



MADGE MORRIS WAGNER

Collected Poems

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers | Los Angeles, 2026

Collected Poems

Madge Morris Wagner

A Critical Reading Edition

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

The Text-Tech Papers

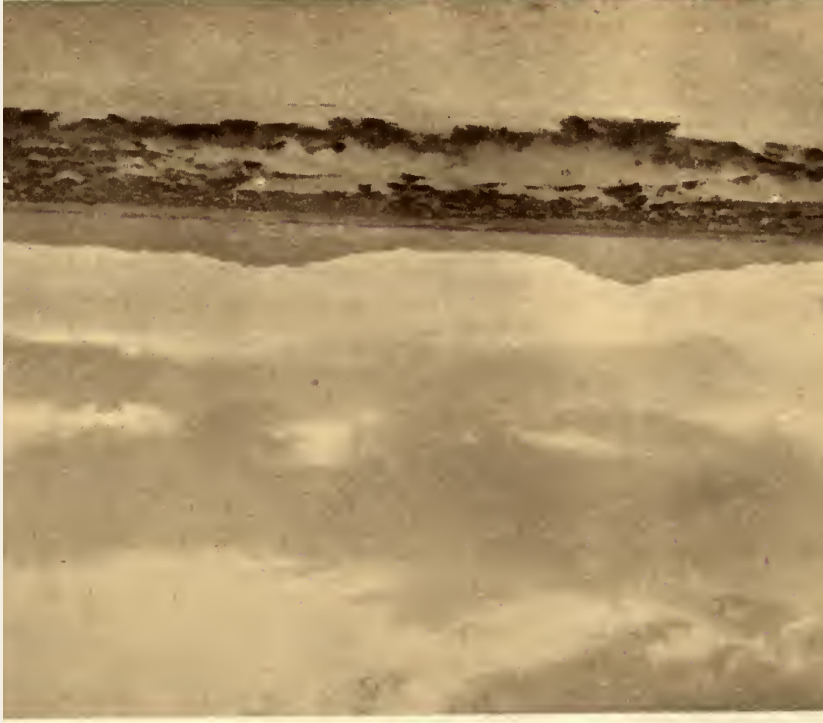
Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record



Madge Morris Wagner in The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems (1917).



*The Colorado Desert, photographed for *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems* (1917).*

Editorial Note

This edition resets the complete recoverable poetry of *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881), *Poems* (1885), *At San Diego Bay* (1898), and *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems* (1917) from complete scans. A later substantially equivalent text is preferred and the earlier appearance recorded after the poem; materially revised versions remain separate. The prose pieces in *Debris* and the prose conclusion of “Mystery of Carmel” are set as prose. Narrow-page compositor wraps are restored to logical lines, the untitled 1917 quatrain on page 114 is recovered as a separate poem, and running heads, folios, scan labels, and OCR debris are removed. Stanza divisions, speakers, internal headings, signatures, footnotes, and deliberate indentation are retained.

Contents

Archival Images	I
Editorial Note	3
Introduction	10
Original Dedication and Preface	12
<i>Debris: Selections from Poems</i>	13
"Uncle Sam's" Soliloquy	14
Home	16
A Neglected "Woman's Right"	17
"It Is Life to Die"	19
I Love Him for His Eyes	20
<i>Poems</i>	21
Mystery of Carmel	22
Two Days	38
Pearlie Has Gone Away	39
Only a Tramp	40
A Valentine	41
Love's Lamp	42
To Unknown	44
O, Speak It Not	45
After All	46
Wasted Hours	48
Life's Way	49
Garfield	51
The Difference	52
Enmaze	53
Why?	55
"I Don't Care"	56
Beware	58
Put Flowers on My Grave	59

<i>The Hunter's Song</i>	60
<i>A Vision from the Tower</i>	61
<i>Forever</i>	63
<i>Which One?</i>	64
<i>Estrangement</i>	65
<i>Nay, Do Not Ask</i>	66
<i>Opening the Gate for Papa</i>	67
<i>Bring Flowers</i>	69
<i>Hang Up Your Stocking</i>	70
<i>White Honeysuckle</i>	71
<i>The Flower I Love</i>	72
<i>The Pale Boatman</i>	73
<i>Out in the Cold</i>	74
<i>Watching the Shadows</i>	77
<i>I Give Thee Back Thy Heart</i>	78
<i>In the Twilight</i>	79
<i>A Thought of Heaven</i>	81
<i>To Jennie</i>	83
<i>Light Beyond</i>	84
<i>Would You Care?</i>	85
<i>Good-Bye</i>	86
<i>Consolance</i>	87
<i>When the Roses Go</i>	88
<i>A Regret</i>	89
<i>A Shattered Idol</i>	90
<i>Poor Little Joe</i>	91
<i>The Ghosts in the Heart</i>	93
<i>Old Aunt Lucy</i>	94
<i>Unspoken Words</i>	96
<i>O! Take Away Your Flowers</i>	98
<i>Rain</i>	99
<i>I Love Him for His Eyes</i>	100
<i>Only</i>	101
<i>The Withered Rosebud</i>	102
<i>Lilies</i>	103
<i>To E. R. W.</i>	105

<i>Little Bertie</i>	107
<i>Wishes</i>	108
<i>Forgotten Heroes</i>	109
<i>Isolde to Sir Tristram</i>	111
<i>"Till the Sea Gives Up Its Dead"</i>	112
<i>Fragments</i>	114
<i>Ephemerals</i>	117
<i>Changed</i>	118
<i>To Belle</i>	119

At San Diego Bay 121

<i>At San Diego Bay</i>	122
-----------------------------------	-----

The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems 125

<i>The Lure of the Desert Land</i>	126
<i>Quien Sabe?</i>	127
<i>To the Colorado Desert</i>	128
<i>In the Yucca Land</i>	129
<i>Tehachapi</i>	131
<i>My Heart and All Life's Sweet Alluring Charms</i>	132
<i>Rocking the Baby</i>	133
<i>Men Have Fought for Liberty</i>	134
<i>Liberty's Bell</i>	135
<i>The Crowning of Liberty</i>	138
<i>The Passing of McKinley</i>	140
<i>Cuba</i>	141
<i>What Has a Man When It All Is Attained</i>	142
<i>"He Hitched His Wagon to a Star"</i>	143
<i>The Woodman's Philosophy</i>	144
<i>The Oracle</i>	145
<i>The Little Brown Bird</i>	146
<i>A Stained Lily</i>	147
<i>Somebody's Baby's Dead</i>	149
<i>Interregnum</i>	150
<i>The Sea and the Wind</i>	151
<i>Society</i>	152

<i>An Empiric</i>	153
<i>Mother</i>	154
<i>Dead Love</i>	155
<i>Fate</i>	156
<i>Under the Sea</i>	157
<i>The Undertone of Song</i>	159
<i>To a Mummy</i>	160
<i>Sappho to Phaon</i>	161
<i>Her Christmas Gift</i>	163
<i>Ab Me!</i>	164
<i>I Have Folded Them Up and Put Them Away</i>	165
<i>If When We Left a Loved, or Loving One</i>	167
<i>My Ships Have Come from the Sea</i>	168
<i>Break Down the Door of the Jubilee</i>	171
<i>Easter Lilies</i>	172
<i>The Christmas Cross</i>	174
<i>Genesis</i>	175
<i>A Thought</i>	177
<i>A Mood</i>	178
<i>All Hallowe'en</i>	179
<i>Under the Grass</i>	180
<i>Bendita</i>	181
<i>I Wonder If Ever the Angel Who Holds</i>	182
<i>To Truth</i>	183
<i>To Whom It May Concern</i>	184
<i>To California</i>	185
<i>If I and You No More Were Said</i>	186
<i>"To You"</i>	187
<i>"Distance Is Cruel" vs. "Distance Is Kind"</i>	188
<i>Dead Days</i>	190
<i>When Will My Soul Go?</i>	191
<i>When the Roses Go</i>	192
<i>Pearlie Is Gone Away</i>	193
<i>A Picture</i>	194
<i>Two Must Be Two</i>	195
<i>An Inward Glance</i>	198

<i>In a Vision</i>	199
<i>Coronals</i>	200
<i>Inconsistence</i>	201
<i>But One Little Stocking</i>	202
<i>My Soul and I</i>	203
<i>Across the Great Divide</i>	205
<i>My Brother</i>	206
<i>The Fairy of the Heights</i>	207
<i>Valentine</i>	208
<i>Not Acclimated</i>	209
<i>Question</i>	210
<i>I Have Never, You Think, a Serious Thought</i>	211
<i>Unanswered</i>	212
<i>Query</i>	213
<i>The Red Winds Blow</i>	214
<i>A Peace Conference</i>	216
<i>Intuition</i>	217
<i>California</i>	218
<i>The Opening of the California Poppies</i>	219
<i>The Golden Gate</i>	220
<i>To Clara Shortridge Foltz</i>	222
<i>Mount Whitney</i>	224
<i>Welcoming the G. A. R. to California</i>	225
<i>San Francisco</i>	227
<i>A Legend of Sutro Heights</i>	229
<i>Helen Hunt Jackson</i>	233
<i>In the Foothills of the Sierras</i>	235
<i>The Wheat of San Joaquin</i>	236
<i>Thanksgiving at Montara</i>	237
<i>They All Are Kin to You</i>	238
<i>At San Diego</i>	239
<i>The Last Priestess of the Sun</i>	242
<i>The Builders</i>	243
<i>The Native Daughters of the Golden West</i>	244
<i>Wonderful, Mysterious Mexico</i>	245
<i>Alaska's Woman</i>	246

<i>What Know You of My Soul's Inherent Strife</i>	247
<i>Love's Way</i>	248
<i>God Bless You Wherever You Are</i>	249
<i>The Dryads</i>	250
<i>The Sign of the Cross</i>	251
<i>That Day in Texas</i>	252
<i>Canst Thou Not Hear Me</i>	253
<i>Just This One Day</i>	254
 Bibliography	 255
 Colophon	 256

Introduction

Madge Morris Wagner wrote California from the top of an electric tower, from newspaper offices, from San Diego's literary boom, and from the exposed reaches of the Colorado Desert. A journalist, editor, fiction writer, and poet, she could turn domestic grief into a recitation favorite, civic spectacle into a national campaign, or desert heat into something jagged and nearly modern. She also helped run *The Golden Era*, carrying forward one of the West's most storied magazines. This edition gathers the poetry of her four surviving verse books, removes simple reprints in favor of the latest substantially equivalent text, and records earlier appearances after the poems. The result restores the range of a writer once famous far beyond California.

Biography

Madge Morris Wagner was born Madge Morris on 25 April 1862 in Oregon while her family was traveling toward California. She was educated in common schools and began her newspaper and poetry career in San Jose. As a reporter and special writer for J. J. Owen's *Daily Mercury*, she became locally famous after accepting an assignment, reportedly offered half in jest, to ascend the city's 180-foot electric light tower and write about the panorama from its summit. The resulting "A Vision from the Tower" became part of the story of her arrival as a California writer.

Her first collection, *Debris: Selections from Poems*, appeared in 1881. An expanded *Poems* followed in 1885. Her verse combined domestic pathos, dramatic monologue, civic and patriotic themes, California landscape, and long narrative poems such as "Mystery of Carmel." Many pieces were designed for public recitation. "Rocking the Baby," "My Ships Have Come from Sea," and "The Little Brown Bird" circulated widely, while "Liberty's Bell" helped inspire William Osborne McDowell's campaign for the Columbian Liberty Bell at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Wagner was made an honorary member of the bell committee and was publicly honored at the California Building in Chicago.

Morris married Harr Wagner, a publisher and educator, and the couple had two daughters. From roughly 1885 to 1895 she served as editor of *The Golden Era*, the western literary magazine associated with Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and Joaquin Miller. When the magazine moved to San Diego, she continued as

assistant editor, regular contributor, and for a period editor and proprietor. Her poems, stories, and short editorial pieces appeared throughout its pages. She also wrote fiction, including *A Titled Plebeian*, and later published *The Autobiography of a Tame Coyote* with illustrations by James A. Holden.

Ill health repeatedly interrupted Wagner's work and helped draw her toward California's dry interior. The desert poems that resulted moved beyond conventional local-color praise. Their broken measures, hard surfaces, silence, and fierce heat impressed contemporary readers; Frona Eunice Wait Colburn later called "The Colorado Desert" the finest poem written by a California woman. Wagner's final poetry collection, *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems* (1917), gathered these later works with revised versions of earlier favorites. She also issued the separate poem *At San Diego Bay* in 1898.

Wagner spent periods in San Francisco, San Diego, and a cottage in the hills associated with Joaquin Miller. She belonged to a circle of California women writers and reformers that included Clara Shortridge Foltz and Frona Wait. Retiring by temperament and limited by illness, she nevertheless built a career that joined newspaper work, editing, performance poetry, regional publishing, and national civic spectacle. She died at her San Francisco home on 27 February 1924. The May 1924 *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* published tributes by Henry Meade Bland, Ella Sterling Mighels, and Frona Eunice Wait Colburn.

Original Dedication and Preface

From Debris: Selections from Poems (1881)

To the one who, reading, may fancy—
With a kindly thought for me—
There's a grain of gold in its driftings,
I dedicate this *Debris*.

This waif is born of emergency, and timidly launched on the rough sea of opinion. Critic, touch it gently; it assumes nothing—has nothing to assume; and your scalpel can only pain its author.

Debris: Selections from Poems

First collection | 1881

The complete poetry text of Morris's first collection.

“Uncle Sam’s” Soliloquy

I’m a century old and more to-day,—
A ripe old age for a modern man,—
Yet they who rocked my cradle, they say,
Predicted a thousand years my span;
They christened me at the fount of prayer,
And gave me a star-gemmed robe to wear.

My first free breath was the battle-smoke,
And prayerful nurses did not abhor
The sounds that first my ear awoke—
The clash and din and shout of war.
They pressed in my hand a crown of might
And pointed my way to the eagle’s flight.

Cannon and sword were my playthings to bless,
(Dangerous toys for a babe to try,)
The stirring reveille my morn caress,
The wild tattoo was my lullaby;
And well, methinks, as the years have run,
Have I wrought the work my sires begun.

An infant prodigy I, and ere
Expired a tenth of my granted day,
I wrested from lion-grasp the spear—
A nation’s power I held in sway;
I broke the gyves from freedom’s graves,
And steam and lightning I bound my slaves.

I flung my starred robe on the breeze,
From burning tropic to arctic cold.
On distant isles, in distant seas,
A foot-hold gained with sword and gold.
Atlantic’s slope and Pacific’s strand
I bound together with iron band.

But of late I’ve premature grown old;
There’s something wrong with the clothes I wear;
There is something wrong with the helm I hold,
Else I hold it wrong,—there’s wrong somewhere.
Disease too has thrown me his poisoned dart;

His workman are “striking” right at my heart.

My head is so strangely vision thrilled
With plans to evade the demon’s stay,
But all the plots that my brain have filled
Only have served to augment his sway,
And on my feet, at the sunset’s door,
Is spreading a troublesome grievous sore.

I’m growing ill I can plainly see,
And many prescribe my pain to ease,
But somehow each medicine proves to be
“A remedy worse than the disease.”
Though strong as ever, should once my strength
Give way, I must fall a fearful length.

My doctors say they know the cause,
And they’ve gone to work with eager zest,
Probed and expounded with weighty straws,
And leeches applied to my troubled breast;
I fee them well, as attests my purse,
But day after day I’m growing worse.

Though they have not yet touched the cause they knew,
And are wrangling over its direful flood,
They promise to build me better than new,
And stop the drain on my famished blood;
But lest they’re careful while building the dam
They’ll scoop out a grave for “Uncle Sam.”

Publication. First published in *Debris: Selections from Poems*. Sacramento: H. S. Crocker & Company, 1881, p. 41.

Home

“How many times and oft” has the sweet, sweet word been sung in song and told in story. And he sang sweetest of home, who had never a home on earth. If one to whom home was only a poet’s dream could portray its charms by only imagination, until a million hearts thrilled with responsive echo, how deeper, how more intense must be his longings and recollections who treasures, deep down in his heart, the sweet delights and pure associations that he has known, but never may know again. We do not appreciate our blessings until they have passed. We do not try to gather the sunbeams until the clouds have obscured them.

How many and many a youth, brave-hearted and true, answers with eager haste the war call of his native land, all heedless of the home he is leaving and the loving arms that sheltered him there. But when his soldier’s blood is crimsoning the sands beneath a foreign sky, the thoughts that go with his ebbing life are of home—all of home.

Who rushes from his home out into the world, blind devotee of fortune’s phantom goddess, to realize a phantom indeed, sits down in his despondency and his despair to dream of “dear old home.”

Yes, too, and the wretch—so seemingly depraved that nothing beautiful or pure of soul is left—who flings from him his life in mad suicide, goes out into that trackless eternity with home upon the lips of death. Then if the patter of baby’s feet, the glad ring of children’s voices echo within the walls of your home, if father and mother, and brothers and sisters brighten it with the sunshine of love, enjoy it while you may, make it your heaven, and be not in over-haste to break the ties that bind you there.

You may never weep, perchance, over a home made desolate by death; and yet, time—so surely as time is—will make it but only a memory. And all too late each heart will learn that it did not prize enough the blessedness of home.

Publication. First published in *Debris: Selections from Poems*. Sacramento: H. S. Crocker & Company, 1881, p. 55.

A Neglected “Woman’s Right”

I have listened to this cry of “Woman’s Rights,” this clamoring for the ballot, for redress for woman’s wrongs, and I could but think, amid it all, that there is one “woman’s right”—the right that could make the widest redress for woman’s wrongs—which she holds in her own hands and does not exercise. It is the right to defend, to uplift and ennoble womankind; to be as lenient to a plea for mercy from a fallen woman as though that plea had come from the lips of a fallen man; to throw around her also the broad mantle of charity, and if she would try to reform, give her a chance.

Far be it from any honest woman to countenance the abandoned wretch who plies an unholy calling in defiance of all morality, for her very breath is contamination; but why should you greet with smiles and warmest handclasps of friendship the man who pays his money for her blackened soul? When two human beings ruled by the same mysterious nature have yielded to temptations and fallen, what is this monster of social distinction that excuses the sin of one as a folly or indiscretion, while it makes that of the other a crime, which a lifetime cannot retrieve? It is a strange justice that condones the fault of one while it condemns the other even to death; that gives to one, when dead, funeral rite and Christian burial and to the other the Morgue and a dishonored grave, simply because one is a strong man and the other a weak woman. And it is a stranger, sadder truth that ’tis woman’s influence which metes out this justice to woman.

Mother, if you must look with scorn and contempt upon the woman who through her love for some man has gone down to destruction, do not smilingly acknowledge her paramour a worthy suitor for your own unsullied daughter. Maiden, if you must sneeringly raise your white hand and push back into the depths of pollution the woman who seeks to reinstate herself in the path of rectitude, do not permit the man who keeps half a dozen mistresses to clasp his arm around your waist and whirl you away to the soft measure of the “Beautiful Blue Danube.” If the ban of society forbids that you say to a penitent sin-sick sister, “Go and sin no more,” if you must consign her to the life of infamy which inevitably follows the deaf ear which you turn upon her appeal, then do it; but in God’s name do not turn around and throw open the doors of your homes and welcome to the sanctity of your family altars the man who enticed her to ruin.

Ah, woman, by your tireless efforts you may win the right to vote, your voice may be heard in the Assembly Halls of the Nation; but if you administer as one-sided a justice in political life as you do in social life, the reform for which you pray will never come!

Publication. First published in *Debris: Selections from Poems*. Sacramento: H. S. Crocker & Company, 1881, p. 65.

“It Is Life to Die”

“It is life to die,” the muse has sung,
The prophet words have rung from pole to pole,
The trust, the hope to which have many clung,
An echo woke in many a weary soul.

“Ah! welcome thrice if but that death would come
As sweeps the avalanche from Alpine height,
As falls the flashing storm-sent lightning-bolt,
Resistless in its terror and its might.

But oh! to die by slowest slow decay,
To clothe a dying heart in life’s warm breath,
When every day repeats a long eternity,
And every hour is but another death!”

O, God! why were we born to live a life,
From very thought of which our souls must shrink,
To sink down in the waves of human strife,
And ever only wait, and wait and think.

No wonder that so many hapless ones,
Too sensitive the specter to defy,
Arm, Hamlet-like, against a sea of woes,
And test the truth, that “it is life to die.”

Publication. First published in *Debris: Selections from Poems*. Sacramento: H. S. Crocker & Company, 1881, p. 75.

I Love Him for His Eyes

The wealth of golden tinted curls
Old Time will streak with snow;

The rose-bud mouth so dainty curved
To sterner lines will grow.

The fleeting years will mark with change
Each feature now they prize,
Save only the sweet eyes I love—
I love him for his eyes.

Those wondrous, wondrous soulful eyes,
How strange the spell they fling
Unconsciously around my heart;
What memories they bring!

What buried hours come thronging back—
A distant, dearer clime—
Another pair of love-lit eyes,
Another summer time.

Oh, baby, take your eyes away:
They burn into my heart!
I'll kiss you once, and say good-by,
And hide the tears that start;
But through the years to come and go,
The changeful scenes to rise,
I'll love the little baby boy—
I love him for his eyes.

Publication. First published in *Debris: Selections from Poems*. Sacramento: H. S. Crocker & Company, 1881, p. 91.

Poems

Expanded collection | 1885

The complete poetry text of the expanded 1885 collection.

Mystery of Carmel

The Mission floor was with weeds o'ergrown,
And crumbling and shaky its walls of stone;
Its roof of tiles, in tiers and tiers,
Had stood the storms of a hundred years.
An olden, weird, medieval style
Clung to the mouldering, gloomy pile,
And the rhythmic voice of the breaking waves
Sang a lonesome dirge in its land of graves.
Strangely awed, I felt, that day,
As I walked in the Mission old and gray—

The Mission Carmel at Monterey.

An ancient owl went fluttering by,
Scared from his haunt. His mournful cry
Wakened the echoes, till roof and wall
Caught and re-echoed the dismal call
Again and again, till it seemed to me
Some Jesuit soul, in mockery—
Stripped of Rosary, gown, and cowl—
Haunted the place, in this dreary owl.
Surely I shivered with fright that day,
Alone in the Mission old and gray—

The Mission Carmel at Monterey.

Near the chapel vault was a dungeon grim,
And they say that many a chanted hymn
Has rung a knell on the moldy air
For luckless errant prisoned there,
As kneeling monk and pious nun
Sang orison at set of sun.
A single window, dark and small,
Showed opening in the heavy wall,
Nor other entrance seemed attained
That erst had human footstep gained.
I paused before the uncanny place,
And peered me into its darksome space.
Had it of secret aught to tell,
That locked-up darkness kept it well?
I turned, and lo! by my side there stood
A being of strangest naturehood.

Startled, I glanced him o'er and o'er,
Wondering I noted him not before.
His form was stooped with the weight of years,
And on his cheek was a trace of tears;
Over all his face a shade of pain,
That deepened and vanished, and came again.
Fixed he his woeful eyes on me—
Through my very soul they seemed to see.
And lightly he laid his hand on mine—
His hand was cold as the vestal shrine.
"Tis haunted," he said, "haunted, and he
Who dares at night-noon go with me
To this cursed place, by phantoms trod,
Must fear not devil, man, nor God."
"Tell me the story," I cried, "tell me!"
And frightened was I at my bravery.
A curious smile his thin lips curved,
That well had my bravery unnerved.
And this is the story he told that day
To me, in the Mission old and gray—

 The Mission Carmel at Monterey.
"Each midnight, since have seventy years
Begun their cycle around the spheres,
Two faces have looked from that window there;
One is a woman's young and fair,
With tender eyes and floating hair.
Love, and regret, and dumb despair,
Are told in each tint of the fair sweet face.
The other is crowned with a courtly grace,
Gazing, with all a lover's pride.
On the beautiful woman by his side.
Anon! a change flits o'er his mien,
And baffled rage in his glance is seen.
Paler they grow as the hours go by,
With the pallor that comes with the summons to die.
Slowly fading, and shrinking away,
Clutched in the grasp of a gaunt decay,
Till the herald of morn on the sky is thrown;
Then a shriek, a curse, and a dying moan,
Comes from that death-black window there.

