

Classic Poetry Series

Muriel Stuart

- poems -

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A Chicot

IN days of ancient history
Who were you? Tell me if you know.
Between your kisses answer me
To-night, Chicot.

Were you a faun by Castaly
Tracking Urania or Clio?
Or a white boy in Arcady
Astray, Chicot?

Were you a satin-supple page
Swinging a curtain to and fro,
Chanting some impudent addage
Of love, Chicot?

Were you the subtlest cardinal
That ever blessing did bestow?
At Fontarabia did you fall,
Fighting, Chicot?

Or at some monarch' table set,
Did the bells twink at wrist and toe?
Were you Brusquet or Dagonet,
Or else, Chicot?

Something you were of all of these,
Wise, gay, serene--that hid below,
More sad for all your subtleties,
Something, Chicot.

You brace your armor well tonight,--
Too well for any blood to flow;
You'd not betray in any fight
A wound, Chicot!

I think you would not flinch beneath
Life's whips, but after every blow
Stand up again, and set your teeth
And smile, Chicot.

Weariness waits on wariness,
There's leaping flame beneath the snow--
All sorts of things that none would guess
Of you, Chicot!

Are you a lover? No and yes!
Are you a comrade? Yes and no!
What are you? Neither more nor less
Than just Chicot!

Take what a passing poet sings
Before to-morrow bids us go,

In memory of--many things,
And you, Chicot!

Muriel Stuart

After

WHEN, on an empty night in later years
Thou ponderest over sorrowful sweet things,
While troubling with cold hands the muted strings
Of Memory's lute now silent in thine ears,
These words shall sweep with soft descent of tears--
Shall wound the air with sudden thrust of wings
Bringing the Past to thee as Winter brings
To naked boughs the colour April wears.
Thou shalt read over, in less fortunate days,
Forgotten pages till thy heart be moved
To sudden pity and to passionate praise
Of what thou didst not heed nor understand;
Letting the book drop from thy trembling hand,
"Once," thou shalt say and pause . . . "How I was loved!"

Muriel Stuart

At a Life's End

COME here, rekindle the old fire,
This last night leave no lamp unlit!
In later days we twain shall sit,
Remembering the joys of it,--
The warmth and sweetness of desire.

Here, ere we part, again live o'er
The way we went,--the hour,--the kiss;
Let Love with magic hand of his
Rebuild the mirage of our bliss
In desert days that wend before.

Swart night of August! when we stood
Heart-locked beside the window-pane!
The thunder quickening again
The laggard pulses of the rain,
Wrung a few drops as hot as blood.

Outside we heard the passionate tune
That wooing wind and water keep;
The weft that silence keeps with sleep;
While through the foam-blown silent deep
Sailed the wan shallop of the moon.

Outside, the dark night and the sea!
The sleepy and seductive speech
Of water to the shrinking beach,
The wind that odoured plum and peach,
The white rose that regaled a bee.

Joy through our hand like water runs!
Ah! dearest, could we keep those hours
As some divine unfading flowers,
Renewed by the eternal showers,
And lit by everlasting suns!

But flowers and hours alike must fade;
In the old book of Memory
Seal up these hours for you and me,
As on some page of poetry,
At glowing words a rose is laid.

Let the grape purple in the South,
And let the wild red daisies blow!
I shall not see, I shall not know;
For me, alone the darnels grow,
Only the hemlocks bruise my mouth.

To-night the world is stunned with gloom,
The trees shake in a sudden fright,
Wincing against the hailstones' spite,
And the crape curtains of the night

Hang heavy on the unfinished loom.

Fit hour for parting! Say 'farewell,'
Clasp me no closer, ask no more!
What word can ease--what kiss restore?
The thunder's hearse is on the shore,
And the sea tolls a passing bell.

Muriel Stuart

Ave et Vale

FAREWELL is said! Yea, but I cannot take
All that my Greeting gave.
In you hath Hope her doom and Joy her grave;
Still you go crowned with old imaginings,
Clad in the purple that young passion flings
About the sorriest god that Love can make.

Ah! would you might forget, and so pass by
Unwounded of my kiss,
Made free of Youth's unmemorable bliss!
Love's hand that speeds along his daisy chain
Forgets in swift delight to tell again
Old prayers upon a new-strung rosary.

For when I part from you I would not leave
One shadow that might be
A ghost to haunt you, what you had of me
I would fold by in Memory's lavender--
Something my breath may very gently stir
In the slow fading of a rainy eve.

When you drop cherries in the purple wine
For other lips to drain,
Let not old nights betrayed leap up again,
Throw down no murdering chalice at your feast
To-night, nor find another woman's breast
Less lovely with the sudden dream of mine.

Yet if a stranger bear my name, or one
With the same-coloured eyes
Glance at you suddenly, lost dreams shall rise
With unintelligible swift appeals,
The broken images of old ideals
Shall stare from corners where as gods they shone.

Farewell is on the lips of the first kiss
But speaks no word until
The loud voice of Desire hath had its will.
Greeting is swift and beautiful, Farewell
Is slow and patient and immutable,
Knowing of old that love must lead to this.

Greeting! Farewell! The day's grown very old,
My heart put out the light,
Read no more pages of the Past to-night.
There are no roses here to miss the sun;
A soul hath looked on love and he hath flown;
Ashes are on the wind; the tale is told.

Muriel Stuart

Change

CHANGE shall accustom me in after years
To kingdom's builded on life's overthrow;
Onward with other poets I shall go,
Unpraised of thee. though praised of all my peers,
Until the vine that thou hast quickened, bears
Its fruit in others' hands; until I grow
So different from myself I shall not know
This poor young desperate heart, nor these wild tears.
But though I change, thou shalt not change with me,
Thy shrine shall stand unaltered and unmoved,
And if we meet again I shall but see
The features of a stranger, thou wilt be
Wholly what once thou wert to me, Beloved
And not what time and men have made of thee

Muriel Stuart

Christ at Carnival

THE hand of carnival was at my door,
I listened to its knocking, and sped down:
Faith was forgotten, Duty led no more:
I heard a wonton revelry in the town;
The Carnival ran in my veins like fire!
And some unfrustrable desire
Goaded me on to catch the roses thrown
From breast to breast, and with my own
Fugitive kiss to snatch the fugitive kiss;
I broke all faith for this
One wild and worthless hour,
To dance, to run, to beckon, as a flower
Maddens the bee with half-surrendering,
Then flies back in the air with petals shut.

