

The Coming of the Princess and Other Poems

Kate Seymour Maclean

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by Kate Seymour Maclean

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Title: The Coming of the Princess and Other Poems

Author: Kate Seymour Maclean

**Release Date: October, 2004 [EBook #6623]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on January 5, 2003]**

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

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THE COMING OF THE PRINCESS; AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

KATE SEYMOUR MACLEAN, KINGSTON, ONTARIO.

AN INTRODUCTION, BY THE EDITOR OF "THE CANADIAN MONTHLY."

INTRODUCTION.

BY G MERCER ADAM.

The request of the author that I should write a few words of preface to this collection of poems must be my excuse for obtruding myself upon the reader. Having frequently had the pleasure as editor of *The Canadian Monthly*, of introducing many of Mrs. MacLean's poems to lovers of verse in the Dominion it was thought not unfitting that I should act as foster father to the collection of them here made and to bespeak for the volume at the hands at least of all Canadians the appreciative and kindly reception due to a

Child of the first winds and suns of a nation.

Accepting the task assigned to me the more readily as I discern the high and sustained excellence of the collection as a whole let me ask that the volume be received with interest as a further and most meritorious contribution to the poetical literature of our young country (the least that can be said of the work), and with sympathy for the intellectual and moral aspirations that have called it into being.

There is truth, doubtless, in the remark, that we are enriched less by what we have than by what we hope to have. As the poetic art in Canada has had little of an appreciable past, it may therefore be thought that the songs that are to catch and retain the ear of the nation lie still in the future, and are as yet unsung. Doubtless the chords have yet to be struck that are to give to Canada the songs of her loftiest genius; but he would be an ill friend of the country's literature who would slight the achievements of the present in reaching solely after what, it is hoped, the coming time will bring.

But whatever of lyrical treasure the future may enshrine in Canadian literature, and however deserving may be the claims of the volumes of verse that have already appeared from the native press, I am bold to claim for these productions of Mrs. MacLean's muse a high place in the national collection and a warm corner in the national heart.

To discern the merit of a poem is proverbially easier than to say how and in what manner it is manifested. In a collection the task of appraisement is not so difficult. Lord Houghton has said: "There is in truth no critic of poetry but the man who enjoys it, and the amount of gratification felt is the only just measure of

criticism." By this test the present volume will, in the main, be judged. Still, there are characteristics of the author's work which I may be permitted to point out. In Mrs. MacLean's volume what quickly strikes one is not only the fact that the poems are all of a high order of merit, but that a large measure of art and instinct enters into the composition of each of them. As readily will it be recognized that they are the product of a cultivated intellect, a bright fancy, and a feeling heart. A rich spiritual life breathes throughout the work, and there are occasional manifestations of fervid impulse and ardent feeling. Yet there is no straining of expression in the poems nor is there any loose fluency of thought. Throughout there is sustained elevation and lofty purpose. Her least work, moreover, is worthy of her, because it is always honest work. With a quiet simplicity of style there is at the same time a fine command of language and an earnest beauty of thought. The grace and melody of the versification, indeed, few readers will fail to appreciate. Occasionally there are echoes of other poets--Jean Ingelow and Mrs. Barrett Browning, in the more subjective pieces, being oftenest suggested. But there is a voice as well as an echo--the voice of a poet in her own right. In an age so bustling and heedless as this, it were well sometimes to stop and listen to the voice. In its fine spiritualizations we shall at least be soothed and may be bettered.

But I need not dwell on the vocation of poetry or on the excellence of the poems here introduced. The one is well known to the reader, the other may soon be. Happily there is promise that Canada will ere long be rich in her poets. They stand in the vanguard of the country's benefactors, and so should be cherished and encouraged. Of late our serial literature has given us more than blossomings. The present volume enshrines some of the maturer fruit. May it be its mission to nourish the poetic sentiment among us. May it do more to nourish in some degree the "heart of the nation", and, in the range of its influence, that of humanity.

CANADIAN MONTHLY OFFICE,
Toronto, December, 1880

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Coming of the Princess

Bird Song

An Idyl of the May

The Burial of the Scout

Questionings

Pansies

November Meteors

Pictures in the Fire

A Madrigal

The Ploughboy

The Voice of Many Waters

The Death of Autumn

A Farewell

The News Boy's Dream of the New Year

The Old Church on the Hill

The Burning of Chicago

The Legend of the New Year

By the Sea-Shore at Night

Resurgam

Written in a Cemetery

Marguerite

The Watch-Light

New Year, 1868

Thanksgiving

Miserere

Beyond

The Sabbath of the Woods

A Valentine

Snow-Drops

Easter Bells

In the Sierra Nevada

Summer Rain

A Baby's Death

Christmas

My Garden

River Song

The Return
Voices of Hope
In the Country
Science, the Iconoclast
What the Owl said to me
Our Volunteers
Night: A Phantasy
A Monody
Minnie
The Golden Wedding
Verses Written in Mary's Album
The Woods in June
The Isle of Sleep
The Battle Autumn of 1862
In War Time
Christmas Hymn
Te Deum Laudamus
A November Wood-Walk
Resignation
Euthanasia
Ballad of the Mad Ladye
The Coming of the King
With a Bunch of Spring Flowers
The Higher Law
May
Two Windows
The Meeting of Spirits
George Brown
Forgotten Songs
To the Daughter of the Author of "Violet Keith"

A Prelude, and a Bird's Song

An April Dawn

ENVOI

A little bird woke singing in the night,
Dreaming of coming day,
And piped, for very fulness of delight,
His little roundelay.

