Classic Poetry Series

Mathilde Blind

- poems -

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A Child's Fancy

"Hush, hush! Speak softly, Mother dear,
So that the daisies may not hear;
For when the stars begin to peep,
The pretty daisies go to sleep.

"See, Mother, round us on the lawn,
With soft white lashes closely drawn,
They've shut their eyes so golden-gay,
That looked up through the long, long day.

"But now they're tired of all the fun--
Of bees and birds, of wind and sun
Playing their game at hide-and-seek;--
Then very softly let us speak."

A myriad stars above the child
Looked down from heaven and sweetly smiled;
But not a star in all the skies
Beamed on him with his Mother's eyes.

She stroked his curly chestnut head,
And whispering very softly, said,
"I'd quite forgotten they might hear;
Thank you for that reminder, dear.

Mathilde Blind

A Dream

Only a dream, a beautiful baseless dream;
Only a bright
Flash from your eyes, a brief electrical gleam,
Charged with delight.

Only a waking, alone, in the moon's last gleam
Fading from sight;
Only a flooding of tears that shudder and stream
Fast through the night.

Mathilde Blind

A Fantasy

I was an Arab,
I loved my horse;
Swift as an arrow
He swept the course.

Sweet as a lamb
He came to hand;
He was the flower
Of all the land.

Through lonely nights
I rode afar;
God lit His lights--
Star upon star.

God's in the desert;
His breath the air:
Beautiful desert,
Boundless and bare!

Free as the wild wind,
Light as a foal;
Ah, there is room there
To stretch one's soul.

Far reached my thought,
Scant were my needs:
A few bananas
And lotus seeds.

Sparkling as water
Cool in the shade,
Ibrahim's daughter,
Beautiful maid.

Out of thy Kulleh,
Fairest and first,
Give me to drink
Quencher of thirst.

I am athirst, girl;
Parched with desire,
Love in my bosom
Burns as a fire.

Green thy oasis,
Waving with Palms;
Oh, be no niggard,
Maid, with thy alms.

Kiss me with kisses,
Buds of thy mouth,

Sweeter than Cassia
Fresh from the South.

Bind me with tresses,
Clasp with a curl;
And in caresses
Stifle me, girl.

I was an Arab
Ages ago!
Hence this home-sickness
And all my woe.

Mathilde Blind

A Parting

The year is on the wing, my love,
With tearful days and nights;
The clouds are on the wing above
With gathering swallow-flights.

The year is on the wing, my sweet,
And in the ghostly race,
With patter of unnumbered feet,
The dead leaves fly apace.

The year is on the wing, and shakes
The last rose from its tree;
And I, whose heart in parting breaks,
Must bid adieu to thee.

Mathilde Blind

A Spring Song

Dark sod pierced by flames of flowers,
Dead wood freshly quickening,
Bright skies dusked with sudden showers,
Lit by rainbows on the wing.

Cuckoo calls and young lambs' bleating,
Nimble airs which coyly bring
Little gusts of tender greeting
From shy nooks where violets cling.

Half-fledged buds and birds and vernal
Fields of grass dew-glistening;
Evanescent life's eternal
Resurrection, bridal Spring!

Mathilde Blind

A Symbol

Hurrying for ever in their restless flight
The generations of earth's teeming womb
Rise into being and lapse into the tomb
Like transient bubbles sparkling in the light;
They sink in quick succession out of sight
Into the thick insuperable gloom
Our futile lives in flashing by illume--
Lightning which mocks the darkness of the night.

Nay--but consider, though we change and die,
If men must pass shall Man not still remain?
As the unnumbered drops of summer rain
Whose changing particles unchanged on high,
Fixed, in perpetual motion, yet maintain
The mystic bow emblazoned on the sky.

Mathilde Blind

A Winter Landscape

All night, all day, in dizzy, downward flight,
Fell the wild-whirling, vague, chaotic snow,
Till every landmark of the earth below,
Trees, moorlands, roads, and each familiar sight
Were blotted out by the bewildering white.
And winds, now shrieking loud, now whimpering low,
Seemed lamentations for the world-old woe
That death must swallow life, and darkness light.

But all at once the rack was blown away,
The snowstorm hushing ended in a sigh;
Then like a flame the crescent moon on high
Leaped forth among the planets; pure as they,
Earth vied in whiteness with the Milky Way:
Herself a star beneath the starry sky.

Mathilde Blind

Ah, If You Knew

Ah, if you knew how soon and late
My eyes long for a sight of you
Sometimes in passing by my gate
You'd linger until fall of dew,
If you but knew!

Ah, if you knew how sick and sore
My life flags for the want of you,
Straightway you'd enter at the door
And clasp my hand between your two,
If you but knew!

Ah, if you knew how lost and lone
I watch and weep and wait for you,
You'd press my heart close to your own
Till love had healed me through and through,
If you but knew!

Mathilde Blind

Ah, Yesterday Was Dark and Drear

Ah, yesterday was dark and drear,
My heart was deadly sore;
Without thy love it seemed, my Dear,
That I could live no more.

And yet I laugh and sing to-day;
Care or care not for me,
Thou canst not take the love away
With which I worship thee.

And if to-morrow, Dear, I live,
My heart I shall not break:
For still I hold it that to give
Is sweeter than to take.

Mathilde Blind

All My Heart Is Stirring Lightly

All my heart is stirring lightly
Like dim violets winter-bound,
Quickening as they feel the brightly
Glowing sunlight underground.

Yea, this drear and silent bosom,
Hushed as snow-hid grove but now,
Breaketh into leaf and blossom
Like a gleaming vernal bough.

Oh the singing, singing, singing!
Callow hopes that thrill my breast!
Can the lark of love be winging
Back to its abandoned nest?

Mathilde Blind

Analkh

Like a great rock which looming o'er the deep
Casts his eternal shadow on the strands,
And veiled in cloud inexorably stands,
While vaulting round his adamantine steep
Embattled breakers clamorously leap,
Sun-garlanded and hope-uplifted bands,
But soon with waters shattered in the sands
Slowly recoiling back to ocean creep:

So sternly dost thou tower above us, Fate!
For still our eager hearts exultant beat,
Borne in the hurrying tide of life elate,
And dashing break against thy marble feet.
But would Hope's rainbow-aureole round us fleet,
Without these hurtling shocks of man's estate?

Mathilde Blind

Apple-Blossom

Blossom of the apple trees!
Mossy trunks all gnarled and hoary,
Grey boughs tipped with rose-veined glory,
Clustered petals soft as fleece
Garlanding old apple trees!

How you gleam at break of day!
When the coy sun, glancing rarely,
Pouts and sparkles in the pearly
Pendulous dewdrops, twinkling gay
On each dancing leaf and spray.

Through your latticed boughs on high,
Framed in rosy wreaths, one catches
Brief kaleidoscopic snatches
Of deep lapis-lazuli
In the April-coloured sky.

When the sundown's dying brand
Leaves your beauty to the tender
Magic spells of moonlight splendour,
Glimmering clouds of bloom you stand,
Turning earth to fairyland.

Cease, wild winds, O, cease to blow!
Apple-blossom, fluttering, flying,
Palely on the green turf lying,
Vanishing like winter snow;
Swift as joy to come and go.

Mathilde Blind

April Rain

The April rain, the April rain,
Comes slanting down in fitful showers,
Then from the furrow shoots the grain,
And banks are fledged with nestling flowers;
And in grey shaw and woodland bowers
The cuckoo through the April rain
Calls once again.

The April sun, the April sun,
Glints through the rain in fitful splendour,
And in grey shaw and woodland dun
The little leaves spring forth and tender
Their infant hands, yet weak and slender,
For warmth towards the April sun,
One after one.

And between shower and shine hath birth
The rainbow's evanescent glory;
Heaven's light that breaks on mists of earth!
Frail symbol of our human story,
It flowers through showers where, looming hoary,
The rain-clouds flash with April mirth,
Like Life on earth.

Mathilde Blind

Autumn Tints

Coral.coloured yew-berries
Strew the garden ways,
Hollyhocks and sunflowers
Make a dazzling blaze
In these latter days.

Marigolds by cottage doors
Flaunt their golden pride,
Crimson-punctured bramble leaves
Dapple far and wide
The green mountain-side.

Far away, on hilly slopes
Where fleet rivulets run,
Miles on miles of tangled fern,
Burnished by the sun,
Glow a copper dun.

For the year that's on the wane,
Gathering all its fire,
Flares up through the kindling world
As, ere they expire,
Flames leap high and higher.

Mathilde Blind

Beauty

Even as on some black background full of night
And hollow storm in cloudy disarray,
The forceful brush of some great master may
More brilliantly evoke a higher light;
So beautiful, so delicately white,
So like a very metaphor of May,
Your loveliness on my life's sombre grey
In its perfection stands out doubly bright.

And yet your beauty breeds a strange despair,
And pang of yearning in the helpless heart;
To shield you from time's fraying wear and tear,
That from yourself yourself would wrench apart,
How save you, fairest, but to set you where
Mortality kills death in deathless art?

Mathilde Blind

Brown Eyes

Oh, brown Eyes with long black lashes,
Young brown Eyes,
Depths of night from which there flashes
Lightning as of summer skies,
Beautiful brown Eyes!

In your veiled mysterious splendour
Passion lies
Sleeping, but with sudden tender
Dreams that fill with vague surmise
Beautiful brown Eyes.

All my soul, with yearning shaken,
Asks in sighs--
Who will see your heart awaken,
Love's divine sunrise
In those young brown Eyes?

Mathilde Blind

Cagnes

ON THE RIVIERA.

In tortuous windings up the steep incline
The sombre street toils to the village square,
Whose antique walls in stone and moulding bear
Dumb witness to the Moor. Afar off shine,
With tier on tier, cutting heaven's blue divine,
The snowy Alps; and lower the hills are fair,
With wave-green olives rippling down to where
Gold clusters hang and leaves of sunburnt vine.

You may perchance, I never shall forget
When, between twofold glory of land and sea,
We leant together o'er the old parapet,
And saw the sun go down. For, oh, to me,
The beauty of that beautiful strange place
Was its reflection beaming from your face.

Mathilde Blind

Christmas Even

Alone--with one fair star for company,
The loveliest star among the hosts of night,
While the grey tide ebbs with the ebbing light--
I pace along the darkening wintry sea.
Now round the yule-log and the glittering tree
Twinkling with festive tapers, eyes as bright
Sparkle with Christmas joys and young delight,
As each one gathers to his family.

But I--a waif on earth where'er I roam--
Uprooted with life's bleeding hopes and fears
From that one heart that was my heart's sole home,
Feel the old pang pierce through the severing years,
And as I think upon the years to come
That fair star trembles through my falling tears.

