
Immortal self which, through projected thought, shall build.

A quiet alteration in your codes
Shall be effected in the future days
When human feet shall walk on outer roads
Bearing the knowledge of the inner ways;
 The very dust shall start
Under their rhythmic falls and beat with power
As though it had contained a secret heart
 Always about to flower;
And every mile upon your earth-ways trod
Will be a huge light-distance traveled unto God.

Your heavens shall change their aspect, being bowed
With rarest wisdom that was never there,
For man who is of earth a wandering cloud
Shall, with a glance, transform the cloud in air
 Into a conscious shape;
Fire-argent wind shall play upon his pipe
Until the vineyards of the spaces grape
 Incalculably ripe;
The nebulae will crystallize and be
Distinct new heart-throbs of God-man-eternity!

Nature shall be a loveliness of loves
Fulfilled into a miracled content:
Her peacocks and her panthers and her doves
Shall wear the colors of the firmament
 And walk as though in Him;
The lion and the stag will meet and sip
The water of a single pool, and brim
 With true companionship;

Nor will the jewel of one creature's eye
Depend for its warm lustre on another's cry!

Man shall control the tempest and the rain,
As he controlleth now a restive steed,
Holding them by their silver-shadowy mane,
And turn the lightning-flames that redly bleed
Into a whip that cracks
Merrily in the air, interpreter
Of speed or slowness, working on the backs
 Of elemental stir,
Leading it onward towards the final poise
That anything already held by light enjoys.

FIRE-MESSENGERS

Myriads of mighty birds flew by,
Their plumes of mingled gold and flame
Clove all the air to splendors high:
Who knows from what mysterious sky
Into a dusky world they came?

They filled the silence with a whirl
Of blended pinions whose flame-rush
Was deeper silence naught could stir:
Was each a fire-messenger
Journeying from hush to deeper hush?

At first I did not realize
Whence streamed the soft enchanted whirl,
A spiraled light of changing dyes:
But soon I saw them in their eyes
Of wedded emerald, sapphire, pearl.

Birds of humility, a crowd
Of the eternal rapture, sent
Shot like bright pangs through every cloud
Which dared to come between their proud
Flight and the calling firmament.

Each curve of pinion seemed to hold
An ecstasy that traced a bow
At every point of speed, controlled
By some far master-hand of gold
Arrowing the air with birded glow.

So swift they flew; I could not count
These dazzling hosts of angel-grace:
But even their memories seem to mount
Keenly to an immortal fount
Flowing in some cool pilgrim-place.

High noon dissolved to dusk and passed
Into a brooding night that was
An emanation of the last

Self-revelation of the vast,
Mirrored to depths of starry pause.

When, like a multitudinous roll
Of precious honey poured from jars
From pole to diamond-studded pole,
The golden bird-wings from my soul
Melted and covered up the stars.

Myriads of giant birds flew out:
Each, an event that but occurs
In realms unshadowed of all doubt:
O ancient many-jeweled rout
Of deathless fire-messengers!

NATARAJ

Nataraj, the red-fire dancer,
Poised in peace and clad in storms,
Dances in his lonely rapture
On the burning ghat of forms.
See him dancing in elation
Like a wild and drunken wind:
He is dancing all creation
To the pattern in his mind.

Ruthlessly he comes to shatter
Everything that blocks his way,
Piercing blind inconscient matter.
With his all-consuming ray;
Rocks and mountains grow transparent
And the stars begin to beat
Like the heart-throbs of the spirit
Round his dance-ecstatic feet.

Time beneath his measured footfalls
With its myriad moments marks,
One by one, our passions flying
From his dance like holy sparks.
All our life that was unreal
Is re-woven in its whirl
For the naked-born ideal
To a spirit-cloth of pearl.

Nataraj, the conscious dancer,
With his rhythm comes to bless
Every corner of creation
Till it knows his consciousness.
Streams and rivers stand suspended
While the planets reel and swim
As though stricken with the splendid
Ether-drunken dance of him.

He has come at last to capture
Unpremeditated bliss,
Through the running lonely rapture

Born to beings, in his kiss.
See him dancing, dancing, dancing
Like a darkly-drunken breeze!
He is breaking and re-making
Terrible eternities.

AN OLD OLD SONG

My song is her song:
I didn't know it!
I didn't know so long
I was her poet!

All things are her moods,
In gladness sing, O!
Blue of the twilight-woods,
Pink of flamingo!

See how they rise and rush
At her least call, O!
Silver of water-hush
And sudden swallow!

The world out of her deep
Joy she has made, O!
White bud half-asleep
And black tornado!

From her calm form of light
Touched by her will, O!
Wild winds perform their flight
O'er the dark billow!

All human-hearted things
That may have sinned, O!
Sprout into angel-wings
Under her window.

And yet my heart bleeds
And I turn sad, O!
Since for our sake she needs
To cast a shadow.

