

Cawein Madison Julius

Blooms of the Berry



Madison Cawein

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PROEM

Wine-warm winds that sigh and sing,
Led me, wrapped in many moods,
Thro' the green sonorous woods
Of belated Spring;

Till I came where, glad with heat,
Waste and wild the fields were strewn,
Olden as the olden moon,
At my weary feet;

Wild and white with starry bloom,
One far milky-way that dashed,
When some mad wind o'er it flashed,
Into billowy foam.

I, bewildered, gazed around,
As one on whose heavy dreams
Comes a sudden burst of beams,
Like a mighty sound.

If the grander flowers I sought,
But these berry-blossoms to you,
Evanescent as their dew,
Only these I brought.

July 3, 1887.

I. – BY WOLD AND WOOD

THE HOLLOW

I

Fleet swallows soared and darted
'Neath empty vaults of blue;
Thick leaves close clung or parted
To let the sunlight through;
Each wild rose, honey-hearted,
Bowed full of living dew.

II

Down deep, fair fields of Heaven,
Beat wafts of air and balm,
From southmost islands driven
And continents of calm;
Bland winds by which were given
Hid hints of rustling palm.

III

High birds soared high to hover;
Thick leaves close clung to slip;
Wild rose and snowy clover
Were warm for winds to dip,
And one ungentle lover,
A bee with robber lip.

IV

Dart on, O buoyant swallow!
Kiss leaves and willing rose!
Whose musk the sly winds follow,
And bee that booming goes; —

But in this quiet hollow
I'll walk, which no one knows.

V

None save the moon that shineth
At night through rifted trees;
The lonely flower that twineth
Frail blooms that no one sees;
The whippoorwill that pineth;
The sad, sweet-swaying breeze;

VI

The lone white stars that glitter;
The stream's complaining wave;
Gray bats that dodge and flutter;
Black crickets hid that rave;
And me whose life is bitter,
And one white head stone grave.

BY WOLD AND WOOD

I

Green, watery jets of light let through
The rippling foliage drenched with dew;
Bland glow-worm glammers warm and dim
Above the mystic vistas swim,
Where, 'round the fountain's oozy urn,
The limp, loose fronds of limber fern
Wave dusky tresses thin and wet,
Blue-filleted with violet.
O'er roots that writhe in snaky knots
The moss in amber cushions clots;
From wattled walls of brier and brush
The elder's misty attars gush;
And, Argus-eyed, by knoll and bank
The affluent wild rose flowers rank;
And stol'n in shadowy retreats,
In black, rich soil, your vision greets
The colder undergrowths of woods,
Damp, lushy-leaved, whose gloomier moods
Turn all the life beneath to death
And rottenness for their own breath.
May-apples waxen-stemmed and large
With their bloom-screening breadths of targe;
Wake robins dark-green leaved, their stems
Tipped with green, oval clumps of gems,
As if some woodland Bacchus there
A-braiding of his yellow hair
With ivy-tod had idly tost
His thyrsus there, and so had lost.
Low blood root with its pallid bloom,
The red life of its mother's womb
Through all its ardent pulses fine
Beating in scarlet veins of wine.
And where the knotty eyes of trees
Stare wide, like Fauns' at Dryades
That lave smooth limbs in founts of spar,
Shines many a wild-flower's tender star.

II

The scummy pond sleeps lazily,
Clad thick with lilies, and the bee
Reels boisterous as a Bassarid
Above the bloated green frog hid
In lush wan calamus and grass,
Beside the water's stagnant glass.
The piebald dragon-fly, like one
A-weary of the world and sun,
Comes blindly blundering along,
A pedagogue, gaunt, lean, and long,
Large-headed naturalist with wise,
Great, glaring goggles on his eyes.
And dry and hot the fragrant mint
Pours grateful odors without stint
From cool, clay banks of cressy streams,
Rare as the musks of rich hareems,
And hot as some sultana's breath
With turbulent passions or with death.
A haze of floating saffron; sound
Of shy, crisp creepings o'er the ground;
The dip and stir of twig and leaf;
Tempestuous gusts of spices brief
From elder bosks and sassafras;
Wind-cuffs that dodge the laughing grass;
Sharp, sudden songs and whisperings
That hint at untold hidden things,
Pan and Sylvanus that of old
Kept sacred each wild wood and wold.
A wily light beneath the trees
Quivers and dusks with ev'ry breeze;
Mayhap some Hamadryad who,
Culling her morning meal of dew
From frail accustomed cups of flowers —
Some Satyr watching through the bowers —
Had, when his goat hoof snapped and pressed
A brittle branch, shrunk back distressed,
Startled, her wild, tumultuous hair
Bathing her limbs one instant there.

ANTICIPATION

Windy the sky and mad;
Surly the gray March day;
Bleak the forests and sad,
Sad for the beautiful May.

On maples tasseled with red
No blithe bird swinging sung;
The brook in its lonely bed
Complained in an unknown tongue.

