

Classic Poetry Series

Sarah Teasdale

- poems -

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"Did You Never Know?"

Did you never know, long ago, how much you loved me --
That your love would never lessen and never go?
You were young then, proud and fresh-hearted,
You were too young to know.

Fate is a wind, and red leaves fly before it
Far apart, far away in the gusty time of year --
Seldom we meet now, but when I hear you speaking,
I know your secret, my dear, my dear.

Sarah Teasdale

"I Am Not Yours"

I am not yours, not lost in you,
Not lost, although I long to be
Lost as a candle lit at noon,
Lost as a snowflake in the sea.

You love me, and I find you still
A spirit beautiful and bright,
Yet I am I, who long to be
Lost as a light is lost in light.

Oh plunge me deep in love -- put out
My senses, leave me deaf and blind,
Swept by the tempest of your love,
A taper in a rushing wind.

Sarah Teasdale

"I Have Loved Hours at Sea"

I have loved hours at sea, gray cities,
The fragile secret of a flower,
Music, the making of a poem
That gave me heaven for an hour;

First stars above a snowy hill,
Voices of people kindly and wise,
And the great look of love, long hidden,
Found at last in meeting eyes.

I have loved much and been loved deeply --
Oh when my spirit's fire burns low,
Leave me the darkness and the stillness,
I shall be tired and glad to go.

Sarah Teasdale

"I Thought of You"

I thought of you and how you love this beauty,
And walking up the long beach all alone
I heard the waves breaking in measured thunder
As you and I once heard their monotone.

Around me were the echoing dunes, beyond me
The cold and sparkling silver of the sea --
We two will pass through death and ages lengthen
Before you hear that sound again with me.

Sarah Teasdale

"It Is Not a Word"

It is not a word spoken,
Few words are said;
Nor even a look of the eyes
Nor a bend of the head,

But only a hush of the heart
That has too much to keep,
Only memories waking
That sleep so light a sleep.

Sarah Teasdale

"It Will Not Change"

It will not change now
After so many years;
Life has not broken it
With parting or tears;
Death will not alter it,
It will live on
In all my songs for you
When I am gone.

Sarah Teasdale

"Like Barley Bending"

Like barley bending
In low fields by the sea,
Singing in hard wind
Ceaselessly;

Like barley bending
And rising again,
So would I, unbroken,
Rise from pain;

So would I softly,
Day long, night long,
Change my sorrow
Into song.

Sarah Teasdale

"My Heart Is Heavy"

My heart is heavy with many a song
Like ripe fruit bearing down the tree,
But I can never give you one --
My songs do not belong to me.

Yet in the evening, in the dusk
When moths go to and fro,
In the gray hour if the fruit has fallen,
Take it, no one will know.

Sarah Teasdale

"Oh Day of Fire and Sun"

Oh day of fire and sun,
Pure as a naked flame,
Blue sea, blue sky and dun
Sands where he spoke my name;

Laughter and hearts so high
That the spirit flew off free,
Lifting into the sky
Diving into the sea;

Oh day of fire and sun
Like a crystal burning,
Slow days go one by one,
But you have no returning.

Sarah Teasdale

"Oh You Are Coming"

Oh you are coming, coming, coming,
How will hungry Time put by the hours till then? --
But why does it anger my heart to long so
For one man out of the world of men?

Oh I would live in myself only
And build my life lightly and still as a dream --
Are not my thoughts clearer than your thoughts
And colored like stones in a running stream?

Now the slow moon brightens in heaven,
The stars are ready, the night is here --
Oh why must I lose myself to love you,
My dear?

Sarah Teasdale

"Only in Sleep"

Only in sleep I see their faces,
Children I played with when I was a child,
Louise comes back with her brown hair braided,
Annie with ringlets warm and wild.

Only in sleep Time is forgotten --
What may have come to them, who can know?
Yet we played last night as long ago,
And the doll-house stood at the turn of the stair.

The years had not sharpened their smooth round faces,
I met their eyes and found them mild --
Do they, too, dream of me, I wonder,
And for them am I too a child?

Sarah Teasdale

"The Dreams of My Heart"

The dreams of my heart and my mind pass,
Nothing stays with me long,
But I have had from a child
The deep solace of song;

If that should ever leave me,
Let me find death and stay
With things whose tunes are played out and forgotten
Like the rain of yesterday.

Sarah Teasdale

"The Old Maid"

I saw her in a Broadway car,
The woman I might grow to be;
I felt my lover look at her
And then turn suddenly to me.
Her hair was dull and drew no light,
And yet its color was as mine;
Her eyes were strangely like my eyes,
Tho' love had never made them shine.

Her body was a thing grown thin,
Hungry for love that never came;
Her soul was frozen in the dark,
Unwarmed forever by love's flame.

I felt my lover look at her
And then turn suddenly to me -
His eyes were magic to defy
The woman I shall never be.

Sarah Teasdale

"What Do I Care?"

What do I care, in the dreams and the languor of spring,
That my songs do not show me at all?
For they are a fragrance, and I am a flint and a fire,
I am an answer, they are only a call.

But what do I care, for love will be over so soon,
Let my heart have its say and my mind stand idly by,
For my mind is proud and strong enough to be silent,
It is my heart that makes my songs, not I.

Sarah Teasdale

A Cry

Oh, there are eyes that he can see,
And hands to make his hands rejoice,
But to my lover I must be
Only a voice.

Oh, there are breasts to bear his head,
And lips whereon his lips can lie,
But I must be till I am dead
Only a cry.

Sarah Teasdale

A November Night

There! See the line of lights,
A chain of stars down either side the street --
Why can't you lift the chain and give it to me,
A necklace for my throat? I'd twist it round
And you could play with it. You smile at me
As though I were a little dreamy child
Behind whose eyes the fairies live. . . . And see,
The people on the street look up at us
All envious. We are a king and queen,
Our royal carriage is a motor bus,
We watch our subjects with a haughty joy. . . .
How still you are! Have you been hard at work
And are you tired to-night? It is so long
Since I have seen you -- four whole days, I think.
My heart is crowded full of foolish thoughts
Like early flowers in an April meadow,
And I must give them to you, all of them,
Before they fade. The people I have met,
The play I saw, the trivial, shifting things
That loom too big or shrink too little, shadows
That hurry, gesturing along a wall,
Haunting or gay -- and yet they all grow real
And take their proper size here in my heart
When you have seen them. . . . There's the Plaza now,
A lake of light! To-night it almost seems
That all the lights are gathered in your eyes,
Drawn somehow toward you. See the open park
Lying below us with a million lamps
Scattered in wise disorder like the stars.
We look down on them as God must look down
On constellations floating under Him
Tangled in clouds. . . . Come, then, and let us walk
Since we have reached the park. It is our garden,
All black and blossomless this winter night,
But we bring April with us, you and I;
We set the whole world on the trail of spring.
I think that every path we ever took
Has marked our footprints in mysterious fire,
Delicate gold that only fairies see.
When they wake up at dawn in hollow tree-trunks
And come out on the drowsy park, they look
Along the empty paths and say, "Oh, here
They went, and here, and here, and here! Come, see,
Here is their bench, take hands and let us dance
About it in a windy ring and make
A circle round it only they can cross
When they come back again!" . . . Look at the lake --
Do you remember how we watched the swans
That night in late October while they slept?
Swans must have stately dreams, I think. But now
The lake bears only thin reflected lights
That shake a little. How I long to take

One from the cold black water -- new-made gold
To give you in your hand! And see, and see,
There is a star, deep in the lake, a star!
Oh, dimmer than a pearl -- if you stoop down
Your hand could almost reach it up to me. . . .

There was a new frail yellow moon to-night --
I wish you could have had it for a cup
With stars like dew to fill it to the brim. . . .

