



WHISPERS OF A FADING BLOOM

As a blown red rose that shivers And bends to the wind and rain. So give me thy hands and speak me As once in the days of yore, When love spoke sweetly to us, The love that speaks no more; The sound of thy voice may help him To speak in our hearts once more. Ah! over grieved my soul is, And tired and sick for sleep, As a poppy-bloom that withers, Forgotten, where reapers reap; As a harvested poppy-flower That dies where reapers reap. So bend to my face and kiss me As once in the days of yore, When the touch of thy lips was magic That restored to life once more; The thought of thy kiss, which awakens To life that love once more. Sitting often I have, oh! Often have desired you so— Yearned to kiss you as I did When your love to me you gave, In the moonlight, by the wave, And a long impetuous kiss Pressed upon your mouth that chid, And upon each dewy lid— That, all passion-shaken, I With love language will address Each dear thing I know you by, Picture, needle-work or frame: Each suggestive in the same Perfume of past happiness: Till, meseems, the ways we knew Now again I tread with you From the oldtime tryst: and there Feel the pressure of your hair Cool and easy on my cheek, And your breath's aroma: bare Hand upon my arm, as weak As a lily on a stream: And your eyes, that gaze at me With the sometime witchery, To my inmost spirit speak. And remembered ecstacy Sweeps my soul again ... I seem Dreaming, yet I do not dream. When day dies, lone, forsaken, And joy is kissed asleep; When doubt's gray eyes awaken, And love, with music taken From hearts with sighings shaken, Sits in the dusk to weep: With ghostly lifted finger What memory then shall rise?— Of dark regret the bringer— To tell the sorrowing singer Of days whose echoes linger, Till dawn unstars the skies. When night is gone and, beaming, Faith journeys forth to toil; When hope's blue eyes wake gleaming, And life is done with dreaming The dreams that seem but seeming, Within the world's turmoil: Can we forget the presence Of death who walks unseen? Whose scythe casts shadowy crescents Around life's glittering essence, As lessens, slowly lessens, The space that lies between. Bland was that October day, Calm and balmy as the spring, When we went a forest-way, 'Neath paternal beeches gray, To a valleyed opening: Where the purple aster flowered, And, like torches shadow-held, Red the fiery sumach towered; And, where gum-trees sentinelled Vistas, robed in gold and garnet, Ripe the thorny chestnut shelled Its brown plumpness. Bee and hornet Droned around us; quick the cricket, Tireless in the wood-rose thicket, Tremoloed; and, to the wind All its moon-spun silver casting, Swung the milk-weed pod unthinned; And, its clean flame on the sod By the fading golden-rod, Burned the white life-everlasting. It was not so much the time, Nor the place, nor way we went, That made all our moods to rhyme, Nor the season's sentiment, As it was the innocent Carefree childhood of our hearts, Reading each expression of Death and care as life and love: That impression joy imparts Unto others and retorts On itself, which then made glad All the sorrow of decay, As the memory of that day Makes this day of spring, now, sad. The balsam-breathed petunias Hang riven of the rain; And where the tiger-lily was Now droops a tawny stain;

While in the twilight's purple pause Earth dreams of Heaven again. When one shall sit and sigh, And one lie all alone Beneath the unseen sky— Whose love shall then deny? Whose love atone? With ragged petals round its pod The rain-wrecked poppy dies; And where the hectic rose did nod A crumpled crimson lies; While distant as the dreams of God The stars slip in the skies. When one shall lie asleep, And one be dead and gone— Within the unknown deep, Shall we the trysts then keep That now are done? Holding both your hands in mine, Often have we sat together, While, outside, the boisterous weather Hung the wild wind on the pine Like a black marauder, and With a sudden warning hand At the casement rapped. The night Read no sentiment of light, Starbeam-syllabled, within Her romance of death and sin, Shadow-chaptered tragicly.— Looking in your eyes, ah me! Though I heard, I did not heed What the night read unto us, Threatening and ominous: For love helped my heart to read Forward through unopened pages To a coming day, that held More for us than all the ages Past, that it epitomized In its sentence; where we spelled What our present realized Only—all the love that was Past and yet to be for us. 'Though in the garden, gray with dew, All life lies withering, And there's no more to say or do, No more to sigh or sing, Yet go we back the ways we knew, When buds were opening. Perhaps we shall not search in vain Within its wreck and gloom; 'Mid roses ruined of the rain There still may live one bloom; One flower, whose heart may still retain The long-lost soul-perfume. And then, perhaps, will come to us The dreams we dreamed before; And song, who spoke so beauteous, Will speak to us once more; And love, with eyes all amorous, Will ope again his door. So 'though the garden's gray with dew, And flowers are withering, And there's no more to say or do, No more to sigh or sing, Yet go we back the ways we knew When buds were opening. Looking on the desolate street, Where the March snow drifts and drives, Trodden black of hurrying feet, Where the athlete storm-wind strives With each tree and dangling light,— Centers, sphered with glittering white,— Hissing in the dancing snow ... Backward in my soul I go To that tempest-haunted night Of two autumns past, when we, Hastening homeward, were o'ertaken Of the storm; and 'neath a tree, With its wild leaves whisper-shaken, Sheltered us in that forsaken, Sad and ancient cemetery,— Where folk came no more to bury.— Haggard grave-stones, mossed and crumpled, Tottered 'round us, or o'ertumbled In their sunken graves; and some, Urned and obelisked above Iron-fenced in tombs, stood dumb Records of forgotten love. And again I see the west Yawning inward to its core Of electric-spasmed ore, Swiftly, without pause or rest. And a great wind sweeps the dust Up abandoned sidewalks; and, In the rotting trees, the gust Shouts again—a voice that would Make its gaunt self understood Moaning over death's lean land. And we sat there, hand in hand; On the granite; where we read, By the leaping skies o'erhead, Something of one young and dead. Yet the words begot no fear In our souls: you leaned your cheek Smiling on mine: very near Were our lips: we did not speak. And suddenly alone I stood With scared eyes gazing through the wood.

