

SUSAN COOLIDGE

A FEW MORE
VERSES

Susan Coolidge
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Susan Coolidge

A Few More Verses

GIVING to all, thou gavest as well to me.
A myriad thirsty shores await the tide:
They drink and drink, and will not be denied;
But not a drop less full the brimming Sea.

One tiny shell among the kelp and weed,
One sand-grain where the beaches stretch away, —
How shall the tide regard them? Yet each day
It comes, and fills and satisfies their need.

What can the singing sands give to the Sea?
What the dumb shell, though inly it rejoice?
Only the echo of its own strong voice; —
And this is all that here I bring to thee.

A BENEDICTION

GOD give thee, love, thy heart's desire!
What better can I pray?
For though love falter not, nor tire,
And stand on guard all day,
How little can it know or do,
How little can it say!

How hard it strives, and how in vain,
By hope and fear misled,
To make the pathway soft and plain
For the dear feet to tread,
To shield from sun-beat and from rain
The one beloved head!

Its wisdom is made foolishness;
Its best intent goes wrong;
It curses where it fain would bless,
Is weak instead of strong, —
Marring with sad, discordant sighs
The joyance of its song.

I do not dare to bless or ban, —
I am too blind to see, —
But this one little prayer I can

Put up to God for thee,
Because I know what fair, pure things
Thy inmost wishes be;

That what thy heart desires the most
Is what he loves to grant, —
The love that counteth not its cost
If any crave or want;
The presence of the Holy Ghost,
The soul's inhabitant;

The wider vision of the mind;
The spirit bright with sun;
The temper like a fragrant wind,
Chilling and grieving none;
The quickened heart to know God's will
And on his errands run;

The ministry of little things, —
Not counted mean or small
By that dear alchemy which brings
Some grain of gold from all;
The faith to wait as well as work,
Whatever may befall.

So, sure of thee, and unafraid,
I make my daily prayer,
Nor fear that my blind zeal be made
Thy injury or snare:

God give thee, love, thy heart's desire,
And bless thee everywhere!

TO ARCITE AT THE WARS.

1759

A THOUSAND leagues of wind-blown space,
A thousand leagues of sea,
Half of the great earth's hiding face
Divides mine eyes from thee;
The world is strong, the waves are wide,
But my good-will is stronger still,
My love, than wind or tide.

These sentinels which Fate has set
To bar and hold me here
I make my errand-men, to get
A message to thine ear.
The winds shall waft, the waters bear,
And spite of seas I, when I please,
Can reach thee everywhere.

Prayers are like birds to find the way;
Thoughts have a swifter flight;
And mine stream forth to thee all day,
Nor stop to rest by night.
Like silent angels at thy side
They stand unseen, they bend and lean,
They bless and warn and guide.

There is no near, there is no far,
There is no loss or change,
To love which, like a fixed star,
Abideth in one range,
And shines, and shines, with quenchless eyes,
And sends long rays in many ways
To lighten distant skies.

Where sight is not, faith brighter burns;
So faithfully I wait,
Secure that loyal loving earns
Its guerdon soon or late, —
Secure, though lacking word or sign,
That thy true thought keeps as it ought
Tryst with each thought of mine.

NEW EVERY MORNING

EVERY day is a fresh beginning,
Every morn is the world made new.
You who are weary of sorrow and sinning,
Here is a beautiful hope for you, —
A hope for me and a hope for you.

All the past things are past and over;
The tasks are done and the tears are shed.
Yesterday's errors let yesterday cover;
Yesterday's wounds, which smarted and bled,
Are healed with the healing which night has shed.

Yesterday now is a part of forever,
Bound up in a sheaf, which God holds tight,
With glad days, and sad days, and bad days, which never
Shall visit us more with their bloom and their blight,
Their fulness of sunshine or sorrowful night.

Let them go, since we cannot re-live them,
Cannot undo and cannot atone;
God in his mercy receive, forgive them!
Only the new days are our own;
To-day is ours, and to-day alone.

Here are the skies all burnished brightly,
Here is the spent earth all re-born,
Here are the tired limbs springing lightly
To face the sun and to share with the morn
In the chrism of dew and the cool of dawn.

Every day is a fresh beginning;
Listen, my soul, to the glad refrain,
And, spite of old sorrow and older sinning,
And puzzles forecasted and possible pain,
Take heart with the day, and begin again.

LOHENGRIN

TO have touched Heaven and failed to enter in!
Ah, Elsa, prone upon the lonely shore,
Watching the swan-wings beat along the blue,
Watching the glimmer of the silver mail,
Like flash of foam, till all are lost to view, —
What may thy sorrow or thy watch avail?
He cometh nevermore.

