

CAWEIN

MADISON

JULIUS

POEMS

Madison Cawein
Poems

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Madison Julius Cawein

Poems

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The verses composing this volume have been selected by the author almost entirely from the five-volume edition of his poems published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company in 1907. A number have been included from the three or four volumes which have been published since the appearance of the Collected Poems; namely, three poems from the volume entitled "Nature Notes and Impressions," E. P. Button & Co., New York; one poem from "The Giant and the Star," Small, Maynard & Co., Boston; Section VII and part of Section VIII of "An Ode" written in commemoration of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and published by John P. Morton & Co., Louisville, Ky.; some five or six poems from "New Poems," published in London by Mr. Grant Richards in 1909; and three or four selections from the volume of selections entitled "Kentucky Poems," compiled by Mr. Edmund Gosse and published in London by Mr. Grant Richards in 1902. Acknowledgment and thanks for permission to reprint the various poems included in this volume are herewith made to the different publishers.

The two poems, "in Arcady" and "The Black Knight" are new and are published here for the first time.

In making the selections for the present book Mr. Cawein has endeavored to cover the entire field of his poetical labors, which extends over a quarter of a century. With the exception of his dramatic work, as witnessed by one volume only, "The Shadow Garden," a book of plays four in number, published in 1910, the selection herewith presented by us is, in our opinion, representative of the author's poetical work.

THE POETRY OF MADISON CAWEIN

When a poet begins writing, and we begin liking his work, we own willingly enough that we have not, and cannot have, got the compass of his talent. We must wait till he has written more, and we have learned to like him more, and even then we should hesitate his definition, from all that he has done, if we did not very commonly qualify ourselves from the latest thing he has done. Between the earliest thing and the latest thing there may have been a hundred different things, and in his swan-long life of a singer there would probably be a hundred yet, and all different. But we take the latest as if it summed him up in motive and range and tendency. Many parts of his work offer themselves in confirmation of our judgment, while those which might impeach it shrink away and hide themselves, and leave us to our precipitation, our catastrophe.

It was surely nothing less than by a catastrophe that I should have been so betrayed in the volumes of Mr. Cawein's verse which reached me last before the volume of his collected poems.... I had read his poetry and loved it from the beginning, and in each successive expression of it, I had delighted in its expanding and maturing beauty. I believe I had not failed to own its compass, and when—

"He touched the tender stops of various quills,"

I had responded to every note of the changing music. I did not always respond audibly either in public or in private, for it seemed to me that so old a friend might fairly rest on the laurels he had helped bestow. But when that last volume came, I said to myself, "This applausive silence has gone on long enough. It is time to break it with open appreciation. Still," I said, "I must guard against too great appreciation; I must mix in a little depreciation, to show that I have read attentively, critically, authoritatively." So I applied myself to the cheapest and easiest means of depreciation, and asked, "Why do you always write Nature poems? Why not Human Nature poems?" or the like. But in seizing upon an objection so obvious that I ought to have known it was superficial, I had wronged a poet, who had never done me harm, but only good, in the very terms and conditions of his being a poet. I had not stayed to see that his nature poetry was instinct with human poetry, with *his* human poetry, with mine, with yours. I had made his reproach what ought to have been his finest praise, what is always the praise of poetry when it is not artificial and formal. I ought to have said, as I had seen, that not one of his lovely landscapes in which I could discover no human figure, but thrilled with a human presence penetrating to it from his most sensitive and subtle spirit until it was all but painfully alive with memories, with regrets, with longings, with hopes, with all that from time to time mutably constitutes us men and women, and yet keeps us children. He has the gift, in a measure that I do not think surpassed in any poet, of touching some smallest or commonest thing in nature, and making it live from the manifold associations in which we have our being, and glow thereafter with an inextinguishable beauty. His felicities do not seem sought; rather they seem to seek him, and to surprise him with the delight they impart through him. He has the inspiration of the right word, and the courage of it, so that though in the first instant you may be challenged, you may be revolted, by something that you might have thought uncouth, you are presently overcome by the happy bravery of it, and gladly recognize that no other word of those verbal saints or aristocrats, dedicated to the worship or service of beauty, would at all so well have conveyed the sense of it as this or that plebeian.

If I began indulging myself in the pleasure of quotation, or the delight of giving proofs of what I say, I should soon and far transcend the modest bounds which the editor has set my paper. But the reader may take it from me that no other poet, not even of the great Elizabethan range, can outword this poet when it comes to choosing some epithet fresh from the earth or air, and with the morning sun or light upon it, for an emotion or experience in which the race renews its youth from generation to generation. He is of the kind of Keats and Shelley and Wordsworth and Coleridge, in that truth to observance and experience of nature and the joyous expression of it, which are the dominant

characteristics of his art. It is imaginable that the thinness of the social life in the Middle West threw the poet upon the communion with the fields and woods, the days and nights, the changing seasons, in which another great nature poet of ours declares they "speak in various language." But nothing could be farther from the didactic mood in which "communion with the various forms" of nature casts the Puritanic soul of Bryant, than the mood in which this German-blooded, Kentucky-born poet, who keeps throughout his song the sense of a perpetual and inalienable youth, with a spirit as pagan as that which breathes from Greek sculpture—but happily not more pagan. Most modern poets who are antique are rather over-Hellenic, in their wish not to be English or French, but there is nothing voluntary in Mr. Cawein's naturalization in the older world of myth and fable; he is too sincerely and solely a poet to be a *posseur*; he has his eyes everywhere except on the spectator, and his affair is to report the beauty that he sees, as if there were no one by to hear.

An interesting and charming trait of his poetry is its constant theme of youth and its limit within the range that the emotions and aspirations of youth take. He might indeed be called the poet of youth if he resented being called the poet of nature; but the poet of youth, be it understood, of vague regrets, of "tears, idle tears," of "long, long thoughts," for that is the real youth, and not the youth of the supposed hilarity, the attributive recklessness, the daring hopes. Perhaps there is some such youth as this, but it has not its home in the breast of any young poet, and he rarely utters it; at best he is of a light melancholy, a smiling wistfulness, and upon the whole, October is more to his mind than May.

