

Helen of Troy And Other Poems

**By Sara Teasdale[American (Missouri & New York)
Poet]**

To Marion Cummings Stanley

Song

You bound strong sandals on my feet, You gave me bread and wine,
And bade me out, 'neath sun and stars, For all the world was mine.

Oh take the sandals off my feet, You know not what you do; For all my
world is in your arms, My sun and stars are you.

The Rose and the Bee

If I were a bee and you were a rose, Would you let me in when the
gray wind blows? Would you hold your petals wide apart, Would you let
me in to find your heart, If you were a rose?

"If I were a rose and you were a bee, You should never go when you
came to me, I should hold my love on my heart at last, I should close my
leaves and keep you fast, If you were a bee."

The Song Maker

I made a hundred little songsThat told the joy and pain of love, And
sang them blithely, tho' I knewNo whit thereof.

I was a weaver deaf and blind;A miracle was wrought for me, But I
have lost my skill to weaveSince I can see.

For while I sang -- ah swift and strange!Love passed and touched me
on the brow, And I who made so many songsAm silent now.

Wild Asters

In the spring I asked the daisies
If his words were true, And the clever
little daisies Always knew.

Now the fields are brown and barren,
Bitter autumn blows, And of all
the stupid asters Not one knows.

When Love Goes

I

O mother, I am sick of love, I cannot laugh nor lift my head, My bitter
dreams have broken me, I would my love were dead.

"Drink of the draught I brew for thee, Thou shalt have quiet in its
stead."

II

Where is the silver in the rain, Where is the music in the sea, Where is
the bird that sang all day To break my heart with melody?

"The night thou badst Love fly away, He hid them all from thee."

The Wayfarer

Love entered in my heart one day, A sad, unwelcome guest; But when
he begged that he might stay, I let him wait and rest.

He broke my sleep with sorrowing, And shook my dreams with tears,
And when my heart was fain to sing, He stilled its joy with fears.

But now that he has gone his way, I miss the old sweet pain, And
sometimes in the night I pray That he may come again.

The Princess in the Tower

I

The Princess sings:

I am the princess up in the towerAnd I dream the whole day thro'Of a knight who shall come with a silver spearAnd a waving plume of blue.

I am the princess up in the tower,And I dream my dreams by day,But sometimes I wake, and my eyes are wet,When the dusk is deep and gray.

For the peasant lovers go by beneath,I hear them laugh and kiss,And I forget my day-dream knight,And long for a love like this.

II

The Minstrel sings:

I lie beside the princess' tower,So close she cannot see my face,And watch her dreaming all day long,And bending with a lily's grace.

Her cheeks are paler than the moonThat sails along a sunny sky,And yet her silent mouth is redWhere tender words and kisses lie.

I am a minstrel with a harp,For love of her my songs are sweet,And yet I dare not lift the voiceThat lies so far beneath her feet.

III

The Knight sings:

O princess cease your dreams awhileAnd look adown your tower's gray side --The princess gazes far away,Nor hears nor heeds the words I cried.

Perchance my heart was overbold,God made her dreams too pure to

break,She sees the angels in the airFly to and fro for Mary's sake.

Farewell, I mount and go my way,-- But oh her hair the sun sifts thro' -
-The tilts and tourneys wait my spear,I am the Knight of the Plume of
Blue.

When Love Was Born

When Love was born I think he lay
Right warm on Venus' breast, And
whiles he smiled and whiles would play
And whiles would take his rest.

But always, folded out of sight,
The wings were growing strong That
were to bear him off in flight
Erelong, erelong.

The Shrine

There is no lord within my heart, Left silent as an empty shrine Where
rose and myrtle intertwine, Within a place apart.

No god is there of carven stone To watch with still approving eyes My
thoughts like steady incense rise; I dream and weep alone.

But if I keep my altar fair, Some morning I shall lift my head From
roses deftly garlanded To find the god is there.

The Blind

The birds are all a-building, They say the world's a-flower, And still I
linger lonely Within a barren bower.

I weave a web of fancies Of tears and darkness spun. How shall I sing
of sunlight Who never saw the sun?

I hear the pipes a-blowing, But yet I may not dance, I know that Love
is passing, I cannot catch his glance.

And if his voice should call me And I with groping dim Should reach
his place of calling And stretch my arms to him,

The wind would blow between my hands For Joy that I shall miss, The
rain would fall upon my mouth That his will never kiss.

Love Me

Brown-thrush singing all day long
In the leaves above me, Take my
love this little song, "Love me, love me, love me!"

When he harkens what you say,
Bid him, lest he miss me, Leave his
work or leave his play, And kiss me, kiss me, kiss me!

The Song for Colin

I sang a song at dusking time Beneath the evening star, And Terence
left his latest rhyme To answer from afar.

Pierrot laid down his lute to weep, And sighed, "She sings for me," But
Colin slept a careless sleep Beneath an apple tree.

