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Tangled

in

Stars



Poems by

Ethelwyn

Wetherald



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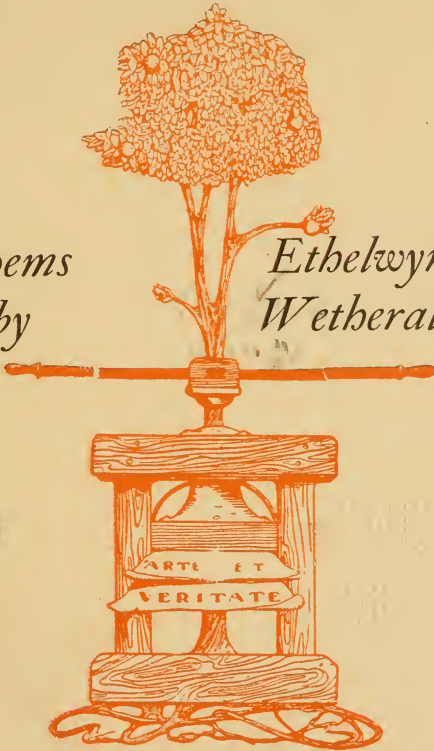
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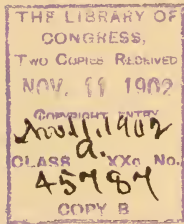


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TO MY COMRADE

Down to thy breast the leaves slip,
When we twain in comradeship,
Go with the breeze under the trees
 Out in the wood where the heart belongs;
So to thy breast, thus leaf-caressed,
 Fly all my little leafy songs.

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TANGLED IN STARS

TANGLED IN STARS

Tangled in stars and spirit-steeped in dew,
The city worker to his desk returns,
While 'mid the stony streets remembrance burns,
Like honeysuckle running through and through
A barren hedge. He lifts his load anew,
And carries it amid the thronging ferns
And crowding leaves of memory, while years
Above him once again the open blue.

His letter-littered desk goes up in flowers;
The world recedes, and backward dreamily
Come days and nights, like jewels rare and few.
And while the consciousness of those bright hours
Abides with him, we know him yet to be
Tangled in stars and spirit-steeped in dew.

THE LEAVES

When with an airy covering
 Around the summer's woodland wall,
Or wreathing all the doors of spring,
 Or painting all the paths of fall,

The leaves go on their lovely ways,
 With naught to ask, with all to give,
They make for me the empty days
 Of winter lonelier to live.

AMONG THE LEAVES

The near sky, the under sky,
 The low sky that I love!
I lie where fallen leaves lie,
 With a leafy sky above,
And draw the colored leaves nigh,
And push the withered leaves by,
And feel the woodland heart upon me,
 Brooding like a dove.

The bright sky, the moving sky,
 The sky that autumn weaves.
I see where scarlet leaves fly
 The sky the wind bereaves.
I see the ling'ring leaves die,
I hear the dying leaves sigh,
And breathe the woodland breath
 Made sweet of all her scented leaves.

AT WAKING

When I shall go to sleep and wake again
At dawning in another world than this,
What will atone to me for all I miss?
The light melodious footsteps of the rain,
The press of leaves against my window pane,
The sunset wistfulness and morning bliss,
The moon's enchantment and the twilight kiss
Of winds that wander with me through the lane.

Will not my soul remember evermore
The earthly winter's hunger for the spring,
The wet sweet cheek of April, and the rush
Of roses through the summer's open door;
The feelings that the scented woodlands bring
At evening with the singing of the thrush?

A MARCH NIGHT

A wild wind and a flying moon,
And drifts that shrink and cower;
A heart that leaps at the thought, How soon
The earth will be in flower.

Behind the gust and the ragged cloud
And the sound of loosening floods,
I see young May with her fair head bowed,
Walking in a world of buds.

