



RUBY DE CORSAW CULVER

The Flaming Bush

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

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The Flaming Bush

Ruby De Corsaw Culver

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

THE FLAMING BUSH

SONGS OF THE DESERT

BOOK ONE

BY
RUBY DE CORSAW CULVER
Photographs by the Author

*"Make Straight in the Desert a Highway
for our God"*



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Title page or opening source witness for The Flaming Bush.

Editorial Note

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. The text was transcribed from the source pages in the local archive and collated against available embedded text. Physical page wraps were rejoined only when the source showed that they were typographic continuations; stanza breaks, meaningful indentation, epigraphs, subtitles, speakers, and section headings were retained. Obvious scanning debris was removed without silently modernizing diction, spelling, or punctuation. Each poem or complete sequence ends with a source note in the established Green-volume form.

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Introduction

Ruby De Corsaw Culver built *The Flaming Bush* out of sun, silence, sand, abandoned towns, desert plants, roads, wind, moonlight, and the uneasy pull between revelation and mirage. The book's long sequences move through Rhyolite, the Salton Sea, Palm Springs, canyons, mesas, Joshua trees, and painted sands, treating the desert as both a physical region and a pressure on belief. Culver's life remains difficult to document securely, but the 1927 volume is large enough to stand as a career in itself. This edition resets it complete, restores its section structure, and keeps its shaped spacing and recurrent epigraph-like lines distinct from the poems.

Biography

Ruby De Corsaw Culver is securely identified as the author of *The Flaming Bush: Songs of the Desert*, published in 1927. Exact-name library authority records confirm the title, but a dependable birth date, death date, obituary, and family chronology have not yet been joined to the author.

The volume is an extensive poetic geography of the American desert. Its subjects include Rhyolite, the Salton Sea, Palm Springs, the Colorado, mesas, canyons, dunes, roads, plants, wind, stars, prospectors, and abandoned traces of settlement. The poems alternate direct landscape observation with devotional, allegorical, and romantic frames.

The book's organization matters. Repeated numbered divisions, motto-like page openings, and sequences of related poems create a journey rather than a miscellaneous heap. Culver returns to mirage, silence, heat, and distance as forces that rearrange perception.

Until stronger civil or archival evidence appears, biographical claims based only on the surname Culver or De Corsaw should be treated as leads. Research should continue through the 1927 copyright entry, publisher and printer records, California directories, desert-club periodicals, and contemporary reviews. What can already be said with confidence is that Culver produced one of the period's most sustained books of Southern California desert poetry.

The Flaming Bush

Stage 1 | 1927

The complete recoverable poetry text of the 1927 collection, reset from the source pages.

My Desert Land

Sun, and silence, and sand,
This is my desert land.
Sand, and sun, and solitude,
Stretching away to infinitude.

Silence, and sand, and sun,
To herald the day begun,
Climbing aloft with terrible fire
To the far zenith high and higher,
Or soothing all things to sleep and rest
Ere its glory is veiled in flaming west.

Sand, and sun, and silence,
Not caring why or whence;
Silence that sleeps eternal,
Through the day, and nocturnal
Quiet,—and stillness profound;
Nowhere the faintest sound.

Sun, and silence, and sand,
This is my desert land.
Sand, and sun, and solitude,
Stretching away to infinitude.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 21.

Night-blooming Cereus

A butterfly poised for flight,

 This is the Cereus.

A sojourner for only a night,

A butterfly poised for flight

Robed in glorious white,

 With beauty imperious.

A butterfly poised for flight,

 This is the Cereus.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 21.

Shadows

Soft gray shadows are lying on the hill;

Long blue shadows are underneath the trees.

Shades of dancing leaflets and shadows that are still,

And the shadow of a song is lilting in the breeze.

Shadows of the palm trees are floating on the stream,

And shadows swept with gold dust where sun-beams filter through.

The mauve and purple shadows step softly as a dream

Of the gray clad Twilight with velvet cloak of blue.

Green and lilac shadows on the sun scorched trail,

Sudden gleams of sapphire on the shifting sand;

But when rain clouds gather, and stormy south winds wail,

Then the canyon, truly, is changed to shadowland.

The clouds come tumbling over and the lightning is a chain

That illumines all the crannies of the canyon wall;

But the wayward wind flees sobbing—and oh, the silver lane

Of shadows in the moonlight is the fairest of them all.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 22.

Solitude

The sands stretch far as the eye can see.
 A hawk wheels dizzily up in the sky;
 Lone on the sands as the hawk on high
Nothing moves save the bird and me.

Barren sands, and brown hills nude;
 Peace unuttered,—no single sound
 To break my rest as I lie on the ground
Thanking God for this solitude.

But the city calls and I go in dread
 For she can a hard taskmaster be
 To artist folk, and to fools like me
Who have chosen the desert waste instead.

Shunted like brutes through the crowded street;
Not an answering smile on a face I meet,—
Caught, and enmeshed in a traffic jam,—
Dear God, how utterly alone I am!.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 23.

The Dull Road

I shall not take this way again
 Across the sandy plain
 The way is dull and dreary,
 I shall not come again.

But thorn and briars blossomed,—
 The road has made amend.
 I found a bit of heaven
 Was waiting at the end.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 23.

Silence

Friend, have you heard the Silence speak?

Then come to the desert with me

And share the silence of silent things

Where birds sing silently.

Under the stir of the creosote bush

The hare awakes with a bound;

A streak of grey flashes through the sage,

And sends back never a sound.

Wheeling above on silent wings

The vulture and desert hawk sail.

Mutely the road runner darts through the brush,

Our vanguard along the trail.

Nay, speak not, nor whisper, but silently pray

At dawn or at tranquil noon;

Break not the stillness with trivial thought

For peace is the desert's boon.

Do you know the meaning of your own heart's beat?

Can you hear what it says to you?

Come not to the desert with a heart unclean;

Come, come if your heart be true,

And heed the voice of the desert things,

And the silent drift of the sand.

Place your ear against that Joshua Tree,

The seer of this silent land.

It murmurs of peace and silent songs,

And heals a long heartache,—

Nay, it did not thunder, and I did not shout—

It was the voice of God that spake.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 26.

The Ghosts of Rhyolite

It sleeps upon Nevada's plains,
The deserted town of Rhyolite.
It was here men came for golden gains—
A dream that vanished in a night.

No habitant in all the town
Is left of all the former hosts,—
But there are tenants of renown,
The place is peopled now by ghosts.

How do I know? Because I heard,—
Not only heard—I also saw.
You thought it was a mocking bird
That called and whistled in the draw.

You thought it was a pale moonbeam
That swayed across the valley floor—
I saw it in a brighter gleam,
It came right to the very door.

It saw me there and beckoned, too,
And out through sage and tangy way,—
Of course I followed, so would you
Could you have known how ghosts would play.

These are the spirits, so it seems,
Of those who once were desert folk.
But now 'tis only in their dreams
They can throw off the city's yoke.

And if they ever imprison me
Where a city groans in all its pains,
I, too, at night shall struggle free
And riot on these golden plains.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 27.

Maid of the Moonlight

I met her there by a silver dune,
The maid of the white moonlight,
And oh, a light was in her eyes
Like the radiant stars of night.

Dear moonlight maid, beneath desert skies,
I wander all alone.
Then come to the dunes for the moon shines bright
And the evening zephyrs moan.

Oh, come again, my silver maid,
Out into the white moonlight.
I listen here for your haunting voice
Under velvet skies of night.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 28.

The Sahuaro

Like a giant candelabrum
 On the plains the sahuaro stands
Looming up like some strange phantom
 On these waste and lonely lands.
Some believe they've found Elysium
As they wander o'er the sands
And behold this ghostly spectrum
With its waiting outstretched hands.

Here the owls in nesting season
 Build their nests and raise their young.
Some would say, to praise were treason
 Any cactus. With arms wide flung
I dance and chant for I adore
This lonely, fluted semaphore.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 28.

Grand Canyon

I

Purple twilight and the night-bird calls;
A flutter of wings over Canyon walls
While I idly dream as Night's mantle falls
Weaving its web and my heart enthralls.

For here in the Canyon where all is so still,
With the mighty river a trickling rill
A mile below, look where I will,
There are gorgeous forms to dazzle and thrill.

Words cannot picture the glories here.
The stars are enchanted, and draw so near
I might reach out and pluck them from the dome overhead
And string them like diamonds on the river's thread,—

But as I turn to the Canyon and my vigil keep,
I scorn my folly and sit and weep.

II

I weep for the grandeur of temples in stone
As I kneel at the foot of a great white throne,
And for the far off river's wailing moan;
And I weep because I am all alone.

Alone with the beauty of a jewelled sky,
And the romance of a thousand years gone by,
Where generations of foot-prints of Red Men lie;
And new grandeurs are born ere the old ones die.

May I keep this vision and scan it o'er
When days are dreary and life a bore;
When the fogs roll in and the air drags down,
And I'm pushed and jostled through the crowded town,—

I will think of the Canyon,—this holy place,
And naught shall the world see but a shining face.

III

There will be a halo about my head
When I think of these White Cliffs and Cliffs of Red;
As past new glories each hour I'm led,
I remove my sandals and softly tread;

Softly, softly, through ages of dust.
Where the river has torn through the marble crust
Towers and castles are forward thrust—
Bow down thy head for bow you must.

