



SYDNEY KING RUSSELL

Collected Poems, 1923–1949

A CRITICAL READING EDITION

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

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The Text-Tech Papers · Los Angeles · 2026

ARCHIVAL PORTFOLIO

A selective visual record placed at the front of the volume



Sydney King Russell; portrait preserved in the project research archive.



A selection from Russell's personal library, documenting the scale of his later private-print career.

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INTRODUCTION

Editorial scope and the shape of the surviving record

Sydney King Russell moved easily between kinds of writing that literary history often keeps apart: formal lyrics, satirical portraits, devotional poems, popular songs, film publicity, anthology making, and the privately printed books of his later decades. The seven substantial witnesses preserved here—beginning with *The Changing Flame* and ending with *Selected Poems, 1919–1948*—show a writer repeatedly reordering his own career. The 1949 selection is therefore printed as a separate historical construction rather than used to erase the earlier books.

Russell's strongest recurring form was the sonnet. In *Lost Warrior* he used it for compressed social types and for the sequence *This Mortal Love*; in *Bright Avowal* he expanded the love sequence to forty-two poems; in the 1949 book he shortened and rearranged it again. The three states differ enough in architecture and emphasis to deserve independent presentation. Elsewhere his shorter free-verse lyrics and comic portraits show the same appetite for polish, closure, and immediate address.

The archive is extensive but incomplete. Contemporary notices and a surviving bookseller's inventory describe more than fifty books and pamphlets, many privately printed, while the present folder supplies complete texts only through 1949. This edition makes that limit visible: it prints every available primary book witness, adds complete poems newly recovered online, and records later titles in the bibliography without inventing or silently reconstructing unavailable texts.

BIOGRAPHY

A documented life in poetry, print, and public culture

Sydney King Russell was born in New York City on November 29, 1897, and grew up partly in New Jersey. By his late teens he was in California, attending the University of California and already working as a composer. A 1917 Los Angeles notice called him an eighteen-year-old student whose Hawaiian-themed song “My Flower of Waikiki” had reached a second edition after he promoted it in Honolulu. The surviving 1916 score credits him with both words and music, establishing at the outset the double career he maintained for the next six decades.

On January 15, 1920, Russell married the lyric soprano Carlotta Rydman, professionally known as Carlotta King, in Beverly Hills. Their daughter Joyce was born about 1921 and appears in an early poem. The household connected poetry to concert, radio, and early sound-film culture: Russell accompanied and wrote for singers, while Carlotta became known for musical films associated with *The Desert Song* and *Rose-Marie*. His 1929 Screenland profile “A Queen of Kings” and a later photograph of the couple document the public overlap of their careers. They separated in 1942 and divorced in 1944.

Russell’s first located poetry collection, *The Changing Flame*, appeared from the Four Seas Company in 1923. Its acknowledgments place him in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Smart Set*, *Argosy-All Story Weekly*, *Lyric West*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. *Pilgrimages* followed in 1925 and *The Golden Snare* in 1928. Howard Mumford Jones, reviewing the latter in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, praised the apparent naturalness and solidity of Russell’s sonnets. By then poems had also appeared in anthologies and in the wider California little-magazine network.

The late 1920s and early 1930s brought national magazine visibility. *The New Yorker* printed eleven poems between 1929 and 1931, many of them tight satirical portraits of critics, movie workers, family roles, and urban professions. Thomas Bird Mosher issued *Lost Warrior* in 1931. Harriet Monroe’s 1933

review in *Poetry* admired several individual poems while warning that Russell's fluency could become formula. The forty-two-sonnet *Bright Avowal* appeared in 1933; *Poetry* printed "Women" the following January.

Russell also maintained a long devotional line in Christian Science periodicals. Poems located for this edition include "Christ Jesus," "God's Day," "I Am the Way," and a later "Counsel" distinct from the satirical poem of that name. *Proud Universe* appeared in 1940. During the war he published *Songs for America* and founded *The Poetry Chap-Book*, which he edited from 1942 to 1953; he also co-edited *Voices*. His periodical record ranged through *Good Housekeeping*, *The American Mercury*, *Radio Mirror*, *Prairie Schooner*, and many newspapers.

After the divorce Russell moved his center back toward New York and married the Australian soprano Jean Love in November 1944. They had three daughters—Victoria Jean, Melinda King, and Lorena Love—while Joyce, his daughter by Carlotta, married in Los Angeles in 1945. Russell continued composing, accompanying, and writing art songs. He received the Kimball Award in 1944 for "Harbor Night"; singers associated with his work included John Charles Thomas, Lawrence Tibbett, Nelson Eddy, Hilde Gueden, Frances Yeend, Jean Madeira, and Igor Gorin. His membership in ASCAP and surviving publishers' and performers' archives document a musical career substantially larger than the poetry record alone suggests.

The 1949 *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* was a midpoint, not a conclusion. Later identified books include *The Listening Year*, *Give the Heart Rein*, *Ghosts at My Window*, *Shores of Tomorrow*, *Poems of the Macabre*, *The Shadow Walks*, *Now I've Seen Everything*, *This Is Where We Came In*, *Take a Long Look*, *Girl with the Tired Hair*, and *Their Faces Haunt Us*. Many were privately printed. A rare-book dealer who handled Russell's own library described twenty-six of his books from 1925 to 1971, seventeen privately printed, and reported more than fifty books and pamphlets overall.

Russell eventually settled in Palm Beach, where he belonged to the Palm Beach Quills, helped organize the Civic Opera of the Palm Beaches, and became a founding member and two-term president of the Palm Beach Symphonette. His late work turned increasingly toward fantasy and the macabre while retaining the formal finish of the early books. He died in West Palm Beach on November 28, 1976, one day short of his seventy-ninth

birthday, and was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. His monument calls him “Poet and Composer” and “The Bard of Palm Beach.”

ORIGINAL FRONT MATTER

Dedication, acknowledgment, author's note, and contemporary introduction

Sydney King Russell's Introduction

From Selected Poems, 1919–1948 (1949)

In the hope that lyrical poetry will shortly return to its high place in public esteem, I have ventured to assemble these verses, written over a period of thirty years. Instead of arranging them chronologically, I have chosen to group them with regard to mood and subject matter. A number of hitherto unpublished poems have been included, as well as those which are reprinted from various periodicals. Some are also available in song form, having been set to music by such composers as Albert Hay Malotte, Ernest Charles, Elinor Remick Warren, Mortimer Browning, Edward Harris and Francis H. McKay, as well as by the author.

Sydney King Russell

Acknowledgments

From Selected Poems, 1919–1948 (1949)

For permission to reprint many of the following poems, thanks are due the editors of the following publications: *The New Yorker*, *The American Mercury*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Pictorial Review*, *Radio Mirror*, *Poetry*, *Voices*, *Wings*, *Poetry Chap-Book*, *Florida Magazine of Verse*, *Poetry World*, *New York Times*, *New York Sun*, *New York Herald-Tribune*, *New York Post*, *New York Journal-American*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Smart Set*, *Script*, *Promenade*, *Kaleidograph*, *College Humor* and *Saturday Night*.

And to the *Christian Science Monitor* for permission to reprint 'Exhortation,' 'Journey in Autumn,' 'Skyward,' 'Vista,' 'Haven,' 'The Watcher,' 'Winter Music,' 'Winter Evening,' 'Summer Storm,' 'Panorama,' 'Our Days,' 'Silence,' 'Caged Leopard,' 'Ivory Tower,' and 'Invitation.' To the

Boston Music Company for permission to reprint ‘The Two Songs,’ published in music form with the title *The Song of the Hill*.

THE CHANGING FLAME

Complete text of The Changing Flame (1923)

The Two Songs

Sing your song by the river
And I'll sing mine from on high,
Up where the eager hilltop
Gropes to the distant sky.
You with the earth to listen,
I with the heaven to fill;
Yours the voice of the valley
And mine the song of the hill.

You shall be heard by the river,
You shall be loved on the plain;
Who will come climbing to seek me
Hid with the dew and the rain?
And never our songs shall mingle
Though the earth in wonder be still,
For yours is the voice of the valley
And mine the song of the hill.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Young Love

(To C. M. R.)

On the threshold of my thought
You pause... hesitate,
Then enter softly, altogether without ostentation,
As one who is a foe to forwardness.
So must you have come into the world
On tiptoe,—fearing to waken it.
Your eyes have the look of a timid goddess
Afraid of her reflection in Nature's pool
And your hands convey a mute appeal
As they glide into mine...
When I mention love
You blush like the eastern sky
At the kiss of dawn.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Lotus Leaves

I

Oh, Miru San,
Thy soft footfalls are like the tinkling waterfall
Of Yoto Soy, at dusk.
Thy heart's murmuring is like the distant hoof beat
Of the mounted messengers of the Emperor
Bearing tidings from Kioto.
Thy hands are tired lotus blossoms
Drowsing in the sun.

II

The Emperor-son of the high Sun—
Hath twelve good traits,
Twelve stalwart qualities
To endear him to his subjects.
But one of the twelve is a traitor.
Traitors are ever fomenting trouble
And some fine evening
When the eleven are asleep in the lotus garden
This one shall betray him
And accomplish his downfall.
And it shall be for some such paltry price
As thirty pieces of silver.

III

The mountains of Satsuma
Are hermits of the great open Way.
They have never known the press of cities,
The fevered jostle of the throng.
They live in the breath of their own Silence
And the song of the winds is peace.
If it were not so,—
If they bathed in the spume of the metropolis,
Felt its hot breath upon their straining necks,

They would not be mountains,
Nor would they reach up so
With joyous yearning
To what men call sky.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Piano Recital

When Hofmann plays, my heart's a stream
That overflows with spring
And breathes its faint, ecstatic dream
To every living thing.

To every fern beside its shore,
To every tree, its praise;
The sea itself could tell no more,—
When Hofmann plays.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

One Spake to Helen

Your beauty is a lyric thing,
One little voice too small
Upon the noisy way of life
To sing, and tell it all.

Yet some shall pause, and some shall hear,
And some shall mark me well;
And some shall say, “Give ear, good friends,
To what he hath to tell.

In after days, if memory grope
Through hazy years and long
Which shall the world remember,
Your beauty,—or my song?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Woodland Fear

If love but pass this way again
And pause beside the cypress bark,
Shall you or I be here to mark
Her footstep, light as summer rain,
Or, cowards made of sudden pain,
Shall we run lightly through the fern
Dreading her face at every turn,
If love but pass this way again?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Outcast

Love wanders dumb, an outcast lone
Upon a viewless way;
No roof he knows to call his own
Nor friend to bid him stay.
Silence shall be his mournful bed
And solitude his store
Till you shall come with quick'ning tread,
Fling wide his heart's closed door;
Till you shall wake the birds of spring
On every living tree
And loose the tongue that waits to sing
Its song of ecstasy!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Moods

Mistress of a thousand moods,
Whims that know no peace,
Ah, well I call her tenderly
My lady of caprice.

A little shrug proclaims a mood
Of careless nonchalance,
A passing word, a frown beget
A calm insouciance.

Again a mood that trembles close
Upon the brink of tears;
Yet still she sits in firm command,
All smiling, through her fears.

She turns from mood to mood at will,
Brooding, yearning, weighing,
Wearing a mood as one would don
A cloak to go a'maying.

Mistress of a thousand moods
Save one, which holds her slave,—
The mood to love, when love allures
With manner gay or grave!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Remembrance

Magda gave me love's sweet smile,
Ione kissed in play;
Carlotta sang a twilight song
And fled away.
How strange, when spring's in flight
And love's in tears,
What memory's lamp keeps bright
Through all the years.
The smile, the kiss have left me
Without a pang,—
I have forgot them for the song
Carlotta sang!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Desire

All I want that life can give me,
Glow of evening, flush of morn,
Thrill of seasons ever changing,
Joy of linnet in the thorn.
Children's voices, bare of sorrow,
Hands to touch mine in the gloom,
Gentle hands... and most of all,
Music in a quiet room.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

With Much Making of Music

With much making of music,
With striving after song,
I find the day gone weary
And over-long.

Better to dwell in silence
A very little space
Surprising dreams that hover
In shadows on your face;

Guessing at tiny mysteries
That play about your lips,
Better these, than foolish songs
Of long-forgotten ships

And dusty deeds of valor,—
Oh, bid me pluck this tongue
That weary grows of music
And songs too often sung!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Orchids

Orchids,
Orchids in a window,—
What matters snow upon the street
And all the scurrying rush of feet
And careless eyes that never stop?
About the little florist shop
The ghost of summer broods and sings
And whispers unremembered things...

Who minds what threat gray winter flings
Who has beheld through ice and sleet
Orchids,
Orchids in a window!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Covenant

The vows of spring with the fading leaves of autumn
Shall be broken and fall;
The oath of the foe, the terrible vows of the stranger
Shall be scattered all.

Far away shall the leaves of their wrath be wafted,
The proud and the bold,
So shall the reckless vows of the young be scattered
And the muttered vows of the old.

But day by day on farthest paths of silence
By man untrod,
My heart, my faltering heart on weariest heights
Keeps faith with God.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Choice

Morning, and a bright road
That rises to the north;
Not all the dreams of cities
Would once have sped me forth.
Night, and a wan road
That stretches to the south,
A road I lost once for the kiss
You laid upon my mouth.
And who knew that I hated
The east road gaunt and gray
When two soft arms that held me
Entreated me to stay?
I used to think that loneliness
Went trudging toward the west
Along the road that winds and winds
And never reaches rest.

But now the burden of the road,
Its promise, seen from tar,
Are more of rest, of faith to me
Than you, and all you are,

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Prophet

From day to day beside the mount
The hungry ones he fed,
Yet was as one who has nor home
Nor place to lay his head.

And now that he has found that hav'n
For which in life he sighed,
With bated breath men speak of death
And weep him, mournful-eyed!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Carlotta

I have said all there is to say.
Slowly
I have drawn silence about me like a veil;
But I cannot shut you out
Nor the tenderness of your song.
Into the inmost veil of silence,
Where no word has ever ventured,
Your CARISSIMA will follow me.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Song

What can I say of April
Or what can I leave unsaid
Who in a barren hour believed
April was dead?
Dead, and long I mourned her,
Sought her in sun and rain,
Till with a rush of crimson
April was born again!
Now I can jest with folly,
Smile at my young heart's fears;
But how can I look at April
Save through a mist of tears?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Legend

Nausica's passion came to this
Long ago, in the full of the moon,—
A midnight tryst, a fevered kiss;
But what said the gypsy rune?

“Two shall ride and one shall sleep
Soon as the deed be done!”—
Nausica thinks of the word of fate,
Knows the dread hour is run.

Come clattering hoofs, a challenge clear,—
“On guard, son of the dust!”
The play of darting steel on steel,
Death in the silent thrust.
Two who speed in the starless gloam,
A frightened steed astride,
One who sleeps in the wind-swept loam
With none to rest beside.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Robin Roy

Robin Roy's come home again,
Home from hill and dell;
My heart went out to meet him
That loved him bitter well.

Aye, Robin Roy is home at last.
This very morn he came
With easy smile and jesting way;
But oh, 'tis not the same.

He took my hand and looked beyond,
Talking of tropic skies
And when I spoke of bygone days
He could not meet my eyes.

He wanders by familiar paths
As in the days before,—
But his heart beats with the singing surf
Upon a moonlit shore.

There is a look of other days,
A lurking memory
Of other eyes that came between
My Robin Roy and me.

Now are my love dreams scattered all
Like leaves before the wind
Since Robin Roy's come home, but left
His heart, his heart behind!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Simple Things

We who have loved simple things
In childhood's simple way,
Why are we reaching eager hands
For empty husks, today?

Too long we've sown with folly,
Reaped ruin with our blood,—
Courting the scentless blossom,
Scorning the perfect bud;

Bearing the lawless burdens
Of fierce, unresting kings;
God, turn us back to peaceful ways,
The love of simple things!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Love Song

Leave me for a little, lover,
For a little let me be,
Lest your tenderness uncover
Wayward tenderness in me.
All too lightly falls the even
And too sweetly runs your song;
Lest I learn too much of heaven,
Leave me, love, but not for long.

Leave me now, with faith unshaken,
To gray dusk and fall of dew;
One by one the pale stars waken,
Melts a cloud, the moon rides through.
Night has slipped her airy tether,
Roams the hours with flying feet;
Lest she find us here together,
For a little, leave me, sweet.

Let me linger in the shadows,
Solitary, unafraid,
Musing wander through the meadows
Where your feet have lately strayed;
Till the wind of passion, blowing
All before, be safely past,
Lest I grow o'erbold for knowing,
Fold you, love, too close at last.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Mists

You who go forth with so much to remember,
Shall you find these things easy to forget,—
South winds, storm-laden, in the late November,
Hills on whose summits timeless worlds were set?

Dusk, and the tremulous hush that followed thun— der,
Are these, and I, but memories early stilled?
Then let me wander blind to autumn's wonder,
Then let my days go dreamless, unfulfilled.
Let lovers mark swift, burning kisses on your mouth
Until at last the far, dim thought of me
Shall be to you like wisps of fog that spiral south,
Shall fade like gray mists rolling out to sea.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Dawn

Out of the silence the clear cry of morning,
Hear it who will, and who will not, let be;
Day sends but once her impetuous warning,
Once, till she shatter the dream-ridden sea,

Drive down the mists into echoing valleys,
Scatter night-shadows from moor and from hill;
Day charges swiftly while man dreams and dallies,
Singing with voice that will never be still.

Morning whose breath is a presage of power,
Shall you renew my dear youth's ecstasies,
Shining from far in the desolate hour,
Bring me remembrance of days like these?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Betrayal

Love, should we quarrel on the morrow,
Then would I have you stern,
Careless of another's onset,
Nobly wounding in your turn;

Choosing you in deadly earnest
Weapons for the fray,
Words designed to pierce and poison,
Words to seek and slay.

Bravely will I thrust and parry,
Call the battle sweet,
Give you word for word in answer,
Owning no defeat.

Withhold no word; this stout heart
To bitterness resigned
Fears only basest of betrayals,—
That you be kind!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

In Sleep Behold Her

In sleep behold her like the rose,
Her breath a scent of dear delight;
Sleeping she dreams, and waking knows
My love enfolds her through the night.

What though her spirit thwart her will
And wander, while her eyelids close?
My love shall find and hold her still,
And this throughout her calm repose
Untroubled by a thought of ill,
Sleeping she dreams, and waking knows.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

For Baby; at Seven Months

Baby, your wisdom is to me
A dearer thing than dew or dawn,
A never-ending mystery
For folk like me to think upon.

Baby, you've secrets in your eyes,
And there, I think, a word
Within your heart's voiceless surprise
Has faintly stirred.

What treasure have you wisely kept
In silent hoard;
In ageless dreaming, as you slept,
What visions, stored?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Young David

His only weakness was a love for words
That poured from his young lips in glad refrain;
For these he left his father's flocks and herds
To wake deep valleys with his magic strain.

With these he won into the courts of grace
And into women's hearts, with melting ways,
But scoffers called him weakling to his face
Nor recked the valiance of his latter days.

Yet who but stands forth blest above the strong
Whose soul rises to heaven as he sings,
Working, like David, miracles with song,
Conjuring madness from the hearts of kings!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Legacy

You came to us that we might have more Life,
For so You said;
Passing beyond the bounds of sense and sight,
We called You dead.
You left us certain words you named sufficient
To meet our needs;
But, richer gifts than parable or sermon,
You left us deeds.

Yet in a million minds groping for heaven
Some madness lurks,
That still we quibble over word and doctrine,
Forgetting works.

Ah, can it be the Word which hushed the tempest
Has left us cold
Or that You gave us more of Life in keeping
Than our poor hearts could hold?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Surf Rider

Across a silvered sea he skims,—
Bronzed god of sun and ocean.
Joyously, like some wild gull
At race with the wave.
Beneath his feet the frail bark
Lightly noses a hundred breakers.
The sea rolls, laughing, from his back
And the sun makes fine play
On lean, polished hips
And supple arms, poised in easy balance.
To him the sea is life
Bearing him lightly, kindly,
Lifting him with unsuspected buoyance,
(Bronzed god of sun and ocean!)
Bearing him always smoothly
Toward pleasant sands.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Legends

To go adventuring with knights and kings,
To brave the flaming tongues of dragons grim,
These are abandoned unremembered things,
Gray legends over which our eyes grow dim.

No princess languishes beyond the pale,
Spent captive of some monstrous sorcery,
Nor does the pious knight, seeking the Grail,
On bended knee swear deathless fealty.

The high road hears no more the herald's blast;
Above the tourney ground the grasses blow,
Gay, flaunted banners of a host that passed
And came not back. The years still softly flow

And still a wind blows over Camelot
Stirring the valley to an echo clear
That holds the listener rooted to the spot
To hear the word, low-whispered, "Guinevere!"

Almost, for press of years, I had forgot
I too loved once in far-off Camelot.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

First Spring

Love, girl, love,
And conquer, if you can,
With swift kisses, soft caresses,
Cunning, heartless man!

Dream, lass, dream;
Were ever skies so blue?
Do you hunger after love?
See, he hungers too!

By the brooklet watch him stand;
What's he thinking of?
Rowing... fishing... berrying—
Why not love?

See... he doubts if life, the cheat
Ever more may hold
Rapture priceless, unalloyed;
Ha, he dreams he's old!

Pelt him, then, with daisies,
Watch him start and stare.
Weave a dandelion chain
For his curly hair.

Mock him now, sport and jest,
Gaily lead him on;
Pipe a tune, that he may dance
Till his breath is gone.

Watch his shyness melt at last,
All his wonder fade
As he finds you not a dream
But a mortal maid
Blest with mortal loveliness,
Charm of lip and eye;
Lo, he marks your slenderness,
Hear him gently sigh.

Part your lips lightly, so,
Feign a dumb surprise
When he leans to capture you,
Madness in his eyes.

Let him sweep you to his heart,
Murmuring in bliss
Phrases inarticulate.
Ah, his kiss!
That was heaven stooping low,
Spring in fullest flower.—
What? Is love so come to grief
Within the hour?

Alas, child, you weep
Is it because you know
Love's little hour is spent... or—
Ah, you loved him so!

Then love... but ah, forbear
To claim him—Nay,
Give him one parting glance
And then away.

You shall know other dreams,
Other remembering.
And past the wintry hour, mayhap—
Another spring!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Peace of the Hills

I have remembered mountains
Walking a wind-swept shore,
Lifting my little voice in vain
Against old Neptune's roar,
Hills have a certain tenderness;
Here, where the world is rude,
I have missed their gentle presence,
Their peace, their solitude.

I have remembered hilltops
Tramping a pathless plain
And yearned for them, as one who yearns
For sunlight after rain.
Oh, keep your valley or your sea,
Build there your citadel,
But give me back for my heart's home
The hills I love so well!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Poet of the City

I

Can this be Beauty in some latter guise?
Beauty that goes forgetting her white past,—
This mighty mound, unutterable, vast,
That flaunts itself against the autumn skies,
Gray roofs, unfeeling walls that close me fast,
Mocking my very thought of paradise;
Or are these but a veil before mine eyes
And this dim place a dream from which at last
Girt for a fairer day, I shall arise,
Go forth, take up the quest alone.—Aye, this
Gray wall so heedless of despair and bliss,
Deaf to all laughter, tears, reproaches, sighs,
Can this be Beauty (for these eyes grow dim,)
Or waits she still, past yon horizon's rim?

II

What matters it that, friendless now and lone
I walk as one who walks an unknown place
And finds no friend, no loved, familiar face
Nor aught to call back beauty he has known?
Are these, then, alien folk who pass me by
And one another, with no outward sign;
Is not their quest, their aspiration mine,
Are we not brothers all beneath the sky?
For lo, the rapture of the lighted room
Lights him who silent stands without, as well
As from the synagogue the organ's swell
Sends forth some hint of heaven into gloom.
For me no loneliness, where God's folk are,—
Who am of kin to cloud, and sky and star.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Beethoven

He never wooed the Muse; but she to him
Came ever, for of men she loved him best
And strove to waken oft his fancy, lest
His hand wax heavy, or his eyes grow dim.
Gone lethargy and barrenness of soul
When Music came; waking or sleeping there
She stood beside, and lo, his dream was fair,
While note by note grew th' illumined scroll
Such strains she taught him as men love to hear
From land to land; and many a wond'ring age
Has fingered reverently th' inspired page
And hearkening, found heaven very near...
Our eulogies of him are faintest praise
Who left us deathless beauty for our days.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

My Lady's Lips

And sweet to rest upon;
Light is her breath as summer air
That passes, and is gone.
My lady's laughter ripples low
As brooks on mountain steeps;
Oh, hands, why do you tremble so
To touch her as she sleeps?

My lady's ways are melting ways,
Level her glance and true;
Song runs like sunlight through her days,
So glad is life, so new.
Mark you upon her gentle brow
No trace of cruel care;
Oh, look on her, and tell me,
Is not my lady fair?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Answer

Hope, is it mockery,
Tempting, forsaking,
Life a strange slumber
And death the waking?

Love but remembrance
Of follies and tears,
Joy the lost music
Of vanishing years?

You who come questioning,
Kneel at my feet,
I give you silence,
Wordless, complete.

Knew I the secret
Of death and of birth,
I should be wisest
Of any on earth.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Song for Hymen in After Years

She knits, and he nods
Through the long day,
Little to think about,
Little to say.
Two hearts the church joined
Together as one,
Two souls as far apart
As earth and sun.

He sang a love strain
Long years ago;
Now he is silent,
What made him so?

Was it the arrogant
Failure of youth
Or was it seeing
The cold face of truth?
One time her young hands
Thrilled to love's hurt;
Now they lie folded
Hopeless, inert.

Vaguely reminded
Of some distant chore,
He strides the room's length,
Flings wide the door.

She'll be conspiring
Dinner for two,
Bouillon and beefsteak,
Maybe a stew.
Others have day dreams
Of sweetness and light;
These know but morning,
Noon time, and night,

Morning and noon time,—
So on, to the close;
Why they were married
God only knows.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Bonner Beach

On Bonner Beach, at break of day
A man might give a world away
And never feel the loss... To stand
In gray infinitude of sand
And hear old Ocean shout and storm,
This is to feel the heart grow warm
And young again... Or but to lie
With two hands clutching at the sky
And weave young dreams of cloud and mist
Wistfuller than lips unkissed,
To dream, to dally,—is not this
The very overflow of bliss?
Then who would inland dwell, and be
Forever stranger to the sea?

On Bonner Beach at evenfall
A man may hearken to the call
Of that unknown which dreaming lies
Remote, eternal as the skies,
Billowing outward and away
To where young stars lean down to play...
‘Tis heaven hangs in easy reach
On Bonner Beach.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Song

Why am I beating empty hands
And crying ceaselessly
That there are gardens in far worlds
That I shall never see?

Gardens I shall never view
Where roses red and white
Are born; yet where a fairer rose
Than blooms for my delight?

Though there be vineyards in the sea
And orchards in the sky,
Shall I find beauty lovelier
Than meets the roving eye?
Here let me dwell, while beauty's star
Keeps solitary glow,
Though there be loveliness afar
That I shall never know.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Rendezvous

Oh, let me tent where Beauty dwells
This night, by lonely rill,
On quiet upland pasture
Or solitary hill.
For I must follow Beauty far
Though my poor heart should break,
Crying aloud the song I learned
To utter, for her sake.
I must break bread with Beauty
This night, beyond the wall
Where Beauty waits; this very hour
Is hers; if she but call
As lightly as the questing wind,
I burn as with a flame
To speed from startled height to height
Crying on Beauty's name!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Interim

Death came and found him... suddenly, in sleep
Where he had thrown himself for weariness
Upon his homely couch, and shut the door
On every care that marked his day of toil.
Somewhere a clock struck seven; voices rose
Beyond, and fell; then all again was still.
A fly buzzed vaguely on the window pane.
Soft breezes stirred the curtains; this, his room
With faded walls, familiar chairs and bed,
Its window looking to the quiet west,
Seemed as before, yet subtly different
When she, his wife, came in, and stood and coughed
Her little conscious cough, and spoke his name,
Smiled to herself, crossed over, drew the blinds
And spoke his name again, close at his side,
And leaned, and could not waken him at all.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Tod Rickert

He thumps the ivories in Mikey's place
One dim flight down; from eight to twelve each night
Presides in state, the tenderloin's delight,
Dispensing syncopation, while his face,
Shoulders and body keep pace with his theme.
Yet there are times I'd swear he'd found his way
Into a realm above the cabaret,
In his slow groping dreamed a nobler dream.
One Sunday evening in the concert hall
Surprised, I found him raptly giving ear
To things of Bach...

Beethoven... I sat near
And watched him. He was happiest of all
Who listened.

Once he quickly turned his head.
"God! There's a playin' fool!" was all he said.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Alms

“Silver and gold have I none,” —
It was long and long ago
That Peter spoke to the lame man
Who cried out in his woe;

A beggar who sat imploring
His alms of passers-by
Close by the gate called Beautiful, —
“But such as I have, give I!”

“Such as I have!” — The lame man raised

Expectant eyes to trace
The gleam of coin; but there instead
The light of God in a face.
The light of God, and the firm command:
“In the name of Jesus Christ
Of Nazareth, arise and walk!” —
And lo, the Word sufficed!

The lame man leaped, to learn anew
The joy of paths untrod;
“Silver and gold have I none, —”
But ah, the alms of God!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Lie

He loathed himself the evening long for this,
His first deception; even while he took
The woman in his arms, with one long look
Devouring her, then held her with a kiss
That robbed them both of reason, he was still
Half conscious of his guilt, hating the place
Where he had brought her, with her painted face
And wanton eyes that swayed his easy will.
The warmth, the music sickened him; he rose
Quickly, to leave her—"Ted!"

She caught his wrist,
Pleading, with those red lips he just had kissed
Pursued to beguile; but he had dropped the pose,—
"Enough of this!"—He groped, and reached the street,
Drank the clean, bracing air.

"Oh, why and why
Must we be fools?"—He framed a tepid lie
As home he stalked; the lie he must repeat
To his true wife... She heard him at the door
And came to meet him: "Dear, how glad I am
You're home at last. I feared" He hated sham
And fumbled with his hat, and softly swore.
"That lazy office crowd give me a pain;
They'll never keep me down town late again!"

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Refusal

You who beguile me now
With little staccato gestures,
How your smile struggles
To confuse me.
How can you know
Your face is to me
 Without diversion,
Like the face of one long dead?
And yet you say, I must be comforted—
Comforted
 By this stifling,
 This beating of wings in my face...

It is hopeless
 To smile... to gesture.
In the dark hour
 My thoughts will fly far,
 Far from you
With your little mockeries.

I will not be comforted.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Garwell Grimm

To paint a picture, to write a line,
Indulging, he says, an idle whim,
To model a statue straight and fine,
These are nothing to Garwell Grimm.

Grimm, whose specialty is rents,
Whose profits mount up day by day,
Grimm, whose name means dollars and cents
Because he made it read that way.
To limn an etching, to pipe a song,
These are things beyond his ken,—
“Not, you see, that I call them wrong,
But what’s the good of a world of men

Giving their time to fripperies,
Daubs and jingles that scarcely pay?”—
Grimm bubbles over with pleasantries,
Knowing you’ll see things just his way.

... I’ve sometimes thought, if I’d a lad
With lips devout enough for prayer,
I’d gladly give up all I’ve had
Only to teach him, kneeling there
Before the firelight’s wavering glow,
To fold his hands and pray to Him
Who hears and pities us below,
To open the eyes of Garwell Grimm.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Beside the Road

One late spring afternoon, beside the road
She loved, in that frail house she called her own,
She turned her back upon the weary load
Of years on years,—and met the end alone.

They found her afterward, when stealthy night
Had crept unbidden from the distant wood,
Some who had known and loved her, some who might
Have loved her, had they better understood.

Strange, that they said she died in poverty
When spring had richly sown in that still place,
Stranger still, that she died in misery
When God's own peace was written on her face.

God's peace, and swift forgetfulness of fears
That only such a quiet passing brings;
Were they so lost in ritual of tears
They could not trace her soul's swift, shining wings?

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Lady and the Mocking Bird

“Congratulations, Comtesse. You achieve
Something superb, inspired; your memoirs
Are worth a world’s perusal; you have lived
In song, and taught your people how to live
With you. It is a happy thing, this book.”
His tone conveyed a delicate regret.
“It shall companion them when you are gone.”
He bowed above her white hand; with his lips
He brushed it, and departed... For a time
She stood beside the table, fingering
Her manuscript, a tall and stately form
Against the portals of that stately room.
“My Life of Song.”—The name upon her lips
Awakened recollections; days and nights
Long vanished, passed before her; in her ears
Still rang the insistent music of lost hours.
“Song, always song!” she mused. At length she trod
With dainty step the full length of the room,
Opened the window wide.—Out of the day,
Deep-throated, pure, a mocking bird’s refrain
Rose quivering on the air. On roof and room
It spun its magic web of eager song
And she who listened, finger on her lips,
Grew strangely wistful.—“Birdling, do you then
Remember as we humans do? Ah, well,
Your memories are all of singing brooks,
Of trees that stand all stalwart in the sun,
Of cooling shade, and mossy nook. Your life
Is song, my birdling, is it not?”—The bird
Sang on, and gaily flew from limb to limb.
“The world owns you; it has no need of me,”
The Comtesse said, and leaned above the grate.
“Song, always song!” she breathed, and turned away.
The mocking bird flew on, and as he trilled,
My Life of Song lay gleaming in the flame.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Humility

The wisdom of the wise,
The grandeur of the proud
God shall breathe upon
And scatter as a cloud.

God shall laugh them by
Like mists across the sun,
Like shadows down the valley
When day is done.

Folly, and her fruit,—
These too shall pass
Swifter than, young autumn
Across the grass.

Then be not worldly wise,
Not so much proud as meek
That you have seen Him smile,
That you have heard Him speak.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Plea

My first love was Sorrow,
My second Laughter;
I put by Sorrow
For her who came after.

I put by Sorrow
For all she pleaded;
Now I am wishing
I had but heeded.
Now I am smiling
And shunning the morrow;
Oh, rid me of Laughter,
Give me back Sorrow!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Look Not for Love

Look not for love on living lips
Nor in the eyes that wanton rove;
No careless tongue that lightly trips
Shall truthful witness bear of love.
The amorous glance, the gesture bold,
The flattering, insincere refrain
Are tokens true of them who take
Love's name in vain.

Look not for love within the glass
Whose wine delights, when it is red;
'Tis love who flees the act profane,
The lawless tryst, th' unhallowed bed,
Nor stays to weep the fate of fools
But draws a veil across her eyes
And vanishes, leaving no trace
Beneath the skies.

Look not for love, but in that land
Whose shadowy portals open lie
To sun and star: on whose pale sand
No print of foot the seeking eye
Rewards.—A faint perfume, no more,
Rests lightly over copse and clay
To tell that love, not so long since,
Has passed that way.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Word-Weariness

I am weary of traffic in words, of barter
In phrases, of meaning little and none,
Beauty a beggar unsought, unheeded
And only words, words under the sun.

Better to drown in a pool of silence
Far at the fringe of an unguessed space
Than to pour out words in wilful wasting,
To turn from unyielding face to face,

Clutching at trivial, tawdry meanings,
Crying out words that splutter and spill;
Better the peace of perilous wastes
Where the thousand tongues of night are still.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Music in the Bowl

(Hollywood, California)

Out of a flurry of words
Silence
Grown suddenly expectant;
The wistful plea of a violin,
And a Voice filled the air,
Rose, and soared,
Circling the hushed and eager hills,
Storming the walled places;
A Voice that was not more nor less
Than the shimmering fabric of a dream,
An equal part of Beauty
With April's shining bud
And autumn's far-flung glory. Scarcely voice
As much as silver mist, afloat
Between us and the outer world
Grown suddenly remote.
I did not guess at length the song was done,
For when the last clear shining note had fled
And gloved hands gave gracious applause,
I sat still, listening
To murmurs of waterfalls,
Leaves that stirred in slumber
And a bird singing from far;
Thrilling with eager nostrils
To the pungent aroma of morning;
Sensing, almost in unbelief, a miracle—
The flowering of imperishable spring
In the waste places of my heart.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Flight

Oh, should you leave me, love, at last
Loathing me quite,
Be sure you lose me utterly
In blessed flight.

Stay not. Farewell were mockery
And tears deceit.
Midnight shall cover, as you go,
Your flying feet.
Swear to most solemn secrecy
Each wind that blows,
Lest any dare to breathe to me
The way you chose;

Nor leave upon your ghostly track
By hill or hollow
The shadow of a misty trail
That I may follow.

Lest at a somber, silent hour
In some far place
Night fall away, and we stand fearful,
Face to face!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Song

Youth is abroad today.
And April's blowing;
Over the hill is journey's end,—
Sing, heart, for the going!

Shout for the dust that clings
To happy, wandering feet;
The wind is fresh from the south
And the journey sweet.

Gray pillar and portal grim
Could not hold me long
Now I have found all freedom
Compassed in a song,

Now I have wrested laughter
From old defeats and fears;
Heard on the lips of morning
The music of new spheres!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

When Colin Sings

His song it is a lightsome thing
As any bird that soars
On pinions fleet, eager to beat
His wings at heaven's doors.

On what dim cloud it finds a home
Celestial, none may guess;
I only know its magic flow
Was born of loveliness

And that such ecstasy of song
Has lent my spirit wings
To dare Olympus' dizzy height
When Colin sings!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Ten Little Sins of Reverend Doane

Reverend Doane had sins twice five,
Twice five sins, that followed him far
From porch to pulpit and home again,
Parasites all, as little sins are.

Reverend Doane on Sunday morn
Thundered his message to eager pews:
“Awake! Repent!”—(Ten little sins
Widened their eyes at the awful news.)
“Flee from greed!” cried Reverend Doane.
“Evil’s roots are greed and graft!”—
(One little sin perched high on a sill
And crossed his legs, and slyly laughed.)
“Fast and pray,” was the high Command,
“Look for truth, that makes men free.”—
(“Hear, oh hear!” cried the next little sin
And stood on his head, and howled for glee.)
“Love thy neighbor as thine own self;
Seek ye love, and turn from strife.”—
Doane’s eyes wander, to rest at last
In the eyes,—rapt eyes!—of his neighbor’s wife.
Ten little sins laughed long and loud,
(Laughter heard by themselves alone,)
As heads were bent for the words of grace
That fell from the lips of Reverend Doane.

Anon he walks, as one who deems
His work well done, somewhat apart,
Yet troubled on his homeward path
By wayward voices in his heart.
Folly to think he could shake them off
As one may put by flesh and bone;
Part and parcel,—ten little sins,—
Of him the world calls Reverend Doane!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Joel, Become Deaf

No more to hear the linnet sing
Beyond the gate at early morn,
The blackbirds twittering in the corn,
Was not such an accursed thing
To him, afflicted, as to miss
The little sigh, the tender word
Of her, his wife; the feeling stirred
When she came, nestling to his kiss
And held him close—Now when the talk
Eluded him, he'd push his chair
From table, plead the want of air
And take his solitary walk,
Musing... 'Twas seldom he'd complain.
Only when Joy, his youngest born
Would say her prayers, he'd sit forlorn,
His eyes filled with a wistful pain,
And watch her rosy lips in prayer,
And run his fingers through her hair.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

His Father's Son

He was only a lad, her brown-eyed boy;
It wasn't his guilt
That buried its keen edge in her heart
Up to the hilt.

It wasn't the horror of public talk,
The slow disgrace
That grew to a flood when pitying eyes
Looked in her face.
She heard them speak of the girl: "That minx,
That common brat!" -
But she knew the lad was as much to blame,
For all of that.

For his father before him had caught her heart
And torn it in twain,
And he was his father's son. It was his
So to tear it, again.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

I Would My Heart Were Light

I would my heart were light as May
Laughing through the meadow
That I might sigh as little
The changing sun and shadow.

I would my heart were lighter
Than summer when she sings
Of gardens gay with daffodils,
Moonrise, and growing things.

I would my heart were gossamer
Sheer as April air
That I might toss it skyward
Laughing, and never care

Whose rose tonight you carry
In wordless ecstasy.—
Two eyes have I for love alone
Who has no eyes for me!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

The Folly of Paul

Paul had his choice of loves, perhaps a score
Of girls who thought him quite a catch
And frankly, many more
Who, with their mothers, would have made a match
And tried, each in her way.
Paul liked to play,
Knowing he held the cards. And if they led,
He followed suit, went each one better,
Trumped.—Heigh-ho! If any woman chose
To lose her head,
'Twere foolish to suppose
He'd interfere.

Contrariwise, he'd let her,
Smiling his slow, soft smile.
He read the meaning
Of each rapt glance. The posing and the preening
Amused him for a while
But did not all deceive.
Wisely he never let himself believe
That any loved him for love's sake alone,
For character or laudable ambition,
Not that, he knew. It was his high position
Socially. All Framingham had known
His forbears; rated Paul a "man of means"
While he was in his teens,
And now, behold! he was a catch, full-blown.
Under such circumstances, 'twere absurd
To think the boy would keep his word
To every girl whose lips he'd fancied once.
If any played the dunce,
Be sure it was not Paul.—
As for the girls, he'd loved and laughed at all,
Till Arline came to town
And took a cottage hard by Glover's glen.
Paul met her, liked her eyes, the way she wore her gown,
Her talk of cities, and of many men.
And she
Liked Paul, as she had liked a hundred more;

And so it was unfortunate that he
Found himself frantic when he missed a day
Of seeing her; hovered about her door
Till she had chanced his way
And he had looked on her, taking his fill
Of her ripe beauty. When he had his will
Holding her in his arms one ardent night
He learned a lover's passionate delight
Letting his lips stray on her lips, her hair,
Her white throat. Madness hovered in the air
That night, for it was June. He fled at last
Snared hopelessly, beyond recall.
Poor Paul!

