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To the unkindest of critics H.G.N.

## CONTENTS

**FOR \*\*\* SONG: LET US GO BACK SONG: MY SPIRIT LIKE A  
SHEPHERD BOY CONVALESCENCE TO KNOWLEDGE DISILLUSION THE  
BANQUET MCMXVIII A CREED TO A POET NOMADS THE GARDEN  
THE DANCING ELF CONSTANTINOPLE: DHJI-HAN-GHIR  
LEBLEBIDI THE MUEZZIN THE GREEK HAN YANGHIN VAR  
MORNING IN CONSTANTINOPLE RETOUR EN SONGE  
CONSTANTINOPLE, MARCH MCMXV RESOLUTION**

## POEMS

### FOR \*\*\*

NO eyes shall see the poems that I write For you; not even  
yours; but after long Forgetful years have passed on our  
delight Some hand may chance upon a dusty song

Of those fond days when every spoken word Was sweet, and  
all the fleeting things unspoken Yet sweeter, and the music half  
unheard Murmured through forests as a charm unbroken.

It is the plain and ordinary page Of two who loved, sole-  
spirited and clear. Will you, O stranger of another age, Not  
grant a human and compassionate tear To us, who each the other  
held so dear? A single tear fraternal, sadly shed, Since that  
which was so living, is so dead.

### SONG: LET US GO BACK

LET us go back together to the hills. Weary am I of palaces  
and courts, Weary of words disloyal to my thoughts,— Come,  
my beloved, let us to the hills.

Let us go back together to the land, And wander hand in hand  
upon the heights; Kings have we seen, and manifold delights,—  
Oh, my beloved, let us to the land!

Lone and unshackled, let us to the road Which holds  
enchantment round each hidden bend, Our course uncompassed  
and our whim its end, Our feet once more, beloved, to the road!

SONG: MY SPIRIT LIKE A SHEPHERD BOY "Convalescente  
di squisiti mali"

MY spirit like a shepherd boy Goes dancing down the  
lane. When all the world is young with joy Must I lie here in  
pain?

With shepherd's pipe my spirit fled And cloven foot of  
Pan; The mortal bondage he has shed And shackling yoke of  
man.

And though he leave me cold and mute, A traitor to his  
care, I smile to hear his honeyed flute Hang on the scented  
air.

## CONVALESCENCE

WHEN I am in the Orient once again, And turn into the gay  
and squalid street, One side in the shadow, one in vivid  
heat, The thought of England, fresh beneath the rain, Will rise  
unbidden as a gently pain. The lonely hours of illness, as they  
beat Crawling through days with slow laborious feet, And I  
lay gazing through the leaded pane, Idle, and listened to the

swallows' cry After the flitting insect swiftly caught, —Those  
all-too-leisured hours as they went by, Stamped as their heritage  
upon my thought The memory of a square of summer  
sky Jagged by the gables of a Gothic court.

TO KNOLE October 1, 1913

I I LEFT thee in the crowds and in the light, And if I  
laughed or sorrowed none could tell. They could not know our  
true and deep farewell Was spoken in the long preceding night.

Thy mighty shadow in the garden's dip! To others dormant, but  
to me awake; I saw a window in the moonlight shake, And  
traced the angle of the gable's lip,

And knew thy soul, benign and grave and mild, Towards me,  
morsel of morality, And grieving at the parting soon to be, A  
patriarch about to lose a child.

For many come and soon their tale is told, And thou remainest,  
dimly feeling pain, Aware the time draws near to don  
again The sober mourning of the very old.

II Pictures and galleries and empty rooms! Small wonder  
that my games were played alone; Half of the rambling house to  
call my own, And wooded gardens with mysterious glooms.

My fingers ran among the tassels faded; My playmates moved  
in arrases brocaded; I slept beside the canopied and  
shaded Beds of forgotten kings. I wandered shoeless in the  
galleries; I contemplated long the tapestries, And loved the  
ladies for their histories And hands with many rings.

Beneath an oriel window facing south Through which the  
unniggard sun poured morning streams, I daily stood and  
laughing drank the beams, And, catching fistfuls, pressed them

in my mouth.

This I remember, and the carven oak,    The long and polished  
floors, the many stairs,    Th' heraldic windows, and the velvet  
chairs,    And portraits that I knew so well, they almost spoke.

III    So I have loved thee, as a lonely child    Might love the  
kind and venerable sire    With whom he lived, and whom at  
youthful fire    Had ever sagely, tolerantly smiled;

In whose old weathered brain a boundless store    Lay hid of  
riches never to be spent;    Who often to the coaxing child  
unbent    In hours' enchantment of delightful lore.

So in the night we parted, friend of years,    I rose a stranger to  
thee on the morrow;    Thy stateliness knows neither joy nor  
sorrow,—    I will not wound such dignity by tears.

## DISILLUSION

I WROTE the burning words to you    That meant so much to  
me.    I sent them speeding straight to you,    To you across the  
sea;    I waited with sure reckoning    For your reply to me.

I waited, and the counted day    Fruitlessly came and went;    I  
made excuse for the delay,    Pitiably confident.    I knew to-  
morrow's light must bring    The words you must have sent.

And still I stand on that dim verge    And look across the  
sea;    The waves have changed into a dirge    Their  
volubility.    And in my disillusioned heart    Is a little grave for  
me.

