

Classic Poetry Series

Ella Wheeler Wilcox
- poems -

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Ella Wheeler Wilcox(5 November 1850 - 30 October 1919)

Ella Wheeler Wilcox was an American author and poet. Her best-known work was *Poems of Passion*. Her most enduring work was "Solitude", which contains the lines: "Laugh, and the world laughs with you; Weep, and you weep alone". Her autobiography, *The Worlds and I*, was published in 1918, a year before her death.

Biography

Ella Wheeler was born in 1850 on a farm in Johnstown, Wisconsin, east of Janesville, the youngest of four children. The family soon moved north of Madison. She started writing poetry at a very early age, and was well known as a poet in her own state by the time she graduated from high school.

Her most famous poem, "Solitude", was first published in the February 25, 1883 issue of *The New York Sun*. The inspiration for the poem came as she was travelling to attend the Governor's inaugural ball in Madison, Wisconsin. On her way to the celebration, there was a young woman dressed in black sitting across the aisle from her. The woman was crying. Miss Wheeler sat next to her and sought to comfort her for the rest of the journey. When they arrived, the poet was so depressed that she could barely attend the scheduled festivities. As she looked at her own radiant face in the mirror, she suddenly recalled the sorrowful widow. It was at that moment that she wrote the opening lines of "Solitude":

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone.

She sent the poem to the *Sun* and received \$5 for her effort. It was collected in the book *Poems of Passion* shortly after in May 1883.

In 1884, she married Robert Wilcox of Meriden, Connecticut, where the couple lived before moving to New York City and then to Granite Bay in the Short Beach section of Branford, Connecticut. The two homes they built on Long Island Sound, along with several cottages, became known as Bungalow Court, and they would hold gatherings there of literary and artistic friends. They had one child, a son, who died shortly after birth. Not long after their marriage, they both became interested in theosophy, new thought, and spiritualism.

Early in their married life, Robert and Ella Wheeler Wilcox promised each other that whoever went first through death would return and communicate with the other. Robert Wilcox died in 1916, after over thirty years of marriage. She was overcome with grief, which became ever more intense as week after week went without any message from him. It was at this time that she went to California to see the Rosicrucian astrologer, Max Heindel, still seeking help in her sorrow, still unable to understand why she had no word from her Robert. She wrote of this meeting:

In talking with Max Heindel, the leader of the Rosicrucian Philosophy in California, he made very clear to me the effect of intense grief. Mr. Heindel assured me that I would come in touch with the spirit of my husband when I learned to control my sorrow. I replied that it seemed strange to me that an omnipotent God could not send a flash of his light into a suffering soul to bring its conviction when most needed. Did you ever stand beside a clear pool of water, asked Mr. Heindel, and see the trees and skies repeated therein? And did you ever cast a stone into that pool and see it clouded and turmoiled, so it gave no reflection? Yet the skies and trees were waiting above to be reflected when the waters grew calm. So God and your husband's spirit wait to show themselves to you when the turbulence of sorrow is quieted.

Several months later, she composed a little mantra or affirmative prayer which she said over and over "I am the living witness: The dead live: And they speak through us and to us: And I am the voice that gives this glorious truth to the suffering world: I am ready, God: I am ready, Christ: I am ready, Robert."

Wilcox made efforts to teach occult things to the world. Her works, filled with positive thinking, were popular in the New Thought Movement and by 1915 her booklet, *What I Know About New Thought* had a distribution of 50,000 copies, according to its publisher, Elizabeth Towne.

The following statement expresses Wilcox's unique blending of New Thought, Spiritualism, and a Theosophical belief in reincarnation: "As we think, act, and live here today, we build the structures of our homes in spirit realms after we leave earth, and we build karma for future lives, thousands of years to come, on this earth or other planets. Life will assume new dignity, and labor new interest for us, when we come to the knowledge that death is but a continuation of life and labor, in higher planes".

Her final words in her autobiography *The Worlds and I*: "From this mighty storehouse (of God, and the hierarchies of Spiritual Beings) we may gather wisdom and knowledge, and receive light and power, as we pass through this

preparatory room of earth, which is only one of the innumerable mansions in our Father's house. Think on these things".

Ella Wheeler Wilcox died of cancer on October 30, 1919

Poetry

A popular poet rather than a literary poet, in her poems she expresses sentiments of cheer and optimism in plainly written, rhyming verse. Her world view is expressed in the title of her poem "Whatever Is—Is Best", suggesting an echo of Alexander Pope's "Whatever is, is right."

None of Wilcox's works were included by F. O. Matthiessen in *The Oxford Book of American Verse*, but Hazel Felleman chose no fewer than fourteen of her poems for *Best Loved Poems of the American People*, while Martin Gardner selected "Solitude" and "The Winds of Fate" for *Best Remembered Poems*.

She is frequently cited in anthologies of bad poetry, such as *The Stuffed Owl: An Anthology of Bad Verse* and *Very Bad Poetry*. Sinclair Lewis indicates Babbitt's lack of literary sophistication by having him refer to a piece of verse as "one of the classic poems, like 'If' by Kipling, or Ella Wheeler Wilcox's 'The Man Worth While.'" The latter opens:

It is easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows by like a song,
But the man worth while is one who will smile,
When everything goes dead wrong.

Her most famous lines open her poem "Solitude":

Laugh and the world laughs with you,
Weep, and you weep alone;
The good old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.

"The Winds of Fate" is a marvel of economy, far too short to summarize. In full:

One ship drives east and another drives west
With the selfsame winds that blow.
'Tis the set of the sails,
And Not the gales,
That tell us the way to go.

Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate;
As we voyage along through life,
'Tis the set of a soul
That decides its goal,
And not the calm or the strife.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox cared about alleviating animal suffering, as can be seen from her poem, *Voice of the Voiceless*. It begins as follows.

I am the voice of the voiceless;
Through me the dumb shall speak,
Till the deaf world's ear be made to hear
The wrongs of the wordless weak.

From street, from cage, and from kennel,
From stable and zoo, the wail
Of my tortured kin proclaims the sin
Of the mighty against the frail.

Legacy

Her quote "Love lights more fires than hate extinguishes" is inscribed on a paving slab in Jack Kerouac Alley in San Francisco (next to the City Lights Bookstore).

Ella Wheeler Wilcox's name provided the unlikely inspiration for doggerel by the English humorist Richard Murdoch, which he set to the opening bars of Alexandre Luigini's *Ballet égyptien*.

The first stanza of her poem "The Man Worth While" can be found in Disney's Hollywood Studios, in the boiler room portion of the queue for *The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror*.

Oliver's Stone movie *JFK* starts with a quote from her: "To sin by silence when we should protest makes cowards out of men".

The first stanza of "The Man Worth While" is parodied in the movie *Caddyshack* when the character Judge Smails (played by Ted Knight) reads the following at the christening of his yacht: "It's easy to grin when your ship comes in / And you've got the stock market beat. / But the man worthwhile is the man who can smile / When his shorts are too tight in the seat."

The opening lines in her poem "Solitude" are recited in Park Chan-wook's film Oldboy.

Her poem "Over the Banisters" was adapted into a song for Judy Garland in the film "Meet Me in St. Louis".

Her poem "I like cigars beneath the stars" was set to music by an "E. C. Walker," possibly British and not the politician E. C. Walker. The song was recorded by the Huelgas Ensemble in 2010.

"It Might Have Been"

We will be what we could be. Do not say,
"It might have been, had not this, or that, or this."
No fate can keep us from the chosen way;
He only might who is.

We will do what we could do. Do not dream
Chance leaves a hero, all uncrowned to grieve.
I hold, all men are greatly what they seem;
He does, who could achieve.

We will climb where we could climb. Tell me not
Of adverse storms that kept thee from the height.
What eagle ever missed the peak he sought?
He always climbs who might.

I do not like the phrase "It might have been!"
It lacks force, and life's best truths perverts:
For I believe we have, and reach, and win,
Whatever our deserts.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Baby In The House

I knew that a baby was hid in that house,
Though I saw no cradle and heard no cry;
But the husband was tip-toeing 'round like a mouse,
And the good wife was humming a soft lullaby;
And there was a look on the face of the mother,
That I knew could mean only one thing, and no other.

The mother, I said to myself, for I knew
That the woman before me was certainly that;
And there lay in a corner a tiny cloth shoe,
And I saw on a stand such a wee little hat;
And the beard of the husband said, plain as could be,
'Two fat chubby hands have been tugging at me.'

And he took from his pocket a gay picture-book,
And a dog that could bark, if you pulled on a string;
And the wife laid them up with such a pleased look;
And I said to myself, 'There is no other thing
But a babe that could bring about all this, and so
That one thing is in hiding somewhere, I know.'

I stayed but a moment, and saw nothing more,
And heard not a sound, yet I know I was right;
What else could the shoe mean that lay on the floor,
The book and the toy, and the faces so bright;
And what made the husband as still as a mouse?
I am sure, very sure, there's a babe in that house.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Burial

Today I had a burial of my dead.
There was no shroud, no coffin, and no pall,
No prayers were uttered and no tears were shed
I only turned a picture to the wall.

A picture that had hung within my room
For years and years; a relic of my youth.
It kept the rose of love in constant bloom
To see those eyes of earnestness and truth.

At hours wherein no other dared intrude,
I had drawn comfort from its smiling grace.
Silent companion of my solitude,
My soul held sweet communion with that face.

I lived again the dream so bright, so brief,
Though wakened as we all are by some Fate;
This picture gave me infinite relief,
And did not leave me wholly desolate.

To-day I saw an item, quite by chance,
That robbed me of my pitiful poor dole:
A marriage notice fell beneath my glance,
And I became a lonely widowed soul.

With drooping eyes, and cheeks a burning flame,
I turned the picture to the blank wall's gloom.
My very heart had died in me of shame,
If I had left it smiling in my room.

Another woman's husband. So, my friend,
My comfort, my sole relic of the past,
I bury thee, and, lonely, seek the end.
Swift age has swept my youth from me at last.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Fable

Some cawing Crows, a hooting Owl,
A Hawk, a Canary, an old Marsh-Fowl,
One day all meet together
To hold a caucus and settle the fate
Of a certain bird (without a mate),
A bird of another feather.
'My friends,' said the Owl, with a look most wise,
'The Eagle is soaring too near the skies,
In a way that is quite improper;
Yet the world is praising her, so I'm told,
And I think her actions have grown so bold
That some of us ought to stop her.'
'I have heard it said,' quoth Hawk, with a sigh,
'That young lambs died at the glance of her eye,
And I wholly scorn and despise her.
This, and more, I am told they say,
And I think that the only proper way
Is never to recognize her.'
'I am quite convinced,' said Crow, with a caw,
'That the Eagle minds no moral law,
She's a most unruly creature.'
'She's an ugly thing,' piped Canary Bird;
'Some call her handsome—it's so absurd—
She hasn't a decent feature.'
Then the old Marsh-Hen went hopping about,
She said she was sure—she hadn't a doubt—
Of the truth of each bird's story:
And she thought it a duty to stop her flight,
To pull her down from her lofty height,
And take the guilt from her glory.
But, lo! from a peak on the mountain grand
That looks out over the smiling land
And over the mighty ocean,
The Eagle is spreading her splendid wings—
She rises, rises, and upward swings,
With a slow, majestic motion.
Up in the blue of God's own skies,
With a cry of rapture, away she flies,
Close to the Great Eternal:

She sweeps the world with her piercing sight;
Her soul is filled with the infinite
And the joy of things supernal.
Thus rise forever the chosen of God,
The genius-crowned or the power-shod,
Over the dust-world sailing;
And back, like splinters blown by the winds,
Must fall the missiles of silly minds,
Useless and unavailing.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Fallen Leaf

A trusting little leaf of green,
A bold audacious frost;
A rendezvous, a kiss or two,
And youth for ever lost.

Ah, me!

The bitter, bitter cost.

A flaunting patch of vivid red,
That quivers in the sun;
A windy gust, a grave of dust,
The little race is run.

Ah, me!

Were that the only one.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Fatal Impress

A little leaf just in the forest's edge,
All summer long, had listened to the wooing
Of amorous birds that flew across the hedge,
Singing their blithe sweet songs for her undoing.
So many were the flattering things they told her,
The parent tree seemed quite too small to hold her.

At last one lonesome day she saw them fly
Across the fields behind the coquette summer,
They passed her with a laughing light good-bye,
When from the north, there strode a strange new comer;
Bold was his mien, as he gazed on her, crying,
'How comes it, then, that thou art left here sighing! '

'Now by my faith though art a lovely leaf-
May I not kiss that cheek so fair and tender? '
Her slighted heart welled full of bitter grief,
The rudeness of his words did not offend her,
She felt so sad, so desolate, so deserted,
Oh, if her lonely fate might be averted.

'One little kiss, ' he sighed, 'I ask no more-'
His face was cold, his lips too pale for passion.
She smiled assent; and then bold Frost leaned lower,
And clasped her close, and kissed in lover's fashion.
Her smooth cheek flushed to sudden guilty splendour,
Another kiss, and then sweet surrender.

Just for a day she was a beautiful sight,
The world looked on to pity and admire
This modest little leaf, that in a night
Had seemed to set the forest all on fire.
And then - this victim of a broken trust,
A withered thing, was trodden in the dust.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Fisherman's Baby

Oh hush, little baby, thy papa's at sea;
The big billows rock him as mamma rocks thee.
He hastes to his dear ones o'er billows of foam;
Then sleep, little darling, till papa comes home.
Sleep, little baby; hush, little baby;
Papa is coming, no longer to roam.

The shells and the pebbles, all day tossed about,
Are lulled into sleep by the tide ebbing out.
The tired shore slumbers, stretched out in the sand,
While the waves hurry off at mid-ocean's command.
Then hush, little darling; sleep, little darling;
Sleep, baby, rocked by thy mother's own hand.

The winds that have rollicked all day in the west
Are hushed into sleep on the calm evening's breast.
The boats that were out with the wild sea at play
Are now rocked to sleep in the arms of the bay.
Then rest, little baby; sleep, little baby;
Papa will come at the break of the day.

Sleep, little darling; too soon thou wilt be
A man like thy father, to sail o'er the sea.
Then sleep will not come at thy bidding or prayer,
For thou wilt be harassed by danger and care.
Then sleep, little darling; rest, little baby;
Rest whilst thou may, dear, and sleep whilst thou dare.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Girl's Autumn Reverie

We plucked a red rose, you and I
All in the summer weather;
Sweet its perfume and rare its bloom,
Enjoyed by us together.
The rose is dead, the summer fled,
And bleak winds are complaining;
We dwell apart, but in each heart
We find the thorn remaining.

