

Grass Blades from a Cinnamon Garden

Poems

by

Lilian May Miller

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PRINTED BY
THE JAPAN ADVERTISER PRESS
TOKYO
1927

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Editors of ASIA and THE JAPAN ADVERTISER for their courteous permission to reprint those of the poems which have already appeared in their pages.

GRASS BLADES FROM A CINNAMON GARDEN

In my garden of cinnamon trees

I found young grass had sprung from root and stone,

Marking the steps of song-enchanted spring;

And as I wandered there half sad, alone,

In this garden of cinnamon trees,

Softly I went from blade to gleaming blade,

Gathered them in a sheaf of tender jade,

Wrapped them in fragrance from the southern breeze,

Tied them with silken cord ! And now I bring

Them to you—you, who alone were not afraid

To teach me again, love, what it is to sing.

TO L. W. J.

My mind, a young and tender, growing thing,
 Eager to push above earth's choking dust
Into the flowering courtyards of the spring,
 Sought often too impetuously the sun
What time the sound of your brocaded skirt
 Came softly down the walk: and, one by one,
You pruned my faults with slender hands and white
Until you saw them blossom in the light.

OUR VIOLET PATH

There came an amber morning of delight
When spring first tinged the trees with softest green,
And perfumed all the air with her sweet breath;
The blossoms of the plum trees on the hills
Threw feathery shadows on the waking earth,
And nightingales trilled in the dark green woods
As we strolled through them on our violet path,
As joyously we walked our violet path.

From time to time we stooped to pick the flowers
That glowed in lavender on either side:
A dear excuse for hand and hand to meet,
A fair excuse to linger, and to smile
Deep into each other's answering eyes;
And all the beauty round us drew us close
As we strolled down our sunlit violet path,
As joyously we walked our violet path.

Both heart and soul cannot forget that day,
Each hour brings fresh remembrance of its joy;
Ah, surely, half myself is wandering there,
Still wandering with you through the violets there
And as dull time crawls by I sit and dream,
And pray some other morning soon to come
Will see us strolling down our violet path,
Hand close in hand along our violet path !

THE YOUNG RED APRIL MOON

See how green, errant spring has kissed this hill !
The little teahouse nestling to its throat
Has put away the wooden winter blinds;
And blue-clad throngs of laughing pilgrims fill
(On their long way to mountain shrines remote)
The scarlet benches under blossoming trees,
Their voices humming with the April bees

Shall we, too, happy-hearted, wander there,
Down through the waving, gold-tipped mountain grass,
And drink the amber tea, pale eastern tea,
Served by some red-cheeked girl, with glistening hair,
On a lacquer tray? We shall find a garden seat
High, where the hills drop to eternity
Below us, and a rushing murmur comes
From a silver fall, and fragrant petals float
Dreamily into our cups; and we shall eat
Gossamer rice-cakes, and pink pickled plums,
Smiling to think perhaps some drifting cloud,
Rose-flushed at sunset, must have suddenly turned
To bright, celestial food! Ah, we shall laugh and talk,
Talk of the things for which we two have yearned,
Of things we two alone can understand,
Heart opened wide to heart till grey mists shroud
The hills into a melting shadowland,
And night comes slowly up the garden walk,
A red moon-lantern glimmering in her hand.

BRUSH PICTURES OF THE CELESTIAL MOUNTAIN

1. DAWN.

I saw shy Fuji of an early morn
 Robed in an opalescent mist,
Like some quaint maiden, delicate, highborn,
 In pearl-grey kimono, cloud-kissed,
Stolen away alone to greet the dawn,
 Thinking to see no strangers by the sea;
 And when I smiled and looked too eagerly,
She hid her face behind a sleeve of fawn.

2. MORNING.

A dream-white Fuji high above the sea,
 Hovering with outspread wings against a sky
Blue-grey, the sea a turquoise in the sun—
 While far below a white-sailed junk skims by.

3. NOON.

I looked to see a distant, soaring crest,
 Gleaming like crystal in the noonday sun:
But all the peaks I saw were only clouds
 Hiding that other high, most perfect one.

4. AFTERNOON.

Then a bird called in sudden ecstasy:
 "Surely," I thought, "that far and gracious form
At last shines silver-etched upon the sky—"
 But there rose only barrier-walls of storm.

5. EVENING.

The clouds rolled back in billowy silver waves
 Until, against a fading coral sky
Patterned by branches of a bending pine,
 A dim grey shadow rose—then night walked by.

THE CRESCENT MOON TO THE EVENING STAR

I am thy crescent moon,
 Thou art my star,
Swinging through heavens wide,
 Sailing afar;
What though the clouds sweep by,
What though the winds roar high?
I am thy crescent moon,
 Thou art my star.

Now our long journey done
 Sink we to rest,
Rocked in the cradling trees
 On the hill's crest;
Gently we close our eyes
As the green gloaming dies,
Rocked in soft silver ease
 Sink we to rest.

I am thy crescent moon,
 Thou art my star,
Ah, could there never be
 Parting to mar !
On must I take my way
Over the hills of gray,
I go—thy crescent moon,
 Goodbye—dear star.

IN SOME OLD NOBLE'S GARDEN

Give me your griefs, your hurts, your crimson scars,
Give me the black, keen bitterness that mars
The sunlight of your spirit, and I shall take
Their brooding shadows to far orient lands
Of jade and amber; there to lighten them
With the dim, brocaded peace that stills each ache.

Some I shall mingle with the cobalt seas
Girdled with creamy foam. Some I shall throw
To the strong, free, sweeping winds that lift and blow
Around the world in endless majesty.
Others I'll leave in nodding peonies
In some old noble's garden, or beyond
The lacquered pillars of a temple shrine,
Where they can float upon some lotus pond
Beneath dark canopies of blue-green pine,
Each like a somber butterfly apoise.

And when at last I gather them again
To send them to you, you will find no pain,
For all your old griefs will have turned to joys !

RED GATES THAT HAVE CRUMBLLED INTO RED DUST

This dusk, as of old, I saw the crescent moon
Glimmer in crystal through deep amethyst skies
Behind the trees, those quiet poplar trees
That dream along the western palace wall,
Dreaming, perhaps, as I am, of the long ago

The old rare days are gone, I know, I know:
The rank weeds crowd and stain our terraced courts,
Even the great red gates are redder dust;
Today the beggar wails for his poor alms,
And the laden coolie walks with careless feet
Where only peacock slippers, perfumed silks
Once passed

And yet, and yet, love, in some other life,
Some other world, those days may come again
Bearing their flowers, the cuckoo in the grove,
The cricket in the sweet grass, silver lakes
Bordered with bright pavilions, lotus blooms,
The amber west at dusk—all that we loved—
The old, deep, mellow, cool tranquillity
Breathed by a thousand centuries of calm
And we shall stand beneath far lilac skies,
And, breathless, watch the silver crescent rise !

FROM A TEMPLE COURTYARD

As I walk through the temple grounds at cool of night,
And hear rich, resonant tones of bronze strike out the hour,
Through carven pillars I see altar candles flower
To flickering blossoms, incense-fringed, of orange light;
The temple drum for prayers rolls full, then dies away,
And peace descending comes to brood with close of day.

Beneath dark, ancient, lacquered eaves the doves wing home,
Pale, shaven priests in flowing silks drone deep in prayer;
Through velvet dusk intangible the evening air
Steals music from the temple fountain's purling foam;
Gold lanterns flower dimly through the dreaming trees
Ah, never, surely, will the western tides change these !

TORWOOD BY THE SEA

(At Kamakura)

I love to think of you out on the dunes,
Walking with eager stride to meet the wind
That sweeps the sand along in driving sheets,
Of little whirling pools skirting the rocks
To lose itself in the deep, rustling grass
Blue noons, green mornings, and gold afternoons
Melt into one another there. The waves,
Warm with white foam, seethe on the snowy beach
And leave light, sparkling suds around the shells.
The nets are drying in the sun. Behind,
A thatched roof peers out from a bamboo grove,
And hills and sea sleep on in sunny peace
Then a far bell, deep-throated, rings the hour
In a temple courtyard nestling on a slope,
And I can see you leave the silver dunes
And hurry home with cheeks like peonies,
Along a path winding through storm-bent trees
The storm-bent pines that run down to the sea,
The little pines that bow so crookedly.