But still with shaded eyes I gaze    As mournfully I sing,    And  
one by one the trailing days,    As they no message bring,    Fall  
with their slow monotony    As beads fall from a string.

## THE BANQUET

WINE ran; rich yellow wine upon the marble floor    Recklessly spilled; the Nubians ran to pour    A fresh libation; and to scatter showers    Of red rose petals; candles overturned    Smouldered among the ruins of the flowers,    And overhead swung heavy shadowy bowers    Of blue and purple grapes,    And strange fantastic shapes    Of varied birds, where lanterns hung and dimly burned.

The melon and the orange, turned to use    As golden balls with laughter lightly tossed,    Lay burst and drained of their sweet juice,    Uselessly ripened and for ever lost;    All glowing as they lay upon the ground,    As envious of their fellows,    Who, piled in luscious reds and yellows,    Enriched the tables all around,    The tables low,    Sheltering the reclining grace;    Here, through the curling smoke, a swarthy face,    And jewelled turban bound about the head,    And here the glow    Of red carnation pressed to lips as warmly red.

And as they lay in their luxurious ease,    Playing with grapes and rose-leaves, slim    And willowy slave-girls, in the hope to please,    Twisted and danced before them, to the dim    Uncertain music in the shadows played;    Some came with supple limb,    With Mystery's aid    And snake-like creep,    Others with riotous leap    And made festivity to Bacchus wed;    Others with stiff Egyptian tread,    And straight black hair hanging in glossy braid,    They danced, unnoted, and exhausted fled.    \* \* \* \*

\*    Still floated from beneath the acacia-tree    The droning Eastern music's minor key.

## MCMXIII

SO prodigal was I of youth,    Forgetting I was young;    I worshipped dead men for their strength,    Forgetting I was strong.

I cherished old, jejune advice; I thought I groped for truth; Those dead old languages I learned When I was prodigal of youth!

Then in the sunlight stood a boy, Outstretching either hand, Palm upwards, cup-like, and between The fingers trickled sand.

"Oh, why so grave" he cried to me, "Laugh, stern lips, laugh at last! Let wisdom come when wisdom may. The sand is running fast."

I followed him into the sun, And laughed as he desired, And every day upon the grass We play till we are tired.

## **A CREED**

THAT I should live and look with open eyes I count as half my claim to Paradise. I have not crept beneath cathedral arches, But bathed in streams beneath the silver larches;

And have not grovelled to the Sunday priest, But found an unconfined and daily feast; Was called ungodly, and to those who blamed Laughed back defiance and was not ashamed.

Some hold their duty to be mournful; why? I cannot love your weeping poets; I Am sad in winter, but in summer gay, And vary with each variable day.

And though the pious cavilled at my mirth, At least I rendered thanks for God's fair earth, Grateful that I, among the murmuring rest, Was not an unappreciative guest.

## **TO A POET WHOSE VERSES I HAD READ**

I WOULD not venture to dispraise or praise. Too well I know  
the indifference which bounds A poet in the narrow working-  
grounds Where he is blind and deaf in all his ways.

He must work out alone his path to glory; A thousand breaths  
are fanning him along; A thousand tears end in one little  
song, A thousand conflicts in one little story;

A thousand notes swell to a single chord. He cannot tell where  
his direction tends; He strives unguided towards indefinite  
ends; He is an ignorant though absolute lord.

## NOMADS

FROM the shores of the Atlantic to the gardens  
of Japan, From the darkness of the Neva to the courts  
of Ispahan, There is nothing that can hold us, hold our  
wandering caravan.

Leisurely is our encamping; nowhere pause in  
hasty flight. Long enough to learn the secret, and the value,  
and the might, Whether of the northern mountains or the  
southern lands of light.

And the riches of the regions will be ours from land  
to land, Falling as a willing booty under our  
marauding hand, Rugs from Persia, gods from China,  
emeralds from Samarcand!

And the old forgotten empires, which have faded turn by  
turn, From the shades emerging slowly to their ancient  
sway return, And to their imperial manhood rise the ashes  
from the urn.

We have known Bzyantium's glory when the eagled flag was

flown,    When the ruins were not ruins; eagled visions have    I  
known    Of a spectral Roman emperor seated on a  
spectral    throne.

We have tasted space and freedom, frontiers falling as    we  
went,    Now with narrow bonds and limits never could we  
be    content,    For we have abolished boundaries, straitened  
borders    have we rent,    And a house no more confines us  
than the roving    nomad's tent.

## **THE GARDEN**

We owned a garden on a hill,    We planted rose and  
daffodil,    Flowers that English poets sing,    And hoped for glory  
in the Spring.

We planted yellow hollyhocks,    And humble sweetly-smelling  
stocks,    And columbine for carnival,    And dreamt of Summer's  
festival.

And Autumn not to be outdone    As heiress of the summer  
sun,    Should doubly wreath her tawny head    With poppies and  
with creepers red.

We waited then for all to grow,    We planted wallflowers in a  
row.    And lavender and borage blue,—    Alas! we waited, I and  
you,    But love was all that ever grew.

Long Barn    Summer, 1915

## **THE DANCING ELF\***

I WOKE to daylight, and to find    A wreath of fading vine-  
leaves, rough entwined,    Lying, as dropped in hasty flight, upon  
my floor.



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