

The Poems Of Lesbia Harford

Harford, Lesbia (1891-1927)

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The Poems Of Lesbia Harford

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Lesbia Harford

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I LEGENDS

If you have loved a brave story
Tell it but rarely:
And, with due faith in its glory
Render it barely.

Then must the listener, hearing
Your tale of wonder,
Let his own hoping and fearing
Tear him asunder.

II DELIVERANCE THROUGH ART

When I am making poetry I'm good
And happy then.
I live in a deep world of angelhood
Afar from men.
And all the great and bright and fiery troop
Kiss me again
With love. Deathless ideas! I have no need
Of girls' lips then.

Goodness and happiness and poetry,
I put them by:
I will not rush with great wings gloriously
Against the sky
While poormen sit in holes, unbeautiful,
Unsouled and die:
Better let misery and pettiness
Make me their sty.

III THE FOLK I LOVE

I do hate the folk I love —
They hurt so:
Their least word and act may be
Cause of woe.

‘Won’t you come to tea with me’
‘Not to-day;
I’m so tired, I’ve been to church.’
Such folk say.

All the dreary afternoon
I must clutch
At the strength to love like them —
Not too much.

IV SPRING

The hot winds wake to life in the sweet daytime
My weary limbs,
And tear through all the moonlit darkness shouting
Tremendous hymns.

My body keeps earth's law and goes exulting,
Poor slavish thing!
The soul that knows you dead rejects in silence
This riotous spring.

V

You, whom the grave cannot bind,
Shall a song hold you?
Still you escape from the mesh
Spun to enfold you.

Your woven texture of flesh
Short time confined you.
Sib to the sun and the wind,
Shall a song bind you ?

VI

To-day when you went up the hill
And all that I could see
Was just a speck of black and white
Very far from me;

It seemed more strange than words can say
The dot that I could see
Really was the dearest thing
The world holds for me.

VII GREEN AND BLUE

Green and blue;
First-named of colours believe these two.
They first of colours by men were seen
This grass-colour, tree-colour,
Sky-colour, sea-colour,
Magic-named, mystic-souled blue and green.

Later came
Small, subtle colours like tongues of flame,
Small jewel-colours for treasure trove,
Not fruit-colour, flower-colour.
Cloud-colour, shower-colour,
But purple, amethyst, violet, mauve.

These remain,
Two broad fair colours for our larger gain,
Stretched underfoot or spread on high
Green beech-colour, vine-colour,
Gum-colour, pine-colour,
Blue of the noonday or moonlit sky.

VIII CLOSING TIME PUBLIC LIBRARY

At ten o'clock its great gong sounds the dread
Prelude to splendour. I push back my chair,
And all the people leave their books. We flock,
Still acquiescent, down the marble stair
Into the dark where we can't read. And thought
Swoops down insatiate through the starry air.

IX A BRONTE LEGEND

They say she was a creature of the moor,
A lover of the angels, silence bound.
She sought no friendships; she was too remote —
Her sister Charlotte found.

I know she nursed her brother till he died,
Although she didn't like him; that she had
Housework and all the ironing to do,
Because the maids were bad.

And in the midst of it she wrote a book
There could have been small leisure for the moor
Or wandering! She used to mend and sew,
The family was so poor.

Her brother died. But she died just as soon
As she had nursed dear Charlotte through the shock
Of Patrick's death. Contemplative? Well, well!
No Simeon of the Rock!

X

I count the days until I see you, dear.
But the days only.
I dare not reckon up the nights and hours
I shall be lonely.

But when at last I meet you, dearest heart,
How can it cheer me ?
Desire has power to turn me into stone
When you come near me.

I give my heart the lie against my will —
Seem not to see you,
Glance aside quickly if I meet your eye —
Love you and flee you.

XI THE TYRANT

When I was a child
I felt the fairies' power;
Of a sudden my dry life
Would burst into flower.