Ineffable beauty. In speechless awe
I acknowledge thy glories without a flaw.
Buttes, and turrets, and towers sublime,
Thund'ring your message throughout all time.

I lay down my pen and close my lips,
Before the wonder of thy apocalypse.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 29.

Desert Stars

Beneath the desert skies I lay at night
And woke to wondrous pageantry at dawn.
Like fiery opals of fair Mexico
The skies were glowing after stars had gone.

By day I trudged through grasses brown and sere,
Enthralled by skies where timid stars retreat.
I knelt to tie a dusty boot and found
Flowers like star-dust underneath my feet.

Is there no place these earth-bound feet have trod
But they have crushed the hieroglyphs of God?

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 31.

The Oasis

The sun has winged his last arrow
Over the land he sought to slay,
And now the Lord God is walking
In His garden at “cool of the day.”

There is sound of rippling water,
And flash of the dancing spray
Where the thrush with wings aflutter
Is bathing at “cool of the day.”

The mountain looks down in the mirror
Of the quiet, shimmering pool,
And I, with my Lord God am walking
In His garden when day is cool.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 31.

Wood-winds

A little woodland minstrel calls to my canary;
 From dawn until the sunset I hear his wild-wood song.
In plaintive notes he trills, and then with accents airy;
 But, filled with joy or sadness, he calls the whole day long.

Singing on the hilltop or down among the willows;
 Out beyond the sahuaros or over garden walls.
Halting little bird notes, then songs in waves and billows,
 The little woodland singer to my canary calls.

Are you content in durance this lovely summer weather
 While every woodland creature is calling from outside?
My cares have gone a-soaring, lightly as a feather,
 And through the sunlit valleys I'm roaming far and wide.

But still,—I can't forget you, with-held by city walls,
 And my heart, a wild-wood singer, calls and calls, and calls.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 32.

Salton Sea

Three geese against a stormy sky
 And a gray sea.
Could I but fly
As they, against a stormy sky,
Would you then stand so coldly by
 And aim a gun at me?
Three geese against a stormy sky,
 And a gray sea.

Stragglers from a migrant wedge,
 The three gray geese,
Dropping now amidst the sedge.
These stragglers from a migrant wedge
Do not see me in the hedge;
 I, too, would seek release
Like these stragglers from a wedge,
 The three gray geese.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 33.

Passing Shadows

Just the little passing shadows
 That along my pathway lie,
Only make the sunshine brighter
 When the shadows have passed by.

Just the little griefs and sorrows
 And gray days of skies and heart,
Make our love and kindness quicker
 When others walk in grief apart.

Not all days are bright with sunshine
 Clouds and rain are needed, too.
Look up, love, and see the rainbow
 When the rain descends on you.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 33.

Three Journeys

"Sinister as the desert may seem to the uninitiated, once you have traveled its byways and slept under its stars you begin to appreciate the powerful influence it exerts. The 'Lure of the Desert' is no mere phrase—it is a primary law and cannot be denied." —R. L. Larson

I

A waste, a silence, and a desolation
That Time has dragged her weary footsteps o'er.
These lurid plains are an abomination
Where, please God, I shall not wander more.
Clouds of sand the very air have riven
As wailing winds like lonely children cry.
Wild geese far from their haunts are driven,
Now southward wing against a brazen sky.
Let me go far from this awful desert
To forest lands, or by singing brooks to roam.
I need trees above me or flimsy covert,
Anything but this vast-spreading, copper dome.
If this be peace, then give me roaring war
That I may gain a peace worth fighting for.

II

Often in the night-time I have heard a calling,
A voice so still I scarce could hear a sigh,
From some far land like breath of spirit falling;
Till I would wake and answer, "Here am I."
And I would catch a gleam of open spaces,
With room to breathe, and where my soul might grow,
Till I prepared to flee from crowded places
To see if Time yet moved with footsteps slow.
So to the desert once again I'm turning,
To wind-swept plains far clouds are drifting o'er;
Where, straight above, a fiery sun is burning
That filled me so with rage in days of yore.
And if again I hear that low voice cry,
Swift shall I be to answer, "Here am I."

III

Somewhere in the night a bird is singing,
And the willows stir and whisper in the breeze.
Down deep in my heart glad songs are winging
To the lone and joyous singer in the trees.
As beneath the stars I watch the shifting
Of moon-beams playing on the desert floor,
Shadows through the sagebrush softly drifting
I know that Peace and I ne'er met before.
And at the dawning or at purple twilight,
Midst swirling sands or under raging sun,
Peace comes gently like a flood of moonlight,
So now I know that Peace and I are one.
And as she weaves her spell 'neath silent sky,
I answer to her magic, "Here am I."

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 36.

Moonlight on the Colorado

In my dreams I see the pinons
Looming dark on desert hill,
Where we four by moonlight wandered,
Arm in arm as lovers will.

Far below we saw the river
Like a silver ribbon gleam;
For by moonlight 'tis enchanted,
But by day a swarthy stream.

And the Indian huts are shrouded
By a shimmering silver mist.
In the day they stand out plainly,
And by burning suns are kissed.

There the spines of cactus glisten,
Flashing spears in desert heat;
And the shadows on dark shorelines
Are the willow and mesquite.

Now the mountains frown no longer,
But smiling peer through purple haze,
Beaming on the crystal river
Flowing through the desert maze.

Ah, at eve, in lovers' Springtime,
 Beneath tranquil desert moons,
Colorado's mud is silver,
Where it gleams along the dunes.

There our youthful love we plighted
Under desert skies of blue,
Springtime love should never waver,
December suns would find us true.

 They are gone, those youthful lovers;
 Without a care one wanders free.
 One sleeps in a verdant valley,
 And the other by the sea.

Where we wandered in the moonlight
Other lovers wander now.

Where we promised love unchanging,
They their loves forever vow.

Through a million silver moonlights
Will the Colorado flow,—
But I'm dreaming of the river,
As I loved it, long ago.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 38.

The Goal

When I have reached that farther hill
Where pinons whisper at the sunset hour
I shall no longer fear the valley's power;
For there Love beckoned once—and beckons still.
I shall no longer cry and beat the door
That shuts me now within the valley's grip.
On sunlit paths along the hills I'll skip
Where Love once beckoned in the days of yore.

I hear the whispering of the pinon tree
And the wild free booming of the thunder-bird.
Courage, my heart, until my loins I gird;
Strain at thy bonds till thou at last are free.
Love waits thee yet upon the farther hill—
O shouting heart, be still! I say, "Be still!"

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 39.

The Silent Call

Legend: "It was not people who went into the desert merely to write it up who invented the fabled Hassayampa, of whose waters, if any drink, they can no more see fact as naked fact, but all radiant with the color of romance."

—Mary Austin, in The Land of Little Rain.

Do not hold me, friends and neighbors,
 For I hear the Silent Call.
I must follow where it echoes
 Out beyond the canyon wall.
There the fabled Hassayampa,
 (But a fact it is to me),
Laves the feet of deep, dark canyons
 Ere it seeks a far off sea.

For the fabled Hassayampa,
 Thus it is, the legends say,
If any drink its amber waters
 Truth will lightly on him lay.
And all things he views be colored
 With the light of desert skies;
Stars will shine at brightest noon-time,
 Suns will at the midnight rise.

All things henceforth will be glowing
 With the radiance of the West.
Romance lure far more than wisdom,
 Be with sweet enchantment blest.
Sapphire skies will bend above him,
 At his feet the sands of gold;
Burning bushes will amaze him,
 Flaming as in days of old.

Mesquite trees are tipped with silver
 When the desert sun drops low;
Clouds are flowing streams of crimson
 Flecked with orange and indigo.

I must follow, friends, and neighbors,
 Where the Hassayampa calls,
Where it tinkles down the canyon

And over rock of porphyry falls.
I can see the sunbeams beckoning
 Where the cerulean shadows sway;
I can see the waters glistening,
 Though it is a mirage, you say.
But I'll go to Hassayampa
 Where the fabled river runs;
Where the blue dome spreads above me
 Starry nights and burning suns.
Burning suns that heal my heartache,
 Aching from the ways of men;
There I'll tread my lonely pathway
 Till my peace shall come again.
There I'll live with star-eyed Beauty
 Underneath the turquoise dome
Where the stars keep watch in splendour
 When on silver sands I roam.

I will walk my lovely pathway,
 I will sing my songs divine,
Songs that lift the hearts grown weary
 As the Silence lifted mine.
For the Silence calms and strengthens,
 Chastens us and gives us peace;
Quiets all our pain and yearning,
 From our striving gives release.

Ah, my heart glows with the sunrise,
 And with burning stretch of sands,—
Clouds are troops with flying banners
 Where a western sun commands.

And I'll drink of Hassayampa,
 For the fabled river runs
At the feet of deep, dark canyons
 Out beneath the burning suns.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 40.

Dawn on the Mesa

I am waiting 'neath the pinon for the dawn;
 The dawn that now is hidden just behind the hill.
Stars will soon be fading from the sky,
 I am waiting for the dawn and the bluebird's trill.

All night I watched the stars that come and go,
 Beheld the velvet midnight wax and wane,
Heard the drifting and the shifting of the sands,
 And with the dawn I will come to you again.

I am coming now, my love, for the dawn is in the sky,
 And the world with songs of birds is all atune.
My winged feet fly swiftly o'er the sands;
 The dawn! The dawn is coming! Night is gone!

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 42.