Dreaming he heard the wood-lark's carol loud,
Down calling to his mate,
Like silver rain out of a golden cloud,
At morning's radiant gate.

And all for joy of his embowering woods,
And dewy leaves he sung,--
The summer sunshine, and the summer floods
By forest flowers o'erhung.

Thou shalt not hear those wild and sylvan notes
When morn's full chorus pours
Rejoicing from a thousand feathered throats,
And the lark sings and soars,

Oh poet of our glorious land so fair,
Whose foot is at the door;
Even so my song shall melt into the air,
And die and be no more.

But thou shalt live, part of the nation's life;
The world shall hear thy voice
Singing above the noise of war and strife,
And therefore I rejoice!

THE COMING OF THE PRINCESS

I.

Break dull November skies, and make
Sunshine over wood and lake,
And fill your cells of frosty air
With thousand, thousand welcomes to the Princely pair!
The land and the sea are alight for them;
The wrinkled face of old Winter is bright for them;
The honour and pride of a race
Secure in their dwelling place,
Steadfast and stern as the rocks that guard her,
Tremble and thrill and leap in their veins,
As the blood of one man through the beacon-lit border!
Like a fire, like a flame,

At the sound of her name,
As the smoky-throated cannon mutter it,
As the smiling lips of a nation utter it,
And a hundred rock-lights write it in fire!
Daughter of Empires, the Lady of Lome,
Back through the mists of dim centuries borne,
None nobler, none gentler that brave name have worn;
Shrilled by storm-bugles, and rolled by the seas,
Louise!
Our Princess, our Empress, our Lady of Lorne!

II.

And the wild, white horses with flying manes
Wind-tost, the riderless steeds of the sea.
Neigh to her, call to her, dreadless and free,
"Fear not to follow us; these thy domains;
Welcome, welcome, our Lady and Queen!
O Princess, oh daughter of kingliest sire!
Under its frost girdle throbbing and keen,
A new realm awaits thee, loyal and true!"
And the round-cheeked Tritons, with fillets of blue
Binding their sea-green and scintillant hair,
Blow thee a welcome; their brawny arms bear
Thy keel through the waves like a bird through the air.

II.

Shoreward the shoal of mighty shoulders lean
Through the long swell of waves,
Reaching beyond the sunset and the hollow caves,
And the ice-girdled peaks that hold serene
Each its own star, far out at sea to mark
Thy westward way, O Princess, through the dark.
The rose-red sunset dies into the dusk,
The silver dusk of the long twilight hour,
And opal lights come out, and fiery gleams
Of flame-red beacons, like the ash-gray husk
Torn from some tropic blossom bursting into flower,
Making the sea bloom red with ruddy beams.

IV

Still nearer and nearer it comes, the swift sharp prow
Of the ship above and the shadow ship below,
With the mighty arms of the Titans under,
All bowed one way like a field of wind-blown ears,
Still nearer and nearer, and now
touches the strand, and, lo,
With the length of her bright hair backward flowing
Round her head like an aureole,
Like a candle flame in the wind's breath blowing,
Stands she fair and still as a disembodied soul,
With hands outstretched, and eyes that shine through tears

And tremulous smiles

When the trumpets, and the guns, and the great drums roll,
And the long fiords and the forelands shake with the thunder
Of the shout of welcome to the daughter of the Isles.

V

Bring her, O people, on the shoulders of her vassals
Throned like a queen to her palace on the height,
Up the rocky steeps where the fir tree tassels
Nod to her, and touch her with a subtle, vague delight,
Like a whisper of home, like a greeting and a smile
From the fir-tree walks and gardens, the wood-embowered castles
In the north among the clansmen of Argyle.
Now the sullen plunge of waves for many a mile
Along the roaring Ottawa is heard,
And the cry of some wood bird,
Wild and sudden and sweet,
Scared from its perch by the rush and trample of feet,
And the red glare of the torches in the night.
And now the long facade gay with many a twinkling light
Reaches hands of welcome, and the bells peal, and the guns,
And the hoarse blare of the trumpets, and the throbbing
of the drums
Fill the air like shaken music, and the very waves rejoice
In the gladness, and the greeting, and the triumph of
their voice.

VI.

Under triumphal arches, blazoned with banners and scrolls,
And the sound of a People's exulting, still gathering as it rolls,
Enter the gates of the city, and take the waiting throne,
And make the heart of a Nation, O Royal Pair, your own.
Sons of the old race, we, and heirs of the old and the new;
Our hands are bold and strong, and our hearts are faithful and true;
Saxon and Norman and Celt one race of the mingled blood
Who fought built cities and ships and stemmed the unknown flood
In the grand historic days that made our England great
When Britain's sons were steadfast to meet or to conquer fate
Our sires were the minster builders who wrought themselves unknown
The thought divine within them till it blossomed into stone
Forgers of swords and of ploughshares reapers of men and of grain,
Their bones and their names forgotten on many a battle plain
For faith and love and loyalty were living and sacred things
When our sires were those who wrought and yours were the leaders
and kings.

