

Classic Poetry Series

Arabella Eugenia Smith

- poems -

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Arabella Eugenia Smith(1844 - July 1916)

Arabella Eugenia Smith was born in 1844 in Lichfield, Ohio, and resided from 1850 to 1874 in Percival, Iowa. She graduated from Tabor College in Tabor, Iowa.

After graduation, she became an instructor there. She published *If I Should Die To-night* in *The Christian Union* on June 18, 1873, and in only a few years it swept America as one of the country's favorite poems and hymns. Her authorship of the poem was quickly obscured though; It was presented under anonymous in Slason Thompson's, *The Humbler Poets: A Collection of Newspaper and Periodical Verse 1870 to 1885*.

Very little is known about Smith, She died in July, 1916, in Santa Barbara, California.

If I Should Die Tonight

If I should die to-night,
My friends would look upon my quiet face
Before they laid it in its resting-place,
And deem that death had left it almost fair;
And, laying snow-white flowers against my hair,
Would smooth it down with tearful tenderness,
And fold my hands with lingering caress, --
Poor hands, so empty and so cold to-night!

If I should die to-night,
My friends would call to mind with loving thought
Some kindly deed the icy hands had wrought,
Some gentle word the frozen lips had said,
Errands on which the willing feet had sped;
The memory of my selfishness and pride,
My hasty words would all be put aside,
And so I should be loved and mourned to-night.

If I should die to-night,
Even hearts estranged would turn once more to me,
Recalling other days remorsefully;
The eyes that chill me with averted glance
Would look upon me as of yore, perchance,
And soften in the old familiar way,
For who could war with dumb, unconscious clay?
So I might rest, forgiven of all to-night.

Oh, friends! I pray to-night,
Keep not your kisses for my dead, cold brow:
The way is lonely, let me feel them now.
Think gently of me; I am travelworn;
My faltering feet are pierced with many a thorn.
Forgive, oh, hearts estranged, forgive, I plead!
When dreamless rest is mine I shall not need
The tenderness for which I long to-night.

Arabella Eugenia Smith