Mathilde Blind

Cleave Thou the Waves

Cleave thou the waves that weltering to and fro
Surge multitudinous. The eternal Powers
Of sun, moon, stars, the air, the hurrying hours,
The winged winds, the still dissolving show
Of clouds in calm or storm, for ever flow
Above thee; while the abysmal sea devours
The untold dead insatiate, where it lowers
O'er glooms unfathomed, limitless, below.

No longer on the golden-fretted sands,
Where many a shallow tide abortive chafes,
Mayst thou delay; life onward sweeping blends
With far-off heaven: the dauntless one who braves
The perilous flood with calm unswerving hands,
The elements sustain: cleave thou the waves.

Mathilde Blind

Dead Love

Mother of the unfortunate, mystic form,
Who calm, immutable, like oldest fate,
Sittest, where through the sombre swinging gate
Moans immemorial life's encircling storm.
My heart, sore stricken by grief's leaden arm,
Lags like a weary pilgrim knocking late,
And sigheth--toward thee staggering with its weight--
Behold Love conquered by thy son, the worm!

He stung him mid the roses' purple bloom,
The Rose of roses, yea, a thing so sweet,
Haply to stay blind Change's flying feet,
And stir with pity the unpitying tomb.
Here, take him, cold, cold, heavy and void of breath!
Nor me refuse, O Mother almighty, death.

Mathilde Blind

Deep in a Yew-Sequestered Grove

Deep in a yew-sequestered grove
I sat and wept my heart away;
A child came by at close of day
With eyes as sweet as new-born love.

He came from sun-bleached meadows where
High on the hedge the topmost rose
Curtsies to every wind that blows.
A wanton of the summer air.

The sunset aureoled his brow,
Kindling the roses in his hand,
And by my side I saw him stand
To offer me his rose-red bough:

Take back thy gift--I sighed forlorn,
And showed where like the yew's red seed,
My blood had trickled, bead on bead,
From wounds made by his cruel thorn.

He smiled and said:--Nay, take my Rose;
You know, when all is said and done,
There's not a joy beneath the sun
Worth lovers' joys but lovers' woes.

Mathilde Blind

Despair

Thy wings swoop darkening round my soul, Despair!
And on my brain thy shadow seems to brood
And hem me round with stifling solitude,
With chasms of vacuous bloom which are thy lair.
No light of human joy, no song or prayer,
Breaks ever on this chaos, all imbrued
With heart's-blood trickling from the multitude
Of sweet hopes slain, or agonising there.

Lo, wilt thou yield thyself to grief, and roll
Vanquished from thy high seat, imperial brain,
And abdicating turbulent life's control,
Be dragged a captive bound in sorrow's chain?
Nay! though my heart is breaking with its pain,
No pain on earth has power to crush my soul.

Mathilde Blind

Dost Thou Remember Ever

Dost thou remember ever, for my sake,
When we two rowed upon the rock-bound lake?
How the wind-fretted waters blew their spray
About our brows like blossom-falls of May
One memorable day?

Dost thou remember the glad mouth that cried--
"Were it not sweet to die now side by side,
To lie together tangled in the deep
Close as the heart-beat to the heart--so keep
The everlasting sleep?"

Dost thou remember? Ah, such death as this
Had set the seal upon my heart's young bliss!
But, wrenched asunder, severed and apart,
Life knew a deadlier death: the blighting smart
Which only kills the heart.

Mathilde Blind

Egyptian Theosophy

Far in the introspective East
A meditative Memphian Priest

Would solve--such is the Sage's curse--
The riddle of the Universe.

Thought, turning round itself, revolved,
How was this puzzling World evolved?

How came the starry sky to be,
The sun, the earth, the Nile, the sea?

And Man, most tragi-comic Man,
Whence came he here, and where began?

Communing with the baffling sky,
Who twinkled, but made no reply,

He brooded, till his heated brain
Grew fairly addled with the strain.

For in that dim, benighted age
Philosopher and hoary sage

Had not yet had the saving grace
To teach the Schools that Time and Space,

And all the marvels they contain,
Are but the phantoms of the brain.

But that profound Egyptian Seer
Maybe--who knows?--came pretty near;

When, after days of strenuous fast,
He hit the startling truth at last;

And on select, mysterious nights,
Veiled in occult, symbolic rites:

He taught--that once upon a time--
To disbelieve it were a crime--

The World's great egg--refute who can,
That meditates on Life and Man--

While deafening cacklings spread the news--
Was laid by an Almighty Goose.

Mathilde Blind

Green Leaves and Sere

Three tall poplars beside the pool
Shiver and moan in the gusty blast,
The carded clouds are blown like wool,
And the yellowing leaves fly thick and fast.

The leaves, now driven before the blast,
Now flung by fits on the curdling pool,
Are tossed heaven-high and dropped at last
As if at the whim of a jabbering fool.

O leaves, once rustling green and cool!
Two met here where one moans aghast
With wild heart heaving towards the past:
Three tall poplars beside the pool.

Mathilde Blind

Haunted Streets

Lo, haply walking in some clattering street--
Where throngs of men and women dumbly pass,
Like shifting pictures seen within a glass
Which leave no trace behind--one seems to meet,
In roads once trodden by our mutual feet,
A face projected from that shadowy mass
Of faces, quite familiar as it was,
Which beaming on us stands out clear and sweet.

The face of faces we again behold
That lit our life when life was very fair,
And leaps our heart toward eyes and mouth and hair:
Oblivious of the undying love grown cold,
Or body sheeted in the churchyard mould,
We stretch out yearning hands and grasp--the air.

Mathilde Blind

Heart's-Ease

As opiates to the sick on wakeful nights,
As light to flowers, as flowers in poor men's rooms,
As to the fisher when the tempest glooms
The cheerful twinkling of his village lights;
As emerald isles to flagging swallow flights,
As roses garlanding with tendrilled blooms
The unweeded hillocks of forgotten tombs,
As singing birds on cypress-shadowed heights,

Thou art to me--a comfort past compare--
For thy joy-kindling presence, sweet as May,
Sets all my nerves to music, makes away
With sorrow and the numbing frost of care,
Until the influence of thine eyes' bright sway
Has made life's glass go up from foul to fair.

Mathilde Blind

Hope

All treasures of the earth and opulent seas,
Metals and odorous woods and cunning gold,
Fowls of the air and furry beasts untold,
Vineyards and harvest fields and fruitful trees
Nature gave unto Man; and last her keys
Vouched passage to her secret ways of old
Whence knowledge should be wrung, nay power to mould
Out of the rough, his occult destinies.

But tired of these he craved a wider scope:
Then fair as Pallas from the brain of Jove
From his deep wish there sprang, full-armed, to cope
With all life's ills, even very death in love,
The only thing man never wearies of--
His own creation--visionary Hope.

Mathilde Blind

Hymn to Horus

Hail, God revived in glory!
The night is over and done;
Far mountains wrinkled and hoary,
Fair cities great in story,
Flash in the rising sun.

Behold the Dawn uncloses
The shutters of the night;
The Waste and her oases
Blossoms a rose of roses
Beneath thy rose-red light.

Hail, golden House of Horus,
Lap of heaven's holiest God!
From lotos-banks before us
Birds in ecstatic chorus
Fly, singing, from the sod.

Up, up, into the shining,
Translucent morning sky,
No longer dull and pining,
With drooping plumes declining,
The storks and eagles fly.

The Nile amid his rushes
Reflects thy risen disk;
A light of gladness gushes
Through kindling halls, and flushes
Each flaming Obelisk.

Vast Temples catch thy splendour;
Vistas of columns shine
Celestial, with a tender
Rose-bloom on every slender
Papyrus-pillared shrine.

In manifold disguises,
And under many names,
Thrice-holy son of Isis,
We worship him who rises
A child-god fledged in flames.

Hail, sacred Hawk, who, winging,
Crossest the heavenly sea!
With harp-playing, with singing,
With linen robes, white clinging,
We come, fair God, to thee.

Thou whom our soul espouses,
When weary of the way,
Enter our golden houses,
And, with thy mystic spouses,

Rest from the long, long way.

Mathilde Blind

I Am Athirst, But Not For Wine

I am athirst, but not for wine;
The drink I long for is divine,
Poured only from your eyes in mine.

I hunger, but the bread I want,
Of which my blood and brain are scant,
Is your sweet speech, for which I pant.

I am a-cold, and lagging lame,
Life creeps along my languid frame;
Your love would fan it into flame.

Heaven's in that little word--your love!
It makes my heart coo like a dove,
My tears fall as I think thereof.

Mathilde Blind

I Charge You

I charge you, O winds of the West, O winds with the wings of the dove,
That ye blow o'er the brows of my Love, breathing low that I sicken for love.

I charge you, O dews of the Dawn, O tears of the star of the morn,
That ye fall at the feet of my love with the sound of one weeping forlorn.

I charge you, O birds of the Air, O birds flying home to your nest,
That ye sing in his ears of the joy that for ever has fled from my breast.

I charge you, O flowers of the Earth, O frailest of things, and most fair,
That ye droop in his path as the life in me shrivels consumed by despair.

O Moon, when he lifts up his face, when he seeth the waning of thee,
A memory of her who lies wan on the limits of life let it be.

Many tears cannot quench, nor my sighs extinguish, the flames of love's fire,
Which lifteth my heart like a wave, and smites it, and breaks its desire.

I rise like one in a dream when I see the red sun flaring low,
That drags me back shuddering from sleep each morning to life with its woe.

I go like one in a dream, unbidden my feet know the way
To that garden where love stood in blossom with the red and white hawthorn of May.

The song of the throstle is hushed, and the fountain is dry to its core,
The moon cometh up as of old; she seeks, but she finds him no more.

The pale-faced, pitiful moon shines down on the grass where I weep,
My face to the earth, and my breast in an anguish ne'er soothed into sleep.

The moon returns, and the spring, birds warble, trees burst into leaf,
But Love once gone, goes for ever, and all that endures is the grief.

Mathilde Blind

I Planted a Rose Tree

I planted a rose tree in my garden,
In early days when the year was young;
I thought it would bear me roses, roses,
While nights were dewy and days were long.

It bore me once, and a white rose only--
A lovely rose with petals of light;
Like the moon in heaven, supreme and lonely;
And the lightning struck it one summer night.

Mathilde Blind

I Think of Thee in Watches of the Night

I think of thee in watches of the night,
I feel thee near;
Like mystic lamps consumed with too much light
Thine eyes burn clear.