All gone the new hope of thy yesterday, —
The tender gaze and strong, like dewy fire,
The gracious form with airs of Heaven bedight,
The love that warmed thy being like a sun: —
Thou hadst thy choice of noonday or of night;
Now the swart shadows gather, one by one,
To give thee thy desire!

To every life one heavenly chance befalls;
To every soul a moment, big with fate,
When, grown importunate with need and fear,
It cries for help, and lo! from close at hand,
The voice Celestial answers, "I am here!"
Oh, blessed souls, made wise to understand,
Made bravely glad to wait!

But thou, pale watcher on the lonely shore,
Where the surf thunders, and the foam-bells fly,
Is there no place for penitence and pain,
No saving grace in thy all-piteous rue?
Will the bright vision never come again?
Alas, the swan-wings vanish in the blue,
There cometh no reply!

A SINGLE STITCH

ONE stitch dropped as the weaver drove
His nimble shuttle to and fro,
In and out, beneath, above,
Till the pattern seemed to bud and grow
As if the fairies had helping been, —
One small stitch which could scarce be seen.
But the one stitch dropped pulled the next stitch out,
And a weak place grew in the fabric stout;
And the perfect pattern was marred for aye
By the one small stitch that was dropped that day.

One small life in God's great plan,
How futile it seems as the ages roll,
Do what it may, or strive how it can
To alter the sweep of the infinite whole!
A single stitch in an endless web,
A drop in the ocean's flow and ebb!
But the pattern is rent where the stitch is lost,
Or marred where the tangled threads have crossed;
And each life that fails of its true intent
Mars the perfect plan that its Master meant.

REPLY

“WHAT, then, is Love?” she said.
Love is a music, blent in curious key
Of jarring discords and of harmony;
’Tis a delicious draught which, as you sip,
Turns sometimes into poison on your lip.
It is a sunny sky infolding storm,
The fire to ruin or the fire to warm;
A garland of fresh roses fair to sight,
Which then becomes a chain and fetters tight.
It is a half-heard secret told to two,
A life-long puzzle or a guiding clew.
The joy of joys, the deepest pain of pain; —
All these Love has been and will be again.

“How may I know?” she said.
Thou mayest *not* know, for Love has conned the art
To blind the reason and befool the heart.
So subtle is he, not himself may guess
Whether he shall be more or shall be less;
Wrapped in a veil of many colored mists,
He flits disguisèd wheresoe’er he lists,
And for the moment is the thing he seems,
The child of vagrant hope and fairy dreams;
Sails like a rainbow bubble on the wind,

Now high, now low, before us or behind;
And only when our fingers grasp the prize,
Changes his form and swiftly vanishes.

“Then best not love,” she said.

Dear child, there is no better and no best;
Love comes not, bides not at thy slight behest.
As well might thy frail fingers seek to stay
The march of waves in yonder land-locked bay,
As stem the surging tide which ebbs and fills
Mid human energies and human wills.
The moon leads on the strong, resisting sea;
And so the moon of love shall beckon thee,
And at her bidding thou wilt leap and rise,
And follow o’er strange seas, ’neath unknown skies,
Unquestioning; to dash, or soon or late,
On sand or cruel crag, as is thy fate.

“Then woe is me!” she said.

Weep not; there is a harder, sadder thing, —
Never to know this sweetest suffering!
Never to see the sun, though suns may slay,
Or share the richer feast as others may.
Sooner the sealed and closely guarded wine
Shall seek again its purple clustered vine,
Sooner the attar be again the rose,
Than Love unlearn the secret that it knows!
Abide thy fate, whether for good or ill;
Fearlessly wait, and be thou certain still,

Whether as foe disguised or friendly guest
He comes, Love's coming is of all things best.

TALITHA CUMI

OUR little one was sick, and the sickness pressed her sore.
We sat beside her bed, and we felt her hands and head,
And in our hearts we prayed this one prayer o'er and o'er:
"Come to us, Christ the Lord; utter thine old-time word,
"Talitha cumi!"

And as the night wore on, and the fever flamed more high,
And a new look burned and grew in the eyes of tender blue,
Still louder in our hearts uprose the voiceless cry,
"O Lord of love and might, say once again to-night,
"Talitha cumi!"

And then, and then – he came; we saw him not, but felt.
And he bent above the child, and she ceased to moan, and
smiled;
And although we heard no sound, as around the bed we knelt,
Our souls were made aware of a mandate in the air,
"Talitha cumi!"

And as at dawn's fair summons faded the morning star,
Holding the Lord's hand close, the child we loved arose,
And with him took her way to a country far away;
And we would not call her dead, for it was his voice that said,
"Talitha cumi!"

THE BETTER WAY

WHO serves his country best?
Not he who, for a brief and stormy space,
Leads forth her armies to the fierce affray.
Short is the time of turmoil and unrest,
Long years of peace succeed it and replace:
There is a better way.