We walked in the wasted wood:
Her face as the Spring's was fair,
Her blood was the Spring's own blood,
The Spring's her radiant hair,

And we found in the windy wild
One cowering violet,
Like a frail and tremulous child
In the caked leaves bowed and wet.

And I sighed at the sight, with pain
For the May's warm face in the wood,
May's passions of sun and rain,
May's raiment of bloom and of bud.

But she said when she saw me sad,
"Tho' the world be gloomy as fate,
And we yearn for the days to be glad,
Dear heart, we can afford to wait.

"For, know, one beautiful thing
On the dark day's bosom curled,
Makes the wild day glad to sing,
Content to smile at the world.

"For the sinless world is fair,
And man's is the sin and gloom;
And dead are the days that were,
But what are the days to come?

"Be happy, dear heart, and wait!
For the past is a memory:
Tho' to-day seem somber as fate,
Who knows what to-morrow will be?"

* * * * *

And the May came on in her charms,
With a twinkle of rustling feet;
Blooms stormed from her luminous arms,
And honey of smiles that were sweet.

Now I think of her words that day,
This day that I longed so to see,
That finds her dead with the May,
And the March but a memory.

A LAMENT

I

White moons may come, white moons may go,
She sleeps where wild wood blossoms blow,
Nor knows she of the rosy June,
Star-silver flowers o'er her strewn,
The pearly paleness of the moon, —
Alas! how should she know!

II

The downy moth at evening comes
To suck thin honey from wet blooms;
Long, lazy clouds that swimming high
Brood white about the western sky,
Grow red as molten iron and lie
Above the fragrant glooms.

III

Rare odors of the weed and fern,
Dry whisp'rings of dim leaves that turn,
A sound of hidden waters lone
Frothed bubbling down the streaming stone,
And now a wood-dove's plaintive moan
Drift from the bushy burne.

IV

Her garden where deep lilacs blew,
Where on old walls old roses grew
Head-heavy with their mellow musk,
Where, when the beetle's drone was husk,
She lingered in the dying dusk,
No more shall know that knew.

V

When orchards, courting the wan Spring,
Starred robes of buds around them fling,
Their beauty now to her is naught,
Once a sweet passion, when she fraught
Dark curls with blossoms that nodding caught
Impulse from the bee's wing.

VI

White moons may come, white moons may go,
She sleeps where wildwood blossoms blow;
Cares naught for fairy fern or weed,
White wand'rings of the plummy seed,
Of hart or hind she takes no heed;
Alas! her head lies low!

DISTANCE

I

I dreamed last night once more I stood
Knee-deep in purple clover leas;
Your old home glimmered thro' its wood
Of dark and melancholy trees,
Where ev'ry sudden summer breeze
That wantoned o'er the solitude
The water's melody pursued,
And sleepy hummings of the bees.

II

And ankle-deep in violet blooms
Methought I saw you standing there,
A lawny light among the glooms,
A crown of sunlight on your hair;
Wild songsters singing every where
Made lightning with their glossy plumes;
About you clung the wild perfumes
And swooned along the shining air.

III

And then you called me, and my ears
Grew flattered with the music, led
In fancy back to sweeter years,
Far sweeter years that now are dead;
And at your summons fast I sped,
Buoyant as one a goal who nears.
Ah! lost, dead love! I woke in tears;
For as I neared you farther fled!

ASPIRATION

God knows I strive against low lust and vice,
Wound in the net of their voluptuous hair;
God knows that all their kisses are as ice
To me who do not care.

God knows, against the front of Fate I set
Eyes still and stern, and lips as bitter prest;
Raised clenched and ineffectual palms to let
Her rock-like pressing breast!

God knows what motive such large zeal inspires,
God knows the star for which I climb and crave,
God knows, and only God, the eating fires
That in my bosom rave.

I will not fall! I will not; thou dost lie!
Deep Hell! that seethest in thy simmering pit;
Thy thousand throned horrors shall not vie,
Or ever compass it!

But as thou sinkest from my soul away,
So shall I rise, rolled in the morning's rose,
Beyond this world, this life, this little day —
God knows! God knows! God knows!

SPRING TWILIGHT

The sun set late, and left along the West
One furious ruby rare, whose rosy rays
Poured in a slumb'rous cloud's pear-curdled breast,
Blossomed to peachy sprays.

The sun set late, and wafts of wind arose,
And cuffed the blossom from the blossoming quince;
Shatter red attar vials of the rose,
And made the clover wince.

By dusking forests, thro' whose fretful boughs
In flying fragments shot the evening's flame,
Adown the tangled lane the quiet cows
With dreary tinklings came.

The sun set late; but hardly had he gone
When o'er the moon's gold-litten crescent there,
Clean Phosphor, polished as a precious stone,
Pulsed in fair deeps of air.