Fainting with laughter and pursuit
I heard shrill winds leap out and sink again,
Tracking the green bed where the Spring hath lain,
And vanished from, whose feet made audible
Music among the tall trees on the hill.
Above me leaned a nightingale
Burdened and big with song, whose throat let fall
Long notes, so poignant and so musical,
I deemed his young mate, listening,
Heard him less passionately sing
Than I a-foot at Carnival!

Above the town, swart Night came rolling in
Upon her couch of heliotrope:
A new Moon, young and thin,
Lay like a Columbine
Teasing the spent hill, her old Harlequin,
She, who of late waned on the bitter sky,
Furtive and old, a woman without hope,
Begging in long-familiar streets, where Sin
Once seeking her, now shuddered and went by.

Caught in the meshes of a merry throng,
I stumbled through the lighted Market Place;
The lanterns swung an undetermined rose
In Night's convulsive face
As we were swept along
In crazy dance and song,--
On through the mirth-mad alleys of the town,
With shrill loud laughter tumbled roughly down,
Whirled up in swift embrace.
All, all went swinging, swaying in the revel,
Laughing and reeling, kissing each and all--
A crowd that wildest jesting did dishevel--
O mad night of Carnival!

Racing along the last mean street that goes

From house to house to find the mountain track,
I loosed their hands to catch a rose
Flung from some casement; swiftly they turned back
With gusty laughter their wild mates to greet,
Swift as the footless wind along the wheat!
Fainter and fainter grew their revelling,
Deserted of a sudden, lay the street,
Silence fell on me like a famished thing,
Making my soul aware of one who stood
Beside me--one who wore a monkish hood.
I stared, as one who sees
Beneath the thin and settled sheet
Over still mysteries
Faint outline of beloved hands and feet,
Too little loved and now too dead to care,
And suddenly becomes aware
That more than Death lies there,
That from this piteous and submissive change
Something has risen, terrible and strange.

Why fell my roses? What fear drove me, then,
To question him: "Who art thou, citizen?
Fainter and fainter grows the Carnival.
Wilt thou lock hands and turn with me again?"
He answered not, but let the hood half-fall,
Showing a thorn-plait on a forehead marred;
Trembling I cried: "Who art thou, Lord?"
"As thou sayest, I am He!
How long upn my cross am I to bleed
For thee still to deny me utterly?
Is not the hour yet come that I be freed,
How long am I to listen at thy door?"

Stricken in soul, I fell against his feet,
In rose-disorderd street,
Weeping: "I have not heard Thy foot before."
He answered: "He who hears
Loud noise of Carnival about his ears,
How shall he heed the foot with silence shod,
Or listen for the small still voice of God?
What is thy life?
Is thy sword stained in any splended strife?
Hast thou, in all thy safe, unshaken years,
Once thrown thyself upon Night's ambushed spears,
Or broken with thy tears
Thy heart against the Dawn's feet any day?
Hast thou spurned
Any earthly perishable sweet thing
To bear another's burden? Hast thou learned
At any knee but Folly's, trafficking
With every sweet delight that said thee 'yea'?
Oft hast thy goaded men to kiss thy mouth,

The flower of thy youth
Thou hast rendered up to any wind that's fleet,
But hast thou ever hastened to the Cross
To kiss My saving feet?"

"Thou knowest, Lord, thou knowest, I have not striven,
I made life easy, profitable, sweet,
I have not loved much or been much forgiven;
Of all a woman's vows the holiest--
To children that were posies at my breast--
I have forsworn, to-night, forsaking all
The ways of God to dance at Carnival.
What have I now to offer Thee Who deignest
To seek for grape on such unfruitful vine;
Who with such sinful head Thy bosom stainest!"
He said: "The last allegiance will be Mine,
Leave all and follow Me."

"Nay but my little children sleep at home
Beside their father, I would say good-bye."
He answered: "Was there any time for Me
To make My farewells in Gethsemane,
Or any lips to take last kisses from?
Knowest thou not that I can satisfy
All creatures I make Mine, shall I not be
Thy priest, blessing for thee the common bread,
Till the white flesh divine
Quicken against thy lip, and hallowèd,
The blood beat through the wine?
I would have all thou hast,
Be all thou art,
I would claim all thy present, future, past,
For My dispisèd heart;
For Me thou shalt all other creatures hate,
My seven wounds thou shalt assuage
With mouth inviolate."
"O pardoning love," I wept, "O love divine,
That such as thou shouldst ask of such!--
I am Thine, all Thine,
Casting here at Thy feet, despisèd Thou,
All other loves that used to mean so much,
All other hopes that mean so little now."

From a side-alley dumb to revelry,
Came the low sound of weeping, then my name:
A beggar came
Out of the heaving dark and spake to me:
"How knowest thou Christ?" I answered: "By the thorn";
"Nay, but the thorn tree grows in every wood
For any brow forsworn!"
The other whispered: "Thou art tempted here
For my sake," but the beggar's voice came fleet

As pain: "Three crosses did that hillside bear,
Not Christ alone hath wounded hands and feet;
Dost thou believe
That every pierced hand stretched to thee is Christ?
Shall not some thief inpenitent deceive,
At some strange shrine wilt thou be sacrificed?"
The other whispered: "Shall thy faith be led
So soon a traitor, child? For such as he
Trample me every day." The beggar said:
"Nay, wast thou spit upon in Galilee?"

Wildly I cried: "Oh, from this hallowed street
Go thy way, beggar, take thine apostate feet
From this poor temple on whose pinnacle
Christ in His Love doth not disdain to dwell,
Who doth confer
Glory on things inglorious, nor doth shun,
But bids an angel to Him minister,
Albeit a fallen one;
And if thou canst not pray,
Leave me my prayer at least and go thy way!"

Swift were Christ's feet the mountain road along;
A swift as they my soul beside them fled,
Keeping fleet measure to the strong
Unshatterable music of His words,
That in my hard heart made
Exquisite wounds that sang the while they bled,
Like little tamèd birds;
"O Holy One, I break here at Thy feet
The perfume of my soul like Magdalen's sweet
Spilled ointment; knewest Thou who gatherèd
Those holy spices? What dishevelled night,
What lust, profaning every temple-rite
To toss the gold of her sweet shameless head,
Had eased from priestly hands the spikenard
That made her soiled garments smell of God?
Thou did accept that sweetness when she kneeled,--
That holy myrrh, spilled from the soul and shard!
Nor didst disdain by her to be unshod,
Nay, Thy world-wounded feet her tresses healed.