The skies were my path
The sun my comrade fair,
And the night was a dark rose
I wore in my hair.

But thou camest, love,
Who madest me unfree;
I will dig myself a grave
And hide there from thee.

XII

Though I had lost my love,
The hills could calm me;
Deep in a woodland grove
No loss could harm me.

But when I came to town,
And saw around me
Lovers pass up and down —
Then sorrow crowned me.

XIII

To-day they've made a bonfire
Close to the cherry tree,
And smoke like incense drifted
Through the white tracery.

I think the gardener really
Played a tremendous game,
Offering beauty homage
In soft blue smoke and flame.

XIV

I'm like all lovers, wanting love to be
A very mighty thing for you and me.

In certain moods your love should be a fire
That burnt your very life up in desire.

The only kind of love, then, to my mind
Would make you kiss my shadow on the blind.

And walk seven miles each night to see it there,
Myself within serene and unaware.

But you're as bad. You'd have me watch the clock
And count your coming while I mend your sock.

You'd have my mind devoted day and night
To you, and care for you and your delight.

Poor fools, who each would have the other give
What spirit must withhold if it would live.

You're not my slave; I wish you not to be,
I love yourself and not your love for me,

The self that goes ten thousand miles away
And loses thought of me for many a day.

And you love me for loving much beside,
But now you want a woman for your bride.

Oh, make no woman of me, you who can,
Or I will make a husband of a man!

By my unwomanly love that sets you free
Love all myself, but least the woman in me.

XV NOLI ME TANGERE

We watched the dawn breaking across the sea
While just above us hung the evening star.
The nearer waters took a hint of white
And clouds and waves together massed afar,
Narrowed our morning world of pallid light
Till dawn seemed very close to you and me.

‘Nay, dawn, stay farther off. Be Magdalen,
Go back into the distance whence you came,
The Near is meaningless when Far is nought.’
So I, and you: ‘Wait but a little then,
And day, whole day, uprising like a flame,
Will show us the far reaches of our thought.’

XVI LEARNING GEOGRAPHY

They have a few little hours
To study the world,
Its lovely absence of clouds,
Or the thunderbolts hurled
By hidden powers.

All the soft shapes of the vales,
And the trees of the north,
They dream of a minute, no longer,
No longer — then forth
Ere the year fails.

To cities where carnival glows
Or the furnace is bright,
So is measured or leisured
According as teachers dispose
Their cosmic delight.

XVII

They say — priests say —
That God loves the world.
Maybe he does
When the dew is pearly
On the emerald grass,
Or the young dawns shine.
Would you be satisfied,
Proteus mine,
Just to be loved
When your hair is curled,
As Earth is beloved
When Earth is fine?
I love you more
Than God loves the world.

XVIII

This evening I'm alone,
I wish there'd be
Someone to come along
And talk to me.

Yet out of all my friends
There isn't one
I'd like to come and talk
To me alone.

But if a stranger came
With newer brain
We'd yarn until we felt
Alive again.

XIX

Up in my room on my unmade bed
I sat and read.

There was work waiting for me below,
I didn't go,

For in my little green room the song
Flickered along.

If the singer had seen the way it fared
She would have stared,

Have wondered and stared at me who read
With tumbled bed,

Wide-open window, wide-open door,
Books on the floor.

Hers was a disciplined, comely, wise,
Christina-guise.

But what's the hell of a mess to me
When I am free,

And wind blows in and a delicate song
Flickers along!

XX

He has a fairy wife,
He does not know her.
She is the heart of the storm,
Of the clouds that lower.

And as the clouds are torn
Into rain and thunder,
She in her brightness tears
His heart asunder.

XXI DEDICATED

He has picked grapes in the sun. Oh, it seems
Like a fairy tale,
Like a tale of dreams

‘He in his slender youth, with vines, with sun,
Under a blazing sky,’
The tale might run.

There's beauty for eye and mind, for sight and thought
Here on the surface;
Plunge. This beauty's nought.