A mocking laugh rings out on the air,
From that darkful place, in the nascent dawn,
And the faces that looked from the window are gone.
Seventy years, when the Spanish flag
Floated above yon beetling crag,
And this dearthful mission place was rife
With the panoply of busy life;
Hard by, where yon canyon, deep and wide,
Sweeps it adown the mountain side,
A cavalier dwelt with his beautiful bride.
Oft to the priestal shrive went she;
As often, stealthily, followed he.
The padre Sanson absolved and blessed
The penitent, and the sin-distressed,
Nor ever before won devotee
So wondrous reverence as he.
A-nigh, when the winds played wild and high,
And the ocean rocked it to the sky,
An earthquake trembled the shore along,
Hushing on lip of praise its song,
And jarred to its center this Mission strong.
When the morning broke with a summer sun,
The earth was at rest, the storm was done.
Still the Mission tower'd in its stately pride;
Still the cottage smiled by the canyon-side;
But never the priest was there to bless,
And the cottage roof was tenantless.
Vainly they sought for the padre, dead,
For the cottage dwellers; amazed, they said
'Twas a miracle; but since that day
There's a ghost in the Mission old and gray—
 The Mission Carmel at Monterey.
“A sequel there is to that tale,” said he,
“Of the way and the truth, I hold the key.”
‘Show me the way,” I cried; ‘Show me
To the depth of this curious mystery!’
He waved me to follow; my heart stood still
Under the ban of a mightier will
Than mine. A terror of icy chill
O'er-shivered my being, from hand to brain,

Freezing the blood in each pulsing vein,
As I followed this most mysterious guide
Through the solid floor at the chancel side,
Into a passage whose stifling breath
Reeked with the pestilence of death.
Down through a subterranean vault,
Over broken steps, with never a halt,
Till we stood in the midst of a spacious room,
A charnel-house in its shroud of gloom.
Only a window, narrow and small,
Left in the build of the heavy wall,
Through which the flickering sunbeams died,
Showed passway to the world outside,
Slowly my eyes to the darkness grew,"
And I saw in the gloom, or rather knew,
That my feet had touched two skeleton forms,
One closely clasped in the other's arms.
Recoiling, I shuddered and turned my face
From the fleshless mockery of embrace.
Again o'er a heap of rubbish and rust,
I stumbled and caught in the moth and dust
What hardly a sense of my soul believes—
A mold-stained package of parchment leaves!
A hideous bat flapped into my face!
O'ercome with horror, I fled the place,
And stood again with my curious guide
On the solid floor, at the chancel's side.
But, lo! in a moment the age-bowed seer
Was a darkly frowning cavalier,
Gazing no longer in woeful trance;
Vengeance blazed in his every glance.
Then a mocking laugh rang the Mission o'er,
And I stood alone by the chapel door;
And, save for the mold-stained parchment leaves,
I had thought it the vision that night-mare weaves.
Hardly a sense of my soul believes,
Yet I held in my hand the parchment leaves.
Careful I noted them, one by one,
Each was a letter in rhyming run,
Written over and over, in tenderest strain,

By fingers that never will write again.
I strung them together, a tale to tell,
And named it "The Mystery of Carmel."
And these are the letters I found that day,
In the mission ruin, old and gray—
The Mission Carmel of Monterey:

To the Holy Father Sanson.

Oh, holy father, list thee to my prayer!
I may not kneel to thee as others kneel,
And tell my heart-aches with the suppliant's air,
But fiercer burns the fire I must conceal.
A father ne'er my brow in loving smoothed,
Nor taught my baby tongue to lisp his name;
No mother's voice my childish sorrows soothed,
Nor sought my wild, imperious will to tame.
Yet ran my life, like some bright, bubbling spring,
Too full of thoughtless happiness to care
If that the future might more gladness bring,
Or might its skies be clouded or be fair.
Afar upon the purple hills of Spain—
Since waned the moons of half a year ago—
I sported, reckless as the laughing main,
Nor dreamed in life a thought of grief to know.
To-day I pine here in a chain whose gall
Is bitterer than drop of wormwood brought
From that salt sea where nothing lives, and all
The recompense my willfulness has brought.
Oh, holy father, list thee to my prayer!
And though I may not kneel as others kneel,
And tell my heart-aches with a suppliant air,
I crave thy grace a sickened soul to heal.
Here, close beside this sacred font of gold,
My humble prayer, oh, father, I will lay,
With all its weight of misery untold;

And wait impatient that which thou wilt say.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita,

When to the font, this morn, my lips I pressed,
A fairy's gift my fingers trembled o'er;

A sweeter prayer ne'er smile of angel blessed,
Nor gemmed a tiar that the priesthood wore.

The secret of thy grief I may not know,
Since that thy lips refuse the tale to tell;
Methinks, dear child, it was the sound of woe
That woke an echo in my heart's deep well.

The wail of a spirit that a-yearning gropes
In darkness for the sunlight that is fled;
A broken idol in secret wept, and hopes—
Crushed hopes—that are to thee as are the dead.

A tender memory ling'ring yet of when
Each bounding pulse beat faster with its joy;

A something that allured, and won, and then
With waking fled, and years may not destroy

The impress which it left upon thy brain.
But seek thee, child, grief's ravaging to stay;
Thy tears might fall as falls the show'ring rain,
They could not wash the heart's deep scars away.

Repine thee not; shroud not thy faith in gloom;
Shrink not to meet a disappointment's frown;
Away beyond the narrow bordered tomb,
Who here have borne the cross may wear the crown.

To Sanson.

Whisper to him, fairies, whisper—
Whisper softly in his ear
That some one is waiting, waiting,
Listening his step to hear.

Fairies, if he knew his presence

Would a demon's spell allay,
Would he heed your timid whisperings?
Would he—will he come to-day?

Reyenita.

To Reyenita.

Fairies whisper, ever whisper,
In the silence of the night,
And he hears their voiceless murmurings
Floating in the starry light.

And they tell him; yes, they tell him,

All in accents sweet and clear,
Of the beautiful Hereafter
That is ever drawing near.

Of the loved ones waiting, waiting,
For his footfall on the shore;

They will welcome his appearing—
They will greet him o'er and o'er.

Sanson.

To Sanson,

Oh, would the fairies to her whisper,
The truths which they to him impart,
Teach her a beautiful hereafter,
A Heaven to bless a tired heart.
Yet thinks she that the dear ones waiting
Would envy not the boon she craves—
To rear fair friendship's sacred altar
Where love and hope sleep in their graves.

She knows not that a loving welcome
Will wait her in a realm of light,
Naught of a future meeting whispers,
No faith illumines her soul's dark night.
All she has known has to her proven
A false, deluding, fleeting show;
Can she, generous spirit, can she

Trust blindly what she does not know?

But if for this she shuts against her
The heart that's shining in his eyes,
She'll bring the gift that for the Peri
Unbarred the gates of paradise.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita,

If she'll let him be her teacher
In the mysteries of life,
In the spirit's grand unfoldment
Far beyond this world of strife.

A sacred altar he will build her,
And dedicate to friendship true,
And this shall be their bond of union,
More constant than all others knew.

Sanson.

To Sanson.

Kind teacher, henceforth be it mine
To kneel at friendship's sacred shrine,
And hope's bright budding flowers entwine
 Into a garland for thy brow.
And thou shalt wait not for the hours
To woo thee to elysian bowers,
 But wear it now.

Too long a dreamer I have been,
Too long life's dark side only seen;
And if thou canst, while thus I kneel,
The mystery of life reveal,
 Then gladly will I learn of thee.
For as on flowers the dewdrops fall,
As sunbeams break the storm-cloud's pall,

As pardon comes to lives which blame
Has crushed beneath its weight, so came
Thy sympathy to me.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita,

Life is love, and only love,
Love that had its source above.
It wreathes with flowers the chastening rod,
And diamond decks the throne of God.

Sanson.

To Sanson,

If "life is love, and only love,"
Then never have I lived before;
But for love's sake I'll sit me down
And careful con the lesson o'er.
I fain would win the shining goal,
So far away, so seeming fair,
But could not reach its highs alone;
Then, teacher, take me, take me there.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita.

Thy teacher, then, will take thee there,
And ever watch with tender care,
To guard thy way to loftiest aim,
And his reward thy love shall claim.

Sanson.

To Sanson,

O, inconsistent teacher,
He'd knowledge give away;
Fill head and heart, from tomes of art,
Then take me for his pay.

He'd kindly lead me to the realm
Where joyous freedom reigns,
He'd teach my soul love's sweet control,

Then claim it for his pains.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita,

Ah! Reyenita, do not charge

To selfishness thy teacher's plea,
He seeks thine every wish to bless,
His deepest fault is loving thee.
"Heaven's kingdom," said the Nazarene,
"Is in the heart;" sweet fairy queen,
Thou rulest alone this realm of mine,
Canst say I have no place in thine?

Sanson.

To Sanson.

They boast of Ormuz' milk-white pearls,
The ruby's magic art,
And proudly wear the crystal drop
That fires the diamond's heart.

And these may admiration claim,
And countless wealth may sway.
But rarer gem was given to me,
One golden summer day.

Were all earth's costly jewels thrown
In one great glittering heap,
They could not buy, for e'en a day,
The gem I'd selfish keep.

Yet 'twas not won from pearly depths,
Nor gleaned from diamond mine,
Nor all the chemist's subtlety
Its substance could define.

It ne'er was set in band of gold
A dainty hand to grace,
Nor shone in diadem to deck
A brow of kingly race.
For me alone, a wizard spell

Lies prisoned in its beams,
Hours of enchanted ecstasy
And days of Eden dreams.

Wouldst know the precious gift with which
For worlds I would not part?
The priceless jewel is thy love,
Its setting is my heart.

Reyenita.

Song—To Reyenita.

When midnight moon's soft gleaming
Wrapped earth in splendor bright,
Methought two dark eyes, beaming
In tender, radiant light,
Smiled on me in my dreaming,
A smile of heavenly bliss,
And loving lips, with finger-tips,
Flung to my heart a kiss.
Then come, love, come again in my sleep, to me,
For I'm dreaming, I'm dreaming, I'm dreaming of thee.

Sweet eyes my slumber breaking,
I wondering, wondering sought;
But eyes, and smile, at waking,
Had vanished like a thought.
And life may hence bring pleasures,
But never more the bliss,
When loving lips, with finger-tips,
Flung to my heart a kiss.
Then come, love, come again in my sleep, to me,
For I'm dreaming, I'm dreaming, I'm dreaming of thee.

Sanson.

To Sanson.

I've a beautiful home, where I live in my dreams,
So joyous and happy—an Eden it seems;
All beautiful things in nature and art

Are blending to rapture the mind and the heart;
No discords to jar, no dissensions arise,
'Tis calm as Italia's ever blue skies,
When kissed by the bright rosy blush of the morn,
And a voice of the spheres on the breezes is borne,
Soft as the murmur of sea-tinted shells,
Sweet as the chiming of far away bells;
And grief cannot enter, nor trouble nor care,
And the proud, peerless prince of my soul, he is there.

In my beautiful home, in the cold world apart,
He holds me so close to his fast beating heart;
More enchanting his voice than the syren-wrapt song,
O'er the wind-dimpled ocean soft floating along,
As he whispers his love in love's low, passionate tone,
Such home, and such love, no other has known.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita.

O, let us leave this world behind—
Its gains, its loss, its praise, its blame—
Not seeking fame, nor fearing shame,
Some far secluded land we'll find
And build thy dream-home, you and I,
And let this foolish world go by.
A paradise of love and bliss!
Delicious draughts in Eden bowers,

Of peace, and rest, and quiet hours,
We'll drink, for what we've missed in this.
The shafts of malice we'll defy,
And let this foolish world go by.

Sanson.

To Sanson,

Life of my life, my soul's best part,
I could not live without thee now;
And yet this love must break my heart,

Or break a sacred vow.

Which shall it be? an answer oft
From puzzling doubts I've sought to wake,
Must joy, or misery, hence be mine,
Must heart or promise break?

Alone, Heaven's highest court would prove
A desolated land to me;

Earth's barest, barren desert wild,
A paradise with thee.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita.

Thou hast beamed on my pathway, a vision of light,
To guide and to bless from afar;

To illumine with thy smile the dead chill of the night,
My star, my bright, beautiful star.

The sun pales before thee, the moon is a blot
On the sky where thine own splendors are;
And dark is the day where thy presence is not,
My star, my bright, beautiful star.

Sanson.

O love, do not call me a star!

'Tis too cold and bright, and too far
Away from your arms; I would be

The life-drops that flow in your veins,
The pulses that throb in your heart.
My bosom should be the warm sea
Of forgetfulness, tinged with the stains
Of the sunset; when day-dreams depart,
You should drink at its fountain of kisses,
Drink mad of its fathomless deep,
Submerged in an ocean of blisses,
I'd be something to kiss and to keep.
Loving, and tender, and true,

I'd be nearer, oh! nearer to you
Than the glittering meteors are;
Then, love, do not call me a star.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita.

Thou'st made for me an atmosphere of life;
The very air is brighter from thine eyes,
They are so soft and beautiful, and rife
With all we can imagine of the skies.

O woman, where is thy resistless power;
I swore the livery of Heaven to grace,
Yet stand, to-day, a sacrilegious tower,
Perjured by the witchery in thy face.

Sanson.

To Sanson.

Then, love, I'll give thee back thy perjured vow;
I would not hold thee with one pleading breath;
It may be best to leave the pathway now

That can but lead to death,

I shall not look in your dear eyes again,
Nor feel again the pressure of your hand;
Divided by a moaning gulf of pain,
Apart, forevermore, we stand.

God gave you here a mission that's divine;
'Tis your heaven's truth to spread;
Your life is beautiful, and blest—and mine?
Alas! the sea cannot give up its dead.

Why prizes most, the heart, a joy it misses?
And why did God make mouths that kill with kisses?
I'll crush the agonies that burning swell,
And say farewell.

Reyenita.

To Reyenita.

“Farewell?” No, not farewell; I’ll worship ever
Thy form divine.
No death’s despair, no voice of doom shall sever
My heart from thine.

Thou’st crowned me with thy love and bade me wear it,
I kiss the shrine.
I will not give thee up; nay, here I swear it,
That thou art mine.

* * * *

A desecrated holiness is o’er me,
I’ve held the Thyrsus cup;
I’ve dared the thunderbolts of Heaven for thee,
I will not give thee up.

Sanson.

World, farewell! And thou pale taper light, by whose fast-dying flame I write these words—the last my hand shall pen—farewell! What is’t to die? To be shut in a dungeon’s walls and starved to death? She knows, and soon will I. She sought to learn of me, and I to teach to her, the mystery of life. Ha! ha! Who claimed her by the church’s law has given us both to learn the mystery of death. What was’t I loved? The eyes that thrilled me through and through with their magnetic subtlety? They’re there, set on my face; but where’s their lifened light? What was’t I loved? The mouth whose coral redness I have buried in my own? ’Tis there, shrunk ’gainst two rows of dead pale pearls, and cold and colorless as lip of statue carved in marble. Was it the form whose perfect outline stamped it with divinity? It’s there, but ’reft of all its winsome roundness, and stiffening in the chill of death. It makes me cold to look upon its rigidity. But just this hour the breath went out; was ’t that I loved? ’Twas this I clasped and kissed. What is it that we’ve christened love, that glimmers men to madness, and stains with falsehood virgin purity? It made this gruesome charnel vault a part of Heaven—it made him spring the bolt and lock us in. Where is the creed’s foundation? I’ve shrived a thousand souls—I cannot now absolve my own. To quench this awful thirst, I cut an artery in my arm and sucked its blood. The thirstiness did not cease. They lied. ’Twas not the vultures at Prometheus’

heart, 'twas hunger at his vitals gnawed. The salt drops that I swallowed from that vein have set my brain on fire. What's that? The ground's a-tremble 'neath my feet as touched with life. Earth, rend your breast and let me in! For anything but this dire darkness, made alive with vengeful eye-balls—his eyes! They glare with hate at me. I heard him laugh but now, For anything but this most loving corpse whose head caressing rests it on my feet. Ah, no, I did not mean it thus; I would not get away alone. I loved that corpse. It was the sweetest bit of human frailty that to man e'er brought a blessing or a curse. I turned from Dias' holy grail to taste its nectar. Hell, throw a-wide your sulphur-blazoned gates, I'll grasp it in my arms and make the plunge! Hist! what was that? I heard him laugh again. Laugh, fiend, you cannot hurt me more. Ah! Reyenita; mine in-life you were, in death you shall be mine. When this clogged blood has stopped the wheels of life, I'll put my arms around your neck, I'll lay my face against your frozen one, and thus I'll die. When this foul place has crumbled to the sunlight, some relic-hunting lunatic will stumble o'er our bones, and pitiless will weave a tale for eyes more pitiless to read. Death's on me now. I feel his rattle in my throat! My limbs are blocks of ice! My heart has tuned it with the muffled dead-march drum? A jar of crushing worlds in my ears! A drowsy faintness creeps upon——

The seal is broken, the mystery fell;
You have read the letters, what do they tell?
Do they tell you the story they told that day
To me, in the Mission old and gray—
The Mission Carmel at Monterey?

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Two Days

But yesterday the world was bright and fair—
Too bright and fair to last of life a part.
I pinned a spray of lilacs in my hair,
 Another o'er my heart.

You praised the snowy blossoms that I wore,
You took one from my tangled, wind-blown hair
Such sweet content I had not known before—
 The world was fair—too fair.

The foam-tipped ocean waves broke at our feet,
And, shivering, died upon the long, low shore.
Their voices said, in tender tones and sweet:
 "Glad heart! Oh, grieve no more!"

To-day I wear white lilacs in my hair;
 I've pinned a snowy cluster on my breast;
But miss your voice, and 'neath the flowers fair
There burns a strange unrest.

To-day again the sky is bright and fair,
The same waves break and die upon the shore;
But, oh! the burden of the song they bear:

 "Poor heart! be glad no more!"

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 33.

Pearlie Has Gone Away

How still and lonesome the house is,
The sunshine looks paler to-day,
And the wind round the corners is whispering:
“Pearlie has gone away.”

No papers, cut with the scissors,
Scattered over the floor;
No scampering feet on the stairway,
No finger-marks on the door.
The flies on the window are tamer,
There’s no one to catch them to-day
And fasten them up in a bottle—
Pearlie has gone away.

There in the farthest corner
Is her “sailor-hat” on the floor,
Where she tossed it yesterday evening
As she bounded in at the door.
Somehow I couldn’t take it
And put it away to-day,
And a plate of mud cakes in the cupboard,
I couldn’t throw them away.

“Is she dead?” did you ask me? no, no!
My heart had a deeper pain
If never to still its throbbing
I’d clasp my darling again.
But the house is so still and so lonesome,
And the sun shines so coldly to-day,
And the wind round the corners keeps whispering:
“Pearlie has gone away.”

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 34.

Only a Tramp

Only a tramp by the roadside dead,
Only a tramp—who cares?
His feet are bare, his dull eyes stare,
And the wind plays freaks with his unkempt hair.
The sun rose up and the sun went down,
But nobody missed him from the town
Where he begged for bread ‘till the day he was dead.
He’s only a tramp—who cares?
Only a tramp, a nuisance gone.
One more tramp less—who cares?

Ghastly and gray, in the lane all day,
A soiled, dead heap of human clay.
Would the wasted crumbs in the rich man’s hall,
Where the gas-lights gleam and the curtains fall,
Have given him a longer lease of breath—
Have saved the wretch from starving to death?
He’s only a tramp—who cares?

Only a tramp! was he ever more
Than a beggar tramp? Who cares?
Was the hard-lined face ever dimpled and sweet?
Has a mother kissed those rough brown feet,
And thought their tramping a sweeter strain
Than ever will waken his ear again?
Does somebody kneel ‘way over the sea,
Praying “Father, bring back my boy to me?”
Does somebody watch and weep and pray
For the tramp who lies dead in the lane to-day?
He’s only a tramp—who cares?

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

A Valentine

I love thee for the soul that shines
Within thine eyes' soft beaming,
From out whose depths the prisoned fires
Of intellect are gleaming.

I love thee for the mind that soars
Beyond earth's narrow keeping,
That measures suns, and stars, and worlds,
Through boundless limits sweeping.

I love thee for the voice whose power
Can in my heart awaken
To passioned life each slumbering chord
The ruder tones have shaken.

Thou ne'er, perchance, mayst feel the chain
With which this love has bound thee,
Nor dream thee of the hand that flung
Its glittering links around thee.

And vainly mayst thou deem the task
Thy captive bounds to sever—
Who madly dates to love thee now
Will love thee on forever.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Love's Lamp

Afar, and long ago, in Egypt's land
A palace stood—

The palace of a king—wrought out by hand
In precious wood
Of curious carving, and in marble white
It gleamed and glistened in the sun's red light,
Close where the Nilus crept 'mid leaf and vine,
The palace of the Ptol'my's fateful line.

Within the center of the spacious hall,
Where sat the king
In royal state, admiring gaze of all
The lordly ring,
A single marble shaft stood white and lone
A'neer the gorgeous trappings of the throne;
A thing so perfect, beautiful and chaste
In monarch's presence erst had not been placed.

Upon the shaft, a hand that ne'er had sinned, Placed for support
A lamp brought from the distant shores of Ind To grace his court.
The king smiled on the quaint, strange gift, and told
His followers to light it; but the old,
The young, the ill-faced and the fair, in vain
Their skill applied—no light repaid their pain.

At length, one day, when years and years had passed, The weary king,
Yielding to persuasion, said at last,
“Destroy the thing.”

When from the crowd a maiden, fair and sweet,
Came forth, and flung her at the monarch's feet,
And begged, in pitying tone, that he would spare
The beauteous lamp that hung so useless there.

“If thou canst light it,” said the king, “I will Grant thy request.”
The maiden timidly approached it, still
And trembling pressed
She closely to the object of her love,
And gently breathed upon it. Quick above

Her downcast head a matchless brilliance came—
The sacred fire had leaped into a flame.

Amazed, each wondering courtier bowed his head As to a shrine.
Then spoke the king, and to the maiden said, “The lamp is thine!

Go, take it to thy home, and guard it well;
But thou alone couldst find its hidden spell;
But for thy breath its magic brightness lives—
Love’s silent tribute unto love it gives.”

The human heart’s a buried lamp like this.

To light it, vain

Each softly wooing voice, each tender kiss—

No touch remains;

All passionless it lies beyond their ken,

Until the right soul breathes upon it; then

The slumbering fire bursts its prison thrall,

And joyous to the conqueror yields it all.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 38.

To Unknown

Sweet minstrel, came thy tender lay
Into the desert of my heart,
As dew-drops fall on flowers of May
When burning Summer suns depart.
 But oh, thou bidst me sing a strain
 That ne'er my voice may wake again.

Sweet minstrel, were it mine the power
To strike for thee this golden lyre,
Like hence had not a lonely hour
Thy generous heart to bind and tire.
I'd sweet its quivering strings until
The prisoned soul of melody
Beneath my hand's warm touch should thrill
And sing it low and tenderly;
 Aye, till the cadence of my lute
 Were unto thee the lotus fruit.

But ah, for me its chords are all
Untuned, unstrung; it could not bless

Thy life e'en with one joyous call
To woo thee from thy loneliness.
 The saddest strain it ever knew
 It sings for thee—adieu, adieu.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 41.

O, Speak It Not

O, speak not hastily the word
Thine ear from idle tongues has heard.
If false the tale thou couldst recall,
How hard, and cruel must it fall?
If true, why, helping it along
Will never, never right the wrong.
O, speak it not, not speak the word
That wounds, though but in jest 'tis heard;
Keep back the thrust, the look askance,
The petty doubt, the sneering glance;
Keep back the taunts and jeers,
Life has enough of breaking hearts,
Of pointed barbs and venom'd darts—
Enough of pain and tears.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

After All

So I—capricious-minded,
Whose fancy a whim could thrall—
Whom you taught love's truth of loving
Was truest after all!

