

Cawein Madison Julius

One Day & Another: A Lyrical Eclogue



Madison Cawein

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One Day & Another: A Lyrical Eclogue

TO

G. F. M

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED IN MEMORY

OF MANY DAYS

What though I dreamed of mountain heights,
Of peaks, the barriers of the world,
Around whose tops the Northern Lights
And tempests are unfurled.

Mine are the footpaths leading through
Life's lowly fields and woods, – with rifts,
Above, of heaven's Eden blue, —
By which the violet lifts

Its shy appeal; and holding up
Its chalice gold, like some wild wine,
Along the hillside, cup on cup,
Blooms bright the celandine.

Where soft upon each flowering stock
The butterfly spreads damask wings;
And under grassy loam and rock
The cottage cricket sings.

Where overhead eve blooms with fire,
In which the new moon bends her bow,
And, arrow-like, one white star by her
Burns through the afterglow.

I care not, so the sesame
I find; the magic flower there,
Whose touch unseals each mystery
In water, earth and air.

That in the oak tree lets me hear

Its heart's deep speech, its soul's wise words;
And to my mind makes crystal clear
The melodies of birds.

Why should I care, who live aloof
Beyond the din of life and dust,
While dreams still share my humble roof,
And love makes sweet my crust?

PART I

LATE SPRING

The mottled moth at eventide
Beats glimmering wings against the pane;
The slow, sweet lily opens wide,
White in the dusk like some dim stain;
The garden dreams on every side
And breathes faint scents of rain.
Among the flowering stocks they stand:
A crimson rose is in his hand.

1

Outside her garden. He waits musing

Herein the dearness of her is;
The thirty perfect days of June
Made one, in maiden loveliness
Were not more sweet to clasp and kiss,
With love not more in tune.

Ah me! I think she is too true,
Too spiritual for life's rough way;
For in her eyes her soul looks new —
Two bluet blossoms, watchet-blue,
Are not so pure as they.

So good, so beautiful is she,
So soft and white, so fond and fair,
Sometimes my heart fears she may be
Not long for me, and secretly
A sister of the air.

2

Dusk deepens. A whippoorwill calls

The whippoorwills are calling where
The golden west is graying;
"Tis time," they say, "to meet him there —
Why are you still delaying?

"He waits you where the old beech throws
Its gnarly shadow over
Wood-violet and the bramble rose,
Frail maiden-fern and clover.

"Where elder and the sumach creep
Above your garden's paling,
Whereon at noon the lizards sleep
Like lichens on the railing.

"Come! ere the early rising moon's
Gold floods the violet valleys;
Where mists, like phantom picaroons
Anchor their stealthy galleys.

"Come! while the deepening amethyst
Of dusk above is falling —
'Tis time to tryst! 'tis time to tryst!"
The whippoorwills are calling.

They call you to these twilight ways
With dewy odor dripping —
Ah, girlhood, through the rosy haze
Come like a moonbeam slipping.

3

He enters her garden, speaking dreamily:

There is a fading inward of the day,
And all the pansy heaven clasps one star;
The dwindling acres eastward glimmer gray,
While all the world to westward smoulders far.

Now to your glass will you pass for the last time?
Pass! humming some ballad, I know, —
Here where I wait it is late and is past time —
Late! and the moments are slow, are slow.

There is a drawing downward of the night;
The bridegroom Heaven bends down to kiss the moon;
Above, the heights hang silver in her light;
Below, the woods stretch purple, deep in June.

There in the dew is it you hiding lawny?
You, or a moth in the vines? —
You! – by your hand, where the band twinkles tawny!
You! – by your ring, like a glowworm, that shines!

4

She approaches, laughing. She speaks, —

You'd given up hope?

HE

Believe me.

SHE

Why, is your love so poor?

HE

I knew you'd not deceive me.

SHE

As many a girl before, —
Ah, dear, you will forgive me?

HE

Say no more, sweet, say no more!

SHE

Love trusts, and that's enough, my dear.
Trust wins to trust; whereof, my dear,
Love holds to love; and love, my dear,

Is – well, that's all my lore.

HE

Come, pay me or I'll scold you. —
Give me the kiss you owe. —
You fly when I'd enfold you?