THE LITTLE MAPLE TREE

Before your picture on a Chinese stand
I have stood a tiny maple of soft green
In a little emerald pot: and there it grows
Happily, and puts out new, wee, tender leaves;
I smile to see them, for it is as though
Each tiny leaf were a new, sweet thought of you,—
A new, sweet thought of you and how I love you !

THE EVENING AFTER YOU HAD SAILED AWAY

Grey-pearled, the evening shimmered into night
Above the harbor's quiet stretch of sea,
Where shadowy ships of mauve at anchor lay
Half-sleeping in the slowly darkening light,
That evening after you had sailed away

All pearly grey and amethyst the sea,
Except a shining path of silver bright
Sweeping across into far misty depths
Of purple distance. Grey and lavender
The clouds, and silvery grey the sand,
And magic stillness over sea and strand.

With wistful eyes I watched rose-tinted rays,
Delicate as the lining of a shell
Fade out and join the vanished other days,
The shining throng, the gleaming, luminous band
Of treasured hours we gathered through the years
Wistful, since you were then far out at sea,
Wistful, since I was left—alone—on land.

And when night came—to end those happy years—
The silver in the harbor turned to grey
(That evening after you had sailed away),
The grey to lavender, and then to mauve,
The darkening mauve to silent, hidden tears.

DISSERTATION ON ROOFS

The Sea has a luminous sapphire roof
Which sweeps up splendidly aloof;

The River's roof is ice and snow
With crystal vaults to guard its flow;

The Pool lies under a massive dome
Of bouldered rock all seamed with loam;

The Spring is roofed with moist white sand,
Oozing therefrom with gurglings bland;

But *my* little roof—the best of all—
Is of deep brown thatch by a bamboo wall,
Where fat little sparrows love to call !

JAPANESE ARTIST

With ten strokes he built a mountain,
With two strokes a tree—
 And then with the most delightful smile
 He gazed through the lattice door awhile,
And with *one* stroke brushed in the boundless sea !

SAYONARA

Some go down by a bright blue sea
To wave light farewell to their friends,
And hail them Godspeed joyously.
"So long, old man, I'll see you soon,"
"Goodbye, my dear, be back in June,"-
The gay, hard voices shout above
The rush of wind, the crowds that shove,
The vivid ribbons fluttering bright
From deck to dock in the gold sunlight.
Others have chores that bring them there,
Banker, trader, merchant, rare
Curio dealer, those who make
The greater part of this port of call.
But once I saw far more at stake—
Two hearts that broke behind a wall
Of outer, seeming carelessness:
Saw at the last loud warning bell
The passionate, clinging, last caress,
Heart strained to heart in sad farewell.
Then she came down and stood below
Where he leaned, yearning, on the rail,
And caught his streamer in high show
Of fun,—yet how she gripped that frail
Last bond between them ! Through the mass
Of other blowing ribbons there
She kept their own untorn and true:
I saw the gallant streamer bear
Their messages of dear adieu.
And when the great ship moved away
With din of blast and gong and shout,
Gaily she guided through the fray
Of wind-torn bands that one so stout,
So steady to his hand . . . until
At last her arms fell to her side,
And the streamer—last of them to go—
Fluttered out over the harbor's wide
Grey mouth. *Must heaven be ended so?*

Far at the end of the dock she stood
Like one turned stone. The ship sailed on
Toward the south. Like stone she stood,
Her straining eyes in sockets wan
Striving to keep his slender form
Clear of the others by the rail:
But only a vast, grey, blurring storm
Of misery rose in a veil.
Tears in her eyes, tears on her cheek,
Tears in her heart . . . and the hopeless, bleak,
Black sense of *left behind!* She did not feel
The crowds that pressed, marked not the zeal
Of friends who saw her sadly stand
Alone, and came with outstretched hand
To offer help—till they caught sight
Of her grief-taut face. She stood there, slight
And bowed and trembling, with heart torn raw;
She stood in gold sunlight, but all she saw
Was a grey, blurred ship on a grey, blurred sea
Melting to grey eternity.

SHE WAS BORN WITH A BROOK IN HER THROAT

She was born with a brook in her throat,—
 Cream of the foam in its whirl,
Sun-threaded shallows where float
 Ripples of amber and green
Where summer winds nestle and curl.
But, dearer than all, the cool swirl,
 The lingering night-drifting serene,
 With murmuring deeps by a screen
Of poplars that furl and unfurl
 Their silver-lined leaves to the moon:
For then it flows langorously sweet,
 Skimming deep pools with a croon,
 As she sings some old magical rune,
And I sit me close, close by her feet !

TO A. R. M.

(Nikko, 1921)

It's spring, and the willows blow along the palace moat,-
The willows blow and fragile cherry petals float
Down from the rose-white mists upon the trees.
Borne here, borne there. But in my heart it still is fall,
The scarlet maple trees still flame, the hills still call,
Your name still haunts me from across far western seas.

THE SCARLET SHUTTERS OF YOUR HEART

When the gods are asleep on their sacred lotus pillows,
And the silver moon of spring has dropped behind
The camelia trees that screen your lattice gate;
When dreams are afloat on the amethyst wings of night,
And the stars swing silver censers through still hours
Beloved, I shall come to you ! Throw back your doors,
The splendor of your doors, and open wide
The gleaming scarlet shutters of your heart,—
That I may proudly enter, with rare gifts
Of gold and ivory in my eager hands,
With reverence and worship in my soul.

This is my hour, beloved. This night you have said
I could pick as a rose from the courtyards of the gods;
This night you have said is mine for as long as the fall
Of a petal dropping from an almond branch;
Mine while one stick of incense burns and steals
With heavy, misty perfume through the dark
Yet mine, now, till the shining, sleepless eye
Of the dragon of eternity grows dim !

LITTLE SONGS FROM SEOUL

THE THREE-FOOT BAMBOO PIPE

If you should smoke a three-foot bamboo pipe

 Would it increase,

Inch by sweet inch, and puff by long, slow puff,

The soft contentment of a smoke, rebuff

All care and worry, change them to a ripe

 And mellow peace?

If this is true, ah, then I understand

 Why in this wide, grey, wall-encircled land,

Wherever you may go and all the while,

 The old men smile and smile!

THREE MINUTES: A KALEIDOSCOPE

Down the grey road

A black bull ambles underneath a load

Of young green pines;

His master is in white,

With vivid turquoise lines

Close-binding wrist and sock.

From a side-alley comes a slender maid

With swinging step, high on her head a crock

Dun-colored, and her skirt of palest jade.

Blue trousers dash across the light

On some gay lad; from out the doorway peeps

A cherry skirt; and lying just within,

Stretched on a sunny pile of yellow straw,

A baby in a purple jacket sleeps

All this my eyes in three short minutes saw !

THE BEGGAR BY THE PALACE WALL

SCENE 1.—Beside the Palace Wall

All day long
In the sunniest spot he can find
Beside the old grey palace wall,
At the feet of the crowds that throng
Far down the street, and file and wind
Around him, the starving beggar sits and sits.
His face is gaunt and haggard, and his eyes
Two hard black beads that peer through narrow slits,
And gleam with greedy longing when he spies
A foreigner. All the day long he sits,
In rags, and minus either lower limb,—
A mere sad stump of a man.
And your heart goes out in pity to his grim
And sordid lot you feel you must do all you can
And yet—

SCENE 2.—Around the Corner

At six o'clock, firm-footed, straight and brown,
He briskly walks away,
The richest man, they say,
That you can find in this wide, windy town !

THE NINE DRAGON POOLS

(Diamond Mountains, Korea)

They say nine dragons bide in these nine pools,
Have haunted them since immemorial years,
Since first the lotus flower came to this land
Brought by bold Buddhas from green southern climes

But rather will you find *one* dragon there,—
One huge, grey, rock-ribbed beast with granite feet
Stretched out across the land, its winding tail
Still in the sea, in broken pine-clad isles.
Its snout is thrust into cool, wooded depths,
But the rigid, mighty, terrible jaw is bare,
And ten, ten thousand ivory fangs leap high,
Soaring in steep, fantastic pinnacles,
In strange, slim, breathless forms against the skies

Upward, white granite rank on granite rank,
Gleaming like silver in the noonday sun,
Upward and ever upward, phantom-winged,
Up, till the heart stands still, the breath comes short
At their last, dizzy, shining, radiant height,
Their uttermost, high, silver majesty
Of countless peaks dreamborn

And these nine pools,
That lie embedded in a gleaming chain,
Are clear, green, dripping bubbles of sweet song,
Soothing the dragon in his endless sleep,
Stealing in limpid ripples through his dreams !

