

POETRY

Of Her

Snow on dark lashes;
Breath,
A gossamer
Under the cold moon.

Bending above my books and half asleep,
I heard the waiting Dawn behind the rain
Rustle his pinions in the dusk suspense
Of night, and then rap softly at the pane.
Slowly I rose, for I was still intense
With dreams I'd ravished of my thumb worn friend;
But he that called was Dawn. I could not keep
Him beckoning, and we were wont to roam
Together down the long, deserted street
And cross the weedy marshland to the sea.
My fellow; and together, toward the foam
We tramped across the city and the lee
And sang to greet the sun at the land's end.

Give me the great wind raging in the rain
And some bleak moreland stretching to the sea
Where the white surges, broken on the sand,
Gather their shattered forces and come on again;
For, battling along that lonely strand,
Leaning against the storm with half-bent knee,
Drenched to the skin with heaven and the salty main,
Shall I again be cleansed again be free.

Oh you close eaves - what are you but a grave
Where safely hid the coward and the weak
Are equal with the strong, the clean, the brave.

Uncover me; for I, where the terns cry,
Would trudge the wide-winded moore where bleak
Is ocean's storm under a troubled sky.

Ballade of the Loon

Floating upon my back by night
Among wave mirrored stars, I long
To hold the lake, the distant height
Of wooded hills, the clouds, the song
Of ages, and the scent of earth,
Close pressed with the more distant moon
Against my heart, till mad comes mirth.
I love the laughter of the loon.

Again, beneath the leafy brink
And starry dew, in feathered fern
In reed and vine, I float to drink
The dreamy littleness and learn
That perfect beauty is a thing
Too small to see. In silence soon
To deeper silence listening -
I love the laughter of the loon.

The distance is too great for me
To gather all the stars of night,
The dewdrops are too small. I see
Them dimly in my great delight,
While Beauty that I still desire
Is never near enough. My boon
Is pain, yet in its poignant fire
I love the laughter of the loon.

Prince of the Infinite in Me,
I cannot win thy Heaven so.
Thine Eden comes too terribly,
Nor have I tongue for half I know.
Here, like thy bird that haunts the lake,
In music's dream and color's tune,
I shall go mad with Love and make
My life the laughter of the loon.

The Wrestler and His Lion

Barehanded caught the cub in rankest jungle -

Caged it, fed it flesh of bulls and lusty rams

Beat it daily till it hated him -

Never broke its will nor hurt its strength.

When three years had brought consummate power,

Before the amphitheatre's crowded stand

Fought the monarch, captured from the jungle.

Muscles on the wrestler's naked hams,

Muscles on his neck for battle grim;

Man and lion fought and rolled their length;

Naked, warred for life one crowning hour.

Rose the wrestler, victor, raised his hand -

Bloody, fierce, an Ajax carved in stone -

Frightened, wailing, "Dead - and I alone!"

Voluntaries

Short are the symphonies that swift Eternity

Has rung upon the strings of space.

The chord that was an empire dies away -

The motives that were epochs are no more -

And Time has passed to other harmonies.

These are the tragedies of brief sincerity.

A passing sight of Nature's lovely face,

Or quest of Heaven's wild-fire-Night to stay,

A moment's song of lovers or of war,

And time removes his fingers from the keys.

I cannot think how all these days were spent
That, out of lavish Time's undwindling store,
I borrowed, wasted, and came back for more,
Nor know I to whose purse nor why they went.

Yet this I know, that most of them anent
Some empty kisses by the hearts closed door
Have left their aching morrows to deplore
And imitate their sorrow, not repent.

Ah, lovers generous, forgive the crime
Of silence through the hours wasted so;
But do not hope my promise to amend -

The noose of death is round the purse of time,
And, ere my foolish heart to manhood grow,
Yea, though Death tighten slow, this life shall end.

As ebon clouds ore slumbering seas
When leaden thunders slowly roll
Beneath a white-plumed southern pole
And over-awe the summer's breeze
A tempest gathered round his soul.

Proud upon its pinions soared
That bark across the rippling sea,
And bounded ore the billows free
To winds that spread its canvas broad
And sped away to shores alee.

None knew the cargo none the goal.
The bark was strongly built and fair,
And listing to the summer air
Bore on the mystery of a soul
And swept the billows flash and flare.

But flat and lank the kelp is rank
That on the rocks the billows throw,
And weeds upon its ratting grow,
And bury there the shattered plank
That was the ship we shall not know.

Marah

First love and last love and never to be mine;

Ocean, with its homing tide and its boundless plain,

Ocean, laughing in the sun, Ocean soft with rain.

First love and last love, give me but the brine.

Give me but the sea, Love, and the breaker's line.

Give me the tempest wild, and the billows high.

