

**WHITNEY**  
**HELEN HAY**

SONNETS AND SONGS

**Helen Whitney**  
**Sonnets and Songs**

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*Sonnets and Songs:*

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Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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# Helen Hay Whitney

## Sonnets and Songs

### SONNETS

#### I

#### *Ave atque Vale*

As a blown leaf across the face of Time  
Your name falls emptily upon my heart.  
In this new symmetry you have no part,  
No lot in my fair life. The stars still chime  
Autumn and Spring in ceaseless pantomime.  
I play with Beauty, which is kin to Art,  
Forgetting Nature. Nor do pulses start  
To hear your soul remembered in a rhyme.

You may not vex me any more. The stark  
Terror of life has passed, and all the stress.  
Winds had their will of me, and now caress,  
Blown from bland groves I know. Time dreams, and I,

As on a mirror, see the days go by  
In nonchalant procession to the dark.

## II

**“Chaque baiser vaut un roman.”**

I, living love and laughter, have forgot  
The way the heart has uttered melody.  
As sobbing, plaintive cadence of the sea  
A poet's soul should rest, remembering not  
The inland paths of green, the flowers, the spot  
Where fairies ring. In hermit ecstasy  
Music is born, and gay or wofully  
Lovers of Poesy share her lonely lot.

For you and me, Beloved, crowned with Spring,  
Catching Love's flowers from off the lap of Time,  
What are the songs my voice has scorned to sing?  
Ghostly they hover round my heart-wise lips;  
Into a kiss I fold my rose of Rhyme,  
Laid like a martyr on your finger-tips.

### III

## As a Pale Child

As a pale child, hemmed in by windy rain,  
Patiently turns to touch his well-known toys,  
Playing as children play who make no noise,  
Yet happy in a way; then sighs again,  
To watch the world across the storm-dim pane,  
And sees with wistful eyes glad girls and boys  
Who romp beneath the rain's unlicensed joys,  
And feels wild longings sweep his gentle brain.

So I, contented with my flowers for stars,  
Stroll in my fair, walled garden happily,  
Knowing no gladder game till, shrill and sweet,  
I hear life's cry ring down the silent street,  
And press my face against the sunlit bars  
To watch the joyous spirits who are free.

## IV

### Flower of the Clove

Ah, Love, have pity!—I am but a child;  
I ask but light and laughter, and the tears  
Darken the sunlight of my fairest years.  
By love made desolate, by love beguiled,  
I waste the Spring. Love's harvest wains are piled  
With poppies and gold grain—I glean but fears  
Of empty hands, grim hunger, and the jeers  
Of happy wives whose loves are reconciled.

But mine! Ah, mine is like a tattered leaf  
Upon a turbid stream. I have no pride,  
No life, but love, which is a bitter grief.  
As a lost star I wander down your sky.  
Give me your heart. Open it wide—so wide!  
I must have love and laughter, or I die.

## V

### Too Late

Upon your stone the wine of my desire  
Is spilled. Your poppy lips have grown too pale  
From fasting. Your white hands will not avail  
The cold eyes of your heart to light the fire.  
I did not think my prayers could ever tire.  
Now, like doomed ships, they flutter without sail.  
Lost in a calm which held no rock, no gale—  
Now, when your chilly smile bids me aspire!

So, without history, my soul is slain—  
Woman of barren love; the wine was red—  
Beautiful for your spending. Not again  
Will the bud blossom where the frost has sped.  
Timid, you dared not hark when angels sang.  
All, all is lost, without one saving pang.

## VI

### The Supreme Sacrifice

Better than life, better than sea and morn,  
And all the sun-stained fragments of the day—  
Ah! more than breeze, than purple clouds that stray  
Across dim twilights—I, the tempest-torn,  
Fighting the stars for glory, who must scorn  
Heart-drops bespread along love's cruel way  
Like scattered petals on the breast of May—  
Better than life I love you, I forlorn.

Better than death—the sleeping and the peace  
When warm within the breast of brooding Earth  
My weary heart should give its woes release,  
The pitiful dark remembering not my loss,  
The calm, wise years restoring joy for dearth—  
Better than death, my love, my burning cross.

## VII

### Malua

Out of the purple treasures of night  
Came the dark wind of evening silver-starred—  
Stirred on his cheek. The forest keeping ward  
Breathed with a tremulous silence, and the bright,  
Bare moon crowned his adoring brow with light.  
The exquisite dream of beauty held him hard  
In a great love, a forest love, unmarred—  
Still unprofaned—by human nature's sight.

Guarding the temple gates of peace he stood,  
Statue of bronze with pagan heart of stone.  
Sudden, a dazzling glory lit the wood—  
Moon in his soul that dimmed the moon above.  
Life was revealed, a Spring-sweet maid, alone—  
Beauty was woman, and the woman—Love.

## VIII

### Love's Legacy

As one who looks too long upon the sun  
When he must turn to earth from flame-shot skies  
Sees all else dark through his bereaved eyes,  
And yet may watch the rainbow ribbons run  
Athwart the gravity of gray and dun,  
He holds the darkness dearer for the prize  
Wherein his only pledge of radiance lies  
When he the vast magnificence must shun.