How cold it is! Even the lights are cold;
They have put shawls of fog around them, see!
What if the air should grow so dimly white
That we would lose our way along the paths
Made new by walls of moving mist receding
The more we follow. . . . What a silver night!
That was our bench the time you said to me
The long new poem -- but how different now,
How eerie with the curtain of the fog
Making it strange to all the friendly trees!
There is no wind, and yet great curving scrolls
Carve themselves, ever changing, in the mist.
Walk on a little, let me stand here watching
To see you, too, grown strange to me and far. . . .
I used to wonder how the park would be
If one night we could have it all alone --
No lovers with close arm-encircled waists
To whisper and break in upon our dreams.
And now we have it! Every wish comes true!
We are alone now in a fleecy world;
Even the stars have gone. We two alone!

Sarah Teasdale

A Prayer

Until I lose my soul and lie
Blind to the beauty of the earth,
Deaf though shouting wind goes by,
Dumb in a storm of mirth;

Until my heart is quenched at length
And I have left the land of men,
Oh, let me love with all my strength
Careless if I am loved again.

Sarah Teasdale

A Winter Night

My window-pane is starred with frost,
The world is bitter cold to-night,
The moon is cruel, and the wind
Is like a two-edged sword to smite.

God pity all the homeless ones,
The beggars pacing to and fro,
God pity all the poor to-night
Who walk the lamp-lit streets of snow.

My room is like a bit of June,
Warm and close-curtained fold on fold,
But somewhere, like a homeless child,
My heart is crying in the cold.

Sarah Teasdale

After Love

There is no magic any more,
We meet as other people do,
You work no miracle for me
Nor I for you.

You were the wind and I the sea --
There is no splendor any more,
I have grown listless as the pool
Beside the shore.

But though the pool is safe from storm
And from the tide has found surcease,
It grows more bitter than the sea,
For all its peace.

Sarah Teasdale

After Parting

Oh, I have sown my love so wide
That he will find it everywhere;
It will awake him in the night,
It will enfold him in the air.

I set my shadow in his sight
And I have winged it with desire,
That it may be a cloud by day,
And in the night a shaft of fire.

Sarah Teasdale

Alchemy

I lift my heart as spring lifts up
A yellow daisy to the rain;
My heart will be a lovely cup
Altho' it holds but pain.

For I shall learn from flower and leaf
That color every drop they hold,
To change the lifeless wine of grief
To living gold.

Sarah Teasdale

Alone

I am alone, in spite of love,
In spite of all I take and give --
In spite of all your tenderness,
Sometimes I am not glad to live.

I am alone, as though I stood
On the highest peak of the tired gray world,
About me only swirling snow,
Above me, endless space unfurled;

With earth hidden and heaven hidden,
And only my own spirit's pride
To keep me from the peace of those
Who are not lonely, having died.

Sarah Teasdale

April

The roofs are shining from the rain,
The sparrows twitter as they fly,
And with a windy April grace
The little clouds go by.

Yet the back-yards are bare and brown
With only one unchanging tree --
I could not be so sure of spring
Save that it sings in me.

Sarah Teasdale

April Song

Willow, in your April gown
Delicate and gleaming,
Do you mind in years gone by
All my dreaming?

Spring was like a call to me
That I could not answer,
I was chained to loneliness,
I, the dancer.

Willow, twinkling in the sun,
Still your leaves and hear me,
I can answer spring at last,
Love is near me!

Sarah Teasdale

Arcturus

Arcturus brings the spring back
As surely now as when
He rose on eastern islands
For Grecian girls and men;

The twilight is as clear a blue,
The star as shaken and as bright,
And the same thought he gave to them
He gives to me to-night.

Sarah Teasdale

At Midnight

Now at last I have come to see what life is,
Nothing is ever ended, everything only begun,
And the brave victories that seem so splendid
Are never really won.

Even love that I built my spirit's house for,
Comes like a brooding and a baffled guest,
And music and men's praise and even laughter
Are not so good as rest.

Sarah Teasdale

At Night

Love said, "Wake still and think of me,"
Sleep, "Close your eyes till break of day,"
But Dreams came by and smilingly
Gave both to Love and Sleep their way.

Sarah Teasdale

At Sea

In the pull of the wind I stand, lonely,
On the deck of a ship, rising, falling,
Wild night around me, wild water under me,
Whipped by the storm, screaming and calling.

Earth is hostile and the sea hostile,
Why do I look for a place to rest?
I must fight always and die fighting
With fear an unhealing wound in my breast.

Sarah Teasdale

August Moonrise

The sun was gone, and the moon was coming
Over the blue Connecticut hills;
The west was rosy, the east was flushed,
And over my head the swallows rushed
This way and that, with changeful wills.

I heard them twitter and watched them dart
Now together and now apart
Like dark petals blown from a tree;
The maples stamped against the west
Were black and stately and full of rest,

And the hazy orange moon grew up
And slowly changed to yellow gold
While the hills were darkened, fold on fold
To a deeper blue than a flower could hold.

Down the hill I went, and then
I forgot the ways of men,
For night-scents, heady, and damp and cool
Wakened ecstasy in me
On the brink of a shining pool.

O Beauty, out of many a cup
You have made me drunk and wild
Ever since I was a child,
But when have I been sure as now
That no bitterness can bend
And no sorrow wholly bow
One who loves you to the end?
And though I must give my breath
And my laughter all to death,
And my eyes through which joy came,

And my heart, a wavering flame;
If all must leave me and go back
Along a blind and fearful track
So that you can make anew,
Fusing with intenser fire,
Something nearer your desire;

If my soul must go alone
Through a cold infinity,
Or even if it vanish, too,
Beauty, I have worshipped you.

Let this single hour atone
For the theft of all of me.

Sarah Teasdale

Barter

Life has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Soaring fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,
Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,
Buy it and never count the cost;
For one white singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well lost,
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been, or could be.

Sarah Teasdale

Because

Oh, because you never tried
To bow my will or break my pride,
And nothing of the cave-man made
You want to keep me half afraid,
Nor ever with a conquering air
You thought to draw me unaware --
Take me, for I love you more
Than I ever loved before.

And since the body's maidenhood
Alone were neither rare nor good
Unless with it I gave to you
A spirit still untrammeled, too,
Take my dreams and take my mind
That were masterless as wind;
And "Master!" I shall say to you
Since you never asked me to.

Sarah Teasdale

Buried Love

I have come to bury Love
Beneath a tree,
In the forest tall and black
Where none can see.

I shall put no flowers at his head,
Nor stone at his feet,
For the mouth I loved so much
Was bittersweet.

I shall go no more to his grave,
For the woods are cold.
I shall gather as much of joy
As my hands can hold.

I shall stay all day in the sun
Where the wide winds blow, --
But oh, I shall cry at night
When none will know.

Sarah Teasdale

But Not To Me

The April night is still and sweet
With flowers on every tree;
Peace comes to them on quiet feet,
But not to me.

My peace is hidden in his breast
Where I shall never be;
Love comes to-night to all the rest,
But not to me.

Sarah Teasdale

Change

Remember me as I was then;
Turn from me now, but always see
The laughing shadowy girl who stood
At midnight by the flowering tree,
With eyes that love had made as bright
As the trembling stars of the summer night.

Turn from me now, but always hear
The muted laughter in the dew
Of that one year of youth we had,
The only youth we ever knew --
Turn from me now, or you will see
What other years have done to me.

Sarah Teasdale

Child, Child

Child, child, love while you can
The voice and the eyes and the soul of a man;
Never fear though it break your heart --
Out of the wound new joy will start;
Only love proudly and gladly and well,
Though love be heaven or love be hell.

Child, child, love while you may,
For life is short as a happy day;
Never fear the thing you feel --
Only by love is life made real;
Love, for the deadly sins are seven,
Only through love will you enter heaven.

Sarah Teasdale

Come

Come, when the pale moon like a petal
Floats in the pearly dusk of spring,
Come with arms outstretched to take me,
Come with lips pursed up to cling.