In Mr. Cawein's work, therefore, what is not the expression of the world we vainly and rashly call the inanimate world, is the hardly more dramatized, and not more enchantingly imagined story of lovers, rather unhappy lovers. He finds his own in this sort far and near; in classic Greece, in heroic England, in romantic Germany, where the blue flower blows, but not less in beautiful and familiar Kentucky, where the blue grass shows itself equally the emblem of poetry, and the moldering log in the cabin wall or the woodland path is of the same poetic value as the marble of the ruined temple or the stone of the crumbling castle. His singularly creative fancy breathes a soul into every scene; his touch leaves everything that was dull to the sense before glowing in the light of joyful recognition. He classifies his poems by different names, and they are of different themes, but they are after all of that unity which I have been trying, all too shirkingly, to suggest. One, for instance, is the pathetic story which tells itself in the lyrical eclogue "One Day and Another." It is the conversation, prolonged from meeting to meeting, between two lovers whom death parts; but who recurrently find themselves and each other in the gardens and the woods, and on the waters which they tell each other of and together delight in. The effect is that which is truest to youth and love, for these transmutations of emotion form the disguise of self which makes passion tolerable; but mechanically the result is a series of nature poems. More genuinely dramatic are such pieces as "The Feud," "Ku Klux," and "The Lynchers," three out of many; but one which I value more because it is worthy of Wordsworth, or of Tennyson in a Wordsworthian mood, is "The Old Mill," where, with all the wonted charm of his landscape art, Mr. Cawein gives us a strongly local and novel piece of character painting.

I deny myself with increasing reluctance the pleasure of quoting the stanzas, the verses, the phrases, the epithets, which lure me by scores and hundreds in his poems. It must suffice me to say that I do not know any poem of his which has not some such a felicity; I do not know any poem of his which is not worth reading, at least the first time, and often the second and the third time, and so on as often as you have the chance of recurring to it. Some disappoint and others delight more than others; but there is none but in greater or less measure has the witchery native to the poet, and his place and his period.

It is only in order of his later time that I would put Mr. Cawein first among those Midwestern poets, of whom he is the youngest. Poetry in the Middle West has had its development in which it was eclipsed by the splendor, transitory if not vain, of the California school. But it is deeply rooted in the life of the region, and is as true to its origins as any faithful portraiture of the Midwestern landscape could be; you could not mistake the source of the poem or the picture. In a certain tenderness of light

and coloring, the poems would recall the mellowed masterpieces of the older literatures rather than those of the New England school, where conscience dwells almost rebukingly with beauty....

W. D. HOWELLS.

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POEMS

HYMN TO SPIRITUAL DESIRE

I

Mother of visions, with lineaments dulcet as numbers
Breathed on the eyelids of Love by music that slumbers,
Secretly, sweetly, O presence of fire and snow,
Thou comest mysterious,
In beauty imperious,
Clad on with dreams and the light of no world that we know:
Deep to my innermost soul am I shaken,
Helplessly shaken and tossed,
And of thy tyrannous yearnings so utterly taken,
My lips, unsatisfied, thirst;
Mine eyes are accurst
With longings for visions that far in the night are forsaken;
And mine ears, in listening lost,
Yearn, waiting the note of a chord that will never awaken.

II

Like palpable music thou comest, like moonlight; and far,—
Resonant bar upon bar,—
The vibrating lyre
Of the spirit responds with melodious fire,
As thy fluttering fingers now grasp it and ardently shake,
With laughter and ache,
The chords of existence, the instrument star-sprung,
Whose frame is of clay, so wonderfully molded of mire.

III

Vested with vanquishment, come, O Desire, Desire!
Breathe in this harp of my soul the audible angel of Love!
Make of my heart an Israfel burning above,
A lute for the music of God, that lips, which are mortal, but stammer!
Smite every rapturous wire
With golden delirium, rebellion and silvery clamor,

Crying—"Awake! awake!
Too long hast thou slumbered! too far from the regions of glamour
With its mountains of magic, its fountains of faery, the spar-sprung,
Hast thou wandered away, O Heart!"

Come, oh, come and partake
Of necromance banquets of Beauty; and slake
Thy thirst in the waters of Art,
That are drawn from the streams
Of love and of dreams.

IV

"Come, oh, come!
No longer shall language be dumb!
Thy vision shall grasp—
As one doth the glittering hasp
Of a sword made splendid with gems and with gold—
The wonder and richness of life, not anguish and hate of it merely.
And out of the stark
Eternity, awful and dark,
Immensity silent and cold,—
Universe-shaking as trumpets, or cymbaling metals,
Imperious; yet pensive and pearly
And soft as the rosy unfolding of petals,
Or crumbling aroma of blossoms that wither too early,—
The majestic music of God, where He plays
On the organ, eternal and vast, of eons and days."

BEAUTIFUL-BOSOMED, O NIGHT

I

Beautiful-bosomed, O Night, in thy noon
Move with majesty onward! soaring, as lightly
As a singer may soar the notes of an exquisite tune,
The stars and the moon
Through the clerestories high of the heaven, the firmament's halls:
Under whose sapphirine walls,
June, hesperian June,
Robed in divinity wanders. Daily and nightly
The turquoise touch of her robe, that the violets star,
The silvery fall of her feet, that lilies are,
Fill the land with languorous light and perfume.—
Is it the melody mute of burgeoning leaf and of bloom?
The music of Nature, that silently shapes in the gloom
Immaterial hosts
Of spirits that have the flowers and leaves in their keep,
Whom I hear, whom I hear?
With their sighs of silver and pearl?
Invisible ghosts,—
Each sigh a shadowy girl,—

Who whisper in leaves and glimmer in blossoms and hover
In color and fragrance and loveliness, breathed from the deep
World-soul of the mother,
Nature; who over and over,—
Both sweetheart and lover,—
Goes singing her songs from one sweet month to the other.

II

Lo! 'tis her songs that appear, appear,
In forest and field, on hill-land and lea,
As visible harmony,
Materialized melody,
Crystallized beauty, that out of the atmosphere
Utters itself, in wonder and mystery,
Peopling with glimmering essence the hyaline far and the near....