"So here I gather sweets of all my life,
Treasure for which sin waged unworthy strife,
Holding as one who guilty pleasure wins--
Yea, even all my sins, my little sins--
My loves and penitences, foes no more
At strife with Thee for me. Oh, bid me pour
My spirit's perfume! I have wept and kissed
Those feet grown weary following what men
Caught up so easily; upon this brow
Be shed the glory of Love's pardon now,

As once the tresses of a Magdalen
became an aureole at the feet of Christ!"

Only the silence shook as we went on;
Soon the last watching window-light was gone;
No least star gleamed,
And trembling-still it seemed,
As if the mountain held its breath
For fear that it should weep;
A stopped stream smelled of Death;
The moon was out, blown by God's breath asleep;
The heavens turned
Plunging and livid, choked with thunder-spume,
Black driven clouds beneath whose eyelids burned
A dreadful light, rushed forward in the gloom;
There was no wind, but something seemed to stir
In the thin grass, as if unquiet head
On sleepless pillow moved--a listener
To hideous word unsaid; until at last
The narrow track was passed.
Below us empty and wide
The world was flung; the hill-top shivered bare,
While fretful lightning dug a viscious spear
Into her sweating side
As she flinched, blind and stark . . .
A thin hail ravened against the door of dark.

Against His feet I trembled, but no word
Of peace or pity heard;
The darkness shook as a dry leaf about,
The world seemed to go out
With a great groan along the sea . . .
Silence . . . then words to me . . .
"Child, what is it thou fearest?"
I stared up: Oh, strange words did that implore! . . .
His brow was no more wounded, and no more
Were the hands, still outstretched to me, pierced.

"Lord, with this vision art thou tempting me,
To show how poor a thing my worship is?
Yet oh, be Christ, be Christ! I have for Thee
Forsaken all my loved, my lovely ones,
As a wild stream breaks from maternal hill,
Escaping the sweet fingers of the sedge
Whose stinging hair doth all his bosom fill,
Listens to some great voice far off, and runs
To find the sea, the calling, crying sea . . .
I ran to Thee!"

Then I heard human accents answering:
"I am a god, made god by all thy prayers;
Wach stone becomes a god by worshipping;

I am a man who loves thee: in thy town
Many have loved thee, I am one of these."

At those few words of horror Faith fell down,
Yet scarcely understood such blasphemies;
"What didst thou need?" I wept, still at his feet;
"Thyself, thou lovely thing!"
"Does thou yet love me as Christ loves albeit
Thou are not He--some message thou dost bring?"
"Nay, but I love thee as a night of Spring!
I saw thee dance to-night at Carnival,
I saw thee laugh, and spurn thy lovers all,
And dreamed, 'No man's desire she will heed,
Her lips are over-sworn and over-kissed,
But she will shurely list
If God but seem to speak, will list indeed.
I will not weave, as other lovers weave,
her garlands, she shall find, and grieve
For the one last thorn found tangled in my hair;
She shall forsake the world, she shall forswear,
Gather the honey of her being sweet
Into a vase of prayer
To break here at my feet.'
Since at the Carnival all men may wear
What guise they will, I chose the holiest;
Yea, when thy voice persuaded: 'Turn again'
I dreamed to woo thee, not as other men--
What faith hadst thou in any reveller?
It seemed thy soul was brimmed for God to stir.
Delight was impotent, and joy was old.

Of Christ I made a travesty of sin,
Thy loveliness to win--
To run my miser fingers through the gold,
The shuddering sweetness of thy rebel hair,
To sense the conflict of refusing lips,
The slow surrender from thy finger tips
Till thou wert all mine, utterly possessed,
Mine as the Moon
Is captive on a night's triumphant breast,
Mine as May's burning bowl is full of June!"

I shrank away, the thin words fell like blood
From my torn lips, I shuddered where I stood,
Muttering: "Christ may come in stranger's guise
To poor men's houses, may go humbly shod,
Begging for broken meats, nor shall despise
Those who give thus, knowing the cloak hides God.

But I and all my soul are sacrificed
To a thief that hath put on the garb of Christ.
Oh, at sin's feet to break my spirit's vase!

Oh, that I dreamed to lie upon His breast
While over me He brake the bread and blessed;--
To feel the mighty stars
Streaming to meet me; to have compassed all,
Reached, overtaken, passed, Eternity,
In one hour's glory, then to fall
To Hell, at least with thee!
Ah God, that Thou couldst let such horror be,
Could let that veritable image HE--
Travesty of Thy Son,
Tear my weak soul in tatters, yea, that Thou
Couldst lead Sin by Thy hand and by Thy brow
To Thy poor foolish helpless little one!"

Then horror laid her hands on me--I fled:
It seemed the world-end could not be too far
For such a fugitive,
Nor ramparts of the outer darkness give
Shelter for such a head.
The hideous night, with lips of a lazar,
With a shrill scream pursued,
Till Dawn in seamless sky a tatter rent
That oozing long lines of blood,
Smearing the grey breast of the firmament . . .
The whole world closed upon me, o'er my face
Flinging an inescapable black hood.

As one half-drowned may feel above his head
(After all sense of dread,
And desperate fight for breath have died away),
The heavy waters part, and sound and space
And cold sky stare about him, which make melt
Green water-worlds into familiar day.
The light came groping to me, and I felt
The morning on my brow, while over me
An unaccustomed face leaned patiently,
Until it grew to be
The beggar I had scorned at Carnival.
"O Child," the voice of pity spake: "for all
Thy faith, Christ was not in those hands, that brow."
"Nay a thief took my soul, but comest thou
Beggar, to taunt me, as I taunted thee?"

"I come to none to chide or spurn:
I come to plead with thee that thou return
To thy forsaken Christ, rebellious one.
God long hath sat beside thee in the sun,
Thou knowing not." I said: "If thou be He,
Trouble me not, I have nought left to give;
I am drained utterly
Of faith and worship. Can these dead bones live?
What rose shall spread wing from this stricken tree?"

All, all is waste and scattered to the wind,
All, all is dead and strangled in the dust!
And no dew lies
In the dead Morning's eyes;
The sheeted Moon, unsepulchred, is thrust
On the bare Night, another tomb to find!
Earth, heaven, have passed away."
"These are built up again." "But not for me."
He answered: "Yea,
Even for such as thou; oh, seek and find!
Go back, thou hast two children in thy house;
Breaking thy holy vows,
Didst think to find thy God in mummeries,
Finding it not with whom Christ said: 'Of these'
A child is but a shell upon Life's shore,
Fragile, rose-kissed, yet holding for thine ears
Raging of seas, and roaring of the spheres.
Thou hadst no need too heavenward to look up,
Thou discontented soul.
Behold Christ's milky mouth in the china cup,
Christ's hand that tips the blue-rimmed porridge bowl!"

