

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Amy Lowell**

**- poems -**

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## **A Coloured Print by Shokei**

It winds along the face of a cliff  
This path which I long to explore,  
And over it dashes a waterfall,  
And the air is full of the roar  
And the thunderous voice of waters which sweep  
In a silver torrent over some steep.

It clears the path with a mighty bound  
And tumbles below and away,  
And the trees and the bushes which grow in the rocks  
Are wet with its jewelled spray;  
The air is misty and heavy with sound,  
And small, wet wildflowers star the ground.

Oh! The dampness is very good to smell,  
And the path is soft to tread,  
And beyond the fall it winds up and on,  
While little streamlets thread  
Their own meandering way down the hill  
Each singing its own little song, until

I forget that 't is only a pictured path,  
And I hear the water and wind,  
And look through the mist, and strain my eyes  
To see what there is behind;  
For it must lead to a happy land,  
This little path by a waterfall spanned.

Amy Lowell

## A Fairy Tale

On winter nights beside the nursery fire  
We read the fairy tale, while glowing coals  
Built its pictures. There before our eyes  
We saw the vaulted hall of traceried stone  
Uprear itself, the distant ceiling hung  
With pendent stalactites like frozen vines;  
And all along the walls at intervals,  
Curled upwards into pillars, roses climbed,  
And ramped and were confined, and clustered leaves  
Divided where there peered a laughing face.  
The foliage seemed to rustle in the wind,  
A silent murmur, carved in still, gray stone.  
High pointed windows pierced the southern wall  
Whence proud escutcheons flung prismatic fires  
To stain the tessellated marble floor  
With pools of red, and quivering green, and blue;  
And in the shade beyond the further door,  
Its sober squares of black and white were hid  
Beneath a restless, shuffling, wide-eyed mob  
Of lackeys and retainers come to view  
The Christening.  
A sudden blare of trumpets, and the throng  
About the entrance parted as the guests  
Filed singly in with rare and precious gifts.  
Our eager fancies noted all they brought,  
The glorious, unattainable delights!  
But always there was one unbidden guest  
Who cursed the child and left it bitterness.

The fire falls asunder, all is changed,  
I am no more a child, and what I see  
Is not a fairy tale, but life, my life.  
The gifts are there, the many pleasant things:  
Health, wealth, long-settled friendships, with a name  
Which honors all who bear it, and the power  
Of making words obedient. This is much;  
But overshadowing all is still the curse,  
That never shall I be fulfilled by love!  
Along the parching highroad of the world  
No other soul shall bear mine company.  
Always shall I be teased with semblances,  
With cruel impostures, which I trust awhile  
Then dash to pieces, as a careless boy  
Flings a kaleidoscope, which shattering  
Strews all the ground about with coloured sherds.  
So I behold my visions on the ground  
No longer radiant, an ignoble heap  
Of broken, dusty glass. And so, unlit,  
Even by hope or faith, my dragging steps  
Force me forever through the passing days.

Amy Lowell

## **A Fixed Idea**

What torture lurks within a single thought  
When grown too constant, and however kind,  
However welcome still, the weary mind  
Aches with its presence. Dull remembrance taught  
Remembers on unceasingly; unsought  
The old delight is with us but to find  
That all recurring joy is pain refined,  
Become a habit, and we struggle, caught.  
You lie upon my heart as on a nest,  
Folded in peace, for you can never know  
How crushed I am with having you at rest  
Heavy upon my life. I love you so  
You bind my freedom from its rightful quest.  
In mercy lift your drooping wings and go.

Amy Lowell

## A Japanese Wood-Carving

High up above the open, welcoming door  
It hangs, a piece of wood with colours dim.  
Once, long ago, it was a waving tree  
And knew the sun and shadow through the leaves  
Of forest trees, in a thick eastern wood.  
The winter snows had bent its branches down,  
The spring had swelled its buds with coming flowers,  
Summer had run like fire through its veins,  
While autumn pelted it with chestnut burrs,  
And strewn the leafy ground with acorn cups.  
Dark midnight storms had roared and crashed among  
Its branches, breaking here and there a limb;  
But every now and then broad sunlit days  
Lovingly lingered, caught among the leaves.  
Yes, it had known all this, and yet to us  
It does not speak of mossy forest ways,  
Of whispering pine trees or the shimmering birch;  
But of quick winds, and the salt, stinging sea!  
An artist once, with patient, careful knife,  
Had fashioned it like to the untamed sea.  
Here waves uprear themselves, their tops blown back  
By the gay, sunny wind, which whips the blue  
And breaks it into gleams and sparks of light.  
Among the flashing waves are two white birds  
Which swoop, and soar, and scream for very joy  
At the wild sport. Now diving quickly in,  
Questing some glistening fish. Now flying up,  
Their dripping feathers shining in the sun,  
While the wet drops like little glints of light,  
Fall pattering backward to the parent sea.  
Gliding along the green and foam-flecked hollows,  
Or skimming some white crest about to break,  
The spirits of the sky deigning to stoop  
And play with ocean in a summer mood.  
Hanging above the high, wide open door,  
It brings to us in quiet, firelit room,  
The freedom of the earth's vast solitudes,  
Where heaping, sunny waves tumble and roll,  
And seabirds scream in wanton happiness.

Amy Lowell

## **A Lady**

You are beautiful and faded  
Like an old opera tune  
Played upon a harpsichord;  
Or like the sun-flooded silks  
Of an eighteenth-century boudoir.  
In your eyes  
Smoulder the fallen roses of out-lived minutes,  
And the perfume of your soul  
Is vague and suffusing,  
With the pungence of sealed spice-jars.  
Your half-tones delight me,  
And I grow mad with gazing  
At your blent colours.

My vigour is a new-minted penny,  
Which I cast at your feet.  
Gather it up from the dust,  
That its sparkle may amuse you.

Amy Lowell

## **A Little Song**

When you, my Dear, are away, away,  
How wearily goes the creeping day.  
A year drags after morning, and night  
Starts another year of candle light.  
O Pausing Sun and Lingering Moon!  
Grant me, I beg of you, this boon.

Whirl round the earth as never sun  
Has his diurnal journey run.  
And, Moon, slip past the ladders of air  
In a single flash, while your streaming hair  
Catches the stars and pulls them down  
To shine on some slumbering Chinese town.  
O Kindly Sun! Understanding Moon!  
Bring evening to crowd the footsteps of noon.

But when that long awaited day  
Hangs ripe in the heavens, your voyaging stay.  
Be morning, O Sun! with the lark in song,  
Be afternoon for ages long.  
And, Moon, let you and your lesser lights  
Watch over a century of nights.

Amy Lowell

## **A London Thoroughfare. 2 A.M.**

They have watered the street,  
It shines in the glare of lamps,  
Cold, white lamps,  
And lies  
Like a slow-moving river,  
Barred with silver and black.  
Cabs go down it,  
One,  
And then another,  
Between them I hear the shuffling of feet.  
Tramps doze on the window-ledges,  
Night-walkers pass along the sidewalks.  
The city is squalid and sinister,  
With the silver-barred street in the midst,  
Slow-moving,  
A river leading nowhere.

Opposite my window,  
The moon cuts,  
Clear and round,  
Through the plum-coloured night.  
She cannot light the city:  
It is too bright.  
It has white lamps,  
And glitters coldly.

I stand in the window and watch the  
moon.  
She is thin and lustreless,  
But I love her.  
I know the moon,  
And this is an alien city.

Amy Lowell

## **A Winter Ride**

Who shall declare the joy of the running!  
Who shall tell of the pleasures of flight!  
Springing and spurning the tufts of wild heather,  
Sweeping, wide-winged, through the blue dome of light.  
Everything mortal has moments immortal,  
Swift and God-gifted, immeasurably bright.

So with the stretch of the white road before me,  
Shining snowcrystals rainbowed by the sun,  
Fields that are white, stained with long, cool, blue shadows,  
Strong with the strength of my horse as we run.  
Joy in the touch of the wind and the sunlight!  
Joy! With the vigorous earth I am one.

Amy Lowell

## Aftermath

I learnt to write to you in happier days,  
And every letter was a piece I chipped  
From off my heart, a fragment newly clipped  
From the mosaic of life; its blues and grays,  
Its throbbing reds, I gave to earn your praise.  
To make a pavement for your feet I stripped  
My soul for you to walk upon, and slipped  
Beneath your steps to soften all your ways.  
But now my letters are like blossoms pale  
We strew upon a grave with hopeless tears.  
I ask no recompense, I shall not fail  
Although you do not heed; the long, sad years  
Still pass, and still I scatter flowers frail,  
And whisper words of love which no one hears.

Amy Lowell

## Apology

Be not angry with me that I bear  
Your colours everywhere,  
All through each crowded street,  
And meet  
The wonder-light in every eye,  
As I go by.

Each plodding wayfarer looks up to gaze,  
Blinded by rainbow haze,  
The stuff of happiness,  
No less,  
Which wraps me in its glad-hued folds  
Of peacock golds.

Before my feet the dusty, rough-paved way  
Flushes beneath its gray.  
My steps fall ringed with light,  
So bright,  
It seems a myriad suns are strown  
About the town.

Around me is the sound of steepled bells,  
And rich perfumed smells  
Hang like a wind-forgotten cloud,  
And shroud  
Me from close contact with the world.  
I dwell imperaled.

You blazon me with jewelled insignia.  
A flaming nebula  
Rims in my life. And yet  
You set  
The word upon me, unconfessed  
To go unguessed.

Amy Lowell

## **Apples of Hesperides**

Glinting golden through the trees,  
Apples of Hesperides!  
Through the moon-pierced warp of night  
Shoot pale shafts of yellow light,  
Swaying to the kissing breeze  
Swings the treasure, golden-gleaming,  
Apples of Hesperides!

Far and lofty yet they glimmer,  
Apples of Hesperides!  
Blinded by their radiant shimmer,  
Pushing forward just for these;  
Dew-besprinkled, bramble-marred,  
Poor duped mortal, travel-scarred,  
Always thinking soon to seize  
And possess the golden-glistening  
Apples of Hesperides!