THE FIRST BLUEBIRD

First, first!
That was thy song that burst
Out of the spring of thy heart,
Incarnate spring that thou art!
Now must the winter depart,
Since to his age-heavy ear
Fluteth the youth of the year.

Low, low,
Delicate, musical, slow;
Lighten, O heaven that lowers,
Blossom, ye fields into flowers,
Thicken, ye branches to bowers;
And thou, O my heart, like a stone,
Wilt thou keep winter alone?

Sweet, sweet,
But there is lead in the feet,
No spring thoughts in the head,
But wintry burdens instead.
Nay, they are gone, they have fled,
Fled while the bluebird sung;
The earth and the heart are young.

THE RAIN

I heard my lover pleading
 Beneath the ivied pane,
I looked out through the darkness
 And lo, it was the rain!

I heard my lover singing
 His low heart-stirring songs,
I went without and sought him
 To whom my soul belongs.

I found him in the darkness,
 His tears were on my face;
O sweet, your voice has pierced me,
 And your unhurrying pace.

He gave me as we wandered
 A down the winding lane,
A thousand tender touches
 And that heart-stirring strain.

The lamps and fires and faces
 No longer did I see;
I walked abroad with Music
 And Love and Poetry.

FLOWER AND FLAME

Between the flowering and the flaming woods,
All greening in the rain
The fields unfold,
The sun upon the grain
Outpours its gold,
And sweet with bloom and dew are nature's moods
Between the flowering and the flaming woods.

Between the flaming and the flowering woods
The wind bemoans a host
Of withered leaves,
The winter is a ghost
That grieves and grieves
Around a ruined house where none intrudes,
Between the flaming and the flowering woods.

O woods that break in flower or in flame,
My wingèd days and hours
Shall meet their doom
Like to your leaves and flowers;
Let not your bloom
And brightness put my flying years to shame,
O woods that break in flower or in flame!

THE SUNFLOWERS

When lamps are out and voices fled,
And moonlight floods the earth like rain,
I steal outside and cross the lane
And stand beside the sunflower bed;
Each blind, unopened face is turned
To where the western glories burned,
As though the sun might come again,
With some last word he left unsaid.

When Dawn with slender shining hand
Inscribes a message on the wall,
I follow at the silent call
To where my tall sun-lovers stand.
Their wistful heads are lifted high
Toward the flaming eastern sky,
As though some voice had turned them all,
Some secret voice of strong command.

Ah, should I from the windowed height
Keep vigil in the room above,
And see them lightly, surely move
Through the chill stretches of the night,
Would not the heart within me burn,
As loyally I watched them turn,
With sweet undoubting faith and love
From vanished light to dawning light?

HOME

Wherever on far distant farms
The orchard trees lift bounteous arms,
The lane is grape-leaved, woodland dense,
The chipmunk leaps the zigzag fence,
The horses from the plow's last round
Drink with a deep sweet cooling sound,
And with the thin young moon afloat
Comes up the frog's heart-easing note,
And tree toads' endless melody,
 Oh that is home,
 Is restful home to me.

Whenever on a distant street
Two charming eyes I chance to meet,
The look of one that knows the grace
Of every change on nature's face;
Whose sealike soul is open wide
To breezes from the farther side,
Whose voice and movement seem to give
The knowledge of how best to live
And how to live most happily,
 Oh that is home,
 Is blessed home to me.

THE PLOWMAN

I heard the plowman sing in the wind,
 And sing right merrily,
As down in the cold of the sunless mould,
 The grasses buried he.

And now the grasses sing in the wind,
 Merrily do they sing;
While down in the cold of the sunless mould,
 Is the plowman slumbering.

IN SUMMER RAIN

How vividly in summer rain
The commonest of tints are seen;
The robin is a scarlet stain
Against the shining evergreen.

The last scant strawberries—a score
That hid behind the reddening leaves—
Rain-flushed, wind-tossed, are waiting for
Red-lipped or redder-breasted thieves.

