

Classic Poetry Series

**Rose Terry Cooke**  
**- poems -**

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## Rose Terry Cooke(February 17, 1827 – July 18, 1892)

Rose Terry Cooke (née Terry) was an American writer born in West Hartford, Connecticut to Henry Wadsworth Terry and Anne Wright Hurlbut.

She went to the Hartford Female Seminary where "For her own entertainment she wrote poems and dramas for her friends". She graduated from the seminary at age sixteen and that same year became a member of the Congregational Church and began teaching at a Presbyterian church in Burlington, New Jersey and worked as a governess for the family of clergyman William Van Rensselaer.

Terry's first published poem appeared in the New York Daily Tribune in 1851 and received high praise from the editor Charles A. Dana. In 1860 she published a volume of poems, and in 1888 she published more verse with her Complete Poems. It was after her marriage in 1873 to Rollin H. Cooke that she became best known for her fresh and humorous stories. Her chief volumes of fiction dealing mainly with New England country life were Happy Dodd: or, She Hath Done What She Could (1878), Somebody's Neighbors (1881), Root-bound and Other Sketches (1885), The Sphinx's Children and Other People's (1886), No: A Story for Boys.(1886), Steadfast (1889) and Huckleberries Gathered From the New England Hills (1891). She died at Pittsfield, Massachusetts on July 18, 1892.

# A Story

In a gleam of sunshine a gentian stood,  
Dreaming her life away,  
While the leaves danced merrily through the wood,  
And rode on the wind for play.

She stood in the light and looked at the sky,  
Till her leaves were as fair a blue;  
But she shut her heart from the butterfly  
And the coaxing drops of dew.

Dreaming and sunning that autumn noon,  
She stayed the idlest bee  
That ever lingered to hear the tune  
Of the wind in a rustling tree.

He had a golden cuirass on,  
And a surcoat black as night,  
And he wandered ever from shade to sun,  
Seeking his own delight.

Now were the blossoms of Summer fled,  
And the bumble-bee felt the frost;  
He knew that the asters all lay dead,  
And the honey-vine cups were lost.

So he poised and fluttered above the flower,  
And tried his tenderest arts,  
With whispers and kisses, a weary hour,  
Till he opened its heart of hearts.

Not for love of the gentian blue,  
But for his own wild will;  
All he wanted was honey-dew,  
And there he drank his fill.

No more dreaming in sun or shade!  
It never could close again!  
The gentian withered, alone, dismayed;  
The bee flew over the plain.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Arachne

I watch her in the corner there,  
As, restless, bold, and unafraid,  
She slips and floats along the air  
Till all her subtle house is made.

Her home, her bed, her daily food  
All from that hidden store she draws;  
She fashions it and knows it good,  
By instinct's strong and sacred laws.

No tenuous threads to weave her nest,  
She seeks and gathers there or here;  
But spins it from her faithful breast,  
Renewing still, till leaves are sere.

Then, worn with toil, and tired of life,  
In vain her shining traps are set.  
Her frost hath hushed the insect strife  
And gilded flies her charm forget.

But swinging in the snares she spun,  
She sways to every winter wind:  
Her joy, her toil, her errand done,  
Her corse the sport of storms unkind.

Poor sister of the spinster clan!  
I too from out my store within  
My daily life and living plan,  
My home, my rest, my pleasure spin.

I know thy heart when heartless hands  
Sweep all that hard-earned web away:  
Destroy its pearled and glittering bands,  
And leave thee homeless by the way.

I know thy peace when all is done.  
Each anchored thread, each tiny knot,  
Soft shining in the autumn sun;  
A sheltered, silent, tranquil lot.

I know what thou hast never known,  
-Sad presage to a soul allowed;-  
That not for life I spin, alone.  
But day by day I spin my shroud.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Basile Renaud

The summer sun bedecks Anjou,  
The harvest time keeps promise true,  
And I have kept my faith with you  
Basile Renaud!

The sun forsakes my dungeon walls,  
Across the fosse no shadow falls,  
I hear no answer to my calls,  
Basile Renaud!

My name was Clara Madaillon.  
I had a sister, I had one  
Who should have been a hooded nun,  
That made us three:  
Marie and I dwelt in the tower,  
But Angelique forsook her dower,  
And in a convent made her bower,  
The convent of St. Brie.

There came a lover to our lands,  
I wove my hair in shining bands  
And put bright jewels on my hands,  
Basile Renaud!  
You looked at me as at a star,  
You said I was as cold and far;  
I laugh now, thinking what you are,  
Basile Renaud!

He gave me a betrothal ring,  
I learned for him to smile and sing;  
'Proud Clara, have you found your king?'  
They said to me.  
So from the nuns came Angelique  
For her farewells; oh! she was meek,  
With yellow tresses down her cheek,  
And blue eyes soft to see!

My love beheld her tender face,  
Her little hands and gentle grace,-  
How dared you give her my right place,

Basile Renaud?

I scoffed at her, I hated him;  
And Marie said-'His eyes are dim;  
Were't me-' So ran thy requiem,  
Basile Renaud!

We took our counsel, nor would show  
More signs of vengeance than the snow  
That hides a traveller far below  
Its shining drift.  
The winter nights came on too fast,  
But they two did not hear the blast  
That howled, and howled, and shivered past,  
And muttered in the rift.

One night we were both grave and gay,  
For Angelique had gone away,  
And one was sad, but two would play,  
Basile Renaud.  
The firelight flickered in the hall,  
The sconces burned with torches tall;  
I, blinded, hunted to the wall  
Basile Renaud.

'Will you be hunter?' Marie said;  
She tied the kerchief round his head;  
I had a knife-and it grew red  
But not with flame.  
His brow bent down upon my arm.  
I laughed to see the working charm.  
He had no will to do us harm,  
Nor breath to murmur blame.