Four Winds

"Four winds blowing thro' the sky, You have seen poor maidens die,
Tell me then what I shall do That my lover may be true." Said the wind
from out the south, "Lay no kiss upon his mouth," And the wind from out
the west, "Wound the heart within his breast," And the wind from out the
east, "Send him empty from the feast," And the wind from out the north,
"In the tempest thrust him forth, When thou art more cruel than he, Then
will Love be kind to thee."

Roundel

If he could know my songs are all for him, At silver dawn or in the
evening glow, Would he not smile and think it but a whim, If he could
know?

Or would his heart rejoice and overflow, As happy brooks that break
their icy rim When April's horns along the hillsides blow?

I may not speak till Eros' torch is dim, The god is bitter and will have
it so; And yet to-night our fate would seem less grim If he could know.

Dew

I dream that he is mine, I dream that he is true, And all his words I
keep As rose-leaves hold the dew.

O little thirsty rose, O little heart beware, Lest you should hope to
hold A hundred roses' share.

A Maiden

Oh if I were the velvet roseUpon the red rose vine, I'd climb to touch
his windowAnd make his casement fine.

And if I were the little birdThat twitters on the tree, All day I'd sing my
love for himTill he should harken me.

But since I am a maidenI go with downcast eyes, And he will never
hear the songsThat he has turned to sighs.

And since I am a maidenMy love will never know That I could kiss
him with a mouthMore red than roses blow.

"I Love You"

When April bends above meAnd finds me fast asleep, Dust need not
keep the secretA live heart died to keep.

When April tells the thrushes,The meadow-larks will know, And pipe
the three words lightlyTo all the winds that blow.

Above his roof the swallows,In notes like far-blown rain, Will tell the
little sparrowBeside his window-pane.

O sparrow, little sparrow,When I am fast asleep, Then tell my love the
secretThat I have died to keep.

But Not to Me

The April night is still and sweet
With flowers on every tree; Peace
comes to them on quiet feet, But not to me.

My peace is hidden in his breast
Where I shall never be, Love comes
to-night to all the rest, But not to me.

Hidden Love

I hid the love within my heart, And lit the laughter in my eyes, That
when we meet he may not know My love that never dies.

But sometimes when he dreams at night Of fragrant forests green and
dim, It may be that my love crept out And brought the dream to him.

And sometimes when his heart is sick And suddenly grows well again,
It may be that my love was there To free his life of pain.

Snow Song

Fairy snow, fairy snow, Blowing, blowing everywhere, Would that
I too, could fly Lightly, lightly through the air.

Like a wee, crystal star I should drift, I should blow Near, more near, To
my dear Where he comes through the snow.

I should fly to my love Like a flake in the storm, I should die, I should
die, On his lips that are warm.

Youth and the Pilgrim

Gray pilgrim, you have journeyed far, I pray you tell to me Is there a
land where Love is not, By shore of any sea?

For I am weary of the god, And I would flee from him Tho' I must take
a ship and go Beyond the ocean's rim.

"I know a port where Love is not, The ship is in your hand, Then
plunge your sword within your breast And you will reach the land."

The Wanderer

I saw the sunset-colored sands, The Nile like flowing fire
between, Where Rameses stares forth serene, And Ammon's heavy temple
stands.

I saw the rocks where long ago, Above the sea that cries and
breaks, Bright Perseus with Medusa's snakes Set free the maiden white like
snow.

And many skies have covered me, And many winds have blown me
forth, And I have loved the green bright north, And I have loved the cold
sweet sea.

But what to me are north and south, And what the lure of many
lands, Since you have leaned to catch my hands And lay a kiss upon my
mouth.

I Would Live in Your Love

I would live in your love as the sea-grasses live in the sea, Borne up by each wave as it passes, drawn down by each wave that recedes; I would empty my soul of the dreams that have gathered in me, I would beat with your heart as it beats, I would follow your soul as it leads.

May

The wind is tossing the lilacs, The new leaves laugh in the sun, And the
petals fall on the orchard wall, But for me the spring is done.

Beneath the apple blossoms I go a wintry way, For love that smiled in
April is false to me in May.

Rispetto

Was that his step that sounded on the stair? Was that his knock I heard
upon the door? I grow so tired I almost cease to care, And yet I would that
he might come once more.

It was the wind I heard, that mocks at me, The bitter wind that is more
cruel than he; It was the wind that knocked upon the door, But he will
never knock nor enter more.

Less than the Cloud to the Wind

Less than the cloud to the wind, Less than the foam to the sea, Less
than the rose to the storm Am I to thee.

More than the star to the night, More than the rain to the lea, More than
heaven to earth Art thou to me.

Buried Love

I shall bury my weary Love Beneath a tree, In the forest tall and
black Where none can see.

I shall put no flowers at his head, Nor stone at his feet, For the mouth I
loved so much Was bittersweet.

I shall go no more to his grave, For the woods are cold. I shall gather as
much of joy As my hands can hold.

I shall stay all day in the sun Where the wide winds blow, But oh, I
shall weep at night When none will know.