LETTER TO A POET

When you take up your scarlet quill in hand
And cull choice blossoms from the fields of song,
Then send them, calling their rare fragrance mine
(Mine ! who am so unworthy of it all),
I cannot help but tremble; for I think
Of that dark time when you will realize—
Against your will perhaps—that she you call
Your flaming goddess is but clay and dust
And gray monotony, quite like the rest,
The other people of this little world
And yet, ah, after all I cannot be
Ever like them again, since you have wrapped
My heart in the flaming mantle of your love;
And though there be few nightingales on earth
And all too many sparrows, love, know this:--
That I shall ever sit beneath the tree
And wait for the enchantment of your song,
And love and understand with all my heart !

The sleepy fire sinks low,
And the tired shadows lay them down to rest
As I sit dreamingly and pen these words.
Outside the rain has ceased. And, dearest, hark !
There is a little feathered songster in the court;
But oh, I cannot listen now that I
Have heard your voice. What is this golden link
That binds me to you in its radiant hold?
My lips can never seem to speak the thoughts
That flash like scarlet arrows through my mind;
A strange cold numbness seizes my poor tongue
When I am with you, making me quite dumb
Compared to *you*. But, love, do not forget
That oft the humbler people of this world
Say naught because their hearts are brimmed too full.

KOREAN COUNTRY VIGNETTE

The west wind washes the tattered sky
From grey to blue;
Sweeps fog and fume from the crowded lanes
Straggling from one close courtyard to another;
Silvers the clouds; cuts with a keen, sharp knife
The shadows, startling in their living black,
And lays them in velvet patterns on the rocks.
The ironing clubs click with a keener stroke,
And the howl of the savage *wonk*,
Savage in breed and temper, comes piercing up
The valley. On the hills brown brush and pine
Mingle with sturdy rustlings,
And the first ice struggles with the restless stream.
Three red persimmons cling
To a gnarled old branch, and the magpies chatter long
And loud of the coming snow.
Down in the fields,
The farmer hastens to thatch his roof afresh
With yellow straw before the winter winds
Come with their flails of ice;
And in the busy courts
The women are chopping peppers in great heaps
For the pickled sauce that warms the coldest heart
Through the long, grim siege of that cruel tiger,—winter.

THE LITTLE NIGHT WIND

As the dim stars slowly thread the quiet heavens
(Dim from the exceeding glory of the moon),
And that glory lies like silver on the roofs,
The grey-tiled roofs of slender, fragile houses
With soft grey shadows on their paper doors,
And the world sleeps—still pine, still leaf,
And the rice-fields' hush, and the far and silent hills—
All sleeping, only I awake,—
Upon my balcony I sit and dream

Round me the moonlight falls,
Floods of clear moonlight, shining and serene,
Wrapping me in the mystic folds of peace,
Drawing me close to the deep, calm breast of night,
To the soft, silvery breast of white, unearthly beauty.
And as I dream, a breath stirs through the stillness,
As a little melting night wind of the sky
Steals low from pine to pine, and down the lane,
And so to me; and as it gently passes,
Brushing with shy, dim touch my lifted face,
A memory wakes a sudden memory stirs
A haunting memory of another night,
Of a light kiss falling softly on my cheek
As fragrant, tender, oh, as fleeting-sweet
As this little night wind melting through the dark
Under a moon as round, as gleaming white,
As that far, radiant moon of long ago.

THE CATHEDRAL HEIGHTS OF MORNING

Some mornings are so beautiful and clear,
So fresh and sweet, so deeply brimming over
With light, that their wide glory strikes across
The very dawn with a high, resistless surge,—
Strikes across dawn and downs the doors of sleep:
So that I, sleeping, stir within my dreams,
Stretch, waken, start up to my eager feet,
Roused by a keen and sweetly sudden sense
That calls me with a ringing crystal voice
Calls me to waken to the growing skies,
The bamboo grass blades harboring pearls of dew,
The sound of water sending down the gorge
Its rushing chant; wild lilies on the hills,
Bathed in the scarlet of the eastern skies,
And thrushes singing in the woodland vales,—
Until my heart in answer to this call,
This pouring out in boundless overflow
Of beauty and of loveliness, leaps up
The morning's blue, catbedraled, gleaming heights
And perches there, remembering your smile!

THE YELLOW POT OF VIOLETS

Brave little yellow pot of violets,
Spreading your purple faces though it snows
With the heavy snow December only sends
On the bare, whipped trees that tremble in long rows:
Have you glimpsed into my heart, wee purple friend
And now bloom forth to keep me company ?
(There is no winter in my memory)

THE SOUTHERN SLOPES OF SORROW

On the desolate northern slopes of an olden sorrow
The snow spreads white its thick-encrusted mail,
And immemorial winds roam wailing by,
Keen as a tiger's fang . . . while the dim grey peaks
Of the utmost northern pass stand thickly wrapped
In blinding, bitter, endless misery

But on the southern slopes the snow has gone;
Instead grow pale, sweet, quiet flowers there,
And the sun pours down serenely warm and mild.
Even the cold blue shadows of the past,
Shadows of memories that still throb and ache,
Melt to a strange, deep fragrance on the grass.
I think of how I once could see the sky
Only within the eyes of one I loved,
Knew of sweet flowers only through his lips,
And swore that heaven was in his arms alone

Thus through the long day-hours I wander, dreaming,
On the sunny southern slopes of my olden sorrow,
While the little winds run catching at my feet,
The sunbeams at my heart

AFTER A VISIT

Gracious, the treasured hours spent with you day to day,
Broidered with thoughts of gold that cannot fade:
Lady, I came to you all quiet-colored gray,—
 Leaving, I found my plainness rich brocade.

SNOW-MORNING

Down the dim avenue of snow-clad pines
The flakes drift deep, or flutteringly blow
Through shadowy branches. Ladies on tall shoes
Of lacquered wood go softly shuffling by,
Their slender, dark kimonos blown aside
In haunting glimpses of gay under-folds,
Scarlet and amber, willow-green and blue.
Each lady holds in her small ivory hands
A gay umbrella turned against the wind,
Brilliantly gleaming through the blow and whirl
Of driving snowflakes, and each tip concealed
Beneath quaint, rounded peaks of clinging snow
They pass—and as they pass my dream-print fades,
Fades to far, wistful grey, and slowly melts
Down the dim avenue of bending pines.

THE RICH RED PEONY OF MY HEART

The rich red peony of my heart

Once blossomed on a perfect day:

Love was the warm, enwrapping soil,

And love the nourishing ray.

The rich red peony of my heart

Once withered on a somber day:

The soil was dry, clouds hid the sun,

And love had gone away.

A JAPANESE NOVEMBER

Lo, with a swift decaying pomp, November comes,
Her scarlet tresses rippling along the trees,
And all her robes in tapestry of bronze
And gold. Across far fields of rice she comes,
Stopping to peer into the sunny courts
Of sleek thatched farmer cottages, where bright
Persimmons hang their burnished fruit aloft
On wrinkled boughs, like orange elfin lanterns
Strung in brocaded patterns on the rich
Blue-green of pines. Even the slim bamboos,
Soft-whispering to the winds, wave gold-tipped plumes;
And myriad leaves drop from their summer nests
To crumble down beside old temple walls,
Where, in a last imperial pageantry,
Russet chrysanthemums flaunt to the end
Their wine-tipped petals. Breathlessly, the world
Waits for the golden bubble of autumn to fall,
Burst by cold winter's ruthless, ice-tinged hand.

And lo, with a gaunt mysteriousness, November goes
From hedge and maple grove to the high, lone hills:
There, tiredly, to sink beneath the pines,
Tall grey-winged pines, ghosts hauntingly half veiled
In blowing mist, that stand and watch alone
Between dim, shadowy voids unfathomable.
Softly she lies, lulled by the murmuring rains
That string the slender needles of the pines
With crystal beads; and silently she sleeps,
Under the pale dream mountains, half revealed,
Half melting into mist; while over her
The long, faint bamboo grasses whisper low
With swaying leaves in rustling requiem,
As she glides forth to grey eternity.