As from faint stars the glory waned and waned,
The fussy insects made the garden shrill;
Beyond the luminous pasture lands complained
One lonely whippoorwill.

FRAGMENTS

I

STARS

The fields of space gleam bright, as if some ancient giant, old
As the moon and her extinguished mountains,
Had dipped his fingers huge into the twilight's sea of gold
And sprinkled all the heavens from these fountains.

II

GHOSTS

In soft sad nights, when all the still lagoon
Lolls in a wealth of golden radiance,
I sit like one enchanted in a trance,
And see them 'twixt the haunted mist and moon.

Lascivious eyes 'neath snow-pale sensual brows,
Flashing hot, killing lust, and tresses light,
Lose, satin streaming, purple as the night,
Night when the storm sings and the forest bows.

And then, meseems, along the wild, fierce hills
A whisper and a rustle of fleet feet,
As if tempestuous troops of Mænads meet
To drain deep bowls and shout and have their wills.

And once I see large, lustrous limbs revealed,
Moth-white and lawny, 'twixt sonorous trees;
And then a song, faint as of fairy seas,
Lulls all my senses till my eyes are sealed.

III

MOONRISE AT SEA

With lips that were hoarse with a fury
Of foam and of winds that are strewn,
Of storm and of turbulent hurry,
The ocean roared, heralding soon
A birth of miraculous glory,
Of madness, affection – the moon.

And soon from her waist with a slipping
And shudder and clinging of light,
With a loos'ning and pushing and ripping
Of the raven-laced bodice of Night,
With a silence of feet and a dripping
The goddess came, virginal white.

And the air was alive with the twinkle
And tumult of silver-shod feet,
The hurling of stars, and the sprinkle
Of loose, lawny limbs and a sweet
Murmur and whisper and tinkle
Of beam-weaponed moon spirits fleet.

THE RAIN

We stood where the fields were tawny,
Where the redolent woodland was warm,
And the summer above us, now lawny,
Was alive with the pulse winds of storm.

And we watched weak wheat waves lighten,
And wince and hiss at each gust,
And the turbulent maples whiten,
And the lane grow gray with dust.

White flakes from the blossoming cherry,
Pink snows of the peaches were blown,
And star-fair blooms of the berry
And the dogwood's flowers were strewn.

And the luminous hillocks grew sullied,
And shadowed and thrilled with alarm,
When the body of the blackness was gullied
With the rapid, keen flame of the storm.

And the birds to dry coverts had hurried,
And the musical rillet ran slow,
And the buccaneer bee was worried,
And the red lilies swung to and fro.

Till the elf-cuirassiers of the showers
Came, bright with slant lances of rain,
And charged the bare heads of the flowers,
And trampled the grass of the plain.

And the armies of the leaves were shattered,
Their standards drenched, heavy and lank;
And the iron weed's purple was spattered,
And the lily lay broke on the bank.

But high in the storm was the swallow,
And the rain-strong voice of the fall
In the bough-grottoed dingle sang hollow
To the sky-blue flags on its wall.

But the storm and its clouds passed over,
And left but one cloud in the West,
Wet wafts that were fragrant with clover,
And the sun low sunken to rest;

Soft spices of rain-studded poppies,
Of honey unfilched of a bee,
And balm of the mead and the coppice,
And musk of the rain-breathing tree.

Then the cloud in the West was riven,
And bubbled and bursten with gold,
Blown out through deep gorges of heaven,
And spilled on the wood and the wold.

TO S. McK

I

Shall we forget how, in our day,
The Sabine fields about us lay
In amaranth and asphodel,
And bubbling, cold Bandusian well,
Fair Pyrrhas haunting every way?
In dells of forest faun and fay,
Moss-lounged within the fountain's spray,
How drained we wines too rare to tell,
Shall we forget?

The fine Falernian or the ray
Of fiery Cæcuban, while gay
We heard Bacchantes shout and yell,
Filled full of Bacchus, and so fell
To dreaming of some Lydia;
Shall we forget?

II

If we forget in after years,
My comrade, all the hopes and fears
That hovered all our walks around
When ent'ring on that mystic ground
Of ghostly legends, where one hears
By bandit towers the chase that nears
Thro' cracking woods, the oaths and cheers
Of demon huntsman, horn and hound;
If we forget.

Lenora's lover and her tears,
Fierce Wallenstein, satanic sneers
Of the red devil Goethe bound, —
Why then, forsooth, they soon are found
In burly stoops of German beers,
If we forget!

MORNING AND NIGHT

From "The Triumph of Music."

... Fresh from bathing in orient fountains,
In wells of rock water and snow,
Comes the Dawn with her pearl-brimming fingers
O'er the thyme and the pines of yon mountain;
Where she steps young blossoms fresh blow...

