



STANLEY PRESTON KIMMEL

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

Stanley Preston Kimmel

A Critical Reading Edition

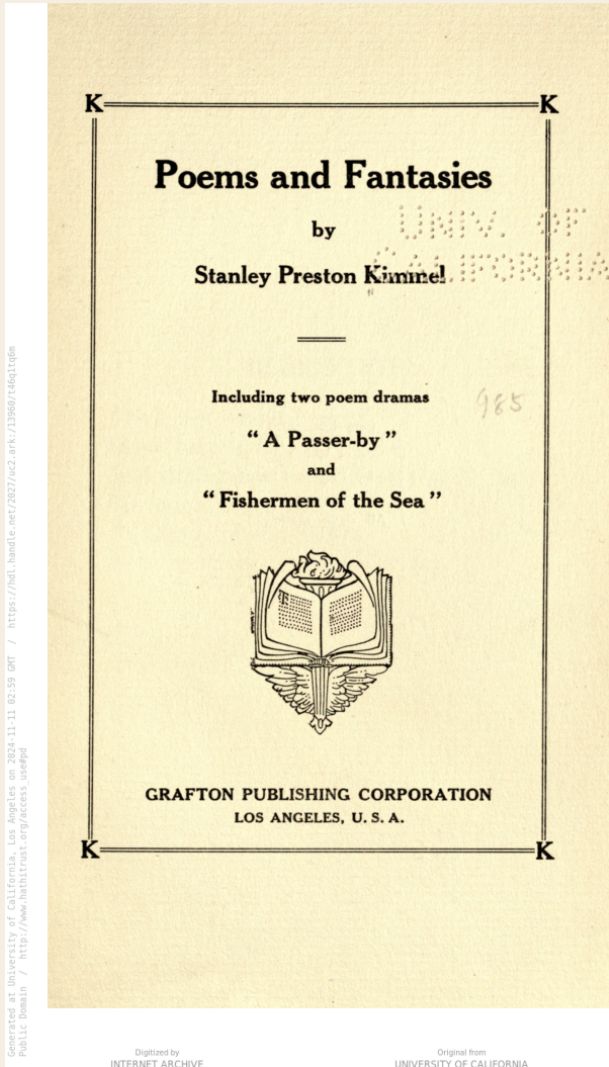
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Extremes and Moderations: Early Southern California Poetry

Archival Images

A short selection from the source record



Title page of Poems and Fantasies (1916).

Editorial Note

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. The poems were transcribed from the original book and periodical scans in the local archive rather than from earlier reader PDFs. Narrow source-page wraps have been rejoined; stanza divisions, purposeful line indents, subtitles, epigraphs, and internal section headings have been retained. Unavoidable display wraps use a hanging indent. Obvious scanning debris was removed without silently modernizing diction or punctuation. Book and periodical titles are italicized in editorial matter, and every poem begins on a new page and ends with a source note.

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Introduction

Stanley Preston Kimmel began as a musician and USC law student, publishing youthful lyrics and two poem dramas in Los Angeles in 1916. Then the First World War broke the style open. He drove ambulances near Verdun, survived the torpedoing of the *SS Antilles*, and turned bodies, rain, refugees, prisoners, ruined villages, and military machinery into the stripped poems of *Souvenirs*. Between those worlds came the more formally ambitious *Improvisations*, full of classical figures, urban night, music, and experiments in sequence. Kimmel later moved through China, Paris, Chicago, Washington, coalfield drama, journalism, and Civil War history, befriending writers from Carl Sandburg to Ezra Pound. This edition gathers the complete poetry in the project's three available original collections, including the 1916 fantasies and poem dramas, while recording later missing books for future recovery.

Biography

Stanley Preston Kimmel was born in Du Quoin, Illinois, on June 12, 1894, the son of lawyer and lumber dealer Daniel Luther Kimmel and Edith Preston Kimmel, an amateur poet and artist. He studied music in St. Louis, played piano and violin, composed as a teenager, and graduated from Ernest R. Kroeger's School of Music in 1912. After further schooling he entered the University of Southern California to study law.

While at USC, Kimmel published *Poems and Fantasies* in Los Angeles in 1916. The book combines youthful ballads and songs, ten numbered prose poems or "fantasies," and two poem dramas. He was also known locally as a pianist. He left law school in his third year after the United States entered the First World War.

Kimmel traveled to France intending to join the Lafayette Escadrille but instead became an ambulance driver with the American Field Service and French army in the Verdun sector. He served around Mort Homme and Hill 304 and received three medals. Returning from France, he survived the German torpedoing of the transport *SS Antilles* on October 17, 1917. He later entered U.S. naval aviation training in Seattle, where the armistice ended his hoped-for flying career.

In San Francisco in 1919 he published *Improvisations* and *Souvenirs*. The first mixes classical reference, musical organization, and urban nocturne. The second is a stark sequence of war poems about wounded bodies, refugees, soldiers, prisoners, hospital wards, and moral exhaustion. A small 1922 selection, *Poems*, reprinted five pieces from *Improvisations* with spectacular hand-drawn lettering.

Kimmel left for China in 1919 and worked for English-language publications in Asia. The period informed *The Strange Voyage* and *Leaves on the Water: Sketches and Tales of the Orient*, the latter introduced by Sadakichi Hartmann. In Paris he knew F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Archibald MacLeish, and Ezra Pound. After returning to the United States he worked for the *Chicago Daily News* and became close to Carl Sandburg.