Orbed, and glittering, and pendent,  
Apples of Hesperides!  
Not one missing, still transcendent,  
Clustering like a swarm of bees.  
Yielding to no man's desire,  
Glowing with a saffron fire,  
Splendid, unassailed, the golden  
Apples of Hesperides!

Amy Lowell

## Astigmatism

The Poet took his walking-stick  
Of fine and polished ebony.  
Set in the close-grained wood  
Were quaint devices;  
Patterns in ambers,  
And in the clouded green of jades.  
The top was smooth, yellow ivory,  
And a tassel of tarnished gold  
Hung by a faded cord from a hole  
Pierced in the hard wood,  
Circled with silver.  
For years the Poet had wrought upon this cane.  
His wealth had gone to enrich it,  
His experiences to pattern it,  
His labour to fashion and burnish it.  
To him it was perfect,  
A work of art and a weapon,  
A delight and a defence.  
The Poet took his walking-stick  
And walked abroad.

Peace be with you, Brother.

The Poet came to a meadow.  
Sifted through the grass were daisies,  
Open-mouthed, wondering, they gazed at the sun.  
The Poet struck them with his cane.  
The little heads flew off, and they lay  
Dying, open-mouthed and wondering,  
On the hard ground.  
"They are useless. They are not roses," said the Poet.

Peace be with you, Brother. Go your ways.

The Poet came to a stream.  
Purple and blue flags waded in the water;  
In among them hopped the speckled frogs;  
The wind slid through them, rustling.  
The Poet lifted his cane,  
And the iris heads fell into the water.  
They floated away, torn and drowning.  
"Wretched flowers," said the Poet,  
"They are not roses."

Peace be with you, Brother. It is your affair.

The Poet came to a garden.  
Dahlias ripened against a wall,  
Gillyflowers stood up bravely for all their short stature,  
And a trumpet-vine covered an arbour  
With the red and gold of its blossoms.  
Red and gold like the brass notes of trumpets.

The Poet knocked off the stiff heads of the dahlias,  
And his cane lopped the gillyflowers at the ground.  
Then he severed the trumpet-blossoms from their stems.  
Red and gold they lay scattered,  
Red and gold, as on a battle field;  
Red and gold, prone and dying.  
"They were not roses," said the Poet.

Peace be with you, Brother.  
But behind you is destruction, and waste places.

The Poet came home at evening,  
And in the candle-light  
He wiped and polished his cane.  
The orange candle flame leaped in the yellow ambers,  
And made the jades undulate like green pools.  
It played along the bright ebony,  
And glowed in the top of cream-coloured ivory.  
But these things were dead,  
Only the candle-light made them seem to move.  
"It is a pity there were no roses," said the Poet.

Peace be with you, Brother. You have chosen your part.

Amy Lowell

## At Night

The wind is singing through the trees to-night,  
A deep-voiced song of rushing cadences  
And crashing intervals. No summer breeze  
Is this, though hot July is at its height,  
Gone is her gentler music; with delight  
She listens to this booming like the seas,  
These elemental, loud necessities  
Which call to her to answer their swift might.  
Above the tossing trees shines down a star,  
Quietly bright; this wild, tumultuous joy  
Quickens nor dims its splendour. And my mind,  
O Star! is filled with your white light, from far,  
So suffer me this one night to enjoy  
The freedom of the onward sweeping wind.

Amy Lowell

## **Aubade**

As I would free the white almond from the green husk  
So I would strip your trappings off,  
Beloved.  
And fingering the smooth and polished kernel  
I should see that in my hands glittered a gem beyond counting.

Amy Lowell

## Autumn

They brought me a quilled, yellow dahlia,  
Opulent, flaunting.  
Round gold  
Flung out of a pale green stalk.  
Round, ripe gold  
Of maturity,  
Meticulously frilled and flaming,  
A fire-ball of proclamation:  
Fecundity decked in staring yellow  
For all the world to see.  
They brought a quilled, yellow dahlia,  
To me who am barren  
Shall I send it to you,  
You who have taken with you  
All I once possessed?

Amy Lowell

## Azure and Gold

April had covered the hills  
With flickering yellows and reds,  
The sparkle and coolness of snow  
Was blown from the mountain beds.

Across a deep-sunken stream  
The pink of blossoming trees,  
And from windless appleblooms  
The humming of many bees.

The air was of rose and gold  
Arabesqued with the song of birds  
Who, swinging unseen under leaves,  
Made music more eager than words.

Of a sudden, aslant the road,  
A brightness to dazzle and stun,  
A glint of the bluest blue,  
A flash from a sapphire sun.

Blue-birds so blue, 'twas a dream,  
An impossible, unconceived hue,  
The high sky of summer dropped down  
Some rapturous ocean to woo.

Such a colour, such infinite light!  
The heart of a fabulous gem,  
Many-faceted, brilliant and rare.  
Centre Stone of the earth's diadem!

Centre Stone of the Crown of the World,  
"Sincerity" graved on your youth!  
And your eyes hold the blue-bird flash,  
The sapphire shaft, which is truth.

Amy Lowell

## **Basket dance**

Dance!

Dance!

The priest is yellow with sunflower meal,  
He is yellow with corn-meal,  
He is yellow as the sun.

Dance!

Dance!

His little bells are ringing,  
The bells tinkle like sunlight,  
The sun is rising.

Dance!

Dance!

Perhaps I will throw you a basket,  
Perhaps I will throw you my heart.

Lift the baskets, dancing,  
Lower the baskets, dancing,  
We have raised fruits,  
Now we dance.  
Our shadows are long,  
The sunlight is bright between our shadows.  
Do you want my basket?  
Catch it!  
Catch it!  
But you cannot catch me,  
I am more difficult.

Amy Lowell

## **Before Dawn**

Life! Austere arbiter of each man's fate,  
By whom he learns that Nature's steadfast laws  
Are as decrees immutable; O pause  
Your even forward march! Not yet too late  
Teach me the needed lesson, when to wait  
Inactive as a ship when no wind draws  
To stretch the loosened cordage. One implores  
Thy clemency, whose wilfulness innate  
Has gone uncurbed and roughshod while the years  
Have lengthened into decades; now distressed  
He knows no rule by which to move or stay,  
And teased with restlessness and desperate fears  
He dares not watch in silence thy wise way  
Bringing about results none could have guessed.

Amy Lowell

## Before the Altar

Before the Altar, bowed, he stands  
With empty hands;  
Upon it perfumed offerings burn  
Wreathing with smoke the sacrificial urn.  
Not one of all these has he given,  
No flame of his has leapt to Heaven  
Firesouled, vermilion-hearted,  
Forked, and darted,  
Consuming what a few spare pence  
Have cheaply bought, to fling from hence  
In idly-asked petition.

His sole condition  
Love and poverty.  
And while the moon  
Swings slow across the sky,  
Athwart a waving pine tree,  
And soon  
Tips all the needles there  
With silver sparkles, bitterly  
He gazes, while his soul  
Grows hard with thinking of the poorness of his dole.

"Shining and distant Goddess, hear my prayer  
Where you swim in the high air!  
With charity look down on me,  
Under this tree,  
Tending the gifts I have not brought,  
The rare and goodly things  
I have not sought.  
Instead, take from me all my life!

"Upon the wings  
Of shimmering moonbeams  
I pack my poet's dreams  
For you.  
My wearying strife,  
My courage, my loss,  
Into the night I toss  
For you.  
Golden Divinity,  
Deign to look down on me  
Who so unworthily  
Offers to you:  
All life has known,  
Seeds withered unsown,  
Hopes turning quick to fears,  
Laughter which dies in tears.  
The shredded remnant of a man  
Is all the span  
And compass of my offering to you.

"Empty and silent, I  
Kneel before your pure, calm majesty.  
On this stone, in this urn  
I pour my heart and watch it burn,  
Myself the sacrifice; but be  
Still unmoved: Divinity."

From the altar, bathed in moonlight,  
The smoke rose straight in the quiet night.

Amy Lowell

## Behind a Wall

I own a solace shut within my heart,  
A garden full of many a quaint delight  
And warm with drowsy, popped sunshine; bright,  
Flaming with lilies out of whose cups dart  
Shining things  
With powdered wings.

Here terrace sinks to terrace, arbors close  
The ends of dreaming paths; a wanton wind  
Jostles the half-ripe pears, and then, unkind,  
Tumbles a-slumber in a pillar rose,  
With content  
Grown indolent.

By night my garden is o'erhung with gems  
Fixed in an onyx setting. Fireflies  
Flicker their lanterns in my dazzled eyes.  
In serried rows I guess the straight, stiff stems  
Of hollyhocks  
Against the rocks.

So far and still it is that, listening,  
I hear the flowers talking in the dawn;  
And where a sunken basin cuts the lawn,  
Cinctured with iris, pale and glistening,  
The sudden swish  
Of a waking fish.

Amy Lowell

## **Carrefour**

O you,  
Who came upon me once  
Stretched under apple-trees just after bathing,  
Why did you not strangle me before speaking  
Rather than fill me with the wild white honey of your words  
And then leave me to the mercy  
Of the forest bees?

Amy Lowell

## **Climbing**

High up in the apple tree climbing I go,  
With the sky above me, the earth below.  
Each branch is the step of a wonderful stair  
Which leads to the town I see shining up there.

Climbing, climbing, higher and higher,  
The branches blow and I see a spire,  
The gleam of a turret, the glint of a dome,  
All sparkling and bright, like white sea foam.

On and on, from bough to bough,  
The leaves are thick, but I push my way through;  
Before, I have always had to stop,  
But to-day I am sure I shall reach the top.

Today to the end of the marvelous stair,  
Where those glittering pinacles flash in the air!  
Climbing, climbing, higher I go,  
With the sky close above me, the earth far below.