For some still sign of ill or good, To lead me from the solitude. The day was at its twilight; One cloud o'erhead spread a vast wing Of rosy thunder; vanishing Above the far hills' mystic ring. Some stars shone timidly o'erhead; And toward the west's cadaverous red— Like some wild dream that haunts the dead In limbo—the lean moon was led. Upon the sad, debatable Vague lands of twilight slowly fell A silence that I knew too well, A sorrow that I can not tell. What way to take, what path to go, Whether into the east's gray glow, Or where the west burnt red and low— What road to choose, I did not know. So, hesitating, there I stood Lost in my soul's uncertain wood: One sign I craved of ill or good, To lead me from its solitude. It was autumn: and a night, Full of whispers and of mist, With a gray moon, wanly whist, Hanging like a phantom light O'er the hills. We stood among Windy fields of weed and flower, Where the withered seed pod hung, And the chill leaf-crickets sung. Melancholy was the hour With the mystery and loneliness Of the year, that seemed to look On its own departed face; As our love then, in its oneness, All its dead past did retrace, And from that sad moment took Presage of approaching parting.— Sorrowful the hour and dark: Low among the trees, now starting, Now concealed, a star's pale spark— Like a fen-fire—winked and lured On to shuddering shadows; where All was doubtful, unassured, Immortal; and the bare Facts of unideal day Changed to substance such as dreams. And meseemed then, far away— Farther than remotest gleams Of the stars—lost, separated, And estranged, and out of reach, Grew our lives away from each, Loving lives, that long had waited. There is no gladness in the day Now you're away; Dull is the morn, the noon is dull, Once beautiful; And when the evening fills the skies With dusky dyes, With tired eyes and tired heart I sit alone, I sigh apart, And wish for you. Ah! darker now the night comes on Since you are gone; Sad are the stars, the moon is sad, Once wholly glad; And when the stars and moon are set, And earth lies wet, With heart's regret and soul's hard ache, I dream alone, I lie awake, And wish for you. These who once spake me, speak no more, Now all is o'er; Day hath forgot the language of Its hopes of love; Night, whose sweet lips were burdensome With dreams, is dumb; Far different from what used to be, With silence and despondency They speak to me. So it ends—the path that crept Through a land all slumber-kissed; Where the sickly moonlight slept Like a pale antagonist. Now the star, that led us onward,— Reassuring with its light,— Fails and falters; dipping downward Leaves us wandering in night, With old doubts we once disdained ... So it ends. The woods attained— Where our heart's desire builded A fair temple, fire-gilded, With hope's marble shrine within, Where the lineaments of our love Shone, with lilies clad and crowned, 'Neath white columns reared above Sorrow and her sister sin, Columns, rose and ribbon-wound,— In the forest we have found But a ruin! All around Lie the shattered capitals, And vast fragments of the walls ... Like a climbing cloud,—that plies, Wind-wrecked, o'er the moon that lies 'Neath its blackness,—taking on Gradual certainties of wan, Soft assaults of easy white,

Pale-approaching; till the skies' Emptiness and hungry night Claim its bulk again, while she Rides in lonely purity: So we found our temple, broken, And a musing moment's space Love, whose latest word was spoken, Seemed to meet us face to face, Making bright that ruined place With a strange effulgence; then Passed, and left all black again. Bee-bitten in the orchard hung The peach; or, fallen in the weeds, Lay rotting: where still sucked and sung The gray bee, boring to its seed's Pink pulp and honey blackly stung. The orchard path, which led around The garden,—with its heat one twinge Of dinning locusts,—picket-bound, And ragged, brought me where one hinge Held up the gate that scraped the ground. All seemed the same: the martin-box— Sun-warped with pigmy balconies— Still stood with all its twittering flocks, Perched on its pole above the peas And silvery-seeded onion-stocks. The clove-pink and the rose; the clump Of coppery sunflowers, with the heat Sick to the heart: the garden stump, Red with geranium-pots and sweet With moss and ferns, this side the pump. I rested, with one hesitant hand Upon the gate. The lonesome day, Droning with insects, made the land One dry stagnation; soaked with hay And scents of weeds, the hot wind fanned. I breathed the sultry scents, my eyes Parched as my lips. And yet I felt My limbs were ice. As one who flies To some strange woe. How sleepy smelt The hay-sweet heat that soaked the skies! Noon nodded; dreamier, lonesomer, For one long, plaintive, forestside Bird-quaver.— And I knew me near Some heartbreak anguish ... She had died. I felt it, and no need to hear! I passed the quince and peartree; where All up the porch a grape-vine trails— How strange that fruit, whatever air Or earth it grows in, never fails To find its native flavor there! And she was as a flower, too, That grows its proper bloom and scent No matter what the soil: she, who, Born better than her place, still lent Grace to the lowness she knew.... They met me at the porch, and were Sad-eyed with weeping. Then the room Shut out the country's heat and purr, And left light stricken into gloom— So love and I might look on her. Last night I dreamed I saw you lying dead, And by your sheeted form stood all alone: Frail as a flow'r you lay upon your bed, And on your still face, through the casement, shone The moon, as lingering to kiss you there Fall'n asleep, white violets in your hair. Oh, sick to weeping was my soul, and sad To breaking was my heart that would not break; And for my soul's great grief no tear I had, No lamentation for my heart's deep ache; Yet all I bore seemed more than I could bear Beside you dead, white violets in your hair. A white rose, blooming at your window-bar, And glimmering in it, like a fire-fly caught Upon the thorns, the light of one white star, Looked on with me; as if they felt and thought As did my heart,— "How beautiful and fair And young she lies, white violets in her hair!" And so we watched beside you, sad and still, The star, the rose, and I. The moon had past, Like a pale traveler, behind the hill With all her echoed radiance. At last The darkness came to hide my tears and share My watch by you, white violets in your hair. I looked upon a dead girl's face and heard ,