Come, for life is a frail moth flying,
Caught in the web of the years that pass,
And soon we two, so warm and eager,
Will be as the gray stones in the grass.

Sarah Teasdale

Compensation

I should be glad of loneliness
And hours that go on broken wings,
A thirsty body, a tired heart
And the unchanging ache of things,

If I could make a single song
As lovely and as full of light,
As hushed and brief as a falling star
On a winter night.

Sarah Teasdale

Debt

What do I owe to you
Who loved me deep and long?
You never gave my spirit wings
Or gave my heart a song.

But oh, to him I loved,
Who loved me not at all,
I owe the open gate
That led through heaven's wall.

Sarah Teasdale

Debtor

So long as my spirit still
Is glad of breath
And lifts its plumes of pride
In the dark face of death;
While I am curious still
Of love and fame,
Keeping my heart too high
For the years to tame,
How can I quarrel with fate
Since I can see
I am a debtor to life,
Not life to me?

Sarah Teasdale

Dew

As dew leaves the cobweb lightly
Threaded with stars,
Scattering jewels on the fence
And the pasture bars;
As dawn leaves the dry grass bright
And the tangled weeds
Bearing a rainbow gem
On each of their seeds;
So has your love, my lover,
Fresh as the dawn,
Made me a shining road
To travel on,
Set every common sight
Of tree or stone
Delicately alight
For me alone.

Sarah Teasdale

Doubt

My soul lives in my body's house,
And you have both the house and her --
But sometimes she is less your own
Than a wild, gay adventurer;
A restless and an eager wraith,
How can I tell what she will do --
Oh, I am sure of my body's faith,
But what if my soul broke faith with you?

Sarah Teasdale

Driftwood

My forefathers gave me
My spirit's shaken flame,
The shape of hands, the beat of heart,
The letters of my name.

But it was my lovers,
And not my sleeping sire,
Who gave the flame its changeful
And iridescent fires;

As the driftwood burning
Learned its jewelled blaze
From the sea's blue splendor
Of colored nights and days.

Sarah Teasdale

Dusk in War Time

A half-hour more and you will lean
To gather me close in the old sweet way --
But oh, to the woman over the sea
Who will come at the close of day?

A half-hour more and I will hear
The key in the latch and the strong, quick tread --
But oh, the woman over the sea
Waiting at dusk for one who is dead!

Sarah Teasdale

Dust

When I went to look at what had long been hidden,
A jewel laid long ago in a secret place,
I trembled, for I thought to see its dark deep fire --
But only a pinch of dust blew up in my face.

I almost gave my life long ago for a thing
That has gone to dust now, stinging my eyes --
It is strange how often a heart must be broken
Before the years can make it wise.

Sarah Teasdale

Ebb Tide

When the long day goes by
And I do not see your face,
The old wild, restless sorrow
Steals from its hiding place.

My day is barren and broken,
Bereft of light and song,
A sea beach bleak and windy
That moans the whole day long.

To the empty beach at ebb tide,
Bare with its rocks and scars,
Come back like the sea with singing,
And light of a million stars.

Sarah Teasdale

Embers

I said, "My youth is gone
Like a fire beaten out by the rain,
That will never sway and sing
Or play with the wind again."

I said, "It is no great sorrow
That quenched my youth in me,
But only little sorrows
Beating ceaselessly."

I thought my youth was gone,
But you returned --
Like a flame at the call of the wind
It leaped and burned;

Threw off its ashen cloak,
And gowned anew
Gave itself like a bride
Once more to you.

Sarah Teasdale

Enough

It is enough for me by day
To walk the same bright earth with him;
Enough that over us by night
The same great roof of stars is dim.

I do not hope to bind the wind
Or set a fetter on the sea --
It is enough to feel his love
Blow by like music over me.

Sarah Teasdale

Epitaph

Serene descent, as a red leaf's descending
When there is neither wind nor noise of rain,
But only autumn air and the unending
Drawing of all things to the earth again.

So be it, let the snow fall deep and cover
All that was drunken once with light and air.
The earth will not regret her tireless lover,
Nor he awake to know she does not care.

Sarah Teasdale

Evening: New York

Blue dust of evening over my city,
Over the ocean of roofs and the tall towers
Where the window-lights, myriads and myriads,
Bloom from the walls like climbing flowers.

Sarah Teasdale

Faces

People that I meet and pass
In the city's broken roar,
Faces that I lose so soon
And have never found before,

Do you know how much you tell
In the meeting of our eyes,
How ashamed I am, and sad
To have pierced your poor disguise?

Secrets rushing without sound
Crying from your hiding places --
Let me go, I cannot bear
The sorrow of the passing faces.

-- People in the restless street,
Can it be, oh can it be
In the meeting of our eyes
That you know as much of me?

Sarah Teasdale

Faults

They came to tell your faults to me,
They named them over one by one;
I laughed aloud when they were done,
I knew them all so well before, --
Oh, they were blind, too blind to see
Your faults had made me love you more.

Sarah Teasdale

Four Winds

"Four winds blowing through the sky,
You have seen poor maidens die,
Tell me then what I shall do
That my lover may be true."
Said the wind from out the south,
"Lay no kiss upon his mouth,"
And the wind from out the west,
"Wound the heart within his breast,"
And the wind from out the east,
"Send him empty from the feast,"
And the wind from out the north,
"In the tempest thrust him forth;
When thou art more cruel than he,
Then will Love be kind to thee."

Sarah Teasdale

Gifts

I gave my first love laughter,
I gave my second tears,
I gave my third love silence
Through all the years.

My first love gave me singing,
My second eyes to see,
But oh, it was my third love
Who gave my soul to me.

Sarah Teasdale

Gray Eyes

It was April when you came
The first time to me,
And my first look in your eyes
Was like my first look at the sea.

We have been together
Four Aprils now
Watching for the green
On the swaying willow bough;

Yet whenever I turn
To your gray eyes over me,
It is as though I looked
For the first time at the sea.

Sarah Teasdale

Guenevere

I was a queen, and I have lost my crown;
A wife, and I have broken all my vows;
A lover, and I ruined him I loved: --
There is no other havoc left to do.

A little month ago I was a queen,
And mothers held their babies up to see
When I came riding out of Camelot.
The women smiled, and all the world smiled too.

And now, what woman's eyes would smile on me?
I still am beautiful, and yet what child
Would think of me as some high, heaven-sent thing,
An angel, clad in gold and miniver?

The world would run from me, and yet am I
No different from the queen they used to love.
If water, flowing silver over stones,
Is forded, and beneath the horses' feet
Grows turbid suddenly, it clears again,
And men will drink it with no thought of harm.
Yet I am branded for a single fault.

I was the flower amid a toiling world,
Where people smiled to see one happy thing,
And they were proud and glad to raise me high;
They only asked that I should be right fair,
A little kind, and gowned wondrously,
And surely it were little praise to me
If I had pleased them well throughout my life.

I was a queen, the daughter of a king.
The crown was never heavy on my head,
It was my right, and was a part of me.
The women thought me proud, the men were kind,
And bowed right gallantly to kiss my hand,
And watched me as I passed them calmly by,
Along the halls I shall not tread again.
What if, to-night, I should revisit them?
The warders at the gates, the kitchen-maids,
The very beggars would stand off from me,

And I, their queen, would climb the stairs alone,
Pass through the banquet-hall, a loathed thing,
And seek my chambers for a hiding-place,
And I should find them but a sepulchre,
The very rushes rotted on the floors,
The fire in ashes on the freezing hearth.

I was a queen, and he who loved me best
Made me a woman for a night and day,
And now I go unqueened forevermore.

A queen should never dream on summer eves,
When hovering spells are heavy in the dusk: --
I think no night was ever quite so still,
So smoothly lit with red along the west,
So deeply hushed with quiet through and through.
And strangely clear, and deeply dyed with light,
The trees stood straight against a paling sky,
With Venus burning lamp-like in the west.