Watching to-night the sunset,
I saw the sun go down
In a sea of crimson splendor—
In its own red sea—to drown;
Like the sun in the sunset glory,
The sun of my hopes went down.

Over a couch I'm bending
With eyes that are wet with pain,
Where, wrapped in its shroud of memory,
My beautiful love lies slain.
Slain by a random arrow,
Shot from a bow unstrung;

Dead, with its depths unsounded,
The wealth of its song unsung.

The stars will shine in the winter,
And the spring-tide come and go,
The summers will burn and revel,
And the autumn winds will blow.

But the gleam of the stars is vanished
Out of their silver mist,
The sparkle gone from the dew-drops
That the purple violets kissed';

The joy from the throbbing pulses
In the heart of the summer warm,
The tint from the autumn's colors,
The grandeur out of the storm,

Ever and ever, to-morrow,
The sun will arise again
From its yellow and opal ocean—
From its crimson sea of pain;

But the sun that went down in its sorrow
Will rise from it never again.

So I—capricious-minded,
Whose fancy a whim could thrall—
Whom you taught love's truth of loving,
Was the truest, after all!

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 42.

Wasted Hours

If that thy hand with heart-will sought,
To work with Christ-love underlying,
But ere thou hadst accomplished aught
Time passed thee by while vainly trying,
 The wasted hour, the vain endeavor,
 Will wait thee in the far forever.

If thou hadst toiled from dawn till eve,
But felt no thrill of joy in giving
No heart made glad, no want relieved,
Lived but for selfish love of living,
 Though idle hours went by thee never,
 The hours are lost to thee forever.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Life's Way

Good-bye, sweetheart, he said, and clasped her hand,
And rained his kisses on her tear-wet face;
Then broke away, and in a foreign land,
For her dear sake, sought gold, that he might place
Love's jewelled crown upon his queen's fair brow,
And pour his hard-won treasures at her feet;
And swore, than Heaven, than life itself, his vow
To her he held more sacred and more sweet.

She waited as the woman only may
Whose eyes are blinded oft with unshed tears;
Lines on her forehead grew, and threads of gray;
The weary days crept into weary years.

"Oh star, go down! Oh sun, be shrouded now!
My love comes not; he does not live," she said;
And brushed the curls he'd kissed back from her brow,
And put on mourning for her dead.

And still as oft the day came round that he
Had left his warm good-bye upon her lips,
As oft she sought the headland by the sea,
And longing watched the far-off white-sailed ships.

To-day, the low sand-beach was over-strewn;
Torn sail, and broken spar and human form,
'Gulfed by the waves, and crushed, and then out-thrown—
A ship went down in yester-night's wild storm.
She walked among the debris, and the dead,
As some sweet mercy-sister on her round,
Scanning each up-turned face with nameless dread,
For aught of life; her tireless searching found

A babe—a waif with tawny tangled locks,
And great blue eyes with wonder brimming o'er;
Of all the human freight wrecked on the rocks,
The only living thing that washed ashore.

A pearl-gemmed golden case upon its breast
She oped, then stared, her eyes a-sudden wild,
A name, a pictured face told all the rest;
His name—his face—his child!

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Garfield

Toll the bells high in the steeple,
Slowly toll a mournful lay.
Ring a knell for all the people,
A nation is bereft to-day.

Lower the starry flag above us,
Drape its floating folds in grief,
Bid the eyes of those who love us,
Weep with us our fallen chief.

Close the door of trade, and hush the
Song of praise, and bow the head;
Help to bear the woes that crush the
Hearts that weep our martyred dead.

Fallen at his post of duty,
Slain, a vile assassin's prey;
Tower of strength and moral beauty—
Dead at Elberon to-day.

Landward, through the valleys stealing,
Thrills a sigh that veils the sun;
Outward, o'er the ocean pealing,
Booms the dirgeful minute-gun.

Nor party, creed, nor rank, that gives him
Meed of grief above his clay,
Nor fame of conquest that outlives him—
The nation mourns the man to-day.

Ye whose lips are skilled in arts that
Know the soul's diviner way,
Kneel in praying for the hearts that
Break at Elberon to-day.

Ye who welcomed him with pleasure,
With shout and song in Autumn's gloam—
With arms reversed, and muffled measure,
Bear your murdered chieftain home.

The Difference

With odds all against him, struggling to gain,
From fortune a name, with life to maintain,
Toiling in sunshine, toiling in rain,
Never waiting a blessing Heaven-sent,
Working and winning his way as he went—
Whether he starved, or sumptuously fared,
Nobody knew and nobody cared.

With success-crowned effort that fate had defied,
That wrought out from fortune what favor denied,
Standing aloof from the world in his pride;
The niche he has carved on fame's slippery wall
Friends are proclaiming with heraldry-call.
His Croesus-bright scepter has magical sway,
Yester's indifference solicits to-day.
His daring his triumph, how daily he fares,
Every one knows, and anxiously cares.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Enmaze

A fisherman rocked in his boat on the tide
And dropped his net in the sea,
And he sang as he worked, and the rising tide
Drifted his voice to the water-side—
Echoed his voice on the lea.

A maiden mended the fisherman's nets
At the water-side on the lea,
And she listened and longed as she patient wrought,
And no sound was so sweet, the maiden thought,
As the fisherman's song on the sea.

A maiden stood in the mist-moonlight
Gazing out o'er the water wide,
Straining her eyes through the paling light,
And around her feet in the deepening night
Crept slowly the rising tide.

The mermaids braided the maiden's hair
Under the depths of the sea—
Braided her long, bright golden hair
Into a shimmering wonderful snare
Under the fathomless sea.

The fisherman smiled as he sang his song,
For a maid too fond and fair—
A mermaid floated the waves along
And prisoned the soul of the fisherman's song
In a net of golden hair.

And ever and e'er when the twilight falls,
And the moonlight pales on the sea,
A voice on the ear of the fisherman falls,
A song that his soul and his sense entralls
Drifts over the lonesome sea.

And deaf to the warn that a death will snare,

He follows the song on the sea;
But he comes not back for a shimmering snare.
A wonderful weft of golden hair
Is waiting him under the sea.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 49.

Why?

Why is it we grasp at the shadow
That flits from us swift as thought,
While the real that maketh the shadow
Stands in our way unsought?
And why do we wonder, and wonder,
What's beyond the hill-tops of thought?

Why is it the things that we sigh for
Are the things that we never can reach?
Why, only the sternest experience
A lesson of patience can teach?
And why hold we so careless and lightly
The treasures that are in our reach?

Why is it we wait for the future,
Or dwell on the scenes of the past,
Rather than live in the present
Hastening from us so fast?
Why is it the prizes we toil for,
So tempting in fancy's mould cast,
Prove, when to our lips we have pressed them,
Only dead-sea apples at last?
And why are the crowns, and the crosses,
So wondrous inequally classed?

Ask it, ye, over and over,
Let the winds waft your question on high,
Till memory wanes with the ages,
Till the stars in eternity die.
And out from the bloom and the sunshine,
From the rainbow o'erarching the sky,
From the night and the gloom and the tempest,
Echo will answer you, "Why?"

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

“I Don’t Care”

“I don’t care,” we hear it oft
And oft, the words are seeming fair;
But many a heartache lies beneath
A careless “I don’t care!”

In every age, from every tongue,
The vain assertions fell;
But oh, trust not the cheating words,
For never truth they tell!
Hearts may grow sick with hope deferred,
Be crushed with black despair,
But lips, too proud to own defeat,
Will whisper, “I don’t care!”

A thoughtless friend flings out in jest—
As jesters always do—
A deadly shaft you wince beneath,
You know the story’s true;
But while the dart has pierced your heart,
And poisoned, rankles there,
You look amused, and answer with
A smiling, “I don’t care!”

When Fortune’s favors are withdrawn,
And friends like shadows fled,
When all your fondest dreams are gone,
Your dearest hopes are dead,
You curse the fickle goddess, then,
Who wrought you such despair,
Yet hide chagrin beneath a frown,
And mutter, “I don’t care!”

The veteran, battle-scarred, who fills
A nation’s honored place,
Feels keener than his saber’s point,
Unmerited disgrace.
With indignation all aflame
He meets some rival’s stare;
But for all answer gives the worlds
A freezing “I don’t care!”

A woman's heart is trifled with,
Her hopes are ground to dust,
Her proud soul humbled with neglect,
Betrayed her sacred trust,
Yet, while to desperation stung,
With death and ruin there,
She'll crush the tears and cheat you with
A laughing "I don't care?"

"I don't care!" 'tis but a breath,
The words are seeming fair,
But many a heartache lies beneath
A careless "I don't care!"

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Beware

Beautiful maiden,
So daintily fair,
Thy rose-hued lips,
Thy soft, flowing hair,
Symmetric perfection,
Sweet, winning face,
The charms that thou wearest
A palace might grace;
And yet thy bright beauty
May wreck and despair.
Beautiful maiden,
Beware! oh, beware!

There are flattering tongues
That 'twere death to believe,
And loves who woo
But to win and deceive;
For innocent feet
There is many a snare.
Beautiful maiden,
Beware! oh, beware!

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Put Flowers on My Grave

When dead, no imposing funeral rite,
Nor line of praise I crave;
But drop your tears upon my face—
Put flowers on my grave.

Close not in narrow wall the place
In which my heart finds rest,
Nor mark with tow'ring monument
The sod above my breast.

Nor carve on gleaming, marble slab
A burning thought or deed,
Or word of love, or praise, or blame,
For stranger eyes to read.

But deep, deep in your heart of hearts,
A tender mem'ry save;
Upon my dead face drop your tears—
Put flowers on my grave.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

The Hunter's Song

Let them sing, they who will, of the pleasures that cloy
In the heart that receives and the heart of the giver;
But give me the wild and untrampling joy
That thrills through my veins by the mountain and river.

Then oh, for the hills,
For the sun-tinted rills,
For the days that grow wearisome never;
The blue sky is o'er me,
The world is before me,
And my heart it is singing forever.

No sighing at beauty's proud foot-stool for me,
No bacchanal's night of carousing;
But the heights of the mountains, the moon-silvered lea
And the haunt where the red deer is browsing.

Then oh, for the hills,
For the sun-tinted rills,
For the days that grow wearisome never;
The blue sky is o'er me,
The world is before me,
And my heart it is singing forever.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 56.

A Vision from the Tower

I stood on the top of the tower one day—
The electric tower in San Jose—
And never again, till the day I die,
Will a vision so beautiful bless my eye
As that which below and around me lay
From the top of the tower in San Jose.

One lone little cloud slow floated above,
A dot in the reamless azure deep,
As white as the soul of a baby's love,
As still as the stars when the night winds sleep.
I thought 'twas the mist of an angel's breath,
Frozen, and floating away to death.
Far down below me, around, away,
A curious picture the city lay.
It seemed that whim of a geni's hand
Had waved above its divining wand,

And wafted there, from some mythic place,
A people of liliputian race.
And curve of nature, and line of art,
And light, and shadow, and human mart,
Were strangely blended, below, that day,
As I stood on the tower in San Jose.

From the shadowy side of Almaden
 Hazily rolled the valley away—
Away to the east, and the west, and then
 Lost in the misty blue of the bay.
From a myriad fires up-wreathed the smoke
Into weird, fantastic forms, and broke,
And hung like a city the landscape o'er—
The phantom city of a legend lore.
And mountain and plain-land, forest and stream,
Flushed bright in the gold of the sunset's gleam,
Bare sloping hill, and vale low and sweet,
Blushed bright in the glow of the sun's warm kiss,
The land that never the prophet's feet
Might tread, meseems, was a land like this

Marvelous gem the master of skills
Set in the amethyst crown of the hills.
Words are all too weak to portray
The vision I saw from the tower that day.

I have stood on a mountain crag and seen
A world of grandeur beneath me spread,
The valleys that slept in their peaceful green,
And the hills that echoed an army's tread,

I have heard on the shore the thunderous shocks,
When the storm-dashed waves burst on the rocks;

And my soul has trembled in silent prayer
To the God who holds the waters there,
But never again, till the day I die,
Will a vision so beautiful bless my eye
As that which below, and around me lay,
From the top of the tower in San Jose.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 57.

Forever

There are trees that bend in the weight of a storm,
 Then rise again to the bright blue sky;
And under the weight of the crushing storm
 There are trees that break, and fall, and die.

Our human hearts are alike to these;

One heart, when the tempests sweep life's plain,
Will moan with the cry of the moaning seas,
Then smile in the sun, and forget its pain.

And for one, when a face that was all in all,
 Is hid from its sight in the grave's deep gloom,
No more will the joyous sunshine fall,
 Never again will the roses bloom.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 62.

Which One?

Each was as fair as the other,
And both as my life were dear;
And the voices that lisped me mother,
Heaven's music in my ear.

One faded from life—and mother,
And died in the summer dawn;
And I turned away from the other
And wept for the child that was gone.

Then I lay in a weird sleep-vision,
Before me an earth dark scene,
And the land of the sweet Elysian,
And only a grave between.

One child soft called me mother
Out from the shining door,
And smile and beckoned; the other
Unconsciously played on the floor.

One's path, to my inward seeing,
Was light with a wondrous day,
And led to the heights of being,
And an angel showed the way.

The other lay where Marah's
Hot sands with snares are strewn—
Through many a darksome forest,
And the way was roughly hewn.

A faith to my soul was given—
The weird sleep-vision o'er—
And I turned from the child in heaven
To the child that played on the floor.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Estrangement

Only a “something light as air,”
Which never words could tell,
Yet feel you that between your lives
A cloud has strangely fell;
Though never a change in look or tone,
A change your heart is grieving;
You sentient feel the friend you love
Has deemed you are deceiving.

A promise rashly given has bound
Your lips the truth to screen,
The nameless something gathers fast
As mist the hills between;
You wrap you in your cloak of pride,
The words are never spoken
That might have thrown the portal wide,
And friendship’s tie is broken.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Nay, Do Not Ask

Nay, do not ask me, Sweet, if I have loved before,
Or if, mayhap, in other years to be,
A younger, fairer face than thine I know,
I'll love her more than thee.

What should it matter if I've loved before,
So that I love thee now, and love thee best?
What matters it that I should love again
If, first, the daisy-buds blow o'er thy breast?

Love has the waywardness of strange caprice,
One can not chain it to a recreant heart,
Nor, when around the soul its tendrils twine,
Can will the clinging, silken bonds to part.

It is enough, I hold thee prisoned in my arms,
And drink the dewy fragrance of thy breath;
And earth, and heaven, and hades, are forgot,
And love holds carnival, and laughs at death.

Then do not ask me, Sweet, if I have loved before,
Or if some day my heart might turn from thee;
In this brief hour, thou hast my soul of love,
And thou art Is, and Was, and May be—all to me.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Opening the Gate for Papa

Hurrying out to the gateway
Go two little pattering feet;
Eagerly out through the palings
Peer two eyes bright and sweet.

A footstep as eager is answering
The sweet eyes that patiently wait
And papa is kissing, and blessing
The baby that opens the gate.

And every day all the long Summer,
At noontime and evening late,
The little one's watching for papa—
Waiting to open the gate.

And now the bright Summer is ended,
And Autumn's gay mantle unrolled;
The maple leaves wooing the breezes
Are gorgeous in crimson and gold.

At noonday the face at the gateway
Is flushed with a feverish glow,
At night the bright head on the pillow
Is tossing in pain to and fro.

The father kneels down in his anguish,
And stifles the sobs with groan;
He knows that his idol is going—
Going out in the midnight alone.

He buries his face in the pillow,
Close, close, to the fast failing breath;
A little arm clasps his neck closely,
A voice growing husky in death

Says pleadingly, half in a whisper:
"Please, darling papa, don't cry;
I know Birdie's going to Heaven—
I heard doctor say he will die;

"But I'll ask God for one of the windows
The pretty star-eyes look out through,

And when you come up with the angels
I'll sure be the first to see you.

“And maybe I'll find my dear mamma;
And you'll come up, too, by-and-by,
And Birdie will watch for you, papa,
And open the gate of the sky.”

The little hand falls from his shoulder
All nerveless, the blue eyes dilate,
A shuddering sigh, then the baby
Is waiting to open the gate.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Bring Flowers

Bring flowers, bring flowers, thou Queen of the Spring,
 Sweet flowers to garland the earth,
Exotics to bloom in the mansions of wealth,
 Wild flowers for the lowly hearth.
 Bring flowers for the brave and strong-hearted,
 Bring flowers for the merry and glad,
 Bring flowers for the weak and despairing,
 Bring flowers for the weary and sad.

Bring flowers, bring flowers, thou Queen of the Spring,
 Sweet flowers, the dark hours to cheer.
Bring flowers for the little ones, flowers for the aged,
 Bring flowers for the bridal and bier.
In this beautiful, sun-lighted Springtime,
 Bring flowers their fragrance to shed,
 To brighten the homes of the living,
 To garnish the graves of the dead.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Hang Up Your Stocking

Laugh, little bright-eyes, hang up your stocking;

Don't count the days any more;

Old Santa Claus will soon be knocking,

Knocking,

Knocking at the door.

Then laugh, little bright-eyes, and hang up your stocking;

Don't count the days any more;

Old Santa Claus will soon be knocking,

Knocking,

Knocking at the door.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

White Honeysuckle

White honeysuckle, “bond of love,”
Emblem born in Orient bowers,
Whence mythic Deities have wooed,
And told the soul’s desire in flowers.
As sweet thy breath as Eden’s balm,
As sweet and pure. Methinks that erst
Thy flower was of our earth a part,
Some angel hand the seed immersed
In fragrance of the lotus’ heart,
And dropped it from the realm of calm.
And life of earth, and life above,
Thou bindest with they “bond of love.”

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

The Flower I Love

The little white chrysanthemum,
That blooms in wintry weather,
I love and guard and cherish more
Than all the flowers together.

Not for its fragrance, or its grace,
Or beauty's charm above it;
But just because it touched her breast
I bless the flower, and love it.

Her white, white cheeks, her lips, her hair,
I kissed the day she wore it—

Her heart was still within her breast,
Her hands were folded o'er it.

The flowers will bloom again, again,
The stars will shine forever;

But oh! the lips that I kissed then
Will kiss me never, never.

And so I love and cherish more
Than all the flowers together,
The little white chrysanthemum
That blooms in wintry weather.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 72.

The Pale Boatman

They tell of a boatman, cold and pale,
 Who waits on the shores of a fathomless river
With a noiseless oar and a white-winged sail,
And he wafts the soul to the dim Forever.
O, who is the boatman, pallid and slow,
And where does the white-winged vessel go?

We have named him Death, who with ruthless grasp
Each tie of our hearts will snap and sever;
But whence is the source of his icy clasp,
And where is the distant, dim Forever?
When the pulse is stilled and the eyes are dim,
Where goeth the soul that goes out with him?

Suggested by reading “Lights and Shades in San Francisco.”

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 76.

Out in the Cold

Out from a narrow, crowded street,
Sick'ning resort of shame and crime,
Wearing upon her brow a curse,
Out in the darkness, lost to sight,
Out in the dreary Winter night,
Fleeing a fate than Nessus worse.
On through the gathering mist and dew
'Till the fog-wrapped city is hid from view;
'Till the rugged cliffs with the waters meet,
And the mingled voices from every clime
And the hurrying tramp of reckless feet
Are drowned in the breakers' sobbing rhyme.
But farther out than this ocean beach,
Farther than Charity's hands will reach,
Farther than Pity dares to come,
Is she who rushes, with white lips dumb,
To repeat the tale that too oft is told—
 Out in the cold.

From the loathesome dens whose scenes appal,
Whose tainted breath's the Simoom's blast;
Away on the dizzying, surf-washed rock,
Pausing a moment upon the brink—
Pausing a moment perchance to think;
Sliding the bolt in Memory's lock,
And back in its dusty, haunted hall,
Living again the vanished past—
Living her happy childhood o'er;
Chasing the butterflies over the flowers,
Petted and loved, a girl again,
Dreaming away the golden hours;
Living again another scene,
Flattered and toasted "beauty's queen;"
Taking again, with a merry laugh,
From gallant hands a sparkling draught.
O, angels, tell her 'tis a draught of woe!
That ruin lies in its amber glow.
Over the rest let oblivion fall,

Cover it up with a funeral pall;
Turn away with a shudder and groan,
Let her live it over alone.
Few are the months, as they count, since then;
Short and joyous they else had been
That to anguished heart and maddened brain
Are long decades of woe and pain.
Over, again, on the wings of thought,
Treading the path which her ruin wrought;
Over again each step she went,
From the sunny home to the swift descent,
Where sin lies hidden 'neath a gilded pile,
Down to the haunts of the low and vile.
One more step and it all is done.
Only a shriek the midnight breaks—
Only a splash in the waves below,
A wider ripple the water makes.
The rock is bare by the ocean side—
A death-white face with the ebbing tide
Is floating away from the headland bold—
 Out in the cold.

A lifeless form, in the wintry dawn,
Left on the sand by a rising swell;
A story of weakness, shame, and wrong
Mutely the frozen features tell.
Noiseless falls on it, the tears of dew,
Over it softly the breezes blow;
Wavelets, kissing the tangled hair,
Murmur a requiem sad and low.
Out to the barren, bleak hillside
Rough hands bear it with scorn and jest.
Cradled once in a mother's arms—
Once by a mother's fond lips pressed—
Under the clods of a new-made grave;
A rough-hewn board at the foot and head,

Where never a flower of love shall wave;
Left with the city's nameless dead—
Left with her fate unwept, untold—
 Out in the cold.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Watching the Shadows

Watching the shadows, the fire-light shadows,
That gather and play on the wall;
Dark, flitting shadows, fanciful shadows,
That gather and rise and fall.
Reading the fire shadows' language of shadows,
Pages of darkness and light—

Watching, watching,
Watching the shadows to-night.

Watching the shadows, the fire-light shadows,
That over the wall fitful play;
Dreaming of shadows, dreaming of shadows,
Deep darker shadows than they.
Heart-shading shadows, soul-darkening shadows,
Flitting in memory's light—

Dreaming, dreaming,
Watching the shadows to-night.

Watching the shadows, the fire-light shadows,
Merrily dancing about,
Wondering if heart-shadows vanish like shadows,
When life's fitful flame has gone out;
Wondering if shadows are deep, darker shadows,
Aeons of ages of blight;

Wondering, wondering,
Watching the shadows to-night.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

I Give Thee Back Thy Heart

I give thee back thy fickle heart,
Thy faithless vows I've spurned,
I bury deep the blighted hopes
That in my bosom burned.

Yet who had thought a brow so fair,
From guile so seeming free,
A voice so sweet, so winning rare,
So treacherous could be?

Who would have dreamed a form that seemed
Proud Honor's templed shrine,
Could hold within an urn of sin
A soul so false as thine?

Nor strange 'twould be, if ne'er again,
Till age had wasted youth,
That heart betrayed by such as thou,
Could trust in human truth.

But go! and though thy wiles no more
Will move my heart to strife,
Canst glad thy vain soul with the thought
That thou hast wrecked a life.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

In the Twilight

In the twilight gray and shadowy,
Deepening o'er the sunset's glow,
Softly through the mystic dimness
Flitting shadows come and go.

As my thoughts in listless wandering
With these phantom shadows fly,
Meseems they wear the forms of faces,
Faces loved in days gone by.

One by one I recognize them
As they silent gather near;
Some are loving, childish faces,
Knowing naught of grief or care.

Some are blooming, youthful faces,
Victory confident to win,
Some are from the contest shrinking,
Wearied with the strife and din.

Some are aged, wrinkled faces,
Time life's sands has nearly run;
Not a leaflet spared of Springtime,
Not a furrow left undone.

Other faces, sweet, sad faces,
Wafted o'er the Lethean sea,
Radiant smile in twilight shadows,
But they came not back to me.

In the twilight, dreamy twilight,
When the sultry day is gone,
Quietly o'er vale and hillside,
Tenderly as blush of dawn,

Come the timid evening breezes,
Sighing through the Summer leaves,
Transient as thought's pencil-paintings,
Sweet as weft that fancy weaves.

And as shadows in the twilight
Shapeful forms of faces wear,

So these dainty, light-winged zephyrs,
To my hearing, voices are.