We sipped a sweet wine, you and I,
All in the summer weather.
The beaded draught we lightly quaffed,
And filled the glass together.
Together we watched its rosy glow,
And saw its bubbles glitter;
Apart, alone, we only know
The lees are very bitter.

We walked in sunshine, you and I,
All in the summer weather.
The very night seemed noonday bright.
When we two were together.
I wonder why with our good-by
O'er hill and vale and meadow
There fell such shade, our paths seemed laid
Forevermore in shadow.

We dreamed a sweet dream, you and I,
All in the summer weather,
Where rose and wine and warm sunshine
Were mingled in together.
We dreamed that June was with us yet,
We woke to find December.
We dreamed that we two could forget,
We woke but to remember.

A Glass Of Wine

'What's in a glass of wine?'
There, set the glass where I can look within.
Now listen to me, friend, while I begin
And tell you what I see-
What I behold with my far-reaching eyes,
And what I know to be
Below the laughing bubbles that arise
Within this glass of wine.
There is a little spirit, night and day,
That cries one word, for ever and alway:
That single word is 'More!'
And whoso drinks a glass of wine, drinks him:
You fill the goblet full unto the brim,
And strive to silence him.

Glass after glass you drain to quench his thirst,
Each glass contains a spirit like the first;
And all their voices cry
Until they shriek and clamor, howl and rave,
And shout 'More!' noisily,
Till welcome death prepares the drunkard's grave,
And stills the imps that rave.

That see I in the wine:
And tears so many that I cannot guess;
And all these drops are labelled with 'Distress.'
I know you cannot see.
And at the bottom are the dregs of shame:
Oh! it is plain to me.
And there are woes too terrible to name:
Now drink your glass of wine.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Golden Day

The subtle beauty of this day
Hangs o'er me like a fairy spell,
And care and grief have flown away,
And every breeze sings, "all is well."
I ask, "Holds earth or sin, or woe?"
My heart replies, "I do not know."

Nay! all we know, or feel, my heart,
Today is joy undimmed, complete;
In tears or pain we have no part;
The act of breathing is so sweet,
We care no higher joy to name.
What reck we now of wealth or fame?

The past--what matters it to me?
The pain it gave has passed away.
The future--that I cannot see!
I care for nothing save today--
This is a respite from all care,
And trouble flies--I know not where.

Go on, oh noisy, restless life!
Pass by, oh, feet that seek for heights!
I have no part in aught of strife;
I do not want your vain delights.
The day wraps round me like a spell
And every breeze sings, "All is well."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Grey Mood

As we hurry away to the end, my friend,
Of this sad little farce called existence,
We are sure that the future will bring one thing,
And that is the grave in the distance.
And so when our lives run along all wrong,
And nothing seems real or certain,
We can comfort ourselves with the thought (or not)
Of that spectre behind the curtain.

But we haven't much time to repine or whine,
Or to wound or jostle each other;
And the hour for us each is to-day, I say,
If we mean to assist a brother.
And there is no pleasure that earth gives birth,
But the worry it brings is double;
And all that repays for the strife of life,
Is helping some soul in trouble.

I tell you, if I could go back the track
To my life's morning hour,
I would not set forth, seeking name or fame,
Or that poor bauble called power.
I would be like the sunlight, and live to give;
I would lend, but I would not borrow;
Nor would I be blind and complain of pain,
Forgetting the meaning of sorrow.

This world is a vaporous jest at best,
Tossed off by the gods in laughter;
And a cruel attempt at wit were it
If nothing better came after.
It is reeking with hearts that ache and break,
Which we ought to comfort and strengthen,
As we hurry away to the end, my friend,
And the shadows behind us lengthen.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Holiday

The Wife

The house is like a garden,
The children are the flowers,
The gardener should come methinks
And walk among his bowers,
Oh! lock the door on worry
And shut your cares away,
Not time of year, but love and cheer,
Will make a holiday.

The Husband

Impossible! You women do not know
The toil it takes to make a business grow.
I cannot join you until very late,
So hurry home, nor let the dinner wait.

The Wife

The feast will be like Hamlet
Without a Hamlet part:
The home is but a house, dear,
Till you supply the heart.
The Xmas gift I long for
You need not toil to buy;
Oh! give me back one thing I lack –
The love-light in your eye.

The Husband

Of course I love you, and the children too.
Be sensible, my dear, it is for you
I work so hard to make my business pay.
There, now, run home, enjoy your holiday.

The Wife (turning)

He does not mean to wound me,
I know his heart is kind.
Alas! that man can love us
And be so blind, so blind.
A little time for pleasure,
A little time for play;

A word to prove the life of love
And frighten care away!
Tho' poor my lot in some small cot
That were a holiday.

The Husband (musing)

She has not meant to wound me, nor to vex –
Zounds! but 'tis difficult to please the sex.
I've housed and gowned her like a very queen
Yet there she goes, with discontented mien.
I gave her diamonds only yesterday:
Some women are like that, do what you may.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Leaf

Somebody said, in the crowd, last eve,
That you were married, or soon to be.
I have not thought of you, I believe,
Since last we parted. Let me see:
Five long Summers have passed since then –
Each has been pleasant in its own way –
And you are but one of a dozen men
Who have played the suitor a Summer day.

But, nevertheless, when I heard your name,
Coupled with some one's, not my own,
There burned in my bosom a sudden flame,
That carried me back to the day that is flown.
I was sitting again by the laughing brook,
With you at my feet, and the sky above,
And my heart was fluttering under your look –
The unmistakable look of Love.

Again your breath, like a South wind, fanned
My cheek, where the blushes came and went;
And the tender clasp of your strong, warm hand
Sudden thrills through my pulses sent.
Again you were mine by Love's decree:
So for a moment it seemed last night,
When somebody mentioned your name to me.

Just for the moment I thought you mine –
Loving me, wooing me, as of old.
The tale remembered seemed half divine –
Though I held it lightly enough when told.
The past seemed fairer than when it was near,
As 'blessings brighten when taking flight, '
And just for the moment I held you near –
When somebody mentioned your name last night.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Lovers' Quarrel

We two were lovers, the Sea and I;
We plighted our troth `neath a summer sky.

And all through the riotous ardent weather
We dreamed, and loved, and rejoiced together.

At times my lover would rage and storm.
I said: 'No matter, his heart is warm.'

Whatever his humour, I loved his ways,
And so we lived though the golden days.

I know not the manner it came about,
But in the autumn we two fell out.

Yet this I know – 'twas the fault of the Sea,
And was not my fault, that he changed to me.

I lingered as long as a woman may
To find what her lover will do or say.

But he met my smiles with a sullen frown,
And so I turned to the wooing Town.

Oh, bold was this suitor, and blithe as bold!
His look was as bright as the Sea's was cold.

As the Sea was sullen, the Town was gay;
He made me forget for a winter day.

For a winter day and a winter night
He laughed my sorrow away from sight.

And yet, in spite of his mirth and cheer,
I knew full well he was insincere.

And when the young buds burst on the tree,
The old love woke in my heart for the Sea.

Pride was forgotten – I knew, I knew,
That the soul of the Sea, like my own, was true.

I heard him calling, and lo! I came,
To find him waiting, for ever the same.

And when he saw me, with murmurs sweet
He ran to meet me, and fell at my feet.

And so again `neath the summer sky
We have plighted our troth, the Sea and I.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Maiden To Her Mirror

He said he loved me! Then he called my hair
Silk threads wherewith sly Cupid strings his bow,
My cheek a rose leaf fallen on new snow;
And swore my round, full throat would bring despair
To Venus or to Psyche.

Time and care

Will fade these locks; the merry god, I know,
Uses no grizzled cords upon his bow.
How will it be when I, no longer fair,
Plead for his kiss with cheeks, whence long ago
The early snowflakes melted quite away,
The rose leaf died – and in whose sallow clay
Lie the deep sunken tracks of life's gaunt crow?

When this full throat shall wattle fold on fold,
Like some ripe peach left drying on a wall,
Or like a spent accordion, when all
Its music has exhaled – will love grow cold?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Maiden's Secret

I have written this day down in my heart
As the sweetest day in the season;
From all of the others I've set it apart---
But I will not tell you the reason,
That is my secret---I must not tell;
But the skies are soft and tender,
And never before, I know full well,
Was the earth so full of splendour.

I sing at my labour the whole day long,
And my heart is as light as a feather;
And there is a reason for my glad song
Besides the beautiful weather.
But I will not tell it to you; and though
That thrush in the maple heard it,
And would shout it aloud if he could, I know
He hasn't the power to word it.

Up, where I was sewing, this morn came one
Who told me the sweetest stories,
He said I had stolen my hair from the sun,
And my eyes from the morning glories.
Grandmother says that I must not believe
A word men say, for they flatter;
But I'm sure he would never try to deceive,
For he told me---but there---no matter!

Last night I was sad, and the world to me
Seemed a lonely and dreary dwelling,
But some one then had not asked me to be---
There now! I am almost telling.
Not another word shall my two lips say,
I will shut them fast together,
And never a mortal shall know to-day
Why my heart is as light as a feather.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Man's Repentance

To-night when I came from the club at eleven,
Under the gaslight I saw a face-
A woman's face! and I swear to heaven
It looked like the ghastly ghost of-Grace!

And Grace? why, Grace was fair; and I tarried,
And loved her a season as we men do.
And then-but pshaw! why, of course, she is married,
Has a husband, and doubtless, a babe or two.

She was perfectly calm on the day we parted;
She spared me a scene, to my great surprise.
She wasn't the kind to be broken-hearted,
I remember she said, with a spark in her eyes.

I was tempted, I know, by her proud defiance,
To make good my promises there and then.
But the world would have called it a *mésalliance*!
I dreaded the comments and sneers of men.

So I left her to grieve for a faithless lover,
And to hide her heart from the cold world's sight
As women do hide them, the wide earth over;
My God! was it Grace that I saw to-night?

I thought of her married, and often with pity,
A poor man's wife in some dull place.
And now to know she is here in the city,
Under the gaslight, and with that face!

Yet I knew it at once, in spite of the daubing
Of paint and powder, and she knew me;
She drew a quick breath that was almost sobbing,

And shrank in the shade so I should not see.

There was hell in her eyes! She was worn and jaded;
Her soul is at war with the life she has led.
As I looked on that face so strangely faded,
I wonder God did not strike me dead.

While I have been happy and gay and jolly,
Received by the very best people in town,
That girl whom I led in the way to folly,
Has gone on recklessly down and down.

Two o'clock, and no sleep has found me.
That face I saw in the street-lamp's light
Peers everywhere out from the shadows around me-
I know how a murderer feels to-night!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A March Snow

Let the old snow be covered with the new:
The trampled snow, so soiled, and stained, and sodden.
Let it be hidden wholly from our view
By pure white flakes, all trackless and untrodden.
When Winter dies, low at the sweet Spring's feet
Let him be mantled in a clean, white sheet.

Let the old life be covered by the new:
The old past life so full of sad mistakes,
Let it be wholly hidden from the view
By deeds as white and silent as snow-flakes.

Ere this earth life melts in the eternal Spring
Let the white mantle of repentance fling
Soft drapery about it, fold on fold,
Even as the new snow covers up the old.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Marine Etching

A yacht from its harbour ropes pulled free,
And leaped like a steed o'er the race track blue,
Then up behind her, the dust of the sea,
A gray fog, drifted, and hid her from view.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Married Coquette

Sit still, I say, and dispense with heroics!
I hurt your wrists? Well, you have hurt me.
It is time you found out that all men are not stoics,
Nor toys to be used as your mood may be.
I will not let go of your hands, nor leave you
Until I have spoken. No man, you say,
Dared ever so treat you before? I believe you,
For you have dealt only with boys till to-day.

You women lay stress on your fine perception,
Your intuitions are prated about;
You claim an occult sort of conception
Of matters which men must reason out.
So then, of course, when you asked me kindly
'To call again soon,' you read my heart.
I cannot believe you were acting blindly;
You saw my passion for you from the start.

You are one of those women who charm without trying;
The clay you are made of is magnet ore,
And I am the steel; yet, there's no denying
You led me to loving you more and more.
You are fanning a flame that may burn too brightly,
Oft easily kindled, but hard to put out;
I am not a man to be played with lightly,
To come at a gesture and go at a pout.

A brute you call me, a creature inhuman;
You say I insult you, and bid me go.
And you? Oh, you are a saintly woman,
With thoughts as pure as the drifted snow.
Pah! you are but one of a thousand beauties
Who think they are living exemplary lives.
They break no commandments, and do all their duties
As Christian women and spotless wives.

But with drooping of lids, and lifting of faces,
And baring of shoulders, and well-timed sighs,
And the devil knows what other subtle graces,
You are mental wantons, who sin with the eyes.
You lure love to wake, yet bid it keep under,
You tempt us to fall, but bid reason control;
And then you are full of an outraged wonder
When we get to wanting you, body and soul.

Why, look at yourself! You were no stranger
To the fact that my heart was already on fire.
When you asked me to call you knew my danger,
Yet here you are, dressed in the gown I admire;
For half of the evil on earth is invented
By vain, pretty women with nothing to do
But to keep themselves manicured, powdered and scented,
And seek for sensations amusing and new.

But when I play at love at a lady's commanding,
I always am certain to win one game;
So there-there-there! I will leave my branding
On the lips that are free now to cry 'Shame, shame!'
You hate me? Quite likely! It does not surprise me.
Brute force? I confess it; but still you were kissed;
And one thing is certain-you cannot despise me
For having been played with, controlled, and dismissed.

And the next time you see that a man is attracted
By the beauty and graces that are not for him,
Don't lead him on to be half distracted;
Keep out of deep waters although you can swim.
For when he is caught in the whirlpool of passion,
Where many bold swimmers are seen to drown,
A man will reach out and, in desperate fashion,
Will drag whoever is nearest him down.

Though the strings of his heart may be wrenched and riven

By a maiden coquette who has led him along,
She can be pardoned, excused and forgiven,
For innocence blindfolded walks into wrong.
But she who has willingly taken the fetter
That Cupid forges at Hymen's command-
Well, she is the woman who ought to know better;
She needs no mercy at any man's hand.