The barriers that divide us in the day
And hide from view,
Like idle cobwebs now are brushed away
Between us two.

I probe the deep recesses of thy mind
Without control,
And in its inmost labyrinth I find
My own lost soul.

No longer like an exile on the earth
I wildly roam,
I was thy double from the hour of birth
And thou my home.

Mathilde Blind

I Took Your Face into My Dreams

I took your face into my dreams,
It floated round me like a light;
Your beauty's consecrating beams
Lay mirrored in my heart all night.
As in a lonely mountain mere,
Unvisited of any streams,
Supremely bright and still and clear,
The solitary moonlight gleams,
Your face was shining in my dreams.

Mathilde Blind

I Was Again Beside Thee in a Dream

I was again beside thee in a dream:
Earth was so beautiful, the moon was shining;
The muffled voice of many a cataract stream
Came like a love-song, as, with arms entwining,
Our hearts were mixed in unison supreme.

The wind lay spell-bound in each pillared pine,
The tasselled larches had no sound or motion,
As my whole life was sinking into thine--
Sinking into a deep, unfathomed ocean
Of infinite love--uncircumscribed, divine.

Night held her breath, it seemed, with all her stars:
Eternal eyes that watched in mute compassion
Our little lives o'erleap their mortal bars,
Fused in the fulness of immortal passion,
A passion as immortal as the stars.

There was no longer any thee or me;
No sense of self, no wish or incompleteness
The moment, rounded to Eternity,
Annihilated time's destructive fleetness:
For all but love itself had ceased to be.

Mathilde Blind

I Would I Were the Glow-Worm

I would I were the glow-worm, thou the flower,
That I might fill thy cup with glimmering light;
I would I were the bird, and thou the bower,
To sing thee songs throughout the summer night.

I would I were a pine tree deeply rooted,
And thou the lofty, cloud-beleaguered rock,
Still, while the blasts of heaven around us hooted,
To cleave to thee and weather every shock.

I would I were the rill, and thou the river;
So might I, leaping from some headlong steep,
With all my waters lost in thine for ever,
Be hurried onwards to the unfathomed deep.

I would--what would I not? O foolish dreaming!
My words are but as leaves by autumn shed,
That, in the faded moonlight idly gleaming,
Drop on the grave where all our love lies dead.

Mathilde Blind

In a Kentish Rose Garden.

Beside a Dial in the leafy close,
Where every bush was burning with the Rose,
With million roses falling flake by flake
Upon the lawn in fading summer snows:

I read the Persian Poet's rhyme of old,
Each thought a ruby in a ring of gold--
Old thoughts so young, that, after all these years,
They're writ on every rose-leaf yet unrolled.

You may not know the secret tongue aright
The Sunbeams on their rosy tablets write;
Only a poet may perchance translate
Those ruby-tinted hieroglyphs of light.

Mathilde Blind

In a Lonesome Burial-Place

In a lonesome burial-place
Crouched a mourner white of face;
Wild her eyes--unheeding
Circling pomp of night and day--
Ever crying, "Well away,
Love lies a-bleeding!"

And her sighs were like a knell,
And her tears for ever fell,
With their warm rain feeding
That purpureal flower, alas!
Trailing prostrate in the grass,
Love lies a-bleeding.

Through the yews' black-tufted gloom
Crimson light fell on the tomb,
Funeral shadows breeding:
In the sky the sun's light shed
Dyed the earth one awful red--
Love lies a-bleeding.

Came grey mists, and blanching cloud
Bore one universal shroud;
Came the bowed moon leading,
From the infinite afar
Star that rumoured unto star--
Love that lies a-bleeding.

Mathilde Blind

In the St. Gotthardt Pass

The storm which shook the silence of the hills
And sleeping pinnacles of ancient snow
Went muttering off in one last thunder throe
Mixed with a moan of multitudinous rills;
Yea, even as one who has wept much, but stills
The flowing tears of some convulsive woe
When a fair light of hope begins to glow
Athwart the gloom of long remembered ills:

So does the face of this scarred mountain height
Relax its stony frown, while slow uprolled
Invidious mists are changed to veiling gold.
Wild peaks still fluctuate between dark and bright,
But when the sun laughs at them, as of old,
They kiss high heaven in all embracing light.

Mathilde Blind

Internal Firesides

Bewilderingly, from wildly shaken cloud,
Invisible hands, deft moving everywhere,
Have woven a winding sheet of velvet air,
And laid the dead earth in her downy shroud.
And more and more, in white confusion, crowd
Wan, whirling flakes, while o'er the icy glare
Blue heaven that was glooms blackening o'er the bare
Tree skeletons, to ruthless tempest bowed.

Nay, let the outer world be winter-locked;
Beside the hearth of glowing memories
I warm my life. Once more our boat is rocked,
As on a cradle by the palm-fringed Nile;
And, sharp-cut silhouettes, in single file,
Lank camels lounge against transparent skies.

Mathilde Blind

Lassitude

I laid me down beside the sea,
Endless in blue monotony;
The clouds were anchored in the sky.
Sometimes a sail went idling by.

Upon the shingles on the beach
Grey linen was spread out to bleach,
And gently with a gentle swell
The languid ripples rose and fell.

A fisher-boy, in level line,
Cast stone by stone into the brine:
Methought I too might do as he,
And cast my sorrows on the sea.

The old, old sorrows in a heap
Dropped heavily into the deep;
But with its sorrow on that day
My heart itself was cast away.

Mathilde Blind

L'Envoi

Thou art the goal for which my spirit longs;
As dove on dove,
Bound for one home, I send thee all my songs
With all my love.

Thou art the haven with fair harbour lights;
Safe locked in thee,
My heart would anchor after stormful nights
Alone at sea.

Thou art the rest of which my life is fain,
The perfect peace;
Absorbed in thee the world, with all its pain
And toil, would cease.

Thou art the heaven to which my soul would go!
O dearest eyes,
Lost in your light you would turn hell below
To Paradise.

Thou all in all for which my heart-blood yearns!
Yea, near or far--
Where the unfathomed ether throbs and burns
With star on star,

Or where, enkindled by the fires of June,
The fresh earth glows,
Blushing beneath the mystical white moon
Through rose on rose--

Thee, thee, I see, thee feel in all live things,
Beloved one;
In the first bird which tremulously sings
Ere peep of sun;

In the last nestling orphaned in the hedge,
Rocked to and fro,
When dying summer shudders in the sedge,
And swallows go;

When roaring snows rush down the mountain-pass,
March floods with rills
Or April lightens through the living grass
In daffodils;

When poppied cornfields simmer in the heat
With tare and thistle,
And, like winged clouds above the mellow wheat,
The starlings whistle;

When stained with sunset the wide moorlands glare
In the wild weather,

And clouds with flaming craters smoke and flare
Red o'er red heather;

When the bent moon, on frostbound midnights waking,
Leans to the snow
Like some world-mother whose deep heart is breaking
O'er human woe.

As the round sun rolls red into the ocean,
Till all the sea
Glows fluid gold, even so life's mazy motion
Is dyed with thee:

For as the wave-like years subside and roll,
O heart's desire,
Thy soul glows interfused within my soul,
A quenchless fire.

Yea, thee I feel, all storms of life above,
Near though afar;
O thou my glorious morning star of love,
And evening star.

Mathilde Blind

Like Some Wild Sleeper

Like some wild sleeper who alone at night
Walks with unseeing eyes along a height,
With death below and only stars above;
I, in broad daylight, walk as if in sleep,
Along the edges of life's perilous steep,
The lost somnambulist of love.

I, in broad day, go walking in a dream,
Led on in safety by the starry gleam
Of thy blue eyes that hold my heart in thrall;
Let no one wake me rudely, lest one day,
Startled to find how far I've gone astray,
I dash my life out in my fall.

Mathilde Blind

Manchester by Night

O'er this huge town, rife with intestine wars,
Whence as from monstrous sacrificial shrines
Pillars of smoke climb heavenward, Night inclines
Black brows majestical with glimmering stars.
Her dewy silence soothes life's angry jars:
And like a mother's wan white face, who pines
Above her children's turbulent ways, so shines
The moon athwart the narrow cloudy bars.

Now toiling multitudes that hustling crush
Each other in the fateful strife for breath,
And, hounded on by diverse hungers, rush
Across the prostrate ones that groan beneath,
Are swathed within the universal hush,
As life exchanges semblances with death.

Mathilde Blind

Many Will Love You

Many will love you; you were made for love;
For the soft plumage of the unruffled dove
Is not so soft as your caressing eyes.
You will love many; for the winds that veer
Are not more prone to shift their compass, dear,
Than your quick fancy flies.

Many will love you; but I may not, no;
Even though your smile sets all my life aglow,
And at your fairness all my senses ache.
You will love many; but not me, my dear,
Who have no gift to give you but a tear
Sweet for your sweetness' sake.

Mathilde Blind

Motherhood

From out the front of being, undefiled,
A life hath been upheaved with struggle and pain;
Safe in her arms a mother holds again
That dearest miracle--a new-born child.
To moans of anguish terrible and wild--
As shrieks the night-wind through an ill-shut pane--
Pure heaven succeeds; and after fiery strain
Victorious woman smiles serenely mild.

Yea, shall she not rejoice, shall not her frame
Thrill with a mystic rapture! At this birth,
The soul now kindled by her vital flame
May it not prove a gift of priceless worth?
Some saviour of his kind whose starry fame
Shall bring a brightness to the darkened earth.

Mathilde Blind

Mourning Women

All veiled in black, with faces hid from sight,
Crouching together in the jolting cart,
What forms are these that pass alone, apart,
In abject apathy to life's delight?
The motley crowd, fantastically bright,
Shifts gorgeous through each dazzling street and mart;
Only these sisters of the suffering heart
Strike discords in this symphony of light.

Most wretched women! whom your prophet dooms
To take love's penalties without its prize!
Yes; you shall bear the unborn in your wombs,
And water dusty death with streaming eyes,
And, wailing, beat your breasts among the tombs;
But souls ye have none fit for Paradise.

Mathilde Blind

My Lady

Like putting forth upon a sea
On which the moonbeams shimmer,
Where reefs and unknown perils be
To wreck, yea, wreck one utterly,
It were to love you, lady fair,
In whose black braids of billowy hair
The misty moonstones glimmer.

Oh, misty moonstone-coloured eye,
Latticed behind long lashes,
Within whose clouded orbs there lies,
Like lightning in the sleeping skies,
A spark to kindle and ignite,
And set a fire of love alight
To burn one's heart to ashes.