Through me all day and night
She sings . . . I know it . . .!
And so I have a right
To be her poet!

SHAPER SHAPED

In days gone by I used to be
A potter who would feel
His fingers mould the yielding clay
To patterns on his wheel;
But now, through wisdom lately-won,
That pride has died away:
I have ceased to be the potter
And have learned to be the clay.

In bygone times I used to be
A poet through whose pen
Innumerable songs would come
To win the hearts of men;
But now, through new-got knowledge
Which I hadn't had so long,
I have ceased to be the poet
And have learned to be the song.

I was a fashioner of swords,
In days that now are gone,
Which on a hundred battlefields
Glittered and gleamed and shone;
And now that I am brimming with
The silence of the lord,
I have ceased to be sword-maker
And have learned to be the sword.

In other days I used to be
A dreamer who would hurl
On every side an insolence
Of emerald and pearl;
But now that I am kneeling
At the feet of the supreme,
I have ceased to be the dreamer
And learned to be the dream.

EQUILIBRIUM

Can you be as calm
As a palm
In the shy light
Of the twilight?

And can you repose
Like a rose
In the grey light
Of old daylight?

Can you be a blade
Unafraid
Under frightening
Yellow lightning?

Can you lie alone
Like a stone
Quiet under
Dreadful thunder?

Can you be as cool
As a pool
In a deep
Inward sleep?

Can you truly be
As a tree
Blossom-bowed
To the cloud?

HOMeward

Does the perfume that leaves the lily
Ever yearn to return to it?
And to the wide surging darkness
The flame when once it is lit?

Does the sound that is struck in the tower
Ever yearn to return to its bell?
Does the water you fill in your pitcher
Ever yearn to return to its well?

DIVINE DRAMA

What are you doing, beloved!
With this body's dim sad clay?
"I am crowning it chosen hero
In the spirit's beautiful play."
What are you doing, beloved!
With this frail white column of spine?
"It is the master-musician's flute
In the drama of the Divine."

What are you doing, beloved!
With my weary human thought?
"I am breaking it up and making it up
Into a golden plot."
What are you doing, beloved!
With my dreams not ready as yet?
"I am cutting them up and painting them
Into a gorgeous set."

What are you doing, beloved!
With my errors and sins and wrongs?
"I am setting them all to music
And striking them into songs."
What are you doing, beloved!
With the time I have not lived well?
"O! out of that I am forging
The clear, announcing bell!"

What are you doing, beloved!
With my myriad human sense?
"I am making the seats for ancestors
Who will form the audience."
And what are you doing, beloved!
With my life so bruised and cracked?
"I am recasting its substance
And writing the final act."

MOMENT OF TRANCE

I stood upon the edge of trance,
On the blue margin of the night,
And saw within the heart advance
An utter loneliness of light.

My blood grew to a scented blush
Of roses, while the body was
A rich experience of hush,
A rhythm-flowering of pause.

In that great moment I became
One who had power to control
Life's crimson-pointed candle-flame,
And the white gem-fire of the soul.

Thus, while I stood upon the edge
Of inwardness, I heard a voice
Cry out, "I have fulfilled my pledge,
And now, O flowered soul, rejoice!"

POWERS

At the end of the silent secret lane
I saw the ancient man turn,
Swinging my soul in his calm right hand
As though he were swinging a lantern.

And while he walked through that secret lane
Whose name was inspiration,
Each patterned shade that the lantern made
Was a colorful creation.

Through dark transparencies I saw
The flame of the lantern pass,
Since all around it was walled and bound
With squares of colored glass.

So while he walked through the secret lane
The shadows to left and right
Were stains of color although the flame
Itself within was white.

PILGRIM

Through desolations he goes on
In flowing beauty, pouring out
From the sweet pitchers of his dawn
New-kindled faith on glooms of doubt.

We are the mystic deaths of him
Through which himself he comes to meet
Since every death is but a dim
Grey shadow of his rose-red feet.

He seeks an ever-distant goal
Through life's miraculous decay;
Between the griefhoods of our soul
He treads the hushful homeward way.

PROTECTION

He knows to save his myriad loves,
Sweet nurslings of eternal bliss:
Lilies, his mating-moods, and doves,
Pure revelations of his kiss.

Held safely in his equal joy
All things grow strong and unafraid;
No demon-force shall dare destroy
These lovely things his hands have made.

Nothing shall die that dreams his dream
Bearing, within, the holy spark,
What though, sometimes, it almost seem
As though his light were growing dark.

But lizard time shall never hold
Between its sudden jaws, in death,
Beauty's immortal moths of gold
Dancing around his flamelike breath.

EVASION

I have found you out at last,
And this time without a doubt:
Master of the golden vast!
Surely I have found you out.

I have, in this instant, known
That you have been waiting long
To become my very own
At the end of every song.