III

Behold how it sprouts from the grass and blossoms from flower and tree!

In waves of diaphanous moonlight and mist,
In fugue upon fugue of gold and of amethyst,
Around me, above me it spirals; now slower, now faster,
Like symphonies born of the thought of a musical master.—
O music of Earth! O God, who the music inspired!
Let me breathe of the life of thy breath!
And so be fulfilled and attired
In resurrection, triumphant o'er time and o'er death!

DISCOVERY

What is it now that I shall seek
Where woods dip downward, in the hills?—
A mossy nook, a ferny creek,
And May among the daffodils.

Or in the valley's vistaed glow,
Past rocks of terraced trumpet vines,
Shall I behold her coming slow,
Sweet May, among the columbines?

With redbud cheeks and bluet eyes,
Big eyes, the homes of happiness,
To meet me with the old surprise,
Her wild-rose hair all bonnetless.

Who waits for me, where, note for note,
The birds make glad the forest trees?—
A dogwood blossom at her throat,
My May among th' anemones.

As sweetheart breezes kiss the blooms,
And dews caress the moon's pale beams,
My soul shall drink her lips' perfumes,
And know the magic of her dreams.

O MAYTIME WOODS!

From the idyll "Wild Thorn and Lily"

O Maytime woods! O Maytime lanes and hours!
And stars, that knew how often there at night
Beside the path, where woodbine odors blew
Between the drowsy eyelids of the dusk,—
When, like a great, white, pearly moth, the moon
Hung silvering long windows of your room,—
I stood among the shrubs! The dark house slept.
I watched and waited for—I know not what!—
Some tremor of your gown: a velvet leaf's
Unfolding to caresses of the Spring:
The rustle of your footsteps: or the dew
Syllabing avowal on a tulip's lips
Of odorous scarlet: or the whispered word
Of something lovelier than new leaf or rose—
The word young lips half murmur in a dream:

Serene with sleep, light visions weigh her eyes:
 And underneath her window blooms a quince.
The night is a sultana who doth rise
 In slippered caution, to admit a prince,
Love, who her eunuchs and her lord defies.

Are these her dreams? or is it that the breeze
 Pelts me with petals of the quince, and lifts
The Balm-o'-Gilead buds? and seems to squeeze
 Aroma on aroma through sweet rifts
Of Eden, dripping through the rainy trees.

Along the path the buckeye trees begin
 To heap their hills of blossoms.—Oh, that they
Were Romeo ladders, whereby I might win
 Her chamber's sanctity!—where dreams must pray
About her soul!—That I might enter in!—

A dream,—and see the balsam scent erase
 Its dim intrusion; and the starry night
Conclude majestic pomp; the virgin grace
 Of every bud abashed before the white,
Pure passion-flower of her sleeping face.

THE REDBIRD

From "Wild Thorn and Lily"

Among the white haw-blossoms, where the creek
Droned under drifts of dogwood and of haw,
The redbird, like a crimson blossom blown
Against the snow-white bosom of the Spring,
The chaste confusion of her lawny breast,
Sang on, prophetic of serener days,
As confident as June's completer hours.
And I stood listening like a hind, who hears
A wood nymph breathing in a forest flute
Among the beech-boles of myth-haunted ways:
And when it ceased, the memory of the air
Blew like a syrinx in my brain: I made
A lyric of the notes that men might know:

He flies with flirt and fluting—
As flies a crimson star
From flaming star-beds shooting—
From where the roses are.

Wings past and sings; and seven
Notes, wild as fragrance is,—
That turn to flame in heaven,—
Float round him full of bliss.

He sings; each burning feather
Thrills, throbbing at his throat;
A song of firefly weather,
And of a glowworm boat:

Of Elfland and a princess
Who, born of a perfume,
His music rocks,—where winces
That rosebud's cradled bloom.

No bird sings half so airy,
No bird of dusk or dawn,
Thou masking King of Faery!
Thou red-crowned Oberon!

A NIËLLO

I

It is not early spring and yet
Of bloodroot blooms along the stream,
And blotted banks of violet,
My heart will dream.

Is it because the windflower apes
The beauty that was once her brow,
That the white memory of it shapes
The April now?

Because the wild-rose wears the blush
That once made sweet her maidenhood,
Its thought makes June of barren bush
And empty wood?

And then I think how young she died—
Straight, barren Death stalks down the trees,
The hard-eyed Hours by his side,
That kill and freeze.

II

When orchards are in bloom again
My heart will bound, my blood will beat,
To hear the redbird so repeat,
On boughs of rosy stain,
His blithe, loud song,—like some far strain
From out the past,—among the bloom,—
(Where bee and wasp and hornet boom)—
Fresh, redolent of rain.

When orchards are in bloom once more,
Invasions of lost dreams will draw
My feet, like some insistent law,
Through blossoms to her door:
In dreams I'll ask her, as before,
To let me help her at the well;
And fill her pail; and long to tell
My love as once of yore.

I shall not speak until we quit
The farm-gate, leading to the lane
And orchard, all in bloom again,
 Mid which the bluebirds sit
And sing; and through whose blossoms flit
The catbirds crying while they fly:
Then tenderly I'll speak, and try
 To tell her all of it.

And in my dream again she'll place
Her hand in mine, as oft before,—
When orchards are in bloom once more,—
 With all her young-girl grace:
And we shall tarry till a trace
Of sunset dyes the heav'ns; and then—
We'll part; and, parting, I again
 Shall bend and kiss her face.

And homeward, singing, I shall go
Along the cricket-chirring ways,
While sunset, one long crimson blaze
 Of orchards, lingers low:
And my dead youth again I'll know,
And all her love, when spring is here—
Whose memory holds me many a year,
 Whose love still haunts me so!

III

I would not die when Springtime lifts
 The white world to her maiden mouth,
And heaps its cradle with gay gifts,
 Breeze-blown from out the singing South:
Too full of life and loves that cling;
 Too heedless of all mortal woe,
The young, unsympathetic Spring,
 That Death should never know.