I walked alone amid a thousand flowers,
That drooped their heads and drowsed beneath the dew,
And all my thoughts were quieted to sleep.
Behind me, on the walk, I heard a step --
I did not know my heart could tell his tread,
I did not know I loved him till that hour.
Within my breast I felt a wild, sick pain,
The garden reeled a little, I was weak,
And quick he came behind me, caught my arms,
That ached beneath his touch; and then I swayed,
My head fell backward and I saw his face.

All this grows bitter that was once so sweet,
And many mouths must drain the dregs of it.
But none will pity me, nor pity him
Whom Love so lashed, and with such cruel thongs.

Sarah Teasdale

Houses of Dreams

You took my empty dreams
And filled them every one
With tenderness and nobleness,
April and the sun.

The old empty dreams
Where my thoughts would throng
Are far too full of happiness
To even hold a song.

Oh, the empty dreams were dim
And the empty dreams were wide,
They were sweet and shadowy houses
Where my thoughts could hide.

But you took my dreams away
And you made them all come true --
My thoughts have no place now to play,
And nothing now to do.

Sarah Teasdale

I Remembered

There never was a mood of mine,
Gay or heart-broken, luminous or dull,
But you could ease me of its fever
And give it back to me more beautiful.
In many another soul I broke the bread,
And drank the wine and played the happy guest,
But I was lonely, I remembered you;
The heart belong to him who knew it best.

Sarah Teasdale

I Shall Not Care

When I am dead and over me bright April
Shakes out her rain-drenched hair,
Though you should lean above me broken-hearted,
I shall not care.

I shall have peace, as leafy trees are peaceful
When rain bends down the bough,
And I shall be more silent and cold-hearted
Than you are now.

Sarah Teasdale

I Would Live in Your Love

I would live in your love as the sea-grasses live in the sea,
Borne up by each wave as it passes, drawn down by each wave that recedes;
I would empty my soul of the dreams that have gathered in me,
I would beat with your heart as it beats, I would follow your soul
as it leads.

Sarah Teasdale

If Death Is Kind

Perhaps if Death is kind, and there can be returning,
We will come back to earth some fragrant night,
And take these lanes to find the sea, and bending
Breathe the same honeysuckle, low and white.

We will come down at night to these resounding beaches
And the long gentle thunder of the sea,
Here for a single hour in the wide starlight
We shall be happy, for the dead are free.

Sarah Teasdale

In a Garden

The world is resting without sound or motion,
Behind the apple tree the sun goes down
Painting with fire the spires and the windows
In the elm-shaded town.

Beyond the calm Connecticut the hills lie
Silvered with haze as fruits still fresh with bloom,
The swallows weave in flight across the zenith
On an aerial loom.

Into the garden peace comes back with twilight,
Peace that since noon had left the purple phlox,
The heavy-headed asters, the late roses
And swaying hollyhocks.

For at high-noon I heard from this same garden
The far-off murmur as when many come;
Up from the village surged the blind and beating
Red music of a drum;

And the hysterical sharp fife that shattered
The brittle autumn air,
While they came, the young men marching
Past the village square. . . .

Across the calm Connecticut the hills change
To violet, the veils of dusk are deep --
Earth takes her children's many sorrows calmly
And stills herself to sleep.

Sarah Teasdale

In the End

All that could never be said,
All that could never be done,
Wait for us at last
Somewhere back of the sun;

All the heart broke to forego
Shall be ours without pain,
We shall take them as lightly as girls
Pluck flowers after rain.

And when they are ours in the end
Perhaps after all
The skies will not open for us
Nor heaven be there at our call.

Sarah Teasdale

Interlude: Songs out of Sorrow

I. Spirit's House

From naked stones of agony
I will build a house for me;
As a mason all alone
I will raise it, stone by stone,
And every stone where I have bled
Will show a sign of dusky red.
I have not gone the way in vain,
For I have good of all my pain;
My spirit's quiet house will be
Built of naked stones I trod
On roads where I lost sight of God.

II. Mastery

I would not have a god come in
To shield me suddenly from sin,
And set my house of life to rights;
Nor angels with bright burning wings
Ordering my earthly thoughts and things;
Rather my own frail guttering lights
Wind blown and nearly beaten out;
Rather the terror of the nights
And long, sick groping after doubt;
Rather be lost than let my soul
Slip vaguely from my own control --
Of my own spirit let me be
In sole though feeble mastery.

III. Lessons

Unless I learn to ask no help
From any other soul but mine,
To seek no strength in waving reeds
Nor shade beneath a straggling pine;
Unless I learn to look at Grief
Unshrinking from her tear-blind eyes,
And take from Pleasure fearlessly
Whatever gifts will make me wise --

Unless I learn these things on earth,
Why was I ever given birth?

IV. Wisdom

When I have ceased to break my wings
Against the faultiness of things,
And learned that compromises wait
Behind each hardly opened gate,
When I can look Life in the eyes,
Grown calm and very coldly wise,
Life will have given me the Truth,
And taken in exchange -- my youth.

V. In a Burying Ground

This is the spot where I will lie
When life has had enough of me,
These are the grasses that will blow
Above me like a living sea.

These gay old lilies will not shrink
To draw their life from death of mine,
And I will give my body's fire
To make blue flowers on this vine.

"O Soul," I said, "have you no tears?
Was not the body dear to you?"
I heard my soul say carelessly,
"The myrtle flowers will grow more blue."

VI. Wood Song

I heard a wood thrush in the dusk
Twirl three notes and make a star --
My heart that walked with bitterness
Came back from very far.

Three shining notes were all he had,
And yet they made a starry call --
I caught life back against my breast
And kissed it, scars and all.

VII. Refuge

From my spirit's gray defeat,
From my pulse's flagging beat,
From my hopes that turned to sand
Sifting through my close-clenched hand,
From my own fault's slavery,
If I can sing, I still am free.

For with my singing I can make
A refuge for my spirit's sake,
A house of shining words, to be
My fragile immortality.

Sarah Teasdale

Jewls

If I should see your eyes again,
I know how far their look would go --
Back to a morning in the park
With sapphire shadows on the snow.

Or back to oak trees in the spring
When you unloosed my hair and kissed
The head that lay against your knees
In the leaf shadow's amethyst.

And still another shining place
We would remember -- how the dun
Wild mountain held us on its crest
One diamond morning white with sun.

But I will turn my eyes from you
As women turn to put away
The jewels they have worn at night
And cannot wear in sober day.

Sarah Teasdale

Joy

I am wild, I will sing to the trees,
I will sing to the stars in the sky,
I love, I am loved, he is mine,
Now at last I can die!

I am sandaled with wind and with flame,
I have heart-fire and singing to give,
I can tread on the grass or the stars,
Now at last I can live!

Sarah Teasdale

June Night

Oh Earth, you are too dear to-night,
How can I sleep while all around
Floats rainy fragrance and the far
Deep voice of the ocean that talks to the ground?

Oh Earth, you gave me all I have,
I love you, I love you, -- oh what have I
That I can give you in return --
Except my body after I die?

Sarah Teasdale

Let it be Forgotten

Let it be forgotten, as a flower is forgotten,
Forgotten as a fire that once was singing gold.
Let it be forgotten forever and ever,
Time is a kind friend, he will make us old.

If anyone asks, say it was forgotten
Long and long ago,
As a flower, as a fire, as a hushed footfall
In a long-forgotten snow.

Sarah Teasdale

Lights

When we come home at night and close the door,
Standing together in the shadowy room,
Safe in our own love and the gentle gloom,
Glad of familiar wall and chair and floor,

Glad to leave far below the clanging city;
Looking far downward to the glaring street
Gaudy with light, yet tired with many feet,
In both of us wells up a wordless pity;

Men have tried hard to put away the dark;
A million lighted windows brilliantly
Inlay with squares of gold the winter night,
But to us standing here there comes the stark
Sense of the lives behind each yellow light,
And not one wholly joyous, proud, or free.