Amy Lowell

## **Crepuscule du Matin**

All night I wrestled with a memory  
Which knocked insurgent at the gates of thought.  
The crumbled wreck of years behind has wrought  
Its disillusion; now I only cry  
For peace, for power to forget the lie  
Which hope too long has whispered. So I sought  
The sleep which would not come, and night was fraught  
With old emotions weeping silently.  
I heard your voice again, and knew the things  
Which you had promised proved an empty vault.  
I felt your clinging hands while night's broad wings  
Cherished our love in darkness. From the lawn  
A sudden, quivering birdnote, like a taunt.  
My arms held nothing but the empty dawn.

Amy Lowell

## **Crowned**

You came to me bearing bright roses,  
Red like the wine of your heart;  
You twisted them into a garland  
To set me aside from the mart.  
Red roses to crown me your lover,  
And I walked aureoled and apart.

Enslaved and encircled, I bore it,  
Proud token of my gift to you.  
The petals waned paler, and shriveled,  
The thorns started through.  
The thorns to proclaim me your lover,  
A diadem woven with rue.

Amy Lowell

## **Decade**

When you came, you were like red wine and honey,  
And the taste of you burnt my mouth with its sweetness.  
Now you are like morning bread,  
Smooth and pleasant.  
I hardly taste you at all for I know your savour,  
But I am completely nourished.

Amy Lowell

## Diya

Look, Dear, how bright the moonlight is to-night!  
See where it casts the shadow of that tree  
Far out upon the grass. And every gust  
Of light night wind comes laden with the scent  
Of opening flowers which never bloom by day:  
Night-scented stocks, and four-o'clocks, and that  
Pale yellow disk, upreared on its tall stalk,  
The evening primrose, comrade of the stars.  
It seems as though the garden which you love  
Were like a swinging censer, its incense  
Floating before us as a reverent act  
To sanctify and bless our night of love.  
Tell me once more you love me, that 't is you  
Yes, really you, I touch, so, with my hand;  
And tell me it is by your own free will  
That you are here, and that you like to be  
Just here, with me, under this sailing pine.  
I need to hear it often for my heart  
Doubts naturally, and finds it hard to trust.  
Ah, Dearest, you are good to love me so,  
And yet I would not have it goodness, rather  
Excess of selfishness in you to need  
Me through and through, as flowers need the sun.  
I wonder can it really be that you  
And I are here alone, and that the night  
Is full of hours, and all the world asleep,  
And none can call to you to come away;  
For you have given all yourself to me  
Making me gentle by your willingness.  
Has your life too been waiting for this time,  
Not only mine the sharpness of this joy?  
Dear Heart, I love you, worship you as though  
I were a priest before a holy shrine.  
I'm glad that you are beautiful, although  
Were you not lovely still I needs must love;  
But you are all things, it must have been so  
For otherwise it were not you. Come, close;  
When you are in the circle of my arm  
Faith grows a mountain and I take my stand  
Upon its utmost top. Yes, yes, once more  
Kiss me, and let me feel you very near  
Wanting me wholly, even as I want you.  
Have years behind been dark? Will those to come  
Bring unguessed sorrows into our two lives?  
What does it matter, we have had to-night!  
To-night will make us strong, for we believe  
Each in the other, this is a sacrament.  
Beloved, is it true?

Amy Lowell

## Dreams

I do not care to talk to you although  
Your speech evokes a thousand sympathies,  
And all my being's silent harmonies  
Wake trembling into music. When you go  
It is as if some sudden, dreadful blow  
Had severed all the strings with savage ease.  
No, do not talk; but let us rather seize  
This intimate gift of silence which we know.  
Others may guess your thoughts from what you say,  
As storms are guessed from clouds where darkness broods.  
To me the very essence of the day  
Reveals its inner purpose and its moods;  
As poplars feel the rain and then straightway  
Reverse their leaves and shimmer through the woods.

Amy Lowell

## **Epitaph in a Church-Yard in Charleston, South Carolina**

GEORGE AUGUSTUS CLOUGH

A NATIVE OF LIVERPOOL,

DIED SUDDENLY OF "STRANGER'S FEVER"

NOV'R 5th 1843

AGED 22

He died of "Stranger's Fever" when his youth  
Had scarcely melted into manhood, so  
The chiselled legend runs; a brother's woe  
Laid bare for epitaph. The savage ruth  
Of a sunny, bright, but alien land, uncouth  
With cruel caressing dealt a mortal blow,  
And by this summer sea where flowers grow  
In tropic splendor, witness to the truth  
Of ineradicable race he lies.

The law of duty urged that he should roam,  
Should sail from fog and chilly airs to skies  
Clear with deceitful welcome. He had come  
With proud resolve, but still his lonely eyes  
Ached with fatigue at never seeing home.

Amy Lowell

## **Falling Snow**

The snow whispers around me  
And my wooden clogs  
Leave holes behind me in the snow.  
But no one will pass this way  
Seeking my footsteps,  
And when the temple bell rings again  
They will be covered and gone.

Amy Lowell

## **Fatigue**

Stupefy my heart to every day's monotony,  
Seal up my eyes, I would not look so far,  
Chasten my steps to peaceful regularity,  
Bow down my head lest I behold a star.  
Fill my days with work, a thousand calm necessities  
Leaving no moment to consecrate to hope,  
Girdle my thoughts within the dull circumferences  
Of facts which form the actual in one short hour's scope.

Give me dreamless sleep, and loose night's power over me,  
Shut my ears to sounds only tumultuous then,  
Bid Fancy slumber, and steal away its potency,  
Or Nature wakes and strives to live again.

Let each day pass, well ordered in its usefulness,  
Unlit by sunshine, unscarred by storm;  
Dower me with strength and curb all foolish eagerness --  
The law exacts obedience. Instruct, I will conform.

Amy Lowell

## Fragment

What is poetry? Is it a mosaic  
Of coloured stones which curiously are wrought  
Into a pattern? Rather glass that's taught  
By patient labor any hue to take  
And glowing with a sumptuous splendor, make  
Beauty a thing of awe; where sunbeams caught,  
Transmuted fall in sheafs of rainbows fraught  
With storied meaning for religion's sake.

Amy Lowell

## **Francis II, King of Naples**

Written after reading Trevelyan's "Garibaldi and the making of Italy"

Poor foolish monarch, vacillating, vain,  
Decaying victim of a race of kings,  
Swift Destiny shook out her purple wings  
And caught him in their shadow; not again  
Could furtive plotting smear another stain  
Across his tarnished honour. Smoulderings  
Of sacrificial fires burst their rings  
And blotted out in smoke his lost domain.  
Bereft of courtiers, only with his queen,  
From empty palace down to empty quay.  
No challenge screamed from hostile carabine.  
A single vessel waited, shadowy;  
All night she ploughed her solitary way  
Beneath the stars, and through a tranquil sea.

Amy Lowell

## Frankincense and Myrrh

My heart is tuned to sorrow, and the strings  
Vibrate most readily to minor chords,  
Searching and sad; my mind is stuffed with words  
Which voice the passion and the ache of things:  
Illusions beating with their baffled wings  
Against the walls of circumstance, and hoards  
Of torn desires, broken joys; records  
Of all a bruised life's maimed imaginings.  
Now you are come! You tremble like a star  
Poised where, behind earth's rim, the sun has set.  
Your voice has sung across my heart, but numb  
And mute, I have no tones to answer. Far  
Within I kneel before you, speechless yet,  
And life ablaze with beauty, I am dumb.

Amy Lowell

## **Fringed Gentians**

Near where I live there is a lake  
As blue as blue can be, winds make  
It dance as they go blowing by.  
I think it curtseys to the sky.

It's just a lake of lovely flowers  
And my Mamma says they are ours;  
But they are not like those we grow  
To be our very own, you know.

We have a splendid garden, there  
Are lots of flowers everywhere;  
Roses, and pinks, and four o'clocks  
And hollyhocks, and evening stocks.

Mamma lets us pick them, but never  
Must we pick any gentians -- ever!  
For if we carried them away  
They'd die of homesickness that day.

Amy Lowell

## **From One Who Stays**

How empty seems the town now you are gone!  
A wilderness of sad streets, where gaunt walls  
Hide nothing to desire; sunshine falls  
Eery, distorted, as it long had shone  
On white, dead faces tombed in halls of stone.  
The whir of motors, stricken through with calls  
Of playing boys, floats up at intervals;  
But all these noises blur to one long moan.  
What quest is worth pursuing? And how strange  
That other men still go accustomed ways!  
I hate their interest in the things they do.  
A spectre-horde repeating without change  
An old routine. Alone I know the days  
Are still-born, and the world stopped, lacking you.

Amy Lowell

## **Generations**

You are like the stem  
Of a young beech-tree,  
Straight and swaying,  
Breaking out in golden leaves.  
Your walk is like the blowing of a beech-tree  
On a hill.  
Your voice is like leaves  
Softly struck upon by a South wind.  
Your shadow is no shadow, but a scattered sunshine;  
And at night you pull the sky down to you  
And hood yourself in stars.

But I am like a great oak under a cloudy sky,  
Watching a stripling beech grow up at my feet.

Amy Lowell

## Hero-Worship

A face seen passing in a crowded street,  
A voice heard singing music, large and free;  
And from that moment life is changed, and we  
Become of more heroic temper, meet  
To freely ask and give, a man complete  
Radiant because of faith, we dare to be  
What Nature meant us. Brave idolatry  
Which can conceive a hero! No deceit,  
No knowledge taught by unrelenting years,  
Can quench this fierce, untamable desire.  
We know that what we long for once achieved  
Will cease to satisfy. Be still our fears;  
If what we worship fail us, still the fire  
Burns on, and it is much to have believed.

Amy Lowell

## Hoar-Frost

In the cloud gray mornings  
I heard the herons Flying  
And when I came into my garden,  
My silken outer-garment  
Trailed over withered leaves.  
A dried leaf crumbles at a touch,  
But I have seen many Autumns  
With herons blowing like smoke  
Across the sky.

Amy Lowell

## **Hora Stellatrix**

The stars hang thick in the apple tree,  
The south wind smells of the pungent sea,  
Gold tulip cups are heavy with dew.  
The night's for you, Sweetheart, for you!  
Starfire rains from the vaulted blue.