I would not die when Summer shakes
 Her daisied locks below her hips,
And naked as a star that takes
 A cloud, into the silence slips:
Too rich is Summer; poor in needs;
 In egotism of loveliness
Her pomp goes by, and never heeds
 One life the more or less.

But I would die when Autumn goes,
The dark rain dripping from her hair,
Through forests where the wild wind blows
Death and the red wreck everywhere:
Sweet as love's last farewells and tears
To fall asleep when skies are gray,
In the old autumn of my years,
Like a dead leaf borne far away.

IN MAY

I

When you and I in the hills went Maying,
You and I in the bright May weather,
The birds, that sang on the boughs together,
There in the green of the woods, kept saying
All that my heart was saying low,
"I love you! love you!" soft and low,—
And did you know?
When you and I in the hills went Maying.

II

There where the brook on its rocks went winking,
There by its banks where the May had led us,
Flowers, that bloomed in the woods and meadows,
Azure and gold at our feet, kept thinking
All that my soul was thinking there,
"I love you! love you!" softly there—
And did you care?
There where the brook on its rocks went winking.

III

Whatever befalls through fate's compelling,
Should our paths unite or our pathways sever,
In the Mays to come I shall feel forever
The wildflowers thinking, the wild birds telling,
In words as soft as the falling dew,
The love that I keep here still for you,
Both deep and true,
Whatever befalls through fate's compelling.

AUBADE

Awake! the dawn is on the hills!
Behold, at her cool throat a rose,
Blue-eyed and beautiful she goes,
Leaving her steps in daffodils.—
Awake! arise! and let me see
Thine eyes, whose deeps epitomize
All dawns that were or are to be,
O love, all Heaven in thine eyes!—
Awake! arise! come down to me!

Behold! the dawn is up: behold!
How all the birds around her float,
Wild rills of music, note on note,
Spilling the air with mellow gold.—
Arise! awake! and, drawing near,
Let me but hear thee and rejoice!
Thou, who keep'st captive, sweet and clear,
All song, O love, within thy voice!
Arise! awake! and let me hear!

See, where she comes, with limbs of day,
The dawn! with wild-rose hands and feet,
Within whose veins the sunbeams beat,
And laughters meet of wind and ray.
Arise! come down! and, heart to heart,
Love, let me clasp in thee all these—
The sunbeam, of which thou art part,
And all the rapture of the breeze!—
Arise! come down! loved that thou art!

APOCALYPSE

Before I found her I had found
 Within my heart, as in a brook,
Reflections of her: now a sound
 Of imaged beauty; now a look.

So when I found her, gazing in
 Those Bibles of her eyes, above
All earth, I read no word of sin;
 Their holy chapters all were love.

I read them through. I read and saw
 The soul impatient of the sod—
Her soul, that through her eyes did draw
 Mine—to the higher love of God.

PENETRALIA

I am a part of all you see
In Nature; part of all you feel:
I am the impact of the bee
Upon the blossom; in the tree
I am the sap,—that shall reveal
The leaf, the bloom,—that flows and flutes
Up from the darkness through its roots.

I am the vermeil of the rose,
The perfume breathing in its veins;
The gold within the mist that glows
Along the west and overflows
With light the heaven; the dew that rains
Its freshness down and strings with spheres
Of wet the webs and oaten ears.

I am the egg that folds the bird;
The song that beaks and breaks its shell;
The laughter and the wandering word
The water says; and, dimly heard,
The music of the blossom's bell
When soft winds swing it; and the sound
Of grass slow-creeping o'er the ground.

I am the warmth, the honey-scent
That throats with spice each lily-bud
That opens, white with wonderment,
Beneath the moon; or, downward bent,
Sleeps with a moth beneath its hood:
I am the dream that haunts it too,
That crystallizes into dew.

I am the seed within the pod;
The worm within its closed cocoon:
The wings within the circling clod,
The germ, that gropes through soil and sod
To beauty, radiant in the noon:
I am all these, behold! and more—
I am the love at the world-heart's core.

ELUSION

I

My soul goes out to her who says,
"Come, follow me and cast off care!"
Then tosses back her sun-bright hair,
And like a flower before me sways
Between the green leaves and my gaze:
This creature like a girl, who smiles
Into my eyes and softly lays
Her hand in mine and leads me miles,
Long miles of haunted forest ways.

II

Sometimes she seems a faint perfume,
A fragrance that a flower exhaled
And God gave form to; now, unveiled,
A sunbeam making gold the gloom
Of vines that roof some woodland room
Of boughs; and now the silvery sound
Of streams her presence doth assume—
Music, from which, in dreaming drowned,
A crystal shape she seems to bloom.

III

Sometimes she seems the light that lies
On foam of waters where the fern
Shimmers and drips; now, at some turn
Of woodland, bright against the skies,
She seems the rainbowed mist that flies;
And now the mossy fire that breaks
Beneath the feet in azure eyes
Of flowers; now the wind that shakes
Pale petals from the bough that sighs.

IV

Sometimes she lures me with a song;
Sometimes she guides me with a laugh;
Her white hand is a magic staff,
Her look a spell to lead me long:
Though she be weak and I be strong,
She needs but shake her happy hair,
But glance her eyes, and, right or wrong,
My soul must follow—anywhere
She wills—far from the world's loud throng.

V

Sometimes I think that she must be
No part of earth, but merely this—
The fair, elusive thing we miss
In Nature, that we dream we see
Yet never see: that goldenly
Beckons; that, limbed with rose and pearl,
The Greek made a divinity:—
A nymph, a god, a glimmering girl,
That haunts the forest's mystery.

WOMANHOOD

I

The summer takes its hue
From something opulent as fair in her,
And the bright heaven is brighter than it was;
Brighter and lovelier,
Arching its beautiful blue,
Serene and soft, as her sweet gaze, o'er us.

II

The springtime takes its moods
From something in her made of smiles and tears,
And flowery earth is flowerier than before,
And happier, it appears,
Adding new multitudes
To flowers, like thoughts, that haunt us evermore.

III

Summer and spring are wed
In her—her nature; and the glamour of
Their loveliness, their bounty, as it were,
Of life and joy and love,
Her being seems to shed,—
The magic aura of the heart of her.

