

Cawein Madison Julius

The Triumph of Music, and Other Lyrics



Madison Cawein
**The Triumph of Music,
and Other Lyrics**

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The Triumph of Music, and Other Lyrics:*

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THE TRIUMPH OF MUSIC

I

There lay in a vale 'twixt lone mountains
A garden entangled with flowers,
Where the whisper of echoing fountains
Stirred softly the musk-breathing bowers.
Where torrents cast down from rock-masses,
From caverns of red-granite steeps,
With thunders sonorous clove passes
And maddened dark gulfs with rash leaps,
With the dolorous foam of their leaps.

II

And, oh, when the sunrays came heaping
The foam of those musical chasms,
With a scintillant dust as of diamonds,
It seemed that white spirits were sweeping
Down, down thro' those voluble chasms,
Wild weeping in resonant spasms.
And the wave from the red-hearted granite
In veins rolled tumbling around;
Meandered thro' shade-haunted forests
Where many rock barriers did span it
To dash it in froth and in sound:
Where the nights with their great moons could wan it,
Or star its dusk stillness profound.

III

And here in the night would I wander
On woodways where fragrances kissed,
By shadows where murmurings kissed;
And here would I tarry to ponder
When the moon in blue vales made a mist;
Dim in forests of rank, rocking cedars,
Whose wildness made glad with their scent,
Whose boughs in the tempests were bent
Like the pennons and plumes of fierce leaders,
In the battle all ragged and rent.

IV

And so when the moonshine was floating
Far up on the mountain's bleak head,
On the uttermost foam of the torrent,
Would I string a wild harp while was gloating
The moon on my blossomy bed.
Or I lay where a fountain of blossoms
Rained rustling from arches aloft,
From the thick-scented arbors aloft,
And I sang as the blossoms' white bosoms
Pressed silk-smooth to mine and lay soft:
I sang as their redolence stung me,
And laughed on my blossomy couch,
Till the fragrance and music had flung me
Into shadows of sleep with their touch,
The magic of exquisite touch...

V

One night as I wondered and wandered
In this my rare Aidenn of flowers,
I saw where I lingered and pondered

A youth cast asleep mid the bowers:
A youth on a mantle of satin,
A poppy-red robe in the flowers.

VI

So I kissed his thin eyelids full tender,
I kissed his high forehead and pale,
I sighed as I kissed his black splendor
Of curls that were kissed of the gale,
That were moved of the balm-breathing gale.
And he woke and cried out as if haunted: —
"Oh God! for one note of that song!
For a sob of that languishing song!
Whose tumult of sorrow enchanted,
And swept my weak spirit along!"

VII

Than I sate me upon the red satin
And plunged a long look in his eyes;
I bowed on the weft of red satin
And kindled his love with my sighs.
With fingers of lightness set sobbing

The chords of my harp in a song,
Till I found that my heart was a-throbbing
And sobbing to sing like a tongue,
Was sobbing to mix with the song.

VIII

Then he cried, and his dark eyes keen glistened,
"Lost! lost! for that perilous music!
Oh God! for that tyrannous strain!
To which in my dreams I have listened,
Ah, wretch! I have listened with pain!"
And he tost on the garment of satin
His deep raven darkness of hair,
And the song at my lips was ungathered,
And I sate there to marvel and stare.

IX

Then I wrenched from my soul a wild glory
Of music delirious with words,
Of music that wailed a soul's story,
And trembled with god-uttered words,
Or fell like the battling of swords.

And in with it mixed all the beauty
Of farewells and ravenous sighs,
The heart that was broken for booty,
Tears, rapture to know that one dies,
Hell, heaven and laughter and cries.

X

In music the heart-ache of passion,
The terror of souls that are lost,
Cold, dizzying anguish of dying,
All torments that beauty could fashion,
Hot manacles of love and their cost.
The bliss and the fury of dashing
A soul into riotous love,
While the smiting of harp-chords and crashing
Of song like the winds were enwove
With the stars that fall sounding above.

XI

Ah! why did the poppy-crowned slumber
Seal up the rare light of his eyes
With its silver of vapory pinions,

The creature that sung in each number,
To nest in his tired-out eyes,
Like a bird that is sick of the skies.
Yet he murmured so sad and so thrilling,
"Oh God! for a lifetime of song!
Oh life! for a world of such song!
For a heaven or hell and the killing,
Mad angel or devil of song!
Oh, the rapture engendered in throwing
On bubbles of music and song
A soul to the anguish of loving,
Until like a flower, full blowing,
It is lost in a whirlwind most strong,
It dies in a thunder of song!"

