

THE DESERTED CITY

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Produced by Al Haines.

THE DESERTED CITY
Stray Sonnets written by F. S.
and Rescued for the Few who
Love them by H. D.

Privately Printed

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Title page decoration

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THE DESERTED CITY

THE HOUSE OF NIGHT

Though all the light were lifted from the land,
 And a great darkness lay upon the sea;
 Though, groping each for some not-careless hand,
 I felt sad men pass over wearily;
 Though it were certain dawn would not come in
 With the next hour; that after many days
 Would no moon rise where the grey clouds grew thin,
 Nor any stars resume their ancient ways:
 Though all my world was thus, and I more blind
 Than the dead, blundering planets raining past,
 I know I should not fancy Time unkind;
 For you, as once of old you came, at last
 Would surely come, and with unfaltering faith
 Lead me beyond the dominance of death.

THE HOUSE OF DOUBT

Why should we fear? The sun will surely rise,
 If we but wait, to light us on our way.

Think you none hearkeneth to us who pray,
 That no God's heart is softened by our cries?
 Did we not learn that He was kind and wise
 And loved our souls? And shall your bodies say
 "There is no light. The tales they told us,—they
 Were only dreams, dreamed in the House of Lies."
 Nay, listen not to what your body saith,
 But by the memory of those antique years
 When it was evil and of little faith
 And led the soul along a way of tears,
 Let your soul chant—as one that hath no fears—
 "We know that Thou art stronger, God, than death."

THE HOUSE OF MERCY

I question not, Beloved, nor deny
 That you had God's own right of punishment;
 Yet now my sins and days are over and spent
 Find you the hours so pleasant that go by?
 Would not the colour of the fields and sky,
 The odour of the woods, bring more content
 Now, if a little pity had been lent
 Then, unto love, to judge a life awry?
 Upon a day the young June grasses seem
 Quite still that keep the edge of the still stream;
 I think you go down close to them, and say:
 "O little grasses, waiting patiently,
 I come to tell you this is God's decree:
 '*I comfort him who suffered yesterday?*'"

THE HOUSE OF EARTH

O ye disconsolate and heavy-souled,
 That evening cometh when ye too shall learn

The pangs of one who may no more return,
 To live again the uneven days of old.
 Ye too shall weary of the myrrh and gold
 (Seeing the gods and their great unconcern),
 And, as I yearn to-day, your feet shall yearn
 To touch that Earth which ye afar behold.
 Think now upon your grievous things to bear,—
 Some goal unwon, some old sin's lurid stain,
 Your vistaed paths,—are they not fair as hope?
 But I between dead suns must peer, and grope
 Among forsaken worlds, one glimpse to gain
 Of my old place—the heaviest shadow there.

THE HOUSE OF FAITH

I would not have thee, dear, in darkness sit,
 On days like this, hand clasped in quiet hand,
 Remembering mournfully that fragrant land—
 Each day therein, the joy we had of it.
 Rather, while still the lamps are trimmed and lit,
 Bid strangers to the feasts that once we planned,
 Merry the while! Until the dust's demand
 My soul, not thine, shall separately submit.
 So, when thou comest (for I at last will call
 And thou shalt hear, and linger not at all),
 Still to thy throat, thine arms, thy loosened hair
 Will cling the savour of the World's fresh kiss,
 So sweet to me! and doubly sweet for this—
 That thou for mine shouldst leave a place so fair!

THE HOUSE OF TEARS

When in the old years I had dreams of thee
 Thy dark walls stood in a most barren place;

And he within (was his wan face *my* face?)
 Wandered alone and wept continually.
 There was no bird to hear, nor sun to see,
 Nor green thing growing; nor for his release
 Came sleep; neither forgetfulness nor peace:
 Whereby I knew that none had sinned as he.
 To-day I met him where white lilies gleam;
 Across our path we watched the sparrows flit;
 Until—the sunlight strong in our dry eyes—
 He paused with me beside a green-edged stream,
 Moaning, "I know, where its young waters rise,
 Remembering, one leaneth over it."