And sweet as the star-beams in fountains,
And soft as the fall of the dew,
Wet as the hues of the rain-arch,
To me was the Dawn when on mountains
Pearl-capped o'er the hyaline blue,
Saint-fair and pure thro' the blue,
Her spirit in dimples comes dancing,
In dimples of light and of fire,
Planting her footprints in roses
On the floss of the snow-drifts, while glancing
Large on her brow is her tire,
Gemmed with the morning-star's fire.

But sweet as the incense from altars,
And warm as the light on a cloud,
Sad as the wail of bleak woodlands,
To me was the Night when she falters
In the sorrowful folds of her shroud,

In the far-blowing black of her shroud,
O'er the flower-strewn bier of her lover,
The Day lying faded and fair
In the red-curtained chambers of air.
When disheveled I've seen her uncover
Her gold-girdled raven of hair —
All hooped with the gold of the even —
And for this sad burial prepare,
The spirit of Night in the heaven
To me was most wondrously fair,
So fair that I wished it were given
To die in the rays of her hair,
Die wrapped in her gold-girdled hair.

THE TOLL-MAN'S DAUGHTER

Once more the June with her great moon
Poured harvest o'er the golden fields;
Once more her days in hot, bright shields
She bore from morn to drooping noon.
A rhymers, sick of work and rhyme,
Disheartened by a poor success,
I sought the woods to loll the time
In one long month of quietness.
It was the time when one will thrill
For indolent fields, serenest skies;
For Nature's softening subtleties
Of higher cloud and gullied rill.

When crumpled poppies strew the halls
Of all the East, where mounts the Dawn,
And in the eve the skyey lawn
Gold kingcups heap 'neath Night's gray walls.
The silver peace of distant wolds,
Of far-seen lakes a glimmering dance,
Fresh green of undulating hills,
Old woodlands silent with romance.
Intenser stars, a lazier moon,
The moonlit torrent on the peak,
And at one's side a maiden meek
And lovely as the balmy June.

The toll-gate stood beside the road,
The highway from the city's smoke;
Its long, well white-washed spear-point broke
The clean sky o'er the pike and showed
The draught-horse where his rest should be.
The locusts tall with shade on shade
The trough of water cool beneath,
From heat and toil a Sabbath made.
Beyond were pastures where the kine
Would browse, and where a young bull roared;
And here would pass a peeping hoard
Of duck and brood in waddling line.

A week flew by on wings of ease.
I walked along a rutty lane;
I stopped to list some picker's strain
Sung in a patch of raspberries.
Upon the fence's lanky rails
I leaned to stare into great eyes

Glooming beneath a bonnet white
Bowed 'neath a chin of dimpled prize.
Phœbe, the toll-man's daughter she;
I knew her by a slow, calm smile,
Whose source seemed distant many a mile,
Brimming her eyes' profundity.

Elastic as a filly's tread
Her modest step, and full and warm
The graceful contour of her form
Harmonious swelled from foot to head.
And such a head! – You'd thought that there
The languid night, in frowsy bliss,
Had curled brown rays for her deep hair
And stained them with the starlight's kiss.
A face as beautiful and bright,
As crystal fair as twilight skies,
Lit with the stars of hazel eyes,
And lashed with black of dusky night.

She stood waist-deep amid the briers;
Above in twisted lengths were rolled
The sunset's tangled whorls of gold,
Blown from the West's mist-fueled fires.
A shuddering twilight dashed with gold
Down smouldering hills the fierce day fell,
And bubbling over star on star
The night's blue cisterns 'gan to well,
With the dusk crescent of his wings
A huge crane cleaves the wealthy West,
While up the East a silver breast
Of chastity the full moon brings.

For her, I knew, where'er she trod,
Each dew-drop raised a limpid glass
To flash her beauty from the grass;
That wild flowers bloomed along the sod,
Or, whisp'ring, murmured when she smiled;
The wood-bird hushed to hark her song,
Or, all enamored, from his wild
Before her feet flew flutt'ring long.
The brook droned mystic melodies,
Eddied in laughter when she kissed
With naked feet its amethyst
Of waters stained by blooming trees.

THE BERRIERS

MORN

Down silver precipices drawn
The red-wine cataracts of dawn
Pour soundless torrents wide and far,
Deluging each warm, floating star.
A sound of winds and brooks and wings,
Sweet woodland-fluted carolings,
Star radiance dashed on moss and fern,
Wet leaves that quiver, breathe, and burn;
Wet hills, hung heavily with woods,
Dew-drenched and drunken solitudes
Faint-murmuring elfin canticles;
Sound, light, and spicy boisterous smells,
And flowers and buds; tumultuous bees,
Wind-wafts and genii of the trees.
Thro' briers that trammel, one by one,
With swinging pails comes laughing on
A troop of youthful berriers,
Their wet feet glitt'ring where they pass
Thro' dew-drop studded tufts of grass:
And oh! their cheers, their merry cheers,
Wake Echo on her shrubby rock,
Whom dale and mountain answering mock
With rapid fairy horns, as if
Each mossy hill and weedy cliff
Had its imperial Oberon,
Who, seeking his Titania hid
In bloomy coverts him to shun,
In kingly wrath had called and chid.