They haled us to a prison high,  
Where all day long thick shadows lie,  
And in broad daylight we shall die,  
Basile Renaud!  
But I had vengeance! though there be  
Only one sister left of three  
Angelique in the nunnery  
Basile Renaud!





# Bird Music

Singer of priceless melody,  
Underguerdoned chorister of air,  
Who from the lithe top of the tree  
Pourest at will thy music rare,  
As if a sudden brook laughed down the hill-side there.

The purple-blossomed fields of grass,  
Waved sea-like to the idle wind,  
Thick daisies that the stars surpass,  
Being as fair and far more kind;  
All sweet uncultured things thy wild notes bring to mind.

When that enraptured overflow  
Of singing into silence dies,  
Thy rapid fleeting pinions show  
Where all thy spell of sweetness lies  
Gathered in one small nest from the wide earth and skies.

Unconscious of thine audience,  
Careless of praises as of blame,  
In simpleness and innocence,  
Thy gentle life pursues its aim,  
So tender and serene, that we might blush for shame.

The patience of thy brooding wings  
That droop in silence day by day,  
The little crowd of callow things  
That joy for weariness repay,  
These are the living spring, thy song the fountain's spray.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Blue-Beard's Closet

Fasten the chamber!  
Hide the red key;  
Cover the portal,  
That eyes may not see.  
Get thee to market,  
To wedding and prayer;  
Labor or revel,  
The chamber is there!

In comes a stranger-  
'Thy pictures how fine,  
Titian or Guido,  
Whose is the sign?'  
Looks he behind them?  
Ah! have a care!  
'Here is a finer.'  
The chamber is there!

Fair spreads the banquet,  
Rich the array;  
See the bright torches  
Mimicking day;  
When harp and viol  
Thrill the soft air,  
Comes a light whisper:  
The chamber is there!

Marble and painting,  
Jasper and gold,  
Purple from Tyrus,  
Fold upon fold,  
Blossoms and jewels,  
Thy palace prepare:  
Pale grows the monarch;  
The chamber is there!

Once it was open  
As shore to the sea;  
White were the turrets,

Goodly to see;  
All through the casements  
Flowed the sweet air;  
Now it is darkness;  
The chamber is there!

Silence and horror  
Brood on the walls;  
Through every crevice  
A little voice calls:  
'Quicken, mad footsteps,  
On pavement and stair;  
Look not behind thee,  
The chamber is there!

Out of the gateway,  
Through the wide world,  
Into the tempest  
Beaten and hurled,  
Vain is thy wandering,  
Sure thy despair,  
Flying or staying,  
The chamber is there!

Rose Terry Cooke

# Daisies

Fair and peaceful daisies,  
Smiling in the grass,  
Who hath sung your praises?  
Poets by you pass,  
And I alone am left to celebrate your mass.

In the summer morning,  
Through the fields ye shine,  
Joyfully adorning  
Earth with grace divine,  
And pour, from sunny hearts, fresh gladness into mine.

Lying in the meadows,  
Like the milky way,  
From nocturnal shadows  
Glad to fall away,  
And live a happy life in the wide light of day.

Bees about you humming  
Pile their yellow store,  
Winds in whispers coming  
Teach you love's sweet lore,  
For your reluctant lips still worshipping the more.

Birds with music laden  
Shower their songs on you;  
And the rustic maiden,  
Standing in the dew,  
By your alternate leaves tells if her love be true.

Little stars of glory!  
From your amber eyes  
No inconstant story  
Of her love should rise!  
And yet 'He loves me not!' is oft the sad surprise.

Crowds of milk-white blossoms!  
Noon's concentrated beams  
Glowing in your bosoms;

So, by living streams  
In heaven, I think the light of flowers immortal gleams.

When your date is over,  
Peacefully ye fade,  
With the fragrant clover  
And sweet grasses laid,  
In odors for a pall beneath the orchard shade.

Happy, happy daisies!  
Would I were like you,  
Pure from human praises,  
Fresh with morning dew,  
And ever in my heart to heaven's clear sunshine true!

Rose Terry Cooke

# Done For

A WEEK ago to-day, when red-haired Sally  
DOWN to the sugar-camp came to see me,  
I saw her checked frock coming down the valley,  
Far as anybody's eyes could see.  
Now I sit before the camp-fire,  
And I can't see the pine-knots blaze,  
Nor Sally's pretty face a-shining,  
Though I hear the good words she says.

A week ago to-night I was tired and lonely,  
Sally was gone back to Mason's fort,  
And the boys by the sugar-kettles left me only;  
They were hunting coons for sport.  
By there snaked a painted Pawnee,  
I was asleep before the fire;  
He creased my two eyes with his hatchet,  
And scalped me to his heart's desire.

There they found me on the dry tussocks lying,  
Bloody and cold as a live man could be;  
A hoot-owl on the branches overhead was crying,  
Crying murder to the red Pawnee.  
They brought me to the camp-fire,  
They washed me in the sweet white spring;  
But my eyes were full of flashes,  
And all night my ears would sing.

I thought I was a hunter on the prairie,  
But they saved me for an old blind dog;  
When the hunting-grounds are cool and airy,  
I shall lie here like a helpless log.  
I can't ride the little wiry pony,  
That scrambles over hills high and low;  
I can't set my traps for the cony,  
Or bring down the black buffalo.

I 'm no better than a rusty, bursted rifle,  
And I don't see signs of any other trail;  
Here by the camp-fire blaze I lie and stifle,

And hear Jim fill the kettles with his pail.  
It 's no use groaning. I like Sally,  
But a Digger squaw would n't have me!  
I wish they had n't found me in the valley,—  
It 's twice dead not to see!

Rose Terry Cooke



# Ebb And Flow

'Tis something to have turned the tide  
That ebb'd and ebb'd and slid away,  
Till all the sands lay bare and wide,  
A dreary level, bleak and gray.