His 1933 Broadway play *Black Diamond* drew on the southern Illinois coalfields and the Herrin massacre; *The Kingdom of Smoke* likewise returned to mining culture. From the mid-1930s he researched the Booth family and worked in Washington journalism, producing *The Mad Booths of Maryland* and later illustrated histories of Civil War Washington and Richmond. During the Second World War he reported in connection with the U.S. Army and wrote about Dachau.

Kimmel's long later career as historian often eclipsed his beginning as a poet. He died in Sarasota, Florida, on July 28, 1982, and was buried in Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans. The University of Tampa preserves an important digital exhibition of photographs, letters, and biographical documents from his life.

Poems and Fantasies

Stage I | Los Angeles apprenticeship, 1916

The complete poetry and two poem dramas of Kimmel's Los Angeles debut.

The Brooklet

I hear a brooklet murmur,
So soft and sweet and low,
As through the little valley
Its bright clear waters flow,

Rushing along so merrily
Past the mossy banks;
In and out among the rocks,
It plays its little pranks.

How many years, my little brook,
Have you thus passed along
Through the lonely forest,
With only the woods as your home?

You may run on forever,
But soon I shall be gone,
And only the birds in the forest
Will hear your sad, sweet song.
But they will understand each word,
Each little tune you play,
And I in solitude shall dwell,
In my forest, far away.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 10.

Konnie

Many a day as the sun sinks low
I wander along by the sea,
And remember the hours, spent long ago,
With the beautiful maiden Konnie,
With the beautiful maiden Konnie.
And there comes a song from out the wind,
But the words are lost to me;
Still in a dream I wander on
With the beautiful maiden Konnie,
With the beautiful maiden Konnie.
The stars sparkle bright from out the sky,
And the moon comes up o'er the lea,
Upon my cheeks I feel the kiss
Of the beautiful maiden Konnie,
Of the beautiful maiden Konnie.
The roar of the sea calls me from the dream
Of the land where I long to be,
And the song which I heard is the wind o'er the grave
Of the beautiful maiden Konnie,
Of the beautiful maiden Konnie.
The lips which so closely seemed pressed to my cheek
Only a rose in my hand,
And homeward alone, I turn my steps,
As the waves madly dash on the sand,
As the waves madly dash on the sand. nil

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 11.

Song of the Shepherd

With heart as free as a bird
I homeward wind my way,
Sheep follow closely behind me,
In the distance stretches the bay.

All is so still and quiet
I can hear the song of the sea,
But its doleful tune half saddens
This heart so gay and free.

And as the night comes creeping
Slowly, but surely on,
I am thankful to Him above me
For shelter until the dawn.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 12.

A Remembrance

You remember, don't you Stella,
The morning I first met you there
Standing under the umbrella,
You, with lovely golden hair.

And we wandered on together,
Seemed as though we didn't mind

This, or any kind of weather;
Life to us was then sublime.

We were very young and gay,
Never thinking of the morrow;
But just living for the day;
Little dreaming then of sorrow.

Now full twenty years have passed;
O'er many countries have I roamed,
And you, I dare not ask,
But I, I am alone.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 13.

The Sea

It is no wonder to me
That some men love the sea,
So pure and deep and blue,
So old and yet so new.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 14.

Thoughts of a Child While Gazing at a Star

GAZING AT A STAR

Oh, little star way off up there,
How small you seem to me,
Yet you may hold a world as large
As two of ours could be.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 15.

Serenade

The night wind's softly singing
And the moon is all aglow;
Your lover now is waiting
In the garden here below.

Come, come, ere our evening
Hath passed so fast away
And the fresh breeze of morning
Hath kissed another day.

We'll wander far into the glen,
Where only birds and flowers dwell,
And listen to their wonder tales,
So much of love they have to tell!

And not until the sign of dawn
Comes sweeping o'er the lea
Will we return again, my love,
To this castle by the sea.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 16.

Arlee

In a time past long ago,
In a land of rain and snow,
There lived a little maiden
Whose name was called
Arlee.

And no other thoughts were hers,
As the days their nights unfurled,
Than to love and in return be loved
By me.

Many an hour passed by,
And many silent sighs
Found their echoes in the heart
Of this little maid
Arlee.

Then September brought the day,
For me to go away,
And I with heart of sadness took
My leave.

I remember still the brook,
And the little shady nook,
Where I spent the last few moments
With the little maid
Arlee.

As the tears rolled down our cheeks,
Neither one of us could speak,
When we parted by the brook across
The lea.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 17.

The Lone Star

As the sun sinks in the west
With its shimmering golden crest,
The Lone Star rises o'er the sea,
She guides me in my quest,
To where I may find rest,
Then silently she watches over me.

And the many hours pass by,
As I slumber neath the sky,
Dreaming of a land to be.
And I hope that when I die,
They'll put me where I'll lie
So her rays will ever fall on me.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 18.

In the Garden Down Below

In the twilight of the evening,
As the sun is bending low,
I hear a sweet voice humming
In the garden down below.

And its tones are oft familiar,
Seems as though I ought to know,
Just who it is that's humming
In the garden down below.

Then I softly draw the curtains,
And the ground is white as snow,
As the lights shine out upon it
In the garden down below.

And close beside the fountain,
Where the water lilies grow,
Stands my lovely Angelina
In the garden down below.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 19.

Salton Land

A land of desolations,
The land here by a sea,
A place unknown of nations
And death for you and me.
Whose shores are naught but sand,
Whose soil ne'er bears a tree,
A land of burning sun
And death for you and me.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 20.

Evening Farewell

Farewell ye noble mountains,
The evening doth come on
And take thee from my vision
With the setting of the sun,
And clothe thee in thy night attire
That pure blue veil of mist,
And thou dost live forever more
In a country such as this.
The snows ne'er beat upon thy side
Nor rain and tempests rage,
But flowers in all their beauty hide
And on thy bosom fade.
What wonders thou hast seen and heard,
What peoples thou hast known,
What triumphs wilt thou yet perceive,
What misery and moan!