In the game of hearts, though a woman be winner,
The odds are ever against her, you know;
The world is ready to call her a sinner,
And man is ready to make her so.
Shame is likely, and sorrow is certain,
And the man has the best of it, end as it may.
So now, my lady, we'll drop the curtain,
And put out the lights. We are through with our play.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Meeting

Quite carelessly I turned the newsy sheet;
A song I sang, full many a year ago,
Smiled up at me, as in a busy street
One meets an old-time friend he used to know.
So full it was, that simple little song,
Of all the hope, the transport, and the truth,
Which to the impetuous morn of life belong,
That once again I seemed to grasp my youth.
So full it was of that sweet, fancied pain
We woo and cherish ere we meet with woe,
I felt as one who hears a plaintive strain
His mother sang him in the long ago.
Up from the grave the years that lay between
That song's birthday and my stern present came
Like phantom forms and swept across the scene,
Bearing their broken dreams of love and fame.
Fair hopes and bright ambitions that I knew
In that old time, with their ideal grace,
Shone for a moment, then were lost to view
Behind the dull clouds of the commonplace.
With trembling hands I put the sheet away;
Ah, little song! the sad and bitter truth
Struck like an arrow when we met that day!
My life has missed the promise of its youth.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Mother's Wail

The sweet young Spring walks over the earth,
It flushes and glows on moor and lea;
The birds are singing in careless mirth,
The brook flows cheerily on to the sea;
And I know that the flowers are blooming now
Over my beautiful darling's brow:
Blooming and blowing in perfume now
Over my poor lost darling's brow.

The breath of the passionate Summer turns
The green of the hills to a deeper dye;
The wind from the south land blows and burns,
The sun grows red in the brazen sky;
And I know that the long, dank grasses wave
Over my beautiful darling's grave:
Rise and fall, and lift and wave
Over my darling's narrow grave.

The days flow on, and the summer dies,
And glorious Autumn takes the crown;
And toward the south the robin flies,
And the green of the hills grows dull and brown;
And the leaves, all purple, and gold, and red,
Drift over my precious darling's bed:
Drift and flutter, all gold and red,
Over my darling's lowly bed.

The Winter comes with its chilling snows,
And wraps the world in a spotless shroud;
And cold from the north the wild wind blows,
And the tempest rages fierce and loud;
It shrieks, and sobs, and sighs, and weeps
Over the mound where my darling sleeps:
In pity, it sobs, and sighs, and weeps
Over the mound where my lost one sleeps.

He was so young, and fair, and brave:
The pride of my bosom-my heart's best joy;
And he lieth now in a drunkard's grave;
My beautiful darling, my only boy:
But down in my heart of hearts, I know
He has gone where his tempters never can go:
To heaven his soul has gone, I know,
Where the soul of his tempters never can go.

They charmed him into their licensed hell,
They gave him rum, and his eye grew wild;
And lower and lower down he fell,
Till they made a fiend of my precious child:
May the curses of God fall on the soul
Who gave my darling the poison bowl!
Ay, curses dark and deep on the soul
Who tempted my darling to lift the bowl!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Naughty Little Comet

There was a little comet who lived near the Milky Way!
She loved to wander out at night and jump about and play.

The mother of the comet was a very good old star;
She used to scold her reckless child for venturing out too far.

She told her of the ogre, Sun, who loved on stars to sup,
And who asked no better pastime than in gobbling comets up.

But instead of growing cautious and of showing proper fear,
The foolish little comet edged up nearer, and more near.

She switched her saucy tail along right where the Sun could see,
And flirted with old Mars, and was as bold as bold could be.

She laughed to scorn the quiet stars who never frisked about;
She said there was no fun in life unless you ventured out.

She liked to make the planets stare, and wished no better mirth
Than just to see the telescopes aimed at her from the Earth.

She wondered how so many stars could mope through nights and days,
And let the sickly faced old Moon get all the love and praise.

And as she talked and tossed her head and switched her shining trail
The staid old mother star grew sad, her cheek grew wan and pale.

For she had lived there in the skies a million years or more,
And she had heard gay comets talk in just this way before.

And by and by there came an end to this gay comet's fun.
She went a tiny bit too far-and vanished in the Sun!

No more she swings her shining trail before the whole world's sight,
But quiet stars she laughed to scorn are twinkling every night.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Picture

I strolled last eve across the lonely down;
One solitary picture struck my eye:
A distant ploughboy stood against the sky—
How far he seemed above the noisy town!
Upon the bosom of a cloud the sod
Laid its bruised cheek as he moved slowly by,
And, watching him, I asked myself if I
In very truth stood half as near to God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Pin

Oh, I know a certain lady who is reckoned with the good,
Yet she fills me with more terror than a raging lion would.
The little chills run up and down my spine whene'er we meet,
Though she seems a gentle creature, and she's very trim and neat.

And she has a thousand virtues and not one acknowledged sin,
But she is the sort of person you could liken to a pin.
And she pricks you and she sticks you in a way that can't be said.
If you seek for what has hurt you – why, you cannot find the head.

But she fills you with discomfort and exasperating pain.
If anybody asks you why, you really can't explain!
A pin is such a tiny thing, of that there is no doubt,
Yet when it's sticking in your flesh you're wretched till it's out.

She's wonderfully observing – when she meets a pretty girl,
She is always sure to tell her if her hair is out of curl;
And she is so sympathetic to her friend who's much admires,
She is often heard remarking, 'Dear, you look so worn and tired.'

And she is an honest critic, for on yesterday she eyed
The new dress I was airing with a woman's natural pride,
And she said, 'Oh, how becoming!' and then gently added, 'it
Is really a misfortune that the basque is such a fit.'

Then she said, 'If you heard me yester eve, I'm sure, my friend,
You would say I was a champion who knows how to defend.'
And she left me with the feeling – most unpleasant, I aver –
That the whole world would despise me is it hadn't been for her.

Whenever I encounter her, in such a nameless way
She gives me the impression I am at my worst that day.
And the hat that was imported (and cost me half a sonnet) ,
With just one glance from her round eyes becomes a Bowery bonnet.

She is always bright and smiling, sharp and pointed for a thrust;
Use does not seem to blunt her point, nor does she gather rust.
Oh! I wish some hapless specimen of mankind would begin
To tidy up the world for me, by picking up this pin!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Sculptor

As the ambitious sculptor, tireless, lifts
Chisel and hammer to the block at hand,
Before my half-formed character I stand
And ply the shining tools of mental gifts.
I'll cut away a huge, unsightly side
Of selfishness, and smooth to curves of grace
The angles of ill-temper.
And no trace
Shall my sure hammer leave of silly pride.
Chip after chip must fall from vain desires,
And the sharp corners of my discontent
Be rounded into symmetry, and lent
Great harmony by faith that never tires.
Unfinished still, I must toil on and on,
Till the pale critic, Death, shall say, 'Tis done.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Servian Legend

Long, long ago, ere yet our race began,
When earth was empty, waiting still for man,
Before the breath of life to him was given
The angels fell into a strife in heaven.

At length one furious demon grasped the sun
And sped away as fast as he could run,
And with a ringing laugh of fiendish mirth,
He leaped the battlements and fell to earth.

Dark was it then in heaven, but light below;
For there the demon wandered to and fro,
Tilting aloft upon a slender pole
The orb of day-the pilfering old soul.

The angels wept and wailed; but through the dark
The Great Creator's voice cried sternly: sternly: 'Hark!
Who will restore to me the orb of Light,
Him will I honor in all heaven's sight.'

Then over the battlements there dropped another.
(A shrewder angel well there could not be.)
Quoth he: 'Behold my love for thee, my brother,
For I have left all heaven to stay with thee.

'Thy loneliness and wanderings I will share,
Thy heavy burden I will help thee bear.'
'Well said,' the demon answered, 'and well done,
But I'll not tax you with this heavy sun.

'Your company will cheer me, it is true,
And I could never think of burdening you.'
Idly they wandered onward, side by side,

Till, by and by, they neared a silvery tide.

'Let's bathe,' the angel suddenly suggested.
'Agreed,' the demon answered. 'I'll go last,
Because I needs must leave quite unmolested
This tiresome sun, which I will now make fast.'

He set the pole well in the sandy turf,
And called a jackdaw near to watch the place.
Meanwhile the angel paddled in the surf,
And playfully dared his brother to a race.

They swam around together for awhile,
The demon always keeping near his prize,
Till presently the angel, with a smile,
Proposed a healthful diving exercise.

The demon hesitated. 'But,' thought he,
'The jackdaw will inform me with a cry
If this good brother tries deceiving me;
I will not be outdone by him-not I!'

Down, down they went. The angel in a trice
Rose up again, and swift to shore he sped.
The jackdaw shrieked, but lo! a mile of ice
The demon found had frozen o'er his head.

He swore an oath, and gathered all his force,
And broke the ice, to see the sun, of course,
Held firmly in the radiant angel's hand,
Who sailed away toward the heavenly land.

He gave pursuit. Wrath lent speed to his chase;
All heaven leaned down to watch the exciting race.
On, on they came, and still the Evil One

Gained on the angel burdened with the sun.

With bated breath and faces white as ghosts,
Over the walls leaned heaven's affrighted hosts.
Up, up, still up, the angel almost spent,
Threw one foot forward o'er the battlement.

The demon seized the other with a shout;
So fierce his clutch he pulled the bottom out,
As the good angel, fainting, laid the sun
Down by the throne of God, who cried: 'Well done!
Thy great misfortune shall be made divine:
Man will I create with a foot like thine!'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Song Of Life

In the rapture of life and of living,
I lift up my head and rejoice,
And I thank the great Giver for giving
The soul of my gladness a voice.
In the glow of the glorious weather,
In the sweet-scented, sensuous air,
My burdens seem light as a feather –
They are nothing to bear.

In the strength and the glory of power,
In the pride and the pleasure of wealth
(For who dares dispute me my dower
Of talents and youth-time and health?) ,
I can laugh at the world and its sages –
I am greater than seers who are sad,
For he is most wise in all ages
Who knows how to be glad.

I lift up my eyes to Apollo,
The god of the beautiful days,
And my spirit soars off like a swallow,
And is lost in the light of its rays.
Are you troubled and sad? I beseech you
Come out of the shadows of strife –
Come out in the sun while I teach you
The secret of life.

Come out of the world – come above it –
Up over its crosses and graves,
Though the green earth is fair and I love it,
We must love it as masters, not slaves.
Come up where the dust never rises –
But only the perfume of flowers –
And your life shall be glad with surprises
Of beautiful hours.
Come up where the rare golden wine is
Apollo distills in my sight,
And your life shall be happy as mine is,
And as full of delight.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Suggestion

As I go and shop, sir!
If a car I stop, sir!
Where you chance to sit,
And you want to read, sir!
Never mind or heed, sir!
I'll not care a bit.

For it's now aesthetic
To be quite athletic.
That's our fad, you know.
I can hold the strap, sir!
And keep off your lap, sir!
As we jolting go.

If you read on blindly,
I shall take it kindly,
All the car's not mine.
But, if you sit and stare, sir!
At my eyes and hair, sir!
I must draw the line.

If the stare is meant, sir!
For a compliment, sir!
As we jog through town,
Allow me to suggest, sir!
A woman oft looks best, sir!
When she's sitting down.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Tumbler Of Claret

I poured out a tumbler of Claret,
Of course with intention to drink,
And, holding it up in the sunlight,
I paused for a moment to think.
I really can't tell you what made me;
I never had done so before,
Though for years, every day at my dinner,
I had emptied one tumbler or more.

'A friend' in the loneliest hours,
'A companion,' I called the red wine,
And sometimes I poetized slightly,
And called it a 'nectar divine.'
But to-day as I gazed at the claret,
That sparkled and glowed in the sun,
I asked it, 'What have you done for me,
That any true friend would have done?

'You have given me some pleasant feelings,
But they always were followed by pain.
You have given me ten thousand headaches,
And are ready to do it again.
You have set my blood leaping and bounding,
Which, though pleasant, was hurtful, no doubt,
And, if I keep up the acquaintance,
I am sure you will give me the gout.

'I remember a certain occasion,
When you caused me to act like a fool.
And, yes, I remember another
When you made me fall into a pool.
And there was Tom Smithers-you killed him!
Will Howard you made a poor knave.
Both my friends! and I might count a
dozen

You have sent to the prison or grave.

'Is this like a loyal friend's treatment?
And are you deserving the name?
Say! what do you give those who love you
But poverty, sorrow, and shame?
A few paltry moments of pleasure,
And ages of trouble and grief.
No wonder you blush in the sunlight,
You robber, you liar, you thief!

'I will have nothing more to do with you,
From this moment, this hour, this day.
To send you adrift, bag and baggage,
I know is the only safe way.'
And I poured out that tumbler of claret,
Poured it
out
, and not
down
, on the spot.
And all this you see was accomplished,
By a few sober moments of thought.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Waif

My soul is like a poor caged bird to-night,
Beating its wings against the prison bars,
Longing to reach the outer world of light,
And, all untrammelled, soar among the stars.
Wild, mighty thoughts struggle within my soul
For utterance. Great waves of passion roll
Through all my being. As the lightnings play
Through thunder clouds, so beams of blinding light
Flash for a moment on my darkened brain -
Quick, sudden, glaring beams, that fade away
And leave me in a darker, deeper night.

Oh, poet soul! that struggle all in vain
To live in peace and harmony with earth,
It cannot be! They must endure the pain
Of conscience and unacknowledged worth,
Moving and dwelling with the common herd,
Whose highest thought has never strayed as far,
Or never strayed beyond the horizon's bar;
Whose narrow hearts and souls are never stirred
With keenest pleasures, or with sharpest pain;
Who rise and eat and sleep, and rise again,
Nor question why or wherefore. Men whose minds
Are never shaken by wild passion winds;

Women whose broadest, deepest realm of thought
The bridal veil will cover.

Who see not
God's mighty work lying undone to-day, -
Work that a woman's hands can do as well,
Oh, soul of mine; better to live away
In this tumultuous inward pain and strife,
Doing the work that in thy reach doth fall,
Weeping because thou canst not do it all;
Oh, better, my soul, in this unrest to dwell,
Than grovel as they grovel on through life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Waltz-Quadrille

The band was playing a waltz-quadrille,
I felt as light as a wind-blown feather,
As we floated away, at the caller's will,
Through the intricate, mazy dance together.
Like mimic armies our lines were meeting,
Slowly advancing, and then retreating,
All decked in their bright array;
And back and forth to the music's rhyme
We moved together, and all the time
I knew you were going away.

The fold of your strong arm sent a thrill
From heart to brain as we gently glided
Like leaves on the wave of that waltz-quadrille;
Parted, met, and again divided –
You drifting one way, and I another,
Then suddenly turning and facing each other,
Then off in the blithe chasse.
Then airily back to our places swaying,
While every beat of the music seemed saying
That you were going away.

I said to my heart, 'Let us take our fill
Of mirth, and music, and love, and laughter;
For it all must end with this waltz-quadrille,
And life will never be the same life after.
Oh that the caller might go on calling!
Oh that the music might go on falling
Like a shower of silver spray,
While we whirled on to the vast Forever,
Where no hearts break, and no ties sever,
And no one goes away!