Voices whose sad intonations
Seemingly, as flit they past,
Bring to memory hopes long shattered,
Blissful dreams too bright to last.

Voices, merry laughing voices,
Fondly loved in other years,
Mournfully are whispering to me
That their mirth was drowned in tears.

Telling of a fairer fortune
Far away 'neath tropic skies,
Telling of a broken circle,
Scattered friends and severed ties.

Other kindly, loving voices,
Winning in the long ago,
Tell me now, as then they told me,
"Thou canst live for weal or woe."

Are these weird and mystic voices
But creations of the brain?
Only in illusive fancy
Must I hear their tones again?

Would some magic power lend me
Aid to stay the witching tone,
Art to pain the beauteous picture
Ere its impress swift has flown.

While I dreamed the day has faded,
Stars are shining overhead,
Evening winds have ceased to whisper,
Twilight's shadows all have fled.

Thus, too oft, our life-work seemeth,
And we, when disowned its sway,
Find we are pursuing phantoms,
Shadows in the twilight gray.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

A Thought of Heaven

Friend of my heart, you say to me
That your belief is this—
The heaven is but a vision rare
Of pure, ethereal bliss.

And life there but a dream enhanced,
Where never sound alarms;
Where flowers ne'er fade and skies ne'er cloud,
And voiceless music charms—

And save as see we in our dreams
The dear ones gone before,
The friends that here we knew and loved,
We'll know and love no more.

An endless and unbroken rest,
Nor change, nor night, nor day,
Where aimless, as in sleep, we'll dream
Eternity away.

Sweet friend of mine, that Heaven of thine
Methinks if overblest;
We could not work on earth enough
To need so long a rest.

Our human nature could not be
Content with rest like this,
And even bliss could cloy, if we
Had nothing else but bliss.

Great Nature's hand, in every plan,
Had laid in wise design,
But what design, or use, is in
This theory of thine?

If, when our earth-career is done,
All conscious life must cease,
And we drift on, and on, and on,
In endless, dreamy peace—

If Heaven is but a mystic spell,
Whose glowing visions thrall,
Why should we have a life beyond?
Why have a Heaven at all?

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

To Jennie

Farewell my darling, fare thee well,
Life hence has only dearth;
With thee it were too sweet a dream—
Too much Heaven, for earth.
Thou dost not know the depth of pain
This parting gives to me,
Nor how, as time drags weary on,
My soul will sigh for thee.

Each loved one that thou leavest here,
Some other love may wear,
Each heart will have some other heart
Its loneliness to share.
But I have nothing, darling, left—
You're all the world to me—
And only God and Heaven can know
The love I give to thee.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Light Beyond

Is your heart bowed down with sorrow;
Does your lot the hardest seem;
Think you of a brighter morrow,
Of a fairer future dream.

Have your prospects all been blighted;
Has each promise proved a snare;
Deepest wrongs are sometime righted,
Never yield you to despair.

Has the slanderer's tongue unsparing
Ruthless tarnished with its stain;
Was your good name worth the wearing—
Go and win it back again.

Would you rest where sunshine lingers;
You must toil the darkness through;
Only work with willing fingers,
Only live you brave and true.

Never care or trouble borrow,
“Trouble's real if it seems”—
Ever see a bright to-morrow,
Though you see it but in dreams.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Would You Care?

All day on my pillow I wearily lay,
With a stabbing pain at my heart,
With throbbing temples, and a feverish thirst
Burning, my lips apart.
If I longed for a touch of your soft, strong hand,
For you one little minute there;
For a smile, or a kiss, or a word to bless,
Would you blame me, love?—would you care?

When the long, long, lonesome day was done,
And you never for a moment came,
If I tried to shut you out of my heart,
Impatient at your name;
If disappointment's bitter sting
Was harder than pain to bear,
If I turned away with a doubting frown,
Would you blame me, love?—would you care?

Should I die to-night, and you saw me not
Again till my soul had fled
With its vain request, and my features wore
The white hue of the dead—
Would you place just once, in a last caress,
Your hand on my death-damp hair?
Would you give me a thought, or a fond regret?
Would you kiss me, love?—would you care?

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Good-Bye

Good-bye! Good-bye!
Once pledged we fondly o'er and o'er
That nought should cloud our love's bright sky;
Once thought we that we could not stay
Apart and live. But oh! For us
Fate willed it not to linger thus.
To-day earth's wintry poles apart
Are further not that we in heart,
Nor colder than our sunless way.
Passion and pride can do no more,
And you and I can only say
 Good-bye! Good-bye!

 Good-bye! Good-bye!
So sad it seems the sound of tears,
So sad it seems life's parting sigh,
And yet, alas! It can but be.
Deserted ghostly wrecks of
Once freighted with Hope's golden gleams,
Wrecks drifting on a sullen sea,
To mock the memory-haunted years,
Are all now left to you and me.
 Good-bye! Good-bye!

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Consolance

“Be brave?” why, yes, I will; I’ll never more despair;
Who could, with such sweet comforting as yours?
How, like the voice that stilled the tempest air,
Your mild philosophy its reasoning pours.

Go you and build a temple to the skies, and make
Your soul an alter-offering on the pile;
Then, from its lightning-riven ruin, take
Your crushed and bleeding self, and calmly smile.

When loud, and fierce, and wild, a storm sweeps o’er your rest,
Say that it soothes you—brings you peace again;
Laugh while the hot steel quivers in your breast,
And “make believe” you love the scorching pain.

See every earthly thing your life is woven round,
Fall, drop by drop, until your heart is sieved!
Go mad and writhe, and moan upon the ground,
And curse, and die, and say that you have prayed and lived!

Then come to me, as now, and I will take your hand,
And look upon your face and smile and say:
“All were not born to hold a magic wand;
Cheer up, my friend, you must be brave always.”

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

When the Roses Go

You tell me you love me; you bid me believe
That never such lover could mean to deceive.
You tell me the tale which a million times
Has been told, and talked, and sung in rhymes:
You rave o'er my "eyes" and my "beautiful hair,"
And swear to be true, as they always swear;
But the wrinkles will grow, and the roses go
And lovers are rovers oft, you know,
When the roses go.

I have heard of a woman, sweet and fair,
With dewy lips and shining hair,
And you pledged to her, on your bended knee,
The self-same vow you make to me.
She was fairer than I, I know;
She was pure and true, and she loved you so;
But the wrinkles will grow, and the roses go—
How she learned that trouble comes, you know,
When the roses go.

You're a man in each outward sense, I trow,
With the stamp of a god on your peerless brow.
You hold my hand in your thrilling clasp,
And my heart grows weak in your subtle grasp,
Till I blush in the light of your tender eyes,
And dream of a far-off paradise—
Almost forgetting that ever from these
Another was turned in her bleak despair.
But the wrinkles will grow, and the roses go—
I will answer you, love, my love, you know,
When the roses go.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

A Regret

Close on my heart was resting
A sunny, golden head,
As the dim gray of the twilight
Crept round with noiseless tread,

“Tell me a ’tory, mamma,”
The blue-eyed baby said,
“’Bout some itty birdies
In za itty birdie bed.

“’Bout fen oo was itty
An’ ze mens was wakin’ hay
An’ found free ittie birdies
Wiz za muzzer don away.”

“Some other time, my darling;
Mamma’s tired now.”
A shade of disappointment
Swept over baby’s brow.

The dear blue eyes grew misty;
O, lips that lived to blame,
That kissed and whispered “sometime” —
That “sometime” never came.

Again the dim, gray twilight
Creeps round with noiseless tread,
But on my heart is resting
No sunny, golden head.

No sweet voice pleads with mamma,
“Tell me a ’tory” now,
And only death can take away
The shadow on my brow.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

A Shattered Idol

O blame me not for the cruel words
In a moment of madness said;
The shadow that fell upon my life
Is cold as the shrouded dead.
Deem not I am hard and heartless;
My tears are as warm as thine;
'Twas clay that I crowned and worshipped,
And wept o'er its crumbled shrine.

To me, my passionate, deathless soul,
Was less than his finger-tips;
He turned away fro the gold of my love
For the dross on a wanton's lips.
My faith in his truth is broken—
Even truth itself is a lie.
I have cursed him!—but I love him,
And I'll love him till I die.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Poor Little Joe

A ring on the door bell,
Some one at the door,
Mute asking admittance
Where never before
A stranger in midnight,
In silence and stealth,
Sought access to gain
In a mansion of wealth.
Into the gaslight
A package is borne;
Quickly from round it
The wrappings are torn.
What is it? a baby!
What seek you to-night,
So rosy and smiling,
Nor in fear, nor in fright?

Ah! little intruder,
What is it you wear
So close to your breast?
Sure but hand in despair
Could have written the message
Unconscious you bear,
And “loved” and “God blessed” you
While leaving you there.
Let’s see the story
’Tis telling for you;
How brief and pathetic;
But can it be true?
A mother heart brokenly
Praying in grief
From hand of a stranger
Her baby’s relief.
“He’s helpless and homeless,
But stainless as snow;
O, take him and keep him—
My poor little Joe.”

That’s all there is of it,

If false or if true;
Yet long enough seems it,
And sad enough, too.
No love-welcomed greeted
The sweet baby face,
In the life that gave his life
There was not a place.
No place for the baby,
There's none for him here,
No heart that may give him
A smile or a tear.
Off to the refuge,
For such, he must go,
He's only a foundling—
Poor little Joe.

Deserted, forsaken,
Thrust out in the strife,
Adrift on the pitiless
Ocean of life.
What will become of him,
Who may decide
If good or if evil
His life shall betide.
No tender caresses
Ever to know,
Nor guidance, nor blessing—
Poor little Joe.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

The Ghosts in the Heart

They came in the hush of the midnight,
In the glare of the noonday start
Out from the graves we made them—
The graves we made in the heart.

There is love with its fickle fancies;
Its grave was so wide and deep,
And we heaped the mound with oblivion,
But the soul of love could not sleep.

And hate! ah, we buried it deeper
Than all the rest of the train;
But one word through memory flashing,
And its ghost comes back again.

There are phantoms of sunshiny hours
That fled when the summer time fled,
And specters that mock while they haunt us,
Long buried, but never dead.

And ever and ever an hour
Will come that the heart-wraiths control,
Till down from Eternity's tower
A banshee shall ring for the soul.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Old Aunt Lucy

Why into that darkened chamber
Walk you with such noiseless tread?
No slumbering one will awaken—
The sheeted form is dead.

Why gaze on the rigid features,
So white in death's embrace,
With such look of awe and pity?
'Tis only the same old face.

Why touch you now so tender
The hands that silent lay?
They're only the sunburned fingers
That toiled for you night and day.

Why now, with your tear-dimmed vision,
So softly do you press
Upon the wrinkled forehead
Your lips in sad caress?

How much of care had lighted
That lingering, loving kiss,
Had you in life but gave it—
You never thought of this.

No loving hand e'er brightened
Her life with tender care,
No mother's baby-kisses
Were ever hers to share.

Only for others caring,
The long, long years have fled;
Now, only, they say,—the neighbors—
“Poor old Aunt Lucy's dead.”

And they whisper a girl's ambition,
A name in the world to make;
'Way back in her vanished youth-time,
Gave up for a duty's sake.

But whatever had been the story
Of love, or grief, or woe,

It died with the heart, and no one
Will ever care or know.

The hands were hard and toil-stained,
And sallow the cheeks and chin,
But whiter not the snow-wreath
Than the soul that dwelt within.

And methinks a crown resplendent—
Just over the waveless sea—
With gems of self-denial,
Awaits for such as she.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Unspoken Words

Unspoken words may thrill the heart,
Their meaning be more deeply felt
Than all the glowing oratory
Poured at the shrine where reason knelt.
The fairest pictures art conceives,
The noblest sentiments of mind,
The loveliest, purest gems of thought
Are those which never are defined.

The hand that paints the rainbow dyes
Ne'er leaves a trace its skill to show—
The art that gilds the sunset skies
And tints the flower, we may not know.
Nor may we know the wizard power
Which o'er our being wields control,
Nor how, when silence seals the lips,
Heart speaks to heart and soul to soul.

We do not know from whence the life
Imbued in crystal drop of rain,
Nor why, when torn and trampled on,
The rose's fragrance will remain.
Nor know we why the tender tone
Will linger when love's dream is fled,
Now why the smile we loved will live,
Although the face it wreathed will be dead.

Some strangely fascinating spell
Steals o'er the heart in ethic's hour;
We know not what, nor how, nor why,
Still must we own we feel its power—
A power that wakens slumbering dreams,
Intangible emotion swells,
That penetrates the soul's deep fount,
And greets the tide that from it wells.

It is not charm of form or face,
Nor is it long contact of years
That wins this mutual soul response,
This spirit sympathy endears.

A theory by time engraved
Fro life, one mad impulse may sweep—
A glance may into being start
Vain hopes that nevermore may sleep.

The quiet touch when hands are clasped
Would seemingly no sense impart,
Yet may it wake a deathless theme
And send it quivering to the heart.
And thus may kindred spirits feel,
Though tone of voice be never heard,
The sweet impassioned eloquence,
The magic of unspoken words.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

O! Take Away Your Flowers

O! take your pale camellias back;
Their soft leaves, waxen white
And odorless, too ill accord
With my dark mood to-night.

I do not want your hot-house flowers,
They're like the love you give—
A something tame and passionless
That breathes but does not live.

You take my hand as though you feared
Your clasp were over-bold,
Your kiss falls light as flake of snow,
And just as calm and cold.

I'd rather have your hatred
Than this lifeless loving claim,
If your heart beat one throb faster
At mention of my name.

Leave me, and bind those soulless leaves
A calmer brow above;
I cannot wear your flowers to-night—
I do not want your love.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Rain

Drop! drop! drop!
With a ceaseless patter fall,
With a sobbing sound on the sodden ground,
And the gray clouds over all.
Dost weep of the parted summer,
O, spirit of the rain?
For the vanished hours and the faded flowers
That never can come again?

The farmer smiles at they weeping,
Hushing the whispering leaves,
And dreams of days in the Autumn haze
And the gathered golden sheaves.
There's a voice of hope, a promise,
In the sound of thy refrain,
And as bright the hours and as fair the flowers
That will come to thee again.

And yet in our lives, though knowing
That we hold a scepter's sway,
How oft we turn with the thoughts that burn,
To weep on Autumn day.
Turn from the hopeful future
To weep in grief and pain,
For the vanished hours and the faded flowers
That never can come again.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

I Love Him for His Eyes

They praise the baby's dimpled hands,
His brow so broad and fair;
They kiss the dainty rose-bud mouth,
Caress the sunny hair.
His lisping words, his tottling steps,
His smiles they praise and prize;
They love him for his cunning ways,
I love him for his eyes.

The wealth of golden-tinted curls
Old Time will streak with snow;
The rose-bud mouth so dainty curved
To sterner lines will grow.
The fleeting years will mark with change
Each feature now they prize,
Save only those sweet eyes I love—
I love him for his eyes.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 105.

Only

Only a sentence earnest spoke,
With never a thought to word it,
Fell like balm from the sea of calm,
On the aching heart that heard it.

Only a glance, a scornful smile,
A wavering purpose altered,
Goaded a hand the crime to do
At which before it faltered.

Only a kiss, a love caress,
Tender and trustful given,
Banished a cloud from brow of care,
Made home a woman's Heaven.

Only a secret, chance disclosed,
Whence secret should be never,
A doubt crept into the heart that loved
And its light went out forever.

Only a prayer, a wrong confessed,
By suppliant lowly kneeling,
Opened the gate where the angels wait,
Life's Eden field revealing.

Careful then scatter the little things,
They make life drear and lonely,
Or strew its way with flowers gay,—
We live by trifles only.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

The Withered Rosebud

I gathered you, sweet little rosebud,
With a dew crown encircling your head;
Now, out of the window I toss you,
Shriveled, and scentless, and dead.
You had opened to wondrous perfection,
Had only my hand let you pass;
Yet here you have perished for water—
I forgot to put some in the glass.

Ah! poor little withered, dead rosebud,
How many a weak human heart,
Too like you, has famishing perished,
When life had but only a start?
Yes, many a heart, little rosebud,
Loving, and tender, and true,
For water has faded and withered,
And died in its beauty like you,
Not because there was dearth of life's fountain,
Nor the blessing to all might not pass,
But because the strong hand which it clung to
Forgot to put some in its glass.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881).

Lilies

With eyes a-dimmed and downcast,
She stood at the foot of the cross,
Bowling, in deep submission,
Under the weight of her loss,
And she held in her hand a lily,
Close at the foot of the cross.

A beautiful, perfect lily,
To lay at the Savior's feet;
Sign in her silent sorrow—
Of her worship—passion sweet—
A snowy, a sinless offering,
To lay at the Savior's feet.
“Behold thy mother and brethren!”

A voice came up from the crowd
To the ear of the dying Savior—
The Savior murmuring aloud:
“These are thy mother and brethren! ”

Looked on the muttering crowd.

And the mother's heart that was in her
Swelled with a jealous fear,
And down in the cup of the lily
Dropped she a burning tear—
Dropped on the snow of the lily
The blot of a selfish fear.

Dropped in the cup of the lily
A tear that was hot with pain,
And the snowy heart of the lily
Was snowy never again.
The wax-white heart had withered
In the salt of its burning pain.

And ever the beautiful lilies
Are placed at the feet of the Lord.
Baptized with the tear of a mother,
Keep they, a sinless ward—

Sign of a silent worship
At the cross of the risen Lord.

And ever and ever the lilies
We lay with a smile or a tear,
A sacred gift on the altar
Of the idols we worship here,
But deep in each lily's chalice'
Is the yellow stain of a tear.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 113.

To E. R. W.

You asked me to write you a poem
That eve when we stood alone
At the foot of the convent garden—
We heard in its softened tone
The half-hushed noise of the city;
The moon, just arisen, shown
Through the shivering, rustling locusts,
In a flood of quivering bars,
And the wind was full of fragrance,
And the night was full of stars.
The hour itself was a poem,
One of those “gems in the rough,”
That we quit with a sigh the reading—
They are never long enough.

You asked me to write you a poem,
And your eyes looked into mine—
O, your eyes were the grandest poem!
Full of a theme divine,
Like the holy calm that severs
The day and the night apart,
The grandest, the sweetest of poems
A woman e’er learned by heart.

What little things one will remember!
I can see yet the moon on your coat,
I can hear what you said of the violets
Pinned in the lace at my throat.

You asked me to write you a poem;
I answered, “I will, sometime;”
And I thought—of the place and the season
I will weave him a golden rhyme.
For the sound of a song in the distance
Awaited the touch of my pen—
Reason had lost her resistance,
The world was a poem then!

Alas! who may vesture the graces,
Who may set into rhythmical bars

Of measure, the measureless spaces,
Or gather the gleam of the stars?
Who can wrest from a rose-leaf its fragrance?
From the night wind the sigh that he heard,
Or mix him the tints of the rainbow,
Or write out the song of a bird?

I thought I could write you a poem,
But over the wreckful sea
The traitorous Caprean maidens
Were singing their songs to me.
I could not—I never could write it,
Tho' mine were all poesy's tiars,
Tho' my pen were the plume of an angel,
And dipped in the vestal fires—
Only a god can write you
The poem your heart desires.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 115.

Little Bertie

Once the angels up in heaven
Pushed the gates of gold apart,
And sent the brightest of their number
Down to bless a mother's heart.

Bertie, sunshine of the household,
Like some fair and fragile flower,
Grew a dainty rose-bud maiden,
Fairer, sweeter, hour by hour.

But the winds of life were dreary,
And its songs her ear oppressed,
And the little maiden, weary,
Drooped and laid her down to rest;

And the angels up in heaven
Pushed the gates of gold apart,
And took the precious, priceless spirit
Back into the Father's heart.

Close the brown eyes sweet and tender,
Fold the hands so waxen fair,
O'er the dimpled, snowy shoulders,
Loose her wondrous shining hair.

Never more will joy or sorrow
Break her silent, sinless rest;
You loved her with your earth-born worship,
But the angels loved her best.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 117.

Wishes

I wish that I could hold my father's hand
Against my lips in reverence and truth—
And ask him to forgive each act of mine,
That grieved him in my thoughtless, wayward youth.

I wish those sweet, dark pleading eyes of hers,
(The child whose precious life I made a shrine
To worship at) from that dim shadow-land,
Would look less sorrowfully into mine.

I wish that I could lock the gate, and lose
The keys, to folly's fount of fruitless tears—
That I could keep my hands from reaching for
The hollow phantom of the shapeless years.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 118.

Forgotten Heroes

When death has solved its mystery of pain,
When I have crossed the bridge from sphere to sphere,
I wish that God would let me come again,
And tell you what I could not tell you here.

*

What is that horrible din on the street,
Above all the noise of the hurrying crowd?
An organ-grinder out on his beat!
Strange such a nuisance is ever allowed

To encumber the ground and annoy people so;
The tune is enough to drive any one mad.
Who could write out a thought with that racket below?
A whole morning wasted! I declare, it's too bad!

If the man who invented that horrid machine
Isn't warming his toes down in Tophet to-day
With the craziest organ that ever was seen,
Then things are misstated. I—what did you say?

"A soldier that's making that dolorous sound?"
You're surely mistaken. Let's see. What's that large
White card on his breast? "Made blind by a wound
Received at Chapultepec, leading a charge."

As I live, 'tis a soldier! His hair is as white
As the snow of the poles, and his trembling form
Is bowed with the weight of its years—what a sight—
The giant oak's withering after the storm.

Old man, let me shake your one brown wrinkled hand
While I sigh for the wrong that has left you this lot.
I'll drop a poor dollar, too, into your palm;
I wish 'twas a thousand—it's all I have got.

Nay, thank me not, soldier; I owe it to you.
'Tis never a charity gratitude gives.
Alone to such hearts of the loyal and true
Our nation to-day owes the boon that she lives.

And my own dear father might stand in your place.
He, too, was a soldier, and fought with the brave.
A kindlier fortune stooped down to embrace;
Death made him a couch in the vault of the grave.

Then, soldier, I pray you play for me again,
And softly, sing softly, "Pass under the Rod."
Your rythm of sadness is sweet in its pain
As the song that the angels are singing to God.

Must you go? Then farewell, if you must go so soon.
O, Providence, strange are the ways of thy might!
The hand that is turning that pitiful tune
Has wielded a saber in Liberty's fight.

That tremulous voice that is pleading so low
Has shouted a charge, while the foe has stood dumb;
Those tired, worn feet, that so tottering go,
Have started at sound of the reveille drum.

Unwearied, unfaltering, have marched up the hight
Where the bristling bayonets guardian kept;
Those sad eyes now locked in the thralldom of night
Have sentinel watched while an army has slept.

An American soldier, a beggar to bend!
Gracious heaven! What a spectacle this of our own!
What subject for artist in colors to blend—
For chisel of sculptor to carve out in stone!

A blind, cripple soldier! and begging the street
In a land whose proud honor his quick steel has kept!
The morn of his manhood he laid at her feet.
Has his country forgotten? Has Liberty slept?

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 119.

Isolde to Sir Tristram

Oh, hungry heart, that searchest all in vain
For that thy life most craves and needs—soul-rest,
To me, instinctive, comes thy cry of pain,
And this: that thou couldst find it on my breast.

He were a fool who would sit pining down
And by a Dian's frozen beauty die,
When Phryne stood with Nature's royal crown
Of Womanhood, unbound, inviting by!

I am not beautiful; the partial gods
Gave to me neither perfect form nor face,
And yet, methinks, if thou wouldst come, the odds
Thou'dst swear were with the subtle innate grace

Would that thou from mine flash all thy beings o'er
If that thy hand but touch my finger tips;
And Orient wines, aye, draughts that Peris pour,
Were less intoxicating than my lips.

I'd take thee from the ice-imprisoned poles
To where love's islands meet the kissing sun,
And thou shouldst learn the ecstasy of souls
Attracted, met and melted into one.

Enraptured, gazing down into my face,
Thou wouldst forget the gods left aught to prize:
Thou'dst think the world were clasped in thine embrace
And Heaven's stars were lighted from my eyes.

The passionate thrill that trembles in my breast
Came with my fierce blood from the fiery South.
I hold a chalice brimmed with love and rest
For thee; wilt come and drink it from my mouth?