Vision succeeds to dream. Deep in his heart
Fierier beauty lives
Than this surface art.

He has no song to sing of fragrant soil
Who in his heart revolts
At unlovely toil.

He has known the real, the truth of it. It seems
Misery eats the heart
Out of fairest dreams.

He in his slender youth, at strife, in vain
Offers his life to set
The world right again.

XXII

Sometimes I wish that I were Helen-fair
And wise as Pallas,
That I might have most royal gifts to pour
In love's sweet chalice.

Then I reflect my dear love is no god
But mortal only
And in this heavenly wife might deem himself
Not blest, but lonely.

XXIII

Those must be masts of ships the gazer sees
On through the little gap in the park trees,
So far away that seeing almost fails,
Those must be masts — the lovely masts of ships
Stripped bare of sails.

There's nothing here to please the seeing eyes —
Four poles with crossway beams against the skies
But beauty's not for sight. True beauty sings
Of latent movement to the unsensed soul
In love with wings.

XXIV A BAD SNAP

He. That isn't you.

She. It's me, in my blue skirt
And scarlet coat and little golden shoes.

He. Not good enough.

She. Well, burn it if you choose,
And take myself.

He. Yourself like skies and days
To praise and live in, worship and abuse.

XXV

I have golden shoes
To make me fleet,
They are like the wind
Underneath my feet.

When my lover's kiss
Is overbold,
I can run away
In my shoes of gold.

Nay, when I am shod
With this bright fire,
I am forced to run
From my own desire.

From the love I love
Whose arms enfold
I must run away
In my shoes of gold.

XXVI

You may have other loves,
Red mouths to kiss.
Why should you lose
That loveliness for this?

No loveliness of mine
That comes and goes
Wild-fuchsia-like,
Need blind you to the rose.

So I who bless
Your hot and passionate ways
Still need the starry loves
Of virgin days.

XXVII

Do you remember still the little song
I mumbled on the hill at Aura, how
I told you it was made for Katie's sake
When I was fresh from school and loving her
With all the strength of girlhood? And you said
You liked my song, although I didn't know
How it began at first and gabbled then
In a half-voice, because I was too shy
To speak aloud, much less to speak them out, —
Words I had joined myself, — in the full voice
And with the lilt of proper poetry.
You could have hardly heard me. Here's the girl.
The little girl from school you never knew.
She made this song. Read what you couldn't hear.

How bright the windows are
Where the dear sun shineth.
They strive to reflect the sun,
To be bright like the sun,
To give heat like the sun.
My heart too has its chosen one
And so to shine designeth.

The windows on the opposite hill that day
Shone bright at sunset too and made me think
Of the old patter I had half forgot,
Do you remember? I remind you now,
Who wandered yesterday for half an hour
Into St. Francis, where I thought of you
And how I would be glad to love you well
If I but knew the way. The rhyme came back
Teasing me till I knew I hated it.
I couldn't take that way of loving you.
That was the girl's way. Hear the woman now.
Out of my thinking in the lonely church
And the day's labour in a friendly room
Tumbled a song this morning you will like.

I love my love
But I could not be
Good for his sake;
That frightens me.

Nor could I do
Such things as I should

Just for the sake
Of being good.

Deeds are too great
To serve my whim,
Be ways of loving
Myself or him.

Whether my deeds
Are good or ill
They're done for their own
Not love's sake, still.

I didn't know it till the song was done,
But that's Ramiro in a nutshell, eh?
With his contempt for individual souls
And setting of the deed above the man.
Perhaps I like him better than I thought,
Or would like, if he'd give me leave to scorn,
Chameleon, adjectival good and ill
And set the deed so far above the man
As to be out of reach of morals too.
There you and I join issue once again.

XXVIII

Florence kneels down to say her prayers
At night.

I wonder what she says, and why she cares
To pray at night.

I think when she kneels down to pray
At night
The names that have been on her lips all day
Are there at night.