VII

For since the deeds that live in Arthur's rhyme
Who left the stainless flower of knighthood for all time
Down to our Blameless Prince wise gentle just
Whom the world mourns not by your English dust
More precious held more sacredly enshrined
Than in each loyal breast of all mankind,

Men bare the head in homage to the good,
And she who wears the crown of womanhood,
August, not less than that of Empress, reigns
The crowned Victoria of the world's domains
North, South, East, West, O Princess fair, behold
In this new world, the daughter of the old,
Where ribs of iron bar the Atlantic's breast,
Where sunset mountains slope into the west,
Unfathomed wildernesses, valleys sweet,
And tawny stubble lands of corn and wheat,
And all the hills and lakes and forests dun,
Between the rising and the setting sun;
Where rolling rivers run with sands of gold,
And the locked treasures of the mine unfold
Undreamed of riches, and the hearts of men,
Held close to nature, have grown pure again.
Like that exalted Pair, beloved, revered,
By princely grace, and truth and love endeared,
Here fix your empire in the growing West,
And build your throne in each Canadian breast,
Till West and East strike hands across the main,
Knit by a stronger, more enduring chain,
And our vast Empire become one again.

BIRD SONG.

Art thou not sweet,
Oh world, and glad to the inmost heart of thee!
All creatures rejoice
With one rapturous voice.
As I, with the passionate beat
Of my over-full heart feel thee sweet,
And all things that live, and are part of thee!

Light, light as a cloud
Swimming, and trailing its shadow under me
I float in the deep
As a bird-dream in sleep,
And hear the wind murmuring loud,
Far down, where the tree-tops are bowed,--
And I see where the secret place of the thunders be

Oh! the sky free and wide,
With all the cloud-banners flung out in it
Its singing wind blows
As a grand river flows,
And I swim down its rhythmical tide,
And still the horizon spreads wide,
With the birds' and the poets' songs like a shout in it!

Oh life, thou art sweet
Sweet--sweet to the inmost heart of thee!
I drink with my eyes
Thy limitless skies,
And I feel with the rapturous beat
Of my wings thou art sweet--

And I,--I am alive, and a part of thee!

AN IDYL OF THE MAY.

In the beautiful May weather,
Lapsing soon into June;
On a golden, golden day
Of the green and golden May,
When our hearts were beating tune
To the coming feet of June,
Walked we in the woods together.

Silver fine
Gleamed the ash buds through the darkness
of the pine,
And the waters of the stream
Glance and gleam,
Like a silver-footed dream--
Beckoning, calling,
Flashing, falling,
Into shadows dun and brown
Slipping down,
Calling still--Oh hear! Oh follow!
Follow--follow!
Down through glen and ferny hollow,
Lit with patches of the sky,
Shining through the trees so high,
Hand in hand we went together,
In the golden, golden weather
Of the May;
While the fleet wing of the swallow
Flashing by, called--follow--follow!
And we followed through the day:
Speaking low--
Speaking often not at all
To the brooklet's crystal call,
With our lingering feet and slow--
Slow, and pausing here and there
For a flower, or a fern,
For the lovely maiden-hair;
Hearing voices in the air,
Calling faintly down the burn.

Still the streamlet slid away,
Singing, smiling, dimpling down
To a mossy nook and brown,
Under bending boughs of May;
Where the nodding wind-flower grows,
And the coolwort's lovely pink,
Brooding o'er the brooklet's brink
Dips and blushes like a rose.

And the faint smell of the mould.
Sweeter than the musky scent
Of the garden's manifold
Perfumes into perfect blent.

Lights and sounds and odours stole,
In the golden, golden weather--
Heart and thought, and life and soul,
Stole away,
In that merry, merry May,
Wandering down the burn together.

Ah Valentine--my Valentine!
Heard I, with my hand in thine,
Grave and low, and sweet and slow,
As the wood bird over head,
Brooding notes, half sung half said,--
"In the world so bleak and wide,
Hearts make Edens of their own;
Wilt thou linger by my side,--
Wilt thou live for me alone,
Making bright the winter weather,
Thou and I and love together?"

"Yea," I said, "for thee alone, "--
Shading eyes lest they confess
Too much their own happiness,
With the happy tears o'erflown.

Gravely thou--"The world is not
Like this ferny hollow--
Through a rougher, thornier lot
Wilt thou bravely follow?"
Still the brook, with softer flow,
Called, "Oh hear! Oh follow!"
"Aye," I said, with bated breath,
"Where thou goest, I will go;
Holding still thy stronger hand,
Through the dreariest desert land,
True, till death."

Silence fell between us two,
Noiseless as the silver dew;
Hearts that had no need of speech
In the silence spoke to each;
And along the sapphire blue,
Shot with shafts of sunset through,
Fell a voice, a bodiless breath--
"True, till death"

Through a mist of smiles and tears,
Doubts and fears, and toils and dreams,
Oh! how long ago it seems,
Looking back across the year
Silver threads are in my hair
And the sunset shadows slope
Back along the hills of hope
That before us shone so fair.

Ah! for us the merry May
Comes no more with golden weather;
Fields, and woods, and sunshine gay,
Purple skies, and purple heather.
We have had our holyday,

And I sit with folded hands,
In the twilight looking back
Over life's uneven track--
Thorny wilds, and desert sands.

Weary heart, unwearied faith,
In the twilight softly saith--
"We have had our golden weather--
We have walked through life together,
True, till death!"

THE BURIAL OF THE SCOUT.

O not with arms reversed,
And the slow beating of the muffled drum,
And funeral marches, bring our hero home
These stormy woods where his young heart was nursed
Ring with a trumpet burst
Of jubilant music, as if he who lies
With shrouded face, and lips all white and dumb
Were a crowned conqueror entering paradise,--
This is his welcome home!