THE HOUSE OF LOVE

Often between the midnight and the morn
 I wake and see the angels round my bed;
 Then fall asleep again, well-comforted.
 I wait not now till that clear dawn be born
 Shall lead my feet (O Love, thine eyes are worn
 With watching) where her feet have late been led;
 Nor lie awake, saying the words she said—
 (Her yellow hair.—Have ye seen yellow corn?)
 I fall asleep and dream and quite forget,
 For here in heaven I know a new love's birth
 Which casteth out all memory. And yet
 (As I had loved her more, O Christ, on earth,
 Hadst Thou not been so long unsought, unmet)
 Some morrow Thou shalt learn my worship's worth.

THE HOUSE OF BEAUTY

She pauseth; and as each great mirror swings
 (O ruined Helen, O once golden hair)

I see Ænone's ashes scattered there.
 Another, and, behold, the shadowed things
 Are violated tombs of shrunken kings.
 And yet another (O, how thou wert fair!),
 And I see one, black-clad, who prayeth where
 No sound of sword on cloven helmet rings.
 Yet, were I Paris, once more should I see
 Troy's seaward gates for us swung open wide.
 Or old Nile's glory, were I Anthony.
 Or, were I Launcelot, the garden-side
 At Joyous Gard. Surely; for even to me,
 Where Love hath lived hath Beauty never died.

THE HOUSE OF CONTENT

Were once again the immortal moment mine
 How should I choose my path? The path I chose
 (How long ago I wonder if Time knows)
 Even now I see. I see the old sun shine
 Upon the moss, thick strewn with fir and pine;
 The open field; the orchard's even rows;
 The wood again; then, where the hills unclose,
 Far off at first, now near, the long-sought shrine.
 O Time, how impotent thou art! Though thou
 Hast taken me from all things, and all things
 From me,—although the wind of thy swift wings
 Hath swept at last the shadow from her brow
 Of my last kiss, yet do I triumph now
 Who, choosing, paused to hear Love's counsellings.

THE HOUSE OF CHANGE

Was it last Autumn only, when I stood
 At the field's edge, and watched the red glow creep

Among the leaves, and saw the swift flame sweep
 From spruce to hemlock, till the living wood
 Became a devastated solitude?
 For now, behold, old seeds, long years asleep,
 Wake; and a legion of young birches leap
 To life, and tell the ashes life is good.
 O Love of long ago, when this mad fire
 Is over, and the ruins of my soul
 With the Spring wind the old quest would resume,—
 When age knocks at the inn of youth's desire,
 Shall the new growth, now worthier of the goal,
 Find still untenanted the chosen room?

THE HOUSE OF REGRET

It is not that I now were happier
 If with the dawn my tireless feet were led
 Along her path, till I saw her fair head
 Thrown back to make the sunshine goldener:
 For it is well, sometimes, the things that were
 Are over, ere their perfectness hath fled;
 Lest the old love of them should fade instead,
 And lie like ruins round the throne of her.
 Now with the wisdom of increasing years
 I know each ancient joy a cup for tears;
 Yet had I drunk, while they were draughts to praise,
 Deeper, I were not now as men that grow
 Old, and sit gazing out across the snow
 To dream sad dreams of wasted summer days.

THE HOUSE OF WISDOM

I had not thought (ah, God! had I but known!)
 That this sad hour should ever me befall,

When thou I judged the holiest of all
 Should come to be the thing I must disown.
 Was it not true? that April morn? thy blown
 Gold hair around my hair for coronal?
 Or is this truer?—thou at the outer wall,
 Unroyal, and with unrepentant moan?
 Yet prize I now this wisdom I have won,
 Who must always remember? Nay! My tears
 Must close mine eyes—as thou wouldst hide thy face
 If some great meteor, kindred to the sun,
 Should haunt the undying stars ten million years
 To fall, some noon, dead in thy market place.