One Lone Star

The city screams, and rumbles, and shrieks,
And I long for the stillness where you are.
Tired and nerve-racked I lift my eyes
To the blue, blue sky, and one lone star.

Trains and motors clang by in the streets,
Riveters clank at their work near by.
A siren wails through the chaos of sound,—
 I lift my eyes and look at the sky.

The same lone star and the blue, blue sky
Bend over you and this hive of men.
Just a few more days of the city's strife
 Then to you and my plains I will fly again.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 43.

We Might Have Loved

Had you been aught but a spirit
 Sweeping over my mesa land,
We had loved and been so happy,
 Climbed the mesa hand in hand.
But you were the grey wolf walking
 In rain clouds over the sky,—
I, but a thirsty corn-field
 Drooping and ready to die.

You were the silver moonlight
 I was the snow-white sands.
You were the towering sahuaro
 That alone on the desert stands.
I was the song of the river
 Rippling over its rocky bed;
I was the weeping willow,
 You were the star overhead.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 43.

Luring Voices

There are voices of my childhood that I hear and search for ever
That called across the prairies throughout the summer day;
Where clouds cast purple shadows across the fallow farm-lands
And richly costumed sun-flowers danced the hours away.

I followed winding cow-trails over billows of the prairies,
And always, just beyond, the voice was calling still;
Down the cross cut coulees my mustang gaily cantered,
And the voice was calling beyond the farther hill.

Later, in the mountains, I thought that I might find it,
Where Cheyenne towers in splendour or on greenclad Manitou—
Breathlessly I climbed them, ready to make answer,—
Only one vast echo in endless space of blue.

I sought the voice at Needles over in the dune lands
That stretch through miles of desert back beyond the town.
I sought it by the river, the red, and mystic river
The Rio Colorado that silently glides down
Through thickets of the mesquite and meekly bowing willows,
By lofty mountains and plains of golden splintered sand;
And, as I was drifting over swirling, gleaming waters
I heard both sobs and laughter echo from the land.

I have sought in Coachella where palm-trees nod in greeting,
And have heard the voice still calling beyond the Salton Sea;
But I came nearer to it on Mohave's sun-washed stretches
For the gaunt and lonely Joshuas told secrets there to me.

Yes, I am ever seeking and listening for the voices
That called and beckoned ever on the prairies long ago,
Where the sun-flowers yet are nodding and the breezes ever luring,
As they're luring on Mohave. Farewell, comrade. I must go.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 46.

Palm Canyon

The Palms are waving their hands,—
Come over to the Canyon and see
A green oasis in desert lands
Where the Palms are waving their hands.
Free from the blistering sands
And the sun's intensity
The Palms are waving their hands—
Come over to the Canyon and see.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 47.

The Prospector's Philosophy

He wheels, and wheels, and sails;
 The vulture up in the sky.
Do I revile him as carrion bird
 Awaiting his prey? Not I.

I journey with faltering steps,
 While darkness over me steals.
The vulture in smaller circles
 Silently sails, and wheels.

It has been a good fight and brave;
 I shall go to unknown lands,
But this hampering dust I shall leave
 Here on the golden sands.

Like the vulture up in the sky,
 I shall wheel, and wheel, and sail,—
And say as I soar to the Golden Gate,
 “I have done my bit. All hail!”

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 48.

Ambition

Swinging on a telephone wire
 Perched a ghostly tumble-weed.
His soul was filled with youthful fire
As, swinging on a telephone wire
He gaily sang to the wind-swept lyre
 And boasted his aspiring deed.
Swinging on a telephone wire
 Perched a ghostly tumble-weed.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 48.

The Suppliant

Compassion grows within my heart for these scarred lonely lands,
That seem to wait entreating with toil-worn, weary hands;
Or am I the needy suppliant, and is 't the land that understands.

Its past is veiled in mystery. For many a golden age
Those who sought have come and gone having earned their scanty wage
Or brief enlightenment, securely kept for prophet and for sage.

So here I wander once again to seek thy mystery,
And though it be in storm, in drouth, in sun's intensity,
Yet, with-hold thou not anything, but give it all to me.

If thou be queen in largesse and I a beggar maid,
My heart, like starry open sky is on thy altar laid.
Dost thou speak with mighty voice? I listen unafraid.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 49.

The Voice of the Desert

Like a voice from Sinai

 The desert speaks.

Cloud angels floating by

Like a voice from Sinai,

“Lift up your eyes on high,

 Unto the highest peaks.”

Like a voice from Sinai

 The desert speaks.

The desert speaks.

 Thunder rumbles through the sky;

Lightning tears the clouds in streaks

While the desert speaks.

Like a maniac the wild wind shrieks,

 Waves of sand are tossed

 on high,—

The desert speaks

 And thunder rumbles

 through the sky.

Thunder rumbles through the sky

 Then dies away and all is peace.

I heard a voice from Sinai

When thunder rumbled through the sky,

“I, the Lord thy God on high,

 From every storm will give release,

Though thunder rumbles through the sky—

 For it shall die”—and all is peace.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 50.

The Lady of the Organ

In a rocky canyon we tarried
 For a few brief hours of rest;
Weary with days of travel
 Over the desert's breast.

Under the great stone organ
 We laid our blankets down,
Careless alike of the organ
Or the Lady's smile or frown.

Draco rose high in the heavens;
In the east was a silver moon.
I know not if I waked or was dreaming
 When I heard that wondrous tune.

It was a sound as of angels singing
That soared aloft to the stars,
And shook mighty rocks of the canyon
 With the organ's triumphant bars.

In the moonlight of blue and silver
 Even lowly thoughts take wing.
And so the great stone organ
 Must open its heart and sing.

And now, afar from the canyon
Where angelic songs are made,
I dream of wondrous harmonies
 The Lady of the Organ played.

Oh, I long to hear that organ,
 And the angel songs again,
Ringing out in the silver moonlight,
 "Amen! Amen! Amen!"

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 51.

The Storm

The storm whirls fiercely down the dusty street
 Like mad Apaches tearing down the trail.
The bowing trees acknowledge their defeat,
 And greet their conqueror with a sobbing wail.

Bony fingers of the rose bush tap upon the window pane;
 Grey clouds scud swiftly over brassy sky.
Showers of leaves are piling in the lane;
 The trees give forth a wailing mournful cry.

Blow! wild winds, blow! And fling the leaves about!
 Charge, and charge again upon my lovely trees!
I answer to your raging shout for shout—
 Are there none stronger to oppose than these?

Though in terrific gales you tear the hills apart,
 'Tis naught to the tempestuous storm within my heart.

II

The dawn breaks cold and oh, so strangely clear.
 The trees that sobbed now lift their heads again;
Only the scattered leaves to remind that storms were here,
 The flowers lift shining faces in the glen.

The raging wind is now a languid breeze
 That lightly tips the petals of the rose,
Leaves its sweet impress on the nodding trees,
 And, incense-like, across the plains it flows.

Where have the demons of the darkness gone—
 The fierce wild call of all the elements?
They leave no waymarks for the radiant dawn,
 The tempest in my soul it, too, relents.

The everlasting hills stand unmoved afar
 And on my heart is left no stain nor scar.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 52.

Loving You

It has been so easy to love you,
And I will not repine or fret;
Now you say your heart is another's,
It seems so hard to forget.

So hard to forget the love songs
That sang in my heart all day,
So hard to forget the longing
For your dear presence alway.

So my desires I will take to the desert
Let the hot winds on them blow,
Till the chaff is burned out of my longing
And it shines forth pure as snow.

Then I will be loyal and faithful
Till the last golden sun has set,
For it has been so easy to love you,
And then,—I need not forget.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 53.

The Mountain of Rose

I long for the land where the Silence is,
Where the Old Rose Mountain towers;
Where the moon streams down on the silver sands
And whitens the sleeping flowers.

Toward the rising sun is the Mountain of Rose,
To the south is the Pointed Peak;
And overhead and on either hand
Are the treasures for which we seek.

The dawn-star lifts o'er this silent land,
And is lost in its sunrise skies;
Morning tints are opal, but golden sand
Under the noon sun lies.

The moon looks down on a silvery world,
And a silver, waterless sea;
Glistening chollas in silver sands,
And a silver Joshua Tree.

But oh, the wealth of that Mountain of Rose,
And the silence and boundless peace,
Where the gold of sunset or flaming dawn
Bids our restless striving cease.

For the land awakes in opaline haze
And dreams in a golden doze;
But 'neath amethyst, gold or turquoise sky,
Glow my beautiful Mountain of Rose.

A Painting by F. Grayson Sayre.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 54.

Trophies of the Wind

The wind comes down the canyon strong and free
and bold.
It shakes the stately sycamores and flings away their
gold
Which they all year have garnered, and now across
the trail
The little leaves are scampering like a flock of
frightened quail.
They huddle by the brookside and beneath the willow trees
And fall in fear and trembling before the blust'ring
breeze.
The wind in boasting braggart way now attacks the
proud and high.
He tears the clouds to tatters, drives them across
the sky
And on a far horizon his ill gained trophies flaunts
And of his power and prestige he makes his boasts
and taunts.

Like a mighty spotlight on the booty of the wind
The sun glows flame and violet where the ragged
clouds have thinned,—
Jade, and gold, and scarlet in a theatric heap,
He searches out their radiance ere he prepares for
sleep,
But with a color filter he changes to Payne's Gray
And turns to dust and ashes the trophies of a day.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 55.

