

Classic Poetry Series

Francis Joseph Sherman
- poems -

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Francis Joseph Sherman(February 3, 1871 – June 15, 1926)

Francis Joseph Sherman (February 3, 1871 – June 15, 1926) was a Canadian poet.

He published a number of books of poetry during the last years of the nineteenth century, including *Matins* and *In Memorabilia Mortis* (a collection of sonnets in memory of William Morris). Sherman was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, the son of Alice Maxwell Myrshall and Louis Walsh Sherman. He attended Fredericton Collegiate School, where he came under the influence of headmaster George R. Parkin, "an Oxonian with an enthusiasm for the poetry of Rossetti, Swinburne, and, notably, Morris," who had also taught Bliss Carman and Charles G.D. Roberts. For a short time, Carman was one of Sherman's teachers.

Sherman entered the University of New Brunswick in 1886, but had to drop out after a year for financial reasons. Louis Sherman abandoned his family, and Francis, as the eldest of the seven children, had to help support them. In 1887 he took a junior post in the Merchants' Bank of Halifax in Woodstock, New Brunswick, transferring back to Fredericton the next year.

Charles G.D. Roberts, who first met Sherman in 1895, described him as "very tall, lean, very dark, with heavy black eyebrows like his mother, and with the large wistful eyes of the poet rather than the banker." Sherman was writing poetry at that time, and with Roberts's encouragement published his first book the next year. Sherman was engaged to May Whelpey of Fredericton when they were both in their twenties. However, the marriage was called off after she was stricken with infantile paralysis.

By 1898 Sherman was the manager of the Merchants' Bank Fredericton branch, "the youngest man in Canada to hold such an office." He was transferred to the Montreal office in 1899, and in November of that year sent to Havana, Cuba, as the bank's first agent there. He "had established the bank's influence throughout Cuba and the Caribbean by 1901, when the Merchants' Bank changed its name to the Royal Bank of Canada."

Sherman last published work appeared at Christmastime, 1900, and he appears to have stopped writing poetry entirely in 1901. "Outside business hours, his chief hobby was reading, and collecting first editions. What little spare time remained he devoted to swimming and yachting. A love of the seas was in his

veins. He sailed his own yacht, *White Wings*, in many races, and was Vice-Commodore of the Havana Yacht Club at the time of his return to Canada." Sherman stayed in Cuba until 1912, at which time he transferred back to Montreal.

When World War I broke out in 1914, Sherman left his bank position, enrolling with the Officers' Training Corps at McGill University, and then enlisting as a private for reinforcements of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry in 1915. In France, he became a captain and later was transferred to the Royal Canadian Pay Corps, where he reached the rank of major.

After the War Sherman returned to the Royal Bank, but had to resign in 1919 due to ill health caused by his military service. Sherman married Ruth Ann Sullivan of Philadelphia on June 16, 1921. They had two sons, Francis and Jerry. Francis Sherman died in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1926, and is buried in Forest Hill Cemetery in Fredericton.

Writing

Matins

In 1896, Sherman visited Bliss Carman's publishers, Copeland and Day, in Boston, taking with him "a slim manuscript of thirty poems in an assortment of styles, most either sonnets or ballads." Copeland and Day published them as his first book, *Matins*. Copeland and Day subsequently became the regular publisher of Sherman's work. Bliss Carman called *Matins* "the most notable first volume of verse of the past year," while Roberts called it "a work of considerable significance.". In the United States, the Hartford Courant cited the book for "dignity, art, and much beauty of thought and expression", and the Boston Transcript added that it was "of genuine literary importance." Rudyard Kipling reportedly also praised the book.

The poetry of this first volume "is unmistakably derived from Rossetti and the early Morris". Many of the stories recall Morris poems: "a narrator speaks from beyond life, a fantastic setting is located beyond space and time, a ballad and a dramatic monologue are written in the Froissartian tone, interior and exterior landscapes reflect the speakers' disturbed psychological states, precise details of colour predominate, italics are used for effect, atmospheres are Medieval, and, in general, the subjects are love, fate, and death." At the same time, as Roberts notes, in "some respects Sherman was most akin to Rossetti. 'A Memory,' 'The Path,' 'The Last Flower" and "The Kingfisher' ... vividly recall Rossetti's brilliance of light color, but most of all his rich imagery and sensuous recollection."

In Memorabilia Mortis

Sherman's next publication, *In Memorabilia Mortis*, also published in 1896, was an elegy he had composed just two months after Morris's death that October. The elegy consists of six stanzas, each of which is also a technically perfect sonnet. Roberts says of these that, "In mastery of the sonnet form, in beauty of cadence, in verbal felicity and adequacy of thought content, with the nineteen sonnets of lofty faith published, in 1899, under the title of *The Deserted City*, they fully establish him in the same rank with Lampman, our master sonneteer."

The elegy contains obvious allusions to Morris's work: "the seasonal and perceptual subjects of Sherman's elegy recall *The Earthly Paradise* sequence of lyrics as a whole; in a sense, *In Memorabilia Mortis* returns Morris's art to him in a modified and relevant Canadian form and by so doing demonstrates the universality of his mythmaking project."

A Prelude

Sherman's long poem "A Prelude" was published privately by Copeland and Day in 1897. It "demonstrates a subtle shift away from the Pre-Raphaelites. Its diction is not as anachronistic as the previous collections, though it is still freighted with elevated language. Sherman incorporates Canadian foliage such as birches, maples, and pines more perceptibly here and allows himself a closer association to New Brunswick subject matter." Roberts called "A Prelude" "a sustained contemplative poem of nature interwoven with human interest, inspired with that seriousness, that unawareness of the trivial, so characteristic of all Sherman's work. It is written, with unfaltering technique throughout, in that most exacting Italian verse form, the *Terza Rima*, which scarcely any one else except Shelley has known how to handle successfully in English."

The Deserted City

Three years later, Copeland and Day published (again privately) *The Deserted City*, "nineteen lyrical and finely disciplined sonnets on faith and love, described by Roberts as the work of a 'master sonneteer'." Modelled on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "House of Life," the sonnet sequence "demonstrates Sherman's attempts to reconcile spiritual/secular dichotomies by exploring the soul/body conflict." *The Deserted City* "exhibits a less elevated language and explores the Canadian scene in a more realistic sense" than in his earlier work.

A Canadian Calendar: XII Lyrics

Sherman's last collection was *A Canadian Calendar: XII Lyrics*, privately published in Havana in 1900. This cycle, meant to describe Canadian nature over a full year, show "a more authentic New Brunswick, partly because Sherman exhibits a greater diversity of metrical pattern than in previous works." Roberts

calls this book "Sherman's most mature and deepest work. Life has marked him inescapably. The tragedy of his great love and his great loss inspires every one of these twelve poems, but always it is expressed interpretatively in terms of the changing seasons."

In this last book, "Sherman's ability to apply the techniques of Rossetti and, especially, Morris to specifically Canadian subjects appears most clearly.... Sherman presents the particularities of seasonal changes in landscape, as well as the correspondent variations in human mood, with sensitivity and clarity. Form and content blend. 'A Song in August' and 'Three Gray Days' are examples of this suitability."

An Acadian Easter

"An Acadian Easter," published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1900, is considered Sherman's strongest piece of work. "This is an attempt — a very successful attempt — to present an heroic and supremely tragic episode of Canadian history, the episode of Madame La Tour ... but impressionistically and by allusion. It is written in firmly woven but intensely emotionalized blank verse interspersed with plangent lyrics. It is a poetical, but hardly a popular, triumph."

The poem is a dramatic monologue spoken by Madame LaTour, "with varying stanza forms reminiscent of Morris's 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End' and 'Rapunzel'. Whereas the personal voice of Lady La Tour recalls that of Guenevere, her historical voice and situation have similarities with those of Peter Harpdon. The speaker's reflections on her betrayal by both love and history give her words the psychological intensity and nostalgic depth of the Guenevere poems.... Her vision is, then, 'Pre-Raphaelite but, at the same time, distinctively Canadian.'

In her essay, "'There Was One Thing He Could Not See': William Morris in the Writing of Archibald Lampman and Francis Sherman," Karen Herbert sums up: "Sherman's integration of Canadian history, landscape, and perspective into Morris's psychological narrative, colour symbolism, and form creates an exemplary Canadian myth. All in all, Sherman's poetry acknowledges both his debt to Morris and Rossetti and his allegiance to a Canadian mode of vision and voice. This dialectic predominates in the work of Francis Sherman, a personally diffident but artistically assured turn-of-the-century Canadian poet."

Recognition

In a 1934 address to the Royal Society of Canada, Roberts referred to the complete neglect of Sherman's work by critics.

In 1935 Sherman's Complete Poems were published, with a memoir by the editor, Lorne Pierce, and a foreword by Sir Charles G.D. Roberts.

In 1945, Sherman's name was added to the Canadian Government's list of

Persons of National Historic Significance.

He is commemorated by a sculpture erected on the University of New Brunswick campus in 1947 that portrays him with fellow poets Bliss Carman and Sir Charles G.D. Roberts.

A Hearth Song

One more log on the fire!
For we be agèd men
(Whom nothing once could tire—
But it was Summer then!)
With only one desire—

That Spring were born again.

Now Earth the deep snows cover,
That—long ago, alas!—
Was garmented with clover
And yellow weeds and grass;

The wasted days are over
We deemed could never pass.

Yet why should we go weeping
Because that sudden thief,
The snow, hath in its keeping

Each little bud and leaf?—
I think the grasses, sleeping,
Laugh softly at our grief!

For once of old we waited,
Praying that Spring might come

And Earth be consecrated;
(Had she discovered some
New resting-place, created
For her eternal home?)

But in our slumber-hours

Softly she came to us,
With gentle winds and showers,
Wayward and tyrannous;
With promises of flowers
Golden and glorious.

So like each little brother
We have beneath the snow,
Unto the mighty Mother.
A-sleeping let us go—
Till we—as they—another

Glad resurrection know!

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Last Word

And if it be I shall not sing again,
And thou have wonder at my silent ways,
I pray thee think my days not weary days,
Or that my heart is dumb for some new pain.
Seeing that words are nought, nor may remain,

Why should I strive with Time? Come blame, come praise,
I am but one of them his might betrays
At last, when all men learn that all was vain.
And yet one thing Time cannot wrest from me.
Therefore, cry out, yea, even to the throng

That pauseth not for echo of a song,
"O, your red gold is very fair. But he
Is glad as heaven to loiter and dream along
His Lady Beauty's path continually."

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Life

Let us rise up and live! Behold, each thing
Is ready for the moulding of our hand.
Long have they all awaited our command;
None other will they ever own for king.
Until we come no bird dare try to sing,

5

Nor any sea its power may understand;
No buds are on the trees; in every land
Year asketh year some tidings of some Spring.
Yea, it is time,—high time we were awake!
Simple indeed shall life be unto us.

10

What part is ours?—To take what all things give;
To feel the whole world growing for our sake;
To have sure knowledge of the marvelous;
To laugh and love.—Let us rise up and live!

II

Let us rule well and long. We will build here

15

Our city in the pathway of the sun.
On this side shall this mighty river run;
Along its course well-laden ships shall steer.
Beyond, great mountains shall their crests uprear,
That from their sides our jewels may be won.

20

Let all you toil! Behold, it is well done;
Under our sway all far things fall and near!
All time is ours! Let us rule long and well!
So we have reigned for many a long, long day.
No change can come. . . .What hath that slave to tell,

25

Who dares to stop us on our royal way?

"O King, last night within thy garden fell,

From thine own tree, a rose whose leaves were gray." [page 32]

III

Let us lie down and sleep! All things are still,

And everywhere doth rest alone seem sweet.

30

No more is heard the sound of hurrying feet

Athrough the land their echoes once did fill.

Even the wind knows not its ancient will,

For each ship floats with undisturbèd sheet:

Naught stirs except the Sun, who hastes to greet

35

His handmaiden, the utmost western hill.

Ah, there the glory is! O west of gold!

Once seemed our life to us as glad and fair;

We knew nor pain nor sorrow anywhere!

O crimson clouds! O mountains autumn-stoled!

40

Across even you long shadows soon must sweep.

We too have lived. Let us lie down and sleep!

IV

Nay, let us kneel and pray! The fault was ours,

O Lord! No other ones have sinned as we.

The Spring was with us and we praised not Thee;

45

We gave no thanks for Summer's strangest flowers.
We built us many ships, and mighty towers,
And held awhile the whole broad world in fee:
Yea, and it sometime writhed at our decree!
The stars, the winds,—all they were subject-powers.

50

All things we had for slave. We knew no God;
We saw no place on earth where His feet trod—
This earth, where now the Winter hath full sway,
Well shrouded under cold white snows and deep.
We rose and lived; we ruled; yet, ere we sleep,

55

O Unknown God,—Let us kneel down and pray

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Memory

You are not with me though the Spring is here!
And yet it seemed to-day as if the Spring
Were the same one that in an ancient year
Came suddenly upon our wandering.

You must remember all that chanced that day.

Can you forget the shy awaking call
Of the first robin?—And the foolish way
The squirrel ran along the low stone wall?

The half-retreating sound of water breaking,
Hushing, falling; while the pine-laden breeze

Told us the tumult many crows were making
Amid innumerable distant trees;

The certain presence of the birth of things
Around, above, beneath us,—everywhere;
The soft return of immemorial Springs

Thrilling with life the fragrant forest air;

All these were with us then. Can you forget?
Or must you—even as I—remember well?
To-day, all these were with me, there,—and yet
They seemed to have some bitter thing to tell;

They looked with questioning eyes, and seemed to wait
One's doubtful coming whom of old they knew;
Till, seeing me alone and desolate,
They learned how vain was strong desire of you.

Francis Joseph Sherman

A November Vigil

I wonder why my love for him
Should grow so much these last three days,
While he but stares as if some whim
Had been discovered to his gaze;

Some foolish whim that brings but shame

Whatever time he thinks thereof,—
To him my name is now the name
Of some old half-forgotten love.

And yet I starve for his least kiss
And faint because my love is great;

I, who am now no more than this,—
An unseen beggar at his gate. . . .

She watched the moon and spake aloud.
The moon seemed not to rise, but hung
Just underneath the long straight cloud

That low across the heavens swung,

As if to press the old moon back
Into its place behind the trees.
The trees stood where the hill was black;
They were not vexed by any breeze.

The moon was not as it had been
Before, when she had watched it rise;
It was misshapen now, and thin,
As if some trouble in the skies

Had happened more than it could bear.

Its color, too, was no more red;
Nor was it like her yellow hair;?
It looked as if its soul were dead.

I, who was once well-loved of him,
Am as a beggar by his gate

Whereon black carved things look grim
At one who thinks to penetrate.

I do not ask if I may stray
Once more in those desired lands;
Another night, yet one more day,

For these I do not make demands;

For when the ripened hour is past
Things such as these are asked in vain:
His first day's love,—were that the last
I were repaid for this new pain.

Out of his love great joy I had
For many days; and even now
I do not dare to be but glad
When I remember, often, how

He said he had great joy of me.

The while he loved, no man, I think,
Exceeded him in constancy;
My passion, even, seemed to shrink

Almost to nothing, when he came
And told me all of love's strange things:

The paths love trod, loves eyes of flame,
Its silent hours, its rapid wings. . . .

The moon still waited, watching her
(The cloud still stretched there, close above;
The trees beneath): it could not stir,

And yet it seemed the shape thereof,

Since she looked first, some change had known.
In places it had burned away,
And one side had much thinner grown;
—What light that came from it was gray.

It was not curved from east to west,
But lay upon its back; life one
Wounded, or weary of some quest,
Or by strong enemies undone.

Elsewhere no stars were in the sky;

She knew they were burned out and dead
Because no clouds went, drifting by,
Across the light the strange moon shed.

Now I can hope for naught but death.
I would not stay to give him pain,

Or say the words a woman saith
When love hath called aloud in vain

And got no answer anywhere.
It were far better I should die,
And have rough strangers come to bear

My body far away, where I

Shall know the quiet of the tomb;
That they should leave me, with no tears,
To think and think within the gloom
For many years, for many years.