THE HOUSE OF SIN

When Time is done at last, and the last Spring
 Fadeth on earth, and thy gaze seeketh mine,
 Watch well for one whose face beareth for sign
 The legend of a soul's refashioning:
 As I shall watch for one whose pale hands bring
 The first faint violet, and know them thine
 Grown pitiful and come to build Love's shrine
 Where the old Aprils wait, unfaltering.
 Then the great floods between us will retire,
 And the long path I follow down will grow
 To be the path thy climbing feet desire;
 Until we meet at last, made glad, and know
 The cleansing hands that made my soul as snow
 Have kept alive in thine the ancient fire.

THE HOUSE OF MUSIC

Such space there is, such endless breadth of time
 Between me and my world of yesterday,

I half forget what sounds these be that stray
 About my chamber, and grow and fall and climb.
 Listen!—that sweet reiterated chime,
 Doth it not mark some body changed to clay?
 That last great chord, some anguish far away?
 Hark! harmony ever now and faultless rhyme.
 O Soul of mine, among these lutes and lyres,
 These reeds, these golden pipes, and quivering strings,
 Thou knowest now that in the old, old years
 We who knew only one of all desires
 Came often even to music's furthest springs—
 To pass, because their waters gleamed like tears.

THE HOUSE OF COLOUR

Mine gold is here; yea, heavy yellow gold,
 Gathered ere Earth's first days and nights were fled;
 And all the walls are hung with scarfs of red,
 Broïdered in fallen cities, fold on fold;
 The stained window's saints are aureoled;
 And all the textures of the East are spread
 On the pavéd floor, whereon I lay my head,
 And sleep, and count the coloured things of old.
 Once, when the hills and I were all aflame
 With envy of the pageant in the West
 (Except the sombre pine-trees—whence there came,
 Continually, the sigh of their unrest),
 A lonely crow sailed past me, black as shame,
 Hugging some ancient sorrow to his breast.

THE FOURTH DAY

As when the tideless, barren waters lay
 About the borders of the early earth;

And small, unopened buds dreamt not the worth
 Of their incomparable gold array;
 And tall young hemlocks were not set a-sway
 By any wind; and orchards knew no mirth
 At Autumn time, nor plenteousness from dearth;
 And night and morning, then, were the first day,
 –Even so was I. Yet, as I slept last night,
 My soul surged towards thy love's controlling power;
 And, quickened now with the sun's splendid might,
 Breaks into unimaginable flower,
 Knowing thy soul knows this for beacon-light–
 The culmination of the harvest hour.

VICTORY

Because your strife and labour have been vain,
 Ye who have striven, shall I forego, forget
 The far-off goal where to my feet were set
 In the old days when life was first made plain?
 Upward in April, who, meeting with the rain,
 Did turn, the first shy mayflowers still are met?
 I who have sought, yea, who am seeking yet,
 What pain have I like unto your sore pain?
 So let me go as one yearning, that braves,
 With shipmen that have knowledge of the sea,
 The wind disastrous and the ponderous waves
 (Because his love dwells in some far countree),
 Crying, "Not one of all your million graves
 Is deep enough to keep my love from me!"

THE LAST STORM

From north, from east, the strong wind hurries down
 Against the window-pane the sleet rings fast;

The moon hath hid her face away, aghast,
 And darkness keeps each corner of the town.
 The garden hedges wear a heavy crown,
 And the old poplars shriek, as night drifts past,
 That, leagues on desolate leagues away, at last
 One comes to know he too must surely drown.
 And yet at noon, to-morrow, when I go
 Out to the white, white edges of the plain,
 I shall not grieve for this night's hurricane,
 Seeing how, in a little hollow, sinks the snow
 Around the southmost tree, where a lean crow
 Sits noisily impatient for the rain.

A LAST WORD

And if it be I shall not sing again,
 And thou have wonder at my silent ways,
 I pray thee think my days not weary days,
 Or that my heart is dumb for some new pain.
 Seeing that words are nought, nor may remain,
 Why should I strive with Time? Come blame, come praise,
 I am but one of them his might betrays
 At last, when all men learn that all was vain.
 And yet one thing Time cannot wrest from me.
 Therefore, cry out, yea, even to the throng
 That pauseth not for echo of a song,
 "O, your red gold is very fair. But he
 Is glad as heaven to loiter and dream along
 His Lady Beauty's path continually."

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