The willows, pallid in the sun,
Are sunny in the rainy dark,
A deeper brown the streamlets run
And deeply black the orchard bark.

And yet, although the clouds are gray,
These freshening tints of every hue
Would intimate a rain at play,
Or at the worst a storm of dew.

The quality of mercy flows
Upon the meadows' thirsty brood,
And every brightening grass blade shows
The quality of gratitude.

BOATING BY STARLIGHT

The breeze has washed me clean of cares,
The night has broken Labor's bars;
My soul and I through heavenly airs
Are voyaging among the stars.

Soft shadows wrap the shore, the lake,
The pier, the bridge, the gazing eyes.
In splendid loneliness we take
This jewelled journey through the skies.

FROM MY WINDOW

(IN SPRING)

The plums and cherries are in bloom,
The apple trees are on the brink
Of swimming in a sea of pink;
The grass is thick'ning like the gloom
Of winter twilights, and from far
Each dandelion is a star.

The birds fill all the air, and one
Is building at my window sill.
Across the lane the squirrels run,
And like a poet's ghost, so still
And spirit white, a butterfly
Appears and slowly wavers by.

Beyond the pine trees, tall and dark,
Across the lower orchard, where
The honey-laden peach and pear
Give to the bees their burden—hark!
Swift flies the thunderous express,
And leaves more quiet quietness.

GREEN BOUGHS OF HOME

Green boughs of home, that come between
Mine eyes and this far distant scene,
I see whene'er my thought escapes,
Your old serene familiar shapes;

Each lissom willow tree that dips
Into the stream her golden whips,
The sassafras beside the gate,
Where twilight strollers linger late;

The hemlock groups that dimly hold
Their own against the noonday gold,
The maple lines that give the view
A green or luminous avenue;

Those oldest apple trees whose forms
Have braved a hundred years of storms,
And turn a face as blithe and free
To greet their second century;

The younger orchard's heavy edge,
Framed in the honey locust hedge;
Fruit-flushed, snow-burdened or bloom-bright,
It comes to my home-longing sight;

The billowy woods across the road,
Where all the winds of heaven strode,
And sang in every towering stem,
Would that I were at home with them!

For under these down-bending boughs
A thousand tender memories house.
Oh, while your old companions roam,
Your peace be theirs, green boughs of home!

THE WILD JESSAMINE

(IN THE SOUTH)

The sun of March is hot and bold,
The rain of March is loud.
O jessamine, your cups of gold
Uplift to sun and cloud;
To song of bird, to breath of herd,
To light and wind and dew,
Lift up, lift up, the golden cup,
And bid me drink with you!

The woods of March are hung with green,
The green is hung with bloom;
The olive boughs, O jessamine,
Let all your gold illumine.
To woodland wine—the drink that pine
And oak, and yeupon brew—
Lift up, lift up the golden cup,
And let me drink with you!

The breath of March is violet sweet,
The arms of March are soft;
O jessamine, the time is fleet,
Lift all your cups aloft!
To looks that make the spirit ache—
That pierce, deny, pursue—
Lift up, lift up the golden cup,
And I will drink with you!

OUT-DOOR AIR

Breather of hope upon the face that grieves,
Redd'ner of paleness, mocker at despair,
Playground of happy wings that upward fare,
Lover of violets and sodden leaves,
Of roses running to the cottage eaves,
And hay fields sweet'ning in the sunny glare;
Companion of the heart that knows no care,
And of the budding boughs and bursting sheaves.

Though armed with weapons of the icy north,
Or red with dropping leaves, or fair with flakes,
Or scorched with sun or wistful in the rain,
Out of my cell your spirit calls me forth,
Out to the splendid open, where the aches
And hurts of life are bathed and healed again.

JUNE

Before the green wheat turneth yellow,
Before green pears begin to mellow,
Before the green leaf reddeneth,
Before green grasses fade in death,
Before the green corn comes in ear,
Then is the keen time,
Then is the queen time,
Then is the green time of the year.

