

THEIR SWEET SORROW

THEY meet to say farewell: Their way
Of saying this is hard to say.—

He holds her hand an instant, wholly
Distressed—and she unclasps it slowly.

He lends *his* gaze evasively
Over the printed page that she
Recur to, with a new-moon shoulder
Glimpsed from the lace-mists that infold her.

The clock, beneath its crystal cup,
Discreetly clicks—“*Quick! Act! Speak up!*”
A tension circles both her slender
Wrists—and her raised eyes flash in splendor,

Even as he feels his dazzled own.—
Then, blindingly, round either thrown,
They feel a stress of arms that ever
Strain tremblingly—and “*Never! Never!*”

THEIR SWEET SORROW

Is whispered brokenly, with half
A sob, like a belated laugh,—
While cloyingly their blurred kiss closes,—
Sweet as the dew's lip to the rose's.

JOHN McKEEN

JOHN McKEEN, in his rusty dress,
His loosened collar, and swarthy throat,
His face unshaven, and none the less,
His hearty laugh and his wholesomeness,
And the wealth of a workman's vote!

Bring him, O Memory, here once more,
And tilt him back in his Windsor chair
By the kitchen stove, when the day is o'er
And the light of the hearth is across the floor,
And the crickets everywhere!

And let their voices be gladly blent
With a watery jingle of pans and spoons,
And a motherly chirrup of sweet content,
And neighborly gossip and merriment,
And old-time fiddle-tunes!

JOHN M'KEEN

Tick the clock with a wooden sound,
And fill the hearing with childish glee
Of rhyming riddle, or story found
In the Robinson Crusoe, leather-bound
Old book of the Used-to-be!

John McKeen of the Past! Ah, John,
To have grown ambitious in worldly ways!—
To have rolled your shirt-sleeves down, to don
A broadcloth suit, and, forgetful, gone
Out on election days!

John, ah, John! did it prove your worth
To yield you the office you still maintain?—
To fill your pockets, but leave the dearth
Of all the happier things on earth
To the hunger of heart and brain?

Under the dusk of your villa trees,
Edging the drives where your blooded span
Paw the pebbles and wait your ease,—
Where are the children about your knees,
And the mirth, and the happy man?

JOHN M'KEEN

The blinds of your mansion are battened to;
Your faded wife is a close recluse;
And your "finished" daughters will doubtless do
Dutifully all that is willed of you,
And marry as you shall choose!—

But O for the old-home voices, blent
With the watery jingle of pans and spoons,
And the motherly chirrup of glad content,
And neighborly gossip and merriment,
And the old-time fiddle-tunes!

OUT OF NAZARETH

"HE shall sleep unscathed of thieves
Who loves Allah and believes."
Thus heard one who shared the tent,
In the far-off Orient,
Of the Bedouin ben Ahrzz—
Nobler never loved the stars
Through the palm-leaves nigh the dim
Dawn his courser neighed to him!

He said: "Let the sands be swarmed
With such thieves as I, and thou
Shalt at morning rise, unharmed,
Light as eyelash to the brow
Of thy camel, amber-eyed,
Ever munching either side,
Striding still, with nestled knees,
Through the midnight's oases.

OUT OF NAZARETH

“Who can rob thee an thou hast
More than this that thou hast cast
At my feet—this dust of gold?
Simply this and that, all told!
Hast thou not a treasure of
Such a thing as men call love?”

“Can the dusky band I lead
Rob thee of thy daily need
Of a whiter soul, or steal
What thy lordly prayers reveal?
Who could be enriched of thee
By such hoard of poverty
As thy niggard hand pretends
To dole me—thy worst of friends?
Therefore shouldst thou pause to bless
One indeed who blesses thee:
Robbing thee, I dispossess
But myself.—Pray thou for me!”

He shall sleep unscathed of thieves
Who loves Allah and believes.

SEPTEMBER DARK

I

THE air falls chill;
The whippoorwill
Pipes lonesomely behind the hill:
The dusk grows dense,
The silence tense;
And lo, the katydids commence.

II

Through shadowy rifts
Of woodland, lifts
The low, slow moon, and upward drifts,
While left and right
The fireflies' light
Swirls eddying in the skirts of Night.

SEPTEMBER DARK

III

O Cloudland, gray
And level, lay
Thy mists across the face of Day!
At foot and head,
Above the dead,
O Dews, weep on uncomforted!

WE TO SIGH INSTEAD OF SING

“RAIN and rain! and rain and rain!”
Yesterday we muttered
Grimly as the grim refrain
That the thunders uttered:
All the heavens under cloud—
All the sunshine sleeping;
All the grasses limply bowed
With their weight of weeping.