VAGABONDS OF SUSONO

Across the river and by the sea
Lightfoot we went, and laughing and free;
Long step in step and with singing hearts,
Where the roofs leave off and the woodland star

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,
And pine woods where the wind sighs,
On the way to Susuno.

Along the sea and over a hill,—
The glimpse of a moss-sheathed wooden mill
With red, red blossoms of plum and peach,
And the sea lying green by an ivory beach.

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,
And deep groves where the bee hies,
On the way to Susuno.

Over a hill and down the glade,
Down into luminous emerald shade,
With a gold-brown temple beneath a cliff
Where incense came in a sharp, sweet whiff.

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,
And stone gods with their grey eyes,
On the way to Susuno.

Along the glade and down to the sea,
Where a quaint little point and an old gnarled tree
Lean to the water, and sandalwood boats
Drift where their quavering shadow floats.

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,

And brown nets that the sun dries,
On the way to Susuno.

Then up from the sea, up old stone stairs,
Worn by the humble who bring their prayers
To the lofty shrine where the huge pines stand
A dizzy height from the net-strewn sand.

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,
And a bell's drone as the wind dies,
On the way to Susuno.

Up a hundred steps and along the hill,
To a hollow that clustering plum trees fill;
To caves deep in the rocky walls,
And cliffs lined white with waterfalls.

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,
And lush haunts where the plums rise,
On the way to Susuno.

Along the hill and again to the sea,
Beneath a fragrant canopy
Of bending pines—a turn—and lo,
The brown thatched roofs of Susuno!

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,
And a blue bay soft as June skies,
On the way to Susuno.

O Susuno, on a silver beach,
Bordered with blossoming plum and peach,
A turquoise sea, and to the west
A single, soaring, perfect crest.

Five miles as the crow flies,
Fifteen as the road lies,

And a snow peak red with sunrise
By the bay at Susuno !

LANTERNS OF MEMORY

While the great white clouds blow through the summer heavens
And the glittering lake lies blue to the vagrant wind,
And day rides blinding-clear astride of the sun,
Your name is but a dim whisper in my heart, a thin shadow,
Blotted out in the dazzling glory of high noon.
But when the sun seeks the red ending of its western trail,
And the mists come down from the mountains and gather
 along the river lands,
When the wild duck wings from the sea, and evening dims
 the edges of the dusk,
And out through the twilight, under the stars, the yellow
 lights shine slowly, one by one
Then slowly, one by one, in my heart also come gleaming
 memories of you,
Memories of dear and radiant days never to drift up dawn again,
Shining like yellow lanterns through an endless ebony night.

THE LITTLE FOX SHRINE

Under the sweeping roof of a wayside shrine,
Soft brown, deep-thatched, curved high in perfect line,
Ridged with blue iris and with gracious moss,
A rustic idyll 'neath a bending pine,
A little mottled fox of stone is sitting.
Below are heaped grey stones that people toss
Within as they pass by, each stone a prayer
To ward off evil; while with curious flitting
The bats dart through the branches and the air
Is blue with pleasant incense. Soft and dark
The shadows lie, save where dull glintings mark
The little altar, and a scarlet pair
Of temple lanterns swings beneath the eaves.
Small, sleepy sparrows twitter, bob and lurch
About their nests, while from its high blue perch
A crescent moon half peers between the leaves.
The hills lie quietly toward the west,
The breeze is balm and spring is at its best,
Its sweetest height . . . but all the while, the while,
The little fox sits with its firm, fixed smile !

TEN THOUSAND DAWNS

(To Fuji San)

Ten thousand dawns have seen this luminous crest
 Tinted to coral-red ten thousand times,
Yet never have two mornings come alike,
 And never does this winged, intangible peak
Seem twice the same. Its moods are infinite:
 Some flash with crystal fire on snowy days,
Others are glimpsed enshrined in opal mist,
 Still others dream at dusk with the tender stars,
Lovely beyond all knowing. It seems as though
 I could gaze a myriad mornings at its light
And yet still catch my breath, still feel my heart
 Stopped short for ecstasy, still feel my lips
Murmur in low, awed syllables these words-

"High, gracious mountain, perfect ten thousand times,
O rainbow mountain, matchless ten thousand times,
Yet never perfect till this matchless hour!"

Snow dawn, green summer noon, rose eventide,
A brooding presence by a mountain lake,
Or grey and silver by the evening sea,—
Ten thousand glimpses of the heart of heaven !

RAIN-MUSIC

For weeks I had heard no sound of falling rain,
No cool, wet cadences of pattering drops;
Had half forgot, discovered now afresh,
With sheer delight how subtly soft there lies
A silver music in the slanting threads
Of blowing mist—music so murmuring-sweet,
That even an aching heart is soothed from hurt,
Thinking it hears some favorite lullaby
Loved lips alone can sing! O heart, my heart,
Hear this soft drip again of rain-washed eaves,
The limpid flowing of the garden stream
Beyond the long, cool swish of blowing trees!
And see the path gleam orange as it leads
Into the lantern-lighted shadow-land
At my reed door

How friendly rain-drops are !

They laugh and impudently wet your face,
And hide among your locks, dash on your hands,—
And yet how tender, too a touch so soft
Your heart almost stops short, half-fooled, half-glad
With a glad, foolish hope, a wistful hope,
That it might be a slim and tranquil hand-
Not rain—that lingers with such cool caress
Upon your cheek ! O rain, soft melting rain,
Sing all your honeyed, silver songs tonight;
Bring me a dream of courtyards in the sun
Where fragrant plums blow petals on the pools
(White, drifting stars on jade), and crown the hair
(Soft, perfumed stars on ebony) of one
Who should be sitting by their marble brim.
Sing low and sweet and soft, oh, very soft,—
Sing that my straining ears through these dark hours
May hear steal faintly on your murmurous chant
Her silver-throated voice, may catch its lilt
In your soft fall from dim camelia flowers.

MOON OF THE WILLOW MONTH

The moon in the ivory-grey east
Is like a young athlete, handsome, slim
And straight-flanked: his body gleamingly apoise
In supple grace for a high celestial vault
Over the trees that edge the world's deep rim,
Into the cloud-turfed skies.

But the moon in the dull amber west
Is like a young maiden, fragile, slight
Cool-breasted, with silver throat and dreaming eyes:
Her body, across the shy dusk, glimmering white
In a slender curve, as drowsily she leans
Against smooth, pillowing skies.

A STRING OF CHINESE BEADS

Look, is it not lovely,
 My bright chain?
Each bead bears its memory,
 Brings again,
Gleaming with lost fire and lost delight,
Dear rainbow-tinted hours long turned to night.

Here is polished ivory
 (Like *her* throat),
And tinted cowry
 From remote
Opalescent tides that drift and swing
Up through gardens where strange blossoms cling.

Next, from that same ocean,
 Borne in ships,
See this coral notion
 (Like *her* lips),
Carved and tinted till the glowing ball
Seems to breathe a warmth her lips let fall.

You will find red amber
 (Like *her* hair:
You may not remember,
 But the flare
Of copper tresses on her leapt and shone
Until the sun and her bright head seemed one,)

Other beads in number
 Grace my chain,
Orange, green and umber,
 Fine of grain,—
But there's only one more that can stir
Half-sleeping ghosts in my heart's sepulchre.

See this amethyst pendant
 At the end,

Gleaming there resplendent?

Ah , my friend,

Those soft purple depths reveal her eyes,

Therein sealed for me to idolize.

Yes, is it not lovely,

My bright chain?

I can wear it proudly,

Though with pain,

Catch it up and press it to my cheek,

While my thoughts her star-roofed dwelling seek.

A PRINCESS SINGS IN HER PAVILION AT DUSK

The charm of fragile cherry blooms, wistaria by a temple pool,
 These caress the eager eye and dwell in splendor in the mind;
Peonies blossoming to the dawn, and lotus white upon a lake
 Send the heart in turquoise shoes dancing down the wind.

But all of heaven and all the gods have entered through my coral gate
 When deep in phantom moonlit pines I hear a calling nightingale;
Or when across the yellow dusk there melts a dreamy, wistful song
 Floating from the palace walls that crown the jasper vale.

Brocaded robes and peacock plumes, these are filling to the eye,
 And blowing petals of the peach make lonely hermit-hearts rejoice;
But oh, the soul's high ecstasy when from the winding palace wall
 Drift a lute's cool silver song, a distant hidden voice.