She toyed with him awhile; then disappeared
As suddenly as she had come. Folks named
A man they somehow linked with Arline's past;
Still others blamed
An artist with long hair and flowing beard
Who had been seen
In company with her. But of Arline
One thing was known for certain. She was gone
And Paul was a changed man. No more he sought
Society. All human company
Forsworn, he found a shack far in the hills,
Withdrew to brood awhile on human ills
And such delights a man may muse upon;
Forgot the world, or tried to. A few books,
A pipe, a dog, the friendly rooks
Were company enough. The world was naught
Since he had found the realm of nature good,
Made him a shelter in her friendly wood.

They see him still in town, now and again;
He comes in for supplies,
And lounging men
Who knew him watch with wondering eyes.
Said one, a storekeeper grown worldly wise,
"I knew him in his prime

Once on a time;
He cut a dashing figure then,
Before a wanton drove him to the wall,—
Poor Paul!”

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Phineas Hooper

Phineas Hooper's afraid,
(Who boasted his soul was his own,)
Shamefully, starkly afraid
Of the dark, and of being alone.

Of being alone, and a prey
To thoughts that incessantly creep
Through uneasy portals of dream
Till Phineas screams in his sleep

Or wakens to peer through the dark
And listen for steps on the stair,
To moisten his lips and cry out
Half-choking: "Who is it?—Who's there?"

Phineas Hooper, esquire,—
(Accursed on the day he was born!)
Liar and braggart and knave,
Who killed a man yesterday morn;
Quarreling, by the old creek
Over selling a parcel of land,
Struck down his friend with an axe
And stared at the blood on his hand.

Blood made him sick... and he reeled
From the sight on the grass; close beside
He bathed his two hands in the creek
And fled where a man may, to hide...
Phineas Hooper's afraid,
Terror-struck, body and bone,
Horridly, grossly afraid
Of the dark, and of being alone.

Of menacing shadows that crawl,
Of phantoms that gibber and squeak,
"Phinney," who murdered a man
And washed out his sin in the creek!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Surcease

They say that the sea is calling lovers
Through long nights of unrest,
That she keeps a place for weary lovers
Close to her breast.

I do not know if folk speak wisely
Or if such tales be lies,
But this I have seen,— a certain madness
Drawn from tortured eyes

By looking long upon the sea.
I have seen men grow strong
Again, who rested at her side
The wan night long.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

To a Builder

You builded well, oh strong and free
Who reared within the heart of me

A fairy structure, long to stand
A tribute to the builder's hand,

A monument that shall remain
Though cruel wind and driving rain

Conspire the citadel to storm.—
Within whose tabernacle warm
No hint of adverse winds shall press,
Whose largess-bearing loveliness

Spreads over all a hallowed peace.—
By this men know, till time shall cease,

You strove with more than builder's art
Who reared, aye, heaven, in a heart!

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

So I Have Wakened

Remembering darkness I have wakened
In a great flood of light,
Wakened sharply and wondered,
Remembering night.

Remembering dreams and a voice,
A sword, whiter than steel
Flashing from a grey height.
So I have stirred, to feel
Morning pressing my eyelids,
(Wan his visage, and white.)
How I have sighed, and pondered,
Remembering night.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Haven

Westward the billows foam,
Circling the sea-gull flies;
Longing we strain our eyes
Through the fast-falling gloam,
Where, 'neath deep, changing skies,
Far through the mist, lies home.

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

Greater Than We Dream

Within the tangle of a crowded street
Where the metropolis divides its flow,
Pause with me at a window, large, ornate,
Decked out with music sheets; the proud display
Of Lambert Lorry, music publisher,
As we are told by the neat lettering,
Suave, concise, over the massive door.
Within his cosy sanctum Lorry sits
Knee-deep in music, score and manuscript
To probe and choose; the meagre offerings
Of young and old composers; the frail sum
Of aspirations reaching out for fame,
For royalties. He lets his pipe go out
At last, in reverie.—Soft, pleasant strains
Of music haunt him from familiar ways.
In old New York, in some vague wandering
He'd heard a fellow play a violin
In some dim basement; caught a tone that thrilled
And drew him back.—What matter if the man
Was a gaunt vagabond, a nameless scum?
About him, notwithstanding touseled head
And tattered coat, there clung a something frail,
Elusive, not of cities; his young eyes
Burned with strange light. And Lorry looked and saw
A master. In the week he came again
And brought the fellow money, talked to him
Of prospects,—paying pupils he would send;
And so it was Jed Ennie found a patron,
Bought a new hat, some favorite tobacco
And went his way bewildered, wondering.

One late spring day the massive door swung wide
And into Lambert Lorry's, -publishers,—
Jed Ennie strode blinking, and looked about:
“A manuscript for Lorry, just a song,”
He mumbled to the woman at the desk,
Who took it gingerly.—“We're overstocked
Already,—reams of stuff we scarcely sell.

You'd better call again within the week
And get your song." He flushed and looked away,
Forgot to ask for Lorry, as he'd meant
And wandered out. But there, he'd left the song,
Set down in black and white, a flaming thing
That ate his heart out, till he'd put it down
On paper. And in time it found its way
To that last, inner desk on which remained
Out of a thousand songs, a chosen few.
Now Lorry held it, now he thumbed it over,
And hummed, and cleared his throat, seeking in vain
The name of the composer, for the scrawl
Across the margin baffled his attempt.
"A song of songs? Where is the man?"—Two days
He waited, wondering. On the third day
Jed Ennie came to get his manuscript
And found himself in Lorry's inner office
And Lorry staring at him. "You wrote this?"
He had not guessed Jed Ennie was the man.
"This song may well be greater than we dream—"
His smile, his gesture seemed so futile there
With Ennie's hungry eyes searching his face.
"We'll give you twenty dollars for it now,
Royalties later, when the song is made."
Ennie was looking past him; now he spoke
Slowly and simply: "Why, the song's worth more
Than you can ever give."— Shrugging, he dropped
Into a chair, and signed the bill of sale,
Smiled, and walked out; so Lorry had his way.
Ennie had named it "Memory"; that fall
It made its first appearance, simply garbed
In black and gray, a cover suitable
For such a song. In Lorry's fall display
It lay within the window. Thirty days
He watched it go, a copy here and there
And wondered. Then Madame Lamar came in,
The silver-voiced soprano of the hour,
And Lorry, chatting, thought of "Memory"
And fetched a copy.
"You must try this song,"

He said. “I will take you back a hundred years.”
They talked of other things, and when she left,
He jogged her memory:

“That song.”—She smiled,
“Eh, bien,” and left him. Two days slowly passed
Before Madame sent word by telephone
The song she took had pleased her: she was glad
To give it place upon her next program.
“Next month,—recital.” Lorry rubbed his hands
And wrote a line to Ennie,—not the news,
For that he wished to tell him face to face,
But a vague hint of fortune. Ennie came
Shuffling and curious, his deep-set eyes
Searching the eyes of Lorry as they met.

“I have two passes for a near event,”
Said Lorry. “You must hear Madame Lamar
With me, for she is singing ‘Memory.’”
Jed Ennie took a step, his jaw dropped down,
His pale face flushed.

“Madame Lamar, you say?
You don’t mean she—” The publisher mistook
For incredulity his blank dismay.
Nodding his head, “The song is made,” he smiled.
“Madame Lamar? But no,” cried Ennie, “no,
She cannot sing my song, I say, not she.”
He scowled.

“And why not, then?” asked Lorry, vexed.
“Because she was my—” That was all. Words failed.
Jed Ennie clenched a fist.

“Because, my friend,”
He muttered, “this Lamar has never suffered;

Publication. *The Changing Flame* (Four Seas Company, 1923).

PILGRIMAGES

Complete text of Pilgrimages (1925)

Plea

How can I sing of love
Who have so little known
His touch upon my heart; who have
Not lived for love alone?

How can I tell of love
Who never kept a tryst
With tenderness; can any lips
Sing love, that go unkissed?

Oh, give me but a tender glance
And quick caresses fling,
That I may know a part of love
And may a little sing.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

One Who Never Told Her Name

You are fluted laughter
On a high hill,
And you are the silence
Of music grown still.
The lightly winging cloud
And soaring sun,
You are the chiming bell
When day is done.
If you were none of these,
Silence or song,
How should I worship you
Day and night long?

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Adoration

My songs that were so proud
Are humble now;
No more they skim the cloud
That is your brow.

No more circle your head
With pinions fleet,
My little songs that kneel
Here at your feet.

My songs that held content
All things above
Now silent move, apart
And sigh for love!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Absence

Ah, only that she think of me
When early shadows fall,
Remembering certain words I spoke,
Never all;

And that she keep alive the old,
Sweet promise of the May,
Challenge a star, breathe a wish
And look away,

Ah, that she think and not forget
To leave her door
Ajar, when dreams go wandering,
I ask no more.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Reward

Because I loved her so, I gave
My heart to keep her own heart brave,
A thing to cherish at her breast;
And for unease I brought her rest.
Because I loved her so, I caught
At stars new-born.—I vainly sought

A perfect pearl beside the sea
To match her beauty.— Hopefully
I plucked a rose divinely sweet
And laid it softly at her feet.
Because I loved her so, she smiled
And tossed my tribute to a child.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Warning

Oh, do not think to live within my love
As some abide content in dwellings warm
And safe. Oh, do not seek within my love
A shelter from the storm.

It is too frail and tenuous a thing
Ever to keep a wind away for long;
Then do not think to hide within my love
That is as swift as song,

As sudden as despair. But be content
To tarry for a day, and when delight
Is colder grown, to gird at dusk and fare
Into the kinder night.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Two Days

“Love, are you all
I dream you to be?” —
Love’s eyes are smiling
Looking at me.
Love’s eyes are pools
Fathomless, grey;
Star-jewelled, misted,
Looking my way.

“Love, are you all
I dream of, and more?” —
Love’s hands are spent waves
Beating the shore;

Love’s eyes are fathomless,
Dark as the sea,
Silent and sorrowful,
Looking at me.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Farewell

Beauty burns a little hour
With a steadfast light,
Here a beam and there a beam...
Then the night.
Beauty burns a little while.
When the flame is low
Look into my eyes and smile
Ere you go.
Look into my heart and say,
“Love must know no fear.
Do not pity... nor forget,
Dear, my dear!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

The Letter

I have written a letter to send to my love in the East,
A letter of love to her who is far in the East,
To my wonderful One.

I have fashioned a letter with care, wording it well;
Choosing my words as a lover will choose who writes
From love, for love; knowing that love will be reader.
High words I chose, and words with a beautiful ring
To send to my love in the East;
Words that will leap from the page in the eyes of her,
Of my wonderful One.

I have finished a letter, gathering words like these,
(Gathering words like flowers, abloom in a garden,)
“Honor... and worship... dreams that live beyond death,
Love that gropes for love... in your half-lowered eyes.”

These I have gathered, and many fairer than these,
Words that I culled, loveliest flowers of thought,
These I have sent, with a prayer, to my love in the East,
To her who is far, who awaits,—
To my wonderful One.

She will read them alone, my words, when the sun is not high;
She will read them alone, in silence as they were written,—
Reading, playing with words, with passionate phrases,
Caught in a rush of words, prisoned in tenderness.
She will read, my love, and think of the miles, that divide us,
Words have conquered the miles, oh, wonder of pages!
Words have fashioned a miracle,
Words, and our love.

I have written today of love to her in the East;
How she will smile, knowing a letter is coming.
My love will sing, and suddenly miles are as nothing.
Love in the West, warm, strong love in the East
Suddenly one in the mystic wonder of words,
One in the magic of words heard and remembered.

Defeat is a dream, and parting a dream, a nightmare,
For this is conquest; this, subduing of space.
There is no time, nor space, but infinite wonder,
The wonder of love caught and held in a letter,
In a letter of love to her who is far in the East,
To her who is far, who awaits,
To my wonderful One.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Sonnets

I

If I should say, I love you more than living
And more than that which makes our life elate,
Or should I add, I love you more than giving
Or being given; more than any state
Or circumstance of being; if I say
(As one will speak his mind when sorely prest,)
I love you more than night and more than day,
More than the heart that beats within this breast,

Why, then I am but poorly echoing
A thousand loves that now insensate lie;
For every tender accent I may sing
Hath been more nobly sung in days long by.
Still, if I say, “I love you” and no more,
It is enough.—What are we waiting for?

II

There is no beauty but when you are by,
No loveliness save when you hover near;
For you are the poignant bird note at my ear
And every wistful color of the sky.
And if there be enchantment in a star
Or music in the carolling of night,
It is some echoing of old delight
When thought was young and you were not so far.

It is ghost of Beauty haunts me now
And troubles with remembered loveliness
My dreams that walk the past, white as the brow
That met the rapture of my first caress.
The moon is veiled tonight; old splendors die...
Oh, where is Beauty but when you are by?

III

Home is the little road that leads to you,
A quiet path beneath the brooding stars,
A refuge ever free of bolts and bars;
A fringe of cloud with sunlight stealing through,
The wistful towers of cities, seen through mist,
The artless pageantry of hill and plain,
The clear note of a robin in the rain,
A memory of kisses we have kissed;

Home is in all of these, and yet apart,
It is the aspiration unfulfilled,
The song of hope refusing to be stilled,
The haven of the unrequited heart,
The Dream of dreams, that never quite came true,
Home is the heart of me that cries to you!

IV

Sometimes I love you so there is no rest
For this my love, nor any solitude
And I grow bitter, feeling at my breast
The worms of discontent, a sorry brood;
World-weariness, remorse, satiety,
All these invade me, knowing you are far;
There is no silent place, nor sight of star
Can quell the gnawing at the heart of me.

Oh, what new trail across the piteous night
May carry me to peace beyond the hill?
No good can come of blind, insensate flight;
From eve to eve your face invades me still
And I cry out, dreaming that at your feet
I hear the voice of death, and find it sweet.

V

Oh, wait for me an hour. The spring is young
And I am going but a little way;
A dream possesses me, and I must stray
Tonight. A word too beautiful for tongue
Stirs in my heart. Oh, wait for me an hour,
A day, a year, and count it not too long;
Out of the silence I will bring you song
Lyrical as the petals of a flower.

And I will bring you tenderness and truth
And high illusion for your spirit's need,
And I will bring you wonderment, whose seed
Begot the flower of eternal youth.
Oh, wait for me an hour. The spring is young
And love's a song we must not leave unsung!

VI

Now I am rich and blest beyond compare
Where others are but poor, who have not known
The rarest perfume breeze has ever blown,
The scent of April drifting through your hair;
And I am rich since God has let me see
The wealth of you; all that your lips impart,
All that your eyes betray, against your heart,
All that your budding youth cries out to me.

Gold cannot match your hair; nor would I take
The minted wealth of kingdoms for the kiss
Two willing lips bestowed for love's own sake
Tonight. Earth knows no wealth as great as this,—
And I am rich, for sharing, as I do,
The dream of dreams, dear heart, alone with you.

VII

Oh, let me kiss a while, but not too long
And I will go the weary way I came,
Bearing upon my lips a precious name,
And in my heart the echo of a song;
I who have mocked at lovers lost in June,
Pitied their faltering accents and their sighs,
I was a simpleton, and mocked too soon;
Now I am willing slave to lips and eyes.

Oh, let me dream one dream, and when I wake
To meet the ghost of morning on the grass,
Spare me your pity then... and when I pass
Guard well the passion flower for my sake...
... Love is a dream, you said, and well you know;
Give me your lips, and let me, let me go!

VIII

Sometimes you say so little that I fear
The thought unspoken and the word withheld;
I cannot touch you, though you hover near.
A thousand fears that I have never quelled
Clutch at me, nameless, rob me of my peace
Darkening with doubt my inmost thought
Till I could cry aloud and beg them cease;
If only you would speak, set them at naught!

If you would but seek out some golden word
Or phrase that should my ill-timed doubt dispel,
My joy would upward soar like any bird,
Singing that all in love's domain is well.
But you are silent, and in sudden dread
I see love stalk alone among the dead.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

A Friend

I knew him well; we fenced at many a bout
As boys; jested, as you and I do now.
He was my friend before, till fame reached out
And laid the wreath of laurel on his brow.

And now he walks in kingly paths, and seeks
Only such friends as kings desire to own;
Now, with his head held high, he boldly speaks
Of visions. But he walks no more alone.

The friends that gather at the beck of fame
Feed on the glamour of his brief renown.
Among this crowd I found him, spoke his name
And sought to add a jewel to his crown

With word well-turned. Though my intent was fair,
Between us two the message went astray.—
His answer strangely smote the empty air;
Somehow there was so little left to say.

He does not mean, I fancy, to forget;
A wound is quite the last thing he'd intend.
The cunning world but trapped him in her net
Of shining fame... and I have lost a friend.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Beyond the Door

Oh, she that I have never kissed is nigh;
Beyond the door she waits, with jonquils in her hair,
With smiling lips that never yet have felt my kiss.
Let me away, that I may meet and crush her smile;
Against her parted lips my flaming words shall leap
And hotly will I press her unretreating hands
And mould her mood to yielding. Ah, beyond the door!
Richness of yielding, sudden recompense.
A moment, then, of swift, insatiable delight
Of plucking at stars, torturing slow time
On some far, heavenly height from which the gaze looks down
As through a cloud, across a world of swimming suns.
What tender and ineffable delight is mine!
Let me hear her, that I may give and richly take,
Let me beyond the door where Ecstasy awaits
And Victory, and Defeat,—for She is near!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Until a Wind

I thought she had forgotten him
Until a wind at evening came,
Sudden as the dusk that follows,
Blew wide the door and spoke his name.
Breathed a word, while she who waited
Hand on heart, grew still as death;
She I dreamed was safe forgetting
Till a wind in a moment's breath

Blew a door wide, called insistent.
One who stood like carved stone
Tottered, trembling, into darkness,
Left another bowed, alone.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Mystery

With restless eyes and plaintive air
Love went wandering God knows where.
Love went down the road a space,
Love... and no one saw his face.

No one knew his heart was sad,
Love is such a quiet lad;
Till they heard his parting cry,
No one knew that Love could die.

Love was young... and none could guess
He had tasted loneliness;
Yet somewhere I heard it told
In a whisper... Love is old.
Older than the thoughts of men,
Old as life, and twice again,
Weary, too, of earth and sky;
Love went crying... was that why?

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Lapse

This and that, men say of love;
Only this I know,—
Love is like a tale I heard
Long and long ago.

Like a story I forgot:
When the world was young
Or the echo of a song
Now no longer sung.

Little do I know of love
Even to remember
If in June he softly comes
Or in grey December.

If at peep of dawn he steals
Through the quiet dell
Or at early dusk, alone,
I can never tell.
I have heard men blessing love,
Calling him divine.
Some I know have said. But that's
No affair of mine.

I have heard men curse at love,
Praying to forget.
Could I but remember where
Love and I have met!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Retreat

In the hush of the darkened room
I give myself wholly to grief,
Utterly yield to my sorrow,
Alone as I am in the gloom,
In the dark of the pitiful chamber
With silence for sentinel lone,
I give of myself without respite,
Yield to abandon of tears.
You would have come to the doorway,
You, had you known, would have lingered
Charmed with the music of weeping,
Lured by this perfume of song;
You might have come to regard me
Straining your eyes into darkness,
Listened, and maybe in silence
Turned, and departed unshaken;
You with no message to utter,
No word for grief to remember,
You to whom weeping is music,
You for whom grief is a song.
 And I, in the hush that is Darkness,
 Utterly yield to my sorrow,
 Beggar myself, in the gloom,
 Of joy, of the semblance of pleasure,
 To lie in abandon of grief
 Clinging, as one to a lover,
 To Mourning, whose comfort is ashes,
 To Sorrow, whose kisses are tears.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

The Secret

Love sang loud but yesterday
Through the willow trees;
Love was happy, love was gay
With his melodies.

Love sang loud the evening long
Through the asphodel
Till the ripple of his song
Echoed like a bell.

Love sang well... and no one knows
(Worlds were fast asleep,)
In the dark, beside the rose
I heard Love weep!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Pilgrimage

Burden me not with Beauty
Lest I rue the load;
Mine is a weary way
On a weary road.

Mine is a climbing way
Where the trail is steep.
I must seek the high place
Ere I sleep.
I must reach the peak
Though the way be far;
A cloud would crush me back
Or a falling star.
Loveliness has bent my back,
Silvered my hair;
Burden me not with Beauty
Who have known Despair!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

I Walk Alone

Wise men say one thing,
Fools another;
I am as one
Who had no mother

To tell me truths
From plain men hidden;
I am as one
Who came unbidden

To life's repast
And go as surely
As those who fare:
Like me, but poorly.

Wise men say few things,
Fools cry many,
I walk alone
And speak not any.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

December's Rose

December's rose,
Ah, coldest flower
With winter snows
For chilly bower;

December's blast
Your stern caress
Who were conceived
In loneliness

And flowering, saw
A little day
Of snow and wind
And went away.
Rose of the wind,
Of winter's breath,
December's rose,
White flower of death!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

April Song

Oh, do not close your heart against the spring,
You have tasted winter's wild caress
And quivered at her icy loveliness,
Oh, do not grudge the gaily lifted wing
Of April's swallow, far against the blue;
A hundred hearts lift to his eager flight
And follow far. And where but yesternight
Was barren soil, the buds are bursting through.
Loveliness still, whate'er the season's flow,
Weaves over hill and plain her sorceries;
Come out while zephyrs murmur through the trees,
While yet the early rose is white as snow.
Winter's away, and hearts must have their fling;
Oh, do not close your heart against the spring!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Recollection

Remembered beauty grips the heart
When time and place are one
With all delight; one with the flight
Of every setting sun.

Remembered beauty lights the eye
That sees again the glow
Of tender youth... and touches truth
And love it used to know.

By day and night the Dream persists
Till we remain to bless
Who feel our hearts grow brighter for
Remembered loveliness!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Ministry

Those barren lives which beauty touches not
And joy may seldom reach, are the unblest,
The pitiful, whom loveliness has left
All desolate, devoid of sheltering grace;
Like barren roots that wither in the sun
And curl to dust, these lives would rot away
In emptiness, the suicides of scorn
But for the hand outstretched, the pitying eye,
The benediction of a tender word,
The blessing of a smile, an eager glance
Exchanged, and living made the lovelier
For small communion, simple, unafraid;
These are the lives that, leaning on our own,
Cry out for ministry of hand and heart.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

A Burden Shared

“How can I live, now that he is gone?”
Stricken, you said,
And I who knew and pitied your bowed head,
Watched you live on.
Watched you plod bravely through a mist of tears
Day upon day,
Pitied you struggling on the toilsome way
Beset with fears.
“How can I live?” The answer I implied.
Welcomed the task;
From life’s grim face I strove to tear the mask
Of pain aside.
Until you rallied, and hope brighter grew
Each passing hour;
Transfigured now, you bloomed a very flower
Of radiant hue.

Came soon a day when I must journey far.
The news I told
And marvelled that your hand in mine grew cold.—
As at some star
You looked at me with eyes strangely aglow;
“Ah, lover, nay!
You bade me live, and now you steal away—”
How could I go?

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Paolo Plays

“None of your kiln-dried instruments for me,
The sort they’ve learned to fashion nowadays.
A wood that’s chosen from the best that grows
And left for days to soak with sun and air
Until it’s mellowed; that’s the wood, say I,
To build a good piano, and no other.”
So Paolo would speak, and sit him down
At his beloved instrument, and draw
With sweeping fingers melody alive
And throbbing. Talk would cease, and each of us
Sit slouched within our chairs with bated breath
Lest some faint chord escape, some tiny part
Of that veiled magic steal and pass us by
And we be none the wiser, for not holding
In memory through scarred and sunless days
The full, unblemished wonder of that hour.
No wood alone, though soaked with sun and air
Gives rapture forth unaided. Paolo
Alone, the rhythm of the universe
Impelling him, could lift us up on high
So, with a chord or two, and leave us taut
And breathless, finding heaven drawn so near.
An artist, truly, Paolo, who played.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

To a Pianist

You touched the keys to something more than tone
And wakened slumbering music in us all
Who raptly listened in the quiet hall
And marvelled at the miracle, full blown.
Some strength you gave us, wholly not your own
But drawn from out the void; and at the sound
Our bent souls straightened, and our eyes that found
Horizons wider than they yet had known,
Grew clear and keen.—A simple majesty
Enveloped your bowed head, your passive face,
A kingliness that knew nor time nor place
But fashioned music for eternity.

Your hands relaxed, the music died away,
And we who groped for words, found none to say.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

In the Garden

I went into the garden when the grasses were astir
And the little flowers nodded in the breeze;
I wandered in the garden when the frankincense and myrrh
Of the morning faintly drifted through the trees.
There is glory in a garden, there is tenderness and truth
And wonderment, whose wings are tipped with flame;
For the music of the garden is the melody of youth
Crying wistfully an oft-repeated name.

I lingered in the garden when dawn lay like a sword
Across the drowsing firmament of men.
I strolled within the garden, and I fancied that the Lord
On days like these might walk the earth again.

On days like this, when loveliness still sits among the leaves
And in the shadows exaltation waits;
The heart that longest doubted is the heart that now believes,
The stranger is the king within our gates.

I went into the garden when the grasses were astir
And the leafy arms of trees inclined to pray;
I wandered in the silence and I dreamed a dream of Her
And my heart rose up in rapture of the May.

My heart arose in ecstasy, recalling old delight,
My spirit leapt to loveliness, reborn,
As if an angel found me and washed my garment white
In the garden, in the glory of the morn!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

You Who Dread the Dawn

The singing dusk is on us while we dream
Of smiling suns, and subtly we are drawn
From visions of adventuring with dawn
Into a world of shade and purpling stream
Where lamps that far outshine the daylight's gleam
Beckon from far... Her ageless tapestry
Night prodigally spreads for all to see.
Pan pipes from far the loved, familiar theme
And we are lost in music, in a maze
Of melody that blurs the homeward track,
That, though we take our soulless bodies back,
Shall never quite forsake us all our days.
O you who dread the dawn, much more beware
The singing dusk on twilight's sable stair.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Sonnet

Lean close to life. Behold it in its grime
And glory. Learn to love the rock-ribbed hills,
The canyons cool where dawn her glory spills
Across a waking world. Before you climb
High in the clouds to dwell, walk for a year
Or two the cobbled pavements of the town
Where strong men buy and sell, laugh, curse and down
And catch at pleasure. Grow to love the clear,
Cool sound of women's laughter, and the strong
Handclasp of men who too have walked with life
On rugged ways, and wresting peace from strife
Now turn serenely homeward with a song.
Lean close, I say. Draw over life no pall
Of loathing. Learn to love it, scars and all.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Oblivion

They lay and kissed when time was young
On a Helvetian hill,
Made tryst in some forgotten tongue
Nor ever dreamed of ill.

They lay and clasped, and were one flesh...
But thrones wavered and fell
And sudden these who had known heaven
Wandered the ways of hell,
Dark, comfortless. Now, strangely each
Is silent grown, and knows
Naught of the ancient ecstasy
When love talked with the rose.

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Youth Grows Up

When youth loves, the rest is naught,
When youth loves, the world is taut
For a moment's breath

When youth laughs, the merry sound
Ripples to the clouds above,
Echoing for miles around;
Youth's in love.

On a day when hope is crushed
Age, advised, his counsel keeps;
Oh, a pitying world is hushed
When youth weeps!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Claudia's Song

He is gone down the road
In the bright spring rain;
Heart, O my heart,
Shall we see him again?

Shall we hear his step
In the cadence we know,
He who has gone
Where the fickle winds blow?

What avail promises
Beating at my ears
Now that he has gone
Past reach of tears?

Now that he has strode on
And shut the last door,
Whisper, my heart;
Shall we ever see him more?

Now an empty hearth
Is dusted and swept,
What now are promises
Broken or kept?

Yesterday he smiled
And waved a light hand.
Last night we kissed,
Forgot we had planned
 Never any parting,
 Even for a day.
Cruel, cruel winds
To bear him away!

Nearer the moon now
And the farthest star
Than one the fickle winds
Have borne so far.

How can I sing
Any song save pain
Now that he is gone
With the bright spring rain?

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

The Beauty Tree

On a night of ecstasy
Colin shook the Beauty Tree,
Shook the boughs of loveliness
Till in rare, undreamed-of dress
Maidens tumbled far and wide,
Dreamy maids and starry-eyed,
Maids whose laughter as they fell
Tinkled like a silver bell
To the echo loud and long
Blent as one with Colin's song.
One was fine and one was fair,
One was made for man's despair;
Loveliness in every face,
In each body subtle grace,
Till with loveliness surrounded,
Happy Colin grew confounded.

In a circle then they tripped,
Pirouetted, bent and dipped,
Leaped and laughed, and gaily sang
Till the very woodland rang.
Colin on his bended knee
Lingered by the Wonder Tree,
Till each took him to her breast,
Each to his her two lips pressed
With such fairy sweetness laden
Colin yearned to every maiden.—
 Yearned in rapture, swooning nearly
 Whom the maidens loved so dearly.
 And the last, with slow, sweet song
 Held him close and kissed him long
 Till a mist of strangest sheen
 Stole, him and the moon between...
 Fairy footprints, elfin laughter
 Leave no trace the morning after;
 Even maiden kisses sweet
 Are as moonlit madness fleet.

Would I had been Colin waking
To a dream of fairy making;
Oh, to have been there to see
Colin shake the Beauty Tree!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

A Recluse

He never laughed
And seldom smiled;
He had the look
Of any child

Who stares at spring
And gently wonders
Why leaves are green
And why it thunders;

Why many a cloud
Is soft and white
And why the moon
Wanders at night.

He seldom smiled
And never laughed.
Some folks I know
Have called him daft;

But I know better.—
Once I caught
Him unaware
And read his thought

And swift I found
Him keener far
Than most of us
Poor mortals are.

His heart had found
A melody
He could not voice
Nor sing for me.

A thing his tongue
Could never phrase,—
I only read it
In his gaze

And went my way
With something new
To brood upon.—
Only to you

I give my word
I was beguiled.
He had the look
Of any child

And only I
Who found him there
With glint of star-dust
In his hair.—

I, only I
Who trapped him, knew
He had dreams hid
From me and you!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

Sally Grover

Laugh at a wise man, kiss a fool,
Run with any rover
From here to valley's end and back,
That was Sally Grover.

Never the devil piped a tune
To lead a soul astray
But laughing Sally heard the call
And danced till breaking day.

When moonbeams fled along the path
That ran among the clover,
Chances were some mother's son
Was out with Sally Grover.

Laugh at a wise man, kiss a fool;
There was the parson's son
Took her away on his father's mare.
What is done, is done.

Seven months, and we nigh forgot
Mad Sally, with her whim;
Seven months, and she came again
But never a sign of him.

A lusty brat she mothers now
Full seven pounds, and over;
But never a wedding ring wears she,
Poor Sally Grover!

Publication. *Pilgrimages* (Harold Vinal, 1925).

THE GOLDEN SNARE

Complete text of The Golden Snare (1928)

Song

A poem is so frail a thing
But he who once has known its song
Shall dreaming go the journey long
Because he has heard Silence sing.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Beauty Like Sand

Beauty like sand is slipping through my fingers,
Beauty like chaff is flying on the wind;
Around my heart a subtle fragrance lingers,—
My ears with strangest melodies are dinned.
Beauty is singing in the wood and meadow
And crying by the opalescent sea;
Beauty is flying swiftly from her shadow,
Flinging rich crumbs of loveliness to me.
O lovers lying with averted eyes
Among the grasses, soon the holy hour
Will pass, and love lay off the dear disguise,
While dust will swallow up the passion flower.
Moments like sands are slipping softly past;
Too frail are love and loveliness to last.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

While Roses Fade

Past her ears no music sweeps
As the dawn begins to stir;
At her breast no lover sleeps,—
Pity lies with her

Through the silent, sleepless hours.
Pity sighs, but never speaks
Thinking how the roses fade
From the fairest cheeks.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Gratitude

Give thanks, my heart, for joy of feathered things
That mount the heavenly way on eager wings,
For rain that comes to cool the fevered night
And thanks for wings of snow, divinely white,
For gifts of goodness, frankincense and myrrh
And thanks for every kneeling worshipper.
Give thanks for laughter born to chasten fears,
Thanks for the surging ecstasy of tears.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Feet of Clay

I can destroy your image, lady, too
Within my heart, nor ever ask your pardon.
I shall pluck out the very thought of you
That like a weed would overgrow the garden
I tend with this devotion. For a while
I shall forget you and your tepid lies,
Your pleading pout and your transparent smile,
As covetous, as faithless as your eyes.

One image more I can destroy with ease
Before the dark comes down... one last despair.
In exultation now upon my knees
I thank the gods I am at last aware
That even images have feet of clay
To mock a dreamer when he kneels to pray.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

While Peace Sleeps

Who looks for Peace
Through the mad town
Sleeps with his tears
When the sun's down.

But I know a still spot
Far from despair
Where I have caught Beauty
Unaware

And I know a lone hill
Where a moon keeps
Pale watch all night
While Peace sleeps.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Resignation

They do not guess that she has lain with sorrow
And found the lips of grief divinely sweet
Who watch her smiling run to meet the morrow
With eager hands outstretched, with hurrying feet.

They do not dream that smiling eyes are lonely
That may not freely tear the mask from woe.
They know her laughter and her laughter only;
So let it always be. Why need they know?

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Havoc

You are more beautiful than wanton words
That weave a story scintillant and strange,
More lovely than the flight of eager birds
Your lifting thoughts in swift profusion range;
When first you walked into my world of doubt
It was as if my eyes beheld afar
Time's deathless legions rallying from rout
Beneath the promise of a blazing star.
It was as if a sudden wall of flame
Had set a helpless universe afire,
Again, as if a foe with banners came
To storm the citadels of my desire
And found the watchman drowsing at the gate.
You are so dear. Why did you come too late?

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Certainty

There is no trust may foil the ultimate
Decay, nor hope that may not end in dust;
All things the final dissolution wait,
Corruption and the final seal of rust.
This tabernacle of the body's guilt
And costly raiment fashioned to adorn
Shall with the roses of the morrow wilt
And swiftly with her dust be earthward borne.
These too my words in tender longing sped,
Your fleeting sighs and yet unanswered fears,
Though by sweet grief, by certain yearning led
Forth to the very crucible of tears,
These all, the living and the dauntless dead,
Await alike the inexorable years.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

A Gypsy Whispered

My love would be
A fine dark woman
From over the sea;

A gypsy whispered
Who read my hand
Love would come
From another land

With rings on her fingers,
Dreams in her eyes.
Love comes walking
In wistful guise.

A gypsy told me
I'd look in vain
Till two and twenty
Red moons should wane,

Till a fine dark girl
Came out of the west
With wine-red lips
And a jewel at her breast.

A gypsy warned me
Never to wed
Till I should meet
At the nuptial bed

Just such a bride
With eyes deep brown
And a body as smooth
As eider-down.

You may believe it
Or not, as you will;
I who have waited
Am waiting still.

A gypsy will tell you
Many a strange thing,
All for a farthing
To buy a gold ring.

II

Tribute

I will not weave a cunning snare of words
With which to trap your eager enterprise,
For mine is not the way of preying birds
Who pluck at quivering flesh and helpless eyes.
I will not challenge faith that makes you surer,
More radiant than those who walk in gloom,
Nor yet begrudge you that which keeps you purer
Than those who now confront you in this room.
Only stupidity could hold against you
The calm perception of an eye serene.
Eyes closed, head bowed, how often have I sensed you
Beside me when despair's knife-edge was keen,
Ready to turn aside the poisoned dart
Some horrid fear was aiming at my heart.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Counsel

Build me a house
As safe as sin,
I will not stoop
To enter in.

A house secure
On rugged rock
This fickle heart
Would mock.

But hew me a home
As frail as mirth
That shall not scorn
The seeking earth,

A dream-house high
Upon the sands
And I will bless
Your groping hands!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Scene

I think that in some far, forgotten dream
My eyes have looked upon this scene before,
This covert lighted by an errant gleam,
These roses blooming by a quiet door,
This flight of birds, unhurrying, through space,
The distant shimmer of a lake asleep,
A cloud or two whose calm, unwearied pace
Is like the quiet wandering of sheep
In far-off pastures, dim against the sky,—
Yes, I have seen it all so long ago
I cannot tell you where, nor whisper why
My heart beats faster, warmed with sudden glow
Of recognition wakened by the sight
Of petals falling, delicate and white.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

The Unblest

The mighty heart of this unsleeping earth
Is stirred and shaken with the awful cry
Of those who did not bless the gift of birth,
Who only seek a wiser way to die
Than they have learned a thousand times in death
Of aspiration, in defeat of pride,
Who do not cherish the uncertain breath
Of this fast failing hour,—who can confide
To death alone the secret agony
They strive to hide from life. On every hand
Their voices rise, resistless as the sea
In song of grief no spirit can withstand.
My heart but hears them and is close to breaking;
Soft be their slumber, sweet their spirits' waking!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Suddenly a Wind

You think that I am gone
But I will come again
Suddenly, from silence
Silver as the rain

I will find your door
A hundred doors among,
Labor with a lost word
Trembling on my tongue.

You fancy I am lost
In other worlds apart,
But suddenly a wind
Will blow me to your heart,—

Leave the lattice wide
Or make the door fast,
Out of storm and shadow
Love will come at last!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Glissando

Tremulous
Are the spires of my city
Against the haze
Of noon,

Tremulous
The sails of my ships
Setting out
In the face of immensity,

And tremulous
With unspoken rapture
Are my thoughts of you
Winging
Into faltering dusk.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Pæan

Exult, my spirit!
Gravitate with morning
Upward. Laugh and sing!
Triumphant morning
Flings a net of suns across the world,
Her feet are trampling out
The grapes of darkness.
Drowsing spirit, waken
At the word
And fleetly move in music
The shining length and breadth
Of this moment and hour.
Behold!
Untrammeled morning
Laughs across a hundred hills
And singing moves from misty sea to sea.
Thus do you, Spirit,
Toss laughter like a ball across the day.
Gravitate, my spirit,
Outward. Laugh and sing,
My own, exult!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Ecstasy

Who have known rapture seldom cry
Their sudden transport to the sky, -
But stare at sunsets wondering
Or falter, hearing a bird sing.
In music of the falling rain
They find an anodyne for pain;
Yet though their eyes see past the cloud,
Joy does not bid them cry aloud,
But every murmuring voice grows small...
The lovers scarcely speak at all.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Still . . . How Still

Still, how still the lovers are
Under cloud and under star,
Under curving branch of pine
Lovers' eyes like planets shine;
Lovers' eager arms entwine.
(Love has led them far.)

Still, how still the lovers lie
With a dream to linger by,
Love for halo at each head,
Ecstasy for wine and bread.
They wake no sigh, no ghost of sound;
Silence has folded them around.

Under cloud and falling star,
Still, how still the lovers are!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Aftermath

A fair-haired goddess on a barren isle
Remembering Ulysses, stares afar.
She does not weep, I think, nor does she smile
But is grown patient as all wild things are
And tranquil as the sea that sweeps her feet,
Whose tender waves caress her sloping thighs
And brush her patient knees with kisses fleet;
Gone is expectancy... she has grown wise
In silence, like her cunning foe, the sea
That bore him farther than her arms may reach
And will not give him back. Her lover free
And love a shadow on a lonely beach!
Slowly she droops, and shakes out her long hair,
Remembering Ulysses from despair.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Houdini

Skilled sorcerer you were with rope and box,
Magician of the unseen and unknown,
Weird wizard of a thousand loops and locks,
A master sorcerer who worked alone
And kept your secret from the guess of man
With hand and mind too quick for human eye.
No manacle, when freedom was your plan,
Could bind you long, nor force you to comply
With laws that were our masters. You were free
Of fetters, forged or fancied, in the flight
Of seconds. Of all men you held the key
To freedom. Time and space you ruled aright
Till Death, grim wizard armed with certainty,
Sealed you at length in everlasting night.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

And We Shall Sleep

It is not worth our rue and our remembering,
This little life, its even littler love.
By every planet God has swung above,
I swear we shall forget, even to sing!
Scarce is it worth our grief and our repentance,
The folly and the sacrament of tears;
Presently comes Death to annul the sentence
Life lays upon each head, the curse of years.
Then we shall rest, unmindful of the roses,
Of every dear and dreadful thing we knew
And we shall sleep as one who lightly closes
A book half read, finding it not so new
As he had reckoned in the glance of youth,—
Not half so bright with dream, so sweet with truth.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

The Lovely Lady

The lovely lady
Of Ballyclare
Is not so pure
As she is fair

And not so fine
As she is proud
Who goes with head
Unbowed.

The lovely lady
Knows full well
Rich secrets
Many a man will tell

In certain stress,
And this is why
Good women pass her
Coldly by.

When matrons chat
In wayside inns
And gossip runs
To neighbors' sins,
Men's wives have
Little cause to spare
The lovely lady
Of Ballyclare.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Wisdom

I shall go softly all my latter days
Who tramped with all the lustiness of youth;
I shall go watchfully when men most praise
And muse upon the mystery of truth;
I shall go dreaming with each sun's decline,
(Praying for faith's reward to silence fears,)
Likening his impermanence to mine,
Pitying both, as twilight slowly nears.
I shall go gently with unhurried pace
From shade to shade, from burning rim to rim;
None shall discern in this unwearied face
Aught but the luster time nor state can dim.