I will not put forth on this deep
Of perilous emotion;
No, though your hands be soft as sleep,
They shall not have my heart to keep,
Nor draw it to your fatal sphere.
Lady, you are as much to fear
As is the fickle ocean.

Mathilde Blind

New Year's Eve

Another full-orbed year hath waned to-day,
And set in the irrevocable past,
And headlong whirled long Time's winged blast
My fluttering rose of youth is borne away:
Ah rose once crimson with the blood of May,
A honeyed haunt where bees would break their fast,
I watch thy scattering petals flee aghast,
And all the flickering rose-lights turning grey.

Poor fool of life! plagued ever with thy vain
Regrets and futile longings! were the years
Not cups o'erbrimming still with gall and tears?
Let go thy puny personal joy and pain!
If youth with all its brief hope disappears,
To deathless hope we must be born again.

Mathilde Blind

Nirvana

Divest thyself, O Soul, of vain desire!
Bid hope farewell, dismiss all coward fears;
Take leave of empty laughter, emptier tears,
And quench, for ever quench, the wasting fire
Wherein this heart, as in a funeral pyre,
Aye burns, yet is consumed not. Years on years
Moaning with memories in thy maddened ears--
Let at thy word, like refluent waves, retire.

Enter thy soul's vast realm as Sovereign Lord,
And, like that angel with the flaming sword,
Wave off life's clinging hands. Then chains will fall
From the poor slave of self's hard tyranny--
And Thou, a ripple rounded by the sea,
In rapture lost be lapped within the All.

Mathilde Blind

Nuit

The all upholding,
The all enfolding,
The all beholding,
Most secret Night;
From whose abysses,
With wordless blisses,
The Sun's first kisses,
Called gods to light.

One god undying,
But multiplying,
Restlessly trying,
Doing: undone.
Through myriad changes,
He sweeps and ranges;
But life estranges
Many in one.

In wild commotion,
Out of the ocean,
With moan and motion,
Wave upon waves,
Mingling in thunder,
Rise and go under:
Break, life, asunder;
Night has her graves.

Mathilde Blind

O Moon

O moon, large golden summer moon,
Hanging between the linden trees,
Which in the intermittent breeze
Beat with the rhythmic pulse of June!

O night-air, scented through and through
With honey-coloured flower of lime,
Sweet now as in that other time
When all my heart was sweet as you!

The sorcery of this breathing bloom
Works like enchantment in my brain,
Till, shuddering back to life again,
My dead self rises from its tomb.

And, lovely with the love of yore,
Its white ghost haunts the moon-white ways;
But, when it meets me face to face,
Flies trembling to the grave once more.

Mathilde Blind

On a Viola D'Amore

CARVED WITH A CUPID'S HEAD, AND PLAYED ON FOR THE FIRST TIME AFTER MORE THAN A CENTURY.

What fairy music clear and light,
Responsive to your fingers,
Swells rippling on the summer night,
And amorously lingers
Upon the sense, as long ago
In days of rouge and rococo!

A century of silence lay
On strings that had not spoken
Since powdered lords to ladies gay
Gave, for a lover's token,
Fans glowing fresh from Watteau's art,
Well worth a marchioness's heart.

Your dormant music, tranced and bound,
Was like the Sleeping Beauty
Prince Charming in the forest found,
And kissed in loyal duty:
And when she woke her eyes' blue fire
Turned the dumb forest to a lyre.

Thus Amor with the bandaged eyes,
Fit symbol of hushed numbers,
Most musically wakes and sighs
After an age of slumbers:
Beneath your magic bow's control
The Viol has regained her soul.

Mathilde Blind

On and On

By long leagues of wood and meadow
On and on we drive apace;
In the dreamy light and shadow
Veiling earth's autumnal face.

Rosy clouds are drifting o'er us,
Rooks rise parleying from their tryst,
And the road lies far before us,
Fading into amethyst.

On and on, through leagues of heather,
Deeps of scarlet beaded lane,
Like a pheasant's golden feather
Golden leaves around us rain.

On and on, where woodlands hoary,
In October's lavish fire,
Flame up with unearthly glory,
Beauteous summer's funeral pyre.

On and on, where casements blinking
Lighten into transient gules,
As the dying day in sinking
Splashes all the wayside pools.

On and on; the land grows dimmer,
And our road recedes afar;
While on either hand there glimmer
Setting sun and rising star.

Would I knew what thoughts steal o'er you,
As the long road lengthens yet:
Ah, like hope it winds before you,
And behind me like regret.

Mathilde Blind

On Life's Long Round

On life's long round by chance I found
A dell impearled with dew;
Where hyacinths, gushing from the ground,
Lent to the earth heaven's native hue
Of holy blue.

I sought that plot of azure light
Once more in gloomy hours;
But snow had fallen overnight
And wrapped in mortuary white
My fairy ring of flowers.

Mathilde Blind

On Reading the

In a Kentish Rose Garden.

Beside a Dial in the leafy close,
Where every bush was burning with the Rose,
With million roses falling flake by flake
Upon the lawn in fading summer snows:

I read the Persian Poet's rhyme of old,
Each thought a ruby in a ring of gold--
Old thoughts so young, that, after all these years,
They're writ on every rose-leaf yet unrolled.

You may not know the secret tongue aright
The Sunbeams on their rosy tablets write;
Only a poet may perchance translate
Those ruby-tinted hieroglyphs of light.

Mathilde Blind

On the Lighthouse at Antibes

A stormy light of sunset glows and glares
Between two banks of cloud, and o'er the brine
Thy fair lamp on the sky's carnation line
Alone on the lone promontory flares:
Friend of the Fisher who at nightfall fares
Where lurk false reefs masked by the hyaline
Of dimpling waves, within whose smile divine
Death lies in wait behind Circean snares.

The evening knows thee ere the evening star;
Or sees that flame sole Regent of the bight,
When storm, hoarse rumoured by the hills afar,
Makes mariners steer landward by thy light,
Which shows through shock of hostile nature's war
How man keeps watch o'er man through deadliest night.

Mathilde Blind

Once on a Golden Day

Once on a golden day,
In the golden month of May,
I gave my heart away--
Little birds were singing.

I culled my heart in truth,
Wet with the dews of youth,
For love to take, forsooth--
Little flowers were springing.

Love sweetly laughed at this,
And between kiss and kiss
Fled with my heart in his:
Winds warmly blowing.

And with his sun and shower
Love kept my heart in flower,
As in the greenest bower
Rose richly glowing.

Till, worn at evensong,
Love dropped my heart among
Stones by the way ere long;
Misprizèd token.

There in the wind and rain,
Trampled and rent in twain,
Ne'er to be whole again,
My heart lies broken.

Mathilde Blind

Only a Smile

No butterfly whose frugal fare
Is breath of heliotrope and clove,
And other trifles light as air,
Could live on less than doth my love.

That childlike smile that comes and goes
About your gracious lips and eyes,
Hath all the sweetness of the rose,
Which feeds the freckled butterflies.

I feed my love on smiles, and yet
Sometimes I ask, with tears of woe,
How had it been if we had met,
If you had met me long ago,

Before the fast, defacing years
Had made all ill that once was well?
Ah, then your smiling breeds such tears
As Tantalus may weep in hell.

Mathilde Blind

Our Souls Have Touched Each Other

Our souls have touched each other,
Two fountains from one jet;
Like children of one mother
Our leaping thoughts have met.

We were as far asunder
As green isles in the sea;
And now we ask in wonder
How that could ever be.

I dare not call thee lover
Nor any earthly name,
Though love's full cup flows over
As water quick with flame.

When two strong minds have mated
As only spirits may,
The wold shines new created
In a diviner day.

Yea, though hard fate may sever
My fleeting self from thine,
Thy thought will live for ever
And ever grow in mine.

Mathilde Blind

Pauper Poet's Song

Sun, moon, and stars, the ample air,
The birds shrill whistling everywhere,
Fields white with lambs and daisies;
The pearls of eve, the jewelled morn,
The rose rich blowing on the thorn,
The glow of blush-rose faces;
The silver glint of sun-smit rain,
The shattered sun-gold of the main,
And heaven's sweet breath that moves it;
The earth, our myriad-bosomed nurse,
This whole miraculous universe
Belongs to him who loves it!

Why fret then for the gold of this,
The fame of that man, or the bliss,
Or such another's graces?
Oh heart that chim'st with golden verse,
My heart, thou art the magic purse
Which all dull trouble chases;
Thine too fruition of all fame
When the live soul, as flame with flame,
Weds the dead soul that moves it;
Then sing for aye, and aye rehearse,
This whole miraculous universe
Belongs to him who loves it!

Mathilde Blind

Prelude

What a twitter! what a tumult! what a whirr of wheeling wings!
Birds of Passage hear the message which the Equinoctial brings.

Birds of Passage hear the message and beneath the flying clouds,
Mid the falling leaves of autumn, congregate in clamorous crowds.

Shall they venture on the voyage? are the nestlings fledged for flight;
Fit to face the fluctuant storm-winds and the elemental night?

What a twitter! what a tumult! to the wild wind's marching song
Multitudinous Birds of Passage round the cliffs of England throng.

And o'er tempest-trodden Ocean, cloud-entangled day and night,
Birds on birds, in corporate motion, wing a commonwealth in flight.

Waves, like hollow graves beneath them, hoarsely howling, yawn for prey;
And the welkin glooms above them shifting formless, grey in grey.

And across the Bay of Biscay on undaunted wing they flee,
Where mild seas move musically murmuring of the Odyssey;

Where the gurgling whirlpools glitter and by soft Circean Straits,
Fell Charybdis lies in ambush, and the ravenous Scylla waits;

Where a large Homeric laughter lingers in the echoing caves,
And in playful exultation Dolphins leap from dimpling waves;

Where, above the fair Sicilian, flock-browsed, flower-pranked meadows, looms
Ætna--hoariest of Volcanoes--ominously veiled in fumes;

Where the seas roll blue and bluer, high and higher arch the skies,
And as measureless as ocean new horizons meet the eyes;

Where at night the ancient heavens bend above the ancient earth,
With the young-eyed Stars enkindled fresh as at their hour of birth;

Where old Egypt's desert, stretching leagues on leagues of level land,
Gleams with threads of channelled waters, green with palms on either hand;

Where the Fellah strides majestic through the glimmering dourah plain,
And in rosy flames flamingoes rise from rustling sugar-cane;--

On and on, along old Nilus, seeking still an ampler light,
O'er its monumental mountains, Birds of Passage take their flight.

Where the sacred Isle of Philæ, twinned within the sacred stream,
Floats, like some rapt Opium-eater's labyrinthine lotos dream,

Birds on birds take up their quarters in each creviced capital,
In each crack of frieze and cornice, in each cleft of roof and wall.