Remember Thy Creator

Remember now thy Creator, O Youth; remember Him now and dwell safely.
Walk not in the way of the froward and tread not the bypaths of evil;
Wisdom crieth aloud at the gates, wilt thou not bid her to enter?
Those that receive her are blessed and she showers her treasures upon them.
Let us turn now the pages of Time and see what the future may bring thee.
Yea, take heed, O Youth, the blessings that Wisdom shall give thee
Can never be taken away but are given forever to cherish—
The moon, a word whispered of hope, when shadows seemed almost enclosing,
An invitation, the stars, to look up and remember thy blessings.
Yea, remember thy God, O Youth, ere Fear shall cause thee to tremble,
Ere Rashness shall battle with Wisdom and seem to be stronger;
And many to Mammon pay homage and bow down to Pride and Oppression
Who close the doors of the Temple. Yea, and stand in the place that is holy.
Then will long dreary hours of the night give promise of day that is drearier.
Ay, remember, O Youth, remember.

II

Wilt thou hear the call of the bird and rise up in haste with thanksgiving
For even one voice that speaks not of sorrow and grieving?
But finding the daughters of song are bowed low in weeping and moaning
Wilt thou turn away also grieved? The bird sings no more. All is silent.
And all are afraid to look up but grope about in the darkness
Fearing all things below, yet knowing not what is above them.
Only the almond doth flourish which presages the end of all evil.
The locust devours all things growing and hope is a word with no meaning;
Apathy stalks in the streets and man sleeps,—never to waken. Remember, O
Youth, remember.
And thine own silver cord wouldst thou loose, now tarnished with life which
thou hatest?
And thy golden bowl so empty that better by far if 'twere broken?
Wilt thou break at the cistern thy pitcher when thou findest the water all
stagnant?
Of naught dost thou think thou hast come, and to nothing wouldst thou be
going
Scorning even the peace which thou seekest to find in oblivion?
“Vain are all things,” wilt thou sigh, “and the end of all things is vanity?” O
Youth, thy Creator remember.

III

Now into thy darkened house a ray of light gains admittance
Searching out the dull cobwebs of Doubt, of Sloth, and Indifference,
The bars of Pride on thy windows clamped on by stubborn Resistance.
In vain thou strivest to patch up the shade where the ray of light had found
entrance
Shamed at thy vile abode. Knewest thou not its uncleanness?
See! Under thy gloomy portal stands Humility, friend of thy childhood;
Ever a welcome companion till Pride came with her dazzle and glitter.
Thou hast found through the years Pride is false. She leads, but she never will
follow,
And when evil days come, she speaks not of comfort, but torment.
Humility is welcomed again. Pride flees, and the years fall away as a shadow. O
Youth, wilt thou thy Creator remember?
Now through the wide open window the light streams in warm and glowing
And thou hearest the voice of the Preacher freely imparting his knowledge.
Because he looks to God for his wisdom he can interpret God's word to His
children.
Diligently the Scriptures he searched and sets the proverbs before them;
'Twas the way that the prophets had taught by comparing the good with the
evil.
And he tells them of Moses, the shepherd, Moses, the lowly and humble,
Moses, who tended the sheep on the lone far side of the desert.
Under the desert stars and under the sheen of the moonlight,
There in the big open spaces with the great white Silence upon him
He learned of a God who is Law and deliverer of His people. O Youth, for
Moses remembered.

IV

And Moses, the lowly shepherd, rejoicing in beauty around him,
Turned aside to look at the shrubs that glowed with blossoms of Springtime.
There in the midst of a bush that was flaming in radiant glory
But was not consumed in the burning but flared and burned ever the brighter,
Even as the ocotillo that now is aflame on the desert,
He heard a still voice speaking, a voice that was calling and calling.
"Go thou unto Egypt," it said, "and bring my people from bondage."
Ay, even yet on the desert that quiet voice is heard calling
By those who are humble of heart and answer the call of the needy.
There the wind and the sun and the sands kiss the feet of the stranger

Who wanders with lowly tread on the sands that ever are holy.
From those golden plains at the dawning if thou wilt bow thine head low and
listen
Thou wilt hear the stars of the morning as they sing their songs of rejoicing.
As the color floods over the mountains while the valleys still are in shadow
Thou wilt hear the chorus of angels as they join in the hallelujahs.
The sun at noon-time stands still in reverence to its Creator.
The birds, the sheep, and the flowers all join in prayer at the nooning,
And so profound is the silence that, knowing not, thou wouldst think they
were sleeping.

V

But oh, the glory of sunset when God reveals Himself to the humble.
There the great beauty and grandeur that no worldly pomp can e'er measure
Hints at far greater glory and bids thee to seek till thou find it.
Then, as Night draws her curtains and darkness settles around thee
A pall on thy heart is falling for the page has no backward turning.
Ah, but look up above thee! Look up and consider the heavens!
Was ever from the beginning of time so great a gift to one's loved ones?
If, then, this is the gift, what of him to whom it is given?
Ay, what of him, the beloved, to whom has been given dominion?
Shall he not, who harks to the Silence, gain courage of blue skies above him,
And the strength of the winds that sweep wide in purity over the valleys?
Shall he not go to the darkness of Egypt and lead the children from bondage?
O Youth, with thy soul aflame and eyes with a holy light burning,
Youth, thou hast spoken well. "I will go afar to the desert,
I will seek for the burning bush with sandals removed, softly treading
On blooming desert or waste; I will journey and seek till I find it.
I will hark to the voice of the Silence and bring God's word to His people."

L' Envoi

Remember now thy Creator, O Youth,
Thou art His image and likeness;
Made in the likeness of Love,
Love, which is everywhere present.

Even as a lord of the earth,
Unto thee was given dominion
Over the works of His hands.
O Youth, thy Creator, remember.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 56.

The Road Runner

I think I know why you ran ahead.
It was just to see where the trail would end.
With flirt of tail, and a quirk of your head
Where will you lead us, my scouting friend?

You ran full tilt down the open road,
When we nearly caught you, sprang in the brush.
Did I hear a chuckle when by sage I strode?
No, nothing is there but the desert's hush.

But come now, road runner, and take the lead;
You may bob your head and flirt your tail,
Blink your saucy eye like a jet black bead,
But we need a road runner along our trail.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 64.

The Cholla

Thou maligned and disparaged of men,
 Thou impudent one of the plains,
Only loved by the lone cactus wren
 Who builds safe in thy thorny domains.
Your spines are barbed to the point
 And the strongest leather will pierce.
You easily sever a joint
 Which you use in a manner most fierce.

And yet, your silver white spines
 Are a gleam like the crown of a saint.
I condole with him who maligns
 But I have not yet made complaint,
And to shield you from wrath I'll agree
 But, pray, keep your barbs far from me.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 64.

Overtones

In golden robes at mid-day the desert dreams and sleeps
While on her trailing garments purple shadows fall.
A million fiery summers across her body sweeps;
The desert sleeps at mid-day—the sun's recumbent thrall.

Silence of vast wilderness is gathered round her bed,
A haze is spread about her in shimmering veils of heat.
Amethyst and topaz gauze from turquoise skies are shed
That turns to deepest purple in folds about her feet.

But in the mighty overtones that sweep across the sands
Is heard celestial music no bard may ever sound,—
Vague and stirring melodies from far-off, unknown lands,
And tragedy half hidden seems crying from the ground.

I can not pluck her measures, I string my harp in vain,
For paeans of enchantment or minor chords, and moans.
You may not like her music—may hear but cries of pain,
But my whole being echoes to her mighty overtones.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 65.

The Mirage

Neighbor, walk along with me
On the road to Araby.
There the dust, so I am told,
Beneath one's feet is dust of gold.
Far off the song of Lorelei
Underneath the turquoise sky
Lures her captives o'er the sands,
Binds them with her golden bands.
Sets before them cities great,
Lures them onward to their fate.

On the plains she spreads a sea;
Ships are sailing gracefully.
Rippling down 'gainst dusty wall
Pours a shining waterfall.
"Water, water, everywhere."
Fall not in the tempter's snare.
There's no water e'er was found
On this parched and barren ground;
There's nothing here but sun-scorched sands,
Empty are all grasping hands.

But the seeking soul is filled
With gorgeous beauty, and is thrilled
With the riches of Dorado. Here
In this wondrous atmosphere
Anything could happen. Gnomes
Or angels find their homes.
Come, dear neighbor, let us dwell
Where Lorelei has cast her spell.
Come along, and let us see
The enchanted land of Araby.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 66.

Dawn in the Canyon

How the sycamore leaves are clapping
 High up on the topmost bough!
Who, or what has set them dancing?
 There's no breeze in the canyon now.

It is the darkest hour of night-time—
 Silent, save when a dead leaf falls,
Loosed by vagrant, amorous zephyr
 Sweeping over canyon walls.

Far above, between dusky mountains,
 Comes a lonely, brooding cry,
For his beloved of the canyon
 As the Dawn-wind dances by.

For the owl was strangely troubled;
 He had come his mate to woo,
Called out softly, "Who is coming
 Down the canyon? Who? Who? Who?"

Then the Dawn-wind stepping lightly,
 Ere the East burst into flame,
Nodding to the trees and flowers
 Gaily down the canyon came.

Answered laughing, "I, the Dawn-wind,
 Harbinger of life and light,
Come to loose a world from thralldom,
 Come to sweep away the night."