XII

I had flung in my song the emotion
Triumphant of heart and of soul,
And I recked not the passionate ocean
That rolled to abysses of dole,
To infinite torture and dole.

XIII

So I sang and I harped till all weary
I sunk on the red of that robe,
Crouched down at his feet on the satin,
While he slumbered with eyelashes teary
Fringed dark o'er each eye-ball's dark globe.
Then I wondered and said, "It is dreary
To see him so still on this robe."
And I sobbed and I sobbed, "Is he living,
Or have I but slain with my song!"
And it seemed that a demon was striving
To strangle my heart with a thong,
With terror and sorrow of wrong.

XIV

And I rent the wild harp in my madness,
From his ashen brows furrowed the hair;
Soft wafted dark curls from pale temples —
They rustled with death – and the sadness
Of his face so hopelessly fair!
How I wailed to the stars of the heaven
How they scoffed at and answered my grief

In letters of flame, "Unforgiven!
Thou deathless, whose voice is a thief,
Forever and ever grief!"

XV

So I wept on the instrument broken,
The instrument sweet of his death,
The dagger that stabbed not to kill him,
The dagger of song which had spoken,
And ravished away his life's breath.
So I wept, and my curls thick and golden
Stormed entangled and showered 'mid his;
My arms around him were enfolden,
My lips clave to his with a kiss,
With the life and the love of a kiss.

WHAT YOU WILL

I

When the season was dry and the sun was hot
And the hornet sucked gaunt on the apricot,
And the ripe peach dropped to its seed a-rot,
With a lean red wasp that stung and clung;
When the hollyhocks, ranked in the garden-plot,
More seed-pods had than blossoms, I wot,
A weariness weighed on the tongue,
That the drought of the season begot.

II

When the black grape bulged with the juice that burst
Through its thick blue skin that was cracked with thirst,
And the round gold pippins, the summer had nursed,
In the yellowing leaves o' the orchards hung;
When the reapers, their lips with whistling pursed,
To their sun-tanned brows in the corn were immersed,
A lightness came over the tongue,

And one sung as much as one durst.

III

When the skies of December gray dripped and dripped,
And icicles eaves of the big barn tipped,
And loud hens flew over the snow or slipped,
And the north wind hooted and bit and stung,
And the ears of the milkmaid, Miriam, nipped,
And the chappy cheeks of the farm boy whipped,
A goddess unloosened the tongue,
And one's mouth with wild honey was lipped.

IN THE SOUTH

[Serenade.]

The dim verbena drugs the dusk
With heavy lemon odors rare;
Wan heliotropes Arabian musk
Exhale into the dreamy air;
A sad wind with long wooing husk
Swoons in the roses there.

The jasmine at thy casement flings
Star-censers oozing rich perfumes;
The clematis, long petaled, swings
Deep clusters of dark purple blooms;
With flowers like moons or sylphide wings
Magnolias light the glooms.

Awake, awake from sleep!
Thy balmy hair,
Unbounden deep on deep,
Than blossoms fair,
Who sweetest fragrance weep,
Will fill the night with prayer.
Awake, awake from sleep!

And dreaming here it seems to me
Some dryad's bosoms grow confessed
Nude in the dark magnolia tree,
That rustles with the murmurous West, —
Or is it but a dream of thee
That thy white beauty guessed?

In southern heavens above are rolled
A million feverish gems, which burst
From night's deep ebon caskets old,
With inner fires that seem to thirst;
Tall oleanders to their gold
Drift buds where dewes are nursed.

Unseal, unseal thine eyes,
Where long her rod
Queen Mab sways o'er their skies
In realms of Nod!
Confessed, such majesties
Will fill the night with God.
Unseal, unseal thine eyes!

PAN

1

Haunter of green intricacies,
Where the sunlight's amber laces
Depths of darkest violet;
Where the ugly Satyr chases
Shining Dryads, fair as Graces,
Whose lithe limbs with dew are wet;
Piper in hid mountain places,
Where the blue-eyed Oread braces
Winds which in her sweet cheeks set
Of Aurora rosy traces,
Whiles the Faun from myrtle mazes
Watcheth with an eye of jet:
What art thou and these dim races,
Thou, O Pan! of many faces,
Who art ruler yet?

2

Tell me, piper, have I ever
Heard thy hollow syrinx quiver
Trickling music in the trees?
Where dark hazel copses shiver,
Have I heard its dronings sever
The warm silence, or the bees?
Ripple murmurings, that never
Could be born of fall or river,
Whisperings and subtleties,
Melodies so very clever,
None can doubt that thou, the giver,
Master Nature's keys.

3

What glad awes of storm are given
Thy mad power, which has striven, —
Where the craggy forests glare, —
In wild mockery, when Heaven
Splits with thunder wedges driven
Red through night and rainy air!
What art thou, whose presence, even
While its fear the heart hath riven,
Heals it with a prayer?

PAX VOBISCUM

1

Her violets in thine eyes
The Springtide stained I know,
Two bits of mystic skies
On which the green turf lies,
Whereon the violets blow.

2

I know the Summer wrought
From thy sweet heart that rose,
With that faint fragrance fraught,
Its sad poetic thought
Of peace and deep repose.

3

That Autumn, like some god,
From thy delicious hair —
Lost sunlight 'neath the sod
Shot up this golden-rod
To toss it everywhere.

4

That Winter from thy breast
The snowdrop's whiteness stole —
Much kinder than the rest —
Thy innocence confessed,
The pureness of thy soul.

MIRABILE DICTU

There lives a goddess in the West,
An island in death-lonesome seas;
No towered towns are hers confessed,
No castled forts and palaces.
Hers, simple worshipers at best,
The buds, the birds, the bees.

And she hath wonder-worlds of song
So heavenly beautiful, and shed
So sweetly from her honeyed tongue,
The savage creatures, it is said,
Hark marble-still their wilds among,
And nightingales fall dead.

I know her not, nor have I known;
I only feel that she is there;
For when my heart is most alone
There broods communion on the air,
Concedes an influence not its own,
Miraculously fair.

Then fain is it to sing and sing,
And then again to fly and fly
Beyond the flight of cloud or wing,

Far under azure arcs of sky.
Its love at her chaste feet to fling,
Behold her face and die.

QUESTIONINGS

Now when wan winter sunsets be
Canary-colored down the sky;
When nights are starless utterly,
And sleeted winds cut moaning by,
One's memory keeps one company,
And conscience puts his "when" and "why."

Such inquisition, when alone,
Wakes superstition in the head,
A Gorgon face of hueless stone
With staring eyes to terror wed,
Stamped on her brow God's words, "Unknown!"

Behind the dead, behind the dead."
And, oh! that weariness of soul
That leans upon our dead, the clod
And air have taken as a whole
Through some mysterious period: —
Life! with thy questions of control:
Death! with thy unguessed laws of God.

WAITING

Were we in May now, while
Our souls are yearning,
Sad hearts would bound and smile
With red blood burning;
Around the tedious dial
No slow hands turning.

Were we in May now, say,
What joy to know
Her heart's streams pulse away
In winds that blow,
See graceful limbs of May
Revealed to glow.

Were we in May now, think
What wealth she has;
The dog-tooth violets pink,
Wind-flowers like glass,
About the wood brook's brink
Dark sassafras.

Nights, which the large stars strew
Heav'n on heav'n rolled,
Nights, whose feet flash with dew,

Whose long locks hold
Aromas cool and new,
A moon's curved gold.

This makes me sad in March;
I long and long
To see the red-bud's torch
Flame far and strong,
Hear on my vine-climbed porch
The blue-bird's song.

What else then but to sleep
And cease from such;
Dream of her and to leap
At her white touch?
Ah me! then wake and weep,
Weep overmuch.

This is why day by day
Time lamely crawls,
Feet clogged with winter clay
That never falls,
While the dim month of May
Me far off calls.

IN LATE FALL

Such days as break the wild bird's heart;
Such days as kill it and its songs;
A death which knows a sweeter part
Of days to which such death belongs.

And now old eyes are filled with tears,
As with the rain the frozen flowers;
Time moves so slowly one but fears
The burthen on his wasted powers.

And so he stopped; – and thou art dead!
And that is found which once was feared: —
A farewell to thy gray, gray head,
A goodnight to thy goodly beard!

MIDWINTER

The dew-drop from the rose that slips
Hath not the sparkle of her lips,
My lady's lips.

Than her long braids of yellow hold
The dandelion hath not more gold,
Her braids like gold.

The blue-bell hints not more of skies
Than do the flowers in her eyes,
My lady's eyes.

The sweet-pea blossom doth not wear
More dainty pinkness than her ear,
My lady's ear.

So, heigho! then, tho' skies be gray,
My heart's a garden that is gay
This sorry day.

LONGING

When rathe wind-flowers many peer
All rain filled at blue April skies,
As on one smiles one's lady dear
With the big tear-drops in her eyes;

When budded May-apples, I wis,
Be hidden by lone greenwood creeks,
Be bashful as her cheeks we kiss,
Be waxen as her dimpled cheeks;

Then do I pine for happier skies,
Shy wild-flowers fair by hill and burn;
As one for one's sweet lady's eyes,
And her white cheeks might pine and yearn.