And within those twilight-litten, holy halls of Death and Birth,

Even the gaily twittering swallows, even the swallows, hush their breath.

And they cast the passing shadows of their palpitating wings
O'er the fallen gods of Egypt and the prostrate heads of Kings.

Even as shadows Birds of Passage cast upon their onward flight
Have men's generations vanished, waned and vanished into night.

Mathilde Blind

Rose D'Amour

Oh haste while roses bloom below,
Oh haste while pale and bright above
The sun and moon alternate glow,
To pluck the rose of love.

Yea, give the morning to the lark,
The nightingale its glimmering grove,
Give moonlight to the hungry dark,
But to man's heart give love!

Then haste while still the roses blow,
And pale and bright in heaven above
The sun and moon alternate glow,
Pluck, pluck the rose of love.

Mathilde Blind

Saving Love

Would we but love what will not pass away!
The sun that on each morning shines as clear
As when it rose first on the world's first year;
The fresh green leaves that rustle on the spray.
The sun will shine, the leaves will be as gay
When graves are full of all our hearts held dear,
When not a soul of those who loved us here,
Not one, is left us--creatures of decay.

Yea, love the Abiding in the Universe
Which was before, and will be after us.
Nor yet for ever hanker and vainly cry
For human love--the beings that change or die;
Die--change--forget: to care so is a curse,
Yet cursed we'll be rather than not care thus.

Mathilde Blind

Scarabæus Sisyphus

I've watched thee, Scarab! Yea, an hour in vain
I've watched thee, slowly toiling up the hill,
Pushing thy lump of mud before thee still
With patience infinite and stubborn strain.
Strive as thou mayst, spare neither time nor pain,
To screen thy burden from all chance of ill;
Push, push, with all a beetle's force of will,
Thy ball, alas! rolls ever down again.

Toil without end! And why? That after thee
Dim hosts of groping Scarabs too shall climb
This self-same height? Accursèd progeny
Of Sisyphus, what antenatal crime
Has doomed us too to roll incessantly
Life's Stone, recoiling from the Alps of time?

Mathilde Blind

Seeking

In many a shape and fleeting apparition,
Sublime in age or with clear morning eyes,
Ever I seek thee, tantalising Vision,
Which beckoning flies.

Ever I seek Thee, O evasive Presence,
Which on the far horizon's utmost verge,
Like some wild star in luminous evanescence,
Shoots o'er the surge.

Ever I seek Thy features ever flying,
Which ne'er beheld I never can forget:
Lightning which flames through love, and mimics dying
In souls that set.

Ever I seek Thee through all clouds of error;
As when the moon behind earth's shadow slips,
She wears a momentary mask of terror
In brief eclipse.

Ever I seek Thee, passionately yearning;
Like altar-fire on some forgotten fane,
My life flames up irrevocably burning,
And burnt in vain.

Mathilde Blind

She Stood Against the Orient Sun

She stood against the Orient sun,
Her face inscrutable for light;
A myriad larks in unison
Sang o'er her, soaring out of sight.

A myriad flowers around her feet
Burst flame-like from the yielding sod,
Till all the wandering airs were sweet
With incense mounting up to God.

A mighty rainbow shook, inclined
Towards her, from the Occident,
Girdling the cloud-wrack which enshrined
Half the light-bearing firmament.

Lit showers flashed golden o'er the hills,
And trees flung silver to the breeze,
And, scattering diamonds, fleet-foot rills
Fled laughingly across the leas.

Yea, Love, the skylarks laud but thee,
And writ in flowers thine awful name;
Spring is thy shade, dread Ecstasy,
And life a brand which feeds thy flame.

Mathilde Blind

Sleep

Love-cradling Night, lit by the lucent moon,
Most pitiful and mother-hearted Night!
Blest armistice in life's tumultuous fight,
Resolving discords to a spheral tune!
When tired with heat and strenuous toil of noon,
With ceaseless conflict betwixt might and right,
With ebb and flow of sorrow and delight,
Our panting hearts beneath their burdens swoon:

To thee, O star-eyes comforter, we creep,
Earth's ill-used step-children to thee make moan,
As hiding in thy dark skirts' ample sweep;
--Poor debtors whose brief life is not their own;
For dunned by Death, to whom we owe its loan,
Give us, O Night, the interest paid in sleep.

Mathilde Blind

Snow or Snowdrops?

Is it snow or snowdrops' shimmer
Whitens thus the bladed grass,
With a faint aërial glimmer,--
Spring or winter, which did pass?
For the sky is dim and tender
With an evanescent light,
And the fading fields are white,
White with snow or snowdrops, under
The fair firstling stars of night.

Little robin, softly, cheerly
Piping on yon wintry bough,
Why have all the fields that pearly
Iridescence, knowest thou?
Did old Winter, grim and hoary,
Aim a parting dart at Spring
As she fled on azure wing,
Or did she with rainbow glory
In his face her snowdrops fling?

Mathilde Blind

Sometimes I Wonder

Sometimes I wonder if you guess
The deep impassioned tenderness
Which overflows my heart;
The love I never dare confess;
Yet hard, yea, harder to repress
Than tears too fain to start.

Sometimes I ponder, O my sweet,
The things I'll tell you when we meet;
But straightway at your sight
My heart's blood oozes to my feet
Like thawing waters in the heat,
Confused with too much light.

I hardly know, when you are near,
If it is love, or joy, or fear
Which fills my languid frame;
Enveloped in your atmosphere,
My dark self seems to disappear,
A moth entombed in flame.

Mathilde Blind

Sphinx-Money

Where Pyramids and temple-wrecks are piled
Confusedly on camel-coloured sands,
And the mute Arab motionlessly stands,
Like some swart god who never wept or smiled,--
I picked up mummy relics of the wild
(And sea-shells once with clutching baby hands),
And felt a wafture from old Motherlands,
And all the morning wonder of a Child

To find Sphinx-money. So the Beduin calls
Small fossils of the waste. Nay, poet's gold;
'Twill give thee entrance to those rites of old,
When hundred-gated Thebes, with storied walls,
Gleamed o'er her Plain, and vast processions rolled
To Amon-Ra through Karnak's pillared halls.

Mathilde Blind

Suffering

Oh ye, all ye, who suffer here below,
Schooled in the baffling mystery of pain,
Who on life's anvil bear the fateful strain,
Wrong as forged iron, hammered blow on blow.
Take counsel with your grief, in that you know,
That he who suffers suffers not in vain,
Nay, that it shall be for the whole world's gain,
And wisdom prove the priceless price of woe.

Thus in some new-found land where no man's feet
Have trod a path, bold voyagers astray,
May fall foredone by torturing thirst and heat:
But from the impotent body of defeat--
The winners spring who carve a conquering way--
Measured by milestones of their perished clay.

Mathilde Blind

The After-Glow

It is a solemn evening, golden-clear--
The Alpine summits flame with rose-lit snow
And headlands purpling on wide seas below,
And clouds and woods and arid rocks appear
Dissolving in the sun's own atmosphere
And vast circumference of light, whose slow
Transfiguration--glow and after-glow--
Turns twilight earth to a more luminous sphere.

Oh heart, I ask, seeing that the orb of day
Has sunk below, yet left to sky and sea
His glory's spiritual after-shine:
I ask if Love, whose sun hath set for thee,
May not touch grief with his memorial ray,
And lend to loss itself a joy divine?

Mathilde Blind

The Beautiful Beeshareen Boy

Beautiful, black-eyed boy,
O lithe-limbed Beeshareen!
Face that finds no maid coy,
Page for some peerless queen:
Some Orient queen of old,
Sumptuous in woven gold,
Close-clinging fold on fold,
Lightning, with gems between.

Bred in the desert, where
Only to breathe and be
Alive in living air
Is finest ecstasy;
Where just to ride or rove,
With sun or stars above,
Intoxicates like love,
When love shall come to thee.

Thy lovely limbs are bare;
Only a rag, in haste,
Draped with a princely air,
Girdles they slender waist.
And gaudy beads and charms,
Dangling from neck and arms,
Ward off dread spells and harms
Of Efreets of the waste.

Caressed of wind and sun,
Across the white-walled town
Fawnlike we saw thee run,
Light Love in Mocha brown!
Wild Cupid, without wings,
Twanging thy viol strings;
With crocodiles and rings
Bartered for half a crown.

Spoilt darling of our bark,
Smiling with teeth as white
As when across the dark
There breaks a flash of light.
And what a careless grace
Showed in thy gait and pace;
Eyes starlike in a face
Sweet as a Nubian night!

Better than Felt or Fez,
High on thy forehead set,
Countless in lock and tress,
Waved a wild mane of jet.
Kings well might envy thee
What courts but rarely see,
Curls of rich ebony

Coiled in a coronet.

Lo--in dim days long since--
The strolling Almehs tell,
Thou shouldst have been a prince,
Boy of the ebon fell!
If truth the poet sings,
Thy tribe, oh Beduin, springs
From those lost tribes of Kings,
Once Kings in Israel.

Ah me! the camp-fires gleam
Out yonder, where the sands
Fade like a lotos dream
In hollow twilight lands.
Our sail swells to the blast,
Our boat speeds far and fast,
Farewell! And to the last
Smile, waving friendly hands.

* * * * * *

From England's storm-girt isle,
O'er seas where seagulls wail,
Rocked on the rippling Nile,
We drift with drooping sail.
On waters hushed at night,
Where stars of Egypt write
In hieroglyphs of light
Their undeciphered tale.

Forlorn sits Assouan;
Where is her boy, her pride?--
Now in the lamplit Khan,
Now by the riverside,
Or where the Soudanese,
Under mimosa trees,
Chaunt mournful melodies,
We've sought him far and wide.

Oh, desert-nurtured Child,
How dared they carry thee,
Far from thy native Wild,
Across the Western Sea?
Packed off, poor boy, at last,
With many a plaster cast
Of plinth and pillar vast,
And waxen mummies piled!

Ah! just like other ware,
For a lump sum or so
Shipped to the World's great Fair--

To big Chicago Show!
With mythic beasts and things,
Beetles and bulls with wings,
And imitation Sphinx,
Ranged row on curious row!

Beautiful, black-eyed boy;
Ah me! how strange it is
That thou, the desert's joy,
Whom heavenly winds would kiss,
With Ching and Chang-hwa ware,
Blue pots and bronzes rare,
Shouldst now be over there
Shown at Porkopolis.