Before young thimble-berries thicken,
Before young grapes begin to quicken,
Before young robins flutter down,
Before young butternuts embrown,
Before young love has grown too dear,
Then are the long days,
Then are the song days,
Then are the young days of the year.

THE PASTURE FIELD

When spring has burned

The ragged robe of winter, stitch by stitch,
And deftly turned

To moving melody the wayside ditch,
The pale-green pasture field behind the bars
Is goldened o'er with dandelion stars.

When summer keeps

Quick pace with sinewy, white-shirted arms,
And daily steep

In sunny splendor all her spreading farms,
The pasture field is flooded foamy white
With daisy faces looking at the light.

When autumn lays

Her golden wealth upon the forest floor,
And all the days

Look backward at the days that went before,
A pensive company, the asters, stand,
Their blue eyes brightening the pasture land.

When winter lifts

A sounding trumpet to his strenuous lips,
And shapes the drifts

To curves of transient loveliness, he slips
Upon the pasture's ineffectual brown
A swan-soft vestment delicate as down.

IN JUNE

The trees are full, the winds are tame,
The fields are pictures in a frame
Of leafy roads and fair abodes,
Steeped in content too large for name.

Across a slender bridge of night
The luminous days are swift in flight,
As though 'twere wrong to cover song
And scent and greenness from the light.

Within the snowy clouds above
Sits viewless Peace, a brooding dove;
For every nest there beats a breast,
For every love some answering love.

The ways are thronged with angel wings,
The heart with angel whisperings;
And as it seems in happy dreams
The bird of gladness sings and sings.

HOME-SICKNESS

At twilight on this unfamiliar street,
With its affronts to aching ear and eye,
I think of restful ease in fields that lie
Untrodden by a myriad fevered feet.
O green and dew and stillness! O retreat
Thick-leaved and squirrel-haunted! By and by
I too shall follow all the thoughts that fly
Bird-like to you, and find you, ah, how sweet.

Not yet—not yet. To-night it almost seems
That I am hasting up the hemlock lane,
Up to the door, the lamp, the face that pales
And warms with sudden joy. But these are
dreams;
I lean on memory's breast, and she is fain
To soothe my yearning with her tender tales.

THE SONG SPARROW'S NEST

Here where tumultuous vines
Shadow the porch at the west,
Leaf with tendril entwines
Under a song sparrow's nest.
Just at the height of my heart,
When I am loitering near,
And, exaggeration apart,
Almost equally dear.

She in her pendulous nook
Sways on the warm wind tide,
I with a pen or a book
Rock as soft at her side.
Comrades with nothing to say,
Neither of us intrudes,
But through the lingering day
Each of us sits and broods.

Not upon hate and fear,
Not upon grief or doubt,
Not upon spite or sneer,
These we could never hatch out.
She broods on wonderful things:
Quickening life that belongs
To a heart and a voice and wings,
But—I'm not so sure of my songs!

Then in the summer night,
When I awake with a start,
I think of the nest at the height—
The leafy height of my heart;
I think of the mother love,
Of the patient wings close furled,
Of the sky that broods above,
Of the love that broods on the world.

SUMMER IN THE CITY

“If I were out of prison”—ah! the leap
That Arthur’s heart gave with its yearning
strong—

“If I were out of prison and kept sheep,
I should be merry as the day is long.”

O little prince, whose feet were strange to grass,
Whose royal hands no dandelions knew,
Whose wistful child-eyes saw no seasons pass,
Within the city walls I think of you;

For here on pavements hot to work I creep,
Walls, roofs and chimneys at my window throng;
Ah, were I out of prison and kept sheep,
I should be merry as the day is long!

IN AUGUST

Now when the grove is stifled to the core,
And all the parchèd grass is summer-killed,
I think of vehement March, and how she filled
These arid roadsides with a murmurous pour
Of rushing streams from an exhaustless store.
This breathless air to tropic slumber stilled,
Recalls those early passionate winds that thrilled
The spirit, blending with the water’s roar.