EVENING

Cloud-feathers oozing rich with light,
Slow trembling in the locks of Night,
Her dusky waist with sultry gold
Girdled and buckled fold on fold.
High stars; a sound of bleating flocks;
Gray, burly shadows fall'n 'mid rocks,
Like giant curses overthrown
By some Arthurian champion;

Soft-swimming sorceries of mist
Haunting glad glens of amethyst;
Low tinklings in dim clover dells
Of bland-eyed kine with brazen bells;
And where the marsh in reed and grass
Burns angry as a shattered glass.

The flies blur sudden blasts of shine,
Like wasted draughts of amber wine
Spun high by reeling Bacchanals
When Bacchus brede his curling hair
With vine-leaves, and from ev'ry lair
Voluptuous Mænads lovely calls.
They come, they come, a happy throng,
The berries with gibe and song;
Deep pails brimmed black to tin-white eaves
With luscious fruit kept cool with leaves
Of aromatic sassafras,
'Twixt which some sparkling berry slips,
Like laughter, from the purple mass,
Wine swollen as Silenus' lips.

HARVESTING

I

NOON

The tanned and sultry noon climbs high
Up gleaming reaches of the sky;
Below the balmy belts of pines
The cliff-lunged river laps and shines;
Adown the aromatic dell
Sifts the warm harvest's musky smell.
And, oh! above one sees and hears
The brawny-throated harvesters;
Their red brows beaded with the heat,
By twos and threes among the wheat
Flash their hot sickles' slenderness
In loops of shine; and sing, and sing,
Like some mad troop of piping Pan,
Along the hills that swoon or ring
With sounds of Ariel airiness
That haunted freckled Caliban:

"O ho! O ho! 'tis noon, I say;
The roses blow.
Away, away, above the hay
The burly bees to the roses gay
Hum love-tunes all the livelong day,
So low! so low!
The roses' Minnesingers they."

II

TWILIGHT

Up velvet lawns of lilac skies
The tawny moon begins to rise
Behind low blue-black hills of trees,
As rises from faint Siren seas,
To rock in purple deeps, hip-hid,
A virgin-bosom'd Oceanid.

Gaunt shadows crouch by rock and wood,
Like hairy Satyrs, grim and rude,
Till the white Dryads of the moon
Come noiseless in their silver shoon
To beautify them with their love.
The sweet, sad notes I hear, I hear,
Beyond dim pines and mellow hills,
Of some fair maiden harvester,
The lovely Limnad of the grove
Whose singing charms me while it kills:

"O deep! O deep! the twilight rare
Pales on to sleep;
And fair, so fair! fades the rich air.
The fountain shines in its ferny lair,
Where the cold Nymph sits in her oozy hair
To weep, to weep,
For a mortal youth who is not there."

GOING FOR THE COWS

I

The juice-big apples' sullen gold,
Like lazy Sultans laughed and lolled
'Mid heavy mats of leaves that lay
Green-flatten'd 'gainst the glaring day;
And here a pear of rusty brown,
And peaches on whose brows the down
Waxed furry as the ears of Pan,
And, like Diana's cheeks, whose tan
Burnt tender secresies of fire,
Or wan as Psyche's with desire
Of lips that love to kiss or taste
Voluptuous ripeness there sweet placed.
And down the orchard vistas he, —
Barefooted, trousers out at knee,
Face shadowing from the sloping sun
A hat of straw, brim-sagging broad, —
Came, lowly whistling some vague tune,
Upon the sunbeam-sprinkled road.
Lank in his hand a twig with which
In boyish thoughtlessness he crushed
Rare pennyroyal myriads rich
In pungent souls that warmly gushed.
Before him whirled in rattling fear
The saffron-bellied grasshopper;
And ringing from the musky dells
Came faint the cows' melodious bells,
Where whim'ring like a fretful hound
The fountain bubbled up in sound.

II

Yellow as sunset skies and pale
As fairy clouds that stay or sail
Thro' azure vaults of summer, blue
As summer heavens the violets grew;
And mosses on which spurts of light
Fell laughing, like the lips one might
Feign for a Hebe or a girl
Whose mouth heat-lightens up with pearl;

Limp ferns in murmuring shadows shrunk
And silent as if stunned or drunk
With moist aromas of the wood;
Dry rustlings of the quietude;
On silver fronds' thin tresses new
Cold limpid blisters of the dew.
Across the rambling fence she leaned:
A gingham gown to ankles bare;
Her artless beauty, bonnet-screened,
Tempestuous with its stormy hair.
A rain-crow gurgled in a vine, —
She heard it not – a step she hears;
The wild rose smelt like delicate wine, —
She knew it not – 'tis he that nears.
With smiles of greeting all her face
Grew musical; with rustic grace
He leant beside her, and they had
Some parley, with light laughter glad;
I know not what; I know but this,
Its final period was a kiss.