She interferes with destinies
At night.
My loves are free to do the things they please
By day, or night.

XXIX

She has all Ireland in her blood —
All Ireland's need of sword and tears,
With memories dim before the flood,
And conflicts of a thousand years.

No son of Italy should love
A heart the centuries have worn
She had no thought of kissing lips,
She held her womanhood in scorn,

And all her joy is blackest pain,
And all her joy is bitter woe.
Then you must leave her side again,
That is no path for you to go.

XXX THE NUNS AND THE LILIES

The lilies in the garden walk
Are out to-day.
The nuns all come to look at them,
To look and say
They wouldn't last to deck the crib
On Christmas Day.

They had outstripped the Holy Child,
And yet at least
They should have been for Ursula,
Lucy, Joan, Perpetua,
Have glittered on the altar through some virgin feast.

The lilies in the convent walk
Are fair to see.
They have forgotten baby Christs,
It seems to me,
They laugh and toss their royal heads
In ecstasy.

And still they say I must believe
Like princely churls,
'For all your lovely purity,
Catherine, Mary, Dorothy,
We will not die as altar flowers for dreaming girls.'

XXXI

I used to be afraid to meet
The lovers going down the street;
I'd try to shrink to half my size
And blink and turn away my eyes.

But now I'm one of them I know
I never need have bothered so.
And they won't mind it if I stare
Because they'll never know I'm there.

XXXII THE FUTURE

I dare not leave the splendid town
To go where morning meadows are,
For somewhere here the Future's hid
In factory, shop, or liquor bar.

And when the picture-shows are closed
She goes to roam about the docks:
Oh, she has wisdom in her mouth
And blood with honey in her locks.

I dare not read of Rosamund
Or such sweet ladyhood in books,
Lest dreaming on their excellence
I should forget the Future's looks.

And I'll walk lonely all my days
Down city pavements without end,
For with young love on flowery paths
I'd have small need for her to friend.

Yes, I would fain forget to sing,
Like larks in city prison bound,
For fear I should not hear her voice
Above that clatter of sweet sound.

XXXIII MACHINISTS TALKING

I sit at my machine,
Hour long beside me Vera, aged nineteen,
Babbles her sweet and innocent tale of sex.

Her boy, she hopes, will prove
Unlike his father in the act of love,
Twelve children are too many for her taste.

She looks sidelong, blue-eyed
And tells a girlish story of a bride
With the sweet licence of Arabian queens.

Her child, she says, saw light
Minute for minute, nine months from the night
The mother first lay in her lover's arms.

She says a friend of hers
Is a man's mistress who gives jewels and furs
But will not have her soft limbs cased in stays.

I open my small store
And tell of a young, delicate girl, a whore
Stole from her mother many months ago.

Fate made the woman seem
To have a tiger's loveliness, to gleam
Strong and fantastic as a beast of prey.

I sit at my machine,
Hour long beside me Vera, aged nineteen,
Babbles her sweet and innocent tale of sex.

XXXIV THE INVISIBLE PEOPLE

When I go into town at half-past seven,
Great crowds of people stream across the ways,
Hurrying although it's only half-past seven;
They are the invisible people of the days.

When you go into town about eleven
The hurrying morning crowds are hid from view,
Shut in the silent building at eleven
They toil to make life meaningless for you.

XXXV

He had served eighty masters; they'd have said
He 'worked for these employers' to earn bread.

And they, if they had heard him, would have sneered
To brand him inefficient whom they feared.

For to know eighty masters is to know
What sort of thing men who are masters grow.

XXXVI WORK-GIRLS' HOLIDAY

A lady has a thousand ways
Of doing nothing all her days,
And so she thinks that they're well spent,
She can be idle and content:
But when I have a holiday
I have forgotten how to play.

I could rest idly under trees
When there's some sun or little breeze,
Or if the wind should prove too strong
Could lie in bed the whole day long.
But any leisured girl would say
That that was waste of holiday.