Sigh and sigh! and sigh and sigh!
Never end of sighing;
Rain and rain for our reply—
Hopes half drowned and dying;
Peering through the window-pane,
Naught but endless raining—
Endless sighing, and, as vain,
Endlessly complaining.

WE TO SIGH INSTEAD OF SING

Shine and shine! and shine and shine!
Ah! to-day the splendor!—
All this glory yours and mine—
God! but God is tender!
We to sigh instead of sing,
Yesterday, in sorrow,
While the Lord was fashioning
This for our To-morrow!

THE BLOSSOMS ON THE TREES

Blossoms crimson, white, or blue,
Purple, pink, and every hue,
From sunny skies, to tintings drowned
In dusky drops of dew,
I praise you all, wherever found,
And love you through and through;—
But, Blossoms On The Trees,
With your breath upon the breeze,
There's nothing all the world around
As half as sweet as you!

Could the rhymer only wring
All the sweetness to the lees
Of all the kisses clustering
In juicy Used-to-bes,
To dip his rhymes therein and sing
The blossoms on the trees,—
"O Blossoms on the Trees,"
He would twitter, trill, and coo,

THE BLOSSOMS ON THE TREES

“However sweet, such songs as these
Are not as sweet as you:—
For you are *blooming* melodies
The *eyes* may listen to!”

LAST NIGHT—AND THIS

LAST night—how deep the darkness was!
And well I knew its depths, because
I waded it from shore to shore,
Thinking to reach the light no more.

She would not even touch my hand.—
The winds rose and the cedars fanned
The moon out, and the stars fled back
In heaven and hid—and all was black!

But ah! To-night a summons came,
Signed with a tear-drop for a name,—
For as I wondering kissed it, lo,
A line beneath it told me so.

And *now*—the moon hangs over me
A disk of dazzling brilliancy,
And every star-tip stabs my sight
With splintered glitterings of light!

A DISCOURAGING MODEL

Just the airiest, fairest slip of a thing,
With a Gainsborough hat, like a butterfly's wing,
Tilted up at one side with the jauntiest air,
And a knot of red roses sown in under there
Where the shadows are lost in her hair.

Then a cameo face, carven in on a ground
Of that shadowy hair where the roses are wound;
And the gleam of a smile, O as fair and as faint
And as sweet as the masters of old used to paint
Round the lips of their favorite saint!

And that lace at her throat—and the fluttering hands
Snowing there, with a grace that no art understands,
The flakes of their touches—first fluttering at
The bow—then the roses—the hair—and then that
Little tilt of the Gainsborough hat.

Ah, what artist on earth with a model like this,
Holding not on his palette the tint of a kiss,
Nor a pigment to hint of the hue of her hair
Nor the gold of her smile—O what artist could dare
To expect a result half so fair?

BACK FROM A TWO-YEARS' SENTENCE

BACK from a two-years' sentence!
And though it had been ten,
You think, I were scarred no deeper
In the eyes of my fellow-men.
"My fellow-men"?—sounds like a satire,
You think—and I so allow,
Here in my home since childhood,
Yet more than a stranger now!

Pardon!—Not wholly a stranger,—
For I have a wife and child:
That woman has wept for two long years,
And yet last night she smiled!—
Smiled, as I leapt from the platform
Of the midnight train, and then—
All that I knew was that smile of hers,
And our babe in my arms again!

BACK FROM A TWO-YEARS' SENTENCE

Back from a two-years' sentence—

But I've thought the whole thing through,—
A hint of it came when the bars swung back

And I looked straight up in the blue
Of the blessed skies with my hat off!

O-ho! I've a wife and child:
That woman has wept for two long years,
And yet last night she smiled!

THE WANDERING JEW

THE stars are falling, and the sky
Is like a field of faded flowers;
The winds on weary wings go by;
The moon hides, and the tempest lowers;
And still through every clime and age
I wander on a pilgrimage
That all men know an idle quest,
For that the goal I seek is—REST!

I hear the voice of summer streams,
And, following, I find the brink
Of cooling springs, with childish dreams
Returning as I bend to drink—
But suddenly, with startled eyes,
My face looks on its grim disguise
Of long gray beard; and so, distressed,
I hasten on, nor taste of rest.

THE WANDERING JEW

I come upon a merry group
Of children in the dusky wood,
Who answer back the owl's whoop,
That laughs as it had understood;
And I would pause a little space,
But that each happy blossom-face
Is like to one *His* hands have blessed
Who sent me forth in search of rest.

Sometimes I fain would stay my feet
In shady lanes, where huddled kine
Couch in the grasses cool and sweet,
And lift their patient eyes to mine;
But I, for thoughts that ever then
Go back to Bethlehem again,
Must needs fare on my weary quest,
And weep for very need of rest.