SONG OF THE SPIRITS OF SPRING

I

Wafted o'er purple seas,
From gold Hesperides,
Mixed with the southern breeze,
Hail to us spirits!
Dripping with fragrant rains,
Fire of our ardent veins,
Life of the barren plains,
Woodlands and germs that the woodland inherits.

II

Wan as the creamy mist,
Tinged with pale amethyst,
Warm with the sun that kissed
Vine-tangled mountains
Looming o'er tropic lakes,
Where ev'ry air that shakes
Tamarisk coverts makes
Music that haunts like the falling of fountains.

III

Swift are our flashing feet,
Fleet with the winds that meet,
Winds that, blown, billow sweet,
And with light porous,
Boom with the drunken bees,
Sigh with the surge of seas,
Rush with the rush of trees,
Birds and wild wings and of torrents sonorous.

IV

Stars in our liquid eyes,
Stars of the darkest skies,

And on our fingers lies
Starlight; and shadows,
Unmooned, of nights that creep
Hide in our tresses deep,
And in our limbs white sleep
Dreams like a baby in asphodel meadows.

V

Music of many streams,
Strength of a million beams,
Fire and sainted dreams,
Murmuring lowly,
Pulse on hot lips of light,
Which, what they kiss of blight,
Quicken and blossom white,
Raise to be beautiful, perfect, and holy.

VI

Oh, will you sit and wait,
When fields, erst desolate,
Now are intoxicate
With life that flowers?
Purple with love and rife
With their fierce budded life,
Passion and rosy strife
Drained from warm winds and the turbulent showers?

VII

Nay! at our feet you'll lie:
For the winds lullaby,
For our completest sky,
And largess flying
Of pinky pearls of blooms,
For the one bee that booms,
And the warm-spilled perfumes
Forget for a moment already we're dying!

THE SPIRITS OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS

[VOICES SINGING.]

FIRST CHORUS

Ere the birth of Death and of Time,
Ere the birth of Hell and its torments,
Ere the orbs of heat and of rime
And the winds to the heavens were as garments,
Worm-like in the womb of Space,
Worm-like from her monster womb,
We sprung, a myriad race
Of thunder and tempest and gloom.

SECOND CHORUS

As from the evil good
Springs like a fire,
As bland beatitude
Wells from the dire,
So was the Chaos brood
Of us the sire.

FIRST CHORUS

We had lain for gaunt ages asleep
'Neath her breast in a bulk of torpor,
When down through the vasts of the deep
Clove a sound like the notes of a harper;
Clove a sound, and the horrors grew
Tumultuous with turbulent night,
With whirlwinds of blackness that blew,
And storm that was godly in might.
And the walls of our prison were shattered
Like the crust of a fire-wrecked world;
Like torrents of clouds that are scattered
On the face of the Night we are hurled.

SECOND CHORUS

Us, in unholy thought
Patiently lying,
Eons of violence wrought,
Violence defying.
When on a mighty wind, —
Born of a godly mind
Large with a motive kind, —
Girdled with wonder,
Flame and a strength of song
Rushed in a voice along,
Burst and, lo! we were strong —
Strong as the thunder.

FIRST CHORUS

We lurk in the upper spaces,
Where the oceans of tempest are born,
Where the scowls of our shadowy faces
Are safe from the splendors of morn.
Our homes are wrecked worlds and each planet
Whose sun is a light that is sped;
Bleak moons whose cold bodies of granite
Are hollow and flameless and dead.

SECOND CHORUS

We in the living sun
Live like a passion;
Ere all his stars begun
We and the sun were one,
As God did fashion.
Lo! from our burning hands,
Flung like inspired brands,
Hurled we the stars, like sands
Whirled in the ocean;
And all our breath was life,
Life to those worlds and rife
With ever-moving strife,
Passion for motion.

FIRST CHORUS

Our beds are the tombs of the mortals;
We feed on their crimes and the thought
That falters and halts at the portals
Of actions, intentions unwrought.
We cover the face of to-morrow;
We frown in the hours that be;
We breathe in the presence of sorrow,
And death and destruction are we.

SECOND CHORUS

We are the hope and ease,
Joy and the pleasure,
Authors of love and peace,
Love that shall never cease,
Free as the azure.
Birth of our eyes – the might,
Power and strength of light,
Victor o'er death and night,
Flesh and its yearnings:
And from our utt'rance streams
Beauty with burnings
After completer dreams,
Fuller discernings.

Morning and birth are ours,
Dew that is blown
From our light lips like flowers;
Clouds and the beating showers,
Stars that are sown;
Song and the bursting buds,
Life of the many floods,
Winds that are strown.

Ye in your darkness are
Dark and infernal;
Subject to death and mar!
But in the spaces far,
Like our effulgent star,
We are eternal!