Perhaps if I had weeks to spend
In doing nothing without end
I might learn better how to shirk
And never want to go to work.

XXXVII BUDDHA IN THE WORKROOM

Sometimes the skirts I push through my machine
Spread circleywise, strong petalled lobe on lobe,
And look for the rapt moment of a dream
Like Buddha's robe.

And I, caught up out of the workroom's stir
Into the silence of a different scheme,
Dream in a sun-dark, templed otherwhere
His alien dream.

XXXVIII DAY'S END

Little girls —
You are gay,
Little factory girls
At the end of day.

There you stand
Huddled close
On the back of a tram,
Having taken your dose.

And you go
Through the grey
And the gold of the streets
At the close of the day.

Blind as moles:
You are crude,
You are sweet, — little girls,
And amazingly rude.

But so fine
To be gay,
Gentle people are dull
At the end of the day.

XXXIX

I read a statement in a newspaper
That Twentyman, the manufacturer,
Found it was cheaper to deliver goods
By horse and lorry than by motor-truck
Or motor-van. So he had sold his trucks
To purchase horses. He dismissed those men
Who had mechanics' minds to re-employ
Drivers of horses, friends of animals.
Then life grew stronger in me because life
Had triumphed in this case, and would perhaps
Finally triumph over the machine.
Even such mean commercial victory
Being better than no victory at all.

XL HUNGARY

All through the day at my machine
There still keeps going
A strange little tune through heart and head
As I sit sewing:

‘There is a child in Hungary,
A child I love in Hungary,’
The words are flowing.

When I am walking home at night
That song comes after,
And under the trees in holiday-time
Or hearing laughter:

‘I have a son in Hungary,
My little son in Hungary,’
Comes following, after.

XLI

Into old rhyme
The new words come but shyly.
Here's a brave man
Who sings of commerce dryly.

Swift-gliding cars
Through town and country winging,
Like cigarettes
Are deemed unfit for singing.

Into old rhyme
New words come tripping slowly.
Hail to the time
When they possess it wholly!

XLII

My lovely pixie, my good companion,
You do not love me, bed-mate of mine,
Save as a child loves,
Careless of loving,
Rather preferring raspberry wine.

How can you help it? You were abandoned.
Your mother left you; your father died.
All your young years of
Pain and desertion
Are not forgotten, here at my side.

XLIII A BLOUSE MACHINIST

Miss Murphy has blue eyes and blue-black hair,
Her machine's opposite mine,
So I can stare
At her pale face and shining blue-black hair.

She's nice to watch when her machine-belt breaks,
She has such delicate hands,
And arms, it takes
Ages for her to mend it when it breaks.

Oh, beauty's still elusive and she's fine;
Through all the moulding
Of her face — the line
Of nose, mouth, chin is Mongol, yet she's fine.

Of course things would be different in Japan,
They'd see her beauty:
On a silken fan
They'd paint her for a princess in Japan.

But still her loveliness eludes the blind;
Who never use their eyes
But just their mind.
So must much loveliness elude the blind.

XLIV AN IMPROVER

Maisie's been holding down her head all day,
Her little red head. And her pointed chin
Rests on her neck that slips so softly in
The square-cut low-necked darling dress she made
In such a way, since it's high-waisted, too,
It lets you guess how fair young breasts begin
Under the gentle pleasant folds of blue.

But on the roof at lunch-time when the sun
Shone warmly and the wind was blowing free
She lifted up her head to let me see
A little rosy mark beneath the chin —
The mark of kisses. If her mother knew
She'd be ashamed, but a girl-friend like me
Made her feel proud to show her kisses to.

XLV COMPANIONS

They are so glad of a young companion,
They hail and bless me, these boys of mine,
And I whose pathway was dark and lonely
Have no more need of the sun to shine.

We'll walk in darkness, obscure, despised,
We'll mourn each other at prison gates;
These boys are splendid as mountain eagles,
But mountain eagles have eagle mates.