Listen! The dancing of unseen leaves.  
A drowsy swallow stirs in the eaves.  
Only a maiden is sorrowing.  
'T is night and spring, Sweetheart, and spring!  
Starfire lights your heart's blossoming.

In the intimate dark there's never an ear,  
Though the tulips stand on tiptoe to hear,  
So give; ripe fruit must shrivel or fall.  
As you are mine, Sweetheart, give all!  
Starfire sparkles, your coronal.

Amy Lowell

## **In Darkness**

Must all of worth be travailed for, and those  
Life's brightest stars rise from a troubled sea  
Must years go by in sad uncertainty  
Leaving us doubting whose the conquering blows,  
Are we or Fate the victors? Time which shows  
All inner meanings will reveal, but we  
Shall never know the upshot. Ours to be  
Wasted with longing, shattered in the throes,  
The agonies of splendid dreams, which day  
Dims from our vision, but each night brings back;  
We strive to hold their grandeur, and essay  
To be the thing we dream. Sudden we lack  
The flash of insight, life grows drear and gray,  
And hour follows hour, nerveless, slack.

Amy Lowell

## In Excelsis

You -- you --  
Your shadow is sunlight on a plate of silver;  
Your footsteps, the seeding-place of lilies;  
Your hands moving, a chime of bells across a windless air.

The movement of your hands is the long, golden running of light from a rising sun;  
It is the hopping of birds upon a garden-path.

As the perfume of jonquils, you come forth in the morning.  
Young horses are not more sudden than your thoughts,  
Your words are bees about a pear-tree,  
Your fancies are the gold-and-black striped wasps buzzing among red apples.  
I drink your lips,  
I eat the whiteness of your hands and feet.  
My mouth is open,  
As a new jar I am empty and open.  
Like white water are you who fill the cup of my mouth,  
Like a brook of water thronged with lilies.

You are frozen as the clouds,  
You are far and sweet as the high clouds.  
I dare to reach to you,  
I dare to touch the rim of your brightness.  
I leap beyond the winds,  
I cry and shout,  
For my throat is keen as is a sword  
Sharpened on a hone of ivory.  
My throat sings the joy of my eyes,  
The rushing gladness of my love.

How has the rainbow fallen upon my heart?  
How have I snared the seas to lie in my fingers  
And caught the sky to be a cover for my head? How have you come to dwell with me,  
Compassing me with the four circles of your mystic lightness,  
So that I say "Glory! Glory!" and bow before you  
As to a shrine?

Do I tease myself that morning is morning and a day after?  
Do I think the air is a condescension,  
The earth a politeness,  
Heaven a boon deserving thanks?  
So you -- air -- earth -- heaven --  
I do not thank you,  
I take you,  
I live.  
And those things which I say in consequence  
Are rubies mortised in a gate of stone.

Amy Lowell

## Interlude

When I have baked white cakes  
And grated green almonds to spread on them;  
When I have picked the green crowns from the strawberries  
And piled them, cone-pointed, in a blue and yellow platter;  
When I have smoothed the seam of the linen I have been working;  
What then?  
To-morrow it will be the same:  
Cakes and strawberries,  
And needles in and out of cloth  
If the sun is beautiful on bricks and pewter,  
How much more beautiful is the moon,  
Slanting down the gauffered branches of a plum-tree;  
The moon  
Wavering across a bed of tulips;  
The moon,  
Still,  
Upon your face.  
You shine, Beloved,  
You and the moon.  
But which is the reflection?  
The clock is striking eleven.  
I think, when we have shut and barred the door,  
The night will be dark  
Outside.

Amy Lowell

## **J--K. Huysmans**

A flickering glimmer through a window-pane,  
A dim red glare through mud bespattered glass,  
Cleaving a path between blown walls of sleet  
Across uneven pavements sunk in slime  
To scatter and then quench itself in mist.  
And struggling, slipping, often rudely hurled  
Against the jutting angle of a wall,  
And cursed, and reeled against, and flung aside  
By drunken brawlers as they shuffled past,  
A man was groping to what seemed a light.  
His eyelids burnt and quivered with the strain  
Of looking, and against his temples beat  
The all enshrouding, suffocating dark.  
He stumbled, lurched, and struck against a door  
That opened, and a howl of obscene mirth  
Grated his senses, wallowing on the floor  
Lay men, and dogs and women in the dirt.  
He sickened, loathing it, and as he gazed  
The candle guttered, flared, and then went out.

Through travail of ignoble midnight streets  
He came at last to shelter in a porch  
Where gothic saints and warriors made a shield  
To cover him, and tortured gargoyles spat  
One long continuous stream of silver rain  
That clattered down from myriad roofs and spires  
Into a darkness, loud with rushing sound  
Of water falling, gurgling as it fell,  
But always thickly dark. Then as he leaned  
Unconscious where, the great oak door blew back  
And cast him, bruised and dripping, in the church.  
His eyes from long sojourning in the night  
Were blinded now as by some glorious sun;  
He slowly crawled toward the altar steps.  
He could not think, for heavy in his ears  
An organ boomed majestic harmonies;  
He only knew that what he saw was light!  
He bowed himself before a cross of flame  
And shut his eyes in fear lest it should fade.

Amy Lowell

## Leisure

Leisure, thou goddess of a bygone age,  
When hours were long and days sufficed to hold  
Wide-eyed delights and pleasures uncontrolled  
By shortening moments, when no gaunt presage  
Of undone duties, modern heritage,  
Haunted our happy minds; must thou withhold  
Thy presence from this over-busy world,  
And bearing silence with thee disengage  
Our twined fortunes? Deeps of unhewn woods  
Alone can cherish thee, alone possess  
Thy quiet, teeming vigor. This our crime:  
Not to have worshipped, marred by alien moods  
That sole condition of all loveliness,  
The dreaming lapse of slow, unmeasured time.

Amy Lowell

## Listening

'T is you that are the music, not your song.  
The song is but a door which, opening wide,  
Lets forth the pent-up melody inside,  
Your spirit's harmony, which clear and strong  
Sings but of you. Throughout your whole life long  
Your songs, your thoughts, your doings, each divide  
This perfect beauty; waves within a tide,  
Or single notes amid a glorious throng.  
The song of earth has many different chords;  
Ocean has many moods and many tones  
Yet always ocean. In the damp Spring woods  
The painted trillium smiles, while crisp pine cones  
Autumn alone can ripen. So is this  
One music with a thousand cadences.

Amy Lowell

## Loon Point

Softly the water ripples  
Against the canoe's curving side,  
Softly the birch trees rustle  
Flinging over us branches wide.

Softly the moon glints and glistens  
As the water takes and leaves,  
Like golden ears of corn  
Which fall from loose-bound sheaves,

Or like the snow-white petals  
Which drop from an overblown rose,  
When Summer ripens to Autumn  
And the freighted year must close.

From the shore come the scents of a garden,  
And between a gap in the trees  
A proud white statue glimmers  
In cold, disdainful ease.

The child of a southern people,  
The thought of an alien race,  
What does she in this pale, northern garden,  
How reconcile it with her grace?

But the moon in her wayward beauty  
Is ever and always the same,  
As lovely as when upon Latmos  
She watched till Endymion came.

Through the water the moon writes her legends  
In light, on the smooth, wet sand;  
They endure for a moment, and vanish,  
And no one may understand.

All round us the secret of Nature  
Is telling itself to our sight,  
We may guess at her meaning but never  
Can know the full mystery of night.

But her power of enchantment is on us,  
We bow to the spell which she weaves,  
Made up of the murmur of waves  
And the manifold whisper of leaves.

Amy Lowell

## **Madonna of the Evening Flowers**

All day long I have been working,  
Now I am tired  
I call: "Where are you?"  
But there is only the oak-tree rustling in the wind.  
The house is very quiet,  
The sun shines in on your books,  
On your scissors and thimble just put down,  
But you are not there.  
Suddenly I am lonely:  
Where are you? I go about searching.

Then I see you,  
Standing under a spire of pale blue larkspur,  
With a basket of roses on your arm.  
You are cool, like silver,  
And you smile.  
I think the Canterbury bells are playing little tunes.

You tell me that the peonies need spraying,  
That the columbines have overrun all bounds,  
That the pyrus japonica should be cut back and rounded.  
You tell me all these things.  
But I look at you, heart of silver,  
White heart-flame of polished silver,  
Burning beneath the blue steeples of the larkspur,  
And I long to kneel instantly at your feet,  
While all about us peal the loud, sweet, Te Deums of the Canterbury bells.

Amy Lowell

## March Evening

Blue through the window burns the twilight;  
Heavy, through trees, blows the warm south wind.  
Glistening, against the chill, gray sky light,  
Wet, black branches are barred and entwined.

Sodden and spongy, the scarce-green grass plot  
Dents into pools where a foot has been.  
Puddles lie spilt in the road a mass, not  
Of water, but steel, with its cold, hard sheen.

Faint fades the fire on the hearth, its embers  
Scattering wide at a stronger gust.  
Above, the old weathercock groans, but remembers  
Creaking, to turn, in its centuried rust.

Dying, forlorn, in dreary sorrow,  
Wrapping the mists round her withering form,  
Day sinks down; and in darkness to-morrow  
Travails to birth in the womb of the storm.

Amy Lowell

## Market Day

White, glittering sunlight fills the market square,  
Spotted and sprigged with shadows. Double rows  
Of bartering booths spread out their tempting shows  
Of globed and golden fruit, the morning air  
Smells sweet with ripeness, on the pavement there  
A wicker basket gapes and overflows  
Spilling out cool, blue plums. The market glows,  
And flaunts, and clatters in its busy care.  
A stately minster at the northern side  
Lifts its twin spires to the distant sky,  
Pinnacled, carved and buttressed; through the wide  
Arched doorway peals an organ, suddenly --  
Crashing, triumphant in its pregnant tide,  
Quenching the square in vibrant harmony.