And the Dawn-wind, oh, so gaily,
 Now her daily task is done,
Floats out blithely from the canyon,
 Leaves a pathway for the sun.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 67.

The High Road

Let us keep to the high road close to the mountains' base
Where far fields stretch below as we look on the valley's face.

The valley smiles with Springtime though mountains are crowned with snow,
And mountain tears stream downward and gladden the vale below.

Shadow, and storm, and sunshine, and rainbow after the rain,—
The road in glory winds downward from the mountain into the plain.

The way is broad and level that along the valley lies,
Green trees nod beside it and over it stretch blue skies.

By its marge the meadow larks warble, and the tuneful mocking bird trills,
But its way is a way of sadness for those who would climb the hills.

Come, let us leave the valley pavements where
 winged miles fly by
For I need a winding roadway
 that will lead me
 close to the sky.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 68.

Night

I could not sleep last night for the glory of the sky;
Silver clouds were slowly drifting over desert roof
so high,
And the lightning played like fireflies in the swiftly
greying clouds,
Made of them bright robes of glory,—left them but
poor tattered shrouds.
And the moon, so slowly moving, strove to dim the
few bright stars,
But the clouds came to their rescue, veiled her face
with double bars,—
Veiled her like a Turkish maiden with a misty flow-
ing veil—
Hark! The coyote's lonely cry, or the desert wind's
low wail.

Then the wind arose in fury; blew the far-flung
clouds away.
Whipped the sands and sent them writhing, whirl-
ing, stinging into spray.
How they bite, and burn, and stifle. Every breath
is filled with dust.
Assault from east, and then from westward comes
a rushing saber thrust;
But as winds become victorious in one grand broad
sweep they cease.
Metamorphosis of desert! And a radiant, glowing
peace.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 69.

My Desert Lorelei

Far off I hear her calling,
My desert Lorelei;
It comes on the eerie night-wind
When lonely breezes sigh.
There's the lure of wide open spaces,
And the lure of golden sands,
And the sahuaro, arms outreaching,
Lures on to desert lands.

For the Lorelei of the desert
Is ever calling me.
I follow strange flute-like voices
Out into a waterless sea.
And there I see her dancing
Robed in a shining mist,
Dancing with silver moonbeams,
And by desert breezes kissed.

Oh, I hear her call on the night-wind,
And calling, calling by day,
And there where the whirlwind beckons
I follow forever and aye.
Over silver sands of the moonlight
I hear her enchanting cry;
Oh, stay not my fleeting footsteps
For I follow my Lorelei.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 70.

The Silent Hour

If you love the breath of high or open spaces
Bide here, just one short hour with me.
The sands are hot?—the sun is fiercely burning?
But rest awhile beneath this pinon tree.

You love the mountains and the forest better,
And are wearied by the shimmer of the sand?
But wait, until you hear its voices drifting
And “desert lure” you cannot then withstand.

To you will be revealed why desert dweller
Poverty, loneliness and heat endures;
For there is no sorrow and no cruel heartache
 But what the calm, slow Silence cures.

I would not keep you from the singing forests,
 Nor from the booming waves of restless sea;
But till you hear the Silence gently whisper
 Stay, friend, one tranquil hour with me.

And if again we meet in distant places,
 On busy thoroughfares or shifting sand,
You will know the hour was not in vain, my brother;
 You will hear the Silence speak—and understand.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 71.

Gray and Gold

How drear the day:

How stern, and gray, and cold.

Then over the sands you came,
And the sands were sands of gold.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 71.

A Desert Lullaby

Like the ocean's deep toned breathing
Sighs the wind through the Joshua Tree
And brings back childhood memories
When my mother sang to me.
Songs of sand and of silence,
Sweet songs of Araby.

IT lie underneath its branches
While it croons the long night through
And whispers of songs forgotten
Under skies so near and blue.
The wood dove, too, is singing,
Is singing, love, of you.

Singing of you in the night wind
When desert stars hang low,
And the lone tree sings of Araby
While night winds softly blow.
And I hear your voice in its branches
And those songs of long ago.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 72.

Canyon Glory

I did not know what glory could be
Till on the branch of an old dead tree
A bluejay sat preening for all to see.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 72.

Midnight

Mystery and solemn midnight;
 Not a breath stirs all the air.
Ghostly figures loom by moonlight
 Round about me everywhere.

Elves and spirits, wraiths and giants,
Distorted creatures writhe in pain,—
Has sleep brought a dream of madness
And strange phantoms of the brain?

Ah, I know these ghostly figures
 As I waken from my sleep;
I but slept in a Joshua forest,
 And their shadows round me creep.

Grotesque, shaggy, friendly Joshuas
 Crowd about on every side,
Reach their lonely arms out to me
 As their sorrows they confide.

For the Joshua was banished,—
 Far out on the plains he stands,
Reaching, yearning, longing, pleading,
With his scraggly barren hands.

Pleads with us for understanding
 Of endless plains and open sky;
Gives the desert's benediction
 As he lifts his hands on high.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 73.

Adventuring

I, too, have heard strange tales.
My eyes have filled with lure and magic, too.
In thought I journeyed to far distant lands,
Enchanted woods and valleys wandered through.
And though the waves were moaning at my feet,
The boom of distant surf was in my ears.
You say that I am restless,—ill at ease—
True, I do not grow more quiet with the years.
The urge is just as strong within my heart today,—
I know not what I seek, or my desire,
I only know that distance and vast space
Can satisfy the yearning and the inward fire.

Long years ago when my mother read
Of one who journeyed to a land afar
Not knowing where he went, even then
My feet were destined for a distant star.
“Adventurer,” you say. Well, be it so.
“And seeker ever of the unknown trails.”
My eyes are magic filled; my heart a wonderland—
I, too, have heard strange tales.

Boyhood of Sir Walter Raleigh, painted by Sir John E. Millais.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 74.

“East Is East”

Jade of yuccas and carnelian hills
Where opal clouds predominate.
From amethyst mountains slip silver rills
To ochre sands. I prevaricate?

Yes, “East is East, and West is West,”
The one toned down the other aflame.
Your scenes are modest, like Quakers drest,
While ours their freedom loudly proclaim.

We look at a peak in the cold gray dawn,
Another moment it is tinged with rose.
Indigo shadows beneath rocks of fawn
As out on the plains the color flows.

Like a river of color under opal sky,
Except on the sands like new-fallen snow.—
The truth is not in me? I boldly lie?
Yes, “East is East.” So you can not know.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 75.

Vignette—the Lyric Cry

He heard the lyric cry of woods and fields,—

Even so.

He listens, sees the glow of cirrus sky,

November winds that rush call from northern

show,—

He yields.

He, too, would fly with lonely heron winging by.

Dame Nature wields a flaming brush.

Her colors flow, and fade, and die.

A breathless hush, a smothered sigh;

Day passes by,—

Even so.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 75.

Midnight Fantasy

Beauty of night and glowing stars.
My love is waiting by silver bars,
 Waiting, Waiting,
While out in the night
 Impassionating,
Float the velvet notes of my flute.
Ah wait, my love, while the flute notes ring.
Wait, my love, while my songs I sing.
 Ah, Ah,
Wait, while my songs I sing.

II

The clouds scud by on silent wings,
The night an evil portent brings.
 Come, love, and fly with me
 While Night steps silently.

The moon has veiled her glowing face
While shadows strangely interlace,
 And down below
 In wailing woe
 Afar from sleep
 They mourn and weep,—
 The Penitentes.

III

(A weird, piercing sound is heard—the Piper of the Penitentes).
 Pi-ti-ti, pi-ti-ti,
Pi-ti-ti, it calls for pity,
 Or pi-ti-ti, a curse,
Pi-ti-ti, what means thy wailing,
 Defiance or remorse?
 Pi-ti-ti, pi-ti-ti,
Chants from hell or worse.

IV

It comes upon the midnight air,
 Wild, unearthly, shrill,—

To make me cower trembling there
And cause my breath to chill.

Is it bird, or beast, or devil?
Is it hell's Satanic choir
Rising from the hills in evil
This dread midnight hour?

Before that piping brave men flee,
Yea, strong men quailed and fled,—
Pi-ti-ti, pi-ti-ti,
Filling night with dread.

V

Whir overhead of the night-bird's wings.
The moon her glowing mantle flings
Over the valley and my heart sings.
Ah, Ah,
Come, my love, and fly with me
While Night is stepping silently.

VI

Beauty of night and glowing stars.
My love is waiting by silver bars,
Waiting, Waiting,
While out in the night
Impassionating,
Float the velvet notes of the flute.
Ah wait, my love, while my flute notes ring.
Wait, my love, while my songs I sing.
Ah, Ah,
Songs in the night,
Ah, Ah,
Wait while my songs I sing.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 76.

The Feet of the Wind

Someone has passed along this way
For here on the dunes I saw his track;
Waved and fretted the pattern lay,
Footprints weaving forward and back.

Ornate and fluted in filigree,
Carved and traced in the silver sand,
Where elfin feet danced airily,
Or magician has come with fan in hand.

Ah, the same pattern is in the sky
Where ridges of white cover all the blue.
Has a fairy been dancing up on high
'Tis a dappled sky that heaven looks through.

Shadows of clouds are on the grass,—
Lighter there, where the clouds have thinned—
“Waves are formed,” you say, “where breezes pass,
And patterns are made by the feet of the wind?”