I shall go softly all my latter years
And envy youth the tumult and the tears.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Song

What does it matter now
That April's been and gone
And not a star is left
To pin a dream upon?

And not a road is left
To wander until Day
Comes streaming down the east
And bears our dreams away.

What does it matter now
If all loveliness
Prove fleeting as a song
Or a lost caress?
For I have met your eyes
And I have kissed your brow;
O wonderful and wise,
What does it matter now?

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Escape

Where you may seek I shall not be,
High in the ever-circling cloud
Nor in that prison deep and proud
Which underlies the changing sea.

Where you may look you will not find
A trace of me. No remnant lingers
Trapped in your searching, eager fingers;
I am past reach of ties that bind.
But you will hear me in the tone
Of many a woodland lullaby
And you will wonder how or why
I found a song to call my own.

And you will trace me in the speech
Of ghostly birds that wake the night
And you will follow till the light,
Only to find me out of reach.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Fate

Agatha Morley
All her life
Grumbled at dust
Like a good wife.

Dust on a table,
Dust on a chair,
Dust on a mantel
She couldn't bear.

She forgave faults
In man or child
But a dusty shelf
Would set her wild.

She bore with sin
Without protest
But dust-thoughts preyed
Upon her rest.

Agatha Morley
Is sleeping sound
Six feet under
The mouldy ground.
 Six feet under
 The earth she lies
 With dust at her feet,
 Dust in her eyes.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Revelation

Now I have watched you grow more chastely wise
Through learning what you first refused to know
Till there is revelation in your eyes
Of that which wakes within, as if to show
A longing unappeasable below,
An eager reaching toward a changeless star
As if each empty quest, foredoomed to woe,
Had left upon you its unlovely scar
And bade you somehow make your dream secure
Against the last, inevitable hour,—
So I have watched you grow more coldly pure
Than marble. In your effigy of power
I see only a statue's chill allure
Who might have held the fragrance of a flower!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Caution

Beauty has turned betrayer in the night
And glides abroad as if in search of prey;
Beauty, a wanton scented with delight,
Will proffer love to all who cross her way.
But I shall keep my bed though Beauty knock
And though I hear her singing in the lanes
I shall be snugly sealed with bolt and lock;
Let other lovers have her for their pains!
Let them, I say, come crying vainly after
Lost ecstasy, proclaiming their distress;
I shall reward them richly with my laughter
And send them back to beg for her caress.
Let them in vain lament their waning powers
Who lie with Beauty in the secret hours.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Song

Bracelets encircle
The slender wrist
Of my beloved.—
When I have kissed

The eyes of love
And lips that charm
My heart has prayed her
Shut from harm.

Rubies encircle
The eager throat
Of my beloved.—
The long wild note

Of a lost bird
Is in her song
That haunts my dream
Day and night long.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

How Are the Heroes

How are the heroes toppled to the dust,
Honor a sign and chivalry a name
And we dishonored who have placed our trust
In the rash promise of uncertain fame.
Poet and warrior alike are fled
Down vast, untrodden ways. It were in vain
To cry our challenge to the nameless dead,
The answer silence on the lips of pain.
Brave deeds are soon forgotten and the songs
Of nobler days have perished with their own.
Stout hearts which cried against their ancient wrongs
Are one with the frail dust forever blown
Against the heedless walls of us who sleep
With neither heart to dream nor will to weep.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Legacies

Jeremiah Judkins,
Long since dead,
Left as strange a will
As I have read.

To his wife Hannah
He left his farm,
Cattle and crops
And an old watch charm

Worn with fingering.
To his daughter June
He left a shelf of books
And a gold spoon.

To his friend Hiram
Withered with age
He left his pet bird
In a gilt cage

And to his mad son
A silk-lined purse
With two dark pennies
And an old man's curse.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Warning

Do not wander far with him
Though the night be still.
He will lead you to a dim
Place beside a hill.

He will fill your heart with
Bitter words and strange,
Leave you groping with this
Suddenness of change.

He will leave you for a boon
Never peace or rest,
Only wildness like a wolf
Gnawing at your breast.

If you walk a way with him
Do not walk far;
Keep your eyes upon a hill
Or a kind star.

Break no bread with him at all,
Never share his song
Though the night be empty
And the way long.

Share no tear that he may show
Nor his echoed laughter
Lest you live to sorrow
All your life and after.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Music

Strangeness of music in the silent night
Confounds me where I lie inert, alone
In league with darkness or in fear of light;
This is no music my faint heart has known
Or dreamed of. Is it not some spectral sound
Of spirit cadence from another land?
Comes it from overhead or underground?
Trembling, my spirit gropes to understand
In vain. Perhaps the wiser wind can tell
Who bore the burden of this symphony
What god or devil granted it the spell
That holds in thrall a universe and me,
Whether it springs from paradise or hell,
From lonely cloud or from unresting sea.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Encomium

I think of you as of an interlude
Caught plaintively between the dark and dawn,
- A snatch of song in evanescent mood,
A fragile picture delicately drawn
On cloudy canvas by an unseen hand;
Again I think of you as of a flame
That lights the traveller through a weary land
Nor burns to lead him back the way he came.

You are a sign, the echo of a voice
That trembles down the aisles of sea and air
In music at whose waking, worlds rejoice;
You are the sword men use to slay despair.
I wonder, would my tears as freely fall
If I should never think of you at all?

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Death the Lover

Death the lover
Is lonely tonight;
Only a woman
Beautiful and white

Can quench his longing.
Hark how he comes
Rattling his fingers
Like dreadful drums.

Tremble not, old men
Sick with fear,
Only the young heart
Death holds dear.

Only the young hands
Death loves to hold
More than the hands
Of the pitiful old.

Four and twenty maidens
Sitting in a hall;
How will Death choose him
One from all?

Which will he summon
By smile or sign
Of four and twenty maidens
Sitting in a line?

How will Death know
While the music plays
One who has waited him
All her days?

Moon on the hill-top
Gleams frost-white.
Death the lover
Is lonely tonight.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Metamorphosis

I thought my love could never live with you
And stay as fresh and fair as love should be,
Nor guessed my heart thrice eager to be true
Because I had disclaimed her constancy.

But now behold, with each recurring spring
I hail your welcome footstep at the door
And find with every April's blossoming
Love nobler grown, comelier than before!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Dread

I think it is not silence that I fear
In this still house where all the moments creep
Like uninvited ghosts that prowl and peer
At my still face when I would be asleep;
Yet if not silence, what is this I dread
As I go stealing down the narrow stair
Who need not fear the living or the dead?
Why do I cry as if for want of air
And rush to throw the window wide at last
And stare into the dark with sightless eyes,
Dizzy and trembling till the spell is past;
Is this some madness come in subtle guise
That bids me start and tremble at the sound avocados falling on the ground?

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Rebirth

I think it will be easy to dissolve
The bands invisible which long have held
Me to the earth; then slowly to evolve
A being self-sufficient, uncompelled
By that which orders me now here, now there
With no regard for fitness or desire
And bids me what to eat and what to wear,
When to rejoice, when triumph, when aspire.
I think it will be proper to discard
All superfluities in folly borne
For many a dreary day; to interlard
With phrases new, discourses long outworn
And speaking as befits a heavenly bard,
To hail divinely the celestial morn.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Pretense

In spite of all this photograph conveys
I cannot think of you as more than cold.
Your eyes that men are readiest to praise
Will shed as little warmth when you are old
And wise (perhaps too wise), as they do now
For all your improvising of this mood
That flickers for an instant at your brow
Where seldom warmth and tenderness intrude.

O deft insinuation of a pose
That might outwit a less discerning eye!
Here speaks one who has looked within, and knows
The face of pretense rounded in a lie.
If I were dead, my very dust would laugh
And hail this matchless jest, your photograph!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Cynthia Crumley

Cynthia Crumley,
Twenty and plain
Read of the romance
Of fair Elaine.

Read of her journey
To her last rest,
White hands folded
Across her breast.

Cynthia Crumley
Drew a long breath,
Found herself courting
A delicate death;

Each night at ten
Cynthia lay
Her two hands folded
In just the way

The picture showed her
Elaine had died.
(For who would have thought
A picture lied?)

So if the angels
Sent her swift release,
She would be found thus,
Beautiful in peace.

The ghost of a smile
Played round her face;
Cynthia's sleep
Was a miracle of grace.

Morning after morning
Just at seven
She opened wide eyes
And looked for heaven.

What did she wake to
But a few prints,
An overstuffed chair
And hangings of chintz?

Cynthia Crumley
Wearied of waiting,
Sickened of routine,
Found herself hating.

Years passed over
And Cynthia woke
 Always to the same scene,—
 Life's little joke.

She had half forgotten
Elaine's bright fame
But her hands were folded
Just the same

Evening and morning
Lest under cover
Of a still midnight
Come the dark lover.

So it seems odd
That Cynthia fell
Suddenly, when lightning
Like a bolt from hell

Struck an old cedar,
Glanced from its core
And smote a frail figure
Running to the door.
Cynthia Crumley
Struggled for breath,
Sighed.... So they found her
Twisted in death.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Which?

My father taught me how to curse,
My mother how to pray.
I took for better or for worse
Life's little rôle to play.

And who's to blame that I must hang
Between two murderers this morn,
The one who cursed me when I sang
Or she who wept when I was born?

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Preferences

Better than sun
And sky and air
I love the passion flower
Of prayer.

Better than highways
Broad and kind
I love the lonely paths
That wind;

Better than wind
And rain and fire
The twinkling dust
Of my desire;

Better than lads
Long-limbed and fleet
A slender maid
Whose mouth is sweet.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Requiem

Too still her hands are and too strangely white;
There is no recognition in her eyes
Save of the One who touched her brows tonight
And made her old and infinitely wise.
If you but lean to touch her where she lies,
Be not afraid, for laughter never lingers
On lips that no more curve to lullabies,
On chilling brows, on unresisting fingers.
She has forgotten everything she knew,
Yesterday's pain, and pride of tender years.
Whether God spare the rain or send the dew
She will not care. The music of the spheres
Eludes her. Vain the offerings we strew
And even these our sacrificial tears.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Night

Night is more dear than any dream of days
And more to be desired than melting dawn;
Night is a mother with a thousand ways
Of bidding every aching fear begone.
The roads of dream are many; where they lead
Night only knows, and she will scarcely tell
Save to her own,—but when they cry their need
She guides her children wondrously and well.
Hers are the stars and the celestial spaces,
The secrets of the moon, and growing things
We know not of... hers are the covered faces
Of clouds. Her hands are folded when she sings
Save when she calls some lost child to her breast
And draws his eyelids down and bids him rest.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Three Things

Three things my heart
Can scarcely bear,
A violin crying
A mournful air,

The look in the eyes
Of one gone mad
And you in the arms
Of a lovesick lad.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Who Would Be Free

Who would be free
Must put behind
The golden snare
Of ties that bind.

Who would be free
Must learn to know
The wistful way
His steps must go.

A way that laughs
At bolts and bars
Lies far and fast
Among the stars.

Who would be free
As clouds above
Must lightly fare
And laugh at love!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Beethoven

Who lived to honor Music, tended well
The burning flame of faith within his heart;
For all eternity his raptures swell,
Of that diviner harmony a part,
For days unending, not for one brief hour
Nor for one race, community or clime;
Each year the blossoms leap to fairer flower
Which Beauty raised as hostages to time.
Ennobling strains of heavenly design,
Immutable as the unchanging sea,
Weaving our days with motive all divine
Into one grand and glorious symphony!
Remembering Beethoven, let us bless
The Power that points our life to loveliness.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Till Music Perish

Your flesh is the beloved instrument
From which I draw with slow, caressing fingers
The theme of love long given yet unspent,
The melody that lures and strangely lingers.
Your body is a harp on which I weave
Cool cadences of finest rapture spun;
Till music perish, let no fond heart grieve
Nor dread the silence after song is done.

Kiss now, and breathe the passionate reply,
Lover to lover in the silent shade.
Kiss well, for April will be swiftly by
And heart to heart in dreamless dust be laid.
Till then, proud flesh, exultant instrument,
Sound us the song of rue and rapture blent.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Hush

September silence hovers on the hills
And in the sanctuary of my heart,
Autumnal quietude that spreading fills
The little world where we have walked apart.
No grieving bird his plaintive note obtrudes,
No far horn's mellow music breaks the spell;
September silence on the valley broods
Where life is lonely as a muffled bell.

The evening air is heavy with perfume,
Earth lies beneath us languorous and warm
And we who wander wraith-like in the gloom
Withhold the words our lips desire to form
As if our hearts recoiled from sudden doom
Approaching on the wings of unseen storm.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

The Spite Fence

Martin Appleby
Nursed a grudge
Against a neighbor
He called the Judge

Because his grown daughter
Plighted to none
Swore she'd not marry
Appleby's son.

Young Joe Appleby
Wasn't for caring
Till his old father
Fell to swearing,

"There ain't a woman
In all Old Crow
That's any too good
For my boy Joe!"

It may have been true
Or just wide talk
But Appleby watched things
Like a hawk.

His friends and neighbors
Plainly saw
He wanted Jane
For a daughter-in-law.

But Jane looked through
Joe Appleby then;
You might have surmised
She didn't like men,

Till the summer brought
Old Crow a new boarder.
Jane favored him
In very short order.

Clyde was his name,
He was no woman-hater.
The parson married them
Two weeks later.

Martin Appleby,
Man of little sense,
Took out his grudge
In a spite fence,
 An ugly affair
 To shut off his garden
 From that of the Judge,
 For he could not pardon

Jane's utter rudeness
In marrying one
Who was not the equal
Of Appleby's son.

I don't know just
How the tale leaked out
But it wasn't a year
Till word got about

That Jane and Clyde
Despised each other
And he was treating her
Worse than a brother.

And when Clyde's trips
Took him out of range,
Jane saw another lad
For a change.
You'd not believe
If you didn't know
That her whim now turned
To Appleby's Joe,

Who suddenly learned
Another man's wife
Could give a sad oaf
New lease on life.

Late one night
He was visiting Jane,
(A mist had fallen
And turned to rain,)

When out of the dark
He heard Clyde's voice
And dreading a scandal
He had no choice

But to slip through the yard
And scale the wall.
His shoes were muddy
And he took a fall
 That broke his neck
 In a curious way...
 You can see the scratches
 To this day

Where his boot slid over
The clinging stone...
A spite fence is not
For the wise to own

Lest it vent spite
In ways not planned
Like a boomerang
In a hateful hand.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Prayer of the Disciple Who Doubted

Oh give me back the faith that I have lost,
The certainty of right's unshaken rule;
I face the piper and I pay the cost
As one who knows that he has played the fool.

Oh give me back, if they may be restored,
The joy and fullness of my eager youth;
Misers were not so rich for all their hoard
As I, who stumbled on the pearl of Truth.

Renew in me the creed of a full heart
That laughed with stars and shouted with the sun,
That I may play again the lover's part
In this brief scene before the day be done.

As one in whom the pride of living burned
I pray that He on whom our sorrows lie
Will give me back the faith that I have spurned
Before the dawn when I go out to die!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

The Music Master

He gravely teaches for a meager pittance
The art of music to the neophyte
And lives from month to month on the remittance
His labors win him, an encumbrance slight;
His own opinions constitute a quorum
On what is noblest, worthiest in art.
He greets new pupils with a grave decorum
That draws their aspirations to his heart.
For once he shared the fond and foolish vision
Of those who dare aspire... he too would play
For thousands. But the ultimate decision
Was made by fate in her remorseless way.
He tutors willing minds and eager fingers
To hide his own hurt... but the memory lingers.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Lazarus

You who had crossed the pale, cold halls of Death
And walked with specters in a shadow land,
How heard your faltering spirit His command
That gave to nerveless flesh new life and breath?
When came the quickening Word, Death had no choice
But your release, his lesser will denied,
His to forget that you had ever died
Who walked again, obedient to a Voice.

Beside the aching tomb pale Martha wept
And Mary watched her Lord with stricken eyes.
“Come forth!” You tore your way from death’s dis—guise
While fear and awe upon their anguish crept.
Did you first laugh or falter like a child
When He who called you took your hand and smiled?

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Nate

Nate was a man
Who believed in doom.
No one could make him
Enter a room

Where there were twelve
Already. He feared
Black cats, shadows
And all things weird.

Having spilled salt,
He trembled... grew bolder
Only when a pinch was thrown
Over his shoulder.

He heard the clap of doom
In April thunder.
Passing a ladder, he
Never went under.

You could waste your breath
Preaching to Nate
If you tried to prove him
Master of his fate.

He crossed his fingers
Often as he could.
When he smelled trouble
He knocked on wood.

Nate lost his life
In a swollen creek;
He saw a doom coming
But could not speak.

That was the last
We ever saw of him.
Having knocked on wood,
He couldn't swim.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Tryst

This snow pursues a delicate invasion
Of wooded slope and lowland pasture, till
She wins submission with her cool persuasion
And rides at last in state across the hill.
But not content to touch the sombre scene
To glowing life, she hurries under cover
To keep a stealthy tryst in the ravine
And melt upon the bosom of her lover.
Earth yields as always at her mellow touch;
Steadfast in love, albeit reticent
He softens at her kiss, but not too much
To read her weakness, far from his intent,
And wonder if his rugged heart should break
To see her softly perish for his sake.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Young Night

A moon rose
And a cloud fled
And stars went singing
Overhead.
A wind stole
Behind the hill
And kissed a sleeping
Daffodil.
A bird cried
In the lonely dark
Where beacon fires
Sank to a spark.
A leaf whirled
And sighing fell;
A snail forsook
His lonely shell.
A fountain sang
With silver tongue;
The moon laughed
And the night was young.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Two Looking at Rain

“Lie still and listen to the rain
Until you may forget
That this bright corner sheltered pain
And that your eyes were wet.

The little drops are round and bright
Against the darkening earth—”
“I heard them called the tears of night
For sorrow gave them birth.

I can be quiet after pain
Till silence ease the smart
But must I ever hear the rain
Falling on my heart?”

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Sculptured Lovers

Rodin's The Kiss

Two lovers locked in infinite embrace
Are figures for our envy, be they stone
Or marble. In their posture we may trace
A deathless rapture rivalling our own,
A tenderness immortalized in line
And curve by sculptor's art; superbly wrought
In curious and intricate design,—
Art nobly learned and science heaven-taught!

In awe we stand, considering such bliss
As images suggest... and there we pause.
Eternity is one impassioned kiss
For sculptured lovers who, ignoring laws
Of time and space that govern our estate,
Their days to love immortal dedicate.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Resolution

I will take a strange name,
Call it my own
Cover up my face
With a beard full-grown,

Sing a new oath
As I fling the door wide,
Breasting the world
With a terrible stride,

Sowing great seeds
Of struggle afar,
I'll blow a breath
That shall melt a star.

This will I do
Because a maid laughed
When I spoke of love
And called me daft!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Change

I have forgotten melodies
Once beautiful and bright
Since you have blown across my heart
Like music in the night;

Since you have drifted like a moon
Across a wistful sea
The world that used to be my all
Is little now to me.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

In the Night

I heard my mother weeping in the night
And mute before the mystery of grief
With bated breath and face grown ashen white
I lay and trembled like an autumn leaf
And stared into the dark and could not speak
For wondering at imminence of pain
That summoned tears to the beloved cheek
In pitiful and devastating rain.

My mother never mentioned, nor did I
The hour of grief that vanished with the light;
Love's face is now serene against the sky
And every dream is beautiful and bright.
But oh, the hour when bitterness drew nigh
And Death's face leered from the uneasy night!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Pledge

Mother, I shall come back to you at last
When all the world has gone the lonely way,
When stars are dim and heavens overcast
I shall go wisely back and choose to stay
Where we may voice the things we meant to say
So long ago and somehow put aside;
Like gold well stored against a rainy day
We'll mint our dreams and happily confide
The ecstasy and hurt that we have won
Upon our ways, and you will take my hand
More as a friend than mother to her son
And smiling tell me that you understand
And fear no more lest eager feet should stray,
Mother, when I come home at last to stay.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Of a Troubadour

His is a nameless wizardry with words;
He is no common poet, but a charmer
Of insects, and a friend of bats and birds,—
A mountebank, a knight in shining armor
Who rides against an unseen foe afar
Or tilts with windmills to engage his strength.
He bears a misty net to trap a star
Or shake a cloud across a valley's length.

He walks with men along a city street
But keeps his eyes upon the tops of trees
Or on the hills. His song grows doubly sweet
From long communion with the wandering breeze
Where in the dead of night it hears the beat
Of Beauty's heart, and dares her mysteries.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Encounter

She came to me upon a road
That pricked into the dark
Where never man nor wraith abode,
So slowly I could mark

The piteous pallor of her cheek,
The luster of her eye,
I bent my head as she would speak
But only heard her sigh.

She came to me upon a night
When April half awake
Stirred in the thicket out of sight
And sang for beauty's sake

And slept again. She came as one
Who gropes her way from gloom
And knows her journey just begun
Toward a shining doom.

No word she spoke but calm as death
She nearer drew and stood.
Against my own I felt her breath
And prayed as mortal would.

She spoke no word as mortals speak
Sharp words that beat like whips,
But once she leaned to kiss my cheek
And twice to kiss my lips.

Then had she cried a golden word
Or uttered any sound
I had been like a stricken bird
That totters to the ground.

And if she knew no kith nor kin
And went without a name,
Why did I shake like one in sin,
Finding her kiss a flame?

Upon a silver road she came
That fled into the west,
And softly went, leaving the scent
Of sorrow at my breast.

I cannot learn her last abode
Yet have I felt her spell
Who kissed me thrice upon a road
That sundered heaven from hell.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Ultimatum

Never in this valley,
Not this side of doom
Shall I find contentment
Though the body bloom.

Never shall I find
Though I bravely seek
Pity for a strong shield
When the spirit's weak.

Never in a proud heart
Nor in any name
Shall I find completion
Though my will be flame;

Shall I find deliverance
For my body's breath,—
Never in this gray land
This side of death.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Liberation

To step beyond the bounds of sense and feeling,
Beyond earth's old vexations and delights,
To touch the well-spring of the spirit's healing
Were to outdistance monumental flights
Of man's imagination. Suddenly
As one who keeps a long-remembered vow,
To look on loveliness as on the sea,
As one who lays a kiss on Beauty's brow,
To walk in wonder, snatched from our distress,—
Such dreams as these outreach our vision's scope,
Yet at time's sepulchre, eyes raised to bless
Still wait the winged seraphim of hope,
Their mercy certain as to render dumb
The lips of men to cry, Millennium!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Andante

There is a lute that never sings
Though love go bravely by,
Only across its tautened strings
Echoes a muted sigh.

There is a lute that strangely sleeps
While youth and laughter part.
Across the hush goes one who weeps
And wears Death at his heart.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Insistence

Why do you still pursue me with a song
And cunningly contrive to agitate
My spirit with your music? What strange wrong
Fancied or real, what parody of fate
Marked me for your insistent shadowing,
What unremembered bond we may not sever,
Hallowed by neither clergyman nor ring
Nor murmured vows, united us forever?

You say a stranger interlude than this
Was shared by two under a blazing sky
Whose stars beheld our hymeneal kiss
And heard the passionate whisper, “Till we die!”
Almost your song convinces me of all
That I forgot, that you alone recall.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Catherine Carver

Catherine Carver
Wanted a man
All her life
But had no plan

Nor even a notion
How to snare
A likely lad
With curly hair.

Catherine grew up
Strangely shy,
Never could meet
A lover's eye,

Slunk abroad
With drooping head
And grew to loathe
Her lonely bed.

Catherine, goaded
Might have been
Proud to achieve
A splendid sin.
But instead she
Scrimped and saved,
Fretted, and wondered
Why she slaved.

Catherine Carver
Slowly shrivelled,
Thought of men
And sighed... and snivelled,—

Said her prayers
At night and wondered
Had a god
Or devil blundered?

Till one night
In early fall
When a pale Stranger
Came to call

Whose bloodless fingers
Drew the cover,
Catherine smiled
Upon her Lover.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Visitation

This room has known the touch of tragedy,
The hand of terror groping at its door;
Warm darkness here befriended mystery
Till timid daylight crept across the floor
And drew the shutters open one by one...
Morning grew pale and shrank in sudden dread
Of what it knew not, as the prying sun
Fingered the chilly bosom of the dead.

Now peace is on this room. Deep shadows fall
Quietly over crib and counterpane.
No stain of blood upon the frescoed wall
Betrays the base indignity of pain
Upon a night when Horror stalked this hall
Whose threshold knew the guilty step of Cain.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Testimony

Dear wife and sweetheart of my tender youth,
Companion in the unrelenting quest,
Who pointed me to beauty and to truth
And proved them one, how often have I blessed
The certainty that bade you seek a goal
Against the odds of time and circumstance,
The knowledge that the liberated soul
Is not the victim of a blind mischance.

There is no day but mutely testifies
To faith enduring, to a pride unshaken
By circumstance, a wisdom grown more wise
Since idols cherished once are long forsaken.
Now two have tasted peace and go unswayed
Save by that deepening love which cannot fade.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

Bright Conquest

In the warm curve of your exultant arm
There must be solace for the last despair
And cheer to counteract the evil charm
Laid silently to take men unaware.
Not in the acquiescence of your lips
But in their protest, silent wonder waits
While your eyes blaze a fearlessness that strips
The thin veneer of chance, and mocks the fates.

So let me come to you when standards fail
And odds of battle lean toward the foe;
Your ecstasy shall be my coat of mail
And render every thrust a glancing blow.
Your lips on mine, your breath against my breath—
It may be this alone shall conquer death.

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

The Poet

He sings his shining song because he must;
And if beneath the weight of toiling years
His golden words shall crumble into dust,
Enrich them, Love, with your immortal tears!

Publication. *The Golden Snare* (Harold Vinal, 1928).

LOST WARRIOR · PART I

The first division of Lost Warrior (1931)

A Certain Critic

Deliberate, dark rapture and the cool
Sweet cadences of tenderness elude
One who has gilded art with ridicule
Until he sings no more in any mood
Save of an unbeliever.

Now to please
The cynical who find him easy reading
He snickers at the ancient verities
And lightly scoffs to show his perfect breeding.

He fears no sin but to be sentimental;
Dreading to be discovered in an act
Of kindness and reluctant to be gentle,
Condemning what he names misguided tact,
He lives and dies, denouncing foes and brothers,
A law unto himself, but not to others.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

A Censor

Day in, day out upon his classic quest
He haunts the book stores one by one to scan
Some doubtful volume should escape his ban.
He thumbs the classics over, fondly lingers
On Richardson and Sterne and Rabelais
And turns their pages with excited fingers—
He'd censor Scripture if he had his way.

A few books he takes home for late inspection
Long after dark when good folk are in bed.
A dozen moderns of his own selection
Contribute thrills by which his mind is fed.
On his chaste brow, then, let us twine the laurels
Due him for elevating public morals!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Paterfamilias

Girls of eighteen he loves, and even twenty,
Pleasing and plump and eloquently young;

In his own day he knew and courted plenty
Whose praises tripped divinely from his tongue.
Now that his daughter's chums come in to call
And stay to taste his wife's Alsatian cooking
He kisses each one fondly in the hall
When he is sure his good wife isn't looking.

The boys who hang around he tolerates
And marvels that a girl must have in tow
Such callow lads who prattle of their dates;
He patronizes all his daughter's beaux
And smiles to hear Virginia call them "men"—
What he could show them, were he young again!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

A Wife and Mother

She was a wide-eyed dreamer in her youth
Who thought of marriage as a sure Gibraltar;
It did not take her long to learn the truth
After she led a rich man to the altar.
The luxury she courted bred confusion,
A traitor was the dollar she esteemed,
Draining the hemlock cup of disillusion
She wept that all was not as she had dreamed.

A mother now, with daughter nearly twenty
She walks with wisdom and is somewhat human
As they can be who are inured to plenty,
And with the fine consistency of woman
She'll give her lovely daughter for a song
To the first wealthy man who comes along.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Sob Sister

With glowing pen she writes the histories
Of men and women doomed to passing fame.
For such as she there are no mysteries—
She can disclose superbly, without shame
The intimate details of little lives,
Their aspirations, fickle and sincere;
The tragedies of mothers, sons and wives
Are stuff with which she wrings a ready tear.

With phrases just a trifle saccharine
She stoops to analyze a murderer
Or mourn the passing of a movie queen.
A million breathless readers reckon her
The voice of truth, and heed her word, unsated
With drivel nationally syndicated.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Movie Premiere

She flutters from an orchid limousine,
The faintest frown of wonder at her brow,
The crowd is waiting to acclaim its queen;
A shout goes up; they recognize her now.
Bowing, she smiles, accosts the microphone,—
“Miss Rita Craye,” the bland announcer cries.
“Good-evening, friends.” Thus does Miss Craye intone
A novel greeting through admiring sighs.

Now with the splendor of a queen she sweeps
Into the theatre. Her steady gaze
Follows the film. She neither smiles nor weeps;
To damn a sister star with faintest praise
Is her delight. But harden not your heart,—
Miss Rita Craye lives only for her art.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

A Diner

He stalks into a tea room with the air
Of one who cannot easily forget
That he has dined with princes. Unaware
Of watching eyes, untroubled by regret
He orders calmly and enjoys his food
As if it were a banquet served in state
And not a snack devoured in solitude;
Here is no recluse brooding on his fate.

A bit of pudding and a demi-tasse
Complete his meal. He fingers a cigar
And drums a moment idly on his glass
And scans the check. The grandeur of a czar
Is his. The tip he leaves, superbly bored
Might be a gold piece tendered by a lord.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

A Bard

Endearing phrases leaping to his tongue
Choke and confuse him. Daily, at the sight
Of lovely girls whose beauty goes unsung
He yearns to praise their bodies slim and white,
Their lips and bosoms and their graceful limbs,
These are his own to sing did he but guess
Immortal ardor trembles in the hymns
His heart has fashioned but can scarce express.

Forever silent and alone he goes
Through lonely gardens of recurrent night,
Pausing to mark the wonder of the rose,
Praying that time may close upon his sight
Lest he be caught forever in the snare
Of beauty greater than his heart may bear.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Ananias

Prevarication was his first resort,
The refuge of a swift and subtle mind
Keyed to the cunning of the sly retort;
Yet he could tell the truth when so inclined,
Which was but seldom. He was one to weave
Amazing tales that sought to glorify
His own bravado, and at once deceive
A score of minds that failed to pierce the lie.

The simple love of truth for its own sake
Was never bred in him. The fact that white
Was always white and never black, that two
And two, however reckoned, could not make
More than their sum or less, he never knew
Who dared to think two wrongs could make a right.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

A Vocal Teacher

In thundered syllables he eulogizes
Great singers of a half-forgotten hour,
Then demonstrates the breathing exercises
Whose use may bring each voice to fullest flower.
To every pupil eager or half-hearted
He earnestly presents a diagram
On which the chest and lungs and throat are charted,
Also the action of the diaphragm.

I've heard him interrupt a pupil singing
To hear his own voice resonantly boom,
And on a lonely evening caught him flinging
Defiant arias at an empty room.
His pupils worship him. There's not a thing
He has not taught them all,—save how to sing.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

The Barrier

There was one door through which he never passed,

A door she kept inscrutably apart,
Securely latched. A stranger to the last,
He sighed and longed to keep her at his heart.
But she was not for any man to hold
Save for a moment. She was one to slip
Out of his arms and leave him lost and cold;
He trembled when he kissed her finger's tip.

Sometimes he wondered as he mused alone
What lay, still inaccessible, behind
The barrier.

A world he had not known
Lurked in the dark recesses of her mind
And he who stood, a beggar at the gate
Was left in rags, to wonder... and to wait.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

City Husband

To please his wife he walks her Pekingese
Three times a day along the Avenue;
To balk would be to lose his hold on peace
And that of course, he's not inclined to do.
Life to his eyes is odd, but seldom funny;
He found a way to compromise with debt
By marrying Griselda and her money,—
He harbors, though he won't admit regret.

He sleeps late and is prone to no misgiving
Since all his days are very much the same,
Yet with the chance to earn an honest living
He might do much to vindicate his name
In ways that he has sometimes vaguely planned—
Alas, Griselda might not understand!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Lost Warrior

Behind the mask of your indifference
I see a spirit wrestling with defeat
As Jacob wrestled with omnipotence;
About your head avenging thunders beat
And retribution hovers. Yet you stand
Unwavering, a lost world in your eyes
And splendidly salute the doom at hand,
Your glance reflecting scorn and faint surprise.

So shall I still remember you at last
When flesh and blood elude my failing sight,
So shall my spirit seek you in that vast,
Illimitable interval of night
To find you not indifferent, but only
Shy and aloof, and tragically lonely.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Portrait

She lives on chocolates and romantic fiction,
For dreams of knightly chivalry are hers,
Of tender vows proclaimed in faultless diction;
The heroes of her novel she prefers,
Though overdrawn, to the unseemly creatures
With whom she must engage in conversation
And find, alas, without redeeming features
If she commune with people of her station.

Her husband meekly tiptoes through her life,
A timid wraith. Her children look their ages.
But still the bookish fancies of a wife
Fetter her to the never-ending pages
Devoured, along with countless chocolate creams
By one whose weight grows daily with her dreams.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

John Sprigg

He loathed the joy he read on human faces;

A smile to him was but a sign of guilt,
He came, a living scourge, to shame the traces
Of pleasure and to make his comrades wilt.
The school-board named him president. Men feared him
And women passed him shyly on the street;
A few commended but none ever cheered him,
His sway over their morals was complete.

Yet in the winter of his icy bleakness
A touch of spring had hovered all unguessed
Save by the one who chanced to find his weakness
And laughing softly held him to her breast.
Unseen he kissed the deacon's blue-eyed wife,
A sin that he remembered all his life.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Movie Society Editor

The social gadabout of Hollywood
Attends a dozen parties every week,
Bearing her notebook as a scribbler should,
Accepting tributes to her last critique
And basking in the hospitality
Of filmdom's latest favorite, whose Scotch
And cigarettes are plentiful and free.
Time slips away... The scribe ignores her watch.

A Latin lover stoops to kiss her hand,
A sudden thrill that finds her acquiescent.
“Gladys, I must be off. It's been too grand.
Have I the names of everybody present?
Good-night.” They watch her leave, erect and solemn
And hope for mention in her Sunday column.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Portrait

She took a passive interest in various
Activities of ladies in her town.
The only love she knew had been vicarious;
It was not hard to keep her passions down
And set her neighbors all a good example
That they might see in Christian fortitude
Something to emulate. Here was a sample
Of holiness in admirable mood.

Time offered her the halo of a martyr
Who had forsaken all that mortals seek;
Yet I have wondered if she would not barter
The austere calm that lay on brow and cheek
To walk with Love one path that led apart
And know his healing touch upon her heart!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Discovery

From each one who adored her she exacted
In her own cunning way, relentless toll;
So willing were these men that she attracted
To lay before her mind and heart and soul.
Not that her will was wantonly destructive
Or that she smiled at vows so simply broken,
But youth was brief and days must be productive
Of more than fine intentions, bravely spoken.

And so she went her proud way, gathering
Flower and fruit, and never looked behind
Until a day came when the yield of spring
Rotted against her fingers, and the rind
Grew bitter in her mouth, till in disgust
She looked upon her heart and found it dust.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Taxi Driver

Incredible anathemas that roll
From out his lips convince the passer-by
He has small love for his immortal soul;
What heaven will he seek when he shall die?
No paradise conventionally planned
With thoroughfares superbly wrought in gold
And everlasting trees on either hand;
To anything but chaos he'll be cold.

In darker realms he and his kind will toot
Derisive horns as they go whirling by
In ghostly motors.

 Mouths will not be mute
Below, that have been long inured to cry
Bright blasphemies upon the city street;
In Satan's ears each oath shall echo sweet.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Portrait

She boasts a close acquaintance with diseases
Whose mention leaves but little room for doubt;
She has known asthma and the fitful sneezes
Dear to hay-fever sufferers—and gout.
Her operation for appendicitis
Made history for hospital and clinic;
Again, when she was troubled with arthritis
Hers was a record to confound the cynic.

Sciatica and rheumatism she
Can boast of. Seven winters found her lame.
She blandly mentions water on the knee
And subtler ills no specialist could name.
Who knows what ailment, if she persevere,
She may delightedly unearth next year?

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

The Leveler

He swore it could not happen to a man
Who kept his mind on being up and doing;
Full well was love excluded from his plan
Who had not seen a woman worth the wooing.
He mocked at those who knew the subtle pangs
Of tender passion, and was heard to say
Love was a serpent harmless when his fangs
Were well removed, and he frustrate at bay.

He vowed it should not happen. Stubbornly
He clung to phrases easy to repeat;
Perhaps no one was more dismayed than he
To find himself one day at woman's feet
A helpless suppliant on bended knee
Eager to learn if smiling lips were sweet....

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Scandal Monger

She knows the menace of a whispered word,
An innuendo delicately spoken,
Divines how readily the mind is stirred
By whispered echoes, and how hearts are broken
By confidences cleverly betrayed.
A secret is a light thing in her keeping
And for her deft, bright word she is repaid
By pallid music of incessant weeping.

Words are her planting. Day and night she sows
On fallow soil the seedlings of despair
In cautious handfuls, till the scattered rows
Give promise of unreckoned fruitage there.
The world her handiwork invades is wide;
Each planting leaves her still unsatisfied.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Week-End Guest

This hush was almost more than he could bear;

He missed the friendly tumult of the city
And tossing in the darkness, grew aware
Of loneliness no hermit heart would pity.
About him black infinitude of space,
No sound to comfort and no light to cheer;
In vain he brushed a cobweb from his face
And slapped an insect crooning at his ear.

A little more than ninety miles away
Trolleys were clanging, and the hum of cars
Was music to a happy world at play.
He sighed and counted the unfriendly stars
And wondered with a calculating frown
What train he'd best be taking back to town.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Portrait

He knew for days that Death was fondly waiting
Bearing a doom he could not well escape
An arm thrust swiftly upward through a grating,
Or in an alley's interval a shape
Leaping to blot him out. His luck, he felt
Could scarcely last. His foes with provocation
Would never spare a blow beneath the belt;
His was no lot for lively contemplation.

Yet fear he knew not. Disconcertingly
He went his way undaunted to the end
Nor ever dreamed how near was Death when he
Knelt at the couch of his most trusted friend.
Hate was a monster with inhuman will,
But who had guessed that love would kiss... and kill?

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Pilgrim

Careless of death is one who sleeps in space
Indifferent to folly and despair,
Who knows the wind of night against his face
And holds the stars of morning in his hair.
No couch is half so gentle as the loam
On which he lays his head at close of day:
A spider's skill may fashion him a home,
A swallow's blessing speed him on his way.

He does not often wander where men pass
And by their eyes he is but seldom found,
And few may trace his footstep on the grass
Or challenge him upon familiar ground.
To meet him face to face and eye to eye
Were to be struck dumb, as when Love goes by.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

LOST WARRIOR · PART II

The second division of Lost Warrior (1931)

June

A city swelters in the heat of June;
No casual breezes blow. The skies are gray.
These pavements know no peace morning or noon,
Night cannot cool the fevered pulse of day.
The air is heavy with the stifling smell
Of gasoline. Smoke hovers like a pall
And footsteps lag.

Duty cannot compel
Devotion when far hills and uplands call

Now is the time to rest among the fern,
Pursue the leaping trout, invade cool streams.
Arcady beckons us at every turn;
We cannot sleep in peace for sudden dreams
Of quiet pastures where young daisies blow
And mountains whose dim peaks are fringed with snow.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Within Our Hands

Within our hands we hold the keys of heaven
Yet dare not cry the gods in our distress;
Our sins are infinitely more than seven
And Baal rejoices at our wickedness.
Idols we have forsworn times without number
Only to raise new gods within the hour
Who cannot watch beside us while we slumber
Nor carry us to triumph when we cower.

Shall we invoke the mercy of another
Strange deity, or hesitantly pray
To beast and bird? Rome knew a wolf for mother
Yet towered her brightness to the rising day
Who went as proudly glowing to her doom
As we to face the ultimate, still tomb.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

April Night

There is no loneliness in April night
That circles us with cool, protecting fingers,
Only a drowsy languor of delight
And fragrant scent of earth that faintly lingers.
There is no yearning but the dark dispels,
No void but any dreaming star may fill;
Music of midnight, lost in muffled bells
Dies in an echo over wood and hill.

We two who stand in this forgotten arbor
Are conscious of an alien world apart
That we have touched as ships that ride to harbor;
A peaceful world that greets the questing heart
With evening's own ineffable caress,
The solitude that knows no loneliness!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Bitter Brew

These aching days are more than we can bear
Whose hearts are yet unschooled in fortitude;
We shrink in dread of ultimate despair
And fear to drain the cup that life has brewed
Against our thirst. This is a bitter wine
Whose sparkle mocks us from the rounded glass;
Its ancient fruit upon some Stygian vine
Ripened too long. If but the cup might pass
To stronger lips! But this were tempting fate,—
Let craven spirits cry the weakling's prayer.
Lift high the glass before it be too late
And drink a lingering death to black despair.
The empty glass lies shattered at our feet
Whose lips once found the lips of laughter sweet!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Admonition

When I am gone and all my songs are sped
Upbraid me in whatever tone you will,
Tell if you must, the foolish things I said,
Rehearse the good, nor yet ignore the ill.
Say I was quick of temper and unwise,
Prodigal, and the friend of knaves and those
Who prey on weaklings. In my brave disguise
Show how I stalked, and mimic every pose.