Sarah Teasdale

Longing

I am not sorry for my soul
That it must go unsatisfied,
For it can live a thousand times,
Eternity is deep and wide.

I am not sorry for my soul,
But oh, my body that must go
Back to a little drift of dust
Without the joy it longed to know.

Sarah Teasdale

Love and Death

Shall we, too, rise forgetful from our sleep,
And shall my soul that lies within your hand
Remember nothing, as the blowing sand
Forgets the palm where long blue shadows creep
When winds along the darkened desert sweep?

Or would it still remember, tho' it spanned
A thousand heavens, while the planets fanned
The vacant ether with their voices deep?
Soul of my soul, no word shall be forgot,
Nor yet alone, beloved, shall we see

The desolation of extinguished suns,
Nor fear the void wherethro' our planet runs,
For still together shall we go and not
Fare forth alone to front eternity.

Sarah Teasdale

Love Me

Brown-thrush singing all day long
In the leaves above me,
Take my love this April song,
"Love me, love me, love me!"

When he harkens what you say,
Bid him, lest he miss me,
Leave his work or leave his play,
And kiss me, kiss me, kiss me!

Sarah Teasdale

May Day

A delicate fabric of bird song
Floats in the air,
The smell of wet wild earth
Is everywhere.

Red small leaves of the maple
Are clenched like a hand,
Like girls at their first communion
The pear trees stand.

Oh I must pass nothing by
Without loving it much,
The raindrop try with my lips,
The grass with my touch;

For how can I be sure
I shall see again
The world on the first of May
Shining after the rain?

Sarah Teasdale

May Night

The spring is fresh and fearless
And every leaf is new,
The world is brimmed with moonlight,
The lilac brimmed with dew.

Here in the moving shadows
I catch my breath and sing --
My heart is fresh and fearless
And over-brimmed with spring.

Sarah Teasdale

May Wind

I said, "I have shut my heart
As one shuts an open door,
That Love may starve therein
And trouble me no more."

But over the roofs there came
The wet new wind of May,
And a tune blew up from the curb
Where the street-pianos play.

My room was white with the sun
And Love cried out in me,
"I am strong, I will break your heart
Unless you set me free."

Sarah Teasdale

Meadowlarks

In the silver light after a storm,
Under dripping boughs of bright new green,
I take the low path to hear the meadowlarks
Alone and high-hearted as if I were a queen.
What have I to fear in life or death
Who have known three things: the kiss in the night,
The white flying joy when a song is born,
And meadowlarks whistling in silver light.

Sarah Teasdale

Message

I heard a cry in the night,
A thousand miles it came,
Sharp as a flash of light,
My name, my name!

It was your voice I heard,
You waked and loved me so --
I send you back this word,
I know, I know!

Sarah Teasdale

Moods

I am the still rain falling,
Too tired for singing mirth --
Oh, be the green fields calling,
Oh, be for me the earth!

I am the brown bird pining
To leave the nest and fly --
Oh, be the fresh cloud shining,
Oh, be for me the sky!

Sarah Teasdale

Moonlight

It will not hurt me when I am old,
A running tide where moonlight burned
Will not sting me like silver snakes;
The years will make me sad and cold,
It is the happy heart that breaks.

The heart asks more than life can give,
When that is learned, then all is learned;
The waves break fold on jewelled fold,
But beauty itself is fugitive,
It will not hurt me when I am old.

Sarah Teasdale

Morning

I went out on an April morning
All alone, for my heart was high,
I was a child of the shining meadow,
I was a sister of the sky.

There in the windy flood of morning
Longing lifted its weight from me,
Lost as a sob in the midst of cheering,
Swept as a sea-bird out to sea.

Sarah Teasdale

Morning Song

A diamond of a morning
Waked me an hour too soon;
Dawn had taken in the stars
And left the faint white moon.

O white moon, you are lonely,
It is the same with me,
But we have the world to roam over,
Only the lonely are free.

Sarah Teasdale

New Love and Old

In my heart the old love
Struggled with the new;
It was ghostly waking
All night through.

Dear things, kind things,
That my old love said,
Ranged themselves reproachfully
Round my bed.

But I could not heed them,
For I seemed to see
The eyes of my new love
Fixed on me.

Old love, old love,
How can I be true?
Shall I be faithless to myself
Or to you?

Sarah Teasdale

Night Song at Amalfi

I asked the heaven of stars
What I should give my love --
It answered me with silence,
Silence above.

I asked the darkened sea
Down where the fishers go --
It answered me with silence,
Silence below.

Oh, I could give him weeping,
Or I could give him song --
But how can I give silence,
My whole life long?

Sarah Teasdale

November

The world is tired, the year is old,
The fading leaves are glad to die,
The wind goes shivering with cold
Where the brown reeds are dry.

Our love is dying like the grass,
And we who kissed grow coldly kind,
Half glad to see our old love pass
Like leaves along the wind.

Sarah Teasdale

Old Tunes

As the waves of perfume, heliotrope, rose,
Float in the garden when no wind blows,
Come to us, go from us, whence no one knows;

So the old tunes float in my mind,
And go from me leaving no trace behind,
Like fragrance borne on the hush of the wind.

But in the instant the airs remain
I know the laughter and the pain
Of times that will not come again.

I try to catch at many a tune
Like petals of light fallen from the moon,
Broken and bright on a dark lagoon,

But they float away -- for who can hold
Youth, or perfume or the moon's gold?

Sarah Teasdale

On the Dunes

If there is any life when death is over,
These tawny beaches will know much of me,
I shall come back, as constant and as changeful
As the unchanging, many-colored sea.

If life was small, if it has made me scornful,
Forgive me; I shall straighten like a flame
In the great calm of death, and if you want me
Stand on the sea-ward dunes and call my name.

Sarah Teasdale

Open Windows

Out of the window a sea of green trees
Lift their soft boughs like the arms of a dancer,
They beckon and call me, "Come out in the sun!"
But I cannot answer.

I am alone with Weakness and Pain,
Sick abed and June is going,
I cannot keep her, she hurries by
With the silver-green of her garments blowing.

Men and women pass in the street
Glad of the shining sapphire weather,
But we know more of it than they,
Pain and I together.

They are the runners in the sun,
Breathless and blinded by the race,
But we are watchers in the shade
Who speak with Wonder face to face.

Sarah Teasdale

Other Men

When I talk with other men
I always think of you --
Your words are keener than their words,
And they are gentler, too.

When I look at other men,
I wish your face were there,
With its gray eyes and dark skin
And tossed black hair.

When I think of other men,
Dreaming alone by day,
The thought of you like a strong wind
Blows the dreams away.

Sarah Teasdale

Pain

Waves are the sea's white daughters,
And raindrops the children of rain,
But why for my shimmering body
Have I a mother like Pain?

Night is the mother of stars,
And wind the mother of foam --
The world is brimming with beauty,
But I must stay at home.

Sarah Teasdale

Peace

Peace flows into me
As the tide to the pool by the shore;
It is mine forevermore,
It will not ebb like the sea.

I am the pool of blue
That worships the vivid sky;
My hopes were heaven-high,
They are all fulfilled in you.

I am the pool of gold
When sunset burns and dies --
You are my deepening skies;
Give me your stars to hold.

Sarah Teasdale

Pierrot

Pierrot stands in the garden
Beneath a waning moon,
And on his lute he fashions
A fragile silver tune.

Pierrot plays in the garden,
He thinks he plays for me,
But I am quite forgotten
Under the cherry tree.

Pierrot plays in the garden,
And all the roses know
That Pierrot loves his music, --
But I love Pierrot.

Sarah Teasdale

Pity

They never saw my lover's face,
They only know our love was brief,
Wearing awhile a windy grace
And passing like an autumn leaf.