THE GOLDEN PHOENIXES OF DAWN

I have seen many and many a winter dawn,—
They are gregarious, friendly fellows
And come close to the life of man:
As if in the bitter coldness of the year
They crouched near us for warmth and company

But *summer* dawns !
They are high and beautiful and set apart
And you must be a merry-hearted pilgrim,
A devotee,
Rising at the last edge of darkness and hurrying out
Amongst the dewy fields and sleeping woods,
And up hill slopes, to glimpse their blinding glory:
As if they were great golden birds of ancient myth,
Spreading their scarlet wings and gleaming tails
In sudden flight at the crunch of a human step

CARAVANS OF SILVER

Long caravans of silver fill the night,
 Wending their lordly way through limpid skies;
With measured step across wide purple sands,
 They march to where young, sleeping Morning lies.

And mid their gleaming hosts there goes a bride,
 With round, smooth face and brightly glowing eyes;
Flanked by long caravans of stars,
 She goes to meet her lord where Morning lies.

And dies of its very sweetness . . . while the faint,
Far echo of its tone drifts down beyond
The wind-stirred murmurings of green ranks of pines.

THE CROCUS AND THE SONG

Today, though it snowed outside,
A little yellow crocus bloomed and shone
Like a golden star here in my humble room;
And when I scanned the page beneath my pen,
There, too, I found a blossom opening wide—
A little golden song that gleamed and shone.

POOR LITTLE BIRD

Sleep softly, poor little bird that was never born,
Poor little bird lying dead on a gold-green morn—
Dead before you knew what it was to live,
Caught ere you wakened, fate's weak fugitive
What evil thing was it that scorned to give
Thought or sweet pity to your wee, soft form,
But broke into your warm, protecting shell
With careless strength, and watched you as you fell
Battered and broken? Ah, I swear, no storm
Of wrath could be too strong for such ! My heart
Weeps for you, little bird, for your tiny eyes
Not really yet your eyes; for your small, weak wings
That will never beat through windswept summer skies;
For the wide, sweet mouth forever shut, that will know
Nothing of singing; for each tender part
Of your unfeathered, bare, wee embryo
See, little bird, I have made you a mossy nest,
Not in the pine boughs high on the hilly crest,
But deep and warm underneath where, row on row,
The kindly roots will wrap you and cradle you low.
See, little bird, I cover you soft and warm,
Pledge you safe shelter from all further harm:
Sleep in your nest, sleep well and softly so,
Where the shadows flicker gently to and fro,
Dappled with sunlight through long summer hours,
Stirred with deep fragrance from the summer flowers ...
Sleep softly, poor little bird, that was never born,
Sleep, and my heart will pity you each gold morn,
Will pity you, pray for you, each green-golden morn.

TEN THOUSAND MILES

Ten thousand foaming miles away I have a friend who dwells
 Within the luminous yellow shade of lordly dragon towers;
Ten thousand miles my heart must fly to where bronze temple bells
 Nearby his court ring loud, ring low the jasmine-scented hours.

Ah, when the autumn moon hangs low its burnished orange ball,
 My friend will don his pilgrim's cloak and journey here to me;
But till he comes how endlessly ten thousand hours must crawl,
 How dark and long the waiting of ten thousand miles will be !

PLUM BLOSSOM HOURS

Borne on the boisterous breeze of March

Came a wonderful day to me:

It came like a petal of purest white

Blown from a plum blossom tree.

It fluttered towards me in fragrant flight,

I caught it, and kissed it, and held it tight,

Mad with the magic, the fragrance, the light

That charmed its brief hours for me.

MOONLIGHT SHADOWS

Shadows on my garden wall,—
Nets of lucent ebony fall
 Linked with labyrinths of light;
In fragile curves, or slim and tall
They waver, as the moonrays crawl
 Down the amethyst slopes of night.

Here, crisp patterns half-ally
With somber leaf-ghosts floating nigh;
 There, a tender, soft-blurred mass
Shows where blossoming petals lie
Melting, as the moon slips high
 Above the watch-towers on the pass.

The pines are mist, but a maple tree
Stands where its feathery filigree
 Is chiselled jet upon the white;
While down a smooth stretch runs a sea
Of tangled leaves and in their lea
 Spring elfin phantoms of delight.

Shadows on my moonlight wall,
Slender sprays or vines that sprawl
 Luxuriantly along the height,—
Bright silver spells around you fall
And mysteries beyond my call
 Tend you in lingering, magic flight.

Yours is a charm which cannot fade
 From garden-wall, or silent glade,
 Or sleeping court, or postern white:
Darkness a thing of dreams is made,
And nameless ecstasies are laid
 On a lone heart watching through the night.

AN AVENUE OF TREES

To me an avenue of trees
Is one of Nature's sanctities.

I love the grandeur of their aisles
Marching through far, mysterious miles.

An orange moon glimpsed through their ranks
Stirs me to high, ecstatic thanks.

And where, majestic pair by pair,
They guard dim shrines, I stand in prayer.

TO A GILDED BUDDHA IN A CURIO STORE

Once . . . once you were incarnate God supreme.
Hidden within the inmost holy shrine
Of some great temple, where with dusky gleam
You sat in majesty, your only dream
(If dream you could) of lotus-bordered worlds
High in some amber universe divine.
Rich gilded doors kept your calm form aloof,
Deep-shadowed peace was there . . . only the glow
Of tall red candles flickered to and fro
Upon the gleaming, polished ornaments
Of brass beneath your ancient altar-place.
The deep drums rolled in stirring resonance
While, robed in rich brocade, each shaven priest
Chanted the sing-song prayers dear to the East
Before your gold-encrusted eminence.
Long did you rule, on incense did you feast;
And with each weighty prayer the beaten lobes
Of your gilt, kindly ears did longer grow,
As if you heard the sighs and hopes and tears
Of reverent worshippers and wished to show
A gracious interest as they clapped their hands,
And rang your temple gongs, and bowed in prayer
With that faith nigh sublime of orient lands.

Now . . . now you sit within a shoddy store
Of idle curios, to catch the eye
Of some loud-talking foreigner. No more
Are you a God supreme, and yet no sigh.
Comes from your rusted lips: with stoic mien
You bear the abuse of those who scorn and scold;
Dust-covered, but ineffably serene,
You bear your Godhead bartered for mere gold . . .
And though you must have suffered wrongs untold,
Nirvana's peace you contemplate with calm
Before a gaudy, worthless tourist screen !

Today some noisy strangers found you there

And laughed to see your distant, pensive air;
I heard them say, "Look at his ugly head !"
"Let's buy him for the billiard-room," they said.

THE RED GOOSE OF KOREA

The red goose crosses with a steady wing
Over gold rice-field and wide river plain
To the infinite hills
Strong and untiring,
The red goose: straight and high
He heads through the deep autumnal sky,
Bright copper fire, sparked out by the sun,
Flashing from his sleek feathers.
Straight he flies,
Knowing no pain, fatigue,
While stretches of dun and reedy marshes
Gleam and fade.
Ahead the broad miles lie,
Intimately measured to their farthest blade
Of grass by his keen, glinting eye.
Faster than wind he travels, resolute, fleet,
Covering his level course between
Far hill and river, river back to hill,
With an unbroken beat
Of tireless pinions:
And how magnificently strong they sweep
In white, broad-banded with glowing, burnished green !
Straight for the south he flies, as an arrow flies,
(And an arrow only may be matched to him),
Following the river's winding silver thread,
Or some lagoon's grey-silver, shining rim,
Till he can glide
Over the jagged edge of the long grey walls
That the mountains build across the land in pride
Of intrenched granite;
Flies, till a distant speck, a far faint point,
He merges in blue space
While with him flies my restless, hungry heart,
Bound in an eager, keen-winged, tireless race,—
Bound for your southern, palm-girt dwelling place !

ON THE FACE OF THE FOREST POOL

Two white arrows of light speeding toward each other

 Across the dark, cool face of a forest pool,

 With stillness all about

Two gliding silver arrows—the dim bronze waters,

The thrilling moment when the arrows merge

 In a sparkling splash, a little blur of foam—

 Two wild ducks meeting !

IN MEMORIAM

To George H. Scidmore

Consul General of the United States of America

Died November, 1922

Is this all we have left to us of you,

A little pinch of ashes, puff of dust,

Covered with fragrant petals, white and red ?