Just as in rich and dusty-leavèd age
The soul goes back to brood on swelling buds
Of hope, desire, and dream, in childhood’s clime,
So I turn backward to the spring-lit page,
And hear with freshening heart the deep-voiced
floods,
That to the winds give their melodious rhyme.

THE BUDDING CHILD

Here are the budding boughs again,
But where the budding child,
That from green slopes to greener shores
Last April was beguiled?

Here is the hurrying stream again,
But where the hurrying feet
That vanished with the ebbing wave
Last year when spring was sweet?

Into my life the springtime came,
Soft-aired and thickly starred;
Out of my life the springtime went,
Though I prayed hard—prayed hard.

O little life, with all thy buds
Close-folded—laid in death;
Would they had oped in bloom and fruit
About thy mother's path!

Or would that Faith might build more strong
The bridge between my heart
And thy fair dwelling-place, so thou
And spring should not depart.

SEPARATION

He went upon a journey,
And she was left at home;
And yet 'twas he who stayed behind,
And she that far did roam.

For though he went by mountain
And wood and stream and sea,
A little cot enwrapt in green
He saw perpetually.

And she within the green leaves,
Not knowing that he stood
Forever by her, dreamed her way
With him by mount and wood.

Now heaven help these lovers,
And bring her safely home,
Or lead him back along the track
Where she, e'en now, doth roam.

EARTH'S SILENCES

How dear to hearts by hurtful noises scarred

The stillness of the many-leavèd trees,
The quiet of green hills, the million-starred
Tranquility of night, the endless seas
Of silence in deep wilds, where nature broods
In large, serene, uninterrupted moods.

Oh, but to work as orchards work—bring forth
Pink bloom, green bud, red fruit and yellow leaf,
As noiselessly as gold proclaims its worth,
Or as the pale blade turns to russet sheaf,
Or splendid sun goes down the glowing west,
Still as forgotten memories in the breast.

How without panting effort, painful word,
Comes the enchanting miracle of snow,
Making a sleeping ocean. None have heard
Its waves, its surf, its foam, its overflow;
For unto every heart, all hot and wild,
It seems to say, "Oh, hush thee, hush, my child."

THE CHICKADEE

Stout-hearted bird,
When thy blithe note I heard
From out the wind-warped tree—
Chick-a-dee-dee—
There came to me
A sense of triumph, an exultant breath
Blown in the face of death.
For what are harsh and bitter circumstances
When the heart dances,
And pipes to rattling branch and icy lea
Chick-a-dee-dee!

Sing loud, sing loud,
Against that leaden cloud,
That draggeth drearily,
Chick-a-dee-dee.
Pour out thy free
Defiance to the sharpest winds that blow
And still increasing snow.
By courage, faith, and joy art thou attended,
And most befriended
By thine own heart, that bubbleth cheerily,
Chick-a-dee-dee!

THE INDIGO BIRD

When I see,
High on the tip-top twig of a tree,
Something blue by the breezes stirred,
But so far up that the blue is blurred,
So far up no green leaf flies
Twixt its blue and the blue of the skies,
Then I know, ere a note be heard,
That is naught but the Indigo bird.

Blue on the branch and blue in the sky,
And naught between but the breezes high,
And naught so blue by the breezes stirred
As the deep, deep blue of the Indigo bird.

When I hear
A song like a bird laugh, blithe and clear,
As though of some airy jest he had heard
The last and the most delightful word,
A laugh as fresh in the August haze
As it was in the full-voiced April days,
Then I know that my heart is stirred
By the laugh-like song of the Indigo bird.

Joy in the branch and joy in the sky,
And naught between but the breezes high;
And naught so glad on the breezes heard
As the gay, gay note of the Indigo bird.