SHE

No! no! I say! now, no!
How often have I told you,
You must not treat me so?

HE

More sweet the dusk for this is,
For lips that meet in kisses. —
Come! come! why run from blisses
As from a mortal foe?

5

She stands smiling at him. She speaks:

How many words in the asking!
How easily I can grieve you! —
My "no" in a "yes" was a-masking,
Nor thought, dear, to deceive you. —
A kiss? – the humming-bird happiness here
In my heart consents... But what are words,
When the thought of two souls in speech accords?
Affirmative, negative – what are they, dear?
I wished to say "yes," but somehow said "no."
The woman within me thought you would know
Thought that your heart would hear.

He speaks:

So many hopes in a wooing! —
Therein you could not deceive me;
Some things are sweeter for the pursuing —
I knew what you meant, believe me. —
Bunched bells of the blush pomegranate, to fix
At your throat ... six drops of fire they are...
Will you look where the moon and its following star
Rise silvery over yon meadow ricks?
While I hold – while I lean your head back, so —
For I know it is "yes" though you whisper "no,"
And my kisses, sweet, are six.

6

Moths flutter around them. She speaks:

Look! – where the fiery
Glow-worm in briery
Banks of the moon-mellowed bowers
Sparkles – how hazily
Pinioned and arily
Delicate, warily,
Drowsily, lazily,
Flutter the moths to the flowers.

White as the dreamiest
Bud of the creamiest
Rose in the garden that dozes,
See how they cling to them!
Held in the heart of their
Hearts like a part of their
Perfume they swing to them
Wings that are soft as the roses.

Dim as the forming of
Dew in the warming of
Moonlight, they light on the petals;
All is revealed to them;
All – from the sunniest
Tips to the honiest
Heart, whence they yield to them
Spice through the darkness that settles.

So to our tremulous
Souls come the emulous
Spirits of love; through whose power
All that is best in us,
All that is beautiful,
All that is dutiful,
Is made confessed in us,
Even as the scent of a flower.

7

Taking her hand, he says:

What makes you beautiful?
Answer, now, answer! —
Is it that dutiful
Souls are all beautiful?
Is't that romance or
Beauty of spirit,
Which souls of merit
Of heaven inherit? —
Have you no answer?

She roguishly:

What makes you lovable?
Answer, dear, answer! —
Is it not provable
That man is lovable
Just because chance or
Nature makes woman
Love him? – Her human
Part's to illumine. —
Have you no answer?

8

Then, regarding him seriously, she continues:

Could I recall every joy that befell me
There in the past with its anguish and bliss,
Here in my heart it has whispered to tell me,
Those were no joys like this.

Were it not well if our love could forget them
Veiling the *was* with the dawn of the *is*?
Dead with the past we should never regret them,
Being no joys like this.

When they were gone and the Present stood speechful,
Ardent in word and in look and in kiss,
What though we know that their eyes are beseechful,
Those were no joys like this.

Is it not well to have more of the spirit,
Living for Futures where naught is amiss,
Less of the flesh with the Past pining near it?
Is there a joy like this?

9

Leaving the garden for the lane. He, with lightness of heart

We will leave reason,
Sweet, for a season;
Reason were treason
Now that the nether
Spaces are clad, oh,
In silvery shadow —
We will be glad, oh,
Glad as this weather!

She, responding to his mood:

Heart unto heart, where the moonlight is slanted,
Let us believe that our souls are enchanted: —
I in the castle-keep; you are the airy
Prince who comes seeking me; Love is the Fairy
Bringing our hearts together.

HE

Starlight in masses
Over us passes;
And in the grass is
Many a flower:
Now will you tell me
How'd you enspell me?
What once befell me
There in your bower?

SHE

Soul unto soul – in the moon's wizard glory,
Let us believe we are parts in a story: —
I am a poem; a poet you hear it
Whispered in star and in flower; a Spirit,
Love, puts my soul in your power.

10

He, suddenly and very earnestly:

Perhaps we lived in the days
Of the Khalif Haroun er Reshid;
And loved, as the story says
Did the Sultan's favorite one
And the Persian Emperor's son,
Ali ben Bekkar, he
Of the Kisra dynasty.

