

Cawein Madison Julius

# Undertones



# **Madison Cawein**

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*Undertones:*

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# Madison J. Cawein

## Undertones

INSCRIBED TO THE PATHETIC

MEMORY OF THE POET

HENRY TIMROD

Long are the days, and three times long the nights.  
The weary hours are a heavy chain  
Upon the feet of all Earth's dear delights,  
Holding them ever prisoners to pain.  
What shall beguile me to believe again  
In hope, that faith within her parable writes  
Of life, care reads with eyes whose tear-drops stain?  
Shall such assist me to subdue the heights?  
Long is the night, and over long the day. —  
The burden of all being! – is it worse  
Or better, lo! that they who toil and pray  
May win not more than they who toil and curse?  
A little sleep, a little love, ah me!

And the slow weigh up the soul's Calvary!

# THE DREAMER

Even as a child he loved to thrid the bowers,  
And mark the loafing sunlight's lazy laugh;  
Or, on each season, spell the epitaph  
Of its dead months repeated in their flowers;  
Or list the music of the strolling showers,  
Whose vagabond notes strummed through a twinkling staff;  
Or read the day's delivered monograph  
Through all the chapters of its dædal hours.  
Still with the same child-faith and child-regard  
He looks on Nature, hearing, at her heart,  
The beautiful beat out the time and place,  
Whereby no lesson of this life is hard,  
No struggle vain of science or of art,  
That dies with failure written on its face.

# QUIET

A log-hut in the solitude,  
A clapboard roof to rest beneath!  
This side, the shadow-haunted wood;  
That side, the sunlight-haunted heath.

At daybreak Morn shall come to me  
In raiment of the white winds spun;  
Slim in her rosy hand the key  
That opes the gateway of the sun.

Her smile shall help my heart enough  
With love to labor all the day,  
And cheer the road, whose rocks are rough,  
With her smooth footprints, each a ray.

At dusk a voice shall call afar,  
A lone voice like the whippoorwill's;  
And, on her shimmering brow one star,  
Night shall descend the western hills.

She at my door till dawn shall stand,  
With Gothic eyes, that, dark and deep,  
Are mirrors of a mystic land,  
Fantastic with the towns of sleep.



# UNQUALIFIED

Not his the part to win the goal,  
The flaming goal that flies before,  
Into whose course the apples roll  
Of self that stay his feet the more.

Beyond himself he shall not win  
Whose flesh is as a driven dust,  
That his own soul must wander in,  
Seeing no farther than his lust.

# UNENCOURAGED ASPIRATION

Is mine the part of no companion hand  
Of help, except my shadow's silent self?  
A moonlight traveller in Fancy's land  
Of leering gnome and hollow-laughing elf;

Whose forests deepen and whose moon goes down,  
When Night's blind shadow shall usurp my own;  
And, mid the dust and wreck of some old town,  
The City of Dreams, I grope and fall alone.

# THE WOOD

Witch-hazel, dogwood, and the maple here;  
And there the oak and hickory;  
Linn, poplar, and the beech-tree, far and near  
As the eased eye can see.

Wild-ginger; wahoo, with its wan balloons;  
And brakes of briars of a twilight green;  
And fox-grapes plumed with summer; and strung moons  
Of mandrake flowers between.

Deep gold-green ferns, and mosses red and gray, —  
Mats for what naked myth's white feet? —  
And, cool and calm, a cascade far away  
With even-falling beat.

Old logs, made sweet with death; rough bits of bark;  
And tangled twig and knotted root;  
And sunshine splashes and great pools of dark;  
And many a wild-bird's flute.

Here let me sit until the Indian, Dusk,  
With copper-colored feet, comes down;  
Sowing the wildwood with star-fire and musk,  
And shadows blue and brown.

Then side by side with some magician dream,  
To take the owlet-haunted lane,  
Half-roofed with vines; led by a firefly gleam,  
That brings me home again.

# WOOD NOTES

## I

There is a flute that follows me  
From tree to tree:  
A water flute a spirit sets  
To silver lips in waterfalls,  
And through the breath of violets  
A sparkling music calls:  
"Hither! halloo! Oh, follow!  
Down leafy hill and hollow,  
Where, through clear swirls,  
With feet like pearls,  
Wade up the blue-eyed country girls.  
Hither! halloo! Oh, follow!"

## II

There is a pipe that plays to me  
From tree to tree:  
A bramble pipe an elfin holds

To golden lips in berry brakes,  
And, swinging o'er the elder wolds,  
A flickering music makes:  
"Come over! Come over  
The new-mown clover!  
Come over the new-mown hay!  
Where, there by the berries,  
With cheeks like cherries,  
And locks with which the warm wind merries,  
Brown girls are hilling the hay,  
All day!  
Come over the fields and away!  
Come over! Come over!"

# SUCCESS

How some succeed who have least need,  
In that they make no effort for!  
And pluck, where others pluck a weed,  
The burning blossom of a star,  
Grown from no earthly seed.

For some shall reap that never sow;  
And some shall toil and not attain, —  
What boots it in ourselves to know  
Such labor here is not in vain,  
When we still see it so!

# SONG

Unto the portal of the House of Song,  
Symbols of wrong and emblems of unrest,  
And mottoes of despair and envious jest,  
And stony masks of scorn and hate belong.

Who enters here shall feel his soul denied  
All welcome: lo! the chiselled form of Love,  
That stares in marble on the shrine above  
The tomb of Beauty, where he dreamed and died!