THE FISHERMAN

The fisher's face is hard to read,
His eyes are deep and still;
His boots have crushed a pungent weed
Beside a far off rill.

Oh, early lifted he the latch
And sped through dew away,
But when we ask him of the catch
That was to mark the day,
He lifts his empty hands and smiles:
"I fished for hours, I fished for miles."

The fisher has an open mind,
A meditative heart;
He walks companioned by the wind
Or sits alone, apart,
Within some stream-enchanted dell.
The fish about him play
In sweet content. They know full well
That friends of his are they.
Dame Nature all his soul beguiles
With murmurous hours and emerald miles.

But one who trod the path he took
By fragrant woodland ways,
To where the cold trout-haunted brook
Ran thick-leaved from the gaze,
Heard him but sigh, "How fair it is!
My God—and what am I
That Thy most secret harmonies
Should flood the ear and eye?"
At eve with empty hands he smiles:
"I caught the best of hours and miles."

THE LITTLE NOON

My life that goes from dark to dark,
From leaping light to lowering light,
Must have its little noonday spark
Of heat and flame before the night.

My little noon! How strong it seems,
How dazzling fair and deep its tide,
And yet a million million beams
Of day have burned before and died.

Long, long ago—a thousand years—
Was Fear all white and Rage all red?
Did Love meet Love with shining tears
That eased the stress of words unsaid?

Two thousand years ago did Hope
Fly outward with tumultuous breast?
Youth wake at night to sing? Age grope
Through gathering darkness to his rest?

Back in the ages past was sweet
As sweet as now? Did bitterness
Flavor the very drink and meat?
Did Rapture wear her April dress?

Did strong men give their hands to men,
Their hearts to women? Did the wife
Joy in her budding secret then?
Did children throng the doors of life?

Ah, these had all their little noons,
Yet cradled in the earth they lie,
And still beside them Ocean croons
Her immemorial lullaby.

My little noon! How pale it seems!
Weak as a wave, faint as a sigh;
It looks the very stuff of dreams,
Seen in the light of noons gone by.

THE LONG DAYS OF THE YEAR

The long days of the year,
How sweet they are to the ear!
The happy birds begin them before I awake from
sleep,
And tenderly they are ended by the voices of the
sheep,
Coming home in the twilight. Oh, happy child
that I am,
Roused by a bird in the morning and lulled at
night by a lamb.

The long days of the year,
How fair to the eye and dear!
The grass is thick in the meadows, the branches
heavy with leaves,
And gaily the roses are running up to the cottage
eaves,
Steeping the porch in perfume. Oh, loving child
should I be,
When thick and rosy and fragrant my joys are
coming to me.

STARS AND FLOWERS

The stars enchant the upper skies,
The flowers chain the feet;
They look into each other's eyes,
And flame and fragrance meet.

So will it be when Death unbars
These slender doors of ours,
And turns our spirits into stars,
Our bodies into flowers.

AT DUSK

The phantom time of day is here.
Some spirit from diviner air
Unto our blindness draweth near,
And in our musing seems to share.

Who hath not in a darkening wood,
At twilight's moment, dimly known
That all his hurts were understood
By some near presence not his own;

That all his griefs were comforted,
His aspirations given release;
And that upon his troubled head
Was laid the viewless hand of Peace.

Too sure for doubt, too sweet for fear,
Unfelt in days of toil and stress;
But when the twilight brings it near
Who hath not felt its tenderness?

YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

Love met Youth in the churchyard old,
Under a branch of hawthorn blossom;
Love gave Youth a flower to hold
Freshly grown from a dead girl's bosom.

Youth sang Love a heart-warm rhyme,
Writ by an ancestor turned to ashes;
And all the song was of blossom time
And the spring-soft light 'neath a maiden's
lashes.

AN OLD INFLUENCE

A child, I saw familiar things
In sweet imagined guise;
For me the clouds were angels' wings,
The stars were angels' eyes.