Who serves his country best?
Not he who guides her senates in debate,
And makes the laws which are her prop and stay;
Not he who wears the poet's purple vest,
And sings her songs of love and grief and fate:
There is a better way.

He serves his country best,
Who joins the tide that lifts her nobly on;
For speech has myriad tongues for every day,
And song but one; and law within the breast
Is stronger than the graven law on stone:
There is a better way.

He serves his country best
Who lives pure life, and doeth righteous deed,
And walks straight paths, however others stray,

And leaves his sons as uttermost bequest
A stainless record which all men may read:
This is the better way.

No drop but serves the slowly lifting tide,
No dew but has an errand to some flower,
No smallest star but sheds some helpful ray,
And man by man, each giving to all the rest,
Makes the firm bulwark of the country's power:
There is no better way.

FOREVER

THEY sat together in the sun,
And Youth and Hope stood hovering near;
Like dropping bell-notes one by one
Chimed the glad moments soft and clear;
And still amid their happy speech
The lovers whispered each to each,
“Forever!”

Youth spread his wings of rainbow light,
“Farewell!” he whispered as he went;
They heeded not nor mourned his flight,
Wrapped in their measureless content;
And still they smiled, and still was heard
The confidently uttered word,
“Forever!”

Hope stayed, her steadfast smile was sweet, —
Until the even-time she stayed;
Then with reluctant, noiseless feet
She stole into the solemn shade.
A graver shape moved gently by,
And bent, and murmured warningly,
“Forever!”

And then – where sat the two, sat one!
No voice spoke back, no glance replied.
Behind her, where she rested lone,
Hovered the spectre, solemn-eyed;
She met his look without a thrill,
And, smiling faintly, whispered still,
“Forever!”

Oh, sweet, sweet Youth! Oh, fading Hope!
Oh, eyes by tearful mists made blind!
Oh, hands which vainly reach and grope
For a familiar touch and kind!
Time pauseth for no lover's kiss;
Love for its solace has but this, —
“Forever!”

MIRACLE

OH! not in strange portentous way
Christ's miracles were wrought of old,
The common thing, the common clay,
He touched and tintured, and straightway
It grew to glory manifold.

The barley loaves were daily bread,
Kneaded and mixed with usual skill;
No care was given, no spell was said,
But when the Lord had blessed, they fed
The multitude upon the hill.

The hemp was sown 'neath common sun,
Watered by common dews and rain,
Of which the fishers' nets were spun;
Nothing was prophesied or done
To mark it from the other grain.

Coarse, brawny hands let down the net
When the Lord spake and ordered so;
They hauled the meshes, heavy-wet,
Just as in other days, and set
Their backs to labor, bending low;

But quivering, leaping from the lake
The marvellous, shining burdens rise
Until the laden meshes break,
And, all amazed, no man spake,
But gazed with wonder in his eyes.

So still, dear Lord, in every place
Thou standest by the toiling folk
With love and pity in thy face,
And givest of thy help and grace
To those who meekly bear the yoke.

Not by strange sudden change and spell,
Baffling and darkening Nature's face;
Thou takest the things we know so well
And buildest on them thy miracle, —
The heavenly on the commonplace.

The lives which seem so poor, so low,
The hearts which are so cramped and dull,
The baffled hopes, the impulse slow,
Thou takest, touchest all, and lo!
They blossom to the beautiful.

We need not wait for thunder-peal
Resounding from a mount of fire,
While round our daily paths we feel
Thy sweet love and thy power to heal,
Working in us thy full desire.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

ORCHID, chance-sown among the moorland heather,
Scarce seen or tasted by the infrequent bee,
Set mid rough mountain growths, lashed by wild weather,
With none to foster thee.

We watch thee fronting all the blasts of heaven,
Thy slender rootlets grappled fast to rock,
Enduring from thy morning to thy even
The buffet and the shock.

Never thy sun vouchsafed a cloudless shining,
Never the wind was tempered to thy pain;
No cloud turned out for thee its silver lining,
No rainbow followed rain.

Nourished mid hardness, learning patience slowly
As hearts must do which know no other food,
Duty and Memory, companions holy,
Shared thy bleak solitude.

Cold touch of Memory, strong chill hand of Duty,
These held thee fast and ruled thee to the end,
Until, with smile mysterious in its beauty,
Came Death, rewarding friend.

Earth gave thee scanty cheer, but earth is ended,
Finished the years of thwarted sacrifice.
We see thee walking forward, well attended,
Led into Paradise!

Heaven is twice Heaven to one who, hungry-hearted,
Goes thither knowing no satisfaction here;
And when we thank the Lord for those departed
In this sure faith and fear,

We think of thee, lonely no more forever,
And tasting, while the eternal years unroll,
That joy of Heaven, which like a flowing river
Satisfies every soul.