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 21.

The Suicide

Guanguana!
In the gloomy dusk of night,
 Guanguana!
I can see thy face,
Engraved upon a tomb so white,
 Guanguana!
Thou, so pure and chaste.
 Guanguana!
The roaring waters of the sea,
 Guanguana!
In full light of the moon.
Bid me come and rest with thee,
 Guanguana!
Eternally within thy tomb,
 Guanguana!
Forever rest within thy tomb.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 22.

Eheu!

Here I lie, within the earth,
The same whose womb did give me birth,
I cry, "Osoul, art thou accursed!"
The answer: rumblings of my hearse.

And as the feet above me trod,
In tune, as thunder of the cloud,
I call in agony to God
The answer: falling of the sod.

Tempest torn, my fevered brain
Cries anew with every pain;
"Must I, to Earth, return again!"

The answer: tapping of the rain.

Here where worms will crawl within
To eat from out my heart, the sin; could it otherwise have been!"
"Oh,

The answer: howling of the wind,
Eheu! Eheu!

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 23.

Fantasies

I

Oft in the night,
When everything is still,
I seem to hear you singing
Some old forgotten song;
But when I pause to listen
A pain darts through my heart,
And the only sound that greets me
Is the night wind at my door.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 27.

II

As I was walking in my garden
I came upon a most beautiful flower.
I stopped to pluck thinking that it,
Its beauty and its fragrance would help
Me on my way, but there beneath
Its petals grew large thorns, and so
I left it, and passed on.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 28.

III

Little birds of the forest
From whence do you come
And whither do you go?
What dost thou sing
So merrily, so sweetly?
Is it the forest
That gives thee thy songs?
Dost thou know the secret
Beauty of the flowers?
Dost thou know the limits
Of the heavens?
Would that I had thy
Freedom and thy song.
Little birds of the forest
From whence do you come
And whither do you go?

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 29.

IV

As you passed my door yesterday,
On your way to the fountain,
A rose fell from your tresses.
I called to you, but my
Words were in vain.
Now I return it to you,
With thankfulness that
For one sweet day
It did lie upon my heart.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 30.

V

I once had a beautiful garden
Wherein the birds their sweetest songs did sing,
And little brooks murmured softly and low.
There the flowers were rocked to sleep
Each evening by the gentle winds,
And in the morning awakened by
The kisses of the sun.
And in the midst of all
Stood a beautiful lake, at whose side
Was the castle "Joy."

But a great storm came and beat upon it
And left it coarse and rugged
And without beauty.
My garden was no longer a garden of flowers,
But a wilderness, the lake a wild
And furious sea, at whose side
Was the castle "Pain."

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 31.

VI

My gate is open, why do you not come in?
Why stand there so lovely, yet with a tear drop
In your eye? If it is sad you are, perchance
I might make you gay. If lonely
Nay, do not go away.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 32.

VII

As my canoe glided into the driftwood
I seemed to see you standing on the shore.
But as the moon played full upon the
Mossy bank, only a pure, white lily
Lifted her head rocking to and fro
In the night breezes.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 33.

VIII

In the forest today I found
A wild flower, blooming alone.
She told me the brook sang to her all day
And in the evening the winds came
To lull her to sleep. She loved
The forest for here was her home,
This little wild flower which I
Found today, blooming alone.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 34.

IX

What I write when I am sad
I love to read when I am glad.
It is not that the rain spoils
The sunny day, to me it is more
Beautiful than before. Nor do the
Shadows of the clouds darken my
Path as they hide me and
Let me walk in peace alone.
So my thoughts when I am sad
I love to read when I am glad.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 35.

X

What song doth float upon the midnight air,
What strange music through my window comes
So full of sadness and of grief?
Is someone wandering in the forest, lost,
Who of loneliness is filled with fear?
But hark! again I hear the strain,
It is the death song of a swan.

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 36.

Poem Dramas

A Passer-by

A Dramatic Play in One Act

Dramatis Personae

Eugene, a man.

Milicent, a woman.

A Passer-by.

(The action takes place at the home of Eugene and Milicent.)

Scene

A room with door in center to back
of stage, window on each side, over which
thin draperies hang. Windows open one-third. The walls are of plaster and for
the

most part bare. There is a shelf with a lamp
on it. A small table is in the room to right
of door-way. Through the windows can be
seen large trees, etc., as in the center of a
forest. It is toward evening and the room is
becoming gloomy. As the curtain rises Milicent is putting the dishes on the
table and

preparing the supper, humming a tune as she
goes about her duties. The door opens and
Eugene is seen standing in the door-way, the
wind blowing through his hair. The trees
are rocking to and fro and the leaves blowing
about in the forest.

Eugene: Milicent!

(She runs to him as he closes the door and steps into the room. He takes her
into his arms. The darkness of the night is coming on.)

Like unto the forest flower
Which in virgin soil doth grow,
Thou, my darling Milicent,
Ever lovely as a rose.

Milicent:

Gene,
How oft when you're away
I within my room do pray
For all the qualities of life
Which will help you in your strife.

(Pause.)

This one thought above all else:
To be your true and loving wife.

Eugene:

Ah, thy voice is always sweet
As the singing of a bird,
Often though the wind doth sigh,
Sad and weary thy reply,
I, in silence, wonder why.

(Pause.)

Can it be that thou art tired
Of this wild and lonely wood,
Wouldst thou in some distant land abide?