The hidden rocks, the treacherous shore,  
Show black and steep above the sea;  
The maddened breakers rave no more,  
Full fast the outward billows flee.

Rest for thy moment, turning tide!  
Then creep and ripple on the sand.  
I fear no more thy waters wide,  
I know the dangers of the strand.

Now let the white-caps foam and flow,  
The soul assured may laugh at fear,  
And bear serene the heaviest woe,  
So that its utmost depths appear.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Exogenesis

The curving beach and shining bay,  
Stretch from the cliff-foot far away,  
Where sailing dreams of ships go by  
And trace their spars against the sky.  
A belt of woodland, dense and dark,  
The distant beacon's flashing spark,  
The moth-white sails that wing-and-wing  
Up from the purple ocean spren;  
One and all, in the perfect hour,  
Open to life its perfect flower;  
Though the ardent rose is dim and dead,  
Though the cool Spring-daisies all are fled,  
The lily unfolds its tintless calm  
And the goblin anthers are spiced with balm.

Come, my soul, from thy silent cell!  
Know the healing of Nature's spell.  
The soft wild waves that rush and leap,  
Sing one song from the hoary deep;  
The south wind knows its own refrain  
As it speeds the cloud o'er heaven's blue main.  
'Lose thyself, thyself to win:  
Grow from without thee, not within.'

Leave thy thought and care alone,  
Let the dead for the dead make moan;  
Gather from earth and air and sea  
The pulseless peace they keep for thee.  
Ring on ring of sight and sound  
Shall hide thy heart in a calm profound,  
Where the works of men and the ways of earth  
Shall never enter with tears or mirth,  
And the love of kind shall kinder be  
From nature than humanity.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Fantasia

When I am a sea-flower  
Under the cool green tide,  
Where the sunshine slants and quivers,  
And the quaint, gray fishes glide,  
I'll shut and sleep at noonday,  
At night on the waves I'll ride,  
And see the surf in moonshine  
Rush on the black rocks' side.

When I am a sea-bird,  
Under the clouds I'll fly,  
And 'light on a rocking billow  
Tossing low and high.  
Safe from the lee-shore's thunder,  
Mocking the mariner's cry,  
Drifting away on the tempest,  
A speck on the sullen sky!

When I am a sea-wind,  
I'll watch for a ship I know,  
Through the sails and rigging  
Merrily I will blow.  
The crew shall be like dead men  
White with horror and woe;  
Then I'll sing like a spirit,  
And let the good ship go.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Fastrada's Ring

'Stretch out thy hand, insatiate Time!  
Keeper of keys, restore to me  
Some gift that in the gray Earth's prime  
Her happy children held of thee;  
Some signet of that mystery  
Thy footsteps trample into death,  
Some score of that strange harmony  
That sings in every breath.'

So sung I on an autumn-day,  
Sitting in silence, golden, clear,  
When even the mild winds seemed to pray  
Beside the slowly dying year,  
And the old conqueror stopped to hear;  
For, like the echo of a bell,  
I heard him speak, in accents clear:  
'Choose! and thy wise choice tell!'

Then all my vanishing desires,  
The threads of hope and joy and pain,  
Long burned in life's consuming fires,  
Came glittering into life again,  
And, gathered as a summer rain  
Into the rainbow's bended wing,  
Cried, with one voice of longing vain:  
'Give me Fastrada's ring!

'Give me that talisman of peace  
She wore upon her finger white,  
Then shall the weary visions cease,  
That haunt me all the lingering night;  
The world shall blossom with delight,  
And birds of heaven about me sing;  
Ah! fill these darkened eyes with light!  
Give me Fastrada's ring!

'Give me no jewels from thy store,  
No learned scrolls, no gems of art;  
My eager wishes grasp at more:

Sleep for a worn and wretched heart;  
A draught to melt these lips apart,  
Sealed with such thirst as death-pains bring;  
Love,-life's sole rest and better part,  
Give me Fastrada's ring!

Rose Terry Cooke

# Gone

A silent, odor-laden air,  
From heavy branches dropping balm;  
A crowd of daisies milky fair,  
That sunward turn their faces calm.  
So rapt, a bird alone may dare  
To stir their rapture with his psalm.

So falls the perfect day of June  
To moonlit eve, from dewy dawn,  
With light winds rustling through the noon,  
And conscious roses half withdrawn,  
In blushing buds that wake too soon,  
To flaunt their hearts on every lawn.

The wide content of summer's bloom,  
The peaceful glory of its prime;  
Yet over all a brooding gloom,  
A desolation born of time;  
As distant storm-caps tower and loom,  
And shroud the sun with heights sublime.

For they are vanished from the trees,  
And vanished from the thronging flowers,  
Whose tender tones thrilled every breeze  
And sped with mirth the flying hours.  
No form nor shape my sad eye sees;  
No faithful spirit haunts these bowers.

Alone, alone, in sun or dew!  
One fled to heaven, of earth afraid;  
And one to earth, with eyes untrue  
And lips of faltering passion strayed.  
Nor shall the strenuous years renew  
On any bough these leaves that fade.

Long summer-days shall come and go  
No Summer brings the dead again.  
I listen for that voice's flow  
And ache at heart with deepening pain.

And one fair face no more I know,  
Still living sweet, but sweet in vain.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Gray

In the dead calm of night, when the stars are all shining,  
The deep, silent shadows lie cold o'er my head,  
And the wind, like a sad spirit, round the house pining,  
Calls up from their quiet the tones of the dead.

Almost I can see them who rustle the curtain,  
And flit past my cheeks like a cold waft of air;  
I hear their faint sighs and their footsteps uncertain,  
I need not a vision to know they are there.