END AND MEANS

WE spend our strength in labor day by day,
We find new strength replacing old alway;
And still we cheat ourselves, and still we say:

“No man would work except to win some prize;
We work to turn our hopes to certainties, —
For gold, or gear, or favor in men’s eyes.”

And all the while the goal toward which we strain —
Up hill and down, in sunshine and in rain,
Heedless of toil, if so we may attain —

Is but a lure, a heavenly-set decoy
To exercised endeavor, full employ
Of every power, which is man’s highest joy.

And work becomes the end, reward the means,
To woo us from our idleness and dreams;
And each is truly what the other seems.

So, Lord, with such poor service as we do,
Thy full salvation is our prize in view,
For which we long, and which we press unto.

Like a great star on which we fix our eyes,
It dazzles from the high, blue distances,
And seems to beckon and to say, "Arise!"

And we arise and follow the hard way,
Winning a little nearer day by day,
Our hearts going faster than our footsteps may;

And never guess the secret sweet device
Which lures us on and upward to the skies,
And makes each toil its own reward and prize.

To give our little selves to thee, to blend
Our weakness with thy strength, O Lord our Friend,
This is life's truest privilege and end.

COMFORTED

THE last sweet flowers are dying,
The last green leaves are red;
The wild geese southward flying,
By law mysterious led,
Scream noisily o'erhead;
The honey-bees have hived them,
The butterflies have shrived them;
All hushed the song and twitter
And flutter of glad wing; —
How could we bear the autumn
If t'were not for the spring?

To see the summer banished,
Nor dare to bid her stay;
To mourn o'er beauty vanished
And joyance driven away;
To mark the shortening day;
To note the sad winds plaining,
The storm cloud and the raining;
To see the frost lance stabbing
Each faint and wounded thing; —
Oh, we should hate the autumn
Excepting for the spring!

To know that life is failing
And pulses beating slow;
To catch the unavailing
Sad monotones of woe
All the earth over go;
To know that snows must cover
The grave of friend and lover,
To hide them from the eyes and hands
That still caress and cling; —
The heart would break in autumn
If there were not a spring!

For every sleep a waking,
For every shade a sun,
A balm for each heart breaking,
A rest for labor done,
A life by death begun;
And so in wintry weather,
With smile and sigh together,
We look beyond the present pain,
The daily loss and sting,
And welcome in the autumn
For the sure hope of spring.

WORDS

A LITTLE, tender word,
Wrapped in a little rhyme,
Sent out upon the passing air,
As seeds are scattered everywhere
In the sweet summer-time.

A little, idle word,
Breathed in an idle hour;
Between two laughs that word was said,
Forgotten as soon as uttered,
And yet the word had power.

Away they sped, the words:
One, like a wingèd seed,
Lit on a soul which gave it room,
And straight began to bud and bloom
In lovely word and deed.

The other careless word,
Borne on an evil air,
Found a rich soil, and ripened fast
Its rank and poisonous growths, and cast
Fresh seeds to work elsewhere.

The speakers of the words
Passed by and marked, one day,
The fragrant blossoms dewy wet,
The baneful flowers thickly set
In clustering array.

And neither knew his word;
One smiled, and one did sigh.
“How strange and sad,” one said, “it is
People should do such things as this!
I’m glad it was not I.”

And, “What a wondrous word
To reach so far, so high!”
The other said, “What joy ’twould be
To send out words so helpfully!
I wish that it were I.”

INFLUENCE

COUCHED in the rocky lap of hills,
The lake's blue waters gleam,
And thence in linked and measured rills
Down to the valley stream,
To rise again, led higher and higher,
And slake the city's hot desire.

High as the lake's bright ripples shine,
So high the water goes,
But not a drop that air-drawn line
Passes or overflows;
Though man may strive and man may woo,
The stream to its own law is true.

Vainly the lonely tarn its cup
Holds to the feeding skies;
Unless the source be lifted up,
The streamlet cannot rise:
By law inexorably blent,
Each is the other's measurement.

Ah, lonely tarn! ah, striving rill!
So yearn these souls of ours,
And beat with sad and urgent will

Against the unheeding powers.
In vain is longing, vain is force;
No stream goes higher than its source.

AN EASTER SONG

A SONG of sunshine through the rain,
Of spring across the snow,
A balm to heal the hurts of pain,
A peace surpassing woe.
Lift up your heads, ye sorrowing ones,
And be ye glad of heart,
For Calvary and Easter Day,
Earth's saddest day and gladdest day,
Were just one day apart!