Along the reedy marge of the dim lake,
I hear the gathering horsemen of the North,
The cavalry of night and tempest wake,--
Blowing keen bugles as they issue forth,
To guard his homeward march in frost and cold,
A thousand spearmen bold!

And the deep-bosomed woods,
With their dishevelled locks all wildly spread,
Stretch ghostly arms to clasp the immortal dead,
Back to their solitudes
While through their rocking branches overhead,
And all their shuddering pulses underground
shiver runs, as if a voice had said--
And every farthest leaf had felt the wound--
He comes--but he is dead!

The dainty-fingered May
with gentle hand shall fold and put away
The snow-white curtains of his winter tent,
and spread above him her green coverlet,
'Broidered with daisies, sweet to sight and scent
and Summer, from her outposts in the hills,
Under the boughs with heavy night-dews wet,
shall place her gold and purple sentinels,
And in the populous woods sound reveille,
falling from field and fen her sweet deserters back--
But he,--no long roll of the impatient drum,
for battle trumpet eager for the fray,
From the far shores of blue Lake Erie blown,
shall rouse the soldier's last long bivouac.

QUESTIONINGS.

I touch but the things which are near;
The heavens are too high for my reach:
In shadow and symbol and creed,
I discern not the soul from the deed,
Nor the thought hidden under, from speech;
And the thing which I know not I fear.

I dare not despair nor despond,
Though I grope in the dark for the dawn:
Birth and laughter, and bubbles of breath,
And tears, and the blank void of death,
Round each its penumbra is drawn,--
I touch them,--I see not beyond.

What voice speaking solemn and slow,
Before the beginning for me,
From the mouth of the primal First Cause,
Shall teach me the thing that I was,
Shall point out the thing I shall be,
And show me the path that I go?

Were there any that missed me, or sought,
In the cycles and centuries fled.
Ere my soul had a place among men?--
Even so, unremembered again
I shall lie in the dust with the dead,
And my name shall be heard not, nor thought.

Yea rather,--from out the abyss,
Where the stars sit in silence and light,
When the ashes and dust of our world
Are like leaves in their faces up-whirled,--
What orb shall look down through the night,
And take note of the quenching of this?

Yea, beyond--in the heavens of space
Where Jehovah sits, absolute Lord,
Who made out of nothing the whole
Round world, and man's sentient soul--
Will He crush, like a creature abhorred,
What He fashioned with infinite grace

In His own awful image, and made
Quick with the flame of His breath,--
Which He saw and behold it was good?--
Ah man! thou hast waded through blood
And crime down to darkness and death,
Since thou stood'st before Him unafraid.

My life falls away like a flower
Day by day,--dispersed of the wind
Its vague perfume, nor taketh it root,
Ripening seeds for the sower, or fruit
To make me at one with my kind,
And give me my work, and my hour

No creed for my hunger sufficed,
Though I clung to them, each after other,
They slipped from my passionate hold,--
The prophets, the martyrs of old,--
Thy pitying face, Mary Mother,--
Thy thorn-circled forehead, O Christ!

Pilgrim sandalled, the deserts have known
The track of my wandering feet,
Where dead saints and martyrs have trod,
To search for the pure faith of God,
Making life with its bitterness sweet,
And death the white gate to a throne.

O Thou, who the wine-press hast trod,
O sorrowful--stricken--betrayed,--
Thy cross o'er my spirit prevails;
In Thy hands with the print of the nails,
My life with its burdens is laid,--
O Christ--Thou art sole--Thou art God!

PANSIES.

When the earliest south winds softly blow
Over the brown earth, and the waning snow
In the last days of the discrowned March,--
Before the silver tassels of the larch,
Or any tiniest bud or blade is seen;
Or in the woods the faintest kindling green,
And all the earth is veiled in azure mist,
Waiting the far-off kisses of the sun,--
They lift their bright heads shyly one by one.
And offer each, in cups of amethyst,
Drops of the honey wine of fairy land,--
A brimming beaker poised in either hand
Fit for the revels of King Oberon,
With all his royal gold and purple on:
Children of pensive thought and airy fancies,
Sweeter than any poet's sweetest stanzas,
Though to the sound of eloquent music told,
Or by the lips of beauty breathed or sung:
They thrill us with their backward-looking glances,
They bring us to the land that ne'er grows old,--
They mind us of the days when life was young
Nor time had stolen the fire from youth's romances,
Dear English pansies!

While still the hyacinth sleeps on securely,
And every lily leaf is folded purely,
Nor any purple crocus hath arisen;
Nor any tulip raised its slender stem,
And burst the earth-walls of its winter prison,
And donned its gold and jewelled diadem;
Nor by the brookside in the mossy hollow,
That calls to every truant foot to follow,

The cowslip yet hath hung its golden ball,--
In the wild and treacherous March weather,
The pansy and the sunshine come together,
The sweetest flower of all!
The sweetest flower that blows;
Sweeter than any rose,
Or that shy blossom opening in the night,
Its waxen vase of aromatic light--
A sleepy incense to the winking stars;
Nor yet in summer heats,
That crisp the city streets,--
Where the spiked mullein grows beside the bars
In country places, and the ox-eyed daisy
Blooms in the meadow grass, and brooks are lazy,
And scarcely murmur in the twinkling heat;
When sound of babbling water is so sweet,
Blue asters, and the purple orchis tall,
Bend o'er the wimpling wave together;--
The pansy blooms through all the summer weather,
The sweetest flower of all!