Amy Lowell

## Mirage

How is it that, being gone, you fill my days,  
And all the long nights are made glad by thee?  
No loneliness is this, nor misery,  
But great content that these should be the ways  
Whereby the Fancy, dreaming as she strays,  
Makes bright and present what she would would be.  
And who shall say if the reality  
Is not with dreams so pregnant. For delays  
And hindrances may bar the wished-for end;  
A thousand misconceptions may prevent  
Our souls from coming near enough to blend;  
Let me but think we have the same intent,  
That each one needs to call the other, "friend!"  
It may be vain illusion. I'm content.

Amy Lowell

## **Monadnock in Early Spring**

Cloud-topped and splendid, dominating all  
The little lesser hills which compass thee,  
Thou standest, bright with April's buoyancy,  
Yet holding Winter in some shaded wall  
Of stern, steep rock; and startled by the call  
Of Spring, thy trees flush with expectancy  
And cast a cloud of crimson, silently,  
Above thy snowy crevices where fall  
Pale shrivelled oak leaves, while the snow beneath  
Melts at their phantom touch. Another year  
Is quick with import. Such each year has been.  
Unmoved thou watchest all, and all bequeath  
Some jewel to thy diadem of power,  
Thou pledge of greater majesty unseen.

Amy Lowell

## **New York at Night**

A near horizon whose sharp jags  
Cut brutally into a sky  
Of leaden heaviness, and crags  
Of houses lift their masonry  
Ugly and foul, and chimneys lie  
And snort, outlined against the gray  
Of lowhung cloud. I hear the sigh  
The goaded city gives, not day  
Nor night can ease her heart, her anguished labours stay.

Below, straight streets, monotonous,  
From north and south, from east and west,  
Stretch glittering; and luminous  
Above, one tower tops the rest  
And holds aloft man's constant quest:  
Time! Joyless emblem of the greed  
Of millions, robber of the best  
Which earth can give, the vulgar creed  
Has seared upon the night its flaming ruthless screeed.

O Night! Whose soothing presence brings  
The quiet shining of the stars.  
O Night! Whose cloak of darkness clings  
So intimately close that scars  
Are hid from our own eyes. Beggars  
By day, our wealth is having night  
To burn our souls before altars  
Dim and tree-shadowed, where the light  
Is shed from a young moon, mysteriously bright.

Where art thou hiding, where thy peace?  
This is the hour, but thou art not.  
Will waking tumult never cease?  
Hast thou thy votary forgot?  
Nature forsakes this man-begot  
And festering wilderness, and now  
The long still hours are here, no jot  
Of dear communing do I know;  
Instead the glaring, man-filled city groans below!

Amy Lowell

### **On Carpaccio's Picture**

Swept, clean, and still, across the polished floor  
From some unshuttered casement, hid from sight,  
The level sunshine slants, its greater light  
Quenching the little lamp which pallid, poor,  
Flickering, unreplenished, at the door  
Has striven against darkness the long night.  
Dawn fills the room, and penetrating, bright,  
The silent sunbeams through the window pour.  
And she lies sleeping, ignorant of Fate,  
Enmeshed in listless dreams, her soul not yet  
Ripened to bear the purport of this day.  
The morning breeze scarce stirs the coverlet,  
A shadow falls across the sunlight; wait!  
A lark is singing as he flies away.

Amy Lowell

## **Opal**

You are ice and fire,  
The touch of you burns my hands like snow.  
You are cold and flame.  
You are the crimson of amaryllis,  
The silver of moon-touched magnolias.  
When I am with you,  
My heart is a frozen pond  
Gleaming with agitated torches.

Submitted by Venus

Amy Lowell

## Patterns

I walk down the garden-paths,  
And all the daffodils  
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.  
I walk down the patterned garden-paths  
In my stiff, brocaded gown.  
With my powdered hair and jeweled fan,  
I too am a rare  
Pattern. As I wander down  
The garden-paths.  
My dress is richly figured,  
And the train  
Makes a pink and silver stain  
On the gravel, and the thrift  
Of the borders.  
Just a plate of current fashion,  
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.  
Not a softness anywhere about me,  
Only whalebone and brocade.  
And I sink on a seat in the shade  
Of a lime tree. For my passion  
Wars against the stiff brocade.  
The daffodils and squills  
Flutter in the breeze  
As they please.  
And I weep;  
For the lime-tree is in blossom  
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the plashing of waterdrops  
In the marble fountain  
Comes down the garden-paths.  
The dripping never stops.  
Underneath my stiffened gown  
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,  
A basin in the midst of hedges grown  
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,  
But she guesses he is near,  
And the sliding of the water  
Seems the stroking of a dear  
Hand upon her.  
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!  
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.  
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,  
And he would stumble after,  
Bewildered by my laughter.  
I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the  
buckles on his shoes.  
I would choose  
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,  
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover.

Till he caught me in the shade,  
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he  
clasped me,  
Aching, melting, unafraid.  
With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,  
And the plopping of the waterdrops,  
All about us in the open afternoon--  
I am very like to swoon  
With the weight of this brocade,  
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom  
In my bosom,  
Is a letter I have hid.  
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the  
Duke.  
"Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell  
Died in action Thursday se'nnight."  
As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,  
The letters squirmed like snakes.  
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.  
"No," I told him.  
"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.  
No, no answer."  
And I walked into the garden,  
Up and down the patterned paths,  
In my stiff, correct brocade.  
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,  
Each one.  
I stood upright too,  
Held rigid to the pattern  
By the stiffness of my gown.  
Up and down I walked,  
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.  
In a month, here, underneath this lime,  
We would have broke the pattern;  
He for me, and I for him,  
He as Colonel, I as Lady,  
On this shady seat.  
He had a whim  
That sunlight carried blessing.  
And I answered, "It shall be as you have said."  
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk  
Up and down  
The patterned garden-paths  
In my stiff, brocaded gown.  
The squills and daffodils  
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.

I shall go  
Up and down  
In my gown.  
Gorgeously arrayed,  
Boned and stayed.  
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace  
By each button, hook, and lace.  
For the man who should loose me is dead,  
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,  
In a pattern called a war.  
Christ! What are patterns for?

Amy Lowell

## **Petals**

Life is a stream  
On which we strew  
Petal by petal the flower of our heart;  
The end lost in dream,  
They float past our view,  
We only watch their glad, early start.

Freighted with hope,  
Crimsoned with joy,  
We scatter the leaves of our opening rose;  
Their widening scope,  
Their distant employ,  
We never shall know. And the stream as it flows  
Sweeps them away,  
Each one is gone  
Ever beyond into infinite ways.  
We alone stay  
While years hurry on,  
The flower fared forth, though its fragrance still stays.

Amy Lowell

## **Prayer for a profusion of sunflowers**

Send sunflowers!  
With my turkey-bone whistle  
I am calling the birds  
To sing upon the sunflowers.  
For when the clouds hear them singing  
They will come quickly,  
And rain will fall upon our fields.  
Send sunflowers!

Amy Lowell

## **Prayer for lightning**

My corn is green with red tassels,  
I am praying to the lightning to ripen my corn,  
I am praying to the thunder which carries the lightning.  
Corn is sweet where lightning has fallen.  
I pray to the six-coloured clouds.

Amy Lowell

## Roads

I know a country laced with roads,  
They join the hills and they span the brooks,  
They weave like a shuttle between broad fields,  
And slide discreetly through hidden nooks.  
They are canopied like a Persian dome  
And carpeted with orient dyes.  
They are myriad-voiced, and musical,  
And scented with happiest memories.  
O Winding roads that I know so well,  
Every twist and turn, every hollow and hill!  
They are set in my heart to a pulsing tune  
Gay as a honey-bee humming in June.  
'T is the rhythmic beat of a horse's feet  
And the pattering paws of a sheep-dog bitch;  
'T is the creaking trees, and the singing breeze,  
And the rustle of leaves in the road-side ditch.

A cow in a meadow shakes her bell  
And the notes cut sharp through the autumn air,  
Each chattering brook bears a fleet of leaves  
Their cargo the rainbow, and just now where  
The sun splashed bright on the road ahead  
A startled rabbit quivered and fled.  
O Uphill roads and roads that dip down!  
You curl your sun-spattered length along,  
And your march is beaten into a song  
By the softly ringing hoofs of a horse  
And the panting breath of the dogs I love.  
The pageant of Autumn follows its course  
And the blue sky of Autumn laughs above.

And the song and the country become as one,  
I see it as music, I hear it as light;  
Prismatic and shimmering, trembling to tone,  
The land of desire, my soul's delight.  
And always it beats in my listening ears  
With the gentle thud of a horse's stride,  
With the swift-falling steps of many dogs,  
Following, following at my side.  
O Roads that journey to fairyland!  
Radiant highways whose vistas gleam,  
Leading me on, under crimson leaves,  
To the opaline gates of the Castles of Dream.

Amy Lowell

## Song

Oh! To be a flower  
Nodding in the sun,  
Bending, then upspringing  
As the breezes run;  
Holding up  
A scent-brimmed cup,  
Full of summer's fragrance to the summer sun.

Oh! To be a butterfly  
Still, upon a flower,  
Winking with its painted wings,  
Happy in the hour.  
Blossoms hold  
Mines of gold  
Deep within the farthest heart of each chalice flower.

Oh! To be a cloud  
Blowing through the blue,  
Shadowing the mountains,  
Rushing loudly through  
Valleys deep  
Where torrents keep  
Always their plunging thunder and their misty arch of blue.

Oh! To be a wave  
Splintering on the sand,  
Drawing back, but leaving  
Lingeringly the land.  
Rainbow light  
Flashes bright  
Telling tales of coral caves half hid in yellow sand.

Soon they die, the flowers;  
Insects live a day;  
Clouds dissolve in showers;  
Only waves at play  
Last forever.  
Shall endeavor  
Make a sea of purpose mightier than we dream to-day?

Amy Lowell

## **Suggested by the Cover of a Volume of Keats's Poems**

Wild little bird, who chose thee for a sign  
To put upon the cover of this book?  
Who heard thee singing in the distance dim,  
The vague, far greenness of the enshrouding wood,  
When the damp freshness of the morning earth  
Was full of pungent sweetness and thy song?