The girls who prattle of work and pleasure,
Of last week's picnic and this week's joys,
Of past and present, nor heed the future,
Are lagging comrades for dawnstruck boys.

XLVI BEAUTY AND TERROR

Beauty does not walk through lovely days,
Beauty walks with horror in her hair;
Down long centuries of pleasant ways
Men have found the terrible most fair.

Youth is lovelier in death than life,
Beauty mightier in pain than joy,
Doubly splendid burn the fires of strife
Brighter than the brightness they destroy.

XLVII REVOLUTION

She is not of the fireside,
My lovely love;
Nor books, nor even a cradle
She bends above.

No, she is bent with lashes,
Her flesh is torn;
From blackness into blackness
She walks forlorn.

But factories and prisons
Are far more fair
Than home or palace gardens
If she is there.

XLVIII

To-day is rebels' day. And yet we work —
All of us rebels, until day is done,
And when the stars come out we celebrate
A revolution that's not yet begun.

To-day is rebels' day. And men in jail
Tread the old mill-round until day is done;
And when night falls they sit at home to brood
On revolution that's not yet begun.

To-day is rebels' day. Let all of us
Take courage to fight on until we're done —
Fight though we may not live to see the hour,
The revolution splendidly begun.

XLIX STREET MUSIC

There's a band in the street, there's a band in the street
It will play you a tune for a penny —
It will play you a tune, you a tune, you a tune,
And you, though you haven't got any.

For the music's free, and the music's bold,
It cannot really be bought and sold.

And the people walk with their heads held high,
Whether or not they've a penny.
And the music's there, as the bandsmen know,
For the poor, though the poor are many.

Oh, the music's free and the music's bold,
It cannot really be bought and sold.

L

I went down to post a letter
Through the garden, through the garden,
All the lovely stars were shining
As I went.
They were free as I; unhappy
Only he to whom the letter
Must be sent.

Even stars forget the prisons,
Stars and clouds and moonlit waters;
I believe the wind would shun them
If it could.
He at least rebels — remembers
Dawn breaks eastward, where the prisons
Erstwhile stood.

LI

Whenever I think of you, you are alone —
Shut by yourself between
Great walls of stone.

There is a stool, I think, and a table there,
And a mat underneath your feet;
And the rest is bare.

I cannot stop remembering this, my own,
Seventeen hours of the day
You are alone.

LII EXPERIENCE

I must be dreaming through the days
And see the world with childish eyes
If I'd go singing all my life,
And my songs be wise.

And in the kitchen or the house
Must wonder at the sights I see.
And I must hear the throb and hum
That moves to song in factory.

So much in life remains unsung,
And so much more than love is sweet;
I'd like a song of kitchenmaids
With steady fingers and swift feet.

And I could sing about the rest
That breaks upon a woman's day
When dinner's over and she lies
Upon her bed to dream and pray,

Until the children come from school
And all her evening work begins;
There's more in life than tragic love
And all the storied, splendid sins.

LIII INVENTORY

We've a room that we call home,
With a bed in it
And a table and some chairs,
A to Z in it.
There's a mirror
And a safe
And a lamp in it.
Were there more
Our mighty love
Might get cramp in it.

LIV

Now all the lonely days are past,
The hours of sun and leagues of sea
And starry nights that lay between
Yourself and me.

Our boat has left the sea behind,
She lies beside the friendly dock,
And soon the gangway will go down
And lips will meet and hands will lock.

And carriers will come climbing up
To take my things and leave us free;
There's trams and streets and home at last
For you and me.

LV

I came to live in Sophia Street,
In a little house in Sophia Street,
With an inch of floor
Between door and door
And a yard you'd measure in children's feet.
When I'd been ten days in Sophia Street
I remembered its name was Wisdom Street:
For I'd learned much more
Than in all the score
Of years I clamoured for books to eat.