Milicent:

Nay, nay, Gene, I would not part
From thee for distant lands of old;
For thou my body, soul and heart
Hath within thine own enfolded.

(Pause.)

Oh, that I might always be
Safely here with thee.

Eugene:

No one in this world can sever
These two hearts while thus together.

Milicent:

(Running lightly toward the shelf where sits a lamp.)

Darkness has come over all.

(Takes the lamp, lights it, and places it on the table. Then continues to prepare the supper.)

Eugene:

Ever on this earth must fall

Until within the bonds of rest
The universe doth pass;
Then God shall rule the world with song
Where now in grief we pass along.

(Eugene draws up two chairs and places them on opposite sides of the table.

Milicent finishes preparing the supper and they both take their seats at the table. The wind begins to howl outside and the lamp flickers.)

Milicent: A storm is brewing!

(The wind blows the door open and the rain begins to fall in torrents. The lightning flashes through the windows and open door. Eugene hurries to the door and closes then shuts the windows tight. The door is blown open again and a great sheet of rain, a few leaves, and a rose blow through the door way, falling at the feet of Milicent, who is standing with her hands clasped watching Eugene. He closes the door again and bolts it.)

Eugene:

(Looking down at the rose on the floor then picking up and holding it in the palm of his hand.)

See how the storm hath rent the rose,
Which by our door did bloom so fair;
Only a little while ago
Its fragrance filled the air.

Milicent:

And torn the leaves from off the bough
To drown them in the rain.
Who could ever be so cruel,
On whom is laid the blame?

Eugene:

So in life the loveliest flowers
Before the storm must fall;
And many a soul has passed beyond
Not knowing why the call.

(Milicent gathers the leaves and places them in Eugene's hand. He lays them on the table and they are seated, resuming their supper. The wind rattles the windows and the storm rages. Milicent stops eating and places her hands over her eyes.)

Milicent: An awful stupor o'er me comes.

Eugene: You are frightened by the storm.

Milicent: I thought I heard a knock and groan.

Eugene: Milicent, there is no harm.

(Three knocks are heard at the door. They both listen and the three knocks are repeated.)

Eugene:

Some stranger o'er the country roams,
Should we offer shelter here within our home?

Milicent:

Yes, for long may be his way,
And many hours will pass
Before the dawn of day.

(Eugene goes to the door and opens it. The storm is still raging and the rain is falling in torrents. A tall person garbed in black draperies glides into the room, passing Milicent, then is lost in the darkness. As the person passes Milicent she sinks into her chair. Eugene has closed the door and is standing in awe watching her as she sinks into the chair. He rushes to her and takes her into his arms.)

Eugene: Milicent! Milicent!

(Curtain.)

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 39–48.

Fishermen of the Sea

A Dramatic Play in One Act

Dramatis Personae

Friedrich, first fisherman.

Ludwig, second fisherman.

Johann, third fisherman, son of Ludwig,
lover of Louise.

Clara, wife of Ludwig.

Wilhelmina, little daughter of Ludwig.

Louise, a young woman, daughter of Friedrich.

(The action takes place by the sea shore.)

Scene

Early morning by the seashore.

The sea stretching out over indefinite space in the back of stage. A large pile on the shore to which a fisherman's boat is fastened. In the distance and to right of stage can be seen the faint light of a light-house. The sun is still below the horizon but the early grey light of dawn is over all. The sun rises very slowly.

A lone figure of a fisherman dressed for his day's work appears from left of stage like a shadow against the grey outline. Two other fishermen dressed likewise come from right of stage. Their nets have been drying along the seashore. They gather them and make preparations for the day's work. While they work the sun appears, casting its rays over the horizon and making the scene a little lighter.

(Enter Friedrich from left of stage.)

(Enter Ludwig and Johann from right of stage.)

Friedrich: 'morning—

Ludwig: 'morning—

Johann: Good-morning Sir.

Ludwig (looking out over the sea):

A fine and dusky morn,

A smooth and quiet sea,

This day'should see us shorn

From all calamity.

(They pick up their nets and begin to untangle them.)

Johann (to the father, laughingly):

A sailor, old as thou,

Should know at least by now:

A quiet sea at starting

Proves not the same at parting.

(Enter Clara with daughter Wilhelmina. Friedrich and Johann continue preparing for day's work. Ludwig walks toward Clara and Wilhelmina.)

Ludwig:

We shall soon be off

But will return by sun-down.

Johann (to his mother):

Why where is Louise?

Clara: She will be here anon.

Friedrich (turning to see where Ludwig and Johann are sees Clara and, leaving his work, walks to where she is.)

Where is my fair Louise?

Clara: She will be here anon.

Friedrich: How pretty is Wilhelmina!

Johann: Every day more so.

Ludwig: She gets that from her mother.

(Louise comes running in from left of stage laughing and carrying a basket on her arm.)

Louise: I am rather slow.

(She looks down at her basket.)

But here I bring a basket

Full of good things to eat,

Some are more substantial,

Then too there are some sweets

(whispering aside to Johann)

For you Johann.

(Louise places the basket on the ground and with Johann turns away from others, walking toward the boat.)

Johann:

All the sweets together

Could not to one compare

(They stop about half way to the boat as Ludwig calls. The others then pass them and go on to the boat while Johann and Louise resume their conversation where they are standing.) Ludwig: Ho! the sun is rising high
So let us now be off, For soon the night will lie, And we must fill our
trough. (They all walk to boat except Johann and Louise.)

Louise:

Sometimes in stormy weather,
When the waves are beating high,
And the sun has left its place
Within the darkened sky,
And all is darker than the darkest part of night,
I fear for thy safety
Johann,
And am filled with fright.
(Pause.)