They call from the past all its bitterest warnings,  
And trail the gray ghosts through my shuddering soul,  
The nights of lone grief and the desolate mornings,  
The long days of anguish that mocked my control.

Then comes the still angel who watches me ever,  
And numbers the tears of my sleepless despair,  
And for each sullen dropp that assuages its fever,  
The angel stoops softly, and kisses my hair.

And at dawn I perceive in those shadowy tresses  
Bright silvery threads, as they fall o'er my breast,  
And I know where the angel has left his caresses,  
A promise and pledge that he hastens my rest.

Rose Terry Cooke



# Hesper

Sunset on the mountains hoary,  
Deepens into night;  
Day hath lost its crown of glory,  
Life hath lost its light.

In mine eyes the tears are springing,  
For thy face I see;  
In my heart its dreams are singing,  
Mournful songs of thee.

All the sunshine fled from heaven  
With thy closing eyes;  
Yet on me, at lonely even,  
Clear as stars they rise.

Though the way be long and dreary  
Down the mountain's side,  
I no more can call it weary,  
Thou art there my bride!

I behold thy garments flowing,  
Snow-like, in the moon;  
See thy parted lips are glowing,  
Red as flowers in June.

Underneath the daisies lying,  
Lost in dreamless sleep;  
Thou hast heard my nightly crying,  
Thou hast left my sleep.

All the night in visions tender,  
Love and life return;  
Until morning's cloudy splendor  
O'er the hills shall burn.

Day glides o'er the meadow,  
Love and life to steal;  
But the first star's trembling shadow  
Brings a bridal peal.

Rose Terry Cooke

# In Vain

PUT every tiny robe away!  
The stitches all were set with tears,  
Slow, tender drops of joys; to-day  
Their rain would wither hopes or fears:  
Bitter enough to daunt the moth  
That longs to fret this dainty cloth.

The filmy lace, the ribbons blue,  
The tracery deft of flower and leaf,  
The fairy shapes that bloomed and grew  
Through happy moments all too brief.  
The warm, soft wraps. O God! how cold  
It must be in that wintry mould!

Fold carefully the broidered wool:  
Its silken wreaths will ne'er grow old,  
And lay the linen soft and cool  
Above it gently, fold on fold.  
So lie the snows on that soft breast,  
Where mortal garb will never rest.

How many days in dreamed delight,  
With listless fingers, working slow,  
I fashioned them from morn till night  
And smiled to see them slowly grow.  
I thought the task too late begun;  
Alas! how soon it all was done!

Go lock them in a cedar chest,  
And never bring me back the key!  
Will hiding lay this ghost to rest,  
Or the turned lock give peace to me?  
No matter!—only that I dread  
Lest other eyes behold my dead.

I would have laid them in that grave  
To perish too, like any weed;  
But legends tell that they who save  
Such garments, ne'er the like will need:

But give or burn them,—need will be;  
I want but one such memory!

Rose Terry Cooke

# Lise

IF I were a cloud in heaven,  
I would hang over thee;  
If I were a star of even,  
I 'd rise and set for thee;  
For love, life, light, were given  
Thy ministers to be.

If I were a wind's low laughter,  
I 'd kiss thy hair;  
Or a sunbeam coming after,  
Lie on thy forehead fair;  
For the world and its wide hereafter  
Have nought with thee to compare.

If I were a fountain leaping,  
Thy name should be  
The burden of my sweet weeping;  
If I were a bee,  
My honeyed treasures keeping,  
'T were all for thee!

There 's never a tided ocean  
Without a shore;  
Nor a leaf whose downward motion  
No dews deplore;  
And I dream that my devotion  
May move thee to sigh once more.

Rose Terry Cooke

# May

There's a bluebird sits on the apple-tree bough,  
Singing merrily and gay.  
Come, little blossoms, the Spring's here now,  
And the sun shines warm all day.

Fast asleep in the leaves and grass,  
Don't you hear the quick rain?  
And the winds that whisper as they pass,  
'The dear Spring's here again.'

Push your soft leaves out of the ground  
Open your mist-blue eyes,  
Hear the brook with its singing sound,  
Look at the sunny skies.

All the drifts of the winter snow  
Were frightened and fled away.  
They left their place for the grass to grow,  
And the merry moths to play.

Red buds shine on the maple-tree,  
The trailing May-blooms fair  
Under their green leaves peep at me,  
For the Spring has kissed them there.

Come, little blossoms, you sleep too long!  
Purple and white and blue,  
Open your buds to hear my song,  
The honey-bee waits for you.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Monotropa

Loves serene, uncarnate Graces!  
Born of pure dreams in lonely places,  
Where the black untrodden earth  
Rejects the dancing sunshine's mirth,  
And slow leaves, dropping through the wood,  
Stir to sound the solitude.  
Through what tranquil, odorous airs,  
Undisturbed by sighs or prayers,  
Paler than pale alabaster  
Wrought to life by some old master,  
Did ye into vision rise,  
And nocturnal moths surprise?

Clustered in undraperied whiteness,  
Pierced by stars to lucent brightness,  
Cooler than a baby's lips,  
Pure as dew that nightly drips,  
Utterly intact and calm,  
Cold to summer's rapturous balm,  
So divine that in ye lingers  
A shuddering dread of mortal fingers,  
Though their tips be pink and fine,  
Under the caress ye pine,  
Blackened with the passion-fever  
That your cool bells shun forever.

Sweetest souls of beauty-lovers,  
Above your cups the gold bee hovers,  
In sequestered maze and awe,  
Repelled by instinct's sacred law;  
Knowing well no sweetness lies  
In your frosted chalices.  
Never bird, nor bee, nor moth,  
Inebriate with sunny sloth,  
Dare intrude on hallowed ground,  
Cease thyself, vain rhythmic sound!