THE IDYLL OF THE STANDING STONE

The teasel and the horsemint spread
The hillside as with sunset, sown
With blossoms, o'er the Standing-Stone
That ripples in its rocky bed:
There are no treasures that hold
Gold richer than the marigold
That crowns its sparkling head.

'Tis harvest time: a mower stands
Among the morning wheat and whets
His scythe, and for a space forgets
The labor of the ripening lands;
Then bends, and through the dewy grain
His long scythe hisses, and again
He swings it in his hands.

And she beholds him where he mows
On acres whence the water sends
Faint music of reflecting bends
And falls that interblend with flows:
She stands among the old bee-gums,—
Where all the apiary hums,—
A simple bramble-rose.

She hears him whistling as he leans,
And, reaping, sweeps the ripe wheat by;
She sighs and smiles, and knows not why,
Nor what her heart's disturbance means:
He whets his scythe, and, resting, sees
Her rose-like 'mid the hives of bees,
Beneath the flowering beans.

The peacock-purple lizard creeps
Along the rail; and deep the drone
Of insects makes the country lone
With summer where the water sleeps:
She hears him singing as he swings
His scythe—who thinks of other things
Than toil, and, singing, reaps.

NOËRA

Noëra, when sad Fall
Has grayed the fallow;
Leaf-cramped the wood-brook's brawl
In pool and shallow;
When, by the woodside, tall
Stands sere the mallow.

Noëra, when gray gold
And golden gray
The crackling hollows fold
By every way,
Shall I thy face behold,
Dear bit of May?

When webs are cribs for dew,
And gossamers
Streak by you, silver-blue;
When silence stirs
One leaf, of rusty hue,
Among the burrs:

Noëra, through the wood,
Or through the grain,
Come, with the hoiden mood
Of wind and rain
Fresh in thy sunny blood,
Sweetheart, again.

Noëra, when the corn,
Reaped on the fields,
The asters' stars adorn;
And purple shields
Of ironweeds lie torn
Among the wealds:

Noëra, haply then,
Thou being with me,
Each ruined greenwood glen
Will bud and be
Spring's with the spring again,
The spring in thee.

Thou of the breezy tread;
Feet of the breeze:
Thou of the sunbeam head;

Heart like a bee's:
Face like a woodland-bred
Anemone's.

Thou to October bring
An April part!
Come! make the wild birds sing,
The blossoms start!
Noëra, with the spring
Wild in thy heart!

Come with our golden year:
Come as its gold:
With the same laughing, clear,
Loved voice of old:
In thy cool hair one dear
Wild marigold.

THE OLD SPRING

I

Under rocks whereon the rose
Like a streak of morning glows;
Where the azure-throated newt
Drowzes on the twisted root;
And the brown bees, humming homeward,
Stop to suck the honeydew;
Fern- and leaf-hid, gleaming gloamward,
Drips the wildwood spring I knew,
Drips the spring my boyhood knew.

II

Myrrh and music everywhere
Haunt its cascades—like the hair
That a Naiad tosses cool,
Swimming strangely beautiful,
With white fragrance for her bosom,
And her mouth a breath of song—
Under leaf and branch and blossom
Flows the woodland spring along,
Sparkling, singing flows along.

III

Still the wet wan mornings touch
Its gray rocks, perhaps; and such
Slender stars as dusk may have
Pierce the rose that roofs its wave;
Still the thrush may call at noontide
And the whippoorwill at night;
Nevermore, by sun or moontide,
Shall I see it gliding white,
Falling, flowing, wild and white.

A DREAMER OF DREAMS

He lived beyond men, and so stood
Admitted to the brotherhood
Of beauty:—dreams, with which he trod
Companioned like some sylvan god.
And oft men wondered, when his thought
Made all their knowledge seem as naught,
If he, like Uther's mystic son,
Had not been born for Avalon.

When wandering mid the whispering trees,
His soul communed with every breeze;
Heard voices calling from the glades,
Bloom-words of the Leimoniäds;
Or Dryads of the ash and oak,
Who syllabled his name and spoke
With him of presences and powers
That glimpsed in sunbeams, gloomed in showers.

By every violet-hallowed brook,
Where every bramble-matted nook
Rippled and laughed with water sounds,
He walked like one on sainted grounds,
Fearing intrusion on the spell
That kept some fountain-spirit's well,
Or woodland genius, sitting where
Red, racy berries kissed his hair.

Once when the wind, far o'er the hill,
Had fall'n and left the wildwood still
For Dawn's dim feet to trail across,—
Beneath the gnarled boughs, on the moss,
The air around him golden-ripe
With daybreak,—there, with oaten pipe,
His eyes beheld the wood-god, Pan,
Goat-bearded, horned; half brute, half man;
Who, shaggy-haunched, a savage rhyme
Blew in his reed to rudest time;
And swollen-jowled, with rolling eye—
Beneath the slowly silvering sky,
Whose rose streaked through the forest's roof—
Danced, while beneath his boisterous hoof
The branch was snapped, and, interfused
Between gnarled roots, the moss was bruised.

And often when he wandered through

Old forests at the fall of dew—
A new Endymion, who sought
A beauty higher than all thought—
Some night, men said, most surely he
Would favored be of deity:
That in the holy solitude
Her sudden presence, long-pursued,
Unto his gaze would stand confessed:
The awful moonlight of her breast
Come, high with majesty, and hold
His heart's blood till his heart grew cold,
Unpulsed, unsinewed, all undone,
And snatch his soul to Avalon.

DEEP IN THE FOREST

I. SPRING ON THE HILLS

Ah, shall I follow, on the hills,
The Spring, as wild wings follow?
Where wild-plum trees make wan the hills,
Crabapple trees the hollow,
Haunts of the bee and swallow?

In redbud brakes and flowery
Acclivities of berry;
In dogwood dingles, showery
With white, where wrens make merry?
Or drifts of swarming cherry?

In valleys of wild strawberries,
And of the clumped May-apple;
Or cloudlike trees of haw-berries,
With which the south winds grapple,
That brook and byway dapple?

With eyes of far forgetfulness,—
Like some wild wood-thing's daughter,
Whose feet are beelike fretfulness,—
To see her run like water
Through boughs that slipped or caught her.