Say that I had a hundred lies to tell
And told them boldly, if you so recall;
Incredulous of heaven as of hell
Cry how I mocked the wormwood and the gall.
Repeat I loved not wisely but too well
But do not say I never loved at all!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

November Night

Fog-HORNS in autumn sound an anxious note

Dismal enough to make the hearer shiver
And pray that luck attend each eager boat
That ploughs its way across the restless river.
Dark shapes loom up incredibly from mist,
A nameless dread pervades the frosty air;
November strikes with clenched and chilly fist
That takes the peaceful stranger unaware.

The naked eye is powerless to pierce
This veil of gray drawn over all the town.
The wind of night is merciless and fierce,
His cudgel waits to strike his victims down.
Dawn comes at last. Where fog was hanging low
Manhattan whitens under the first snow.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

My City

What fortress as impregnable as this
Stern citadel whose wall remains unshaken?
Arrows were impotent; a bullet's kiss
A vain caress. The city is not taken
Though enemies conspire. Alone she stands,
Her haughty towers soaring to the sky
And challenges the might of straining hands
And dares to breathe that beauty may not die.

Yet Jericho once fronted such a night,
Wearing the jewels of heaven for a crown,
A trumpeter's challenge leapt swifter than light
And at the siege of song the walls fell down.
Take heed, my city, lest a madman's prayer
Uproot your strength and scatter you to air!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Scene

Snow clings to façades and adheres to casements;
A murky street is lit with frosty bloom
Where frowsy figures creep from dingy basements
And steal in search of God knows what or whom.
Ice weaves fantastic patterns at the curb.—
The word he writes is beautiful and brief
Whose scepter mortal hands may not disturb,
Whose miracles defy our unbelief.

Dim vestibules shrink silently from pity,
Bleak alleys show the ravages of sleet;
Blind to the squalor of a lonely city
The wind goes up and down on tireless feet
Crying that man, too long beset by odds,
Must worship Winter, lord above all gods.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

May Night

My heart, look not on loveliness tonight
Lest beauty leave you suddenly confounded;
Guard well your eyes against a dazzling light
The spirit may not bear. Be wisely bounded
By shrewder barriers than Night has laid,
Be circumspect, my heart, and do not roam
Lest you be found bewildered and afraid
Of roads that bring no traveller safely home.

It will be safer, doubtless on the morrow
To venture forth with unexpectant eyes.
Tonight you shall meet beauty to your sorrow
Should you go forth a beggar in disguise
To gape alone at loveliness in flower—
Be wise, my heart, and bide at home this hour!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Ultimatum

You may not easily be rid of Death,
But should you meet him with your gusty mirth,
You may confuse him with a sudden breath
Of merriment, until the square of earth
You stand upon be readily transformed
Into a shining and celestial acre
Blossoming with the fruit of heaven, warmed
By gentle suns obedient to their Maker.

Then be not found a coward at the blast
Of awful trumpets out of peaceful night
For you shall somehow triumph at the last
And watch Death shrink a renegade from sight
Into the darkness of unhallowed years,
The music of your laughter in his ears!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

LOST WARRIOR · PART III

The third division of Lost Warrior (1931)

The High Road

When I was but a young lad,
Before I was seven,
My mother used to tell me
Of the high road to heaven.

The gallant road, the lost road,
No lane of soil and gravel,
A road for drooping shoulders
And weary feet to travel.

When I was but a young lad
My mother used to rock
For half a night and stare at space,
Her eyes upon the clock;

And then she'd peer at nothing
Beyond the window pane
And talk of hearing voices
That whispered in the rain.
And where the voices whispered
A road ran young and white
But only eyes could see it
Which saw beyond the night;

And only feet could walk it
That were as strangely shod
As the pale feet of prophets
Who journeyed up to God.

I heard my mother say it,
(I hear her say it still,)
The road to heaven runs higher
Than the highest hill.

I heard my mother murmur
That such a path led far
As human eye could travel
From wheeling star to star.

But try my best at seeking
All that I could find
Was darkness veiling all ahead,
Shrouding all behind.

And though I listened often
For voices through the rain
The most I heard was crickets
That murmured in the lane.

My mother's nimble fingers
When I was very small
Were as adroit at spinning
As she was fair and tall.

But long before the shadow
Of dusk was on the hill
She grew to turn from spinning,
And though she sat as still

As ever woman lingered
With four walls closing in,
I knew why she was laggard
And why she could not spin.

I knew I should be waking
At midnight or at dawn
To find her bed untroubled,
Her footprint on the lawn....

Upon a winter evening
I called her to my bed.—
“Why are your cheeks so pallid
And why your eyes so red?”

I asked her twice and yet again:
“Dear mother, answer me.”
My mother stared into my eyes
But not a word said she.

I turned my face against the wall
And tried to close my eyes;
I could not bear my mother's face
So proud and sad and wise.

I could not bear my mother's hands
That faltered at her breast.
At length I heard her move away,
And lay but could not rest.

The wind blew up a storm. All night
The fingers of the gale
Rattled the doors and windows.
I heard the pelt of hail

And tried to call my mother
With one high, piping note,
But terror held me breathless
And fear was at my throat.

The wind subsided slowly
And silence fell at last
More terrible than chaos,
Unconquerable, vast,—

A silence that oppressed me
Till I arose from bed
And sought my mother's chamber
Humming a song of dread.

My mother's bed was empty,
My mother's room was bare.
I heard the hollow echo
Of my footstep on the stair.

I knew I must be dreaming
But suddenly I guessed
The meaning of my mother's finger
Pointing to the west.

For where would one whose spirit
Had borne a grievous load
Find peace, except against a hill
Or on a shining road?

I searched through yard and cellar
But in the ice and sleet
I found no clue to follow
Nor trace of flying feet.

Once more at dusk of autumn
I listen for the sound
Of voices in the shadow
And whispers on the ground.

And in the dead of winter
Upon a moonless night
I strain my eyes to fathom
A road serene and white.
But though my mother's whisper
Still echoes in my ear,

I know no more the music
That woke a night to fear;

And though my lonely years have reached
Seventy and seven
My seeking eyes have never found
The high road to heaven.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Simeon's Dream

Dreamed one night
A dream of swift
And sharp delight

In which, as through
A glass he saw
A lady bred
For sudden awe,

A lady slim
And tall and fair
Fashioned for ardor
And despair.

Simeon dreamed
She came and took
His hand in hers
And at her look
He thought his heart
Melted away
And his stout flesh
Was turned to clay.

He thought he swam
In the clear gaze
Of her two eyes
And in a daze
 He caught her to him,
 Flesh and bone,
 And found her lips
 Against his own.

Cool was her flesh
Yet Simeon burned;
In her embrace
His passion churned,

His thoughts went skipping
East and south
And all his world
Lay on her mouth.

Simeon dreamed
The moment passed
And darkness fell
Upon him fast;

The lady laughed
And drank his breath
And on her lips
He tasted death.

He turned to flee
But could not find
Escape from someone
Close behind;

He tripped and fell
Beneath an oak
And could not stir.
Her dark voice spoke

A word he faintly
Dared to guess;
Again he felt
Her slow caress

But bitter now
And sharp as frost—
Simeon knew
That he was lost.

Fainter grew his breath
And colder
Blew the wind
Against his shoulder.

Simeon wakened
With a scream
Bent with the burden
Of his dream

And staring, saw
Beyond his pane
The ecstasy
Of waving grain.
 His spirit leaped
 In quick derision
 From the dim lady
 Of his vision

As he beheld
Untouched by doom
The friendly vista
Of his room,

Heard the cockerel's
Golden warning
And knew that here
Was living morning.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Nocturne

On a night of rain and mist
Noddy went a-wooing;
Any idiot had guessed
Here was trouble brewing.

Thunder muttered in the hills
But the lanes were quiet;
Expectation quickened
Eager blood to riot.

Noddy skipped along the path
To his lady's door,
Pushed the knocker seven times,
Shook it seven more,

Listened to the echoes die
While a subtle terror
Caught his heart as in a vise.
What unreckoned error

Left him standing here alone,
One instead of two?
Noddy cocked his ear and heard
Rain against the flue.

Something rustled in the dark,—
Noddy thought he heard
Murmured sighs across the lawn
Where a whisper stirred.

Noddy's feet went crunching
Over soil and gravel,—
Was there any mystery
Love could not unravel?

Was it wind he thought he heard,
Was it muffled laughter?
Noddy listened... and recoiled
From this silence after.

Lovers' eyes are cats' eyes,
He could almost see
Shadows,—was it one or two?—
Past the apple tree.

Midnight passed in music,
Silence stirred and slept.
Cradled in the tall grass
Noddy lay and wept.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Susanna Passes

Harden not your hearts,
 You with whom the wise
Sit as counsellors;
Narrow not your eyes

When she walks your street
With her band of fools
Whose exultant feet
Dancing, make your rules

Words of no account,
Formulas outgrown.
If she ask for bread
Will you give a stone?

Furtive whispers pass,
Lips and eyes are set.
Shall this golden bird
Tremble in your net?

In your hearts contempt
Sets a knell to ringing;
She will heed you not,
She will pass you singing.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Justus Coley

Justus Coley
On his knees
Many a night
Found grateful ease

In thanking God
Now and again
That he was not
As other men.

Each passing year
Convinced him more
That he was born
Superior

To other mortals,
Yet as friend
That he might nobly
Condescend.

And while he gloried
In his heart
That he was set
As one apart,

His neighbors praised
Jehovah wholly
That they were not
Like Justus Coley.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Song Without Rancor

I can forgive your tongue's persistent clatter,
Your lack of anything approaching tact,
I can condone your mad, insensate chatter,
The fiction that you choose to blend with fact;

Your tepid wrath and your transparent coolness,
The phrases you rely on to abuse me,
But damned if I can overlook your dullness
Now that you cease to startle or amuse me!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Women

I knew a woman who
Fathomed me well,
Reading deep in my eyes
All I would not tell.

And I knew a woman who
Searched me for more
Than she could ever find
Or had found before.

But I loved a woman best
Who never thought to see
All that I kept hid
In the depth of me.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Discovery

Concerning chance
And woe and weather,

Concerning pathways
Lately lost
And seas uncharted
Or uncrossed,

Concerning moods
And motor cars,
Anemones
And shooting stars,

I have discovered
Two can chat
An hour or more
Of this and that

And part assured
And comforted
For having left love
Well unsaid.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Aggie

What so beautiful
And what so proud
As pale Aggie lying
In her white shroud?

Aggie at rest, with
No word to say,
What is so beautiful
As this calm clay?

Aggie knew trouble,
Tumult and pain
Till she heard Death sing
Through the cool rain.

Till she saw Death come
Smiling through mist
The young mouth of Aggie
Never had been kissed.

The shy lips of Aggie
Never knew a song;
Hers to be lonely
Day and night long.

Now she is radiant,
Now she is proud
Smiling at young Death
From her cool shroud.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Song in Doubt

You ask me if I love you,
But who am I to say
To whom love came at evening
And fled at waking day?

You ask if I adore you
And I may answer yes,
But love is not begotten
Of promise or caress.

You ask me if I love you
But who am I to tell?
Though love has found me seldom
I can endure him well.

Go ask the hills at morning
Or walk beside the sea
And cry till echo answer,
But never ask of me.

You are so young and lovely
I would that it were so;
You ask me if I love you
But who am I to know?

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Song

I can remember silences
Upon a western hill
And essences like nectar
That deadened sense and will.

I can remember curving roads
That slipped into the gloom,
Dim nights profoundly fragrant
With heaven and earth in bloom.

I can remember dateless hours
Spent in a world apart
And midnight on a western hill
With you against my heart.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Summer Rain

Wherever time may summon me
I may not wander fancy-free
Nor look afar at summer rain
Without a stab of sudden pain.

I may not see a midday shower
Without remembering an hour
Brief as its dream, when you and I
Stared out across a changing sky.

For I may look in eyes of gray
And eyes of blue, and look away
And seek again, but never find
A pair of eyes I left behind.

Though I may scarcely tell you why,
I think for grief my dreams must die
If I may never see again
Your eyes look out at summer rain.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Plainville

Rain is a stranger
In this town
Whose fields are yellow
Or dirty brown.

Streams dry up
And blossoms perish
Till there is little
Left to cherish

Save an old stump
Of stubborn oak
On which young dusk
Sits like a cloak,

And a worn road
Too tired to run
That limps into
The setting sun.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Desire

All I want that life can give me,
Glow of evening, flush of morn,
Thrill of seasons ever changing,
Joy of linnet in the thorn.
Children's voices, bare of sorrow,
Hands to touch mine in the gloom,
Gentle hands-and most of all,
Music in a quiet room.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Song

It may be we shall love again,
Perhaps more fondly than before,
But for this day and night I know
I must depart and close the door.

And I must bear away with me
Your “fare-thee-well” to warm my ears,
And I must take your laughter on
And not be heeding sudden tears.

I think that we shall meet again
Forgetting all we need not keep,
With Beauty’s taper slim and tall
To burn beside us when we sleep.

And if time bring my shadow back
And bid you hearken when I call,
Then maybe we shall love again
Or maybe love no more at all.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Miss Annabel

On stern
And unrelenting feet
Miss Annabel
Goes down the street

And does not glance
To left or right.
No man has watched her
Out of sight

And no man pleads
To take her home;
Her thoughts have never
Learned to roam

Save in the paths
Her mother trod
Who spoke familiarly
Of God.

Yet with incentive
Who can tell?
She might ignore
The transient hell

Her forbears feared
And find that she
Was blessed with undreamed
Coquetry.

What lies beneath
Her sober glance
We may not guess;
Yet, given the chance,

She might prove fire
Instead of ice
If any man
Looked at her twice!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Certainty

I am not lonely who have been
Alone with silence and with din,
Alone with sleep and with the sound
Of creeping things along the ground;
Alone without you, and alone
With you beside me, still as stone.

I am not lonely who have been
Alone with neither friend nor kin,
Alone without remorse or pride
And you a stranger at my side.
I turn my face against the wall
And know no loneliness at all;
I keep repeating o'er and o'er,
I am not lonely any more.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Image

Long, long ago,
But here is one
I do not know.

Here is a stranger
In whose eyes
A mystery
Unburied lies;

And here is one
Whose words conceal
A truth more terrible
Than steel.

This mirrored face
Looks back at me
And smiles a hint
Of mockery.

Who is this stranger
Standing near?
His words I dare not
Closely hear.

His meaning I
May scarcely guess
Who shrink from all
His eyes confess.

His counsel I
Must scorn to heed
Though I and he
Spring from one seed.

Who is this stranger
Standing by?
I question not
Lest he reply.

Myself I knew well
Long ago...
This ghost of him
I do not know.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Globe Trotter

He saw young trees
That moved as men
And dwarfs who had
The strength of ten.

He tells of caverns
Echo-haunted,
Quicksands but few
May face undaunted,

And laughing streams
That ran uphill,
Of these his tongue
Will not be still.

But there are songs
He will not sing
Who has grown wise
With journeying,

And there are tales
He will not tell
Though he is one
To know them well.

Unshared, forever
Unconfessed
He keeps a dream
Within his breast;

Indifference
Is his disguise,
But secrets smoulder
In his eyes.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Song

When love comes gnawing
 There's little use
In trying to trick him
By sudden ruse.

Love comes nibbling
For all of that
Wise as a witch
And soft as a cat.

When love comes scratching
Lock all the doors
And pray he'll steal
No treasure of yours.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Finale

She will lie quiet
Against a cool hill,
She will lie softly
Who was never still.

She will lie alone
With the sun in her eyes,
She who was witless
Will be made wise.

Forgetting a word
She was trying to say
She will be suddenly
Carven in clay.

With no sound uttered
And no word spoken
She will lie still as though
Her heart were broken.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Forecast

The weather is her choice of talk;
One might believe she cared
What storm the wind blew up this night
Or how the traveller fared.

She gravely weighs the chance of rain
With calm and sunny weather
And frowning stares at space again
And rubs her palms together.

She does not guess that long before
The lamps of dawn are lit
She will be lying still and small
And never care a whit.

She does not know that with the dawn
She will not wake nor stir
And whether day be foul or fair
Will matter naught to her.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Words

You will not listen
 To words like these
Who welcome servile
Words that please,—

Words that come kneeling
At your feet,
Words that are humble,
Shy and sweet.

Words that extol
Your grace and charm
You will receive
Without alarm.

But robust words
That plumb the core
Of your disdain
You will ignore.

And words that cry
The truth of you,
You will repeat
They are not true.
Lost in your own
Gay fantasies
You have no time
For words like these.

 But words that boast
 And flatter slyly,
 These are the sort
 That please you highly.

They are your daily
Bread and wine
You will not heed
These words of mine.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Fate

Agatha Morley
All her life
Grumbled at dust
Like a good wife.

Dust on a table,
Dust on a chair,
Dust on a mantel
She couldn't bear.
She forgave faults
In man and child
But a dusty shelf
Would set her wild.

She bore with sin
Without protest
But dust-thoughts preyed
Upon her rest.

Agatha Morley
Is sleeping sound
Six feet under
The mouldy ground;

Six feet under
The earth she lies
With dust at her feet,
Dust in her eyes.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

Counsel

You who have known
 A sharper grief
Than this dark wound
Of unbelief,

Why be dismayed
At sudden blight?
Speak with a tongue
Both bitter and bright.

But you who choke
On the icy fruit
Of disillusion,
Be wisely mute;

Wisdom with a word
Can level a hill,
But to hold your peace
Is wiser still.

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

LOST WARRIOR · PART IV

The concluding sequence of Lost Warrior (1931)

This Mortal Love

I

It would be strange if I were wholly blind
To that which makes you most to be desired
If by your undisputed gifts of mind
Alone my admiration had been fired,
I had been zealous in a noble cause
Knowing it lost before the fray began.
It is the visible you which gives me pause,
Compelling worship as no other can.

Incredible that having loved you long
In rapturous embrace, one could forget
The lips that bloomed with ecstasy of song
And eyes that at swift parting glimmered wet.
One cries your name against the heedless dark;
Silence defies him, pitiless and stark.

II

I long to run, from what I cannot guess;
I yearn to fly, but where I do not know.
Is it your dark, insidious caress
That follows still, no matter where I go?
Let me be cold and distant for a season,
Walk solemnly, with eyes that never swerve,
Then do not pause to ask me for a reason;
I may not frame an answer that will serve.

Conscience or pride, whichever you may term it
I leave behind. This is the lonely hour.
Call me, if you see fit, a stupid hermit,
I shall not seek the shelter of your bower
Though you may walk the hills in search of me
Railing at reason long and bitterly.

III

Against the couch your acquiescent form
Weaves a familiar pattern of desire;
I bend to you as eager blood runs warm
And lips persuade from lips the answering fire.
I gaze on you and dare not look away—
Venus has laid her sign upon your brow
And I am snared. O close your eyes and pray
That love forget to seal the urgent vow!

My fingers touch your shoulder and your throat;
My eyes have dared profane your loveliness.
Of such as you, young Keats and Byron wrote,
And Shelley lay and dreamt of your caress,
And myriad gallant souls, well-lost to fame,
Perished in darkness, crying on your name.

IV

You would reject my pity who require
The gift of pity unsolicited,
Pride will not let you wither under fire
Nor briefly droop that unforgiving head.
Your spirit meets the onslaught of the foe
And gives no inch, knowing the die is cast
Despite the pain of giving blow for blow,
The yet unreckoned price of standing fast.

But it is not to me that you will turn
When desolation threatens. Though I plead
My cause superbly, yours are eyes that yearn
To other eyes, against an hour of need.
His be to glory then in your defeat
To whom the spoils of victory are sweet!

V

Knowing your body, delicate and proud,
Its secrets and its confidences, knowing
Its loveliness among an alien crowd,
Its ardours and its eloquences glowing,
I am constrained to summon you apart,
To draw you somewhat from the listless throng
Where I may hear the beating of your heart
And touch your lips to ecstasy of song.

I am but one... and there are sudden dangers
From greedy hands that press about you seeking.
I am but one lost in a maze of strangers
Who trample on the words my heart is speaking;
But you have smiled and cancelled the offence
All else remains of little consequence.

VI

The whiteness of your body in the dusk
Rekindles ardour in my singing blood;
Again I winnow beauty from the husk
And passion sweeps me with the ancient flood.
Your fingers touch my arm and I am made
One with a host exultant over time
And space—no longer timid and afraid
Of windy stairs too tenuous to climb.

Your breath is on my hair, and in my eyes
Your certain image stamped indelibly;
I am refashioned, radiant and wise
Since you have crossed a world to succor me.
The gift of ecstasy lies in our keeping;
Look homeward, Time you shall not find Love sleeping!

VII

Because my heart was lonely in the night
I cried your name aloud against the dark.
A word went echoing but found no light,
An arrow perished far below its mark.
Fingers of silence tightened at my throat,
The air was heavy with unspoken dread,
My senses swam... I heard the far-off note
Of midnight toll for the unsleeping dead.

You were not with me, yet your shadow lay
Across my sill. I closed my eyes and slept
And woke again to think I heard you say
“Be wise, forget.” Then silence leaned and wept
Above me, and I felt against my cheek
Her burning tears, and lay and could not speak

VIII

One who has loved your body knows no rest,
Try as he may he can forget you never—
Once he has found your lips and touched your breast
A strange caress will haunt his heart forever.
He will go plunging toward oblivion
Stopping his ears lest your remembered laughter
Grieve him with music, lest the bright web spun
Tightly about, ensnare him ever after.

Better, far better had he never bent
To kiss the arched, pale throat and restless eyes.
Better he had not learned the acrid scent
And taste of love. He had been doubly wise
Had he but bent his gaze where planets sprawl
And never looked upon your face at all.

IX

So do not mask the bitterness you feel
And let no shred of anger be repressed;
No wound is worth the labor to conceal,
No grief deserves a haven at your breast.
Strike out again, and lash me with your wrath—
I shall not cry for mercy in the dark
Though spiteful comets flash across my path
And I am stung by every falling spark.

Let no persuasion summon you aside;
Lunge and destroy, although the heavens fall.
The arrows of contempt, the barb of pride
Wound deep. Yet do not fear that I will crawl
Before you, pleading with a coward's breath
Who never feared the icy kiss of death.

X

If I were certain of your love as I
Am sure of half a hundred other things
I should not weep to see my dreams that lie
Like fallen birds with spent and broken wings.
If the mirage which leaves me little rest
Might prove no figment of imagination
But the immortal city of my quest
I should go heralding a heart's elation.

But I am one to doubt the evidence
These eyes would all too readily accept;
Though reason rail upon the stubborn sense
I am not quick to yield who am not swept
From the firm bulwark of my spirit's fears
By any flood of kisses or of tears.

XI

I should not care to fathom you too well,
To seek what lies behind the furtive mask
You wear, nor hearken what your lips may tell
Of scornful artifice. I shall not ask
Whence you have come nor whither you may go;
It is enough that in the cloak of dread
You can defy the cunning of a foe
Who wishes, but cannot behold you dead.

The semblance of a sneer that curls your lip
And keeps a world at bay—is this the whole
Of you? Should he find more who dared to strip
The grin away and bare the gaping soul,
Or would he look past terror and despair
Upon the utter emptiness of air?

XII

Nothing was so incredible as this,
That suddenly, without another word
We should forswear the urgent vow, the kiss,
And part as strangers part. Again I heard
As from afar, the music we had shared,
Symphonies that had bound us when we sat
Enthralled, and I discovered that you cared
For Mozart as for me. And that was that.

But now the ultimate. I turned my head
And gulped, and felt that all the world was wrong;
Your voice cried, “Wait!” I woke as from the dead
My spirit trembling on the brink of song.
“Oh, well,” you said, and shrugged and broke the spell;
I smiled and left you echoing, “Oh well...”

XIII

Continue to assure me of your hate
And let your lips and eyes bear out the word;
The curse is impotent that leaps too late
I smile and am not too profoundly stirred
Recalling two who met upon the brink
Of desolation, in a dateless hour.
Repeat the awful curse, but dare not think
The seed of your contempt will nobly flower.

Look not too long for any word to tell
What none may well impart... for words are dust.
Invective is a boomerang guard well
Your own sweet breast against the fatal thrust
Lest I who find the call to battle sweet
Perceive you torn and bleeding at my feet.

XIV

I would seek love where love has never lain
Against your throat, your arms that whitely rest,
And brave your utmost gesture of disdain
To touch your brow and your unheeding breast.
It were no grievous wrong to name you fair
And with a kiss unseal your lips and eyes,
To close your doubtful heart against despair
And make you one irrevocably wise.

Poets and satyrs know a common doom.
The swift, inglorious end of all I seek
Confronts me even now, within this room,
Yet I shall murmur once against your cheek
The prayer of Pan, older than love or death,
And know at last your breath against my breath.

XV

It will not be enough to hear you praise
Love in the language of the seraphim,
Exalting her in half a hundred ways,
Groping untiringly for synonym
For that strange loveliness which is her own;
Nor will it comfort me to hear you cry
How you have knelt before her shrine alone
And hailed her star ascendant in the sky.

I have no heart for miracles tonight
Nor any faith in sudden eloquence
To conjure up the specter of delight—
The word we muster has no permanence.
It is against your lips and arms I keep
Serenity before the hour of sleep.

XVI

Seeing that love at last is firmly caught
And held in a strange web of his own weaving,
That each, helpless to find what he has sought,
Must trace the pattern of his own deceiving,
Seeing that we are brought to the same end
Whatever road our fearful selves may take,
Let us rejoicing go as to befriend
The adversary; let no frail heart break.

Let us go forward free of pride or shame.
Seeing that pain and passion are forever
Blent in a song for which time has no name,
Let us whom life has kindled, cry that never
Was hour so touched with wonder since the day
A bright star pointed where a young Child lay.

XVII

Be to me all I dream that you can be,
My sun and sky and my unchanging star,
My promised Land and my eternal sea,
Be to me all that you forever are,
A light in darkness leading me along
A perilous way—a sure and steadfast light;
Oh be my exultation and my song,
My secret ardor and my sudden might.

Be to me all I have not dared to dream,
The ultimate of all I strain to find,
My aspiration and my joy supreme,
Be to me Soul and Vision, Heart and Mind,
I ask but little else... Whate'er befall,
Oh be my love and loveliness—my all!

XVIII

I think I know why worlds were subtly planned
By One who fashioned rugged constellations
And held the twin seas in His mighty hand
And laid the corner-stones of countless nations;
I know the meaning of the tides that flow
Unceasingly from changeless shore to shore,
Of clouds that drift forever to and fro
And waning moons, and April rains that pour.

I read His purpose not to be derided
In every wheeling star that kindles heaven.
His lavish gifts are equably divided
Save that to you the world itself was given;
I wonder now, and shall perhaps, forever—
Why did God make you beautiful... and clever?

XIX

Wisely I shall not seek to justify
What words may never sensibly explain,
Nor is it mine to cancel with a lie
The certain debt of bitterness and pain.
If with the summer spent, there still remain
A leaf or two upon the withering bough
We know this fruit shall ripen soon again—
All is not lost, though love forsake us now.

For you will learn forgetfulness of me
In other arms that eagerly enfold
And other lips that whisper ecstasy
Will soon persuade you how my lips were cold,
Till one day you will waken to recall
I was someone you never loved at all!

Publication. *Lost Warrior* (Thomas Bird Mosher, 1931).

BRIGHT AVOWAL

The complete forty-two-sonnet sequence in Bright Avowal (1933)

Bright Avowal

I

The day and hour were much like any day
And any hour-except that in that space
I found what Time can never snatch away,
Glowing against the contour of your face,
Smiling at me from grave and searching eyes
That said more than they dared to say, and more
Than one could answer simply, lover-wise;
This day was not like any day before!

This day was like no day that followed after
In the dark calendar of restless years,
No other day so wholly wrapped in laughter,
No mortal hour again so close to tears,
No moment quickened into deathless flame
As when I heard your lips repeat my name!

II

I own no adjective to make obey
My bidding when I conjure thoughts of you;
The trite and hackneyed words of yesterday
Will not suffice. I must have words as new
And passionate and shining as the blue
Morning that arches overhead. I must
Have glowing words to lend this love a clue
And sentences that will not fall to dust.

For you whose wonder words may never tell
I make my little songs, forever knowing
It is in vain, that words are but the shell
And you the inner Core superbly glowing;
Wherefore, I grieve, and grieving, may not rest
For that unborn which stifles in my breast.

III

How altered the complexion of my days
Since you have come, adorable and dear,
To lead me gently through untrodden ways;
How glamorous the promise of a year
Which sent me you. How can I well complain
Whatever gifts the grinning gods bestow,
Who have your song for anodyne in pain,
Your smile to keep wherever I may go?

It is enough that I have walked with you
And all my dreams your loveliness surround;
I shall go softly, as the Easterns do,
As one who treads at length on holy ground,
When I remember you and pause to bless
All that my heart has learned of loveliness.

IV

If this be love, let it suffice for us
Whose hearts are weary after endless seeking;
To shut it from the heart were treasonous—
Let us be still as if a god were speaking
Whose ultimatum found us on our knees.
If this be love, let it be ours to keep
Against the hour when stealthy memories
Shall snatch us from the shining hands of sleep.

Let this suffice, and let our morrows rest
In peace upon the lap of destiny,
Else shall the moment find us dispossessed,
Stripped of the armor of serenity,
And leave us dumb, bewildered, unresigned,
In quest of that which we shall never find.

V

Out of my longing and my loneliness
I make a song for you, and it shall be
Frail as the touch of air, as the wind's caress,
Mortal as music, timeless as the sea
That falters at your threshold. Out of dust,
Out of the rich dark plenitude of earth
I fashion that which Autumn shall not rust
Nor Winter doom implacably at birth.

Out of this waiting heart a dream shall rise
And swiftly find its way to one still door
To look for recognition in your eyes;
Out of my hope and out of the rich store
Of faith I send you this unshriven seed
That it may blossom in your hour of need.

VI

The days that might have been so full of you
Are filled with endless trivial obligations,
Debts to be cancelled, petty chores to do
And social duties—tedious ministrations
To uncongenial intimates and neighbors.
The days that might have been our own to cherish
Are void of recompense for him who labors
If love must briefly blossom but to perish.

Yet I shall look for Summer in your eyes
And seek upon your lips the sweet of spring
Before the year of adoration dies
And love is tardy for the harvesting.
How otherwise shall time appease the ache
I suffer night and morning for your sake?

VII

O heart of love immeasurably dear,
Reach out again and bless me where I stand
A grieving spirit in a lonely land,
Come back to me across the waning year
And bid unrest forever disappear;
If silence be your answer, I shall guess
That time must make an end of tenderness
And love at last grow frigid and austere.

With loss of you such loneliness descends
As laughter may not readily dispel.
Dearest of loves and tenderest of friends,
Draw near again and cry you love me well
And take me to your breast, that I may know
All that my heart has whispered must be so!

VIII

I am as one who entertains a ghost,
Who sits alone, but sees across a table
A face to which he drinks a silent toast
And drains a brimming glass, and is not able
To voice denial to a visitor
So wholly charming yet withal persistent;
Impossible to shut beyond the door
A Presence grown so dear, and yet so distant.

I am but one who crudely improvises
A song in which despair and hope are blent,
A theme in which one doubtfully disguises
A strangely overwhelming sentiment,
And reaches out in search of shadowy fingers—
The specter melts, and only darkness lingers.

IX

I would not bring you certain disillusion
Nor any sudden breath of bitterness
To add a measure to your heart's confusion
Nor leave you prey to delicate distress.
I would not lift a prayer except to bless
Your hand and heart, whose generosity
Invokes delight. I shall not find redress
If Time unkindly lead you far from me!

I would be one to shield you from the clamor
Of alien hearts, lest you be drawn astray
Unwittingly, in quest of futile glamour—
For I am one to kneel this hour and pray
That love may light your path across the earth
And bring you boundless peace and joy and mirth!

X

You are a blend of all those queens of yore,
Elaine, Iseult, the Lady of Shalott,
And even Helen, whom all men adore,
Remembering her in dream, who knew her not.
You are that loveliness to which men cry
When idols fail and gods of earth betray,
A gracious memory which can not die
Though winds of time may blow these words away.

Smile if you will when casually you read
These halting lines upon a printed page;
To you I sing, and if your heart give heed
It is enough. Let critics mock or rage,
I care no whit who tenderly address
This song to you, my Love and Loveliness!

XI

It must be always Winter in my heart
As long as only fancies still remain
And we must dwell eternally apart—
It must be Winter till you come again
And send the Spring, the blessed dew and rain,
And tender sunlight... till you come with song
To close the door of memory on pain
And lead my dreams abroad in joyous throng.

It must be Winter till your lips and eyes
Invoke a deathless Spring. Then fold me fast
And bid me hear your heart's unuttered sighs
And let this heart upon your own at last
Beat for an hour and break... and I shall roam
No more, knowing I am at last come home!

XII

You go your way untrammelled and serene
With none to cross your path and cry you nay
Nor ever guess how little time may mean
To him who walks the avenues of day
And sighs for one a thousand leagues away—
The fragrant blooms of youth are yours to keep
And you may gather roses as you stray
And fear no cruel thorn to make you weep.

Consider then the heart of one who knows
No flower so radiant, no mortal bloom
So lovely as the one ungathered rose
His heart must cherish till the day of doom.
His life it is which lies at your command
Within the hollow of your lovely hand.

XIII

My need of you is greater than the need
Young lovers feel for April, or the yearning
For sunlight in the slow, insensate seed;
More than the heart's want of the unreturning
Moments to which reluctant fancy clings
Knowing how they are fled. My need of you
Is not for words to tell save they had wings;
In such as these Love finds but little clue.

Yet I shall use such words as I command
And with familiar cadences invoke
Your tenderness; and in a barren land
Draw close your love about me as a cloak,
Caring no more what stormy gusts may beat
Who cry your name and dream your lips are sweet!

XIV

Sometimes love grows intolerable, a weight
Not to be borne, a burden at my breast
And I am moved to suddenness of hate
For that which lies forever unconfessed
Yet not disowned. It is as if I bore
The loves of countless lovers down the years
Who knew delight and know it now no more,
Whom laughter may not waken, neither tears.

Their words are dust, they lie at last alone;
Shall words of mine deserve a better fate?
Love will not save me when the hour is flown,
The dear deliverance shall come too late
That comes not soon upon the hour of this.
Passionate and premeditated kiss.

XV

Let no dark breath of sacrilege confuse
Our spirits consecrated to this Word;
Ours is a boundless theme on which to muse
For by Divinity our hearts are stirred.
This is the answer to our crying need,
The swift response to our bewildered prayer—
This cup is offered us if we but heed,
This true communion is our own to share.

From chaos let no alien word confound
The final mandate of the voice of Reason—
Long may our cry of gratitude resound
And every faltering doubt be reckoned treason
By hearts that learn the impotence of pain,
The power of prayer that rises not in vain!

XVI

If love himself awaken in your heart
And open your dear eyes to ecstasy,
There is no power can hold us two apart—
Look in my eyes, beloved, and be free!
Let tenderness resistless as the sea
Pour joyously through mind and heart and brain
That love may sweetly flow from me to thee
And (if the gods be gracious) back again.

No barrier can remain, with love supreme;
Then bide with me and do not fear the end.
Though worlds may crumble, let us keep the dream
Whatever good or ill tomorrow send.
Share all with me and never count the cost—
So Love be ours, the world were nobly lost!

XVII

The gracious gesture of renunciation
Is profitless in this emergency;
Invoke no symbol of a new frustration
To cloud our eyes with sudden misery.
Freedom is bitter to the lonely free
Who walk the earth in lordly solitude
Their eyes forever shut to ecstasy,
Gnawing at husks of holiness for food.

Then bind upon your brow the sign of Venus
And make your peace with her when you awake,
Whose fingers wove this shining bond between us;
Hers is a glowing universe at stake.
Hear from the lips of love a nobler story
Than pallid martyrs sing on thrones of glory!

XVIII

If when I shut the world away at night
I send a gentle benediction far
To you who are invulnerable as light,
Remote forever as the morning star,
If I repeat your name on faltering breath
And close my eyes at last, only to see
Your face as dear, as intimate as death,
As visible as life itself to me,

If calling back a shadowy hour of wonder,
I sense anew the urgency of rain
And find my heart remembering distant thunder
With all the sweet and bitterness of pain,
Oh, tell me, will you waken then and know
The voice of one who grieving, loves you so?

XIX

No Summer lingers in this heart tonight,
Only such Winter as the outcast knows,
Who walks the earth a prisoner of blight
And reads no April underneath the snows
That shut him from the robin and the rose—
Who learns the unimagined desolation
Of one long road on which the pilgrim goes
Blindly to an uncertain destination.

Such Winter lingers as the lonely heart
In its extremity alone may guess
That knew its little hour with Love apart
And touched the Summer of her tenderness.
A thousand Springs in no wise shall atone
For one lost April and its magic flown!

XX

Be to me all I dream that you can be,
My sun and sky and my unchanging star,
My promised Land and my eternal Sea,
Be to me all that you forever are,
A lamp in darkness leading me along
A perilous way,—a sure and steadfast light;
O be my exultation and my song,
My secret ardor and my sudden might.

Be to me all I have not dared to dream,
The ultimate of all I strain to find,
My aspiration and my joy supreme,
Be to me Soul and Vision, Heart and Mind.
I ask but little else... Whate'er befall,
O be my love and loveliness—my all!

XXI

If time decree we two must part again,
I shall want strength to face the bitter hour
And solace in the interval of pain—
I shall need that which lies beyond the power
Of others to bestow, which you alone
Can give. If time insist that we must part
And I be fugitive, forever blown
Toward chaos-darling, take me to your heart

A little hour before the woeful end
And shelter me at the beloved breast,
Lover and guide, sweet counsellor and friend,
Lend me that wisdom I have not possessed
That I may rise, knowing it must be so
And cry farewell at last and let you go!

XXII

So I am neither more nor less than one
Who broods upon your loveliness and sings
A lyric measure haltingly begun
As if a musing bard should sweep the strings
Of an uneasy instrument and call
To mind devoutly a beloved face;
To me you are not more nor less than all
That time and circumstance may not displace.

I shall not vainly ask that you requite
This reasonless devotion, that you heed
A voice forever crying in the night;
It is enough that in an hour of need
You cried a word that cannot be unsaid
Though every dream of ecstasy were fled!

XXIII

Let us be thankful even for this hour
Of greying Autumn skies who once have known
The radiance of Spring, beheld each flower
Ripen and bloom and pass. The lark is flown
To kinder climes and every bough is bare—
Even in desolation we rejoice
Who fling a song against the frosty air
And hail again the Winter of our choice.

Let us be thankful even in despair;
A shout goes up to heaven from our throats,
A pæan to the God of sea and air
And exultation trembles in its notes.
Echo the challenge, heavens, that we fling
Who in our anguish yet have hearts to sing!

XXIV

Not with a poem in my heart I come
So much as with desire made eloquent,
With singing lips Time has not stricken dumb
And with an irresistible intent
Your dreaming heart, forever innocent
Will scarcely fathom. Not with eulogies
But with the coin of eagerness unspent
I come to crush insistent memories.

You stare amazed as if you could not guess
The utter truth that blazing eyes convey,
The stern conviction of a sharp caress,
The word no gesture of defense can stay
Now that the strongest will is no more steeled
Against impetuous arms and lips unsealed.

XXV

So let us make a ritual of this
Our love, that it may last beyond the night
Which bends above our hymeneal kiss
And sees our spirits meet in swift delight.
Let us by word or sacrament prolong
This unpremeditated ecstasy
That love unfettered find a joyous song
Blended of fervor and fidelity.

Here in the silent watches let us burn
A candle at the shrine of One we cherish;
Now in these arms, my sweet, be swift to learn
Such love and loveliness as may not perish.
My prayer is done.... Your lips upon my own
Awaken joy this heart has never known!

XXVI

If I remain forever unobsessed
Save by the indefinable allure
Of one who woke confusion in this breast,
If love be more than I may well endure,
Send me no pity and invoke no cure;
Here is a sickness Time may scarcely heal.
Of this and of this only am I sure
Who in your presence dutifully kneel.

Witless am I from birth who wander blind
To mortal beauty, save it be your own.
The heart might better forage unconfined
Than linger in your presence still as stone,
Turning from star and sun, still cherishing
The rapture Time has found unperishing.

XXVII

Because I marshalled into words for you
A hundred things you knew and could not say,
A hundred more you dimly felt were true,
Because my phrases pleased you, grave and gay
Confronting you upon the printed page,
Because I sang of love and hope and death,
You greeted me as one would hail a sage
And read my little songs with quickened breath.

You looked upon me, half in reverence,
With sweetly brimming eyes, nor ever guessed
To whom I owed what slender eloquence,
What brief, bright ecstasy my songs possessed,
Nor reckoned how my spirit longed to own
That loveliness forever yours alone!

XXVIII

So utterly involved with what you name
Loving, so wrapped in all you now confess,
The citadel caught up as in a flame,
The heart a prisoner of tenderness,
So wholly snared in this amazing spell,
I do beseech you whom I reckoned wise,
Look past the moment and consider well—
Be certain it is I, not love you prize!

For such is love's consummate witchery
That many are deceived who sigh and languish;
Not that I were not flattered if for me
You showed a spirit capable of anguish,
But I would have you certain past all rue,
As I am certain of this love for you!