"Ah, Lord, can such as I return
To the grey paths of peace--re-live, re-learn?
How can I feel my children's hands like flowers
Anout my face? Assign me grimmer hours,
Not the familiar stair, the to and fro
Of duties slow,
The little, dreadful paths of every day!"

"Am I not broken in the commonest bread,
And spilled in the unconsecrated wine?
Is not each man who loves, a priest,
Albeit men lock Me in a sunless shrine,
Spreading a special feast?
Yet am I outside in the lilac-tree,
beneath their feet, around them everywhere.
Thou canst not chain Christ to a chapel-bell.
From brothels thinkest thou I hear no prayer?
Doth not the choking gutter sing Me well?
Is not the whole sweet world my Sanctuary?
Do they despise My feet, who do but lave
The feet of strangers, in their bosoms nursed?
Am I not fed on orphan's lips, My thirst
Quenched in the beggar's platter? They who save
One shipwrecked soul, or seek some heart forgot,
Are Mine and love Me, though they know it not.
They are too noble for escape of Me:
Their lives more sing Me than a thousand psalms!
They thrust aside My Everlasting Arms,
Yet they are still beneath them--them and thee.

"What need hast thou of vows?
Go back, thou hast two children in thy house."

I went by wood and waste toward the town:
The whole world lay, a quiet emerald
Set in a golden ring
Upon God's finger, against His bosom thrall'd;
Elusive airs were blown
On elfin horns of Spring;
Through the thin mist pale hawthorn trees peered out
Like a dim, sick face from its frilled cap
Upon infirmity pillow, turned about--
Caught creatures in some vast, predestined trap.
But with each step I took, the morning grew
Gayer and younger, a full-throated thrush
Woke, and from hidden bush
Dimpled a note or two,
Set the wood's side a-shake, as if it knew
Answer to impudent jest; already bees
Sought the dell's bosom all a-heave with blue,
And girdled with the goldenest primroses.
From every fold
The young lamb's cough came softly down the lane;
The cuckoo told
His first few notes--as miser tells his gold,
And counted them again.
I pased along the unchanged, quiet street,
At my own door unlatched I entered in
Upon an atmosphere that seemed too sweet
For me and all my sin.

I felt no agony of hope or loss,
Treading the old paths that beside me lay;
For me no one great lifting on the Cross,
But small, slow crucifixions every day.
I brought no prayers, I made no conscious vows,
And though it seemed God never could confer
Duty so simple, such a humble faith,
And that no further life my soul could stir,
I went back, meekly, trusting what he saith:
"Go back, thou hast two children in thy house."

Muriel Stuart

Forgiveness

ASK not my pardon! For if one hath need
Once to forgive the god that he hath raised,
No further creed
Can that god give; but 'neath the soul who praised
Lies bruised like a reed.

Let your dark plume, in passing leave a stain
On my plume's whiteness: call you bitter, sweet:
Give plague, or pain:
But cringe not, fallen and fawning at my feet,
By that to rise again.

No! go your wild and mad way, and seem at least
The god you were . . . assume your aureole:
Make me no priest
To wash hands in the waters of your soul,
Before I go to feast!

Muriel Stuart

Forgotten Dead, I Salute You

Dawn has flashed up the startled skies,
Night has gone out beneath the hill
Many sweet times; before our eyes
Dawn makes and unmakes about us still
The magic that we call the rose.
The gentle history of the rain
Has been unfolded, traced and lost
By the sharp finger-tips of frost;
Birds in the hawthorn build again;
The hare makes soft her secret house;
The wind at tourney comes and goes,
Spurring the green, unharnessed boughs;
The moon has waxed fierce and waned dim:
He knew the beauty of all those
Last year, and who remembers him?

Love sometimes walks the waters still,
Laughter throws back her radiant head;
Utterly beauty is not gone,
And wonder is not wholly dead.
The starry, mortal world rolls on;
Between sweet sounds and silences,
With new, strange wines her beakers brim:
He lost his heritage with these
Last year, and who remembers him?

None remember him: he lies
In earth of some strange-sounding place,
Nameless beneath the nameless skies,
The wind his only chant, the rain
The only tears upon his face;
Far and forgotten utterly
By living man. Yet such as he
Have made it possible and sure
For other lives to have, to be;
For men to sleep content, secure.
Lip touches lip and eyes meet eyes
Because his heart beats not again:
His rotting, fruitless body lies
That sons may grow from other men.

He gave, as Christ, the life he had
The only life desired or known;
The great, sad sacrifice was made
For strangers; this forgotten dead
Went out into the night alone.
There was his body broken for you,
There was his blood divinely shed
That in the earth lie lost and dim.
Eat, drink, and often as you do,
For whom he died, remember him.

Muriel Stuart

In Praise of Mandragora

O, MANDRAGORA, many sing in praise
Of life, and death, and immortality,--
Of passion, that goes famished all her days,--
Of Faith, or fantasy;
Thou, all unpraised, unsung, I make this rhyme to thee.

The womby underworlds thy roots enclose,
In human shape, sprung from abhorrent seed;
But when through crumbling roof the daylight shows,
And thou my breast hast freed
Thou growest in the field as any flower or weed.

At many a cross-road bare thy leaves protrude,
Upon the brow of lonely, moon-blanchèd heath,
And from a loathly breast thou draggest food,
That moulders far beneath . . .
Whereon a crazy moon stares out and bares her teeth.

And sometimes, in the purblind face of morn
The stealthy hinds slink out to gather thee,
Then shudder, as thy shrieking roots are torn,
And turn at last, and flee,
Leaving a slimy pulp that bleedeth suddenly.

Ah!--well thou mayest shriek, for he who lies
In clotted earth, with stones upon his breast,
Feareth a victim who drags out his eyes
In vengeance deadliest,
While to thy loosened feet his screaming mouth is pressed!

O mystic one, thou hast a couch more dread
Than Isabella's Basil ever knew;--
Whose petals on gentle brow were fed,
Whose leaves in fragrance grew,
That Death, in sorrowful amend, made sweet with dew.

O Mandragora, though thy features dwell
Beneath the earth in such ill company
Far sweeter than that plant to Isabel,
Thy blossoms are to me.
Thou Root of dreamless sleep, take this in praise of thee!