They wonder why I do not weep,
They think it strange that I can sing,
They say, "Her love was scarcely deep
Since it has left so slight a sting."
They never saw my love, nor knew
That in my heart's most secret place
I pity them as angels do
Men who have never seen God's face.

Sarah Teasdale

Places

Places I love come back to me like music,
Hush me and heal me when I am very tired;
I see the oak woods at Saxton's flaming
In a flare of crimson by the frost newly fired;

And I am thirsty for the spring in the valley
As for a kiss ungiven and long desired.
I know a bright world of snowy hills at Boonton,
A blue and white dazzling light on everything one sees,

The ice-covered branches of the hemlocks sparkle
Bending low and tinkling in the sharp thin breeze,
And iridescent crystals fall and crackle on the snow-crust
With the winter sun drawing cold blue shadows from the trees.

Violet now, in veil on veil of evening
The hills across from Cromwell grow dreamy and far;
A wood-thrush is singing soft as a viol
In the heart of the hollow where the dark pools are;

The primrose has opened her pale yellow flowers
And heaven is lighting star after star.
Places I love come back to me like music --
Mid-ocean, midnight, the waves buzz drowsily;

In the ship's deep churning the eerie phosphorescence
Is like the souls of people who were drowned at sea,
And I can hear a man's voice, speaking, hushed, insistent,
At midnight, in mid-ocean, hour on hour to me.

Sarah Teasdale

Red Maples

In the last year I have learned
How few men are worth my trust;
I have seen the friend I loved
Struck by death into the dust,
And fears I never knew before
Have knocked and knocked upon my door --
"I shall hope little and ask for less,"
I said, "There is no happiness."

I have grown wise at last -- but how
Can I hide the gleam on the willow-bough,
Or keep the fragrance out of the rain
Now that April is here again?
When maples stand in a haze of fire
What can I say to the old desire,
What shall I do with the joy in me
That is born out of agony?

Sarah Teasdale

Redbirds

Redbirds, redbirds,
Long and long ago,
What a honey-call you had
In hills I used to know;

Redbud, buckberry,
Wild plum-tree
And proud river sweeping
Southward to the sea,

Brown and gold in the sun
Sparkling far below,
Trailing stately round her bluffs
Where the poplars grow --

Redbirds, redbirds,
Are you singing still
As you sang one May day
On Saxton's Hill?

Sarah Teasdale

Riches

I have no riches but my thoughts,
Yet these are wealth enough for me;
My thoughts of you are golden coins
Stamped in the mint of memory;

And I must spend them all in song,
For thoughts, as well as gold, must be
Left on the hither side of death
To gain their immortality.

Sarah Teasdale

September Midnights

Lyric night of the lingering Indian Summer,
Shadowy fields that are scentless but full of singing,
Never a bird, but the passionless chant of insects,
Ceaseless, insistent.

The grasshopper's horn, and far-off, high in the maples,
The wheel of a locust leisurely grinding the silence
Under a moon waning and worn, broken,
Tired with summer.

Let me remember you, voices of little insects,
Weeds in the moonlight, fields that are tangled with asters,
Let me remember, soon will the winter be on us,
Snow-hushed and heavy.

Over my soul murmur your mute benediction,
While I gaze, O fields that rest after harvest,
As those who part look long in the eyes they lean to,
Lest they forget them.

Sarah Teasdale

Sleepless

If I could have your arms tonight-
But half the world and the broken sea
Lie between you and me.

The autumn rain reverberates in the courtyard,
Beating all night against the barren stone,
The sound of useless rain in the desolate courtyard
Makes me more alone.

If you were here, if you were only here-
My blood cries out to you all night in vain
As sleepless as the rain.

Sarah Teasdale

Snowfall

"She can't be unhappy," you said,
"The smiles are like stars in her eyes,
And her laugh is thistledown
Around her low replies."
"Is she unhappy?" you said --
But who has ever known
Another's heartbreak --
All he can know is his own;
And she seems hushed to me,
As hushed as though
Her heart were a hunter's fire
Smothered in snow.

Sarah Teasdale

Song at Capri

When beauty grows too great to bear
How shall I ease me of its ache,
For beauty more than bitterness
Makes the heart break.

Now while I watch the dreaming sea
With isles like flowers against her breast,
Only one voice in all the world
Could give me rest.

Sarah Teasdale

Song Making

My heart cried like a beaten child
Ceaselessly all night long;
I had to take my own cries
And thread them into a song.

One was a cry at black midnight
And one when the first cock crew --
My heart was like a beaten child,
But no one ever knew.

Life, you have put me in your debt
And I must serve you long --
But oh, the debt is terrible
That must be paid in song.

Sarah Teasdale

Spray

I knew you thought of me all night,
I knew, though you were far away;
I felt your love blow over me
As if a dark wind-riven sea
Drenched me with quivering spray.

There are so many ways to love
And each way has its own delight --
Then be content to come to me
Only as spray the beating sea
Drives inland through the night.

Sarah Teasdale

Spring Night

The park is filled with night and fog,
The veils are drawn about the world,
The drowsy lights along the paths
Are dim and pearled.

Gold and gleaming the empty streets,
Gold and gleaming the misty lake,
The mirrored lights like sunken swords,
Glimmer and shake.

Oh, is it not enough to be
Here with this beauty over me?
My throat should ache with praise, and I
Should kneel in joy beneath the sky.
O, beauty, are you not enough?
Why am I crying after love,
With youth, a singing voice, and eyes
To take earth's wonder with surprise?

Why have I put off my pride,
Why am I unsatisfied, --
I, for whom the pensive night
Binds her cloudy hair with light, --
I, for whom all beauty burns
Like incense in a million urns?
O beauty, are you not enough?
Why am I crying after love?

Sarah Teasdale

Spring Rain

I thought I had forgotten,
But it all came back again
To-night with the first spring thunder
In a rush of rain.

I remembered a darkened doorway
Where we stood while the storm swept by,
Thunder gripping the earth
And lightning scrawled on the sky.

The passing motor busses swayed,
For the street was a river of rain,
Lashed into little golden waves
In the lamp light's stain.

With the wild spring rain and thunder
My heart was wild and gay;
Your eyes said more to me that night
Than your lips would ever say. . . .

I thought I had forgotten,
But it all came back again
To-night with the first spring thunder
In a rush of rain.

Sarah Teasdale

Spring Torrents

Will it always be like this until I am dead,
Every spring must I bear it all again
With the first red haze of the budding maple boughs,
And the first sweet-smelling rain?

Oh I am like a rock in the rising river
Where the flooded water breaks with a low call --
Like a rock that knows the cry of the waters
And cannot answer at all.

Sarah Teasdale

Stars

Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head,
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
That aeons
Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill,
I watch them marching
Stately and still,
And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

Sarah Teasdale

Summer Night, Riverside

In the wild, soft summer darkness
How many and many a night we two together
Sat in the park and watched the Hudson
Wearing her lights like golden spangles
Glinting on black satin.
The rail along the curving pathway
Was low in a happy place to let us cross,
And down the hill a tree that dripped with bloom
Sheltered us,
While your kisses and the flowers,
Falling, falling,
Tangled my hair. . . .

The frail white stars moved slowly over the sky.

And now, far off
In the fragrant darkness
The tree is tremulous again with bloom,
For June comes back.

To-night what girl
Dreamily before her mirror shakes from her hair
This year's blossoms, clinging in its coils?

Sarah Teasdale

Summer Storm

The panther wind
Leaps out of the night,
The snake of lightning
Is twisting and white,
The lion of thunder
Roars -- and we
Sit still and content
Under a tree --
We have met fate together
And love and pain,
Why should we fear
The wrath of the rain!

Sarah Teasdale

Sunset: St. Louis

Hushed in the smoky haze of summer sunset,
When I came home again from far-off places,
How many times I saw my western city
Dream by her river.

Then for an hour the water wore a mantle
Of tawny gold and mauve and misted turquoise
Under the tall and darkened arches bearing
Gray, high-flung bridges.