XXIX

I would not have you love me otherwise
Than as your wisdom bids you cherish one
Who would be servant to your lips and eyes
Upon a day propitiously begun.
Love me, if may be, as you love the sun
Or as your eyes adore November rain,
And though this heart be speedily undone
You shall not guess how it has fathomed pain.

I would not have you love me save with this
Dark flame which feeds upon the quickening breath
Of ardor. Give me perilous lips to kiss
And love which blooms beyond its sudden death
That I may learn delight, daring to be
One who exists to love you utterly.

XXX

I wonder if these phrases you have fashioned,
These tender words imploring my attention
Were born of ardor utterly impassioned;
A lurking dread contributes apprehension
That you are one to toy with shining phrases
And build with words a castle on the sand
From which to shout anew your empty praises
Of one whose heart you scarcely understand.

I shall be overwhelmed with swift contrition
If such an accusation do you wrong;
Come near and banish every vain suspicion
And bind this heart with such a snare of song
That I forget how days were made for grieving
And lift my lips to meet your kiss, believing!

XXXI

Your body is a song of tenderness,
An image of delight, ordained to bear
Through time unseen the mark of love's caress;
O loveliness too exquisite to spare!
O sudden kiss that takes me unaware,
Swift eloquence of pleading finger tips,
One slender arm against the curving stair,
Again your mouth insistent at my lips.

Was this the voice of passion swift and stark
Calling me to inexorable night,
Or love that murmured through the nameless dark?
Brief is the moment of supreme delight
But ours the triumph, who as gods can be
One with unutterable ecstasy!

XXXII

Let us tonight incredibly arrest
The hour and moment, lest they pass us by—
And wisely let these lips and hands attest
A brimming tenderness that may not die.
Let the bright gull wing over, and the sky
Deepen to midnight. Let the heart await
That which the mind is loath to deify;
Love is the moment made articulate.

Behold the blameless, the quiescent hour
A wise Divinity laid in our keeping
Who look in awe on heaven and earth in flower
And guard the secret of the night unsleeping.
Let us keep faith whose glowing hearts are full,—
We live, we have beheld the Miracle!

XXXIII

Beloved, there is little left to say
Save that I love you, love you in my heart
A thousandfold with every passing day,
With every moment we must spend apart
My longing deepens and my spirit cries
In vain, alas, to you who may not hear;
My heart goes forth a beggar in disguise
Imploring mercy of a ruthless year.

Almost I wish that we had never met,
Though such confession hint at heresy;
There would not be your laughter to forget,
Your lips and eyes to banish utterly,
And I should find the peace I may not know
For having loved you, having let you go!

XXXIV

To all appearances this room is still
Unchanged. Its chairs stand, orderly and neat,
Its floors are polished. On the window sill
A bowl of pansies. Nothing incomplete
To eyes that have not swept the scene before—
The desk, these etchings all in perfect taste,
The lacquered book-case just beyond the door
Breathe of a leisure sacrosanct and chaste.

But one who looks upon this room remembers
The shining moment when it held a dream,
When this still hearth knew more than greying embers;
This room lives on, but it can never seem
Aught but a phantom of the old retreat
Across whose threshold two found laughter sweet!

XXXV

If ever you perceive with other eyes
Than those with which you look upon me now
And penetrate the fallible disguise
I wear, and read upon my lips and brow
The shattered oath, the bruised and broken vow,
The secret I may scarcely long conceal,
You will not rashly pluck from such a bough
This fruit which Time will grind beneath his heel.

If, in an hour of sudden penetration,
You read between the lines and so discern
That which your heart may name equivocation,
Let no tear fall. Be wise and quickly turn
From one too long unworthy of your trust
Whose love sprang from, and shall return to dust.

XXXVI

Now let the heart run lightly through the grass
Before a Summer vanishes in mist,
And let the old loves delicately pass
Whose memories incredibly persist;
Let there be peace this day and a forgetting
Of all that drowsy hearts are loath to keep,
And let there be no rue and no regretting
When first we stir and slowly rise from sleep.

Let not the heart look back upon desire
With any semblance of despair or dread,
Nor stir the ashes of a dying fire
That with the gust of Autumn will be dead.
Look up and sing, for morning is astir—
Was ever glimpse of heaven lovelier?

XXXVII

I am not steadfast by your reckoning
Nor diligent in all that you esteem,
For I have strayed when stars were beckoning
And I have followed many a fitful gleam
Only to linger captive to a dream;
I was not ever loyal by your measure,
For to this spirit Beauty is supreme,
The quest of loveliness alone its pleasure.

But I have learned delight you know not of
Who have so little faith in sorcery,
For I have leaned to kiss the lips of love
And drained the heady wine of ecstasy.
You call me base, you cannot guess how true
I am to Beauty, being false to you!

XXXVIII

We who have looked on greatness and beheld
The majesty of minds that dwarf our own,
Shall we not linger, suddenly compelled
By radiance our hearts have never known?
Shall we not make obeisance who are shown
The glowing face of this transcendent hour,
Who hear the trumpets of the morning blown
And look with ecstasy on love in flower?

We who have found the Wonder that we sought
Have learned the ultimate futility
Of gestures.... Still the pinnacle of thought
Defies us with its calm integrity
And still the homing pilgrim has no word
To sing the marvels he has seen and heard.

XXXIX

I am afraid of sudden memories
On which my heart may never close the door,
Although it sail the unforgiving seas
And brave the perils of an alien shore.
I dread a host of memories that cling
Beyond the years, whose chains have bound me fast
For all my spirit's valiant journeying,
Holding me helpless prisoner at last.

Remembered words, remembered music steal
Across my sense, and in a lonely hour
I grieve for you, and out of darkness feel
Your sudden touch and am bereft of power.
I could own courage were I not afraid
Of this dark pyre on which my heart is laid!

XL

I tell you this, knowing you will not care,
I make my cry, fearing you will not heed,
Seeing you walk forever unaware
Of my dismay and my most bitter need;
For why I weep and tremble as I go
You do not guess, nor render grief a glance,
Ignoring that which you already know
Yet in your knowing will not countenance.

I tell you this who counted love a thing
As light as dust, and less to be desired—
Tomorrow waits to bring a reckoning
When more than gold and pence shall be required,
When you must render up in blood and tears
Dark penance to the unforgiving years!

XLI

It may be Time will delicately heal
This sudden wound, and so annul the thrust
That vanquishes. Perhaps I shall not feel
A second bitter onslaught. Come what must,
These banners shall not falter into dust,
Nor droop amid the tumult of the fray;
Let craven hearts be readily nonplussed—
Love knows a courage that shall save the day.

The dark alternative men call defeat
Deserves but small consideration, lest
Fear bind the hands and manacle the feet
And courage perish in the stricken breast.
Go forward, heart, whatever menace loom,
Proud of the scars you carry to your doom!

XLII

This can be said of Love and this indeed,
There is no sorrow deadlier than its loss
And no privation greater than its need,
No Calvary more grievous than its cross.
This can be reckoned, this be uttered soon
Though it be trampled after the word is spoken,
Love is the eye which sees and desires the moon,
The pitcher which sought the well and at last was broken.

Love is the wound, the salt and the anodyne,
The shout of the victor and the cry of the slain,
The prayer to indifferent skies, the answering sign,
Love is forever brimstone, fire and rain,
Eternal lord, slave at the heart's commanding
And Love is the peace which passeth understanding.

Publication. *Bright Avowal* (Bruce Humphries, 1933).

PROUD UNIVERSE · PART I

The opening division of Proud Universe (1940)

Reminder

My songs are not of vanity nor mirth,
Of beauty such as fools and knaves despoil,
But they are fashioned out of honest earth,
Their roots are deep in elemental soil.
Laboriously they blossom, in the way
Of all slow-growing things. They are not spent
With years, nor with the rigor of the fray,
But make their peace with time, and are content.

My songs are pilgrims, penniless but proud
Who face the years serene and unafraid;
They do not seek the plaudits of the crowd
Like mincing mannequins upon parade,
But children of the soil and wind and sun,
They breast the fierce tides of oblivion.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Editorial note. Opening poem printed before Part I.

November

There is a crispness in November air
That bids the heart forget the touch of grief
And makes it turn, contemptuous of despair
And sheathe at last the sword of unbelief.

Sweet is the wine of autumn on the lips
And doubly sweet upon the dreaming heart—
Now shadows lengthen and the slow sun dips
Beyond the crest. The day is split apart.

Dusk hovers; silence presently enfolds
The broad domain. Inexorable, grand,
November walks the hills, a king who holds
His realm within the hollow of his hand.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Portent

Who hears the step
Of Autumn pass
Quietly
Over yielding grass

Must cry farewell
To Summer's dream
When twilight falls
On wood and stream.

Who hears the chant
Of Autumn sung
In hearty and
Familiar tongue

Must build his hearth-fire
High, and wait
The voice of Winter
At his gate
Whose song shall wake him
Soon or late

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Reminiscence

I can remember out of pain
The music of September rain
Among the cypresses, along
The rocky shore, the primal song
Of wind and rain and ocean blent
Like some celestial instrument
Repeating to attentive ears
The liquid music of the spheres.
These I shall not forget—the cry
Of wheeling gulls against the sky,
The ebb and surge of laughing spray.
As if it had been yesterday
I shall remember wistfully
Their iridescent symphony;
Out of despair my heart shall hear
The voice of Autumn at its ear
As when I walked beside the sea
And heard September sing to me.
The heart forgets familiar places,
Laughter and song and friendly faces,
Shadows and shapes of long ago.
The winds of time are quick to blow
Them out of sight and out of mind.
Forlorn and mute and unresigned,
The heart forgets a thousand things,
But not the song September sings.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Midsummer

When slanting sunlight leans across the hills,
The shadows slowly deepen, and the day
Recedes.

Her blossom tenderly distils
A subtle fragrance. Struggle though he may,
The traveller is captive in a spell
That summer weaves about him, lover-wise;
His will be tales of sorcery to tell,
Of secrets written strangely in his eyes.

He will remember slowly from a dream
The fruit of summer, luscious to the core,
And cattle kneeling by a shaded stream
To quench their thirst. As tranquil hours unfold
Before his eyes, he will discover more
Than he had guessed one eager heart could hold.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

We Who Have Watched

We who have watched the hounds of morning run
Across the hills and strangely disappear
Into the pastures of oblivion,
Their baying lost to the pursuing ear,
We who have watched the hounds are left to wonder
What splendid quarry theirs, what eager chase,
What cry of triumph and what answering thunder
Shall urge their flying feet to quickened pace?

The sun drops softly... and the day, forlorn,
Numbers its moments with but few to spare;
From far the echo of a huntsman's horn
Challenges mind and heart to hasten where
The hounds of evening wander in full cry
Against the shadow of a darkening sky.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Winter Is Not Our Comrade

Winter is no respecter of our ease—
He will not let us walk beneath the sky
With heads uncovered to a random breeze
Nor kneel among the dreaming fern, nor lie
On any hooded hill. He will not deign
To humor us who were in love with spring,
Whose hearts were friendlier with April rain
Than with this angry wind's derisive sting.

Winter is not our comrade. We must wait
More charitable days than these, to seek
A season's bright renaissance soon or late,
When morning's breath is kind on brow and cheek
And waters locked in icy sleep too long
Welcome the summer with exultant song!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Sonnet

We who have looked on islands in the blue
Soft haze of summer, watched their beacons burn,
Have plumbed horizons that we never knew—
We will not find it easy to return
Silently to the mainland one by one
And sternly hold our peace, remembering
The curve of islands lying in the sun,
The subtle cadence of a sea gull's wing.

We who have looked on islands have no word
To tell what we have found—no syllable
To intimate the music we have heard,
Idyllic and serene and beautiful.
Upon a breaker's swell, where cormorants cry,
Our hearts are moored beneath a boundless sky.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Bright Pilgrimage

The road winds upward to a mountain's crest—
Look never vainly backward as you climb,
On valleys fading swiftly to the west,
But meet the hills that challenge space and time.
Reach upward till your hands touch spreading trees,
Walk into leafy silence, broad and deep;
There are no friends beneficent as these
Wise sentinels of earth who never sleep.

There is no loneliness in solitude
That whispers peace; no fear when night has spun
Her starry web. With joy and faith renewed
The heart looks up. In splendid unison
Deep sky and sea and glowing earth express
The wonder of eternal loveliness.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Bright Sorcery

No music stirs this shallow pool
To memories of a distant hour
When April's fingers tossed a flower
To waters luminous and cool.

So still these brooding waters lie
That hoary Time himself must seem
Only the figment of a dream
Shadowing earth and sea and sky.

Yet song shall blossom from the slow
And delicate awakening
Of worlds that burgeon into spring
From the bright sorcery of snow.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Fog

Fog softly rides upon a mountain's crest—
The hills are indistinct, their outlines blurred
As if a hand had drawn across the west
A sudden curtain. Faithful to its word,
Dusk hovers at the outer canyon's rim;
A hawk skims widely upward in an arc.
Soon evening's beacon, flickering and dim,
Will point a fitful passage through the dark.

Fog closes stealthily upon a world
Indifferent to the pattern of an hour
That finds the banners of its triumph furled;
Upon the threshold of the ivory tower
No watcher challenges the foe who creeps
Across the rooftops while a city sleeps.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Who Waits for Evening

Who waits for evening shall be well rewarded
By all the muted wonder of the dark,
By loveliness that day has slowly hoarded—
With dusk upon his eyelids he shall mark
The sloping hills, cloud-ridden, and the wide
And wistful plains that vanish into space;
Immensity shall leave him stupefied
To stare with awe and wonder on his face.

He shall see fireflies weaving endlessly
The fitful pattern of a summer's flight,
And hear the drowsy music of the sea
Quicken to a crescendo of delight.
Though day be slow to ease the heart of pain,
Who waits for evening shall not wait in vain.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Sonnet

Men who have looked too long upon the sea
Come home bewitched, with visions in their eyes,
With intimations of a sorcery
Only the sea-born know and recognize
Who gaze on torrents flung against the skies
And view the wreck of stalwart ships laid low;
Men who have known the sea too well surmise
More than the inland born can ever know.

For those who walk the lonely shore too long
Have something in their hearts they cannot tell
Who worship solitude, bereft of song
And wrestle with a word they may not spell.
He sleeps and wakes and walks a world apart
Who keeps the sea forever in his heart.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Love Came to Dwell with Them

Love? It's a word that's freely tossed about,
I hear young people use it carelessly,
Blaming their woes, their handicaps on love,
Blind to the void in their own shallow souls.
I see them court frustration with divorce,
Telling their troubles glibly to a judge,
Paying their way to what they label freedom
That they may squander, in the name of love,
The coin they cannot see is counterfeit,
Pursuing phantoms blindly down a road
That leads to emptiness and disillusion.

I turn from them and their unhappy brood
To climb a wind-swept hill and cross a meadow
Where Jason's farm lies, sentinelled with elms;
Here Jason, with his wife and help-meet, Ella,
Has spent his years, brought up eleven children,
Tilling the soil and raising cows and chickens.
Jason, a stalwart son of wind and rain
Beginning as his father did before him,
With little but the will to wrest a living;
Alert and up at dawn to feed the stock
And start the chores that mark another day,
To work serenely and without complaint
As he has toiled these forty-seven years;
And Ella cooking, washing, mending, scrimping
To feed and clothe the brood, and finding time
To school them somewhat in the homespun virtues
With which they may meet life on its own terms.

Each time I cross the road to chat with Ella
Or briefly pass the time of day with Jason,
I take my hat off to their generation—
To watch them gather for the evening meal
Is to see industry and thrift rewarded;
Each word and glance from Jason's wife to Jason
Reflects a joy quite indescribable,
A peace that others seek and have not found.
Within their simple homestead lies the answer
To questions left unanswered or ignored
By those who idly take Love's name in vain.

On sturdy Jason's tombstone and on Ella's
Beneath the elms, I hope to see it graven—
"Love came to dwell with them, and lingered on."

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Interlude

This is a beginning
And an end of pain,
Searching the tired skies
For a hint of rain,
Hearing the heart-beats
Of the night, like drums
And listening for music
That never comes.

This is a beginning
And an end of desire,
To sit empty-hearted
Before a dying fire,
Eager no more to find
Comrade or lover
Now that the nights are deep
And April is over.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Reminder

Earth holds the key to loneliness
Within whose solitude
Man fearful walks across the night
Where sky and ocean brood.

He tarries in the wilderness,
His bed a jutting stone,
He makes his prayer to empty air
And knows himself alone.

Though paltry man beneath the weight
Of loneliness must plod,
His faltering heart may never share
The loneliness of God!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Hill-Dweller

He lives in solitude, content
Within a wordless firmament
And talks with star and tree and stone,
Aloof he dwells, yet not alone.

The language of the seasons he
Has learned, the music of the bee;
The silence of the hills he knows
And every secret of the rose.

What wisdom can a city hold
For one whom dreaming hills enfold,
Who wanders secret paths and wild,
Whom stars have looked upon and smiled,
Who lies among the fern, and keeps
Laughter beside him while he sleeps?

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Counsel

Those eyes from looking on distress
Are prey to utter weariness,
Wherever they may turn, they see
Incredible catastrophe.

Let those sad eyes by woe undone
Look gaily upward toward the sun,
Let them, by grief too long possessed,
Look to the hills and gather rest.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Confession

Books have not taught me all I know
Nor reason all that I surmise—
The winds of loneliness that blow
Across my heart, have made me wise.

I am not versed in ancient lore,
But I have learned from sun and rain
And from the voice of thunder, more
Than word or symbol can explain.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

PROUD UNIVERSE · PART II

The second division of Proud Universe (1940)

City Murder

This is no sudden and impulsive crime
Kindled by loathing, jealousy or wrath,
Rather the deed of one who found the time
Auspicious, and the victim in his path.
The blow was skilful and premeditated,
No angry gesture, but the thrust of one
Whose ruthless mind was scheming while he waited,
Dark messenger of swift oblivion.

Perhaps he lingers in this frozen crowd,
Staring with harsh, triumphant eyes at death,
Masking his guilt with gaze aloof and proud
Or pacing a silent room with quickened breath,
Seeing reflected, like a vivid stain
Upon his brow, the dreadful mark of Cain.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Forsaken House

At the end of the street of lost Delight
A house stands, lonelier than night;

A house whose walls remember well
Secrets they wisely will not tell.

Laughter and song and revelry,
These they remember wistfully,

And these they cherish as old walls must
Against the ravage of moth and rust.

Eyes look away, and cautious feet
Avoid the house at the end of the street;

For none will care and none will come
Where a lonely house stands stricken and dumb,—

Where triumph and tenderness are dead
And Silence sleeps on a moldy bed.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Ordeal

The whistle of an outbound train
Is like a stab of sudden pain
To one who, mute and unresigned
Is somehow always left behind.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

The Dancers

To strains insidious and sweet
The dancers move on careless feet,
Caught in the surge and sorcery
Of rhythm, irresistibly
Swept on an undulating sea.

Strangely they move, without surprise
Through space, indifferent and wise,
Their goal elusive, unconfessed,
A secret prisoned in each breast.
Persistently the oboe weaves
Its spell... the muted trumpet grieves,
And wearily the dancers move,
Heavy with music and with love.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Silence

Silence walks through the city,
But no one turns to stare,
For no one sees that Silence
Has roses in her hair.

And no one follows Silence
Upon her quiet way
Or wonders at her beauty.—
But there will come a day

When strangers will remember
They heard her softly pass,
And cry one to another
How beautiful she was.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Girl in the Subway

She sits within a subway car,
Her fancy lighted by a star
That briefly shone for her delight
One unforgotten summer night;
She sits among the heedless crowd
Silent and tremulous and proud,
And dreams of riding on a cloud
With love no longer in disguise
To guide her gently through the skies...

Musing she sits and does not hear
The voice of reason at her ear,
But wrapped in wonder and elation
Journeys a mile beyond her station.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Sentries

Lone trees that guard
A wintry city
Invite no stranger's
Careless pity.

Like valiant sentries
They command
The ramparts of
A barren land.

True to their trust
They proudly keep
Watch at the citadel
Of sleep,—

Their boughs as bare
As winter's larder,
Yet with what keen,
Unflagging ardor

They wait the promise
Of a spring
Whose birds shall seek
Their boughs, and sing!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Episode

A stranger wandered through the town
And looked the morning up and down,
Wondering at a city's whim
That would not stop and speak to him.

A stranger passed, and going, took
His secret with him. Field and brook
Have shared his story, and the hills
Have strewn his path with daffodils.

A stranger came and went before
The city heard him at her door
And guessed the burden that he bore.
But Silence, faithful to the end,
Walked at his side, a constant friend.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

River Boats

Up and down the river
The little vessels glide,
Dreaming of an ocean
Perilous and wide.

Longing for a journey
Over trackless seas,
Day by day fulfilling
Trivial destinies.

Distant harbors beckon,
Colorful and gay,
Continents and islands
Far beyond the bay.

Patient through the twilight
The little vessels go,
Wistful for the waters
They will never know.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

PROUD UNIVERSE · PART III

The third division of Proud Universe (1940)

Adjuration

Let no bright interval betray
The heart that, having lost its way
Within a maze so wide and deep
Must fall an early prey to sleep;
Within a maze so deep and wide
The heart must roam unsatisfied
In search of imminent delight
Beyond the reach of mortal sight.

Let there be gentle light and rest
To compensate the weary breast,
Familiar voices and a warm
Retreat in time of stress and storm,
That this our load be ever light
And each day more serenely bright,
Each gleaming hour a friend to us
And every pathway luminous.

Let no remote mirage confuse
The groping mind, nor yet accuse
The vague and undiscerning eye—
Let there be light to journey by,
An honest light above that may
Not lead the pilgrim far astray
On strange detours that twist and bend
Along a path that knows no end.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Query

What are we waiting after silence,
What shall we find beyond surprise
To ease the want upon our brows,
The hunger in our eyes!

What are we seeking where we wander
Tense with a bright expectancy,
Whose is the voice that calls us forward,
What is the ghost we flee?

What cry of morning shall we answer,
What music perilous and sweet
Shall call us proudly forth when silence
Shatters in fragments at our feet?

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Nocturne

Pause with me here and see how one
Brave star defies oblivion,
Its constant loveliness unfurled
Against a slowly darkening world

Gaze with me here for one brief hour
Upon a firmament in flower,
For Time's rude hand will gather soon
The delicate blossoms of the Moon.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Serenade

This is no mortal
Music heard
From the strings of a harp,
From the throat of a bird.

This is the music
Silence weaves
Between the blossoms,
Among the leaves.

Forget the music
Your hands have made
And listen, eager
And unafraid.

Give ear to music
Not born of men—
You shall not hear it
Soon again.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Song

How shall I best remember you
With spring once more in flower
Who walked with me a road of dream
For one white, speechless hour?

How shall I best remember you,
With silence or with song,
When summer lies beneath the snows
And waiting years are long!

When Time has fallen fast asleep
And singing suns are set,
How shall my heart remember you,
Or how, at last, forget?

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Prayer

Let there be Music while I live,
That joy be never fugitive,
Though perilous the way and long,
Let me live out my years in song;
And when at last I face alone
The silence of the wide Unknown,
Let Music still, when I embark,
Go forth with me to light the dark.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

The Reckoning

The minutes close above my head
Like earth upon the newly dead;

Like earth upon the freshly slain
The minutes softly close on pain.

They make no music as they pass—
Like phantoms in a looking-glass

I see my years and turn away
And cannot find a word to say.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Confession

I used to ask so much of Life
When I was very young,
And fervent prayers for this and that
Were ever on my tongue.

I used to cry for more of Life
Than eager hands could hold,
Impatient of the passing years
That saw my heart grow old.

But now I ask for little,
Such is my chastened mood,—
Whatever Life may offer,
I take with gratitude.

From worship of satiety
I find my heart redeemed,—
Simplicity is lovelier
Than I had ever dreamed.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Proud Tryst

I

I do not fear the pattern, warm and eager
Your supple body makes, nor am I led
To build a shrine to one whose faith is meagre;
It is no lure of perilous lips I dread
But that which I may neither touch nor tell,
That which my curious heart may never see,
Although it cry aloud it knows you well
And tremble at its own intensity.

It is that part of you Time may not change,
That which my will, though patiently it try,
May scarcely alter. Passionate and strange,
It will not give me peace until I die,
For mine it is to fear your unresigned,
Your cunning and intolerable mind!

II

Compulsion looks out strangely from your eyes
Marked by a longing not to be denied,
An ardor that will scarcely brook disguise
Even at the stern sacrifice of pride.

 This bright anachronism, this perverse
 And obstinate delight is ours to share
 Against the moment when our hearts rehearse
 A song of desolation and despair.

What intimation should a sharp caress
Waken in one unfathomable and old
As Time itself, but young in tenderness,
What fable should this truce of ours unfold,
What answering note of passion darkly spoken
In phrases inarticulate and broken?

III

This love was no less love because it came
As silently and strangely as it went,
This love that flowered skyward like a flame,
Blazing its trail across the firmament.
No less exultant that its song was brief,
Its gallant pledge a mockery of trust,
No less triumphant that it tasted grief
And saw its banners trampled into dust.

Call it by what indifferent name you will,
Laugh it to scorn as fools and cravens do,
Beauty inscrutable is beauty still
And love denied will rise again when you
And I are chaff the winds of time have hurled
Rudely across the ramparts of the world!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Pledge

There is a part of you that I shall keep
When time has softly hidden you from sight,
When I forget to wonder or to weep
That you have crossed the boundary of night,—
Though the grave candor of your searching gaze
Elude me, and the magic of your voice
Return no more to gladden somber days,
I shall discover reason to rejoice.

There is a memory that will not fade
Though fugitive the years forever flee,
A glowing word you whispered unafraid
That time can never snatch away from me.
There is a part of you as frail as breath
My heart shall proudly keep, even from death.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

PROUD UNIVERSE · PART IV

The fourth division of Proud Universe (1940)

Portrait

She is not lonelier than most
Who live alone from spring to spring
And wait to hear the door-bell ring
As if they thought to see a ghost.

It is not loneliness she feels
That makes her wordless and austere
As she goes striding down the year
With Time a lean hound at her heels.

Wonder or scorn she might confess
If she were taken off her guard,
Or anger that had left her scarred,—
All these... but never loneliness.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Apparition

Wherever she wanders
Robed in laughter,
The village lads
Come hurrying after.

Along each road
From hill to hill
They joyfully
Pursue her still.

Her loveliness
To morning flung
Makes children old
And old men young.

A radiant vision
Of delight,
Woman or Circe,
Witch or sprite;

With beauty she
Contrives a snare
Woven of wonder
And despair.

Lads who have plumbed
The dark abyss
Of utter night
To win her kiss

And brave her laughter
Through the gale
Return no more
To tell the tale.

The curious heart
May only guess
The end of her
Elusiveness,

Who walks forever
Robed in laughter
While sun and moon
Run headlong after.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Release

When Amory died,
His woman Kate
Crossed her fingers
And railed at fate;

When Amory sank
With wheezing breath
Into the reaching
Arms of Death,

Kate cried words
She had not known,
But Amory lay
As still as stone;

Kate went sobbing
And cursing God—
With Amory lying
Under the sod.

When Amory slept,
His woman said,
“Would I were with him
Lying dead.”

This much she cried
And turned away
From all who came
To weep and pray.

For six months after
Her lover died,
Kate slept alone
And kept her pride,

Till one sweet night
When spring lay over
The tansy fields
And nodding clover,

She rose and donned
A scarlet gown
And swept like a princess
Through the town,

Till we were hearing
Roof and rafter
Echo the music
Of her laughter,

Till we saw a glow
In her eyes like fever,
And men she beckoned
Were slow to leave her...

I heard the silence
Suddenly broken
By an old name
Unwisely spoken;

I saw Kate start
And toss her head,
And I knew her heart
Had buried its dead,

And turned to life
In proud forgetting
After a slow sun's
Luminous setting.

None blamed her
Or pitied him
Who slept alone
Past the moon's pale rim.

For why should the dead
Be slow forgiving
The pain and joy
And lust of the living?

Better, far better
When all is said,
A woman taste love
Than die unwed,

Aloof from laughter,
Denying lust,
Nursing a dream
Whose hope is dust.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Nocturne

On a night of mist and rain
Phyllis saw her image plain,
Viewed herself repugnant, crass
In her ample looking-glass,
Saw the countenance whose stare
Riddled her with sharp despair.
Phyllis, acolyte of spring,
Wished a bell might swiftly ring,
Send a lover to her side;
Phyllis saw herself a bride
Smiling into tender eyes
Till her image, wan and wise
Gave the lie to her bright vision,
Staring back in grim derision.
Phyllis, flying from despair
Wandered down the stubborn stair,
Stepped into the diffident
Night with amorous intent.
In an hour of rain and mist
Phyllis walked abroad unkissed,
Fiercely longing for the lover
She could strangely not discover,
Walked a league or two, or three,
Turning, fumbled for her key.
Facing midnight unaghost,
Phyllis found her door at last,
Groping darkly, struck a match,
Called the cat in, turned the latch,
Heard a cricket in the grass,
Paused before her looking glass.
From the landing Phyllis heard
Echoes of a muffled word,
Heard her mantel clock, grown gay
Tick her silly life away.
Softly curtailed in her pride,
Phyllis laid her clothes aside;
Furtively the night withdrew,
Leaving no familiar clue.

Phyllis heard the rain no more,
Heard no lover at her door,
Wished that she were dead, and then
Longed for day to come again,
Crept to bed and could not sleep,
Lay and stared and could not weep.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

The Bride

On her wedding day she fled
To a lonely place
Down a path she knew her feet
Never could retrace.

Through a silent wood she crept
Solitary, wild,
Where she lay among the fern
Like a frightened child.

Why she went she could not say,
Only that a Voice
Called her in a sudden hour
Leaving her no choice.

It had been as if she saw
Dimly through a glass
One whose presence summoned her
Through the waving grass.

This had been her wedding morn,
This her day of grace,
Till she found herself forlorn
In a lonely place;

 Till she knew herself alone
 With the wind and rain.—
 Those who gathered at the church
 Waited her in vain.

One whose heart was not his own
Cried her name aloud,
Two and three remembered her
Passionate and proud.

Bells were pealing through the town,
Calling far and wide,—
Through the dark the lonely groom
Vainly sought his bride.

She had wandered far from sight
Over darkening hills
Where her feet had left no trace
In the daffodils.

On her day of joy she fled
Leaving not a clue,
Down the lonely years her kin
Sought her two by two.
Whose the arms that held her fast
No one ever knew.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Aviator's Wife

How could she bind him with her love
Within four walls, and hold him fast
When he had found the heights above
Their world, incredible and vast?

How could she charge him not to roam
Save at her side with quiet pace
When he had made the skies his home
And talked with singing stars in space?

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Hill-Wife

My mother was a plain sort,
My father an Apollo,
I never saw a likely lass
He would not up and follow.

I never saw a willing wench
Who flashed an easy smile,
But that my father turned about
To follow her a mile.

My mother was a quiet sort
Who gladly stayed at home,
My father was another breed
And he was one to roam.

He sang the songs that hill-men know
And laughed and cursed with zest—
I loved my mother fondly,
But I liked my father best.

The morning that he rode away
Rang with his gusty laughter,—
We saw his face no more that day
Nor many a day thereafter.
And though she hid her futile tears
And played her woman's part,
I know it was my father's way
That broke my mother's heart.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Portrait

This man is haunted by the ghost
Of all his heart derided most;
Of mortal weapons unafraid,
By his own fear he is betrayed.

He is confounded by the sight
Of shapes that loom against the night
Unseen by those whose eyes are blind
To that which threatens heart and mind.

He asks no pity, being proud,
Nor words to cry his fear aloud,
His lips defiantly compressed,
He locks his terror in his breast.

He walks in silence, being bound
To shadows. In his face are found
Riddle and answer darkly woven
And nothing sought and nothing proven.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Susanna Passes

Harden not your hearts,
You with whom the wise
Sit as counsellors.
Narrow not your eyes

When she walks your street
With her band of fools
Whose exultant feet
Dancing, make your rules

Words of no account,
Formulas outgrown.
If she ask for bread,
Will you give a stone?

Furtive whispers pass,
Lips and eyes are set.
Shall this golden bird
Tremble in your net?

In your hearts contempt
Sets a knell to ringing;
She will heed you not,
She will pass you singing.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Portrait

Laughter was
Her firm defence
Against the years'
Indifference—

Laughter was her
Most becoming
Garment, whom
The slow and numbing

Tide of hatred
Could not drown.—
Laughter was
A glittering crown

Resting lightly
On her head.
Those who shared
Her wine and bread

Took away with them
Her mirth
Elemental
As the earth.

Those who loathed her,
Those whose pride
Drove them sharply
From her side,

Never could escape
Thereafter
The constant music
Of her laughter.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Portrait

Her sense of humor
Is so keen
She'll snare a jest
At sight unseen,

And find diversion
In the quips
That fall from her
Capricious lips.

A fool's heart beats
Within the breast
Of one who only
Lives to jest,—

Who'll flirt with Death
Behind a laugh
And write her own gay
Epitaph!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Varney

Varney heard above his head
Music like the rush of wings,
Like cool fingers plucking strings,
This and more, he raptly said.

Varney could not sleep for wonder
At the imminence of tone
That assailed him, earth-ward blown,
Irresistible as thunder.

Mocking words and glances grieved him;
Though he labored with a word
To convey what he had heard,
Not a listener believed him.

Varney heard an unseen choir
When the stars were smiling down
On the unbelieving town,—
Setting blood and brain afire.

Through the hills, erect and fleet
Varney capered, drunk with sound,
Till with dewy verdure crowned,
Morning blossomed at his feet.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Portrait

She lived so deep within a dream
She never saw the morning's gleam
And many a song and laughing word
Besought her heedless ear unheard.

So deep within a dream she dwelt
She seemed oblivious. But she felt
Remotely yet insistently
The heart-beat of eternity.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Counsel

Seek the implicit word,
The syllable dark with meaning;
Winnow the chaff to find
A harvest worth the gleaning.

What though the well be dry,
The heart's bright pitcher broken?
Seek the deliberate word
That must not go unspoken.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

The Victor

While wise men, long beset by doubt,
Wander from pole to pole,
The fool who knows his way about
Is first to reach the goal.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Hands

Her hands were slim and delicate and tender
And full of comfort when the years were long,
Hands that had known the courage of surrender,
Hands that were deft, and lyrical as song;
Like birds they moved with light and easy grace,
Making no task a burden to complete,
Eager to serve him, skilful to erase
The bitterness that savored of defeat.

Her gentle fingers curved in a caress
Were quick to speak assurance to the heart
Of one who leaned upon her tenderness
And sought no solitary world apart.
Her hands were warm and intimate and kind,
Though he had never seen them, being blind.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Deprivation

He made no cry to heaven, going blind,
Nor was he one to rail at such a fate,—
He talked and ate and slept like one resigned
To circumstance; nor did he curse the weight
Of darkness on his eyes. For fifty years
He had seen dawn and sunset, known the thrill
Of splendid vistas, watched the glowing spears
Of morning like a host upon the hill.

He would not miss the sheep within their fold,
He whispered, nor the sight of bush and tree,
Russet of autumn, April's green and gold
Bravely he could forswear. Yet silently
He mourned that he might never more behold
The wide, majestic beauty of the Sea.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

PROUD UNIVERSE · PART V

The fifth division of Proud Universe (1940)

Women

Women are indefatigably cruel
To one another, darkly nurturing
Hate in the bosom, gathering slow fuel
To fan each deadlier flame. Women can fling
Reserve away and launch a subtle sting
That lurks in words too intricate to bear,
Too delicately seasoned. These they bring
To ruined altars, smiling and aware.

Women are priestesses who dare invoke
Lightning and thunder out of awful skies,
Who worship words that intimately cloak
Significances sinister and wise.
Lovely and barbarous, with skill to spend
They sharpen claws that passionately rend.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Alice Hare

She is not jealous of the joy he finds
In contact with a host of learned minds,
Nor does she criticize his adulation
Of women who arouse his admiration.
But when he lets her suddenly surprise
A glow of recollection in his eyes
Of days and nights in which she had no part,
She stumbles from him, wounded to the heart.

She is not one to criticize his choice
Of company, nor lift complaining voice
In condemnation of the hours he spends
Burning the candle rashly at both ends.
But when she feels his spirit steal away
Beyond her reaching, follow though she may,
She finds herself resentful, ill at ease
And darkly jealous of his memories.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

David Stanton

He cannot well avert his destiny
Though he may boldly roam the wide world over

Groping for freedom where no man is free,
Challenging life that fashioned him a rover.
He may not cheat his destiny, northward
The certain ultimatum yet in store,
Although his ship ride gallantly to port
Bearing him home victorious from war.

He may not superciliously defy
The last decree, forever have his fling
A word of warning scribbled on the sky
At some far twilight may suffice to bring
His pride to naught and lay his valor by
In that still hour of final reckoning.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Dora Shelton

She dreams herself a modern Joan of Arc
Till martyrdom itself becomes a passion,
But since no foes await her in the dark
And burning at the stake is out of fashion,
She vainly looks for causes to espouse,
For ramparts she may valiantly defend,
Loathing the drudgery of keeping house,
Knowing her labor thwarted in the end.

Hers is a cloistered, rather saintly air—
A martyr to the sins her friends commit,
She Lays her white soul delicately bare;
And yet somehow the halo does not fit
One who, denouncing worldly gain and loss
Stands where the gaping world may view her cross!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Marian Carr

She strove to analyze her own reactions,
An end not always easy to achieve
When life was full of glittering distractions
And formulas invented to deceive.
Herself at last she could not classify
Who wondered why she loved and why she hated
And why she lived to watch her fellows die,
Content to go her way unloved, unmated.

Life on this whirling planet was a strange
Phenomenon not easy to explain;
She watched the stars melt and the seasons change
And knew an odd presentiment of pain
That she must face, even in Death's bright kiss
A riddle which defied analysis.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Grace Clover

Yours was a heart afraid of happiness,
Distrustful of its promise—far too wise
To seek the sum of love in a caress,
Preferring the indifferent surmise
To fathoming the intricate disguise
Confronting you. A doubter's heart alone
Could thus forswear the race, eschew the prize
And ask no bread lest it receive a stone.

Yours was a timorous heart afraid to seize
The radiant interval; reluctant lest
Tomorrow stealing find you on your knees,
A luckless pilgrim on an empty quest.
And so you went your way, secure, alone,
Dreaming of beauty you had never known!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Helen Hart

Her mind is washed as clean of memories,
As clean of recollections of the past
As islands that are washed by summer seas,
She fathoms true serenity at last;
Forgetting she has ever learned to grieve,
Oblivious of tears once freshly shed,
She wears her heart no longer on her sleeve
But lets the shadowy past entomb its dead.

The present leaves her spirit satisfied;
She lives for golden moments that are sweet.
With no transgression, no remorse to hide
She finds the rapture of the day complete,
For looking forward, she has learned to know
Joy walks beside wherever she may go.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

PROUD UNIVERSE · PART VI

The sixth division of Proud Universe (1940)

Case Histories

He hoped to be forgotten
By the world he knew too well,
But stern years paid him homage
Even death could not dispel.

Another hoped his name would live
To echo far and wide
Alas! The heedless world forgot him
Long before he died.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Vigil

I have no appetite for sleep
Who know the watch that I must keep—
In dreadful silence for the sake
Of one late guest I lie awake.

In solitude I lie and hear
The voice of silence at my ear
And count the moments I must wait
To keep a pledge inviolate.

I have no appetite for rest
With weariness upon my breast,
Broad though the chasm yawn, and deep,
I know the watch that I must keep.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Portrait

Here is a man who, sad and full of shame
Cannot remember himself, his given name
Nor why he moves unwillingly through space,
A look of pain upon his stricken face.

Here is a man inquiring up and down
The byways of an unfamiliar town,
“Who am I?” Eyes give answer with a stare
And heads are shaken, mocking his despair.

Identity eludes him, though he stands
Biting his lips and wringing his pale hands,
Between him and his cloudy past a door
Is shut that he may never enter more.

He wanders high and low without a clue,
Give him a name and let him start anew
Lest he discover the truth, and so undone
Seek a swift pathway to oblivion.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Query

What shall our hearts
Unearth to keep
As dear, as delicate
As Sleep?

What shall we find
On wakeful ways
To move our hearts
To instant praise,
Like Sleep
In whose profound embrace
We look on rapture
Face to face?

Seek though you may,
You shall not find
On the broad hilltops
Of the mind,

Nor on uncharted
Sky and sea
Such measure of
Serenity

As hearts
Too diffident to weep
Have briefly found
In dreamless sleep.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Sleep

Sleep is a friend, a dearer friend than man
Has ever found in his extremity;
He has seen foes and friends, since time began,
Come and depart—but he will never be,
While sleep is with him, utterly forsaken;
Whatever ravage his poor heart has known,
He who has given himself to sleep will waken
Singing, and will not find himself alone.

The hands of sleep are kind, the face of sleep
Is beautiful at morning on the pillow;
He who has known her kiss will cease to weep
And lie at last in peace beneath the willow,
Hearing the voice he loves with bated breath,
The bloom of sleep upon his brow, like death.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Disenchantment

She sought a love he could not understand
Whose heart was hostage to her loveliness;
He could not follow her into that land
Where she had fled, evading his caress.
Hers was a country turbulent and strange
Whose misty borders he could never cross,
Whose hills and valleys were not his to range
Her gain he shared as little as her loss.