Rose Terry Cooke

# Nemesis

With eager steps I go  
Across the valleys low,  
Where in deep brakes the writhing serpents hiss.  
Above, below, around,  
I hear the dreadful sound  
Of thy calm breath, eternal Nemesis!

Over the mountains high,  
Where silent snow-drifts lie,  
And greet the red morn with a pallid kiss,  
There, in the awful night,  
I see the solemn light  
Of thy clear eyes, avenging Nemesis!

Far down in lonely caves,  
Dark as the empty graves  
That wait our dead hopes and our perished bliss,  
Though to their depths I flee,  
Still do my fixed eyes see  
Thy pendant sword, unchanging Nemesis!

Inevitable fate!  
Still must thy phantoms wait.  
And mock my shadow like its fearful twin?  
Is there no final rest  
In this doom-haunted breast?  
Does thy terrific patience wait therein?

'Aye! wander as thou wilt,  
The blood thy hand hath spilt  
Stamps on thy brow its black, eternal sign;  
Thyself thou canst not flee.  
Writhe in thine agony!  
Suffer! despair! thou art condemned-and mine.'

Rose Terry Cooke



# New Moon

Once, when the new moon glittered  
So slender in the West,  
I looked across my shoulder,  
And a wild wish stirred my breast.

Over my white, right shoulder  
I looked at the silver horn,  
And wished a wish at even  
To come to pass in the morn.

Whenever the new moon glittered,  
So slender and so fine,  
I looked across my shoulder,  
And wished that wish of mine!

Now, when the West is rosy,  
And the snow-wreaths blush below,  
And I see the light white crescent  
Float downward, soft and slow;

I never look over my shoulder,  
As I used to look before;  
For my heart is older and colder,  
And now I wish no more!

Rose Terry Cooke

# Night Comes Creeping

Night comes creeping slowly o'er me,  
Like a vapor cold and gray;  
Dim the track that lies before me,  
Lost the lingering smile of day.

As a river, nearing ocean,  
Drops the brooklet's merry bell,  
I forget hope's wild emotion;  
Love and life, farewell, farewell!

Eyes above me raining sorrow,  
Lips too tender to be true,  
In the sunshine of tomorrow  
Glow and sweetness shall renew.

I have trod a weary measure,  
Fairy-tales no more I tell.  
False is pain, and fleeting pleasure;  
Love and life, farewell, farewell!

Softly through the darkened heaven,  
Like a vision in the night,  
Float the purple wings of even;  
No more laughter, no more light.

Close mine eyes, worn out with weeping,  
Weary pulses rest as well!  
In the dust and silence sleeping,  
Love and life, farewell, farewell!

Rose Terry Cooke

# October

There comes a time of rest to thee,  
Whose laden boughs droop heavily  
Toward earth, thou golden-fruited tree!

A time when wind and tempest cease  
To spoil and stain thy fair increase:  
After fruition deepest peace.

The tender bloom that decked thee, bride,  
The jewels of thy matron pride,  
And purple robes,-all laid aside.

The slow, red sunshine, o'er thee cast,  
In sweet, sad kisses for thy last,  
And shadow-haunted from the past.

Green, leafy, quiet, freed from care,  
No heavier weight thy lithe limbs bear  
Than dripping rain and sunny air.

But unto man's diviner sense  
The strenuous rest of penitence  
Remaineth only for defense.

His fruit drops slowly from his hands,  
But only with the dropping sands  
That fall on Time's slow-gathering strands.

The sower in this mortal field  
Shall reap no harvest's gracious yield,  
The warrior conquers-on his shield.

But after life and fruit and rest,  
Thou, tree! by dust shalt be possessed;  
To him remains a day more blest,

A newer hope, a summer-time  
Renewed forever in its prime,  
Where God, his harvest, sits sublime.

Rose Terry Cooke

# Once Before

Sole she sat beside her window,  
Hearing only rain-drops pour,  
Looking only at the shore,  
When, outside the little casement,  
Weeping in a feigned abasement,  
Love stood knocking  
Knocking at her bolted door.

Slow she swung the little casement  
Where the Autumn roses glowed,  
Sweet and sad her deep eyes showed;  
And her voice, in gentlest measure,  
Said aloud-'Nor Love, nor Pleasure  
Can come in here any more-  
Never, any more!'

'But I am Love nor Pleasure-  
I am but an orphan baby;  
Lost, my mother is, or maybe  
Dead she lies, while I am weeping,'  
Sobbed the child, his soft lie creeping  
Softly through the bolted door  
Through the maiden's door.

Low she said, in accents lonely:  
'Once I let him in before,  
Once I opened wide my door.  
Ever since my life is dreary,  
All my prayers are vague and weary;  
Once I let him in before,  
Now I'll double-lock the door!'

In the rain he stands imploring;  
Tears and kisses storm the door,  
Where she let him in before.  
Will she never know repenting?  
Will she ever, late relenting,  
Let him in, as once before?  
Will she double-lock the door?

Rose Terry Cooke

# Prayer

Oh, Love divine, ineffable!  
Help the weak heart that strays from thee!  
And battling with the hosts of hell,  
Doubts or despairs of victory:  
For Thou hast died upon the tree,  
Thine anguish poured in bloody sweat,  
And can thy yearning heart forget  
The first-fruits of that agony?  
O Lord, in glory, think on me!

Thy tenderness no mother knows,  
Not she who sees her darling pine,  
And weeps that dying shadows close  
Above the lamb she knows is thine;  
But Thou, my God, art all divine!  
Thy banished shall return again;  
Thy life poured out like summer rain  
Those dying pangs exchanged for mine  
Are not an alien's birth-right sign.

I know that from the depths of sin,  
The uttermost abyss of woe,  
Thine arm my trembling soul shall win,  
Thy piercing eyes thy child shall know.  
Though mortal love forget to flow  
Though mortal faith grow cold and die  
Thy love is called eternity,  
Thy truth is morning's orient glow,  
And wide as space shall ever grow.