If thou shouldst ever lose thy way
I shall wait here day by day
Till thou dost come again.

(Johann takes Louise into his arms. The others are gazing out to sea. A large
black ship whose sail has a red falcon painted on it is seen passing far out to
sea. It is nearing the horizon.)

Clara:

What ship is that whose sail
Doth carry such an emblem?

Ludwig: Is it the Norsemen's trail?

Friedrich: Such ships are seen here seldom.

Ludwig:

And a Norsemen's ship it is;
But why the falcon red?

Clara:

Perhaps it is the ship
Which carries naught but dead,

Of those slain in battle,
And those whose hearts have bled
For their country and their home.

Friedrich:
Yes, some such custom I have known.
(The ship passes beyond the horizon.)

Johann (to Louise):
The winds which play upon the sea,
Singing softly, merrily,
Often bring a kiss to me,
And I know it is from thee
 Louise;
And the cross thou gavest me
Next my heart shall always be.

Ludwig: Ho! we must be off!

(Johann walks to the boat. Ludwig unfastens the rope. Johann sets the basket into the boat then the three push the boat into the water, jumping in as it touches the water.)

Ludwig: We'll return by sun-down.

(They take up their oars and pull away to left of stage. The women stand on the shore watching them. Wilhelmina is waving a small white handkerchief. The boat is hardly out of sight when a small black cloud appears. Also the ship with its falcon sail appears at the horizon for a few seconds then is lost again to sight. The women turn to go home and walk silently for a few steps.)

Louise: A cloud I see aloft.

Clara: I'll hope twill soon be gone.
(They pass out to right of stage, Wilhelmina going with them. The ship appears again at the horizon and the sky is soon filled with clouds. A few distant peals of thunder are heard now and then and an occasional flash of lightning is seen. Soon the clouds fill the sky and it grows very dark. The winds begin to howl. Louise runs onto the stage frantically.)

Louise:
A storm! A storm!
O God! keep them from harm.

(Clara comes running in. The wind is blowing the hair and skirts of both madly.)

Clara:

Come, come within the shelter,
We can do nothing here,
But sit and calmly wait
Until the sky is clear.

(The sea becomes furious and the rain begins to fall. Louise and Clara rush, hand in hand, off the stage to right. In the flashes of the lightning the ship with the falcon sail can be seen hovering about in mid-sea. The storm rages for awhile but soon begins to calm. The sky clears and there is a beautiful sunset. The ship cannot be seen. Louise and Clara appear and walk to the water's edge, gazing out over the sea.)

Louise: Thinkest thou that they are lost?

Clara:

I am afraid to think,
I pray, only tempest tossed,
Now safe within the brink.

(They gaze out over the in silence. sea Darkness comes on and the stars are beginning to sparkle in the sky.)

Clara:

Wilhelmina

I must look after her.

(Clara passes out to right of stage. Louise is standing close to the water's edge, alone, outlined against the sea and sky and remains here for some time in silence. The moon rises into the heavens, making a soft, grey light over all. The ship appears a dull outline near the horizon and moves slowly along. The light is seen in the light-house. Clara returns.)

Clara: Hast thou seen naught of them?

Louise: Naught

Clara: Hast thou seen any fishermen?

Louise: None

Clara:

Yon boat upon the waters still doth float,

And so Louise... there is hope.

(Pause.)

The night is colder growing,
We should be homeward going.

Louise:

I shall here remain
Until the sky is bare
Of all the sparkling stars
Now existing there;
Until the moon forever goes
Away from sight of man,
Until the earth becomes
A place of frozen sand,
Until the depths of sea
Become a desert land,
I shall here remain
Until he comes again.

(Clara walks slowly with bowed head passing out to right of stage. Louise remains motionless. The ship with the falcon sail is seen again near the horizon. It is slowly moving out of sight.)

Louise:

O moon who oft hath seen us in our walk,
O stars who guided us upon the sea,
O wind in which his sail has caught,
Bring him safely home again to me.

(As the ship disappears beyond the horizon a cross is thrown from the sea, falling at the feet of Louise, who grasps it and holds it high above her head.)

Louise:

Johann! Johann!
It is thy cross!
Johann! Johann!
Forever lost!

(Curtain)

Publication. First published in *Poems and Fantasies*. Los Angeles: Grafton Publishing Corporation, 1916, p. 49–63.

Improvisations

Stage II | Music, classicism, and experiment, 1919

The complete San Francisco collection, including the Melancholia movements and Two Songs.

Vespera

Evening comes and softly floats
The music of a summer's breeze,
And mingles with Apollo's lyre
The sighing of the laurel trees.
On yonder lake the gleaming stars
Have kissed the tiring waves to sleep,
And o'er the far off stretching plain
Golden moon-beams, silent, creep.

Olympus harps again are stilled,
The song is dead, the feast is o'er,
Fair Hebe holds an empty cup,
And nectar spots the golden floor.

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Noctis Silentium

The day lies buried 'neath a wintry sky,
In cloaks of silence, once vermillion,
Through misty shreds of fading verdant light,
Selene bathes white-limbed Endymion.
Beside a flaming shield of golden mould,
The ancient Clio grasps a withered quill,
Impatiently, with quivering hand, she scrawls,
Atropos softly breathes, "Be still, be still."
O where is she of Ilion's fallen towers,
Or Caesar with his treasured wealth and fame,
And he who roamed a fabled, mystic sea,
That liberty might know a sweeter name
Are they but as the dust of Fortune's day,
When she strode boldly through archaic lands
And wedded deathless Immortality,
Then left him with her Jewels in his hands?

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered. Reprinted with typographic and minor punctuation variants in *Poems* (1922); this edition uses the complete 1919 witness.