TO SORROW

I

O tear-eyed goddess of the marble brow,
Who showerest snows of tresses on the night
Of anguished temples! lonely watcher, thou
Who bendest o'er the couch of life's dead light!
Who in the hollow hours of night's noon
Rockest the cradle of the child,
Whose fever-blooded eyeballs seek the moon
To cool their pulses wild.
Thou who dost stoop to kiss a sister's cheek,
Which rules the alabaster death with youth;
Thou who art mad and strangely meek, —
Empress of passions, couth, uncouth,
We kneel to thee!

II

O Sorrow, when the sapless world grows white,
And singing gathers on her springtide robes,
On some bleak steep which takes the ruby light
Of day, braid in thy locks the spirit globes
Of cool, weak snowdrops dashed with frozen dew,
And hasten to the leas below
Where Spring may wandered be from the rich blue
Which rims yon clouds of snow.
From the pied crocus and the violet's hues,
Think then how thou didst rake the bosoming snow,
To show some mother the soft blues
Of baby eyes, the sparkling glow
Of dimple-dotted cheeks.

III

On some hoar upland, hoar with clustered thorns,
Hard by a river's wind-blown lisp of waves,
Sit with young white-skinned Spring, whose dewy morns
Laugh in his pouting cheeks which Health enslaves.
There feast thee on the brede of his long hair,

Where half-grown roses royal blaze.
And cool-eyed primroses wide-diskéd bare,
Frail stars of moonish haze,
Contented lie wound in his breathing arms: —
'Tis meet that grief should mingle with the wan,
That blue of calms and gloom of storms
Reign on the burning throne of dawn
To glorify the world.

IV

Or in the peaceful calm of stormy evens,
When the sick, bloodless West doth winding spread
A sheeted shroud of silver o'er the heavens
And brooches it with one rich star's gold head,
Low lay thee down beside a mountain lake,
Which dimples at the twilight's sigh,
Couched on plush mosses 'neath green bosks that shake
Storm fragrance from on high, —
The cold, pure spice of rain-drenched forests deep, —
And gorge thy grief upon the nightingale,
Who with the hush a war doth keep
That bubbles down the starlit vale
To Silence's rapt ear.

THE PASSING OF THE BEAUTIFUL

On southern winds shot through with amber light,
Breeding soft balm, and clothed in cloudy white,
The lily-fingered Spring came o'er the hills
Waking the crocus and the daffodils.
O'er the cold earth she breathed a tender sigh, —
The maples sang and flung their banners high,
Their crimson-tasseled pennons, and the elm
Bound his dark brows with a green-crested helm.
Beneath the musky rot of Autumn's leaves,
Under the forest's myriad naked eaves,
Life woke and rose in gold and green and blue,
Robed in the star-light of the twinkling dew.
With timid tread adown the barren wood
Spring held her way, when, lo! before her stood
White-mantled Winter wagging his white head,
Stormy his brow, and stormily he said: —
"Sole lord of terror, and the fiend of storm,
Crowned king of despots, my envermeiled arm
Slew these vast woodlands crimsoning all their bowers!
Thou, Spirit of Beauty, with thy bursting flowers,
Swollen with pride, wouldst thou usurp my throne,
Long planted here deep in the waste's wild moan?
Sworn foe of beauty, with a band of ice
I'll strangle thee tho' thou be welcomer thrice!"
So round her throat a band of blasting frost,
Her sainted throat of snow, he coiled and crossed,
And cast her on the dark, unfeeling mold;
Her tender blossoms, blighted in the fold
Of her warm bosoms, trembling bowed their brows
In holy meekness, or in scattered rows
Huddled about her white and silent feet,
Or on pale lips laid fond last kisses sweet,
And died: lilacs all musky for the May,
And bluer violets, and snow drops lay
Silent and dead, but yet divinely fair,
Like ice gems glist'ning in Spring's lovely hair.
The Beautiful, so innocent, sweet, and pure,
Why must thou perish, and the evil still endure?
Too soon must pass the Beautiful away!
Too long doth Terror hold anarchal sway!
Alas! sad heart, bow not beneath the pain,
Time changeth all, the Beautiful wakes again!
We can not question such; a higher power
Knows best what bud is ripest in its flower;
Silently plucks it at the fittest hour.

A NOVEMBER SKETCH

The hoar-frost hisses 'neath the feet,
And the worm-fence's straggling length,
Smote by the morning's slanted strength,
Sparkles one rib of virgin sleet.

To withered fields the crisp breeze talks,
And silently and sadly lifts
The bronz'd leaves from the beech and drifts
Them wadded down the woodland walks.

Reluctantly and one by one
The worthless leaves sift slowly down,
And thro' the mournful vistas blown
Drop rustling, and their rest is won.

Where stands the brook beneath its fall,
Thin-scaled with ice the pool is bound,
And on the pebbles scattered 'round
The ooze is frozen; one and all

White as rare crystals shining fair.
There stirs no life: the faded wood
Mourns sighing, and the solitude
Seems shaken with a mighty care.