Song

O woe is me, my heart is sad, For I should never know
If Love came by like any lad, Without his silver bow.

Or if he left his arrows sharp And came a minstrel weary, I'd never tell
him by his harp Nor know him for my dearie.

"O go your ways and have no fear, For tho' Love passes by, He'll come
a hundred times, my dear, Before your turn to die."

Pierrot

Pierrot stands in the garden
Beneath a waning moon, And on his lute he
fashions
A little silver tune.

Pierrot plays in the garden,
He thinks he plays for me, But I am quite
forgotten
Under the cherry tree.

Pierrot plays in the garden,
And all the roses know That Pierrot loves
his music,
But I love Pierrot.

At Night

Love said, "Wake still and think of me," Sleep, "Close your eyes till
break of day," But Dreams came by and smilingly Gave both to Love and
Sleep their way.

Song

When Love comes singing to his heart
That would not wake for me, I
think that I shall know his joy
By my own ecstasy.

And tho' the sea were all between,
The time their hands shall meet, My
heart will know his happiness,
So wildly it will beat.

And when he bends above her mouth,
Rejoicing for his sake, My soul
will sing a little song,
But oh, my heart will break.

Love in Autumn

I sought among the drifting leaves, The golden leaves that once were green,
To see if Love were hiding there And peeping out between.

For thro' the silver showers of May And thro' the summer's heavy heat,
In vain I sought his golden head And light, fast-flying feet.

Perhaps when all the world is bare And cruel winter holds the land, The
Love that finds no place to hide Will run and catch my hand.

I shall not care to have him then, I shall be bitter and a-cold -- It grows
too late for frolicking When all the world is old.

Then little hiding Love, come forth, Come forth before the autumn
goes, And let us seek thro' ruined paths The garden's last red rose.

The Kiss

I hoped that he would love me, And he has kissed my mouth, But I am
like a stricken bird That cannot reach the south.

For tho' I know he loves me, To-night my heart is sad; His kiss was not
so wonderful As all the dreams I had.

November

The world is tired, the year is old, The little leaves are glad to die, The
wind goes shivering with cold Among the rushes dry.

Our love is dying like the grass, And we who kissed grow coldly kind,
Half glad to see our poor love pass Like leaves along the wind.

A Song of the Princess

The princess has her lovers, A score of knights has she, And each can
sing a madrigal, And praise her gracefully.

But Love that is so bitter Hath put within her heart A longing for the
scornful knight Who silent stands apart.

And tho' the others praise and plead, She maketh no reply, Yet for a
single word from him, I ween that she would die.

The Wind

A wind is blowing over my soul,I hear it cry the whole night thro' -- Is
there no peace for me on earthExcept with you?

Alas, the wind has made me wise,Over my naked soul it blew, -- There
is no peace for me on earthEven with you.

A Winter Night

My window-pane is starred with frost, The world is bitter cold to-night,
The moon is cruel and the wind Is like a two-edged sword to smite.

God pity all the homeless ones, The beggars pacing to and fro. God
pity all the poor to-night Who walk the lamp-lit streets of snow.

My room is like a bit of June, Warm and close-curtained fold on fold,
But somewhere, like a homeless child, My heart is crying in the cold.

The Metropolitan Tower

We walked together in the dusk
To watch the tower grow dimly white,
And saw it lift against the sky
Its flower of amber light.

You talked of half a hundred things,
I kept each little word you said;
And when at last the hour was full,
I saw the light turn red.

You did not know the time had come,
You did not see the sudden
flower, Nor know that in my heart
Love's birth Was reckoned from that
hour.

Gramercy Park

For W. P.

The little park was filled with peace, The walks were carpeted with
snow, But every iron gate was locked. Lest if we entered, peace would go.

We circled it a dozen times, The wind was blowing from the sea, I only
felt your restless eyes Whose love was like a cloak for me.

Oh heavy gates that fate has locked To bar the joy we may not win,
Peace would go out forevermore If we should dare to enter in

In the Metropolitan Museum

Within the tiny Pantheon
We stood together silently, Leaving the
restless crowd awhile
As ships find shelter from the sea.

The ancient centuries came back
To cover us a moment's space, And
thro' the dome the light was glad
Because it shone upon your face.

Ah, not from Rome but farther still,
Beyond sun-smitten Salamis, The
moment took us, till you stooped
To find the present with a kiss.

Coney Island

Why did you bring me here? The sand is white with snow, Over the
wooden domes The winter sea-winds blow -- There is no shelter
near, Come, let us go.

With foam of icy lace The sea creeps up the sand, The wind is like a
hand That strikes us in the face. Doors that June set a-swing Are bolted
long ago; We try them uselessly -- Alas, there cannot be For us a second
spring; Come, let us go.

Union Square

With the man I love who loves me not, I walked in the street-lamps'
flare; We watched the world go home that night In a flood through Union
Square.

I leaned to catch the words he said That were light as a snowflake
falling; Ah well that he never leaned to hear The words my heart was
calling.