Come, prince of darkness, with thy bands!  
Their leaguered host a child defies,  
For He who holds me in his hands  
Shall like a stern avenger rise,  
And turn on thee those heavenly eyes  
That tears of pity shed for me;  
But burn with judgment over thee  
And those who dare his love despise,  
Then stoop and bear me to the skies.

Rose Terry Cooke



# Samson Agonistes

You bound and made your sport of him, Philistia!  
You set your sons at him to flout and jeer;  
You loaded down his limbs with heavy fetters;  
Your mildest mercy was a smiling sneer.

One man amidst a thousand who defied him  
One man from whom his awful strength had fled,  
You brought him out to lash him with your vengeance,  
Ten thousand curses on one hoary head!

You think his eyes are closed and blind forever,  
Because you seared them to this mortal day;  
You draw a longer breath of exultation,  
Because your conqueror's power has passed away.

Oh, fools! his arms are round your temple-pillars;  
Oh, blind! his strength divine begins to wake;  
Hark! the great roof-tree trembles from its centre,  
Hark! how the rafters bend and swerve and shake!

Rose Terry Cooke

# Segovia And Madrid

IT sings to me in sunshine,  
It whispers all day long,  
My heartache like an echo  
Repeats the wistful song:  
Only a quaint old love-lilt,  
Wherein my life is hid,—  
“My body is in Segovia,  
But my soul is in Madrid!”

I dream, and wake, and wonder,  
For dream and day are one,  
Alight with vanished faces,  
And days forever done.  
They smile and shine around me  
As long ago they did;  
For my body is in Segovia,  
But my soul is in Madrid!

Through inland hills and forests  
I hear the ocean breeze,  
The creak of straining cordage,  
The rush of mighty seas,  
The lift of angry billows  
Through which a swift keel slid;  
For my body is in Segovia,  
But my soul is in Madrid.

O fair-haired little darlings  
Who bore my heart away!  
A wide and woful ocean  
Between us roars to-day;  
Yet am I close beside you  
Though time and space forbid;  
My body is in Segovia,  
But my soul is in Madrid.

If I were once in heaven,  
There would be no more sea;  
My heart would cease to wander,

My sorrows cease to be;  
My sad eyes sleep forever,  
In dust and daisies hid,  
And my body leave Segovia.  
—Would my soul forget Madrid?

Rose Terry Cooke

# The Death Of Goody Nurse

The chill New England sunshine  
Lay on the kitchen floor;  
The wild New England north wind  
Came rattling at the door.

And by the wide old fire-place,  
Deep in her cushioned chair.  
Lay back an ancient woman,  
With shining snow-white hair.

The peace of God was on her face.  
Her eyes were sweet and calm,  
And when you heard her earnest voice  
It sounded like a psalm.

In all the land they loved her well;  
From country and from town  
Came many a heart for counsel,  
And many a soul cast down.

Her hands had fed the hungry poor  
With blessing and with bread;  
Her face was like a comforting  
From out the Gospel read.

So weak and silent as she lay,  
Her warm hands clasped in prayer,  
A sudden knocking at the door  
Came on her unaware.

And as she turned her hoary head,  
Beside her chair there stood  
Four grim and grisly Puritans —  
No visitants for good.

They came upon her like a host.  
And bade her speak and tell  
Why she had sworn a wicked oath  
To serve the powers of hell;

To work the works of darkness  
On children of the light,  
A witch they might not suffer here  
Who read the Word aright.

Like one who sees her fireside yawn,  
A pit of black despair,  
Or one who wakes from quiet dreams  
Within a lion's lair,

She glared at them with starting, eyes,  
Her voice essayed no sound;  
She gasped like any hunted deer  
The eager dogs surround.

'Answer us!' hoarse and loud they cry;  
She looked from side to side —  
No human help — 'Oh, gracious God!'  
In agony she cried.

Then, calling back her feeble life,  
The white lips uttered slow,  
'I am as pure as babe unborn  
From this foul thing, ye know.

'If God doth visit me for sin,  
Beneath His rod I bend,'  
But pitiless and wroth were they,  
And bent upon their end.

They tortured her with taunt and jeer,  
They vexed her night and day —  
No husband's arm nor sister's tears  
Availed their rage to stay.

Before the church they haled her then;  
The minister arose  
And poured upon her patient head  
The worst of all its woes:

He bade her be accursed of God

Forever here and there;  
He cursed her with a heavy curse  
No mortal man may bear.

She stood among the cowering crowd  
As calm as saints in heaven.  
Her eyes as sweet as summer skies.  
Her face like summer's even.

The devils wrought their wicked will  
On matron and on maid.  
'Thou hast bewitched us!' cried they all,  
But not a word she said.

They fastened chains about her feet,  
And carried her away;  
For many days in Salem jail  
Alone and ill she lay

She heard the scythe along the field  
Ring through the fragrant air,  
She smelt the wild-rose on the wind  
That bloweth everywhere.

Reviled and hated and bereft.  
The soul had plenteous rest,  
Though sorrow like a frantic flood  
Beat sore upon her breast.

At last the prison door stood wide.  
They led the saint abroad;  
By many an old familiar place  
Her trembling footsteps trod.

Till faint with weakness and distress,  
She climbed a hillside bleak,  
And faced the gallows built thereon.  
Still undisturbed and meek.

They hanged this weary woman there.  
Like any felon stout;  
Her white hairs on the cruel rope

Were scattered all about.

The body swung upon the tree  
In every flitting wind,  
Reviled and mocked by passengers  
And folk of evil mind.

A woman old and innocent,  
To die a death of shame.  
With kindred, neighbors, friends thereby,  
And none to utter blame.