Not so to-day: the grassless ways
Of older years invite
No wings to whiten common days,
No eyes to hallow night.

Yet when with grief my heart is loud,
Or harsh thoughts leave their scar,
I feel reproach from every cloud,
Reproof from every star.

IF ONE MIGHT LIVE

If one might live ten years among the leaves,
Ten—only ten—of all a life's long day,
Who would not choose a childhood 'neath the
eaves,
Low-sloping to some slender footpath way?

With the young grass about his childish feet,
And the young lambs within his ungrown arms,
And every streamlet side a pleasure seat
Within the wide day's treasure-house of charms.

To learn to speak while young birds learned to
sing,
To learn to run e'en as they learned to fly;
With unworn heart against the breast of spring,
To watch the moments smile as they went by.

Enroofed with apple buds afar to roam,
Or clover-cradled on the murmurous sod,
To drowse within the blessed fields of home,
So near to earth—so very near to God.

How could it matter—all the after strife,
The heat, the haste, the inward hurt, the strain,
When the young loveliness and sweet of life
Came flood-like back again and yet again?

When best begins it liveth through the worst;
O happy soul, beloved of Memory,
Whose youth was joined to beauty, as at first,
The morning stars were wed to harmony.

THE ROADS OF OLD

The roads of old, how fair they gleamed;
How long each winding way was deemed.

In days gone by, how wondrous high
Their little hills and houses seemed.

The morning road, that led to school,
Was framed in dew that clung as cool

To childish feet as waves that beat
About the sunbeams in a pool;

The river road, that crept beside
The dreamy alder-bordered tide,

Where fish at play on Saturday
Left some young hopes ungratified;

The valley road, that wandered through
Twin vales and heard no wind that blew;

The cowbell's clank from either bank
Was all the sound it ever knew;

The woodland road, whose windings dim
Were known to watchers straight and slim;

How slow it moved, as if it loved
Each listening leaf and arching limb;

The market road, that felt the charm
Of lights on many a sleepy farm,

When whirring clocks and crowing cocks
Gave forth the market man's alarm;

The village road, that used to drop
Its daisies at the blacksmith shop,

And leave some trace of rustic grace
To tempt the busiest eye to stop;

These all renew their olden spell.
With rocky cliff and sunny dell,
 With purling brook and grassy nook,
They bordered childhood's country well.

And we who near them used to dwell,
Can but the same sweet story tell,
 That on them went glad-eyed Content;
They bordered childhood's country well.

THE SILENT SNOW

To-day the earth has not a word to speak.
 The snow comes down as softly through the air
 As pitying heaven to a martyr's prayer,
Or white grave roses to a bloodless cheek.
The footsteps of the snow, as white and meek
 As angel travelers, are everywhere—
 On fence and brier and up the forest stair,
And on the wind's trail o'er the moorland bleak.

They tread the rugged road as tenderly
 As April venturing her first caress;
 They drown the old earth's furrowed griefs
 and scars
Within the white foam of a soundless sea,
And bring a deeper depth of quietness
 To graves asleep beneath the silent stars.

NOVEMBER

The old year's withered face is here again,
The twilight look, the look of reverie,
The backward gazing eyes that seem to see
The full-leaved robin-haunted June remain
Through devastating wind and ruinous rain;
A form that moves a little wearily,
As one who treads the path of memory
Beneath a long year's load of stress and stain.

Good-night! good-night! the dews are thick and
damp,
Yet still she babbles on, as loath to go,
Of apple-buds and blooms that used to be,
Till Indian Summer brings the bedside lamp,
And underneath a covering of snow
She dreams again of April ecstasy.

UNHEARD NIAGARAS

We live among unheard Niagaras.
The force that pushes up the meadow grass,
That swells to ampler roundness ripening fruit,
That lifts the brier rose, were it not mute,
Would thunder o'er the green earth's sunlit tracts,
More loudly than a myriad cataracts.