With shudder of despair and loss
The world's deep heart was wrung,
As lifted high upon his cross
The Lord of Glory hung,
When rocks were rent, and ghostly forms
Stole forth in street and mart;
But Calvary and Easter Day,
Earth's blackest day and whitest day,
Were just one day apart!

No hint or whisper stirred the air
To tell what joy should be;
The sad disciples, grieving there,
Nor help nor hope could see.

Yet all the while the glad, near sun
Made ready its swift dart.
And Calvary and Easter Day,
The darkest day and brightest day,
Were just one day apart!

Oh, when the strife of tongues is loud,
And the heart of hope beats low,
When the prophets prophesy of ill,
And the mourners come and go,
In this sure thought let us abide,
And keep and stay our heart, —
That Calvary and Easter Day,
Earth's heaviest day and happiest day,
Were but one day apart!

SO LONG AGO

THEY stood upon the vessel's deck
To catch our farewell look and beck.
Two girlish figures, fair and frail,
Hovering against a great white sail
Like spirit shapes in dazzling air, —
I seem to see them standing there,
Always together, always so, — ,
'Twas long ago, oh, long ago!

The east was bright with yellow noon,
The flying vessel vanished soon.
Flashes of jubilant white spray
Beckoned and pointed her the way.
A lessening speck she outward sped;
Sadly we turned, but still we said,,
“They will come back again, we know,” —
'Twas long ago, so long ago!

Those faces sweet, those happy eyes,
Looked nevermore on Western skies;
Where the hot sunbeams weave their net
O'er cedar-crowned, sad Olivet,
They who had shared their lives shared death,
Tasting at once the first strange breath

Of those quick airs for souls that flow
So long ago, so long ago!

In vain we picture to our eyes
The convent gray, the still, blue skies,
The mountain with its bordering wood; —
Still do they stand as then they stood,
Hovering like spirits fair and frail
Against the dazzle of the sail;
The red lips part, the faces glow,
As long ago, so long ago!

A BIRTHDAY

WHAT shall I do to keep your day,
My darling, dead for many a year?
I could not, if I would, forget
It is your day; and yet, and yet —
It is so hard to find a way
To keep it, now you are not here.

I cannot add the lightest thing
To the full sum of happiness
Which now is yours; nor dare I try
To frame a wish for you, since I
Am blind to know, as weak to bring,
All impotent to aid or bless.

And yet it is your day, and so,
Unlike all other days, one bead
Of gold in the long rosary
Of dull beads little worth to me.
And I must keep it bright, and show
That what is yours is dear indeed.

How shall I keep it here alone? —
With prayers in which your name is set;
With smiles, not tears; and sun, not rain;

With memories sweeter far than pain,
With tender backward glances thrown,
And far on-lookings, clearer yet.

The gift I would have given to you,
And which you cannot need or take,
Shall still be given; and it shall be
A secret between you and me, —
A sweet thought, every birthday new,
That it is given for your sake.

And so your day, yours safely still,
Shall come and go with ebbing time, —
The day of all the year most sweet, —
Until the years so slow, so fleet,
Shall bring me, as in time they will,
To where all days are yours and mine.

DERELICT

ABANDONED wrecks they plunge and drift,
The sport of sea and wind,
The tempest drives, the billows lift,
The aimless sails they flap and shift
With impulse vague and blind,
As tossing on from wave to wave
They seek – and shun – the yawning grave.

The decks once trodden by busy feet
Man nevermore shall tread;
The cargoes brave of wine or wheat,
Now soaked with salt and drenched with sleet,
And mixed and scatterèd,
No merchant shall appraise or buy
Or store in vat or granary.

The wet ropes pull the creaking sails,
As though by hands drawn tight.
Echoes the hold with ghostly wails,
While daylight wanes, and twilight pales,
And drops the heavy night,
And vast and silent fish swim by,
And scan the wreck with cruel eye.

Ha! lights ahead! A ship is near!
The dumb wreck makes no sign;
No lantern shows, returns no cheer,
But straight and full, without a veer,
Sped by the urging brine
She goes – a crash! her errand done,
The deadly, lonely thing drives on.

Oh, hopeless lives, distorted, crushed,
Which, like the lonely wreck,
Lashed by the waves and tempest-tossed,
With rudder gone and cargo lost,
Torn ribs and leaking deck,
Plunge on through sunshine and eclipse,
A menace to the happier ships.

All oceans know them, and all lands.
Speechless they drift us by;
To questioning voices, friendly hands,
Warnings or counsels or commands,
Still making no reply.
God send them help if help may be,
Or sink them harmless in his sea.

H. H

WHAT was she most like? Was she like the wind,
Fresh always, and untired; intent to find
New fields to penetrate, new heights to gain;
Scattering all mists with sudden, radiant wing;
Stirring the languid pulses; quickening
The apathetic mood, the weary brain?