A clamour, a crash, and the band was still,
'Twas the end of the dream, and the end of the measure:
The last low notes of that waltz-quadrille
Seemed like a dirge o'er the death of Pleasure.
You said good-night, and the spell was over –
Too warm for a friend, and too cold for a lover –

There was nothing else to say;
But the lights looked dim, and the dancers weary,
And the music was sad and the hall was dreary,
After you went away.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A Woman's Love

So vast the tide of Love within me surging,
It overflows like some stupendous sea,
The confines of the Present and To-be;
And 'gainst the Past's high wall I feel it urging,
As it would cry "Thou too shalt yield to me!"

All other loves my supreme love embodies;
I would be she on whose soft bosom nursed
Thy clinging infant lips to quench their thirst;
She who trod close to hidden worlds where God is,
That she might have, and hold, and see thee first.

I would be she who stirred the vague fond fancies,
Of thy still childish heart; who through bright days
Went sporting with thee in the old-time plays,
And caught the sunlight of thy boyish glances
In half-forgotten and long-buried Mays.

Forth to the end, and back to the beginning,
My love would send its inundating tide,
Wherein all landmarks of thy past should hide.
If thy life's lesson must be learned through sinning,
My grieving virtue would become thy guide.

For I would share the burden of thy errors,
So when the sun of our brief life had set,
If thou didst walk in darkness and regret,
E'en in that shadowy world of nameless terrors,
My soul and thine should be companions yet.

And I would cross with thee those troubled oceans
Of dark remorse whose waters are despair:
All things my jealous reckless love would dare,
So that thou mightst not recollect emotions
In which it did not have a part and share.

There is no limit to my love's full measure,
Its spirit gold is shaped by earth's alloy;
I would be friend and mother, mate and toy,

I'd have thee look to me for every pleasure,
And in me find all memories of joy.

Yet though I love thee in such selfish fashion,
I would wait on thee, sitting at thy feet,
And serving thee, if thou didst deem it meet.
And couldst thou give me one fond hour of passion,
I'd take that hour and call my life complete.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

A World Worth Living In

One who claims that he knows about it
Tells me the earth is a vale of sin;
But I and the bees, and the birds we doubt it,
And think it a world worth living in.

Whatever you want, if you wish for it long,
With constant yearning and ceaseless desire,
If your wish soars upward on wings so strong
That they never grow languid, never tire,
Why, over the storm cloud and out of the dark
It will come flying some day to you,
As the dove with the olive branch flew to the ark,
And the wish you've been dreaming,
it will come true.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

About May

One night Nurse Sleep held out her hand
To tired little May.
'Come, go with me to Wonderland,'
She said, 'I know the way.
Just rock-a-by-hum-m-m,
And lo! we come
To the place where the dream-girls play.'

But naughty May, she wriggled away
From Sleep's soft arms, and said:
'I must stay awake till I eat my cake,
And then I will go to bed;
With a by-lo, away I will go.'
But the good nurse shook her head.

She shook her head and away she sped,
While May sat munching her crumb.
But after the cake there came an ache,
Though May cried: 'Come, Sleep, come,
And it's oh! my! let us by-lo-by'-
All save the echoes were dumb.

She ran after Sleep toward Wonderland,
Ran till the morning light;
And just as she caught her and grasped her hand,
A nightmare gave her a fright.
And it's by-lo, I hope she'll know
Better another night.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Acquaintance

Not we who daily walk the City's street;
Not those who have been cradled in its heart,
Best understand its architectural art,
Or realise its grandeur. Oft we meet
Some stranger who has stayed his passing feet
And lingered with us for a single hour,
And learned more of cathedral, and of tower,
Than we, who deem our knowledge quite complete.

Not always those we hold most loved and dear,
Not always those who dwell with us, know best
Our greater selves. Because they stand so near
They cannot see the lofty mountain crest,
The gleaming sun-kissed height, which fair and dear
Stands forth-revealed unto the some-time guest.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ad Finum

On the white throat of useless passion
That scorched my soul with its burning breath
I clutched my fingers in murderous fashion
And gathered them close in a grip of death;

For why should I fan, or feed with fuel,
A love that showed me but blank despair?
So my hold was firm, and my grasp was cruel -
I meant to strangle it then and there!

I thought it was dead. But, with no warning,
It rose from its grave last night and came
And stood by my bed till the early morning.
And over and over it spoke your name.

Its throat was red where my hands had held it;
It burned my brow with its scorching breath;
And I said, the moment my eyes beheld it,
'A love like this can know no death.'

For just one kiss that your lips have given
In the lost and beautiful past to me,
I would gladly barter my hopes of Heaven
And all the bliss of Eternity.

For never a joy are the angels keeping,
To lay at my feet in Paradise,
Like that of into your strong arms creeping,
And looking into your love lit eyes.

I know, in the way that sins are reckoned,
This thought is a sin of the deepest dye;
But I know too that if an angel beckoned,
Standing close by the Throne on High,
And you, adown by the gates infernal,
Should open your loving arms and smile,
I would turn my back on things supernal,
To lie on your breast a little while.

To know for an hour you were mine completely-
Mine in body and soul, my own-
I would bear unending tortures sweetly,
With not a murmur and not a moan.

A lighter sin or lesser error
Might change through hope or fear divine;
But there is no fear, and hell hath no terror,
To change or alter a love like mine.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Advice

I must do as you do? Your way I own
Is a very good way, and still,
There are sometimes two straight roads to a town,
One over, one under the hill.

You are treading the safe and the well-worn way,
That the prudent choose each time;
And you think me reckless and rash to-day
Because I prefer to climb.

Your path is the right one, and so is mine.
We are not like peas in a pod,
Compelled to lie in a certain line,
Or else be scattered abroad.

'T were a dull old world, methinks, my friend,
If we all just went one way;
Yet our paths will meet no doubt at the end,
Though they lead apart today.

You like the shade, and I like the sun;
You like an even pace,
I like to mix with the crowd and run,
And then rest after the race.

I like danger, and storm, and strife,
You like a peaceful time;
I like the passion and surge of life,
You like its gentle rhyme.

You like buttercups, dewy sweet,
And crocuses, framed in snow;
I like roses, born of the heat,
And the red carnation's glow.

I must live my life, not yours, my friend,
For so it was written down;
We must follow our given paths to the end,
But I trust we shall meet--in town.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

After The Engagement

Well, Mabel, 'tis over and ended---
The ball I wrote was to be;
And oh! it was perfectly splendid---
If you could have been here to see.
I've a thousand things to write you
That I know you are wanting to hear,
And one, that is sure to delight you---
I am wearing Joe's diamond, my dear!

Yes, mamma is quite ecstatic
That I am engaged to Joe;
She thinks I am rather erratic,
And feared that I might say "no."
But, Mabel, I'm twenty-seven
(Though nobody dreams it, dear),
And a fortune like Joe's isn't given
To lay at one's feet each year.

You know my old fancy for Harry---
Or, at least, I am certain you guessed
That it took all my sense not to marry
And go with that fellow out west.
But that was my very first season---
And Harry was poor as could be,
And mamma's good practical reason
Took all the romance out of me.

She whisked me off over the ocean,
And had me presented at court,
And got me all out of the notion
That ranch life out west was my forte.
Of course I have never repented---
I'm not such a goose of a thing;
But after I had consented
To Joe---and he gave me the ring---

I felt such a queer sensation.
I seemed to go into a trance,
Away from the music's pulsation,

Away from the lights and the dance.
And the wind o'er the wild prairie
Seemed blowing strong and free,
And it seemed not Joe, but Harry
Who was standing there close to me.

And the funniest feverish feeling
Went up from my feet to my head,
With little chills after it stealing---
And my hands got as numb as the dead.
A moment, and then it was over:
The diamond blazed up in my eyes,
And I saw in the face of my lover
A questioning, strange surprise.

Maybe 'twas the scent of the flowers,
That heavy with fragrance bloomed near,
But I didn't feel natural for hours;
It was odd now, wasn't it, dear?
Write soon to your fortunate Clara
Who has carried the prize away,
And say you'll come on when I marry;
I think it will happen in May.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Alcohol's Requiem Upon Prof. P. F. K., A Gifted Man, Who Died A Victim Of Strong Drink

Ho! ho! Father Death! I have won you another!
Another grand soul I have ruined and taken;
I, who am licensed by good Christian people,
Eat and eat at their souls till by angels forsaken:
I spoil them, I soil them, and past all reclaiming
They fall, sick with sins that are too black for naming.

Ho! ho! Father Death! count me as your best man:
I bring you more souls than famine or battle.
Let pestilence rage! it will last but a season,
And the soft voice of peace stills the cannon's loud rattle;
But I, pausing never, with ceaseless endeavor,
Night and day, day and night, I am toiling for ever.

Ho! ho! Father Death! I have brought you my thousands:
Good people help me, license, uphold me,
Gaze on some victim I stole from their household-
Gaze, and upbraid the foul demon that sold me.
Ah! but they helped him-argued and voted
Till license was granted, and I was promoted.

Ho! ho! Father Death! is he not a grand victim?
I bring you souls that are well worth the winning-
Noble and brave, with the rare gifts of heaven;
But I eat them away and pollute them with sinning.
Now, but for me there would be few above him,
Honored and prized by the dear ones who love him.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

All Roads That Lead To God Are Good

All roads that lead to God are good.
What matters it, your faith, or mine?
Both centre at the goal divine
Of love's eternal Brotherhood.

The kindly life in house or street –
The life of prayer and mystic rite –
The student's search for truth and light –
These paths at one great Junction meet.

Before the oldest book was writ,
Full many a prehistoric soul
Arrived at this unchanging goal,
Through changeless Love, that leads to it.

What matters that one found his Christ
In rising sun, or burning fire?
In faith within him did not tire,
His longing for the Truth sufficed.

Before our modern hell was brought
To edify the modern world,
Full many a hate-filled soul was hurled
In lakes of fire by its own thought.

A thousand creeds have come and gone,
But what is that to you or me?
Creeds are but branches of a tree –
The root of love lives on and on.

Though branch by branch proved withered wood,
The root is warm with precious wine.
Then keep your faith, and leave me mine –
All roads that lead to God are good.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

All That Love Asks

All that I ask, 'says Love, 'is just to stand
And gaze, unchided, deep in thy dear eyes;
For in their depths lies largest Paradise.

Yet, if perchance one pressure of thy hand
Be granted me, then joy I thought complete
Were still more sweet.

'All that I ask, ' says Love, 'all that I ask,
Is just thy hand clasp. Could I brush thy cheek
As zephyrs brush a rose leaf, words are weak
To tell the bliss in which my soul would bask.
There is no language but would desecrate
A joy so great.

'All that I ask, is just one tender touch
Of that soft cheek. Thy pulsing palm in mine,
Thy dark eyes lifted in a trust divine
And those curled lips that tempt me overmuch
Turned where I may not seize the supreme bliss
Of one mad kiss.

'All that I ask, ' says Love, 'of life, of death,
Or of high heaven itself, is just to stand,
Glance melting into glance, hand twined in hand,
The while I drink the nectar of thy breath,
In one sweet kiss, but one, of all thy store,
I ask no more.'

'All that I ask'-nay, self-deceiving Love,
Reverse thy phrase, so thus the words may fall,
In place of 'all I ask, ' say, 'I ask all, '
All that pertains to earth or soars above,
All that thou wert, art, will be, body, soul,
Love asks the whole.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Always At Sea

Always at sea I think about the dead.
On barques invisible they seem to sail
The self-same course; and from the decks cry 'Hail'!
Then I recall old words that they have said,
And see their faces etched upon the mist-
Dear faces I have kissed.

Always the dead seem very close at sea.
The coarse vibrations of the earth debar
Our spirit friends from coming where we are.
But through God's ether, unimpeded, free,
They wing their way, the ocean deeps above-
And find the hearts that love.

Always at sea my dead come very near.
A growing host; some old in spirit lore,
And some who crossed to find the other shore
But yesterday. All, all, I see and hear
With inner senses, while the voice of faith
Proclaims-there is no death.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ambition's Trail

If all the end of this continuous striving
Were simply to attain,
How poor would seem the planning and contriving
The endless urging and the hurried driving
Of body, heart and brain!

But ever in the wake of true achieving,
There shine this glowing trail –
Some other soul will be spurred on, conceiving,
New strength and hope, in its own power believing,
Because thou didst not fail.

Not thine alone the glory, nor the sorrow,
If thou doth miss the goal,
Undreamed of lives in many a far to-morrow
From thee their weakness or their force shall borrow –
Oh, on, ambitious soul.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

American Boys, Hello!

Oh! we love all the French, and we speak in French
As along through France we go.
But the moments to us that are keen and sweet
Are the ones when our khaki boys we meet,
Stalwart and handsome and trim and neat;
And we call to them-'Boys, hello!'
'Hello, American boys,
Luck to you, and life's best joys!
American boys, hello!'

We couldn't do that if we were at home-
It never would do you know!
For there you must wait till you're told who's who,
And to meet in the way that nice folks do.
Though you knew his name, and your name he knew-
You never would say 'Hello, hello, American boy!'
But here it's just a joy,
As we pass along in the stranger throng,
To call out, 'Boys, hello!'

For each is a brother away from home;
And this we are sure is so,
There's a lonesome spot in his heart somewhere,
And we want him to feel there are friends
right there

In this foreign land, and so we dare
To call out 'Boys, hello!'
'Hello, American boys,
Luck to you, and life's best joys!
American boys, hello!'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

An Answer

If all the year was summer-time,
And all the aim of life
Was just to lilt on like a rhyme –
Then I would be your wife.

If all the days were August days,
And crowned with golden weather,
How happy then through green-clad ways
We two could stray together!

If all the nights were moonlit nights,
And we had naught to do
But just to sit and plan delights,
Then I would be with you.

If life was all a summer fete,
Its soberest pace the "glide, "
Then I would choose you for my mate,
And keep you at my side.

But winter makes full half the year,
And labour half of life,
And all the laughter and good cheer
Gives place to wearing strife.

Days will grow cold, and moons wax old,
And then a heart that's true
Is better far than grace or gold –
And so, my love, adieu!
I cannot wed with you.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

An Empty Crib

Beside a crib that holds a baby's stocking,
A tattered picture book, a broken toy,
A sleeping mother dreams that she is rocking
Her fair-haired cherub boy.

Upon the cradle's side her light touch keeping,
She gently rocks it, crooning low a song;
And smiles to think her little one is sleeping,
So peacefully and long.

Step light, breathe low, break not her rapturous dreaming,
Wake not the sleeper from her trance of joy,
For never more save in sweet slumber-seeming
Will she watch o'er her little boy.

God pity her when from her dream Elysian
She wakes to see the empty crib, and weep;
Knowing her joy was but a sleeper's vision,
Tread lightly – let her sleep.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

An Episode

Along a narrow Moorish street
A blue-eyed soldier strode.
(Ah, well-a-day.)
Veiled from her lashes to her feet
She stepped from her abode,
(Ah, lack-a-day.)