The sweetest flower that blows!
When all the rest are scattered and departed,
The symbol of the brave and faithful-hearted,
Her bright corolla glows.
When leaves hang pendant on their withered stalks,
Through all the half-deserted garden walks;
And through long autumn nights,
The merry dancers scale the northern heights,
And tiny crystal points of frost-white fire
Make brightly scintillant each blade and spire,
Still under shade of shelt'ring wall,
Or under winter's shroud of snows,
Undimmed, the faithful pansy blows,
The sweetest flower of all!

NOVEMBER METEORS.

Out of the dread eternities,
The vast abyss of night,
A glorious pageant rose and shone,
And passed from human sight.
We saw the glittering cavalcade,
And heard inwove through all,
Faint and afar from star to star,
The sliding music fall.

With banners and with torches,
And hoofs of glancing flame,
With helm and sword and pennon bright
The long procession came.
And all the starry spaces,
Height above height outshone,
And the bickering clang of their armour rang
Down to the farthest zone.

As if some grand cathedral,
With towers of malachite,
And walls of more than crystal clear,
Rose out of the solid light,
And under its frowning gateway,
Each morioned warrior stept,
And in radiant files down the ringing aisles,
The martial pageant swept.

From out the oriel windows,
From vault, and spire, and dome,
And sparkling up from base to cope,
The light and glory climb.
They knelt before the altar,
Each mailed and visored knight,
And the censers swung as a voice outrung,--
'Now God defend the right'!

On casque, and brand, and corselet
Fell the red light of Mars,
As forth from the minster gates they passed
To the battle of the stars.
Across moon-lighted depths of space,
And breadths of purple seas,
Their flying squadrons sailed in fleets,
Of fiery argosies:

Down lengths of shining rivers,
Past gilded-sanded bars,
And nebulous isles of amethyst,
They dropt like falling stars:
Till on a scarped and wrinkled coast,
Washed by dark waves below,
They came upon the glittering tents--
The city of the foe.

Then rushed they to the battle;
Their bright hair blazed behind,
As deadlier than the bolt they fell,
And swifter than the wind.
And all the stellar continents,
With that fierce hail thick sown,
Recoiled with fear, from sphere to sphere
To Saturn's ancient throne.

The blind old king, in ermine wrapt.
And immemorial cold,
Awoke, and raised his aged hands,
And shook his rings of gold.
Down toppled plume and pennon bright,
In endless ruin hurled,
Their blades of light struck fire from night--
Their splendours lit the world!

And rolling down the hollow spheres,
The mighty chords, the seven,
Clanged on from orb to orb, and smote
Orion in mid-heaven.
Along the ground the white tents lay;

And faint along the fields.
The foe's swart hosts, like glimmering ghosts,
Followed his chariot wheels.

With banners and with torches,
And armour all aflame,
The victors and the vanquished went,
Departing as they came;
With here and there a rocket sent
Up from some lonely barque:
Into the vast abyss they passed,--
Into the final dark.

PICTURES IN THE FIRE

The wind croons under the icicled eaves--
Croons and mutters a wordless song,
And the old elm chafes its skeleton leaves
Against the windows all night long.

Under the spectral garden wall,
The drifts creep steadily high and higher
And the lamp in the cottage lattice small
Twinkles and winks like an eye of fire.

But I see a vision of summer skies
Growing out of the embers red,
Under the lids of my half-shut eyes,
With my arms crossed idly under my head.

I see a stile, and a roadside lime,
With buttercups growing about its feet,
And a footpath winding a sinuous line
In and out of the billowy wheat.

For long ago in the summer noons,
Under the shade of that trysting tree,
My love brought wheat ears and clover blooms,
And vows that were sweeter than both, to me.

Reading the "Times" in his easy chair,
With his slippers feet on the fender bright,
Little, I wot, he dreams how fair
Are the pictures I see in the fire to night.

Still the wind pipes under the serried spears
Of frozen boughs a desolate rhyme,
But I hear the rustle of golden ears,
And in my heart it is summer time.

A MADRIGAL

The lily-bells ring underground,
Their music small I hear
When globes of dew that shine pearl round
Hang in the cowslip's ear
And all the summer blooms and sprays
Are sheathed from the sun,
And yet I feel in many ways
Their living pulses run.

The crowning rose of summer time
Lies folded on its stem,
Its bright urn holds no honey-wine,
Its brow no diadem,
And yet my soul is inly thrilled,
As if I stood anear
Some legal presence unrevealed,
The queen of all the year.

Oh Rose, dear Rose! the mist and dew
Uprising from the lake,
And sunshine glancing warmly through,
Have kissed the flowers awake--
The orchard blooms are dropping balm,
The tulip's gorgeous cup
More slender than a desert palm
It's chalice lifteth up.

The birds are mated in the trees,
The wan stars burn and pale--
Oh Rose, come forth!--upon the breeze
I hear the nightingale
Unfold the crimson waves that lie
In darkness rosy dim,
And swing thy fragrant censer high,
Oh royal Rose for him!

The hyacinths are in the fields
With purple splendours pale
Their sweet bells ring responsive peals
To every passing gale
And violets bending in the grass
Do hide their glowing eyes,
When those enchanting voices pass,
Like airs from Paradise.

We crowned our blushing Queen of May
Long since, with dance and tune,
But the merry world of yesterday
Is lapsing into June--
Thou art not here,--we look in vain--
Oh Rose arise, appear!--
Resume thine emerald throne, and reign
The queen of all the year!