And on we walked and on we walked Past the fiery lights of the picture
shows -- Where the girls with thirsty eyes go by On the errand each man
knows.

And on we walked and on we walked, At the door at last we said good-
bye; I knew by his smile he had not heard My heart's unuttered cry.

With the man I love who loves me not I walked in the street-lamps'
flare -- But oh, the girls who can ask for love In the lights of Union Square.

Central Park at Dusk

Buildings above the leafless trees
Loom high as castles in a dream,
While one by one the lamps come out
To thread the twilight with a gleam.

There is no sign of leaf or bud,
A hush is over everything -- Silent as
women wait for love,
The world is waiting for the spring.

Young Love

I

I cannot heed the words they say, The lights grow far away and dim,
Amid the laughing men and maids My eyes unbidden seek for him.

I hope that when he smiles at me He does not guess my joy and pain,
For if he did, he is too kind To ever look my way again.

II

I have a secret in my heart No ears have ever heard, And still it sings
there day by day Most like a caged bird.

And when it beats against the bars, I do not set it free, For I am happier
to know It only sings for me.

III

I wrote his name along the beach, I love the letters so. Far up it seemed
and out of reach, For still the tide was low.

But oh, the sea came creeping up, And washed the name away, And on
the sand where it had been A bit of sea-grass lay.

A bit of sea-grass on the sand, Dropped from a mermaid's hair -- Ah,
had she come to kiss his name And leave a token there?

IV

What am I that he should love me, He who stands so far above

me, What am I? I am like a cowslip turning
Toward the sky, Where a
planet's golden burning
Breaks the cowslip's heart with yearning,
What am I that he should love me, What am I?

V

O dreams that flock about my sleep, I pray you bring my love to me,
And let me think I hear his voice
Again ring free.

And if you care to please me well, And live to-morrow in my mind, Let
him who was so cold before, To-night seem kind.

VI

I plucked a daisy in the fields, And there beneath the sun I let its silver
petals fall One after one.

I said, "He loves me, loves me not," And oh, my heart beat fast, The
flower was kind, it let me say "He loves me," last.

I kissed the little leafless stem, But oh, my poor heart knew The words
the flower had said to me, They were not true.

VII

I sent my love a letter, And if he loves me not, He shall not find my
love for him In any line or dot.

But if he loves me truly, He'll find it hidden deep, As dawn gleams red
thro' chilly clouds To eyes awaked from sleep.

VIII

The world is cold and gray and wet, And I am heavy-hearted, yet
When I am home and look to see The place my letters wait for me, If I
should find ONE letter there, I think I should not greatly care If it were
rainy or were fair, For all the world would suddenly Seem like a festival to

me.

IX

I hid three words within my heart, That longed to fly to him, At dawn
they woke me with a start, They sang till day was dim.

And now at last I let them fly, As little birds should do, And he will
know the first is "I", The others "Love" and "You".

X

Across the twilight's violet His curtained window glimmers gold; Oh
happy light that round my love Can fold.

Oh happy book within his hand, Oh happy page he glorifies, Oh happy
little word beneath His eyes.

But oh, thrice happy, happy I Who love him more than songs can tell,
For in the heaven of his heart I dwell

Sonnets and Lyrics

Primavera Mia

As kings who see their little life-day pass, Take off the heavy ermine
and the crown, So had the trees that autumn-time laid down Their golden
garments on the faded grass, When I, who watched the seasons in the glass
Of mine own thoughts, saw all the autumn's brown Leap into life and don
a sunny gown Of leafage such as happy April has. Great spring came
singing upward from the south; For in my heart, far carried on the wind,
Your words like winged seeds took root and grew, And all the world
caught music from your mouth; I saw the light as one who had been blind,
And knew my sun and song and spring were you.

Soul's Birth

When you were born, beloved, was your soul New made by God to
match your body's flower, And were they both at one same precious hour
Sent forth from heaven as a perfect whole? Or had your soul since dim
creation burned, A star in some still region of the sky, That leaping
earthward, left its place on high And to your little new-born body yearned?
No words can tell in what celestial hour God made your soul and gave it
mortal birth, Nor in the disarray of all the stars Is any place so sweet that

such a flower Might linger there until thro' heaven's bars, It heard God's voice that bade it down to earth.

Love and Death

Shall we, too, rise forgetful from our sleep, And shall my soul that lies within your hand Remember nothing, as the blowing sand Forgets the palm where long blue shadows creep When winds along the darkened desert sweep? Or would it still remember, tho' it spanned A thousand heavens, while the planets fanned The vacant ether with their voices deep? Soul of my soul, no word shall be forgot, Nor yet alone, beloved, shall we see The desolation of extinguished suns, Nor fear the void wherethro' our planet runs, For still together shall we go and not Fare forth alone to front eternity.