Do you know the story? – Well,
You were Haroun's Sultana.
When night on the palace fell,
A slave through a secret door, —
Low-arched on the Tigris' shore, —
By a hidden winding stair
Brought me to your bower there.

Then there was laughter and mirth,
And feasting and singing together,
In a chamber of wonderful worth;
In a chamber vaulted high
On columns of ivory;
Its dome, like the irised skies,
Mooned over with peacock eyes;
Its curtains and furniture,
Damask and juniper.

Ten slave girls – like unto blooms —
Stand, holding tamarisk torches,
Silk-clad from the Irak looms;
Ten handmaidens serve the feast,
Each girl like a star in the east;
Ten lutanists, lutes a-tune,
Wait, each like the Ramadan moon.

For you in a stuff of Merv
Blue-clad, unveiled and jewelled,
No metaphor known may serve:
Scarved deep with your raven hair,
The jewels like fireflies there,
Blossom and moon and star,
The Lady Shemsennehar.

The zone that girdles your waist
Would ransom a Prince and Emeer;
In your coronet's gold enchased,
And your bracelet's twisted bar,
Burn rubies of Istakhar;
And pearls of the Jamshid race
Hang looped on your bosom's lace.

You stand like the letter I;
Dawn-faced, with eyes that sparkle
Black stars in a rosy sky;
Mouth like a cloven peach,
Sweet with your smiling speech;
Cheeks that the blood presumes
To make pomegranate blooms.

With roses of Rocknabad,
Hyacinths of Bokhara, —
Creamily cool and clad
In gauze, — girls scatter the floor
From pillar to cedarn door.
Then a poppy-bloom at each ear,
Come the dancing girls of Kashmeer.

Kohl in their eyes, down the room, —
That opaline casting-bottles
Have showered with rose perfume, —
They glitter and drift and swoon
To the dulcimer's languishing tune;
In the liquid light like stars,
And moons and nenuphars.

Carbuncles, tragacanth-red,
Smoulder in armlet and anklet;
Gleaming on breast and on head
Bangles of coins, that are angled,
Tinkle; and veils, that are spangled,
Flutter from coiffure and wrist
Like a star-bewildered mist.

Each dancing-girl is a flower
Of the Tuba from vales of El Liwa. —
How the bronzen censers glower!
And scents of ambergris pour
And myrrh brought of Lahore,
And musk of Khoten! how good
Is the scent of the sandal-wood!

A lutanist smites her lute;

Sings loves of Mejnoon and Leila —
Her voice is a houri flute; —
While the fragrant flambeaux wave
Barbaric o'er free and slave,
O'er fabrics and bezels of gems
And roses in anadems.

Sherbets in ewers of gold,
Fruits in salvers carnelian;
Flagons of grotesque mold,
Made of a sapphire glass,
Brimmed with wine of Shiraz;
Shaddock and melon and grape
On plate of an antique shape.

Vases of frosted rose,
Of limpid alabaster,
Filled with the mountain snows;
Goblets of mother-of-pearl,
One filigree silver-swirl;
Vessels of gold foamed up
With spray of spar on the cup.

Then a slave bursts in with a cry:
"The eunuchs! the Khalif's eunuchs! —
With scimitars bared draw nigh!
Wesif and Afif and he,
Chief of the hideous three,
Mesrour! – the Sultan's seen
'Mid a hundred weapons' sheen!"

Did we part when we heard this? No!
It seems that my soul remembers
How I clasped you and kissed you, so.
When they came they found us – dead
On the flowers our blood dyed red;
Our lips together, and
The dagger in my hand.

11

She, musingly:

How it was I cannot tell,
For I know not where nor why;
But perhaps we loved too well
In some world that does not lie
East or west of where we dwell,
And beneath no mortal sky.

Was it in the golden ages
Or the iron? – I had heard, —
In the prophecy of sages, —
Haply, how had come a bird,
Underneath whose wing were pages
Of an unknown lover's word.

I forget. You may remember
How the earthquake shook our ships;
How our city, one huge ember,
Blazed within the thick eclipse.
When you found me – deep December
Sealed my icy eyes and lips.