Or was she like the sun, whose gift of cheer
Endureth for all seasons of the year,
Alike in winter's cold or summer's heat?
Or like the sea, which brings its gifts from far,
And still, wherever want and straitness are,
Lays down a sudden largess at their feet?

Or was she like a wood, where light and shade,
And sound and silence, mingle unafraid;
Where mosses cluster, and, in coverts dark,
Shy blossoms court the brief and wandering air,
Mysteriously sweet; and here and there
A firefly flashes like a sudden spark?

Or like a wilful brook, which laughs and leaps
All unexpectedly, and never keeps
The course predicted, as it seaward flows?

Or like a stream-fed river, brimming high?
Or like a fruit, where those who love descry
A pungent charm no other flavor knows?

I cannot find her type. In her were blent
Each varied and each fortunate element
Which souls combine, with something all her own,
Sadness and mirthfulness, a chorded strain,
The tender heart, the keen and searching brain,
The social zest, the power to live alone.

Comrade of comrades, giving man the slip
To seek in Nature truest comradeship;
Tenacity and impulse ruled her fate,
This grasping firmly what that flashed to feel, —
The velvet scabbard and the sword of steel,
The gift to strongly love, to frankly hate!

Patience as strong as was her hopefulness;
A joy in living which grew never less
As years went on and age drew gravely nigh;
Vision which pierced the veiling mists of pain,
And saw beyond the mortal shadows plain
The eternal day-dawn broadening in the sky.

The love of Doing, and the scorn of Done;
The playful fancy, which, like glinting sun,
No chill could daunt, no loneliness could smother.
Upon her ardent pulse Death's chillness lies;

Closed the brave lips, the merry, questioning eyes.
She was herself! – there is not such another.

FREEDOM

I WOULD be free! For freedom is all fair,
And her strong smile is like the smile of God.
Her voice rings out like trumpet on the air,
And men rise up and follow; though the road
Be all unknown and hard to understand,
They tread it gladly, holding Freedom's hand.

I would be free! The little spark of Heaven
Let in my soul when life was breathed in me
Is like a flame, this way and that way driven
By ever wavering winds, which ceaselessly
Kindle and blow till all my soul is hot.
And would consume if liberty were not.

I would be free! But what is freedom, then?
For widely various are the shapes she wears
In different ages and to different men;
And many titles, many forms she bears, —
Riot and revolution, sword and flame,
All called in turn by Freedom's honored name.

I would be free! Not free to burn and spoil,
To trample down the weak and smite the strong,
To seize the larger share of wine and oil,

And rob the sun my daylight to prolong,
And rob the night of sleep while others wake, —
Feast on their famine, basely free to take.

I would be free! Free in a dearer way,
Free to become all that I may or can;
To be my best and utmost self each day,
Not held or bound by any chain of man,
By dull convention, or by foolish sneer,
Or love's mistaken clasp of feeble fear.

Free to be kind and true and faithful; free
To do the happy thing that makes life good,
To grow as grows the goodly forest-tree;
By none gainsaid, by none misunderstood,
To taste life's freshness with a child's delight,
And find new joy in every day and night.

I would be free! Ah! so may all be free.
Then shall the world grow sweet at core and sound.
And, moved in blest and ordered circuit, see
The bright millennial sun rise fair and round,
Heaven's day begin, and Christ, whose service is
Freedom all perfect, rule the world as his.

THE VISION AND THE SUMMONS

THE trance of golden afternoon
Lay on the Judæan skies;
The trance of vision, like a swoon,
Sealed the Apostle's eyes.
Upon the roof he sat and saw
Angelic hands let down and draw
Again the mighty vessel full
Of beasts and birds innumerable.

Three times the heavenly vision fell,
Three times the Lord's voice spoke;
When Peter, loath to break the spell,
Roused from his trance, and woke,
To hear a common sound and rude,
Which jarred and shook his solitude, —
A knocking at the doorway near,
Where stood the two from Cæsarea.

And should he heed, or should he stay?
Scarce had the vision fled, —
Perchance it might return that day,
Perchance more words be said
By the Lord's voice? — he rises slow;
Again the knocking; he must go;

Nor guessed, while going down the stair,
That 'twas the Lord who called him there.

Had he sat still upon the roof,
Wooing the vision long,
The Gentile world had missed the truth,
And Heaven one "sweet new song."
Souls might have perished in blind pain,
And the Lord Christ have died in vain
For them. He knew not what it meant,
But Peter rose and Peter went.

Oh, souls which sit in upper air,
Longing for heavenly sight,
Glimpses of truth all fleeting-fair,
Set in unearthly light, —
Is there no knocking heard below,
For which you should arise and go,
Leaving the vision, and again
Bearing its message unto men?