THE PLOUGHBOY.

I wonder what he is thinking
In the ploughing field all day.
He watches the heads of his oxen,
And never looks this way.

And the furrows grow longer and longer,
Around the base of the hill,
And the valley is bright with the sunset,
Yet he ploughs and whistles still.

I am tired of counting the ridges,
Where the oxen come and go,
And of thinking of all the blossoms
That are trampled down below.

I wonder if ever he guesses
That under the ragged brim
Of his torn straw hat I am peeping
To steal a look at him.

The spire of the church and the windows
Are all ablaze in the sun.
He has left the plough in the furrow,
His summer day's work is done.

And I hear him carolling softly
A sweet and simple lay,
That we often have sung together,
While he turns the oxen away.

The buttercups in the pasture
Twinkle and gleam like stars.
He has gathered a golden handful,
A leaning over the bars.

He has shaken the curls from his forehead,
And is looking up this way,--
O where is my sun-bonnet, mother?
He was thinking of me all day,--

And I'm going down to the meadow,
For I know he is waiting there,
To wreath the sunshiny blossoms
In the curls of my yellow hair.

THE VOICE OF MANY WATERS.

Oh Sea, that with infinite sadness, and infinite yearning
Liftest thy crystal forehead toward the unpitying stars,--
Evermore ebbing and flowing, and evermore returning
Over thy fathomless depths, and treacherous island bars:--

Oh thou complaining sea, that fillest the wide void spaces
Of the blue nebulous air with thy perpetual moan,
Day and night, day and night, out of thy desolate places--

Tell me thy terrible secret, oh Sea! what hast thou done.

Sometimes in the merry mornings, with the sunshine's golden wonder
Glancing along thy cheek, unwrinkled of any wind,
Thou seemest to be at peace, stifling thy great heart under
A face of absolute calm,--with danger and death behind!

But I hear thy voice at midnight, smiting the awful silence
With the long suspiration of thy pain suppressed;
And all the blue lagoons, and all the listening islands
Shuddering have heard, and locked thy secret in their breast!

Oh Sea! thou art like my heart, full of infinite sadness and pity,--
Of endless doubt and endeavour, of sorrowful question and strife,
Like some unlighted fortress within a beleagured city,
Holding within and hiding the mystery of life.

THE DEATH OF AUTUMN.

Discrowned and desolate,
And wandering with dim eyes and faded hair,
Singing sad songs to comfort her despair,
Grey Autumn meets her fate.

Forsaken and alone
She haunts the ruins of her queenly state,
Like banished Eve at Eden's flaming gate,
Making perpetual moan.

Crazed with her grief she moves
Along the banks of the frost-charmed rills,
And all the hollows of the wooded hills,
Searching for her lost loves.

From verdurous base to cope,
The sunny hill-sides, and sweet pasture lands,
Where bubbling brooks reach ever-dimpled hands
Along the amber slope,--

And valleys drowsed between,
In the rich purple of the vintage time,
When cups of gold that drop with fragrant wine,
From orchard branches lean;--

And far beyond them, spread
Broad fields thick set with sheaves of yellow wheat,
Where scarlet poppies, slumberously sweet,
Glow with a dusky red--

To the remotest zone
Of hazy woodland pencilled on the sky,
On whose far spires the clouds of sunset lie,--
She held her regal throne!

Queen of a princely race,
Whose ministers were all the elements;

Sunshine, and rain, and dew she did dispense
With a right royal grace.

Now, not a breath of air,
Nor sunbeam, nor the voice of beast or bird,
Stirring the lonely woods, hath any word
To comfort her despair.

Insidious, day by day
A smouldering flame, a lurid crimson creeps
Into the ashy whiteness of her cheeks,
And burns her life away.

The cavernous woods are dumb!
Through their oracular depths and secret nooks,
To the mute supplication of her looks
No mystic voices come

And through the still grey air
The night comes down, and hangs her lamp on high,
Like a wan lily blossomed on the sky,
Shining so ghostly fair,

Or looming up the heights,
Those awful spectres of the frozen zone
Splinter the crystal of heaven's sapphire dome,
With arrowy-glancing lights.

The while hoarse night winds rave,
The old year looking backward to his prime
With dim fond eyes, down the last steps of time
Goes maundering to his grave!

A FAREWELL

Down the steep west unrolled,
I watch the river of the sunset flow,
With all its crimson lights, and gleaming gold,
Into the dusk below.

And even as I gaze,
The soft lights fade,-the pageant gay is o'er,
And all is grey and dark, like those lost days,
The days that are no more.

No more through whispering pines,
I shall behold, in the else silent even,
The first faint star-watch set along the lines
Of the white tents of heaven.

Before the earliest buds
Have softly opened, heralding the May
With tender light illumining the gray woods,
I shall be gone away.

Ah! wood-walks winding sweet

Through all the valleys sloping to the west,
Where glad brooks wander with melodious feet,
In musical unrest,--

Ye will not miss me here
With all the bright things of the coming May,
And the rejoicing of the awakened year,--
I shall be far away.

Yet in your loneliest nooks,
I know where all the greenest mosses grow,
And where the violets lift their first sweet looks,
Out of the waning snow.

And I have heard, unsought,
Under the musing shadows of the beech,
Wood-voices answering my unspoken thought,
In half-articulate speech.

And oh! ye shadowy bands,
Rank above rank along yon rocky height,
That lift into the heavens your mailed hands,
And linked armour bright.