Who followed over moss and twisted roots,  
And pushed through the wet leaves of trailing vines  
Where slanting sunbeams gleamed uncertainly,  
While ever clearer came the dropping notes,  
Until, at last, two widening trunks disclosed  
Thee singing on a spray of branching beech,  
Hidden, then seen; and always that same song  
Of joyful sweetness, rapture incarnate,  
Filled the hushed, rustling stillness of the wood?

We do not know what bird thou art. Perhaps  
That fairy bird, fabled in island tale,  
Who never sings but once, and then his song  
Is of such fearful beauty that he dies  
From sheer exuberance of melody.

For this they took thee, little bird, for this  
They captured thee, tilting among the leaves,  
And stamped thee for a symbol on this book.  
For it contains a song surpassing thine,  
Richer, more sweet, more poignant. And the poet  
Who felt this burning beauty, and whose heart  
Was full of loveliest things, sang all he knew  
A little while, and then he died; too frail  
To bear this untamed, passionate burst of song.

Amy Lowell

## Summer

Some men there are who find in nature all  
Their inspiration, hers the sympathy  
Which spurs them on to any great endeavor,  
To them the fields and woods are closest friends,  
And they hold dear communion with the hills;  
The voice of waters soothes them with its fall,  
And the great winds bring healing in their sound.  
To them a city is a prison house  
Where pent up human forces labour and strive,  
Where beauty dwells not, driven forth by man;  
But where in winter they must live until  
Summer gives back the spaces of the hills.  
To me it is not so. I love the earth  
And all the gifts of her so lavish hand:  
Sunshine and flowers, rivers and rushing winds,  
Thick branches swaying in a winter storm,  
And moonlight playing in a boat's wide wake;  
But more than these, and much, ah, how much more,  
I love the very human heart of man.  
Above me spreads the hot, blue mid-day sky,  
Far down the hillside lies the sleeping lake  
Lazily reflecting back the sun,  
And scarcely ruffled by the little breeze  
Which wanders idly through the nodding ferns.  
The blue crest of the distant mountain, tops  
The green crest of the hill on which I sit;  
And it is summer, glorious, deep-toned summer,  
The very crown of nature's changing year  
When all her surging life is at its full.  
To me alone it is a time of pause,  
A void and silent space between two worlds,  
When inspiration lags, and feeling sleeps,  
Gathering strength for efforts yet to come.  
For life alone is creator of life,  
And closest contact with the human world  
Is like a lantern shining in the night  
To light me to a knowledge of myself.  
I love the vivid life of winter months  
In constant intercourse with human minds,  
When every new experience is gain  
And on all sides we feel the great world's heart;  
The pulse and throb of life which makes us men!

Amy Lowell

## **Teatro Bambino. Dublin, N. H.**

How still it is! Sunshine itself here falls  
In quiet shafts of light through the high trees  
Which, arching, make a roof above the walls  
Changing from sun to shadow as each breeze  
Lingers a moment, charmed by the strange sight  
Of an Italian theatre, storied, seer  
Of vague romance, and time's long history;  
Where tiers of grass-grown seats sprinkled with white,  
Sweet-scented clover, form a broken sphere  
Grouped round the stage in hushed expectancy.

What sound is that which echoes through the wood?  
Is it the reedy note of an oaten pipe?  
Perchance a minute more will see the brood  
Of the shaggy forest god, and on his lip  
Will rest the rushes he is wont to play.  
His train in woven baskets bear ripe fruit  
And weave a dance with ropes of gray acorns,  
So light their touch the grasses scarcely sway  
As they the measure tread to the lilting flute.  
Alas! 't is only Fancy thus adorns.

A cloud drifts idly over the shining sun.  
How damp it seems, how silent, still, and strange!  
Surely 't was here some tragedy was done,  
And here the chorus sang each coming change?  
Sure this is deep in some sweet, southern wood,  
These are not pines, but cypress tall and dark;  
That is no thrush which sings so rapturously,  
But the nightingale in his most passionate mood  
Bursting his little heart with anguish. Hark!  
The tread of sandalled feet comes noiselessly.

The silence almost is a sound, and dreams  
Take on the semblances of finite things;  
So potent is the spell that what but seems  
Elsewhere, is lifted here on Fancy's wings.  
The little woodland theatre seems to wait,  
All tremulous with hope and wistful joy,  
For something that is sure to come at last,  
Some deep emotion, satisfying, great.  
It grows a living presence, bold and shy,  
Cradling the future in a glorious past.

Amy Lowell

## **The Bungler**

You glow in my heart  
Like the flames of uncontrolled candles.  
But when I go to warm my hands,  
My clumsiness overturns the light,  
and then I stumble  
Against the tables and chairs.

Amy Lowell

## **The Crescent Moon**

Slipping softly through the sky  
Little horned, happy moon,  
Can you hear me up so high?  
Will you come down soon?

On my nursery window-sill  
Will you stay your steady flight?  
And then float away with me  
Through the summer night?

Brushing over tops of trees,  
Playing hide and seek with stars,  
Peeping up through shiny clouds  
At Jupiter or Mars.

I shall fill my lap with roses  
Gathered in the milky way,  
All to carry home to mother.  
Oh! what will she say!

Little rocking, sailing moon,  
Do you hear me shout -- Ahoy!  
Just a little nearer, moon,  
To please a little boy.

Amy Lowell

## **The End**

Throughout the echoing chambers of my brain  
I hear your words in mournful cadence toll  
Like some slow passing-bell which warns the soul  
Of sundering darkness. Unrelenting, fain  
To batter down resistance, fall again  
Stroke after stroke, insistent diastole,  
The bitter blows of truth, until the whole  
Is hammered into fact made strangely plain.  
Where shall I look for comfort? Not to you.  
Our worlds are drawn apart, our spirit's suns  
Divided, and the light of mine burnt dim.  
Now in the haunted twilight I must do  
Your will. I grasp the cup which over-runs,  
And with my trembling lips I touch the rim.

Amy Lowell

## The Fool Errant

The Fool Errant sat by the highway of life  
And his gaze wandered up and his gaze wandered down,  
A vigorous youth, but with no wish to walk,  
Yet his longing was great for the distant town.

He whistled a little frivolous tune  
Which he felt to be pulsing with ecstasy,  
For he thought that success always followed desire,  
Such a very superlative fool was he.

A maiden came by on an ambling mule,  
Her gown was rose-red and her kerchief blue,  
On her lap she carried a basket of eggs.  
Thought the fool, "There is certainly room for two."

So he jauntily swaggered towards the maid

And put out his hand to the bridle-rein.  
"My pretty girl," quoth the fool, "take me up,  
For to ride with you to the town I am fain."

But the maiden struck at his upraised arm  
And pelted him hotly with eggs, a score.  
The mule, lashed into a fury, ran;  
The fool went back to his stone and swore.

Then out of the cloud of settling dust  
The burly form of an abbot appeared,  
Reading his office he rode to the town.  
And the fool got up, for his heart was cheered.

He stood in the midst of the long, white road  
And swept off his cap till it touched the ground.  
"Ah, Reverent Sir, well met," said the fool,  
"A worthier transport never was found.

"I pray you allow me to mount with you,  
Your palfrey seems both sturdy and young."  
The abbot looked up from the holy book  
And cried out in anger, "Hold your tongue!

"How dare you obstruct the King's highroad,  
You saucy varlet, get out of my way."  
Then he gave the fool a cut with his whip

And leaving him smarting, he rode away.

The fool was angry, the fool was sore,  
And he cursed the folly of monks and maids.  
"If I could but meet with a man," sighed the fool,  
"For a woman fears, and a friar upbraids."

Then he saw a flashing of distant steel  
And the clanking of harness greeted his ears,  
And up the road journeyed knights-at-arms,  
With waving plumes and glittering spears.

The fool took notice and slowly arose,  
Not quite so sure was his foolish heart.  
If priests and women would none of him  
Was it likely a knight would take his part?

They sang as they rode, these lusty boys,  
When one chanced to turn toward the highway's side,  
"There's a sorry figure of fun," jested he,  
"Well, Sirrah! move back, there is scarce room to ride."

"Good Sirs, Kind Sirs," begged the crestfallen fool,  
"I pray of your courtesy speech with you,  
I'm for yonder town, and have no horse to ride,  
Have you never a charger will carry two?"

Then the company halted and laughed out loud.  
"Was such a request ever made to a knight?"  
"And where are your legs," asked one, "if you start,  
You may be inside the town gates to-night."

"'T is a lazy fellow, let him alone,  
They've no room in the town for such idlers as he."  
But one bent from his saddle and said, "My man,  
Art thou not ashamed to beg charity!

"Thou art well set up, and thy legs are strong,  
But it much misgives me lest thou'rt a fool;  
For beggars get only a beggar's crust,  
Wise men are reared in a different school."

Then they clattered away in the dust and the wind,  
And the fool slunk back to his lonely stone;  
He began to see that the man who asks  
Must likewise give and not ask alone.

Purple tree-shadows crept over the road,  
The level sun flung an orange light,  
And the fool laid his head on the hard, gray stone  
And wept as he realized advancing night.

A great, round moon rose over a hill  
And the steady wind blew yet more cool;  
And crouched on a stone a wayfarer sobbed,  
For at last he knew he was only a fool.

Amy Lowell

## **The Fruit Garden Path**

The path runs straight between the flowering rows,  
A moonlit path, hemmed in by beds of bloom,  
Where phlox and marigolds dispute for room  
With tall, red dahlias and the briar rose.  
'T is reckless prodigality which throws  
Into the night these wafts of rich perfume  
Which sweep across the garden like a plume.  
Over the trees a single bright star glows.  
Dear garden of my childhood, here my years  
Have run away like little grains of sand;  
The moments of my life, its hopes and fears  
Have all found utterance here, where now I stand;  
My eyes ache with the weight of unshed tears,  
You are my home, do you not understand?