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 121.

“Till the Sea Gives Up Its Dead”

He sailed away—o’er the sea away,
Your sailor brave;
Your tears fell fast, but they could not stay
Your sailor brave.

He left on your lips his love’s caress.
He whispered in love’s low tenderness
His fond adieu; and you tried to share
The zealous ardor that called him there;
You could not hear that the sad waves said,
“Till the sea gives up its dead.”
The shivering, hungry, treacherous waves
That covered a thousand sailors’ graves,
Crept out to your feet and in warning said:
“Till the sea gives up its dead.”

Away to the frozen North he sailed—
Your sailor brave;
The icy bars of the North enjailed
Your sailor brave.
The snow-wind came with a moaning start,
Chilling the blood to his warm brave heart;
He could not hear that each fierce blast said
“Till the sea gives up its dead.”
The pitiless, soulless, deathful blasts,
That rattled a thousand blackening masts,
In his own ship’s rigging sang and said
“Till the sea gives up its dead.”

O wife, and mother, you long will wait
For your sailor brave;
You long will watch by the Golden Gate
For your sailor brave.
The way from the fields of snow is long,
And the icy bars of the North are strong—
And the waves that laughed at your sorrow said
“Till the sea gives up its dead.”

Many a heart with your own will wait
For your sailor brave;

Will search for a sign to know the fate
Of your sailor brave,
But the ice king holds his treasures well,
And the mocking seas no secret tell—
And each moaning blast of the snow-wind said
“Till the sea gives up its dead.”

O desolate woman; in vain you sigh
For your sailor brave;
The cry of your heart in its pain will die
For your sailor brave.
Who tears the veil from that frozen door,
To his home and his friends returns no more.
Your eyes will dim, and your hopes will set
For your love who sailed on the lost Jeannette,
The frosty breath of the polar skies
Has kissed the light in your sailor's eyes.
And the snow will pillow your lost love's head,
“Till the sea gives up its dead.”

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 123.

Fragments

O, drearily falling Autumn rain,
O, cold October rain;
There's weariness in your sound to-night,
A tired sigh, and a touch of blight,
And a sob of pain.

Behind the curtains the soft lights gleam
Bright as the glint of a lover's dream;
In mirth, and music, and dance, and song,
Merrily speed the hours along.
A world of beauty, and warmth, and glow,
A world that you cannot touch you know;
O, dreary rain!
There's never a sigh or a touch of blight,
Or a sob of pain;
But my heart is akin to you to-night—
O, cold October rain.

I have never, you think, a serious thought,
My friend—
Never a moment by sorrow taught
Its sympathy to lend.
Can you by the light of laughing eyes
See all there is in the heart that lies
Under a smile, my friend?

Forever wrapped in their glittering shrouds
Of snow,
Are the mountain peaks that touch the clouds;
But ah, my friend, you know
There are smoldering fires that never rest,
And earthquakes hid in the mountains breast,
Under the cold, white snow.

The musical chiming of wedding bells;
The slow, slow tolling of dirgeful knells;
A lover's kiss, and a sweet good-bye;
A mourner's tears, and a dying sigh;
A night spent gaily in dance and song;
A night in a woeful vigil long;

Hearts that jest at a thought of pain;
And hearts that will never be glad again;
Over and over, the rose and the mould;
And the social tale of the world is told.

Wild and high the breezes sweep
And soft and low,
From Pacific's heaving deep,
And Sierra's snow,
And slowly Autumn's shadows creep
O'er Summer's glow.

The shimmering robe of the Summer,
With its threads of burnished gold,
The hands of an "angel comer"
Into a shroud enfold.
Gone is the red of the berries
That burned in the stain of her lips,
Faded the pink of the cherries
That tinted her finger-tips.
Autumn, with softest wooing,
Kissed the light of her brow;
But his touch was her life's undoing—
Summer is dying now.

Go down in the perilous depths of the sea
Where its pearly treasures are;
Bring gems that have lain in a dead man's eyes,
To braid in a maiden's hair.

Bring the gorgeous weft from orient looms
Proud fashion's queen to lave,—
Each thread is wrought with the thread of a life,
And stained with the tear of a slave.

The violet buds of the May-time
Died with the May's sweet breath,
And June, with its passioned wooing,
Is kissing the rose to death.

Chime loud a requiem in cathedral towers,
Old melancholy Lent to-day is dead.—
We'll fold his hands and heap white Easter flowers

Upon its confined head.

O hearts that are world-a-weary,
O lives that are lived in vain,
O feverish maze of aimless days,
Ye follow in Fashion's train.

The buds of the spring-time and summer's long hours
In this silvery cup now we place;
May the roses of autumn, and winters snow flowers,
Bloom bright in a golden vase.

But one little stocking! there used to be two
Hung up for the Christmas treasures;
I dropped in a tear as I filled it anew—
Too sad are the Christmas pleasures.

O sainted, O sweet, Mother Mary!
For motherhood's blessing and dearth,
Put a gift in the stocking in heaven
And say its from mamma on earth.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 125.

Ephemerals

One year ago, one little year, to-day,
We wandered far among the fields and flowers,
And time, it seemed, must be one long sweet May
Of beauty laden hours.

You gathered for me then these leaves and flowers,
And twined them thus, a tiny, wild bouquet.
I kissed them, dreaming of the blissful hours
That must be always May.

And told you that I'd keep the gift you gave
As long as I should love you; and I thought,
"They'll lay them on my breast when to the grave
Its loves and dreams are brought."

Only one little year, and see! to-day,
Though earth is glad again in May's bright hours,
My hand has crushed to dust, and flung away
Your gift of faded flowers.

And I have learned that May-time is a day
That Summer's wooing lips will kiss to death.
And I have learned that love's a tender lay
Lost in its own sweet breath.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 130.

Changed

And so you silently have dropped me out
Of all your plans, and dreams, your hopes, your heart;

I once had all your life, my own about,
—I now, have not one little part.

Ah! well; goodbye, we'll go our ways; and meet

On that cold plane where friendship calmly stands—
Nor ever feel that once our pulses beat
To fever-tide, at just a clasp of hands.

I do not blame you that your heart forgot
To lay its crown forever at one shrine—
It is the world's own way, and you are not

To blame because the world's way was not mine.

Goodbye, I say it ling'ring on the word—
For pain is always aftermath of joy,
And I had rather lose the gift that stirred
My soul to life, than keep it till it cloy.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 131.

To Belle

I have folded them up, and put them away,
Each dainty garment you used to wear,
The little kid shoes with tasseled tops,
And the long bright lock of your golden hair;
And the hot tears fell unchecked, untold,
Over garment, and shoe, and tress of gold.

The doll with blue eyes and “real hair,”
That you “named after Mamma,” and used to pet—
I hugged it close to my heart just now,
And cried on its head till its curls were wet.

And the little dishes—the china cups
And saucers, and plates with gilded bands,
You washed them last and piled them up here
In this painted box with your dear, dear hands
I very near dropped and broke them to-day
When I gathered them up to put them away.

There’s the music-book with the lesson marked,
Where your fingers weakened with slow disease,
Ran over the notes, and tired, and failed,
And fell from the task on the ivory keys.

And I found a letter among the things
That were idly thrown on an idle stand,
“My precious Mamma,” the lines began

Wrote in the scrawl of a childish hand.

O I little dreamed when I read it o’er,

And carelessly laid it here away,
That through blinding tears for your sweet dead face,
I would read the letter again to-day.

Every place in this desolate house,
From night to night, and from dawn to dawn,
Wherever I go, wherever I look
There is something to mind me that you are gone.

So I folded them up and put them away
Each dainty garment you used to wear,

The little kid shoes with tasseled tops,
And the long bright lock of your golden hair,
And the hot tears fell unchecked, untold,
Over garment, and shoe, and tress of gold.

I folded them up and put them away,
And locked them out of my sight forever;
And I have not spoken your name since then
To keep from thinking; O vain endeavor!

When has turning a key forgetfulness brought?
And who can limit the flight of a thought?

I shut the door of my lonesome heart,
And curtained it o'er with a heartless air.

I laugh, and jest with the friends I meet
And they—they think that I do not care,
But I hear a voice that the grave has hid,

And I see a face through the coffin lid.

Everywhere in the desolate world
From night to night, and from dawn to dawn,
Wherever I-go, whatever I see
There is. something to mind me that you are gone.

Publication. First published in *Poems*. San Francisco: Golden Era Company, 1885, p. 132.

At San Diego Bay

Separate California poem | 1898

The complete text of the separately issued California poem.

At San Diego Bay

Here first on California's soil,
Cabrillo walked the lonesome sands;
Here first the Christian standard rose
Upon the sea-washed Western lands,
And Junipero Serra first
Laid loving hands.

What saw they here, that peerless band,
To bless, or touch with loving hand?
Or bid them pause, or dream to stay,
Around this silent sleeping bay?

An acreage of many miles,
Vast miles of sun-burnt naked space,
Red, brown, and bare, and baked as tiles;
Whose surface lay unchanged of face
As it had lain, the hills among,
Since first Creation's psalm was sung;
Whose people watched the squirrels play,
And knew not any more than they.

Not these alone, the fathers saw
Not these made hardships doubly sweet—
He never sees his arrow's flight
Who's always looking at his feet—
Those holy fathers, wiser they,
They marked the broad expanse of plains,
And mountains gushing crystal life
Enough to fill its thirsting veins;—

They saw, far off, the mingled weft
Of colors wrought from out the soil,
When nature rounds upon her loom
The laborer's legacy of toil.

And served, and toiled, and built, and planned,
But ever saw a promised land;
And heard its slowly rising swells
Ring joyous from their mission bells.

And decades past, and fifty years,

A century was born and died;
A nation struggled into birth,
And rose to mid-day of its pride.
And freedom's war-wet staff was set
Beside that one of love and peace;
And suns of noons, and midnight moons,
Unwove, and wove time's ageless fleece.

And time crept by the mission bells,
And back, and tied their tongues with rust,
And touched the eye-lids of the priest,
And garmented his bones with dust.
The glory of the mission passed,
Its gloom, its glory over-cast.
Within its corners, shadow-walled,
The bats built nests; the lizard crawled
Upon the sunny side to sit,
With soulless eyes, and laugh at it.

But smile not ye with scornful lips,
Nor croak a prophecy of this;
There's nothing lost, that's lost, and naught
That once has lived, has lived amiss.
Nay, smile not ye, nor count that false
Which failed in promises it gave,
For gold is gold, though it go down
A thousand fathoms in the wave;
And brighter hued the blossom is
That blooms upon a grave.

In silence sleeps the bay no more,
Its treasury of wealth is found;
And all its crescent curving shore
With infant cities girded round;
And through its gateway come and go
The sails of sun, and sails of snow.

And progress to this old new West
Has turned her face and set her seal;
Has bound the waters, broke the hills,
And shod the desert sands with steel.
O land of sun!—hot, splendid sun,

Of days of calm, and nights of balm,
And languorous dreamy noons!
It needs no seer to tell for thee,
Thy quickly coming destiny.

Publication. First published in *At San Diego Bay*. San Diego, 1898, p. 1.

The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems

Desert and later poems | 1917

The complete poetry text of Morris's final collection.

The Lure of the Desert Land

Have you slept in a tent alone—a tent
Out under the desert sky—
Where a thousand thousand desert miles
 All silent round you lie?—
The dust of the aeons of ages dead,
 And the peoples that trampled by?
Have you looked in the desert's painted cup,
Have you smelled at dawn the wild sage musk,
Have you seen the lightning flashing up
From the ground in the desert dusk?

Have you heard the song in the desert rain
 (Like the undertone of a wordless rhyme)?
Have you watched the glory of colors flame
 In its marvel of blossom time?

Have you lain with your face in your hands,
 afraid,
 Face down—flat down on your face—and
 prayed,
While the terrible sand storm whirled and swirled
In its soundless fury, and hid the world
And quenched the sun in its yellow glare—
Just you, and your soul, and nothing, there?

If you have, then you know, for you've felt its spell,
 The lure of the desert land,
And if you have not, then I could not tell—
 For you could not understand.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 1.

Quien Sabe?

“Where do the waters go that go
To the sands of the bleached Majave?”
I asked of an ancient Indian man

(Lingering trace of his vanished race):

“Do they sink in the sand
To the underland?”
With never a bend of his stately head,
Nor look, or the lurk of a smile, he said:

“Quien sabe?”

“Surely thou knowest, thou primal man!

Brood of the desert’s birth, and ban,—
Wise as the rattlesnake, old as the sun,
Where do the rivers run that run
To the sands of thy grim Majave?
Do they sink in the sand
To the underland?—
Down where the red volcano’s glow
Lieth await for the underflow?
Down where the salt-sea left its scum
When the earth was void and the deep was
dumb?”

“Quien sabe?” means “Who knows?”

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 2.

To the Colorado Desert

Thou brown, bare-breasted, voiceless mystery,
Hot sphinx of nature, cactus-crowned, what hast thou done?
Unclothed and mute as when the groans of chaos turned
Thy naked burning bosom to the sun.
The mountain silences have speech, the rivers sing.
Thou answerest never unto anything.
Pink-throated lizards pant in thy slim shade;
The horned toad runs rustling in the heat;
The shadowy gray coyote, born afraid,
Steals to some brackish spring and laps, and prowls
Away; and howls, and howls and howls and
 howls,
Until the solitude is shaken with an added loneliness.
Thy sharp mescal shoots up a giant stalk,
Its century of yearning, to the sunburnt skies,
And drips rare honey from the lips
Of yellow waxen flowers, and dies.
Some lengthwise sun-dried shapes with feet and hands
And thirsty mouths pressed on the sweltering sands,
Mark here and there a gruesome graveless spot
Where some one drank thy scorching hotness,
 and is not.
God must have made thee in His anger, and
 forgot.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 3.

In the Yucca Land

The rim of the desert is the Yucca land,
Behind it the snow-peaked ranges stand.
Beyond it, and out, the desert lies,—
And far as the line of the tenting skies.
“The ship of the desert” sails there at dawn
In the swift mirage; and there, up-drawn
From violet seas, in the sunrise glow
Are the coral reefs the mermen know;
And the perfumed plains where the iris grow.
Out there where the web of the gossamer flies
The shoals of the purple islands rise,
Out there are the pink gray mists unrolled,
And the sun goes down on a world of gold,
In the Yucca land.

The grimness of time, is the Yucca land,
When twilight reaches her specter hand,
When the moon bends down, a living thing,
And the midnight stars are whispering!
The Yucca glades are peopled, then,
With naiads and gnomes and the ghosts of men;
From the inner earth, from the Everywhere,
They come, and they walk in the moonlight there.
The dryads step from the Yucca trees
And lean white arms on the wavering breeze.
There, a pallid priestess counts her beads,
Yon arch to a Druid temple leads.
Aye; and yonder Yucca, whose grim shape warns,
Is the cross of Him, and His crown of thorns.
There are stealthy shadows, a phantom whirl—
The night vibrates with a soundless stir;
And oh, the silence! so tense, so terse,
You can hear the heart of the Universe.
The desert its mystery unbars
To you and the moon and the whispering stars,
In the Yucca land.

The newness of earth, is the Yucca land,

The tang of the first-made gleam of sand,
Not ever a plow profaned its sod,—
The world is so new you could talk with God,
In the Yucca land.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 4.

Tehachapi

Vanguard of the desert thou! The high divide
Between the ocean's all life-giving atmosphere
And that vast arid world
Where bleak Mojave stretches to the east.
From thy brave front dwarfed pines look desertward
Against the sun. And up the steep slants at thy base
Defiant bristling yucca trees climb scantily.
The brewing place of storms art thou,—of clouds
That come unheralded,—vague whims of fleeciness—
All piling up in wonderments of shapes.
White towers, and domes of glistening ivory,
And golden pinnacles the sunlight plays upon.
Or blown by warring winds whirl round and
round thy head
Black helpless furies,—vampires of the night.
Then dawn; and lo, thou standest robed in sacred white.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 6.

My Heart and All Life's Sweet Alluring Charms

*My heart and all life's sweet alluring charms
I leave here in the desert wilderness.
There is no joy outside of your dear arms,
No heaven beyond the reach of your caress.—
Soul of the desert silences.*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 6.

Rocking the Baby

I hear her rocking the baby—
Her room is just next to mine—
And I fancy I feel the dimpled arms
That round her neck entwine,
As she rocks, and rocks the baby,
In the room just next to mine.

I hear her rocking the baby
Each day when the twilight comes,
Oh! I know there's a world of blessing and love
In the "baby bye" she hums.
I can see the restless fingers
Playing with "mamma's rings,"
And the sweet little smiling, pouting mouth,
That to hers in kissing clings,
As she rocks and sings to the baby,
And dreams as she rocks and sings.

I hear her rocking the baby,
Slower and slower now,
I know she is leaving her good-night kiss
On its eyes, and cheeks, and brow.
From her rocking, rocking, rocking,
I wonder would she start,
Could she know, through the wall between us,
She is rocking on my heart.
While my empty arms are aching
For a form they may not press
And my emptier heart is breaking
In its desolate loneliness,
I list to the rocking, rocking,
In the room just next to mine,
And breathe a prayer in silence
At a mother's broken shrine,
For the woman who rocks the baby
In the room just next to mine.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881). Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

Men Have Fought for Liberty

*Men have fought for Liberty and told her battles o'er,
And died still listening to her far-off call,
Since Miriam struck her timbrel on the Red Sea's shore,
And sang deliverance from Egypt's thrall.*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 8.

Liberty's Bell

There's a legend told of a far-off land—
The land of a king—where the people planned
To build them a bell that never should ring
But to tell of the death, or the birth, of a king,
Or proclaim an event, by its swinging slow,
That could startle a nation to joy or woe.

It was not to be builded—this bell that they planned—
Of common ore dug from the breast of the land,
But of metal first moulded by skill of all arts—
Built of the treasures of fond human hearts.

And from all o'er the land like pilgrims they came,
Each to cast in a burden, a mite in the flame
Of the furnace—his offering—to mingle and swell
In the curious mass of this wonderful bell.

Knights came in armor and flung in the shields
That had warding off blows on the Saracen fields;

Freemen brought chains from prisons afar—
Bonds that had fettered the captives of war.
And sabers were cast in the molten flood
Stained with the crimson of heroes' blood.
Pledges of love, a bracelet, a ring,
A gem that had gleamed in the crown of a king;
The coins that had ransomed a maiden from
death,

The words, hot with eloquence, caught from the breath
Of a sage, and the prayer on the lips of a slave
Were heard and recorded, and cast in the wave
To be melted and moulded together, and tell
The tale of their wrongs in the tones of the bell.

It was finished at last, and, by artisan hand,
On its ponderous beams hung high o'er the land.
The slow years passed by but no sound ever fell
On a listening ear from the tongue of the bell.
The brown spider wove her frail home on its

walls,
The dust settled deep in its cavernous halls.
Men laughed in derision, and scoffed at the pains
Of the builders; and harder and harder the chains
Of a tyrannous might on the people were laid;
More insatiate, more servile, the tribute they paid;
There was something they found far more cruel than death,
And something far sweeter than life's fleeting breath.
But, hark! in the midst of the turbulent throng,
The moans of the weak and the groans of the
strong,
There's a cry of alarm. Some invisible power
Is moving the long silent bell in the tower.
Forward and backward, and forward it swung,
And Liberty! Liberty! Liberty! rung
From its wide, brazen throat, over mountain and vale.
Till the seas caught its echo and monarchs turned pale.
Our forefathers heard it—that wild, thrilling tone,
Ringing out to the world, and they claimed it their own.
And up from the valley, and down from the hill,
From the flame of the forge, the field, and the mill,
They paid with their lives the price of its due,
And left it a legacy, freemen, to you.
And ever when danger is menacing nigh,
The mighty bell swings in the belfry on high,
And men wake from their dreams, and grasp in affright,
Their swords, when its warning sweeps out on the night.
It rang a wild paean o'er war's gory waves
When the gyves were unloosed from our millions of slaves;
It started with horror and trembled a knell
From ocean to ocean, when great Lincoln fell.
And once in each year as time onward rolls,
Slowly and muffled and mournful it tolls
A dirge, while Columbia pauses to spread
A tribute of love on the graves of her dead.
While Washington's name is emblazoned in gold,
Or the valor of Lee, or of Sheridan, told,

While patriots treasure the words of a Hayne,
The fiery drops from the pen of a Paine;
While the memory of Morris it's sacrifice gave,
And gratitude lingers to weep at his grave;
While dear is the name of child, mother or wife,
Or sweet to a soul is the measure of life,
America's sons will to battle prepare
When its tones of alarm ring aloud on the air.
For Liberty's goddess holds in her white hand
The cord of the bell that swings over our land.

William O. McDowell, a liberty-loving patriot of Lincoln Park, Newark, New Jersey, saw "Liberty's Bell" tacked beside the old Liberty Bell in Independence Hall. The poem helped inspire his Columbian Liberty Bell campaign; Wagner and McDowell were honored with the freedom of Chicago on Liberty Bell Day, 4 July 1893. Reset from the author's bracketed note in the 1917 collection.

Publication. Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

The Crowning of Liberty

She came on that immortal morn,—
So pale, so wan, and weeping so!

Fair Liberty; bowed with the scorn
That wrought a suffering people's woe.

She spoke, and in her pleading tones
A voice came ringing o'er the sea
From fallen Roma's crumbling thrones,
From graves of old Thermopylae.

The listening breezes heard her plea,
They told it to the summer morn,
'Twas whispered by each forest tree,
And by each blade of rustling corn.
'Twas murmured by the brooklet's waves,
The echoing mountains caught the cry
And flung it back to ocean's caves—
The ocean rolled it to the sky.

Our patriot sires—that grand old band—
Had met in troubled council throng,
If that they might, to quench the brand,
Where smouldering burned a Nation's wrong.

They heard fair Liberty's appeal,
They gazed upon her matchless form;

Each faltering nerve grew firm as steel,
Each breast was bared to meet the storm.

A moment low those stern heads bowed
In solemn, silent awe of prayer,
And then a wild shout, long and loud,
Burst out upon the quivering air.

The spirit, roused, would sleep no more,
And each in turn, on bended knee,
With brow uncovered, reverent swore,
Eternal faith to Liberty!

Her torn and bleeding feet they dressed

In sandals wrought of maiden gold,
Into her trembling hand they pressed
The scepter from a Monarch's hold.

They broke the fetters that had led
Her captive in their cruel scars,
And bound upon her regal head
A flashing coronet of stars.
Their fortunes, lives, their all, alone,
They fastened, with her mantle's sheen;

Gave her their proud hearts for a throne,
And Liberty was crowned our Queen.
The deed a world then laughed to mock
Has swept in Majesty of State,
From Massachusetts' Plymouth Rock,
To California's Golden Gate.

Her heritage from sea to sea,
A land that owns no craven's right,
Where but to be is to be free,
Her flag the symbol of her might.

Publication. Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

The Passing of McKinley

Black, black, all black, our open door is closed with ebon bars;

For woe like this there are no creeds, no bonds, no social bourns:

Black, black, all black! half-masted hangs Old Glory's stripes and stars—The
great republic mourns.

Low, low he lies, so low! the nation's chief, the nation's pride;
So still the careful hands which steered his country's danger past;
So dumb the tongue whose golden speech our
faith had justified:

God's seal of rest upon his breast, and peace, and home, at last.

The shot that felled McKinley jarred the round earth's rim;

It aimed at law, all law, it aimed at heaven's high throne,—
For doth the firmament not move by law of Him,
And seed and harvest time from zone to zone?

Calamity stared grimly black the whole world in the face
When anarchy, foul-brooded spawn of slime
and mud,

Spat her corroding venom to the highest place
And smeared the down-step to her den with
blood.

Not, not alone McKinley's life—brave life that bore no stain,
Great statesman, gentlest husband, man of
Christian men—

He stood for us, each one, and in him were our brothers slain,
And our dead fathers in his death did die again.

Black, black, all black, our open door is closed with ebon bars;
For woe like this there are no creeds, no bonds, no social bourns;

Black, black, all black! half-masted hangs Old Glory's stripes and stars—The
great republic mourns.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 14.