The city of her ultimate salvation
Lay farther than a lover might surmise
Who could not share her grief and her elation
Nor quench the flame that burned behind her eyes,
Nor guess the substance of a dream that led
Her feet into the kingdom of the dead.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Interim

Death came and found him-suddenly, in sleep
Where he had thrown himself for weariness
Upon his homely couch and shut the door
On all the cares that marked his day of toil.
Somewhere a clock struck seven; voices rose
Beyond, and fell; then all again was still.
A fly buzzed vaguely on the window pane.
Soft breezes stirred the curtains; this his room
With faded walls, familiar chairs and bed,
Its window looking to the quiet west,
Seemed as before, yet subtly different
When she, his wife, came in and stood and coughed
Her little conscious cough, and spoke his name,
Smiled to herself, crossed over, drew the blinds
And spoke his name again close at his side,
And leaned, and could not waken him at all.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Aftermath

He welcomed death, as one who sought
A new and joyous mating,
And drained the cup... then woke to find
Lite calm and changeless, waiting!

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

PROUD UNIVERSE · PART VII

The concluding division of Proud Universe (1940)

Little Churches

Like valiant sentinels from dawn to dawn
The country churches lift their lofty spires
And wait to welcome pious hearts withdrawn
From worldly aspirations and desires.
How firm they stand, defying wind and rain,
Oblivious of the burden of the years,
Deaf to the sullen threat of fear and pain,
Unshaken at the impotence of tears.

The pleas of those who knelt in reverence
Long years ago, and bowed their heads in prayer,
Invoking Heaven's serene benevolence,
Linger upon this consecrated air
And bid the pilgrim lift his voice to bless
The little churches of the wilderness.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

The Undefeated

We are the Undefeated, who have known
Terror and persecution. At our feet
The seeds of inhumanity are sown
For whom the fruit of life was once so sweet.

We are the Conquerors, from whose dark shame
Shall blossom joy to set the earth aglow;
He too was undefeated, in Whose name
We ask forgiveness for the reckless foe.

Though scorn malign and hatred crucify,
We are the Conquerors, whose sons shall see
His word endure, His blessings multiply
With peace and honor, for eternity.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

The Dictator

What Elba waits for him who would
Destroy the peace of brotherhood
And write his name in blood and fire
To gratify a mad desire?
What silence shall at last defy
The cunning of his hand and eye,
What hell awaits the reckless brain
That revels in despair and pain,
What path his steps may not retrace,
How shall he answer face to face
The ultimate Dictator of
A world whose cornerstone is Love?

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

Summary

This generation understands the last
As little as it may, being engrossed
In its brief day, forgetful of the past
And unaware of that invisible host
Which watches, torn with pity and distress,
To see its errors born again, its hate
Courting catastrophe beyond redress,
Its sons and daughters hostages of fate.

The dead are silent while the living wage
Their ceaseless warfare still. Dark circumstance
Rolls up the curtain on a shifting stage
Whose actors are the victims of mischance,
Playing their desperate roles in the deep trance
Of men unmindful of their heritage.

Publication. *Proud Universe* (1940).

SELECTED POEMS · BRIGHT AVOWAL

The opening division of Selected Poems, 1919–1948 (1949)

Bright Avowal

I

The day and hour were much like any day
And any hour-except that in that space
I found what Time can never snatch away
Glowing against the contour of your face,
Smiling at me from grave and searching eyes
That said more than they dared to say, and more
Than one could answer simply, lover-wise;
This day was not like any day before!

This day was like no day that followed after
In the dark calendar of restless years,
No other day so wholly wrapped in laughter,
No mortal hour again so close to tears,
No moment quickened into deathless flame
As when I heard your lips repeat my name!

2

If this be love, let it suffice for us
Whose hearts are weary after endless seeking;
To shut it from the heart were treasonous—
Let us be still as if a god were speaking
Whose ultimatum found us on our knees.
If this be love, let it be ours to keep
Against the hour when stealthy memories
Shall snatch us from the shining hands of sleep.

Let this suffice, and let our morrows rest
In peace upon the lap of destiny,
Else shall the moment find us dispossessed,
Stripped of the armor of serenity,
And leave us dumb, bewildered, unresigned,
In quest of that which we shall never find.

3

Out of my longing and my loneliness
I make a song for you, and it shall be
Frail as the touch of air, as the wind's caress,
Mortal as music, timeless as the sea
That falters at your threshold. Out of dust,
Out of the rich dark plenitude of earth
I fashion that which autumn shall not rust
Nor winter doom implacably at birth.

Out of this waiting heart a dream shall rise
And swiftly find its way to one still door
To look for recognition in your eyes;
Out of my hope and out of the rich store
Of faith I send you this unshriven seed
That it may blossom in your hour of need.

4

Let no dark breath of sacrilege confuse
Our spirits consecrated to this Word;
Ours is a boundless theme on which to muse,
For by Divinity our hearts are stirred
This is the answer to our crying need,
The swift response to our bewildered prayer—
This cup is offered us if we but heed,
This true communion is our own to share.

From chaos let no alien word confound
The final mandate of the voice of reason.
Long may our cry of gratitude resound
And every faltering doubt be reckoned treason
By hearts that learn the impotence of pain,
The power of prayer that rises not in vain!

5

The gracious gesture of renunciation
Is profitless in this emergency;
Invoke no symbol of a new frustration
To cloud our eyes with sudden misery.
Freedom is bitter to the lonely free
Who walk the earth in lordly solitude
Their eyes forever shut to ecstasy,
Gnawing at husks of holiness for food.

Then bind upon your brow the sign of Venus
And make your peace with her when you awake
Whose fingers wove this shining bond between us;
Hers is a glowing universe at stake.
Hear from the lips of love a nobler story
Than pallid martyrs sing on thrones of glory!

6

Be to me all I dream that you can be,
My sun and sky and my unchanging star,
My promised Land and my eternal Sea,
Be to me all that you forever are,
A lamp in darkness leading me along
 A perilous way,—a sure and steadfast light;
 O be my exultation and my song,
 My secret ardor and my sudden might.

Be to me all I have not dared to dream,
The ultimate of all I strain to find,
My aspiration and my joy supreme,
Be to me soul and vision, heart and mind.
I ask but little else... Whate'er befall,
O be my love and loveliness—my all!

7

Now let the heart run lightly through the grass
Before a summer vanishes in mist,
And let the old loves delicately pass
Whose memories incredibly persist;
Let there be peace this day and a forgetting
Of all that drowsy hearts are loath to keep,
And let there be no rue and no regretting
When first we stir and slowly rise from sleep.

Let not the heart look back upon desire
With any semblance of despair or dread,
Nor stir the ashes of a dying fire
That with the gust of autumn will be dead.
Look up and sing, for morning is astir—
Was ever glimpse of heaven lovelier?

8

I am afraid of sudden memories
On which my heart may never close the door,
Although it sail the unforgiving seas
And brave the perils of an alien shore.
I dread a host of memories that cling
Beyond the years, whose chains have bound me fast
For all my spirit's valiant journeying,
Holding me helpless prisoner at last.

Remembered words, remembered music steal
Across my sense, and in a lonely hour
I grieve for you, and out of darkness feel
Your sudden touch, and am bereft of power.
I could own courage were I not afraid
Of this dark pyre on which my heart is laid!

9

I should not care to fathom you too well,
To seek what lies behind the furtive mask
You wear, nor hearken what your lips may tell
Of scornful artifice. I shall not ask
Whence you have come nor whither you may go;
It is enough that in the cloak of dread
You can defy the cunning of a foe
Who wishes, but cannot behold you dead.

The semblance of a sneer that curls your lip
And keeps a world at bay—is this the whole
Of you? Should he find more who dared to strip
The grin away and bare the gaping soul,
Or would he look past terror and despair
Upon the utter emptiness of air?

10

I tell you this, knowing you will not care,
I make my cry, fearing you will not heed,
Seeking you walk forever unaware
Of my dismay and my most bitter need;
For why I weep and tremble as I go
You do not guess, nor render grief a glance,
Ignoring that which you already know
Yet in your knowing will not countenance.

I tell you this who counted love a thing
As light as dust and less to be desired—
Tomorrow waits armed with a reckoning
When more than gold and pence shall be required,
When you must render up in blood and tears
Dark penance to the unforgiving years!

11

This can be said of Love and this indeed,
There is no sorrow deadlier than its loss
And no privation greater than its need,
No Calvary more grievous than its cross.
This can be reckoned, this be uttered soon
Though it be trampled after the word is spoken,
Love is the eye which sees and desires the moon,
The pitcher which sought the well and at last was broken.

Love is the wound, the salt and the anodyne,
The shout of the victor and the cry of the slain,
The prayer to indifferent skies, the answering sign,
Love is forever brimstone, fire and rain,
Eternal lord, slave at the heart's commanding
And Love is the peace which passeth understanding.

12

It will not be enough to hear you praise
Love in the language of the seraphim,
Exalting her in half a hundred ways,
Groping untiringly for synonym
For that strange loveliness which is her own,
Nor will it comfort me to hear you cry
How you have knelt before her shrine alone
And hailed her star ascendant in the sky.

I have no heart for miracles tonight
Nor any faith in sudden eloquence
To conjure up the specter of delight—
The word we muster has no permanence.
It is against your lips and arms I keep
Serenity until the hour of sleep.

13

In the warm curve of your exultant arm
There must be solace for the last despair
And faith to counteract the evil charm
Laid silently to take men unaware.
Not in the acquiescence of your lips
But in denial, silent wonder waits,
While your eyes blaze a fearlessness that strips
The dark veneer of chance, and mocks the fates.

So let me come to you when standards fail
And odds of battle lean toward the foe;
Your ecstasy shall be my coat of mail
And render every thrust a glancing blow.
Your lips on mine, your breath against my breath—
It may be this alone shall conquer death.

14

You are more beautiful than wanton words
That weave a story scintillant and strange,
More lovely than the flight of eager birds
Your lifting thoughts in swift profusion range.
When first you walked into my world of doubt
It was as if my eyes beheld afar
Time's deathless legions rallying from rout
Beneath the promise of a blazing star.

It was as if a sudden wall of flame
Had set a helpless universe afire,
Again, as if a foe with banners came
To storm the citadels of my desire
And found the watchman drowsing at the gate.
You are so dear. Why did you come too late?

15

I thought of you till thought itself became
A dark adventure and a perilous quest,
Till every ticking hour cried out your name,
You, the Unyielding and the Unpossessed,
You, the immediate and eventual Song—
My thought encompassed you, unsatisfied
With lesser night and morning and their throng
Wide as the heart of loneliness is wide.

No shaken earth and no tumultuous skies
Woke at my word at last. Above my head
Orion watched, indifferent and wise.
Through the long night, alone, unshepherded,
I thought of you till Silence intervening
Caught at the dream and guessed its secret mean— ing.

16

Knowing your body, delicate and proud,
Its secrets and its confidences, knowing
Its loveliness among an alien crowd,
Its ardours and its eloquences glowing,
I am constrained to summon you apart,
To draw you somewhat from the listless throng
Where I may hear the beating of your heart
And touch your lips to ecstasy of song.

I am but one... and there are sudden dangers
From greedy hands that press about you seeking.
I am but one lost in a maze of strangers
Who trample on the word my heart is speaking;
But you have smiled and cancelled the offence—
All else remains of little consequence.

17

The whiteness of your body in the dusk
Rekindles ardor in my singing blood;
Again I winnow beauty from the husk
And passion sweeps me with the ancient flood.
Your fingers touch my arm, and I am made
One with a host exultant over time
And space-no longer timid and afraid
Of windy stairs too tenuous to climb.

Your breath is on my cheek, and in my eyes
Your certain image stamped indelibly;
I am refashioned, radiant and wise
Since you have crossed a world to succor me.
The gift of ecstasy lies in our keeping;
Look homeward, Time. You shall not find love sleeping!

18

I do not fear the pattern, warm and eager
Your supple body makes, nor am I led
To build a shrine to one whose faith is meagre;
It is no lure of perilous lips I dread
But that which I may neither touch nor tell,
That which my curious heart may never see,
Although it cry aloud it knows you well.
And tremble at its own intensity.

It is that part of you time may not change,
That which my will, though patiently it try,
May scarcely alter. Passionate and strange,
It will not give me peace until I die,
For mine it is to fear your unresigned,
Your cunning and intolerable mind!

19

This love was no less love because it came
As silently and strangely as it went,
Passion that flowered skyward like a flame
Blazing its trail across the firmament;
No less exultant that its song was brief,
Its gallant pledge a mockery of trust,
No less triumphant that it tasted grief
And saw its banners trampled into dust.

Call it by what indifferent name you will,
Laugh it to scorn as fools and cravens do,
Beauty inscrutable is beauty still
And love denied will rise again when you
And I are chaff the winds of time have hurled
Rudely across the ramparts of the world!

20

Because my heart was lonely in the night
I cried your name aloud against the dark.
A word went echoing but found no light,
An arrow perished far below its mark.
Fingers of silence tightened at my throat,
The air was heavy with unspoken dread,
My senses swam. I heard the far-off note
Of midnight toll for the unsleeping dead.

You were not with me, yet your shadow lay
Across my sill. I closed my eyes and slept
And woke again to think I heard you say,
“Be wise, forget.”—Then silence leaned and wept
Above me, and I felt against my cheek
Her burning tears, and lay and could not speak.

21

My place is with my darling where she lies
And gravely mused in the twilight hour,
My lady with the dewy-lidded eyes
And lips that curve like petals of a flower.
Love lies upon her mouth and on her fingers
And on her bosom joy itself was born—
My heart is with my darling where she lingers
And I would sing her praises night and morn.

Time laughs at me, for I am lost in space
And borne through worlds that neither know nor care,
But I can close my eyes and see her face
And know again the fragrance of her hair.
My place is with my lovely One. In sleep
I hear her cry my name aloud, and weep.

22

This is the hardest hour of all to bear
When I turn slowly back to my still room
Where you have been, who are no longer there—
This is the after hour, when shadows loom
And walls bend down to listen, when delight
Is lost in doubt, and dark forebodings press
Upon the uneasy heart, when all the night
Is heavy with the weight of loneliness.

This room has known you-table, hearth and chair
Treasured your chiming laughter. Now the spell
Is shattered by the closing of a door.
This is the darkest hour of all to bear
Alone in my still room that knew you well
And loving you, will know you now no more.

23

There is a part of you that I shall keep
When time has softly hidden you from sight,
When I forget to wonder or to weep
That you have crossed the boundary of night,—
Though the grave candor of your searching gaze
Elude me, and the magic of your voice
Return no more to gladden sombre days,
I shall discover reason to rejoice.

There is a memory that will not fade,
Though fugitive the years forever flee,
A glowing word you whispered unafraid
That time can never snatch away from me.
There is a part of you as frail as breath
My heart shall proudly keep, even from death.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Exhortation

A poem is a changeless entity,—
Mysterious and musical, it glows
With light and color of the brimming sea,
Its breath the simulacrum of the rose.

If you would garner the transparent flower
Of loveliness, the cool and unpossessed,
Pluck from the moment, from the gathering hour
The bloom of song, and hold it to your breast.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Night Song

The night is full of mystery. In vain
The heart goes seeking down the nameless dark—
The night is full of wonder, on whose breast
A star, traced faintly, gutters to a spark.

The night is rich with silence, with a joy
It sought across the years and never knew.
Dearest, to one whose heart is lost in dream
The night is full of you.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Better Than Wind

Better than sun
And sky and air
I love the passion flower
Of prayer.
Better than highways
Broad and kind
I treasure lonely paths
That wind.

Better than wind
And rain and fire,
The twinkling dust
Of my desire;

Better than lads
Long-limbed and fleet
A slender maid
Whose mouth is sweet.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Survival

Your beauty is a lyric thing,
One little voice too small
Upon the noisy way of life
To sing and tell it all.
Yet some shall pause and some shall hear
And some shall mark me well,
And some shall say, “Good friends, give ear
To what he has to tell.”

In after days, if memory grope
Through hazy years and long,
Which shall the world remember,
Your beauty-or my song?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Enchanted Ground

There is a way that lovers know
Of finding that which is not found
Except in secret ways and slow
Across enchanted ground.

There is a language lovers speak
Too beautiful for tongue,
A haven they are quick to seek
In silence, old and young.

They share a song who wander bound
By words their hearts are speaking,
A music I have never found
For all my careful seeking.

That joy which cools the heart like snow
I do remember well,
But never that which lovers know
And have no word to tell.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Midsummer

You loved me for a little
Who could not love me long;
You gave me wings of gladness
And lent my spirit song.

You loved me for an hour,
But only with your eyes;
Your lips I could not capture
By storm or by surprise,—

Your mouth that I remember
With rush of sudden pain
As one remembers starlight
Or roses after rain.

Out of a world of laughter
Suddenly I am sad...
Day and night it haunts me,
The kiss I never had.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

One Who Never Told Her Name

You are fluted laughter
On a high hill,
And you are the silence
Of music grown still.

The lightly winging cloud
And soaring sun,—
You are the chiming bell
When day is done.

If you were none of these,
Silence or song,
How should I worship you
Day and night long?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

She Walks in Tenderness

My lady is the fairest thing
That ever came within my sight;
Her loveliness is my delight—
I tremble when I hear her sing.

She walks in tenderness, and calls
The birds by name from near and far;
Her eyes reflect the rising star
Above her head, as evening falls.

My lady has but to command
And I am hers. With maiden art
How easily she holds my heart
Within the hollow of her hand.

I come to her on bended knee.
Her mouth is cool and very sweet,
And when I kiss her gentle feet
I know that God is good to me.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Woodland Fear

If love but pass this way again
And pause beside the cypress bark,
Shall you or I be here to mark
Her footstep, light as summer rain,

Or, cowards after sudden pain,
Shall we run lightly through the fern,
Dreading her face at every turn
If love but pass this way again?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Desire

All I want that life can give me,
Glow of evening, flush of morn,
Thrill of seasons ever changing,
Joy of linnet in the thorn,
Children's voices, bare of sorrow,
Hands to touch mine in the gloom,
Gentle hands... and most of all,
Music in a quiet room.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Discovery

Remembering words
We had together
Concerning chance
And woe and weather,
 Concerning pathways
 Lately lost
 And seas uncharted
 Or uncrossed,

 Concerning moods
 And motor cars,
 Anemones
 And shooting stars,

I have discovered
Two can chat
An hour or more
Of this and that

And part assured
And comforted
For having left love
Well unsaid.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Serenade

This is no mortal
Music heard
From the strings of a harp,
From the throat of a bird.
This is the music
Silence weaves
Between the blossoms,
Among the leaves.
Forget the music
Your hands have made
And listen eager
And unafraid.
Give ear to music
Not born of men—
You shall not hear it
Soon again.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

When Summer Lies

How shall I best remember you
With spring once more in flower,
Who walked with me a road of dream
For one white, speechless hour?

How shall I best remember you,
With silence or with song,
When summer lies beneath the snows
And waiting years are long?

When Time has fallen fast asleep
And singing suns are set,
How shall my heart remember you
Or how, at last, forget?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Claudia's Song

He is gone down the road
In the bright spring rain;
Heart, O my heart,
Shall we see him again?

Shall we hear his step
In the cadence we know,
He who has gone
Where the fickle winds blow?

What avail promises
Beating at my ears
Now that he has gone
Past reach of tears?

Now that he has strode on
And shut the last door,
Whisper, my heart;
Shall we ever see him more?

Now an empty hearth
Is dusted and swept,
What now are promises
Broken or kept?

Yesterday he smiled
And waved a light hand.
Last night we kissed,
Forgot we had planned
Never any parting,
Even for a day.
Cruel, cruel winds
To bear him away!

Nearer the moon now
And the farthest star
Than one the fickle winds
Have borne so far.

How can I sing
Any song save pain
Now that he is gone
With the bright spring rain?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

All That I Kept Hid

I knew a woman who
Fathomed me well,
Reading deep in my eyes
All I would not tell.

And I knew a woman who
Searched me for more
Than she could ever find
Or had found before.

But I loved a woman best
Who never thought to see
All that I kept hid
In the depth of me.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Timeless Hour

I can remember silences
Upon a western hill
And essences like nectar
That deadened sense and will.

I can remember curving roads
That slipped into the gloom,
Dim nights profoundly fragrant
With heaven and earth in bloom.

I can remember dateless hours
Spent in a world apart
And midnight on a western hill
With you against my heart.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Lest Some Still Night

There is a song I shall not sing,
A road I shall not tread,
A crimson rose I shall not fling
Now that delight is dead.

I shall be reticent and wise
And lie at ease as others do,
But I shall fear to close my eyes
Lest some still night I dream of you.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Captive

She is caught in a trap like a lovely mouse,
Caught in a snare and past recall,
Love has her fast in a shuttered house
And she does not struggle at all.

Love has her close and there's no escaping,
Though she be subtle and slow to win,
No retreat with the morrow gaping
And silence to close her in.

Caught in a snare while the dark hours stumble
Little she grieves for a day grown small,
And little she cares what worlds may crumble
Beyond her cottage wall.

Now she is singing, her heart has risen
To meet the morning that love has made;
Smiling she sits in her trellised prison
Lovely and unafraid.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Song

What does it matter now
That April's been and gone
And not a star is left
To pin a dream upon?
And not a road is left
To wander until day
Comes streaming down the east
To bear our dreams away.

What does it matter now
If all loveliness
Prove fleeting as a song
Or a lost caress?

For I have met your eyes
And I have kissed your brow.
O wonderful and wise,
What does it matter now?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

While Roses Fade

Past her ears no music sweeps
As the dawn begins to stir;
At her breast no lover sleeps,—
Pity lies with her

Through the silent, sleepless hours.
Pity sighs, but never speaks,
Thinking how the roses fade
From the fairest cheeks.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Deny the Heart

Deny the heart the sustenance
Of love and her delight,
The comfort of a tender word,
The gift of second sight,
It will discover kindness still
And joy whereof to take its fill.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Reunion

When we met again,
Smiling and light-hearted,
It was quite as though
We had never parted.

What an idle myth
Separation seemed—
With the future rosy
Just as we had dreamed.

Yet by such a narrow
Margin we regained
This familiar rapture
Ere its ardor waned;

What if I'd been burdened
With remembered sins,
Or if you had met me
Gravely leading twins?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Though the Willows Grieve

This day they do not know their roads will cross,
They, cannot read the pattern Time will weave
Nor feel a swift presentiment of loss—
No sign has warned them, though the willows grieve
And autumn lies forlorn. They may not master
The secret of the morrow as they go
Each on a road that beckons to disaster,
Two who will meet, and share the cup of woe.

Destiny draws them like a magnet, toward
A focal point to both as yet unknown.
Above them sternly hangs the invidious sword
That waits to cleave them sharply, flesh and bone.
Time will inform them, quick to castigate,
And Time will coldly waken them-too late.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Marauder

When love comes gnawing
There's little use
In trying to trick him
By sudden ruse.

Love comes nibbling
For all of that,
Wise as a witch
And soft as a cat.

When love comes scratching
Lock all the doors
And pray he'll steal
No treasure of yours.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919-1948* (1949).

The Mind Forgets

The mind takes counsel, being wise
In time of sudden stress,
The heart, a victim of surprise
Looks vainly for redress.

The mind reserves opinion, weighs
The moment and is shrewd.
The heart invokes the urgent phrase
To clothe the fleeting mood.

When days that gave our fancies wing
Are gone to dust and embers,
The mind forgets the face of spring—
Only the heart remembers.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

If Time Relent

It may be we shall love again,
Perhaps more fondly than before,
But for this day and night I know
I must depart and close the door.
And I must bear away with me
Your “fare-thee-well” to warm my ears,
And I must take your laughter on
And not be heeding sudden tears.

I think that we shall meet again
Forgetting all we need not keep,
With Beauty’s taper slim and tall
To burn beside us when we sleep.

And if time bring my shadow back
And bid you hearken when I call,
It may be we shall love again
Or maybe love no more at all

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

SELECTED POEMS · LOST SEASON

The second division of Selected Poems, 1919–1948 (1949)

Lost Season

Moon of the lost season, linger near,
Moon of returning autumn, heed again
The heart's cry over the lonely weir,
The heart's shadow dark upon the plain.

See how the hare is furtive in the grasses,
The cricket's song is stilled, the plaintive loon
Withholds his call. Time trembles as he passes—
The rose will droop, its petals fall too soon.

Moon of remembrance, turn, but not for long,
Mirror this rapture delicate and brief.
Moon of the lost season, be my song,
My comfort in the night of unbelief.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Skyward

This flight of swallows in the morning air
Is effortless and buoyant. As they pass,
Horizons broaden and the day is fair
With moving birds above a sea of glass.

Who may forget a moment of delight
That mirrored glint of spray, with sea grass clinging
And over all this miracle of flight—
My heart goes skyward with the swallows winging!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Journey in Autumn

From under cloudy skies one autumn day
We came upon a lane of sunlight clear
As sudden silver flung across our way,
And laughed to see the shadows disappear.

The day grew deeper still, became a well
Whose hidden depth the heart could scarcely plumb.
The chiming voice of evening was a bell
Whose song we could not echo, being dumb.

Rain did not fall. We paused with listening ears
For overtones of storm or distant thunder.
Night offered us, instead of autumn tears
A shower of stars to dazzle us with wonder.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Midsummer Song

The sky is a mirror
In which I see
The face of Summer
Smile at me.

The sky is a looking-glass
Serene
Reflecting gray
And blue, and green.

It mirrors hills
And sleepy herds,
Billows and rocks
And crying birds;

A glass of dream
Without a flaw.—
Perceived in ecstasy
And awe

The face of earth
Grows brighter, clearer
Viewed in the sky's
Amazing mirror.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Flight

So nothing mattered after April went
And took our dream, and left us strangely groping
Across the dark until our strength was spent,
Till there was little virtue left in hoping.

You with your long pale hair, and curving bodice,
Your wistful glance, no longer very wise,
Drooped from your early stature of a goddess
And turned to mortal maiden in my eyes.

One word came from your lips, and one word only.
Evening stirred and sighed, while silence slept,
April had fled and left us, lost and lonely,
Strangers who stared in each other's eyes and wept.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Summit

The hill of loneliness is high
And few there are who seek
To brave its paths that dare the sky
And reach its perilous peak.

Its summit hides no streets of gold,
No proud and pearly gates,
Yet for the fearless heart and bold
Its silent wonder waits.

Who climbs to stand upon its brink
May walk unshod, unshriven,
For from its crest his eyes may drink
The whole of earth and heaven.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Vista

Green hills and a blue sky
And a soft wind blowing,—
The heart's bright cup of rapture
Is filled to overflowing.

Tall cliffs and an opal sea
And far clouds scudding,
Hollyhock, lilac, columbine
And early roses budding.
Happy the feet that wander free,
Grateful the heart, finding
Green hills and a blue sky
And a white road winding.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Moment

My love came up from the sea, dripping with brine,
Rich with the scent of the sea, with its fragrance and fire,
She came to my arms and I hailed her and called her mine
And crushed her lips with the kiss of my heart's desire.

My love came up with laughter, skimming the sand,
The glistening water ran from her thighs like rain;
Breasting a wave she came, with love in her hand,
Joy in her eyes and never a thought of pain:

My love came up, and I saw the day release
Its shafts of gold across the shimmering air,
The stars sang out, unable to hold their peace
And the heavens smiled on the joy that we had to share.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

When Silence Shatters

What are we waiting after silence,
What shall we find beyond surprise
To ease the want upon our brows,
The hunger in our eyes?

What are we seeking where we wander
Tense with a bright expectancy,
Whose is the voice that calls us forward,
What is the ghost we flee?

What cry of morning shall we answer,
What music perilous and sweet
Shall call us proudly forth when silence
Shatters in fragments at our feet?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Moon Blossoms

Pause with me here and see how one
Brave star defies oblivion,
Its constant loveliness unfurled
Against a slowly darkening world.

Gaze with me here for one brief hour
Upon a firmament in flower,
For Time's rude hand will gather soon
The delicate blossoms of the moon.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Let Music Still

Let there be music while I live,
That joy be never fugitive,
Though perilous the way and long,
Let me live out my years in song;
And when at last I face alone
The silence of the wide Unknown,
Let Music still, when I embark
Go forth with me to light the dark.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Redemption

I used to ask so much of life
When I was very Young
And fervent prayers for this and that
Were ever on my tongue.

I used to cry for more of life
Than eager hands could hold,
Impatient of the drifting years
That saw my heart grow old.
But now I ask for little,
Such is my chastened mood,—
Whatever life may offer
I take with gratitude.

From worship of satiety
I find my heart redeemed;
Simplicity is lovelier
Than I had ever dreamed.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Reckoning

The minutes close above my head
Like earth upon the newly dead;

Like earth upon the freshly slain
The minutes softly close on pain.

They make no music as they pass.
Like phantoms in a looking-glass

I see my years and turn away
And cannot find a word to say.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

For a Wayfarer

Cross no bridge unless you know
What lies shimmering below,

What awaits the heart beyond.
Leave no valley fair and fond

For a road that is not kind;
Burn no friendly bridge behind

Till you know the land that lies
Underneath your seeking eyes.

Heed a traveller's advice
Who has, blundered once or twice,

Cross no bridge that does not lead
To the country of your need.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

River Boats

Up and down the river
The little vessels glide,
Dreaming of an ocean
Perilous and wide;

Longing for a journey
Over trackless seas,
Day by day fulfilling
Trivial destinies.

Distant harbors beckon,
Colorful and gay,
Continents and islands
Far beyond the bay.

Patient through the twilight
The little vessels go
Wistful for the waters
They will never know.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Rain at Evening

The tapers of the day burn low at last
And one by one her acolytes depart;
From silence unassailable and vast
The night lets fall her tears upon my heart.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Against the Wind

He walks against the wind, observes the birds
Darting in shadow, one with rain and mist,
He shouts against the gale, and knows his words
Buffeted by the wind's enormous fist.

Exhilaration fills him, and he cries
Syllables for a cadence. Soon he hears
A wintry message when the wind replies
In challenge that is music to his ears.

His is a simple path-yet he can trace
The loveliness of winter, with her thinned
And frosty breath at evening in his face,
Walking against the wind.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Draught

Drink deep of peace as you would drain
The cup of April cool and clear,
An anodyne to cancel pain
And banish fear.

Repose is here by day or night
And quiet waking after sleep.
For this is peace, the heart's delight—
Drink deep.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Fugitive

In a perilous hour the heart, a frightened fawn,
Looks for escape where there is none to find,—
Into the formless dusk, the pitiless dawn
The heart retreats, alone and unresigned.

It cries its sorrow to the budding leaf,
The young rose listens, and the daffodil.
The heart laments its loneliness; its grief
Wakens the valley, stirs the listless hill.

Shadowed by sadness and the shape of dread,
Its music jangled in the shaken breast,
In a dark hour the heart, uncomforted,
Troubles the sea and sky, and finds no rest.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Crescendo

The song of rain is rhythmical and certain,
Falling in quiet cadence on the land,
Midsummer fog lifts up its seamless curtain
And shows the glint of water in the sand.

The cricket holds his peace as if in wonder
And silence falls upon the bird's refrain;
From distant hills, above the voice of thunder
Swells the crescendo of the falling rain.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Haven

Loneliness came never here
Where the willow rushes quiver,
Where the print of spring is clear
In the sand beside the river.

You will never find him where
Winds of morning gently shake
Lilac bough and maidenhair;
He has other paths to take.

Loneliness has subtly found
Many a cavernous abyss,
Crag and crevice, tempest-bound—
Never this.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Elegy for April

What can I say of April
Or what can I leave unsaid
Who in a barren hour believed
April was dead?

Dead, and long I mourned her,
Sought her in sun and rain,
Till with a rush of crimson
April was born again.
Now I can jest with folly,
Smile at my young heart's fears,
But how can I look at April
Save through a mist of tears?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Bright Sorcery

No music stirs this shallow pool
To memories of a distant hour
When April fingers tossed a flower
To waters luminous and cool.

So still these brooding waters lie
That hoary Time himself must seem
Only the figment of a dream
Shadowing earth and sea and sky.

Yet song shall blossom from the slow
And delicate awakening
Of worlds that burgeon into spring
From the bright sorcery of snow.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Watcher

He found the substance of a song
Where others saw but steel and stone;
With eager ears that listened long
He caught the quiet monotone
 That wakened him to new delight
 And left his heart unfettered, free
 To trace the magic of the night
 In a skyscraper's symmetry.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Winter Music

The harps of winter echo
From misty field and hill
When evening lies in shadow
And all the land is still.

The woodsman halts in wonder
And hears as in a dream
The sound of harpstrings, dwelling
On one recurrent theme.

The shepherd turns from musing,
A thistle at his ear,
And wonders at a cadence
So eloquent and clear.

Who hears the harps of winter
Beneath a frosty moon
And listens to their music
Will not forget them soon.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Guarded Hour

Remembered winter grips the heart
That lightly lay in summer's hand,—
The mariner consults his chart
And steers in quest of contraband.

Where eyes look out with more than dread,
No tongue may whisper what they see.
The pool of night is tinged with red,
The lapwing mourns incessantly.

This is the grim, the guarded hour
Of muffled stroke and midnight bell.
Spent is the perfume of the flower,
The music of the carousel.

Proud walks the moon, aloof, austere.
The watchman hears beyond the moat
The baying of the hounds of fear
That wait to seize him by the throat.

Lean shadows lurk beside the gate,
The tides of evening strangely flow
As hearts lie darkly down to wait
A morning they may never know.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

November

There is a crispness in November air
That makes the heart forget the touch of grief
And bids it turn, contemptuous of despair
And sheathe at last the sword of unbelief.

Sweet is the wine of autumn on the lips
And doubly sweet upon the dreaming heart—
Now shadows lengthen and the slow sun dips
Beyond the crest. The day is split apart.

Dusk hovers; silence presently enfolds
The broad domain. Inexorable, grand,
November walks the hills, a king who holds
His realm within the hollow of his hand.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Plainville

Rain is a stranger
In this town
Whose fields are yellow
Or dirty brown.

Streams dry up
And blossoms perish
Till there is little
Left to cherish
Save an old stump
Of stubborn oak
On which young dusk
Sits like a cloak

And a worn road
Too tired to run
That limps into
The setting sun.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Winter Evening

We wandered in the park at dusk, and heard
The sound of laughter on the frosty air,—
Above our heads the leafless branches stirred
Where poplars stood in silence, bleak and bare.
The tone we loved, the liquid voice of rain
Was muted to a music soft and slow;
Where summer in her sleep had lately lain
The fields were blanketed with early snow.

A sheen of silver trembled on the lake
And faded into darkness. Silence fell.
We beat our hands, and cried aloud to wake
The echo of a voice, a distant bell.
And stood as in a dream. Serene and pure,
We traced the curve of winter's signature.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Invitation

Let us walk seaward in the changing light
To hear the breakers lapping at the shore
And watch the gulls in iridescent flight—
There let us linger, taste the golden core
Of mellow Summer, delicate and sweet;
One with the salt wind and the laughing spray,
With all a season's harvest at our feet,
Measure the shadow of an ebbing day.

Let us walk seaward while the slow sun dips,
As pilgrims go, and quietly rejoice,
A song of praise for Summer on our lips
And in our hearts the echo of her voice.
Light as the zephyr, fleeter than the swallow
Our hearts go seaward, as our feet must follow!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

We Who Have Watched

We who have watched the hounds of morning run
Across the hills and strangely disappear
Into the pastures of oblivion,
Their baying lost to the pursuing ear,
We who have watched the hounds are left to wonder
What splendid quarry theirs, what eager chase,
What cry of triumph and what answering thunder
Shall urge their flying feet to quickened pace?
The sun drops softly... and the day, forlorn,
Numbers its moments with but few to spare;
From far the echo of a huntsman's horn
Challenges mind and heart to hasten where
The hounds of evening wander in full cry
Against the shadow of a darkening sky.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Summer Storm

Rain drives the loungers rudely from the park,
The brooding shapes of lovers in the grass
Are quick to vanish in the flowering dark—
The beat' of cymbals and the clang of brass
Blend in the orchestration of the storm,
A gathering force that may not be denied,
Whose shape and color, resonance and form
No reckless tongue may volubly confide.

The fountain wakens from its placid dream
To spill its liquid silver on the stone.
In half a hundred pools the ripples gleam,
Where silence lately walked, a petal blown
From laden bough lies floating on the stream,
Frail fugitive of summer, lost, alone.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

First Snow

Fog-horns in autumn sound an anxious note
Dismal enough to make the hearer shiver
And pray that luck attend each eager boat
That ploughs its way across the restless river.
Dark shapes loom up incredibly from mist,
A nameless dread pervades the frosty air;
November strikes with clenched and chilly fist
That takes the peaceful stranger unaware.

The naked eye is powerless to pierce
This veil of gray drawn over all the town.
The wind of night is merciless and fierce,
His cudgel waits to strike his victims down.
Dawn comes at last. Where fog was hanging low
Manhattan whitens under the first snow.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Panorama

To eyes observing from a railroad train
The panorama of an autumn day,
Deep-bosomed valleys bathed in sun and rain,
Fields decked in shades from russet brown to gray,
The passing landscape in its silence holds
Subtle enchantment, beautiful and brief—
The dream one hour of loveliness unfolds
Survives the barren interval of grief.
Farther than eyes that fathom them may guess,
Hills throw their shadows as the day grows small,
Till hearts reminded of their timelessness
Discover comfort, till the temporal wall
That shuts the pilgrim from his promised Land
Is swiftly leveled by an unseen hand!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Portent

November's shadow lies upon the hill
And far across the valleys men have heard
The echo of her voice, caught in the shrill
Defiance of a lost and lonely bird.
November's face turns westward at the sound
Of dry leaves falling softly one by one,
Whirling in patterns intricate and round
Into the hollows of oblivion.
November's hand has written on the sky
A message for the roaming heart to read,
Clear as a blazing star to reckon by,
A prophecy for all the world to heed,
Her proclamation candid and austere—
The ultimatum of the deepening year.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

December Night

Now in the time of winter, when the heart
Remembers other winters long before
And watches while the frosty days depart,
Hearing December's cadence at the door,
Now in the time of wind against the pane
The hearth is heaped with faggots, and the blaze
Leaps upward. Now the bins are rich with grain
And gratitude invokes the song of praise.

The skies are deep and luminous tonight—
Celestial music trembles in the air
Till dawn unfolds the miracle of light
And points the heart to pinnacles of prayer,
As when three Wise Men, musing, came from far
On paths of wonder, following a Star.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Gulls

Lovers are these of boundless land and sea,—
Not men with compass close to reckon by,
Their faces level to infinity,
But fearless gulls that skim the widening sky,
Whose buoyant wings have known the long delight
Of passage seaward toward the setting sun,
Who dare uncharted oceans in their flight
Where time and space are threads, of silence spun.
These are explorers valorous and bold
Who plumb horizons. With the curving arc
Their wings describe, they leave the luminous gold
Of day at last, to seek the quiet dark.
Lovers are they of space, blessed with the wide
Vision that soars and will not be denied.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Lest Dark Oblivion

This is no day to isolate the heart
Delivered to the judgment of an hour
In which delight and wonder have no part,
Suspended in a vacuum,—a blown flower
With neither rain nor dew for nourishment,
An atom at the mercy of the gale.
No day is this to bid the heart repent
Lest courage ebb and aspiration fail.

Let the heart's banners stream from west to east
Prouder than morning, lordlier than the sun,
Her beat the cry of music. Bid her feast
On happiness, lest dark oblivion
Descend too soon, conferring with a breath
The passionless finality of death.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

SELECTED POEMS · THE SINGLE HEART

The third division of Selected Poems, 1919–1948 (1949)

Our Days

(For J. L. R.)

We wore our days as gaily as we might
Like gleaming jewels strung for our delight,
And none who saw but envied us their glow
Whose brilliance gave us lustre through the night.

Like raiment sheer and fine we wore our days
Contentedly, that all the world might gaze
Upon our joy. And all our dream was peace
And all our song was everlasting praise.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Beauty Like Sand

Beauty like sand is slipping through my fingers,
Beauty like chaff is flying on the wind;
Around my heart a subtle fragrance lingers,
My ears with strangest melodies are dinned.
Beauty is singing in the wood and meadow
And crying by the opalescent sea;
Beauty is flying swiftly from her shadow,
Flinging rich crumbs of loveliness to me.
O lovers lying with averted eyes
Among the grasses, soon the holy hour
Will pass, and love lay off the dear disguise,
While dust will swallow up the passion flower.
Moments like sands are slipping softly past;
Too frail are love and loveliness to last.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Lonely Men

The little songs of lonely men
Are strange and sad and slow,
I hear them echo in my heart,
No matter where I go.

They would not take a world for that
Which they have learned from grief,
The little songs of lonely men
Are wise beyond belief.

He has not lived who has not heard
The music, like a cry,
Of lonely men who sing aloud
To keep their courage high.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Prayer

Let me remember music
When music is no more
Than the far beat of breakers
Upon a windy shore.

Though sorrow cast his shadow
And tears of anguish flow,
Let me remember music
From long and long ago.
Though laughter may be muted
And mournful eyelids wet,
Let me remember music
The heart must not forget,

Lest in the dark forgetting
In seasons of unrest,
The lonely heart should perish
Within the stricken breast.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Beyond Redress

Now in a time of flux,
Denying change,
We alter with the seasons—
Shedding grief,
We reach for hope, the aromatic leaf.
Quick to invade, the eager finger plucks
The fruit forbidden,
Sensuous and strange.