Amy Lowell

## **The Garden by Moonlight**

A black cat among roses,  
Phlox, lilac-misted under a first-quarter moon,  
The sweet smells of heliotrope and night-scented stock.  
The garden is very still,  
It is dazed with moonlight,  
Contented with perfume,  
Dreaming the opium dreams of its folded poppies.  
Firefly lights open and vanish  
High as the tip buds of the golden glow  
Low as the sweet alyssum flowers at my feet.  
Moon-shimmer on leaves and trellises,  
Moon-spikes shafting through the snowball bush.  
Only the little faces of the ladies' delight are alert and staring,  
Only the cat, padding between the roses,  
Shakes a branch and breaks the chequered pattern  
As water is broken by the falling of a leaf.  
Then you come,  
And you are quiet like the garden,  
And white like the alyssum flowers,  
And beautiful as the silent sparks of the fireflies.  
Ah, Beloved, do you see those orange lilies?  
They knew my mother,  
But who belonging to me will they know  
When I am gone.

Amy Lowell

## **The Green Bowl**

This little bowl is like a mossy pool  
In a Spring wood, where dogtooth violets grow  
Nodding in chequered sunshine of the trees;  
A quiet place, still, with the sound of birds,  
Where, though unseen, is heard the endless song  
And murmur of the never resting sea.  
'T was winter, Roger, when you made this cup,  
But coming Spring guided your eager hand  
And round the edge you fashioned young green leaves,  
A proper chalice made to hold the shy  
And little flowers of the woods. And here  
They will forget their sad uprooting, lost  
In pleasure that this circle of bright leaves  
Should be their setting; once more they will dream  
They hear winds wandering through lofty trees  
And see the sun smiling between the leaves.

Amy Lowell

## **The Lamp of Life**

Always we are following a light,  
Always the light recedes; with groping hands  
We stretch toward this glory, while the lands  
We journey through are hidden from our sight  
Dim and mysterious, folded deep in night,  
We care not, all our utmost need demands  
Is but the light, the light! So still it stands  
Surely our own if we exert our might.  
Fool! Never can'st thou grasp this fleeting gleam,  
Its glowing flame would die if it were caught,  
Its value is that it doth always seem  
But just a little farther on. Distraught,  
But lighted ever onward, we are brought  
Upon our way unknowing, in a dream.

Amy Lowell

## The Letter

Little cramped words scrawling all over  
the paper  
Like dragged fly's legs,  
What can you tell of the flaring moon  
Through the oak leaves?  
Or of my uncertain window and the  
bare floor

Spattered with moonlight?  
Your silly quirks and twists have nothing  
in them  
Of blossoming hawthorns,  
And this paper is dull, crisp, smooth,  
virgin of loveliness  
Beneath my hand.

I am tired, Beloved, of chafing my heart  
against  
The want of you;  
Of squeezing it into little inkdrops,  
And posting it.  
And I scald alone, here, under the fire  
Of the great moon.

Submitted by Venus

Amy Lowell

## **The Little Garden**

A little garden on a bleak hillside  
Where deep the heavy, dazzling mountain snow  
Lies far into the spring. The sun's pale glow  
Is scarcely able to melt patches wide  
About the single rose bush. All denied  
Of nature's tender ministries. But no, --  
For wonder-working faith has made it blow  
With flowers many hued and starry-eyed.  
Here sleeps the sun long, idle summer hours;  
Here butterflies and bees fare far to rove  
Amid the crumpled leaves of poppy flowers;  
Here four o'clocks, to the passionate night above  
Fling whiffs of perfume, like pale incense showers.  
A little garden, loved with a great love!

Amy Lowell

## **The Matrix**

Goaded and harassed in the factory  
That tears our life up into bits of days  
Ticked off upon a clock which never stays,  
Shredding our portion of Eternity,  
We break away at last, and steal the key  
Which hides a world empty of hours; ways  
Of space unroll, and Heaven overlays  
The leafy, sun-lit earth of Fantasy.  
Beyond the ilex shadow glares the sun,  
Scorching against the blue flame of the sky.  
Brown lily-pads lie heavy and supine  
Within a granite basin, under one  
The bronze-gold glimmer of a carp; and I  
Reach out my hand and pluck a nectarine.

Amy Lowell

## The Painted Ceiling

My Grandpapa lives in a wonderful house  
With a great many windows and doors,  
There are stairs that go up, and stairs that go down,  
And such beautiful, slippery floors.

But of all of the rooms, even mother's and mine,  
And the bookroom, and parlour and all,  
I like the green dining-room so much the best  
Because of its ceiling and wall.

Right over your head is a funny round hole  
With apples and pears falling through;  
There's a big bunch of grapes all purple and sweet,  
And melons and pineapples too.

They tumble and tumble, but never come down  
Though I've stood underneath a long while  
With my mouth open wide, for I always have hoped  
Just a cherry would drop from the pile.

No matter how early I run there to look  
It has always begun to fall through;  
And one night when at bedtime I crept in to see,  
It was falling by candle-light too.

I am sure they are magical fruits, and each one  
Makes you hear things, or see things, or go  
Forever invisible; but it's no use,  
And of course I shall just never know.

For the ladder's too heavy to lift, and the chairs  
Are not nearly so tall as I need.  
I've given up hope, and I feel I shall die  
Without having accomplished the deed.

It's a little bit sad, when you seem very near  
To adventures and things of that sort,  
Which nearly begin, and then don't; and you know  
It is only because you are short.

Amy Lowell

## **The Pleiades**

By day you cannot see the sky  
For it is up so very high.  
You look and look, but it's so blue  
That you can never see right through.

But when night comes it is quite plain,  
And all the stars are there again.  
They seem just like old friends to me,  
I've known them all my life you see.

There is the dipper first, and there  
Is Cassiopeia in her chair,  
Orion's belt, the Milky Way,  
And lots I know but cannot say.

One group looks like a swarm of bees,  
Papa says they're the Pleiades;  
But I think they must be the toy  
Of some nice little angel boy.

Perhaps his jackstones which to-day  
He has forgot to put away,  
And left them lying on the sky  
Where he will find them bye and bye.

I wish he'd come and play with me.  
We'd have such fun, for it would be  
A most unusual thing for boys  
To feel that they had stars for toys!

Amy Lowell

## **The Poet**

What instinct forces man to journey on,  
Urged by a longing blind but dominant!  
Nothing he sees can hold him, nothing daunt  
His never failing eagerness. The sun  
Setting in splendour every night has won  
His vassalage; those towers flamboyant  
Of airy cloudland palaces now haunt  
His daylight wanderings. Forever done  
With simple joys and quiet happiness  
He guards the vision of the sunset sky;  
Though faint with weariness he must possess  
Some fragment of the sunset's majesty;  
He spurns life's human friendships to profess  
Life's loneliness of dreaming ecstasy.

Amy Lowell

## **The Promise of the Morning Star**

Thou father of the children of my brain  
By thee engendered in my willing heart,  
How can I thank thee for this gift of art  
Poured out so lavishly, and not in vain.

What thou created never more can die,  
Thy fructifying power lives in me  
And I conceive, knowing it is by thee,  
Dear other parent of my poetry!

For I was but a shadow with a name,  
Perhaps by now the very name's forgot;  
So strange is Fate that it has been my lot  
To learn through thee the presence of that aim

Which evermore must guide me. All unknown,  
By me unguessed, by thee not even dreamed,  
A tree has blossomed in a night that seemed  
Of stubborn, barren wood. For thou hast sown

This seed of beauty in a ground of truth.  
Humbly I dedicate myself, and yet  
I tremble with a sudden fear to set  
New music ringing through my fading youth.

Amy Lowell

## The Road to Avignon

A Minstrel stands on a marble stair,  
Blown by the bright wind, debonair;  
Below lies the sea, a sapphire floor,  
Above on the terrace a turret door  
Frames a lady, listless and wan,  
But fair for the eye to rest upon.  
The minstrel plucks at his silver strings,  
And looking up to the lady, sings: --  
Down the road to Avignon,  
The long, long road to Avignon,  
Across the bridge to Avignon,  
One morning in the spring.

The octagon tower casts a shade  
Cool and gray like a cutlass blade;  
In sun-baked vines the cicadas spin,  
The little green lizards run out and in.  
A sail dips over the ocean's rim,  
And bubbles rise to the fountain's brim.  
The minstrel touches his silver strings,  
And gazing up to the lady, sings: --  
Down the road to Avignon,  
The long, long road to Avignon,  
Across the bridge to Avignon,  
One morning in the spring.

Slowly she walks to the balustrade,  
Idly notes how the blossoms fade  
In the sun's caress; then crosses where  
The shadow shelters a carved chair.  
Within its curve, supine she lies,  
And wearily closes her tired eyes.  
The minstrel beseeches his silver strings,  
And holding the lady spellbound, sings: --  
Down the road to Avignon,  
The long, long road to Avignon,  
Across the bridge to Avignon,  
One morning in the spring.

Clouds sail over the distant trees,  
Petals are shaken down by the breeze,  
They fall on the terrace tiles like snow;  
The sighing of waves sounds, far below.  
A humming-bird kisses the lips of a rose  
Then laden with honey and love he goes.  
The minstrel woos with his silver strings,  
And climbing up to the lady, sings: --  
Down the road to Avignon,  
The long, long road to Avignon,  
Across the bridge to Avignon,  
One morning in the spring.

Step by step, and he comes to her,  
Fearful lest she suddenly stir.  
Sunshine and silence, and each to each,  
The lute and his singing their only speech;  
He leans above her, her eyes unclose,  
The humming-bird enters another rose.  
The minstrel hushes his silver strings.  
Hark! The beating of humming-birds' wings!  
Down the road to Avignon,  
The long, long road to Avignon,  
Across the bridge to Avignon,  
One morning in the spring.

Amy Lowell

## **The Starling**

Forever the impenetrable wall  
Of self confines my poor rebellious soul,  
I never see the towering white clouds roll  
Before a sturdy wind, save through the small  
Barred window of my jail. I live a thrall  
With all my outer life a clipped, square hole,  
Rectangular; a fraction of a scroll  
Unwound and winding like a worsted ball.  
My thoughts are grown uneager and depressed  
Through being always mine, my fancy's wings  
Are moulted and the feathers blown away.  
I weary for desires never guessed,  
For alien passions, strange imaginings,  
To be some other person for a day.