Gone like a lovely dream,
Child of the starry smile;
Gone from the glowing stream
Glassing its greenest isle!
We've sought, but sought in vain;
Thou wilt not come again,
Never for bliss or pain,
Home to thy orphaned Nile.

Mathilde Blind

The Colossi of the Plain

Ancient of Days! Before the Trojan Wars
You towered as now in your colossal prime,
Watching the rosy footed morning climb
O'er far Arabia's flushing mountain bars.
Despite your weird disfigurement and scars
You dwarf all other monuments. Sublime
Survivors of old Thebes! you baffle Time,
And sit in silent conclave with the Stars.

Ah, once below you through the glittering plain
Stretched avenues of Sphinxes to the Nile;
And, flanked with towers, each consecrated fane
Enshrined its god. The broken gods lie prone
In roofless halls, their hallowed terrors gone,
Helpless beneath Heaven's penetrating smile.

Mathilde Blind

The Dead

The dead abide with us! Though stark and cold
Earth seems to grip them, they are with us still:
They have forged our chains of being for good or ill;
And their invisible hands these hands yet hold.
Our perishable bodies are the mould
In which their strong imperishable will--
Mortality's deep yearning to fulfil--
Hath grown incorporate through dim time untold.

Vibrations infinite of life in death,
As a star's travelling light survives its star!
So may we hold our lives, that when we are
The fate of those who then will draw this breath,
They shall not drag us to their judgment bar,
And curse the heritage which we bequeath.

Mathilde Blind

The Desert

Uncircumscribed, unmeasured, vast,
Eternal as the Sea;
What lacks the tidal sea thou hast--
Profound stability.

Beneath the sun that burns and brands
In hushed Noon's halting breath,
Calm as the Sphinx upon thy sands
Thou art--nay, calm as death.

The desert foxes hide in holes,
The jackal seeks his lair;
The sombre rocks, like reddening coals,
Glow lurid in the glare.

Only some vulture far away,
Bald-headed, harpy-eyed,
Flaps down on lazy wing to prey
On what has lately died.

No palm tree lifts a lonely shade,
No dove is on the wing;
It seems a land which Nature made
Without a living thing,

Or wreckage of some older world,
Ere children grew, or flowers,
When rocks and hissing stones were hurled
In hot, volcanic showers.

The solemn Blue bends over all;
Far as winged thought may flee
Roll ridges of black mountain wall,
And flat sands like the sea.

No trace of footsteps to be seen,
No tent, no smoking roof;
Nay, even the vagrant Beeshareen
Keeps warily aloof.

But yon, mid tumbled hillocks prone,
Some human form I scan--
A human form, indeed, but stone:
A cold, colossal Man!

How came he here mid piling sands,
Like some huge cliff enisled,
Osiris-wise, with folded hands,
Mute spirit of the Wild?

Ages ago the hands that hewed,
And in the living rock

Carved this Colossus, granite-thewed
And curled each crispy lock:

Ages ago have dropped to rest
And left him passive, prone,
Forgotten on earth's barren breast,
Half statue and half stone.

And Persia ruled and Palestine;
And o'er her violet seas
Arose, with marble gods divine,
The grace of god-like Greece.

And Rome, the Mistress of the World,
Amid her diadem
Of Eastern Empires set impearled
The Scarab's mystic gem.

Perchance he has been lying here
Since first the world began,
Poor Titan of some earlier sphere
Of prehistoric Man!

To whom we are as idle flies,
That fuss and buzz their day;
While still immutable he lies,
As long ago he lay.

Empurpled in the Afterglow,
Thou, with the Sun alone,
Of all the stormy waste below,
Art King, but king of stone!

Uncircumscribed, unmeasured, vast,
Eternal as the Sea,
The present here becomes the past,
For all futurity.

Mathilde Blind

The Dying Dragoman

Far in the fiery wilderness,
Beyond the town of Assouan,
Left languishing in sore distress,
There lay a dying Dragoman.
Alone amid the waste, alone,
The hot sand burnt him to the bone;
And on his breast, like heated stone,
The burden of the air did press.

His head was pillowed on a tomb,
Reared to some holy Sheik of old;
The irresistible Simoom
Whirled drifts of sand that rose and rolled
Around him, and the panting air
Was one sulphureous spectral glare,
Shot with such gleams as lights the lair
Of tigers in a jungle's gloom.

Groaning, he closed his bloodshot eyes,
As if to shut out all he feared;
And greedily a swarm of flies
Fell on his face and tangled beard.
He lay like one who ne'er would lift
His head above that ashy drift;
When lo, there gleamed across a rift
The blue oasis of the skies.

Like smoke dispersing far and wide,
The draggled sands were blown away;
The wild clouds in a refluent tide
Receded from the face of day.
The lingering airs yet lightly blew
Till the last speck cleared out of view,
And left the hushed Eternal Blue,
And nothing else beside.

Then once again, with change of moods,
A mighty shadow, broadening, fell
Across those shadeless solitudes,
Without a Palm, without a Well.
Wing wedged in wing, an ordered mass
Unnumbered numbers pass and pass,
As if one Will, one only, was
In all those moving multitudes.

A chord thrilled in the sick man's brain;
He raised his heavy-lidded eyes,
He raised his heavy head with pain,
And caught a glimpse of netted skies,
Meshed in ten thousand wings in flight
That cleft the air. Oh wondrous sight!
He gasped, he shrieked in sheer delight:

"The Storks! The Storks fly home again!

"I too, O Storks, I too, even I,
Would see my native land again.
Oh, had I wings that I might fly
With you, wild birds, across the main!
Take, take me to the land, I pray,
The land where nests are full in May,
The land where my young children play:
Oh, take me with you, or I die.

"My lonely heart blooms like a flower,
My children, when I think of you,
My love is like an April shower,
And fills my heart with drops of dew.
Along their unknown tracks, ah me!
The Storks will fly across the sea;
My children soon will hail with glee
Their red bills on the rain-washed tower."

Home-sickness seized him for the herds
That browse upon the fresh green leas;
Home-sickness for the cuckoo birds
That shout afar in feathery trees;
For running stream and rippling rill
That, racing, turning his woodland mill:
And tears on tears began to fill
His eyes, confusing all he sees.

Again he doats on rosy cheeks
Of children rolling in the grass;
Again the busy days and weeks,
The months and years serenely pass.
Black forest clocks tick day and night,
His board and bed are snowy white,
His humble house is just as bright
As if it were a house of glass.

Again, beneath the high-peaked roof,
His wife's unresting shuttle flies
Across the even warp and woof;
Again his thrifty mother plies
Her wheel, that hums like noontide bees;
And lint-locked babes about her knees
Hark to strange tales of talking trees,
And Storks deep versed in sage replies.

Again the ring of swinging chimes
Calls all the pious folk to church,
With shining Sunday face, betimes,
Through rustling woods of beech and birch

Full of moist glimmering hollows where
The pines bow murmuring as in prayer,
And musically through the air
The forest's mighty Choral swells.

Again, O Lord, again he sees
The place where Heaven came down one day;
Where, in a space of bloom and bees,
He won his wife one morn of May.
Warm pulses shook and thrilled his blood,
Wild birds were singing in the wood,
The flowering world in bridal mood
Joined in the Pinewood's symphonies.

Again, O Lord, in grief and fear,
He bids good-bye to all he loves;
The waters swell, the woods are sere,
The Storks are gone, and hushed the doves.
He goes with them; he goes to heal
The sickness whose insidious seal
Is set on him. Ah, tears will steal
And blur the Storks that disappear.

A furnace fire behind the hill,
The sun has burnt itself away;
The ghost of light, transparent, chill,
Yet floats upon the edge of day.
And all the desert holds its breath
As if it felt and crouched beneath
The filmy, flying bat of death
About a heart for ever still.

And one by one, seraphic, bland,
The bright stars open in the skies;
The large above the Shadow land
The white-faced moon begins to rise.
And all the wilderness grows wan
Beneath the stars, that one by one
Look down upon the lifeless man
As if they were his children's eyes.

Mathilde Blind

The Evening of the Year

Wan mists enwrap the still-born day;
The harebell withers on the heath;
And all the moorland seems to breathe
The hectic beauty of decay.
Within the open grave of May
Dishevelled trees drop wreath on wreath;
Wind-wrung and ravelled underneath
Waste leaves choke up the woodland way.

The grief of many partings near
Wails like an echo in the wind:
The days of love lie far behind,
The days of loss lie shuddering near.
Life's morning-glory who shall bind?
It is the evening of the year.

Mathilde Blind

The Hunter's Moon

The Hunter's Moon rides high,
High o'er the close-cropped plain;
Across the desert sky
The herded clouds amain
Scamper tumultuously,
Chased by the hounding wind
That yelps behind.

The clamorous hunt is done,
Warm-housed the kennelled pack;
One huntsman rides alone
With dangling bridle slack;
He wakes a hollow tone,
Far echoing to his horn
In clefts forlorn.

The Hunter's Moon rides low,
Her course is nearly sped.
Where is the panting roe?
Where hath the wild deer fled?
Hunter and hunted now
Lie in oblivion deep:
Dead or asleep.

Mathilde Blind

The Moon of Ramadân

The sunset melts upon the Nile,
The stony desert glows,
Beneath heaven's universal smile,
One burning damask rose;
And like a Peri's pearly boat,
No longer than a span,
Look, faint on fiery sky afloat,
The Moon of Ramadân.

Our boat drifts idly with the Stream,
Our boatmen ship the oar;
Vistas of endless temples gleam
On either topaz shore;
And swimming over groves of Palm,
A crescent weak and wan,
There steals into the perfect calm
The Moon of Ramadân.

All nature seems to bask in peace
And hush her lowest sigh;
Above the river's golden fleece
The happy Halcyons fly.
And lost in some old lotos dream,
The pensive Pelican
Sees mirrored in the mazy stream
The Moon of Ramadân.

Black outlined on the golden air
A turbaned Silhouette,
The Mueddin invites to prayer
From many a Minaret.
Our dusky boatmen hear the call,
And prostrate, man on man,
They bow, adoring, one and all,
The Moon of Ramadân.

Where Luxor's rose-flushed columns shine
Above the river's brim,
The priests with incense once, and wine,
Made sacrifice to Him,
The highest god of Thebes, and head
Of all the heavenly clan;
But now the Moslem hails instead
The Moon of Ramadân.

The gods have come, the gods have gone,
Yet wedded to their walls,
Winged with the serpent of the Sun
In mute processionals,
They stride from door to massy door,
Bound nations in their van,
Though Amon's Sun has waned before

The Moon of Ramadân.