Cuba

On her war beleaguered island
Cuba stands and fights alone.
And her strangling cry for freedom
Shakes the glory of a throne.

Stands beside her ruined altars
Flame and sword engirded round,
Sees her maidens torn from shelter,
Sacrilege on holy ground.

Flame and sword and desecration,
Wrongs that Satan's self abhors,
All the barbarous, shameless, nameless
Savagery of civil wars.

O, ye synod of the nations,
Shall you, to this struggling land,
Give no sign of recognition,
Raise no voice, uplift no hand?

Vain your teaching, false your preaching,
While yon royal flag of Spain
With the cross of Christ upon it
Floats above such fields of slain.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 16.

What Has a Man When It All Is Attained

*What has a man when it all is attained,—
Ambition, and glory, and glitter of fame—
Or wealth with the burden of folly it gained,
And burnt out his candle in winning the game.
Then darkness, and lo! at the end of the strife,
He has fought for a phantom his senses to cheat,
And missed all the sweetness and rhythm of life
And the flowers that grew at his feet.*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 17.

“*He Hitched His Wagon to a Star*”

He hitched his wagon to a star

With brave intent,

He hitched his wagon to a star,—

The highest in the firmament.

He bent his shoulder to the spokes

And lifted with his might;

His feet were in the sordid mire,

His face was toward the light.

He heard the boom of breaking worlds

That starred the Milky Way;

He saw the wardens of the sun

Roll back the gates of day.

And though he never turned a wheel,

Felt not the hurt the vanquished feel;—

Through far high vistas vast and dim,

The highest star still beckoned him.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 17.

The Woodman's Philosophy

The woodman was tall, and brawny, and brown,
And broad of the shoulder, and muscled was he,
As a king of athletes;—not a club in the town
Could produce such a biceps. I came and sat down
To listen, and see,—
For the ring of his axe it was music to me.
He swung the broad blade with a curve at the start,
And a movement of wrist never learned of “Delsarte.”

His knuckles shone white through the brown of his skin,
With a “whah!” went his breath as the sharp edge sank in
To the heart of the tree; and the sappy chips flew
And scattered and rattled like hail on the ground;
And the axe gave a “scream” as he twisted it round
To loosen the blade from the cleft it had made.
The back of his hand o’er his forehead he drew,—
His hand was so sinewy strong—Ah! I knew
The man was a king; I said to him, “Sire,
There’s many a tree in your forest to fell,
Pray what do you do when you tire?”
“What do I?” said he, with a smile on his lip,
“When the handle gets slick and commences to slip,
I spit on my hands and take a fresh grip.”

Not with saber, and cannon, and banners unfurled,
The new Alexander will conquer the world;—
He’ll have sweat on his brow, and a smile on his lip,
And when fortune begins through his fingers to slip,
He’ll “spit on his hands and take a fresh grip.”

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 18.

The Oracle

“This year, next year, now, never!”

Shyly to herself, she said,
Tapered fingers, swift and clever,
Pick to pieces daisy’s head—
That its oracle may tell her
When the day that she shall wed.
Fall the petals ever, ever,
“This year, next year, now, never.”

Pretty maiden, who shall scold her,
If she sighs, and shakes her head!
Has the oracle not told her
She shall never, never wed?

Half agrieved, she glances over
Where the field and meadow meet—
Flushes redder than the clover
Blossoms blushing at her feet.

Farmer’s son, the nearest neighbor,
—Stalwart he, and tall, and lithe—
Pausing in the swath his labor,
Deftly whets his gleaming scythe;

Pulls his hat a little lower,
Steps aside to let her pass,
Stammering asks if he may show her
Where’s a lark’s nest in the grass:

Clasps her hand a little stronger
Than necessity allows,
As their shadows growing longer
Warn her she must find the cows.

Pretty maid in sunset glory,
Thinks the daisy told a story.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 20.

The Little Brown Bird

A little bird sat in her nest on the ground,
A wee, wee little brown bird;
Sat thinking the song in the tall poplar tree
The sweetest she ever had heard.—
And up came a lump in the little bird's throat;—
She never could sing a note.

She looked at the bird in the tall poplar tree,
On its head was a wonderful crest;

Its wings they were spangled with velvet and gold
And red was the flame on its breast.—
Oh, never a feather of color had she,
She was brown as a bird could be.

The bright plumaged bird in the tall poplar tree
Sang longer and sweeter her strain.
The little brown bird drooped lower her head
And listened in envious pain.
Click!

Click! Bang! broke a murderous sound on the
breeze;
It rustled the leaves on the trees.

And down through the rustling leaves came the bird.
There were stains on each leaf which she
brushed.

The red on her breast it was redder with blood
And the voice of her singing was hushed.
The hunter had heard her wild song on the limb
And her breast made a target for him.
In penitent pity the little brown bird
Drew closer each sheltering wing;

And the wee baby birds hidden under her breast
Are glad that their mother can't sing.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 22.

A Stained Lily

Some lilies grew by a brook-side,
Tall and white, and cold,
And lifted up to the sunshine
Their beautiful hearts of gold.

And near to their bed grew mosses,
Rank vines, and flowers small,
And loathsome weeds, and thistles,
And the sunlight warmed them all.

Anon, the proud white lilies
Were gathered, one by one,
Each to crown a festal,
The rarest under the sun.

One lily stopped to the brooklet,
Her face she knew was fair,
And the face of the flowing water
Mirrored her image there.

A hand, upraised in envy,
Or carelessness, or jest,
Flung, from the turbid water,
Mud, on the lily's breast.

And all the proud, white lilies
Turned their faces away,
And nobody plucked that lily,
And day, and night, and day

She wept for her ruined beauty:
And the dew-drops, and the rain,
Touched with her tears, in pity
Fell on the muddy stain.

Still stood she in her grieving,
Day, and night, and day;
Nor tears, nor dew, nor rain-drops
Could fade the stain away.

Pining in desolation,
Shunned by each of her kind,

Sought she a bitter solace
 In creatures of coarser mind.
But the breath of the nettle stung her,
 And the thistle's rude embrace
Burned her sensitive nature,
 And scarred the fair, stained face.
Lower, drooped the lily,
 And died at the feet of the weeds;
And only the tender mosses
 Ministered to her needs.
And still the tall white lilies
 Stand as cold, and proud,
And still the weeds and thistles
 Against the lilies crowd.
Alike the same warm sunbeams
 On weed and flower fall,
Alike by the same soil nourished,
 And the great God made them all.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881). Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

Somebody's Baby's Dead

Upon the satin cover

Some hand has placed a wreath,
White as the waxen features
Of the baby that lies beneath.

Out in the graveyard making
A rest for a shining head,
Somebody's heart is breaking,
Somebody's baby's dead.
Over a baby's coffin,
Heaping a mound of clay,
Somebody's hopes are buried
In that little grave today.

Somebody's home is dreary,
Somebody's sunshine fled;
Somebody's sad and weary,
Somebody's baby's dead.

Publication. Earlier versions in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881) and *Poems* (1885).

Interregnum

“Out of my way!” cried the brave New Year,

“Out of my way,” sang he;

“Make way for my bride, Old Year; aside,

“Aside, Old Year!” sang he,—

“Make way for my bride and me.”

He smiled as he tossed his locks of tawn,

Red crowned with the rosy glimpse of dawn.

He smiled and sang, and sang again,

And the Old Year sighed: “Amen,

Ah me, Amen!”—and he stepped aside.

But he opened his long black mantle wide

And close to his shriveling breast he pressed

The bride of the brave New Year.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 27.

The Sea and the Wind

“Whither away?” sighed the Sea to the Wind,
“Where goeth, where bloweth thou?”
“I go,” said the Wind, “to blow,” said the Wind,
“The secret thou sighest now.”

“Why bidest thou here?” said the Wind to the Sea,
“Why hidest thou here thy worth?”
“I bide,” said the Sea, “to hide,” said the Sea,
“The wrecks of thy cruel mirth.”

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 27.

Society

Go down in the perilous ocean deeps
For the treasures hidden there.
Bring gems that have lain in a dead man's eyes
To gleam in a woman's hair.
Slay a million birds—small mother birds—
Till your soul of pity dies.
In the cup that is rusted with tears of woe
Drink a toast to your lady's eyes.
Have faith in the wiles and the cheating smiles
You hug to your foolish breast,
Thrust to the wall, beyond recall,
The hearts that have loved you best.
Over and over, the rose, and the mold,
The social tales of the world are told.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 28.

An Empiric

What is there ever in living—
 To live, and to live, and to live?
Nay; not the gift, but the giving—
What hast thou, mortal, to give?
The songs that come up from the silence
Of graves where Self lieth slain;
Gethsemane's red drops of passion,
And the pitiful pleasure of pain—
These are thy gifts, and thy gain.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 28.

Mother

I went away against her will,—
 Home was so small, the world so wide,
 And I so full of foolish pride.
Why should she take my going ill?
 Why weight her heart with useless sighs,
 And hurt me with her streaming eyes?
I came at last, I crossed the sea
 To lay my head upon her breast
 And tell her that our dear home nest
Was larger than the world to me.—
 It may be in her silken shroud
 She wondered why I wept aloud.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 29.

Dead Love

There is no dead thing in this world so dead
As love that has been slain.

Think not that you
Can lightly toy with it, and set your foot
Upon its heart for pleasurance, and wound
The ground with its red blood, then bid it rise
And stand all blushing new again
Beside you.

Nay; though from the mouldy grave
Your power could take the skeleton, and all
Its mildewed joints habilitate with living flesh,
You, yet, could not bring dead love back to life.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 30.

Fate

Ruth was a laughing-eyed prattler,
Thoughtless, and happy, and free;
She planted a seed in the garden,
And said: "It will grow to a tree—
 A beautiful blossoming tree."

The birds and the squirrels played round it,
As careless and merry was she,
But no tree ever grew from her planting—
No beautiful, blossoming tree.
Ruth was a winsome-faced maiden,
Happy, and hopeful, and free;
She planted a seed in the garden,
And smilingly waited to see—
 A beautiful, blossoming tree.

She covered the ground up with flowers,
The butterfly came, and the bee,
But no tree ever grew from her planting—
No beautiful, blossoming tree.
Ruth was a pale, saddened woman,
Thoughtful, with tremblings and fears;

She planted a seed in the garden,
And watered the place with her tears—
 And watched it with tremblings and fears.

The winds and the rains beat upon it,
The lightnings flashed o'er it in glee;

But she sleeps 'neath the tree of her planting—
A beautiful, blossoming tree.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881). Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

Under the Sea

A fisherman rocked in his boat on the tide
 And dropped his net in the sea,
He sang as he worked, and the rising tide
Drifted his voice to the water-side—
 Echoed his voice on the lea.

A maiden mended the fisherman's nets
 At the water-side on the lea,
She listened and longed as she patient wrought,
And no sound was so sweet, the maiden thought,
 As the fisherman's song on the sea.

A maiden stood in the misty light
 Gazing out o'er the water wide,
Straining her eyes through the paling light,
And around her feet in the deepening night,
 Crept slowly the rising tide.

The mermaids braided the maiden's hair
 Under the depths of the sea—
Braided her long, bright golden hair
Into a shimmering wonderful snare
 Under the fathomless sea.

The fisherman smiled as he sang his song,
 For a maid too fond and fair—
A mermaid floated the waves along,
She caught the soul of the fisherman's song
 In a net of golden hair.

And ever and e'er when the twilight falls,
 And the moonlight pales on the sea,
A voice on the ear of the fisherman falls,
A song that his soul and his sense entralls
 Drifts over the lonesome sea.

And deaf to the warning that death is there,

He follows the song of the sea;
But he comes not back for a shimmering snare,
A wonderful weft of golden hair
Is waiting him under the sea.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 32.

The Undertone of Song

A broad flat rock the creek goes rippling round,
Where overhanging leaves make pictures in the sun.
The silence is not broken by a sound
Save that of Autumn's making; surely one
Might stay and dream, and dreaming might forget
That there were aught in all the world to do
But dream!

A mother quail and her full score
Of pretty running fledgelings stop, then whirl into
The safer undergrowth which skirts the water shore.
A cone from yon tall pine falls heavily, the spoil
Of some marauding squirrel's teeth; and through
Far hights a mountain vulture sails a sea of blue.
These do but trend the fancies to a dream;

And yet,
That strenuous straight line of rusty ants along
The streamlet's bank keeps faith with never ending human toil,—
Its moving rhythm the undertone of song.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 34.

To a Mummy

Did death come when that form was young and
fair

And lissome, and awake to flattery's praise,
Or when, with heavy step and whitened hair,
Thou'dst lingered out life's longest span of days?
And did that heart with joy or grieving swell?

Who now can tell?

Wast thou a sorceress Cleopatra, with
The splendor of all Egypt in thine eyes?
Or didst thou walk, Diana-like, the world,
A bloodless statue made in woman's guise?
Thou senseless thing! What matters it to thee?

And what to me?

O shrunken, shriveled shape. If I could bring
Thy roundness back, the blood into thy cheek,
And all life's spell once more upon thee fling,
What wouldst thou tell me? If thy tongue could speak,
The secrets of the pyramids wouldst thou
Reveal, or laugh at Israelitish mother's tears,
Or shuddering with horror tell me how
It feels to lie entombed a thousand years?

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 35.

Sappho to Phaon

God, God! How I have loved thee, Phaon,—

My soul's husband.

When the brilliancy of Mitylene turned

Full face to me and crowned me queen,

One kiss of thine was more

Than all of Greece's glory.

And when thou camest forth

 To win thyself a name, and fame,

I was so glad—so glad that thou wast great,

So proud to be thy lesser mate.

I would be thy left hand, and thou my right.

When Athens wrote the name of Phaon on her

 walls

The name of Sappho would be wrote beside it.

Phaon and Sappho ever spoken in one breath.

Phaon and Sappho one in life and death.

 Ten thousand liars had prated since the world began

 Of love, one love, one woman and one man.

 And measuring thy love by mine

 I dreamed that it could be.

Man's love is but a winged fool that flies

 From pretty face to pretty face,

Nor finds a strong abiding rest in any place.

A sensuous shapely form, and well-tricked eyes

Will handicap a soul in any race

 Where love's the prize

 And man is umpire in the case.

Phaon's name is on the tongue of every one,

Alcaeus and Stesichorus, they pale in Phaon's sun,

 And 'tis not Sappho walks by Phaon's side.

 'Tis her—not me—that Lesbos names with
 thee.

But though, while yet the dew is on thy fame

 Thou hast forgotten me

And spurned the wondrous sweetness of our love,
I tell thee, Phaon, I am greater still than thou;
And I will live when thou art only known
 Because that Sappho loved thee.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 36.

Her Christmas Gift

"I have nothing to give you, darling,
For a Christmas gift tonight,
Not even the tiniest present
To keep my memory bright;

Nothing at all to give you
Only my love," she said.
She said it so wistfully, so sad,
And she blushed, and hung her head.
We were poor, as the world would count it—

My little wife and I,—
And the Christmas time, with its joyous chime,
Neglectful passed us by.

Only her love to give me!

Oh
Oh! she could not, could not see

That she gave from the source of giving,
Her Christmas gift to me.
Only her love she gave me,
And rich as a king am I,
And there is not gold enough in the world
Her Christmas gift to buy.

AH ME!
She reached her pretty hands to me,

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 38.

Ah Me!

She reached her pretty hands to me,—
She held them out imploringly.
A fox glove grew just where she stood
Within the border of the wood.

Ah Me!

And then—oh, then, I could not go,
Ah Me!
And then I could not—would not—go,
I turned away and left her so.
Left her, her pretty hands out held,—
Her heart with pent-up grieving swelled,
Ah Me!

Within the border of the wood,
Ah Me!
Within the shadow of the wood
The fox glove grows yet where she stood.
And I could go—and would—if she
Would reach her pretty hands to me.
Ah Me!

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 39.

I Have Folded Them Up and Put Them Away

I have folded them up, and put them away,
Each dainty garment you used to wear,
The little kid shoes with the tasseled tops,
And the long bright lock of your golden hair;
And hot tears fell unchecked, untold,
Over garment, and shoe, and tress of gold.

The little dishes—the china cups
And saucers, and plates with gilted bands,
You washed them last and piled them here
In the painted box with your dear, small hands.

The music-book with the lesson marked,
Your fingers touched with such fairy ease,
Ran over the notes, then tired, and failed,
And fell from the task on the ivory keys.

And I found a letter among the things
So idly thrown on an idle stand,
“My precious Mamma,” the lines began,
Wrote in the scrawl of a childish hand.
O, I little dreamed when I read it over,
And carelessly laid it here away,
That through blinding tears for your sweet dead face,
I would read the letter again today.

Every place in this desolate house,
From night to night, and from dawn to dawn,
Wherever I go, wherever I look,
There is something to mind me that you are gone.

So I folded them up and put them away,
And locked them out of my sight forever;
And I have not spoken your name since then
To keep from thinking.—Vain endeavor!

When has turning a key forgetfulness brought?
And who can limit the flight of a thought?

Everywhere in this beautiful world,
From night to night, and from dawn to dawn,
Wherever I go, whatever I see,
There is something to mind me that you are gone.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 40.

If When We Left a Loved, or Loving One

*If when we left a loved, or loving one,
We knew that surely one of us would die
Before another dawn, or set of sun,
We would not ever lightly say "Good-bye."
And yet we know
Some day it must be so.*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 41.

My Ships Have Come from the Sea

You are watching a ship, Oh, maiden fair,
With parted lips and wistful air.
The ship that out from the sheltered bay
With white sails spread moves slow away;

And I know, my girl, the thoughts that burn
In your heart are of that ship's return.
Ah! I know so well how your pulses beat,

With the great sea sobbing at your feet;
And the yellow stars in southern skies
Are brighter not than your love-bright eyes.

I, too, have stood on the sea-wet sand,
And tearful waved a farewell hand,
And watched with many a longing prayer.
My face, like yours, was young and fair,
And my eyes were bright as the diamond's glow,
They've lost their sparkle long ago.
I stand alone on the beach today,
Watching the ships that sail away;
But never a sail from over the sea
The flowing tide will bring to me.

My ships have come from sea.
The first was builded with childish hand;
It floated away a castle grand—
A beautiful bubble with rainbow hues,
Lined with the crystal of morning dew;
To break at my feet by the sunny sea,
A beautiful bubble came back to me—
Came back from my ship at sea.

I fashioned another in gladsome way
And sent it forth on a summer day.

I see it yet, a fairer craft,
Never at danger mocking laughed;
Its shrouds were the sheen of happy hours,
Its helm a wreath of orange flowers.
And I freighted it down with love and truth,
The golden hopes of my sunny youth.

Had it lived the storm—but it could not be,
A stranded wreck on the surf-washed lea,

My ship came home from sea.

And then a smiling fairy bark,
A fragile, precious-freighted ark,
Out on life's ocean drear and dark.
And I prayed to God as I never before,
To shield this bark from the tempest's roar;
To spare me this—but it could not be.
A little coffin came back to me—

Came back from my ship at sea.

With reckless hand I launched again
A venture on the treacherous main
Bound for ambition's dizzy court,
Sailed from a hopeless, loveless port.
With gloomy walls whose silence chilled,
With ghostly haunting memories filled,
With never a breath of the roses dead;

Never a rest for a weary head,
Never a dream of a sweet to be,
Hopeless, loveless still, to me,

My ship came home from sea.

The last, and least, of all the ships
Fashioned with hands, and heart, and lips,
I pushed from shore with its decks untrod,
And the freight it bore was my faith in God.
I recked not whither its way, nor when,
Nor how, if ever, 'twould come again.
And this, alone, came back to me.
Rich-laden from the stormy sea.
And so, sweet maiden, while your dreams
Paint fairest all that fairest seems,
I stand with you and watch today
The ship that sails from the shore away;

But never a sail from over the sea
The flowing tide will bring to me—
 My ships have come from sea.

Publication. Earlier version, titled “My Ships Have Come from Sea,” in *Poems* (1885).

Break Down the Door of the Jubilee

Let the penitent years file in,
And with knees to earth in the sacristy
Unshoulder their loads of sin.
To your Jubilee ye hundred years,
Your stoles are dabbled with blood and tears,
Red, red with the wrongs of men,—
With the lust of men, and the trust of men;—

With the gorge of gold, forsooth,
And the hearts that broke neath its glittering yoke
In the marvelous faith of youth.
Pass through, pass in, old years, and then
Turn back and seal your door again.

Break down the door, oh, thou white new year!
Break down the door, “the Holy door,”

That never was struck by mace before,
Brave priest, you have naught of sin nor fear.
But pass you in in reverence prone—
Lo! Truth stands naked there, alone.—

Look once, and die, for so it is writ.—
But you’ve opened the door and out of it
The light of her face will shine
Till the morning stars shall sing again
Of “Peace on earth, good will toward men.”

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 45.

Easter Lilies

With eyes all dim and downcast,
 She stood at the foot of the cross,
Bowling, in deep submission,
 Under the weight of her loss,
And she held in her hand a lily,
 Close at the foot of the cross.

A beautiful, perfect lily,
 To lay at the Savior's feet;
Sign in her silent sorrow—
 Of her worship—passion sweet—
A snowy, a Sinless offering,
 To lay at the Savior's feet.
“Behold thy mother and brethren!”
 A voice came up from the crowd
To the ear of the dying Savior—
 The Savior murmuring aloud:
 “These are my mother and brethren!”
 Looked on the muttering crowd.

And the mother's heart that was in her
 Swelled with a jealous fear,
And down in the cup of the lily
 Dropped she a burning tear—
Dropped on the snow of the lily
 The blot of a selfish fear.

Dropped in the cup of the lily
 A tear that was hot with pain,
And the snowy heart of the lily
 Was snowy never again.
The wax-white heart had withered
 In the salt of its burning pain.

And ever the beautiful lilies
 Are placed at the feet of the Lord.
Baptized with the tear of a mother,
 Keep they, a sinless ward—
Sign of a silent worship

At the cross of the risen Lord.
And ever and ever the lilies
 We lay with a smile or a tear,
A sacred gift on the altar
 Of the idols we worship here,
But deep in each lily's chalice
 Is the yellow stain of a tear.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 46.

The Christmas Cross

No longer red, its arms, with Christ's red blood.

No longer bound with superstitions fears—

Self-slaved humanity has washed it in

Two thousand years of tears.

Strip it of creed, and ritual, and all

Its mouth-made garmenture let fall

As fashions that are old.

On Calvary's summit let the mad world see

God's sign of love,—and Christian liberty.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 48.

Genesis

I came from the Unknowable.

I was.

I saw the first far reddening glimmer of the light
Whose whirling fires begot the sun.

And when this globe of earth swung darkling
into space

Through all its changing parentage of life, came I,
Till man, evolved of me, awoke, walked forth
And sunned his forehead in the smile of God.
All things in him expressed, all things were his;
His the adjusting of the belted zones,
The unmade centuries, the cradles, and the
thrones.

But failing recognition of me in himself,
The red instinct of his four-footed time
Strives with his higher element of life.
His lust's desire his law of Right, he makes,
His punier brother to the shambles takes,
Himself of his own heritage himself despoils;

And warring with his soul he pawns his breath
And passes back into the dust of death.
And I?—I come again, again,
Twice twenty times as many times again, I come;

And then, one day, a god is born.
And many wonder at the marvel of his power,
And bow to do him homage, crying "Hail! All
Hail!"

Believing me a new thing yet beneath the sun.
Or by a more ignoble impulse moved, they say:
"A brand-new devil straight from hell is he."

And in the sleeve of my flesh garmenture, I

laugh,—
So old am I,
For I am Love—the Atom of Creation, I.—
I give each man his Christ to bless or crucify.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 49.

A Thought

There's nothing dies;—the words you speak,
The kiss you pressed upon a baby's cheek,
The deeds you do, the thoughts you think, stamp
all too surely on your face
Their separate identities; and leave in space
A heritage for other souls to wear,—
For other hearts to bear.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 50.