Who enters here shall know no poppyflowers  
Of Rest, or harp-tones of serene Content;  
Only sad ghosts of music and of scent  
Shall mock the mind with their remembered powers.

Here must he wait till striving patience carves  
His name upon the century-storied floor;  
His heart's blood staining one dim pane the more  
In Fame's high casement while he sings and starves.

# THE OLD SPRING

## I

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

## II

Myrrh and music everywhere  
Haunt its cascades; – like the hair  
That a naiad tosses cool,  
Swimming strangely beautiful,  
With white fragrance for her bosom,  
For her mouth a breath of song; —

Under leaf and branch and blossom  
Flows the woodland spring along,  
Sparkling, singing, flows along.

### III

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

# HILLS OF THE WEST

Hills of the west, that gird  
Forest and farm,  
Home of the nestling bird,  
Housing from harm,  
When on your tops is heard  
Storm:

Hills of the west, that bar  
Belts of the gloam,  
Under the twilight star,  
Where the mists roam,  
Take ye the wanderer  
Home.

Hills of the west, that dream  
Under the moon,  
Making of wind and stream,  
Late-heard and soon,  
Parts of your lives that seem  
Tune.

Hills of the west, that take  
Slumber to ye,  
Be it for sorrow's sake

Or memory,  
Part of such slumber make  
Me.

# FLOWERS

Oh, why for us the blighted bloom!  
The blossom that lies withering!  
The Master of Life's changeless loom  
Hath wrought for us no changeless thing.

Where grows the rose of fadeless Grace?  
Wherethrough the Spirit manifests  
The fact of an immortal race,  
The dream on which religion rests.

Where buds the lily of our Faith?  
That grows for us in unknown wise,  
Out of the barren dust of death,  
The pregnant bloom of Paradise.

In Heaven! so near that flowers know!  
That flowers see how near! – and thus  
Reflect the knowledge here below  
Of love and life unknown to us.

# SECOND SIGHT

They lean their faces to me through  
Green windows of the woods;  
Their white throats sweet with honey-dew  
Beneath low leafy hoods —  
No dream they dream but hath been true  
Here in the solitudes.

Star trillium, in the underbrush,  
In whom Spring bares her face;  
Sun eglantine, that breathes the blush  
Of Summer's quiet grace;  
Moon mallow, in whom lives the hush  
Of Autumn's tragic pace.

For one hath heard the dryad's sighs  
Behind the covering bark;  
And one hath felt the satyr's eyes  
Gleam in the bosky dark;  
And one hath seen the naiad rise  
In waters all a-spark.

I bend my soul unto them, stilled  
In worship man hath lost;  
The old-world myths that science killed

Are living things almost  
To me through these whose forms are filled  
With Beauty's pagan ghost.

And through new eyes I seem to see  
The world these live within, —  
A shuttered world of mystery,  
Where unreal forms begin  
The real of ideality  
That has no unreal kin.

# DEAD SEA FRUIT

All things have power to hold us back.  
Our very hopes build up a wall  
Of doubt, whose shadow stretches black  
O'er all.

The dreams, that helped us once, become  
Dread disappointments, that oppose  
Dead eyes to ours, and lips made dumb  
With woes.

The thoughts that opened doors before  
Within the mind's house, hide away;  
Discouragement hath locked each door  
For aye.

Come, loss, more frequently than gain!  
And failure than success! until  
The spirit's struggle to attain  
Is still!

# THE WOOD WITCH

There is a woodland witch who lies  
With bloom-bright limbs and beam-bright eyes,  
Among the water-flags, that rank  
The slow brook's heron-haunted bank:  
The dragon-flies, in brass and blue,  
Are signs she works her sorcery through;  
Weird, wizard characters she weaves  
Her spells by under forest leaves, —  
These wait her word, like imps, upon  
The gray flag-pods; their wings, of lawn  
And gauze; their bodies gleamy green.  
While o'er the wet sand, — left between  
The running water and the still, —  
In pansy hues and daffodil,  
The fancies that she meditates  
Take on most sumptuous shapes, with traits  
Like butterflies. 'Tis she you hear,  
Whose sleepy rune, hummed in the ear  
Of silence, bees and beetles purr,  
And the dry-droning locusts whirr;  
Till, where the wood is very lone,  
Vague monotone meets monotone,  
And slumber is begot and born,  
A faery child, beneath the thorn.

There is no mortal who may scorn  
The witchery she spreads around  
Her dim demesne, wherein is bound  
The beauty of abandoned time,  
As some sweet thought 'twixt rhyme and rhyme.  
And by her spell you shall behold  
The blue turn gray, the gray turn gold  
Of hollow heaven; and the brown  
Of twilight vistas twinkled down  
With fire-flies; and, in the gloom,  
Feel the cool vowels of perfume  
Slow-syllabled of weed and bloom.  
But, in the night, at languid rest, —  
When like a spirit's naked breast  
The moon slips from a silver mist, —  
With star-bound brow, and star-wreathed wrist,  
If you should see her rise and wave  
You welcome, – ah! what thing shall save  
You then? forevermore her slave!

# AT SUNSET

Into the sunset's turquoise marge  
The moon dips, like a pearly barge  
Enchantment sails through magic seas,  
To fairyland Hesperides,  
Over the hills and away.

Into the fields, in ghost-gray gown,  
The young-eyed Dusk comes slowly down;  
Her apron filled with stars she stands,  
And one or two slip from her hands  
Over the hills and away.

Above the wood's black caldron bends  
The witch-faced Night and, muttering, blends  
The dew and heat, whose bubbles make

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