LVI

And is love very strong where honour rules?
Would the world ever speak of Lancelot's love
Or Tristan's love had they put honour first?
What would you think if Guinevere had knelt
And begged for kisses and had begged in vain?
Should she be constant had she been refused
Or would she laugh and turn to love elsewhere?
For Joseph is a hero nowadays
And young Paolo, of the Italian blood
Rather too rash and uncontrollable.
Lovers who are not free should sigh and part
Lovers, you call them, and not free to love!
They may be wives or husbands, business men,
Saints even: they're not lovers. After all,
I'd rather be a lover than a saint.

LVII

He looks in my heart and the image there
Is himself, himself, than himself more fair.

And he thinks of my heart as a mirror clear
To reflect the image I hold most dear.

But my heart is much more like a stream, I think,
Where my lover may come when he needs to drink.

And my heart is a stream that seems asleep
But the tranquil waters run strong and deep;

They reflect the image that seems most fair,
But their meaning and purpose are otherwhere.

He may come, my lover, and lie on the brink,
And gaze at his image, and smile and drink,

While the hidden waters run strong and free,
Unheeded, unguessed at, the soul of me.

LVIII

Sometimes I think the happiest of love's moments
Is the blest moment of release from loving.

The world once more is all one's own to model
Upon one's own and not another's pattern.

And each poor heart imprisoned by the other's
Is suddenly set free for splendid action.

For no two lovers are a single person
And lovers' union means a soul's suppression.

Oh, happy then the moment of love's passing
When those strong souls we sought to slay recover.

LIX GIRL'S LOVE

I lie in the dark
Grass beneath and you above me
Curved like the sky,
Insistent that you love me.

But the high stars
Admonish to refuse you,
And I'm for the stars
Though in the stars I lose you.

LX LOVERS PARTED

‘With the awakening of the memory of a forbidden action there is combined the awakening of the tendency to carry out the action.’

Old memories waken old desires
Infallibly. While we're alive
With eye or ear or sense at all,
Sometimes, must love revive.

But we'll not think, when some stray gust
Relumes the flicker of desire
That fuel of circumstance could make
A furnace of our fire.

The past is gone. We must believe
It has no power to change our lives,
Yet still our constant hearts rejoice
Because the past survives.

LXI BIRTHDAY

I have a sister whom God gave to me
He formed her out of trouble and the mists of the sea.

Like Aphrodite she came to me full-grown,
Oh, I am blest forever with a sister of my own.

LXI B

Every night I hurry home to see
If a letter's there from you to me.

Every night I bow my head and say,
'There's no word at all from him to-day.'

LXII

I hate work so
That I have found a way
Of making one small task outlast the day.

I will not leave
The garden and the sun,
In spite of all the work that should be done.

So when I go
To really make my bed
I've made it ten times over in my head.

Then as for meals!
I think I'd rather be
A nervous wreck than make a cup of tea.

The fire's so low
It isn't any good,
While I sit planning to put on some wood.

One thing is sure —
I pity other drones,
God having made me such a lazy-bones.

LXIII

I had a lover who betrayed me,
First he implored and then gainsaid me.

Hopeless I dared no more importune,
I found new friends, a kinder fortune.

Silence, indifference did greet me,
Twice in long years he's chanced to meet me.

Yet when I see him, I discover
I was inconstant, he the lover.

LXIV

Once I thought my love was worth the name
If tears came.

When the wound is mortal, now I know
Few tears flow.

LXV

Last night in a dream I felt the peculiar anguish
Known to me of old;
And there passed me, not much changed, my earliest lover
Smiling, suffering, cold.

This morning I lay with closed lids under the blankets,
Lest with night depart
The truthful dream which restored to me with my lover
My passionate heart.

LXVI PERIODICITY

My friend declares
Being woman and virgin she
Takes small account of periodicity

And she is right;
Her days are calmly spent
For her sex-function is irrelevant.

But I whose life
Is monthly broken in twain
Must seek some sort of meaning in my pain.