All expression on my part,
Lo! however sweet or true,
Does but draw away the heart
From the silent heart of you.

I may never hope to reach
The essential you who are
Past all shadow-sound of speech,
Silence deep-withdrawn and far.

When you give me songs to sing
Something whispers in my breast
You have run away, my king!
To the lonely unexpressed.

How had I not known so long
That, whene'er I sat to shape
Your great beauty into song,
You yourself had found escape?

Now I will not let you go!
When I want you at your best,
Master of the fire, I know
You are in the unexpressed.

REST

Let me rest my head in your lap, beloved!
In the rest I have long desired.
My eyes are full of sleep, beloved!
And my heart is very tired.
My dreams have escaped the mesh of flesh
And the world's most tricky trap:
I have come at last to rest, beloved!
To rest my head in your lap.

I have roamed a great great deal, beloved!
And my feet are bleeding and sore,
But now I have reached your side, beloved!
As a boat that has reached the shore.
My heart still trembles mournfully
When it thinks of the days now gone,
When life was a long, long lonely night
Without the least hope of a dawn,

When all the sky was a sigh, beloved,
And all the earth was a pain . . .
Thank God! those days are now of the past
And will never come back again!
Ah yes, those days are dead, beloved!
The long sweet dawn has begun . . .
Why need I think again, beloved!
Of the days that are over and done?

There was a time when I used to strive
To stir the lord with my prayer,
But the heavens put on a callous blue
And nobody seemed to care:
And when the dawn did come, sometimes,
It was hurled like a blood-red stone
At my life that lay in a corner of hell
And sorrowed alone, alone.

No need for worshipping now remains,
Nor for prayers a-tremble in air,
For you are the silent, very last

Fulfilment of mortal prayer.
All life has now become, beloved!
A quiet and mystic game
Of shadow-worlds that move, beloved!
Between a flame and a flame.

SOLUTION

Bleak death hath sown the bitter seed of strife
In every corner of the world that blows
 Into a scarlet rose,
Housing the canker in the heart of life.
The winds of evil fate go whistling by
 Under the darkening sky
 Of mortal-mated time;
While, midway between hope and anguish hung,
The soul essays truth's ladder, rung by rung,
 Most difficult to climb.

God's silence ever wandering on high
Echoes into a concave of dark light
 Which hangeth day and night,
While He goes moving between cry and cry
Of human lips grown pale with crying grief,
 Whose laughters are but brief
 As flowers that live a while;
Man dies in pain and then again returns
In deeper pain—nor knows what anguish burns
 Behind his truest smile.

The mystery of life is hard to guess,
Nor is it solvable until we reach,
 Beyond all thought and speech,
The naked light of a new consciousness,
Wherein all struggling images but seem
 The process of some dream
 Within a timeless sleep
From which, upon some golden day of days,
Man shall awake, and, in strange silence, gaze
 Across a shadowless deep.

Then shall he learn the meaning of his pain,
The absolute significance of all
 Time-tides which rise and fall,
And look on both the slayer and the slain
As but one masterful divine event
 Brief mournful color lent

Of agony and blood;
Yea, unimprisoned of the body's term,
He shall grow spirit and behold the worm
 One with the flowering bud.

The lonely kite that circles in the air
Bearing a helpless chicken in its beak,
 The loud and sanguine shriek
Of pride victorious, and the moan of prayer
Unheard, a-dropping from the vanquished prey;
 All these shall start some day
 Trails of a single voice;
One will become the gold sun and grey mist,
Earth and the sky, when no more shall exist
 The dual sense of choice.

But not until we reach the light within
Shall we outgrow the need to want and choose,
 And some must bleed and lose
In life's wild battle, some must laugh and win.
While the dim selfhood drunk with greed and lust
 Shall wage a war of dust,
 Of hatred and of death,
Continue yet a slave of cyclic law
Twixt ruddy hours of grief, and sadly draw
 Poor temporary breath!

These fire-red wars of men shall never cease
So long as they in wanton dark remain
 Of huge self-built pain,
Nor yet arrive at life's authentic peace
By sham indulgence, in a fleeting lapse
 Peace-signed and sealed on scraps
 Of paper whitely spread
Before dishonest men who meet and know
That, past their little whiteness, breaks the glow
 Of battles long and red.

How long, O sad humanity! how long
Will you evade your own immortal meaning,
 Your ear forever leaning

To catch the echo of a battle-song?
How long will you the silence veil with loud
 Thunders which tear through cloud
 On darkling cloud of hate?
When will you leave the levels of a breathless
Conflict of man with man, and reach your deathless
 Original estate?

O Earth! refuse submission of the sheep
Led to an idle slaughter for the feast
Of self-intoxicated man grown beast!
Arise and walk upon truth's shimmering deep,
Bent like a stilly arch
From heaven unto heaven of shining sleep
Behold! One waits to watch your shadows march,
Out of bare desert-lengths of pain that parch,
Into a flowering vastness of the steep;—
Out of the long and lingering human night
Towards an ever-more established dawn of light.

MASTERHOOD

I sat and watched them as they came
Towards my myriad-mirrored room,
Some, children of the rose-red flame,
And others of the inky gloom.

Watching that host, I sat apart
A king upon a throne of thrones;
I shut the gateways of the heart
Against their wild, bewildered moans.

Nurslings of nature, rose and black,
Returning to their mother's womb
Shall never dream of coming back
To crowd my many-mirrored room.

VOICES OF POEMS

I am sure—cried the little poems—
Our poet would like to know
That some of us come from the future,
And some, from the long ago.
We are all forerunners of wisdom,
And all you have got to do
Is to fill the being with twilight
And let us twinkle through.

O poet! what you call poems
Are so many ways and means
Of reaching the virgin whiteness
Behind the world's golds and greens,
Divine attempts at storming
The subtle wonder that slips
Between the words you utter
From your song-enchanted lips.

They sound the delicate heart-throbs
Of an ever-elusive One
Who reveals himself in the silence
When all joy of singing is done.
But you go on singing, my poet!
In faith while the day is long:
You will find his light through your shadow,
You will touch his hush through your song.

SEEKERS OF FIRE

There is a long way yet to go,
O you who have received the call!
Where is the end? I do not know
If there be such a thing at all!
I only know the fire burns
Somewhere, beyond our shadowed ken,
And that a something sweetly yearns
Deep in the loneliest hearts of men.

There is a way that winds and goes
Towards the lover, through the mists
Of centuries, and no one knows
For certainty if he exists.
But when we dream such dreams and taste
Such sweetness in the heart, he must
Bloom like a rose beyond the waste
Of doubt's unyielding desert-dust.

O soul! move on from age to age,
Move on, my God-enchanted soul!
Making your every goal a stage
In some forever-distant goal;
And may each end be but fulfilled
Into beginning; nor forget
The spiral process he hath willed
For feet that need to travel yet.

Be still, O traveling soul! be still!
Even in movement learn to rest!
Unite your will unto his will
And then, throughout your lonely quest,
You will discover that you are
The self-same master whom you seek
From evening-star to evening-star,
From mountain-peak to mountain-peak.

The light is brimming in your eyes,
Your breath has scented all the wind;

In every footfall hidden lies
The goal that you are out to find.
The emptiness of time and space
Grows to a fullness sudden-sweet,
Each step becomes a resting place
For the once-weary traveling feet.

THE FORGING ANEW

Master, I am quite prepared now!
I have torn the cloudy cloak,
And my silent breast is bared now
To your swiftest weapon-stroke.
Master, I am not afraid now
Of your angers, for I know
I will surely be re-made now
On your anvil, blow by blow.

I can see your new creation
Bloom out of inconscient dark:
Every moment, a pulsation
Of my nerve, becomes a spark
Wandering into the radiant
Emptinesses hung afar,
And in its untroubled gradient
Widening into a star.

Out of your heroic scourging
Broken life is rendered whole.
In red pain-fires you are forging
The perfection of the soul.
In your ruthless joy are shaken
The dark habits of the earth;
Out of broken things you waken
Scent of resurrected birth.

Nay, the lord will not allow us
Fallow-sleeps of death too long!
With sharp ploughshares he will plough us
Into ripe, nascent song;
For the master knows to hold us
Through our losses in the past
And to some new rapture mould us
Dearer to him than the last.

SONG OF FLOWER-AND-FRUIT

Master-player! play your flute!
Since it is my being's flame-time:
Lo, I am both flower and fruit
At the same time.

See my petals open wide
Where the God-bee comes and settles
Drunk with honey-aeons inside
The circling petals.

Concentrated, ripe and mute,
Inly-gathered, inly-sweet now
I lie as a voiceless fruit
At your feet now.

Master-player! in this hour
Of enchantment stop your playing:
Gather up both fruit and flower
Without delaying.

RAREFIED RAPTURE

White stork standing on the dim water-edge!
Your vision, oh so delicate, has been with me for years:
I wonder if you indicate the still and lonely pledge
Of life fulfilled along the mournful margin of our tears.

White moon bubbled from the fringes of the night!
Are you just a wandering round echo come again
Out of the shout he shouted from his purple mountain-height
When he heard his new creation cry its first wild cry of pain?

White thought blossomed on the borders of the deep!
Say, are you the motherhood of all white flowers?
While around your beauty black shadows rise and leap
You stand stainlessly for hours on rippling hours.

UNFETTERED

I am no more the fated
And fettered thing that I was,
Who loved and longed and hated
Being caught in time's red claws.
Behold, I am grown undated
Being suddenly liberated
From the dark chains struck and created
By birth and its cyclic laws.

