

SONNETS

PAN

THIS Pan is but an idle god, I guess,
Since all the fair midsummer of my dreams
He loiters listlessly by woody streams,
Soaking the lush glooms up with laziness ;
Or drowsing while the maiden-winds caress
Him prankishly, and powder him with gleams
Of sifted sunshine. And he ever seems
Drugged with a joy unutterable—unless
His low pipes whistle hints of it far out
Across the ripples to the dragon-fly
That, like a wind-born blossom blown about,
Drops quiveringly down, as though to die—
Then lifts and wavers on, as if in doubt
Whether to fan his wings or fly without.

DUSK

THE frightened herds of clouds across the sky
Trample the sunshine down, and chase the day
Into the dusky forest-lands of gray
And sombre twilight. Far, and faint, and high,
The wild goose trails his harrow, with a cry
Sad as the wail of some poor castaway
Who sees a vessel drifting far astray
Of his last hope, and lays him down to die.
The children, riotous from school, grow bold
And quarrel with the wind whose angry gust
Plucks off the summer-hat, and flaps the fold
Of many a crimson cloak, and twirls the dus.
In spiral shapes grotesque, and dims the gold
Of gleaming tresses with the blur of rust

JUNE

O QUEENLY month of indolent repose!
I drink thy breath in sips of rare perfume,
As in thy downy lap of clover-bloom
I nestle like a drowsy child and doze
The lazy hours away. The zephyr throws
The shifting shuttle of the Summer's loom
And weaves a damask-work of gleam and gloom
Before thy listless feet. The lily blows
A bugle-call of fragrance o'er the glade;
And, wheeling into ranks, with plume and spear,
Thy harvest-armies gather on parade;
While, faint and far away, yet pure and clear,
A voice calls out of alien lands of shade:—
All hail the Peerless Goddess of the Year!

SILENCE

THOUSANDS of thousands of hushed years ago,
Out on the edge of Chaos, all alone
I stood on peaks of vapor, high upthrown
Above a sea that knew nor ebb nor flow,
Nor any motion won of winds that blow,
Nor any sound of watery wail or moan,
Nor lisp of wave, nor wandering undertone
Of any tide lost in the night below.
So still it was, I mind me, as I laid
My thirsty ear against mine own faint sigh
To drink of that, I sipped it, half afraid
'Twas but the ghost of a dead voice spilled by
The one starved star that tottered through the shade
And came tiptoeing toward me down the sky.

SLEEP

THOU drowsy god, whose blurred eyes, half awink,
Muse on me,—drifting out upon thy dreams,
I lave my soul as in enchanted streams
Where revelling satyrs pipe along the brink,
And, tipsy with the melody they drink,
Uplift their dangling hooves, and down the beams
Of sunshine dance like motes. Thy languor seems
An ocean-depth of love wherein I sink
Like some fond Argonaut, right willingly,—
Because of wooing eyes upturned to mine,
And siren-arms that coil their sorcery
About my neck, with kisses so divine,
The heavens reel above me, and the sea
Swallows and licks its wet lips over me.

HER HAIR

THE beauty of her hair bewilders me—
 Pouring adown the brow, its cloven tide
 Swirling about the ears on either side
And storming round the neck tumultuously:
Or like the lights of old antiquity
 Through mullioned windows, in cathedrals wide
 Spilled moltenly o'er figures deified
In chastest marble, nude of drapery.
And so I love it.—Either unconfined;
 Or plaited in close braidings manifold;
Or smoothly drawn; or indolently twined
 In careless knots whose coilings come unrolled
At any lightest kiss; or by the wind
 Whipped out in flossy ravellings of gold.

DEARTH

I HOLD your trembling hand to-night—and yet
 I may not know what wealth of bliss is mine,
 My heart is such a curious design
Of trust and jealousy! Your eyes are wet—
So must I think they jewel some regret,—
 And lo, the loving arms that round me twine
 Cling only as the tendrils of a vine
Whose fruit has long been gathered: I forget,
 While crimson clusters of your kisses press
 Their wine out on my lips, my royal fair
Of rapture, since blind fancy needs must guess
 They once poured out their sweetness elsewhere,
With fuller flavoring of happiness
 Than e'en your broken sobs may now declare.