Oh, God, that such a thing should be  
On earth which Thou hast made!  
A voice from heaven answered me,  
' Father forgive,' He said.

Rose Terry Cooke

# The Death Of Tankerfield

The death of holy Tankerfield,  
That martyr of the Lord's,  
And his great worth I do set forth  
As seasonable words.

In young King Edward's blessed time,  
A Papist vile was he;  
Uncleansèd from the filthy slime  
Of vain idolatry.

But when it pleased the Lord most high  
To take the king away,  
Unto his everlasting rest,  
To be with him always,-

When bloody Mary's reign began,  
Wherein the flock of Christ  
Did wander through the valleys low,  
And stumble in the mist,-

Then, as he saw what cruel pains  
From men they did endure,  
And suffered pangs of many deaths  
To make their glory sure-

His heart was moved and stirred within  
To see their evil tide,  
And that foul church which wrought the sin  
He might no more abide.

But turned unto the sacred Word,  
To light his darksome soul;  
And learned to leave that faith abhorred  
That would his mind control.

And did his feeble voice uplift  
To make a protest bold,  
Renouncing all the devil's works,  
To which he clave of old.



Thereat unto his house there came  
A man of cruel mind,  
By name one Byrd, who thought no shame  
This godly youth to bind.

Before the judge they haled him then,  
Who sent him back apace,  
Unto a doleful prison-cell,  
Where he remained a space.

But when before the court he came,  
To answer for his faith,  
Of Christ the Lord he was not shamed,  
But owned him unto death.

So, when the summer-tide was come,  
And all the fields were green,  
And flowers upon the dewy meads  
Were joyful to be seen,

They brought him from his dungeon-cell  
Unto a certain Inn,  
And bade him to remember well  
The wages of his sin.

For that he never more should see  
The rising of the sun.  
'Then,' with a cheerful voice, quoth he,  
'Good Lord, thy will be done!'

'Now, bring me here a cup of wine,  
Withal a wheaten cake,  
To keep the Supper of the Lord,  
Ere I my end do make.

'I may not have a minister  
To break this bread to me,  
But by the passion, gracious Lord,  
Lay not the sin to me!

'I fain would keep thy feast again

Before I drink it new,  
To aid my flesh in deathly pain,  
And keep my spirit true.'

So, giving thanks, he took the bread,  
And drank the sacred wine,  
Which now in heaven he doth partake  
From chalices divine.

Then prayed he them to light a fire,  
That he his strength might try;  
The host did grant him his desire,  
And stood amazed by:

For, lo! he stretched his naked food  
Into the scorching flame,  
But bone and sinew quivering shrank,  
And loud he spake in pain:

'Ho, flesh! thou wilt not gladly burn,  
But spirit shall endure;  
Ho, sense! thou wouldst from glory turn,  
But soul thou shalt make sure!'

Then, as the time drew on apace  
That he by fire should die,  
He kneeled again and prayed for grace  
To bear his agony.

Then, with a calm and pleasant smile,  
Saith he, - 'However long  
The day may seem, yet at the last  
It rings for even-song.'

The sheriffs brought him to a green,  
Hard by the abbey-wall,  
And seeing there the fagots piled,  
They spake aloud to all.

'A dinner sharp is mine today,'  
Quoth he, with joyful faith,  
'But I shall sup on heavenly cates,

And triumph over death.'

When he was fettered to the stake,  
They heaped the pile full high,  
And called a priest, with subtle words  
To shake his constancy.

But loudly he denied the mass  
And all the works of Rome,  
So might not Babylonish tricks  
Delay his passage home.

A certain knight, who stood thereby,  
Laid hold upon his hand.  
Quoth he, 'Good brother in the Lord,  
Be strong in Christ, and stand.'

'Oh, sir!' the martyr made reply,  
'I give you thanks indeed.  
May God be lauded, I am strong!'  
With that they bade him heed.

And set the fire unto the pile:  
When, as the flame shot high,  
Unto the strong and mighty One  
He powerfully did cry.

Yea, from the depths uplifted he  
A cry for help to God,  
And homeward then, on fiery wings,  
Right joyfully he rode.

Rose Terry Cooke

# The Desire Of The Moth

Golden-colored miller,  
Leave the lamp, and fly away!  
In that flame so brightly gleaming,  
Sure, though smiling, death is beaming;  
Hasten to thy play!

Nearer? foolish miller!  
Look! thy tiny wings will burn.  
Just escaped,-but soon 'twill reach thee;  
Ah! can dying only teach thee  
Truths thou wilt not learn?

Didst thou whisper, miller?  
Something like a voice and sigh  
Seemed to say,-'in all thy teaching,  
Is there practice, or but preaching;  
Doest thou more than I?'

Wisest little miller!  
I indeed have hung too long  
Round a flame more wildly burning,  
And, with heart too fond and yearning,  
Heard no charmer's song.

Blinder than a miller  
Hovering with devoted gaze,  
Where such visions vain I cherish,  
Either they or I must perish,  
Like that flickering blaze.

But the moonlight, miller,  
Better far befits our mirth;  
That calm, streaming light is given  
From the silent depths of heaven;  
Fire is born of earth!

Rose Terry Cooke

# The Iconoclast

A thousand years shall come and go,  
A thousand years of night and day,  
And man, through all their changing show,  
His tragic drama still shall play.

Ruled by some fond ideal's power,  
Cheated by passion or despair,  
Still shall he waste life's trembling hour,  
In worship vain, and useless prayer.

Ah! where are they who rose in might,  
Who fired the temple and the shrine,  
And hurled, through earth's chaotic night,  
The helpless gods it deemed divine?

Cease, longing soul, thy vain desire!  
What idol, in its stainless prime,  
But falls, untouched of axe or fire,  
Before the steady eyes of Time.