What other eyes will trace
From this dear window haunted with the past,
Strange likeness to some well beloved face,
Among your profiles vast?

What stranger hands will tend
The nameless treasures I must leave behind,--
My flowers, my birds, and each inanimate friend,
Linked closer than my kind.

These glorious landscapes old,
Framed in my cottage windows,--hill-sides dun,
With umber shadows lightened to pale gold
By touches of the sun,--

Valleys like emeralds set
Lonely and sweet in the dusk hills afar,
That half enclose them, like a carcanet
That holds a diamond star.

Will any gentler face,
Weary and sad sometimes, like mine grow bright
Touched with your simple beauty-in my place,
My garden of delight?--

I know not,--yet farewell
Sweet home of mine,--my parting song is o'er,
And stranger forms among your bowers shall dwell,
Where I return no more.

Under the bare brown rafters,
In his garret bed he lay,
And dreamed of the bright hereafters.
And the merry morns of May.

The snow-flakes slowly sifted
In through each cranny and seam,
But only the sunshine drifted
Into the news-boy's dream.

For he dreamed of the brave to-morrows,
His eager eyes should scan,
When battling with wants and sorrows,
He felt himself a Man.

He felt his heart grow bolder
For the struggle and the strife,
When shoulder joined to shoulder,
In the battle-field of life.

And instead of the bare brown rafters,
And the snowflakes sifting in,
He saw in the glad hereafters,
The home his hands should win.

The flowers that grew in its shadow,
And the trees that drooped above;
The low of the kine in the meadow,
And the coo of the morning dove.

And dearer and more tender,
He saw his mother there,
As she knelt in the sunset splendour,
To say the evening prayer.

His face--the sun had burned it,
And his hands were rough and hard,
But home, he had fairly earned it,
And this was his reward!

The morning star's faint glimmer
Stole into the garret forlorn,
And touched the face of the dreamer
With the light of a hope new-born.

Oh, ring harmonious voices
Of New Year's welcoming bells!
For the very air rejoices.
Through all its sounding cells!

I greet ye! oh friends and neighbours
The smith and the artizan;
I share in your honest labours,
A Canadian working-man.

To wield the axe or the hammer,
To till the yielding soil,
Enroll me under your banner,

Oh Brotherhood of Toil!

Ring, bells of the brave to-morrows!
And bring the time more near:
Ring out the wants and the sorrows,
Ring in the glad New Year!

THE OLD CHURCH ON THE HILL.

Moss-grown, and venerable it stands,
From the way-side dust and noise aloof,
And the great elms stretch their sheltering hands
To bless its grey old roof.

About it summer's greenery waves;
The birds build fearless overhead;
Its shadow falls among the graves;
Around it sleep the dead.

The summer sunshine softly takes
The chancel window's pictured gloom;
The moonlight enters too, and makes
The shadow of a tomb.

Along these aisles the bride hath passed,
And brightened, with her innocent grace.
The pensive twilight years have cast
About the holy place.

They brought her here--a tiny maid,
Unweeting any gain or loss,
And on her baby forehead laid
The symbol of the Cross.

And here they brought her once again,
White-robed, and smiling as she slept;
While lips, that trembled, breathed her name,
And eyes that saw her wept.

And still, when sunset lights his fire
Along the gold and crimsoned west,
She sleeps beneath the shadowing spire,
The cross upon her breast.

I watch it from my lonely cot,
When stars shine o'er the hallowed ground,
And think there is no sweeter spot,
The whole wide earth around.

The Sabbath chimes there sink and swim
Along the consecrated air,
The benediction and the hymn,
The voice of praise and prayer:

These mingle with the wind's free song,
The hum of bees, the notes of birds,

And make an anthem sweet and strong
Of inarticulate words.

There let me rest, when I have found
The peace of God, the immortal calm,
Where still above my sleep profound,
Goes up the Sabbath psalm.

THE BURNING OF CHICAGO.

Out of the west a voice--a shudder of horror and pity;
Quivers along the pulses of all the winds that blow;--
Woe for the fallen queen, for the proud and beautiful city.
Out of the North a cry--lamentation and mourning and woe.

Dust and ashes and darkness her splendour and brightness cover,
Like clouds above the glory of purple mountain peaks;
She sits with her proud head bowed, and a mantle of blackness over--
She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks.

The city of gardens and palaces, stately and tall pavilions,
Roofs flashing back the sunlight, music and gladness and mirth,
Whose streets were full of the hum and roar of the toiling millions,
Whose merchantmen were princes, and the honourable of the earth:

Whose traders came from the islands--from far off summer places,
Bringing spices and pearls, and the furs and skins of beasts.
Men from the frozen North, and men with fierce dark faces,
Full of the desert fire, and the untamed life of the East.

Treasures of gems and gold, of statues and flowers and fountains,
Vases of onyx and jasper from Indian emperors sent;
Pictures out of the heart of tropical sunlit mountains,
Of rocks of porphyry piled at the gates of the Occident.

Dusk-brown sons of the forest, hunters of deer and of bison,
And the almond-eyed child of the sun met in her busy streets,
With waifs from the banks of the Indus, and the ancient river Pison--
Lands of the date and the palm, and the citron's hoarded sweets.

The surging tide of the prairie rolled its billows of blossom
Against her mighty walls, and beat at her hundred gates;
The riches of all the world were poured into her bosom,
Kings were her mighty men, and lords, and potentates.