From bondage of life I am freed now,
Yea, freed in every sense,
No more does my bosom bleed now
In slaveries long and intense;
The heart hath hardly a need now
Of hunger whose fiery seed now
Grows heavenly wings that lead now
To skies of omnipotence.

I am not bound by aught now,
By color or shape or sound.
O life of my life! by naught now
Am I fettered or cramped or bound.
Not even a dream or thought now
Can hold me awhile . . . I am wrought now
Into liberty which is not caught now
In the vast of its own profound!

When the star grows a habit, I dim it,
And song, when it runs in a groove;
When hush grows a habit, I hymn it
This freedom of mine to prove.
Ere emptiness gathers I brim it
With fullness,— I round it and rim it
With fullness of truth without limit,
From freedom to freedom I move!

INVITATION TO A WORLDLY FRIEND

There is peace here and hush and twilight
And love that but angels win
And a garden named the beloved
And a flowering called within:
Come away, sad friend, come away
Out of your dark wild whirl
For the world is an ocean of sorrow
And life is a broken pearl.

There is truth here and tireless dreaming
And a state that is stainless-still
And a miracle named the beloved
And a magic wand called will:
Come away, sad friend, come away
From your world of anguish and shame
Where time is a naked candle
And life is a bleeding flame.

There is warmth here and sacred safety
And a fullness of sweet release
And a great mood named the beloved
And a perfect expression called peace:
Come away, sad friend, come away
From your world where the winds blow sharp
And the fingers of death go playing
Your life like a mournful harp.

There is poise here and quiet wisdom,
And a light on every face,
And a birthday named the beloved
And a carnival called grace:
Come away, sad friend, come away
For the world is a drunken blot
And draining your dreams life flings you darkly
Away like an empty pot!

ASCENSION

Face to face in a lonely place of the deep still heart we have met, my love!
Hour by hour the day is a-flower, and each star of night is a pure white dove;
Song by song, the lone year long, my soul draws closer to heaven above.

Note by note, from a mortal throat I have learned to an immortal tune,
Pain by pain, again and again, to an image of rapture I have been hewn;
Aloof, quiescent, my life's dim crescent has almost reached its plenilune.

My weak wing is drunk with a spring whose rich red glory shall never fade;
Out of clay, day after day, the wonder of fire is being made,
Stroke by stroke, thus having awoke to the meaning of life, I am not afraid.

See! I wear the whole blue air like a regal mantle woven for me,
And the dark billows that mark incessant rhythms for the wide sea
Beat by beat roll at my feet like to divine dream-imagery.

We have met as one and yet, beloved of Light! we remain apart,
But we are the single star invisible yet to the human chart,
White and rich with truth, and which hangs high above the hues of the heart.

Even as twain we must remain to fulfill the rules of the mystic game,
Each to each must speak the speech of severance masked in form and name;
We are two, yet I and you are separate lamps that bear one flame.

Time and space meet face to face eternally in sky and land,
But now they seem as a painted dream to us who meet in the soul, and stand
High above the world and its love and its prison of tremulous eye and hand.

ONE-POINTED

The nearer I come
To you, my love!
The further you seem
To go from me,
Your star is a drum
That sounds above
Like a note in a dream
Of your victory.

From day to day
And from night to night,
This heart of mine
Goes looking for you,
O far-away
Unreachable light!
Say, where do you shine,
In what high blue?

As time goes by
My life, somehow,
Like a mateless dove
On a bough sits dumb.
There's no other cry
In my whole life now
But "Come, O love,
Oh come, oh come!"

The wind blows damp
And the night is chill,
And the bleak black seas
Are rising like doubt,
I have lit my lamp,
It is burning still,
In spite of the breeze
That would put it out.

In spite of the thunder,
In spite of the sleet,
In spite of the gale

I will yet come through:
For am I not under
An oath, my sweet?
Though storm prevail,
I will come to you.

Nothing can block
My journey, or crack
My boat that is sped
To your haven afar,
Nor deluge-shock
Nor the starless black,
For my sail is spread
To your guiding star.

TO TIME

O time! who move from dark to dark,
Whose mystery no man can guess,
Behold me lonelily embark
Upon a timeless consciousness;
Now that your darkling waves are crossed
Your narrow memory is lost.

To you my heart has grown immune:
In me your clock forgets to strike,
For now your pale diurnal tune
Dims in the distance echo-like.
The markings of your moon and sun
Are being forgotten one by one.

To the whole world you bring the news
Of dream and happiness and strife,
Of musics, fragrances and hues,
Summed up between a death and life;
While in my deepest self I hide
Wide mysteries to you denied.

With shades you dapple, stain and stripe
The silent earth in silver swoon
When overhead the sky is ripe
With the lone rondure of the moon,
But deep inside me, lo, I bear
Shadowless scintillating air.