He looks, and lo! our altars fall,  
The shrine reveals its gilded clay,  
With decent hands we spread the pall,  
And, cold with wisdom, glide away.

Oh! where were courage, faith, and truth,  
If man went wandering all his day  
In golden clouds of love and youth,  
Nor knew that both his steps betray?

Come, Time, while here we sit and wait,  
Be faithful, spoiler, to thy trust!  
No death can further desolate  
The soul that knows its god was dust.

Rose Terry Cooke

# The Lesson

Flutter thy new wings lightly,  
Poor, fearful little bird!  
Nor grasp thy bough so tightly;  
Hast thou not heard  
That flood of loving song wherewith the leaves are stirred?

Still poised: afraid of flying!  
What softer mother-call,  
Through the warm sunshine crying,  
Could woo thee not to fall?  
Doth not its sweetness say, -'Dear child, fear not at all?'

Now the cool wind shall aid thee;  
Spread thy new wings and fly!  
The master-hand that made thee,  
Gave heart and wings to try.  
The worst fate that befalls can only be to die.

Ah! from the light branch springing,  
My little darling flies,  
And that low, tender sighing  
In tenderer silence dies,  
While with adventurous plume her nestling tempts the skies.

His new-discovered pinions  
Shall bear thy bird away,  
Into those far dominions,  
Beyond the dawning day,  
And thou, poor mother-heart, in solitude shalt stay.

Yet some most weary proving  
Taught him to spread the wing,  
And some most lonely loving  
Taught thee such notes to sing.  
God keep both song and strength to decorate His Spring!

Rose Terry Cooke

# The River

The river flows and flows away,  
A lonely stream through forests gray,  
No rippled rapids o'er it play;  
Forever and forever.

As silent as a winter's night,  
With purple heavens all alight,  
And planets shining strangely bright;  
So quiet is the river.

No found nor fall the vision finds,  
And in no devious course it winds,  
But straight from where the sunset shines,  
Forever and forever.

A mystery of shade and gleam,  
O'er hidden rocks glides on the stream,  
Like sleep above a fearful dream;  
So quiet is the river.

In streams pure silver in the sun,  
Slow, sullen lead, with storms begun,  
And golden green when day is done,  
Forever and forever.  
A flow of pearl in moonlight cold,  
With moonless midnight onward rolled,  
Blacker than lethe streamed of old.  
So quiet is the river.

Oh, water! by the waves serene,  
As tranquil hours a life hath seen,  
No more to be as they have been  
Forever and forever.  
For underneath its restless flow,  
Too black for light's full noon to show,  
Lie broken rocks no mortals know.  
So quiet is the river.

Rose Terry Cooke

# The Two Villages

Over the river, on the hill,  
Lieth a village white and still;  
All around it the forest-trees  
Shiver and whisper in the breeze;  
Over it sailing shadows go  
Of soaring hawk and screaming crow,  
And mountain grasses, low and sweet,  
Grow in the middle of every street.

Over the river, under the hill,  
Another village lieth still;  
There I see in the cloudy night  
Twinkling stars of household light,  
Fires that gleam from the smithy's door,  
Mists that curl on the river-shore;  
And in the roads no grasses grow,  
For the wheels that hasten to and fro.

In that village on the hill  
Never is sound of smithy or mill;  
The houses are thatched with grass and flowers;  
Never a clock to toll the hours;  
The marble doors are always shut,  
You cannot enter in hall or hut;  
All the villagers lie asleep;  
Never a grain to sow or reap;  
Never in dreams to moan or sigh;  
Silent and idle and low they lie.

In that village under the hill,  
When the night is starry and still,  
Many a weary soul in prayer  
Looks to the other village there,  
And weeping and sighing, longs to go  
Up to that home from this below;  
Longs to sleep in the forest wild,  
Whither have vanished wife and child,  
And heareth, praying, this answer fall:  
'Patience! that village shall hold ye all!'



Rose Terry Cooke

# Trailing Arbutus

Darlings of the forest!  
Blossoming alone  
When Earth's grief is sorest  
For her jewels gone  
Ere the last snow-drift melts, your tender buds have blown.

Tinged with color faintly,  
Like the morning sky,  
Or more pale and saintly,  
Wrapped in leaves ye lie,  
Even as children sleep in faith's simplicity.

There the wild wood-robin  
Hymns your solitude,  
And the rain comes sobbing  
Through the budding wood,  
While the low south wind sighs, but dare not be more rude.

Were your pure lips fashioned  
Out of air and dew:  
Starlight unimpassioned,  
Dawn's most tender hue  
And scented by the woods that gathered sweets for you?

Fairest and most lonely,  
From the world apart,  
Made for beauty only,  
Veiled from Nature's heart,  
With such unconscious grace as makes the dream of Art!

Were not mortal sorrow  
An immortal shade,  
Then would I tomorrow  
Such a flower be made,  
And live in the dear woods where my lost childhood played.

Rose Terry Cooke

## Two

How does a woman love? Once, no more,  
Though life forever its loss deplore;  
Deep in sorrow or deep in sin,  
One king reigneth her heart within,  
One alone, by night and day,  
Moves her spirit to curse or pray.  
One voice only can call her soul  
Back from the grasp of death's control;  
Though loves beset her, or friends deride,  
Yea, when she smileth another's bride,  
Still for her master her life makes moan,  
Once is forever, and once alone.

How does a man love? Once for all.  
The sweetest voices of life may call,  
Sorrow daunted him, or death dismay,  
Joy's red roses bedeck his way;  
Fortune smile, or jest, or frown,  
The cruel thumb of the world turn down,  
Loss betray him, or love delight,  
Through storm or sunshine, by day or night,  
Wandering, toiling, asleep, awake,  
Though souls may madden, or weak hearts break,  
Better than wife, or child, or pelf,  
Once and forever, he loves-himself.

Rose Terry Cooke