For the Anniversary of John Keats' Death

(February 23, 1821)

At midnight when the moonlit cypress trees Have woven round his grave a magic shade, Still weeping the unfinished hymn he made, There moves fresh Maia like a morning breeze Blown over jonquil beds when warm rains cease. And stooping where her poet's head is laid, Selene weeps while all the tides are stayed And swaying seas are darkened into peace. But they who wake the meadows and the tides Have hearts too kind to bid him wake from sleep Who murmurs sometimes when his dreams are deep, Startling the Quiet Land where he abides, And charming still, sad-eyed Persephone With visions of the sunny earth and sea.

Silence

(To Eleonora Duse)

We are anhungered after solitude, Deep stillness pure of any speech or sound, Soft quiet hovering over pools profound, The silences that on the desert brood, Above a windless hush of empty seas, The broad unfurling banners of the dawn, A faery forest where there sleeps a Faun; Our souls are fain of solitudes like these. O woman who divined our weariness, And set the crown of silence on your art, From what undreamed-of depth within your heart Have you sent forth the hush that makes us free To hear an instant, high above earth's stress, The silent music of infinity?

The Return

I turned the key and opened wide the door To enter my deserted room again, Where thro' the long hot months the dust had lain. Was it not lonely when across the floor No step was heard, no sudden song that bore My whole heart upward with a joyous pain? Were not the pictures and the volumes fain To have me with them always as before? But Giorgione's Venus did not deign To lift her lids, nor did the subtle smile Of Mona Lisa deepen. Madeleine Still wept against the glory of her hair, Nor did the lovers part their lips the while, But kissed unheeding that I watched them there.

Fear

I am afraid, oh I am so afraid! The cold black fear is clutching me to-night As long ago when they would take the light And leave the little child

who would have prayed, Frozen and sleepless at the thought of death. My heart that beats too fast will rest too soon; I shall not know if it be night or noon, -- Yet shall I struggle in the dark for breath? Will no one fight the Terror for my sake, The heavy darkness that no dawn will break? How can they leave me in that dark alone, Who loved the joy of light and warmth so much, And thrilled so with the sense of sound and touch, -- How can they shut me underneath a stone?

Anadyomene

The wide, bright temple of the world I found, And entered from the dizzy infinite That I might kneel and worship thee in it; Leaving the singing stars their ceaseless round Of silver music sound on orbéd sound, For measured spaces where the shrines are lit, And men with wisdom or with little wit Implore the gods that mercy may abound. Ah, Aphrodite, was it not from thee My summons came across the endless spaces? Mother of Love, turn not thy face from me Now that I seek for thee in human faces; Answer my prayer or set my spirit free Again to drift along the starry places.

Galahad in the Castle of the Maidens

(To the maiden with the hidden face in Abbey's painting)

The other maidens raised their eyes to him Who stumbled in before them when the fight Had left him victor, with a victor's right. I think his eyes with quick hot tears grew dim; He scarcely saw her swaying white and slim, And trembling slightly, dreaming of his might, Nor knew he touched her hand, as strangely light As a wan wraith's beside a river's rim. The other maidens raised their eyes to see And only she has hid her face

away, And yet I ween she loved him more than they, And very fairly fashioned was her face. Yet for Love's shame and sweet humility, She dared not meet him with their queenlike grace.

To an Aeolian Harp

The winds have grown articulate in thee, And voiced again the wail of ancient woe That smote upon the winds of long ago: The cries of Trojan women as they flee, The quivering moan of pale Andromache, Now lifted loud with pain and now brought low. It is the soul of sorrow that we know, As in a shell the soul of all the sea. So sometimes in the compass of a song, Unknown to him who sings, thro' lips that live, The voiceless dead of long-forgotten lands Proclaim to us their heaviness and wrong In sweeping sadness of the winds that give Thy strings no rest from weariless wild hands.

To Erinna

Was Time not harsh to you, or was he kind, O pale Erinna of the perfect lyre, That he has left no word of singing fire Whereby you waked the dreaming Lesbian wind, And kindled night along the lyric shore? O girl whose lips Erato stooped to kiss, Do you go sorrowing because of this In fields where poets sing forevermore? Or are you glad and is it best to be A silent music men have never heard, A dream in all our souls that we may say: "Her voice had all the rapture of the sea, And all the clear cool quiver of a bird Deep in a forest at the break of day"?

To Cleis

"I have a fair daughter with a form like a golden flower,Cleis, the beloved." Sapphic fragment.

When the dusk was wet with dew,Cleis, did the muses nineListen in a silent line While your mother sang to you?

Did they weep or did they smileWhen she crooned to still your cries,She, a muse in human guise, Who forsook her lyre awhile?

Did you feel her wild heart beat?Did the warmth of all the sunThro' your little body run When she kissed your hands and feet?

Did your fingers, babywise,Touch her face and touch her hair,Did you think your mother fair, Could you bear her burning eyes?

Are the songs that soothed your fearsVanished like a vanished flame,Save the line where shines your name Starlike down the graying years?

Cleis speaks no word to me,For the land where she has goneLieth mute at dusk and dawn Like a windless tideless sea.