Now love may guard a favoured wife
Who leaves the harem door;
(Ah, well-a-day.)
But hungry hearted is her life
When she is one of four.
(Ah, lack-a-day.)

If black eyes glow with sudden fire
And meet warm eyes of blue-
(Ah, well-a-day.)
The old, old story of desire
Repeats itself anew.
(Ah, lack-a-day.)

When bugles blow the soldier flies-
Though bitter tears may fall
(Ah, lack-a-day.)

A Moorish child with blue, blue eyes
Plays in the harem hall.

(Ah, well-a-day.)

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

An Inspiration

However the battle is ended,
Though proudly the victor comes
With fluttering flags and prancing nags
And echoing roll of drums.
Still truth proclaims this motto,
In letters of living light, -
No Question is ever settled,
Until it is settled right.

Though the heel of the strong oppressor
May grind the weak to dust,
And the voices of fame with one acclaim
May call him great and just,
Let those who applaud take warning,
And keep this motto in sight, -
No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

Let those who have failed take courage;
Tho' the enemy seems to have won,
Tho' his ranks are strong, if he be in the wrong
The battle is not yet done;
For, as sure as the morning follows
The darkest hour of the night,
No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

O man bowed down with labor!
O woman, young, yet old!
O heart oppressed in the toiler's breast
And crushed by the power of gold!
Keep on with your weary battle
Against triumphant might;
No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

An Old Man To His Sleeping Young Bride

As when the old moon lighted by the tender
And radiant crescent of the new is seen,
And for a moment's space suggests the splendor
Of what in its full prime it once has been,
So on my waning years you cast the glory
Of youth and pleasure, for a little hour;
And life again seems like an unread story,
And joy and hope both stir me with their power.

Can blooming June be fond of bleak December?
I dare not wait to hear my heart reply.
I will forget the question-and remember
Alone the priceless feast spread for mine eye,
That radiant hair that flows across the pillows,
Like shimmering sunbeams over drifts of snow;
Those heaving breasts, like undulating billows,
Whose dangers or delights but Love can know,

That crimson mouth from which sly Cupid borrowed
The pattern for his bow, nor asked consent;
That smooth, unruffled brow which has not sorrowed-
All these are mine; should I not be content?
Yet are these treasures mine, or only lent me?
And, who shall claim them when I pass away?
Oh, jealous Fate, to torture and torment me
With thoughts like these in my too fleeting day!

For while I gained the prize which all were seeking,
And won you with the ardor of my quest,
The bitter truth I know without your speaking-
You only let me love you at the best.
E'en while I lean and count my riches over,
And view with gloating eyes your priceless charms,
I know somewhere there dwells the unnamed lover
Who yet shall clasp you, willing, in his arms.

And while my hands stray through your clustering tresses,
And while my lips are pressed upon your own,
This unseen lover waits for such caresses

As my poor hungering clay has never known,
And when some day, between you and your duty
A green grave lies, his love shall make you glad,
And you shall crown him with your splendid beauty-
Ah, God! ah, God! 'tis this way men go mad!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Angel Or Demon

You call me an angel of love and of light,
A being of goodness and heavenly fire,
Sent out from God's kingdom to guide you aright,
In paths where your spirits may mount and aspire.
You say that I glow like a star on its course,
Like a ray from the altar, a spark from the source.

Now list to my answer; let all the world hear it;
I speak unafraid what I know to be true:
A pure, faithful love is the creative spirit
Which makes women angels! I live in but you.
We are bound soul to soul by life's holiest laws;
If I am an angel – why, you are the cause.

As my ship skims the sea, I look up from the deck.
Fair, firm at the wheel shines Love's beautiful form,
And shall I curse the barque that last night went to wreck,
By the Pilot abandoned to darkness and storm?
My craft is no stauncher, she too had been lost –
Had the wheelman deserted, or slept at his post.

I laid down the wealth of my soul at your feet
(Some woman does this for some man every day) .
No desperate creature who walks in the street,
Has a wickeder heart that I might have, I say,
Had you wantonly misused the treasures you woun,
-As so many men with heart riches have done.

This flame from God's altar, this holy love flame,
That burns like sweet incense for ever for you,
Might now be a wild conflagration of shame,
Had you tortured my heart, or been base or untrue.
For angels and devils are cast in one mould,
Till love guides them upward, or downward, I hold.

I tell you the women who make fervent wives
And sweet tender mothers, had Fate been less fair,
Are the women who might have abandoned their lives
To the madness that springs from and ends in despair.

As the fire on the hearth which sheds brightness around,
Neglected, may level the walls to the ground.

The world makes grave errors in judging these things,
Great good and great evil are born in one breast.
Love horns us and hoofs us – or gives us our wings,
And the best could be worst, as the worst could be best.
You must thank your own worth for what I grew to be,
For the demon lurked under the angel in me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Answered

Good-bye – Yes, I am going,
Sudden? Well, you are right.
But a startling truth came home to me
With sudden force last night.
What is it? shall I tell you? –
Nay, that is why I go.
I am running away from the battlefield,
Turning my back on the foe.
Riddles? You think me cruel!
Have you not been most kind?
Why, when you question me like that,
What answer can I find?
You fear you failed to amuse me,
Your husband's friend and guest,
Whom he bade you entertain and please –
Well, you have done your best.

Then, why, you ask, am I going?
A friend of mine abroad,
Whose theories I have been acting upon,
Has proven himself a fraud.
You have heard me quote from Plato
A thousand times no doubt;
Well, I have discovered he did not know
What he was talking about.

You think I am speaking strangely?
You cannot understand?
Well, let me look down into your eyes,
And let me take your hand.
I am running away from danger –
I am flying before I fall;
I am going because with heart and soul
I love you – that is all.

There, now, you are white with anger.
I knew it would be so.
You should not question a man too close
When he tells you he must go.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Answered Prayers

I prayed for riches, and achieved success;
All that I touched turned into gold. Alas!
My cares were greater and my peace was less,
When that wish came to pass.

I prayed for glory, and I heard my name
Sung by sweet children and by hoary men.
But ah! the hurts – the hurts that come with fame.
I was not happy then.

I prayed for Love, and had my heart's desire.
Through quivering heart and body, and through brain,
There swept the flame of its devouring fire,
And but the scars remain.

I prayed for a contented mind. At length
Great light upon my darkened spirit burst.
Great peace fell on me also, and great strength –
Oh, had that prayer been first!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Answers

What is the end of each man's toil,
Brother, O Brother?
A handful of dust in a bit of soil-
His name forgotten as centuries roll,
Though blazoned to-day on Glory's scroll;
For the lordliest work of brain or hand
Is only an imprint made on sand;
When the tidal wave sweeps over the shore
It is there no more,
Brother, my Brother.

Then what is the use of striving at all,
Brother, O Brother?
Because each effort or great or small
Is a step on the long, long road that leads
To the Kingdom of Growth on the River of Deeds:
And that is the kingdom no man can gain
Till he uses his hand and his mind and brain,
And when he has used them and learned control
He finds his soul,
Brother, my Brother.

And after he finds it, what is the end,
Brother, O Brother?
Upward ever its course and trend;
For this is the purpose and aim and plan
To seek in the soul for the Super-man-
The man who is conscious that Heaven is near-
A bulletin bearer from There to Here,
Finding God dwells in the spirit within
Where He ever has been,
Brother, my Brother.

And what will the God-man do when He comes,
Brother, O Brother?
He will better the world or in courts or slums,

He will do in gladness his nearest duty:
He will teach the religion of love and beauty
In field or factory, mine or mart,
While He tells the world of the larger part
And the wider life that is yet to be
When spirit is free,
Brother, my Brother.

When spirit is free, then where will it go,
Brother, O Brother?
Its uttermost summit no man may know,
For it goes up to God in His holy Tower
To gather more knowledge and force and power;
Like a ray of the sun it shall shine again
To brighten new planets and races of men.
Life had no beginning, life has no end,
Brother and friend-
Brother, my Brother.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Are You Loving Enough?

Are you loving enough? There is some one dear,
Some one you hold as the dearest of all
In the holiest shrine of your heart.
Are you making it known? Is the truth of it clear
To the one you love? If death's quick call
Should suddenly tear you apart,
Leaving no time for a long farewell,
Would you feel you had nothing to tell---
Nothing you wished you had said before
The closing of that dark door?

Are you loving enough? The swift years fly---
Oh, faster and faster they hurry away,
And each one carries its dead.
The good deed left for the by and by,
The word to be uttered another day,
May never be done or said.
Let the love word sound in the listening ear,
Nor wait to speak it above a bier.
Oh the time for telling your love is brief,
But long, long, long is the time for grief.
Are you loving enough?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Arise

Why sit ye idly dreaming all the day,
While the golden, precious hours flit away?
See you not the day is waning, waning fast?
That the morn's already vanished in the past?

When the glowing noon approaches, we will rest
Who have worked through all the morning; but at best,
If you work with zeal and ardor till the night,
You can only make the wasted moments right.

Think you life was made for dreaming, nothing more,
When God's work lies all unfinished at your door?
Souls to save and hearts to strengthen--ah! such work,
Such a richly freighted labor, who would shirk?

Then arise, O idle dreamer! Dreams are sweet,
But better flowers are growing at your feet.
If you crush, or pass unheeding, idle friend,
You shall answer for their ruin in the end.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Art And Heart

Though critics may bow to art, and I am its own true lover,
It is not art, but heart, which wins the wide world over.
Though smooth be the heartless prayer, no ear in Heaven will mind it,
And the finest phrase falls dead if there is no feeling behind it.
Though perfect the player's touch, little, if any, he sways us,
Unless we feel his heart throb through the music he plays us.
Though the poet may spend his life in skilfully rounding a measure,
Unless he writes from a full, warm heart he gives us little pleasure.

So it is not the speech which tells, but the impulse which goes with the saying;
And it is not the words of the prayer, but the yearning back of the praying.
It is not the artist's skill which into our soul comes stealing
With a joy that is almost pain, but it is the player's feeling.
And it is not the poet's song, though sweeter than sweet bells chiming,
Which thrills us through and through, but the heart which beats under the
rhyming.
And therefore I say again, though I am art's own true lover,
That it is not art, but heart, which wins the wide world over.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Art And Love

For many long uninterrupted years
She was the friend and confidant of Art;
They walked together, heart communed with heart
In that sweet comradeship that so endears.
Her fondest hope, her sorrows and her fears
She told her mate; who would in turn impart
Important truths and secrets. But a dart,

Shot by that unskilled, mischevous boy, who peers
From ambush on us, struck one day in her breast,
And Love sprang forth to kiss away her tears.
She thought his brow shone with a wonderous grace;
But, when she turned to introduce her guest
To Art, behold, she found an empty place,
The goddess fled, with sad, averted face.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Artist's Life

Of all the waltzes the great Strauss wrote,
mad with melody, rhythm--rife
From the very first to the final note,
Give me his "Artist's Life!"

It stirs my blood to my finger ends,
Thrills me and fills me with vague unrest,
And all that is sweetest and saddest blends
Together within my breast.

It brings back that night in the dim arcade,
In love's sweet morning and life's best prime,
When the great brass orchestra played and played,
And set our thoughts to rhyme.

It brings back that Winter of mad delights,
Of leaping pulses and tripping feet,
And those languid moon-washed Summer nights
When we heard the band in the street.

It brings back rapture and glee and glow,
It brings back passion and pain and strife,
And so of all the waltzes I know,
Give me the "Artist's Life."

For it is so full of the dear old time--
So full of the dear friends I knew.
And under its rhythm, and lilt, and rhyme,
I am always finding--you.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

As By Fire

Sometimes I feel so passionate a yearning
For spiritual perfection here below,
This vigorous frame, with healthful fervor burning,
Seems my determined foe,
So actively it makes a stern resistance,
So cruelly sometimes it wages war
Against a wholly spiritual existence
Which I am striving for.
It interrupts my soul's intense devotions;
Some hope it strangles, of divinest birth,
With a swift rush of violent emotions
Which link me to the earth.
It is as if two mortal foes contended
Within my bosom in a deadly strife,
One for the loftier aims for souls intended,
One for the earthly life.
And yet I know this very war within me,
Which brings out all my will-power and control,
This very conflict at the last shall win me
The loved and longed-for goal.

The very fire which seems sometimes so cruel
Is the white light that shows me my own strength.
A furnace, fed by the divinest fuel,
It may become at length.
Ah! when in the immortal ranks enlisted,
I sometimes wonder if we shall not find
That not by deeds, but by what we've resisted,
Our places are assigned.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

As You Go Through Life

Don't look for the flaws as you go through life;
And even when you find them,
It is wise and kind to be somewhat blind
And look for the virtue behind them.
For the cloudiest night has a hint of light
Somewhere in its shadows hiding;
It is better by far to hunt for a star,
Than the spots on the sun abiding.

The current of life runs ever away
To the bosom of God's great ocean.
Don't set your force 'gainst the river's course
And think to alter its motion.
Don't waste a curse on the universe –
Remember it lived before you.
Don't butt at the storm with your puny form,
But bend and let it go o'er you.

The world will never adjust itself
To suit your whims to the letter.
Some things must go wrong your whole life long,
And the sooner you know it the better.
It is folly to fight with the Infinite,
And go under at last in the wrestle;
The wiser man shapes into God's plan
As water shapes into a vessel.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ascension

I have been down in the darkest water-
Deep, deep down where no light could pierce;
Alone with the things that are bent on slaughter,
The mindless things that are cruel and fierce.
I have fought with fear in my wave-walled prison,
And begged for the beautiful boon of death;
But out of the billows my soul has risen
To glorify God with my latest breath.

There is no potion I have not tasted
Of all the bitters in life's large store;
And never a drop of the gall was wasted
That the lords of Karma saw fit to pour,
Though I cried as my Elder Brother before me,
'Father in heaven, let pass this cup!'
And the only response from the still skies o'er me
Was the brew held close for my lips to sup.

Yet I have grown strong on the gall Elysian,
And a courage has come that all things dares;
And I have been given an inner vision
Of the wonderful world where my dear one fares;
And I have had word from the great Hereafter-
A marvellous message that throbs with truth,
And mournful weeping has changed to laughter,
And grief has changed into the joy of youth.

Oh! there was a time when I supped sweet potions,
And lightly uttered profound belief,
Before I went down in the swirling oceans
And fought with madness and doubt and grief.
Now I am climbing the Hills of Knowledge,
And I speak unfearing, and say 'I know,'
Though it be not to church, or to book, or college,
But to God Himself that my debt I owe.

For the ceaseless prayer of a soul is heeded,
When the prayer asks only for light and faith;
And the faith and the light and the knowledge needed
Shall gild with glory the path to death.
Oh! heart of the world by sorrow shaken,
Hear ye the message I have to give:
The seal from the lips of the dead is taken,
And they can say to you, 'Lo! we live.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

At An Old Drawer

Before this scarf was faded,
What hours of mirth it knew;
How gayly it paraded
From smiling eyes to view.
The days were tinged with glory,
The nights too quickly sped,
And life was like a story
Where all the people wed.

Before this rosebud wilted,
How passionately sweet
The wild waltz smelled and lilted
In time for flying feet;
How loud the bassoons muttered,
The horns grew madly shrill,
And oh! the vows lips uttered
That hearts could not fulfill.

Before this fan was broken,
Behind its lace and pearl
What whispered words were spoken,
What hearts were in a whirl;
What homesteads were selected
In Fancy's realm of Spain,
What castles were erected
Without a room for pain.

When this odd glove was mated,
How thrilling seemed the play;
Maybe our hearts are sated--
We tire so soon to-day.
O, thrust away these treasures,
They speak the dreary truth;
We have outgrown the pleasures
And keen delights of youth.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

At Bay

Wife

Reach out your arms, and hold me close and fast.
Tell me there are no memories of your past
That mar this love of ours, so great, so vast.

Husband

Some truths are cheapened when too oft averred.
Does not the deed speak louder than the word?
(dear God, that old dream woke again and stirred.)

Wife

As you love me, you never loved before?
Though oft you say it, say it yet once more.
My heart is jealous of those days of yore.

Husband

Sweet wife, dear comrade, mother of my child,
My life is yours by memory undefiled.
(it stirs again, that passion brief and wild.)

Wife

You never knew a happier hour than this?
We two alone, our hearts surcharged with bliss,
Nor other kisses, sweet as my own kiss?

Husband

I was a thirsty field, long parched with drouth;
You were the warm rain, blowing from the south.
(But, ah, the crimson madness of her mouth!)

Wife

You would not, if you could, go down life's track
For just one little moment and bring back
Some vanished rapture that you miss or lack?

Husband

I am content. You are my life, my all.
(One burning hour, but one, could I recall;
God, how men lie when driven to the wall!)

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

At Eleusis

I, at Eleusis, saw the finest sight,
When early morning's banners were unfurled.
From high Olympus, gazing on the world,
The ancient gods once saw it with delight.
Sad Demeter had in a single night
Removed her sombre garments! and mine eyes
Beheld a 'broidered mantle in pale dyes
Thrown o'er her throbbing bosom. Sweet and clear
There fell the sound of music on mine ear.
And from the South came Hermes, he whose lyre
One time appeased the great Apollo's ire.
The rescued maid, Persephone, by the hand
He led to waiting Demeter, and cheer
And light and beauty once more blessed the land.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

At Set Of Sun

If we sit down at set of sun,
And count the things that we have done,
And counting, find
One self-denying act, one word
That eased the heart of him who heard,
One glance, most kind,
That fell like sunshine where it went--
Then we may count that day well spent.

Or, on the other hand, if we,
In looking through the day, can see
A place or spot
Where we an unkind act put down,
Or where we smiled when wont to frown,
Or crushed some thought
That cumbered the heart--ground where it stood--
Then we may count that day as good.

But if, through all the life-long day,
We've eased no heart by yea or nay;
If through it all
We've done no thing that we can trace,
That brought the sunshine to a face--
No act most small
That helped some soul, and nothing cost--
Then count that day as worse than lost.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

At The Hop

'Tis time to dress. Dost hear the music surging
Like sobbing waves that roll up from the sea?
Yes, yes, I hear – I yield – no need of urging;
I know your wishes, - send Lisette to me.

I hate the ballroom; hate its gilded pleasure;
I hate the crowd within it, well you know;
But what of that? I am your lawful treasure –
And when you would display me I must go.

You bought me with a mother's pain and trouble.
I've been a great expense to you always.
And now, if you can sell me, and get double
The sum cost – why, what have I to say?

You've done your duty: kept me in the fashion,
And shown off me at every stylish place.
'Twas not your fault I had a heart of passion;
'Twas not your fault I ever saw his face.

The dream was brief, and beautiful, and tender,
(O, God! to live those golden hours once more.
The silver moonlight, and his dark eyes' splendour,
The sky above us, and the sea below.)

Come, come, Lisette, bring out those royal laces;
To-night must make the victory complete.
Among the crowd of masked and smiling faces,
I'll move with laughter, and with smiles most sweet.

Make me most fair! with youth and grace and beauty.
I needs must conquer bloated age and gold.
She shall not say I have not done my duty;
I'm ready now – a daughter to be sold!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

At The Window

Every morning, as I walk down
From my dreary lodgings, toward the town,
I see at a window, near the street,
The face of a woman, fair and sweet,
With soft brown eyes and chestnut hair,
And red lips, warm with the kisses left there.
And she stands there as long as she can see
The man who walks just ahead of me.

At night, when I come from my office down town,
There stands a woman with eyes of brown,
Smiling out through the window blind
At the man who is walking just behind.

This fellow and I resemble each other -
At least so I'm told by one and another,
(Though I think I'm the handsomer by far, of the two,)
I don't know him at all, save to 'how d'ye do, '
Or nod when I meet him. I think he's at work
In a dry-goods store as a salaried clerk.
And I am a lawyer of high renown,
Having a snug bank account and an office down town, -
Yet I feel for that fellow an envious spite,
(it had no other name, so I speak it outright.)
There were symptoms before; but it's grown I believe,
Alarmingly fast, since one cloudy eve,
When passing the little house close by the street,
I heard the patter of two little feet,
And a figure in pink fluttered down to the gate,
And a sweet voice exclaimed, 'Oh, Will, you are late!
And, darling, I've watched at the window until -
Sir, I beg pardon! I thought it was Will! '

I passed on my way, with such a strange feeling
Down in my heart. My brain seemed to be reeling;
For, as it happens, my name, too, is Will,
And that voice crying 'darling, ' sent such an odd thrill
Throughout my whole being! 'How nice it would be, '
Thought I, 'If it were in reality me

That she's watched and longed for, instead of that lout! '
(It was envy that made me use that word, no doubt,)
For he's a fine fellow, and handsome! -(ahem!)
But then it's absurd that this rare little gem
Of a woman should stand there and look out for him
Till she brings on a headache, and makes her eyes dim,
While I go to lodgings, dull, dreary and bare,
With no one to welcome me, no one to care
If I'm early or late. No soft eyes of brown
To watch when I go to, or come from the town.
This bleak, wretched, bachelor life is about
(If I may be allowed the expression) played out.
Somewhere there must be, in the wide world, I think,
Another fair woman who dresses in pink,
And I know of a cottage, for sale, just below,
And it has a French window in front and - heigho!
I wonder how long, at the longest, 'twill be
Before, coming home from the office, I'll see
A nice little woman there, watching for me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Attainment

Use all your hidden forces.

Do not miss the purpose of this life,
and do not wait for circumstance
to mold or change your fate.
In your own self lies destiny.

Let this vast truth cast out all fear,
all prejudice, all hesitation.
Know that you are great --
great with divinity.

Do dominate environment, and enter into bliss.
Live largely, and hate nothing.

Hold no aim that does not chord
with universal good.

Hear what the voices of the silence say.
All joys are yours if you put forth your claim.

Once you let the spiritual laws be understood,
material things must answer and obey.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Attraction

The meadow and the mountain with desire
Gazed on each other, till a fierce unrest
Surged 'neath the meadow's seemingly calm breast,
And all the mountain's fissures ran with fire.

A mighty river rolled between them there.
What could the mountain do but gaze and burn?
What could the meadow do but look and yearn,
And gem its bosom to conceal despair?

Their seething passion agitated space,
Till lo! the lands a sudden earthquake shook,
The river fled: the meadow leaped, and took
The leaning mountain in a close embrace.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Baby's First Journey

Lightly they hold him and lightly they sway him-
Soft as a pillow are somebody's arms.
Down he goes slowly, ever so lowly
Over the rim of the cradle they lay him-
Baby's first journey is free from alarms.

Baby is growing while Mama sings by-lo,
Sturdy and rosy and laughing and fair,
Crowing and growing past every one's knowing,
Out goes the cradle and in comes the 'high-lo,'
Baby's next journey is into this chair.

Crying or cooing or waking or sleeping,
Baby is ever a thing to adore.
Look at him yonder-oh what a wonder,
Who would believe it, the darling is creeping,
Baby's next journey is over the floor.

Sweeter and cuter and brighter and stronger,
Mama can see every day how he's grown.
Shoes are all battered, stockings all tattered,
Oh! but the baby is baby no longer
Look at the fellow-he's walking alone!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Be Not Dismayed

Be not dismayed, be not dismayed when death
Sets its white seal upon some worshipped face.
Poor human nature for a little space
Must suffer anguish, when that last drawn breath
Leaves such long silence; but let not thy faith
Fail for a moment in God's boundless grace.
But know, oh know, He has prepared a place
Fairer for our dear dead than worlds beneath,
Yet not beneath; for those entrancing spheres
Surround our earth as seas a barren isle.
Ours is the region of eternal fears;
Theirs is the region where God's radiant smile
Shines outward from the centre, and gives hope
Even to those who in the shadows grope.
They are not far from us. At first though long
And lone may seem the paths that intervene,
If ever on the staff of prayer we lean
The silence will grow eloquent with song
And our weak faith with certitude wax strong.
Intense, yet tranquil; fervent, yet serene,
He must be who would contact World Unseen
And comrade with their Amaranthine throng;
Not through the tossing waves of surging grief
Come spirit-ships to port. When storms subside,
Then with their precious cargoes of relief
Into the harbour of the heart they glide.
For him who will believe and trust and wait
Death's austere silence grows articulate.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Be Not Weary

Sometimes, when I am toil-worn and weary,
And tired out with working long and well,
And earth is dark, and skies above are dreary,
And heart and soul are all too sick to tell,
These words have come to me like angel fingers
Pressing the spirit's eyelids down in sleep,
'Oh let us not be weary in well doing,
For in due season we shall surely reap.'

Oh, blessed promise! When I seem to hear it,
Whispered by angel voices on the air,
It breathes new life and courage to my spirit,
And gives me strength to suffer and forbear.
And I can wait most patiently for harvest,
And cast my seeds, nor ever faint, nor weep,
If I know surely that my work availeth,
And in God's season, I at last shall reap.

When mind and body were borne down completely,
And I have thought my efforts were all in vain,
These words have come to me so softly, sweetly,
And whispered hope, and urged me on again.
And though my labour seems all unavailing,
And all my striving fruitless, yet the Lord
Doth treasure up each little seed I scatter,
And sometime, sometime, I shall reap the reward.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Bedlam Town

Do you want to peep into Bedlam Town?
Then come with me, when the day swings down,
Into the cradle, whose rockers rim,
Some people call the horizon dim.

All the mischief of all the fates
Seems to center in four little pates,
Just one hour before we say,
'It is time for bed now, stop your play.'

O, the racket and noise, and roar
As they prance like a caravan over the floor,
With never a thought of the head that aches,
And never a heed to the 'mercy sakes.'
And 'Pity, save us,' and 'Oh! dear, dear,'
Which all but the culprits plainly hear.

A dog, a parrot, a guinea hen,
Warriors, elephants, Indian men,
A salvation army, a grizzly bear,
Are all at once in the nursery there.

And when the clock in the hall strikes seven
It sounds to us like a voice from heaven;
And each of the elves in a warm nightgown,
March away out of Bedlam Town.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Begin The Day

Begin each morning with a talk to God,
And ask for your divine inheritance
Of usefulness, contentment, and success.
Resign all fear, all doubt, and all despair.
The stars doubt not, and they are undismayed,
Though whirled through space for countless centuries,
And told not why or wherefore: and the sea
With everlasting ebb and flow obeys,
And leaves the purpose with the unseen Cause.
The star sheds its radiance on a million worlds,
The sea is prodigal with waves, and yet
No lustre from the star is lost, and not
One dropp missing from the ocean tides.
Oh! brother to the star and sea, know all
God's opulence is held in trust for those
Who wait serenely and who work in faith.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Beppo

Why are thou sad, my Beppo? But last eve,
Here at my feet, thy dear head on my breast,
I heard thee say thy heart would no more grieve
Or feel the olden ennui and unrest.

What troubles thee? Am I not all thine own –
I, so long sought, so sighed for and so dear?
And do I not live but for thee alone?
“Thou hast seen Lippo, whom I loved last year! ”

Well, what of that? Last year is naught to me –
’Tis swallowed in the ocean of the past.
Art thou not glad ’twas Lippo, and not thee,
Whose brief bright day in that great gulf was cast?

Thy day is all before thee. Let no cloud,
Here in the very morn of our delight,
Drift up from distant foreign skies, to shroud
Our sun of love whose radiance is so bright.

“Thou art not first? ” Nay, and he who would be
Defeats his own heart’s dearest purpose then.
No truer truth was ever told to thee –
Who has loved most, he best can love again.

If Lippo (and not he alone) has taught
The arts that please thee, wherefore art thou sad?
Since all my vast love-lore to thee is brought,
Look up and smile, my Beppo, and be glad.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Beyond

It seemeth such a little way to me
Across to that strange country – the Beyond;
And yet, not strange, for it has grown to be
The home of those whom I am so fond,
They make it seem familiar and most dear,
As journeying friends bring distant regions near.

So close it lies, that when my sight is clear
I think I almost see the gleaming strand.
I know I feel those who have gone from here
Come near enough sometimes, to touch my hand.
I often think, but for our veiled eyes,
We should find heaven right round about us lies.

I cannot make it seem a day to dread,
When from this dear earth I shall journey out
To that still dear country of the dead,
And join the lost ones, so long dreamed about.
I love this world, yet shall I love to go
And meet the friends who wait for me, I know.

I never stand above a bier and see
The seal of death set on some well-loved face
But that I think 'One more to welcome me,
When I shall cross the intervening space
Between this land and that one "over there";
One more to make the strange Beyond seem fair.'

And so for me there is no sting to death,
And so the grave has lost its victory.
It is but crossing – with a bated breath,
And white, set face – a little strip of sea,
To find the loved ones waiting on the shore,
More beautiful, more precious than before.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Bird Of Hope

Soar not too high, O bird of Hope!
Because the skies are fair;
The tempest may come on apace
And overcome thee there.

When far above the mountain tops
Thou soarest, over all –
If, then, the storm should press thee back,
How great would be thy fall!

And thou wouldst lie here at my feet,
A poor and lifeless thing, -
A torn and bleeding birdling,
With limp and broken wing.

Sing not too loud, O bird of Hope!
Because the day is bright;
The sunshine cannot always last –
The morn precedes the night.

And if thy song is of the day,
Then when the day grows dim,
Forlorn and voiceless thou wouldst sit
Among the shadows grim.

Oh! I would have thee soar and sing,
But not too high, or loud,
Remembering that day meets night –
The brilliant sun the cloud.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Bleak Weather

Dear Love, where the red lilies blossomed and grew

The white snows are falling;

And all through the woods where I wandered with you

The loud winds are calling;

And the robin that piped to us tune upon tune,

Neath the oak, you remember,

O'er hill-top and forest has followed the June

And left us December.

He has left like a friend who is true in the sun

And false in the shadows;

He has found new delights in the land where he's gone,

Greener woodlands and meadows.

Let him go! what care we? let the snow shroud the lea,

Let it drift on the heather;

We can sing through it all: I have you, you have me.

And we'll laugh at the weather.

The old year may die and a new year be born

That is bleaker and colder:

It cannot dismay us; we dare it, we scorn,

For our love makes us bolder.

Ah, Robin! sing loud on your far distant lea,

You friend in fair weather!

But here is a song sung that's fuller of glee,

By two warm hearts together.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Blind Sorrow

One bitter time of mourning, I remember,
When day, and night, my sad heart did complain,
My life, I said, was one cold, bleak December,
And all its pleasures, were but whited pain.

Nothing could rouse me from my sullen sorrow,
Because you were not near, I would not smile.
And from a score of joys refused to borrow
One ray of light, to gild the weary while.

But all the blessing God has given, scorning,
I wept because we were so far apart,
And spent my time in idle, aimless mourning,
That only kept the grief fresh in my heart.

God pity me! I know now we were nearer,
With all these intervening miles of space,
That life was sweeter, and the future dearer,
Than when to-day I met you, face to face!

God meant to break it gently, ease my anguish,
But I rebelled, and caviled at His will.
Now, seeing His great wisdom, though I languish,
In bitter pain, I trust His mercy still.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Bohemia

Bohemia, o'er thy unatlassed borders
How many cross, with half-reluctant feet,
And unformed fears of dangers and disorders,
To find delights, more wholesome and more sweet
Than ever yet were known to the "elite."

Herein can dwell no pretence and no seeming;
No stilted pride thrives in this atmosphere,
Which stimulates a tendency to dreaming.
The shores of the ideal world, from here,
Seem sometimes to be tangible and near.

We have no use for formal codes of fashion;
No "Etiquette f Courts" we emulate;
We know it needs sincerity and passion
To carry out the plans of God, or fate;
We do not strive to seem inanimate.

We call no time lost that we give to pleasure;
Life's hurrying river speeds to Death's great sea;
We cast out no vain plummet-line to measure
Imagined depths of that unknown To-Be,
But grasp the Now, and fill it full of glee.

All creeds have room here, and we all together
Devoutly worship at Art's sacred shrine;
But he who dwells once in thy golden weather,
Bohemia--sweet, lovely land of mine--
Can find no joy outside thy border-line.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Breakers

When you launch your bark for sailing
On the sea of life, O youth!
Clothe your heart and soul and spirit
In the blessed garb of Truth.

Guard your every word and action:
Never do and never say
Aught you cannot meet with pleasure
On the mighty judgment-day.

You will meet with rocks and breakers-
Cards and wine the most to fear.
Do not pause nor linger by them,
For the devil lurketh near.

Cards and wine, the two great breakers
That have wrecked so many souls-
Wrecked and shattered, lost to heaven,
At the table-in the bowls.

O young man! life is before you,
Shun the road that leads to death,
God will guide you if you ask him:
'Seek me-here I am!' he saith.

Turn to him in all temptations,
He will help and he will save.
When you feel your courage failing,
He will make you strong and brave.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Breaking The Day In Two

When from dawn till noon seems one long day,
And from noon till night another,
Oh, then should a little boy come from play,
And creep into the arms of his mother.
Snugly creep and fall asleep,
O come, my baby, do;
Creep into my lap, and with a nap,
We'll break the day in two.

When the shadows slant for afternoon,
When the midday meal is over;
When the winds have sung themselves into a swoon,
And the bees drone in the clover.
Then hie to me, hie, for a lullaby-
Come, my baby, do;
Creep into my lap, and with a nap
We'll break the day in two.

We'll break it in two with a crooning song,
With a soft and soothing number;
For the day has no right to be so long
And keep my baby from slumber.
Then rock-a-by, rock, may white dreams flock
Like angels over you;
Baby's gone, and the deed is done
We've broken the day in two.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Brotherhood

God, what a world, if men in street and mart,
Felt that same kinship of the human heart,
Which makes them, in the face of fire and flood,
Rise to the meaning of True Brotherhood.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

But One

The year has but one June, dear friend;
The year has but one June;
And when that perfect month doth end,
The robin's song, though loud, though long,
Seems never quite in tune.
The rose, though still its blushing face
By bee and bird is seen,
May yet have lost that subtle grace—
That nameless spell the winds know
Which makes it garden's queen.
Life's perfect June, love's red, red rose,
Have burned and bloomed for me.
Though still youth's summer sunlight glows;
Though thou art kind, dear friend, I find
I have no heart for thee.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

By-And-Bye

'By-and-bye, ' the maiden sighed – 'by-and-bye
He will claim me for his bride,
Hope is strong and time is fleet;
Youth is fair, and love is sweet,
Clouds will pass that fleck my sky,
He will come back by-and-bye.'

'By-and-bye, ' the soldier said – 'by-and-bye,
After I have fought and bled,
I shall go home from the wars,
Crowned with glory, seamed with scars,
Joy will flash from some one's eye
When she greets me by-and-bye- by-and-bye.'

'By-and-bye, ' the mother cried – 'by-and-bye,
Strong and sturdy at my side,
Like a staff supporting me,
Will my bonnie baby be.
Break my rest, then, wail and cry –
Thou'lt repay me by-and-bye - by-and-bye.'

Fleeting years of time have sped – hurried by –
Still the maiden is unwed:
All unknown soldier lies,
Buried under alien skies;
And the son, with blood-shot eye,
Saw his mother starve and die.
God in heaven! dost Thou on high
Keep the promised 'by-and-bye' - by-and-bye?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Camouflage

Camouflage is all the rage.
Ladies in their fight with age-
Soldiers in their fight with foes-
Demagogues who mask and pose
In the guise of statesmen-girls
Black of eyes with golden curls-
Politicians, votes in mind,
Smiling, affable and kind,
All use camouflage to-day.
As you go upon your way,
Walk with caution, move with care;
Camouflage is everywhere!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Camp Followers

In the old wars of the world there were camp-followers,
Women of ancient sins who gave themselves for hire,
Women of weak wills and strong desire.
And, like the poison ivy in the woods
That winds itself about tall virile trees
Until it smothers them, so these
Ruined the bodies and the souls of men.
More evil were they than Red War itself,
Or Pestilence, or Famine. Now in this war-
This last most awful carnage of the world-
All the old wickedness exists as then:
But as a foul stream from a festering fen
Is met and scattered by a mountain brook
Leaping along its beautiful, bright course,
So now the force
Of these new Followers of the camp has come
Straight from God's Source
To cleanse the world and cleanse the minds of men.
Good women, of great courage and large hearts,
Women whose slogan is self-sacrifice,
Willing to pay the price
God asks of pioneers, now play their parts
In this stupendous drama of the age
As Followers of the Camps.

They come in the name of God our Father,
They come in the name of Christ our Brother,
They come in the name of All Humanity,
To give their gold, their labour, and their love
To help the suffering souls in this war-riddled earth,
The New Women of the Race-
The New Camp Followers-
The Centuries shall do honour to their names.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Canada

England, father and mother in one,
Look on your stalwart son.

Sturdy and strong, with the valour of youth,
Where is another so lusty?
Coated and mailed, with the armour of truth,
Where is another so trusty?
Flesh of your flesh, and bone of your bone,
He is yours alone.

England, father and mother in one,
See the wealth of your son.

Forests primeval, and virginal sod,
Wheat-fields golden and splendid:
Riches of nature and opulent God
For the use of his children intended.
A courage that dares, and a hope that endures,

And a soul all yours.

England, father and mother in one,
Hear the cry of your son.

Little cares he for the glories of earth
Lying around and above him,
Yearning is he for the rights of his birth,
And the heart of his mother to love him.
Vast are your gifts to him, ample his store,
Now open your door.

England, father and mother in one,
Heed the voice of your son.

Proffer him place in your councils of state:
Let him sit near, and attend you.
Ponder his words in the hour of debate,
Strong is his arm to defend you.

Flesh of your flesh, and bone of your bone,
Give him his own.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Carlos

Last night I knelt low at my lady's feet.
One soft, caressing hand played with my hair,
And one I kissed and fondled. Kneeling there,
I deemed my meed of happiness complete.

She was so fair, so full of witching wiles –
Of fascinating tricks of mouth and eye;
So womanly withal, but not too shy –
And all my heaven was compassed by her smiles.

Her soft touch on my cheek and forehead sent,
Like little arrows, thrills of tenderness
Through all my frame. I trembled with excess
Of love, and sighed the sigh of great content.

When any mortal dares to so rejoice,
I think a jealous Heaven, bending low,
Reaches a stern hand forth and deals a blow.
Sweet through the dusk I heard my lady's voice.

'My love!' she sighed, 'my Carlos!' Even now
I feel the perfumed zephyr of her breath
Bearing to me those words of living death,
And starting out the cold drops on my brow.

For I am Paul – not Carlos! Who is he
That, in the supreme hour of love's delight,
Veiled by the shadows of the falling night,
She should breathe low his name, forgetting me?

I will not ask her! 'Twere a fruitless task,
For, woman-like, she would make me believe
Some well-told tale; and sigh, and seem to grieve,
And call me cruel. Nay, I will not ask.

But this man Carlos, whosoe'er he be,
Has turned my cup of nectar into gall,
Since I know he has claimed some or all
Of these delights my lady grants to me.

He must have knelt and kissed her, in some sad
And tender twilight, when the day grew dim.
How else could I remind her so of him?
Why, reveries like these have made men mad!

He must have felt her soft hand on his brow.
If Heaven were shocked at such presumptuous wrongs,
And plunged him in the grave, where he belongs,
Still she remembers, though she loves me now.

And if he lives, and meet me to his cost,
Why, what avails it? I must hear and see
That curst name 'Carlos' always haunting me –
So has another Paradise been lost.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Certitude

There was a time when I was confident
That God's stupendous mystery of birth
Was mine to know. The wonder of it lent
New ecstasy and glory to the earth.
I heard no voice that uttered it aloud,
Nor was it written for me on a scroll;
Yet, if alone or in the common crowd,
I felt myself a consecrated soul.
My child leaped in its dark and silent room
And cried, 'I am,' though all unheard by men.
So leaps my spirit in the body's gloom
And cries, 'I live! I shall be born again.'
Elate with certitude towards death I go,
Nor doubt, nor argue, since I know, I know!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Change

Changed? Yes, I will confess it – I have changed.
I do not love you in the old fond way.
I am your friend still – time has not estranged
One kindly feeling of that vanished day.

But the bright glamour which made life a dream,
The rapture of that time, its sweet content,
Like visions of a sleeper's brain they seem –
And yet I cannot tell you how they went.

Why do you gaze with such accusing eyes
Upon me, dear? It is so very strange
That hearts, like all things underneath God's skies,
Should sometimes feel the influence of change?

The birds, the flowers, the foliage of the trees,
The stars which seem so fixed, and so sublime,
Vast continents, and the eternal seas, -
All these do change, with ever-changing time.

The face our mirror shows us year on year
Is not the same; our dearest aim, or need,
Our lightest thought, or feeling hope, or fear,
All, all the law of alternation heed.

How can we ask the human heart to stay,
Content with fancies of Youth's earliest hours?
The year outgrows the violets of May,
Although, maybe, there are no fairer flowers.

And life may hold no sweeter love than this,
Which lies so cold, so voiceless, and so dumb,
And will I miss it, dear? Why, yes, we miss
The violets always – till the roses come!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Christ Crucified

Now ere I slept, my prayer had been that I might see my way
To do the will of Christ, our Lord and Master, day by day;
And with this prayer upon my lips, I knew not that I dreamed,
But suddenly the world of night a pandemonium seemed.
From forest, and from slaughter house, from bull ring, and from stall,
There rose an anguished cry of pain, a loud, appealing call;
As man – the dumb beast's next of kin – with gun, and whip, and knife,
Went pleasure-seeking through the earth, blood-bent on taking life.
From trap, and cage, and house, and zoo, and street, that awful strain
Of tortured creatures rose and swelled the orchestra of pain.
And then methought the gentle Christ appeared to me and spoke:
'I called you, but ye answered not' – and in my fear I woke.

Then next I heard the roar of mills; and moving through the noise,
Like phantoms in an underworld, were little girls and boys.
Their backs were bent, their brows were pale, their eyes were sad and old;
But by the labour of their hands greed added gold to gold.
Again the Presence and the Voice: 'Behold the crimes I see,
As ye have done it unto these, so have ye done to me.'

Again I slept. I seemed to climb a hard, ascending track;
And just behind me laboured one whose patient face was black.
I pitied him; but hour by hour he gained upon the path;
He stood beside me, stood upright – and then I turned in wrath.
'Go back!' I cried. 'What right have you to walk beside me here?
For you are black, and I am white.' I paused struck dumb with fear.
For lo! the black man was not there, but Christ stood in his place;
And oh! the pain, the pain, the pain that looked from his dear face.

Now when I woke, the air was rife with that sweet, rhythmic din
Which tells the world that Christ has come to save mankind from sin.
And through the open door of church and temple passed a throng,
To worship Him, with bended knee with sermon, and with song.
But over all I heard the cry of hunted, mangled things;
Those creatures which are part of God, though they have hoofs and wings.

I saw the mill, the mine, and shop, the little slaves of greed;
I heard the strife of race with race, all sprung from one God-seed.
And then I bowed my head in shame, and in contrition cried –

'Lo, after nineteen hundred years, Christ still is crucified.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Christmas Fancies

When Christmas bells are swinging above the fields of snow,
We hear sweet voices ringing from lands of long ago.
And etched on vacant places,
Are half forgotten faces
Of friends we used to cherish, and loves we used to know –
When Christmas bells are swinging above the fields of snow.

Uprising from the ocean of the present surging near,
We see, with strange emotion that is not free from fear,
That continent Elysian
Long vanished from our vision,
Youth's lovely lost Atlantis, so mourned for and so dear,
Uprising from the ocean of the present surging near.

When gloomy gray Decembers are roused to Christmas mirth,
The dullest life remembers there once was joy on earth,
And draws from youth's recesses
Some memory it possesses,
And, gazing through the lens of time, exaggerates its worth,
When gloomy gray December is roused to Christmas mirth.

When hanging up the holly or mistletoe, I wis
Each heart recalls some folly that lit the world with bliss.
Not all the seers and sages
With wisdom of the ages
Can give the mind such pleasure as memories of that kiss
When hanging up the holly or mistletoe, I wis.