So we who play with rainbows, having seen  
The sun's own face. We may not hold the west,  
Which burns against the bosom of the night,  
But in the after-glow, with eyes serene,  
We still may find, dear heart, the sun's bequest,  
An echoed glory of our passionate light.

## IX

### How we would Live!

How we would live! We'd drink the years like wine,  
With all to-morrows hid behind the veil,  
Which is your hair; between two lilies pale—  
Your slender hands—my heart should lie and shine,  
A crimson rose. We'd catch the wind and twine  
The evening stars—a chaplet musical—  
To crown our folly, lure the nightingale  
To sing the bliss your lips should teach to mine.

And if the sage, declaring life is vain,  
Should frown upon the flower of all our days  
And chide the sun that knows no tears of rain,  
He should not tease our heart with cynic eye—  
The soul's vast altar stands beyond his gaze  
When two have lived—then shall they fear to die?

# X

## In Extremis

Nay, touch me not, nor even with your eyes  
Hold mine, for I would speak you, thus afar,  
Aloof and chill and lonely as a star.  
The hands that urge, the hungry heart that cries,  
Have wrapped my love with love's elusive lies;  
The lips that burn have laid a ruddy scar  
Against the truth that stands without the bar,  
And blinded faith with passion's mysteries.

Night holds a single moon, day one desire—  
Her golden sun; and life a love supreme,  
Wherein one moment poises, crowned with fire,  
White with the naked truth. Beyond control,  
'Tis here, my Sun, in love's last hour extreme,  
I hold aloft my bare, adoring soul.

# XI

## The Forgiveness

If I might see you dead, Beloved—dead—  
Your false eyes closed forever to the light,  
Your false smile stilled upon my aching sight;  
If I might know that nevermore your head,  
Cruelly fair, could lie upon the bed  
Of my torn heart; if I beheld the night  
Free from your living thought—ah! if I might,  
Then could my desolate soul be comforted.

For this is worst of all the woes you gave—  
My heart may not forgive. The tired years go  
And leave the great love weeping for a grave,  
Scorned and unburied, 'neath the open sky.  
I could not love you less, to see you so.  
Loving you more, I might forgive—and die.

## XII

### With Music

Dear, did we meet in some dim yesterday?  
I half remember how the birds were mute  
Among green leaves and tulip-tinted fruit,  
And on the grass, beside a stream, we lay  
In early twilight; faintly, far away,  
Came lovely sounds adrift from silver lute,  
With answered echoes of an airy flute,  
While Twilight waited tiptoe, fain to stay.

Her violet eyes were sweet with mystery.  
You looked in mine, the music rose and fell  
Like little, lisping laughter of the sea;  
Our souls were barks, wind-wafted from the shore—  
Gold cup, a rose, a ruby, who can tell?  
Soft—music ceases—I recall no more.

## XIII

### Alpha and Omega

I died to-day, and yet upon my eyes  
A glamour of the gorgeous summer green  
Still wavers, and my brain has kept a keen,  
Sweet bird-song. Glad with light, the summer skies  
Are sapphire, and a purple shadow lies  
Across the hills—no change is on the scene  
Since happy yesterday. Ah! can it mean  
The body lives when stricken spirit dies?

The blow has fallen, yet I can recall  
The first of days when this dead heart drew breath—  
A wondrous moon-flower waking of a heart.  
Strange—then as now the moment seemed to part  
Body from soul, so like are birth and death;  
So did I gain, and so I lost my all.

## XIV

### Flowers of Ice

The lights within the ice-floes are our flowers,  
Lily and daffodil and violet.  
Beneath these monstrous suns that never set  
Tremble soft rainbows, young as Earth's first hours,  
Ancient as Time. No balm of gentle showers  
Make for their growth; for them, gigantic, met  
The immemorial ice and sun, to get  
Such blossoms—pledge of Beauty's bravest powers.

Violet and pale grass-green, the Spring-time dies  
In the soft South. To us, in this grim world,  
Daring with frozen heart and tearless eyes  
The North's white sanctity, Fate idly throws  
These alms—a deathless Spring of ice enfurled,  
And over all, far flung, the sunset rose.

## XV

### Love and Death

I can believe that my Beloved dies,  
That all her virtue, all her youth shall fail,  
And life, her rosy life, grow cold and pale,  
To bloom again in braver Paradise.  
I must believe that death shall close her eyes,  
And hold her heart beyond a heavy veil,  
Where silences surround her spirit frail  
And waste the form where all my loving lies.

Ah, God! but no. And is my love so weak?  
Her heart may pause, may falter and grow still,  
But not her laugh, the color in her cheek—  
That may not fade; the catch that lifts her breath,  
Sobbing against my heart. Essay your will—  
These are too dear to fill *your* grave, O Death!

## XVI

### The Message

When one has heard the message of the Rose,  
For what faint other calling shall he care?  
Dark broodings turn to find their lonely lair;  
The vain world keeps her posturing and pose.  
He, with his crimson secret, which bestows  
Heaven on his heart, to Heaven lifts his prayer,  
And knows all glory trembling through the air  
As on triumphal journeying he goes.

So through green woodlands in the twilight dim,

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