Limon!

Limon! Limon! What thrill thou gavest me
When first I looked upon thy silent throng,
When all of life lay dreaming in the calm,
And night winds mingled with a boatman's song.
Where once the greedy hand of pirate

Spain

Snatched from thy birth-right a dominion's gold,
Then placed upon the soil a tyrant claw.
And for some tinsel god, thy franchise sold.
What land can breath the air republican
Whose State kneels low before a papist, crowned?
Is freedom but a gift of regal power.
Must Liberty in scarlet robes be bound?
Where are the warriors of thy classic days
Who freed thee when thou wert a noble slave?
Arise! Behold! The lord of yesteryears
Who came as knight remains as royal knave!

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered. Reprinted with typographic and minor punctuation variants in *Poems* (1922); this edition uses the complete 1919 witness.

Melpomene

(To Sarah Truax)

Amid the sparkling flood of silver sand,
Where sleeps the desert wrapped in vestal beams,
Thou art the goddess of the opal streams
That fall from heaven to this torrid land.
Like some strange cadence of a saraband
The droning winds chant their nomadic themes
O'er crouching tents where each bronze
 Arab dreams
Of Cassim's gold and nights in
 Samarkand.

Who knows, save he whose prison soul has bled.
The lonely anguish of these Trappist walls,
Or had companionship with living dead
Who jeer the day and chide the night yet dread
The coming hour when o'er their serfdom falls
The requiem they hear in cloistral halls.

(Garden of Allah)

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered. Reprinted with typographic and minor punctuation variants in *Poems* (1922); this edition uses the complete 1919 witness.

Old Men

Old men always sit alone,
In groups of twos or threes or more,
Like rusted bolts held feebly fast
Upon some queer, old fashioned door,
Whose withered eyes have often mocked
The passing paupers and the kings,
And others strolling by that way,
Ladies of the street and things.
They have seen all, the good and bad,
Known Love and pale, green lipped
 Despair;
Yet still they sit with wrinkled eyes,
And like the dead they stare and stare.

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919,
p. unnumbered.

Law

A child of Custom whom all tyrants fear,
A gift divine if reason guides thy way,
But tread not purple roads of power by day,
Nor steal with soulless step into the night
Where Pity gropes unpitied in the sight
Of those gold-kings who would by pillage live,
Lest thou become a red-eyed fugitive
When thou the voice of Anarchy doth hear.

Where Lust and Greed have built a vulture throne
The Christ of Justice kneels with bleeding head,
And Kindness is a stranger in that land
Where Poverty with Crime walks hand in hand;
For such my native soil doth hold her dead-
Is this mine heritage of Washington?

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered. Reprinted with typographic and minor punctuation variants in *Poems* (1922); this edition uses the complete 1919 witness.

Melancholia: Movements from a Symphony

Adagio

In the park so melancholy
The sad pines their torches bear,
Towering in the silence, holy,
Cleave the grey, nocturnal air.

Would it were some vale fantastic
Where my soul could meet thine own,
And with purple song chromatic
Dance the hours as roses blown.

Perfumes linger after greeting,
(Once I saw thee weep, and know)
Saw the moon-light quickly fleeting
In the dawn's first lustrous glow.

L'Envoi

As tones prolonged are softly swept
By jeweled hands on ivory keys,
You passed and only angels wept,
And cold winds stirred the leafless trees.

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919,
p. unnumbered.

Andante

(Quai des Augustines)

The night is green, monotonous,
And rain engulfs the vendor's mart,
It bathes my soul in deepest gloom,
Will not from out my soul depart.
The street lamps glitter dolefully,
Throughout the space of empty halls
Grim phantoms dance half-wittingly,
A eunuch's dance at secret balls.
Now sleeps the river with its fears
Mist hidden by the night's strange pall.
Nor hears the weird, impassioned plaint
Of rain and tears upon the wall;
Hears not the sobbing of the rain
Or tears upon the cold, grey wall.

Like dusky porcelains, spectral forms
Strut up and down the haunted mall;
They mock the little things they pass,
The rain and tears which sob and fall.

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Pieces from a Boudoir Suite

I

Limbs so pure and white,
What wonderful delight
The pallor of the sheet discloses;
Wrapped in fragile hair
They have that virgin air
Of snow and roses.

Have the muses seen
Pygmalion and his queen—
Known the marble passion of her eyes?
Swiftly the false moon
Dances about the room,
Naked, over-wise.

IV

Evening fades and the moon's light
Falls like some soft, blue brocade;
O'er a balcony of jade
Steal the shadows in their flight.

Soul of fast-fleeting dreams,
Like the night whose silver song
Wanes as perfumed silks among
Slender, luring, sapphire beams.

All the grace of womankind,
Innocence, quite like a child,
Mirrored in a voice as mild,
Gay as laughing summer wind.

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919,
p. 17–20.

Queries—Two Songs

Morning Sadness

Why am I thus with sorrow wed,
Who scarce did know sweet childhood's guest,
Where are the singing meadow larks
With carols of their morning quest;
Why do the flowers droop their heads
Upon the shadowed garden wall,
Why is the music soft and sad
From out the sparkling waterfall?

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Whence Comes This Song

Whence comes this song so golden
In the dark and silent night,
Born from my soul's great sadness
Carried on by fancy's flight;

Where go these words of sorrow
Through the ages yet unbound,
Will they, like wintry flowers,
Fall on barren, frozen ground?

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Penombra

Before the day hersleepy eyes have closed
And Somnus sweeps her into shadowed dreams,
Let music float upon the silenced air
In one great symphony of dulcet themes;
Let all the Earth resound in eulogy,
As Sappho sings of some famed hero's might,
Till Phoebus drops his gems of aureate
And lifeless falls into the arms of Night.