May they dance forever, those lightsome feet,
And whisk silken robes over earth and sky.
Sands rise and fall in a

misty sheet,
The cloak of the Wind goes
swishing by.

The Walking Hills, Colorado Desert.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 78.

The Whirlwind

Where the shining sands are drifting
Over land that once was sea,
Desert winds to spirals lifting
Grains of gold in heathen glee.
Lift them up and send them sifting
From the windward to the lee.
Ever circling, swaying, shifting,
Never sands shall quiet be.
For the dervish sands are whirling,
Turning, twisting o'er the plains,
On tip-toe gyrating, swirling
Miniatures of hurricanes.
Soft grey sand and golden twirling,
Here the dancing dervish reigns.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 79.

Shifting Sands

Your heart is like the shifting sands

That strew the desert floor.

If you would leave it in my hands

It might not wander more.

Tis a pilgrim and a vagabond,

That wand'ring heart of thine,

Since of my heart you're rather fond

You'd better trade for mine.

Why must one's heart go roaming so

And shifting all about?

Forever running to and fro?

I'd rather do without.

A passing breeze you scarce withstand,

Your heart is like the shifting sand.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 79.

The Temple of the Sun

We have builded Thee a temple;
Massive, stately piles of stone.
There we've pledged to Thee our worship
And no other allegiance own.

There we kneel, and sing Thy praises
On the holy Sabbath day.
There we learn Thy sacred precepts,
Strive to walk the narrow way.

But, dear God, I seem to lose Thee
In the grandeur of that pile,
There I seek but do not find Thee,
Calling to Thee all the while.

For the walls close in about me;
Over bends the great white dome,
And the many throated organ
Leaves me still afar from home.

But one time when I was wandering
On the desert far away,
There I found a stately temple
Where in peace I knelt to pray.

Its handiwork was of Thy making;
Basalt, gold, and cinnabars;
And the dome of it was open
To the jewelled light of stars.

It was set in solemn grandeur
With the silence all around.
Carved by Time and whirling sandstorms,
And with golden suns is crowned.
And I thought of one who wandered
On the desert years gone by,
How he dreamed about a ladder
Which reached upward to the sky.

Dreaming that the angels tarried
As he lay upon the sod,

He awoke with holy purpose,
Built an altar there for God.

And I said, as had that seeker,
“Surely God is in this place,
I have heard His still voice speaking,
I have seen Him face to face.”

And I yet can see Thy banners
Flaming when the day is done,
Where the desert eagle watches
By that Temple of the Sun.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 82.

Alone

Afraid on the desert? No, not I.
Alone with the sands and the stars and the sky.
No voice to call save the wind in glee
As he pushes and pulls and teases me.
Why should I fear the sun-drenched sands?
Are they not fairest of Nature's lands?
Prophets and saints these sands have trod.
There is nothing to fear for I walk with God.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 83.

Palm Springs Palette

Towered over by purple mountains
 With glistening crests of snow,
Facing a chaparral tangle
 Where gray-green smoke trees grow.

Sands, silver and blue in moonlight,
 Purple and rose in shade,
Russet and gold under sunbeams,
 But yuccas are worn-out jade.

The pool is a gem of emerald
 Set at Jacinto's base.
Ochre and fawn and blue-gray
 Tinge the desert's dusty face.

The hills now veiled in lilac,
 This morning were all aflame;
Never was fairer picture
Set in a burnished frame.

The sun was a bird at dawning
That arose on golden wings
Now drooping o'er San Jacinto
As dusk is hiding Palm Springs.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 84.

Dune-land Dreams

I am off and away for the wind-swept dunes
And the sunny open sky.
There I'll lie all day and trace the clouds
 drift
As they lazily on high.

I am idle, yes, and a vagabond,
As I while the hours away;
But my work is done and I'm off with the sun,
 For this is my holiday.

When the light is gone from the western sky,
And the heaven is ablaze with stars,
I will come back then to the bustling hum
And. look from behind the bars
 out

Bars that are forged where a city toils,—
I will take up the cares of men.
But,—guard me well, or none may tell
When I'll be off to the dunes again.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 85.

The Walking Hills

There are hills forever walking
Down below the Salton Sea.
Moses by the Jordan talking
Saw hills skip right merrily.
Ever from the west to eastward,
Where the Colorado flows,
Drift these hills forever onward;
Why they're going no man knows.

No one has revealed their intent
Why they slowly eastward go,
Why they keep their ridge a crescent
As the desert breezes blow.
Ever walking, creeping, shifting,
These slow moving hills are drifting.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 85.

The End of the Road

Come, let us go to the end of the road
Over behind the hill.
For last night I heard the thunder-bird's boom,
And today the bluebird's trill.

I think it was there on the slope of the hill,
Where I heard its luring song,—
Come, let us go to the end of the road,
Though the way be short or long.

For always, I've wished that I might see
Where the winding road would end;
But when one takes the winding way
He needs at his side a friend.

So let us follow the bluebird's trill
To the end of the road, we two.
But the end of the road or the end of the world,
Is to me all the same, with you.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 86.

Why I Sing

Everything is poetry,

Everything a song.

That is why I'm

singing,

Journeying along.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 86.

Golden Sands Rondeau

On golden sands let me live for aye,
Through winter's night or summer's day,
 Or through a golden noon.
 For less would be too soon,
To go from the sands away.

So in the sun's bright ray,
I will linger while I may,
 And hark to the wind's soft tune,
 On golden sands.

I wish that I might stay,
My weary head to lay
 Here on this golden dune.
 To rest would be a boon,
To stay and sing away,
 On golden sands.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 87.

Wind in the Canyon

The leaves are hurrying, scurrying down
Clothed in a scarlet or copper gown.
Like a bevy of quail across my track
Fluttering out and scampering back.
Flitting and whirling they fly through the air
And the parent tree stands stark and bare,
But I do not feel that the year is old
Though I find my pathway strewn with gold
For already new buds on the branches start,
And Springtime is singing within my heart.
Sunset Canyon

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 87.

“The End of the Trail”

Weary and storm driven, sorely pressed,
He waited not for food or rest,
The hardy rider into the West
Who rode to “The End of the Trail.”

Riding hard, and riding alone,
Blanket from bare shoulders thrown,
Nerve of iron and heart of stone;
He could not falter or fail.

But now at last when the race is run
He bows his head to the setting sun.
He does not know that he fought and won
When he rode alone on the trail.

O Red Man, with thine heart bowed low,
Forever winds shall gently
blow,
And ever a gorgeous
afterglow
Shall rest on “The End of
the Trail.”

Tulare County Park. Statue by James Earl Fraser.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 88.

Painted Canyon

Dame Nature is mixing her colors
And painting the mountains around.
Rich cobalt blue are the heavens,
And the mountains are golden crowned.

Their slopes are of rose and of amber,
And where the stone camel kneels down
A mosaic of rainbow colors,
And the camel a golden brown.

There are towers of deep vermilion
With tracings of delicate fawn,
And colors for which the artists
To the ends of the earth have gone.

An organ of rose and of ivory
Its master musician awaits
To lift up its voice in rich music
That will soar to the golden gates.

Turrets of copper and lilac
Have bases of cinnabar green
Vying with purple shadows
That far in the canyon are seen.

Emerald is streaked with magenta;
Mauve shades balance cadmium pale.
But from the other side of the mountain
Comes a piercing and horrible wail.

There a mountain is set in a fury,
A crown of fire on its head;
It screams at a patch of emerald
And waves its cloak of brick red.

For the emerald moss has invaded
The realm of the kingdom of fire,
And flaunting his own gay colors
Has aroused the great monarch's ire.
On one side all is confusion;
Colors that jangle and scream,
While the other is color symphonic

That lures like a beautiful dream.
Such colors were never discovered
In the space of a half day's walk?
I am taking a poet's license
To indulge in colorful talk?
Nay, doubt not the painting of Nature
Because you've not seen it yourself.
I brought gorgeous bits from the canyon,—
You may examine them there on the shelf.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 89.

Song of Sorrow

I have buried my dreams under a hard gray stone;
Laid them away to the sound of the drums.
And the willows are weeping and the south wind wails
For my lover who never comes.

The moonlight shivers through the restless leaves,
And down on the gray stone gleams.
The fog floats through
like a wraith
in a mist,
There where I have
buried my
dreams.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 90.

The Wind

The wind has gone by like a scamp in the dark.
To creep up and scream,—oh, he thinks it a lark
And scampers away. I get my breath, then
He quickly steals back and scares me again.
He gathers his strength, throws himself on the trees
That wail with his weight—he chuckles, and flees.
Darts through the hedge and down by the stream
Scatters the water, runs away with a scream.
Out through the valley and up on the hill
He whistles in parting loudly and shrill.
Like a rude little boy that has sinned,
gaily
He runs away laughing,—that boisterous wind.

San Gorgonio Pass,
Whitewater Camp.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 91.

The Haunted Land

“This land is haunted,” the Indians said,
And we scoffed at their fears when they turned and fled.
Now we find it so lonely when gloomy night falls
And we are closed round by cathedral walls.
But what means that scaffold at the side of the trail?
And that ghostly form, and the low, trembling wail?
And see that great cross in the valley below!
Truly, no cross was there but an hour ago.