What seemed the voice of Love call unto me Out of her heart; whereon the charactery Of her lost dreams I read there word for word:— How on her soul no soul had touched, or stirred Her Life's sad depths to rippling melody, Or made the imaged longing, there, to be The realization of a hope deferred. So in her life had Love behaved to her. Between the lonely chapters of her years And her young eyes making no golden blur With god-bright face and hair; who led me to Her side at last, and bade me, through my tears, With Death's dumb face, too late, to see and know. Is it uneasy moonlight, On the restless field, that stirs? Or wild white meadow-blossoms The night-wind bends and blurs? Is it the dolorous water, That sobs in the wood and sighs? Or heart of an ancient oak-tree, That breaks and, sighing, dies? The wind is vague with the shadows That wander in No-Man's Land; The water is dark with the voices That weep on the Unknown's strand. O ghosts of the winds who call me! O ghosts of the whispering waves! As sad as forgotten flowers, That die upon nameless graves! What is this thing you tell me In tongues of a twilight race, Of death, with the vanished features, Mantled, of my own face? The old enigmas of the deathless dawns, And riddles of the all immortal eves,— That still o'er Delphic lawns Speak as the gods spoke through oracular leaves— I read with new-born eyes, Remembering how, a slave, I lay with breast bared for the sacrifice, Once on a temple's pave. Or, crowned with hyacinth and helichrys, How, towards the altar in the marble gloom,— Hearing the magadis Dirge through the pale amaracine perfume,— 'Mid chanting priests I trod, With never a sigh or pause, To give my life to pacify a god, And save my country's cause. Again: Cyrenian roses on wild hair, And oil and purple smeared on breasts and cheeks, How with mad torches there— Reddening the cedars of Cithæron's peaks— With gesture and fierce glance, Lascivious Mænad bands Once drew and slew me in the Pyrrhic dance, With Bacchanalian hands. The music now that lays Dim lips against my ears, Some wild sad thing it says, Unto my soul, of years Long passed into the haze Of tears. Meseems, before me are The dark eyes of a queen, A queen of Istakhar: I seem to see her lean More lovely than a star Of mien. A slave, I stand before Her jeweled throne; I kneel, And, in a song, once more My love for her reveal; How once I did adore I feel. Again her dark eyes gleam; Again her red lips smile; And in her face the beam Of love that knows no guile; And so she seems to dream A while. Out of her deep hair then A rose she takes—and I Am made a god o'er men! Her rose, that here did lie When I, in th' wild-beasts' den, Did die. Old paintings on its wainscots, And, in its oaken hall, Old arras; and the twilight Of slumber over all. Old grandeur on its stairways; And, in its haunted rooms, Old souvenirs of greatness, And ghosts of dead perfumes. The winds are phantom voices Around its carven doors; The moonbeams, specter footsteps Upon its polished floors. Old cedars build around it A solitude of sighs; And the old hours pass through it With immemorial eyes. But more than this I know not;

Nor where the house may be; Nor what its ancient secret And ancient grief to me. All that my soul remembers Is that,—forgot almost,— Once, in a former lifetime, 'Twas here I loved and lost. In eōns of the senses, My spirit knew of yore, I found the Isle of Circe, And felt her magic lore; And still the soul remembers What flesh would be once more. She gave me flowers to smell of That wizard branches bore, Of weird and sorcerous beauty, Whose stems dripped human gore— Their scent when I remember I know that world once more. She gave me fruits to eat of That grew beside the shore, Of necromantic ripeness, With human flesh at core— Their taste when I remember I know that life once more. And then, behold! a serpent, That glides my face before, With eyes of tears and fire That glare me o'er and o'er— I look into its eyeballs, And know myself once more. VI. I have looked in the eyes of poesy, And sat in song's high place; And the beautiful spirits of music Have spoken me face to face; Yet here in my soul there is sorrow They never can name nor trace. I have walked with the glamour gladness, And dreamed with the shadow sleep; And the presences, love and knowledge, Have smiled in my heart's red keep; Yet here in my soul there is sorrow For the depth of their gaze too deep. The love and the hope God grants me, The beauty that lures me on, And the dreams of folly and wisdom That thoughts of the spirit don, Are but masks of an ancient sorrow Of a life long dead and gone. Was it sin? or a crime forgotten? Of a love that loved too well? That sat on a throne of fire A thousand years in hell? That the soul with its nameless sorrow Remembers but can not tell? TWO. With her soft face half turned to me, Like an arrested moonbeam, she Stood in the cirque of that deep tree. I took her by the hands; she raised Her face to mine; and, half amazed, Remembered; and we stood and gazed. How good to kiss her throat and hair, And say no word!—Her throat was bare; As some moon-fungus white and fair. Had God not giv'n us life for this? The world-old, amorous happiness Of arms that clasp, and lips that kiss! The eloquence of limbs and arms! The rhetoric of breasts, whose charms Say to the sluggish blood what warms! Had God or Fiend assigned this hour That bloomed,—where love had all of power,— The senses' aphrodisiac flower? The dawn was far away. Nude night Hung savage stars of sultry white Around her bosom's Ethiop light. Night! night, who gave us each to each, Where heart with heart could hold sweet speech, With life's best gift within our reach. And here it was—between the goals Of flesh and spirit, sex controls— Took place the marriage of our souls. A woman, fair to look upon, Where waters whiten with the moon; While down the glimmer of the lawn The white moths swoon. A mouth of music; eyes of love; And hands of blended snow and scent, That touch the pearl-pale shadow of An instrument. And low and sweet that song of sleep After the song of love is hushed; While all the longing, here, to weep, Is held and crushed. Then leafy silence, that is musk With breath of the magnolia-tree, While dwindle, moon-white, through the dusk Her drapery.