Amy Lowell

## **The Taxi**

When I go away from you  
The world beats dead  
Like a slackened drum.  
I call out for you against the jugged stars  
And shout into the ridges of the wind.  
Streets coming fast,  
One after the other,  
Wedge you away from me,  
AND the lamps of the city prick my eyes  
So that I can no longer see your face.  
Why should I leave you,  
To wound myself upon the sharp edges of the night?

Amy Lowell

## **The Trout**

Naughty little speckled trout,  
Can't I coax you to come out?  
Is it such great fun to play  
In the water every day?

Do you pull the Naiads' hair  
Hiding in the lilies there?  
Do you hunt for fishes' eggs,  
Or watch tadpoles grow their legs?

Do the little trouts have school  
In some deep sun-glintoned pool,  
And in recess play at tag  
Round that bed of purple flag?

I have tried so hard to catch you,  
Hours and hours I've sat to watch you;  
But you never will come out,  
Naughty little speckled trout!

Amy Lowell

## The Way

At first a mere thread of a footpath half blotted out by the grasses  
Sweeping triumphant across it, it wound between hedges of roses  
Whose blossoms were poised above leaves as pond lilies float on the water,  
While hidden by bloom in a hawthorn a bird filled the morning with singing.

It widened a highway, majestic, stretching ever to distant horizons,  
Where shadows of tree-branches wavered, vague outlines invaded by sunshine;  
No sound but the wind as it whispered the secrets of earth to the flowers,  
And the hum of the yellow bees, honey-laden and dusty with pollen.  
And Summer said, "Come, follow onward, with no thought save the longing to wander,  
The wind, and the bees, and the flowers, all singing the great song of Nature,  
Are minstrels of change and of promise, they herald the joy of the Future."

Later the solitude vanished, confused and distracted the road  
Where many were seeking and jostling. Left behind were the trees and the flowers,  
The half-realized beauty of quiet, the sacred unconscious communing.  
And now he is come to a river, a line of gray, sullen water,  
Not blue and splashing, but dark, rolling somberly on to the ocean.  
But on the far side is a city whose windows flame gold in the sunset.  
It lies fair and shining before him, a gem set betwixt sky and water,  
And spanning the river a bridge, frail promise to longing desire,  
Flung by man in his infinite courage, across the stern force of the water;  
And he looks at the river and fears, the bridge is so slight, yet he ventures  
His life to its fragile keeping, if it fails the waves will engulf him.  
O Arches! be strong to uphold him, and bear him across to the city,  
The beautiful city whose spires still glow with the fires of sunset!

Amy Lowell

## The Wind

He shouts in the sails of the ships at sea,  
He steals the down from the honeybee,  
He makes the forest trees rustle and sing,  
He twirls my kite till it breaks its string.  
Laughing, dancing, sunny wind,  
Whistling, howling, rainy wind,  
North, South, East and West,  
Each is the wind I like the best.  
He calls up the fog and hides the hills,  
He whirls the wings of the great windmills,  
The weathercocks love him and turn to discover  
His whereabouts -- but he's gone, the rover!  
Laughing, dancing, sunny wind,  
Whistling, howling, rainy wind,  
North, South, East and West,  
Each is the wind I like the best.

The pine trees toss him their cones with glee,  
The flowers bend low in courtesy,  
Each wave flings up a shower of pearls,  
The flag in front of the school unfurls.  
Laughing, dancing, sunny wind,  
Whistling, howling, rainy wind,  
North, South, East and West,  
Each is the wind I like the best.

Amy Lowell

## To a Friend

I ask but one thing of you, only one,  
That always you will be my dream of you;  
That never shall I wake to find untrue  
All this I have believed and rested on,  
Forever vanished, like a vision gone  
Out into the night. Alas, how few  
There are who strike in us a chord we knew  
Existed, but so seldom heard its tone  
We tremble at the half-forgotten sound.  
The world is full of rude awakenings  
And heaven-born castles shattered to the ground,  
Yet still our human longing vainly clings  
To a belief in beauty through all wrongs.  
O stay your hand, and leave my heart its songs!

Amy Lowell

## **To an Early Daffodil**

Thou yellow trumpeter of laggard Spring!  
Thou herald of rich Summer's myriad flowers!  
The climbing sun with new recovered powers  
Does warm thee into being, through the ring  
Of rich, brown earth he woos thee, makes thee fling  
Thy green shoots up, inheriting the dowers  
Of bending sky and sudden, sweeping showers,  
Till ripe and blossoming thou art a thing  
To make all nature glad, thou art so gay;  
To fill the lonely with a joy untold;  
Nodding at every gust of wind to-day,  
To-morrow jewelled with raindrops. Always bold  
To stand erect, full in the dazzling play  
Of April's sun, for thou hast caught his gold.

Amy Lowell

## To Elizabeth Ward Perkins

Dear Bessie, would my tired rhyme  
Had force to rise from apathy,  
And shaking off its lethargy  
Ring word-tones like a Christmas chime.

But in my soul's high belfry, chill  
The bitter wind of doubt has blown,  
The summer swallows all have flown,  
The bells are frost-bound, mute and still.

Upon the crumbling boards the snow  
Has drifted deep, the clappers hang  
Prismed with icicles, their clang  
Unheard since ages long ago.

The rope I pull is stiff and cold,  
My straining ears detect no sound  
Except a sigh, as round and round  
The wind rocks through the timbers old.

Below, I know the church is bright  
With haloed tapers, warm with prayer;  
But here I only feel the air  
Of icy centuries of night.

Beneath my feet the snow is lit  
And gemmed with colours, red, and blue,  
Topaz, and green, where light falls through  
The saints that in the windows sit.

Here darkness seems a spectred thing,  
Voiceless and haunting, while the stars  
Mock with a light of long dead years  
The ache of present suffering.

Silent and winter-killed I stand,  
No carol hymns my debt to you;  
But take this frozen thought in lieu,  
And thaw its music in your hand.

Amy Lowell

## To John Keats

Great master! Boyish, sympathetic man!  
Whose orb'd and ripened genius lightly hung  
From life's slim, twisted tendril and there swung  
In crimson-sphered completeness; guardian  
Of crystal portals through whose openings fan  
The spiced winds which blew when earth was young,  
Scattering wreaths of stars, as Jove once flung  
A golden shower from heights cerulean.  
Crumbled before thy majesty we bow.  
Forget thy empurpled state, thy panoply  
Of greatness, and be merciful and near;  
A youth who trudged the highroad we tread now  
Singing the miles behind him; so may we  
Faint throbbings of thy music overhear.

Amy Lowell

## **Venetian Glass**

As one who sails upon a wide, blue sea  
Far out of sight of land, his mind intent  
Upon the sailing of his little boat,  
On tightening ropes and shaping fair his course,  
Hears suddenly, across the restless sea,  
The rhythmic striking of some towered clock,  
And wakes from thoughtless idleness to time:  
Time, the slow pulse which beats eternity!  
So through the vacancy of busy life  
At intervals you cross my path and bring  
The deep solemnity of passing years.  
For you I have shed bitter tears, for you  
I have relinquished that for which my heart  
Cried out in selfish longing. And to-night  
Having just left you, I can say: "T is well.  
Thank God that I have known a soul so true,  
So nobly just, so worthy to be loved!"

Amy Lowell

## Venus Transiens

Tell me,  
Was Venus more beautiful  
Than you are,  
When she topped  
The crinkled waves,  
Drifting shoreward  
On her plaited shell?  
Was Botticelli's vision  
Fairer than mine;  
And were the painted rosebuds  
He tossed his lady,  
Of better worth  
Than the words I blow about you  
To cover your too great loveliness  
As with a gauze  
Of misted silver?  
For me  
You stand poised  
In the blue and buoyant air,  
Cinctured by bright winds,  
Treading the sunlight.  
And the waves which precede you  
Ripple and stir  
The sands at my feet.

Amy Lowell

## White Currants

Shall I give you white currants?  
I do not know why, but I have a sudden fancy for this fruit.  
At the moment, the idea of them cherishes my senses,  
And they seem more desirable than flawless emeralds.  
Since I am, in fact, empty-handed,  
I might have chosen gems out of India,  
But I choose white currants.  
Is it because the raucous wind is hurtling round the house-corners?  
I see it with curled lips and stripped fangs, gaunt and haunting energy,  
Come to snout, and nibble, and kill the little crocus roots.  
Shall we call it white currants?  
You may consider it as a symbol if you please.  
You may find them tart, or sweet, or merely agreeable in colour,  
So long as you accept them,  
And me.

Amy Lowell

## Women's harvest song

I am waving a ripe sunflower,  
I am scattering sunflower pollen to the four world-quarters.  
I am joyful because of my melons,  
I am joyful because of my beans,  
I am joyful because of my squashes.

The sunflower waves.  
So did the corn wave  
When the wind blew against it,  
So did my white corn bend  
When the red lightning descended upon it,  
It trembled as the sunflower  
When the rain beat down its leaves.

Great is a ripe sunflower,  
And great was the sun above my corn-fields.  
His fingers lifted up the corn-ears,  
His hands fashioned my melons,  
And set my beans full in the pods.  
Therefore my heart is happy  
And I will lay many blue prayer-sticks at the shrine of Ta-wa.  
I will give corn to Ta-wa,  
Yellow corn, blue corn, black corn.  
I wave the sunflower,  
The sunflower heavy with pollen.  
I wave it, I turn it, I sing,  
Because I am happy.

Amy Lowell

## **Women's song of the corn**

How beautiful are the corn rows,  
Stretching to the morning sun,  
Stretching to the evening sun.  
Very beautiful, the long rows of corn.

How beautiful is the white corn,  
I husk it,  
I grind it.  
Very beautiful, my white corn.

How beautiful is the red corn,  
I gather it and make fine meal,  
I am glad doing this.  
Very beautiful, my red corn.

How beautiful is the black corn,  
I give it to my father,  
To my mother,  
I give it to my child.  
Very beautiful, the black corn.

How beautiful is the mottled corn,  
Like the sky with little clouds,  
I eat it looking at the sky.  
Very beautiful, my mottled corn.

Amy Lowell