O Spring, to seek, yet find you not!
To search, yet never win you!
To glimpse, to touch, but bind you not!
To lose, and still continue,
All sweet evasion in you!

In pearly, peach-blush distances
You gleam; the woods are braided
Of myths; of dream-existences....
There, where the brook is shaded,
A sudden splendor faded.

O presence, like the primrose's,
Again I feel your power!
With rainy scents of dim roses,
Like some elusive flower,
Who led me for an hour!

II. MOSS AND FERN

Where rise the brakes of bramble there,
 Wrapped with the trailing rose;
Through cane where waters ramble, there
 Where deep the sword-grass grows,
 Who knows?
Perhaps, unseen of eyes of man,
 Hides Pan.

Perhaps the creek, whose pebbles make
 A foothold for the mint,
May bear,—where soft its trebles make
 Confession,—some vague hint,
 (The print,
Goat-hoofed, of one who lightly ran,)
 Of Pan.

Where, in the hollow of the hills
 Ferns deepen to the knees,
What sounds are those above the hills,
 And now among the trees?—
 No breeze!—
The syrinx, haply, none may scan,
 Of Pan.

In woods where waters break upon
 The hush like some soft word;
Where sun-shot shadows shake upon
 The moss, who has not heard—
 No bird!—
The flute, as breezy as a fan,
 Of Pan?

Far in, where mosses lay for us
 Still carpets, cool and plush;
Where bloom and branch and ray for us
 Sleep, waking with a rush—
 The hush
But sounds the satyr hoof a span
 Of Pan.

O woods,—whose thrushes sing to us,
 Whose brooks dance sparkling heels;
Whose wild aromas cling to us,—
 While here our wonder kneels,
 Who steals

Upon us, brown as bark with tan,
But Pan?

III. THE THORN TREE

The night is sad with silver and the day is glad with gold,
And the woodland silence listens to a legend never old,
Of the Lady of the Fountain, whom the faery people know,
With her limbs of samite whiteness and her hair of golden glow,
Whom the boyish South Wind seeks for and the girlish-stepping Rain;
Whom the sleepy leaves still whisper men shall never see again:
She whose Vivien charms were mistress of the magic Merlin knew,
That could change the dew to glowworms and the glowworms into
dew.

There's a thorn tree in the forest, and the faeries know the tree,
With its branches gnarled and wrinkled as a face with sorcery;
But the Maytime brings it clusters of a rainy fragrant white,
Like the bloom-bright brows of beauty or a hand of lifted light.
And all day the silence whispers to the sun-ray of the morn
How the bloom is lovely Vivien and how Merlin is the thorn:
How she won the doting wizard with her naked loveliness
Till he told her dæmon secrets that must make his magic less.

How she charmed him and enchanted in the thorn-tree's thorns to lie
Forever with his passion that should never dim or die:
And with wicked laughter looking on this thing which she had done,
Like a visible aroma lingered sparkling in the sun:
How she stooped to kiss the pathos of an elf-lock of his beard,
In a mockery of parting and mock pity of his weird:
But her magic had forgotten that "who bends to give a kiss
Will but bring the curse upon them of the person whose it is":
So the silence tells the secret.—And at night the faeries see
How the tossing bloom is Vivien, who is struggling to be free,
In the thorny arms of Merlin, who forever is the tree.

IV. THE HAMADRYAD

She stood among the longest ferns
The valley held; and in her hand
One blossom, like the light that burns
Vermilion o'er a sunset land;
And round her hair a twisted band
Of pink-pierced mountain-laurel blooms:
And darker than dark pools, that stand

Below the star-communing glooms,
Her eyes beneath her hair's perfumes.

I saw the moonbeam sandals on
Her flowerlike feet, that seemed too chaste
To tread true gold: and, like the dawn
On splendid peaks that lord a waste
Of solitude lost gods have graced,
Her face: she stood there, faultless-hipped,
Bound as with cestused silver,—chased
With acorn-cup and crown, and tipped
With oak leaves,—whence her chiton slipped.

Limbs that the gods call loveliness!—
The grace and glory of all Greece
Wrought in one marble shape were less
Than her perfection!—'Mid the trees
I saw her—and time seemed to cease
For me.—And, lo! I lived my old
Greek life again of classic ease,
Barbarian as the myths that rolled
Me back into the Age of Gold.

PRELUDES

I

There is no rhyme that is half so sweet
As the song of the wind in the rippling wheat;
There is no metre that's half so fine
As the lilt of the brook under rock and vine;
And the loveliest lyric I ever heard
Was the wildwood strain of a forest bird.—
If the wind and the brook and the bird would teach
My heart their beautiful parts of speech,
And the natural art that they say these with,
My soul would sing of beauty and myth
In a rhyme and metre that none before
Have sung in their love, or dreamed in their lore,
And the world would be richer one poet the more.

II

A thought to lift me up to those
Sweet wildflowers of the pensive woods;
The lofty, lowly attitudes
Of bluet and of bramble-rose:
To lift me where my mind may reach
The lessons which their beauties teach.

A dream, to lead my spirit on
With sounds of faery shawms and flutes,
And all mysterious attributes
Of skies of dusk and skies of dawn:
To lead me, like the wandering brooks,
Past all the knowledge of the books.

A song, to make my heart a guest
Of happiness whose soul is love;
One with the life that knoweth of
But song that turneth toil to rest:
To make me cousin to the birds,
Whose music needs not wisdom's words.

MAY

The golden discs of the rattlesnake-weed,
That spangle the woods and dance—
No gleam of gold that the twilights hold
Is strong as their necromance:
For, under the oaks where the woodpaths lead,
The golden discs of the rattlesnake-weed
Are the May's own utterance.

The azure stars of the bluet bloom,
That sprinkle the woodland's trance—
No blink of blue that a cloud lets through
Is sweet as their countenance:
For, over the knolls that the woods perfume,
The azure stars of the bluet bloom
Are the light of the May's own glance.

With her wondering words and her looks she comes,
In a sunbeam of a gown;
She needs but think and the blossoms wink,
But look, and they shower down.
By orchard ways, where the wild bee hums,
With her wondering words and her looks she comes
Like a little maid to town.