Let me remember how a heart, Romantic, wrote upon that night! My soul still helps me read each part Of it aright. And like a dead leaf shut between A book's dull chapters, stained and dark, That page, with immemorial green, Of life I mark. It is not well for me to hear That song's appealing melody: The pain of loss comes all too near, Through it, to me. The loss of her whose love looks through The mist death's hand hath hung between: Within the shadow of the yew Her grave is green. Ah, dream that vanished long ago! Oh, anguish of remembered tears! And shadow of unlifted woe Athwart the years! That haunt the sad rooms of my days, As keepsakes of unperished love, Where pale the memory of her face Is framed above. This olden song, she used to sing, Of love and sleep, is now a charm To open mystic doors and bring Her spirit form. In music making visible One soul-assertive memory, That steals unto my side to tell My loss to me. In my dream last night it seemed I stood With a boy's glad heart in my boyhood's wood. The beryl green and the cairngorm brown Of the day through the deep leaves sifted down. The rippling drip of a passing shower Rinsed wild aroma from herb and flower. The splash and urge of a waterfall Spread stairwayed rocks with a crystal caul. And I waded the pool where the gravel gray, And the last year's leaf, like a topaz lay. And searched the strip of the creek's dry bed For the colored keel and the arrow-head. And I found the cohosh coigne the same, Tossing with torches of pearly flame. The owlet dingle of vine and brier, That the butterfly-weed flecked fierce with fire. The elder edge with its warm perfume, And the sapphire stars of the bluet bloom; The moss, the fern, and the touch-me-not I breathed, and the mint-smell keen and hot. And I saw the bird, that sang its best, In the moted sunlight building its nest. And I saw the chipmunk's stealthy face, And the rabbit crouched in a grassy place. And I watched the crows, that cawed and cried, Hunting the hawk at the forest-side; The bees that sucked in the blossoms slim, And the wasps that built on the lichenized limb. And felt the silence, the dusk, the dread Of the spot where they buried the unknown dead. The water murmur, the insect hum, And a far bird calling, Come, oh, come!— What sweeter music can mortals make To ease the heart of its human ache!— And it seemed in my dream, that was all too true, That I met in the woods again with you. A sun-tanned face and brown bare knees, And a hand stained red with dewberries. And we stood a moment some thing to tell, And then in the woods we said farewell. But once I met you; yet, lo! it seems Again and again we meet in dreams. And I ask my soul what it all may mean; If this is the love that should have been. And oft and again I wonder, Can What God intends be changed by man? Among the fields the camomile Seems blown steam in the lightning's glare. Unusual odors drench the air. Night speaks above; the angry smile Of storm within her stare. The way for me to-night?—To-night, Is through the wood whose branches fill The road with dripping rain-drops. Till, Between the boughs, a star-like light— Our home upon the hill.

The path for me to take?—It goes Around a trailer-tangled rock, 'Mid puckered pink and hollyhock, Unto a latch-gate's unkempt rose, And door whereat I knock. Bright on the old-time flower-place The lamp streams through the foggy pane. The door is opened to the rain; And in the door—her happy face, And eager hands again.. Come! look in the shadowy water here, The stagnant water of Ashly Mere: Where the stirless depths are dark but clear, What is the thing that lies there?— A lily-pod half sunk from sight? Or spawn of the toad all water-white? Or ashen blur of the moon's wan light? Or a woman's face and eyes there? Now lean to the water a listening ear, The haunted water of Ashly Mere: What is the sound that you seem to hear In the ghostly hush of the deeps there?— A withered reed that the ripple lips? Or a night-bird's wing that the surface whips? Or the rain in a leaf that drips and drips? Or a woman's voice that weeps there? Now look and listen! but draw not near The lonely water of Ashly Mere!— For so it happens this time each year As you lean by the mere and listen: And the moaning voice I understand,— For oft I have watched it draw to land, And lift from the water a ghastly hand And a face whose eyeballs glisten. And this is the reason why every year To the hideous water of Ashly Mere I come when the woodland leaves are sear, And the autumn moon hangs hoary: For here by the mere was wrought a wrong ... But the old, old story is over long— And woman is weak and man is strong ... And the mere's and mine is the story. The way went under cedared gloom To moonlight, like a cactus bloom, Before the entrance of her tomb. I had an hour of night and thin Sad starlight; and I set my chin Against the grating and looked in. A gleam, like moonlight, through a square Of opening—I knew not where— Shone on her coffin resting there. And on its oval silver-plate I read her name and age and date, And smiled, soft-thinking on my hate. There was no insect sound to chirr; No wind to make a little stir. I stood and looked and thought on her. The gleam stole downward from her head, Till at her feet it rested red On Gothic gold, that sadly said:— "God to her love lent a weak reed Of strength: and gave no light to lead: Pray for her soul; for it hath need." There was no night-bird's twitter near, No low vague water I might hear To make a small sound in the ear. The gleam, that made a burning mark Of each dim word, died to a spark; Then left the tomb and coffin dark. I had a little while to wait; And prayed with hands against the grate, And heart that yearned and knew too late. There was no light below, above, To point my soul the way thereof,— The way of hate that led to love. It was beneath a waning moon when all the woods were sear, And winds made eddies of the leaves that whispered far and near, I met her on the old mill-bridge we parted at last year. At first I deemed it but a mist that faltered in that place, An autumn mist beneath the trees that sentinelled the race; Until I neared and in the moon beheld her face to face.