I forget. No one may say
That such things can not be true: —
Here a flower dies to-day,
And to-morrow blooms anew...
Death is silent. – Tell me, pray,
Why men doubt what God can do?

12

He, with conviction

As to that, nothing to tell,
You being all my belief;
Doubt may not enter or dwell
Here where your image is chief;
Here where your name is a spell,
Potent in joy and in grief.

Is it the glamor of spring
Working in us so we seem
Aye to have loved? that we cling
Even to some fancy or dream,
Rainbowing everything
Here in our souls with its gleam?

See! how the synod is met
There of the heavens to preach us —
Freed from the earth's oubliette,
See how the blossoms beseech us —
Were it not well to forget
Winter and night as they teach us?

Dew and a bud and a star,
These, – like a beautiful thought,
Over man's wisdom how far! —
God for some purpose has wrought;
And though they're that which they are,
What are the thoughts they have brought?

Stars and the moon; and they roll
Over our way that is white.
Here shall we end the long stroll?
Here shall I kiss you good-night?
Or, for a while, soul to soul,
Linger and dream of delight?

13

They enter the garden again... She, somewhat pensively

Myths tell of walls and cities that arose
To melody. But I would build with tone,
Had I that harp, a world for us alone,
A world of love, and joy, and deep repose.

A land of lavender light, of blue-bell skies;
Pale peaks that rise against the gold of eve;
And on one height, the splendors never leave,
Our castled home o'er which the wild swan flies.

There, pitiless, the ruined hand of death
Should never reach. No bud, no thing should fade;
All should be perfect, pure, and unafraid;
And life serener than an angel's breath.

The days should move to music; wildly tame
The nights should move to music and the stars;
And morn and evening in their opal cars,
Like heralds, banner God's eternal name.

O world! O life! desired and to be!
How shall we reach thee? – dark the way and dim.
– Give me your hand, love, let us follow him,
Love with the mystery and the melody.

14

He, observing the various flowers around them:

Violets and anemones
The surrendered hours
Pour, as handsels, round the knees
Of the Spring, who to the breeze
Flings her myriad flowers.

Like to coins the sumptuous day
Strews with blossoms golden
Every furlong of his way, —
Like a Sultan gone to pray
At a Kaaba olden.

And the night, with spark on spark,
Clad in dim attire,
Dots with Stars the haloed dark, —
As a priest around the Ark
Lights his lamps of fire.

These are but the cosmic strings
To the harp of Beauty,
To that instrument which sings
In our souls of love that brings
Peace and faith and duty.

15

She, seriously:

Duty? – Comfort of the sinner
And the saint! – when grief and trial
Weigh us, and within our inner
Selves, – responsive to love's viol, —
Hope's soft voice grows thin and thinner,
It is kin to self-denial.

Self-denial! – through whose feeling
We are gainer though we're loser;
All the finer force revealing
Of our natures. No accuser
Is the conscience then, but healing
Of the wound of which we're chooser.

Some one said no flower knoweth
Of the fragrance it revealeth;
Song, its soul that overfloweth,
Never nightingale's heart feeleth —
Such the love the spirit groweth,
Love unconscious if it healeth.

16

He, after a pause, lightly:

An elf there is who stables the hot
Red wasp that stings on the apricot;
An elf who rowels his spiteful bay
Like a mote on a ray, away, away;
An elf who saddles the hornet lean
To din i' the ear o' the swinging bean;
Who straddles, with cap cocked all awry,
The bottle-blue back o' the dragon-fly.

And this is the elf who sips and sips
From clover-horns whence the perfume drips;
And, drunk with dew, in the glimmering gloam
Awaits the wild-bee's coming home;
In ambush lies, where none may see,
And robs the caravan bumble-bee —
Gold bags of honey the bees must pay
To the bandit elf of the fairy way.

Another ousphen the butterflies know,
Who paints their wings with the hues that glow
On blossoms. — Squeezing from tubes of dew
Pansy colors of every hue
On his bloom's pied pallet, he paints the wings
Of the butterflies, moths, and other things.
This is the elf that the hollyhocks hear,
Who dangles a brilliant in each one's ear;
Teases at noon the pane's green fly,
And lights at night the glow-worm's eye.