Yea, even proud Egypt's proudest king,
Who chastised rebel lands,
And brought his gods for offering
Mountains of severed hands;
Who singly, like a god of War,
Smote hosts that swerved and ran,
Lies low 'neath Allah's scimetar--
The Moon of Ramadân.

And Isis, Queen, whose sacred disk's
Horned splendour crowned her brow,
While fires of flashing Obelisks
Flamed in the Afterglow;
And white-robed priests who served her shrine
Have turned Mahommedan,
And worship Him who wears for sign
The Moon of Ramadân.

The rosy lotos, flower and leaf,
Which wreathed each sacred lake,
With Nature's loveliest bas-relief,
Has followed in their wake;
Yea, with the last true Pharaoh's death,
The lotos leaves, grown wan,
Have changed to lily white beneath
The Moon of Ramadân.

The gods may come, the gods may go,
And royal realms change hands;
But the most ancient Nile will flow,
And flood the desert sands;
And nightly will he glass the stars'
Unearthly caravan,
Nor care if it be Rome's red Mars
Or Moon of Ramadân.

The sunset fades upon the Nile;
The desert's stony gloom,
Receding blankly mile on mile,
Grows silent as a tomb.
All weary wanderers, man and beast,
Hie, fasting, to the Khan,
While shines above their nightly feast
The Moon of Ramadân.

Mathilde Blind

The Music-Lesson

A thrush alit on a young-leaved spray,
And, lightly clinging,
It rocked in its singing
As the rapturous notes rose loud and gay;
And with liquid shakes,
And trills and breaks,
Rippled though blossoming bough of May.

Like a ball of fluff, with a warm brown throat
And throbbing bosom,
'Mid the apple-blossom,
The new-fledged nestling sat learning by rote
To echo the song
So tender and strong,
As it feebly put in its frail little note.

O blissfullest lesson amid the green grove!
The low wind crispeth
The leaves, where lispeth
The shy little bird with its parent above;
Two voices that mingle
And make but a single
Hymn of rejoicing in praise of their love.

Mathilde Blind

The Passing Year

No breath of wind stirs in the painted leaves,
The meadows are as stirless as the sky,
Like a Saint's halo golden vapours lie
Above the restful valley's garnered sheaves.
The journeying Sun, like one who fondly grieves,
Above the hills seems loitering with a sigh,
As loth to bid the fruitful earth good-bye,
On these hushed hours of luminous autumn eves.

There is a pathos in his softening glow,
Which like a benediction seems to hover
O'er the tranced earth, ere he must sink below
And leave her widowed of her radiant Lover,
A frost-bound sleeper in a shroud of snow,
While winter winds howl a wild dirge above her.

Mathilde Blind

The Red Sunsets, 1883

The twilight heavens are flushed with gathering light,
And o'er wet roofs and huddling streets below
Hang with a strange Apocalyptic glow
On the black fringes of the wintry night.
Such bursts of glory may have rapt the sight
Of him to whom on Patmos long ago
The visionary angel came to show
That heavenly city built of chrysolite.

And lo, three factory hands begrimed with soot,
Aflame with the red splendour, marvelling stand,
And gaze with lifted faces awed and mute.
Starved of earth's beauty by Man's grudging hand,
O toilers, robbed of labour's golden fruit,
Ye, too, may feast in Nature's fairyland.

Mathilde Blind

The Robin Redbreast

The year's grown songless! No glad pipings thrill
The hedge-row elms, whose wind-worn branches shower
Their leaves on the sere grass, where some late flower
In golden chalice hoards the sunlight still.
Our summer guests, whose raptures used to fill
Each apple-blossomed garth and honeyed bower,
Have in adversity's inclement hour
Abandoned us to bleak November's chill.

But hearken! Yonder russet bird among
The crimson clusters of the homely thorn
Still bubbles o'er with little rills of song--
A blending of sweet hope and resignation:
Even so, when life of love and youth is shorn,
One friend becomes its last, best consolation.

Mathilde Blind

The Sâkiyeh

"How long shall Man be Nature's fool?" Man cries;
"Be like those great, gaunt oxen, drilled and bound,
Inexorably driven round and round
To turn the water-wheel with bandaged eyes?
And as they trudge beneath Egyptian skies,
Watering the wrinkled desert's beggared ground,
The hoarse Sâkiyeh's lamentable sound
Fills all the land as with a people's sighs?"

Poor Brutes! Who in unconsciousness sublime,
Replenishing the ever-empty jars,
Endow the waste with palms and harvest gold:
And men, who move in rhythm with moving stars,
Should shrink to give the borrowed lives they hold:
Bound blindfold to the groaning wheel of Time.

Mathilde Blind

The Sleeping Beauty

There was intoxication in the air;
The wind, keen blowing from across the seas,
O'er leagues of new-ploughed land and heathery leas,
Smelt of wild gorse whose gold flamed everywhere.
And undertone of song pulsed far and near,
The soaring larks filled heaven with ecstasies,
And, like a living clock among the trees,
The shouting cuckoo struck the time of year.

For now the Sun had found the earth once more,
And woke the Sleeping Beauty with a kiss;
Who thrilled with light of love in every pore,
Opened her flower-blue eyes, and looked in his.
Then all things felt life fluttering at their core--
The world shook mystical in lambent bliss.

Mathilde Blind

The Songs of Summer

The songs of summer are over and past!
The swallow's forsaken the dripping eaves;
Ruined and black 'mid the sodden leaves
The nests are rudely swung in the blast:
And ever the wind like a soul in pain
Knocks and knocks at the window-pane.

The songs of summer are over and past!
Woe's me for a music sweeter than theirs--
The quick, light bound of a step on the stairs,
The greeting of lovers too sweet to last:
And ever the wind like a soul in pain
Knocks and knocks at the window-pane.

Mathilde Blind

The Sphinx

Wanderer, behold Life's riddle writ in stone,
Fronting Eternity with lidless eyes;
Of all that is beneath the changing skies,
Immutably abiding and alone.
The handiwork of hands unseen, unknown,
When Pharaohs of immortal dynasties
Built Pyramids to brave the centuries,
Cheating Annihilation of her own.

The heart grows hushed before it. Nay, methinks
That Man, and all on which Man wastes his breath,
The World, and all the World inheriteth,
With infinite, inexorable links
Grappling the soul; that love, hate, birth and death
Dwindle to nothingness before thee--Sphinx.

Mathilde Blind

The Tombs of the Kings

Where the mummied Kings of Egypt, wrapped in linen fold on fold,
Couched for ages in their coffins, crowned with crowns of dusky gold,

Lie in subterranean chambers, biding to the day of doom,
Counterfeit life's hollow semblance in each mazy mountain tomb,

Grisly in their gilded coffins, mocking masks of skin and bone,
Yet remain in change unchanging, balking Nature of her own;

Mured in mighty Mausoleums, walled in from the night and day,
Lo, the mortal Kings of Egypt hold immortal Death at bay.

For--so spake the Kings of Egypt--those colossal ones whose hand
Held the peoples from Pitasa to the Kheta's conquered land;

Who, with flash and clash of lances and war-chariots, stormed and won
Many a town of stiff-necked Syria to high-towering Askalon:

"We have been the faithful stewards of the deathless gods on high;
We have built them starry temples underneath the starry sky.

"We have smitten rebel nations, as a child is whipped with rods:
We the living incarnation of imperishable gods.

"Shall we suffer Death to trample us to nothingness? and must
We be scattered, as the whirlwind blows about the desert dust?

"No! Death shall not dare come near us, nor Corruption shall not lay
Hands upon our sacred bodies, incorruptible as day.

"Let us put a bit and bridle, and rein in Time's headlong course;
Let us ride him through the ages as a master rides his horse.

"On the changing earth unchanging let us bide till Time shall end,
Till, reborn in blest Osiris, mortal with Immortal blend."

Yea, so spake the Kings of Egypt, they whose lightest word was law,
At whose nod the far-off nations cowered, stricken dumb with awe.

And Fate left the haughty rulers to work out their monstrous doom;
And, embalmed with myrrh and ointments, they were carried to the tomb;

Through the gate of Bab-el-Molouk, where the sulphur hills lie bare,
Where no green thing casts a shadow in the noon's tremendous glare;

Where the unveiled Blue of heaven in its bare intensity
Weighs upon the awe-struck spirit with the world's immensity;

Through the Vale of Desolation, where no beast or bird draws breath,
To the Coffin-Hills of Tuat--the Metropolis of Death.

Down--down--down into the darkness, where, on either hand, dread Fate,

In the semblance of a serpent, watches by the dolorous gate;

Down--down--down into the darkness, where no gleam of sun or star
Sheds its purifying radiance from the living world afar;

Where in labyrinthine windings, darkly hidden, down and down,--
Proudly on his marble pillow, with old Egypt's double crown,

And his mien of cold commandment, grasping still his staff of state,
Rests the mightiest of the Pharaohs, whom the world surnamed the Great.

Swathed in fine Sidonian linen, crossed hands folded on the breast,
There the mummied Kings of Egypt lie within each painted chest.

And upon their dusky foreheads Pleiades of flaming gems,
Glowing through the nether darkness, flash from luminous diadems.

Where is Memphis? Like a Mirage, melted into empty air:
But these royal gems yet sparkle richly on their raven hair.

Where is Thebes in all her glory, with her gates of beaten gold?
Where Syenê, or that marvel, Heliopolis of old?

Where is Edfu? Where Abydos? Where those pillared towns of yore
Whose auroral temples glittered by the Nile's thick-peopled shore?

Gone as evanescent cloudlands, Alplike in the afterglow;
But these Kings hold fast their bodies of four thousand years ago.

Sealed up in their Mausoleums, in the bowels of the hills,
There they hide from dissolution and Death's swiftly grinding mills.

Scattering fire, Uræus serpents guard the Tombs' tremendous gate;
While Troth holds the trembling balance, weighs the heart and seals its fate.

And a multitude of mummies in the swaddling clothes of death,
Ferried o'er the sullen river, on and on still hasteneth.

And around them and above them, blazoned on the rocky walls,
Crowned with stars, enlaced by serpents, in divine processionals,

Ibis-headed, jackal-featured, vulture-hooded, pass on high,
Gods on gods through Time's perspectives--pilgrims of Eternity.

There, revealed by fitful flashes, in a gloom that may be felt,
Wild Chimæras flash from darkness, glittering like Orion's belt.

And on high, o'er shining waters, in their barks the gods sail by,
In the Sunboat and the Moonboat, rowed across the rose-hued sky.

Night, that was before Creation, watches sphinx-like, starred with eyes,
And the hours and days are passing, and the years and centuries.

But these mummied Kings of Egypt, pictures of a perished race,
Lie, of Death forgotten, face by immemorial face.