The thought of that strange, narrow place
Is hard for me to bear, indeed;
I do not fear cold Death's embrace,
And where black worms draw nigh to feed

On my white body, then, I know

That I shall make no mournful cry:
But that I should be hidden so
Where I no more may see the sky,?

The wide sky filled with many a star,
Or all around the yellow sun,

Or even the sky where great clouds are
That wait until the rain be done,

?That is an evil thing for me. . . .
Across the sky the cloud swung still
And pressed the moon down heavily

Where leafless trees grew on the hill.

The pale moon now was very thin.
There was no water near the place,
Else would the moon that slept therein
Have frightened her with its gray face.

How shall I wish to see the sky!
For that alone mine eyes shall weep;
I care not where they make me lie,
Nor if my grave be diggèd deep,

So they leave loose my coffin's lid

And throw on me no mouldy clay,
That the white stars may not be hid:
This little thing is all I pray.

Then I shall move me wearily,
And clasp each bone that was my wrist,

Around each slender bony knee;
And wind my hair, that once he kissed,

Around my body wasted think,
To keep me from the grave's cold breath;
And on my knees rest my poor chin,

And think of what I lose by death.

I shall be happy, being dead. . . .
The moon, by now, had nearly gone,
As if it knew its time was sped
And feared the coming of the dawn.

It had not risen; one could see
The cloud was strong to keep it back;
It merely faded utterly,
And where it was the sky grew black.

Till suddenly the east turned gray,

Although no stars were overhead;

And though the moon had died away,
There came faint glimmerings of red;

Then larger waves of golden light
Heralded that the day was born,

And on the furthest eastern height
With swift feet came the waited morn.

With swift feet came the morn, but lo!
Just as its triumph was begun,
The fist wild onset of the snow

Strangled the glad imperial sun!

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Prelude

Watching the tremulous flicker of the green
Against the open quiet of the sky,
I hear my ancient way-fellows convene

In the great wood behind me. Where I lie
They may not see me; for the grasses grow

As though no foot save June's had wandered by;

Yet I, who am well-hidden, surely know,
As I have waited them, they yearn for me
To lead them whither they are fain to go.

Weary as I, are they, O Time, of thee!

Yea, we, who once were glad only of Spring,
Gather about thy wall and would be free!

With wounded feet we cease from wandering,
And with vain hands beat idly at thy gate;
And thou,—thou hast no thought of opening,

And from thy peace are we still separate.

Yet, comrades, though ye come together there,
And search across the shadows for my face,
Until the pines murmur of your despair,

I think I shall not tell my hiding-place,

For ye know not the path ye would pursue,
And it is late our footsteps to retrace.

Too weak am I, and now not one of you—
So weary are ye of each ancient way?
Retaineth strength enough to seek a new;

And ye are blind—knowing not night from day;
Crying at noontime, "Let us see the sun!"
And with the even, "O for rest, we pray!"

O Blind and fearful! Shall I, who have won
At last this little portion of content,

Yield all to be with you again undone?

Because ye languish in your prisonment
Must I now hearken to your bitter cry?
Must I forego, as ye long since forewent,

My vision of the far-off open sky?

Nay! Earth hath much ungiven she yet may give;
And though to-day your laboring souls would die,
From earth my soul gaineth the strength to live.

O covering grasses! O unchanging trees!
Is it not good to feel the odorous wind

Come down upon you with such harmonies

Only the giant hills can ever find?
O little leaves, are ye not glad to be?
Is not the sunlight fair, the shadow kind,

That falls at noon-time over you and me?

O gleam of birches lost among the firs,
Let your high treble chime in silverly

Across the half-imagined wind that stirs
A muffled organ-music from the pines!
Earth knows to-day that not one note of hers

Is minor. For, behold, the loud sun shines
Till the young maples are no longer gray,

And stronger grow their faint, uncertain lines;

Each violet takes a deeper blue to-day,
And purpler swell the cones hung overhead,

Until the sound of their far feet who stray

About the wood, fades from me; and, instead,
I hear a robin singing—not as one
That calls unto his mate, uncomforted—
But as one sings a welcome to the sun.

Not among men, or near men-fashioned things,
In the old years found I this present ease,
Though I have known the fellowship of kings

And tarried long in splendid palaces.
The worship of vast peoples has been mine,

The homage of uncounted pageantries.

Sea-offerings, and fruits of field and vine
Have humble folk been proud to bring to me;
And woven cloths of wonderful design

Have lain untouched in far lands over-sea,

Till the rich traffickers beheld my sails.
Long caravans have toiled on wearily—

Harassed yet watchful of their costly bales?
Across wide sandy places, glad to bear
Strange oils and perfumes strained in Indian vales,

Great gleaming rubies torn from some queen's hair,
Yellow, long-hoarded coin and golden dust,
Deeming that I would find their offerings fair.

—O fairness quick to fade! Ashes and rust

And food for moths! O half-remembered things

Once altar-set!—I think when one is thrust

Far down in the under-world, where the worm clings
Close to the newly-dead, among the dead
Not one awakes to ask what gift she brings.

The color of her eyes, her hair outspread

In the most wind that stifles ere it blows,
Falls on unwatching eyes; and no man knows
The gracious odors that her garments shed.

And she, unwearied yet and not grown wise,
Follows a little while her devious way

Across the twilight; where no voice replies

When her voice calls, bravely; and where to-day
Is even as yesterday and all days were.
Great houses loom up swiftly, out of the gray.

Knocking at last, the gradual echoes stir

The hangings of unhaunted passages;
Until she surely knows only for her

Has this House hoarded up its silences
Since the beginning of the early years,
And that this night her soul shall dwell at ease

And grow forgetful of its ancient fears
In some long-kept, unviolated room.
And so the quiet city no more hears
Her footsteps, and the streets their dust resume.

But what have I to do with her and death

Who hold these living grasses in my hands,
With her who liveth not, yet sorroweth?

(For it shall chance, however close the bands
Of sleep be drawn about her, nevertheless
She must remember alway the old lands

She wandered in, and their old hollowness.)
?Awaiting here the strong word of the trees,
My soul leans over to the wind's caress,

One with the flowers; far off, it hears the sea's
Rumor of large, unmeasured things, and yet

It has no yearning to remix with these.

For the pines whisper, lest it may forget,
Of the near pool; and how the shadow lies
On it forever; and of its edges, set

With maiden-hair; and how, in guardian-wise,

The alder trees bend over, until one
Forgets the color of the unseen skies

And loses all remembrance of the sun.
No echo there of the sea's loss and pain;
Nor sound of little rivers, even, that run

Where with the wind the hollow reeds complain;
Nor the soft stir of marsh-waters, when dawn
Comes in with quiet covering of rain:

Only, all day, the shadow of peace upon
The pool's gray breast; and with the fall of even,

The noiseless gleam of scattered stars—withdrawn
From the unfathomed treasuries of heaven.

And as the sea has not the strength to win
Back to its love my soul, O Comrades, ye?
In the wood lost, and seeking me therein?

Are not less impotent than all the sea!

My soul at last its ultimate house hath won,
And in that house shall sleep along with me.

Yea, we shall slumber softly, out of the sun,
To day and night alike indifferent,

Aware and unaware if Time be done.

Yet ere I go, ere yet your faith be spent,
For our old love I pass Earth's message on:
"In me, why shouldst thou not find thy content?"

"Are not my days surpassing fair, from dawn

To sunset, and my nights fulfilled with peace?
Shall not my strength remain when thou art gone

"The way of all blown dust? Shall Beauty cease
Upon my face because thy face grows gray?
Behold, thine hours, even now, fade and decrease,

"And thou hast got no wisdom; yet I say
This thing there is to learn ere thou must go:
Have no sad thoughts of me upon the way

"Thou takest home coming; for thy soul shall know
The old glad things and sorrowful its share

Until at last Time's legions overthrow
The House they days have builded unaware."

Now therefore am I joyful who have heard
Earth's message plain to-day, and so I cry
Aloud to you, O Comrades, her last word,

That ye may be as wise and glad as I,
And the long grasses, and the broad green leaves
That beat against the far, unclouded sky:

Who worships me always, who alway cleaves
Close unto me till his last call rings clear

Across the pathless wood,—his soul receives
My peace continually and shall not fear.

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Road Song In May

O come! Is it not surely May?
The year is at its poise today.
Northward, I hear the distant beat
Of Spring's irrevocable feet;
Tomorrow June will have her way.

O tawny waters, flecked with sun,
Come; for your labors all are done.
The gray snow fadeth from the hills;
And toward the sound of waking mills
Swing the brown rafts in, one by one.

O bees among the willow-blooms,
Forget your empty waxen rooms
Awhile, and share our golden hours!
Will they not come, the later flowers,
With their old colors and perfumes?

O wind that bloweth from the west,
Is not this morning road the best?
—Let us go hand in hand, as free
And glad as little children be
That follow some long-dreamed-of quest!

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Song

Between the snowdrifts and the sea,
Seeking, at last shall I find thee?
O friend of half-forgotten days,
Are these indeed the very ways
Thou tookest when thou wentst from me?

It must be that I touch thy hands
Today in these most empty lands:
Else how shall I—O Found in dreams—
Have any joy of all these streams
That strive to bust their iron bands?

—Unless it chance my wandering
Before the night my tired feet bring
Over the unswept threshold of
Thy hidden house, how may I, Love,
Be glad because of this year's Spring?

And yet, a little thing it is
To bear quite patiently with this;
Seeing that I tonight shall find
Forgetfulness of snow and wind
In the warm tremor of thy kiss.

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Song In August

O gold is the West and gold the river-waters
Washing past the sides of my yellow birch canoe.
Gold are the great drops that fall from my paddle,
The far-off hills cry a golden word of you.

I can almost see you! Where its own shadow

Creeps down the hill's side, gradual and slow,
There you stand waiting; the goldenrod and thistle
Glad of you beside them—the fairest thing they know.

Down the worn foot-path, the tufted pines behind you,
Gray sheep between,—unfrightened as you pass;

Swift through the sun-glow, I to my loved one
Come, striving hard against the long trailing grass.

Soon shall I ground on the shining gravel-reaches;
Through the thick alders you will break your way;
Then your hand in mine, and our path is on the waters,—

For us the long shadows and the end of day.

Whither shall we go? See, over to the westward,
An hour of precious gold standeth still for you and me;
Still gleams the grain, all yellow on the uplands;
West is it, or East, O Love, that you would be?

West now, or East? For, underneath the moonrise,
Also it is fair; and where the reeds are tall,
And the only little noise is the sound of quiet waters,
Heavy, like the rain, we shall hear the duck-oats fall.

And perhaps we shall see, resign slowly from the driftwood,

A lone crane go over to its inland nest;
Or a dark line of ducks will come in across the islands
And sail overhead to the marshes of the west.

Now a little wind rises up for our returning;
Silver grows the East, as the West grows gray;

Shadows on the waters, shades are the meadows,
The firs on the hillside— naught so dark as they.

Yet we have known the light!—Was ever such an August?
Your hand leaves mine; and the new stars gleam
As we separately go to our dreams of opened heaven,—

The golden dawn shall tell you that you did not dream.

Francis Joseph Sherman

A Word From Canada

Lest it be said,
 One sits at ease
Westward, beyond the outer seas,
Who thanks me not that my decrees
Fall light as love, nor bends her knees

 To make one prayer
That peace my latter days may find,—
Lest all these bitter things be said
And we be counted as one dead,
Alone and unaccredited

I give this message to the wind:

Secure in thy security,
Though children, not unwise are we;
And filled with unplumbed love for thee,—
Call thou but once, if thou wouldst see!

 Where the gray bergs
Come down from Labrador, and where
The long Pacific rollers break
Against the pines, for thy word's sake
Each listeneth,—alive, awake,

And with thy strength made strong to dare.

And though our love is strong as Spring,
Sweet is it, too,—as sweet a thing
As when the first swamp-robins sing
Unto the dawn their welcoming.

 Yea, and more sweet
Than the clean savor of the reeds

Where yesterday the June floods were,—
Than perfumed piles of new-cut fir
That greet the forest-worshipper

Who follows where the wood-road leads.

But unto thee are all unknown
These things by which the worth is shown
Of our deep love; and, near thy throne,
The glory thou hast made thine own

Hath made men blind
To all that lies not to their hand,—
But what thy strength and theirs hath done:
As though they had beheld the sun
When the noon-hour and March are one

Wide glare across our white, white land.

For what reck they of Empire,—they,
Whose will two hemispheres obey?
Why shouldst thou not count us but clay
For them to fashion as they may

In London-town?
The dwellers in the wilderness
Rich tribute yield to thee their friend;
From the flood unto the world's end
They London ships ascend, descend,

Gleaning—and to thy feet regress.

Yea, thou and they think not at all
Of us, nor note the outer wall
Around thy realm imperial
Our slow hands rear as the years fall,

Which shall withstand
The stress of time and night of doom;
For we who build, build of our love,—
Not as they built, whose empires throve
And died,—for what knew they thereof

In old Assyria, Egypt, Rome?

Therefore, in my dumb country's stead,
I come to thee, unheralded,
Praying that Time's peace may be shed
Upon thine high, anointed head.

—One with the wheat,
The mountain pine, the prairie trail,
The lakes, the thronging ships thereon,
The valley of the blue Saint John,
New France—her lilies—not alone,

Empress, I bid thee, Hail!

Francis Joseph Sherman

After Harvest

O Earth, O Mother, thou hast earned our praise!
The long year through thou hast been good to us!
Forgive us were we ever mutinous
Or unbelieving in thy strange, sure ways.
Sometimes, alas, we watched with wild amaze

Thy passing, for thou wert imperious
Indeed; and our estate seemed perilous,
And we as grass the wind unseeing sways.
Then, we were blind: the least among us sees,
Now, in each well-stripped vine and barren field,

Each garden that is fast a-perishing,
The promise April surely had revealed
Had we had grace to bend our stubborn knees
Who seek thee now with humble thanksgiving.

Francis Joseph Sherman

Among The Hills

Far off, to eastward, I see the wide hill sloping
Up to the place where the pines and sky are one;
All the hill is gray with its young budding birches
And red with its maple-tips and yellow with the sun.

Sometimes, over it rolls a purple shadow

Of a ragged cloud that wanders in the large, open sky,
Born where the ploughed fields border on the river
And melting into space where the pines are black and high.

There all is quiet; but here where I am waiting,
Among the firs behind me the wind is ill at ease;

The crows, too, proclaim their old, incessant trouble,—
I think there is some battle raging in the surging trees.

And yet, should I go down beside the swollen river
Where the vagrant timber hurries to the wide untrammelled sea,
With the mind and the will to cross the new-born waters

And to let the yellow hillside share its peace with me,

—I know, then, that surely would come the old spring-fever
And touch my sluggish blood with its old eternal fire;
Till for me, too, the love of peace were over and forgotten,
And the freedom of the logs had become my soul's desire.

Francis Joseph Sherman

And After Many Days

And after many days (for I shall keep
These old things unforgotten, nevertheless!)
My lids at last, feeling thy faint caress,
Shall open, April, to the wooded sweep
Of Northern hills; and my slow blood shall leap

And surge, for joy and very wantonness—
Like Northern waters when thy feet possess
The valleys, and the green year wakes from sleep.

That morn the drowsy South, as we go forth
(Unseen thy hand in mine; I, seen of all)

Will marvel that I seek the outmost quay,—
The while, gray leagues away, a new-born North
Harkens with wonder to thy rapturous call
For some old lover down across the sea

Francis Joseph Sherman

At Matins

Because I ever have gone down Thy ways
With joyous heart and undivided praise,
I pray Thee, Lord, of Thy great loving-kindness,
Thou'lt make to-day even as my yesterdays!"

(At the edge of the yellow dawn I saw them stand,

5
Body and Soul; and they were hand-in-hand:
The Soul looked backward where the last night's blindness
Lay still upon the unawakened land;

But the Body, in the sun's light well arrayed,
Fronted the east, grandly and unafraid:

10
I knew that it was one might never falter
Although the Soul seemed shaken as it prayed.)

"O Lord" (the Soul said), "I would ask one thing:
Send out Thy rapid messengers to bring
Me to the shadows which about Thine altar

15
Are ever born and always gathering

"For I am weary now, and would lie dead
Where I may not behold my old days shed
Like withered leaves around me and above me;
Hear me, O Lord, and I ma comforted!

20
"O Lord, because I ever deemed Thee kind"
(The Body's words were borne in on the wind):
"Because I knew that Thou wouldst ever love me
Although I sin, and lead me who am blind;

"Because of all these things, hear me who pray!

25

Lord, grant me of Thy bounty one more day
To worship Thee, and thank Thee I am living.
Yet if Thou callest now, I will obey." [page 34]

(The Body's hand tightly the Soul did hold;
And over them both was shed the sun's red gold;

30

And though I knew this day had in its giving
Unnumbered wrongs and sorrows manifold,

I counted it a sad and bitter thing
That this weak, drifting Soul must alway cling
Unto this body—wrought in such a fashion

35

It must have set the gods, even, marveling.

And, thinking so, I heard the Soul's loud cries,
As it turned round and saw the eastern skies)
"O Lord, destroy in me this new-born passion
For this that has grown perfect in mine eyes!

40

"O Lord, let me not see this thing is fair,
This Body Thou hast given me to wear,
Lest I fall out of love with death and dying,
And deem the old, strange life not hard to bear!

"Yea, now, even now, I love this Body so?

45

O Lord, on me Thy longest days bestow!
O Lord, forget the words I have been crying,
And lead me where Thou thinkest I should go!"

(At the edge of the open dawn I saw them stand,
Body and Soul, together, hand-in-hand,

50

Fulfilled, as I, with strong desire and wonder
As they behold the glorious eastern land;

I saw them, in the strong light of the sun,
Go down into the day that had begun;
I knew, as they, that night might never sunder

55

This Body from the Soul that it had won.)

Francis Joseph Sherman

At The Gate

Swing open wide, O Gate,
That I may enter in
And see what lies in wait
For me who have been born!
Her word I only scorn

5

Who spake of death and sin.

I know what is behind
Your heavy brazen bars;
I heard it of the wind
Where I dwelt yesterday:

10

The wind that blows away
Among the ancient stars.

Life is the chiefest thing
The wind brought knowledge of,
As it passed, murmuring:

15

Life, with its infinite strength,
And undiminished length
Of years fulfilled with love.

The wind spake not of sin
That blows among the stars;

20

And so I enter in
(Swing open wide, O Gate!)
Fearless of what may wait
Behind your heavy bars. [

Francis Joseph Sherman

At The Year's Turn

This year, the perfume of her hair
Has fallen about me many times—
Dimly; as when you waken where
One long ago made subtle rhymes
Your vain hands clasp the empty air.

When April first came in, and Spring
Called loud from valley unto hill,
Awhile I laughed at each new thing—
Strong as the risen waters: still,
I dreamed upon her wandering.

And when the warm, warm days were come,
And roses bloomed in any lane,
My heart, that should have sung, was dumb
As waiting birds before the rain:
The heavy air was burthensome.

Today, I paused, at the year's turn,
Between the sunset and the wood
Where many broad-leaved maples burn;
Until I saw her, where I stood,
Across the tawny seas of fern

(Red rowan-berries in her hair)—
October—come to me again:
And as I waited for her there,
Softly the Hunter's Moon made plain
Her curvèd bosom, white and bare.

Francis Joseph Sherman

At Twilight

Heart of my heart! canst thou hear? canst thou hear?
Awake! it is June; and the violets peer
Where the old acorns lie and the leaves of last year.

Awake! It is I, it is I who have come
To arouse thee, to kiss thee, to guide thy feet home.

I call and I hearken: the twilight is dumb.

O, surely thou hearest my far-reaching cry!
O come and be glad of the grass and the sky
And the greenwood we knew long ago, thou and I!

I cry and I hearken; a little wind stirs

Through the trees: then again the great silence is hers:
And the new moon drops under the silver-tipped firs:

Only, over the hill, on the hillside, I know
That it pauses to watch for a while, ere it go,
The roof of her House where the young grasses grow.

Francis Joseph Sherman

At-Advent Tide

The carved stalls; the altar's drapery;
The stained glass; the candlesticks of gold;
The dim far roof; the good priest purple-stoled;
My lady's throat—all these are fair to see,
And where these sounds are I am glad to be.

The simple prayers; Christ's loving kindness told;
The last note that the organ fain would hold;
A little child's hymn rising plaintively—
...Yet I remember...it was long ago...
In sermon-time—(I think he spake of hell—

I do not know—I was not listening)
—The great west door was open wide, and lo!
I saw the grasses where the sunlight fell,
And heard a throated robin worshipping.

Francis Joseph Sherman

Ave!

To-morrow, and a year is born again!
(To-day the first bud wakened 'neath the snow.)
Will it bring joys the old year did not know,
Or will it burthen us with the old pain?
Shall we seek out the Spring—to see it slain?

5

Summer,—and learn all flowers have ceased to grow?
Autumn,—and find it overswift to go?
(The memories of the old year yet remain.)

To-morrow, and another year is born!
(Love liveth yet, O love we deemed was dead!)

10

Let us go forth and welcome in the morn,
Following bravely on where Hope hath led.
(O Time, how great a thing thou art to scorn!)
O Love, we shall not be uncomforted!

Francis Joseph Sherman

Because Thy Separate Ways

Because thy separate ways
Lie past the outmost star,
I fashion in thy praise
This northern calendar
Of memorable days—

Lest thou, afar,

Only lest thou forget:
Not to discomfort thee.
Peace, Child! If thou forget, regret,
How shall it go with me

Who have no strength—and yet
My time bide patiently?

O close to God's control!
When the last dawn shall break
Between me and my goal,

Because His hand did make
The whiteness of thy soul,
Shall He not reach and take
Mine, too, for thy soul's sake?

Francis Joseph Sherman

Bacchus

Listen to the tawny thief,
Hid beneath the waxen leaf,
Growling at his fairy host,
Bidding her with angry boast
Fill his cup with wine distilled
From the dew the dawn has spilled:
Stored away in golden casks
Is the precious draught he asks.

Who,—who makes this mimic din
In this mimic meadow inn,
Sings in such a drowsy note,
Wears a golden-belted coat;
Loiters in the dainty room
Of this tavern of perfume;
Dares to linger at the cup
Till the yellow sun is up?

Bacchus 'tis, come back again
To the busy haunts of men;
Garlanded and gaily dressed,
Bands of gold about his breast;
Straying from his paradise,
Having pinions angel-wise,—
'Tis the honey-bee, who goes
Reveling within a rose!

Francis Joseph Sherman

Because Thou Hast No Dreams Of My Distress

Because thou hast no dreams of my distress
Shall I cry out to mar thy soft delight?
Nay! though the wrathful gods forget me quite
I shall not chide thee nor account thee less.

For though these paths my wounded feet must press

Continually, I know they clearer sight
Had found (O! thick the risen mists and white!)
The hollow land beyond the wilderness.

And thou...I think that now thy garments sweep
Across its grasses and young daffodils;

Its water-ways are thine; its low winds creep
Through thy gold hair; and where the last light thrills
(Thy sentinels—if, haply, thou shouldst sleep)
Lean over thee its purple-shadowed hills.

Francis Joseph Sherman

Between The Battles

Let us bury him here
Where the maples are red!
He is dead,
And he died thanking God that he fell with the fall of the leaf and the year.

Where the hillside is sheer,

Let it echo our tread
Whom he led;
Let us follow as gladly as ever we followed who never knew fear.

Ere he died, they had fled;
Yet they heard his last cheer

Ringing clear,
When we lifted him up, he would fain have pursued, but grew
dizzy instead.

Break his sword and his spear!
Let this last prayer be said
By the bed

We have made underneath the wet wind in the maple trees
moaning so drear:

"O Lord God, by the red
Sullen end of they year
That is here,
We beseech Thee to guide us and strengthen our swords till his

slayers be dead!"

Francis Joseph Sherman

Between The Winter And Spring

Between the Winter and the Spring
One came to me at dead of night;
I heard him well as any might,
Although his lips, un murmuring,
Made no sweet sounds for my delight;

Also, I knew him, though long days
(It seemed) had fallen across my ways
Since I had felt his comforting.

It was quite dark, but I could see
His hair was yellow as the sun;

And his soft garments, every one,
Were white as angels' throats may be;
And as some man whose pain is done
At last, and peace is surely his,
His eyes were perfect with great bliss

And seemed so glad to look at me. [page 70]

I knew that he had come to bring
The change that I was waiting for,
And, as he crossed my rush-strewn floor,
I had no thought of questioning;

And then he kissed me, o'er and o'er,
Upon the eyes; so I fell
Asleep unfrightened,—knowing well
That morning would fulfill the Spring.

And when they came at early morn

And found that I at last was dead,?

Some two or three knelt by my bed
And prayed for one they deemed forlorn;
But he they wept for only said
(Thinking of when the old days were),

“Alas, that God had need of her
The very morning Spring was born!”

Francis Joseph Sherman

Cadences

The low, gray sky curveth from hill to hill,
Silent and all untenanted;
From the trees also all glad sound hath fled,
Save for the little wind that moaneth still
Because it deemeth Earth is surely dead.

5

For many days no woman hath gone by,
Her gold hair knowing, as of old,
The wind's caresses and the sun's kind gold;
?Perchance even she hath thought it best to die
Because all things are sad things to behold. [page 36]

10

[Easter Morning]

She cometh now, with the sun's splendid shine
On face and limbs and hair!
Ye who are watching, have ye seen so fair
A Lady ever as this one is of mine?
Have ye beheld her likeness anywhere?

15

See, as she cometh unrestrained and fleet
Past the thrush-haunted trees,
How glad the lilies are that touch her knees!
How glad the grasses underneath her feet!
And how even I am yet more glad than these!

Francis Joseph Sherman

Easter Even

"A little while and I shall see
His ships returned to fight for me.

He may not dream what bitter woes
I have to bear; but still he knows
April and I wait patiently.

"I pray you, sirs, that you will keep
Good watch tonight, lest they should creep

Close to the landward wall again;
You might not hear them in this rain.
And I, because I cannot sleep,

"Shall guard this other side, till morn
Show me his sails all gray and torn,

But swift to bring to Charnisay
Tidings that it is Easter Day
On earth, and Jesus Christ is born!)

"Shall he not come? Can he withstand
The beckoning of April's hand,

The voices of the little streams
That break tonight across his dreams
Of me, alone in a north land?

"Though yesterday in Boston town
Fair women wandered up and down

Warm pathways under green-leaved trees,
Was he not sick with memories
Of April's hair and starry gown?

"Does he not hear spring's trumpet blow
Beyond the limits of the snow?

Hark how its silver echo fills
The hollow places of the hills,
Proclaiming winter's overthrow!

"How glad he was in the old days
To tread those newly opened ways!

Together we would go—as we
Shall go tomorrow, joyously—
And find ten thousand things to praise,

"Things now so sad to think upon.
And yet he must return ere dawn;

Because he hears at the sea's rim,
Calling across the night to him,
The sundering icebergs of St. John."

...Now, when dawn broke at last, sullen and gray,
And on the sea there gleamed no distant sail,

She quietly said, "It is not Easter Day,
And in my vision I have dreamed strange dreams."
Still drave the rain in from the east, and still
The ice churned by the bases of the cliffs,
And little noises woke among the firs.

"And yet," she said, "beyond the outer seas,
Far off, in France, among the white, white lilies,
Today they think that Eastertide has come;
And maidens deck their bodies amorously,
And go to sing glad hymns to Christ arisen,

Within the little chapel on the hill.
Now shall I fancy it is Easter here,
And think the wasting snow great banks of lilies
And this gray cliff my chapel; and I shall go
And gather seaweed, twining it in my hair,

And know God will regard me graciously
Who fashion such sweet carols in his praise.
I must do this alone, because La Tour
Is dallying still in Boston town, where girls
Make beautiful their hair with southern blooms,—

Wood violets and odorous mayflower blossoms,
Such as come late into our northern fields.
Was it last Easter—was it years ago—
That he and I went joyously together—
(Having prayed Christ to bless us with his grace)—

Between the wasting trunks of the tall pines [page 136]
Wherein one crow called to the hidden rain?
(For here, although it rain at Easter even,
The dawn breaks golden; and a million hours
Seem flown since yesterday.) O golden France,

Long lost and nigh forgotten! do they know
Who walk today between your palaces
The gladness that we know when April comes
Into the solitude of this our north,
And the snows vanish as her flying feet

Are heard upon the hills? Their organs, now,
Do they sound unto heaven a prouder strain
Than these great pines? Hark how the wind booms through
Their topmost branches, come from the deep sea!
And how old Fundy sends its roaring tides

High up against the rocks! Yea, even in France,
I think God sees not more to make him glad
Today,—only the sunshine and the lilies”—
She paused, hearing the chapel matin bell
Clang wearily; and, like to one that finds

No welcome in some long-imagined land
Now near at last, back from the hopeless sea,
With aged face, she turned to help them pray
Whose hearts had lost their heritage of hope....

Francis Joseph Sherman

Easter Morning

“O bloom of lilies oversea!

O throng’d and banner’d citadels!
O clanging of continual bells
Upon the air triumphantly!
Let Christ remember not that we
Await him by these bitter wells.

“Make France so very glad and fair
That Christ, arisen may know today
That he (O green land, leagues away!)
Hath come into his kingdom there;
Let him not dream that elsewhere

Sad men have little heart to pray.

“For we would have him glad; although,
For us, joy may no be again.
Yea, though all day we watch the rain
Striving to waste the pitiless snow,

We would not have him see or know
The limits of our grievous pain.

“And even if he should stoop, perchance,
(Touching you gently on the stem
As you brush by his garment’s hem,)

Saying, with lighted countenance,
‘Across the sea, in my New France,
O lilies, how is it with them?’—

“Lean you up nearer to his face

(Tenderly sad, supremely wise)

And answer, 'Uncle fair, blue skies,
Lord Jesus, in a fruitful place,
Their souls—the stronger for thy grace—
Draw nigh unto the sacrifice.'"

...So, striving to arouse their heavy faith,

Unto their distant Christ they sang and prayed
Until the gray clouds thinned, and the dull east
Grew half prophetic of the laboring sun.
"See! He hath heard! and all is well!" she cried. [page 138]
But as her voice rang hopefully and clear

Down the dim chapel aisle, ere any man
Had caught delight from her fair bravery,
There came upon them sudden gathering sounds
Of strife, of men clamoring, and despair,
Rumor of clashing steel and crumbling walls.

Yet not in vain their prayers! O risen Christ,
Was not that fight a glorious thing to see?
Between thine altar and the front o' the foe
Was not thy hand the hand that lent the strength
Wherewith she drave them backward through the breach,

Far from their wounded, calling all the while?
I think that thou wert very glad, O Christ,
Watching these things; and yet, was it not thou
Who hadst made her heart the heart of very woman—
Strong for the battle, and then, when all was over,

Weak, and too prone to trust (even as a child
That wonders not at all, having belief)
In any chance-flung flag, white to the wind?...

Francis Joseph Sherman

Fellowship

At last we reached the pointed firs
And rested for a little while;
The light of home was in her smile
And my cold hand grew warm as hers.

Behind, across the level snow,

We saw the half-moon touch the hill
Where we had felt the sunset; still
Our feet had many miles to go.
And now, new little stars were born
In the dark hollows of the sky;—

Perhaps (she said) lest we should die
Of weariness before the morn.

Once, when the year stood still at June,
At even we had tarried there
Till Dusk came in —her noiseless hair

Trailing along a pathway strewn

With broken cones and year-old things.
But now, tonight, it seemed that She
Therein abode continually,
With weighted feet and folded wings.

And so we lingered not for dawn
To mark the edges of our path;
But with such hope a blind man hath
At midnight, we went groping on.

—I do not know how many firs

We stumbled past in that still wood:
Only I know that once we stood
Together there—my lips on hers.

Between the midnight and the dawn
We came out on the farther side;

—What if the wood was dark and wide?
Its shadows now were far withdrawn,

And O the white stars in the sky!
And O the glitter of the snow!—
Henceforth we knew our feet should know

Fair ways to travel—she and I—

For One—Whose shadow is the Night—
Unwound them where the Great Bear swung
And wide across the darkness flung
The ribbons of the Northern Light.

Francis Joseph Sherman

Good Friday

"Surely, O Christ, upon this day
Thou wilt have pity, even on me!
Hold thou the hands of Charnisay,
Or bid them clasp, remembering thee.

"O Christ, thou knowest what it is

To strive with mighty, evil men;
Lean down from thy high cross, and kiss
My arms till they grow strong again.

"(As on that day I drove him back
Into Port Royal with his dead!□

Our cannon made the now drifts black,
But there, I deem, the waves were red.) [page 133]

"Yea, keep me, Christ, until La Tour
(Oh, the old days in old Rochelle!)
Cometh to end this coward's war

And send his soul straightway to hell."

...That night, one looking at the west might say
That just beyond the heights the maples flared
Like scarlet banners,—as they do in autumn,—
The sun went down with such imperial splendor.

Near by, the air hung thick with wreathèd smoke,
And not quiet yet had silence touched the hills
That had played all day with thunder of sullen cannon.
But now the veering wind had found the south
And led the following tide up no moon path,

Calling the mists—white as the circling gulls—

In from the outer rocks. Heavy with rain
The fog came in, and all her world grew dark,—
Dark as the empty west.

Though one should stand
(Praying the while that God might bless her eyes)

Upon the seaward cliff the long night through
On such a night as this (O moaning wind!),
I think that dawn—if dawn should ever break—
Would only come to show how void a thing
Is Earth, that might have been no less than Heaven.

Yea, as it was in France so long ago
Where the least path their feet might follow seemed
The path Love's feet had trodden but yester hour....

Francis Joseph Sherman

Heat In September

And why shouldst thou come back to us, July,
Who vanished while we prayed thee not to pass?
Where are thy sunflowers? Where thine uncut grass?
Thy still, blue waters and thy cloudless sky?
Surely, to-day thy very self is nigh;

Only the wind that bloweth in, alas,
Telleth of fire where many a green tree was;
And the crimson sun at noonday standeth high.
Must I, like him who, seeing once again
The long-awaited face of his lost love,

Hath little strength to thank the gods above
(Remembering most the ancient passion's pain),
Yet striveth to recall the joys thereof,
Must I, like him, beseech thee to remain?

Francis Joseph Sherman

In April

The unforgetful April stars
Above the wood in legions rise;
A little lingering while they drift
Across the quiet middle skies,
Until at last their slow gleam fades

Where the low hills wait, brooding-wise.

And I—I call them all by name
(Crying your name to each of them):
Lo, this—I say—marks her white throat;
And this, her golden garment's hem;

And these (I count them—seven) these,
God fashioned for her diadem!

Francis Joseph Sherman

In Exile

I think you must remember
When days like this come back
That afternoon the little firs
Leaned to our snowshoe track.

O, how the wood was silent!

Save when the boughs let fall
Their snow upon the speckled drift;
No other noise at all.

And when we gained the open,
Remember how it seemed

The sun had found its ancient strength!—
How white the meadows gleamed!

Ours was a hill-temple.
The old pines in a ring
Waited around the while we prayed

For just this simple thing—

That morning might be April
And we might seek again
The sources of the hidden springs
That tarry for the rain.

To our most quiet altar
We came not as they come
Who have some burden to lay down,
Whose frightened lips are dumb;

But like to them whose courage

Faints not (although their path
Lead sheer across the pathless drift
Into the pits of wrath),

Knowing (each one) that surely
Time's heartlessness shall cease,

And that at last his hands shall touch
The boundaries of peace.

For we are Northern children;
And when our souls have birth
The strength of the North wind comes to them—

The whiteness of the Earth;

So that we wend unfearing
On our appointed ways,
With thankfulness in our child-hearts
And lips attuned to praise.

Yea, strong enough forever
To bide our separate dooms
Tho' our bare days and nights be filled
With dreams of Southern blooms.

O wind of the pine forests!

Can you blow down to her
Word that her ancient hills await
Their wandered worshipper?

Tell her that April lingers
Behind the low south wall

Only until the hills divide
At her accustomed call;

Say that a gray cloud gathers
Between the eastern rifts;
That great brown stones win slowly through

The purple-shadowed drifts.

And last—a last endeavor
To mar her unconcern—
Whisper, I, too, wait patiently
Her ultimate return,

Who hold the old faith ever
The years may not make less—
That her white Northern soul hath still
The pole-star's steadfastness.

Down in your sultry garden

Where red the roses burn
I think you pause a moment now
When days like this return,

And lift your face, and wonder
How deep the drifted snow

Lies on the northern hills that watch
The little town below;

And if the old hill altar
Retains its ancient use;
If still the brooding pines abide

Their dedicated truce.

I think you pause and hearken—
About this time of year—
For the low sound on hidden plains
Of April's feet, drawn near;

And cry to the opened lilies
That lean unto your hand,—
"Today, one waits on the white hills,
Alone, in a Northern land!"

Francis Joseph Sherman

In Memorabilia Mortis

I MARKED the slow withdrawal of the year.
Out on the hills the scarlet maples shone—
The glad, first herald of triumphant dawn.
A robin's song fell through the silence—clear
As long ago it rang when June was here.

Then, suddenly, a few grey clouds were drawn
Across the sky; and all the song was gone,
And all the gold was quick to disappear.
That day the sun seemed loth to come again;
And all day long the low wind spoke of rain,

Far off, beyond the hills; and moaned, like one
Wounded, among the pines: as though the Earth,
Knowing some giant grief had come to birth,
Had wearied of the Summer and the Sun.

I WATCHED the slow oncoming of the Fall.
Slowly the leaves fell from the elms, and lay
Along the roadside; and the wind's strange way
Was their way, when they heard the wind's far call.
The crimson vines that clung along the wall

Grew thin as snow that lives on into May;
Grey dawn, grey noon,—all things and hours were grey,
When quietly the darkness covered all.
And while no sunset flamed across the west,
And no great moon rose where the hills were low,

The day passed out as if it had not been:
And so it seemed the year sank to its rest,
Remembering naught, desiring naught,—as though
Early in Spring its young leaves were not green.
A LITTLE while before the Fall was done
A day came when the frail year paused and said:

“Behold! a little while and I am dead;
Wilt thou not choose, of all the old dreams, one?”
Then dwelt I in a garden, where the sun

Shone always, and the roses all were red;
Far off, the great sea slept, and overhead,
Among the robins, matins had begun.
And I knew not at all it was a dream
Only, and that the year was near its close;

Garden and sunshine, robin-song and rose,
The half-heard murmur and the distant gleam
Of all the unvext sea, a little space
Were as a mist above the Autumn’s face.

AND in this garden sloping to the sea
I dwelt (it seemed) to watch a pageant pass,—
Great Kings, their armour strong with iron and brass,
Young Queens, with yellow hair bound wonderfully.
For love’s sake, and because of love’s decree,

Most went, I knew; and so the flowers and grass
Knew my steps also: yet I wept Alas,
Deeming the garden surely lost to me.
But as the days went over, and still our feet
Trod the warm, even places, I knew well

(For I, as they, followed the close-heard beat
Of Love’s wide wings who was her sentinel)
That here had Beauty built her citadel
And only we should reach her mercy-seat.

AND Ye, are ye not with me now alway?—
Thy raiment, Glauce, shall be my attire!
East of the Sun I, too, seek my desire!
My kisses, also, quicken the well-wrought clay!
And thou, Alcestis, lest my little day

Be done, art glad to die! Upon my pyre,
O Brynhild, let thine ashes feed the fire!
And, O thou Wood Sun, pray for me, I pray!
Yea, ye are mine! Yet there remaineth one
Who maketh Summer-time of all the year,

Whose glory darkeneth the very sun.
For thee my sword was sharpened and my spear,
For thee my least poor deed was dreamed and done,
O Love, O Queen, O Golden Guenevere! [page 9]

THEN, suddenly, I was awake. Dead things
Were all about me and the year was dead.
Save where the birches grew, all leaves were shed
And nowhere fell the sound of song or wings.
The fields I deemed were graves of worshipped Kings

Had lost their bloom: no honey-bee now fed
Therein, and no white daisy bowed its head
To harken to the wind's love-murmurings.
Yet, by my dream, I know henceforth for me
This time of year shall hold some unknown grace

When the leaves fall, and shall be sanctified:
As April only comes for memory
Of him who kissed the veil from Beauty's face
That we might see, and passed at Easter-tide

Francis Joseph Sherman

In The North

Come, let us go and be glad again together
Where of old our eyes were opened and we knew that we were

free!

Come, for it is April, and her hands have loosed the tether
That has bound for long her children,—who her children more
than we?

Hark! hear you not how the strong waters thunder

Down through the alders with the word they have to bring?
Even now they win the meadow and the withered turf is under,
And, above, the willows quiver with foreknowledge of the spring.

Yea, they come, and joy in coming; for the giant hills have sent
them,—

The hills that guard the portal where the South has built her
throne;□

Unloitering their course is,—can wayside pools content them,
Who were born where old pine forests for the sea forever
moan?

And they, behind the hills, where forever bloom the flowers,
Do they ever know the worship of the re-arisen Earth?
Do their hands ever clasp such a happiness as ours,

Now the waters foam about us and the grasses have their birth?

Faire is their land—yea, fair beyond all dreaming,—
With its sun upon the roses and its long summer day;
Yet surely they must envy us our vision of the gleaming
Of our lay's white throat as she comes her ancient way.

For their year is never April—oh, what were Time without her!
Yea, the drifted snows may cover us, yet shall we not complain;

Knowing well our Lady April—all her raiment blown about her—
Will return with many kisses for our unremembered pain!

Francis Joseph Sherman

In The South

In any other land, now,
Are there nights like these?
The white moon wanders up
Among the palm-trees;
And hardly any wind falls

Upon the purple seas.

More gold than Cortes, even,
Touched in any dream
Sank half-an-hour ago
Deep in the Gulf Stream:

Like fine dust of it
The few clouds seem.

And hark! from the Convent
One slow bell:
There's an old garden there,—

Ah! if I could tell
Half how sweet the jazmin
And diamela smell.

I think that I am glad, here,
And deem the moment good.

And yet—there's the North Star!...
As if one ever could
Forget the gray ways Night comes in
Now, in the old wood.

Francis Joseph Sherman

March Wind

High above the trees, swinging in across the hills,
There's a wide cloud, ominous and slow;
And the wind that rushes over sends the little stars to cover
And the wavering shadow fade along the snow.
Surely on my window (Hark the tumult of the night!)

That's first, fitful dropp of scanty rain;
And the hillside wakes and quivers with the strength of newborn
 rivers
Come to make our Northland glad and free again.

O remember how the snow fell the long winter through!
Was it yesterday I tied your snowshoes on?

All my soul grew wild with yearning for the sight of your
 returning
But I waited all those hours that you were gone.
For I watched you from our window through the blurring flakes
 that fell
Till you gained the quiet wood, and then I knew
(When our pathways lay together how we reveled in such

weather!)□

That the ancient things I loved would comfort you.

Now I knew that you would tarry in the shadow of the firs
And remember many winters overpast;
All the hidden signs I found you of the hiding life around you,
Sleeping patient till the year should wake at last.

Here a tuft of fern underneath the rounded drift;
A rock, there, behind a covered spring;
And here, nowhither tending, tracks beginning not nor
 ending,—
Was it bird or shy four-footed furry thing?

And remember how we followed down the woodman's winding

trail!□

By the axe-strokes ringing louder, one by one,
Well we knew that we were nearing now the edges of the
clearing,—

O the gleam of chips all yellow in the sun!
But the twilight fell about us as we watched him at his work;
And in the south a sudden moon, hung low,

Beckoned us beyond the shadows—down the hill—across the
meadows

Where our little house loomed dark against the snow.

And that night, too—remember?—outside our quiet house,
Just before the dawn we heard the moaning wind;
Only then its wings were weighted with the storm itself created

And it hid the very things it came to find.
In the morn, when we arose, and looked out across the fields,
(Hark the branches! how they shatter overhear!)
Seemed it not that Time was sleeping, and the whole wide
world was keeping
All the silence of the Houses of the Dead?

Ah, but that was long ago! And tonight the wind foretells
(Hark, above the wind, the little laughing rills!)
Earth's forgetfulness of sorrow when the dawn shall break
tomorrow

And lead me to the bases of the hills:
To the low southern hills where of old we used to go—

(Hark the rumor of ten thousand ancient Springs!)
O my love, to thy dark quiet—far beyond our North's mad riot—
Do thy new Gods bring remembrance of such things?

Francis Joseph Sherman

Nunc Dimittis

O Lord of Love, Thy servant thus doth pray:
Abide Thou where my Lady deigns to stay,
Yet send Thy peace to lead me on my way;

Because the memories of the things that were?
That little blessed while with Thee and her?

Make me a heavy-hearted traveler.

And so, when some plain irks, or some steep hill,
I—knowing that Thy will was once our will—
Shall be most sure Thou livest with her still,

And only waitest—Thou and she alone—

Until I know again as I have known
The glory that abideth near our throne.

Francis Joseph Sherman

October

October's peace hath fallen on everything.
In the far west, above the pine-crowned hill,
With red and purple yet the heavens thrill-
The passing of the sun remembering.
A crow sails by on heavy, flapping wing,
(In some land, surely the young Spring hath her will!)
Below, the little city lieth still;
And on the river's breast the mist-wreaths cling.
Here, on this slope that yet hath known no plough,
The cattle wander homeward slowly now;
In shapeless clumps the ferns are brown and dead.
Among the fir-trees dusk is swiftly born;
The maples will be desolate by morn.
The last word of the summer hath been said.

Francis Joseph Sherman

On The Hillside

October's peace hath fallen on everything.
In the far west, above the pine-crowned hill,
With red and purple yet the heavens thrill?
The passing of the sun remembering.
A crow sails by on heavy, flapping wing,

(In some land, surely the young Spring hath her will!)
Below, the little city lieth still;
And on the river's breast the mist-wreaths cling.
Here, on this slope that yet hath known no plough,
The cattle wander homeward slowly now;

In shapeless clumps the ferns are brown and dead.
Among the fir-trees dusk is swiftly born;
The maples will be desolate by morn.
The last word of the Summer hath been said.

Francis Joseph Sherman

Prelude

Watching the tremulous flicker of the green
Against the open quiet of the sky,
I hear my ancient way-fellows convene

In the great wood behind me. Where I lie
They may not see me; for the grasses grow

As though no foot save June's had wandered by;

Yet I, who am well-hidden, surely know,
As I have waited them, they yearn for me
To lead them whither they are fain to go.

Weary as I, are they, O Time, of thee!

Yea, we, who once were glad only of Spring,
Gather about thy wall and would be free!

With wounded feet we cease from wandering,
And with vain hands beat idly at thy gate;
And thou,—thou hast no thought of opening,

And from thy peace are we still separate.

Yet, comrades, though ye come together there,
And search across the shadows for my face,
Until the pines murmur of your despair,

I think I shall not tell my hiding-place,

For ye know not the path ye would pursue,
And it is late our footsteps to retrace.

Too weak am I, and now not one of you—
So weary are ye of each ancient way?
Retaineth strength enough to seek a new;

And ye are blind—knowing not night from day;
Crying at noontime, "Let us see the sun!"
And with the even, "O for rest, we pray!"

O Blind and fearful! Shall I, who have won
At last this little portion of content,

Yield all to be with you again undone?

Because ye languish in your prisonment
Must I now hearken to your bitter cry?
Must I forego, as ye long since forewent,

My vision of the far-off open sky?

Nay! Earth hath much ungiven she yet may give;
And though to-day your laboring souls would die,
From earth my soul gaineth the strength to live.

O covering grasses! O unchanging trees!
Is it not good to feel the odorous wind

Come down upon you with such harmonies

Only the giant hills can ever find?
O little leaves, are ye not glad to be?
Is not the sunlight fair, the shadow kind,

That falls at noon-time over you and me?

O gleam of birches lost among the firs,
Let your high treble chime in silverly

Across the half-imagined wind that stirs
A muffled organ-music from the pines!
Earth knows to-day that not one note of hers

Is minor. For, behold, the loud sun shines
Till the young maples are no longer gray,
And stronger grow their faint, uncertain lines;

Each violet takes a deeper blue to-day,
And purpler swell the cones hung overhead,

Until the sound of their far feet who stray

About the wood, fades from me; and, instead,
I hear a robin singing—not as one
That calls unto his mate, uncomforted—
But as one sings a welcome to the sun.

Not among men, or near men-fashioned things,
In the old years found I this present ease,
Though I have known the fellowship of kings

And tarried long in splendid palaces.
The worship of vast peoples has been mine,

The homage of uncounted pageantries.

Sea-offerings, and fruits of field and vine
Have humble folk been proud to bring to me;
And woven cloths of wonderful design

Have lain untouched in far lands over-sea,

Till the rich traffickers beheld my sails.
Long caravans have toiled on wearily—

Harassed yet watchful of their costly bales?
Across wide sandy places, glad to bear
Strange oils and perfumes strained in Indian vales,

Great gleaming rubies torn from some queen's hair,
Yellow, long-hoarded coin and golden dust,
Deeming that I would find their offerings fair.

—O fairness quick to fade! Ashes and rust
And food for moths! O half-remembered things

Once altar-set!—I think when one is thrust

Far down in the under-world, where the worm clings
Close to the newly-dead, among the dead
Not one awakes to ask what gift she brings.

The color of her eyes, her hair outspread

In the most wind that stifles ere it blows,
Falls on unwatching eyes; and no man knows
The gracious odors that her garments shed.

And she, unwearied yet and not grown wise,
Follows a little while her devious way

Across the twilight; where no voice replies

When her voice calls, bravely; and where to-day
Is even as yesterday and all days were.
Great houses loom up swiftly, out of the gray.

Knocking at last, the gradual echoes stir

The hangings of unhaunted passages;
Until she surely knows only for her

Has this House hoarded up its silences
Since the beginning of the early years,
And that this night her soul shall dwell at ease

And grow forgetful of its ancient fears
In some long-kept, unviolated room.
And so the quiet city no more hears
Her footsteps, and the streets their dust resume.

But what have I to do with her and death

Who hold these living grasses in my hands,
With her who liveth not, yet sorroweth?

(For it shall chance, however close the bands
Of sleep be drawn about her, nevertheless
She must remember alway the old lands

She wandered in, and their old hollowness.)
?Awaiting here the strong word of the trees,
My soul leans over to the wind's caress,

One with the flowers; far off, it hears the sea's
Rumor of large, unmeasured things, and yet

It has no yearning to remix with these.

For the pines whisper, lest it may forget,
Of the near pool; and how the shadow lies
On it forever; and of its edges, set

With maiden-hair; and how, in guardian-wise,

The alder trees bend over, until one
Forgets the color of the unseen skies

And loses all remembrance of the sun.
No echo there of the sea's loss and pain;
Nor sound of little rivers, even, that run

Where with the wind the hollow reeds complain;
Nor the soft stir of marsh-waters, when dawn
Comes in with quiet covering of rain:

Only, all day, the shadow of peace upon
The pool's gray breast; and with the fall of even,

The noiseless gleam of scattered stars—withdrawn
From the unfathomed treasuries of heaven.

And as the sea has not the strength to win
Back to its love my soul, O Comrades, ye?
In the wood lost, and seeking me therein?

Are not less impotent than all the sea!

My soul at last its ultimate house hath won,
And in that house shall sleep along with me.

Yea, we shall slumber softly, out of the sun,
To day and night alike indifferent,

Aware and unaware if Time be done.

Yet ere I go, ere yet your faith be spent,
For our old love I pass Earth's message on:
"In me, why shouldst thou not find thy content?"

"Are not my days surpassing fair, from dawn

To sunset, and my nights fulfilled with peace?
Shall not my strength remain when thou art gone

"The way of all blown dust? Shall Beauty cease
Upon my face because thy face grows gray?"

Behold, thine hours, even now, fade and decrease,

“And thou hast got no wisdom; yet I say
This thing there is to learn ere thou must go:
Have no sad thoughts of me upon the way

“Thou takest home coming; for thy soul shall know
The old glad things and sorrowful its share

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Until at last Time's legions overthrow
The House they days have builded unaware.”

Now therefore am I joyful who have heard
Earth's message plain to-day, and so I cry
Aloud to you, O Comrades, her last word,

That ye may be as wise and glad as I,
And the long grasses, and the broad green leaves
That beat against the far, unclouded sky:

Who worships me always, who alway cleaves
Close unto me till his last call rings clear

Across the pathless wood,—his soul receives
My peace continually and shall not fear.

Francis Joseph Sherman

Processional

Stand aside and let him pass
Over this untrodden grass.
Keep ye to the broken ground.

Let the drums and trumpets sound,
Let the colors be unwound

Till they float out on the wind.

Let him all things fairer find
Than all things that lie behind,—
Than he dreamed that they could be.

Let him wonder at the sea

Sweeping outward, glad and free,
At the mountains and the skies.

Let him know that God is wise
When he sees the sun arise
Where the hills are cleft in two.

When a bird from out the blue
Sings its faultless message through,
He shall laugh and understand

That the hollow of God's hand
Holdeth him and all the land.

—Let your trumpets tell his birth

Unto all the waiting earth.
Yea, he cometh, O the worth
Life outholdeth. Let them sound,

Let your pennons be unwound

Ye upon the broken ground.
Stand aside and let him pass.

Francis Joseph Sherman

So, After All, When All Is Said And Done

So, after all, when all is said and done,
And such is counted loss and such as gain,
For me, these many years, the tropic rain
That threshes thro' the plumèd palms is one
With the next moment's certitude of sun.

Indolent, without change, insurgent, vain,—
So my days follow; long have the old hopes lain
Like weeds along the road your feet have run.
Now, I know not what thing is good, what bad;
And faith and love have perished for a sign:

But, after I am dead, my troubled ghost
Some April morn shall tremble and be glad,
Hearing your child call to a child of mine
Across the Northern wood it dreams of most.

Francis Joseph Sherman

Summer Dying

Last night the heavy moaning wind
Bore unto me
Warning from Him who hath designed
That change shall be.

Beneath these mighty hills I lay,

At rest at last,
And thinking on the golden day
But now gone past;

When softly came a faint, far cry
That night made clear,

"Thy reign is over, thou must die;
Winter is near!"

"Winter is near!" Yea, all night long
Re-echoed far
The burden of that weary song

Of hopeless war.

I prayed unto the fixèd King
Of changing Time
For longer life, till sun-rising
And morning's prime,

And while to-day I watched the sun
Rise, slant, and die;
And now is night the stronger one.
Again the cry

Comes, louder now,?"Thy reign is o'er!"

Yes, Lord, I know;
And here I kneel on Earth's cold floor
Once, ere I go,

And thank Thee for the long, long days
Thou gavest me,

And all the pleasant, laughing ways
I walked with Thee.

I have been happy since the first
Glad day I rose
And found the river here had burst

Through ice and snows

While I had slept. Blue places were
Amidst the gray,
Where water showed; and the water
Most quiet lay.

Upon the ice great flocks of crows
Were clamoring—
Lest my blue eyes again should close?
The eyes of Spring.

I stepped down to the frozen shore?

The snow was gone;
And lo, where ice had been before,
The river shone!

With loud, hoarse cries back flew the birds
To the tall pines;

These were the first of Spring's faint words
And Summer's signs.

And now I hear Thee?"Thou must die!"
Ah, might I stay,
That I might hear one robin's cry

Bringing the day;

That I might see the new grass come
Where cattle range;
The maples bud, wild roses bloom,
Old willows change;

That I might know one night in June
Two found most fair,
And see again the great half-moon
Shine through her hair;

Or under rough, gnarled boughs might lie,

Where orchards are,
And hear some glad child's laughing cry
Ring loud and far; [page 55]

Or even, Lord, though near my end
It surely be,

Couldst Thou not hold Time back, and send
One day to me,

One day—October's brown and red
Cover the hills,
And all the brakes and ferns are dead,

And quiet fills

One place where many birds once sang?
Then should I go
Where heavy fir-trees overhang
Their branches so,

And slim white birches, quivering,
Loose yellow leaves,
And aspens grow, and everything
For Summer grieves.

Ah, there once more, ere day be done,

To face the west,
And see the sure and scarlet sun
Sink to its rest

Beyond the ploughed field sloping sheer
Up to the sky;

To feel the last light disappear
And silent die;

To see faint stars....Yea, Lord, I come;
I hear Thy call;
Reach me Thy hand and guide me home,

Lest I should fall....

Back, Winter! Back! . . . Yea, Lord, I, dead,
Now come to Thee;
I know Thy voice, and Thou hast said
"Let Winter be!"

Francis Joseph Sherman

Te Deum Laudamus

I will praise God alway for each new year,
Knowing that it shall be most worthy of
His kindness and His pity and His love.
I will wait patient, till, from sphere to sphere,
Across large times and spaces, ringeth clear

The voice of Him who sitteth high above,
Saying, "Behold! thou hast had pain enough;
Come; for thy Love is waiting for thee here!"
I know that it must happen as God saith.
I know it well. Yet, also, I know well

That where birds sing and yellow wild-flowers dwell,
Or where some strange new sunset lingereth,
All Earth shall alway of her presence tell
Who liveth not for me this side of death.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Conqueror

I will go now where my dear Lady is,
And tell her how I won in this great fight;
Ye know not death who say this shape is his
That loometh up between me and the light.

As if death could wish anything of one

Who hath to-day brought many men to death!
Why should it not grow dark?—Surely the sun
Heath seen since morning much that wearieth.

Dead bodies; red, red blood upon the land;
Torn sails of scattered ships upon the sea;

And dead forgotten men stretched on the sand
Close to the sea's edge, where the waves are free;

What day hath seen such thing and hath not fled?
What day hath stayed, hearing, for frequent sounds,
The flashing swords of men well-helmeted,

The moans of warriors sick of many wounds?

Ye know not death; this thing is but the night.
Wherefore I should be glad that it is come:
For when I left my Lady for this fight,
I said, "At sunset I am coming home."

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"When you return, I shall be here," she said,
"God knows that I must pray a little while."
And as she put my helmet on my head,
She kissed me; and her blue eyes tried to smile.

And still she waiteth underneath the trees.

(When we had gone a little on our way
I turned and looked; she knelt there on her knees:
I heard her praying many times to-day.)

Nay, nay, I need no wine! She waiteth still
Watching and praying till I come to her.

She saw the sun dropp down behind the hill
And wondereth I am a loiterer.

So I must go. Bring me my shield and sword!
(Is there no unstained grass will clean this stain?)
This day is won;—but now the great reward

Cometh! O Love, thy prayers were not in vain!

I am well rested now.—Nay, I can rise
Without your help! Why do ye look at me
With so much pain and pity in your eyes,
Who gained with me to-day this victory?

I think we should be glad we are not dead,
?Only, perchance, no Lady waiteth you,
No Lady who is all uncomforted,
And who hath watched and prayed these long hours through.

Yea, I must go.—What? Am I tired yet?

Let me lie here and rest my aching side.
The thought of her hath made me quite forget
How sharp his sword was just before he died

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Relief Of Wet Willows

Now this is the ballad of seven men
Who rode to Wet Willows and back again.

It was only an hour before the dawn
When they deemed it best to awaken Sir John.

For they knew his sword long years had hung

On the wall, unhandled. (Once he was young,?

They did not remember; the tale had been told
To them by their fathers, ere they grew old?

And then his sword was dreaded thing
When the men from the North came a-warfaring!)

But the women said that the things they knew
Were best made known to their master, too:

How, down at Wet Willows, there lay on the ground
Some men who were dead and some who were bound

And unable to succor the women who wept

That the North-King had come while their warriors slept.

So it came to pass, with the wind of the dawn,
Six men with their armor girded on

Had ridden around to the Eastern gate;
It was there that Sir John had told them to wait.

And when he came they were unafraid,
And knew no envy for those who stayed

Where the walls of the castle were strong and high;
There were none save some women to bid them good-by,

And they saw, as the sky in the East grew gray,

That Sir John and his men were some miles on their way

These things were heard and seen by the sun
When noon at Wet Willows was nearly done.

After the battle, the King from the North
Bade his men lead the seven horses forth,

And bind, one on each, the Southern man
Who had dared to ride it when day began.

The words that the Northern King had said
Sir John and his men hear not, being dead;

(Nor heard they the sobs of the women who knew

That Sir John's son's son in the East was true

To the cross that was white on the shield that he had):
Nor knew they their home-going horses were glad;

Nor did they remember the trees by the way,
Or the streams that they crossed or the dead leaves that lay

By the roadside. And when the moon rose, red and near,
They saw not its splendor; nor more did they hear

The wind that was moaning from hill unto hill:

Their leader,—his will was his horse's will.

In the Eastern sky faint streaks of gray

Were changed to red, and it was day. [page 79]

The women had waited all night long
Where the castle tower was high and strong;

And now, at last, they beheld Sir John,
And his men, and the horses they rode upon,

Just crossing the brow of the nearest hill.
The women's cries rose loud and shrill,

And in their joy they pitied not,
The men Sir John and his men had fought

And slain at Wet Willows. (Sir John was not young

They knew well; but the might of his sword as it swung,

In the old fighting days, was a thing they well knew,?
A shield was but glass as it clove its way through!)

So they who had waited and watched and prayed
The long night through were no more afraid

To open the gate,—for Sir John and his men
Who had fought at Wet Willows were home again.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Autumn

How shall I greet thee, Autumn? with loud praise
And joyous song and wild, tumultuous laughter?
Or unrestrained tears?
Shall I behold only the scarlet haze
Of these thy days

That come to crown this best of all the years?
Or shall I hear, even now, those sad hours chime—
Those unborn hours that surely follow after
The shedding of thy last-relinquished leaf—
Till I, too, learn the strength and change of time

Who am made one with grief?

For now thou comest not as thou of old
Wast wont to come; and now mine old desire
Is sated not at all
With sunset-visions of thy splendid gold

Or fold on fold
Of the stained clouds thou hast for coronal.
Still all these ways and things are thine, and still
Before thine altar burneth the ancient fire;
The blackness of the pines is still the same,

And the same peace broodeth behind the hill
Where the old maples flame.

I, counting these, behold no change; and yet,
To-day, I deem, they know not me for over,
Nor live because of me.

And yesterday, was it not thou I met,
Thy warm lips wet

And purpled with wild grapes crushed wantonly,
And yellow wind-swept wheat bound round thy hair,
With long green leaves of corn? Was it not thou,

Thy feet unsandaled, and thy shoulders bare
As the gleaned fields are now?

Yea, Autumn, it was thou, and glad was I
To meet thee and caress thee for an hour
And fancy I was thine;

For then I had not learned all things must die
Under the sky,—
That everywhere (a flaw in the design!)
Decay crept in, unquickening the mass,—
Creed, empire, man-at-arms, or stone, or flower.

In my unwisdom then, I had not read
The message writ across Earth's face, alas,
But scanned the sun instead.

For all men sow; and then it happeneth—
When harvest time is come, and thou art season—

Each goeth forth to reap.
"This cometh unto him" (perchance one saith)
"Who laboreth:
This is my wage: I will lie down and sleep."—
He maketh no oblation unto Earth.

Another, in his heart divine unreason,
Seeing his fields lie barren in the sun,
Crieth, "O fool! Behold the little worth
Of that thy toil hath won!"

And so one sleepeth, dreaming of no prayer;

And so one lieth sleepless, till thou comest
To bid his cursing cease;
Then, in his dreams, envieth the other's share.
Whilst, elsewhere,
Thou showest still thy perfect face of peace,

O Autumn, unto men of alien lands!
Along their paths a little while thou roamest,
A little while they deem thee queenliest,
And good the laying-on of thy warm hands—
And then, they, too, would rest.

They, too, would only rest, forgetting thee!
But I, who am grown the wiser for thy loving,
Never may thee deny!
And when the last child hath forsaken me,
And quietly

Men go about the house wherein I lie,
I shall be glad, feeling across my face
Thy damp and clinging hair, and thy hands moving
To find my wasted hands that wait for thine
Beneath white cloths; and, for one whisper's space,

Autumn, thy lips on mine!

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Builder

Come and let me make thee glad
In this house that I have made!
Nowhere (I am unafraid!)
Canst thou find its like on Earth:
Come, and learn the perfect worth

Of the labor I have had.

I have fashioned it for thee,
Every room and pictured wall;
Every marble pillar tall,
Every door and window-place;

All were done that thy fair face
Might look kindlier on me.

Here, moreover, thou shalt find
Strange, delightful, far-brought things:
Dulcimers, whose tightened strings,

Once, dead women loved to touch;
(Deeming they could mimic much
Of the music of the wind!)

Heavy candlesticks of brass;
Chess-men carved of ivory;

Mass-books written perfectly
By some patient monk of old;
Flagons wrought of thick, red gold,
Set with gems and colored glass;

Burnished armor, once some knight

(Dead, I deem, long wars ago!)

Its great strength was glad to know
When his Lady needed him:
(Now that both his eyes are dim
Both his sword and shield are bright!)

Come, and share these things with me,
Men have died to leave to us!
We shall find life glorious
In this splendid house of love;
Come, and claim thy part thereof,?

I have fashioned it for thee!

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Easter Song

Maidens, awake! For Christ is born again!
And let your feet disdain
The paths whereby of late they have been led.
Now Death itself is dead,
And Love hath birth,

And all things mournful find no place on earth.

This morn ye all must go another way
Than ye went yesterday.
Not with sad faces shall ye silent go
Where He hath suffered so;

But where there be
Full many flowers shall ye wend joyfully.

Moreover, too, ye must be clad in white,
As if the ended night
Were but your bridal-morn's foreshadowing.

And ye must also sing
In angel-wise:
So shall ye be most worthy in His eyes.

Maidens, arise! I know where many flowers
Have grown these many hours

To make more perfect this glad Easter-day;
Where tall white lilies sway
On slender stem,
Waiting for you to come and garner them;

Where banks of mayflowers are, all pink and white,

Which will Him well delight;

And yellow buttercups, and growing grass
Through which the Spring winds pass;
And mosses wet,
Well strown with many a new-born violet.

All these and every other flower are here.
Will ye not draw anear
And gather them for Him, and in His name,
Whom all men now proclaim
Their living King?

Behold how all these wait your harvesting!

Moreover, see the darkness of His house!
Think ye that He allows
Such glory of glad color and perfume,
But to destroy the gloom

That hath held fast
His altar-place these many days gone past?

For this alone these blossoms had their birth,
To show His perfect worth!
Therefore, O Maidens, ye must go apace

To that strange garden-place
And gather all
These living flowers for His high festival.

For now hath come the long-desirèd day,
Wherein Love hath full sway!

Open the gates, O ye who guard His home,
His handmaidens are come!
Open them wide,
That all may enter in this Easter-tide!

Then, maidens, come, with song and lute-playing,

And all your wild flowers bring
And strew them on His altar; while the sun?
Seeing what hath been done?
Shines strong once more,
Knowing that Death hath Christ for conqueror.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Foreigner

He walked by me with open eyes,
And wondered that I loved it so;
Above us stretched the gray, gray skies;
Behind us, footprints on the snow.

Before us slept a dark, dark wood.

5
Hemlocks were there, and little pines
Also; and solemn cedars stood
In even and uneven lines.

The branches of each silent tree
Bent downward, for the snow's hard weight

10
Was pressing on them heavily;
They had not known the sun of late.

(Except when it was afternoon,
And then a sickly sun peered in
A little while; it vanished soon

15
And then they were as they had been.) [page 37]

There was no sound (I thought I heard
The axe of some man far away)
There was no sound of bee, or bird,
Or chattering squirrel at its play.

20

And so he wondered I was glad.
?There was one thing he could not see;
Beneath the look these dead things had
I saw Spring eyes agaze at me.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Fourth Day

As when the tideless, barren waters lay
About the borders of the early earth;
And small, unopened buds dreamt not the worth
Of their incomparable gold array;
And tall young hemlocks were not set a-sway

By any wind; and orchards knew no mirth
At Autumn time, nor plenteousness from dearth;
And night and morning, then, were the first day,
—Even so was I. Yet, as I slept last night,
My soul surged towards thy love's controlling power;

And, quickened now with the sun's splendid might,
Breaks into unimaginable flower,
Knowing thy soul knows this for beacon-light—
The culmination of the harvest hour.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Ghost

Just where the field becomes the wood
I thought I saw again
Her old remembered face—made gray
As it had known the rain.

The trees grow thickly there; no place

Has half so many trees;
And hunted things elude one there
Like ancient memories.

The path itself is hard to find,
And slopes up suddenly;

—I met her once where the slender birch
Grow up to meet the wind.

Where the poplars quiver endlessly
And the falling leaves are gray,
I saw her come, and I was glad

That she had learned the way.

She paused a moment where the path
Grew sunlighted and broad;
Within her hair slept all the gold
Of all the goldenrod.

And then the wood closed in on her,
And my hand found her hand;
She had no words to say, yet I
Was quick to understand.
I dared to look in her two eyes;

They too, I thought, were gray:
But no sun shone, and all around
Great, quiet shadows lay.

Yet, as I looked, I surely knew
That they knew nought of tear,—

But this was very long ago,
—A year, perhaps ten years.

All this was long ago. Today,
Her hand met not with mine;
And where the pathway widened out

I saw no gold hair shine.

I had a weary, fruitless search.
—I think that her wan face
Was but the face of one asleep
Who dreams she knew this place.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Beauty

She pauseth; and as each great mirror swings
(O ruined Helen, O once golden hair)
I see CEnone's ashes scattered there.
Another, and, behold, the shadowed things
Are violated tombs of shrunken kings.

And yet another (O, how thou wert fair!),
And I see one, black-clad, who prayeth where
No sound of sword on cloven helmet rings.
Yet, were I Paris, once more should I see
Troy's seaward gates for us swung open wide.

Or old Nile's glory, were I Anthony.
Or were I Launcelot, the garden-side
At Joyous Gard. Surely; for even to me,
Where Love hath lived hath Beauty never died.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Change

Was it last Autumn only, when I stood
At the field's edge, and watched the red glow creep
Among the leaves, and saw the swift flame sweep
From spruce to hemlock, till the living wood
Became a devastated solitude?

For now, behold, old seeds, long years asleep,
Wake; and a legion of young birches leap
To life, and tell the ashes life is good.
O Love of long ago, when this mad fire
Is over, and the ruins of my soul

With the Spring wind the old quest would resume,—
When age knocks at the inn of youth's desire,
Shall the new growth, now worthier of the goal,
Find still untenanted the chosen room?

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Colour

Fine gold is here; yea, heavy yellow gold,
Gathered ere Earth's first days and nights were fled;
And all the walls are hung with scarfs of red,
Broidered in fallen cities, fold on fold;
The stained window's saints are aureoled;

And all the textures of the East are spread
On the paved floor, whereon I lay my head,
And sleep, and count the coloured things of old.
Once, when the hills and I were all aflame
With envy of the pageant in the West

(Except the sombre pine-trees—whence there came,
Continually, the sigh of their unrest),
A lonely crow sailed past me, black as shame,
Hugging some ancient sorrow to his breast.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Content

Were once again the immortal moment mine
How should I choose my path? The path I choose
(How long ago I wonder if Time knows)
Even now I see. I see the old sunshine
Upon the moss, thick strewn with fir and pine;

The open field; the orchard's even rows;
The wood again; then, where the hills unclose,
Far off at first, now near, the long-sought shrine.
O Time, how impotent thou art! Though thou
Hast taken me from all things, and all things

From me,—although the wind of thy swift wings
Hath swept at last the shadow from her brow
Of my last kiss, yet do I triumph now
Who, choosing, paused to hear Love's counsellings.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Doubt

Why should we fear? The sun will surely rise,
If we but wait, to light us on our way.
Think you none hearkeneth to us who pray,
That no God's heart is softened by our cries?
Did we not learn that He was kind and wise

And loved our souls? And shall your bodies say
"There is no light. The tales thy told us,—they
Were only dreams, dreamed in the House of Lies."
Nay, listen not to what your body saith,
But by the memory of those antique years

When it was evil and of little faith
And led the soul along a way of tears,
Let your soul chant—as one that hath no fears—
"We know that Thou art stronger, God, than death."

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Earth

O ye disconsolate and heavy-souled,
That evening cometh when ye too shall learn
The pangs of one who may no more return,
To live again the uneven days of old.
Ye too shall weary of the myrrh and gold

(Seeing the gods and their great unconcern),
And, as I year to-day, your feet shall yearn
To touch that Earth which ye afar behold.
Think now upon your grievous things to bear,—
Some goal unwon, some old sin's lurid stain,

Your vistaed paths,—are they not fair as hope?
But I between dead suns must peer, and grope
Among forsaken worlds, one glimpse to gain
Of my old place—the heaviest shadow there.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Faith

I would not have thee, dear, in darkness sit,
On days like this, hand clasped in quiet hand,
Remembering mournfully that fragrant land—
Each day therein, what joy we had of it.
Rather, while still the lamps are trimmed and lit,

Bid strangers to the feasts that once we planned,
Merry the while! Until the dust's demand
My soul, not thine, shall separately submit.
So, when thou comest (for I at last will call
And thou shalt hear, and linger not at all),

Still to thy throat, thine arms, thy loosened hair
Will cling the savor of the world's fresh kiss,
So sweet to me! and doubly sweet for this—
That thou for mine shouldst leave a place so fair!

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Forgiveness

Remembering most the old, eternal days,
I cannot curse our life—thy life and mine;
But now, perceiving its complex design,
I go on my intolerable ways,
And, blaming me the more, give thee more praise.

—I dared to think that such a love as thine
Were bounded by each little curve and line
My hand might limn!—by my blind yeas and nays!
And now I say not where thy paths shall be,
Or who shall go or come at thy least call;

Only I know that when thy footsteps fall
Across the silences that cover me,
Both God and I shall deem it best of all
Love liveth yet on earth for such as thee.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Love

Often between the midnight and the morn
I wake and see the angels round my bed;
Then fall asleep again, well-comforted.
I wait not now till that clear dawn be born
Shall lead my feet (O Love, thine eyes are worn

With watching) where her feet have late been led;
Nor lie awake, saying the words she said—
(Her yellow hair.—Have ye seen yellow corn?)
I fall asleep and dream and quite forget,
For here in heaven I know a new love's birth

Which casteth out all memory. And yet
(As I had loved her more, O Christ, on earth,
Hadst Thou not been so long unsought, unmet)
Some morrow Thou shalt learn my worship's worth

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Mercy

I question not, Belovèd, nor deny
That you had God's own right of punishment;
Yet now my sins and days are over and spent
Find you the hours so pleasant that go by?
Would not the color of the fields and sky,

The odor of the woods, bring more content
Now, if a little pity had been lent
Then, unto love, to judge a life awry?
Upon a day the young June grasses seem
Quite still that keep the edge of the still stream;

I think you go down close to them, and say:
"O little grasses, waiting patiently,
I come to tell you this is God's decree:
'I comfort him who suffered yesterday.'"

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Music

Such space there is, such endless breadth of time
Between me and my world of yesterday,
I half forget what sounds these be that stray
About my chamber, and grow and fall and climb.
Listen!—that sweet reiterated chime,

Doth it not mark some body changed to clay?
That last great chord, some anguish far away?
Hark! harmony ever now and faultless rhyme.
O Soul of mine, among these lutes and lyres,
These reeds, these golden pipes, and quivering strings,

Thou knowest now that in the old, old years
We who knew only one of all desires
Came often even to music's furthest springs—
To pass, because their waters gleamed like tears.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Night

Though all the light were lifted from the land,
And a great darkness lay upon the sea;
Though, groping each for some not-careless hand,
I felt sad men pass over wearily;
Though it were certain dawn would not come in
With the next hour; that after many days
Would no moon rise where the grey clouds grew thin,
Nor any stars resume their ancient ways:
Though all my world was thus, and I more blind
Than the dead, blundering planets raining past,
I know I should not fancy Time unkind;
For you, as once of old you came, at last
Would surely come, and with unfaltering faith
Lead me beyond the dominance of death.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Night

Though all the light were lifted from the land,
And a great darkness lay upon the sea;
Though, groping each for some not-careless hand,
I felt sad men pass over wearily;
Though it were certain dawn would not come in

With the next hour; that after many days
Would no moon rise where the gray clouds grew thin,
Nor any stars resume their ancient ways:
Though all my world was thus, and I more blind
Than the dead, blundering planets raining past,

I know I should not fancy Time unkind;
For you, as once of old you came, at last
Would surely come, and with unfaltering faith
Lead me beyond the dominance of death.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Regret

It is not that I now were happier
If with the dawn my tireless feet were led
Along her path, till I saw her fair head
Thrown back to make the sunshine goldener:
For it is well, sometimes, the things that were

Are over, ere their perfectness hath fled;
Lest the old love of them should fade instead,
And lie like ruins round the throne of her.
Now with the wisdom of increasing years
I know each ancient joy a cup for tears;

Yet had I drunk, while they were draughts to praise,
Deeper, I were not now as men that grow
Old, and sit gazing out across the snow
To dream sad dreams of wasted summer days

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Sin

When Time is done at last, and the last Spring
Fadeth on earth, and thy gaze seeketh mine,
Watch well for one whose face beareth for sign
The legend of a soul's refashioning:
As I shall watch for one whose pale hands bring

The first faint violet, and know them thine
Grown pitiful and come to build Love's shrine
Where the old Aprils wait, unfaltering.
Then the great floods between us will retire,
And the long path I follow down will grow

To be the path thy climbing feet desire;
Until we meet at last, made glad, and know
The cleansing hands that made my soul as snow
Have kept alive in thine the ancient fire.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Tears

When in the old years I had dreams of thee
Thy dark walls stood in a most barren place;
And he within (was his wan face my face?)
Wandered alone and wept continually.
There was no bird to hear, nor sun to see,

Nor green thing growing; nor for his release
Came sleep; neither forgetfulness nor peace:
Whereby I knew that none had sinned as he.
To-day I met him where white lilies gleam;
Across our path we watched the sparrows flit;

Until—the sunlight strong in our dry eyes—
He paused with me beside a green-edged stream,
Moaning, "I know, where its young waters rise,
Remembering, one leaneth over it."

Francis Joseph Sherman

The House Of Wisdom

I had not thought (ah, God! had I but known!)
That this sad hour should ever me befall,
When thou I judged the holiest of all
Should come to be the thing I must disown.
Was it not true? that April morn? thy blown

Gold hair around my hair for coronal?
Or is this truer?—thou at the outer wall,
Unroyal, and with unrepentant moan?
Yet prize I now this wisdom I have won,
Who must always remember? Nay! My tears

Must close mine eyes—as thou wouldst hide thy face
If some great meteor, kindred to the sun,
Should haunt the undying stars ten million years
To fall, some noon, dead in thy market place.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Kingfisher

Under the sun, the Kingfisher
From his high place was watching her.

He knew she came from some far place;
For when she threw her body down,
She seemed quite tired; and her face

Had dust upon it; and her gown,
That had been yellow, now was brown.

She lay near where the shadows lie
At noontime when they meet the sun.
The water floated slowly by

Her feet. Her hair was all undone,
And with the grass its gold was spun.

The trees were tall and green behind,
And hid the house upon the hill.
This place was sheltered from the wind,

And all the little leaves were still,
And every fern and daffodil.

Her face was hidden in her hands;
And through the grass, and through her hair,
The sunlight found the golden bands

About her wrists. (It was aware,
Also, that her two arms were bare.)

From his high branch, the Kingfisher
Looked down on her and pitied her.

He wondered who that she could be,?

This dear, strange lady, who had come
To vex him with her misery;
And why her days were wearisome,
And what far country was her home.

Her home must be far off indeed,

Wherein such bitter grief could grow.
Had there been no one there to plead
For her when they had wronged her so?
Did none her perfect honor know?

Was there no sword or pennoned lance

Omnipotent in hall or field
For her complete deliverance?
To make them cry, "We yield! we yield"?
Were not her colors on some shield?

Had he been there, the Kingfisher,

How he had fought and died for her!

A little yellow bird flew by;
And where the water-weeds were still,
Hovered a great blue dragon-fly;
Small fishes set the streams a-thrill.

The Kingfisher forgot to kill.

He only thought of her who lay
Upon the ground and was so fair,?
As fair as she who came one day
And sat long with her lover there.

The same gold sun was in her hair.

They had come down, because of love,
From the great house on the hillside:
This lady had no share thereof,
For now this place was sanctified!

Had this fair lady's lover died?

Was this dear lady's lover dead?
Had she come here to wait until
Her heart and soul were comforted?
Why was it not within her will

To seek the lady on the hill?

She, too, was lonely; for he had
Beheld her just this morning, when
Her last kiss made her lover glad
Who went to fight the heathen-men:

(He said he would return again!)

That lady would have charity
He knew, because her love was great;
And this one—fairer even than she—
Should enter in her open gate

And be no more disconsolate!

Under the sun, the Kingfisher
Knew no one else might comfort her.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The King's Hostel

Let us make it fit for him!
He will come ere many hours
Are passed over. Strew these flowers
Where the floor is hard and bare!
Ever was his royal whim

That his place of rest were fair.

Such a narrow little room!
Think you he will deign to use it?
Yes, we know he would not choose it
Where there any other near;

Here there is such damp and gloom,
And such quietness is here.

That he loved the light, we know;
And we know he was the gladdest
Always when the mirth was maddest

And the laughter drowned the song;
When the fire's shade and glow
Fell upon the loyal throng.

Yet it may be, if he come,
Now, to-night, he will be tired;

And no more will be desired
All the music once he knew;
He will joy the lutes are dumb
And be glad the lights are few.

Heard you how the fight has gone?

Surely it will soon be ended!
Was their stronghold well defended
Ere it fell before his might?
Did it yield soon after dawn,
Or when noon was at its height?

Hark! His trumpet! It is done.
Smooth the bed. And for a cover
Drape those scarlet colors over;
And upon these dingy walls
Hang what banners he has won.

Hasten ere the twilight falls!

They are here!—We knew the best
When we set us to prepare him
Such a place; for they that bear him
—They as he—seem weary, too;

Peace! and let him have his rest;
There is nothing more to do.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Landsman

"It well may be just as you say,
Will Carver, that your tales are true;
Yet think what I must put away,
Will Carver, if I sail with you."

"If you should sail with me (the wind

Is west, the tide's at full, my men!)
The things that you have left behind
Will be as nothing to you then."

"Inland, it's June! And the birds sing
Among the wooded hills, I know;

Between green fields, unhastening,
The Nashwaak's shadowed waters flow.

"What know you of such things as these
Who have the gray sea at your door,—
Whose path is as the strong winds please

Beyond this narrow strip of shore?"

"Your fields and woods! Now, answer me:
Up what green path have your feet run
So wide as mine, when the deep sea
Lies all-uncovered to the sun?

"And down the hollows of what hills
Have you gone—half so glad of heart
As you shall be when our sail fills
And the great waves ride far apart?"

"O! half your life is good to live,

Will Carver; yet, if I should go,
What are the things that you can give
Lest I regret the things I know!

“Lest I desire the old life’s way?
The noises of the crowded town?”

The busy streets, where, night and day,
The traffickers go up and down?”

“What can I give for these? Alas,
That all unchanged your path must be!
Strange lights shall open as we pass

And alien wakes traverse the sea;

“Your ears shall hear (across your sleep)
New hails, remote, disquieted,
For not a hand-breadth of the deep
But has to soothe some restless dead.

“These things shall be. And other things,
I think, not quite so sad as these!
—Know you the song the rigging sings
When up the opal-tinted seas

“The slow south-wind comes amorously?

The sudden gleam of some far sail
Going the same glad way as we,
Hastily, lest the good wind fail?

“The dreams that come (so strange, so fair!)
When all your world lies well within

The moving magic circle where
The sea ends and the skies begin?" . . .

. . . "What port is that, so far astern,
Will Carver? And how many miles
Shall we have run ere the tide turn?

—And is it far to the farthest isles?"

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Last Flower

O Golden-Rod, well-worshipped of the sun!
Where else hath Summer tarried save in thee?
This meadow is a barren thing to see,
For here the reapers' toil is over and done.
Of all her many birds there is but one

Left to assail the last wild raspberry;
The buttercups and daisies withered be,
And yet thy reign hath only now begun.
O sign of power and sway imperial!
O sceptre thrust into the hands of Fall

By Summer ere Earth forget her soft foot's tread!
O woman-flower, for love of thee, alas,
Even the trees have let their glory pass,
And now with thy gold hair are garlanded!

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Last Storm

From north, from east, the strong wind hurries down;
Against the window-pane the sleet rings fast;
The moon hath hid her face away, aghast,
And darkness keeps each corner of the town,
The garden hedges wear a heavy crown,

And the old poplars shriek, as night drifts past,
That, leagues on desolate leagues away, at last
One comes to know he too must surely drown.
And yet at noon, to-morrow, when I go
Out to the white, white edges of the plain,

I shall not grieve for this night's hurricane,
Seeing how, in a little hollow, sinks the snow
Around the southmost tree, where a lean crow
Sits nosily impatient for the rain.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Lodger

What! and do you find it good,
Sitting here alone with me?
Hark! the wind goes through the wood
And the snow drifts heavily.

When the morning brings the light

How know I you will not say,
"What a storm there fell last night.
Is the next inn far away?"

How know I you do not dream
Of some country where the grass

Grows up tall around the gleam
Of the milestones you must pass?

Even now perhaps you tell
(While your hands play through my hair)
Every hill, each hidden well,

All the pleasant valleys there,

That before a clear moon shines
You will be with them again?
—Hear the booming of the pines
And the sleet against the pane.

Wake, and look upon the sun.
I awoke an hour ago,
When the night was hardly done
And still fell a little snow.

Since the hill-tops touched the light

Many things have my hands made,
Just that you should think them right
And be glad that you have stayed.

—How I worked the while you slept!
Scarcely did I dare to sing!

All my soul a silence kept—
Fearing your awakening.

Now, indeed, I do not care
If you wake; for now the sun
Makes the least of all things fair

That my poor two hands have done. [page 13]

No, it is not hard to find.
You will know it by the hills—
Seven—sloping up behind;
By the soft perfume that fills

(O the red, red roses there!)
Full the narrow path thereto;
By the dark pine-forest where
Such a little wind breathes through;

By the way the bend o' the stream

Takes the peace that twilight brings;
By the sunset, and the gleam
Of uncounted swallows' wings

—No, indeed, I have not been
There; but such dreams I have had!

And, when I grow old, the green
Leaves will hide me, too, made glad.

Yes, you must go now, I know.
You are sure you understand?
—How I wish that I could go

Now, and lead you by the hand.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Meeting

After a length of summer miles
I met my old love on the road.
One of her unremembering smiles
Greeted me as I passed and bowed.

She had her friend with her; whilst I—

I, who was walking, was alone;
Her smile was such, as she drove by,
The wisest friend had never known.

And yet, for all her easy smile,
I knew that shoe would see, instead

Of her friend's face, within a while
(Between the little things she said!)

A field of oats, swayed to-and-fro
With the wind's kisses, silver-gray,—
This on the hill, while, far below,

A great raft slowly went its way,

Where the wide river slept, all blue.
—Because all these were hers to pass,
That she would say this thing, I knew.
“He spoke of this—one day—alas!”

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Mother

The long dark night crawled slowly on;
I waited patiently,
Knowing at last the sudden dawn,
Sometime, would surely be.

It came,—to tell me everything

Was Winter's quiet slave:
I waited still, aware that Spring
Was strong to come and save.

And then Spring came, and I was glad
A few expectant hours;

Until I learned the things I had
Were only withered flowers

Because there came not with the Spring
As in the ancient days—
The sound of his feet pattering

Along Spring's open ways;

Because his sweetly serious eyes
Looked into mine no more;
Because no more in childish-wise;
He brought his gathered store

Of dandelions to my bed,
And violets and grass,?
Deeming I would be comforted
That Spring had come to pass.

And now these unused toys and I

Have little dread or care
For any season that drifts by
The silence we share;

And sometimes, when we think to pray,
Across the vacant years

We see God watching him at play
And pitying our tears.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Path

Is this the path that knew your tread,
Once, when the skies were just as blue
As they are now, far overhead?
Are these the trees that looked at you
And listened to the words you said?

Along this moss did your dress sweep?
And is this broken stem the one
That gave its flower to you to keep?
And here where the grasses knew the sun
Before a sickle came to reap [page 50]

Did your dear shadow softly fall?
This place is very like, and yet
No shadow lieth here at all;
With dew the mosses still are wet
Although the grass no more is tall.

The small brown birds go rustling through
The low-branched hemlock as of old;
The tree-tops almost touch the blue;
The sunlight falleth down like gold
On one new flower that waiteth you.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Quiet Valley

They pity me who have grown old,?
So old, mine eyes may not behold
If any wolf chance near the fold.

They pity me, because, alas!
I lie and dream among the grass,

And let the herds unheeded pass.

They deem I must be sorrowing,
Because I note not when the Spring
Is over me and everything.

They know not why I am forlorn,?

How could they know?—They were not born
When he rode here that April morn.

They were not living when he came
Into this valley, swift like flame,?
Perchance they have not heard his name!

My men were very valiant men—
(Alas, that I had only ten!
These people were not living then.)

But when one is not yet awake
His banner is not hard to take,

His spears are easy things to break.

And dazed men are not hard to slay
When many foes, as strong as they,
With swords and spears come down their way.

This valley now has quiet grown;

And I lie here content, alone,
Dreaming of things that I have known;

And count the mounds of waving grass—
(Ten,—yea, and ten more, by the Mass!)
And let the restless cattle pass.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Rain

O ye who so unceasing praise the Sun;
Ye who find nothing worthy of your love
But the Sun's face and the strong light thereof;
Who, when the day is done,
Are all uncomforted

Unless the night be crowned with many a star,
Or mellow light be shed
From the ancient moon that gazeth from afar,
With pitiless calm, upon the old, tired Earth;
O ye to whom the skies

Must be forever fair to free your eyes
From mortal pain; ?
Have ye not known the great exceeding worth
Of that soft peace which cometh with Rain?

Behold! the wisest of you knows no thing

That hath such title to man's worshipping
As the first sudden day [page 40]
The slumberous Earth is wakened into Spring;
When heavy clouds and gray
Come up the southern way,

And their bold challenge throw
In the face of the frightened snow
That covereth the ground.
What need they now the armies of the Sun
Whose trumpets now do sound?

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Alas, the powerless Sun!
Hath he not waged his wars for days gone past,
Each morning drawing up his cohorts vast
And leading them with slow and even paces
To assault once more the impenetrable places,

Where, crystal-bound,

The river moveth on with silent sound?
O puny, powerless Sun!
On the pure white snow where are the lightest traces
Of what thy forces' ordered ways have done?

35

On these large spaces
No footsteps are imprinted anywhere;
Still the white glare
Is perfect; yea, the snows are drifted still
On plain and hill;

And still the river knows the Winter's iron will.

Thou wert most wise, O Sun, to hide thy face
This day beneath the cloud's gray covering;
Thou wert most wise to know the deep disgrace
In which thy name is holden of the Spring.

She deems thee now an impotent, useless thing,
And hath dethroned thee from thy mighty place;
Knowing that with the clouds will come apace
The Rain, and that the rain will be a royal king.
A king? —Nay, queen! [page 41]

For in soft girlish-wise she takes her throne
When first she cometh in the young Spring-season;
Gentle and mild,
Yet with no dread of any revolution,
And fearing not a land unreconciled,

And unafraid of treason.
In her dark hair
Lieth the snow's most certain dissolution;
And in her glance is known
The freeing of the rivers from their chainings;

And in her bosom's strainings

Earth's teeming breast is tokened and foreshown.

Behold her coming surely, calmly down,
Where late the clear skies were,
With gray clouds for a gown;

Her fragile draperies
Caught by the little breeze
Which loveth her!
She weareth yet no crown,
Nor is there any sceptre in her hands;

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Yea, in all lands,
Whatever Spring she cometh, men know well
That it is right and good for her to come;
And that her least commands
Must be fulfilled, however wearisome;

And that they all must guard the citadel
Wherein she deigns to dwell!

And so, even now, her feet pass swiftly over
The impressionable snow
That vanisheth as woe

Doth vanish from the rapt face of a lover,
Who, after doubting nights, hath come to know
His lady loves him so! [page 42]
(Yet not like him
Doth the snow bear the signs of her light touch!

It is all gray in places, and looks worn
With some most bitter pain;
As he shall look, perchance,
Some early morn
While yet the dawn is dim,

When he awakens from the enraptured trance
In which he, blind, hath lain,
And knows also that he hath loved in vain
The lady who, he deemed, had loved him much.
And though her utter worthlessness is plain

He hath no joy of his deliverance,
But only asketh God to let him die,
And getteth no reply.)
Yea, the snows fade before the calm strength of the rain!

And while the rain is unabated,

Well-heads are born and streams created
On the hillsides, and set a-flowing
Across the fields. The river, knowing
That there hath surely come at last
Its freedom, and that frost is past,

Gathereth force to break its chains;
The river's faith is in the Spring's unceasing rains!
See where the shores even now were firmly bound
The slowly widening water showeth black,
As from the fields and meadows all around

Come rushing over the dark and snowless ground
The foaming streams!
Beneath the ice the shoulders of the tide
Lift, and from shore to shore a thin, blue crack
Starts, and the dark, long-hidden water gleams,

Glad to be free.
And now the uneven rift is growing wide;
The breaking ice is fast becoming gray;
It hears the loud beseeching of the sea,
And moveth on its way.

Surely at last the work of the rain is done!
Surely the Spring at last is well begun,
O unavailing Sun!

O ye who worship only at the noon,
When will ye learn the glory of the rain?

Have ye not seen the thirsty meadow-grass
Uplooking piteous at the burnished sky,
And all in vain?
Even in June
Have ye not seen the yellow flowers swoon

Along the roadside, where the dust, alas,
Is hard to pass?
Have ye not heard
The song cease in the throat of every bird
And know the thing all these were stricken by?

Ye have beheld these things, yet made no prayer,
O pitiless and uncompassionate!
Yet should the weeping
Of Death's wide wings across your face unsleeping
Be felt of you to-night,

And all your hair
Know the soft stirring of an alien breath
From out the mouth of Death,
Would ye not then have memory of these
And how their pain was great?

Would ye not wish to hear among the trees
The wind in his great night,
And on the roof the rain's unending harmonies?

For when could death be more desired by us
(Oh, follow, Death, I pray thee, with the Fall!)

Than when the night
Is heavy with the wet wind born of rain?
When flowers are yellow, and the growing grass
Is not yet tall,
Or when all living things are harvested

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And with bright gold the hills are glorious,
Or when all colors have faded from our sight
And all is gray that late was gold and red?
Have ye not lain awake the long night through
And listened to the falling of the rain

On fallen leaves, withered and brown and dead?
Have none of you,
Hearing its ceaseless sound, been comforted
And made forgetful of the day's live pain?
Even Thou, who wept because the dark was great

Once, and didst pray that dawn might come again,
Has noon not seemed to be a dreaded thing
And night a thing not wholly desolate
And Death thy soul's supremest sun-rising?
Did not thy hearing strain

To catch the moaning of the wind-swept sea,
Where great tides be,
And swift, white rain?
Did not its far exulting teach thy soul
That of all things the sea alone is free

And under no control?
Its liberty,?

Was it not most desired by thy soul?
I say,
The Earth is always glad, yea, and the sea

Is glad always
When the rain cometh; either tranquilly [page 45]
As at the first dawn of a Summer day
Or in late Autumn wildly passionate,
Or when all things are all disconsolate

Because that Winter has been long their king,
Or in the Spring.
?Therefore let now your joyful thanksgiving
Be heard on Earth because the Rain hath come!
While land and sea give praise, shall ye be dumb?

Shall ye alone await the sun-shining?
Your days, perchance, have many joys to bring;
Perchance with woes they shall be burthensome;
Yet when night cometh, and ye journey home,
Weary, and sore, and stained with travelling,

When ye seek out your homes because the night?
The last, dark night—falls swift across your path,
And on Life's altar your last day lies slain,
Will ye not cry aloud with that new might
One dying with great things unfinished hath,

“O God! If Thou wouldst only send Thy Rain! ”

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Return

A day ago, as she passed through,
(September, with foreshadowed hair)
The great doors of the year swung to
And little leaves fell here and there.

Behind white, drifted clouds was lost

The pageant of the level sun;
We knew the silence tokened frost
And that the old warm eves were done.

And so we mourned and slept. But he,
(The Master of the moving hours)

Called up the Southern wind: and we
Awoke,—to see, across the flowers,

The gates flung back a morning's space,
And (while the fields went wild for mirth!)
Above the threshold Summer's face—

Yearning for her old lover, Earth.

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Second Sunday After Easter

"Hearken! Afar on the hills, at last is it surely spring?
Have the sudden mayflowers awakened to see what the wind can

bring?□

There, in the bare high branches, does a robin try to sing?

"O Life, why—now thou art fair and full of the promise of peace—
Oh, why dost thou shudder away, away from me, begging release,
As the dead leaves falter and flutter and fall when the warm winds cease?

"As the dead leaves fall from the trees. O Life, must thou hurry

away?□

Behold, it is spring upon earth, and tomorrow the month will be
 May;
And the southmost boughs shall grow green that were barren but
 Yesterday.

"And I, even I, shall grow young once more; and my face shall be
 fair,—

Yea, fair as still waters at even, under the starlight there;
And all of the glory of dawn shall be seen once again in my hair.

"And yet, and yet, who will see? Were it true that all things should
 be so,

What joy could we have of it ever? Time bringeth new visions; and
 lo,

One may not remember in April how autumn was kind, long ago!

"O desolate years! are you over at last with your devious ways?
Nay, I should say, 'Let me go from you gladly, giving you praise

For the least of the things I remember of you and the least of your

days.'

"Giving thanks for the noises of Earth—little noises—when April is
born;
For the smell of the roses in June, for the gleam of the yellowing
corn;
For the sight of the sea at even, the sight of the sea at morn.

"And most—most of all—for the old fighting days! (O La Tour, are
they past?)□

For the sound of beleaguering cannon, the sight of the foe fleeing fast.
Yea, and though at the end we have fallen, even now I am glad at the last!

"How good it is here in the sun! O strong, sweet sound of the sea,
Do you sorrow that now I must go? Have you pity to waste upon me
Who may tarry no longer beside you, whom Time is about to set

free?□

"Nay, sorrow nor pity at all. See, I am more glad than a queen
For the joy I have had of you living! Had the things that we know
never been,
You and I then had reason for sorrow, O Sea—had our eyes
never seen!

"Come close to me now,—past the weed-covered rocks, up the
gray of the sand;
Here is a path I have made for you, hollowed it out with my hand;

Come, I would whisper a word to you, Sea, he may never
withstand:

"Where our garden goes down to the sea's edge (remember?—
O France, thou art fair!)
Renewing those old royal days, of all else careless now, unaware,
Among the remembering lilies her soul abides patiently there."

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Seekers

Is it very long ago things were as they are
Now? or was it ever? or is it to be?
Was it up this road we came, glad the end was far?
Taking comfort each of each, singing cheerily?

O, the way was good to tread! Up hill and down;

Past the quiet forestlands, by the grassy plains;
Here a stony wilderness, there an ancient town,
Now the high sun over us, now the driving rains.

Strange and evil things we met—but what cared we,
Strong men and unafraid, ripe for any chance?

Battles by the countless score, red blood running free—
Soon we learned that all of these were our inheritance.

Some of us there were that fell: what was that to us?
They were weak—we were strong— health we held to yet:
Pleasant graves we digged them, we the valorous,—

Then to the road again, striving to forget.

Once again upon the road! The seasons passed us by—
Blood-root and mayflowers, grasses straight and tall,
Scarlet banners on the hills, snowdrifts white and high,—
One by one we lived them through, giving thanks for all.

O, the countries that we found in our wandering!
Wide seas without a sail, islands fringed with foam,
Undiscovered till we came, waiting for their king,—
We might tarry but a while, far a way from home.

Far away the home we sought,—soon we must be gone;

The old road, the old days, still we clung to those;
The dawn came, the moon came, the dusk came, the dawn—
Still we kept upon this path long ago we chose.

Was it up this road we came, glad the end was far,
Yesterday,—last year—a million years ago?

Surely it was morning then: now, the twilight star
Hangs above the hidden hills—white and very low.

Quietly the Earth takes on the hush of things asleep;
All the silence of the birds stills the moveless air;
—Yet we must not falter now, though the way be steep:

Just beyond the urn o' the road,—surely Peace is there!

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Watch

Are those her feet at last upon the stair?
Her trailing garments echoing there?
The falling of her hair?

About a year ago I heard her come,
Thus; as a child recalling some

Vague memories of home.

O how the firelight blinded her dear eyes!
I saw them open, and grow wise:
No questions, no replies. [page 9]

And now, tonight, comes the same sound of rain.

The wet boughs reach against the pane
In the same way, again.

In the old way I hear the moaning wind
Hunt the dead leaves it cannot find,—
Blind as the stars are blind.

—She may come in at midnight, tired and wan.
Yet,—what if once again at dawn
I was to find her gone?

Francis Joseph Sherman

The Window Of Dreams

It was quite dark within the room
Wherein the Lady Alice sat;
One had not seen, who looked thereat,
The gathered dust upon her loom,
There was such gloom.

And though the hangings on the wall
Were wrought so well and cunningly
That many had come far to see
Their glory once (for they were all
Of cardinal,

And gold, and silk, and curious glass)
The ladies with the long red hair
Thereon, the strong men fighting there,
The little river edged with grass,—
Were now, alas,

As if they had been always gray.
Likewise the lily, whose perfume
Had once been over all the room,
In which dark corner now it lay,
What man might say?

She did not see these things, or know
That they had changed since she had seen.
She like it best to sit between
Two little firs (they used to grow,
Once, long ago!)

That stood each in an earthen pot
Upon the window's either side.
They had been green before they died,
But like the rest fell out their lot,—
To be forgot.

Yet what cared she for such as these,
Whose window was toward the sun
At sun-rising? There was not one
Of them so strong and sure to please,
Or bring her ease,

As what she saw when she looked through
Her window just before the dawn.
These were the sights she gazed upon:
Sir John, whose silken pennon flew,
Yellow and blue,

And proud to be upon his lance;
The horse he rode being gray and white;
A few men, unafraid to fight,
Followed (there were some men in France
Were brave, perchance!)

And they were armed with swords and spears;
Their horses, too, were mostly gray.
—They seemed not sad to go away,
For they were men had lost their fears
With their child-years.

They had such hope, there was but one
Looked back: Sir John had strength to look.

His men saw not that his lance shook
A little, for though night was done,
There was no sun.

And so they rode into the dawn
That waited just behind the hill;
(In France there were some men to kill!)
These were the things she looked upon
Till they were gone.

The room was dark, and full of fear;
And so the Lady Alice stayed
Beside the window. Here she prayed
Each morning, and when night drew near,
Year after year.

Beside her lay some unused things:
A trumpet that had long been mute;
A vellum book; a little lute
That once had ten unruined strings;
And four gold rings;

A piece of faded cloth-of-gold;
And three black pennies that were white
As silver once:—the great delight
She had of all these things of old
Was not quite cold.

Only the things that she could see
Out of the window gladdened her;
After the morning, those things were:
A ship that rode triumphantly
(This sight would be

Plainest a little ere the noon)
On wide blue waters, with the wind
Strong from the west that lay behind;
Its sail curved like a slender moon,
Born into June.

An empty ship beside the shore
Of some unconquered foreign land;
Some brave men fighting on the sand
As they had never fought before
In any war;

A few men fleeing to the hills
(This came a little after noon),
God, but the fight was ended soon!
They were not hard to wound and kill!
A trumpet shrill

Echoes, and many knights pursue!
And on the hillside dead men lie,
Who learned before they came to die
The yellow flags the victors flew
Were crossed with blue!

No wonder that this window-place
Could make the Lady Alice glad,
When sights like these were what she had!
Yet there was one that made her face
For a little space

Grow like a face that God has known.
I think she was the happiest

When the sun dropped into the west;
This was the thing she then was shown,
And this alone:

A laden ship that followed fast
The way the setting sun had led;
In the east wind her great sail spread;
A brave knight standing near the mast;
The shore at last!

Of all things, this the best did seem.
And now the gathering darkness fell;
The morn would bring him, she knew well;
She slept; and in her sleep, I deem,
She had one dream

Against the window-side she slept.
This window-place was very strange;
Since it was made it had known change.
Beneath it once no women wept,
And no vines crept

And twisted in the broken glass.
Some time ago, the little tree
That she had planted tenderly
Was not much higher than tall grass;
But now, alas,

Its branches were the greatest where
Her window looked toward the sun.
One branch, indeed, its way had won
Into her room,—it did not bear

Green leaves in there.

135

Above the window, and inside,
Great spider-webs were spun across.
Where stone was, there was wet green moss
Wherein small creeping things did hide
Until they died.

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The leaves that looked toward the room
Were hardly anything but veins;
They had been wasted by the rains,
Like some dead naked girl in the gloom
Of some old tomb.

But those outside were broad and green,
And lived between the sun and shade.
A perfect bower they had made,—
Beneath them there should sit some queen,
Born to be seen!

It was quite dark within the place
Wherein the Lady Alice slept.
I heard the girls below who wept,
But God did not (of His good grace)
Show me her face

Francis Joseph Sherman

Three Grey Days

If she would come, now, and say, What will you, Lover?—
She who has the fairest gifts of al the earth to give—
Think you I should ask some tremendous thing to prove her,
Her life, say, and all her love, so long as she might live? . . .
Should I touch her hair? her hands? her garments, even?

Nay! for such rewards the gods their own good time have set!
Once, these were all mine; the least, poor one was heaven:
Now, lest she remember, I pray that she forget. [page 8]

Merely should I ask—ah! she would not refuse them
Who still seems very kind when I meet with her in dreams—

Only three of our old days, and—should she help to choose
 them—
Would the first not be in April, beside the sudden streams? . . .
Once, upon a morning, up the path that we had taken,
We saw Spring come where the willow-buds are gray,
Heard the high hills, as with tread of armies, shaken;

Felt the strong sun—O the glory of that day!

And then—what? one afternoon of quiet summer weather!
O, woodlands and meadow-lands along the blue St. John,
My birch finds a path—though your rafts lie close together—
Then O! what starry miles before the gray o' the dawn! . . .

I have met the new day, among the misty islands,
Come with whine of saw-mills and whirr of hidden wings,
Gleam of dewy cobwebs, smell of grassy highlands, —
Ah! the blood grows young again thinking of these things.

Then, last and best of all! Though all else were found hollow

Would Time not send a little space, before the Autumn's close,

And lead us up the road—the old road we used to follow
Among the sunset hills till the Hunter's Moon arose? . . .
Then, home through the poplar-wood! damp across our faces
The gray leaves that fall, the moths that flutter by:

Yea! this for me, now, of all old hours and places,
To keep when I am dead, Time, until she come to die.

Francis Joseph Sherman

To Doctor John Donne

Those grave old men—and women, too—
Who thronged St. Paul's in your dear times,
I wonder what they thought of you
When they remembered your strange rhymes.

Did they forgive you for them then

(Because you preached so very well)
Putting them by and turn again
To hear your words of heaven and hell?

Or did they pause, seeing you there,
And say, "How can this man have grace?"

Today, I worship elsewhere!"
And straightway seek some holier place?

(For so most men would do today
If from their pulpit you leaned down.
Yea, they would find the quickest way

To tell the scandal to the town.

How full it must have been of sin—
Your heart—had it but played with verse.
But you must tell your loves therein—
Alas! could anything be worse?)

And yet, among your ancient folk,
I think there must have been a few
Who learned at last to bear Love's yoke
More patiently because of you.

I sit and see across the years

Some maiden kneeling in the aisle,
Contented now; all gone her tears
That you have changed into a smile:

Some lone poor man made rich again:
Some faded woman, with gray hair,

Forgetting most of her old pain:
Some grave-eyed poet, surer there.

O dim, hushed aisles of long ago,
Have ye no messages to tell?
We wonder, and are fain to know

The secret ye have kept so well.

And though we kneel with open eyes
Among your shadowy ghosts today,
Not one of us grows strong, or wise,
Nor find we comfort when we pray.

But they! how glad they seem who sit
And hear the voice we cannot hear.
Quietly they remember it—
The unknown thing we hold so dear.

Their faces fade with the low sun....

What wonder were they dreaming of?
Surely, it cannot be, John Donne,
They think that you were wise to love?

Francis Joseph Sherman

To Summer

Summer! I praise thee, who art glorious!
For now the sudden promise of the Spring
Hath been fulfilled in many ways to us,
And all live things are thine.
Therefore, while all the earth

Is glad, and young, and strangely riotous
With love of thee, whose blood is even as wine,
I dare to sing,
Worshipping thee, and thy face welcoming;
I, also a lover of thy most wondrous worth.

Yet with no scorn of any passèd days
Come I, who even in April caught great pleasure,
Making of ancient woes the stronger praise;
Nor build I this new crown
For my new love's fair head

Of flowers plucked in once oft-travelled ways,
And then forgot and utterly cast down;
But from the measure
Of a strange, undreamt-of, undivided treasure
I glean, and thus my love is garlanded.

Yea, with a crown such as no other queen
That ever ruled on earth wore round her hair,
And garments such as man hath never seen!
The beauty Heaven hath
For thee was magnified;

I think the least of thy bright gold and green
Once lived along God's best-beloved path,
And angels there

Passed by, and gathered those He called most fair,
And, at His bidding, dressed thee for Earth's bride.

How at thy coming we were glad again!
We who were nigh to death, awaiting thee;
And fain of death as one aweary of pain.
Life had grown burthensome,
Till suddenly we learned

The joy the old brown earth has, when the rain
Comes, and the earth is glad that it has come:
That ecstasy
The buds have, when the worn snow sets them free,
The sea's delight when storm-time has returned.

O season of the strong triumphant Sun!
Bringer of exultation unto all!
Behold thy work ere yet thy day be run.
Over thy growing grain
How the winds rise and cease!

Behold these meadows where thick gold lies spun?
There, last night, surely, thy long hair must have lain!
Where trees are tall,
Hear where young birds hold their high festival;
And see where shallow waters know thy peace.

Will any of these things ever pain thine eyes,
Summer, that thou shouldst go another way
Than ours, or shouldst our offerings despise?
Come with me further still
Where, in sight of the sea,

This garden liveth under mellow skies;

Of its dear odors drink thine utmost fill,
And deign to stay
A moment mid its colors' glad array,?
Is not this place a pleasant one for thee?

Yea, thou wilt ever stay, I know full well!
Why do I fear that thou wilt pass from us?
Is not this earth thy home wherein to dwell?
The perfect ways thereof
Are thy desired ones;

Earth hath no voice but of thy worth to tell.
Therefore, as one who loves might praise his love,
So, even thus,
I hail thee, Summer, who art glorious,
And know thy reign eternal as the Sun's!

Francis Joseph Sherman

Victory

Because your strife and labor have been vain,
Ye who have striven, shall I forego, forget
The far-off goal whereto my feet were set
In the old days when life was first made plain?
Up road in April, who, meeting the rain,

Did turn, the first shy mayflower still un-met?
I who have sought, yea, who am seeking yet,
What pain have I like unto your sore pain?
So let me go as one yearning, that braves,
With shipmen that have knowledge of the sea,

The wind disastrous and the ponderous waves
(Because his love dwells in some far countree),
Crying, "Not one of all your million graves
Is deep enough to keep my love from me!"

Francis Joseph Sherman