Sordid the world were vision not,
But fruitless were your stay;
So, having seen the sight, and got
The message, haste away.
Though pure and bright thy higher air,
And hot the street and dull the stair,
Still get thee down, for who shall know
But 'tis the Lord who knocks below?

FORECAST

ALWAYS when the roses bloom most brightly,
Some sad heart is sure to presage blight;
Always when the breeze is kindest blowing
There are eyes that look out for a gale;
Always when the bosom's lord sits lightly
Comes some croaking proverb to affright,
And in sweetest music grieving blindly
Sits the shadow of a sorrow pale.

Though to-day says not a word to sadden,
Still to-morrow's menace fills my ear.
Less intent on this than that I hie me,
Fearful, eager, all the worst to know,
Missing that which might the moment gladden,
For the prescience of a far-off fear,
Which again and yet again flits by me,
Clouding all the sunshine as I go.

There is manna for the day's supplying,
There are daily dews and daily balms,
Yet I shrink and shudder to remember
All the desert drought I yet may see.
Past the green oasis fare I, sighing,
Caring not to rest beneath the palms.

All my May is darkened by December,
All my laughter by the tears to be.

Must my life go on thus to its closing?
Lord, hold fast this restless heart of mine;
Put thy arm about me when I shiver,
Make me feel thy presence all the way.
Hope and fear, and travail and reposing,
All by thee are cared for, all are thine,
Quick to help, sufficient to deliver,
Near in sun and shade, in night and day.

EARLY TAKEN

SHE seemed so young, so young to die!
Life, like a dawning, rosy day,
Stretched from her fair young feet away,
And beams from the just-risen sun
Beckoned and wooed and urged her on.
She met the light with happy eyes,
Fresh with the dews of Paradise,
And held her sweet hands out to grasp
The joys that crowded to her clasp,
Each a surprise, and all so dear:
How could we guess that night was near?

She seemed so young, so young to die!
When the old go, we sadly say,
'Tis Nature's own appointed way;
The ripe grain gathered in must be,
The ripe fruit from the laden tree,
The sear leaf quit the bare, brown bough;
Summer is done, 'tis autumn now,
God's harvest-time; the sheaves among,
His angels raise the reaping-song,
And though we grieve, we would not stay
The shining sickles on their way.

She seemed so young, so young to die!
We question wearily and vain
What never answer shall make plain:
“Can it be this the good Lord meant
Which frustrates his benign intent?
Why was she planted like a flower
In mortal sun and mortal shower,
And left to grow, and taught to bloom,
To gather beauty and perfume;
Why were we set to train and tend
If only for this bootless end?”

She seemed so young, so young to die!
But age and youth, – what do they mean
Measured by the eternal scheme
Of God, and sifted out and laid
In his unerring scales and weighed?
How may we test their sense or worth, —
These poor glib phrases, born of earth,
False accents of a long exile, —
Or know the angels do not smile,
Holding out truth’s immortal gauge,
To hear us prate of youth and age?

She seemed so young, so young to die!
So needed here by every one,
Nor there; for heaven has need of none.
And yet, how can we tell or say?
Heaven is so far, so far away!

How do we know its blissful store
Is full and needeth nothing more?
It may be that some tiny space
Lacked just that little angel face,
Or the full sunshine missed one ray
Until our darling found the way.

SOME LOVER'S DEAR THOUGHT

I OUGHT to be kinder always,
For the light of his kindly eyes;
I ought to be wiser always,
Because he is so just and wise;
And gentler in all my bearing,
And braver in all my daring,
For the patience that in him lies.

I must be as true as the Heaven
While he is as true as the day,
Nor balance the gift with the given,
For he giveth to me alway.
And I must be firm and steady;
For my Love, he is that already,
And I follow him as I may.

O dear little golden fetter,
You bind me to difficult things;
But my soul while it strives grows better,
And I feel the stirring of wings
As I stumble, doubting and dreading,
Up the path of his stronger treading,
Intent on his beckonings.

ASHES

I SAW the gardener bring and strew
Gray ashes where blush roses grew.
The fair, still roses bent them low,
Their pink cheeks dimpled all with dew,
And seemed to view with pitying air
The dim gray atoms lying there.
Ah, bonny rose, all fragrances,
And life and hope and quick desires,
What can you need or gain from these
Poor ghosts of long-forgotten fires?
The rose-tree leans, the rose-tree sighs,
And wafts this answer subtly wise:
“All death, all life are mixed and blent,
Out of dead lives fresh life is sent,
Sorrow to these is growth for me,
And who shall question God’s decree?”