Decay and silence sadly drape
The vigorous limbs of oldest trees,
The rotting leaves and rocks whose knees
Are shagged with moss, with misty crape.

To sullenness the surly crow
All his derisive feeling yields,
And o'er the barren stubble-fields
Flaps cawless, wrapped in hungry woe.

The eve comes on: the teasel stoops
Its spike-crowned head before the blast;
The tattered leaves drive whirling past
Like skeletons in whistling troops.

The pithy elder copses sigh;
Their broad blue combs with berries weighed,
Like heavy pendulums are swayed
With ev'ry gust that hurries by.

Thro' matted walls of tangled brier
That hedge the lane, the sumachs thrust
Their scarlet torches red as rust,
Burning with flames of stolid fire.

The evening's here – cold, hard, and drear;
The lavish West with bullion bright
Of molten silver walls the night
Far as one star's thin rays appear.

Wedge toward the West's cold luridness
The wild geese fly 'neath roseless domes;
The wild cry of the leader comes
Distant and harsh with loneliness.

The pale West dies, and in its cup
Bubble on bubble pours the night:
The East glows with a mystic light;
The stars are keen; the moon is up.

THE WHITE EVENING

From gray, bleak hills 'neath steely skies
Thro' beards of ice the forests roar;
Along the river's humming shore
The skimming skater bird-like flies.

On windy meads where wave white breaks,
Where fettered briers' glist'ning hands
Reach to the cold moon's ghastly lands,
Hoots the lorn owl, and crouching quakes.

With frowsy snow blanched is the world;
Stiff sweeps the wind thro' murmuring pines,
Then fiend-like deep-entangled whines
Thro' the dead oak, that vagrant twirled

Phantoms the cliff o'er the wild wold:
Ghost-vested willows rim the stream,
Low hang lank limbs where in a dream
The houseless hare leaps o'er the cold

On snow-tressed crags that twinkling flash,
Like champions mailed for clanking war,
Glares down large Phosphor's quiv'ring star,
Where teeth of foam the fierce seas gnash.

Slim o'er the tree-tops weighed with white
The country church's spire doth swell,
A scintillating icicle,
While fitfully the village light

In sallow stars stabs the gray dark;
Homeward the creaking wagons strain
Thro' knee-deep drifts; the steeple's vane
A flitting ghost whirls in its sark.

Down from the flaky North with clash,
Swathed in his beard of flashing sleet,
With steeds of winds that jangling beat
Life from the world, and roaring dash, —

Loud Winter! ruddy as a rose
Blown by the June's mild, musky lips;
The high moon dims her horn that dips,
And fold on fold roll down the snows.

SUMMER

I

Now Lucifer ignites her taper bright
To greet the wild-flowered Dawn,
Who leads the tasseled Summer draped with light
Down heaven's gilded lawn.
Hark to the minstrels of the woods,
Tuning glad harps in haunted solitudes!
List to the rillet's music soft,
The tree's hushed song:
Flushed from her star aloft
Comes blue-eyed Summer stepping meek along.

II

And as the lusty lover leads her in,
Clad in soft blushes red,
With breezy lips her love he tries to win,
Doth many a tear-drop shed:
While airy sighs, dyed in his heart,
Like Cupid's arrows, flame-tipped o'er her dart,
He bends his yellow head and craves
The timid maid
For one sweet kiss, and laves
Her rose-crowned locks with tears until 'tis paid.

III

Come to the forest or the musky meadows
Brown with their mellow grain;
Come where the cascades shake green shadows,
Where tawny orchards reign.
Come where fall reapers ply the scythe,
Where golden sheaves are heaped by damsels blithe:
Come to the rock-rough mountain old,
Tree-pierced and wild;
Where freckled flowers paint the wold,
Hail laughing Summer, sunny-haired, blonde child!

IV

Come where the dragon-flies in coats of blue
Flit o'er the wildwood streams,
And fright the wild bee from the honey-dew
Where if long-sipping dreams.
Come where the touch-me-nots shy peep
Gold-horned and speckled from the cascades steep:
Come where the daisies by the rustic bridge
Display their eyes,
Or where the lilied sedge
From emerald forest-pools, lance-like, thick rise.

V

Come where the wild deer feed within the brake
As red as oak and strong;
Come where romantic echoes wildly wake
Old hills to mystic song.
Come to the vine-hung woodlands hoary,
Come to the realms of hunting song and story;
But come when Summer decks the land
With garb of gold,
With colors myriad as the sand —
A birth-fair child, tho' thousand summers old.

VI

Come where the trees extend their shining arms
Unto the star-sown skies;
Displaying wrinkled age in limb-gnarled charms
When Night, moon-eyed, brown lies
Upon their bending lances seen
With fluttered pennons in the moon's broad sheen.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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