Against the sunset, water-towers and steeples
Flickered with fire up the slope to westward,
And old warehouses poured their purple shadows
Across the levee.

High over them the black train swept with thunder,
Cleaving the city, leaving far beneath it
Wharf-boats moored beside the old side-wheelers
Resting in twilight.

Sarah Teasdale

Swans

Night is over the park, and a few brave stars
Look on the lights that link it with chains of gold,
The lake bears up their reflection in broken bars
That seem too heavy for tremulous water to hold.

We watch the swans that sleep in a shadowy place,
And now and again one wakes and uplifts its head;
How still you are -- your gaze is on my face --
We watch the swans and never a word is said.

Sarah Teasdale

The Answer

When I go back to earth
And all my joyous body
Puts off the red and white
That once had been so proud,
If men should pass above
With false and feeble pity,
My dust will find a voice
To answer them aloud:

"Be still, I am content,
Take back your poor compassion --
Joy was a flame in me
Too steady to destroy.
Lithe as a bending reed
Loving the storm that sways her --
I found more joy in sorrow
Than you could find in joy."

Sarah Teasdale

The Coin

Into my heart's treasury
I slipped a coin
That time cannot take
Nor a thief purloin, --

Oh better than the minting
Of a gold-crowned king
Is the safe-kept memory
Of a lovely thing.

Sarah Teasdale

The Crystal Gazer

I shall gather myself into my self again,
I shall take my scattered selves and make them one.
I shall fuse them into a polished crystal ball
Where I can see the moon and the flashing sun.

I Shall sit like a sibyl, hour after hour intent.
Watching the future come and the present go -
And the little shifting pictures of people rushing
In tiny self-importance to and fro.

Sarah Teasdale

The Flight

Look back with longing eyes and know that I will follow,
Lift me up in your love as a light wind lifts a swallow,
Let our flight be far in sun or blowing rain --
But what if I heard my first love calling me again?

Hold me on your heart as the brave sea holds the foam,
Take me far away to the hills that hide your home;
Peace shall thatch the roof and love shall latch the door --
But what if I heard my first love calling me once more?

Sarah Teasdale

The Garden

My heart is a garden tired with autumn,
Heaped with bending asters and dahlias heavy and dark,
In the hazy sunshine, the garden remembers April,
The drench of rains and a snow-drop quick and clear as a spark;

Daffodils blowing in the cold wind of morning,
And golden tulips, goblets holding the rain --
The garden will be hushed with snow, forgotten soon, forgotten --
After the stillness, will spring come again?

Sarah Teasdale

The Ghost

I went back to the clanging city,
I went back where my old loves stayed,
But my heart was full of my new love's glory,
My eyes were laughing and unafraid.

I met one who had loved me madly
And told his love for all to hear --
But we talked of a thousand things together,
The past was buried too deep to fear.

I met the other, whose love was given
With never a kiss and scarcely a word --
Oh, it was then the terror took me
Of words unuttered that breathed and stirred.

Oh, love that lives its life with laughter
Or love that lives its life with tears
Can die -- but love that is never spoken
Goes like a ghost through the winding years. . . .

I went back to the clanging city,
I went back where my old loves stayed,
My heart was full of my new love's glory, --
But my eyes were suddenly afraid.

Sarah Teasdale

The Giver

You bound strong sandals on my feet,
You gave me bread and wine,
And sent me under sun and stars,
For all the world was mine.

Oh, take the sandals off my feet,
You know not what you do;
For all my world is in your arms,
My sun and stars are you.

Sarah Teasdale

The Kiss

I hoped that he would love me,
And he has kissed my mouth,
But I am like a stricken bird
That cannot reach the south.

For though I know he loves me,
To-night my heart is sad;
His kiss was not so wonderful
As all the dreams I had.

Sarah Teasdale

The Lamp

If I can bear your love like a lamp before me,
When I go down the long steep Road of Darkness,
I shall not fear the everlasting shadows,
 Nor cry in terror.

If I can find out God, then I shall find Him,
If none can find Him, then I shall sleep soundly,
Knowing how well on earth your love sufficed me,
 A lamp in darkness.

Sarah Teasdale

The Long Hill

I must have passed the crest a while ago
And now I am going down --
Strange to have crossed the crest and not to know,
But the brambles were always catching the hem of my gown.

All the morning I thought how proud I should be
To stand there straight as a queen,
Wrapped in the wind and the sun with the world under me --
But the air was dull, there was little I could have seen.

It was nearly level along the beaten track
And the brambles caught in my gown --
But it's no use now to think of turning back,
The rest of the way will be only going down.

Sarah Teasdale

The Look

Strephon kissed me in the spring,
Robin in the fall,
But Colin only looked at me
And never kissed at all.

Strephon's kiss was lost in jest,
Robin's lost in play,
But the kiss in Colin's eyes
Haunts me night and day.

Sarah Teasdale

The Mystery

Your eyes drink of me,
Love makes them shine,
Your eyes that lean
So close to mine.

We have long been lovers,
We know the range
Of each other's moods
And how they change;

But when we look
At each other so
Then we feel
How little we know;

The spirit eludes us,
Timid and free --
Can I ever know you
Or you know me?

Sarah Teasdale

The Net

I made you many and many a song,
Yet never one told all you are --
It was as though a net of words
Were flung to catch a star;

It was as though I curved my hand
And dipped sea-water eagerly,
Only to find it lost the blue
Dark splendor of the sea.

Sarah Teasdale

The New Moon

Day, you have bruised and beaten me,
As rain beats down the bright, proud sea,
Beaten my body, bruised my soul,
Left me nothing lovely or whole --

Yet I have wrested a gift from you,
Day that dies in dusky blue:
For suddenly over the factories
I saw a moon in the cloudy seas --

A wisp of beauty all alone
In a world as hard and gray as stone --
Oh who could be bitter and want to die
When a maiden moon wakes up in the sky?

Sarah Teasdale

The Return

He has come, he is here,
My love has come home,
The minutes are lighter
Than flying foam,

The hours are like dancers
On gold-slippered feet,
The days are young runners
Naked and fleet --

For my love has returned,
He is home, he is here,
In the whole world no other
Is dear as my dear!

Sarah Teasdale

The River

I came from the sunny valleys
And sought for the open sea,
For I thought in its gray expanses
My peace would come to me.

I came at last to the ocean
And found it wild and black,
And I cried to the windless valleys,
"Be kind and take me back!"

But the thirsty tide ran inland,
And the salt waves drank of me,
And I who was fresh as the rainfall
Am bitter as the sea.

Sarah Teasdale

The Sanctuary

If I could keep my innermost Me
Fearless, aloof and free
Of the least breath of love or hate,
And not disconsolate
At the sick load of sorrow laid on men;
If I could keep a sanctuary there
Free even of prayer,
If I could do this, then,
With quiet candor as I grew more wise
I could look even at God with grave forgiving eyes.

Sarah Teasdale

The Silent Battle

(In Memory of J. W. T. Jr.)

He was a soldier in that fight
Where there is neither flag nor drum,
And without sound of musketry
The stealthy foemen come.

Year in, year out, by day and night
They forced him to a slow retreat,
And for his gallant fight alone
No fife was blown, and no drum beat.

In winter fog, in gathering mist
The gray grim battle had its end --
And at the very last we knew
His enemy had turned his friend.

Sarah Teasdale

The Song For Colin

I sang a song at dusking time
Beneath the evening star,
And Terence left his latest rhyme
To answer from afar.

Pierrot laid down his lute to weep,
And sighed, "She sings for me."
But Colin slept a careless sleep
Beneath an apple tree.

Sarah Teasdale

The Storm

I thought of you when I was wakened
By a wind that made me glad and afraid
Of the rushing, pouring sound of the sea
That the great trees made.