Close thou Pandora's casket by whose aid
That goddess Discord queens the escapèd woes,
She had no power to hinder or dissuade,
Yet Mandragora shows
A hope uncabined, and a peace that conquers those!

From the Nepenthe doth her pitcher fill,
That bartereth with the merchandise of grief,
And for all suffering and every ill
Hath such a sweet relief,

That sleep the haven seems, and pain the voyage brief.

Thou thro' still gardens in the timorous Dusk,
When all the sky is purpled with the pain
Of dying Day, dost walk, and myrrh and musk
Fall from thy misty train,
And totter all about, and are caught up again.

There the lulled world within the opiate blue
Forgets her long-continued pain and falls
Into an easy sleep; the winds pursue
Each other round the walls;
A night bird cries, then lists, then then answers its own calls.

The moon exhorts her yellow Lily-cup
Above the rainy evening goldenly,
The wan tent of her beauty foldeth up
The frail Anemone,
From whose white bosom spins the spent and touseled bee.

I would not proffer any highest god
Praise for the poor gift of eternity.
When sin has sucked the honey from its rod,
And reason bows the knee,
And Fame beats out her torch, what fire, what feast, for me?

When Sense is numb, and Song forgets her chant,
And beauty swells the ashes of the dead,
And Love's denied white breast forgets to pant
Beneath some lovely head.
What Life shall I desire when Love and Youth are fled?

O Mandragora, when thy lips are laid
On other paling lips, remember mine.
Beneath thy kiss all other kisses fade;
Let Life herself resign
Her breath upon thy lip, her being unto thine.

Then all in vain my golden trump declare,
No flickering lid shall Thracian music raise,
And Pan in vain shall pipe his cunning air
In secret woodland ways.
My closed lips shall sing my triumph and my praise.

O Mandragora, we have pledged our vows,
And I will spill for thee my cup of wine.
Though poets few have woven for thy brows
A coronet divine.
Give thy immortal gift--these verses shall be thine!

Muriel Stuart

In the Orchard

'I thought you loved me.' 'No, it was only fun.'
'When we stood there, closer than all?' 'Well, the harvest moon
Was shining and queer in your hair, and it turned my head.'
'That made you?' 'Yes.' 'Just the moon and the light it made
Under the tree?' 'Well, your mouth, too.' 'Yes, my mouth?'
'And the quiet there that sang like the drum in the booth.
You shouldn't have danced like that.' 'Like what?' 'So close,
Whith your head turned up, and the flower in your hair, a rose
That smelt all warm.' 'I loved you. I thought you knew
I wouldn't have danced like that with any but you.'
'I didn't know, I thought you knew it was fun.'
'I thought it was love you meant.' 'Well, it's done.' 'Yes, it's done.
I've seen boys stone a blackbird, and watched them drown
A kitten... it clawed at the reeds, and they pushed it down
Into the pool while it screamed. Is that fun, too?'
'Well, boys are like that... Your brothers...' 'Yes, I know.
But you, so lovely and strong! Not you! Not you!'
'They don't understand it's cruel. It's only a game.'
'And are girls fun, too?' 'No, still in a way it's the same.
It's queer and lovely to have a girl...' 'Go on.'
'It makes you mad for a bit to feel she's your own,
And you laugh and kiss her, and maybe you give her a ring,
But it's only in fun.' 'But I gave you everything.'
'Well, you shouldn't have done it. You know what a fellow thinks
When a girl does that.' 'Yes, he talks of her over his drinks
And calles her a--' 'Stop that now, I thought you knew.'
'But it wasn't with anyone else. It was only you.'
'How did I know? I thought you wanted it too.
I thought you were like the rest. Well, what's to be done?'
'To be done' 'Is it all right?' 'Yes.' 'Sure?' 'Yes, but why?'
'I don't know, I thought you where going to cry.
You said you had something to tell me.' 'Yes, I know.
It wasn't anything relly... I think I'll go.'
'Yes, it's late. There's thunder about, a drop of rain
Fell on my hand in the dark. I'll see you again
At the dance next week. You're sure that everything's right?'
'Yes,' 'Well, I'll be going.' 'Kiss me...' 'Good night.' ... 'Good night.'

Muriel Stuart

Now

TAKE as you will, slake, solace, and possess
While Youth, with laughter, scatters tears that fall
Sudden and shaken sometimes at your call;
Pledge me in passion and in gentleness,--
In praise and prayer, I would not give you less,
Be less unconquerably true in all,
Take my young kisses,--my young spirit's thrall,
Forbid not Now's imperishable "Yes"!
When I am old, and cold, and wise, and grown
As far beyond as you outstrip me now,--
Nor plead, nor pant, nor challenge nor protest;
Oh, come not then, all these years less your own;
Too old to love, too wise to heed your vow,
Too cold to feel your cold hand upon my breast.

Muriel Stuart

Possession

MOST blessed one, how can I let thee go?
Canst thou forswear the nightingale its tune--
Stay the young sea from following his moon--
Bid hyacinth put out her blue light? Oh,
Thou art not mine but Me! and being so
How canst thou bid my year stop short of June,
Or hold my feet from following thine so soon,
Or bid me build on Heaven's overthrow?
Nay, how can I put off thy presence? Where
Should my soul serve without thy sanctities?
I kneel beside thee, I who am a child
In thy man's hand, cling to thee spent and wild
Until my face is hidden in my hair,
And I fall weeping, weeping, at thy knees!

Muriel Stuart

The Balcony

A STREET at night, a silent square
That mirth forbids;
Whose windows, with drawn lips and narrowed lids,
Resent the intruder's stare.

Where winds are cautious in their play,
Where only steals
Some meager brougham on its muffled wheels
Before the portals grey.

But suddenly a window swings,
A hand is laid
For one white moment on the balustrade,
And benediction brings.

I linger . . . but, O influence malign
I watch a snail
Crawl casually along the painted rail,
Where I had built a shrine!

Muriel Stuart

The Bellman

BRING out your dead before you reap
From lips beloved infection dread;
Above such brows ye dare not weep!
Bring out your dead

Into the street from breast or bed,
Lest ye too sicken into sleep
That reckns not of the Bellman's tread.

Thrice foolish heart! Why do you heap
Corpse upon corpse--conspire to spread
Corruption on all else you keep?
Bring out your dead!

Muriel Stuart

The Chalice of Circe

DRINK of our Cup--of the red wine that burns in it,
All the wild shames that have crusted its mouth,
Passion that twists in it, Madness that churns in it,
Fever that yearns in it, Folly that turns in it,
Drink of our Cup! It is Love, it is Youth!