See how your sun with weary tread
Drops down behind yon hill and dies,
Striking all heaven with a red
Fire-mood reflected from its eyes,
While in my heart a diamond sun
Eternally is just begun.

O Time! I have forgot your face,
All trace of you has in me died,
I even have forgotten space
Who is your ever-changing bride:

Lo, I am wonderfully lit
To a lone sense of infinite.

SURRENDER

You have shot me, and I go
Straight across the worlds and bear
The fire-message of your bow
Quivering through the cloudy air;
For your bow is deftly wrought
To a curve surpassing thought,
And the dart it speeds along
Is a happy dart of song.

You have struck me on your drum
To a brave determined note,
Which vibrates "I come, I come
O'er the centuries afloat!"
And the resonance of it
Correspondingly is lit
In the firmament to round
Twinkling images of sound.

You have held me like a cloud
In your sky of conscious sleep
And have felt extremely proud
To behold me in the deep
Concave of the precious light
Flooded into seerhood-sight,
Tranquil, voiceless, poised and keen,
Like a mood of seen unseen.

You have sent me like a beam
Through the blackness of the night
From the lighthouse of your dream
Over seas that asked for light:
Yet, in severance, have I still
Been connected with your will,
Always borne the deathless stamp
Of true oneness with your lamp.

THE DEATH OF TIME

Time weighs no longer anywhere
With dark monotony of hours:
Days are red roses in your hair
And nights are bluey-burning flowers.

We are eternal, we are free!
The sun and moon are fruits that warm
Life's mystical immortal tree
Unshaken by the frowning storm.

Grey cycles roam across the world,
Pale wanderers without an aim.
The mighty breath within us whirled
Blows out the spaces flame by flame.

No more the tolling of the bell
To keep us on the edge of time
Since in god-liberty we dwell
Lost in a dream of the sublime.

Behold! the past and future meet
In a clear vision of the soul
While years are sandals on your feet
Which lightly move towards the goal.

REALIZATION

Who says that you are far
Or that you do not care?
How near to us you are,
O intimacy rare!
Beloved! I have but
These human eyes to shut,
And lo, your love is there
A-shining like a star.

It is your presence drapes
The universe with glows;
Out of your dream escapes
The color of the rose,
The wing-beat of a bird,
The music of a word;
A universe of shapes
Is born of your repose.

What atom, grain or dot,
Is of your joy devoid?
What moment, mood or spot,
Apparently destroyed
In time, has ever ceased
Or suffered in the least,
O love! since are they not
Within you re-enjoyed?

I see you everywhere,
An image warm and true,
The rainbow in the air
Is but a streak of you.
Yon birdling's yellow bill
Is painted by your will,
Beloved! it is your care
That makes all heaven blue.

Again and yet again
You meet me through the hours:
I sense you in the rain,

I smell you in the flowers;
I hear your endless tune
Played in the sun and moon;
On changing plane on plane
You wield your magic powers.

Beauty! at every turn
I hear your passing feet,
I feel you glow and burn,
In every lane and street;
In every passerby
I see you drawing nigh,
At every step you yearn
Myself in me to meet.

You have possessed me quite
In your enchanted grip;
Across deep miles of light
I seem to drop and slip
Like a lone drop of dew
Into the depths of you
Until upon a height
I share your comradeship.

LIGHT DIVINE

O light I already face to face
I meet you everywhere I go;
Already I begin to know
The poignant bliss of your embrace.

The colored lights which fill the skies
Of moon and sun and star on star,
Now that you flood my being, are
Reflected shadows from my eyes.

One touch of you, O light sublime,
O alchemy of alchemies!
Transmutes this fretting flesh and frees
The spirit from the bonds of time.

The dust of lanes beneath my feet
Is dappled with your warmth of gold;
It is your flowering I behold
In every man in every street.

O light! Already you have come
Into my life without delay;
These lips have nothing more to say
Beyond that they are stricken dumb!

THE SECRET LINK

Long, long ago—what does it matter when?—
There lived a king, accounted among men
A real king—in other words, a king
Loved by the State; the ruby in his ring
Contained his people's laughter, not their blood;
His crown preserved their honor, and his throne
Was conscious that his kingship was their own
Being established but by their consent;
To him, authentic king, his kingdom meant
The people's happiness based on their trust,
Which losing, it would crumble into dust
And he be all unsceptered and uncrowned;
The people loved him with a love profound,
Leaving no room for base intrigue and strife,
He was true trustee of the people's life
Nourished by him with care . . .

In everything

They were consulted by their noble king
Who, not in error even, took one measure
Which might evoke a murmur of displeasure.
And so, he ruled not merely over the State,
But over their hearts . . .

No king was ever great

Without the people's love and confidence,
Nor ever won from them obedience
Unless himself he was obedient,
Nor loyalty, unless himself he gave
Loyalty in exchange . . .