WHAT LITTLE THINGS!

From "One Day and Another"

What little things are those
That hold our happiness!
A smile, a glance, a rose
Dropped from her hair or dress;
A word, a look, a touch,—
These are so much, so much.

An air we can't forget;
A sunset's gold that gleams;
A spray of mignonette,
Will fill the soul with dreams
More than all history says,
Or romance of old days.

For of the human heart,
Not brain, is memory;
These things it makes a part
Of its own entity;
The joys, the pains whereof
Are the very food of love.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BEECHES

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the fragile wildflowers bloom;
Where the pensive silence pleaches
Green a roof of cool perfume,
Have you felt an awe imperious
As when, in a church, mysterious
Windows paint with God the gloom?

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the rock-ledged waters flow;
Where the sun's slant splendor bleaches
Every wave to foaming snow,
Have you felt a music solemn
As when minster arch and column
Echo organ worship low?

In the shadow of the beeches,
Where the light and shade are blent;
Where the forest bird beseeches,
And the breeze is brimmed with scent,—
Is it joy or melancholy
That o'erwhelms us partly, wholly,
To our spirit's betterment?

In the shadow of the beeches
Lay me where no eye perceives;
Where,—like some great arm that reaches
Gently as a love that grieves,—
One gnarled root may clasp me kindly,
While the long years, working blindly,
Slowly change my dust to leaves.

UNREQUITED

Passion? not hers! who held me with pure eyes:
One hand among the deep curls of her brow,
I drank the girlhood of her gaze with sighs:
She never sighed, nor gave me kiss or vow.

So have I seen a clear October pool,
Cold, liquid topaz, set within the sere
Gold of the woodland, tremorless and cool,
Reflecting all the heartbreak of the year.

Sweetheart? not she! whose voice was music-sweet;
Whose face loaned language to melodious prayer.
Sweetheart I called her.—When did she repeat
Sweet to one hope, or heart to one despair!

So have I seen a wildflower's fragrant head
Sung to and sung to by a longing bird;
And at the last, albeit the bird lay dead,
No blossom wilted, for it had not heard.

THE SOLITARY

Upon the mossed rock by the spring
She sits, forgetful of her pail,
Lost in remote remembering
Of that which may no more avail.

Her thin, pale hair is dimly dressed
Above a brow lined deep with care,
The color of a leaf long pressed,
A faded leaf that once was fair.

You may not know her from the stone
So still she sits who does not stir,
Thinking of this one thing alone—
The love that never came to her.

A TWILIGHT MOTH

Dusk is thy dawn; when Eve puts on its state
Of gold and purple in the marbled west,
Thou comest forth like some embodied trait,
Or dim conceit, a lily bud confessed;
Or of a rose the visible wish; that, white,
Goes softly messengering through the night,
Whom each expectant flower makes its guest.

All day the primroses have thought of thee,
Their golden heads close-haremed from the heat;
All day the mystic moonflowers silkenly
Veiled snowy faces,—that no bee might greet,
Or butterfly that, weighed with pollen, passed;—
Keeping Sultana charms for thee, at last,
Their lord, who comest to salute each sweet.

Cool-throated flowers that avoid the day's
Too fervid kisses; every bud that drinks
The tipsy dew and to the starlight plays
Nocturnes of fragrance, thy wing'd shadow links
In bonds of secret brotherhood and faith;
O bearer of their order's shibboleth,
Like some pale symbol fluttering o'er these pinks.

What dost them whisper in the balsam's ear
That sets it blushing, or the hollyhock's,—
A syllabled silence that no man may hear,—
As dreamily upon its stem it rocks?
What spell dost bear from listening plant to plant,
Like some white witch, some ghostly ministrant,
Some specter of some perished flower of phlox?

O voyager of that universe which lies
Between the four walls of this garden fair,—
Whose constellations are the fireflies
That wheel their instant courses everywhere,—
Mid faery firmaments wherein one sees
Mimic Boötes and the Pleiades,
Thou steerest like some faery ship of air.

Gnome-wrought of moonbeam-fluff and gossamer,
Silent as scent, perhaps thou chariotest
Mab or King Oberon; or, haply, her
His queen, Titania, on some midnight quest.—
Oh for the herb, the magic euphrasy,

That should unmask thee to mine eyes, ah me!
And all that world at which my soul hath guessed!

THE OLD FARM

Dormered and verandaed, cool,
Locust-girdled, on the hill;
Stained with weather-wear, and dull-
Streak'd with lichens; every sill
Thresholding the beautiful;

I can see it standing there,
Brown above the woodland deep,
Wrapped in lights of lavender,
By the warm wind rocked asleep,
Violet shadows everywhere.

I remember how the Spring,
Liberal-lapped, bewildered its
Acred orchards, murmuring,
Kissed to blossom; budded bits
Where the wood-thrush came to sing.

Barefoot Spring, at first who trod,
Like a beggermaid, adown
The wet woodland; where the god,
With the bright sun for a crown
And the firmament for rod,

Met her; clothed her; wedded her;
Her Cophetua: when, lo!
All the hill, one breathing blur,
Burst in beauty; gleam and glow
Blent with pearl and lavender.

Seckel, blackheart, palpitant
Rained their bleaching strays; and white
Snowed the damson, bent aslant;
Rambow-tree and romanite
Seemed beneath deep drifts to pant.

And it stood there, brown and gray,
In the bee-boom and the bloom,
In the shadow and the ray,
In the passion and perfume,
Grave as age among the gay.

Wild with laughter romped the clear
Boyish voices round its walls;
Rare wild-roses were the dear

Girlish faces in its halls,
Music-haunted all the year.

Far before it meadows full
Of green pennyroyal sank;
Clover-dotted as with wool
Here and there; with now a bank
Hot of color; and the cool

Dark-blue shadows unconfined
Of the clouds rolled overhead:
Clouds, from which the summer wind
Blew with rain, and freshly shed
Dew upon the flowerkind.