Paris in Spring

The city's all a-shiningBeneath a fickle sun, A gay young wind's a-blowing,The little shower is done. But the rain-drops still are clingingAnd falling one by one -- Oh it's Paris, it's Paris,And spring-time has begun.

I know the Bois is twinklingIn a sort of hazy sheen, And down the Champs the gray old archStands cold and still between. But the walk is flecked with sunlightWhere the great acacias lean, Oh it's Paris, it's Paris,And the leaves are growing green.

The sun's gone in, the sparkle's dead,There falls a dash of rain, But who would care when such an airComes blowing up the Seine? And still Ninette sits sewingBeside her window-pane, When it's Paris, it's Paris,And

spring-time's come again.

Madeira from the Sea

Out of the delicate dream of the distance an emerald emerges Veiled in the violet folds of the air of the sea; Softly the dream grows awakening -- shimmering white of a city, Splashes of crimson, the gay bougainvillea, the palms. High in the infinite blue of its heaven a quiet cloud lingers, Lost and forgotten of winds that have fallen asleep, Fallen asleep to the tune of a Portuguese song in a garden.

City Vignettes

I Dawn

The greenish sky glows up in misty reds, The purple shadows turn to brick and stone, The dreams wear thin, men turn upon their beds, And hear the milk-cart jangle by alone.

II Dusk

The city's street, a roaring blackened stream Walled in by granite, thro' whose thousand eyes A thousand yellow lights begin to gleam, And over all the pale untroubled skies.

III Rain at Night

The street-lamps shine in a yellow line Down the splashy, gleaming street, And the rain is heard now loud now blurred By the tread of homing feet.

By the Sea

Beside an ebbing northern sea While stars awaken one by one, We walk together, I and he.

He woos me with an easy grace That proves him only half sincere; A light smile flickers on his face.

To him love-making is an art, And as a flutist plays a flute, So does he play upon his heart

A music varied to his whim. He has no use for love of mine, He would not have me answer him.

To hide my eyes within the night I watch the changeful lighthouse gleam Alternately with red and white.

My laughter smites upon my ears, So one who cries and wakes from sleep Knows not it is himself he hears.

What if my voice should let him know The mocking words were all a sham, And lips that laugh could tremble so?

What if I lost the power to lie, And he should only hear his name In one low, broken cry?

On the Death of Swinburne

He trod the earth but yesterday, And now he treads the stars. He left us in the April time He praised so often in his rhyme, He left the singing and the lyre and went his way.

He drew new music from our tongue, A music subtly wrought, And moulded words to his desire, As wind doth mould a wave of fire; From strangely fashioned harps slow golden tones he wrung.

I think the singing understands That he who sang is still, And I seel cries that he is dead, -- Does not Dolores bow her head And Fragoletta weep and wring her little hands?

New singing now the singer hears To lyre and lute and harp; Catullus
waits to welcome him, And thro' the twilight sweet and dim, Sappho's
forgotten songs are falling on his ears.

Triolets

I

Love looked back as he took his flight, And lo, his eyes were filled
with tears. Was it for love of lost delight Love looked back as he took his
flight? Only I know while day grew night, Turning still to the vanished
years, Love looked back as he took his flight, And lo, his eyes were filled
with tears.

II (Written in a copy of "La Vita Nuova". For M. C. S.)

If you were Lady Beatrice And I the Florentine, I'd never waste my
time like this -- If you were Lady Beatrice I'd woo and then demand a
kiss, Nor weep like Dante here, I ween, If you were Lady Beatrice And I
the Florentine.

III (Written in a copy of "The Poems of Sappho".)

Beyond the dim Hesperides, The girl who sang them long ago Could
never dream that over seas, Beyond the dim Hesperides, The wind would
blow such songs as these -- I wonder now if she can know, Beyond the dim
Hesperides, The girl who sang them long ago?

IV

Dead leaves upon the stream And dead leaves on the air -- All of my
lost hopes seem Dead leaves upon the stream; I watch them in a
dream, Going I know not where, Dead leaves upon the stream And dead
leaves on the air.

Vox Corporis

The beast to the beast is calling, And the soul bends down to wait; Like
the stealthy lord of the jungle, The white man calls his mate.

The beast to the beast is calling, They rush through the twilight sweet,
But the soul is a wary hunter, He will not let them meet.

A Ballad of Two Knights

Two knights rode forth at early dawn A-seeking maids to wed, Said one,
"My lady must be fair, With gold hair on her head."

Then spake the other knight-at-arms: "I care not for her face, But she I
love must be a dove For purity and grace."

And each knight blew upon his horn And went his separate way, And
each knight found a lady-love Before the fall of day.

But she was brown who should have had The shining yellow hair -- I
ween the knights forgot their words Or else they ceased to care.

For he who wanted purity Brought home a wanton wild, And when
each saw the other knight I ween that each knight smiled.

Christmas Carol

The kings they came from out the south, All dressed in ermine fine,
They bore Him gold and chrysoprase, And gifts of precious wine.