Can it be this little casket hides that head

With the silver of its hair, the deep-set blue,

Keen, sensitive, of those most kindly eyes?

Can it be this soft, damp earth as red as rust

Will come between us and that genial smile?

Or that the man we knew, so gentle, wise,

Warm-hearted, steady, true, has finished now

Of his life's journey this, the last long mile?

One day we saw you full of hearty zest:

The next found us so truly unaware

Of your quick going that we thought it jest

When told that death had stooped to kiss your brow

When told that death had stroked your silver hair.

Now though we cannot help but sorely weep,

Yet we rejoice you trod no tortured path

But sank serene, into the arms of sleep,

And so into the ebon arms of death,

And so rose to the radiant arms of peace.

Here where the pleasant vines will gently creep,

And roses will give out their warm, sweet breath

And year by year guard you with soft increase

We lay your ashes facing to the west,

High on a hill, in their last sheltered rest

Beside her whom you ever loved the best,

One with her before birth, now one in death.

Below, the sea dreams rainbow dreams for you,

The distant hills will watch: one peerless crest,
 Snow-gleaming, or a soft grey summer shadow,
 Rising from russet wastes or emerald meadow,
 Will guard you all the endless seasons through.

And we, your friends, will scatter past blue seas,
 Leave this a foreign, though a friendly, land,
Our voices fall on many a far, strange breeze,
 But always, somehow, you will be there too,
A silver thread run through our memories.

Here where chrysanthemum petals softly lie
 Crushed by our sorrowful feet upon the stones,
 We stand around your flower-hidden bier,
 And with moist eyes, in hushed and reverent tones,
Pledge you our hearts beneath the coral sky,
 Pledge us to guard your name and hold it dear.
And these few, humble, laboring words of praise,
 Of tender praise, are but as lowly leaves
Picked from the laurel of your honored days
 Won by long service to an end immortal.
 And though infinity divides, and my heart grieves,
I would be glad if some day you should gaze
 On this my song as on the least white petal
 Dropped from these flowers that stand in crystal sheaves.

SPRING IN A JAPANESE GARDEN

Spring has slipped over my winding wall's tiled rim,
Warm with the melting, golden breath of April weather
 How do I know?
 The daphnes cluster fragrantly together,
 The peach blooms red, and willow branches blow
 Above my slender lacquer bridge.
Near the long, silver-rippled lake
 Purple wistaria vines awake,
And soft-pronged chalices rise green and slim
 From each dark, starry ring
 Of azalea leaves in my azalea bower;
And there in one this dappled noon, I found her—Spring—
Soft-bathing in a sudden, slanting April shower !

THE MORNING GLORY

From an upper window
I leaned my elbows on my bamboo fence
Of brown and gold, and gaily looked below:
And saw there, gazing up to mine, a pale sweet face
As of some stranger maiden passing by
The white face of a swaying morning glory.

UP THE HILL TO MEGURO

Up the hill to Meguro,
Where the pleasant beeches grow,
Where the pines long shadows throw,
And the cherry petals blow
Up the hill to Meguro.

On the hill at Meguro,
A little cottage, dainty, low,
With paper lattices that show
Quaint silhouettes by lantern glow
On the hill at Meguro.

And in the little cottage low
Lips that whisper soft and slow,
Eyes of midnight overflow,
And ivory hands like ivory snow,
On the hill at Meguro

O little hill of Meguro,
The lanterns of your lanes, I know,
Will follow me with crimson glow
No matter where, how far, I go
Dear little hill of Meguro !

THE LITTLE GREEN KITTENS

I love to sit with busy spade
On soft white sands where shells are laid
In rainbow patterns by the sea,
And salt winds blow their balm to me.
There I can dig and pile and play,
And build grey castles all the day,
While the little waves romp up the shore
To watch me work And more and more
Like playful kittens do they seem
From out some far, fantastic dream
Of Tartar town or Mandarin bay,
That somehow lost their distant way
And now are tossed upon this beach
Their quaint, perked ears half in my reach.
Hush, here comes one with soft white paws
And green cravat and ivory claws
He's very shy, so don't look round:
He'll steal up close, then with a bound
Back to the sea he'll start to run,
Kicking up pebbles just for fun.
I like it best when, turned away,
I seem intent upon my play
And too engrossed to watch them steal
Closer and closer; then I kneel
And half-pretend to dig a gate,
While they creep up and softly wait.
And if I'm still and do not stir,
I hear them give a soft, shy purr
And feel them lick my toes with wet
Cold tongues ! And *then* I turn and let
Them think I'm going to chase them back—
Away they go like cannon crack,
With flying tails and spurting claws,
Without a rest, without a pause !
But when they're safely back at sea
They turn quite brave and slap at me,
And arch their backs and spit soft foam,

And try to scare me closer home !

ECSTACY

Oh, it's a morning to sing on!
Skies of an infinite, laughing blue,
 Floating clouds of white petal-down,
Diamond stars in the sparkling dew,
Sweet flowers that let new fragrance fall;
 Fresh, golden light on the glistening pines,
 And on the green wistaria vines
Clambering over the golden wall
To gaze where sun-flushed mountains rise
 Oh, it's a morning to sing on,
 Dropped straight from paradise!

Oh, it's a morning to wing on,
On, on to paradise!
How my heart leaps up like a lark aflight,
Soaring upward in love's sheer might,
 Seeking ever to climb and climb
 Through the gleaming blue to heights sublime,
There, there, to see your face, Most Sweet,
And to fold its wings of radiant light
 In rapture at your feet !

WIND IN THE MIDDAY PINES

Why should I miss the sea when I have these pines,—
Blue, soaring pines upon a rounded hill
Lush with cool grass and backed by deep bamboo?
For I can lie all day, all day, and fill
My ears with a singing sweeter than cool waves
Caressing ivory slopes, as, rushing through
The slim pine needles overhead, a breeze
Blows strongly by. With a deep spring it comes
From far blue river and low fields of rice,
And sweeps upon my hill; each pine tree burns,
Tense and ecstatic, while the grove behind
Turns to wild tossing of green bamboo plumes.
Oh, what a mighty sound, what a restless surge,
There is to each windy wave as it hurries past !
Close to the mossy roots of the pines I sit
And fill my heart and soul with all the vast
Wild songs it sings in crystal through the sky
As it sweeps from infinity to the infinite !

Why should I miss the sea when on my high,
Cool hill I have the wind, these blowing pines,—
The wind in the brown boughs for deep-booming surf,
The wind in the bamboo over velvet turf
For the long smooth glide of a green wave slipping by?

THE WHITE SANCTUARY

Here in a hushed, dim, quiet sanctuary,
Laid on an altar-dais of purest white
And covered with deep, cool folds of gleaming silk,
You lie. And round you, cherry blossoms! Flowers
So fair, so sweet, ethereal, feathery, soft,
Leaning above you, that it almost seems
As if your radiant ghost still hovered there,—
As if your gracious, misty hands still touched
These shimmering petals. But instead, you lie
In silver peace, tall candles at your head,
And I, the death-watch keeping, at your feet,—
Afraid to press too near, you are so white
And still and beautiful. At times I gaze
Out through the night to where a clear star burns
Beyond tall pines; at times I stand and yearn
Towards the cold white star that is your face,
(Your face so bright, but oh, so still, so cold),
Thinking, but for this strangeness, sudden, sharp,
This somber dignity, I could not keep
From catching you in my arms ! And then and then
At other times in cold despair I hide
My face deep in my sleeve, and sit long hours
Unmoving, sad and numb, while my whirling thoughts
See other cherry blossoms on a hill
In soft, deep masses, blowing in the wind
Across the green of quiet palace moats;
See there, beneath the dim grey-lilac shade
That dusk sends melting through their canopies,
A slender figure standing—(standing then
Where now it lies) —a slender form in mauve
Reaching to break a spray of tinted buds
I start and find you here I find you here—
Still under cherry blooms, still tall, still fair,
But sleeping in the silver halls of death
O dream too blessed, O love too glad, too deep,
O mounting joy that came too sweet, too sweet,
Born with bright April, dead with April's end !

WINTER

Winter is a tiger, old and white,
Crouching above the pale, dead earth
And spitting snow into her dumb, bruised face.

THE LITTLE SHRINES

(To F.H.C.B.)

The little shrines in quiet lanes,—
 I love them so;
Through wintry winds or summer rains,
By morning light or when dusk wanes
 The pines trace patterns on their scarlet glow.