One thought in my mind went over and over
While the darkness shook and the leaves were thinned --
I thought it was you who had come to find me,
You were the wind.

Sarah Teasdale

The Treasure

When they see my songs
They will sigh and say,
"Poor soul, wistful soul,
Lonely night and day."

They will never know
All your love for me
Surer than the spring,
Stronger than the sea;

Hidden out of sight
Like a miser's gold
In forsaken fields
Where the wind is cold.

Sarah Teasdale

The Tree

Oh to be free of myself,
With nothing left to remember,
To have my heart as bare
As a tree in December;

Resting, as a tree rests
After its leaves are gone,
Waiting no more for a rain at night
Nor for the red at dawn;

But still, oh so still
While the winds come and go,
With no more fear of the hard frost
Or the bright burden of snow;

And heedless, heedless
If anyone pass and see
On the white page of the sky
Its thin black tracery.

Sarah Teasdale

The Tree of Song

I sang my songs for the rest,
For you I am still;
The tree of my song is bare
On its shining hill.

For you came like a lordly wind,
And the leaves were whirled
Far as forgotten things
Past the rim of the world.

The tree of my song stands bare
Against the blue --
I gave my songs to the rest,
Myself to you.

Sarah Teasdale

The Unchanging

Sun-swept beaches with a light wind blowing
From the immense blue circle of the sea,
And the soft thunder where long waves whiten --
These were the same for Sappho as for me.

Two thousand years -- much has gone by forever,
Change takes the gods and ships and speech of men --
But here on the beaches that time passes over
The heart aches now as then.

Sarah Teasdale

The Voice

Atoms as old as stars,
Mutation on mutation,
Millions and millions of cells
Dividing yet still the same,
From air and changing earth,
From ancient Eastern rivers,
From turquoise tropic seas,
Unto myself I came.

My spirit like my flesh
Sprang from a thousand sources,
From cave-man, hunter and shepherd,
From Karnak, Cyprus, Rome;

The living thoughts in me
Spring from dead men and women,
Forgotten time out of mind
And many as bubbles of foam.

Here for a moment's space
Into the light out of darkness,
I come and they come with me
Finding words with my breath;

From the wisdom of many life-times
Seek for Beauty, she only
Fights with man against Death!"

Sarah Teasdale

The Wanderer

I saw the sunset-colored sands,
The Nile like flowing fire between,
Where Rameses stares forth serene,
And Ammon's heavy temple stands.

I saw the rocks where long ago,
Above the sea that cries and breaks,
Swift Perseus with Medusa's snakes
Set free the maiden white like snow.

And many skies have covered me,
And many winds have blown me forth,
And I have loved the green, bright north,
And I have loved the cold, sweet sea.

But what to me are north and south,
And what the lure of many lands,
Since you have leaned to catch my hands
And lay a kiss upon my mouth.

Sarah Teasdale

The Wind

A wind is blowing over my soul,
I hear it cry the whole night through --
Is there no peace for me on earth
Except with you?

Alas, the wind has made me wise,
Over my naked soul it blew, --
There is no peace for me on earth
Even with you.

Sarah Teasdale

The Wind in the Hemlock

Steely stars and moon of brass,
How mockingly you watch me pass!
You know as well as I how soon
I shall be blind to stars and moon,
Deaf to the wind in the hemlock tree,
Dumb when the brown earth weighs on me.

With envious dark rage I bear,
Stars, your cold complacent stare;
Heart-broken in my hate look up,
Moon, at your clear immortal cup,
Changing to gold from dusky red --
Age after age when I am dead
To be filled up with light, and then
Emptied, to be refilled again.

What has man done that only he
Is slave to death -- so brutally
Beaten back into the earth
Impatient for him since his birth?

Oh let me shut my eyes, close out
The sight of stars and earth and be
Sheltered a minute by this tree.
Hemlock, through your fragrant boughs
There moves no anger and no doubt,
No envy of immortal things.
The night-wind murmurs of the sea
With veiled music ceaselessly,
That to my shaken spirit sings.
From their frail nest the robins rouse,
In your pungent darkness stirred,
Twittering a low drowsy word --
And me you shelter, even me.
In your quietness you house
The wind, the woman and the bird.
You speak to me and I have heard:

"If I am peaceful, I shall see
Beauty's face continually;
Feeding on her wine and bread
I shall be wholly comforted,
For she can make one day for me
Rich as my lost eternity."

Sarah Teasdale

The Years

To-night I close my eyes and see
A strange procession passing me --
The years before I saw your face
Go by me with a wistful grace;
They pass, the sensitive, shy years,
As one who strives to dance, half blind with tears.

The years went by and never knew
That each one brought me nearer you;
Their path was narrow and apart
And yet it led me to your heart --
Oh, sensitive, shy years, oh, lonely years,
That strove to sing with voices drowned in tears.

Sarah Teasdale

Thoughts

When I am all alone
Envy me most,
Then my thoughts flutter round me
In a glimmering host;

Some dressed in silver,
Some dressed in white,
Each like a taper
Blossoming light;

Most of them merry,
Some of them grave,
Each of them lithe
As willows that wave;

Some bearing violets,
Some bearing bay,
One with a burning rose
Hidden away --

When I am all alone
Envy me then,
For I have better friends
Than women and men.

Sarah Teasdale

Tides

Love in my heart was a fresh tide flowing
Where the starlike sea gulls soar;
The sun was keen and the foam was blowing
High on the rocky shore.

But now in the dusk the tide is turning,
Lower the sea gulls soar,
And the waves that rose in resistless yearning
Are broken forevermore.

Sarah Teasdale

To E.

I have remembered beauty in the night,
 Against black silences I waked to see
 A shower of sunlight over Italy
And green Ravello dreaming on her height;
I have remembered music in the dark,
 The clean swift brightness of a fugue of Bach's,
 And running water singing on the rocks
When once in English woods I heard a lark.

But all remembered beauty is no more
 Than a vague prelude to the thought of you --
 You are the rarest soul I ever knew,
 Lover of beauty, knightliest and best;
My thoughts seek you as waves that seek the shore,
 And when I think of you, I am at rest.

Sarah Teasdale

To-nigh

The moon is a curving flower of gold,
The sky is still and blue;
The moon was made for the sky to hold,
And I for you.

The moon is a flower without a stem,
The sky is luminous;
Eternity was made for them,
To-night for us.

Sarah Teasdale

Twilight

Dreamily over the roofs
The cold spring rain is falling;
Out in the lonely tree
A bird is calling, calling.

Slowly over the earth
The wings of night are falling;
My heart like the bird in the tree
Is calling, calling, calling.

Sarah Teasdale

Understanding

I understood the rest too well,
And all their thoughts have come to be
Clear as grey sea-weed in the swell
Of a sunny shallow sea.

But you I never understood,
Your spirit's secret hides like gold
Sunk in a Spanish galleon
Ages ago in waters cold.

Sarah Teasdale

Water Lilies

If you have forgotten water lilies floating
On a dark lake among mountains in the afternoon shade,
If you have forgotten their wet, sleepy fragrance,
Then you can return and not be afraid.

But if you remember, then turn away forever
To the plains and the prairies where pools are far apart,
There you will not come at dusk on closing water lilies,
And the shadow of mountains will not fall on your heart.

Sarah Teasdale

White Fog

Heaven-invading hills are drowned
In wide moving waves of mist,
Phlox before my door are wound
In dripping wreaths of amethyst.

Ten feet away the solid earth
Changes into melting cloud,
There is a hush of pain and mirth,
No bird has heart to speak aloud.

Here in a world without a sky,
Without the ground, without the sea,
The one unchanging thing is I,
Myself remains to comfort me.

Sarah Teasdale

Wild Asters

In the spring I asked the daisies
If his words were true,
And the clever, clear-eyed daisies
Always knew.

Now the fields are brown and barren,
Bitter autumn blows,
And of all the stupid asters
Not one knows.

Sarah Teasdale