But the dearest elf, so the poets say,
Is the elf who hides in an eye of gray;
Who curls in a dimple and slips along
The strings of a lute to a lover's song;
Who smiles in her smile, and frowns in her frown,
And dreams in the scent of her glove or gown;
Hides and beckons as all may note
In the bloom or the bow of a maiden's throat.

17

She, standing among the flowers:

Soft through the trees the night wind sighs,
And swoons and dies.
Above, the stars hang wanly white;
Here, through the dark,
A drizzled gold, the fireflies
Rain mimic stars in spark on spark. —
'Tis time to part, to say good-night.
Good-night.

From fern to flower the night-moths cross
At drowsy loss.
The moon drifts veiled through clouds of white;
And pearly pale,
A silver blur, through beds of moss,
Their tiny moons the glow-worms trail. —
'Tis time to part, to say good-night.
Good-night.

18

He, at parting, as they proceed down the garden:

You say you cannot wed me, now
That roses and the June are here?
To your decision I must bow. —
Ah, well! 'tis just as well, my dear:
We'll swear again each old love vow,
And wait another year.

Another year of love with you!
Of dreams and doubts, of sun and rain!
When field and forest bloom anew,
And locust clusters pelt the lane,
When all the song-birds wed and woo,
I'll not take "no" again.

Oft shall I lie awake and mark
The hours by no clanging clock,
But in the dim and distant dark
The crowing of some punctual cock;
Then up as early as the lark
To meet you by our rock.

The rock where first we met at tryst;
Where first I wooed and won your love —
Remember how the moon and mist
Made mystery of the heaven above
As now to-night? – How first I kissed
Your lips, you trembling like a dove?

So, then, you cannot wed me now
That roses and the June are here,
That warmth and fragrance weigh each bough?
And yet your reason is not clear.
Ah, well! We'll swear anew each vow,
And wait another year.

PART II

EARLY SUMMER

The cricket in the rose-bush hedge
Sings by the vine-entangled gate;
The slim moon slants a timid edge
Of pearl through one low cloud of slate;
Around dark door and window-ledge
Like dreams the shadows wait.
And through the summer dusk she goes,
On her white breast a crimson rose.

1

She delays, meditating. A rainy afternoon

Gray skies and the foggy rain
Dripping from sullen eaves;
Over and over again
Dull drop of the trickling leaves;
And the woodward-winding lane,
And the hill with its shocks of sheaves
One scarce perceives.

Shall I go in such wet weather
By the lane or over the hill? —
Where the blossoming milkweed's feather
The drops like diamonds fill;
Where, draggled and drenched together,
The ox-eyes rank the rill,
To the old corn-mill.

The creek by now is swollen,
And its foaming cascades sound;
And the lilies, smeared with pollen,
In the dam look dull and drowned.
'Tis a path I oft have stolen
To the bridge that rambles round
With willows bound.

Through a valley wild with berry,
Packed thick with the iron-weeds,
And elder, – washed and very
Fragrant, – the fenced path leads;
Past oak and wilding cherry
To a place of flags and reeds,
That the water bredes.

The sun through the sad sky bleaches —
Is that a thrush that calls?
That bird who so beseeches?
And see! on the balsam's balls,
And leaves of the water-beeches —
One blister of wart-like galls —
No raindrop falls.

My shawl instead of a bonnet!..
Though the woods be soaking yet,

Through the wet to the rock I'll run it, —
How sweet to meet i' the wet!
Our rock with the vine upon it, —
Each flower a fiery jet —
Where oft we've met!

2

They meet. He speaks

How fresh the purple clover
Smells in its veil of rain!
And where the leaves brim over
How fragrant is the lane!
See, how the sodden acres,
Forlorn of all their rakers,
Their hay and harvest makers,
Look green as spring again.

Drops from the trumpet flowers
Rain on us as we pass;
And every zephyr showers,
From tilted leaf or grass,
Clear beads of moisture, seeming
Pale, pointed emeralds gleaming;
Where, through the green boughs streaming,
The daylight strikes like glass.

She speaks

How dewy, clean and fragrant
Look now the green and gold! —
And breezes trailing vagrant

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