The little shrines in quiet courts,—
 My heart is their's;
Beneath cool eaves the wind disports,
Bright cherry petals it assort
 And their soft perfume past each gateway bears.

The little shrines in quiet trees
 Stir my delight;
I trace each worn and weathered frieze,
The fragile, carven balconies,
 And pause where incense steals in languorous flight.

The little shrines on quiet hills,—
 I seek their peace;
By high rock-bastioned mountain rills,
By groves wherein the wild dove thrills
 To his mate they stand, and lone guard never cease.

CLEAR NIGHT, SNOW NIGHT

On a *clear* winter's night my garden seems
Tense, wide-awake, alert. Each ebony twig
Stands stiffly out and sharply pricks its ears.
The bushes crackle and gossip, and the big
Old pine by the gateway leans across the beams
And gives dry answer. Over its shoulder peers
The Northern Star—that, too, stands guard; and all
Are wary and watchful from grey wall to wall.

But on nights after snow has fallen you can feel
Each bush, each vine, each blade of grass asleep
Under soft feathery masses. Cedar leaves
Pull their white capes to the throat and try to keep
Their elbows warmer. The muffled willows kneel;
And in heavy boods the poplars droop to the eaves.
Wrapped in an utter silence my garden lies
And dreams with a shadowy quilt drawn to her eyes.

PILGRIMAGE

The frost has gone and southern winds
 Drift up the valley from the sea;
The yellow grass is touched with green,
 Loud hums the bee.

The earth exhales fresh fragrances
 To scent the air, to thrill the heart,
And from the borders by the road
 Bright violets start.

Deep overhead the vivid sky
 Is patterned with a thousand flowers,
Where mingling branches cross and meet
 In crisp, sweet bowers.

Before me, warm and white, the road
 Leads up the valley from the sea;
Plum blossoms scatter ivory spray
 In fantasy

Around my head, across my path,
 Upon my face, and at my feet
O radiant flood of petals, bright
 And luminous-sweet !

Fresh turn by turn the foot hills gleam
 Nearer and clearer as I tread
Each step of this glad pilgrimage,
 And overspread

The mounting path, my mounting heart,
 Are memories that drift and sway
Of deep, cool groves, a temple court,
 One golden day.

Before me, warm and white, the road
 Shimmers through pines that curve and soar;

With every twist, at every turn
I miss you more.

Dear heart, dear heart, the southern winds
Come drifting past from distant skies;
Ah, could they bring your kiss, one glance
From your dark eyes

Then would the world burst into light,
And spring's most dazzling noon-hour
My heart, as through the clouds I pressed
To your white feet !

But such bright tides are not to be—
Alone and lonely I trudge on
To where close by a mountain lake
Blue violets shone

Once, once, around our lingering steps,
And caught like stars in your dark hair
And I shall rest, and rest, and dream
That you are there.

The frost has gone and southern winds
Drift up the valley from the sea,
Drift up in longing, drive me on
In ecstasy

To where beside cool cedar groves
Blue violets scent the southern air
And I can rest, and rest. and dream
That you are there !

A KOREAN PRINCESS

Her eyes are like black moons, if moons could ever be so velvet dark;
The singing of her voice thrills with a lilt like a silver lark.
There is a light about her lips, as if her smile came from celestial lands;
Magnolias of the south, petaled and perfumed, are her slender hands

And oh, the fragrance of her passing is so great
That butterflies haste after her for honey-freight !

THREE LITTLE OLD LADIES OF JAPAN

Today I saw three ladies bent with years,
Little and old and gnarled, with mincing gait
Trudging along the road that skirts the great
High temple. Snails, indeed, could travel faster
Than their quaint clogs, and others would have sneers
For their slow steps; but I, like some old master,
Studied delightedly their soft dark robes,
Scanned with close eye the deep, carved ivory
Of their brown faces. Pattering gaily on,
They tripped, a happy trio, past my eyes
To where the lanterns bang like orange globes
At the temple gate of Buddha, Mighty One.

And as they went, I fell in reverie:
Wondered at first—then saw they held the prize
Of lives well lived, and daily duties done;
And now they can approach without a fear
The last gate of them all, as each white year
Brings them in simple peace nearer the end.
Ah, you may tread far paths about this world,
See many a curious thing, and faithfully wend
Long eastern miles, but never will you find
Three such old ladies, gentle, mild of mien,
Such calm of heart, such smooth, still peace of mind,
Such fragrant old age,—tranquil, sweet, serene !

NOONTIME LULLABY

(After the Korean)

Flow, flow, flow, flow,
Flow, little streams, from your crystal cages;
Blow, blow, blow, blow,
Blow, little winds, from the fans of the sages;
Close and warm,
Ah, close and warm,
I fold my babe from every harm—
Fold her from every harm.

Swing, swing, swing, swing,
Swing, little leaves, on your airy perches;
Fling, fling, fling, fling,
Fling, little sunbeams, your golden torches;
Sweet and near,
Ah, sweet and near,
I fold my babe from every fear—
Fold her from every fear.

Gleam, gleam, gleam, gleam,
Gleam, little clouds, with your snowy billows;
Dream, dream, dream, dream,
Dream, little hills, on your emerald pillows;
Safe and still,
Ah, safe and still,
I fold my babe from every ill,
Fold her from every ill.

A BAMBOO DELL

The sun looks down
With golden frown;

The hills take pride
In thresholds wide;

The streams are Light
Breathed into Flight:

But of all the loveliness tongue can tell,
Of all the loveliness song can spell,
There is nothing so bright, so fresh, so green
As a bamboo dell.

The dawn-clouds shine
In silver line;

The rain comes fleet
On misty feet;

Dusk draws my heart
Through gates apart:

But of all the loveliness tongue can tell,
Of all the loveliness song can spell,
Of all the loveliness tongue can tell,
There is nothing so dim, so sweet, so cool
As a bamboo dell.

NIKKO

Nikko ! Thy very name is near my heart,—
As near as thou thyself liest to thy hills,
Near as thy rocks strain to thy foaming streams !
Thy cryptomeria fragrance drifts and fills
My nostrils as I write . . . the scarlet gleams
Of thy lacquered shrines where tall pines stand apart
To give green, solemn vistas,—how they rise,
Dream-like, before me ! Through this dragon-gate
My infant footsteps faltered; down this lane
As a child I loitered; by this pond I sate
Unnumbered hours to watch the flash and wane
Of darting goldfish. By that drum-tower lies
The grave of a dragon-fly I found one day,
Dead yet still vivid crimson (even yet
That crimson haunts me !) Near that moss-sheathed pine
My childhood gods I gently ranged and set,
Happy that all this temple court was mine.
And always the bell, whether the dusk was gray
Or dawn was golden, whether thy peaks were flushed
With rosy mountain bloom or autumn's fire,
Sent its sonorous song bright hour by hour,
Sent its deep, resonant thunder higher, higher,
Until the temples, each pagoda-tower,
Stood deep in mists of music wrapt and hushed.
Ah, Nikko, those dear days passed in thy groves
Are still heart's treasure, even now I still
Can sit entranced and hear the temple doves
Call from thy mellow eaves. Nikko, of thee
Am I a part forever, stream and hill,—
Of me eternally art thou the whole,
Mother of beauty, emerald vale and tree,
Dear radiant sanctuary for the soul !

THE GOLDEN JUNK

Over the soft blue stretches of the plain
Where the crickets weave their wistful evensong,
And the cool night-fragrance of the shadowed earth
 Freshens the jaded breeze,—
Lo, a crescent moon rides high with tilted prow,
Like a gleaming golden junk against the dusk,
Like a shining golden junk against the night,
 Gliding through cobalt seas.

MOUNTAIN WATERS

(Diamond Mountains, Korea)

In nimble silver the bubbles spin and blow
 Where the Little Waters splash and tumble and surge
High in the mountains. Mosses cling and grow
 Emerald coats for the ledges, down the slope
 Lie patterned browns and duns, and dwarf pines grope
For foot-holds in the rocks. In May the flowers
 Fling tinted garlands, and azaleas rise
And scent the air and storm the granite towers
 In waves of scarlet, till bewildered eyes
Catch at green depths to earn a moment's rest.
 Bright butterflies weave through the tender shade
Thrown where the greater peaks rear polished crest
 And pillared cliff to edge the melting jade
Of those Little Waters, and to catch their song
 And then distill that song, clear drop by drop,
To crystal echoes ! Oh, it is a place
Enchanted, with a spell so strong, so strong,
 That when a cuckoo chances there to stop
(Homeward flying at eve) and spills largesse
 Of music through the dusk with throbbing throat—
 Then vanishes—it seems as if each note
Had swept the spirit up with high caress—
 Swept it to heavens rainbow-born remote
Heavens where crystal drops are prayers that bless.