The waver of the summer-heat upon the drouth-dry leas; The shimmer of the thistle-drift a down the silences; The gliding of the fairy-fire between the swamp and trees; They qualified her presence as a sorrow may a dream— The vague suggestion of a self; the glimmer of a gleam; The actual unreal of the things that only seem. Where once she came with welcome and glad eyes all loving-wise, She passed and gave no greeting that my heart might recognize, With far-set face unseeing and sad unremembering eyes. It was beneath a waning moon when woods were bleak and sear, And winds made whispers of the leaves that eddied far and near, I met her ghost upon the bridge we parted at last year. High up in the organ-story A girl stands slim and fair; And touched with the casement's glory Gleams out her radiant hair. The young priest kneels at the altar, Then lifts the Host above; And the psalm intoned from the psalter Is pure with patient love. A sweet bell chimes; and a censer Swings gleaming in the gloom; The candles glimmer and denser Rolls up the pale perfume. Then high in the organ choir A voice of crystal soars, Of patience and soul's desire, That suffers and adores. And out of the altar's dimness An answering voice doth swell, Of passion that cries from the grimness And anguish of its own hell. High up in the organ-story One kneels with a girlish grace; And, touched with the vesper glory, Lifts her madonna face. One stands at the cloudy altar, A form bowed down and thin; The text of the psalm in the psalter He reads, is sorrow and sin. O cheerly, cheerly by the road And merrily down the billet; And where the acre-field is sowed With bristle-bearded millet. Then o'er a pebbled path that goes, Through vista and through dingle, Unto a farmstead's windowed rose, And roof of moss and shingle. O darkly, darkly through the bush, And dimly by the boulder, Where cane and water-cress grow lush, And woodland wilds are older. Then o'er the cedared way that leads, Through burr and bramble-thickets, Unto a burial-ground of weeds Fenced in with broken pickets. Then sadly, sadly down the vale, And wearily through the rushes, Where sunlight of the noon is pale, And e'en the zephyr hushes. For oft her young face smiled upon My deeps here, willow-shaded; And oft with bare feet in the sun My shallows there she waded. No more beneath the twinkling leaves Shall stand the farmer's daughter!— Sing softly past the cottage eaves, O memory-haunted water! No more shall bend her laughing face Above me where the rose is!— Sigh softly past the burial-place, Where all her youth reposes! Do you remember how that night drew on? That night of sorrow, when the stars looked wan As eyes that gaze reproachful in a dream, Loved eyes, long lost, and sadder than the grave? How through the heaven stole the moon's gray gleam, Like a nun's ghost down a cathedral nave?— Do you remember how that night drew on? Do you remember the hard words then said? Said to the living,—now denied the dead,— That left me dead,— long, long before I died,— In heart and spirit?—me, your words had slain, Telling how love to my poor life had lied, Armed with the dagger of a pale disdain.— Do you remember the hard words then said? Do you remember, now this night draws down The threatening heavens, that the lightnings crown With wrecks of thunder?

when no moon doth give The clouds wild witchery?—as in a room, Behind the sorrowful arras, still may live The pallid secret of the haunted gloom.— Do you remember, now this night draws down? Do you remember, now it comes to pass Your form is bowed as is the wind-swept grass? And death hath won from you that confidence Denied to life? now your sick soul rebels Against your pride with tragic eloquence, That self-crowned demon of the heart's fierce hells.— Do you remember, now it comes to pass? Do you remember?—Bid your soul be still. Here passion hath surrendered unto will, And flesh to spirit. Quiet your wild tongue And wilder heart. Your kiss is naught to me. The instrument love gave you lies unstrung, Silent, forsaken of all melody. Do you remember?—Bid your soul be still. The leaves are shivering on the thorn, Drearly; And sighing wakes the lean-eyed morn, Wearly. I press my thin face to the pane, Drearly; But never will he come again. (Wearly.) The rain hath sicklied day with haze, Drearly; My tears run downward as I gaze, Wearly. The mist and morn spake unto me, Drearly: "What is this thing God gives to thee?" (Wearly.) I said unto the morn and mist, Drearly: "The babe unborn whom sin hath kissed." (Wearly.) The morn and mist spake unto me, Drearly: "What is this thing which thou dost see?" (Wearly.) I said unto the mist and morn, Drearly: "The shame of man and woman's scorn." (Wearly.) "He loved thee not," they made reply. Drearly. I said, "Would God had let me die!" (Wearly.) II. My dreams are as a closed up book, (Drearly.) Upon whose clasp of love I look, Wearly. All night the rain raved overhead, Drearly; All night I wept awake in bed, Wearly. I heard the wind sweep wild and wide, Drearly; I turned upon my face and sighed, Wearly. The wind and rain spake unto me, Drearly: "What is this thing God takes from thee?" (Wearly.) I said unto the rain and wind, Drearly: "The love, for which my soul hath sinned." (Wearly.) The rain and wind spake unto me, Drearly: "What are these things thou still dost see?" (Wearly.) I said unto the wind and rain, Drearly: "Regret, and hope despair hath slain." (Wearly.) "Thou lov'st him still," they made reply, Drearly. I said, "That God would let me die!" (Wearly.) So let it be. Thou wilt not say 't was I! Here in life's temple, where thy soul may see, Look how the beauty of our love doth lie, Shattered in shards, a dead divinity! Approach: kneel down: yea, render up one sigh! This is the end. What need to tell it thee! So let it be. So let it be. Care, who hath stood with him, And sorrow, who sat by him deified, For whom his face made comfort, lo! how dim They heap his altar which they can not hide, While memory's lamp swings o'er it, burning slim. This is the end. What shall be said beside? So let it be. So let it be. Did we not drain the wine, Red, of love's sacramental chalice, when He laid sweet sanction on thy lips and mine? Dash it aside! Lo, who will fill again Now it is empty of the god divine! This is the end. Yea, let us say Amen. So let it be. The cross I bear no man shall know— No man can ease the cross I bear!— Alas! the thorny path of woe Up the steep hill of care!

There is no word to comfort me; No sign to help my bended head; Deep night lies over land and sea, And silence dark and dread. To strive, it seems, that I was born, For that which others shall obtain; The disappointment and the scorn Alone for me remain. One half my life is overpast; The other half I contemplate— Meseems the past doth but forecast A darker future state. Sick to the heart of that which makes Me hope and struggle and desire, The aspiration here that aches With ineffectual fire; While inwardly I know the lack, The insufficiency of power, Each past day's retrospect makes black Each morrow's coming hour. Now in my youth would I could die!— As others love to live,—go down Into the grave without a sigh, Oblivious of renown! Where was I last Friday night?— Within the forest of dark dreams Following the blur of a goblin-light, That led me over ugly streams, Whereon the scum of the spawn was spread, And the blistered slime, in stagnant seams; Where the weed and the moss swam black and dead, Like a drowned girl's hair in the ropy ooze: And the jack-o'-lantern light that led, Flickered the fox-fire trees o'erhead, And the owl-like things at airy cruise. II. Where was I last Friday night?— Within the forest of dark dreams Following a form of shadowy white With my own wild face it seems. Did a raven's wing just flap my hair? Or a web-winged bat brush by my face? Or the hand of— something I did not dare Look round to see in that obscene place? Where the boughs, with leaves a-devil's-dance, And the thorn-tree bush, where the wind made moan, Had more than a strange significance Of life and of evil not their own. III. Where was I last Friday night?— Within the forest of dark dreams Seeing the mists rise left and right, Like the leathery fog that heaves and steams From the rolling horror of Hell's red streams. While the wind, that tossed in the tattered tree, And danced alone with the last mad leaf ... Or was it the wind?... kept whispering me— "Now bury it here with its own black grief, And its eyes of fire you can not brave!"— And in the darkness I seemed to see My own self digging my soul a grave. At the moon's down-going, let it be On the quarry bill with its one gnarled tree.... The red-rock road of the underbrush, Where the woman came through the summer hush. The sumach high, and the elder thick, Where we found the stone and the ragged stick. The trampled road of the thicket, full Of foot-prints down to the quarry pool. The rocks that ooze with the hue of lead, Where we found her lying stark and dead. The scraggy wood; the negro hut, With its doors and windows locked and shut. A secret signal; a foot's rough tramp; A knock at the door; a lifted lamp. An oath; a scuffle; a ring of masks; A voice that answers a voice that asks. A group of shadows; the moon's red fleck; A running noose and a man's bared neck. A word, a curse, and a shape that swings; The lonely night and a bat's black wings.... At the moon's down-going, let it be On the quarry hill with its one gnarled tree. We have sent him seeds of the melon's core, And nailed a warning upon his door; By the Ku Klux laws we can do no more.

Down in the hollow, 'mid crib and stack, The roof of his low-porched house looms black; Not a line of light at the doorsill's crack. Yet arm and mount! and mask and ride! The hounds can sense though the fox may hide! And for a word too much men oft have died. The clouds blow heavy towards the moon. The edge of the storm will reach it soon. The killdee cries and the lonesome loon. The clouds shall flush with a wilder glare Than the lightning makes with its angled flare, When the Ku Klux verdict is given there. In the pause of the thunder rolling low, A rifle's answer—who shall know From the wind's fierce burl and the rain's blackblow? Only the signature written grim At the end of the message brought to him— A hempen rope and a twisted limb. So arm and mount! and mask and ride! The hounds can sense though the fox may hide! And for a word too much men oft have died. I shall not soon forget her and her eyes, The haunts of hate, where suffering seemed to write Its own dark name, whose syllables are sighs, In strange and starless night. I shall not soon forget her and her face, So quiet, yet uneasy as a dream, That stands on tip-toe in a haunted place And listens for a scream. She made me feel as one, alone, may feel In some grand ghostly house of olden time, The presence of a treasure, walls conceal, The secret of a crime. II. With lambent faces, mimicking the moon, The water lilies lie; Dotting the darkness of the long lagoon Like some black sky. A face, the whiteness of a water-flower, And pollent-golden hair, In shadow half, half in the moonbeams' glower, Lifts slowly there. A young girl's face, death makes cold marble of, Turned to the moon and me, Sad with the pathos of unspeakable love, Floating to sea. III. One listening bent, in dread of something coming, He can not see nor balk— A phantom脚步, in the ghostly gloaming, That haunts a terraced walk. Long has he given his whole heart's hard endeavor Unto the work begun, Still hoping love would watch it grow and ever Turn kindly eyes thereon. Now in his life he feels there nears an hour, Inevitable, alas! When in the darkness he shall cringe and cower, And see his dead self pass.. Though red my blood hath left its trail For five far miles, I shall not fail, As God in Heaven wills!— The way was long through that black land. With sword on hip and horn in hand, At last before thy walls I stand, O Lady of the Hills! No seneschal shall put to scorn The summons of my bugle-horn! No man-at-arms shall stay!— Yea! God hath helped my strength too far By bandit-caverned wood and scar To give it pause now, or to bar My all-avenging way. This hope still gives my body strength— To kiss her eyes and lips at length Where all her kin can see; Then 'mid her towers of crime and gloom, Sin-haunted like the Halls of Doom, To smite her dead in that wild room Red-lit with revelry. Madly I rode; nor once did slack. Before my face the world rolled, black With nightmare wind and rain. Witch-lights mocked at me on the fen; And through the forest followed then Gaunt eyes of wolves; and ghosts of men Moaned by me on the plain. Still on I rode. My way was clear From that wild time when,

spear to spear, Deep in the wind-torn wood, I met him!... Dead he lies beneath Their trysting oak. I clenched my teeth And rode. My wound scarce let me breathe, That filled my eyes with blood. And here I am. The blood may blind My eyesight now ... yet I shall find Her by some inner eye! For God—He hath this deed in care!— Yea! I shall kiss again her hair, And tell her of her leman there, Then smite her dead—and die. At moonset when ghost speaks with ghost, And spirits meet where once they sinned, Between the bournes of found and lost, My soul met her soul on the wind, My late-lost Evalind. I kissed her mouth. Her face was wild. Two burning shadows were her eyes, Wherfrom the maiden love, that smiled A heartbreak smile of severed ties, Gazed with a wan surprise. Then suddenly I seemed to see No more her shape where beauty bloomed ... My own sad self gazed up at me— My sorrow, that had so assumed The form of her entombed. Nor time nor all his minions Of sorrow or of pain, Shall dash with vulture pinions The cup she fills again Within the dream-dominions Of life where she doth reign. Clothed on with bright desire And hope that makes her strong, With limbs of frost and fire, She sits above all wrong, Her heart, a living lyre, Her love, its only song. And in the waking pauses Of weariness and care, And when the dark hour draws his Black weapon of despair, Above effects and causes We hear its music there. The longings life hath near it Of love we yearn to see; The dreams it doth inherit Of immortality; Are callings of her spirit To something yet to be. O day, so sicklied o'er with night! O dreadful fruit of fallen dusk!— A Circe orange, golden-bright, With horror 'neath its husk. And I, who gave the promise heed That made life's tempting surface fair, Have I not eaten to the seed Its ashes of despair! O silence of the drifted grass! And immemorial eloquence Of stars and winds and waves that pass! And God's indifference! Leave me alone with sleep that knows Not any thing that life may keep— Not e'en the pulse that comes and goes In germs that climb and creep. Or if an aspiration pale Must quicken there— oh, let the spot Grow weeds! that dost may so prevail, Where spirit once could not! PAUSE. So sick of dreams! the dreams, that stain The aisle, along which life must pass, With hues of mystic colored glass, That fills the windows of the brain. So sick of thoughts! the thoughts, that carve The house of days with arabesques And gargoyles, where the mind grotesques In masks of hope and faith who starve. Here lay thy over weary head Upon my bosom! Do not weep!— "He giveth His beloved sleep."— Heart of my heart, be comforted.. We went by ways of bygone days, Up mountain heights of story, Where lost in vague, historic haze, Tradition, crowned with battle-bays, Sat 'mid her ruins hoary. Where wing to wing the eagles cling And torrents have their sources, War rose with bugle voice to sing Of wild spear thrust, and broadsword swing, And rush of men and horses. Then deep below, where orchards show A home here, here a steeple, We heard a simple shepherd go, Singing, beneath the afterglow, A love-song of the people. As in the trees the song did cease, With matron eyes and holy Peace,