IN MIDDLE SPRING

When the fields are rolled into naked gold,
And a ripple of fire and pearl is blent
With the emerald surges of wood and wold
Like a flower-foam bursting violent;
When the dingles and deeps of the woodlands old
Are glad with a sibilant life new sent,
Too rare to be told are the manifold
Sweet fancies that quicken redolent
In the heart that no longer is cold.

How it knows of the wings of the hawk that swings
From the dripped dew scintillant seen;
Why the red-bird hides where it sings and sings
In melodious quiverings of green;
How the wind to the red-bud and dogwood brings
Big pearls of worth and corals of sheen,
Whiles he lisps to the strings of a lute that rings
Of love in the South who is queen,
Where the fountain of poesy springs.

Go seek in the ray for a sworded fay
The chestnut's buds into blooms that rips;
And look in the brook that runs laughing gay
For the nymph with the laughing lips;

In the brake for the dryad whose eyes are gray,
From whose bosom the perfume drips;
The faun hid away where the grasses sway
Thick ivy low down on his hips,
Pursed lips on a syrinx at play.

So ho, for the rose, the Romeo rose,
And the lyric he hides in his heart;
And ho, for the epic the oak tree knows,
Sonorous and mighty in art.
The lily with woes that her white face shows
Hath a satire she yearns to impart,
But none of those, her hates and her foes,
For a heart that sings but for sport,
And shifts where the song-wind blows.

TYRANNY

There is not aught more merciless
Than such fast lips that will not speak,
That stir not if I curse or bless
A God that made them weak.

More madd'ning to one there is naught,
Than such white eyelids sealed on eyes,
Eyes vacant of the thing named thought,
An exile in the skies.

Ah, silent tongue! ah, ear so dull!
How angel utterances low
Have wooed you! they more beautiful
Than mortal harsh with woe!

VISIONS

When the snow was deep on the flower-beds,
And the sleet was caked on the brier;
When the frost was down in the brown bulbs' heads,
And the ways were clogged with mire;

When the wind to syringa and bare rose-tree
Brought the phantoms of vanished flowers,
And the days were sorry as sorry could be,
And Time limped cursing his fardle of hours:

Heigho! had I not a book and the logs?
And I swear that I wasn't mistaken,
But I heard the frogs croaking in far-off bogs,
And the brush-sparrow's song in the braken.

And I strolled by paths which the Springtide knew,
In her mossy dells, by her ferny passes,
Where the ground was holy with flowers and dew,
And the insect life in the grasses.

And I knew the Spring as a lover who knows
His sweetheart, to whom he has given
A kiss on the cheek that warmed its white rose,
In her eyes brought the laughter of heaven.

For a poem I'd read, a simple thing,
A little lyric that had the power
To make the brush-sparrow come and sing,
And the winter woodlands flower.

THE OLD BYWAY

Its rotting fence one scarcely sees
Through sumach and wild blackberries,
Thick elder and the white wild-rose,
Big ox-eyed daisies where the bees
Hang droning in repose.

The limber lizards glide away
Gray on its moss and lichens gray;
Warm butterflies float in the sun,
Gay Ariels of the lonesome day;
And there the ground squirrels run.

The red-bird stays one note to lift;
High overhead dark swallows drift;
'Neath sun-soaked clouds of beaten cream,
Through which hot bits of azure sift,
The gray hawks soar and scream.

Among the pungent weeds they fill
Dry grasshoppers pipe with a will;
And in the grass-grown ruts, where stirs
The basking snake, mole-cricket shrill;
O'er head the locust whirrs.

At evening, when the sad West turns
To dusky Night a cheek that burns,
The tree-toads in the wild-plum sing,
And ghosts of long-dead flowers and ferns
The wind wakes whispering.

DIURNAL

I

A molten ruby clear as wine
Along the east the dawning swims;
The morning-glories swing and shine,
The night dews bead their satin rims;
The bees rob sweets from shrub and vine,
The gold hangs on their limbs.

Sweet morn, the South,
A royal lover,
From his fragrant mouth,
Sweet morn, the South
Breathes on and over
Keen scents of wild honey and rosy clover.

II

Beside the wall the roses blow
Long summer noons the winds forsake;

Beside the wall the poppies glow
So full of fire their hearts do ache;
The dipping butterflies come slow,
Half dreaming, half awake.