A VOICE FROM THE FARM

It is my dream to have you here with me,
Out of the heated city's dust and din—
Here where the colts have room to gambol in,
And kine to graze, in clover to the knee.
I want to see your wan face happily
Lit with the wholesome smiles that have not been
In use since the old games you used to win
When we pitched horseshoes: And I want to be
At utter loaf with you in this dim land
Of grove and meadow, while the crickets make
Our own talk tedious, and the bat wields
His bulky flight, as we cease converse and
In a dusk like velvet smoothly take
Our way toward home across the dewy fields.

THE SERENADE

THE midnight is not more bewildering
To her drowsed eyes, than, to her ears, the sound
Of dim, sweet singing voices, interwound
With purl of flute and subtle twang of string,
Strained through the lattice, where the roses cling
And, with their fragrance, waft the notes around
Her haunted senses. Thirsting beyond bound
Of her slow-yielding dreams, the lilt and swing
Of the mysterious, delirious tune,
She drains like some strange opiate, with awed eyes
Upraised against her casement, where, aswoon,
The stars fail from her sight, and up the skies
Of alien azure rolls the full round moon
Like some vast bubble blown of summer noon.

ART AND LOVE

HE faced his canvas (as a seer whose ken
Pierces the crust of this existence through)
And smiled beyond on that his genius knew
Ere mated with his being. Conscious then
Of his high theme alone, he smiled again
Straight back upon himself in many a hue
And tint, and light and shade, which slowly grew
Enfeatured of a fair girl's face, as when
First time she smiles for love's sake with no fear.
So wrought he, witless that behind him leant
A woman, with old features, dim and sear,
And glamour'd eyes that felt the brimming tear,
And with a voice, like some sad instrument,
That sighing said, "I'm dead there; love me here!"

LONGFELLOW

THE winds have talked with him confidingly;
The trees have whispered to him; and the night
Hath held him gently as a mother might,
And taught him all sad tones of melody:
The mountains have bowed to him; and the sea,
In clamorous waves, and murmurs exquisite,
Hath told him all her sorrow and delight—
Her legends fair—her darkest mystery.
His verse blooms like a flower, night and day;
Bees cluster round his rhymes; and twitterings
Of lark and swallow, in an endless May,
Are mingling with the tender songs he sings.—
Nor shall he cease to sing—in every lay
Of Nature's voice he sings—and will away.

INDIANA

OUR Land—our Home!—the common home indeed
Of soil-born children and adopted ones—
The stately daughters and the stalwart sons
Of Industry:—All greeting and godspeed!
O home to proudly live for, and, if need
Be, proudly die for, with the roar of guns
Blent with our latest prayer.—So died men once. . . .
Lo, Peace! . . . As we look on the land THEY freed—
Its harvests all in ocean-overflow
Poured round autumnal coasts in billowy gold—
Its corn and wine and balmèd fruits and flow'rs,—
We know the exaltation that they know
Who now, steadfast inheritors, behold
The Land Elysian, marvelling "This is ours!"

TIME

I

THE ticking—ticking—ticking of the clock!—
That vexed me so last night!—"For though Time
keeps
Such drowsy watch," I moaned, "he never sleeps,
But only nods above the world to mock
Its restless occupant, then rudely rock
It as the cradle of a babe that weeps!"
I seemed to see the seconds piled in heaps
Like sand about me; and at every shock
O' the bell, the pilèd sands were swirled away
As by a desert-storm that swept the earth
Stark as a granary floor, whereon the gray
And mist-bedrizzled moon amidst the dearth
Came crawling, like a sickly child, to lay
Its pale face next mine own and weep for day.