Pale Sleep, with robes of scented asphodels,
Glides swiftly on past mystic twilight folds;
And steals into the forest's dim recess
Where he can woo the gaudy marigolds;
The stars peer out with cold and jealous eyes
Upon a timid faun who doth forsake
Her lily-bed that'she may muse beside
The moon's proud image mirrored in the lake.

Publication. First published in *Improvisations*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered. Reprinted with typographic and minor punctuation variants in *Poems* (1922); this edition uses the complete 1919 witness.

Souvenirs

Stage III | The First World War, 1919

The complete book of poems from Kimmel's First World War experience.

Atlantic

I love the freshness of the open sea,
The blue desert, the eternity
Of silent ships. Waves madly embracing,
The blush of white foam on their wan faces,
The aftermath of passion.
Drifting mountains of golden mist,
Forests of far away clouds,
And the purple evening approaching;
The passing of caravans
Upon a phantomed canvas,
The colors of day fading.
Darkness.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Blue Rain

Rain in the forest and evening,
Blue rain and things which are green,
And squares where a shadow lingers,
Where Death stalks about, unseen.
Echoing roar of the cannons,
The click of the horses hoofs,
Rattling camions passing
The shattered grey walls and roofs;
“Post de Secours” on the hillside,
Skeleton towers which loom
Far to the rear of the troopers
Passing along through the gloom.
Rain in the forest and evening,
Blue rain and things which are green,
And squares where a shadow lingers,
Where Death stalks about, unseen.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Left-Overs

They were only women
Those things which stood
Before us in the drenching rain
Clasping small, frail bits
Of flesh to their breasts.
Half-naked they were, and half-starved,
Beaten and bruised and some, bleeding.
Like cattle they huddled together
For warmth. The doctors passed among them
Caring for those who had just given birth
And those whose hour was near.
They did not cry or blaspheme,
Simply looked as if thinking
Of something far away.
Soon the large wagons came,
And the ambulance corps,
And those who bury the dead.
They were all taken to the rear,
But the wagons were not very full.

About us, the ruins of the village.
Many old men and children, motionless,
And those who knew the smell
Of powder and blood and dirt.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Hopelessness

What good, the coming of the morrow,
If but to tread again through blood,
And hear the trailing cry of sorrow,
And mocking Death's dull drumming thud.

What good the sun, the starlight's shimmer,
The cooling breeze of early dawn,
If only on the dead to glimmer,
Or cool the cheeks of those beyond.
Verdun,

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Morning Near Mort Homme

O'er the soil a faint ray of sunlight gleams,
And falls on formless heaps of cold, blue flesh.
The hills, once green, are bare and desolate;
There, naught remains save those small pools of blood
Which Freedom gave to Charon for her fare
Across the bleak Cimmerian divide.
Beyond, a painted forest of rare jade,
Neath purple clouds fringed with
 Moresque design.
And great, black birds which lounge in the mid-air.
The dawn is torn by tireless, gulping guns,
Where Liberty, like some vain courtesan
In a red robe, struts proudly to her doom.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Troops

They are passing
Over the dark ridge,
Thousands, yet all is still.
It is cold and the night is grey,
But they are a swarm of black
And tread along in silence.
Is it this one, whose sorrowful eyes
Scarcely notices us, is he the one
To be bayoneted, or is it the young man
Who smiled and said, "Americain,"
Or the three to whom we gave cigarettes,
Are they to be shot down like wild animals,
These men who thanked us for cigarettes?
Remember the man whose legs and arms
Were missing when we found him
On Hill Three-hundred-four?
(He died five minutes later)
Will these men know such suffering?
And they who were left behind.
Mothers, fathers, sisters and those
Who walk the evening paths alone,
And those who draw
Their small tin soldiers over quiet ground;

What will they do when the word is
Brought to them, when they
Tell them another victory has been won?
Jubecourt,

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

The Burden

Winds are tired of their wailing,
Rains of their weeping too,
Earth of its bloody burden,
Sky of its smoky blue;
Tired of their bitter sorrow,
Tired of their hellish night,
Tired of the roar of battle,
Tired of an endless fight.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Prisoner

must go down now
And open the shop
The little shop where
I work for Herr Goff.
In an hour or so
She will come to buy
A loaf of bread,
(She gives me a rose
For her loaf of bread.)
She will come for
A loaf of bread, because
She gets a loaf every day
And because we are
To wed very soon, so every day
She comes to the shop.
But first I must find the keys.
The keys to the little shop
Of Herr Goff.”

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

The Outcast

He spoke to me
Continually of Yvonne
And told me how,
When he arrived in Paris
On his permission,
He had searched for her.
She was not in the quarters
They had taken after the retreat
From Revigny. But one day,
As he was walking along the boulevard,
She passed, gowned in black,
Silk as much as possible,
And a large hat.
Oh yes. he knew just why
She dressed like that,
And he knew
She was smiling and talking
Very lively to the British Officer.

The day following he reported
To his post on the front.