Give me suns that burn, Love, in the burnished sky.

First love and last love, emerald bitter wine,

Each day and all day but the riggings whine.

Each night and all night and oft no star to guide,

Then death, the salt death, lurking in the tide.

Since of that loveliness I know is you
Where in quick having holds me quite your own,
Love cannot harvest what could not have grown,
Or what, for my poor gardening, never grew,

I, to the frenzied and immortal few,
Turn, hungry, home. In all the grace you've shown
I felt like one in feasting crowds alone
And grateful if somehow you never knew.

Love, I am glad that timely I have know
How silly is this service, that's still true
As the bee's quest to roses fully blown,

When I am aching for the fiery hue
Of autumn's vintage in the gruff wind grown,
For which my hunger is just homage due -

Cui Bono

Ancient Pine upon a barren hill

Why lift your shaft against the cold-starred sky,

While winter knifes your trunk with frost?

Life has nothing left for you but War.

The distant Spring will not bring cones,

And your last branch is dying. Time will kill.

Blind Fame forsakes the hilltop where you'll lie.

Did such courage ever count the cost

Of strife against embattled winds, as more

Each battle chokes your gallant song with groans?

A moment paused the Pine to weight the thought,

Then 'neath its tattered pennant bent and fought.

Excalibur

When first I saw her eager nostrils quiver,

The crested fire of eye and haughty neck,

I knew her mind was Merlin's vanished sword

And laughed to see it in convention's sheath.

I felt that once it leapt to war 'twould shiver

The chains that selfish man calls virtue; wreck

The clumsy dogmas raised to hid the Lord,

And win a second Sappho's shameless wreath.

Oh, ignorant was I of woman's heart!

A warrior's eye she had, a warrior's tool,

But soft the virgin bosom. Ruled above

The mighty sword a soul to bear the smart.

She drew its temper in the fire of love

And broke it on an adamantine fool.

Breaking Ground

The sprawl, the sledge, the old unbroken stone
And twilight locks the door of labor's day,
And sleep from weary eyes would steal the dream
That might have led the way. These are my own,
Bought with the sweat that swings the ringing sledge,
And, where the flying sprawl could cut and flay,
With blood -- with pain along the deep bruised bone.
Yet time shall see my home, though now it seems
The dream that mocks the dreamer and his stay
In this soon crumbling earth. But day has flown,
The bloody sprawl remains, the rusty wedge
That found no flaw to gad nor gaping seam,
The sledge that rang upon the stony gray:
And dreamless night plays 'round the ledge alone.

Thirteen Lines

R.M. Tibi - si te non dolet.

As the long pools in some wain-rutted road

Are green and silver with reflected leaves,

And even to those earthward eyes of mine

The vistas of the heavens sometime show -

So to companion silences are born

Twin echoes of the choral Nature weaves

Of sun and wind in summer's green abode;

And through them ever and anon there shine

Far glimpses of the hope that love believes.

There these are one unto the unknown morn.

No toil - not yet. These weary days are thine,

Nor is there aught my earthward eye retrieves

Save these long pools in the wain-rutted road.

Whose rigors of pure reason come
Into the realm of puny human grief
But would for ransom to that petty thief
Leave all he had and half that he could dun;

Provided that for such a paltry sum
He could obtain redress, release, relief,
And turn again to harvest that ripe sheaf
Before old winter ankylosed his thumb.

How dunged our brains are with this very woe
Which is to us a foul - a filthy, stench
To be turned under with a plow and hoe.

How many years required for thoughts to grow!
How many tears the thirsty soil to drench!
And how none reap except themselves did sow!

Sometimes I look to science for a sign
That, on a certain day and specified,
The chaos of opinions multiplied
By prejudice, aesthetic and divine,
Shall face hypotheses of form and line
Well founded and conclusions verified
By preference observed and judgment tried,
And cosmos come unto her own design;
For I am certain this machine of mine,
Immediately determined and tight tied
By evolution to the abstract line
Of ingravescient loveliness implied
In sheer cogredience of gross and fine,
Moves with precision when it must decide.

One day, long after he had gone,
Deep in the woods I found a stone
On which some simple words were cut,
Praying that gods of field and stream and hearth
Might have me in their care
And those that I held dear.

I left it lie

Alone, to face the sky.

When I am dead let no man say
That, had I lived, I had done so and so:
For I was always on an unknown way
To mine own ends, the which they could not know!

No more could I, who ended every day
Surprised by the success of my strong go
Toward when I did not dream I would essay
Or, having won, would hold it was enough -

We're moved by springs that carry their surcease
That we unwittingly mistake for goals -
They are but ends unknown before they're had

Yet, once it's clear they can no more increase,
We quit that tack, like ships that near the shoal
A course, which to pursue, were surely mad!