SONG

Dead leaves in the bird's nest,
And after that the snow;
That was where the bird's breast
Tenderly did go,
Where the tiny birds pressed
Lovingly—and lo!
Dead leaves in the bird's nest
Under falling snow.

Dead leaves in the heart's nest,
And after that the snow;
That was where the heart's guest
Brooded months ago,
Where the tender thoughts pressed
Lovingly—and lo!
Dead leaves in the heart's nest
Under falling snow.

WINTER SUNSET

The eyes like the lips have their choice of wines,
And one that tingles and cheers they know;
A sky that burns through a bar of pines
On a wintry world of snow.

Ah, what are the empty eglantines,
And what the desolate earth below,
When the sky is ablaze, and aflame the pines,
And rosily gleams the snow?

THE DESERTED HOUSE

With sagging door and staring window-place,
And sunken roof, it stands among its trees,
Befriended by the boughs that interlace
Between it and the light ghost-footed breeze.

Poor human nest, how desolately torn!
Yet in these ragged rooms young children slept,
And on this floor, all broken and forlorn,
The baby with the sunshine daily crept.

See where some older "Ruth" and "Archie" stood,
And marked their names a yard space from the
ground.
That little height where all of sweet and good
Within the narrow plot of home is found.

Such tiny sleeping rooms, with space for naught
Except a place to dress, a place to dream,
A book, a little shelf, a good night thought,
A childish treasure brought from field or stream.

Upon this curbstone, picking bit by bit
The grass that grew before the cottage door,
The blessed baby sat, examining it
As one who ne'er had seen its like before.

Here by the window in her willow chair,
The mother sewed and sang a low refrain.
Are those the patches from her piece-bag there?
Nay, they are leaves that blew in with the rain!

The leaves blow in, the moss is on the roof,
The squirrels bring their treasures from the
boughs,

The storm comes, and with dull unhastening hoof,
Into this partial shelter stray the cows.

Ah, come away! Some woman's youth lies here,
Some man's fair childhood, dead but wondrous
sweet,

Some heart this cot has sheltered holds it dear,
And fills it with old loves and joys complete.

What right have we to pry or speculate?

The sun goes down, the twilight, like a pall,
Encloseth ruined house and porch and gate,
And tender darkness broodeth over all.

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

November and December, and again
November and December as before;
Dead season on dead season, o'er and o'er,
Till leaflessness becomes most leafless. Then
Naught for the lips, except the sad Amen,
Naught for the eyes, except the darkened door,
And for this pleasant House of Leaves no more
The summer breezes with their light refrain.

November and December—ah, I hear
Like unto heavy, sobbing winds, the old
Novembers and Decembers mourn aloud.
No red leaf lights the darkness of the year,
But only fire that grips the heart of cold,
And stars that burn behind a world of cloud.

A WINTER PICTURE

An air as sharp as steel, a sky
Pierced with a million points of fire;
The level fields, hard, white and dry,
A road as straight and tense as wire.

No hint of human voice or face
In frost below or fire above,
Save where the smoke's blue billowing grace
Flies flaglike from the roofs of love.

L. of C. 1896

THE PASSING YEAR

The feast is over, the guests are fled;
It is time to be old, it is time for bed.
The wind has blown out every light,
And the pleasure garden is turned to blight.
The trees like puffed-out candles stand,
And the smoke of their darkness is over the land.

Heavily hangs the drowsy head,
Heavily droop the lashes;
To bed! to bed! Let prayers be said
And cover the fire with ashes.

How the pipers piped, and the dancers flew,
Their hearts were piping and dancing, too.
Wine of the sun and spell of the stream,
Birds in an ecstasy, flowers that teem,
All gone by; now the quiet sky
Looks down on the earth where the snow must lie.

Heavily hangs the drowsy head,
Heavily droop the lashes;
To bed! to bed! Let prayers be said
And cover the fire with ashes.

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