A Mood

And so, dear dupe, you think that you
By your own truth have kept him true?
That moulded in such loyal mould
Yourself, your thoughts can lift and hold
Him to your loftier level? Then
Christ had not need to die for men.
Well, keep your noble thought, be true,
And guard your ignorance. And pray—
Pray God at night and dawn and day—
The pain of wisdom may not come
To you;
 To you; and strike you dumb; and numb
 and numb
Your senses till they die; and you
Have weariness of being true.
Say wrong is right and let it go.
 And maybe you can make it so.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 50.

All Hallowe'en

A black cat sits on the back yard fence,
And he yowls in the dead o' night;

There's a bat with wings stretched wide and tense
Across the pale moonlight,
A weird wind haunts the restless town,
And ghosts walk up and down.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 51.

Under the Grass

And I must lie out there under the grass
The wind ripples over the hill.
In dewy green, or in dusty brown.
Must lie there, and lie there, and lie there still
When the winter rain beats down,
And down, and into my slim white bones
Dissolving the dust of me.
And filtering through to the sun and the dew
And the light of the stars, will pass
Again to the roots of grass.
And somebody, someday, will plant him a tree
And a grape and a rose in the dust of me.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 51.

Bendita

“If God were not so far away,” she sighed,
“To reach His lowest place, I might have tried.
So high, so far from me His heaven lies,
I may not toward it even lift my eyes,”
She said,
And slowly, lowly, bent her head.

Resigning all the glory of the skies,
She turned to earth her sorrow-smitten eyes
And sought its best, and made the best of all
That chanced into her toiling hands to fall,—
Nor thought of self, nor any chance that she
might take,—
But just to be a witness for His sake.
Then waked one day amidst life’s sudden stir
To find the high and far-off God was leading her.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 52.

I Wonder If Ever the Angel Who Holds

*I wonder if ever the angel who holds
The book where all secrets are hid,
Writes for us the things we were trying to do,—
Or only the things that we did?*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 52.

Toasts

To Truth

The most beautiful naked thing in the world,—And the most carefully clothed.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 53.

To Whom It May Concern

Were all love's joys, its smiles and kisses,
Were all its hopes, and dreams, and blisses—
All that a million years could think,—
Imbrued into one cup of dew
And given to me, a toast to drink,
I'd drink that toast to you.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 53.

To California

Her breath is the purest, the wine of her mouth
Is richer than Circe's of old,
Her sandals are laced with the silk of the South,
Her bosom is woven with gold.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 53.

If I and You No More Were Said

*If I and you no more were said,
And thee and me no longer read,
The ego of all Being would be dead.—
If thee and me no more were read,
And I and thou no longer said.*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 54.

“To You”

When you return to your green hills
And all the starry heavens shine,
Or dawn your dusky canyon thrills
To life again; or may be when

Its little rippling rivulets run
To softest music in the sun,
Or roars the wind in rougher rhyme,
You’ll think of me—just me—some time.
In that dear moment pause, and then
Let some sweet memory of me
Have all your heart and constancy.
And I will come to you that day
Though I be half the world away.

vs.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 55.

“Distance Is Cruel” vs. “Distance Is Kind”

“Distance is cruel,” cruel, you say,
Was it distance that kept you away—
Was it all distance? I say.
The man who is thirsty, or hungry for bread,
Does he count the miles to a feast?
Or dally with time till his banquet is dead
And many the miles have increased?
Death came and took the light out of my heart,
And stood by my bedside for me.
I reached him my hands but he smiled and
 passed on,
Death must be cruel some way.

Grief came and found me
And swathed her cloak round me
And bound me a mummy from head unto feet,
And trouble went double with sorrow
Today, and tomorrow, and yesterday.

Poverty laughed when I bolted my door,
Stood by the door outside
And laughed at my pitiful pride;

Peeped through the keyhole and laughed
Till he rattled the bones in his thin yellow skin.

Aye; they all came—a clamorous crew—

Though each had been rover
Ten times the round of the round earth over,
But never, never came you.

If “distance is cruel” is true,
Then you who thus reasoned were cruelty’s self,
And distance was kinder than you.
Out of the dimmers of distance
One came to the desert to me.
He kissed and caressed me and blessed me.
O, his kisses were warm on my face,—
 My face was so cold.
Over my graves in the desert

He planted white blossoms of peace,
And peace was surcease.
My heart that was shriveled to die
Grew large with the largeness of loving
And the glory came back to the sky.
Distance was lost in the spaces of places that make it,—
And distance, I take it, is only the sieving of time.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 56.

Dead Days

Do dead days ever more return—
 The ghosts of days, I mean,
 When incense smokes and candles burn
 With shrouded Love between?

And if they do, come thou again,
 Touch palms with me, I pray,
 And turn the whole world back to Then,—
 Dear ghost of one dead day!

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 58.

When Will My Soul Go?

O, when will my soul go—and where will it go?
And what is my soul when it goes?
Will it rise with the rain-clouds, and fall in the rain,
And exhale from the heart of a rose?
Who knows?

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 58.

When the Roses Go

You tell me you love me, you bid me believe
That never such lover could mean to deceive.
You rave o'er my eyes, and my beautiful hair,
And swear to be true;—as they always swear—
But the wrinkles will grow and the roses go,
And lovers are rovers oft, you know,—

When the roses go,
I have heard of a woman sweet and fair,
With lips of love, and shining hair,
And you pledged to her on your bended knee
The selfsame vows you make to me,
But the wrinkles will grow and the roses go.
How she learned that trouble comes, you know,—When the roses go.
You hold my hand in your thrilling clasp,
And my heart grows weak in your subtle grasp,
Till I blush in the light of your tender eyes
And dream of a far-off paradise.
But the wrinkles will grow, and the roses go.
I will answer you, love—my love—you know,—
When the roses go.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 59.

Pearlie Is Gone Away

No papers, cut with the scissors,
Scattered over the floor;
No scampering feet on the stairway,
No finger-marks on the door.
How still and lonesome the house is,
The sunshine looks paler today,
And the wind round the corners is whispering:
“Pearlie is gone away.”

There in the farthest corner
Is her “sailor-hat” on the floor,
Where she tossed it yesterday evening
As she bounded in at the door.
Somehow I couldn’t take it
And put it away today,
And a plate of mud cakes in the cupboard,
I couldn’t throw them away.

“Is she dead?” did you ask me? No, no!
Could I sit here so calmly then?—
Just gone on a visit. Some day
She will come to me again.
But the house is so still and so lonesome,
And the sun shines so coldly today,
And the wind round the corners keeps whispering:
“Pearlie is gone away.”

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 60.

A Picture

A little maid, with sweet brown eyes
 Upraised to mine in sad surprise;
I held two tiny hands in mine,
 I kissed the little maid farewell.
Her cheeks to deeper crimson flushed,
 The sweet, shy glances downward fell;
From rosy lips came—ah! so low—
 “I love you—do not go!”
I see it through the lapse of years—
 years
This picture, oftentimes blurred with tears.
No tiny hands in mine are held,
No sweet brown eyes my pulses wake—
Only in memory a voice
 E'er bids me stay for love's sweet sake.

Publication. Earlier version in *Debris: Selections from Poems* (1881). Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

Two Must Be Two

“They twain shall be one flesh,” the Bible said;
The minister with solemn words pronounced us one
That long-ago, sweet hour when we were wed;

And I—I thought it had been done,—
I thought that we were one.

That he would hold my hand in his
All our life’s journey through—
That we in deed and word and thought must be
Each to the other true;
Each to the other all that life desired
Of love or of companionship of sex or soul,
A unison of aim and hope and plan—
No other woman in the world for him,
For me no other man.

One day—a strange and cruel day—he stopped
And told me I must walk alone; that two

Were never one, nor ever could be one.
And then I saw that near unto the path he trod
There was another pathway, parallel, but soon
Diverging. And it was not in the one
Wherein he stood that he placed me.
Far back along the way which we had come
I saw a woman’s tracks, made step by step
In harmony with his; in sharp, swift agony I knew
That they would go with his until the end,
And never weary him; for they were Friendship’s tracks;

And Friendship walked in freedom by his side.
In that cold, strange, new path, where he placed me—
A burden lifted from his weary breast—
Were many heaps of slender bleaching bones.

The daylight fled; black night, without a star,
Came down and shrouded me.
I groped around, I tried to see, I tried to walk,
But only stumbled over those cold, slender bones.
Then all the souls of womanhood, that once

Had habited those slim white bones, came near
And tried to help me. But my feet were weak
And heavy from long uselessness. My eyes
Had learned to see but in Love's light,
And from its cradle-time Love had been taught

That in a woman's breast—

“They twain shall be one flesh;”

It never had been shown to walk alone,
It could not even think alone.

I sat down helpless where I was; then all around

I heard a shiver like the quivering of reeds
Upon a river when the night-wind blows upstream,
And from those heaps of bones there rose a cry,
So strong, so deep and thousand-voiced and long,
That all the darkness trembled.

In its slow, shivering wail, I heard these words:

“Why does the Holiest of Holies lie?

Twain cannot be one flesh;

Why is the sacredest of human ties

Bound with such red mockery of Truth?

Friendship hath only feet with which to climb—
Yet climbs to heaven. Love hath both feet and wings,
But Falsehood's swaddling bandages have made of her
So frail a thing that man must carry her,
Or set her down and let her die.

Go back and tell thy sister woman not to love
Till Love hath torn the bandage from her eyes

And learned the power of her wings,

And taught her feet to walk as free and proudly all
Life's way as Friendship walks.

Go, go thou back, and tell to whom thou findest there
That twain are not one flesh—
That two shall not be one.”

I heard and bowed my head, and wept in wonderment,
And wondering, I died.

And there is one more heap of slim white bones
For some one else to stumble over when
To her, too suddenly, shall come the knowledge that

Two must be two.
Yet my lone soul, unsatisfied,
Knows if there had been such another love as mine,
And these had known and loved each other,
Two had been one by law of Nature's self.
There would no longer then have been the need
Of any far-off Heaven, and death had ceased—
Heaven would have come to dwell with them,
And they for very joy could not have died.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 62.

An Inward Glance

Like waves of tides that higher reached than others went
To meet the fulling moon's impellant light,
And with their depth and force and purpose spent
Left only foam to brown upon the hight,—
 hight,
 So are my thoughts.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 65.

In a Vision

Each was as fair as the other,
And both, as my life, were dear,
And the voices that lisped me “Mother,”
Heaven’s music to my ear.

One faded from life and mother,
And died in a winter dawn,
And I turned me away from the other
And wept for the child that was gone.
Then I lay in a weird sleep vision,
Before me an earth dark scene,
And the land of the Sweet Elysian—
And only a grave between.
One child soft called me “Mother”—

Out from the shining door—
And smiled and beckoned; the other
Played by itself on the floor.

One’s path, to my inward seeing,
Was light with a wondrous day;—
It led to the highs of Being,
And an angel showed the way.
The other lay where Marah’s
Hot sands with snares are strewn,
Through many a darksome forest
And the way was roughly hewn.

A faith to my soul was given—
The weird sleep vision o’er—
And I turned from the child in heaven
To the child that played on the floor.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 66.

Coronals

I twined you a wreath of the ivy vine,
You plucked me a red rose wet with dew—
You hold in your hand, and I hold in mine
Red rose ashes and bitter rue.

Fortune's wheel turned round and round,
And you went up and I went down.
The chaplet of bay that your brow entwined
You proudly wore;—but I knew, I knew

That you held in your hand, as I held in mine,
Red rose ashes and bitter rue.

You brought me a gift from the Avalon shores,
 I gave you the heart of a lily-blow;—
I hold in my hand, and you hold in yours,
 A cypress wreath and ashes of snow.
Fortune's wheel turned round and round,
And I went up, and you went down.
Of the sentient draught that flattery pours
I have drained my meed—but you know, you
 know,
That I hold in my hand, as you hold in yours,
A cypress wreath and ashes of snow.

Publication. Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

Inconsistence

She gave me once a blood red rose and kissed
My cheek. Contemptuously I met her touch
And dropped the flower as though a serpent
 hissed

Among its leaves. I blamed her much
For some things which I knew; nor thought that I
Could less that smile if she should die.

Today a wild flower white as snow I brought,
And laid it on her breast; and then I thought

How mean it was to thrust a gift on her
Who could not hand, or lip, or eyelid stir,
To fling it back;—and was it dew,—that clear

Drop quivering on the blossom,—or a tear?

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 69.

But One Little Stocking

But one little stocking! There used to be two
Hung up for the Christmas treasures;
I dropped in a tear as I filled it anew—
Too sad are the Christmas pleasures.

O sainted, O sweet Mother Mary!
For motherhood's blessing and dearth,
Put a gift in the stocking in Heaven
And say it's from mother on earth.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 70.

My Soul and I

What were you, soul, before that you were I?
Were you by death—some other form of death—
Unburdened from some other shape, in some—
Uncounted time (which I almost remember)
A co-existent quantity with atoms of the stars,
Or were you but a sigh of Nature's breath
And had to have embodiment to make
 Death possible?

O, passion bounded, sorrow tossed
 Poor Soul!

What have you gained or what have you lost
 By wearing flesh's thrall?
Enough to pay the troublous cost
Of staying here—of coming here at all?
And if you were a soul and knew you were
 Why hither journeyed you?
Was there not in vast space a place
 More fitting for a soul?

 Poor Soul,
 and you
If creeds are true, and you
Were fashioned by the Mighty Maker's hand,
In His own Image made,
A thing unsullied as the Maker's self—
White-winged with countless millioned happy
 years
To sing His praises in,
Why came you here to mix identities with me?
To worry through the toil and moil of many years,
To wash yourself in tears

And die at last sore wounded, sullied, too,
Your white wings clipped, just for the slender chance
Of getting back to where and what you were.
Poor Soul!

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 71.

Across the Great Divide

I never hear the night wind blow,
 Or see a red rose pearled with dew,
Or hear a lark's song in the dawn
 But that I think of you,—
 Of you, hear heart, of you.

(Leonard Morris Hilyard)

Gone out into the darkness, and the night—
Gone, gone alone, forever into the unknown—

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 72.

My Brother

Long nights and nights he waited for the dawn,
And watched the sunlight glancing down the
 hills,
Well-knowing he must go; but kept it closely in his breast,
And hid his pain lest it should fright us that he loved.
And then one day he smiled, and went away—

 My Brother.

Say not that he is dead and lives not anywhere
That potent individuality,
Nor in some far-off other world awaits
The Everlasting,—all forgetting this.
No morning dawns, or sun goes down, or rain
 or wind,
Or war of elements, or summer stillness comes,
But that I see his face—

 My Brother.

O, there are hurts too deep for words.
And there are silent rooms in memory
Whose emptiness would break our hearts again
To venture in.
Rest unto thee, and peace, and blessedness, and love; Amen!
 Amen!

There was no braver, kinglier-hearted man than thou—My Brother.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 73.

The Fairy of the Heights

She's the winsomest fairy, with bonnie brown eyes
That twinkle so merrily, then look so wise.
Each hair of her head in the sunshine was
 traced,
It's the vividest gold from her crown to her waist—
Never troubled with tie strings of bonnet or hat.
And the speckled fawn looks from his browse in the flat,
To wonder what manner of comrade is that
With a brown little hand reached to give him a pat.
She is friends with the squirrels and birds, and she knows
Where the shy rabbit hides, and the Christinas tree grows.

She sits where the spring ripples over its brink,
And watches the bees and; the butterflies drink.
She puts her ear close to the old redwood tree
To hear what it says to the wind from the sea;
She could tell you its tale of a shepherd and staff—
The redwood's four thousand,—she's nine and a half.
She will point out the spot where the full moon first spills
Its flood of pure silver to burnish the hills,
For she's friends with the squirrels and birds
 and she knows
Where the shy rabbit hides and the Christmas tree grows.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 74.

Valentine

All night at your heart's door my heart had stood,
But did not knock (you might have let me in,
And that, before the world's tribunal, would
Have been a sin).

From out the somewhere world of dreams, my
soul

Saw yours come back into its sleeping clay;
Then out into the new-born dawn, I stole
And went away.

It was a soul your waking eyes first saw, and so How could you know!

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 75.

Not Acclimated

I hate you, Southland of the southern west,
I say I hate you! All your hot brown breast
Is dried and shrivelled up. Your wide hot mouth
Breathes only scorching desolating drouth.
Your mountains toss their jagged peaks, and stop
Just short of majesty. Your rivers drop
Beneath the sands of their own beds, and seep
Through mud and roots and rotted things, and creep
Like cowards to the sea. I say I hate you!

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 76.

Question

Shall I, because you stabbed me in the back
And killed my friendship with a traitor's blow, blow,
Shall I behind your armor strike, and show
 Myself a traitor too,
 To even things with you?

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 77.

I Have Never, You Think, a Serious Thought

My friend—

Never a moment by sorrow taught

Its sympathy to lend.

Can you by the light of laughing eyes

See all there is in the heart that lies

Under a smile, my friend?

Forever wrapped in their glittering shrouds

Of snow,

Are the mountain peaks that touch the clouds;

But ah, my friend, you know

There are smoldering fires that never rest,

And earthquakes hid in the mountain's breast,

Under the cold, white snow.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 78.

Unanswered

O dear, dear, eyes, now shut to sight and sense,
White folded hands, at rest for evermore,
Can you not give me back one look from thence?
Nor open once, just once, that silent door?

If I could have one glimpse beyond it given,
To know you live, and love, and blame me not;
My mad, mad soul would give its hopes of heaven,
And die, and be forgot.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 78.

Query

It is so precious sweet to be a fool,
A pretty little petted simpleton,
And let the great big fellow you have won
Believe that he is captor, and his rule
Imperative, while round your finger tips
You wind him with a smile or pout of lips.
Who would be large and wise, and boastful rule,
When it's so "cute" to be a "little fool?"

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 79.

The Red Winds Blow

The red winds blew around the world.
The gaunt wolf rose, and sniffed, pricked forward pointed ears;
The vulture sharpened her beak; Death held his breath!
And dissonantly twanged the music of the spheres.

The red winds blew. The nations stirred uneasily,
As when a loitering zephyr ruffles summer leaves,
Then swift, and sudden as the gathered tempest strikes,
Ten times a million men rushed at each other's throats
And drenched the fair earth with each other's blood.
Ten times a million Christian men, with songs of home
Upon their tongues; each praying to the selfsame God
For strength to slay, and slay, and kill and kill
His brother men across the reeking trenches, till
No man was left to lift a hand opposing him.
For what? and how? and why? and why?
To claim a city by another claimed, mayhap?
To step across a line marked on a map?
For greed of place? For power to rule God's unmarked seas?
Or this? or this? or that? or that? or these?
The tramp of armies shakes the smiling lands.
Such armies! God of Hosts, till now, Thou hast not seen.

Death rides before them with red dripping hands;
The roar of breaking worlds their bodeful coming tells;
The bare earth moans where grew sweet fields of gold and green.
The carrion eater slinks close in their shadow's hem,
And Famine, stark and hungry-eyed, stalks after them.
The red winds blow.

Whose sons are these that sail the skies in winged ships,
And hurl down from the blue of heaven, hot, hideous death,
To break upon the lullabies of sleepy babes;
To burst amidst the fleeing multitudes,
Rend limbs from limbs, tear quivering flesh from shrieking bones,
And in High Places thank God for the gruesome crime?
Whose sons are they that plant the seas with death?
Foul, awful death; that lies in wait for human prey,
Laughs when the lordly dreadnought glides too near

(Itself in search of other human prey),
And springs annihilation in a breath!
Leaving, of all the splendid armament's defense,
But streaks of crimson scum upon the broadening waves.
The red winds blow.

Whose sons are they, made in Thy image, Thou, O God!
Not Thine? Not brothers of Thy Son, Whose way
Was gentleness; Whose touch was benediction.
Nay;
Not Thine, not Thine!
Nor thine, thou carnate devil, watching from thy hell,
The hell that out-hells thine! In thy unholyest dreams
Thou could'st not have devised the 'cursed schemes
For human woes, and horrors, these have done.
Thou art outstripped in cunning—out of date—
Too old of fashion. Slip back in thy spuny hell,
They are not thine.

Down through the ages they have come;
Red souls of war, obsessioning the earth,—
They were the miscreated sons of her who sat
Upon the seven-headed scarlet colored beast
Which sat upon the waters of the Seven Seas.
To whom the kings of earth came craftily,
And drank abomination from her gilded cup.
Her smile preceded Babylon,
And on her brow was written "Mystery."
The red winds blow.

And Thou, O gentlest Peace, in what far guarded place
Dost hide and hide the pity of thy face?
Let loose thy snow-winged dove, to rise
And fly across the seething blood-mad world.
To flutter over fields where that dread Silence is!
To light on upturned faces blurring at the skies
And curiously peck at dead men's eyes.
The red winds blow.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 80.

A Peace Conference

Once the great white bear of Russia,
Close beside his polar seas,
Called the beasts and birds to counsel
That the beasts and birds would please
Cease to war upon each other;
Appetite for blood should cease,
And all sovereignty be given
To the sweet, white dove of Peace.
The great bald eagle from his aerie
On the mighty Rockies' crest,
Lauded peace while he was preening
Blood of battle from his breast.

Royally the Albion lion
Licked and licked his velvet paws,
Roaring Peace to Afric jungles
With blood and feathers on his claws.

Came the great black-breasted eagle
Swooping from the Baltic's shore.
Bait for fish in Orient waters
In his peaceful talons bore.

Then the great white bear of Russia
Asked all beaks and claws to sheath;
Asked, and smiled, and showed in smiling,
His own cub's blood upon his teeth.

Far away upon her desert
In her solitude enthroned,
Peace sat desolate and weeping—
And her white dove moaned and moaned.
Slowly, through the hot sun toiling,
An aged worm with ways infirm,
Stopped its homeward crawl to listen;
And the white dove ate the worm.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 84.

Intuition

I kissed her eyes and cheeks, and then

I told her I would come again. ©

told her I

I told her I would come, and then

told her I

I kissed her eyes and cheeks again.

Coat falsehood over thick with wit,

Wrap reasoning round it—yards of it—

And there are eyes will pierce it through

And smile your falsehood back at you.

I fancy she was one of these,

For though I swore by shores and seas,—

Aye; though my vows in heaven I booked—

She looked at me—just looked and looked.

Some minds toil hard, up-hill and far

To find the truth, but some there

Who feel the truth within them grow

And know,—not knowing how they know.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 85.

California

She was not born a babe, to suckle strength;
A woman, gazing down her land's broad length,
Stepped from the pines out on the fall-brown grass;—
The grizzly bear stood back to let her pass.
And Fremont's cannon thundered wide and far,
Old Glory's azure had another star.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 86.

The Opening of the California Poppies

To the West, and below where the snow summit looms,
Stood an army of pike-pointed lances of green,
So slenderly fashioned they scarce could be seen.
How could they, such lilliput lances of green?
The plains and the foothills were spotted all over
With peds of blue camas, and tall lupin plumes
In reaches of purple;

And blushes of bloom of the clover.
And smelled sweet as bee-bread.
But the meadow lark laughed in his ripple of tune,
The meadow lark knew what would happen at
noon.

There were stamens of gold and petals of flame
Wrapped up in each green little conical cap,
That slowly slipped up, and slipped up, till it came
Off at the top with a snap!

And the petals unrolled, flame, orange, and gold,
And airily, fairily, swung on the stem,
Till the land was afire with the color of them.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 87.

The Golden Gate

Down by the side of the Golden Gate

The city stands;

Grimly, and solemn, and silent, wait

The walls of land

Guarding its door, as a treasure fond;

And none may pass to the sea beyond,

But they who trust to the king of fate,

And pass through the Golden Gate.

The ships go out through its narrow door,

White-sailed, and laden with precious store—

White-sailed, and laden with precious freight,

The ships come back through the Golden Gate.

The sun comes up o'er the Eastern crest,

The sun goes down in the golden West,

And the East is West, and the West is East,

And the sun from his toil of day released,

Shines back through the Golden Gate.

Down by the side of the Golden Gate—

The door of life,—

Are resting our cities, sea-embowered,

White-walled, and templed, and marble-towered—

The end of strife.

The ships have sailed from the silent walls,

And over their sailing the darkness falls.

O, the sea is so dark, and so deep, and wide!

Will the ships come back from the further side?