But as rose dawn sweeps softly over this silent land
We laugh at the scaffold which is our friendly well.
And the ghost is a smoke tree by the breezes fanned
Caught in the charm of the desert’s spell.
The cross is a Joshua with arms outspread,—
Benediction is spoken! Bow thy head.

From an anecdote by George Wharton James.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 91.

The Wanderer

Beneath the stars on the wide, wide plains,
While the fleecy clouds roll over,
I lie on the sand and trace their path
For I, too, am a rover.

I hear the night-bird call to his mate
As he is homeward flying;
But my home is under the starry skies,
To gypsy call replying.

Nay, call me not to thoroughfares,
For a wandering star I follow.
My wayward heart is done with cares.
I am kin with the lark and swallow.

I would you share my pilgrim life
For the way sometimes is lonely.
Brighter the skies if you were here,
For I want you, dear, you only.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 92.

Thy World

O Lord, how wonderful is Thy world today!

The fresh green grass and the flowers,
The air washed clean and the silver sheen
Of the trees through the April showers.

The dawn this morning was a shining pearl.

The high-roads and by-roads were calling;
And away so fleet to the San Fran'squite
We rode while a mist was falling.

Through the canyon and over the brooks,

And up the mountains winding,
Until by the lake blue herons awake
As we their wild haunts are finding.

O Lord, how wonderful is Thy world today!

The sun was an ember dying.
As the grey dusk falls the Bob-white calls
To his mate and is homeward flying.

The stars hang low like chandeliers

Down over the canyon bending.
They their silver rays through a mist-hung maze
Down on our pathway are sending.

The crescent moon rides a fleecy cloud

Like a banner of glory unfurled.
And night grows still with a tremulous thrill.
O God, how wonderful today is Thy world.

San Francisquito Canyon.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 93.

The Understanding Heart

Your love has lifted me so high above the world's turmoil
That on a mountain top I sit and sing.
And I am compensated for my years of toil,
Since love can such a crown of glory bring.
Your warm hand-clasp has warmed my future days;
Your smile will cheer me from the world's far end.
Nor storm, nor earthquake now can bar my ways,—
What matters else, when I have you for friend?

And if upon Time's golden sands we part,
And you and I should meet again no more,
Still, with you, love, will go my singing heart;
Each word and smile shall still be counted o'er.
My songs will echo yet
 in far off lands
Because of the heart I've
 found that
 understands.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 94.

A Turner Landscape

If Turner had but seen this golden or that deep
 bronze tree,
And miles away the hills of violet and rose,
The Artemisia's pale grey greenery,
And felt the quiet of the desert's long repose;
Could he have stood upon this little hill
And seen this trail that leads to golden plains,
A solitude that lies unbreathing, calm and still,
This verdant edge to the land of scanty rains;
Could he have seen the golden sunlight break
On a horizon deep with scarlet flame,
To desert beauty he would have made the world
 awake,
And "Beauty" and "Mohave," be one name.
Mohave Desert.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 95.

November

I saw an autumn leaf fall.

I heard a wild bird call;
I felt the gray November breeze
As it came sighing through the trees.
I smell the fragrance of coming rain
And I'm off and away to the hills again.

The rain in showers comes down
On fields and hills, and town.
A fairyland seen through the mist,
Rioting colors by Autumn kissed,—
Be still, wild heart! 'Tis a thing so small
Just to behold an autumn leaf fall.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 95.

Indian Love Song

My heart has been a desert place,

Since we said good-by;

Hope is drooping and joy has fled;

Ah, for thee I sigh.

Ah-ah-me, thy voice is silent,

Tan-a-wah is mute.

Dun are the sands and shadows falling;

I listen for thy flute.

I-oh-ho I hear thee calling,

Far off I hear thy flute.

Hi-oh-ho to thee I answer,

My heart is like a lute.

I-oh-ho, I-oh-ho,

My heart is like a lute.

Send me thy love on the southwest wind,

Tan-a-wah I call.

For thee, Tan-a-wah, I'm yearning,

Ah, thou art my all.

Let thine eyes beam down upon me

From the evening star,

Tan-a-wah, oh, let my pleading

Call thee from afar.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 96.

The Still Small Voice

You who have known the desert
And have heard its still voice speak,
Shall never forget the message
Though the voice was low and meek.

You shall still hear the silence speaking
When caught in the city's fret,
And though afar from the stillness
You shall not be allowed to forget.

For the desert ever is calling
From its sands and skies of blue,
From its wastes and sun-crowned mountains
You will hear it calling you.

When pulled, and pushed and beaten,
And every ill befalls,
You will hark to the voice of silence,
For the desert calls, and calls.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 97.

Reclamation

My heart was a barren desert,
 Its depths were thirsty and dry.
You planted its soil for rich harvest
 And nurtured that ready to die.

You have flooded my heart with waters
 That ripple and sing all day long;
As streams over dry lands murmur,
 My heart has blossomed in song.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 97.

Moonlight

Beauty walks on the sands tonight,—
 May sleep from mine eyelids fail.
She is robed in silver and blue and white,
 And a silken shimmering veil.
The Yucca Palm rears high its crest
 Over the cholla's spines
While the moon mounts high on her nightly quest,
 And the wind down the canyon whines.

Beauty walks on the sand that lies
 Like a luminous silver sea.
Eerie forms in the shadows rise
 In a beautiful mystery.
Sleep comes softly and dims mine eyes,—
 O Sleep, thou hast conquered me.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 100.

Twilight on the Dunes

Twilight, sands white,
All along the dunes;
Flying by, through the sky
Call of lonely loons.

Ah, this moonlight madness,
Filled with love's sweet sadness
Will be turned to gladness
Out along the dunes.

Stars gleam, while I dream
Of my sweetheart true.
She is here, oh, so near,
Whispering, "I love you."

Hear the ocean beating,
Lovers' songs repeating.
Ah, time is so fleeting,
Out along the dunes.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 100.

The Weeping Willow

Villanelle

Down where the waters are sweeping,
Downward on down to the sea,
The desert willow is weeping.

Grey sands so slowly are creeping,
Their rustle comes back to me
Down where the waters are sweeping.

A world of regret she is reaping,
How sad a willow can be,—
The desert willow is weeping.

I know that she should be sleeping,
So sad and weary is she,
Down where the waters are sweeping.

They frolic and laugh and are leaping,
And heed not the sorrowing tree,
The desert willow is weeping.

The sand into dunes she is heaping,
The wind, rushing by gay and free;
Down where the waters are sweeping,
The desert willow is weeping.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 101.

Nocturne

Far away the sunset shadows separate the mountain peaks
That embrace wide purple valleys which were hidden all the day.
Who could know one range was crowding—stepping forward in the creeks?
Now the sun has sent it backward where the mists of morning lay.

There was just a line of mountains when the sun was overhead,
But at sunset miles of blueness are lying in between.
And the sun drops down behind them, an orb of flaming red,
While the mountains put on slowly their robes of purple sheen.

There they sleep in regal splendour; while the moon beyond the hill
Swings forward in slow grandeur and to the zenith wheels.
A thrush his night song carols, and all again is still,—
And Sleep in peace and silence across the valley steals.

San Jacinto Mountains, Colorado Desert.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 102.

I Will Not Sing

"I will not sing today," I said.
"My heart is heavy, and the skies are gray;
Dark thunder-clouds form in battalions overhead.
And so," I said, "I will not sing today."

"I will not sing. The desert swoons
And swirls. Dust-devils gyrate on the plain;
The thunder bursts and eddies through the dunes.
I will not sing. Let the day wane."

"I will not sing, nor dance. My dancing shoes
Are worn and old. I do not care to play,
Nor laugh, nor sing." A sprightly Muse
Defied me. And danced beside me all the way.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 103.

The World and You

The earth is tired and wan today;
No flaming reds—but spectral gray
Looms up in all the landscape round,—
Gray sands, gray mountains, and gray ground.
And would you know why skies are gray
Know then, 'tis that you went away.

The morning flowers, bereft of dew
And in the sky no trace of blue.
No song of birds, no cheery sound,
No single peak with sunlight crowned,—
I catch a distant glimpse of you,
The whole world glows with rainbow hue.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 103.

The Cry from the Mesa

I travel down the barren years
 The years that lie awaste for love
 That we had vowed by stars above
 Should never change nor faithless prove.
Our path is sprinkled with my tears.

Why should love come with promise sweet,
 And then be rudely snatched away?
 The love I gave was given for aye.
 Could not your fleeting footsteps stay
Upon the path where we ne'er meet?

Your feet are treading paths unknown
 While mine still roam the desert sands.
 I hold out empty, waiting hands
 And gaze across the barren lands,—
My heart was given to you alone.

Dearly beloved, I keep the vow
 With which I pledged my heart to you
 In that Springtime when love was new
 And I remain forever true.
Unto your absence my head I bow.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 104.

“Kingdom Come”

High on the Ridge by a lone mesquite
A world drops away beneath my feet.
The alien pines draw away with a shiver
Setting each needle and cone a-quiver.
As a dream I hear the bees’ low hum
And gaze far away to “Kingdom Come.”

Rose hued hills behind plains of gold;
Dunes and hillocks with every fold
Lavender hued or in sun rays gleaming,—
I awake,—and fall again to dreaming
Of the suns that have risen over these plains,
Of the feet that have traversed these sandy lanes.

Scroll of the future, of past years, too,
Written in rose and imperial blue,
Where dust devils dance as heat waves shimmer,
And years recede as the past grows dimmer.
Far off a faint preludium
From Paradise falls upon “Kingdom Come.”