Tomorrow beckons, and derisive clocks
Signal the imminence of crawling doom;
Starkly the bell tolls, and its echo mocks
The one beyond redress,
The listener tapping out his loneliness,
Counting the shadows in a darkening room.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Clock

The stolid clock declines to name the hour—
Indifferent to the gaze of those who pass,
It keeps the silence of the ivory tower.
Though time may stoop to parch the leaping grass,
The clock unwound, its prophecy unsaid,
Ignores the changing season. From its face
Long since, the semblance of a smile has fled;
Its years are paths too lonely to retrace.

Shadows invade the sun-dial, and betray
The passage of a year, its faltering sun.
With dark hands pointing to an hour and day
Lost in the silence of oblivion,
Inscrutable, though garrulous years increase,
The tall clock, proudly dreaming, holds its peace.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Descent

Those who were giants once
Come down from the height
To walk in dust that never knew their feet;
They are smaller men
As they stand in the gathering dark.
Time has whittled them down
And their shadows are thinned.

They speak in the common tongue
But their words are guarded;
They move no more, as before,
On ripples of laughter,
Their eyes are cold and watchful.
Those who were giants, tall and heavy with words
Are anonymous now,
The warmth has left their brows
And they stoop at evening,
Fumbling at doors
That do not open to greet them.
Their glances probe tomorrow
And find no answer.

Their words are wounded eagles
Bruised by an angry wind;
Time has whittled them down
And their shadows are thinned.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Stranger

He speaks an unfamiliar tongue
That falls as strangely on the ear
As cries from throats of anger wrung
Against a harsh and heedless year.

His mouth contorts, his blazing eyes
Are full of all his lips would say—
In doubt and wonder and surprise
I listen, shrug and turn away.

His anguish pleads for more than words,
More than the gesture of a friend,
His fingers droop like fallen birds,
His eyes are slow to comprehend.

And yet his word, transcending time
Pursues me in my final flight
Through the long corridors I climb
Into the all-consuming night.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hill-Dweller

He used to say he loved the land
And sought no other company
Than hill and valley, brightly scanned,
Until he found the sea.

Then all that he had thought and read
And all his ears had heard
Went spinning strangely in his head
And dwindled to a word.

He lay at ease, and listened long
Until the stars grew cold and dim;
He had not dreamed of such a song
As laughing breakers sang to him.
He will not find his hills once more
Nor seek the valley he has known
Who hears beside a rocky shore
The sea's incessant monotone.

His footprints fade against the sand,
His shadow deepens toward the west.
He who was wedded to the land
Lies quiet on the ocean's breast.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Elixir

The cup of life
Was his to drain
Who dared the taste
Of joy and pain.

Their vital tang
Beyond all knowing
Filled his bright cup
To overflowing.

Now with the years
Of scorn erased
He lingers with
The noble taste
 Of brighter nectar
 For his own
 Than any draught
 His heart had known.

In this libation
Richly poured
He finds the wine
Of knowledge stored

Who drinks with One
Of high degree
The nectar of
Eternity.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Of Certain Poets

They talked of poetry, but what they made
Was never music, but a kind of jargon
That was not prose or verse.
They were afraid
To choose a path, so doubtfully they laid
Their hearts away
And wove a net of words
In which their thoughts like struggling birds
Were prisoned for a day.
They talked of poetry, and analyzed
Its form and texture,
Hailing what they prized,—
Sound before sense,
Significance disguised.
These they connived at,
Being tall and proud
And fond of crying wilful words aloud;
But when they paused at last,
Their songs had lost allure
And silence mocked them, eloquent and sure.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Atonement

Destruction is the order of an hour
That sees the milk of human kindness sour.
What he destroys in fear and hate, man must
Rebuild, and raise an altar from the dust.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Measure

A city's strength lies not in towers gleaming
Against the sky, in walls of steel and stone;
Its strength dwells in the measure of its dreaming,
For by the vision is its greatness known.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Proud

Here come the proud folk
Two by two,
Strutting in the sunlight
As proud people do.

Theirs is the motion
Of riding on a cloud,
Hear the song their lips make
Beautiful and proud.

Let us praise humility,
Wise men have cried,
But I would find a proud man
And walk by his side.

The meek shall inherit
The laurel and bays,
But let me walk in proud shoes
All my days.

Though our doom is written
Plain across the sky,
Time lifts his head
When the proud pass by.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Strange Meeting

There was a man who spoke to me
Of twilight by an ancient sea
And vainly groped for words to tell
The wonder of a miracle.
He was a pilgrim gaunt and lame
Upon a street without a name,
But in his eyes there burned a light
That flowered strangely in the night.

The sea that trembled in his words,
Its perilous shore, its crying birds
I have not seen, nor dare surmise
Beneath what flaming star it lies.
But waking I can feel its spell
As if I knew the island well
Because of one who spoke to me,
A stranger cloaked in mystery
Who went as softly as he came
Upon a street without a name.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Epitaph

Here lies the heart that never found repose
But walked the lonely hills that gave it birth
Until it came to join, in waiting earth,
The quiet dust of cyclamen and rose.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Charm

How beautiful the cloak she wore
Against the prying eyes
Of those who daily passed her door,
The curious and wise

Who came in eagerness to break
The silence that she kept,
To share what was not theirs to take.
Yet while she laughed or wept

For what had been and what was dead
Or not to be denied,
She gravely wore with lifted head
The mantle of her pride.

Some pitied her, and strangely knew
A hot and furtive shame
At all the murky tales that grew
With mention of her name.

Yet others shrugged away pretense
And envied her the charm,
The mantle of her reticence
That wrapped her safe from harm.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hunger

He who has not ever known
Hunger gnawing flesh and bone,
Hunger tearing at his heart,
Has not felt the fiery dart
Fear can hurl at these who stand
With abundance close at hand,
Yet beyond the faltering reach.
There is neither song nor speech
Passionately to define
Hunger's hideous design
Known to those whose desperate need
Lamentation cannot feed.

Pity will not serve for bread,
Let them sleep uncomforted.
Spare them, friend, your tears and sighs,
Pass them with averted eyes
Lest they hear and slowly stir,
Waking even hungrier!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Pity the Dead

Pity the nameless dead who lie
Beyond the touch and sight
Of those who, knowing April, cry
With wonder and delight.
But pity most the living dead
Who walk a brimming sphere
With beauty for their wine and bread
And neither see nor hear.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Without a Clue

Here is a man who, sad and full of shame
Cannot remember himself, his given name
Nor why he moves unwillingly through space,
A look of pain upon his stricken face.

Here is a man inquiring up and down
The byways of an unfamiliar town,
“Who am I?”—Eyes give answer with a stare
And heads are shaken, mocking his despair.

Identity eludes him, though he stands
Biting his lips and wringing his pale hands,
Between him and his cloudy past a door
Is shut that he may never enter more.

He wanders high and low without a clue.
Give him a name and let him start anew
Lest he discover truth, and so undone
Seek a swift pathway to oblivion.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Threnody

(For S. V. B.)

He could not wait for spring this year—
A road that beckoned called him far,
For he could see, remote but clear,
The glimmer of a distant star.

Time shall not stay his journeying
To whom Eternity belongs.
He could not wait this year—but Spring
Will live forever in his songs.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Single Heart

They told her she would love again
And know the face of happiness,
But she could pass a hundred men
And still remember one caress.

And so she closed her ears to song
Save one to which her heart was true,
And nightly heard, serene and strong,
A music that they never knew
Who smiled, or felt a sudden stir
Of pity when they spoke of her.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Vachel Lindsay

So many songs he had to sing
He knew no time to gather bread,
And April found him wandering
Without a place to lay his head.

Death saw no terror in his face—
So many songs he had to spare
That Heaven is now a merry place
And he a welcome comrade there.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Charmed Circle

Where the right people went, you always found
John Edgar B-. Correct in all his ways,
Fastidiously attired and shod, he frowned
On folk unworthy of his blame or praise.

No malice lay in him. He walked in grace
Unerringly. And when he found release
From mortal ways, he sought a resting place
Where the right people went, and lay at peace.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Delilah

Delilah's beauty hid a scheming heart,
As Samson learned upon the fateful day
When she enticed him with persuasive art
' And clipped his hair, and drew his strength away.

In this our time, behold the tables turned—
Caught with the seed of treason newly sown,
Her locks are shorn, her supplications spurned;
Delilah hangs her head, and walks alone.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

An Old Man Dreams

An old man feebly wrestling with a nightmare
Is heard by no one, tossing in his sleep.
He is a shadow wandering in darkness,
Lost in a chasm dangerous and deep.

His hands reach out, as if he would recapture
A fallen hour. His dreams remotely range.
The word he whispers in the furtive silence
Is mumbled music, dissonant and strange.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Broken Gate

Music shuns a lonely house
Robbed of wonder and delight,
Silence like a sentinel
Grimly watches day and night.

Ruin lies upon the vine,
Dust upon the fallen flower,
Hunger at the broken gate
Leaves no morsel to devour.

Sorrow broods upon the stair,
Laughter sleeps and will not waken
In a house that crumbling lies
Solitary and forsaken.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Helen

The legend of her loveliness
Was kept alive by those who knew
That time can offer no redress
For beauty lost without a clue.

And so the legend of her grace
Still lights a wondering firmament
And men who never saw her face
Repeat her name, and are content.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Aggie

What is so beautiful
And what so proud
As pale Aggie lying
In her white shroud?

Aggie at rest, with
No word to say,
What is so beautiful
As this calm clay?

Aggie knew trouble,
Tumult and pain
Till she heard Death sing
Through the cool rain.

Till she saw Death come
Smiling through mist,
The young mouth of Aggie
Never had been kissed.

The shy lips of Aggie
Never knew a song;
Hers to be lonely
Day and night long.

Now she is radiant,
Now she is proud
Smiling at young Death
From her cool shroud.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Exile

Eve and Adam, lost in thought
Grieved at what desire had wrought,

Tarried long beyond the Gate,
Knowing well the hour was late,

Finding strength and courage spent,
Recollecting taste and scent

Of the fruit an ominous hour
Saw them eagerly devour,—

Heard the serpent softly pass
In the overhanging grass.

Eve and Adam slowly crept
Through the haze of dusk and wept,

Lost in thoughts of what had been.
Tall before them, strong as sin

Stood the Angel of the Lord
Brandishing a fiery sword,

Holding trespassers at bay.
Past the Gate the Garden lay

Unattainable and fair,
Shimmering in the misty air.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Encounter

I passed Him in the multitude
Upon a busy street,
I knew the music of his step
Among those hurrying feet.

I knew Him by the gentle light
That shone upon His face,
As when He sat with twelve, and prayed
For wisdom and for grace.

I knew Him by the quiet word
I heard Him speak to me,
As once He spoke to listening hearts
In troubled Galilee.

I passed Him on a thoroughfare
And lost Him in the crowd,
But in that hour my heart leaped up
As from beneath a cloud.

And on my lips at last the song
Of life is passing sweet
Who touched Him in the multitude
Upon a city street.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Second Spring

He heard the stubborn raindrops beat
Upon the lonely village street,
For seven aching days he heard
The rain and could not speak a word,
Remembering acres long gone dry
A spring before, and wondered why
His thirsty fields had cried in vain
For the old miracle of rain.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Covenant

The vows of spring with the fading leaves at autumn
Shall be broken and fall,
The oath of the foe, the terrible vows of the stranger
Shall be scattered all.

Far away shall the leaves of their wrath be wafted,
The proud and the bold,
So shall the reckless vows of the young be scattered
And the muttered vows of the old.

But day by day on farthest paths of silence
By man untrod,
My heart, my faltering heart on weariest heights
Keeps faith with God.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Intruder

To ease his loneliness he fled
In search of friends to call his own,
And shared with scores his wine and bread,
Afraid to face himself alone.

But even in the merry throng
While jesters laughed and women eyed him,
Deaf to the voice of mirth and song
Came Loneliness, and sat beside him.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Interim

Death came and found him... suddenly, in sleep
Where he had thrown himself for weariness
Upon his homely couch, and shut the door
On every care that marked his day of toil.
Somewhere a clock struck seven; voices rose
Beyond, and fell; then all again was still.
A fly buzzed vaguely on the window pane.
Soft breezes stirred the curtains; this his room
With faded walls, familiar chairs and bed,
Its window looking to the quiet west,
Seemed as before, yet subtly different
When she, his wife, came in, and stood and coughed
Her little conscious cough, and spoke his name,
Smiled to herself, crossed over, drew the blinds
And spoke his name again, close at his side,
And leaned, and could not waken him at all.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Man

He flings his banners over land and sea
And seeks a country that he never finds—
Man laughs at time, and yet forever he
Remains the servant of the clock he winds.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Journey's End

Beyond the fringe of sleep there lies
The boundary of paradise,
Unconquerable, unpossessed,
The country of the spirit's quest.

Beneath a calm and changeless star
It lies, incredible and far,
The splendor of whose citadel
No traveller returns to tell.

What vision bids the heart revere
An undiscovered hemisphere
That, earth-bound, I may dare to guess
The measure of its loveliness?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Susanna Passes

Harden not your hearts,
You with whom the wise
Sit as counsellors;
Narrow not your eyes

When she walks your street
With her band of fools
Whose exultant feet
Dancing, make your rules

Words of no account,
Formulas outgrown.
If she ask for bread
Will you give a stone?

Furtive whispers pass,
Lips and eyes are set.
Shall this golden bird
Tremble in your net?

In your hearts contempt
Sets a knell to ringing;
She will heed you not,
She will pass you singing.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Justus Coley

Justus Coley
On his knees
Many a night
Found grateful ease

In thanking God
Now and again
That he was not
As other men.

Each passing year
Convinced him more
That he was born
Superior
To other mortals,
Yet as friend
That he might nobly
Condescend.

And while he gloried
In his heart
That he was set
As one apart,

His neighbors praised
Jehovah wholly
That they were not
Like Justus Coley.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Fate

Agatha Morley
All her life
Grumbled at dust
Like a good wife.

Dust on a table,
Dust on a chair,
Dust on a mantel
She couldn't bear.

She forgave faults
In man and child,
But a dusty shelf
Would set her wild.

She bore with sin
Without protest,
But dust-thoughts preyed
Upon her rest.

Agatha Morley
Is sleeping sound
Six feet under
The mouldy ground;

Six feet under
The earth she lies,
With dust at her feet,
Dust in her eyes.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Never in a Proud Heart

Never in this valley,
Not this side of doom
Shall I find contentment
Though the body bloom.

Never shall I find
Though I bravely seek
Pity for a strong shield
When the spirit's weak.

Never in a proud heart
Nor in any name
Shall I find completion
Though my will be flame;

Shall I find deliverance
For the body's breath,—
Never in this gray land
This side of death.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Beauty Tree

On a night of ecstasy
Colin shook the Beauty Tree,
Shook the boughs of loveliness
Till in rare, undreamed-of dress
Maidens tumbled far and wide,
Dreamy maids and starry-eyed,
Girls whose laughter as they fell
Tinkled like a silver bell.
One was fine and one was fair,
One was made for man's despair;
Loveliness on every face,
In each-body subtle grace,
Till with loveliness surrounded,
Happy Colin grew confounded.

In a circle then they tripped,
Pirouetted, bent and dipped,
Leaped and laughed, and gaily sang
Till the very woodland rang.
Colin on his bended knee
Lingered by the Wonder Tree
Till each took him to her breast,
Each to his her two lips pressed
With such fairy sweetness laden
Colin yearned to every maiden,
Yearned in rapture, swooning nearly
Whom the maidens loved so dearly.
And the last, with slow, sweet song
Held him close and kissed him long...

Fairy footprints, elfin laughter
Leave no trace the morning after;
Even maiden kisses sweet
Are as moonlit madness fleet.

Would I had been Colin waking
To a dream of fairy making;
Would I had been by to see
Colin shake the Beauty Tree!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Lovely Lady

The lovely lady
Of Ballyclare
Is not so pure
As she is fair

And not so fine
As she is proud
Who goes with head
Unbowed.

The lovely lady
Knows full well
Rich secrets
Many a man will tell

In certain stress.
And this is why
Good women pass her
Coldly by.

When matrons chat
In wayside inns
And gossip runs
To neighbors' sins,

Such wives have
Little cause to spare
The lovely lady
Of Ballyclare.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Query

What shall our hearts
Unearth to keep
As dear, as delicate
As Sleep?

What shall we find
On wakeful ways
To move our hearts
To instant praise

Like Sleep
In whose profound embrace
We look on rapture.
Face to face?

Seek though you may,
You shall not find
On the broad hilltops
Of the mind,

Nor on uncharted
Sky and sea
Such measure of
Serenity

As hearts
Too diffident to weep
Have briefly found
In dreamless sleep:

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Hands of Sleep

Sleep is a friend, a dearer friend than man
Has learned to seek in his extremity;
He has seen foes and friends, since time began,
Come and depart-but he will never be,
While sleep is with him, utterly forsaken;
Whatever ravage his poor heart has known,
He who has given himself to sleep will waken
Singing, and will not find himself alone.

The hands of sleep are kind, the face of sleep
Is beautiful at morning on the pillow;
He who has known her kiss will cease to weep
And lie at last in peace beneath the willow,
Hearing the voice he loves with bated breath,
The bloom of sleep upon his brow, like death.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919-1948* (1949).

Interlude

Ponder the mystery of night,
The silence of a rose—
Treasure the moment of delight
While yet its rapture glows.

Fathom the secret of the flower,
The whisper of a stream:
Muse on the wonder of this hour,
A dream within a dream.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Ministry

Those barren lives which beauty touches not
And joy may seldom reach, are the unblest,
The pitiful, whom loveliness has left
Desolate and devoid of sheltering grace;
Like barren roots that wither in the sun
And curl to dust, these lives would rot away
In emptiness, the suicides of scorn
But for the hand outstretched, the pitying eye,
The benediction of a tender word,
The blessing of a smile, an eager glance
Exchanged, and living made the lovelier
For small communion, simple, unafraid;
These are the lives that, leaning on our own,
Cry out for ministry of hand and heart.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Quicken the Heart

Shelter the heart with courage,
A bright and flawless shield,
That it resist temptation
And be not swift to yield.

Quicken the heart with laughter,
Dispel the mist of care
That it may never tremble at
The thrust of dark despair.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Two Songs

Sing your song by the river
And I'll sing mine from on high,
Up where the eager hilltop
Gropes to the distant sky.
You with the earth to listen,
I with the heaven to fill,
Yours the voice of the valley
And mine the song of the hill.

You shall be heard by the river,
You shall be loved on the plain,
Who will come climbing to seek me,
Hid with the dew and rain?
And never our songs shall mingle
Though the earth in wonder be still,
For yours is the voice of the valley
And mine the song of the hill.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Imagist

Though nebulous stanzas born of stress
Reveal a verbal acrobat,
The weary reader may but guess
What he is driving at.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

A Friend

I knew him well; we fenced at many a bout,
As boys; jested, as you and I do now.
He was my friend before, till fame reached out
And laid the wreath of laurel on his brow.

And now he walks in kingly paths, and seeks
Only such friends as kings desire to own;
Now, with his head held high, he boldly speaks
Of visions. But he walks no more alone.

The friends that gather at the beck of fame
Feed on the glamour of his brief renown.
Among this crowd I found him, spoke his name
And sought to add a jewel to his crown

With word well-turned. Though my intent was fair,
Between us two the message went astray.—
His answer strangely smote the empty air;
Somehow there was so little left to say.

He does not mean, I fancy, to forget;
A wound is quite the last thing he'd intend.
The cunning world but trapped him in her net
Of shining fame... and I have lost a friend.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

With No Sound Uttered

She will lie quiet
Against a cool hill,
She will lie softly
Who was never still.

She will lie alone
With the sun in her eyes,
She who was witless
Will be made wise.

Forgetting a word
She was trying to say,
She will be suddenly
Carven in clay.

With no sound uttered
And no word spoken
She will lie still as though
Her heart were broken.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Forecast

The weather is her choice of talk;
One might believe she cared
What storm the wind blew up this night
And how the traveller fared.

She gravely weighs the chance of rain
With calm and sunny weather
And frowning stares at space again
And rubs her palms together.

She does not guess that long before
The lamps of dawn are lit
She will be lying still and small
And never care a whit.

She does not know that with the dawn
She will not wake nor stir
And whether day be foul or fair
Will matter naught to her.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Certainty

I am not lonely who have been
Alone with silence and with din,
Alone with sleep and with the sound
Of creeping things along the ground;
Alone without you, and alone
With you beside me, still as stone.

I am not lonely who have been
Alone with neither friend nor kin,
Alone without remorse or pride
And you a stranger at my side.
I turn my face against the wall
And know no loneliness at all;
I keep repeating o'er and o'er,
I am not lonely any more.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Image

Myself I knew
Long, long ago,
But here is one
I do not know.

Here is a stranger'
In whose eyes
A mystery
Unburied lies;

This mirrored face
Looks back at me
And smiles a hint
Of mockery.

Who is this stranger
Standing near?
His words I dare not
Closely hear,

His counsel I
Must scorn to heed
Though I and he
Spring from one seed.

Who is this stranger
Standing by?
I question not
Lest he reply.
Myself I knew well
Long ago...
This ghost of him
I do not know.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Constant Music

Laughter was
Her firm defense
Against the years'
Indifference—

Laughter was her
Most becoming
Garment, whom
The slow and numbing

Tide of hatred
Could not drown.
Laughter was
A glittering crown

Resting lightly
On her head.
Those who shared
Her wine and bread
Took away with them
Her mirth
Elemental
As the earth.

Those who loathed her,
Those whose pride
Drove them sharply
From her side,

Never could escape
Thereafter
The constant music
Of her laughter.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Varney

Varney heard above his head
Music like the rush of wings,
Like cool fingers plucking strings,
This and more, he raptly said.

Varney could not sleep for wonder
At the imminence of tone
That assailed him, earthward blown,
Irresistible as thunder.

Mocking words and glances grieved him;
Though he labored with a word
To convey what he had heard,
Not a listener believed him.

Varney heard an unseen choir
When the skies were smiling down
On an unbelieving town,—
Setting blood and brain afire.

Through the hills, erect and fleet
Varney capered, drunk with sound,
Till with dewy verdure crowned,
Morning blossomed at his feet.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Globe Trotter

He saw young trees
That moved as men
And dwarfs who had
The strength of ten.

He tells of caverns
Echo-haunted,
Quicksands but few
May face undaunted,
And laughing streams
That ran uphill,
Of these his tongue
Will not be still.

But there are songs
He will not sing
Who has grown wise
With journeying,

And there are tales
He will not tell,
Though he is one
To know them well.

Unshared, forever
Unconfessed
He keeps a dream
Within his breast;

Indifference
Is his disguise,
But secrets smoulder
In his eyes.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

To a Poet

I came upon a song you made
A hundred years ago,
And felt the rustling winds of time
Across my spirit blow.

I shared with you the certainty
That bade you follow far
A wistful road that beckoned you
Past moon and cloud and star.

I came upon your song-and there
Is little more to tell
Save that our spirits briefly met.
Hail, comrade-and farewell!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Museum

Here rest the relics of a day
A thousand thousand years away;

Here visitors may pause and stare
At skulls and bones and faded hair,

At weapons of a vanished age—
Here, as upon a timeless stage

The years unroll, that man may trace
With awe and wonder on his face,
The record of the human race.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Episode

A king among the heedless crowd,
He drives his chariot, stern and proud,

And dodges trucks and motor cars
As if he soared among the stars

Instead of following the beat
Of traffic on a city street.

His is the reverie of one
Rescued from bleak oblivion;

A poet's lofty rapture is
Incredibly and wholly his

Who drives no matron, but Queen Mab
Through Gotham in a taxicab!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Ordeal

The whistle of an outbound train
Is like a stab of sudden pain
To one who, mute and unresigned,
Is somehow always left behind.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

From an “El” Train Window

From these car windows one can see
Rapture and mirth and misery;

For one brief instant swiftly trace
Wonder upon a peering face.

These eyes look out without delight
Upon a brooding, moonless night.

From windows looking on the track
They strangely stare, a silent claque

Who lie awake and know not why
To watch the hurrying trains go by.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Insight

Books have not taught me all I know
Nor reason all that I surmise—
The winds of loneliness that blow
Across my heart have made me wise.

I am not versed in ancient lore,
But I have learned from sun and rain
And from the voice of thunder, more
Than word or symbol can explain.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Dancers

To strains insidious and sweet
The dancers move on careless feet,
Caught in the surge and sorcery
Of rhythm, irresistibly
Swept on an undulating sea.

Strangely they move, without surprise
Through space, indifferent and wise,
Their goal elusive, unconfessed,
A secret prisoned in each breast.
Persistently the oboe weaves
Its spell, the muted trumpet grieves,
And wearily the dancers move,
Heavy with music and with love.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Silence

Silence walks through the city,
But no one turns to stare,
For no one sees that Silence
Has roses in her hair.

And no one follows Silence
Upon her quiet way
Or wonders at her beauty.—
But there will come a day
When strangers will remember
They heard her softly pass,
And cry one to another
How beautiful she was.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Caged Leopard

Within a city zoo he lies
With puzzled wonder in his eyes
And meets with stare austere and grim
The faces that encounter him.

He peers forever through the bars
And dreams of distant jungle stars,
Of winding paths his feet have found
And left behind him, city-bound.

The hills on which he wandered free.
Are phantoms in his memory;
Within a city zoo he lies,
Cold and contemptuous and wise.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Now That the Nights Are Deep

This is a beginning
And an end of desire,
To sit empty-hearted
Before a dying fire,
Eager no more to find
Comrade or lover
Now that the nights are deep
And April is over.
This is a beginning
And an end of pain,
Searching the tired skies
For a hint of rain,
Hearing the heart-beats
Of the night, like drums
And listening for music
That never comes.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hands

'Her hands were slim and delicate and tender
And full of comfort when the years were long,
Hands that had known the courage of surrender,
Hands that were deft, and lyrical as song;
Like birds they moved with light and easy grace,
Making no task a burden to complete,
Eager to serve him, skilful to erase
The bitterness that savored of defeat.
Her gentle fingers curved in a caress
Were quick to speak assurance to the heart
Of one who leaned upon her tenderness
And sought no solitary world apart.
Her hands were warm and intimate and kind,
Though he had never seen them, being blind.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Forsaken House

At the end of the street of lost delight
A house stands, lonelier than night;

A house whose walls remember well
Secrets they wisely will not tell

Laughter and song and revelry,
These they remember wistfully,

And these they cherish as old walls must
Against the ravage of moth and rust.

Eyes look away, and cautious feet
Avoid the house at the end of the street;

For none will care and none will come
Where a lonely house stands stricken and dumb,—

Where triumph and tenderness are dead
And Silence sleeps on a mouldy bed.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

City Murder

This is no sudden and impulsive crime
Kindled by loathing, jealousy or wrath,
Rather the deed of one who found the time
Auspicious, and the victim in his path.
The blow was skilful and premeditated,
No angry gesture, but the thrust of one
Whose ruthless mind was scheming while he waited,
Dark messenger of swift oblivion.

Perhaps he lingers in this frozen crowd,
Staring with harsh, triumphant eyes at death,
Masking his guilt with gaze aloof and proud
Or pacing a still room with quickened breath,
Seeing reflected, like a vivid stain
Upon his brow, the dreadful mark of Cain.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

To All Poets

Seek the implicit word,
The syllable dark with meaning;
Winnow the chaff to find
A harvest worth the gleaning.

What though the well be dry,
The heart's bright pitcher broken?
Seek the deliberate word
That must not go unspoken.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Girl in the Subway

She sits within a subway car,
Her fancy lighted by a star
That briefly shone for her delight
One unforgotten summer night;
She sits among the heedless crowd
Silent and tremulous and proud
And dreams of riding on a cloud
With love no longer in disguise
To guide her gently through the skies...

Musing she sits and does not hear
The voice of reason at her ear,
But wrapped in wonder and elation
Journeys a mile beyond her station.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

More Lonely

Earth holds the key to loneliness
Within whose solitude
Man fearful walks across the night
Where sky and ocean brood.

He tarries in the wilderness,
His bed a jutting stone,—
He makes his prayer to empty air
And knows himself alone.
Though paltry man beneath the weight
Of loneliness must plod,
His faltering heart may never share
The loneliness of God!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Freedom Is for Fools

Cages are made for wise men
Who believe in bolts and bars,
But freedom is for fools who walk
With eyes upon the stars.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Little Churches

Like valiant sentinels from dawn to dawn
The country churches lift their lofty spires
And wait to welcome pious hearts withdrawn
From wordly aspirations and desires.
How firm they stand, defying wind and rain,
Oblivious of the burden of the years,
Deaf to the sullen threat of fear and pain,
Unshaken at the impotence of tears.

The pleas of those who knelt in reverence
Long years ago and bowed their heads in prayer,
Invoking Heaven's serene benevolence,
Linger upon this consecrated air
And bid the pilgrim lift his voice to bless
The little churches of the wilderness.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Counsel

You who have known
A sharper grief
Than this dark wound
Of unbelief,

Why be dismayed
At sudden blight?
Speak with a tongue
Both bitter and bright.

But you who choke
On the icy fruit
Of disillusion,
Be wisely mute;

Wisdom with a word
Can level a hill,
But to hold your peace
Is wiser still.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Victor

While wise men, long beset by doubt
Wander from pole to pole,
The fool who knows his way about
Is first to reach the goal.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Words

You will not listen
To words like these
Who welcome servile
Words that please—

Words that come kneeling
At your feet,
Words that are humble,
Shy and sweet,

Words that extol
Your grace and charm
You will receive
Without alarm.

But robust words
That plumb the core
Of your disdain
You will ignore,

And words that cry
The truth of you,
You will repeat,
They are not true.

Lost in your own
Gay fantasies,
You have no time
For words like these;
But words that boast
And flatter slyly,
These are the sort
That please you highly.

They are your daily
Bread and wine—
You will not heed
These words of mine.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Death the Lover

Death the lover
Is lonely tonight;
Only a woman
Beautiful and white

Can quench his longing.
Hark how he comes
Rattling his fingers
Like dreadful drums.

Tremble not, old men
Sick with fear,
Only the young heart
Death holds dear.
Only the young hands
Death loves to hold
More than the hands
Of the pitiful old.

Four and twenty maidens
Sitting in a hall;
How will Death choose him
One from all?

Which will he summon
By smile or sign
Of four and twenty maidens
Sitting in a line?

How will Death know
While the music plays
One who has waited him
All her days?

Moon on the hilltop
Gleams frost-white.
Death the lover
Is lonely tonight.

Nocturne

On a night of rain and mist
Noddy went a-wooing;
Any idiot had guessed
Here was trouble brewing.
Thunder muttered in the hills
But the lanes were quiet;
Expectation quickened
Eager blood to riot.

Noddy skipped along the path
To his lady's door,
Pushed the knocker seven times,
Shook it seven more,

Listened to the echoes die
While a subtle terror
Caught his heart as in a vise.
What unreckoned error

Left him standing here alone,
One instead of two?
Noddy cocked his ear and heard
Rain against the flue.

Something rustled in the dark,—
Noddy thought he heard
Murmured sighs across the lawn
Where a whisper stirred.

Noddy's feet went crunching
Over soil and gravel,—
Was there any mystery
Love could not unravel?

Was it wind he thought he heard,
Was it muffled laughter?
Noddy listened... and recoiled
From this silence after.

Lovers' eyes are cats' eyes,
He could almost see
Shadows—was it one or two?—
Past the apple tree.

Midnight passed in music,
Silence stirred and slept.
Cradled in the tall grass
Noddy lay and wept.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Fable

The three mad sisters
Of Whistledown Derry
Drank tea to be sad on,
Wine to make them merry.

The three mad sisters
With honey-colored hair
Had sixpence between them
And a secret to share.

But what was their secret
Nobody could guess—
The three mad sisters
Lived with Loneliness
In a little grey house
On a street without a name,
Waiting for a caller,
But no one ever came.

No one came but Hunger
Knocking at the gate,
Tapping at the casement
When the hour was late.

Far as moon and raindrop
Ever could discover,
The three mad sisters
Never took a lover,

Never plucked a violet
Or a four-leaf clover,
Never mourned the long days
Lost, with summer over.

One morning early
When the sky was fair
The three mad sisters
Vanished into air,

Leaving not the smallest
Clue to point their fate
Save a heap of ashes
Lying on the grate.

But what road beckoned them
Or how the sisters fared
On a doubtful journey
No one knew or cared;

But somewhere they are huddled
Beneath the eyes of noon
Or sipping elderberry wine,
Laughing at the moon,

Or plucking crimson apples
That glisten on the bough—
This I know for certain,
Never ask me how.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hound at Heel

She is not lonelier than most
Who live alone from spring to spring
And wait to hear the door-bell ring
As if they thought to see a ghost.

It is not loneliness she feels
That makes her wordless and austere
As she goes striding down the year
With Time a lean hound at her heels.

Wonder or scorn she might confess
If she were taken off her guard,
Or anger that had left her scarred,—
All these... but never loneliness.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Aviator's Wife

How could she bind him with her love
Within four walls, and hold him fast
When he had found the heights above
Their world, incredible and vast?
How could she charge him not to roam
Save at her side with quiet pace
When he had made the skies his home
And talked with singing stars in space?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

He Walks in Silence

This man is haunted by the ghost
Of all his heart derided most;
Of mortal weapons unafraid,
By his own fear he is betrayed.

He is confounded by the sight
Of shapes that loom against the night
Unseen by those whose eyes are blind
To that which threatens heart and mind.

He asks no pity, being proud,
Nor words to cry his fear aloud,
His lips defiantly compressed,
He locks his terror in his breast.
He walks in silence, being bound
To shadows. In his face are found
Riddle and answer darkly woven
And nothing sought and nothing proven.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hill-Wife

My mother was a plain sort,
My father an Apollo,
I never saw a likely lass
He would not up and follow.

I never saw a willing wench
Who flashed an easy smile,
But that my father turned about
To follow her a mile.

My mother was a quiet sort
Who gladly stayed at home,
My father was another breed
And he was one to roam.

He sang the songs that hill-men know
And laughed and cursed with zest—
I loved my mother fondly,
But I liked my father best.
The morning that he rode away
Rang with his gusty laughter,
We saw his face no more that day
Nor many a day thereafter.

And though she hid her futile tears
And played her woman's part,
I know it was my father's way
That broke my mother's heart.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Apparition

Wherever she wanders
Robed in laughter,
The village lads
Come hurrying after.

Along each road
From hill to hill
They joyfully
Pursue her still.

Her loveliness
To morning flung
Makes children old
And old men young.
A radiant vision
Of delight,
Woman or Circe,
Witch or sprite;

With beauty she
Contrives a snare
Woven of wonder
And despair.

Lads who have plumbed
The dark abyss
Of utter night
To win her kiss

And brave her laughter
Through the gale
Return no more
To tell the tale.

The curious heart
May only guess
The end of her
Elusiveness.

Who walks forever
Robed in laughter
While moon and sun
Run headlong after.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Bride

On her wedding day she fled
To a lonely place
Down a path she knew her feet
Never could retrace.

Through a silent wood she crept
Solitary, wild,
Where she lay among the fern
Like a frightened child.

Why she went she could not say,
Only that a Voice
Called her in a sudden hour,
Leaving her no choice.

It had been as if she saw
Dimly through a glass
One whose presence summoned her
Through the waving grass.

This had been her wedding morn,
This her day of grace
Till she found herself forlorn
In a lonely place;

Till she knew herself alone
With the wind and rain.
Those who gathered at the church
Waited her in vain.

One whose heart was not his own
Cried her name aloud,—
Two and three remembered her
Passionate and proud.

Bells were pealing through the town,
Calling far and wide,
Through the dark the lonely groom
Vainly sought his bride.
She had wandered far from sight
Over darkening hills
Where her feet had left no trace
In the daffodils.

On her day of joy she fled
Leaving not a clue,
Down the lonely years her kin
Sought her two by two.
Whose the arms that held her fast
No one ever knew.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The High Road

When I was but a young lad,
Before I was seven,
My mother used to tell me
Of the high road to heaven.
The gallant road, the lost road,
No lane of soil and gravel,
A road for drooping shoulders
And weary feet to travel.

When I was but a young lad
My mother used to rock
For half a night and stare at space,
Her eyes upon the clock;

And then she'd peer at nothing
Beyond the window pane
And talk of hearing voices
That whispered in the rain:

And where the voices whispered
A road ran young and white,
But only eyes could see it
Which saw beyond the night;

And only feet could walk it
That were as strangely shod
As the pale feet of prophets
Who journeyed up to God.

I heard my mother say it,
(I hear her say it still,)
The road to heaven runs higher
Than the highest hill.

I heard my mother murmur
That such a path led far
As human eye could travel
From wheeling star to star.

But try my best at seeking,
All that I could find
Was darkness veiling all ahead,
Shrouding all behind.

And though I listened often
For voices through the rain,
The most I heard was crickets
That murmured in the lane.

My mother's nimble fingers
When I was very small
Were as adroit at spinning
As she was fair and tall.

But long before the shadow
Of dusk was on the hill
She grew to turn from spinning,
And though she sat as still

As ever woman lingered
With four walls closing in,
I knew why she was laggard
And why she could not spin.

I knew I should be waking
At midnight or at dawn
To find her bed untroubled,
Her footprint on the lawn...

Upon a winter evening
I called her to my bed.—
“Why are your cheeks so pallid
And why your eyes so red?”

I asked her twice and yet again:
“Dear mother, answer me.”
My mother stared into my eyes
But not a word said she.

I turned my face against the wall
And tried to close my eyes;
I could not bear my mother's face
So proud and sad and wise.

I could not bear my mother's hands
That faltered at her breast.
At length I heard her move away
And lay but could not rest.

The wind blew up a storm. All night
The fingers of the gale
Rattled the doors and windows.

I heard the pelt of hail
And tried to call my mother
With one high, piping note,
But terror held me breathless
And fear was at my throat.

The wind subsided slowly
And silence fell at last
More terrible than chaos,
Unconquerable, vast,—

A silence that oppressed me
Till I arose from bed
And sought my mother's chamber
Humming a song of dread.

My mother's bed was empty,
My mother's room was bare.
I heard the hollow echo
Of silence on the stair.

I knew I must be dreaming
But suddenly I guessed
The meaning of my mother's finger
Pointing to the west.

For where would one whose spirit
Had borne a grievous load
Find peace, except against a hill
Or on a shining road?

I searched through yard and cellar
But in the ice and sleet
I found no clue to follow
Nor trace of flying feet.

Once more at dusk of autumn
I listen for the sound
Of voices in the shadow
And whispers from the ground;

And in the dead of winter
Upon a moonless night
I strain my eyes to fathom
A road serene and white.

But though my mother's whisper
Still echoes in my ear,
I know no more the music
That woke a night to fear;

And though my lonely years have reached
Seventy and seven,
My seeking eyes have never found
The high road to heaven.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Phyllis

On a night of mist and rain
Phyllis saw her image plain,
Viewed herself repugnant, crass
In her ample looking-glass,
Saw the countenance whose stare
Riddled her with sharp despair.

Phyllis, acolyte of spring,
Wished a bell might swiftly ring,
Send a lover to her side;
Phyllis saw herself a bride
Smiling into tender eyes
Till her image, wan and wise
Gave the lie to her bright vision,
Staring back in grim derision.

Phyllis, flying from despair
Wandered down the stubborn stair,
Stepped into the diffident
Night with amorous intent.
In an hour of rain and mist
Phyllis walked abroad unkissed,
Fiercely longing for the lover
She could strangely not discover,—
Walked a league or two, or three,
Turning, fumbled for her key.

Facing midnight unaghast,
Phyllis found her door at last,
Groping darkly, struck a match,
Called the cat in, turned the latch,
Heard a cricket in the grass,
Paused before her looking-glass.
From the landing Phyllis heard
Echoes of a muffled word,
Heard her mantel clock, grown gay
Tick her silly life away.
Softly curtained in her pride,
Phyllis laid her clothes aside;

Furtively the night withdrew,
Leaving no familiar clue.
Phyllis heard the rain no more,
Heard no lover at her door,
Wished that she were dead, and then
Longed for day to come again,
Crept to bed and could not sleep,
Lay and stared and could not weep.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Release

When Amory died
His sister Kate
Crossed her fingers
And railed at fate;
 When Amory sank
 With wheezing breath
 Into the reaching
 Arms of Death,

Kate cried words
She had not known,
But Amory lay
As still as stone;

Kate went sobbing
And cursing God—
With Amory lying
Under the sod.

When Amory slept,
His woman said,
“Would I were with him
Lying dead.”

This much she cried
And turned away
From all who came
To weep and pray.

For six months after
Her lover died
Kate slept alone
And kept her pride,
Till one sweet night
When spring lay over
The tansy fields
And nodding clover,

She rose and donned
A scarlet gown
And swept like a princess
Through the town,—

Till we were hearing
Roof and rafter
Echo the music
Of her laughter,

Till we saw a glow
In her eyes like fever
And men she beckoned
Were slow to leave her...

I heard the silence
Suddenly broken
By an old name
Unwisely spoken;

I saw Kate start
And toss her head,
And I knew her heart
Had buried its dead,
 And turned to life
 In proud forgetting
 After a slow sun's
 Luminous setting.

None blamed her
Or pitied him
Who slept alone
Past the moon's rim.

For why should the dead
Be slow forgiving
The pain and joy
And lust of the living?

Better, far better
When all is said,
A woman taste love
Than die unwed,

Aloof from laughter,
Denying lust,
Nursing a dream
Whose hope is dust.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Spite Fence

Martin Appleby
Nursed a grudge
Against a neighbor
He called the Judge,
Because his grown daughter
Plighted to none
Swore she'd not marry
Appleby's son.