“Nay; but there is no further side,”

A voice is whispering across the tide,—

“Time, itself, is a circle vast,

Building the future out of the past;

For the new is old, and the old is new,

And the true is false, and the false is true,

And the West is East, and the East is West,

And the sun that rose o'er the Eastern crest,

Gone down in the West of his circling track

Forever, and ever, is shining back

Through the Golden Gate of life.”

O soul!

O soul! thy city is standing down
By its Golden Gate;
Over it hangs the menacing frown
Of the king of fate.

The sea of knowledge so near its door,
Is rolling away to the further shore—

The Orient side,—
And the ocean is dark, and deep, and wide!
But thy harbor, O Soul! is filled with sails,

Freighted with messages, wonder tales,
From the lands that swing in the sapphire sky.
Where the gardens of God in the ether lie.

If only thy blinded eyes could see,
If only thy deaf-mute heart could hear,
The ocean of knowledge is open to thee,
And its Golden Gate is near!

For the dead are the living,—the living the dead,
And out of the darkness the light is shed;
And the East is West, and the West is East,
And the sun from his toil of day released,
Shines back through the Golden Gate.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 88.

To Clara Shortridge Foltz

From out the ranks of them that toil
Thy hand has carved its upward way,
Nor stooped its God-given trust to soil,
Nor dreamed in weariness to stay.
If faltered e'er that heart of thine,
It ached, but gave the world no sign.

Thy voice has argued in debate,—
In scathing satire sharply fell;

In forum and in hall of state
Held listening thousands with its spell.
Then dropped its tones to softest keep
And crooning sang a babe to sleep.
True as the ship is to its port,
Thy heart—on seas of sun or foam—
Wrought out its masonry in Court,
But built its tower at home.

And when the gold upon thy head
Shall change to age's colder gray,
The little hands that thou hast led
Will lead thee down life's slanting way.
The path is long since over-grown
With flowers of love that thou hast sown.

Then Hail thee! priestess of the law—
Our fair-browed Portia of the West.
Write on thy shield: "I came, I saw,
 came, I saw,
I conquered." Thou hast earned the crest.—
Nay; more, it seemed the gods to thee
Had given the Sakhral's mystery.

And thou hast proved that woman can—
Who has the grace, and strength, and will—
Work in the wider field of man
And be a glorious woman, still.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 90.

Mount Whitney

Stern sentinel of Pacific's broad embrace
Thou standest drear and lone;

The sun's first glance falls on thy snowy face,
Thou hear'st the ocean's moan.
With foreheads bared the hills enclose thee round;

Winds woo thee o'er in storm and zephyr sweet,
And summer, with her girdle loosely bound
Like some fair Ruth, lies blushing at thy feet.
No bird on thy bleak summit seeks its rest;
No flower e'er blossoms on thy chilling breast.
The nations rise, and die, and rise again,
And still thou standest lone, and drear, and cold,
Immovable, unchangeable as when
The first-born century above thee rolled.
Thy vigil keep, O Mount, till on the brink
 Of Chaos Time shall break his flight.
Wrapped in thy solitary grandeur sink
Like lost Atlantis, in thy might.

Publication. Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

Welcoming the G. A. R. to California

Run up the flag to its highest height
And proudly let it wave
Upon the sunset's wall of light
To greet the true and brave.
There is never a stripe on its crinkling folds
Nor a Star its field to gem
With the vaunted glory victory holds,
But owes its place to them.

Bring out again the unlimbered guns,
And sound the bugle call;

With roll of drums and martial pride
Salute them comrades all.

Ah! They have another welcome heard,
And another scene have they;
Their flags are battle-dimmed and torn,
Their guns had fiercer play.

There are empty sleeves, and stumping limbs,
There are wounds that never sleep;
And the memories of lonesome graves
Where nightshade blossoms weep.

Oh, many a soldier's cheek will pale
Whose heart ne'er beat with fear;

Oh, many a comrade is "marking time,"
Who cannot answer "Here!"

And day on day of the flying years,
In the ranks grow wider gaps
As down the lines in the camp of life
Old Death is sounding "Taps."

Run up the flag to its highest height,
And proudly let it wave,
Upon the sunset's wall of light
To greet the true and brave.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 92.

San Francisco

Upon her thrice seven smiling hills she stood,
Beloved of her patron guide, the good
St. Francis; with pomp and power and pleasure rife.
Richer than Tyre and Sidon was her broad estate,
Fair as Mohamet's dream of after-life;—
Secure, behind her battlemented Golden Gate.
And Dawn slipped down and blessed the sleeping world.
But that unwonted silence, everywhere!
No twitter of a bird in matinal was there,
The dog cowered whimpering at his master's door;
The fishes swimming seaward from the shore.
Then suddenly awakened, all uphurled
Were tower, and dome, and splendid palace wall;
The sick earth reeled and shrank; shock followed shock
Till splintered timbers, dust and tumbling rock
Piled the great city's crumpling streets, and all
Her mighty architecture swayed and groaned
With crunch of wrenching beams, and scream and screech
Of twisted steel. And pallid faces, blank of speech,
Turned helpless to the awesome reddening sky.
From nowhere unto nowhere rumbling moaned
The earthquake's passing sigh.

"Is this the end? This—this our final lot?"
Men looked into each other's eyes and answered not.
And then above the tumult rose a doom more dread;
A thousand sheets of flame leaped up as one;—
The demons from the under earth had spread
Their holocaust to greet the rising sun.
And upward from its terror, and despair,
The smoke of Sacrifice pulsed in the smitten air,
Devouring, roaring, miles of blazing death;—
A kingdom devastated in a breath.
All day the Queen of Evil laughed, and urged
Her fire sons to fiercer rage; all day, all night,
That billowing wall of fire swirled and surged,
And lit far other places with its lurid light.
Men fought it back as gods might fight with Titan foes,

Fought hand to hand, fought face to face, and fell
Unconquered, lying where they fell. And none may tell
The heroisms of that time,—and for no man knows.

In the great earthquake and fire of April 1906.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 94.

A Legend of Sutro Heights

Once when the world was new,
Once in its dawns and springs,
When the waters a language knew,
And the hills were living things,
The Mount that is Tamalpais
And this terrace-bordered Hight,
Stood side by side in the wall of land
Which held the seas aright.

And the Mount and the Hight were lovers,
In love with the sea were they,—
In love with the syren Ocean
Whose beauty before them lay;
Her emerald gown was brodered
With lace the mermaids spun,
And her tawny bosom glittered
With the diamonds of the sun.

They gazed on the matchless vista—
On the wide-out-sweeping zone
Of amber-dappled Ocean,
And they claimed her each his own.
A quarrel grew between them,
And the contest rose and raged
Till the universe was shaken
With the jealous war they waged.

All vain the angered Ocean
Invoked each nymph and gnome,
And beat her breast against them,
And flung her arms of foam.

The sun and the moon drew backward
And hid in their clouded light,
And the pale stars fled affrighted
Back into the aisles of night.

Then the king of the hills and the waters
Arose in his wrathful might,
And kindled his red death-furnace

Under the Mount, and the Hight—
The sea-waves stop and tremble,
The hills like waves careen—
And the wall was rent asunder,
 And the Ocean rushed between.
The king of the hills and the waters
 Still stood in his wrathful might,
And he hurled his curse prophetic
On the riven Mount and Hight:

“Ye shall stand thus widely parted
 While the sea-waves wash the shore,
And hear the ocean moaning
 For ever, ever more;
And thou, rebellious Mountain,
Be a barren waste and dumb
Till the world shall bring you ransom,
 Till the East to the West shall come.”

The circling years whirled onward,
The birds forgot to sing
On the barren, nameless summit
Under the ban of the king.

One day from the dust and tumult,
From the cares, and frets and ills,
Where standeth the busy city
On its ocean-dented hills,
Came one and stood on the Mountain—
On the Mountain cursed of fate.
He looked on the broad Pacific,
On the narrow-bounded strait;

He saw old Tamalpais,
Black-browed as the frown of hate;

He saw the ships of the nations
Come into the Golden Gate.
And the humbled soul of the Mountain
Crept into the soul of the man,
Swift in his brain evolving
The lines of a mighty plan.

He wove him a wondrous vision;
Of the desolate land he made
A flower-wreathed dome of beauty,—
A sylvan perfumed shade.
He planted the snow pale flowers
And the blooms of tropic dye,
And a giant redwood forest
Held its arms up toward the sky.

The rare and the quaint and the curious
Of the world he hither brought,
And the wonder-shapes in sculpture
Which the master hands had wrought.

And he builded here a temple
To the muses Time has sung,
Full-stored with the hoarded volumes
Of many a clime and tongue,
Where the scholar's hand might gather
From the past its fading gleams,
And the poet's fancy fashion
The thought in his realm of dreams.

And his templed palace garden,
With a royal generous hand,
He gave—a gift—to the people
Of the Golden Western land.

From the ocean's lambent splendor,
From his vision-bowered strand,
He turned to the rock-ribbed summit
And the glaring dunes of sand.
He had forced the earth to open
Her secret treasure door—
And back to the earth he yielded
Her gold thrice doubled o'er,

The jagged rocks are shapen,
To curious curving walls,
To granite carven stairways
And terrace-circled halls.
And curve in curve encloses
Long flower embroidered lines,

Where mythic gods and graces
Dream under palms and pines;

Where the ministers of winter
Sleep in acacian bowers,
Drugged with the breath of incense
From purple-throated flowers.

The west wind whispers, whispers,
Its story in the nights,
And the Ocean chants her anthem
At the foot of Sutro Hights.

The humbled soul of the Mountain
Liveth no longer dumb—
The world has brought its ransome,
The East to the West has come.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 96.

Helen Hunt Jackson

Proud California! Bend thy head,
 And measure, reverently, thy tread;
And plant thy tallest pine to wave
 Above the gentle stranger's grave.

A rose dropped down into the sea,
 And drowned;—

But every wave that washed a lea,
 Or swept the ocean round,
Came back and brought upon its crest
A sweetness from the rose's breast.
A song bird on the summit crown
 Of self-denied,
Fell slowly fluttering, fluttering down,
 And died;—
But all the hills and valleys rang
With music of the songs it sang.

A woman's soul has crossed the size
 Of mortal sight—
A woman's hands, a woman's eyes
 Are closed in night;—
But all along the way she came
Are springing blessings on her name.

O rose! O bird! O woman's heart!

 Dead heart—dead flower—and silent bird,—
Ye gave us but the fainter part
 Of songs ye heard:

The solemn nights have sung to thee,—
The trees, and winds and moaning sea;
The mighty silences of space

Closed round and taught thee face to face!

No land may claim thee to enshrine,
Thou art the world's—the world was thine.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 101.

In the Foothills of the Sierras

The pine trees nod to the oaks below,
The wild oats bend to the cliffs of snow;
Noonday's shimmering, gauzy glow
On all the hills is lying—
And the manzanita berries grow
Red in its gorgeous dyeing.
The wood-dove answers the plaintive call
From the nest that is hid in the chemesal,
And the wanton humming bird devours
His feast from the bulky milk-weed flowers.
Threads of cobwebs, glistening gray,
Spun on the wheels of the summer's day,
Glimmering go—and glimmering stay—
A place to dream one's life away.
And the saucy stream goes tumbling down
To water the flowers in a valley town.

Publication. Earlier version, titled "In the Foothills," in *Poems* (1885).

The Wheat of San Joaquin

A thousand rustling yellow miles of wheat,
Gold-ripened in the sun, in one
Vast fenceless field. The hot June pours its flood
Of flaming splendor down, and burns
The field into such yellowness that it
Is gold of Nature's alchemy; and all
The mighty length and breadth of valley glows
With ripeness.

Then a rolling of machinery,
And tramp of horse and scream of steam
And swishing sighs of falling grain,
And sweaty brows of men; and then—
The Samson of the valleys lieth shorn.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 103.

Thanksgiving at Montara

Thanksgiving dawn God's secrets told
In misty lines of pink and gold
 Upon your hills, Montara.
The lark, while yet the dawn was dim,
Sang joyously her praise to Him.
Sweet peas that climbed the windy wall
Shook down their fragrance unto all.
Wee wild things felt the shadows pass,
And heard the growing of the grass.
And lo! Thanksgiving left, that night,
The afterglow of God's own light
 Upon your hills, Montara.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 104.

They All Are Kin to You

(Ina Coolbrith)

The twilight, and the dawn,
Sunrise and set of sun—
The summer's golden hush,
All seasons—all in one—
 Belong to you.

The rose her secret whispers you
The poppy's dreams, you know,
To you, the mystery of the seas
The West winds blow, and blow,—
 They all are kin to you.
And that is why you sit alone
Just at the great sea's door,
And watch, and watch the tides come in,
And watch, and watch the tides go out,—
And the white ships ever more,—
 They all are kin to you.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 105.

At San Diego

Here first on California's soil,
Cabrillo walked the lonesome sands;
Here first the Christian standard rose
Upon the sea-washed Western lands,
And Junipero Serra first
Laid loving hands.

What saw they here, that venturous band,
To bless or touch with loving hand?
Or bid them pause, or dream to stay
Around this silent, sleeping bay?

An acreage of many miles,
Vast miles of sun-burnt naked space,
Red, brown, and bare, and baked as tiles;
Whose surface lay unchanged of face
As it had lain, the hills among,
Since first Creation's psalm was sung;
Whose people watched the squirrels play,
And cared not any more than they.

Not these alone, the fathers saw
Not these made hardships doubly sweet—
He never sees his arrow's flight
Who is always looking at his feet;—
Those holy fathers, wiser they,
They marked the broad expanse of plains,
And mountains gushing crystal life
Enough to fill its thirsting veins;—
They saw, far off, the mingled web
Of colors wrought from out the soil,
When Nature rounds upon her loom
The laborer's legacy of toil.

They served, and toiled, and built, and planned,
But ever saw a promised land;
And heard its slowly rising swells
Ring joyous from their mission bells.

And decades passed, and fifty years,

A century was born and died;
A nation struggled into birth,
And rose to midday of its pride.
And freedom's war-wet staff was set
Beside that one of love and peace;
And suns of noons, and midnight moons,
Unwove and wove time's ageless fleece.
Time crept by the mission bells,
And back, and tied their tongues with rust;
And touched the eye-lids of the priest,
And garmented his bones with dust.

The glory of the mission passed,
Its gloom its glory overcast.
Within its corners, shadow-walled,
The bats made nest; the lizard crawled
Upon the sunny side to sit,
With soulless eyes, and laugh at it.

But smile not ye with scornful lips,
Nor croak a prophecy of this;
There's nothing lost that's lost, and naught
That once has lived, has lived amiss.
Nay, smile not ye, nor count that false
Which failed in promises it gave;
For gold is gold, though it go down
A thousand fathoms in the wave;
And brighter-hued the blossom is
That blooms upon a grave.

In silence sleeps the land no more,
Its treasury of wealth is found;
And all its curving seagirt shore
With queenly cities crowned;
While through its gateway come and go
The sails of suns and sails of snow.

Progress to this old new West
Has turned her face and set her seal;
Has bound the waters, broke the hills,
And shod the desert sands with steel.
O land of sun,—hot, splendid sun!—

Of sea-cool winds, and Southern moons!—
Of days of calm, and nights of balm,
And languorous, dreamy noons.
No seer hath need to tell for thee,
Thy daring and thy destiny.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 106.

The Last Priestess of the Sun

Backward-gazing on her ruined temple

 The Priestess stands,
 Fierce, and wondering, and sullen, gazes
 On the desecration of the spoilers' hands.
 Dead are the fires upon your altar, maiden,
 Despoiled of all its riches is your shrine;

 Your sacred sacrificial vessel gives you
 No answering sign.
 And palms will grow upon your temple border,
 And still the sun will shine.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 109.

The Builders

Ye builders coming late unto the Aztec's Sea—
Unto the sun-land Southwest of the West,
Hail to you, hail! Your temples solemnized today
Disturb no dead world's rest.

Thrice hail to you! Ye builders by the Aztec's Sea;
Twin fold the blessings of your work in stone and wood,—
Who helps to make the world more beautiful
Helps God to make it good.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 109.

The Native Daughters of the Golden West

When California wrought her royal crown of
gold—
The perfectness where in her own proud fame
should rest—
She took the foot-prints of the pioneers,
She took the sound of battle, and the strength
Of manhood measured by the long-drawn length
Misfortune stretched for them across the
years.
She took the whispering sighs of pines that
shake
Their needles down on graves lost in the wake
Of time. She took the heart-sick patience and the tears
Of women waiting, waiting, waiting, for their loved
Who came not back. And then, the sacredness
And permanency of her state-hood laid
Upon this shrine of sacred things. Of these she made
Her crown; and wrote around its shining
crest:
“My Native Daughter of the Golden West.”

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 110.

Wonderful, Mysterious Mexico

Builded on the ruins of dead thrones
Whose temple walls were old when Thebes
 was new;

On altars whose weird sacrificial stones
With ghastly offerings were crimsoned through.
Oblivion hides and holds thy secrets fast—
The dust of ages lies upon thy past,
All wonderful, mysterious Mexico.

The conquerors came knocking at thy peaceful door
And met thy outstretched hands with sword
 and flame;
With broken gods bestrewed thy altar floor,
And slew thee in Christ's loving, gentle name.
But thy bold eagle clutched a serpent in the slipping sand,
And bore it writhing o'er his blood-swept land,
All wonderful, mysterious Mexico.

Thou land of shrines and crosses, legends, yester-days;
From tropic splendor to eternal snow,
Thy purple mountains rim such unfound ways
Of wealth, the greedy world turns hither to thy slow
Awakening; to lay swift hands upon the treasured
 worth

Thy solemn hills and hotland jungles hold—
Why, thou couldst change the commerce of the earth,
And fill the coffers of the world with gold;

 Thou wonderful, awakening Mexico.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. iii.

Alaska's Woman

Mrs. Mary E. Hart

Don't you hear the icy winter calling you?
The far voice of your fierce snow-blinding solemn North?
Your midnight sun turns one dim edge above the snow.
At Kotzebue it's "54 below."

The mighty Yukon's roaring protest shakes the crouching hills,
In vain attempts to burst the icy barrier closing down
Upon its breast. Aurora Borealis shoots across the sky
Red searchlights of her miracle,
And all the heaven with flaming splendor fills.

The tundra crackles for your mucklucks *tread*.
Your parka† hangs beseeching on your cabin wall,—
That far north cabin wall
(A timber wolf housed with her young ones there last fall).
Your huskies‡ snap their teeth impatiently,
And lurch against the traces to be gone.
The sleety blizzard bellows forth its challenge,—
daring you to come.

And still the sunland holds you. I am knocking at your door;
The perfume of your flowers besets me as I knock.
You have grown indolent with too much sheltering ease,
You could not hear the wild North call midst all of these.
Your neighbor leans across the fence to speak to me—
"Left for Alaska more 'n a month ago?"—What? you don't say!
Well that's quite like her. Thank you Mrs.—
er-er-'much obliged. Good-day.

** Fur boots with tops of knee or thigh length. † A hooded fur shirt—an Alaskan outer garment reaching to the knees, worn by men, women, and children. ‡ A breed of native Alaskan dogs.*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 112.

What Know You of My Soul's Inherent Strife

*What know you of my Soul's inherent strife
By that calm faith—untried—which wells in thine—
How can you from the knowledge of your life,
Write out a creed for mine?*

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems* (1917), p. 114.

Love's Way

Love came to my window and tapped one day,
Touched hands and touched lips, and went flying away;—
For Love is like that alway, and alway—
Love is like that alway.

The world went all wintry, sad years passed, and then
Love rested his wings at my window again;
I clasped him, and held him so close to my heart
I thought he would never, could never, depart.
But Love slipped his light wings and went flying away,
For Love is like that alway and alway—
Love is like that alway.

Once more Love came smiling and whispering to me,
But I said to him: "Love, pretty Love, don't you see
The window is barred, dear, between you and me?"
And Love folded his wings at my window to stay.
For Love is like that alway, and alway—
Love is like that alway.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 116.

God Bless You Wherever You Are

Wherever your footsteps are straying,—
 Anear me, or wandering afar,—
Remember I'm saying, I'm praying:
 "God bless you! wherever you are."

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco:
Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 117.

The Dryads

O, I was a dryad, and you were a dryad,
In the long and long ago!
And so when the leaves in the wild-wood are whispering,
And the trees wide shadows throw,
I can hear you calling me
In the way it used to be;
And I know as we used to know,
When I was a dryad and you were a dryad
In the long and long ago.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 118.

The Sign of the Cross

“What will you give me?” I asked him—
My lover of long ago.

“What shall I keep to remember
That ever you loved me so?”

“Dearest one,” softly he answered,
“We have sifted life’s gold and its dross,—
That you may not forget how I loved you
I’ll make you the sign of the Cross.”

As light as the touch of the zephyr
That blows in the nights of the South,
With my face in his hands he kissed me
On forehead and eyes and mouth.
O, I might forget that he loved me,
Forget, too, the pain of my loss,
But deep in my heart, and forever,
Is burning his sign of the Cross.

Publication. Earlier version in *Poems* (1885).

That Day in Texas

The gulf blew its gentlest breeze—
The whisperings of some far seas,
The sunshine flamed across the land,
I felt the warm clasp of your hand
And Oh, the light in your dar eyes
Was brighter than the sunlit skies,
Was brighter than the sunlit skies,
 That day in Texas.

The years, the year, that are to be
May never more bring you to me,
And days will come, and days will go—
But ever when the South winds blow
And sunshine flames across the plain,
I'll hear your voice and live again—
 I'll hear your voice and live again
 That day in Texas.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 120.

Canst Thou Not Hear Me

I failed thee in Love's dear respect
Too lightly held my plighted vow,
I broke thy heart with cold neglect,
And smiled on loves so less than thou.

I see thee again,
And my dream it is fair.
I see thee as then,
With a rose in thy hair,
Thou art so near me
Canst thou not hear me
Calling thee, calling calling thee—
Canst thou not hear my heart.

World-weary, and too late, I find
The world but gave a wanton's dole
And thou alone of womankind
Didst love me, love with thy soul.

I see thee again,
And my dream it is fair.
I see thee as then
With a rose in thy hair,
Thou art so near me
Canst thou not hear me
Calling thee, calling calling thee—
Canst thou not hear my heart.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 121.

Just This One Day

We drifted idly, you and I,
The world was fair, and blue the sky;
Upon the dimpled, sunlit stream
We saw the water-lilies gleam.
No clasp of hands, no lovers' kiss,
Yet never was a day like this
One perfect day of earth and sky—
Just this one day, and you, and I.

Publication. First published in *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. San Francisco: Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917, p. 122.

Bibliography

Selected primary and secondary sources

Book and periodical titles are italicized throughout.

Works by the Author

Morris, Madge. *Debris: Selections from Poems*. H. S. Crocker & Company, 1881.

Morris, Madge. *Poems*. Golden Era Company, 1885.

Wagner, Madge Morris. *A Titled Plebeian*. Golden Era Company, 1890.

Wagner, Madge Morris. *At San Diego Bay*. 1898.

Wagner, Madge Morris. *The Lure of the Desert Land and Other Poems*. Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1917.

Wagner, Madge Morris. *The Autobiography of a Tame Coyote*. Illustrated by James A. Holden, Harr Wagner Publishing Company, 1921.

Works About the Author

Bland, Henry Meade. "Madge Morris Wagner." *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*, vol. 82, no. 5, May 1924, p. 204.

Colburn, Frona Eunice Wait. "A California Poetess—As I Knew Her." *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*, vol. 82, no. 5, May 1924, pp. 204–206.

Mighels, Ella Sterling. "Her Pen Is Stilled." *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*, vol. 82, no. 5, May 1924, p. 206.

"San Francisco Social Life and Clara Foltz's Circle." *Women's Legal History Biographical Search Project*, Stanford Law School.

Vore, Elizabeth A., and J. Torrey Connor. "California Poets at Home." *Godey's Magazine*, July 1897.

Colophon

Publication and production notes

This critical reading edition was edited by Brian Kim Stefans for The Text-Tech Papers, Los Angeles, in 2026, as part of *Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry*. The poems were reset from the source pages identified in the publication notes and datasheet. The book was composed in EB Garamond on a cream field at 6 × 9 inches. The cover uses original abstract artwork prepared for this edition.