"Amorous valleys have travailed to breed in it,
Eden hath shaken one tree at its brim,
Syria scattered an infamous seed in it,
Paphos hath freed in it lovers, to bleed in it,
Foam from Armida hath rusted its rim!

Chalice of gold with the bruised roses dying there,
How the mad kisses have clustered and clung!
All the sweet loves of the world, softly crying there,
Longing and lying there, swooning and sighing there,
Call to me: "Scatter our wine on thy tongue!"

Rim of it: poisoned with carrion kisses,
Taints the fresh flower, and forbiddeth the sun:
Doves never brood where the stirred serpent hisses
At maddening kisses--mysterious blisses:
Over its edges the spiders have spun.

Fierce wife of Philip her portion hath found in it,
Messaline waits there, Aspasia woos:
Helen and Egypt go vested and crowned in it,
Phryne is bound in it, Faustine swings round in it,
Crying: "Come down to us, watch us and choose!"

Voices are calling: "The revel begins with us,
Run thou again in the race of delight!
All the sweet chase and the capturing win with us,
Enter thou in with us, gambol and sin with us,
Fleet is the quarry and fair is the flight!"

Ere I could slake at the chalice's wonder
Lips all a-fire for the taste of such bliss,
Rose a great storm, sucked the white faces under,
And tore them asunder with fury and thunder,
Crushed the last folly and choked the last kiss.

Fiercely it flung them and savagely shattered them,
Burst the last breath in a bubble of blood!
Fury and foam of it broke them and battered them,
Scorched them and scattered them, tortured and tattered them,
Hurling their limbs in the froth of the flood.

.
Perished their promise, their beauty forsaken;
Silence alone walked the face of the deep:

The whirlpool was stilled, and the surface with snaken
Small ripples was shaken, as if did awaken
Some sorrowful ghost from the margin of sleep.

Nothing was left of their beauty and 'plaining--
Left of their magic and spared of their spell:
Only the lip of the dark water, staining
The roses, fast waning; and only the craning
Of snakes' heads, disturbed by the petals that fell.

Muriel Stuart

The Dead Moment

THE world is changed between us, never more
Shall the dawn rise and seek another mate
Over the hill-tops; never can the shore
Spread out her ragged tresses to the roar
Of the sea passionate,
Moon-chained, and for a season love-forbid;
Never shall shift the sullen thunder's lid
At lightning-lash, and never shall the night
Throw the wild stars about,
Nor the day flicker out
Against the evening's breath; but this shall creep--
This moment on us, to make different
The face of every day's intent,
And change the brow of sleep.

What can we name it? Oh, the whitest word
Would leave a stain upon that moment's mouth!
The sweetest piping heard
By wearying birds a-South
Would shake its silence, let no word be said;
What need of name or music hath the dead?
Too far for call, too faint for song it is,
This ghost of ours, that you have buried deep;
Less earth than any violet nourishes
Its fragile stem would keep;
And we could lose it in the frailest shell,
Or lily's wannest bell;
In any rose's urn that dust might dwell.

Oh! to forsake it thus,
Our only one, our starveling piteous!
Even as men who garner and lock up
Gold chasuble and cup,--
Their alabaster and their tourmaline,--
Their sandal-wood and wine,
Will give their dearest to the earth to keep,
Housed among strangers, and will let the clay
Or oozing river-bed
Rot all their wealth away,
While they go home to sleep!
Will let the wild roots of the bramble clutch,
And see the careless sod
Trample it down, and bruise with common touch
All that they knew of glory and of God!

(Who would not house a thief so house their dead!)
In the blind dark with wolf-winds overhead.
When night sucks honey from the hive of day
They lie, while April, with her merry clout,
Flings the white dust about;
When the swift silences that ride the Spring
Whip on their misty chariots, and wring

Foam from the bridled lips of May;
What time the sick moon looks up yellowly
Out of the pillowed sky,
Or when doth sing
Some crazy bird, aslant upon a bough
A song that makes him, just this time of year,
A poet, and can never sing again;
When the pale lips of rain
Tremble above the eyelids of the plain.

Ah! would you hide our one dead moment, now,
Even as they, my dear?
Who into one grave hurdle grace and mirth,
Beating down Beauty with a noisy spade,
Nor dream that 'neath the stunned and senseless earth
Are all their riches laid;--
Such gold as they shall never see again,
Such wine as shall not stain
Their shallow cups! All beauty, all delight,
Treasure, unbarterable and bright,
All lie there in the cold, and in the night.

Nay, you will have it so?
Let all its sweetness go,
Brief, exquisite?
Then take it hence; but make a wreath for it
And let us sing for it a requiem,
Not the few strangled words above the dead
That those, whose hearts condemn,
Mutter, for having left so long unsaid,
Pity or praise, to ears desiring them.
Bury it not as something sick and shamed,
Unfathered and unnamed.
Nay, break sweet spices, myrrh and cedar bring,
Bury it as a king,
Or some beloved child that lies beneath
The rose whose name he knew not, wondering
Why his young mother wove it in a wreath.

For, look you, and remember what it gave,--
Those gifts, that naught and none can take away!
How it makes red as rose each pallid day,
Each coward moment, brave;
And how each wingless heel of Misery
It sandals with a hope, and sends a-sky!
While we await the hour that somewhere goes
Unmatched, unmated . . . it shall not be yet:
Night's heavy eyelids close
On tears; and leave the Morning's pillow wet.
Weep not, though said the requiem, flung the wreath;
Only when you forget, and I forget,
Weep for that moment's death.

Muriel Stuart

The End of Love

WHO shall forget till his last hour be come,--
Until the useful service of the dust
Hath drawn the emptying cerements in and in;--
Until the Earth hath eaten love and lust,
Mirth, Beauty, and their kin . . .
Who shall forget that hour
That night unstarred, that day ungarlanded;
Where fell the petals of that fadeless flower?

When every word was said
That long had bared frustrate and savage teeth,
Leashed in the perishable thong of days,
And whipped to words of praise!
When every ill, and each ingratitude,
Each joy misnamed,
Each deed misunderstood,
Was flogged into the daylight, halt, and maimed,
Out of its bier, to bear the day's disgust--
Out of its decent bed
To beat Love's tortured head
Into the troubled and uncertain dust.
Who can forget the naked hour profane,
When Love fled from us, shrieking through the dark,
His torch blown backward by the hurricane
Licking his dreadful features with its tongue,
While his mouth spat a curse at every spark,
And a scourged menace flung?