Though the glorious sun above them, burning on the naked plain,
Clothes the empty wilderness with the golden, glowing grain;

Though the balmy Moon above them, floating in the milky Blue,
Fills the empty wildernesses with a silver fall of dew;

Though life comes and flies unresting, like the shadow which a dove
Casts upon the Sphinx, in passing, for a moment from above;--

Still these mummied Kings of Egypt, wrapped in linen, fold on fold,
Bide through the ages in their coffins, crowned with crowns of dusky gold.

Had the sun once brushed them lightly, or a breath of air, they must
Instantaneously have crumbled into evanescent dust.

Pale and passive in their prisons, they have conquered, chained to death;
And their lineaments look living now as when they last drew breath!

Have they conquered? Oh the pity of those Kings within their tombs,
Locked in stony isolation in those petrifying glooms!

Motionless where all is motion in a rolling Universe,
Heaven, by answering their prayer, turned it to a deadly curse.

Left them fixed where all is fluid in a world of star-winged skies;
Where, in myriad transformations, all things pass and nothing dies;

Nothing dies but what is tethered, kept when Time would set it free,
To fulfil Thought's yearning tension upward through Eternity.

Mathilde Blind

The Woods Shake in an Ague-Fit

The woods shake in an ague-fit,
The mad wind rocks the pine,
From sea to sea the white gulls flit
Into the roaring brine.

The moon as if in panic grief
Darts through the clouds on high,
Blown like a wild autumnal leaf
Across the wilder sky.

The gusty rain is driving fast,
And through the rain we hear,
Above the equinoctial blast,
The thunder of the Weir.

The voices of the wind and rain
Wail echoing through my heart--
That love is ever dogged by pain
And fondest souls must part.

You made heart's summer, O my friend,
But now we bid adieu,
There will be winter without end
And tears for ever new.

Mathilde Blind

Thou Walkest With Me

Thou walkest with me as the spirit-light
Of the hushed moon, high o'er a snowy hill,
Walks with the houseless traveller all the night,
When trees are tongueless and when mute the rill.
Moon of my soul, O phantasm of delight,
Thou walkest with me still.

The vestal flame of quenchless memory burns
In my soul's sanctuary. Yea, still for thee
My bitter heart hath yearned, as moonward yearns
Each separate wave-pulse of the clamorous sea:
My Moon of love, to whom for ever turns
The life that aches through me.

Mathilde Blind

Time's Shadow

Thy life, O Man, in this brief moment lies:
Time's narrow bridge whereon we darkling stand,
With an infinitude on either hand
Receding luminously from our eyes.
Lo, there thy Past's forsaken Paradise
Subsideth like some visionary strand,
While glimmering faint, the Future's promised land,
Illusive from the abyss, seems fain to rise.

This hour alone Hope's broken pledges mar,
And joy now gleams before, now in our rear,
Like mirage mocking in some waste afar,
Dissolving into air as we draw near.
Beyond our steps the path is sunny-clear,
The shadow lying only where we are.

Mathilde Blind

To Memory

Oh in this dearth and winter of the soul,
When even Hope, still wont to soar and sing,
Droopeth, a starveling bird whose downy wing
Stiffens ere dead through the dank drift it fall--
Yea, ere Hope perish utterly, I call
On thee, fond Memory, that thou haste and bring
One leaf, one blossom from that far-off spring
When love's auroral light lay over all.

Bring but one pansy: haply so the thrill
Of poignant yearning for those glad dead years
May, like the gusty south, breathe o'er the chill
Of frozen grief, dissolving it in tears,
Till numb Hope, stirred by that warm dropping rain,
Will deem, perchance, Love's springtide come again.

Mathilde Blind

To the Obelisk

DURING THE GREAT FROST, 1881.

Thou sign-post of the Desert! Obelisk,
Once fronting in thy monumental pride
Egypt's fierce sun, that blazing far and wide,
Sheared her of tree and herb, till like a disk
Her waste stretched shadowless, and fraught with risk
To those who with their beasts of burden hied
Across the seas of sand until they spied
Thy pillar, and their flagging hearts grew brisk:

Now reared beside out Thames so wintry grey,
Where blocks of ice drift with the drifting stream,
Thou risest o'er the alien prospect! Say,
Yon dull, blear, rayless orb whose lurid gleam
Tinges the snow-draped ships and writhing steam,
Is this the sun which fired thine orient day?

Mathilde Blind

Untimely Love

Peace, throbbing heart, nor let us shed one tear
O'er this late love's unseasonable glow;
Sweet as a violet blooming in the snow,
The posthumous offspring of the widowed year
That smells of March when all the world is sere,
And, while around the hurtling sea-winds blow--
Which twist the oak and lay the pine tree low--
Stands childlike in the storm and has no fear.

Poor helpless blossom orphaned of the sun,
How could it thus brave winter's rude estate?
Oh love, more helpless, why bloom so late,
Now that the flower-time of the year is done?
Since thy dear course must end when scarce begun,
Nipped by the cold touch of relentless fate.

Mathilde Blind

We Met as Strangers

We met as strangers on life's lonely way,
And yet it seemed we knew each other well;
There was no end to what thou hadst to say,
Or to the thousand things I found to tell.
My heart, long silent, at thy voice that day
Chimed in my breast like to a silver bell.

How much we spoke, and yet still left untold
Some secret half revealed within our eyes:
Didst thou not love me once in ages old?
Had I not called thee with importunate cries,
And, like a child left sobbing in the cold,
Listened to catch from far thy fond replies?

We met as strangers, and as such we part;
Yet all my life seems leaving me with thine;
Ah, to be clasped once only heart to heart,
If only once to feel that thou wert mine!
These lips are locked, and yet I know thou art
That all in all for which my soul did pine.

Mathilde Blind

Welcome to Egypt

The Palms stood motionless as Pyramids
Against the golden halo of the sky;
Interminable crops of wheat and rye
Mantled the plain with downy coverlids
Of silken green, where little freckled kids
Frolicked beneath the staid maternal eye;
And babe-led buffaloes plashed trampling by,
Sprinkling cool water on their dusty lids.

Spake the grave Arab, as his flashing glance
Swept the large, luminous verdure's dewy sheen,
Sedately, with a bronze-like countenance:
"Nehârak Saîd! Lo, this happy day,
My country decks herself in sumptuous green,
And smiling welcome, Lady, bids you stay."

Mathilde Blind

What Magic Is There

What magic is there in thy mien
What sorcery in thy smile,
Which charms away all cark and care,
Which turns the foul days into fair,
And for a little while
Changes this disenchanted scene
From the sere leaf into the green,
Transmuting with love's golden wand
This beggared life to fairyland?

My heart goes forth to thee, oh friend,
As some poor pilgrim to a shrine,
A pilgrim who has come from far
To seek his spirit's folding star,
And sees the taper shine;
The goal to which his wanderings tend,
Where want and weariness shall end,
And kneels ecstatically blest
Because his heart hath entered rest.

Mathilde Blind

When You Wake

When you wake from troubled slumbers
With a dream-bewildered brain,
And old leaves which no man numbers
Chattering tap against the pane;
And the midnight wind is wailing
Till you very life seems quailing
As the long gusts shudder and sigh:
Know you not that homeless cry
Is my love's, which cannot die,
Wailing through Eternity?

When beside the glowing embers,
Sitting in the twilight lone,
Drop on drop you hear November's
Melancholy monotone,
As the heavy rain comes sweeping,
With a sound of weeping, weeping,
Till your blood is chilled with fears;
Know you not those falling tears,
Flowing fast through years on years,
For my sobs within your ears?

When with dolorous moan the billows
Surge around where, far and wide,
Leagues on leagues of sea-worn hollows
Throb with thunders of the tide,
And the weary waves in breaking
Fill you, thrill you, as with aching
Memories of our love of yore,
Where you pace the sounding shore,
Hear you not, through roll and roar,
Soul call soul for evermore?

Mathilde Blind

Why Will You Haunt Me

Why will you haunt me unawares,
And walk into my sleep,
Pacing its shadowy thoroughfares,
Where long-dried perfume scents the airs,
While ghosts of sorrow creep,
Where on Hope's ruined altar-stairs,
With ineffectual beams,
The Moon of Memory coldly glares
Upon the land of dreams?

My yearning eyes were fain to look
Upon your hidden face;
Their love, alas! you could not brook,
But in your own you mutely took
My hand, and for a space
You wrung it till I throbbed and shook,
And woke with wildest moan
And wet face channeled like a brook
With your tears or my own.

Mathilde Blind

Winding All My Life About Thee

Winding all my life about thee,
Let me lay my lips on thine;
What is all the world without thee,
Mine --oh mine!

Let me press my heart out on thee,
Grape of life's most fiery vine,
Spilling sacramental on thee
Love's red wine.

Let thy strong eyes yearning o'er me
Draw me with their force divine;
All my soul has gone before me
Clasping thine.

Irresistibly I follow,
As whenever we may run
Runs our shadow, as the swallow
Seeks the sun.

Yea, I tremble, swoon, surrender
All my spirit to thy sway,
As a star is drowned in splendour
Of the day.

Mathilde Blind

Yea, the Roses Are Still on Fire

Yea, the roses are still on fire
With the bygone heat of July,
Though the least little wind drifting by
Shake a rose-leaf or two from the brier,
Be it never so soft a sigh.

Ember of love still glows and lingers
Deep at the red heart's smouldering core;
With the sudden passionate throb of yore
We shook as our eyes and clinging fingers
Met once only to meet no more.

Mathilde Blind

You Make the Sunshine of my Heart

You make the sunshine of my heart
And its tempestuous shower;
Sometimes the thought of you is like
A lilac bush in flower,
Yea, honey-sweet as hives in May.
And then the pang of it will strike
My bosom with a fiery smart,
As though love's deeply planted dart
Drained all its life away.

My thoughts hum round you, Dear, like bees
About a bank of thyme,
Or round the yellow blossoms of
The heavy-scented lime.
Ah, sweeter you than honeydew,
Yet dark the ways of love,
For it has robbed my soul of peace,
And marred my life and turned heart's-ease
Into funereal rue.

Mathilde Blind

Your Looks Have Touched My Soul

Your looks have touched my soul with bright
Ineffable emotion;
As moonbeams on a stormy night
Illume with transitory light
A seagull on her lonely flight
Across the lonely ocean.

Fluttering from out the gloom and roar,
On fitful wing she flies,
Moon-white above the moon-washed shore;
Then, drowned in darkness as before,
She's lost, as I when lit no more
By your beloved eyes.

Mathilde Blind