Ah, dreary life, whose gladsome spark
No longer leaps in song and fire,
But lies in ashes gray and stark,
Defeated hopes and dead desire,
Useless and dull and all bereft, —
Take courage, this one thing is left:
Some happier life may use thee so,

Some flower bloom fairer on its tree,
Some sweet or tender thing may grow
To stronger life because of thee;
Content to play a humble part,
Give of the ashes of thy heart,
And haply God, whose dear decrees
Taketh from those to give to these,
Who draws the snow-drop from the snows
May from those ashes feed a rose.

ONE LESSER JOY

WHAT is the dearest happiness of heaven?

Ah, who shall say!

So many wonders, and so wondrous fair,
Await the soul who, just arrivèd there
In trance of safety, sheltered and forgiven,
Opens glad eyes to front the eternal day:

Relief from earth's corroding discontent,
Relief from pain,
The satisfaction of perplexing fears,
Full compensation for the long, hard years,
Full understanding of the Lord's intent,
The things that were so puzzling made quite plain;

And all astonished joy as, to the spot,
From further skies,
Crowd our belovèd with white wingèd feet,
And voices than the chiming harps more sweet,
Faces whose fairness we had half forgot,
And outstretched hands, and welcome in their eyes; —

Heart cannot image forth the endless store
We may but guess;
But this one lesser joy I hold my own:

All shall be known in heaven; at last be known
The best and worst of me; the less, the more,
My own shall know – and shall not love me less.

Oh, haunting shadowy dread which underlies
All loving here!
We inly shiver as we whisper low,
“Oh, if they knew – if they could only know,
Could see our naked souls without disguise —
How they would shrink from us and pale with fear!”

The bitter thoughts we hold in leash within
But do not kill;
The petty anger and the mean desire,
The jealousy which burns, – a smouldering fire, —
The slimy trail of half-unnoted sin,
The sordid wish which daunts the nobler will.

We fight each day with foes we dare not name.
We fight, we fail!
Noiseless the conflict and unseen of men;
We rise, are beaten down, and rise again,
And all the time we smile, we move, the same,
And even to dearest eyes draw close the veil.

But in the blessed heaven these wars are past;
Disguise is o'er!
With new anointed vision, face to face,
We shall see all, and clasped in close embrace

Shall watch the haunting shadow flee at last,
And know as we are known, and fear no more.

CLOSE AT HAND

“Did you not know Me, my child?” the lips and eyes that were all love seemed to say to her. “You have thought the thoughts that I inspired, you have spoken my words, you set forth to fight on my side in the battle against evil; and yet you forget me, and have often gone near to deny me, while I was standing by your side and giving you the strength to speak and think. Look at me now, and see if I am not better than the images that have hid me from you.” —*A Doubting Heart.*

THE day is long, and the day is hard;
We are tired of the march and of keeping guard,
Tired of the sense of a fight to be won,
Of days to live through and of work to be done,
Tired of ourselves and of being alone.

And all the while, did we only see,
We walk in the Lord's own company;
We fight, but 'tis he who nerves our arm,
He turns the arrows which else might harm,
And out of the storm he brings a calm.

The work which we count so hard to do,
He makes it easy, for he works too;
The days that are long to live are his,

A bit of his bright eternities,
And close to our need his helping is.

O eyes that were holden and blinded quite,
And caught no glimpse of the guiding light!
O deaf, deaf ears which did not hear
The heavenly garment trailing near!
O faithless heart, which dared to fear!

ONLY A DREAM

I DREAMED we sat within a shaded place,
Where mournful waters fell, and no sun shone;
And suddenly, a smile upon his face,
There came to us a winged, mysterious one,
And said, with pitying eyes: "O mourning souls, arise!

"Take up your travelling staves, your sandals lace,
And journey to the Northland and the snow,
Where wild and leaping Borealis trace
Fantastic, glistening dances to and fro;
Where suns at midnight beam, to fright the sleeper's dream.

"There, in the icy, solitary waste,
God's goodness grants this boon, — that thou shalt see,
And hold communion for a little space
With that dear child so lately gone from thee.
Arise, and haste away; God may not let her stay."

So we arose, and quickly we went forth;
How could we slight such all undreamed-of boon?
And when we reached the ultimate far North —
All in a hush of frozen afternoon,
Lit by a dim sun-ray, liker to night than day —

There, o'er the white bare feld we saw her come,
Our little maid, in the dear guise we knew,
With the same look she used to wear at home,
The same sweet eyes of deepest, dark-fringed blue;
Her steps they made no sound upon the icy ground.

She kissed us gently, and she stood and smiled,
While close we clasped and questioned her, and strove
To win some hint or answer from the child
That should appease the hunger of our love,
Something to soothe the pain when she must go again.

And was she happy, happier than of old?
Did heaven fulfil its promises of bliss?
And had she seen our other dead, and told
The story of that loving faithfulness

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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