TIME

II

Wait for the morning! Ah! we wait indeed
For daylight, we who toss about through stress
Of vacant-armed desires and emptiness
Of all the warm, warm touches that we need,
And the warm kisses upon which we feed
Our famished lips in fancy! May God bless
The starved lips of us with but one caress
Warm as the yearning blood our poor hearts bleed!
. . . A wild prayer!—bite thy pillow, praying so—
Toss this side, and whirl that, and moan for dawn;
Let the clock's seconds dribble out their woe,
And Time be drained of sorrow! Long ago
We heard the crowing cock, with answer drawn
As hoarsely sad at throat as sobs. . . Pray on!

GRANT

AT REST—AUGUST 8, 1885

Sir Launcelot rode overthwart and endlong in a wide forest, and held no path but as wild adventure led him. . . . And he returned and came again to his horse, and took off his saddle and his bridle, and let him pasture; and unlaced his helm, and ungirdled his sword, and laid him down to sleep upon his shield before the cross.—AGE OF CHIVALRY.

GRANT

WHAT shall we say of the soldier, Grant,
His sword put by and his great soul free?
How shall we cheer him now or chant
His requiem befittingly?

The fields of his conquest now are seen
Ranged no more with his armèd men—
But the rank and file of the gold and green
Of the waving grain is there again.

Though his valiant life is a nation's pride,
And his death heroic and half divine,
And our grief as great as the world is wide,
There breaks in speech but a single line:—

We loved him living, revere him dead!—
A silence then on our lips is laid:
We can say no thing that has not been said,
Nor pray one prayer that has not been prayed.

But a spirit within us speaks: and lo,
We lean and listen to wondrous words
That have a sound as of winds that blow,
And the voice of waters and low of herds;

GRANT

And we hear, as the song flows on serene,
The neigh of horses, and then the beat
Of hooves that skurry o'er pastures green,
And the patter and pad of a boy's bare feet.

A brave lad, wearing a manly brow,
Knit as with problems of grave dispute,
And a face, like the bloom of the orchard bough,
Pink and pallid, but resolute;
And flushed it grows as the clover-bloom,
And fresh it gleams as the morning dew,
As he reins his steed where the quick quails boom
Up from the grasses he races through.

And ho! as he rides what dreams are his?
And what have the breezes to suggest?—
Do they whisper to him of shells that whiz
O'er fields made ruddy with wrongs redressed?
Does the hawk above him an Eagle float?
Does he thrill and his boyish heart beat high,
Hearing the ribbon about his throat
Flap as a Flag as the winds go by?

GRANT

And does he dream of the Warrior's fame—
This Western boy in his rustic dress?
For, in miniature, this is the man that came
Riding out of the Wilderness!—
The selfsame figure—the knitted brow—
The eyes full steady—the lips full mute—
And the face, like the bloom of the orchard bough,
Pink and pallid, but resolute.

Ay, this is the man, with features grim
And stoical as the Sphinx's own,
That heard the harsh guns calling him,
As musical as the bugle blown,
When the sweet spring heavens were clouded o'er
With a tempest, glowering and wild,
And our country's flag bowed down before
Its bursting wrath as a stricken child.

Thus, ready mounted and booted and spurred,
He loosed his bridle and dashed away!—
Like a roll of drums were his hoof-beats heard,
Like the shriek of the fife his charger's neigh!

GRANT

And over his shoulder and backward blown,
We heard his voice, and we saw the sod
Reel, as our wild steeds chased his own
As though hurled on by the hand of God!

And still, in fancy, we see him ride
In the blood-red front of a hundred frays,
His face set stolid, but glorified
As a knight's of the old Arthurian days:
And victor ever as courtly, too,
Gently lifting the vanquished foe,
And staying him with a hand as true
As dealt the deadly avenging blow.

So, brighter than all of the cluster of stars
Of the flag enshrouding his form to-day,
His face shines forth from the grime of wars
With a glory that shall not pass away:
He rests at last: he has borne his part
Of salutes and salvos and cheers on cheers—
But O the sobs of his country's heart,
And the driving rain of a nation's tears!

IN DIALECT