What is a wave

Except a rhythm of ocean? yet, withal,
Part of the ocean in its rise and fall . . .
The people are the ocean, and the king
Only one wave its waters gladly fling
Up to a crested height to catch the rays
Of some gold-climbing sun.

And thus he reigned:

His rule was crowned with blessings, and unstained
By curses such as fall from mouths that moan
In hunger round a tyrant's bloody throne.

Day after day inside his marble fort
The king appeared, sun-glorious, and held court
Surrounded by his subjects. Each complaint
Was heard and helped.

Was he a man or saint?
Men wondered in their hearts: He is, for sure,
A superman, so wonderfully pure,
So strong, so gifted with uncommon grace,
A godly lustre floods his quiet face;
His hands are big with largess, and his heart
Wider than his own kingdom.

Lords of art
Revealed their works before him; singers sang
And dancers danced; a hundred musics rang
Echoing joyously from hall to hall,
And time itself became a waterfall
Of liquid jewels sparkling as it came
Pouring out of the senses,—wedded flame
Of myriad colors, making one supreme
Carnival of life.

The palace was a dream,
Its walls enameled gorgeously, its floors
Patterned with precious stones, its massive doors
Carven by master hands,—which opened wide
On crystal hinges,—and no one denied
Access into the hall where the king sat
Still as a statue, calmly gazing at
His various performers who performed
Miracles of art, such miracles as warmed
The bosom of the king and every heart;
Oh! art is life, in truth, and life is art
Since, of creation, melody is breath
And rhythm, blood-beat, triumphing over death,
Leaving but space for immortality;
And in the midst of such regality
Came men from near and far with myriad wares:
Vendors of carpets, velvet oblongs, squares
Of many-tinted plush; each blushed design
Flowing as though traced in translucent wine,

Edged and embroidered, honey-dark or light;
Jewelers with jewelry that struck the sight
Blind as with lightning . . . Idol-makers brought
Breath-taking idols, breath-instinct, and wrought
Of stone or bronze,—so utterly divine
Their craftsmanship in mood and curve and line,
You almost heard them tingle, turn and melt
To Beauty which can be at best but felt,
Like immortality, a flowing gold
Of essence that our eyes dare not behold.

And conjurors, turbaned colorfully, came
And wrought such wonder-feats as put to shame
Our so-called rational thinking,—challenged science
Feat upon feat performed, in sheer defiance
Of laws so far discovered that exist
To the poor knowledge of the scientist.
Snake-charmers with their several-throated pipes
Making wild serpents sway of stains and stripes
Yellow and black and brown and green and mauve,
Embodiments of rhythm born in grove
And forest, caught with ease by human hands
Through fatal love of music.

Jesters split

The mighty audience-hall with mightier wit
Until it roared and rang from roof to rafter
With laughter which kept doubling up with laughter.
Then came proud acrobats who bore the seal
Of strength upon their brow, a sense of steel
About their limbs which had, through stern gymnastic,
Acquired exceeding grace and grown elastic.

Astrologers with wisdom in their look
To whom sidereal heaven was a book
With time for binding, nights and days for pages,
Their science coming down through countless ages,
Being coeval with creation: they
Familiar with wheeling stars could say
Such things as took the future by surprise . . .
Indeed, in the vicinity of their eyes
Old planets dwelt, discussing plan on plan

And summing up the destiny of man.

The kingdom was a veritable hive
With busy bees of various trades alive,
Each adding more and more, and more and more
With diligence, to the kings' honey-store
Of large prosperity, which, all the same,
Not he alone, but all alike could claim
With equal-hearted gladness.

Now, it chanced
That on a certain day a man advanced
Towards the king and bowed before his throne,
He is a sandal merchant and was known
In all the kingdom. Elegant and tall,
Nobility in his mien, with nothing small
About his nature.

Everybody cheered
The moment he, like to a prince, appeared
Among the crowds, for he was just and good,
His soul, sweet-scented as the sandalwood
In which he traded.

But the king, he held
His breath; the merchant's sight, somehow, repelled
His royal nature, while his bosom stirred
With hatred . . . but he never said a word.

Week after week the silent ruler eyed
That prince of sandalwood who multiplied
His visits to the court; his hatred grew
From more to more, and yet, he hardly knew
The reason for such hatred—was there one?—
And, after all, what had the merchant done
Either in word or deed? he could detect
No flaw in his behavior. What respect,
What courtesy, what manliness, what grace!
What exquisite serenity in his face!
And yet the king could hardly overcome
The heart's corroding poison: hatred.

"Some
Reason exists for certain. I must know,
Wise minister! why thus, from top to toe,

From head to foot, I grow so cold and queer
The instant the good merchant enters here?
You are aware my years of life have been
Replete with peace, with naught to come between
Me and my love of men. Alas! today
I cannot with a conscience truly say
I do not hate. Oh, hatred is as treason
To God and Nature . . . There must be some reason,
Some secret cause for this that we must find,
Root out forever, and relieve my mind.”