The shepherds came from out the north, Their coats were brown and
old, They brought Him little new-born lambs -- They had not any gold.

The wise-men came from out the east, And they were wrapped in white;
The star that led them all the way Did glorify the night.

The angels came from heaven high, And they were clad with wings;
And lo, they brought a joyful song The host of heaven sings.

The kings they knocked upon the door, The wise-men entered in, The
shepherds followed after them To hear the song begin.

And Mary held the little child And sat upon the ground; She looked up,
she looked down, She looked all around.

The angels sang thro' all the night Until the rising sun, But little Jesus
fell asleep Before the song was done.

The Faery Forest

The faery forest glimmered Beneath an ivory moon, The silver grasses
shimmered Against a faery tune.

Beneath the silken silence The crystal branches slept, And dreaming
thro' the dew-fall The cold white blossoms wept.

A Fantasy

Her voice is like clear water That drips upon a stone In forests far and
silent Where Quiet plays alone.

Her thoughts are like the lotus Abloom by sacred streams Beneath the
temple arches Where Quiet sits and dreams.

Her kisses are the roses That glow while dusk is deep In Persian garden
closes Where Quiet falls asleep.

A Minuet of Mozart's

Across the dimly lighted room
The violin drew wefts of sound,
Airily they wove and wound
And glimmered gold against the gloom.

I watched the music turn to light,
But at the pausing of the bow,
The web was broken and the glow
Was drowned within the wave of night.

Twilight

Dreamily over the roofs
The cold spring rain is falling,
Out in the lonely tree
A bird is calling, calling.

Slowly over the earth
The wings of night are falling;
My heart like the bird in the tree
Is calling, calling, calling.

The Prayer

My answered prayer came up to me,
And in the silence thus spake he:
"O you who prayed for me to come,
Your greeting is but cold and dumb."

My heart made answer: "You are fair,
But I have prayed too long to care.
Why came you not when all was new,
And I had died for joy of you."

Two Songs for a Child

I Grandfather's Love

They said he sent his love to me,
They wouldn't put it in my hand,
And when I asked them where it was
They said I couldn't understand.

I thought they must have hidden it,
I hunted for it all the day,
And when I told them so at night
They smiled and turned their heads away.

They say that love is something kind,
That I can never see or touch.
I wish he'd sent me something else,
I like his cough-drops twice as much.

II The Kind Moon

I think the moon is very kind
To take such trouble just for me.
He came along with me from home
To keep me company.

He went as fast as I could run;
I wonder how he crossed the sky?
I'm sure he hasn't legs and feet
Or any wings to fly.

Yet here he is above their roof; Perhaps he thinks it isn't right For me to
go so far alone, Tho' mother said I might.

On the Tower

Under the leaf of many a Fable lies the Truth for those who look for it.
Jami.

On the Tower
(A play in one act.)

The Knight. The Lady.

Voices of men and women on the ground at the foot of the tower. The
voice of the Knight's Page.

The top of a high battlemented tower of a castle. A stone ledge, which
serves as a seat, extends part way around the parapet. Small clouds float by
in the blue sky, and occasionally a swallow passes. Entrance R. from an
unseen stairway which is supposed to extend around the outside of the
tower.

The Lady (unseen). Oh do not climb so fast, for I am faint With
looking down the tower to where the earth Lies dreaming in the sun. I fear
to fall.

The Knight (unseen). Lean on me, love, my love, and look not down.

L. Call me not "love", call me your conquered foe, That now, since you
have battered down her gates, Gives you the keys that lock the highest
tower And mounts with you to prove her homage true; Oh bid me go no
farther lest I fall, My foot has slipped upon the rain-worn stones, Why are
the stairs so narrow and so steep? Let us go back, my lord.

K. Are you afraid, Who were so dauntless till the walls gave

way? Courage, my sweet. I would that I could climb
A thousand times by
wind-swept stairs like these,
That lead so near to heaven.

L. Sir, you may, You are a knight and very valorous; I am a woman. I
shall never come
This way but once. (The Knight and the Lady appear on
the top of the tower.)

K. Kiss me at last, my love.

L. Oh, my sweet lord, I am too tired to kiss. Look how the earth is like
an emerald,
With rivers veined and flawed with fallow fields.

K. (Lifting her veil) Then I kiss you, a thousand thousand kisses
For all
the days ere I had won to you
Beyond the walls and gates you barred so
close. Call me at last your love, your castle's lord.

L. (After a pause) I love you.

(She kisses him. Her veil blows away like a white butterfly over the
parapet. Faint cries and laughter from men and women under the tower.)

Men and Women. The veil, the lady's veil!

(The knight takes the lady in his arms.)

L. My lord, I pray you loose me from your arms
Lest that my people see
how much we love.

K. May they not see us? All of them have loved.

L. But you have been an enemy, my lord, With walls between us and
with moss-grown moats,
Now on a sudden must I kiss your mouth? I who
was taught before I learned to speak
That all my house was hostile unto
yours, Now can I put my head against your breast
Here in the sight of all
who choose to come?