Where through mint and gypsy-lily
Runs the rocky brook away,
Musical among the hilly
Solitudes,—its flashing spray
Sunlight-dashed or forest-stilly,—

Buried in deep sassafras,
Memory follows up the hill
Still some cowbell's mellow brass,
Where the ruined water-mill
Looms, half-hid in cane and grass....

Oh, the farmhouse! is it set
On the hilltop still? 'mid musk
Of the meads? where, violet,
Deepens all the dreaming dusk,
And the locust-trees hang wet.

While the sunset, far and low,
On its westward windows dashes
Primrose or pomegranate glow;
And above, in glimmering splashes,
Lilac stars the heavens sow.

Sleeps it still among its roses,—
Oldtime roses? while the choir
Of the lonesome insects dozes:
And the white moon, drifting higher,
O'er its mossy roof reposes—
Sleeps it still among its roses?

THE WHIPPOORWILL

I

Above lone woodland ways that led
To dells the stealthy twilights tread
The west was hot geranium red;
And still, and still,
Along old lanes the locusts sow
With clustered pearls the Maytimes know,
Deep in the crimson afterglow,
We heard the homeward cattle low,
And then the far-off, far-off woe
Of "whippoorwill!" of "whippoorwill!"

II

Beneath the idle beechen boughs
We heard the far bells of the cows
Come slowly jangling towards the house;
And still, and still,
Beyond the light that would not die
Out of the scarlet-haunted sky;
Beyond the evening-star's white eye
Of glittering chalcedony,
Drained out of dusk the plaintive cry
Of "whippoorwill," of "whippoorwill."

III

And in the city oft, when swims
The pale moon o'er the smoke that dims
Its disc, I dream of wildwood limbs;
And still, and still,
I seem to hear, where shadows grope
Mid ferns and flowers that dewdrops rope,—
Lost in faint deeps of heliotrope
Above the clover-sweetened slope,—
Retreat, despairing, past all hope,
The whippoorwill, the whippoorwill.

REVEALMENT

A sense of sadness in the golden air;
A pensiveness, that has no part in care,
As if the Season, by some woodland pool,
Braiding the early blossoms in her hair,
Seeing her loveliness reflected there,
Had sighed to find herself so beautiful.

A breathlessness; a feeling as of fear;
Holy and dim, as of a mystery near,
As if the World, about us, whispering went
With lifted finger and hand-hollowed ear,
Harkening a music, that we cannot hear,
Haunting the quickening earth and firmament.

A prescience of the soul that has no name;
Expectancy that is both wild and tame,
As if the Earth, from out its azure ring
Of heavens, looked to see, as white as flame,—
As Perseus once to chained Andromeda came,—
The swift, divine revealment of the Spring.

HEPATICAS

In the frail hepaticas,—
That the early Springtide tossed,
Sapphire-like, along the ways
Of the woodlands that she crossed,—
I behold, with other eyes,
Footprints of a dream that flies.

One who leads me; whom I seek:
In whose loveliness there is
All the glamour that the Greek
Knew as wind-borne Artemis.—
I am mortal. Woe is me!
Her sweet immortality!

Spirit, must I always fare,
Following thy averted looks?
Now thy white arm, now thy hair,
Glimpsed among the trees and brooks?
Thou who hauntest, whispering,
All the slopes and vales of Spring.

Cease to lure! or grant to me
All thy beauty! though it pain,
Slay with splendor utterly!
Flash revelation on my brain!
And one moment let me see
All thy immortality!

THE WIND OF SPRING

The wind that breathes of columbines
And celandines that crowd the rocks;
That shakes the balsam of the pines
With laughter from his airy locks,
Stops at my city door and knocks.

He calls me far a-forest, where
The twin-leaf and the blood-root bloom;
And, circled by the amber air,
Life sits with beauty and perfume
Weaving the new web of her loom.

He calls me where the waters run
Through fronding ferns where wades the hern;
And, sparkling in the equal sun,
Song leans above her brimming urn,
And dreams the dreams that love shall learn.

The wind has summoned, and I go:
To read God's meaning in each line
The wildflowers write; and, walking slow,
God's purpose, of which song is sign,—
The wind's great, gusty hand in mine.

THE CATBIRD

I

The tufted gold of the sassafras,
And the gold of the spicewood-bush,
Bewilder the ways of the forest pass,
And brighten the underbrush:
The white-starred drifts of the wild-plum tree,
And the haw with its pearly plumes,
And the redbud, misted rosily,
Dazzle the woodland glooms.

II

And I hear the song of the catbird wake
I' the boughs o' the gnarled wild-crab,
Or there where the snows of the dogwood shake,
That the silvery sunbeams stab:
And it seems to me that a magic lies
In the crystal sweet of its notes,
That a myriad blossoms open their eyes
As its strain above them floats.

III

I see the bluebell's blue unclose,
And the trillium's stainless white;
The birdfoot-violet's purple and rose,
And the poppy, golden-bright!
And I see the eyes of the bluet wink,
And the heads of the white-hearts nod;
And the baby mouths of the woodland-pink
And sorrel salute the sod.

IV

And this, meseems, does the catbird say,
As the blossoms crowd i' the sun:—

"Up, up! and out! oh, out and away!
Up, up! and out, each one!
Sweethearts! sweethearts! oh, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Come listen and hark to me!
The Spring, the Spring, with her fragrant feet,
Is passing this way!—Oh, hark to the beat
Of her beelike heart!—Oh, sweet, sweet, sweet!
Come! open your eyes and see!
See, see, see!"

A WOODLAND GRAVE

White moons may come, white moons may go—
She sleeps where early blossoms blow;
Knows nothing of the leafy June,
That leans above her night and noon,
Crowned now with sunbeam, now with moon,
Watching her roses grow.

The downy moth at twilight comes
And flutters round their honeyed blooms:
Long, lazy clouds, like ivory,
That isle the blue lagoons of sky,
Redden to molten gold and dye
With flame the pine-deep glooms.

Dew, dripping from wet fern and leaf;
The wind, that shakes the violet's sheaf;
The slender sound of water lone,
That makes a harp-string of some stone,
And now a wood bird's glimmering moan,
Seem whisperings there of grief.

Her garden, where the lilacs grew,

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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