KOREAN LOVE SONG

Soft notes that lean to the ear,
Sweet songs that flutter like jasmine leaves
As the West lies lulled in dreams—
As the West lies lost in dreams—
And over the valleys of rice Dusk weaves
Her curtains with silent sleeves.

Slim hands like pink cherry buds,
Dark eyes that smile through their fringe of jet
And gleam in the moon's bright ray—
And flash in the moon's white ray—
O poignant hours ere the pale stars set,
O perfumed arms that have met !

White jade to pillow my cheek,
Fresh peony petals to press my lips
Till Night folds her screen in the East—
Till Night draws her screen from the East—
And through the courtyards the grey Dawn trips,
Through the lattice the grey Dawn slips.

A DAY AT HAYAMA

Oh, How I ache to be with you today,
 Friend with the little garden by the sea !
 The willows cast their shade enchantingly,
The cherries shimmer white like sunlit spray,
 The skies are a vivid, breathless blue—and we,
Could we but wander slowly down the sands,
 And linger where a temple nestles down
Among tall pines !

 See, I would grasp your hands
 And draw you to a hollow in the brown
Wave-tempered rocks, where on a little ledge
A calm, benign, gray image guards the edge
 And smiles out over space. There we could sit
And gaze with glad, full hearts across the sea,
Gaze at one splendid crest from mist-spume free,
 Peerless and unafraid. The marvel of it,—
 White-spreading ivory queen throned on a peak
Midst the blue halls of heaven! No homily,
 No song, no mortal mouth could ever speak
That beauty

 Through the long deep afternoon
 We would hold converse of a myriad things,
 Content, at utter peace. Oh, we would seek
The farthest realms of mind, the farthest spark
Of fire in a universe so huge, so dark,
 That we seem feeble flickerings in a night
 That never knew of dawn: and on brave wings
We'd leap the silver columns of the moon,
 Striving in glad exuberance to reach
 The high, white, radiant place of Ultimate Light

 Look for a moment down there on the beach—
 Isn't it lovely where that crimson peach
Flames in a crescent by a bamboo gate?
 And, see, across the bay, beyond the line

Of misty, lilac islands floats a sail
Spotlessly white. Now turn a trifle—wait
Until it skims the waves on its blue trail,
And you can glimpse it through this bending pine !

And listen how the wind sweeps past above,
Through the eager grove ! Was there ever such a song,
Such a splendid, rushing, stirring ecstasy
Of sound ? It dwarfs and puts to shame the sea
With the deep singing of it ! And along
The boughs come tremulous sighs that stir of dove
Beneath dark temple eaves, or purl of fount
Within white-blossomed courtyards scarce could breathe.

And from the bordered gardens by the shore
Smell the sweet daphne fragrance! More and more,
Our spirits, drunk with happiness, start and mount
And drift out with the gleaming, luminous tide
To islands hovering where the billows seethe
In frosted pearl, and rainbow elfins ride,
Messengers of the immortals who abide
High in slim emerald towers by the sea

But now the dusk is falling, and the fine
Crisp shadows of the trees merge into gray,
And we must go. The peerless mountain soars,
A violet symbol on the crimson doors
Of sunset—O bright end of this fair day,
This high day stolen from heaven!
Then one last pause
Just as we turn to leave the little shrine.
Just as we turn to linger at the bridge,
And we shall watch the wings of dusk droop down
Across the bay; and stirred by immutable laws
Of beauty that bestow a gleaming crown
Upon the humblest wayside, poorest tree,
The simplest court, the lowliest pine-walled ridge,
The smallest flower, and gives to us the key,
Crusted with gems, of everlasting light,
We'll stand, heart close to heart, in the deepening night.

MORNING IN A LITTLE JAPANESE HOUSE

A great red morning star through the western pines,
As to the east the first white dawn-glow shines;
The wooden shutters rumble loud and ride,
Pushed back by yellow hands, till side by side
They rest in their shallow closet. Comes the flick
Of feather duster on frail doors, with quick
Soft rat-tat-tat, and the swish of a bamboo broom,
As it brushes the cream mats of my garden-room;
Sharp spluttering of live charcoal as it flares
To vivid red, and bare feet on the stairs,
With a washing of smooth steps until they shine;
Then a short silence, while before the shrine
Of the household gods and Buddha, Lord of All,
Food offerings are set and through the wall
The smell of incense steals. Then comes a clink
Of dish on dish, as with a vase of pink
Azalea blossoms on a lacquer tray
They send my morning meal upon its way,
Of cinnamon cakes and smoking amber tea;
A tap at the lattice, a morning bow for me,—
A smile, soft words, a pat on the quilt's dull blue,—
And "Honored good morning, your house is waiting for you !"

BY THE SEA AT MITO

The little hills cluster obediently around at the call of the sea;

Quietly they sit and listen to her song.

They wear green capes and quaint dark green hoods:

Some of them have pushed back their hoods so you can see

their bare brown foreheads,

But all sit silently and listen to the song.

When the sea stops singing, and her waves have fallen placidly asleep,

The little hills do not move away,

But still sit dreamily on guard:

Sit dreamily and sing in their own turn

On lutes of wind-stirred bamboo and of pine.

NIGHTS IN JAPAN

Nights in Japan—with what damp, heavy veils
Of perfume they are wrapped ! From early dusk
They waft strange fragrances, sweet spice and musk,
Rich eastern scents, aromas from temple pales.

As I bend from my window to the midnight breeze,
It is as if I leaned into the heart
Of a great dim flower, with petals soft apart,
Letting me breathe their inmost sanctities.

O PALMS AND STARS OF SINGAPORE

O palms and stars of Singapore,
 And ebony seas that swirl and plunge
In foaming thunder on the shore—
Beneath the palms of Singapore.

O palms and stars of Singapore,
 Far winds that sway the silken fronds,
Perfumes that rise in scented store—
Beneath the stars of Singapore.

O palms and stars of Singapore,
 Warm lips that press, soft bands that soothe,
A heart caught close forevermore—
Dear palms, dear stars, of Singapore !

CHERRY BLOSSOMS OF TOKYO

Dawn rises red across the east

In Tokyo, in Tokyo:

The morning mists fade into light,

The cherries flush to rosy-white,

Clear songs thrill every feathered throat

When cherries blow,

And cherries glow

Along the winding palace moat

In Tokyo.

High noon comes crystal through the skies

In Tokyo, in Tokyo

And crowns each willowed April height,

The cherries gleam soft silver-white,

And reverent pilgrims throng to gaze

When cherries blow,

And cherries glow

Among far, quiet temple ways

In Tokyo.

Dusk steals in sandals softly grey

To Tokyo, to Tokyo:

Dim lanterns glimmer through the night,

The blossoms melt to somber-white,

Ethereal, fragile, tender, cool,

When cherries blow,

And cherries glow

Around pavilioned garden pool

In Tokyo.

AT CHOANJI

(Diamond Mountains, Korea)

We have turned gentle Time to a bird of steel
Clucking the moments in exacting tone;
It holds us with rigid claws, we are never alone,
Never serene. We spin, turn, spin, and feel
Goaded relentlessly onwards. Were truth told,
I fear it could be said that we have lost
All sense of due proportion, and are tossed,
Thin spinning bubbles, where hot fevers hold
Their breathless, senseless sway.

Thank God that here
The tranquil sweetness of silver crag and pine
Rests still unbroken, as in mellow line
Soft-footed days tread out a rounded year

And Time is a calm old priest who falls asleep
As orioles call, or the morning shadows creep.

THE BOOK OF POEMS

It is never I who stop to seek new songs,—

 Rather 't is *they* that come and leap at me,
And tease at my thoughts, until I cradle them down
 Into soft words. Then they doze happily,

And rest at last in peace, and nag no more

 At Memory, the tired nurse. She can stand and look
At the strange little varied heads tucked side by side
 And murmur fondly, "They do make quite a book !"