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 105.

“Ultima Thule”

It sounds like a song as it comes on the air,
 “Ultima Thule,”—“Ultima Thule”
And being a roamer I’ll roam way up there;
 “Ultima Thule,”—Yes, I will, truly.

I will sail till I find the ultimate land,
And there upon its highest peak stand,
And sing of its wonders and mountains so grand.
 I, the unruly. “Ultima Thule.”

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 105.

“As a Thousand Years”

I

Prelude

The desert sleeps, and wakes, and again she sleeps.
An overturned brass bowl is called the sky.
Sands sun-blasted crisped and panting lie
Till night winds mobilize and daytime fires defy.

The desert joys, and laughs, and loudly weeps.
Clasps to her heart her loves and spurns her hates;
Generous with gifts to him who venerates,—
The faint, in mercy, she regenerates.

Prepotent mother where her vast empire sweeps.
Puissant teacher in her savage school;
Bitter the lessons given to arrant fool
Who neglects her mandates or disregards her rule.

Feigning indifference to her school for men,
The desert sleeps, and wakes, and sleeps again.

II

Harbinger

The desert sleeps, and wakes, and sleeps again.
Unblinking stars are strangely cold and still.
The moon withdraws her mellow light and chill
Winds stir, and fret the pinons on the hill.

Strange spectral forms hold carnival when
The Ghost Trees whisper in the dead of night.
An owl hoots by, a sudden gleam of white,
And on the horizon tiptoes a wraith of light.

Where the coyote whines and howls and seeks his den
Gaunt Night stalks slowly out across the plain.
The sage lies close and fickle sands restrain
As in the east a slowly spreading stain

Of crimson mounts and glows and rising higher
Flings in the empurpled sky a flame of fire.

III

Dawn

In the empurpled sky is flung a flame of fire,—
A flame that bursts and sinks, and kindles into rose;
And sulphur cloud to deepest orange grows.
A transplendent glory across the mountain throws
Its shafts of gold and amber as shades of night retire
To the dim valley where tremblingly they creep
Beneath sage and juniper. Encelias half asleep
Lift drooping heads and their golden vigil keep.

And cloud and sunshaft with the sun conspire
And, like a chalice filled with golden wine
Pour in effulgent flood across horizon line
A radiance engulfing chaparral and pine.

Daybreak, a great white heron, lifts her mighty wings,
And hermit thrush, exultant, his morning carol sings.

IV

Daybreak

The hermit thrush, exultant, his morning carol sings
From creosote that, fern-like, sways and stirs.
The desert quail from mesquite thicket whirs
To the sycamore that mistletoe encumbers.

The moody wind in sudden fury stings
The eyes and nostrils. A tempestuous land
That hospitably extends a kindly hand
Or greets with furnace blast of angry sand.

The boisterous wind has ceased its murmurings.
A prismatic glow is on the horizon's edge;
Catkins are burnished in the willow hedge
And dull bronze brightens in the arroyo sedge.

The color burns and flames and then grows still
And pales to lilac, rose, and daffodil.

V

Morning

The color pales to lilac, rose and daffodil.

The desert now is thoroughly awake.
Gentle waves upon a distant shoreline break
Where a mirage shimmers like a crystal lake.

A haze of gold is on the distant hill.
Mauve shadows hug the feet of dusty sage
That holds the sands in leash when wild winds rage
And fiercely the elements in dusty wars engage.

The morning lights her fires perennial.
The yuccas lift their spires upon a thousand hills
Like beacons of an army. Their beauty fills
The plain and valleys where the mocker trills

His wild free notes. Like a hundred birds he sings
And all the wastelands answer to his carolings.

VI

Noon

The wastelands answer to the mocker's carolings
Till venerating noon puts songs to rout.
He ceases now to sing and call and shout,—
Noon-time is for service more devout.
In silence now he folds his joyous wings.
While high, white tide of noon is overhead.
The ocotillo sheathes its vibrant red
And peace drops down,—and heat illimited.

The heat waves quiver and sway like living things.
Triumphant colors all are blended into one
By thrice white heat of noonday sun
That bleaches plains and mountains to a tawny dun.

Derisive jay, at intervals, the

silence breaks

Until the weary desert

its long siesta takes.

VII

Offertory

O mighty Mother, what have I of worth
To render unto thee for gratitude?

The lessons of the wastes and solitude
Are as the stars above for multitude.

It was in thy college religion had its birth.
To prophets and apostles thou a teacher stern—
Seers and Magi knelt at thy feet to learn,—
To these of every age thou givest as they earn.

On thy breast is surcease from the woes of earth;
In thy lap is beauty, and in thy tangled hair
The sunshine of the ages. On thy brow so fair
A name that none may know it, who learns it not in prayer.

The Messiah,
John, and David
were students at
thy knee,—

O mighty Mother, what shall I render thee?

VIII

Siesta

The desert wearies and its siesta takes
Through quiet hours of long, dull afternoon;
For man and beast and creeping things are all atune
With sleep while whirlwinds swirl and swoon.

The mirage is dreaming on a score of lakes
Where drowsy boats unfurl their flapping sails,
Transient as the gold of miners' oft-told tales;
Seductive as the lure of their treasure trails.

No sound upon the shore of silence breaks,
No leaf to stir nor any sudden breath;
Decrepit,—and the last long sleep of death,—
So Truth, heedless of appearance, suffereth

Until her trumpet sounds on timeless shore
The desert sleeps,—and wakes to sleep no more.

IX

Sunset

The desert sleeps, and wakes to sleep no more.
A whirlwind dances dervish-like across the plain.

The drab, dun landscape, from which the sun-
shafts drain
All color, effulgent grows again.
The desert brings from out abundant store
Her robes of opulence and flings them all ablaze
Against the glory of the purple haze
That veils the jagged rocks through lurid days.

It is as though from on the heights a door
Were opened, from which was tumbled jade
And precious stones, of every hue and shade,
And blending, for our wonderment displayed.

But even while we watched the pageant slowly passed
For fires of Araby are too wonderful to last.

X

Dusk

Fires of Araby are too wonderful to last
But turn to ashes and to dusty gray.
The smoke of signal fires lures the traveler from his way
To the phantom Smoke-tree's fraudulent display.

And where the pageantry of sunset passed
Is now the lurid flame of afterglow
That mingles with the shades of indigo
And sifts its burned-out colors on the sands below.

The door from which the colors fell is now made fast—
Closed, it would seem, for all eternity.
And in half light the breath of tragedy,—
Till the mocking bird begins his jubilee

And shouts, and sings, and fills the empty air
Until an expectant hush is everywhere.

XI

Night

An expectant hush is vibrant everywhere,
And music fills the emptiness of night.
Fantastic forms loom in the dimming light
And only the winding road lies clear and white
Like ribbon, slow unwound without a care

But to lead out beneath a star-filled sky
Where, by the oasis, the palm tree towers high
And unto night's low harmonies adds its sigh.

Near by the coyote bounds into the air
Laughs unjoyously and lopes upon his way
As if he, too, were caught in mysterious sway
Of the enchantment "at the cool of day."

The hour of escape has come from desert heat
When we hear the silent desert's wild heart beat.

XII

Moonlight

We hear the silent desert's wild heart beat
And feel its throb as she takes us to her breast.
In blue and silver light with beauty at its crest
We cease our search for we have found our quest.

Where moonbeams and the great white silence meet
The sahuaro like a stately prophet stands
And, like Moses, he spreads prophetic hands
And imbues with courage the contentious lands.
A sudden clap of thunder sounds a quick retreat
To silhouettes that march in file across the plain.
From pompous cloud is poured a barrage of rain
That streaks the desert's face with dusty stain.

She dashes from her eyes the infrequent tears
And daily round repeats unto "a thousand years."

XIII

Postlude

"I will go softly all my years," but unbitter is my soul—
Like Moses, rather, I will wear a veil.
No word, of all the desert speaks, shall fail,—
But many yet her truths unutterable.

What she has yet to teach, and what her goal,
Or what her fruitage, prophet may not say.
She seems to drowse and idly dream away,
But, even "as a thousand years" she lives her day.

When Time has grown outworn and reached her shoal,

The desert, buoyant as a youth, and strong,
Will garner in her harvest, for she has waited long
To swing her mighty sickle and chant her harvest song.
Into a desert place with thoughts more deep than tears
Or laughter, Lord, let me go “softly all my years.”

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 106.

A Highway in the Desert

Straight in the desert is a highway made
Where mesquite has garnered the drifting sand;
Past the towering rock in a weary land
Where the pilgrim rests in its welcome shade.

Long lies the sahuaro and greasewood trail
Through cholla thickets and creosote
Where, with upraised hands on a hill remote
The Joshua's faith shall never fail.

Out in the desert the way lies straight.
The wilderness calls with a low sweet voice,
And he who hears has no other choice
Than to be the wastelands' advocate.

With glistering sands or with gold inlaid,
Straight in the desert is a highway made.

Publication. First published in *The Flaming Bush*. Privately published, 1927, p. 118.

Bibliography

Selected primary and secondary sources

Book and periodical titles are italicized throughout.

Works by the Author

Culver, Ruby De Corsaw. *The Flaming Bush: Songs of the Desert*. 1927.

Works About the Author

Library authority and catalog records for *The Flaming Bush*.

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.