Young Joe Appleby
Wasn't for caring
Till his old father
Fell to swearing,

"There ain't a woman
In all Old Crow
That's any too good
For my boy Joe!"

It may have been true
Or just wide talk,
But Appleby watched things
Like a hawk.

His friends and neighbors
Plainly saw
He wanted Jane
For a daughter-in-law.

But Jane looked through
Joe Appleby then;
You might have surmised
She didn't like men,
Till the summer brought
Old Crow a new boarder.
Jane favored him
In very short order.

Clyde was his name,
He was no woman-hater.
The parson married them
Two weeks later.

Martin Appleby,
Man of little sense,
Took out his grudge
In a spite fence,

An ugly affair
To shut off his garden
From that of the Judge,
For he couldn't pardon

Jane's utter rudeness
In marrying one
Who was not the equal
Of Appleby's son.

I don't know just
How the tale leaked out,
But it wasn't a year
Till word got about
That Jane and Clyde
Despised each other
And he was treating her
Worse than a brother.

And when Clyde's trips
Took him out of range,
Jane saw another lad
For a change.

You'd not believe
If you didn't know
That her whim now turned
To Appleby's Joe,

Who suddenly learned
Another man's wife
Could give a sad oaf
New lease on life.

Late one night
He was visiting Jane,
(A mist had fallen
And turned to rain,)

When out of the dark
He heard Clyde's voice
And dreading a scandal
He had no choice
But to slip through the yard
And scale the wall.
His shoes were muddy
And he took a fall

That broke his neck
In a curious way...
You can see the scratches
To this day

Where his boot slid over
The clinging stone.
A spite fence is not
For the wise to own,

Lest it vent spite
In ways not planned
Like a boomerang
In a hateful hand

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Zeke Hanley's Years

No one in Grass Creek
Knows how old
Zeke Hanley is
And they'll never be told.
They've heard how the guns
Of the Civil War
Boomed in his ears,
How he learned the lore

Of Indian braves
In a bygone day,
But just what his years are
No one can say.

He must be a hundred,
More or less—
Nobody knows,
But they all like to guess.

He wheezes some
When he's village bound,
But he knows his name
And he's walking around.

He likes corn likker
On Saturday nights
And a snootful makes him
Yell for his rights.

His teeth are bad
And he spits too often,
But no one ever measured
Zeke for a coffin.

Next year or later
Somebody will,
But Zeke loves life
And he's getting his fill.
Women of eighty
Are not his style,
He likes young girls
With a song and a smile.

So drink Zeke's health
When the wine starts to flow,
And wish him many
Bright years to go.

He may be a hundred
If he lives through the week,
But no one can prove it
In all Grass Greek.

The natives are wise
In the habits of game,
Insect and bird life
They call by name;

They know where to hunt
For rabbit and quail,
How to treat a cut
From a rusty nail,

But Zeke Hanley's right age
(Hear his bones creak!)
No one can tell you—
Not even old Zeke.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Adjuration

Let no bright interval betray
The heart that, having lost its way
Within a maze so wide and deep
Must fall an early prey to sleep;
Within a maze so deep and wide
The heart must roam unsatisfied
In search of imminent delight
Beyond the reach of mortal sight.

Let there be gentle light and rest
To compensate the weary breast,
Familiar voices and a warm
Retreat in time of stress and storm,
That this our load be ever light
And each day more serenely bright,
Each gleaming hour a friend to us
And every pathway luminous.

Let no remote mirage confuse
The groping mind, nor yet accuse
The vague and undiscerning eye—
Let there be light to journey by,
An honest light above that may
Not lead the pilgrim far astray
On strange detours that twist and bend
Along a path that knows no end.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

City of the Mind

Let a light break upon the mind
And let the eye no longer blind
Look out upon reality
And gather instant cogency;
Let it look up and learn to bear
The urgent weight of sun and air,
The breadth of planets wandering
In space, the bud and blossoming
Of worlds securely bound together,
Of stars that share a common tether;
Let the enlightened sense at last
Look on creation unaghost
And peering past its narrow room
Behold a firmament in bloom.

Let a light break upon the heart
Though earth and sky be torn apart
And ocean fiercely writhe below—
Let every citadel of woe
Grumble unmourned, and in its stead
Utopia lift up its head,
The deathless city of the mind,
Undesecrated, unconfined,
A shining witness to that Power
Which brought a universe to flower,
That man in gratitude may come
At last to his millennium.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

SELECTED POEMS · PORTRAIT GALLERY

The fourth division of Selected Poems, 1919–1948 (1949)

A Certain Critic

Deliberate, dark rapture and the cool
Sweet cadences of tenderness elude
One who has gilded art with ridicule
Until he sings no more in any mood
Save of an unbeliever. Now to please
The cynical who find him easy reading,
He snickers at the ancient verities
And lightly scoffs to show his perfect breeding.

He fears no sin but to be sentimental.
Dreading to be discovered in an act
Of kindness and reluctant to be gentle,
Condemning what he names misguided tact,
He lives and dies, denouncing foes and brothers,
A law unto himself, but not to others.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

A Censor

Day in, day out upon his classic quest
He haunts the book stores one by one to scan
Some doubtful volume should escape his ban.
He thumbs the classics over, fondly lingers
On Richardson and Sterne and Rabelais
And turns their pages with excited fingers—
He'd censor Scripture if he had his way.

A few books he takes home for late inspection
Long after dark, when good folk are in bed.
A dozen moderns of his own selection
Contribute thrills by which his mind is fed.
On his chaste brow, then, let us twine the laurels
Due him for elevating public morals.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Paterfamilias

Girls of eighteen he loves, and even twenty,
Pleasing and plump and eloquently young;
In his own day he knew and courted plenty
Whose praises tripped divinely from his tongue.
Now that his daughter's chums come in to call
And stay to taste his wife's Alsatian cooking
He kisses each one fondly in the hall
When he is sure his good wife isn't looking.

The boys who hang around he tolerates
And marvels that a girl must have in tow
Such callow lads who prattle of their dates;
He patronizes all his daughter's beaux
And smiles to hear Virginia call them "men"—
What he could show them, were he young again!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hypochondriac

She boasts a close acquaintance with diseases
Whose mention leaves but little room for doubt.
She has known asthma and the fitful sneezes
Dear to hay-fever sufferers—and gout.
Her operation for appendicitis
Made history for hospital and clinic;
Again, when she was troubled with arthritis
Hers was a record to confound the cynic.

Sciatica and rheumatism she
Can boast of. Seven winters found her lame.
She blandly mentions water on the knee
And subtler ills no specialist could name.
Who knows what ailment, if she persevere,
She may delightedly unearth next year?

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Scandal Monger

She knows the menace of a whispered word,
An innuendo delicately spoken,
Divines how readily the mind is stirred
By whispered echoes, and how hearts are broken
By confidences cleverly betrayed.
A secret is a light thing in her keeping
And for her deft, bright word she is repaid
By pallid music of incessant weeping.

Words are her planting. Day and night she sows
On fertile soil the seedlings of despair
In cautious handfuls, till the scattered rows
Give promise of unreckoned fruitage there.
The world her handiwork invades is wide;
Each planting leaves her still unsatisfied.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Until a Day Came

From each one who adored her she exacted
In her own cunning way, relentless toll,
So willing were these men that she attracted
To lay before her mind and heart and soul.
Not that her will was wantonly destructive
Or that she smiled at vows so simply broken,
But youth was brief and days must be productive
Of more than fine intentions, bravely spoken.

And so she went her proud way, gathering
Flower and fruit, and never looked behind
Until a day came when the yield of spring
Rotted against her fingers, and the rind
Grew bitter in her mouth, till in disgust
She looked upon her heart and found it dust.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Society Editor—Hollywood

The social gadabout of Hollywood
Attends a dozen parties every week,
Bearing her notebook as a scribbler should,
Accepting tributes to her last critique
And basking in the hospitality
Of filmdom's latest favorite, whose Scotch
And cigarettes are plentiful and free.
Time slips away. The scribe ignores her watch.
A Latin lover stoops to kiss her hand,
A sudden thrill that finds her acquiescent.
“Gladys, I must be off. It's been too grand.
Have I the names of everybody present?
Good-night.” They watch her leave, erect and solemn
And hope for mention in her Sunday column.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Sob Sister

With glowing pen she writes the histories
Of men and women doomed to passing fame.
For such as she there are no mysteries—
She can disclose superbly, without shame
The intimate details of little lives,
Their aspirations, fickle and sincere.
The tragedies of mothers, sons and wives
Are stuff with which she wrings a ready tear.

With phrases just a trifle saccharine
She stoops to analyze a murderer
Or mourn the passing of a movie queen.
A million breathless readers reckon her
The voice of truth, and heed her word, unsated
With drivel nationally syndicated.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Movie Premiere

She flutters from an orchid limousine,
The faintest frown of wonder at her brow.
The crowd is waiting to acclaim its queen;
A shout goes up. They recognize her now.
Bowing, she smiles, accosts the microphone,—
“Miss Rita Craye,” the bland announcer cries.
“Good evening, friends.” Thus does Miss Graye intone
A novel greeting through admiring sighs.

Now with the splendor of a queen she sweeps
Into the theatre. Her steady gaze
Follows the film. She neither smiles nor weeps.
To damn a sister star with faintest praise
Is her delight. But harden not your heart,—
Miss Rita Graye lives only for her art.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

An Actress

She struggled with dramatic roles for years
And got along with bits and little more—
Eager to move an audience to tears
She begged as she had never begged before
For one big chance. She longed to earn the praise
That should be hers. They called her for a test
At Pyramid at last, and in a daze
She played her gripping scene like one possessed.
The rushes made them feel a little daft—
The great Mogul in his projection room
Like little Audrey, sat and laughed and laughed,
And at the sound, the clouds of doubt and gloom
Dissolved... With one quick flourish of the pen
They signed the nation's prime comedienne!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

An Old Timer

In Hollywood they know him as the Ghost—
He was an actor long ago whose fame
Preceded him, they say, from coast to coast,
Who won his public's worshipful acclaim.
Now no one turns at mention of his name,
His generation passes... and he goes
Obscurely, laboring to play the game,
An outcast from the only world he knows.

When movie mobs convene, you may depend,
None recognizes in that cavalcade
The gray-haired extra, second from the end
Who seldom thinks to mention that he played
With Kean and Sothern once upon a time
And shared a scene with Mansfield in his prime.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hollywood Tourist

She gapes at Hollywood as some have eyed
The Pyramids or haughty spires of Rome,
And daily looks for wonders to confide
Upon a postcard to the folks at home.
A motor tour of Hollywood by day
Rewards her well. A guide with megaphone
Points out the homes of Gable, Alice Faye,
Bob Taylor, Myrna Loy and Lewis Stone.

A table at the Derby is her prize,
A premiere at the Chinese an event;
She pushes through the jostling crowd and tries
To snare an autograph. Her time is spent
In storing thrills to please the movie-struck
Neighbors who wait her, back in Keokuk!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Imported Star

Consider well the European star
Imported in the holy name of art
Who praises from her well-upholstered car
The land that she has taken to her heart.
In wide America from coast to coast
Producers somehow could not find the type
They sought-and so they gladly hailed the toast
Of old Granada, sensuous and ripe.
She has her points, as connoisseurs admit,
A joie de vivre, a breathless animation,
A gay abandon and a bubbling wit;
But when I hear her making conversation
I'm sure she came, in spite of ballyhoo,
From Spain, by way of Second avenue.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hollywood Model

She strips demurely in the name of art
And poses for the picture magazines
Or strains the manly hero to her heart,
Emoting soulfully through torrid scenes.
In step-ins she is pictured at the mercy
Of ruthless miscreants who threaten harm;
Again, she shrewdly plays the wily Circe
And registers incomparable charm.

A hundred pounds of conscious sex-appeal,
She sets the pace for glowing pulchritude,
And having very little to conceal,
Hers is the candor which disarms the prude.
Take one brief look at her and be resigned—
A simple case of matter over mind.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hollywood Masseuse

She knows the secrets of a score of stars
She keeps in good condition, with the aid
Of stern massage. She knows the bitter scars
That life has left, the traps that time has laid.
She flatters customers, and draws them out
With all the gentle arts of conversation
And while she puts encroaching pounds to rout
She gathers dividends in information.

Although I would not call her one to tattle
Who knows the use of silence as a curtain,
If time should shrink her ample bank deposits,
It would not take her very long. I'm certain,
To write her memoirs candidly, and rattle
The skeletons in half a hundred closets!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

A Reformer

He rates himself as Hollywood's apostle
Destined to save the picture industry
In his own way. His ego is colossal,
His tongue addicted to hyperbole.
He welcomes sponsors whom he may include
In his design for speedy reformation,
For his are plans of scope and magnitude
Should zealots favor his administration.
He advocates a program so stupendous
Its very cost would take your breath away,
But though the overhead would be tremendous,
The children of his brain are sure to pay.
He promises to elevate the mob—
But what he seeks is just a steady job.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Hollywood Salesgirl

Behind a counter in a ten-cent store
She waits on customers from nine to five
And thinks in silence of the days before
She reached the Melting Pot where thousands strive
To win the gleaming goal, that few attain.
“Crawford and Shearer made it—why not I?
What have they got that I—” Her puzzled brain
Gropes for the answer that eludes her. “Why?”

To casting offices she sends with care
Her photographs in calculated poses
Like those in movie magazines. Aware
That life at best is not a bed of roses,
She sells cosmetics, sealing wax and soap
And learns to live on hamburgers—and hope.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Big Sister

Hers is a heart as large as all outdoors
Whose charity she lovingly extends
To other women's husbands. Be they bores
Or charmers, she's the merriest of friends.
They come to her when home has lost its lure
And wives misunderstand. Her sympathy
She lends to each, her tact is swift and sure—
Her scotch is of the purest quality.

Wives trust her with misgivings, though they know
. No cause to censure her when husbands stray,
For hers are casual favors to bestow,
And many a husband prematurely gray
Whom life and love have wounded through and through
Has been delivered home as good as new.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Disenchantment

She sought a love he could not understand
Whose heart was hostage to her loveliness;
He could not follow her into that land
Where she had fled, evading his caress.
Hers was a Country turbulent and strange
Whose misty borders he could never cross,
Whose hills and valleys were not his to range—
Her gain he shared as little as her loss.
The city of her ultimate salvation
Lay farther than a lover might surmise
Who could not share her grief and her elation
Nor quench the flame that burned behind her eyes,
Nor guess the substance of a dream that led
Her feet into the kingdom of the dead.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Barrier

There was one door through which he never passed,
A door she kept inscrutably apart,
Securely latched. A stranger to the last,
He sighed and longed to keep her at his heart.
But she was not for any man to hold,
Save for a moment. She was one to slip
Out of his arms and leave him lost and cold;
He trembled when he kissed her finger's tip.

Sometimes he wondered as he mused alone
What lay, still inaccessible, behind
The barrier. A world he had not known
Lurked in the dark recesses of her mind
And he who stood a beggar at the gate
Was left in rags to wonder...and to wait.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

City Husband

To please his wife he walks her Pekingese
Three times a day along the Avenue;
To balk would be to lose his hold on peace
And that of course he's not inclined to do.
Life to his eyes is odd but seldom funny,
He found a way to compromise with debt
By marrying Griselda and her money;
He harbors, though he won't admit, regret.

He sleeps late and is prone to no misgiving
Since all his days are very much the same,
Yet with the chance to earn an honest living
He might do much to vindicate his name
In ways that he has sometimes vaguely planned—
Alas, Griselda might not understand!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Lost Warrior

Behind the mask of your indifference
I see a spirit wrestling with defeat
As Jacob wrestled with omnipotence;
About your head avenging thunders beat
And retribution hovers. Yet you stand
Unwavering, a lost world in your eyes
And splendidly salute the doom at hand,
Your glance reflecting scorn and faint surprise.
So shall I still remember you at last
When flesh and blood elude my failing sight,
So shall my spirit seek you in that vast,
Illimitable interval of night
To find you not indifferent, but only
Shy and aloof, and tragically lonely.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Haven

Here is a place to rest when you are ready
To seek repose, regardless of the season.
The nights are still, the company is steady,
The price, all things considered, is in reason.
There is no barrier of race or creed;
The great and lowly find a shelter here
And learn an answer to the final need,
Freedom from want, from weariness, from fear.

In tones discreetly hushed the young mortician
Makes all arrangements for a single fee.
On special plots he earns a high commission
Which may account for his sagacity.
Thus for the turning of an honest penny
Death is his friend, as he has been to many.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

John Sprigg

He loathed the joy he read on human faces;
A smile to him was but a sign of guilt.
He came, a living scourge, to shame the traces
Of pleasure and to make his comrades wilt.
The school board named him president. Men feared him
And women passed him shyly on the street;
A few commended but none ever cheered him,
His sway over their morals was complete.

Yet in the winter of his icy bleakness
A touch of spring had hovered all unguessed
Save by the one who chanced to find his weakness
And laughing softly, held him to her breast.
Unseen, he kissed the deacon's blue-eyed wife,
A sin that he remembered all his life.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Housewife

She lives on chocolates and romantic fiction,
For dreams of knightly chivalry are hers,
Of tender vows proclaimed in faultless diction;
The heroes of her novel she prefers,
Though overdrawn, to the unseemly creatures
With whom she must engage in conversation
And find alas, without redeeming features
If she commune with people of her station.
Her husband meekly tiptoes through her life,
A timid wraith. Her children look their ages.
But still the bookish fancies of a wife
Fetter her to the never-ending pages
Devoured, along with countless chocolate creams
By one whose weight grows daily with her dreams.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Jazz Drummer

With deft, uncanny wizardry he drew
The secret of the jungle from a drum
And gave the pulsing crowd from 10 to 2
Their nightly meed of pandemonium.
A hint of voodoo magic strangely lay
Beneath his urgent rhythm. Eager feet
Responded, jostling bodies quick to sway,
While midnight throbbed to his barbaric beat.

The theme of clarinet and saxophone
He skilfully embroidered with a thread
Of subtle syncopation all his own,
A rhythm eloquent to stir the dead
From graves of silence passionless and stark
And set them dancing in the starry dark.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Alice Hare

She is not jealous of the joy he finds
In contact with a host of learned minds,
Nor does she criticize his adulation
Of women who arouse his admiration.
But when he lets her suddenly surprise
A glow of recollection in his eyes
Of days and nights in which she had no part,
She stumbles from him, wounded to the heart.

She is not one to criticize his choice
Of company, nor lift complaining voice
In condemnation of the hours he spends
Burning the candle rashly at both ends.
But when she feels his spirit steal away
Beyond her reaching, follow though she may,
She finds herself resentful, ill at ease
And darkly jealous of his memories.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Pandora

She sat and stared in silence at the box,
The admonition ringing in her ears,
Knowing that she must keep it shut, its locks
Inviolable, lest the secret of the years
Escape...But stillness mocked her, and once more
A voice repeated, Coward! and she heard
A sound like laughter. At the open door
The shadows deepened, and a whisper stirred.
Her fingers trembled with a strange desire.
Wordless, the box implored her till she drew
The key at last, and caught as in a spell
Lifted the lid, and stared-and screaming knew
The shapes of madness and their tongues of fire
As chaos smote her-and the heavens fell.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919-1948* (1949).

David Stanton

He cannot well avert his destiny
Though he may boldly roam the wide world over
Groping for freedom where no man is free,
Challenging life that fashioned him a rover.
He may not cheat his destiny, nor thwart
The certain ultimatum yet in store,
Although his ship ride gallantly to port
Bearing him home victorious from war.

He may not superciliously defy
The last decree, forever have his fling—
A word of warning scribbled on the sky
At some far twilight may suffice to bring
His pride to naught and lay his valor by
In that still hour of final reckoning.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Dora Shelton

She dreams herself a modern Joan of Arc
Till martyrdom itself becomes a passion,
But since no foes await her in the dark
And burning at the stake is out of fashion,
She vainly looks for causes to espouse,
For ramparts she may valiantly defend,
Loathing the drudgery of keeping house,
Knowing her labor thwarted in the end.

Hers is a cloistered, rather saintly air—
A martyr to the sins her friends commit,
She lays her white soul delicately bare;
And yet somehow the halo does not fit
One who, denouncing worldly gain and loss
Stands where the gaping world may view her cross!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Marian Carr

She strove to analyze her own reactions,
An end not always easy to achieve
When life was full of glittering distractions
And formulas invented to deceive.
Herself at last she could not classify
Who wondered why she loved and scorned and hated
And why she lived to watch her comrades die,
Content to go her way unloved, unmated.
Life on this whirling planet was a strange
Phenomenon not easy to explain.
She watched the stars melt and the seasons change
And knew an odd presentiment of pain
That she must face, even in Death's bright kiss
A riddle that defied analysis.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Grace Clover

Yours was a heart afraid of happiness,
Distrustful of its promise—far too wise
To seek the sum of love in a caress,
Preferring the indifferent surmise
To fathoming the intricate disguise
Confronting you. A doubter's heart alone
Could thus forswear the race, eschew the prize
And ask no bread lest it receive a stone.

Yours was a timorous heart afraid to seize
The radiant interval; reluctant lest
Tomorrow stealing find you on your knees,
A luckless pilgrim on an empty quest.
And so you went your way secure, alone,
Dreaming of beauty you had never known!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Pretender

Himself he fancies as a gay Don Juan,
A shining semblance of Lothario
Whom brooding women love to think upon
With wistful hope, with longing eyes aglow.
He sees himself the cause of tears that flow
Down lovely cheeks he leaves too long unkissed
And chides himself whom Nature fashioned so
Impossible for ladies to resist.

Their silences he readily construes
As tributes to his personality
And daily overlooks such pointed clues
As sharper eyes would not be slow to see.
He counts his love no light thing to be spurned,
But women snicker when his back is turned.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Secret Enemy

She walks forever warily, as one
Who fears a foe among the passing crowd
And moves discreetly lest she be undone—
In meditation, reticent and proud
She goes her way, suspicious of the glances
Men level on her, doubting every plea
Of those who trouble her with their advances,
Who gravely doubts a world's integrity.
Yet close at hand, much closer than she knows
A foe is lyly lurking day and night
Conniving harm, the deadliest of foes
To strike and know no pity for the plight
Of such a victim unaware that she
Is first and last her own worst enemy.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Fallen Idol

He can remember moments when his fame
Was heralded from gaping coast to coast,
When thousands thrilled at mention of his name.
Supremacy was not an idle boast
For one who walked with princes, and was reckoned
Too fine to mingle with the multitude,
To whom his fellows hastened when he beckoned
To gratify each sudden whim and mood.

He can remember-but today he must
Confront a host his presence leaves unstirred;
His dreams and these his memories are dust,
His glowing name no more a household word.
The sun of fame precipitately sets
On one who learns how soon a world forgets!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Pretense

In spite of all this photograph conveys,
I cannot think of you as more than cold.
Your eyes that men are readiest to praise
Will shed as little warmth when you are old
And wise (perhaps too wise) as they do now
For all your improvising of a mood
That flickers for an instant at your brow
Where seldom warmth and tenderness intrude.

O deft insinuation of a pose
That might outwit a less discerning eye!
Here speaks one who has looked within, and knows
The face of pretense rounded in a lie.
If I were dead, my very dust would laugh
And hail this matchless jest, your photograph!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Because Her Days

Because her life was like an open book
Which lay accessible to all who. passed,
Inviting those who cared, to pause and look
And leaving none to turn away aghast,
Because her days, devoid of mystery
Could welcome careful cross-examination
And satisfy the shrewdest scrutiny,
She sighed when moved to silent contemplation.
She walked alone, and often envied those
Whose days were spiced with all that she had missed,
Nor did she read what lay behind the pose
Of gayety not easy to resist,
While those she counted luckiest on earth
Coveted her deep peace and quiet mirth.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Music Master

He gravely teaches for a meager pittance
The art of music to the neophyte
And lives from month to month on the remittance
His labors win him, an encumbrance slight.
His stern convictions constitute a quorum
On what is noblest, worthiest in art;
He welcomes pupils with a grave decorum
That draws their aspirations to his heart.

For once he shared the fond and fervent vision
Of those who dare aspire. He too would play
For thousands...But the ultimate decision
Was made by fate in her remorseless way.
He tutors willing minds and eager fingers
To hide frustration. But the memory lingers.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Unpossessed

The eye with which he looks on love is quizzical;
He is not one to wear upon his sleeve
A heart discreetly wrapped in metaphysical
Reflections. He is careful not to grieve
For fallen April. Stealthy memories
Cannot avail to wound a tranquil breast—
This mortal love is powerless to seize
A vagrant spirit wisely unpossessed.

Aloof and imperturbable as time,
A citadel besieged but never taken,
Alone he stands, triumphant and sublime,
Beholding human vanities unshaken,
Like one who smiling lingers unbeguiled
By the bright folly of a wayward child.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Demagogue

His was a gift for glib, high-sounding phrases
That rolled as if they issued from the heart,
And won a world's attention and its praises
For that which at his call became an art.
He primed each message with a homely story
His listeners were eager to accept.
Such was the passion of his oratory
That strong men blinked and gentle women wept.
His arguments were poignant and persuasive;
Few eyes perceived the showman half concealed,
Or sized him up as artfully evasive.
Sufficient that his eloquence revealed
A promise that they hastened to believe
Who failed to see him laughing up his sleeve!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Dinner for One

He stalks into a tea room with the air
Of one who cannot easily forget
That he has dined with princes. Unaware
Of watching eyes, untroubled with regret
He orders calmly and enjoys his food
As if it were a banquet served in state
And not a snack devoured in solitude;
Here is no mystic brooding on his fate.

A bit of pudding and a demi-tasse
Complete his meal. He fingers a cigar
And drums a moment idly on his glass
And scans the check. The grandeur of a czar
Is his. The tip he leaves, superbly bored,
Might be a gold piece tendered by a lord.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

These Are His Own

Endearing phrases leaping to his tongue
Choke and confuse him. Daily at the sight
Of lovely girls whose beauty goes unsung
He yearns to praise their bodies slim and white,
Their lips and bosoms and their graceful limbs,
These are his own to sing, did he but guess
Immortal ardor trembles in the hymns
His heart has fashioned but can scarce express.

Forever silent and alone he goes
Through lonely gardens of recurring night,
Pausing to mark the wonder of the rose,
Praying that time may close upon his sight
Lest he be caught forever in the snare
Of beauty greater than his heart may bear.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Ananias

Prevarication was his first resort,
The refuge of a swift and subtle mind
Keyed to the cunning of the sly retort;
Yet he could tell the truth when so inclined,
Which was but seldom. He was one to weave
Amazing tales that sought to glorify
His own bravado, and at once deceive
A score of minds that failed to pierce the lie.
The simple love of truth for its own sake
Was never bred in him. The fact that white
Was always white and never black, that two
And two, however reckoned, could not make
More than their sum or less, he never knew
Who dared to think two wrongs could make a right.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

A Vocal Teacher

In thundered syllables he eulogizes
Great singers of a half-forgotten hour,
Then demonstrates the breathing exercises
Whose use may bring each voice to fullest flower.
To every pupil eager or half-hearted
He earnestly presents a diagram
On which the chest and lungs and throat are charted.
Also the action of the diaphragm.

I've heard him interrupt a pupil singing
To hear his own voice resonantly boom,
And on a lonely evening caught him flinging
Defiant arias at an empty room.
His pupils worship him. There's not a thing
He has not taught them all-save how to sing.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Ivory Tower

Behind the bulwark of his ivory tower
He dreams remotely of another day
And fails to heed the summons of an hour
That brooks no truce with terror or dismay.
While history is made, he sits and peers
Into the soundless past, as if he guessed
His answer lay among the mouldy years
Whose hollow music echoes in his breast.

He does not heed the surge of stormy seas,
The thunder of a universe at war.
Guadalcanal, Pearl Harbor, Caen—all these
Are distant names to him, and nothing more,
For he can see no farther than the bower
That holds him safe within his ivory tower.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Women

Women are indefatigably cruel
To one another, darkly nurturing
Hate in the bosom, gathering slow fuel
To fan each deadlier flame. Women can fling
Reserve away and launch a subtle sting
That lurks in words too intricate to bear,
Too delicately seasoned. These they bring
To ruined altars, smiling and aware.
Women are priestesses who dare invoke
Lightning and thunder out of awful skies,
Who worship words that intimately cloak
Significances sinister and wise.
Lovely and barbarous, with skill to spend
They sharpen claws that passionately rend.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Centenarian

One who has lived a hundred years and ten
Remembers youth but faintly, being old,
Having long wearied of the ways of men,
His blood, that once ran warm, now being cold;
One who has seen a century darkly pass
Beyond him with its freight of joy and woe,
Beholds an aging stranger in the glass
Who patiently awaits his hour to go.

His friends have vanished, and the dreams he knew
Are long forgotten. Silent and alone
He mourns a world that faded from his view
Bearing the happiness his heart has known.
A stranger at the feast, he ponders why
The One he waits must pass him coldly by.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Perennial

The years have not defeated her completely
Nor dulled the zest for tennis in her heart,—
At sixty-one she serves the ball as neatly
As many a stripling, and with subtle art
Lobs when occasion beckons, and is quick
To seize advantage when her adversary
Offers an opening. She is one to trick
The timorous, and topple the unwary.

While weaker sisters linger in the shade
And try a hand of bridge, she does her bit
To demonstrate how tennis should be played.
Her daughter and her daughter's children sit
And watch with adoration and dismay
Tomorrow matching skill with yesterday.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

SELECTED POEMS · IN FREEDOM'S NAME

The concluding division of Selected Poems, 1919–1948 (1949)

Washington

His vision saw the nation that would grow
Out of the labor of a valiant few,
A country strong to weather every blow,
And with the vision of the larger view
He sowed the seed of promise in an hour
Of darkened skies, and walked with head unbowed
Knowing that time would surely bring to flower
A people incorruptible and proud.

Oblivious of the burden of the years
He kept his eyes upon the distant goal
And caught a glimpse of unexplored frontiers,—
His was the faith that made a nation whole.
When knaves and fools lament a world undone
And courage fails, remember Washington.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Portrait

His fathers sought and found a continent
Where freedom ruled and tolerance was fed,
But this crusader with a zeal unspent
Denies the hope for which his fathers bled.
He rides his hobby horse and tilts his lance
At chosen foes, shouting and breathing flame,
His are the weapons of intolerance
Which he commands in patriotism's name.
 He flaunts the malice of a twisted mind,
 Yet there are those, his ever-faithful clan,
 The credulous, the simple and the blind,
 Who hail him as a prime American
 And crown him with their loyalty and trust
 Whose name is written haltingly, in dust.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

For a Dictator

Let him be brought to judgment at the end,
A judgment swift and terrible and just,—
Alone, with neither sycophant nor friend
To solace him who forfeited the trust
Of satellite and slave, who laid in dust
The hopes and dreams of millions. Let him hear
The strident echo of a world's disgust
Beat like a malediction in his ear.

Let him be tried, while knaves and traitors cower;
Summon who will, to fashion him a shroud,
Silence compassion in the final hour.
Let him be judged. For this earth cries aloud,
And swift and certain let the verdict be,
A solemn lesson for posterity!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Bitter Brew

These aching days are more than we can bear
Whose hearts are yet unschooled in fortitude;
We shrink in dread of ultimate despair
And fear to drain the cup that life has brewed
Against our thirst. This is a bitter wine
Whose sparkle mocks us from the rounded glass.
Its ancient fruit upon some Stygian vine
Ripened too long. If but the cup might pass
To stronger lips! But this were tempting fate,—
Let craven spirits cry the weakling's prayer.
Lift high the glass before it be too late
And drink a lingering death to black despair.
...The empty glass lies shattered at our feet
Whose lips once found the lips of laughter sweet!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Ultimatum

You may not easily be rid of Death,
But should you meet him with your gusty mirth,
You may confuse him with a sudden breath
Of merriment, until the square of earth
You stand upon be readily transformed
Into a shining and celestial acre
Blossoming with the fruit of heaven, warmed
By gentle suns obedient to their Maker.

Then be not found a coward at the blast
Of awful trumpets out of peaceful night,
For you shall somehow triumph at the last
And watch Death shrink a renegade from sight
Into the darkness of unhallowed years,
The music of your laughter in his ears!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Tortuous Year

This is the lone, the incredible year,
Its dark field sown for the heart to reap,
And this the hour of the purging tear
And the rousing from sleep.

Death with his brightness touched us twice
And each time left us strange and stricken;
The slow pulse lags and the brow is ice
And the senses sicken.

This is the trying, the tortuous year,
But this dark pattern that Time has made
Shall bind our vigil of eye and ear,
Shall find us sturdy and unafraid.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

The Undefeated

We are the Undefeated, who have known
Terror and persecution. At our feet
The seeds of inhumanity are sown
For whom the fruit of life was once so sweet.
We are the Conquerors, from whose dark shame
Shall blossom joy to set the earth aglow;
He too was undefeated, in Whose name
We ask forgiveness for the reckless foe.

Though scorn malign and hatred crucify,
We are the Conquerors, whose sons shall see
His word endure, His blessings multiply
With peace and honor, for eternity.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

To Certain Aggressors

You wanted war—no less than all-out war,
No “live and let live” course, no compromise.
You won concessions and demanded more,
Until we filled the sea with ships, the skies
With roaring planes. You asked for nothing less,—
Hard, bitter war. With sweat of hand and brow,
With blood and tears, we come to seek redress—
Our way is clear. How is it with you now?

Yours are the battered hill, the smoking city,
The bread-line, children crying in the cold,
This was your choice. You dealt in hate, not pity;
That which you gave returns to you tenfold,
Doom and destruction, with their deadly crop—
The cup is yours, to the last bitter drop!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

A Man May Walk

A man may walk across a lonely land
And find no pasture he can call his own,
No acre blossoming at his command,—
He hears the wind's incessant monotone
And vainly looks from slope to slope to find
The place he seeks and came so far to win,
The hollow lying fertile in his mind
Where curving foothills lean to close it in.

This is the tragedy of nameless men,
Of nameless multitudes forever seeking,
That men may come and go and come again
And never hear the voice of silence speaking
And never find the beckoning home that lies
Somewhere in dreams, beyond their weary eyes.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Fellowship

(President Truman signed legislation directing the Secretary of War to place beside the body of the first unknown soldier that of an unknown serviceman of World War

II.—News item.)

A comrade joins another where he lies
To share his silence under watching skies.
Though terrible the dark seed death has sown,
The Unknown Soldier sleeps no more alone.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Demigod

His shadow lies across a shaken world,
His word is chaos crying at the door,
But when the flags of bitterness are furled
And men return to quietness once more,
His voice and those who echo it will go
Unheard, unheeded, in the larger plea
Of those who ask no triumph but to know
Their heritage, and find equality.

Then he will be remembered, if at all,
As one who conquered for a little hour
And rode with hard assurance to his fall,
Swollen with might and insolent with power.
And those who lauded him as god and king
Will bow their heads in shame, remembering.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Declaration

For rigor there is something to be said—
The belt drawn tight, the backbone stiff and straight,
The flesh made ready for the thorny bed,
The heart conditioned to a steadfast hate,
The mind grown bitter, vigilant and wise,—
All these are weapons not to be ignored
By those who clearly see against the skies
The shadow of the Damoclean sword.

 If we were soft, our years have made us so;
 If we were heedless, let it not be said
 We cannot learn the way that we must go.
 Above the graves of our unnumbered dead
 We offer all that free men have to give
 In freedom's name, that liberty shall live!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Could I But Find a Word

World, you are old and full of bitterness
And weary with the noise of many wars;
World, you are full of care
And sick at heart.
Could I but find a word of reassurance,
Were I but strong that I might take you,
World,
And fold you like a child upon my breast
And whisper words of comfort,
Bid you rest.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Revelation

Nothing is changed—, we said with hopeful eyes,
The long road bright before us and the hill
Rearing its lofty head against the skies,
Voices of thrush and cricket never still,
The flowering pasture green beneath our feet,
The distant cadence of the wandering stream,
And April passing with a step as fleet
As once we heard. Or was it in a dream?
After the journey with its fruitless quest
We came again to valleys we had known
To win the bread of comfort, seeking rest,
Who, looking long for bread, had found a stone.
Nothing is changed, we cried...A world in flame
And ashes mocked us. Nothing was the same.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Summary

This generation understands the last
As little as it may, being engrossed
In its brief day, forgetful of the past,
And unaware of that invisible host
Which watches, torn with pity and distress,
To see its errors born again, its hate
Courting catastrophe beyond redress,
Its sons and daughters hostages of fate.

The dead are silent while the living wage
Their ceaseless warfare still. Dark circumstance
Rolls up the curtain on a shifting stage
Whose actors are the victims of mischance,
Playing their desperate roles in the deep trance
Of men unmindful of their heritage.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

To a Lost Flyer

You set your course against the night
And cried the journey well begun.
God speed you on your non-stop flight
Into the setting sun!

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

Reminder

These are the gifts the heart will long remember,
Our hostages to hold against despair,
The hushed and wistful twilight of November,
The scent of autumn fires upon the air,
And crowning these, the privilege we share,
The way of life that is our own to cherish,
The purpose and the goal for which we dare,
The faith we proudly keep, that must not perish.

These are the days, America, we know
Through you and with you. We have come of age
And we are ready, having learned to grow,
For what may come. And being firm and tough,
We shall preserve our precious heritage,
But we must care. And we must care enough.

Publication. *Selected Poems, 1919–1948* (1949).

RECOVERED PERIODICAL POEMS

Full texts located outside the scanned book corpus

Christ Jesus

He taught the world that sickness was a wraith
Which fled before the light of Love divine,
That purest understanding, grown from faith,
Could prove that Truth of which men sought a sign,
Subdue the tempest, quiet stormy seas
And cast out devils from the hearts of men,
Declare unreal the phantom of disease,
And bid the blind at last behold again.

Upon the Mount he taught his own to pray
The prayer of faith that heals and purifies,
Forgiving even one who dared betray;
He pierced the veil of error's dark disguise
And, lifted past the bounds of human sight,
Left to all men the miracle of light.

Publication. *The Christian Science Journal*, July 1931.

God's Day

Morning lies gently on the dreaming hills;
The music of a new day echoes far
Across the plain, through wood and field and valley.
God's morning is upon us. We are held
Within the shelter of His encircling wing.

How shall we honor Him whose presence fills
The broad domain, whose loving Word is law,
Who changeth not with every changing morrow?
How shall we praise Him for the gift of song,
For richness of the prayer of understanding?
In keeping of His statutes is our praise,
In observation of His covenant,
With joy and with the music of thanksgiving.
God is our need, and great is our desire
To know His presence in the silent hours,
To fathom His compassion, broad and deep.
Our feet are set in paths of loveliness,
Our joy lies in the keeping of His Word;
Our cup is full, and truly runneth over.

Peace lingers over hill and vale and meadow,
And blesses humble hearts that bow in worship.
God's morning is upon us who rejoice
In the perfection of His radiant hour.

Publication. *The Christian Science Journal*, June 1937.

‘I Am the Way’

The way of Truth is long, the path is steep;
But he who bravely perseveres shall reap
The full reward of courage. He shall find
The blessed pastures in the realm of Mind.

The way is broad that leads no man aright,
But wanders in the pitfalls of the night;
Wise is the pilgrim who, o’ercoming strife,
Shall choose the path to everlasting Life.

He shall perceive beyond the final hill
The promised land, and learn the Father’s will;
And he shall rest at last, at Truth’s commanding,
In Love that passeth human understanding.

Publication. *Christian Science Sentinel*, December 14, 1940.

Counsel

Let us remember Him when days are long
And shadows gather on the changing sky.
Let us be quick to honor Him with song
In whom our hope and our salvation lie.
For life and laughter and our length of days
And for the gift of His enfolding care,
We render thanks, and with glad voices praise
The Giver of the bounty which we share.

He is our strength when other strongholds fail,
Our refuge in the hour of doubt and dread,
Our shield and buckler, and our coat of mail;
He is the hope by which our hearts are fed.
Let us remember Him, all-wise, all-seeing.
In whom we live, and move, and have our being.

Publication. *The Christian Science Journal*, July 1942.

My Wish for You

The best I wish for you is not the wealth
That men may store against a rainy day;
Time is a thief most cunning in his stealth
Who will but doom your riches to decay.
I would not wish for you the proudest name
That man can cry aloud, to curse or bless,
Nor would I wish you any meed of fame
Lest fame departing leave you loneliness.
This is my deepest wish—that you may know
The warm, true comradeship that satisfies
The seeking heart and sets the mind aglow—
A bright communion, eloquent and wise.
The best I wish you is a steadfast friend
To walk beside you till the journey's end.

Publication. *Radio Mirror*, October 1948.

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Russell research dossier and complete local source audit, August 22, 2026. All scans and downloaded assets are preserved in the poet folder.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Textual method and limits of the present edition

This is a reset reading edition, not a facsimile. Lineation and stanza divisions follow the available primary witnesses. Narrow-page wraps were rejoined only when the source clearly indicated a single metrical line; meaningful indentations were retained in twelve-point steps. Obvious OCR noise was normalized, but uncertain readings remain recoverable against the scans preserved in the poet folder.

All interior pages use the warm-paper ground, mirrored sixty-six-point inner and forty-eight-point outer margins, and the EB Garamond hierarchy established for the Julia Boynton Green volume. Every poem begins on a new page, and every poem carries a publication statement.

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS: EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY