

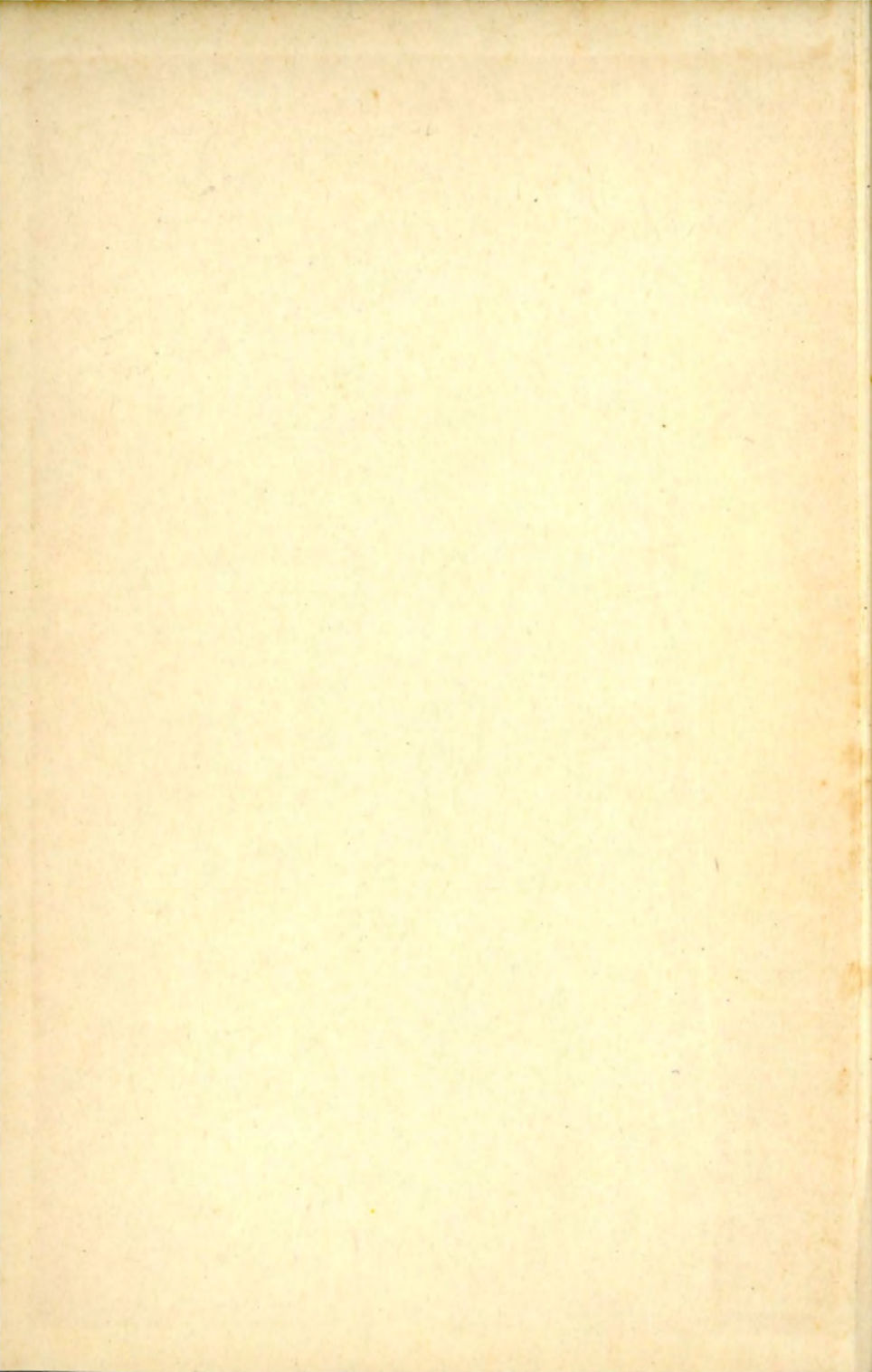
NO BEAUTY IN BATTLE

A book of poems



by

BARBARA YOUNG



For

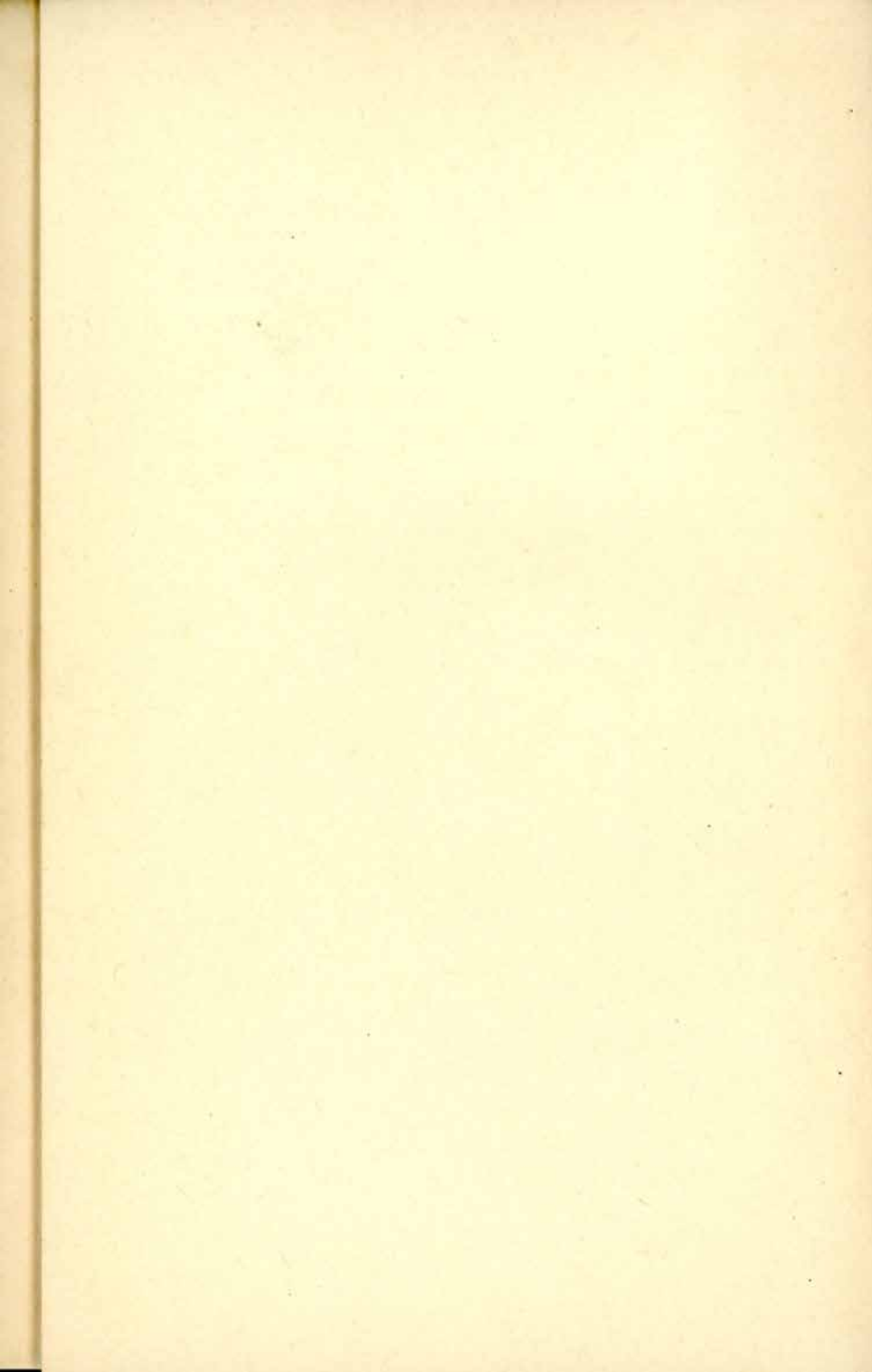
Warren M. Meller

with gratitude for such
lines of fine feeling
and essential poetry
as these:

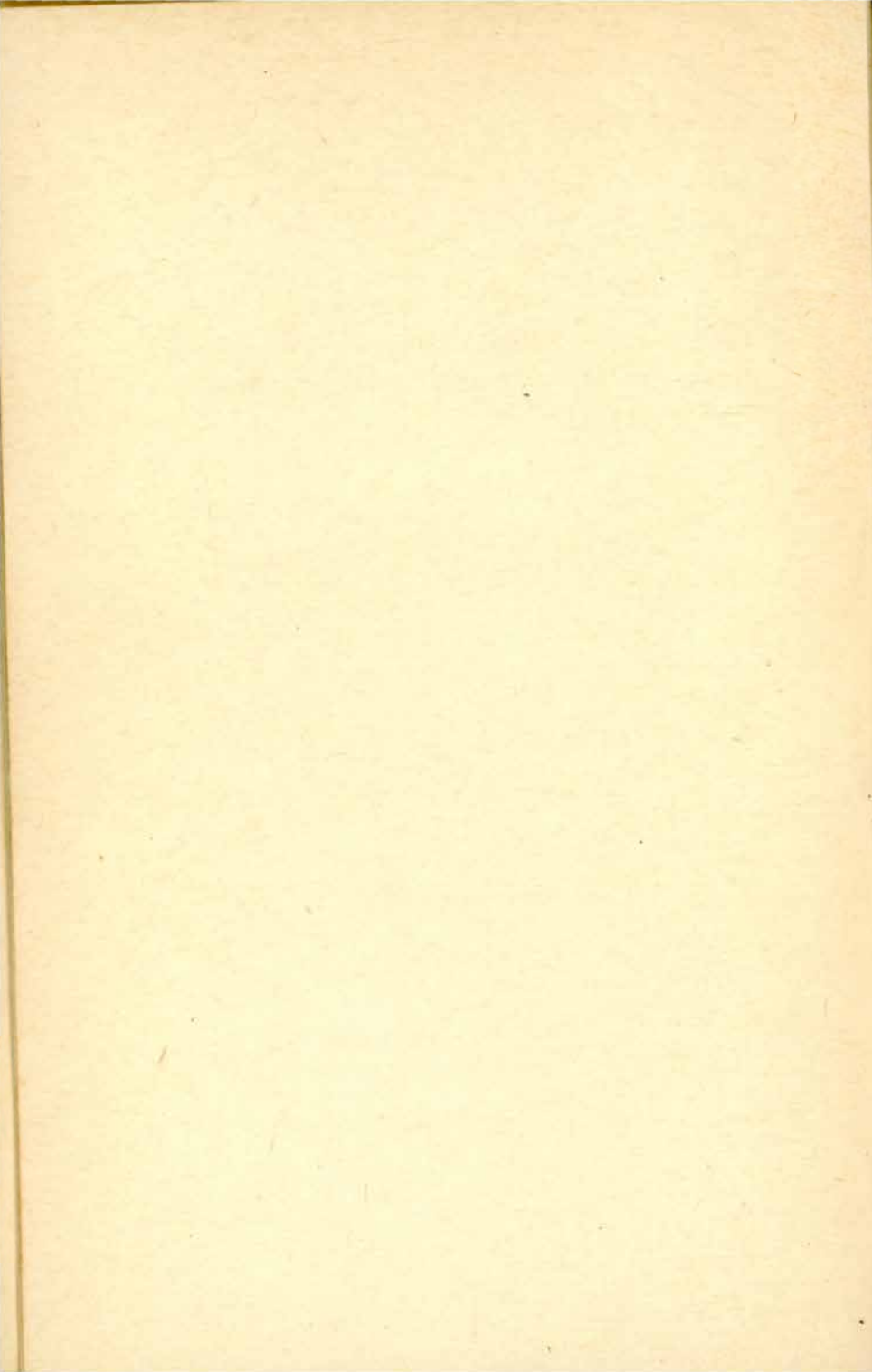
"Once more to have the feel of cool
smooth grass
Beneath my body: the keen con-
sciousness
that I am part and parcel
of it — all —"

With sincere regard —

Barbara Lundy
December — 1937



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AUTHOR. THIS IS NO. 7



NO BEAUTY IN BATTLE



OLD MOTHER

NO BEAUTY IN BATTLE

A Book of Poems

BY

BARBARA YOUNG

Illustrations by KAHLIL GIBRAN

NEW YORK

THE PAEBAR COMPANY, Inc.

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1937

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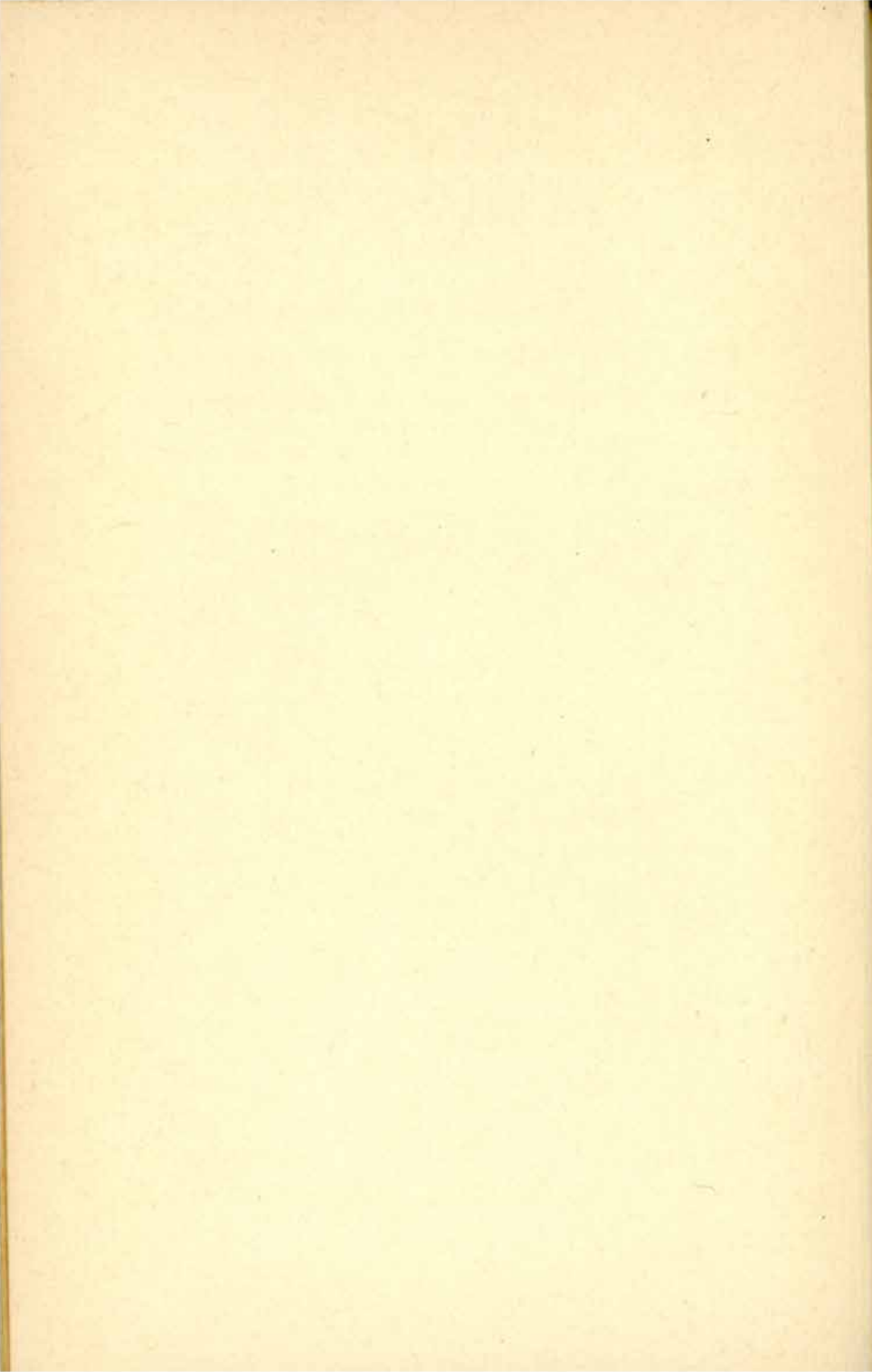
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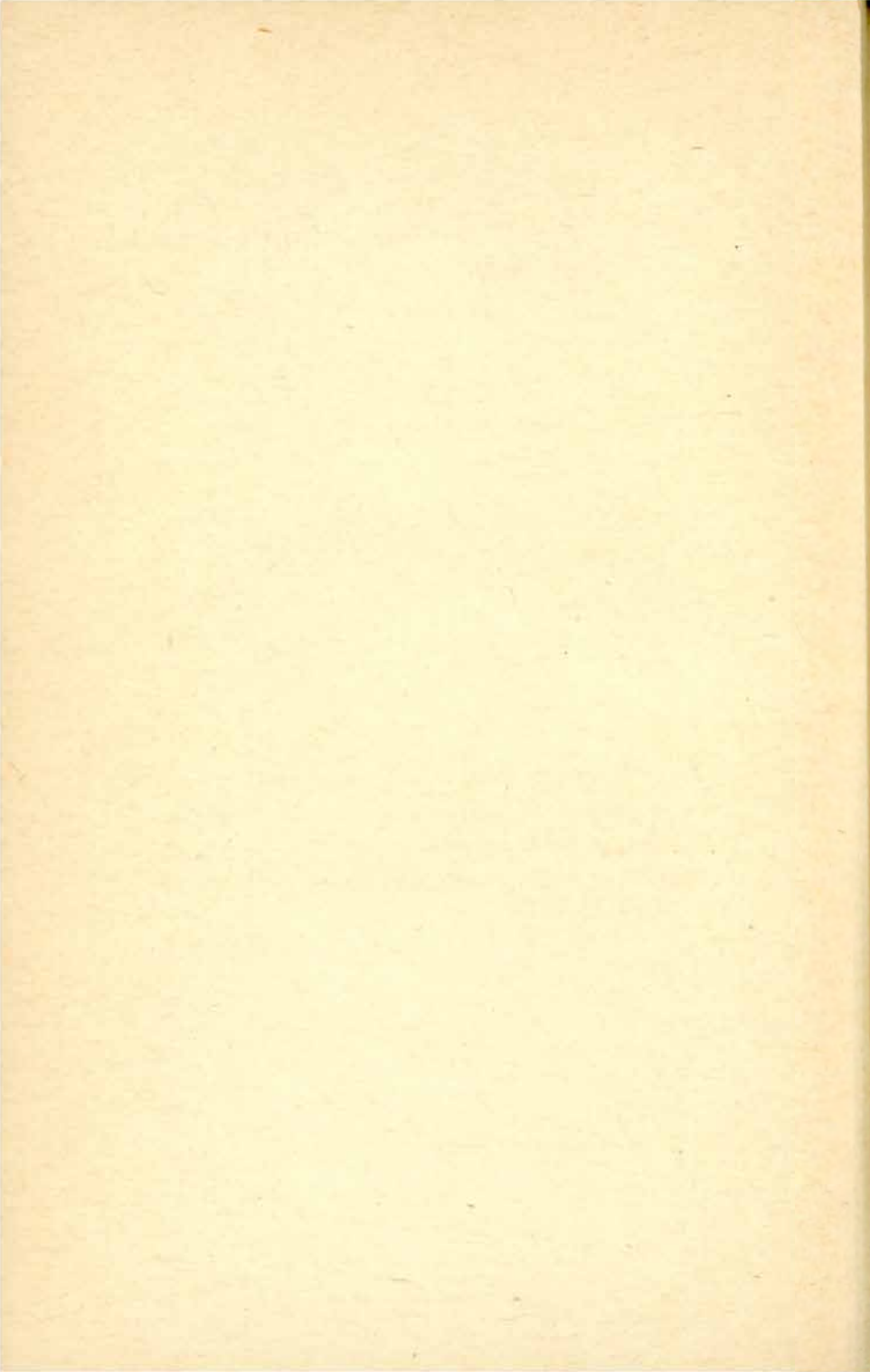
MANY of the poems in this book appeared originally in *The New York Times*; "Remedy," was published in *Delineator*; and "Eaglet" first saw publication in *Pictorial Review*.



To
Anne Sherman Hoyt

*"Your friend is your needs answered.
He is your field which you sow with love
And reap with thanksgiving.
And he is your board and your fireside."*

Kahlil Gibran



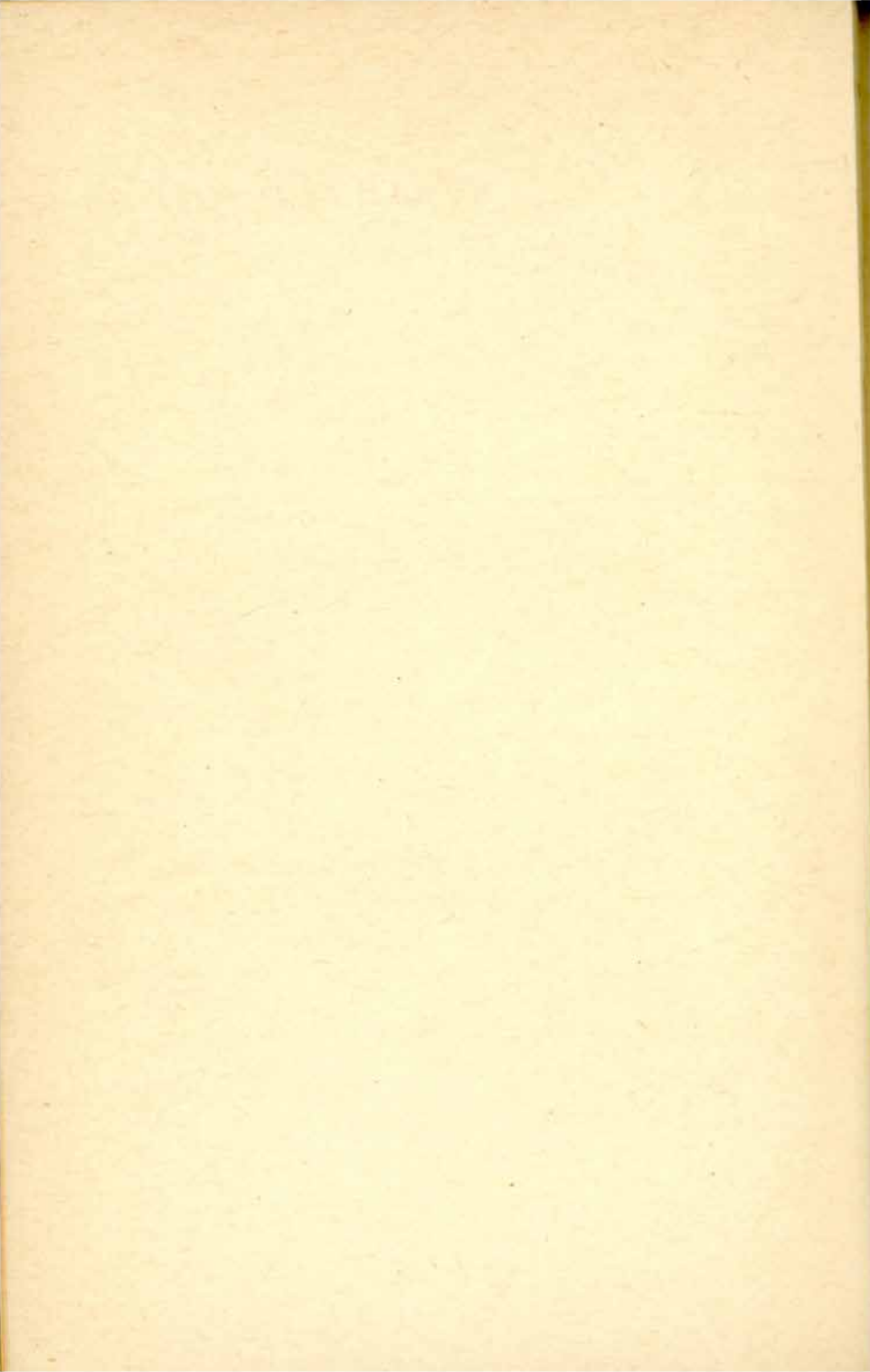
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NO BEAUTY IN BATTLE



NO BEAUTY IN BATTLE

OLD MOTHER

I am so weary of war and the rumors of war.
I have lived a long, long life. I have heard, I
have seen.

The rattle and rap of drums has troubled my
sleep.

I have waked in the dead of night to a vision of
dread,

The black sky lurid with hate and raucous
with wrath,

And the harsh shrill crying of vultures splitting
my brain.

There is left no glory in war, no beauty in battle.
Lances, and banners, and steeds, the semblance
of honor—

These are gone, are dead as a stone. And the
madmen stride

Shodden with stench and with steel, and lusting
for blood.

I am tired of all these things. My sons are dead.
My daughters are lone and silent, hollow-eyed.
Their children wonder and wait. Are they
hopeful still?

What is their hope, their dream? They do not
tell.

They wander in doubtful shoes. Their deep
young eyes

Look into mine with an anguish thinly veiled;
With strange unyouthful courage, bitter and
grim.

I am tired of all these things. I am gray
and old.

I have ploughed and planted and reaped.
My field is bare.

And what now, of theirs? Tomorrow I shall
be gone.

Tomorrow my children's children shall plough
and plant.

The Earth is so fair. The tall trees lift on
the roads.

The grasses comfort the hills, and the rivers
flow

Silver and green in the sun and under the moon;
There is no change here. The seasons follow and
flourish;

The skies give down their beatitude of rain—
Steady and constant all these things remain.
Only the heart of man has shrivelled and failed.

The Earth is waiting for peace. The Earth
knows well

Why she must wait so long, but she does not say.
I who am old have pondered late and soon.
I have seen cities rise and dim the day;
With their insolent glare I have seen them
barrage the stars,
And banish the sweet soft darkness far and high.
I have heard, and wept, how the silence of the
night

Is shivered into a thousand broken bits;
And with it the earned repose of weary men,
And mothers and their babes. And with it too
All hope of hearing in their secret souls
What words the spaces speak and the stars sing.

And still the Earth is fair, the Earth is fair!
Beauty is standing patient at the door;
Denied, rejected, crucified again,
Again and yet again, and crowned with scorn.
We have strayed off like lost and stupid sheep
Lacking a shepherd. We are old and done.

But see, awake, alive upon the morning
Of this distraught, confused, abundant day,
A holy mighty host, the intrepid young!
Out of their mouths touched with a burning coal
The Word shall surely come.

O little children,
I am so tired of war and the wreckage of war.
I have lived a long, full life. I have followed
the road.
I have seen hatred like a holocaust
Ravish the gracious earth. My eyes have
beheld
Viper and vulture robbing the nest and the fold.
And now from the summit of years I look in
your hearts.
They are ready and waiting for wondrous and
beautiful things.
Your hope is not shortened and spent. You
laugh and you go
Seeking the path we have lost.

And so I charge you,
I, an old mother, gray and spent with years,
Quit ye like chiefs, like heralds of the peace.
O children, O my children, you alone
Cup in your curving undefeated hands
The water of this healing and this hope.

Yours is the voice to cry us Up, and On!
The Earth, it is your Earth, and oh how fair!
How green and fragrant when the apples blow
Their buds in April, and their nurtured fruits
In gray November. Suffer not again
The curse, the plague, the demon we have fled
To fetter your free hands. It is your Earth,
And you are mighty, you are myriad.

Cry peace in a great voice around the world!
Cry peace, not havoc, and I swear my soul
That all the angels and the heavenly hosts,
And all sane men, and mothers, all who love
And are beloved, these will fortify
And make your purpose sure. It is your deed
To wrest the sword from the destroyer's hand,
To bind him, justly, without bitterness,
Yet with so firm a courage he may guess
The cords will surely hold.

And you, go on,
Into the splendor of your rising day.
We who are old find wisdom in your eyes.
Your feet will never blunder as our feet.

You will not speak the foolishness and pride
That we have spoken. You in your good time
Inherit this sweet Earth. Bring it to fruit
Of honor, labor, laughter, these with peace.

I shall not see such wonders. I am old.
My sons are dead. My daughter's eyes are dark
Remembering dark things. But this I know:
The Earth is still as fair as ever it was.
Surely as babes are born and young men woo
The peace shall come.

And I shall lie at rest
In the good soil, and listen to your feet,
My children's children running forth and back
Upon the roads of peace.

BIRTHRIGHT

A man has bought these acres. A man has come
With a fat purse, and laid his money down
Taking away our birthright in his pocket.
He is a kindly man. We cannot blame him
That we have lost our sole inheritance.
And yet not lost—for gold can never buy
In truth, the grass and clover that our feet
Have pressed since childhood.

He is city-bred;
He thinks all treasure can be bought and sold.
Now, with the folded parchment in his wallet,
He takes the bean-rows and the standing corn
That we have sown, thinking to make them his.
But they are seeded in our very soul,
And leaf and stalk and reaping shall be ours.

This morning early, we climbed up the hill
Gathering red, ripe berries; saying, "Well—
Tomorrow we shall gather these no more.
The farm is sold, and we are homeless waifs
Faring into a world we do not know,
A world we never loved nor coveted."

We stood a moment by the hemlock tree
And listened to the beating of its heart,
And our heart broke, a little; but we said,
"What of it, if we leave you?" For we knew
Its great dark roots struck deep in the good soil
Of all our life and love, and no brief storm,
No small mischance, no show of bartering
Might separate between us.

Late tonight

When the moon's up, and all the lovely birds
Sleep in the little houses we have built,
And in the sanctuary of the trees,
We shall go forth and leave them, every one;
While the farm drowns in the summer dark
And may not mark our going, we shall go.
No matter. Wheresoever we abide
Upon the Earth's broad breast, and though it be
That towns shall shut us in, and our sad feet
Press only pave hereafter, there is naught
Can purge the blood of grass-blade and brown
soil,
And the old ecstasy of grain and corn
Ripening in the sun. For we have come
The blessed pilgrimage of plough and seed,
And on the barren ways of our tomorrow
Long rich fore-shadows of the harvest lie.

UPON THE LITTLE STREETS

Now, I will write a mystery to you.
I, who am wilderness, infinity.
I am come back to walk in city streets!
My feet turn down the little ways of men.

I, who am four wide variable winds—
I, who am fog in the morning,
Mist in the evening—
I, who am drifting cloud,
And shadow of stars—
I, who am seas, and waves, and the depths of
 them—
I, who am ageless, deathless—am come down,
Stepping upon the mortal paths of time.
I am come back to walk in city ways,
Upon the little streets of little men!

I am green healing of the meadow grass.
I am the silence of the trees—
The silence of leaves.
I am not the trees—
I am not the quivering leaves—
I am nothing that is rooted fast in the earth!
I am the breath, the burden and the stillness—
I am the force, the beauty, and the mystery
Of these free, variant, unmindful things!
And here I am, upon the little streets!

And here I am. And here go up and down,
Speaking a trim and careful city speech,
Wearing a trim and careful city garb,
Paying small coins for small convenient food,
For a neat lodging and a narrow bed—
And keeping passionate counsel, all the while,
With my white stars of promise in the sky!

I wait.

You ask what I am waiting for!
If I should tell you, you would only say,
This one speaks folly,
Thinking we are fools!

I wait for what has long been written down,
Since ever paths of destiny were set.
It will not fail me—
Will not pass me by!
Do you not see it—there upon the sky?

Your eyes are holden. How then shall you see?
And I am speaking folly, unto fools.

I, who am wilderness, infinity—
Come turning down the corner of the street
Into the ways of men, a little while.

REMEDY

Have you an ache in your side
Where a heart used to be?
Sandal your feet, oh quickly
And seek you a tree.
Seek you an oak tree swiftly,
And hark in its shade.
Bide there and wait, and be still.
If a sound be made
In the glossy darks of the leaves,
If a bright wind blows—
(A sound will be made,
O ay, for the oak tree knows;
And surely a wind will move
In the tremulous boughs)
It is love, it is breathless love,
It is God in his house.

Have you an ache where a heart
Used to be, in your side?
Seek you a green tree,
Be still there, and wait, and abide.

THE SWEEPER

Who sweeps gray stones in the dim gray
morning?

The sound of the sweeping comes up to my
window . . .

Oh, woman, chained to a broom forever—
'Throw it down, I say, and let the dust gather!
The soft gray dust on the hard gray pavement.

None of the passers-by will remember.
You will be worn and bitter with sweeping—
And you might have watched how the slow sun
rises,

Or, straight and white and perfect in slumber,
Heard the Dawn with the Stars conferring—
Oh, I have heard them. . . . heard them
sleeping.

But you choose to rise, and open your door,
And sweep the stones. . . . In an hour, a moment,
Dust of the street and dust of the air
Will come again and lie thickly together.
And stilly wait for tomorrow's sweeping.

I shall hear you, and I shall be sorry.
Knowing your years are eaten with labor—
Knowing, too, there will come a morning
When the marks of my feet shall trouble your
pavement.

I shall be going before you have swept it.

I have a Staff of Journeys . . . and Silence.
I have Sandals of Upward Yearning.
I have a Cloak all stitched together
With Bright Threads saved from a Skylark's
singing!
All these things for my Pilgrim going!

Early . . . early—when you come sweeping,
I shall have turned a breathless Corner.
I shall come to the Hills at sundown.
I shall lay me down in my Pilgrim garment—
Lay me down, with my Staff beside me.

Perhaps I shall say again, in my dreaming—
Who sweeps gray stones, in the dim gray
morning?

Not you . . . not you, with your broom and your
blindness.

Oh, it will be the winds I am hearing!
They will be out at their early sweeping!
They will sweep gray dust from my heart
forever.

OF TALKING

I am amazed,
I marvel in my heart
That men can talk so much
And say so little.
I would rather
Be a dumb stone upon a windy hill
Than one of these thin voices babbling
Its arid, dull, reiterated tale.

I would rather be
A dark root in the earth,
I would lie still
A thousand years and listen to the rain.
I would go down
And be an undiscovered grain of sand
On the sea-floor,
Rather than waste my breath in foolish words
That publish to the skies
My emptiness.

SILENCE IS BEST

Silence is often best. We talk and say nothing.
Babbling old unsavory tales and tidbits
In a bright hour, a meeting of friend with
friend,
Leaves a dark stain like tarnish spread over
silver.
Sit with me here awhile, and nothing be spoken.

Silence is best. When tongues are sharpened
with anger
Sheathe them like swords. Better to hold the
peace;
Better to turn and go, for words are like wheat;
Once they are scattered and sown, there's
harvest to reckon.

Silence is best when the heart is broken and
bitter;
Talk is a sting like salt in an open wound.
Naught is in passing words for the weary, the
lonely.
Silence is best, friend. Tarry, and nothing be
spoken.

SONNETS

I.

All the old Aprils thrust my heart tonight.
I hear them sobbing, singing down the hill.
I feel the gold blade of a daffodil
Run through me like a flame. I hear the slight
Impalpable slow roots invoke the sod
Of bygone fields. Young leaves, tall flowering
 grass
Are sudden in the valley. And I pass
Caressed and smitten of a willow rod.

The sharp blue shadows of a year of Spring
Are stabbing me tonight. The tawny moon,
The whiff of meadow-sweet, the splendid hush
Of hemlock bough and birds that dare not sing
Shatter me with their silence. Ah, and soon
I shall be utterly broken by a thrush.

II.

Pray do not trouble me with wondering
What tongues are spoken by the seraphim
Nor by the bright dead who have crossed the
rim

Of this horizon. I am pondering
The vast enigma of the dragon-fly,
The old green riddle of the willow-tree
That weeps above bright waters endlessly,
And what a cricket sings about, and why.

I am a penniless pilgrim and a fool.
Your coin of wisdom I have never earned.
The humming grass is heaven's word to me,
And the low song of turtles in a pool.
My small wit is serenely unconcerned
With the conundrum of eternity.

III.

When I shall hear you coming on the stair,
Step after step ascending to my door
Set wide for welcome, even as before;
When I shall turn and see you standing there,
The April sunlight lying on your hair;
When you come in and walk upon my floor,
Nothing will ever matter any more.
Let gray November fall. I shall not care.

Here is a fire, brave wine, and goodly bread,
And our sweet row of books along the wall;
And here is love awaiting love, that all
Our hungers may be fully comforted.
And I will loose the twilight of my hair
When I shall hear you coming up the stair.

IV.

How quiet is the dusk upon this hill!
The grasses nod, the vineyard is asleep;
The wind is fallen. Every leaf is still.
The children have run home. The laggard sheep
Are folded safely in. The rusty clover
Bends down its drowsy head. There is no sound
Save the late starling chanting vespers over,
Save the lone beetle burrowing the ground.

Long shadows play a voiceless silver tune
Where the stripped orchard like a ruined shrine
Holds its proud place beneath the frosty moon.
The stars pour light like sacramental wine;
And in the shepherd's hut below the hill
Candles of peace are shining on the sill.

V.

Last night an amber wind blew down the sky
And seven stars came in a golden crowd
To my dark sill; a bright bewildering cloud
Leaned to my window with a silver cry.
The hoary branches of the trees drew nigh
Amazedly to listen, and were proud,
And marvelled in their silence, and they bowed
With a hushed reverence as when kings pass by.

Last night new magic like a crystal thread
Ran through the frosty weavings of the moon.
The larks of God went winging through my
head—

Young April whispered lilacs, and a tune
Of sobbing laughter and of singing feet
Running to find me down the world's dark street.

VI.

Give me a staff like yours, and let me wear
A coarse rough garment, and go out with you
Upon the road, into the darkness too,
Into the tempest. And I shall not care
For weariness nor hunger nor the cold,
Nor cry for the soft comfort of a bed
That my slight body may be comforted.
Let us forget I am of woman mould,

And go as comrades to the road's far turning.
Then when we come to where a door stands
 wide,
And a hearth flames and candelight is burning,
We will go in; and soft and tender-eyed
I will braid down the strands of my dark hair,
And we will fold us in love's raiment there.

VII.

When this bright day shapes to a shadowy close,
This road to some lone crag of sudden flight
Wherefrom I shall take off into the night,
Dropping these five frail senses as the rose
Sheds her light petals on the rusty grass—
I shall be very curious and gay
Like a young child let out of school to play.
And without hindrance I shall turn and pass

Beyond the seven portals of the tombed,
And call without a voice, without a sound,
Above the dusty cavern, many-roomed,
Wherein the earth-worm pilgrim may be found
Resting an aeon from his body's care—
And you will answer on the breathless air!

TRUTH TELLER

I shall tell you the truth. I shall tell it simple
and plain.

Today it is Spring because you have come
today.

You, supple and lithe, as lean and as straight
as a tree

That stands on a hill full-taking the rain and
the sun,

Drinking the air like water, the wind like wine.

I heard you afar. I heard your step on the
road.

In my own four walls long-waiting, I said, O
Heart,

In an hour, in a moment he will step over the
sill

And it will be Spring, it will be April again.

It is true. It is true, as I said. Not the budding
bush

Nor the blossoming bough alone can conjure
my Spring,

No never, nor ever alone the thrilling young
grass,

Nor gardens, alone. But your flame-bright
daffodils here

On the sill making sunlight beside me; the lift
of your head,
The way you walk over my floor as you come,
as you go;
The silver and gold of your voice as you read
me fine words—
Let me tell you the truth! Let me tell it as
simple and plain
As a woman may speak from her heart, and
nothing withholding,
These have brought Spring to my heart, and
Spring to my world.

SKY ABOVE MANHATTAN

This tenderness of leaf and fern, and sky
Pierces the careful armor, the fine calm
My shaken heart has studied to put on.
Now I would wish to stand and cry my hurt,
To fling wild words about, to laugh, to weep
Because of this blue morning, this new day,
This marvel of bright wind, these tumbling
clouds

That seem so friendly near. My throat is taut
With songs it cannot sing about the sky.
What azure, and what silver, and what light
That is no color but a gleaming glory
Speeding my sight to a bewildering world
There is no word for, not any word at all.

When I am old and sit within four walls,
When this worn frame no more shall go and
come
In gardens under the sky; when these eyes dim
And weary with long watching near their dark,
I think I shall remember this nameless hour,
This sky above Manhattan and this crying,
This voiceless crying of my enchanted heart.

AGAINST ALL BITTER WIND

Little we know whither the way may lead
Or the road turn;
Little enough our eager eyes may read
Through the cool green of this sweet Summer
 wood
What paths the stars are marking for our feet.
Little our heart may guess
Whether the Autumn's answer will be *Yes*
To this beseeching;
Whether the portion time shall measure to our
 good
Be loneliness or loving.
So, let us whisper not of Winter weather,
And hearth-fires, and the sharing of close
 comfort,
Nor of another Spring in some blest valley
Away, afar. Oh, Lover, let us rather
Take now this wild young Summer's proffered
 grace;
Look in her face—
Her eyes—how full of heavenly surprise,
Of wistful wonder.

Summer is here, is now
Let love be free of fear.
Today the sun, tonight the wise full moon
Will shine and say,
"Tomorrow is a long long road away.
Oh, you so high of heart,
Gather the hour!"

Little enough we know what trails there be
Winding across our world. But this we keep—
This brave today, this treasure, this hour's sweet
Against all bitter wind, all lonely weather.

LIKE A BIRD OF GOD

The love, O the love of my friend is like the sun
Risen at morning; like bright wind blown in
the valley
Whipping and warming the trees and the blood
of my heart;
Like rain in the lonesome night, O singing and
calling,
Telling me, telling me tales as old as the world,
Tales as ancient and strange as the thoughts of
God.

O the love of my friend is God. It is God's
wing.
It is the song of the seven cherubim
Who stand before his face.
I am kept and covered
Like a bird of God in the nest
By the love of my friend.

NOR EVER A TRAP

Let not this new love bind nor burden you.
Let not these arms that would hold you against
the world
Fetter you down;
No, nor this eagerness for the comforting
Of your smallest word,
Weave so much as a silken thread
To keep your heart in leash.
Let it be never a net to stay your wings,
Nor ever a trap for your feet.
Let it be rather a wind, a wave, a wonderment—
A mystery, not to be held in check
By walls and words.
I will that you go free of every chain,
Even this chain of love.

NIGHT RAIN

There shall be rain at night,
When the long darkness covers all the sky,
When the long roads grow quiet, and the sounds
Of the long day are fallen unto sleep.
There shall be rain at night—
And wind and stormy clouds,
And all those things
That bring refreshment to the weary heart.
The leaves will shine again.
The sad, brown leaves,
And the forgotten beauty of old grass
Woo the chill air with fragrance.

There will be exultation among the pines
And the dark cedars,
And a deep chanting in their Winter hearts;
New dreams will quicken in the hemlock tree
When the night rain descends.

I shall remember
Rain in green gardens; on a russet hill;
On a gray window;
And a night of love
Curtained with rain.

WORDS FOR A BROKEN TUNE

This song is made for you.
You will not know it.
We were so proud,
Walking the world together;
Speaking but little,
Strumming the silver strings,
Humming a tune or two—
It was April weather.

I turned my eyes from your face,
For a moment only.
Hand with hand we were going,
You, close beside me;
And then—like that—
You were gone, away, forever;
And I went along with April,
Lonely, lonely—
Bright birds sank in the sun,
But we never heard them;
White blooms fell from the bough,
But we did not see.
Somebody called our name—
What could we answer,
April and I—to you
In eternity?

SO MUCH TO REAP

So much there is to reap on the green Earth,
So wide a beauty and so deep a song;
Naught here of penury, nor any dearth
Of magic and of dreaming. Life is long,
And yet not long enough for the heart's grace;
For hearing wind in trees; watching the moon
Waxing and waning; finding in love's face
All ~~the~~ wistfulness and wonder.

Late and soon
I have gone over the road and understood.
I have run breathless down from city to sea,
From meadowland and marshland, through the
wood
Where darkling sounds and shadows tended me.

I have heard larks, and once, a nightingale!
In England, once. And hence I am persuaded
That beauty and rapt singing shall not fail,
Neither the grass and heather bloom lie faded
And fallen into dust.

Tonight that star
Will hang like a warm jewel above our tree,
And I shall hear one singing who is far;
And hear the murmur of the dividing sea;
And I shall know what I have known before,
The glory and the peace; and seek no more.

AFTER RAIN

Today the wonder of you shakes my heart;
The tranquil silence that we found and shared
Under the trees together, after rain;
The sounds like green leaf-ecstacies, the soft
And dreamy protests of awakened birds
There in the jewelled darkness over head;
The wonder of you—and your words—that said
“Here we find peace;” and then you spoke no
more

For a small sweet eternity of bliss.

Today my heart is shaken with rich pain
Remembering the garden after rain.

EAGLET

To Theodore von Ziekursch

Too long, too long have I nested low in the
hedges,
And though I am overyoung,
With wings scarcely feathered,
I know, I know I am eagle!

I flock with blackbird and starling,
Silent.
I call not.
What if an eaglet should raise its cry
In the hedgerow?
What would the brown thrush do
And the mourning-dove?

I shall hold my peace a little,
A little longer,
Till the crag is clear in my sight,
And the power is strong in my wing;
Then, on a night of tempest and wild wind
calling,
I shall answer, and go!
And then—
And then they will know.

NOTHING BY CHANCE

No, not by chance
The pale moon-flower
Works its white magic
For an hour.

Not unadvised
The hermit thrush
Flings hidden rapture
From the brush.

Nor does it come
Without design
That love and pain
Are yours and mine.

Nor that I heard
Wayfaring feet
One day come walking
Down my street.

WATERS OF SLEEP

All night . . . all night
I have been away.
I heard—what I heard.
I say what I say.

My eyes were closed
That I might not see,
While the waters of sleep
Swept over me.

Deep, and silent,
And blest, I lay.
Oh, the sharp, sweet sting
Of the salt and spray!

The flail of billows
Beat me through.
I saw . . . and suffered—
I heard . . . and knew.

The voices surged
And shattered me—
Sing what you hear
And tell what you see.

Now—light, in the East.
And I am flung
High on the sand,
My song unsung.

Land-folk, sailor men,
Turn your eyes!
Leave me here
With the sea and skies!

For you are naught
Of blood or min.
You may not go
Where I have been.

I am flung back
Upon the sand . . .
How shall I wake?
How shall I stand?

How shall I go
Forever more
Down the pitiless
Peopled shore?

MIRACLE

How should I have known
That green day in Spring,
What seed was deeply sown,
What bird was fain to sing?

How should I have known
Who'd never seen your face,
That in your eyes alone
Would dawn my day of grace?

How should I have known
Whose dream was dull and broken,
That you were mine, my own,
And scarce a word spoken?

VISIONETTE

You'll call it dreaming,
But I don't know.
I walked last night
Through a blinding snow.
I went down a road
And over a hill,
And stood in the darkness,
Lost and still.

I stood in the darkness,
Waiting there.
The snow made a hood
For my tumbled hair.
The snow made a cloak
And covered me.
I looked for the path.
But I couldn't see.

I looked for the path
And some one said:
"Follow the new moon,
Straight ahead."
And there was my mother
Showing me,
The way was as plain,
As plain could be;

There was my mother!
She's been away;
It's nineteen years
This very day.
But there she was,
And she laughed and said,
"Why, child, there's snow
All over your head."

She brushed it off,
And the air grew clear,
The night grew warm,
And I could hear
A sound like singing
Out of the skies.
And I looked in my mother's
Sweet gray eyes.

I looked at my mother's
Strange sweet mouth;
And a soft wind blew
Right out of the south.
And then it was morning,
And then it was noon,
And we set our table,
Cup and spoon.

My mother baked us
A loaf of bread.
And I plucked buds
From a pansy bed.
You'll call it dreaming
But I don't know.
I think it really
Happened so.

THE SONG OF THE STRANGER

I have seen Spring again.
Last year when the leaves fell down
And a white wind blew in the sky
And the wild geese floated by,
Crying and calling,
And the river grew dark and still
And a great snow fell,
There was something I heard in my heart
Like the sound of a tolling bell.
Its voice was a voice that I knew.
It beat like the beating of wings.
I said, It is calling me hence.
For I am a stranger here,
My land is away and afar,
My shore is a golden shore
In the kingdom of Ambersand.

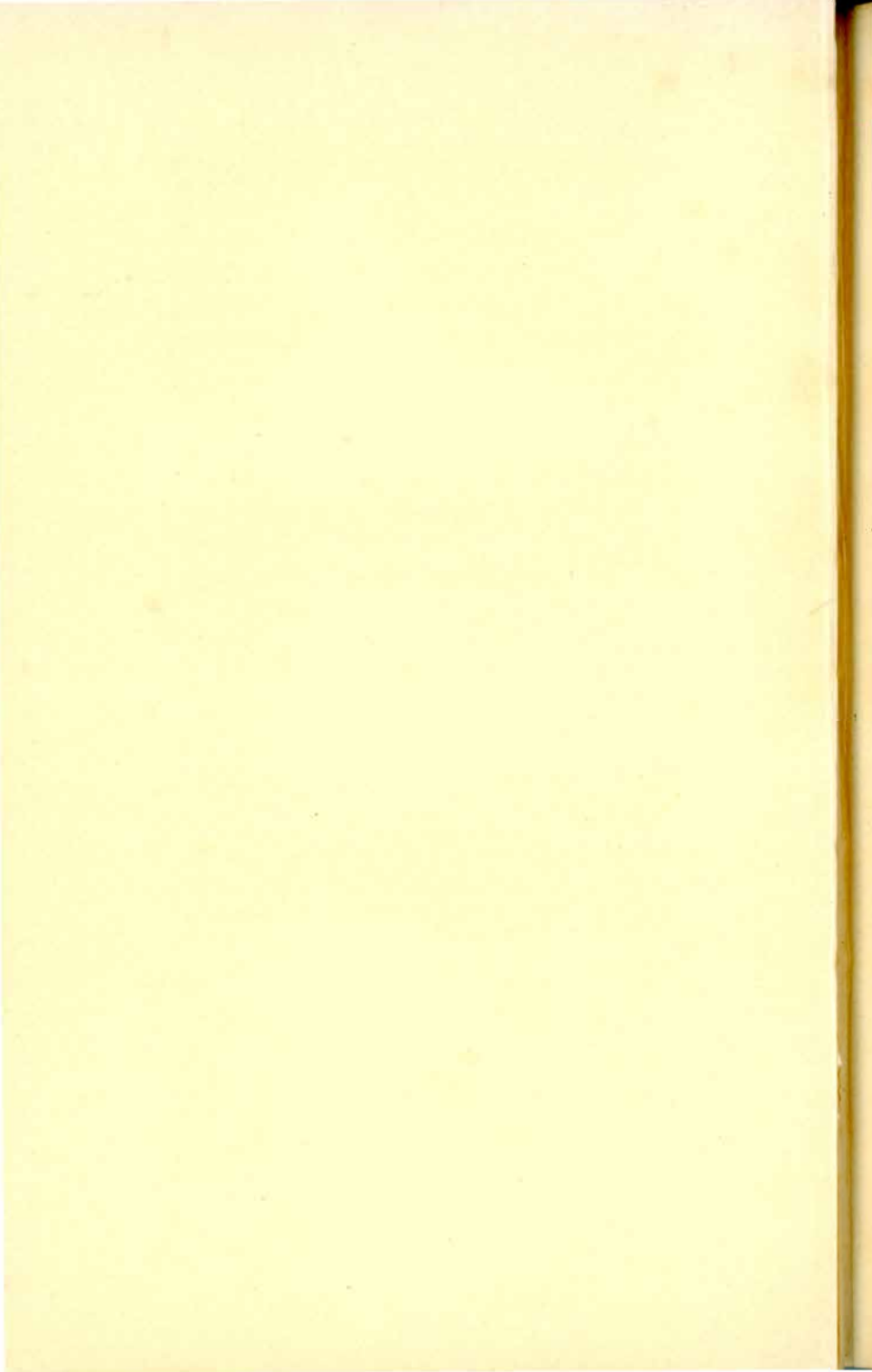
And I said, O, now I shall go.
But the bell trailed off in a fog,
And I lost the lingering sound
Like the beat of a wing.

And now it is Spring.
The willow is amber again.
The barberry's gathering gold
As much as its fingers will hold.

The grass and the hills
Are whispering daffodils.
The white clouds toss in the sky
And the swallows come home.
They are not strangers here,
They are friends with the eaves,
The chimneys are soft to their breast.
I never can rest
Where the roofs and the high walls are.

My land is away and afar.
But I cannot go in the Spring.
I must wait for the bells to call,
For the leaves and the snow to fall
And the wild white geese to fly.
And then I shall go
To the other side of the sky,
And my feet shall know
The welcoming golden strand
Of Ambersand.





FROM AN ANCIENT SCROLL

I am weary of man, and of the ways of man.
I am weary of the poverty of his soul,
And the embarrassment of his ignorance.
His vanity is like an empty shell
Deserted by its snail;
And his clever tongue is like a rapier
In the hand of a blind beggar.
His boasting savors of the scullery,
He measures out his loves, he counts his kindnesses
And sets their number down upon a page.
He is a trickster and a bargainer.
His laughter is a blunt arrow that shall not find
its mark.
His singing lies asleep in the corner of his
pocket.
I shall turn from him, and I shall return not
unto him
Nor unto his dwelling.
I shall find me an abiding place among the
hills.
I shall climb that crag and seek an eagle for
a mate.

I am weary of man. He is a butcher-bird.
He flies too low.
I would look down upon the summits of the
earth.
Too long have I endured the twittering of the
sparrow as a song.
And the gibbering of the magpie as music.
Give to me now the rending cry of eagles,
Or the great silence.
I will have nothing else.

THE UNFORGIVEN

You were a stranger
And I welcomed you.

I do not care that you have taken toll
Of singing and of laughter,
 These things were free gifts.

I do not care
That you have told an hundred smiling lies,
Nor that you came into my garden
Plucking the blossoms,
And walking under the green branches
Of my trees.
 The garden and the trees will understand.

I do not care for any of the hours
That I have wasted
Listening to your babble.
 We learn from fools.
I do not even care that you have passed
Beneath the lintel of my door,
And stepped across the threshold,
And sat beside my fire,
As though you were my friend.
 The fire consumes the chaff.

I care for this:
There is a little book
Wherein my name is written down
In letters of a strange old tongue,
And written by a hand
That will not write a lie,
Nor any word that is not born
Of beauty and of truth
 And you have taken this.

I can forgive your other stupid sins,
And say, Poor atom!
And forget them all.
This I shall hold against you
 All my days.

SEA WOMAN

Sea Woman, wrapped in the mist,
Tall gray Sea Woman,
Why have you come to my door?
There is mist in your eyes,
There is mist caught soft in your hair.
Why have you come
From the deep green caves of the sea
Looking for me?

Sea Woman, wrapped in the mist,
Have you watched me walking in sleep
On the shores of your sea?
Have you watched me, late and white,
A wanderer over the night?
Have you heard the deep-sea cry
That my heart keeps hidden away?

Sea Woman, wrapped in the mist,
Can you tell me why?
Do you know I am you, not I,
A sea woman lost from my home?
The white wind and the foam
Follow me in my dreams.
I fill my arms with the spray
And fold them over my heart,
My heart that is only a mist.

Sea Woman, wrapped in the mist,
Were you lonely, too,
With the soul of you lost and away,
And only the garment of gray,
The garment of blue soft mist
Left there to be you?

Sea Woman, wrapped in the mist,
Tall, gray Sea Woman,
I will be lost no more.
I wrap me around with your mist.
I am tall and gray
And my blown hair catches the spray.
There is nothing more to be said,
Nothing more to be sung.
This night, O wind and foam,
Your lost sea woman comes home.

THAT WE HAVE CHERISHED

Nothing is ever lost of loveliness we once have
known;

Nothing of splendor passes into the thick dark
of oblivion.

No gracious word, no hour of stark white beauty
Shall ever fall away into the measureless pit
Of unremembered things.

Evil shall fade and perish, and sin depart
Weeping and with reluctance, after a dreary
while;

Anger and scorn shall not inherit immortality,
Nor greed, nor envy; these, with all lusts for
gold,

And the preferment in the Earth's high places.
These shall go down and be no more forever-
more.

But tenderness and pity, and all memories
Of all sweet kindness, fair justice, and good
charity

That is without constraint; all merriment every-
where,

Laughter and pretty jesting, and all bright
song;

The looks in lovers' eyes, the clinging hold of
 small new fingers
And their warmth—time shall not take these
 things.
All beauty we have ever gathered and held
Is our own treasure still.
That we have cherished, eternity shall render
Untarnished to our hand.

CREDO

Let us do this for beauty's sake alone.
It is a deed that hath no usefulness;
It will not serve to purchase us a loaf,
Nor win preferment in the market-place,
Nor favor with the wise; it will not serve
For aught save this—to say, without a word,
Without a tune or any human sound:
Beauty hath never need for usefulness,
And being ageless and deathless she hath no
 cause
For any reasonableness at all.
So, we who do this thing shall do it thus
For beauty's sake alone.

BEAUTY

Some night as you lie unsleeping, unaware
That she is heavenly near, divinely close
To your half-open door,
She will be there.
She will knock gently
As she has knocked before,
And you unhearing, careless.

But some night soon
Your heart will heed.
You will turn your ear to hearken.
The Earth will be silver underneath the moon;
Perchance the shadow of a leaf shall darken
Her glory, nothing more. Wholly serene,
Waiting as she waited time on time
Upon your threshold, that you have not seen
Or known her presence;
With a soft sublime seraphic patience
She will knock again,
And call you with a breath, and wait, and
wait—
O turn and hear and heed her coming then
Before it is too late.

TO A STRIPPED TREE

You are not discontent that Winter comes
And a small space of quiet and of rest
From song and sunlight, growth and journeying.
Let me be like you, waiting for my Spring
With rugged joy in wind and beaten branches.
Like buried roots I would be dark and still,
And drink deep waters from the lavish earth,
Rich waters that keep record of the sun,
Of the wild tempests, and the swinging stars
In the blue heaven. Let me be like you
Casting my meagre shadow on the night
When the moon's up; and waiting without haste
For a new April, and a young bird's cry.

SCRIPTURE TO BEAUTY

(Inscribed to John Masefield before his appointment as Poet Laureate of England.)

I

Because he craved the wisdom of the road,
And the wild hill that underlay the sky;
Because he sought the field no man has mowed,
And the dark crag where none but eagles cry;
Because the rigid roof and wall and door
Stifled his heart and overthrew his breath,
Denied the thorny cup he thirsted for
And dealt him cakes as stale as musty death;
Because no man might bind him to a wage,
No woman tame him to a bed and board,
He turned from them and quit their tinselled
cage,
And the barred wicket where the seeds were
stored.

Well, old books tell how proud men, wistful-
eyed,
Have lived for Beauty, and for Beauty died.

II

I have desired Beauty all my days,
Deeming it higher wisdom to go nude
Of all the simpering pomps and panoplies;
Knowing the hyssop and the ancient rood
To be the seal of her celestial pence,
Her very name and sign. So, I have spent
This blood and brawn, the old inheritance,
This sight and breath, to follow where she went.

I have not cared because men shrug and smile
And lift the eye and say, "The fool is mad
To shadow Beauty mile on weary mile."
Lean with a passion they have never had,
I seek the sum of life and love and death—
A sword, a song, a breath of Beauty's breath.

III

Long have I waited for the sweet return
Of some fair thing these eyes shall never see,
Some dust and ashes from the timeless urn
To rise, take shape, and show a face to me.
Long have I listened to the motley tune
The world calls song, for one eluding note
Blown hither like a flute-cry from the moon,
Like the half-word from some immortal throat.

Long have I called, oh not with voice nor sound,
But this red blood that agitates my veins;
With this gray brain by which the Self is bound,
This pallid flesh that nests its brood of pains.
All without hope. Have we not always known
That Beauty's earthly bread is naught but
stone?

IV

Yet still I wait. I call and listen still,
Knowing the hoarse mad laughter of the world
Is but the grinding of a mortal mill,
The sound of cattle-corn, ear-husked and hurled
To shallow bins that cry a hollow sound
Like a lost curlew in a world of fog;
Knowing the feet that tease the temperate
ground
Dance to the baying of a winded dog.

And this I know: I shall go hence at last,
Whither I do not know, I do not care;
Only the earthly clamor will be past,
And Beauty's voice will thread the exultant air,
While this freed spirit like a deathless bird
Shall trail the eternal singing of her word.

V

Is there a god save whom the mind has formed
From its own desolate desire and need?
Is there a fire whereby the heart is warmed
Save the white flame that stirs the sleeping
seed?

And what is heaven pray, and what is hell
More than the quenching of an ancient thirst
Or the sweet cup denied? And who shall tell
What is the last man's end, and what the first?

These things are in the secret of the soul,
And no voice comes to answer. Only this,
Each man is sick with yearning for a goal,
And one man thinks to find it in a kiss,
And one in wine, and one in much fine gold;
All these serve Beauty when the truth is told.

VI

She is the unknown God. And those who dream
Their holy Father, Son and Comforter,
They do but see her image in a stream;
Every good pilgrim is her worshiper;
And every Christ whose willing blood flows
 red
Is her belovéd and her testament.
He is the husband of her stainless bed,
The son of her immaculate intent.

She is not moved by prayer of thine or mine
A constant power permitting constant change—
The blossom and the cluster on the vine;
The steady soul where roving passions range.
She is not ears nor eyes to hear or see,
She is the tongue that uttered you and me.

VII

How we belie her utterance. Soon and late
The crystal bowl is broken at the well.
We crouch like beggars at the city gate,
Nor heed the intoning of the temple bell.
Judas and Peter and the other ten
Have bartered and denied and run away.
O sad wild tale, again and yet again;
O shame of man's eternal passion-play.

But some fair day these ills shall have an end.
Serene, unhindered, beckoning afar,
Beauty will lift her gracious hand and lend
A race of saviours from a goodlier star.
And Earth shall listen with a single ear
To the lost word her heart has died to hear.

VIII

What help is there for all our blundering?
With mumbling feet we stammer up the hill;
We cloud the sun with witless pondering.
Our blood is sand and water is our will.
We gnaw dry roots and nibble deadly weeds,
And all the marrow in our steadfast bones
And all our flesh turns traitor to our needs;
Our sleep is stubble in a bed of stones.

Is there no help at all, no likelier dream
Than this mad terror and this voiceless crying?
Is man a shallop on a mouthless stream?
Is he a false dark word beyond denying?
O Beauty, stir among the ancient embers
For one red living fagot that remembers.

IX

Seek not the heaven those froward fools have
dreamed

Who wooed young Christ and wed Him to a
tree;

Not with blood ransom is our hope redeemed
Nor the path pointed to infinity.

And when I muse it seems a simple thing
To span a mere ten thousand leagues of space,
Emerging from the cage without a wing,
Abiding in the sky without a place.

For what is man, and what is man's estate
Save an old adage half-expressed before—

A blind bird turning from a wicket-gate,
The hidden latchet to a secret door?

This little foot of Earth we squat upon
Is Beauty's doorstep. We shall soon begone.

X

I shall not see her face nor touch her hand,
And no man's pen shall set her radiance down.
She is not caught with clever words that stand
In ruff and mask to humor king and clown.
Only the shadow of her shadow's light
Shall drift a moment to man's heavy bed,
And some rapt word upon the lonesome night
Shape a brief pillow for his restless head.

No man shall find her. He will spend his voice
In futile calling on her lovely name,
Breaking his spirit's wings from eager choice,
Feeding his heart like fagots to her flame.
Only the amber whisper of her hair
Brushing his eyes shall leave a glory there.

XI

So, through this moiling counterplot we crowd,
Blinded and bloody, drunken, weak with
 sweat,
Like bondsmen yoked with oxen who have
 ploughed
The fenceless field of hell, and plough it yet.
No word, no cry, no gesture of recoil.
Let the dark furrows flame upon the night.
The laborer is worthy of his toil;
Our black horizon shall espouse the light.

O Light, O Beauty, not because we pray,
Not for these bodies broken on the road,
But for the glory of a final day,
For the white splendor of a last abode,
Cleave us these wormy thongs that mock and
 mar,
Loose us to be the very gods we are!

I WILL GO NO LONGER

I will go no longer in shadow,
I will walk in the sun.
I will gird myself for a journey.
I will go, being done—
Done with the mimicking pageant
And the press of the mart;
Done, I tell you, with masking
The dreams in my heart.

I will go no longer in silence.
I will make me a tune.
I will put seven white stars in it,
Seven roses of noon.
I will gather me wild pomegranate—
I am done with the smart,
The sting of forever hushing
The songs in my heart.

I will go no longer in fetters.
I have made myself free.
I have waked, I have come to the borders
Of the fathomless sea.
I have waked, I have come to the fringes
Of the ultimate shore,
Free, for my dreaming, dreaming—
And my songs, evermore.

IDENTITY

O, it is not my Self that goes
Upon the common street by day!
Not one who looks upon me knows
What things my Self would say.

My Self is alien in this land
And craves a wingéd, wistful thing
Not one of all would understand
What songs my Self would sing.

But in a wood, upon a hill,
O there my Self goes far and free!
I sing and say whate'er I will—
And Voices answer me.
I call the winds about me there
And all the little leaves bend down
To weave a chaplet for my hair,
And plait it for a crown.

Because it is my Self that knows
How I am kin to root and tree,
And to the eager grass that grows
Beneath the feet of me.

And O, it is my Self can hear
The sea upon a distant bar—
The still tides running high and clear—
The laughing of a star!

But no one knows along the street;
Not one will ever care
What far hid ways shall bless my feet,
What hills my Self shall dare.

SONG FOR DEVON

As I rode up from Plymouth Town
A silver rain came shining down;
So bright it ran, so soft it fell,
It turned a tune, it wove a spell.
And oh, the rust-red Devon soil
Whereon my Grandsire spent his toil;
And oh, the hills of yellow gorse
Where through they gypsied, man and horse;
And oh, the tears that tinged the mist
With tints of gold and amethyst!

For I am but a simple fool,
And since I was a child at school
Have dreamed a splendid dream of Devon
That made of it a sort of heaven.
And I shall always wonder whether
It was the rain and sun together
Or the glad weeping of my eyes
That set a rainbow in the skies,
As I rode up from Plymouth Town
Through the bright rain that shimmered down.

I GO A-WALKING

Why, where have you been?
They said to me,
The road and the sky
And the poplar tree.

Oh, I've been there
In the house, I said,
Minding the children,
And making bread.

Sewing on buttons,
And drying tears;
I've been doing it now
For years and years.

But don't you remember?
They said to me,
The sky and the road
And the white birch tree.

Remember? Oh yes,
Oh yes, I said.
I shall still remember,
When I am dead.

To the last far day
Of eternity.
I shall never forget,
Oh, beechen tree.

And if you will wait,
I will come again,
When my lass is grown,
And my lads are men.

For while they are little
And need me so,
I cannot take
To the road, and go.

But I shall remember.
And some late day,
I shall look deep down
In their eyes and say,

The sky and the road
Are calling me;
And I have a tryst
With a hemlock tree.

They will go dancing
And never care.
And there will be silver
In my hair.

IF I WERE TALL

If I were tall
 As a tall brown tree,
And grew on a hill
 Where green things be,
I could look away
 And behold the sea!
If I were tall
 As a tall young tree.

If I were small
 As a note of song
That a bird's wild throat
 Flings clear and long,
I could heal your heart
 Of hurt and wrong,
If I were small
 As a thread of song.

If I were light
 As a wind-blown leaf,
Or a husk of grain
 From a gathered sheaf,
I could drift away
 From love and grief—
If I were light
 As a wind-tossed leaf.

CHANGELING

She was a stately lady,
And kept her in her place
Beside her lord and husband,
In broideries and lace.

She stepped with pretty hauteur
In pavan and quadrille.
(But once she skipped with urchins
At moonrise on the hill.)

She crooned her plaintive ditties
In verses prim and quaint;
Her lord and husband harkened
And blest her for a saint.

She was a gracious lady,
Serene to look upon.
(One night she plotted mischief
With troll and leprechawn.)

She kept the castle strictly—
The butlers and the maids
Went all in white o' mornings,
And wove her hair in braids.

She walked to church sedately
And bent her down and prayed.
(But some one saw her follow
Where gypsy folk had strayed.)

The day before last April
She buttoned on her shoon,
And off she went a-running,
All in the afternoon.

And where-at-all she ended,
Why, no one ever knew.
(But I could go and find her,
Because I'm gypsy too.)

COLLEEN

Oh, fine it is
 To watch the days
Go slipping down
 The city ways.
And fair it is
 To feast the eye
On city nights
 A-tripping by.

But oh, it's weary
 I can be
For rock and road
 And greenwood tree.
And oh, it's long
 I whisht and wait
For winds to call,
 And birds to mate.

And when I hear
 The tunes of Spring,
It's deaf I am
 To everything.
And when I see
 Her witching feet
It's done I am
 With shop and street.

For in her lovely
 Laughing eyes
I see the hills
 Of Paradise.
And where her skirts
 Have brushed the sod,
I find the little
 Flowers of God.

WAIT'S CAROL

Give ye good-den,
Sweet gentlemen,
 And comely ladies too.
Give ye good-den,
For once again
 The Lord Christ comes to you.

By moor and street
His holy feet
 Shall pass upon the way,
And give good-den
To beasts and men,
 For this is Christmas Day.

Ye gentle poor,
Set wide the door
 So He may enter in.
Bring cup and plate
With simple state,
 And let the feast begin.

And ye who hold
The purse of gold,
 Come out and spend and pray,
And give good-den
To begger men
 For that it's Christmas Day.

SHORE LEAVE

I've lain at dark
 In the rusty grass,
And woke at dawn
 In the purple clover.
I've shared the moon
 With a willing lass,
And gone the road
 When her love was over.

I've carried a heart
 As high as a cloud,
An eye as keen
 As a gull's sharp wing.
I've wooed with a chantey
 Brisk and loud,
And never a care
 For book or ring.

Last night I knocked
 At a low green door.
Now—all my ways
 Are lost and broken.
Who'd think a heart
 Could ache so sore
For one white hand
 And one word spoken?

IF I AM LAID

"If I am laid
By other dead,
With stones to mark
My feet and head,
I will not suffer it,"
She said.

"I will not rest,
I will not stay.
Upon the night
Of that first day,
I'll wake and push
The earth away.

"I'll rise and seek
A lonely place,
Where grass and roots
Will know my face.
My swift dead feet
Will leave no trace.

"When I have found
A quiet hill,
Where sun and storm
Have worked their will,
Then shall my swift
Dead feet grow still.

"And there I'll lay me
Down and sleep.
And none will know.
And none will weep
Above my head.
But rain falls deep."

ALIBI

Drunk with quince blossom and the wine of
 clover,
You came to me one day when love was over,
And with exquisite irony and splendor
You said, "O now, adorable and tender,
O lovely and incurious and proud,
Unpassionate, illusive as a cloud—
Now, O bewildering and perilous one,
No more forever under the golden sun
Shall I put trust in any woman's kiss;
No more, O white and wonderful. And this—
The last low word of love my lips shall speak—
As spoken to the languor of your cheek,
To your cool mouth and to your tempered eyes.
Your heart would never listen, O most wise."
Gallant you were, and bravely debonair,
Drunk with wild plum, and with your new
 love's hair.

HOW CURIOUS, I SAID

I looked upon her as she lay,
How curious, I said,
This strange and silent shape of clay
Upon my bed.

She was a white and slender thing,
And beautiful, I said.
Almost I saw a folded wing
Beneath her head.

Then suddenly I knew her well.
O strange! Untenanted
Before me lay my empty shell,
And I was dead.

GOING AND COMING

I went a woman
And came, a tree.
The sap of earth
Flowed up in me.
The rains of God
Came singing down
Upon my shining
Leafy crown.
A white wind blew
My branches free.
I went, a woman,
And came, a tree.

EARTH ANGEL

I walked the hills.
I talked with God.
I saw the place
His feet had trod.
I felt His breath
Upon me pass
Like winds that stir
The lowly grass.
I brushed His hand
With one small wing.
Now, God and I
Are everything.

HARP MUSIC

I laid my ear
 Upon the earth
And heard a grass-blade
 Come to birth.

I laid my ear
 Upon a tree,
And heard a green
 Leaf-melody.

I laid my ear
 Upon the sky
And heard a cloud
 Sing clear and high.

I laid my ear
 Upon your heart
And heard a poem
 Stir and start.

I CAME AND FOUND THEM

I came and found them at the pool of heaven,
Those other women you had sometime loved—
Counting the treasures over you had given,
With tender boastings. And I smiled and
moved

Apart, whose ringless hands held overmuch,
Keeping the jewel of your last warm touch.

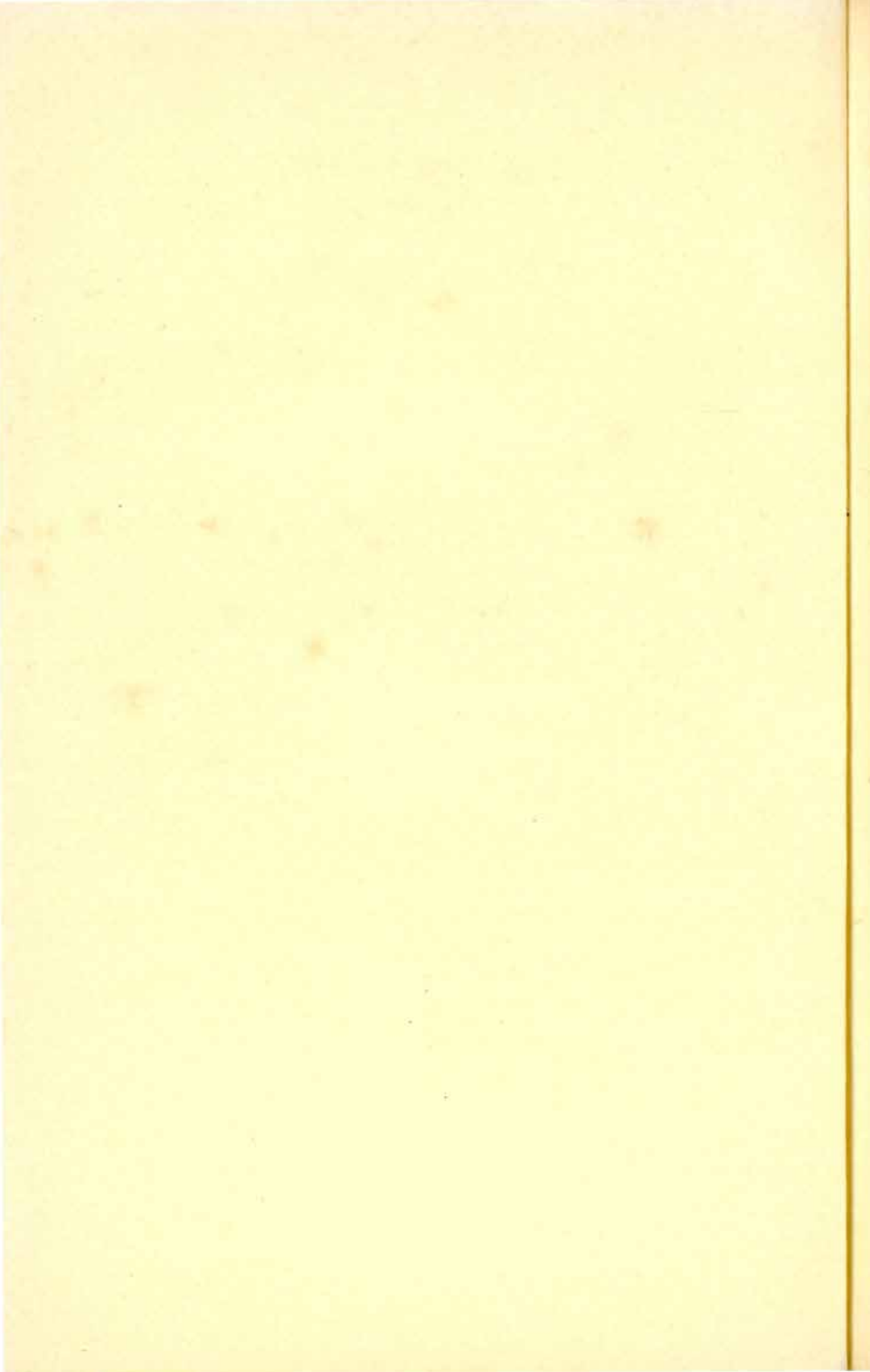
ROMANY BRIDE

Here is the house,
Here is the board;
Here is the chest
With treasure stored.
Here is the bed
Where I shall lie
And sleep beside him
By and by.

Here is a gown
Of silken stuff—
O here are useless
Things enough
To stifle breath,
To bind the sight;
To dim the day
And shroud the night.

Only his arms,
Only his eyes
To recompense
For lost wild skies;
For low lost sounds
Of wood and hill.
Why is a proper
House so still?





Why are the walls
So close and tight?
How can the moon
Get in at night?
My hair is bound,
My feet are shod
And may not press
The early sod.

The doors and windows
Shut me in.
And silence is
Where song has been.
He does not know—
He cannot see—
But all my heart
Is Romany!

AND NOW SHE IS AWAY

Pale as a star
 She lies asleep,
In final slumber,
 Still and deep.
She danced beside me
 Yesterday.
And now she is
 Afar, away.
She played with life,
 She took it up
And quaffed it like
 A careless cup.
She toyed with hearts
 And tossed them high
To hang for stars
 Against her sky.
She plucked the fruit
 Of every tree;
She tasted every
 Mystery.

She was so busy,
And so gay.
What of her silence,
Here—today?
O strange this slumber,
Still and deep.
What will she find
To do with sleep?

SONG OF ANNAIK

It will not matter
When the song is ended,
It will count nothing
In the last deep stillness—
The long fearsome waiting
For you, O late-in-coming,
The calling to the sky
For you whom I knew not.

It will not matter,
That youth went slipping over,
That ashen threads came weaving
My brown braided hair;
It will not matter
That April left my garden,
That now the blue leaf-smoke
Of Autumn stabs the evening.

O lover, O my lover,
The barren winds are crying;
The wild gray geese
They are southward long ago.
The bleak night is jewelled
With one star only,
Yet I, so long aweary,
Take laughter to my pillow.

All the dark bread
My pale lone mouth has eaten,
All the bitter brew
Is forgotten in a moment.
I walk abroad in beauty
In the deep grass going;
The haw blossoms white
And the heather-bell is clear.

It will not matter
That all the gathered roses
Have lost their singing fragrance
And withered on the stem;
For there is a rose here
That will not fall nor scatter,
A budding in the hedge here
To open at your bidding,

O lover, O my lover—
O head of dusk and starlight,
O eyes like woodland shadows
In brown shaken water;
O mouth of wine and honey
Sweeter than the clover
That's flowering in the meadows
Wherever heaven is!

MISER

You are too long away. I cannot wait.
I shall go down the road and through the gate
To the pale heavenly meadows just beyond.
You went too harshly. I was over-fond
And over-eager for your lovingness—
And yet I held and hoarded love's caress.
You said I was a miser with young passion.
You said I doled you coppers, beggar-fashion.

One night, one Spring when these dark lilacs
bloom

You will come hungrily to this stark room
And I not here to see. I shall be yonder—
With stars across my hair. And you will wander
Over the hill and up and down again
Seeking the little coins of love. And then—
Perhaps you will be swiftly comforted,
Knowing I am not faithless, being dead.

KING'S TOWN HOUSE

She was bright as a cricket,
And poor as a mouse;
She had no money,
And she had no house.
She had no cloak
For the Winter's cold;
And her two little shoes
Were gray and old.

She lived on a road,
And slept on a hill,
And the sound of her singing
Was never still.
Her eyes were fey
And her hands were cool;
And the neighbors called her
A pretty fool.

But the two little shoes
Were fairy things;
And a common cloak
Would have crushed her wings.
The walls of a house
Were much too small,
And of money she needed
None at all.

Before it was light
 She'd gather dew
In a rosy bowl
 For a lad she knew,
Before it was noon
 She'd brew and bake
A steaming cup
 And a wheaten cake.

She'd carry him roses
 Late at night,
And sit at his feet
 In the candle light,
As brisk as a cricket,
 As soft as a mouse;
As rich as the Queen
 In the King's town house.

SONG FOR A HAPPY GIRL

She is fey and she is fairy,
And her eyes are lapis blue,
And her pinafore is too;
And her mother calls her Mary.
Her bright hair is like a mist
That the moon has caught and kissed.

Once I spied the shining head
Through the hedges, and I said,
"Tell me, Colleen, if you knew
That the world would end tomorrow—
What you'd leave and what you'd do.
Would your child heart break with sorrow,
Or would laughter run you through
Like a bright blade, if you knew
That the gallant game were done—
No more moon and no more sun,
And the world would end tomorrow?"

Then she leaned and kissed my chin,
And she drew a deep breath in,
Laughing, silver as a stream,
Gleaming, golden as a star;

Wayward like a wistful dream,
Gay as fearless children are.
And she answered with a smile
That was somehow like a tear,
"Just what I've done all the while—
Useless happy things, Sweet Dear;
Darling little foolish things,
Plait my hair, and shine my rings;
Roam the hills an hour with you!
Run across the road to borrow
Cream for breakfast—if I knew
That the world would end tomorrow!"

FORESHADOW

When you are gone into the broken night,
Into the broken sky, I shall recall
The small barbed things you said ; forgetting all
Your grave young wisdom, I shall keep the
 white
Terror and calm that cursed your brief sad
 years,
Saying, "I am so newly come on tears."

When you are gone, the Spring will be a bloom
Vanished with lilacs to the grave. The scent
Of all young leaves be for a cerement,
All winds an epitaph. And in this room
Love will die hourly, where you laughed and
 said,
"I'm curious and eager to be dead!"

COMMITTAL

If I have failed you in some forgotten hour,
Come late to tryst,
Or brought a crimson flower
When white were fitter:
If I have laughed when tears were in your
heart,
Or wept when you were gay,
Or broken bread too soon,
Or spilled the wine upon the book's fair page;
If I have failed you in any moment past
Being unmindful—
It is gone by, even with all that's gone
Into the grave.
I do not fail you now. No—not today.

Sternly would I leave grief.
Let others weep.
Tears dim the vision.
I have far to see.
I dare not and I cannot fail you now.
No, nor I would not.
All the past days are like a goading lash
That smites, and heals me with its stinging song.
If I have failed you ever, when your heart
waited,
Or the board was spread,
I will not fail you now—
That you are dead.

EVEN BETWEEN US TWO

What is the puny earth? And what is man?
A bubble and an atom. All the sounds
Men make in living are like a creaking bough.
Their passions and their anguishes
Are the mere fluttering of a shrivelled leaf.
They turn my heart to stone.
How shall I now endure this prison-house
Where no man knows me?
This place of torment where I am alone?

I have cried out unto the sea,
But the sea rolls its heavy tide
And does not hear me.
I have shouted unto the mountains;
They have mocked me with a small thin answer.
I have besought the forest for a word,
And a derisive wind has scorned my crying.

I have passed through the streets of all the cities
And reached my hand, and said,
Good morrow, Brother!
No man has answered me, for no man speaks
my tongue.

There is but one who understands my language—
He is within me, chained upon a rock;
And he is silent. He will never speak.
In the dark hours I listen to his silence.
I know he also is alone.
Even between us two a wall is built—
Even between us two.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

If I could be as sure of life
As I am sure of death,
It would be easier by far
To draw this constant breath.

If I could see the gates of life
Swing wide on such delights
As swing the gallant gates of death,
I should sleep well o' nights.

But life is such a twisted thing,
And death it goes so straight
Between the stars and through the moon,
Oh, I must not be late—

And I must not be hesitant,
But step with valiance out
Beyond the little lanes of life.
To learn what death's about.

THE END OF THE WORLD

I could not sleep nor rest;
The night was far gone.
The clock in the tower chimed two,
A loud cock crew.
And out of the ghostly dawn
A weird sound came,
Like sinister laughter
Mocking the crow of the cock,
Mocking the tall tower clock.
And the laughter made itself words.
My ears did not hear, but my heart—
My heart heard well.
The mocking laughter hissed,
The end of the world,
The end of the world is nigh!
And a creeping cry
Curved and followed the dawn-gray line of the
sky,
Up and around and over and down the hill,
And then lay still;
Still as a serpent coiled asleep in the grass;
Still as a stitch of thread in an old sown
garment.

And what, I said, is that?
The end of the world!
The finish of all I see before me now?
The end of hills and trees,
The end of sky?
And what is *end*?
Is it a word, nothing more?
Where does *end* come from,
And whither at last shall it lead?
Where then shall the brave and bright and the
 beautiful go?
Where will the mountains be,
And where the sea?
Will the stars go out,
And the moon?
And where is *out*?
And what of the sun?
It is all too strange to believe.

*(My heart is a hammer of stone
Beating its body wall.
Where will my heart
And where will my body be,
After the end?)*

II.

I heard a whisper run
Through the leaves and the boughs.
It is the end, they said,
The end is at hand.
Their voice was like crackles of light
That winked their words.
The green little heart-shaped leaves
Were all of a-shake;
And a shiver of wonder went down
To the roots in the dark.
And they woke and laughed, did the roots,
Knowing all that they know.

And the birds came home to the nest;
But the nest was not equal to this,
And the boughs waxed full,
Till a mighty tremor and trouble arose
in the midst.

The end of the world, they said.

We heard of the wind.

What is this end?

Is it a new strange South

That we must seek for now?

And how shall we find the way?

And the gardens pulsed with the news;
Phlox and delphinium,
Cosmos and marigold
Murmuring each to each
Like ladies sharing a secret.
It is the end, my dear!
The days are done, and the nights!
The end—now whatever is that?

And the gardener stood on the path
And his hands hung down at his side,
Like two sticks useless and old.

(My wings are heavy with pain.
They will not lift to the dawn.)

III.

The ploughman came from the field
Slow and steady and sad,
For life with the soil was good,
It was all the life he knew.
What could a ploughman do
For the space of eternity?
Were the heavenly meadows lush?

Would he plough and harrow and sow—
That the angels might be fed—
Wheat for eternal bread?
The woodsman delivered his axe
With a word of grief to the ground;
The forest was all of his hope;
To leave it was going from home.
And would there be trees and a trail
For a man to follow and find
When the end of the world was come?

The vintager shaded his eyes
And gazed on the rich dark vines.
The blood of his heart stood still.
Perchance, and he looked aloft,
There would be wine to press
For the hosts of the seraphim
When the vineyards of earth were done,
Wine from the stars and the sun!

*(An angel chanted on high,
The end of the world!)*

And the mothers gathered the news
To their hearts with a song.
The end! And the children were safe!
Never and never again
The darks and shadows of woe,
Never the blood and the steel,
Never the wall and the wheel.
The end! And the children would go
Free, to the ether, free
Unto eternity,
And the infinite mercy and love.

IV.

And men like angels walked, and the streets
were still.
They told the tidings. They told the sons of
men.
The merchants they told, and the priests,
And the sweepers of streets;
And all who trafficked and traded and sweated
and stank
In the market-place and the shop.

The boot-blacks there in the cold
Heard and believed and were glad.
The newsboys peddling chaos
Turned over their wares
To the gutters where they belonged.
They threw up their caps with a shout.
They were eager and gay
That the angels said, *Call it a day!*
The judges came down from the bench
And opened the prison doors.
The end of the world, they said.
The word has gone forth, the end!
And the jails were empty and still.
Here was the end of jails.

The factory gates swung wide
For the wan-faced women and men;
Like a river of sweat they poured
Into the light and the air,
The sharp clean air and the light;
Their caught and gasping breath
Making a sound like a curse
That shrivelled and sped away
As vermin seeking the dark.

The brothels gave up their girls,
Frighted and all dismayed.
Where would the harlots go,
And the men who made them so?
Is there a place in the sky
For all, when the end is come?

*(The angels chanted again,
The end of the world!)*

V.

The skies were afire and alight;
And all who dwelt on earth
Beheld and saw in a dream
All who had dwelt before;
All, from the first to the last,
A living radiant host.

And all who dwelt on the earth
Listened and heard in a dream
A mighty surging of sound,
Of living and dying.

And they left the goods and the gold,
And they sought, each, the one of his love,

The veils fell down from their eyes.
Hatred and anger died, and wars were done.
The warriors came out to their foes
And bound their wounds.
It is the end, they said,
The end of the world.

VI.

And I was one of these.
I looked and I saw . . .

Behold and behold
The arches beyond the sky
Whereof there is never a word
May ever be uttered.
Whereof no man has dreamed
Or dared to dream.

The earth and the heavens were rent with a
purple wind;
There was a mighty stir and lifting of wings,
A song and a chanting withouten a voice
or a string.

And all who dwelt on the earth rose up
in a cloud
With all who had dwelt before,
Ay, all, from the first to the last.

And they sought, each, the one of his love,
And they found.
And none was alone.