I left him and went up to Montzeville.
When the return trip was made
I saw a man whom they told me
Was handling a hand grenade
When it exploded and killed him.
The officer cautioned everyone
Standing near us to be careful.
And gave the accident as an example.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Blue Steel

God!
Today I killed a man.
I stuck him through
And saw his blood spurt.
His flesh was like warm butter,
Heard him cry and say something
Which I did not understand.
He fell and took my gun with him,
And then I thought of Liege,
And did not give
A damn.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

The Dead

We looked at the dead
And wondered if they knew
The perfumed sweetness of rest,
And the softness of the dying day.
We wondered if they could hear
The distant roar of the cannon.
Those things which were once men,
Those pieces of human junk,
Stacked upon one another.
One without a head;
One whose limbs had been blown to dust;
The one whom the priest told us thought was an officer:"
"They
Only a small bundle and the worms
Waiting to devour it.
The peasant's house where
Crosses were made
And the hill, shorn of its grain.
The sound of the picks,
And the falling of dirt.
Bois de Bethelainville

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

The Fifth Day

The mud was over our boot-tops
And the rain still falling.
Some of the men were out of it already,
And many more near the point of being sent back.
Our hearts were steeped
In the slime as we stood
There waiting, waiting, days of it,
With the shells pouring in upon us,
And the gas, when the wind was right.
But the S. A. sent up
Hot drinks and tobacco,
Which helped to keep the men going.
When the damn thing was over
The Red Cross gave warm clothing
To those who were left.
The nurses smiled in the rooms
And cried in the hall-ways.
A hospital is a very peculiar place.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

In the Hospital

(Paris)

From the balcony
I see the courtyard below me,
And the walls round about,
Dotted with windows,
And those who gaze from white covered beds.
Near the fountain are two Frenchmen.
One, a leg and arm missing, the other, blind.
They are talking in low tones,
But they do not smile.
The sky is clear,
And the sun peeps over
The red tile roof.
A man in white, walks
Slowly toward them
Holding his hand to his lips.
The Frenchman sees him and calls, is Jean, how is my brother?"
"How
 Monsieur, all is finished."
"Ah,
The man bears his face
In his only hand while
His comrade speaks very softly,
But he does not smile.
The sky is clear,
And the sun peeps over
The red tile roof.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Café in Rue Saint-Honoré

The day glimmers
And the lights of evening flicker about.
Two old men sit by the window
Slowly shuffling cards across an iron table.
Outside a group of soldiers carouse
And throw their half-drunken
Glances at those who pass.
High wheeled carts roll drowsily
Along the rue Saint-Honoré
Like some aged man
Bound-up in a heavy coat.
Long, black veils of the women
Color the atmosphere.
Night is coming on.
Tomorrow there will be more black veils,
Then the night again.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

The Dancer

(Boulevard de Clichy)

Hi, with the dance!
The tambourines tinkle,
A girl in green,
Like an opiate queen,
Glides o'er the mall
As a snake on the wall.
Hi, with the dance!

Give me a cigarette!
The police are asleep
In Pigalle street,
Where good people go
To church and pray,
(Their gowns they must show.)
Hi, with the dance!

Monsieurs;
Vingt sou, s il vous plait,
And the minx will prance
In herserpentine trance.
Ah, merci, merci,
Strike up the tambourines.
Hi, with the dance!

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

An Old Man

“Maps, maps,
Maps of Paris,
Buy a map,
Maps for the English,
You take one, Monsieur
I am a Belgian, and you see,
Here I was slashed on the cheek.
When a young man,
I worked in England,
My three sons were killed the first year,
And two daughters led into Germany.
I have never heard from them.
I am very old;
My life is cheap
So are the maps.
Monsieur?
Thank you! Thank you!”

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

October

(*Bois de Boulogne*)

O'er all the sky breathed a calm autumn twilight,
The landscape drowsed in its veiled auburn glow,
When you came gliding through pale, silver shadows,
An image of some exquisite Watteau.
Thy voice was low in the fast-fading evening,
As music of harps in the forest dim,
It might have been a chanson of
 Debussy,
Or sighing of leaves, sensitively slim.
The delicate notes of the dryades flutes,
Ne'er echo such charms in their fairy flight,
As the soft, flowing words which hushed e'en the trees,
And left them to dream in the sylvan night.
An Aphrodite in cloaked Grecian marble,
Swan-like and holy in this woodland place;
Had Phidias known such enchanting beauty,
His stone would have held thy immortal grace.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville

Like an old hump-backed woman
With heavy feet, you pass,
Carrying huge lamps
Upon your aged shoulders.
Creeping, crawling, staggering,
On to the river.
Your shoes are worn,
And your clothes smell of centuries,
You are a mother of criminals and saints.
Your breath comes in jerks,
And is like the foul air of a damp cellar.
Your hair is musty with cobwebs,
Yet you have defied Time.
But Time is a poor, weak thing.

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Madmen

Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat.

Speak not of peace nor heed the madman's plea,
For madmen sail upon a crimson flood,
Their galleys glide o'er streams of
Freedom's blood,
That they may rend the emblem of
Democracy.

They wander far, across a hopeless sea,
To do the biddings of their paltry kings,
Who gloat with lust and vain imaginings
Of a world bound by false theocracy.

O madmen, think you, France can e'er forget
Her mute cathedrals mid the seething towns?
Will Belgium cringe beneath your servile threat,
Or fear the spectre of your braggart crowns?
Think you, that Liberty neath her white flame,
Will yield her rich inheritance and name?

Publication. First published in *Souvenirs*. San Francisco: The Publishers of Little Books, 1919, p. unnumbered.

Poems

Stage IV | *The designed retrospective, 1922*

A five-poem typographic selection from *Improvisations*. Its minor variants are recorded after the 1919 reading texts rather than duplicating the poems.

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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.

HISTORICAL FRONT MATTER

Stanley Preston Kimmel - Collected Poems

Dedication to Poems and Fantasies

Restored from the original source scans

DEDICATION

The songs which I sing
Have been sung oft before,
And the words are the same as of old.
But don't count their worth
By things of the Earth,
Such as silver, or brass, or gold.

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