Thou wert that dreadful thing!
O Beautiful, O Rare, O Breath of rose,
O Spirit as impalpable as Spring!
How have I held thee, then? Too long, too close?
For it was thou, was thou, who left me thus,
With each sweet thing, with all the lovely host
That turning stared at us,
And, shuddering, gave up their frailest ghost!

Oh! to remember! Oh! to hear the tune
That Love first sang to us, that happy day;
When over us was furled his radiant wing.
Oh! for that one May moment. Not to lose
Its greenest leaf, or miss its singlest spray
So that this hour by that forgotten day
Might be all buried by the buds of Spring
That soft winds beat,--not bruise,--
To make a bridal bed for June
From the pale shroud of May.
O Love, O Love! There was not any need
For thee to die, for me to be bereft,
Our garden to be left
To nettle and to weed,--
To whips of rain when the chid wind was wroth.

Surely by some word, some sigh, had saved us both?
Could everything be lost,
All torn and tossed
Between thy speech and mine? Could all our vows,
And all our lovely life be laid so low,
And God fall on His face within the house
At first marauder's blow?
Yea, it was so:
And all of pride and pleasure, peace and power,
All Life's rich fruit and flower,
Died, as least darnel dies, in that dread hour.

Muriel Stuart

The Fools

BELOW, the street was hoarse with cries,
With groan of carts and scuffling feet,
With laughter worse than blasphemies,
Was choked with dust and blind with heat,
This room was still--too still for peace.

It heard the livid words we said
Of hate and passion, watched us where
I sat, as one beside the dead--
You lay with all your glorious hair
Flung on the crazy bed.

The moment's passion ended brought--
Ah, child, to you what did it bring?
What could it, but one hideous thought
To us so tired of everything,
And hating what we sought?

--So tired of all this grey room meant,
Of life together, shackled cold,
Or bound in flame so different
From the swift, white desire of old,
The old, divine consent.

Poor room, so meanly intimate!
Our dirty clothes sprawled on a chair,
Combs, candle-ends, and grimy plate
Littered the table, paper and hair
Forlornely choked the grate.

And I so passionate, you such
A wild sweet plunderer of bliss
Soon fallen in our own folly's clutch,
Finding how wrong, how mad it is
To know, to love, too much.

You rose, but with no woman's care
For all the beauty that is hers,
Pent up your out-burst storm of hair
And fetched your cloak and found your purse,
And matched my sullen stare.

Wild words so often said before
Escape us in the old fierce way.
You cried, "I shall return no more!"
I said, "I shall no longer stay!"
You closed the grumbling door.

The mirror grinned, "They are still one."
The cupboard gasped, "Their clothes are here."
The ghastly bed said with a leer,
"I shall not sleep alone!"

They knew what took us years to learn,
That Habit terrible and slow
Doth Love and Hate alike inurn.
They knew too well I should not go,
They knew you would return.

Muriel Stuart

The Seed-Shop

Here in a quiet and dusty room they lie,
Faded as crumbled stone or shifting sand,
Forlorn as ashes, shrivelled, scentless, dry -
Meadows and gardens running through my hand.

In this brown husk a dale of hawthorn dreams;
A cedar in this narrow cell is thrust
That will drink deeply of a century's streams;
These lilies shall make summer on my dust.

Here in their safe and simple house of death,
Sealed in their shells, a million roses leap;
Here I can blow a garden with my breath,
And in my hand a forest lies asleep.

Muriel Stuart

Tintagel

DEAD man! will you ride with me,
As you rode that night of yore,
Will you ride with me, once more
To Tintagel by the sea?

When those savage words were said--
Words that challenged destiny--
To Tintagel by the sea,
Through the sweating night we fled!

Hearts, that raged with storm and sea,
Thundered through the scream of rain;
Laugh and ride with me again,
Take my kisses thirstily!

Clutch the cloak that flies apart,
Grip the stallion with your knee:
Let my wild, black tresses be
Once more pinioned on your heart.

Dream is dead, and dead are we:
But the dead rise up again!
Once more through the night and rain,
Dead man! will you ride with me?

Muriel Stuart

To A Gipsy

ONCE when some sudden thought beseeches,
 Swift as a homing bird
I shall come down with Love's young song that reaches
And whispers to the silence Sorrow teaches
 One sweet April word.--
 To where Wind's whitest hand invisible,
 Stroking the mountain's side
 To silver, breaks in edge of froth each bell
 As waves against the tide.
Till a soft fringe of flowers frays on bare beaches.

--To where the blasted tree lies burst asunder
 By hideous lightning's breath,
And in its track hears growl the wolf of thunder
Who follows with wide jaws a-gape for plunder
 Along the path of death.
 Where every sloe-tree writhles, sideways struck,
 Crippled, and dumb, and torn,
 And hell-black berries only gnomes would suck,
 Gape on the twisted thorn
That the moor bears in shame, recoiling under.

I greet you there--there where the great winds greet you!
 And they shall bring and bear
My spirit to you, though they blind and beat you,
And scream away, of this they shall not cheat you,
 My hand is in their hair;
 Where the rough heather gnaws the rattling stones
 Where quarry soil has slipped,
 And flings unshrouded to the day the bones
 Of dead trees, from their crypt;
There, gipsy in your palace, I will meet you.

Out in the blare of great wind-bitten spaces,
 Where from the distant shore
Fugitive foam is flung against our faces,
While on her heel the tempest raves and races,
 There we shall meet once more!--
 Where the sky's red is under-staunched with grey,
 And sunset's livid eye
 Rolls in sick film of blood to see the Day
 Flash up the darkened sky,--
Young Victor, with drawn sword, upon his traces!

Then I shall have no need of song to sing you,--
 No word to speak that day,
My laugh the spirit of the wild shall fling you,
My kiss the fresh lips of the gale shall bring you,
 The stream my name shall say.
 As, from the ditch, some hedge-wraith dartling out,
 Shall prick the horse's ear,
 Your heart, astir, whose word you shall not doubt,

Shall whisper I am near,
And with the old sweet tang of tears shall sting you.

Among the lanes that love--the hills that know you,
There I shall seek and find;
Across the long, blue fields at dawn, that show you
Their dream-disheveled brows, the trees that throw you
Their last leaves down the wind.
And you shall look up from a dream half-sad,
A memory half-sweet,
Find hand in yours, and finding, shall grow glad
Of feet beside your feet,
See grey sky blue, and stubble flower below you.