Sweet noontide, rest,
A slave-girl weary
With her babe at her breast;
Sweet noontide, rest,
The day grows dreary
As soft limbs that are tired and eyes that are teary.

III

Along lone paths the cricket cries
Sad summer nights that know the dew;
One mad star thwart the heavens flies
Curved glittering on the glassy blue;
Now grows the big moon on the skies.
The stars are faint and few.

Sweet night, breathe thou
With a passion taken
From a Romeo's vow;
Sweet night, breathe thou
Like a beauty shaken

Of amorous dreams that have made her waken.

THE WOOD-PATH

Here doth white Spring white violets show,
Broadcast doth white, frail wind-flowers sow
Through starry mosses amber-fair,
As delicate as ferns that grow,
Hart's-tongue and maiden-hair.

Here fungus life is beautiful,
White mushroom and the thick toad-stool
As various colored as wild blooms;
Existences that love the cool,
Distinct in rank perfumes.

Here stray the wandering cows to rest,
The calling cat-bird builds her nest
In spice-wood bushes dark and deep;
Here raps the woodpecker his best,
And here young rabbits leap.

Tall butternuts and hickories,
The pawpaw and persimmon trees,
The beech, the chestnut, and the oak,
Wall shadows huge, like ghosts of bees
Through which gold sun-bits soak.

Here to pale melancholy moons.
In haunted nights of dreamy Junes,
Wails wildly the weird whippoorwill,
Whose mournful and demonic tunes
Wild woods with phantoms fill.

DEFICIENCY

Ah, God! were I away, away,
By woodland-belted hills!
There might be more in Thy bright day
Than my poor spirit thrills.

The elder coppice, banks of blooms,
The spice-wood brush, the field
Of tumbled clover, and perfumes
Hot, weedy pastures yield.

The old rail-fence whose angles hold
Bright briar and sassafras,
Sweet priceless wild flowers blue and gold
Starred through the moss and grass.

The ragged path that winds unto
Lone cow-behaunted nooks,
Through brambles to the shade and dew
Of rocks and woody brooks.

To see the minnows turn and gleam
White sparkling bellies, all
Shoot in gray schools adown the stream
Let but a dead leaf fall.

The buoyant pleasure and delight
Of floating feathered seeds.
Capricious wanderers soft and white
Born of silk-bearing weeds.

Ah, God! were I away, away,
Among wild woods and birds!
There were more soul within Thy day
Than one might bless with words.

HE WHO LOVES

For him God's birds each merry morn
Make of wild throats melodious flutes
To trill such love from brush and thorn
As might brim eyes of brutes:
Who would believe of such a thing,
That 'tis her heart which makes them sing?

For him the faultless skies of noon
Grow farther in eternal blue,
As heavens that buoy the balanced moon,
And sow the stars and dew:
Who would believe that such deep skies
Are miracles only through her eyes?

For him mad sylphs adown domed nights
Stud golden globules radiant,
Or glass-green transient trails of lights
Spin from their orbs and slant:
Who would believe a soul were hers
To make for him a universe?

THE MONASTERY CROFT

1

Big-stomached, like friars
Who ogle a nun,
Quaff deep to their bellies' desires
From the old abbey's tun,
Grapes fatten with fires
Warm-filtered from moon and from sun.

2

As a novice who muses, —
Lips a rosary tell,
While her thoughts are — a love she refuses?
— Nay! mourns as not well:
The ripe apple looses
Its holding to rot where it fell.

THE DRYAD

I have seen her limpid eyes
Large with gradual laughter rise
Through wild-roses' nettles,
Like twin blossoms grow and stare,
Then a hating, envious air
Whisked them into petals.

I have seen her hardy cheek
Like a molten coral leak
Through the leafage shaded
Of thick Chickasaws, and then,
When I made more sure, again
To a red plum faded.

I have found her racy lips,
And her graceful finger-tips,
But a haw and berry;
Glimmers of her there and here,
Just, forsooth, enough to cheer
And to make me merry.

Often on the ferny rocks
Dazzling ripples of loose locks
At me she hath shaken,

And I've followed – 'twas in vain —
They had trickled into rain
Sun-lit on the braken.

Once her full limbs flashed on me,
Naked where some royal tree
Powdered all the spaces
With wan sunlight and quaint shade,
Such a haunt romance hath made
For haunched satyr-races.

There, I wot, hid amorous Pan,
For a sudden pleading ran
Through the maze of myrtle,
Whiles a rapid violence tossed
All its flowerage, – 'twas the lost
Cooings of a turtle.

"THE SWEET O' THE YEAR."

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