Is there no end? I plead in vain:
Lost worlds nor living answer me.
Since Pontius Pilate's awful reign
Have I not passed eternity?

THE WANDERING JEW

Have I not drunk the fetid breath
Of every fevered phase of death,
And come unscathed through every pest
And scourge and plague that promised rest?

Have I not seen the stars go out
That shed their light o'er Galilee,
And mighty kingdoms tossed about
And crumbled clod-like in the sea?
Dead ashes of dead ages blow
And cover me like drifting snow,
And time laughs on as 'twere a jest
That I have any need of rest.

BECALMED

I

WOULD that the winds might only blow
As they blew in the golden long ago!—
Laden with odors of Orient isles
Where ever and ever the sunshine smiles,
And the bright sands blend with the shady trees,
And the lotus blooms in the midst of these.

II

Warm winds won from the midland vales
To where the tress of the Siren trails
O'er the flossy tip of the mountain phlox
And the bare limbs twined in the crested rocks,
High above as the sea-gulls flap
Their lopping wings at the thunder-clap.

BECALMED

III

Ah! that the winds might rise and blow
The great surge up from the port below,
Bloating the sad, lank, silken sails
Of the Argo out with the swift, sweet gales
That blew from Colchis when Jason had
His love's full will and his heart was glad—
When Medea's voice was soft and low.
Ah! that the winds might rise and blow!

TO SANTA CLAUS

Most tangible of all the gods that be,
O Santa Claus—our own since Infancy!—
As first we scampered to thee—now, as then,
Take us as children to thy heart again.

Be wholly good to us, just as of old:
As a pleased father, let thine arms infold
Us, homed within the haven of thy love,
And all the cheer and wholesomeness thereof.

Thou lone reality, when O so long
Life's unrealities have wrought us wrong:
Ambition hath allured us,—fame likewise,
And all that promised honor in men's eyes.

Throughout the world's evasions, wiles, and shifts,
Thou only bidest stable as thy gifts:—
A grateful king re-ruleth from thy lap,
Crowned with a little tinselled soldier-cap:

TO SANTA CLAUS

A mighty general—a nation's pride—
Thou givest again a rocking-horse to ride,
And wildly glad he groweth as the grim
Old jurist with the drum thou givest him:

The sculptor's chisel, at thy mirth's command,
Is as a whistle in his boyish hand;
The painter's model fadeth utterly,
And there thou standest,—and he painteth thee:—

Most like a winter pippin, sound and fine
And tingling-red that ripe old face of thine,
Set in thy frosty beard of cheek and chin
As midst the snows the thaws of spring set in.

Ho! Santa Claus—our own since Infancy—
Most tangible of all the gods that be!—
As first we scampered to thee—now, as then,
Take us as children to thy heart again.

WHERE THE CHILDREN USED TO PLAY

THE old farm-home is Mother's yet and mine,
And filled it is with plenty and to spare,—
But we are lonely here in life's decline,
Though fortune smiles around us everywhere:
 We look across the gold
 Of the harvests, as of old—
The corn, the fragrant clover, and the hay;
 But most we turn our gaze,
 As with eyes of other days,
To the orchard where the children used to play.

*O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
 We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
 To the orchard where the children used to play.*

WHERE THE CHILDREN USED TO PLAY

Our sloping pasture-lands are filled with herds;
The barn and granary-bins are bulging o'er;
The grove's a paradise of singing birds—
The woodland brook leaps laughing by the door;
 Yet lonely, lonely still,
 Let us prosper as we will,
Our old hearts seem so empty everyway—
 We can only through a mist
 See the faces we have kissed
In the orchard where the children used to play.

*O from our life's full measure
And rich hoard of worldly treasure
 We often turn our weary eyes away,
And hand in hand we wander
Down the old path winding yonder
 To the orchard where the children used to play.*

A GLIMPSE OF PAN

I CAUGHT but a glimpse of him. Summer was here,
And I strayed from the town and its dust and heat,
And walked in a wood, while the noon was near,
Where the shadows were cool, and the atmosphere
Was misty with fragrances stirred by my feet
From surges of blossoms that billowed sheer
Of the grasses, green and sweet.

And I peered through a vista of leaning trees,
Tressed with long tangles of vines that swept
To the face of a river, that answered these
With vines in the wave like the vines in the breeze,
Till the yearning lips of the ripples crept
And kissed them, with quavering ecstasies,
And wistfully laughed and wept.

A GLIMPSE OF PAN

And there, like a dream in a swoon, I swear
I saw Pan lying,—his limbs in the dew
And the shade, and his face in the dazzle and glare
Of the glad sunshine; while everywhere,
Over, across, and around him blew
Filmy dragon-flies hither and there,
And little white butterflies, two and two,
In eddies of odorous air.