The minister in silence heard the king
And made reply: “It is a little thing,
It shall be done before the week is done.
My lord! we look upon you as a sun
No cloud should vex or stain.

My own heart states
That your heart but imagines that it hates,
Yet, really does not, since it never did
Ever before . . .”

The king said: “God forbid
My nature grow to sour. All things above
I hate all hate, even as I love all love.”

The minister was wisdom-gifted, and
It did not take him long to understand
A riddle howsoever intricate,
It was his genius that helped the State
And spared it of dark problems.

In a wink
He understood, nor had he long to think:
He would befriend the merchant, probe his heart,
Then, detail upon detail, draw a chart
Of its veiled secrets, dive into his mind,
Record its subtle mechanism, find
The pattern of its working.

“Your renown
Rings everywhere, O merchant! every town
And every city celebrates your name.
How rich you are, how simple all the same!

The people honor you and call you great,
You are a noble asset to our State . . .”
It was no flattery to turn his head,
The minister meant every word he said.

To which the merchant quietly replied:
“The pride of wealth, Sir, is a venomous pride
Slaying its owner’s life by slow degrees:
Thank heavens, I have ever walked with ease
On humble ways with an untroubled tread,
What though I bear a burden on my head . . .”

“Burden?”

“Uncommon is the trade I ply,
I deal in wood few can afford to buy,
I talk of sandalwood, the rarest since
Creation. Yes, indeed, I am a prince
Of SANDAL-forests; yet, my hands are bare,
My wealth imprisoned in yon trees that stare
Frowningly at me—but I let them frown!
A day will come when I will hew them down,
Yea, precious sandal-trees, mile upon mile
Of forest for the royal funeral-pile:
And then alone my sandalwood will find
Fit value and spread odors on the wind.”

The minister returned unto the king
And said: “It is the closing-time of Spring,
Soon shall we have to face a scorching Summer,
My lord, I think there is no thought welcomer,
Than to construct a palace, which we should,
A precious Summer one of sandalwood,
Red sandalwood and white: so be it willed
Our royal masons shall begin to build
A palace such as will delight our hearts
And stand completed ere the Summer starts.”
The king consented, and the merchant sold
Whole forests of the wood for as much gold
As weighed against it on the royal scales,
Oh, such a deal it was, as fairy tales

Could scarcely dream of.

Then day after day
The palace rose in height in the strange way
An image rises silently and seems
Moulded out of the very stuff of dreams.

And once the deal was done, the royal brow
Shook off its cloud, the king was happy now,
His heart unburdened of all bitterness
Towards the merchant; yet, he could not guess
The hidden reason for the sudden change,
The mystic transformation swift and strange
Effected without effort.

The king swore

It was a miracle and nothing more,
And, surely, nothing less. His bosom swelled
With heavenly calm, he was no more repelled
By him, the merchant, as he used to be.
“Pray, minister! what is the mystery
Behind it?” asked the king in wonderment.
The minister replied: “The mind is bent
Like to a bow while thoughts are winged darts
Speeding invisibly twixt human hearts,
Some tipped with nectar, others tipped with gall,
Each thought is blended with the thoughts of all
Or far or near. Yea, every thought one thinks
Is but one psychic link of countless links
In life’s unending chain. Existence runs
Not on the gaudy wheels of orbéd suns
But on the thoughts of men, beggars and kings;
Thoughts are no trifles, but tremendous things
Binding the worlds together, near and far.
A thought can build or break, can make or mar
The beauty of existence. What you sensed
Of hatred for the merchant-prince commenced
Not in *your* heart, but *his*, since at its core
He entertained a thought he does no more,
That sent unkind vibrations to your heart
Troubling its natural calm, with hurt and smart
And hatred as result . . .”

“What thought, I pray?”

“The thought, O king! that you would die some day
And be cremated as a monarch should
Upon a precious pyre of sandalwood
Purchased from him inevitably, since
Of sandalwood he is acknowledged prince.”
The king sat silent, musing for a while,
Then all his face broke to a golden smile
Which made the people wonder. “It was well
We purchased all the stocks he had to sell
To build our Summer palace. Verily
A masterstroke for both himself and me!
And now that serpent hatred has been killed,
Not a mere temporal palace shall we build,
But of high truth, costlier than sandalwood,
A fortified palace of eternal brotherhood.”

EPILOGUE

They dwell like shadows in a book,
Strange patterns of a haunted mind:
Words are pathetic eyes that look
For beauty that they cannot find.

Somehow, the heart grows sad and sadder
Whenever I essay to write:
Each poem is a shadow-ladder
Reaching towards a kindled height.