Women, I say,
Are beautiful in change,
Remote, immortal, like the moon they range;

Or call my pain
A skirmish in the whole
Tremendous conflict between body and soul.

Meaning must lie
Some beauty surely dwell
In the fierce depths and uttermost pits of hell.

Yet still I seek
Month after month in vain
Meaning and beauty in recurrent pain.

LXVII PRUNING FLOWERING GUMS

One summer day, along the street,
Men pruned the gums
To make them neat.
The tender branches, white with flowers,
Lay in the sun
For hours and hours,
And every hour they grew more sweet,
More honey-like
Until the street
Smelt like a hive, withouten bees.
But still the gardeners
Lopped the trees.

Then came the children out of school,
Noisy and separate
As their rule
Of being is. The tangled trees
Gave them one heart;
Such power to please
Had all the flowering branches strown
Around for them
To make their own.
Then such a murmuring arose
As made the ears
Confirm the nose
And give the lie to eyes. For hours
Child bees hummed
In the honey flowers.

They gathered sprigs and armfuls. Some
Ran with their fragrant
Burdens home
And still returned; and after them
Would drag great boughs.

Some stripped a stem
Of rosy flowers and played with these.
Never such love
Had earthly trees
As these young creatures gave. By night
The treasured sprays
Of their delight
Were garnered every one. The street
Looked, as the council liked it, neat.

LXVIII

O you dear trees, you have learned so much of beauty,
You must have studied this only the ages long!
Men have thought of God and laughter and duty
And of love. And of song.

But you, dear trees, from your birth to your hour of dying
Have cared for this way only of being wise.
Lovely, lovely, lovely the sapling sighing,
Lovely the dead tree lies.

LXIX

When I was still a child
I thought my love would be
Noble, truthful, brave,
And very kind to me.

Then, — all the novels said
That if my lover prove
No such man as this
He had to forfeit love.

Now I know life holds
Harder tasks in store,
If my lover fail
I must love him more.

Should he prove unkind,
What am I, that he
Squander soul and strength
Smoothing life for me

Weak or false or cruel
Love must still be strong:
All my life I'll learn
How to love as long.

LXX MORTAL POEMS

I think each year should bring
Little fresh songs
Like flowers in spring.

That they might deck the hours
For a brief while
And die like flowers.

Flower-like content to be
Sharers in man's
Mortality.

LXXI

O man, O woman, grievest so?
Art shut away from all delight,
And must thou leave this garden plot?
O Eve, O Adam, question not.
The God is kind who would be cruel,
He does not know the hearts he made.
Turn unreluctant to the shade,
To bitterest struggle, darkest night,
O man, O woman, happier so.

LXXII THE CONTEST

Our palm designed to grow
In deserts sent roots seeking far and wide
Channels where waters flow.

And in the city found
Intricate pipings where the waters flow
Imprisoned underground.

Since iron strength was nought
Against the clever groping fingers, meant
To find the thing they sought,

Our palms, condemned, must go;
While on through streets and houses at men's will
Rivers of crystal flow.

Be sad awhile. And then
Exult in visible beauty overthrown
By the fair will of men.

LXXIII WHITE SUNSHINE

The sun's my fire,
Golden, from a magnificence of blue,
Should be its hue.

But woolly clouds
Like boarding-house old ladies, come and sit
In front of it.

White sunshine, then,
That has the frosty glimmer of white hair,
Freezes the air.

They must forget,
So self-absorbed are they, so very old,
That I'll be cold.

LXXIV

I am no mystic. All the ways of God
Are dark to me;
I know not if he lived or if he died
In agony.

My every act has reference to man;
Some human need
Of this one, or of that, or of myself
Inspires the deed.

But when I hear the Angelus, I say
A Latin prayer,
Hoping the dim, incanted words may shine
Some way, somewhere.

Words and a will may work upon my mind
Till ethics turn
To that transcendent mystic love with which
The Seraphim burn.