K. Are we not past the caring for their eyes
And nearer to the heaven
than to earth? Look up and see.

L. I only see your face.

(She touches his hair with her hands. Murmuring under the tower.)

K. Why came we here in all the noon-day light
With only darting
swallows over us
To make a speck of darkness on the sun? Let us go down
where walls will shut us round. Your castle has a hundred quiet halls, A
hundred chambers, where the shadows lie
On things put by, forgotten long
ago. Forgotten lutes with strings that Time has slackened,
We two shall

draw them close and bid them sing --Forgotten games, forgotten books
still openWhere you had laid them by at vesper-time,And your embroidery,
whereon half-workedWeeps Amor wounded by a rose's thorn.Shall I not
see the room in which you slept,Palpitant still and breathing of your
thoughts,Where maiden dreams adown the ways of sleepSwept noiselessly
with damosels and knightsTo tourneys where the trumpet made no
sound,Blow as he might, the scarlet trumpeter,And were the dreams not
sometimes brimmed with tearsThat waked you when the night was
loneliest?Will you not bring me to your oratoryWhere prayers arose like
little birds set freeStill upward, upward without sound of flight?Shall I not
find your turrets toward the north,Where you defied white winter armed
for war;Your southern casements where the sun blows inBetween the leaf-
bent boughs the wind has lifted?Shall we not see the sunrise toward the
east,Watch dawn by dawn the rose of day unfoldingIts golden-hearted
beauty sovereignly;And toward the west look quietly at evening?Shall I
not see all these and all your treasures?In carven coffers hidden in the
darkHave you not laid a sapphire lit with flameAnd amethysts set round
with deep-wrought gold,Perhaps a ruby?

L.All my gems are yoursAnd all my chambers curtained from the
sun.My lord shall see them all, in time, in time.

(The sun begins to sink.)

K.Shall I not see them now?To-day, to-night?

L.How could I show you in one day, my lord,My castle and my
treasures and my tower?Let all the days to come suffice for thisSince all
the past days made them what they are.You will not be impatient, my
sweet lord.Some of the halls have long been locked and barred,And some
have secret doors and hard to findTill suddenly you touch them
unawares,And down a sable way runs silver light.We two will search
together for the keys,But not to-day.Let us sit here to-day,Since all is yours
and always will be yours.

(The stars appear faintly one by one.)

K.(After a pause.)I grow a little drowsy with the dusk.

L.(Singing.) There was a man that loved a maid, (Sleep and take your

rest) Over her lips his kiss was laid, Over her heart, his breast.

(The knight sleeps.)

All of his vows were sweet to hear, Sweet was his kiss to take; Why was her breast so quick to fear, Why was her heart, to break?

Why was the man so glad to woo? (Sleep and take your rest) Why were the maiden's words so few ----

(She sees that he is asleep, and slipping off her long cloak-like outer garment, she pillows his head upon it against the parapet, and half kneeling at his feet she sings very softly:)

I love you, I love you, I love you, I am the flower at your feet, The birds and the stars are above you, My place is more sweet.

The birds and the stars are above you, They envy the flower in the grass, For I, only I, while I love you Can die as you pass.

(Light clouds veil the stars, growing denser constantly. The castle bell rings for vespers, and rising, the lady moves to a corner of the parapet and kneels there.)

L. Ave Maria! gratia plena, Dominus ----

Voice of the Page (from the foot of the tower.) My lord, my lord, they call for you at court!

(The knight wakes. It is now quite dark.)

There is a tourney toward; your enemy Has challenged you. My lord, make haste to come!

(The knight rises and gropes his way toward the stairs.)

K. I will make haste. Await me where you are.

(To himself.) There was a lady on this tower with me ----

(He glances around hurriedly but does not see her in the darkness.)

Page. My lord has far to ride before the dawn!

K. (To himself.) Why should I tarry?

(To the page.) Bring my horse and shield!

(He descends. As the noise of his footfall on the stairs dies away, the lady gropes toward the stairway, then turns suddenly, and going to the ledge where they have sat, she throws herself over the parapet.)

CURTAIN.

Sara Teasdale

Sara Teasdale was born in St. Louis, Missouri, where she attended a school that was founded by the grandfather of another great poet from St. Louis -- T. S. Eliot. She later associated herself more with New York City. Her first book of poems was "Sonnets to Duse" (1907), but "Helen of Troy" (1911) was the true launch of her career, followed by "Rivers to the Sea" (1915), "Love Songs" (1917), "Flame and Shadow" (1920) and more. Her final volume, "Strange Victory", is considered by many to be predictive of her suicide.

It is interesting to note that in Teasdale's Collected Works, about half of the poems in this volume -- some more justly than others -- have been excluded, and most of the rest have been slightly changed. Most of the poems from this volume which were selected to be included in "Love Songs" also had some minor changes. This edition preserves the original readings, but they are not to be considered authoritative.