She sat in her place by the sea, and the swift-sailing ships
obeyed her.
Full freighted with corn and wheat their purple sails unfurled,
Far-off in the morning land, and the isles beyond the equator;
Out of her heaped-up garners she scattered the bread of the world.

As her pride and her beauty were perfect, so desolation and mourning,
Swift and sudden, and sure her utter destruction came,
The heavens above were dark with the smoke of her awful burning,
And the earth and the sea were lighted with the fierceness

of her flame.

Behold oh, England! oh, Europe! and see is there any sorrow
Like hers who sits in silence among her children slain,
Oh, blackness of woe and ruin! can any future morrow
Bring back to the shrouded city her glory and crown again!

Aye, subtle and wonderful links of human love and pity,
Ye have bridged the sea of ruin, and spanned it with a span!
She shall rise again from her ashes and build a fairer city,
With a larger faith in God, and the Brotherhood of Man,

THE LEGEND OF THE NEW YEAR.

I dreamed, and lo, I saw in my dream a beautiful gateway,
Arched at the top, and crowned with turrets lance-windowed and olden,
And sculptured in arabesque, all knotted and woven and spangled;
A wonderful legend ran, in letters purple and golden
Written in leaves and blossoms, inextricably intertwined,
A legend I could not resolve, crowning the gate so stately.

Like statues carven and niched in the front of some old cathedral,
Four angels stood each in his turret, immovable warders,
The first with reverend locks snow-white, and a silver volume
Of beard that twinkled with frost, and hung to the icicled borders
That fringed his girdle beneath: ancient his look was, and solemn,
Like a wrinkled and bearded saint blessing some worshipping bedral.

As one in a vision wrapped, with his staff he silently pointed
To the golden legend written in glittering star-points under,
Shining in crystal ferns, and translucent berries of holly.
Yet as I pondered the words of ineffable awe and wonder,
A mist of rainbow brightness obscured them, and hid them wholly,
While wrapt in his vision he stood, like a prophet anointed.

Divers, yet lovely the next, a white-armed, golden-haired maiden;
Blue were her eyes and sweet, and her garments were lily-bordered;
Her hands were full of flowers, and her eyes of innocent gladness,
As the ranks of buds and blossoms, of bees and buds she ordered,
Each in their several paths. Mine eyes were heavy with sadness,
For I read not yet the legend with beauty and mystery laden.

Robed and crowned like an empress in some medieval palace,
Stood the third in her place, with glances of sun-lighted splendour;
Stately her height and tall as a queen in some antique story,
With sheaves about her feet, and the tribute which nations render
To her as the lady of Kingdoms, yet underneath the glory
Of that bright legend to hers was like a containing chalice.

Last of the four, in her turret, serene and benignant,
Sat in the midst of her children and maidens, a household mother;
Want, and the sons of penury dwell not among her neighbours;
Full is her heart of love: her hands wipe the tears of another,
Yet brings she the gold and the pearls of her manifold labours,
To add to that shining legend the grace of her name and her signet.

Fast closed were the gates, and mute in their places the wardens;
No voice in my longing ear whispered the mystical sentence,
And my heart was heavy, and chilled with the fruitless endeavour.
On this side lay the snow and the wind, like the wail of repentance,
Moaned in the branches forlorn but through the closed lattices ever
Drifted a stir and a fragrance of springtime over the borders.

Then through the stillness of night struck the clash and the clangor
Of bells that told twelve from the towers of the neighbouring city;
And lo! the great gates were flung wide, and thronged with the
hurrying races--
High and low, rich and poor--and the light of ineffable pity,
And infinite love shone down and illumined their faces,
Faces of dolor some, of hope, of sorrow, and anger.

Loud clanged the hells from the towers in jubilant rudeness,
And like the voice of a multitude rising respondent,
The words of that marvellous legend made vocal the silence--
The voice of all sentient creatures ascended triumphant,
And all the listening forests, and mountains, and islands
Heard it, and sang it, "He crowneth the Year with His goodness!"

Praise Him, O sounding seas, and floods! praise Him, abounding rivers;
Praise Him, ye flowery months, and every fruitful season!
Praise Him, O stormy wind, and ice, and snow, and vapor,
Ye cattle that clothe the hills, and man with marvellous reason;
Who crowneth the year with goodness, who prospereth all thy labour,
Yea, let all flesh bless the Lord, and magnify Him forever!

BY THE SEA-SHORE AT NIGHT.

Oh lapping waves!--oh gnawing waves!--
That rest not day nor night,--
I hear ye when the light
Is dim and awful in your hollow caves.--

All day the winds were out, and rode
Their steeds, your tossing crest,--
To-night the fierce winds rest,
And the moon walks above them her bright road.

Yet none the less ye lift your hands,
And your despairing cry
Up to the midnight sky,
And clutch, and trample on the shuddering sands,

That shrink and tremble even in sleep,
Out of your passionate reach,
Afraid of your dread speech,
And the more dreadful silence that ye keep

Oh sapping waves!--oh mining waves!--
Under the oak's gnarled feet,
And tower, and village street,
Scooping by stealth in darkness myriad graves;--

What secret strive ye thus to hide,
A thousand fathoms deep,
Which the sea will not keep,
And pours, and babbles forth upon her refluent tide?--

I see your torn and wind-blown hair,
Shewn far along the shore,--
And lifted evermore
You white hands tossing in a fierce despair;

And half I deem ye hold below,
In vast and wandering cell,
The primal spirits who fell,

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