from the cornlands of increase. And rose-beds of love's victories, Spake, smiling, of the lowly.. Wide in the west, a lake Of flame that seems to shake As if the Midgard snake Deep down did breathe: An isle of purple glow, Where rosy rivers flow Down peaks of cloudy snow With fire beneath. And there the Tower-of-Night, With windows all a-light, Frowns on a burning height; Wherein she sleeps,— Young through the years of doom,— Veiled with her hair's gold gloom, The pale Valkyrie whom Enchantment keeps. The misty rain makes dim my face, The night's black cloak is o'er me; I tread the dripping cypress-place, A flickering light before me. Out of the death of leaves that rot And ooze and weedy water, My form was breathed to haunt this spot, Death's immaterial daughter. The owl that whoops upon the yew, The snake that lairs within it, Have seen my wild face flashing blue For one fantastic minute. But should you follow where my eyes Like some pale lamp decoy you, Beware! lest suddenly I rise With love that shall destroy you. O daughter of our Southern sun, Sweet sister of each flower, Dost dream in terraced Avalon A shadow-haunted hour? Or stand with Guinevere upon Some ivied Camelot tower? Or in the wind dost breathe the musk That blows Tintagel's sea on? Or 'mid the lists by castled Usk Hear some wild tourney's paeon? Or 'neath the Merlin moons of dusk Dost muse in old Cærleon? Or now of Launcelot, and then Of Arthur, 'mid the roses, Dost speak with wily Vivien? Or where the shade reposes, Dost walk with stately armored men In marble-fountained closes? So speak the dreams within thy gaze. The dreams thy spirit cages, Would that Romance—which on thee lays The spell of bygone ages— Held me! a memory of those days, A portion of its pages! We have no castles, We have no vassals, We have no riches, no gems and no gold; Nothing to ponder, Nothing to squander— Let us go wander As minstrels of old. You with your lute, love, I with my flute, love, Let us make music by mountain and sea; You with your glances, I with my dances, Singing romances Of old chivalry. "Derry down derry! Good folk, be merry! Hither, and hearken where happiness is!— Never go borrow Care of to-morrow, Never go sorrow While life hath a kiss." Let the day gladden Or the night sadden, We will be merry in sunshine or snow; You with your rhyme, love, I with my chime, love, We will make time, love, Dance as we go. Nothing is ours, Only the flowers, Meadows, and stars, and the heavens above; Nothing to lie for, Nothing to sigh for, Nothing to die for While still we have love. VI. "Derry down derry! Good folk, be merry! Hither, and hearken a word that is sooth:— Care ye not any, If ye have many Or not a penny, If still ye have youth!" When grave the twilight settles o'er my roof, And from the haggard oaks unto my door The rain comes, wild as one who rides before His enemies that follow, hoof to hoof; And in each window's gusty curtain-woof The rain-wind sighs, like one who mutters o'er Some tale of love and crime; and, on the floor, The sunset spreads red stains as bloody proof; From hall to hall and stealthy stair to stair, Through all the house, a dread that drags me toward The ancient dusk of that avoided room, Wherein she sits with ghostly golden hair,

And eyes that gaze beyond her soul's sad doom, Bending above an unreal harpsichord. Low belts of rushes ragged with the blast; Lagoons of marsh reddening with the west; And o'er the marsh the water-fowl's unrest While daylight dwindleth and the dusk falls fast. Set in sad walls, all mossy with the past, An old stone gateway with a crumbling crest; A garden where death drowses manifest; And in gaunt yews the shadowy house at last. Here, like some unseen spirit, silence talks With echo and the wind in each gray room Where melancholy slumbers with the rain: Or, like some gentle ghost, the moonlight walks In the dim garden, which her smile makes bloom With all the old-time loveliness again. Squat-nosed and broad, of big and pompous port; A tavern visage, apoplexy haunts, All pimple-puffed; the Falstaff-like resort Of fat debauchery, whose veined cheek flaunts A flabby purple: rusty-spurred he stands In rakehell boots and belt, and hanger that Claps when, with greasy gauntlets on his hands, He swaggers past in cloak and slouch-plumed hat. Aggression marches armies in his words; And in his oaths great deeds ride cap-a-pie; His looks, his gestures breathe the breath of swords; And in his carriage camp all wars to be: With him of battles there shall be no lack While buxom wenches are and stoops of sack. She gropes and hobbies, where the dropsied rocks Are hairy with the lichens and the twist Of knotted wolf's-bane, mumbling in the mist, Hawk-nosed and wrinkle-eyed with scrawny locks. At her bent back the sick-faced moonlight mocks, Like some lewd evil whom the Fiend hath kissed; Thrice at her feet the slipping serpent hissed, And thrice the owl called to the forest fox.— What sabbath brew dost now intend? What root Dost seek for, seal for what satanic spell Of incantations and demoniac fire? From thy rude hut, hill-huddled in the brier, What dark familiar points thy sure pursuit, With burning eyes, gaunt with the glow of Hell? Oaks and a water. By the water—eyes, ice-green and steadfast as cold stars; and hair Yellow as eyes deep in a she-wolf's lair; And limbs, like darkness that the lightning dyes. The humped oaks stand black under iron skies; The dry wind whirls the dead leaves everywhere; Wild on the water falls a vulture glare Of moon, and wild the circling raven flies. Again the power of this thing hath laid Illusion on him: and he seems to hear A sweet voice calling him beyond his gates To longed-for love; he comes; each forest glade Seems reaching out white arms to draw him near— Nearer and nearer to the death that waits. OPIUM. On reading De Quincey's "Confessions of an Opium Eater." I seemed to stand before a temple walled From shadows and night's unrealities; Filled with dark music of dead memories, And voices, lost in darkness, aye that called. I entered. And, beneath the dome's high-halled Immensity, one forced me to my knees Before a blackness—throned 'mid semblances And spectres—crowned with flames of emerald. Then, lo! two shapes that thundered at mine ears The names of Horror and Oblivion, Priests of this god,—and bade me die and dream. Then, in the heart of hell, a thousand years Meseemed I lay—dead; while the iron stream Of Time beat out the seconds, one by one. These have a life that hath no part in death; These circumscribe the soul and make it strong; Between the breathing of a dream and song, Building a world of beauty in a breath.