Then, Gipsy, then, no asking and no talking!
In that immortal hour
All has been asked and given; the cross forsaking
Crowned Love ascending is, and young bud breaking
Into one heaven, one flower.
And we shall face the morning, take the sun
In vetch and bracken root,
And build our fire, pitch tent when day is flown
Like any dusty-foot,
And find clear sky above us at our waking.

Gipsy, if we, among these grasses lying,
Could find and hold the best,--
Could wander, you and I, the world defying,
Where, on Night's silence falls the day's speech, sighing
Against the woodland's breast;
Then life should wander happy, fearless, free,
And unto both of us
A flowering, not a Crucifixion be;
Oh! once to dare and thus
Live!--and when dying, know not it was dying!

Muriel Stuart

To a Poet, Charles Bridges

THOU singest, thou, me seems,
Coming from high Parnassus; where thy head
Beside the silent streams,
Among fast-fading blooms, hath fashioned
A pillow of pale dreams;
While from thee, sleeping, gods, of heart and soul,
Have taken fullest toll.

Thou knowest at what cost
Thy sleep was taken on those awful hills--
What thou hast gained, and lost;
Thou knowest, too, if what thou art fulfils
The pledge of what thou wast;
And if all compensates the poet's wreath
That wounds the brow beneath.

Rememberest thou that night
Incomparable? Thou in dreams wast laid,
Where petals, rose and white,
Above thy head a pale pavilion made;
Where at unscalèd height
The moon lay anchored in the heaving sky,
And clouds went surging by.

Then came the gods unknown!--
The plundering gods--to take thee unawares,
While thou wast sleeping, thrown
Upon the sacred mountain that is theirs.
In vain sad flowers had blown
A gale of petals o'er thee, on they came
In a still sheet of flame!

They knew that those who dare
To sleep one night beside Parnassus' streams
The poet's crown must wear--
Must lip the chalice of immortal dreams,
And breathe the eternal air;
Who, even unto trembling Ossa's hill,
May walk the mount at will!

They killed thy happiness,
And strangled all thy youth, with hands profane,
They brake Love's rosaries,
Tossing thy ravaged soul amid the slain,
While thou wast weaponless;
And left thee gibbeted 'twixt pain and peace,
Forbidding thy release.

Then they augustly laid
Their crippled gifts beside thee, and withdrew
Into high Pelion's shade;
Their tireless feet made fall no bead of dew,

Their passing bent no blade,
Though thunder muttered round each mighty plume,
And crumbled into gloom.

They laid a fatal spell
Of beauty on thine eyes, that made most fair
The rose unpluckable;
They bade thee thirst, yet find no Cup to bear
Water from any well;
They mocked thee with a vision passionate,
And a soul celibate!

O friend, what thou hast known
Thou givest me; what thou hast suffered, thou
Wouldst calmly bear alone;
Forbidding thorns to gather on my brow,--
Accustomed on thine own;
Thou lingerest at my side, to show and spare
The pitfall and the snare.

For thou wouldst give to me
The poet's pillow, who has suffered not
The poet's penalty;
A goodly heritage, a happy lot
Wouldst have my portion be.
With honey from the rod art fain to feed,
Not from the galled reed.

Thou hast some rare reward!
The reed that gods have guided, in thine hand
Becomes a dreadful sword;
Their fingers on thy heartstrings still demand
A loud, triumphant chord:
They pass the ditch-delivered poets by,
With wide contemptuous eye.

Poet: I take thy cup:
But, from my coloured wreath of morning flowers
Where bees wild honey sup,
Upon thy sepulchre of buried hours
Am fain to offer up
Some bud, that spills upon thy brow anew
Its fragile shell of dew.

And if at last I choose
To make my pillow on some slope forlorn,
And, in that slumber, lose
My morning wreath, that must be tossed and torn
To feed the jealous Muse,
Remember the poor gifts that I resign . . .
I shall remember thine!

Muriel Stuart

To the Old Gods

O YE, who rode the gales of Sicily,
Sandalled with flame,
Spread on the pirate winds; o ye who broke
No wind-flower as ye came--
Though Pelion shivered when the thunder spoke
The gods' decree!--

Into the twilight of the ancient days
Have not ye flown!--
Ye, whom the happy Greeks inspired hand
Struck from the frenzied stone:
That, ye withdrawn, your images should stand
To take their praise.

Smear'd into clay, and frozen into stone!
Ye, that do now
Face eyes unworshipful in plunder's halls,
Mutilate, with marred brow:
Broken and maimed: couched along alien walls
In lands unknown.

O gracious ones! No more, no more, shall ye
Spread wing above
Perilous Ossa! No more wring delight
From pool and golden grove:
No more beneath your fire-shod feet in flight
Shall hiss the sea.

The thunder shall not groan between your breasts,
Nor lightning writhe
Barbed in your clutch; no worshippers shall trace
Your steps in grove and hithe.
No more 'thwart skies your golden stallions race
On mighty quests.

And yet what fane, what column, rises now
To save or shine:
What temple travails at such quickening feet,
What wing-tip seeds a shrine:
What god hath bid us build in wold or street,
Such breast and brow?

What have our wisdom and our worship done
To raise such gods?
To quench the ruined eyes of Parthenon
What newer beauty nods,
And shames the wreckless brow that stares upon
The amazed sun?

Held up in arms of columns white as flowers,
You faced the sea,
With your great breasts for glory passioning,--

For mortal's victory;
Not 'neath occasional thin spires that spring
From streets of ours,

Hooding the dying god, whom men revile,--
Who bears their sin.
No great winds thunder over sun-splashed thrones,
Our dusty shrines within,
Where troubled feet make groan the weary stones,
In hollow isle.

I, only I, kneel at forsaken shrine:
The lamp I bring
Scarce throws a shade beneath your eyelids there:
Forlorn the song I sing
To ears august, and these wrung berries bear
A bitter wine.

Yet still I kneel, poor praise to offer up
To each great name!
And I shall feel upon my brow descend
A sudden edge of flame.
Your wings shall smear these words, even as ye bend
To this poor cup.

Muriel Stuart

Wild Geese Across the Moon

REEDS, snake-like, coiled in the mist
Where the low fog drives:
The muddy cough of the stream that strives
To free its throat from the clot of reed,
As they fight it out the water and the weed--
While the fog, above, takes turn and twist:
Men, these are your lives!

Wild Geese across the moon:
As some hand that unrolls
And scratches black names upon blood-red scrolls;
So seem these shadows, dipping, dying,
Black shapes on the red moon, screaming, flying,
Till the fog blots out, or late or soon:
Men, these are your souls!

Muriel Stuart