For life was made for loving, and love alone repays,
As passing years are proving for all of Time's sad ways.
There lies a sting in pleasure,
And fame gives shallow measure,
And wealth is but a phantom that mocks the restless days,
For life was made for loving, and only loving pays.

When Christmas bells are pelting the air with silver chimes,
And silences are melting to soft, melodious rhymes,
Let Love, the worlds beginning,
End fear and hate and sinning;

Let Love, the God Eternal, be worshipped in all climes
When Christmas bells are pelting the air with silver chimes.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Clara Morris (Written For A Benefit Given Mrs. Morris)

The Radiant Ruler of Mystic Regions
Where souls of artists are fitted for birth,
Gathered together their lovely legions
And fashioned a woman to shine on earth.
They bathed her in splendor
They made her tender:
They gave her a nature both sweet and wild.
They gave her emotions
Like storm stirred oceans,
And they gave her the heart of a little child.

These Radiant Rulers (who are not human
Nor yet divine like the gods above)
Poured all their gifts in the soul of a woman
That fragile vessel meant only for love.
Still more they taught her,
Still more they brought her-
Till they gave her the world for a harp one day,
And they bade her string it-
They bade her ring it,
While the stars all wondered to hear her play.

She touched the strings in a master fashion,
She uttered the cry of a world's despair.
Its long-hid secret, its pent-up passion,
She gave to the winds in a vibrant air.
For ah! the heart of her,
That was the art of her,
Great with the feeling that makes men kin.
Art unapproachable,
Art all uncoachable,
Fragrance and flame from the spirit within.

The earth turns ever an ear unheeding
To the sorrows of art, as it cries for more:
And she played on the harp till her hands were bleeding

And her brow was bruised by the laurels she wore.
She knew the trend of it,
She knew the end of it.
Men heard the music and men felt the thrill.
Bound to the altar
Of art, could she falter?
Then came a silence-the music was still.

And yet in the echoes we seem to hear it
In waves unbroken it circles the earth:
And we catch in the light of her dauntless spirit
A gleam from the center that gave her birth.
Still is the fame of her
Felt in the name of her.
But low lies the harp that once thrilled to her strain.
No hand has taken it,
No hand can waken it-
For the soul of her art was her secret of pain.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Coleur De Rose

I want more lives in which to love
This world so full of beauty,
I want more days to use the ways
I know of doing duty;
I ask no greater joy than this
(So much I am life's lover,)
When I reach age to turn the page
And read the story over,
(Oh love stay near!)

Oh rapturous promise of the Spring!
Oh June fulfilling after!
If Autumns sigh, when Summers die,
'Tis drowned in Winter's laughter.
Oh maiden dawns, oh wifely noons,
Oh siren sweet, sweet nights,
I'd want no heaven could earth be given
Again with its delights,
(If love stayed near!)

There are such glories for the eye,
Such pleasures for the ear,
The senses reel with all they feel
And see and taste and hear;
There are such ways of doing good,
Such ways of being kind,
And bread that's cast on waters fast
Comes home again, I find.
(Oh love stay near.)

There are such royal souls to know,
There is so much to learn,
While secrets rest in Nature's breast
And unnamed stars still burn.
God toiled six days to make this earth,
I think the good folks say---
Six lives we need to give full meed
Of praise---one for each day,
(If love stay near.)

But oh! if love fled far away,
Or veiled his face from me,
One life too much, why then were such
A life as this would be.
With sullen May and blighted June
Blurred dawn and haggard night,
This dear old world in space were hurled
If love lent not his light.
(Oh love stay near.)

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Come Back Clean

This is the song for a soldier
To sing as he rides from home
To the fields afar where the battles are
Or over the ocean's foam:
'Whatever the dangers waiting
In the lands I have not seen,
If I do not fall-if I come back at all,
Then I will come back clean.

'I may lie in the mud of the trenches,
I may reek with blood and mire,
But I will control, by the God in my soul,
The might of my man's desire.
I will fight my foe in the open,
But my sword shall be sharp and keen
For the foe within who would lure me to sin,
And I will come back clean.

'I may not leave for my children
Brave medals that I have worn,
But the blood in my veins shall leave no stains
On bride or on babes unborn;
And the scars that my body may carry
Shall not be from deeds obscene,
For my will shall say to the beast,
Obey
!
And I will come back clean.

'Oh, not on the fields of slaughter
And not in the prison-cell,
Or in hunger and cold is the story told
By war, of its darkest hell.
But the old, old sin of the senses
Can tell what that word may mean
To the soldiers' wives and to innocent lives,

And I will come back clean.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Communism

When my blood flows calm as a purling river,
When my heart is asleep and my brain has sway,
It is then that I vow we must part for ever,
That I will forget you, and put you away
Out of my life, as a dream is banished
Out of the mind when the dreamer awakes;
That I know it will be when the spell has vanished,
Better for both of our sakes.

When the court of the mind is ruled by Reason,
I know it wiser for us to part;
But Love is a spy who is plotting treason,
In league with that warm, red rebel, the Heart.
They whisper to me that the King is cruel,
That his reign is wicked, his law a sin,
And every word they utter is fuel
To the flame that smoulders within.

And on nights like this, when my blood runs riot
With the fever of youth and its mad desires,
When my brain in vain bids my heart be quiet,
When my breast seems the centre of lava-fires,
Oh, then is when most I miss you,
And I swear by the stars and my soul and say
That I will have you, and hold you, and kiss you,
Though the whole world stands in the way.

And like Communists, as mad, as disloyal,
My fierce emotions roam out of their lair;
They hate King Reason for being royal –
They would fire his castle, and burn him there.
O Love! They would clasp you, and crush you and kill you,
In the insurrection of uncontrol.
Across the miles, does this wild war thrill you
That is raging in my soul?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Compensations

I: BLIND

When first the shadows fell, like prison bars,
And darkness spread before me, like a pall,
I cried out for the sun, the earth, the stars,
And beat the air, as madmen beat a wall,
Till, impotent, and broken with despair,
I turned my vision inward. Lo, a spark-
A light-a torch; and all my world grew bright;
For God's dear eyes were shining through the dark.
Then, bringing to me gifts of recompense,
Came keener hearing, finer taste, and touch;
And that oft unappreciated sense,
Which finds sweet odours, and proclaims them such;
And not until my mortal eyes were blind
Did I perceive how kind the world, how kind.

II: DEAF

I can recall a time, when on mine ears
There fell chaotic sounds of earthly life,
Shrill cries of triumph, and hoarse shouts of strife;
A medley of despairs, and hopes and fears.
Then silence came, and unavailing tears.
The stillness stabbed me, like a two edged-knife;
Until I found the Universe was rife
With subtle music of the neighbouring spheres.
Such harmonies, such congruous sweet chords,
Wherein each note conveys a healing balm.
And now no more I miss men's spoken words;
For, in a quiet world of larger thought,
I know the joy that comes from being calm.

III: SHUT-IN

Across my window glass
The moving shadows of the people pass.

Sometimes the shadows pause; and through the hall
Kind neighbours come to call,
Bringing a word or smile
To cheer my loneliness a little while.
But as I hear them talk,
These people who can walk
And go about the great green earth at will,
I wonder if they know the joy of being still,
And all alone with thoughts that soar afar-
High as the highest star.
And oft I feel more free
Than those who travel over land and sea.
For one who is shut in,
Away from all the outer strife and din,
With faithful Pain for guide,
Finds where Great Truths abide.

Across my window glass
The moving shadows pass.
But swifter moves my unimpeded thought,
Speeding from spot to spot-
Out and afar-
High as the highest star.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Completion

When I shall meet God's generous dispensers
Of all the riches in the heavenly store,
Those lesser gods, who act as Recompensers
For loneliness and loss upon this shore,
Methinks abashed, and somewhat hesitating,
My soul its wish and longing will declare,
Lest they reply: 'Here are no bounties waiting:
We gave on earth, your portion and your share.'

Then shall I answer: 'Yea, I do remember
The many blessings to my life allowed;
My June was always longer than December,
My sun was always stronger than my cloud,
My joy was ever deeper than my sorrow,
My gain was ever greater than my loss,
My yesterday seemed less than my to-morrow,
The crown looked always larger than the cross.

'I have known love in all its radiant splendour,
It shone upon my pathway to the end.
I trod no road that did not bloom with tender
And fragrant blossoms, planted by some friend.
And those material things we call successes,
In modest measure, crowned my earthly lot.
Yet there was one sweet happiness that blesses
The life of woman, which to me came not.

'I knew the hope of motherhood; a season
I felt a fluttering heart beat 'neath my own;
A little cry- then silence. For that reason
I dare, to you, my only wish make known.
The babe who grew to angelhood in heaven,
I never watched unfold from child to man.
And so I ask, that unto me be given
That motherhood, which was God's eternal plan.

'All womanhood He meant to share its glories;
He meant us all to nurse our babes to rest.
To croon them songs, to tell them sleepy stories,

Else why the wonder of a woman's breast?
'He must provide for all earth's cheated mothers
In His vast heavens of shining sphere on sphere,
And with my son, there must be many others –
My spirit children who will claim me here.

'Fair creatures by my loving thoughts created –
Too finely fashioned for a mortal birth –
Between the borders of two wounds they waited
Until they saw my spirit leave the earth.
In God's great nursery they must be waiting
To welcome me with many an infant wile.
Now let me go and satisfy this longing
To mother children for a little while.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Contentment

If any line that I ever penned,
Or any word I have spoken,
Has comforted heart of foe or friend -
In any way, why my life, I'll say,
Has reaped the reward of labour,
If aught I have said, or written, has made
Gladder the heart o' my neighbour.

If any deed that I ever did
Lightened a sad heart's sorrow,
If I have lifted a drooping lid
Up to the bright to-morrow,
Though the world knows not, nor gives me a thought,
Nor ever can know, nor praise me,
Yet still I shall say, to my heart always,
That my life and labour repay me.

If in any way I have helped a soul,
Or given a spirit pleasure,
Then my cup of joy, I shall think is full
With an overflowing measure.
Though never an eye, but the one on high
Looks on my kindly action,
Yet, O my heart, we shall think of our part
In the drama, with satisfaction.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Contrasts

I see the tall church steeples,
They reach so far, so far,
But the eyes of my heart see the world's great mart,
Where the starving people are.

I hear the church bells ringing
Their chimes on the morning air;
But my soul's sad ear is hurt to hear
The poor man's cry of despair.

Thicker and thicker the churches,
Nearer and nearer the sky –
But alack for their creeds while the poor man's needs
Grow deeper as years roll by.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Conversion

When this world's pleasures for my soul sufficed,
Ere my heart's plummet sounded depths of pain,
I call on Reason to control my brain,
And scoffed at that old story of Christ.

But when o'er burning wastes my feet had trod,
And all my life was desolate with loss,
With bleeding hands I clung about the cross,
And cried aloud, 'Man needs a suffering God! '

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Coronation Poem And Prayer

The world has crowned a thousand kings:
But destiny has kept
Her weightiest hour of kingly power
To offer England's son.
The rising bell of Progress rings;
And Truths which long have slept,
Like prophets strange, predicting change,
Before Time's chariot run.

The greatest Empire of the Earth.
Old England proudly stands.
Like arteries her Colonies
Reach out from sea to sea.
She clasps all races in her girth;
Her gaze the world commands;
And far and wide where strong ships ride,
The British Flag floats free.

Oh, never since the stars began
Their round of Cosmic law,
And souls evolved in ways unsolved,
And kingdoms reached their prime
Has Destiny held out to Man
A gift so full of awe,
As England's crown which she hands down
In this stupendous time.

This is a crucial hour, when Fate
Tries Monarchs as by fire.
All rulers must be more than just-
Men starve on bread alone.
Old England's sense of right is great;
But now let her aspire
To feel more love, and build thereof
An everlasting Throne.

The dreaming East, awake at last,
Is asking 'when' and 'why';
Wait not too long nor answer wrong,
Nor in too stern a voice.
Let England profit by her past,
And with her wise reply
Rouse hearts, within her foster kin
To hope, and to rejoice.

True wealth dwells not in things we own,
But in our use of things.
Who would command a conquered land
Must conquer first its heart.
Such might as Man has never known,
And power undreamed by kings,
And boundless strength would come at length
To one who used that art.

For now has dawned the People's day:
A day of great unrest.
Nor king nor creed can still man's need
Of time and space to grow.
All lands must shape a wider way,
For this eternal quest;
And Leisure yield a larger field
Where work-worn feet may go.

The Universe is all a-thrill
With changes imminent.
The World in faith, with bated breath,
Holds free the Leader's place.
And wise is he whose heart and will
At one with Time's intent,
Shall open wide doors long denied
To mothers of the race.

On this round globe, oh, when and where

Were fitter time and scene
For Woman's soul to reach its goal
Than now in England's realm.
Was not the crown its King will wear
Made glorious by its Queen?
And who steered straight its ship of State?
Victoria at the Helm!

Kings have been kings by accident,
By favour and by force,
But right of birth and moral worth,
And Empires rich and broad
For England's King to-day are blent
Like rivers on one course.
But, ah! the light falls searching white
Down from the Throne of God.

Lord of the Earth and heavenly spheres,
Creator of all things,
Thou who hast wrought great worlds from naught,
Give strength to England's son.
Give courage to dispel those fears
That come to even kings,
And for his creed give Love's full mead;
Amen. Thy Will be done.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Courage

There is a courage, a majestic thing
That springs forth from the brow of pain, full-grown,
Minerva-like, and dares all dangers known,
And all the threatening future yet may bring;
Crowned with the helmet of great suffering;
Serene with that grand strength by martyrs shown,
When at the stake they die and make no moan,
And even as the flames leap up are heard to sing:
A courage so sublime and unafraid,
It wears its sorrows like a coat of mail;
And Fate, the archer, passes by dismayed,
Knowing his best barbed arrows needs must fail
To pierce a soul so armored and arrayed
That Death himself might look on it and quail.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Creation

The impulse of all love is to create.
God was so full of love, in his embrace
He clasped the empty nothingness of space,
And low! the solar system! High in state
The mighty sun sat, so supreme and great
With this same essence, one smile of its face
Brought myriad forms of life forth; race on race,

From insects up to men.
Through love, not hate,
All that is grand in nature or in art
Sprang into being. He who would build sublime
And lasting works, to stand the test of time,
Must inspiration draw from his full heart.
And he who loveth widely, well, and much,
The secret holds of the true master touch.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Curious Story

I heard such a curious story
Of Santa Claus. Once, so they say,
He set out to find what people were kind,
Before he took presents their way.
'This year I will give but to givers,
To those who make presents themselves.'
With a nod of his head, old Santa Claus said
To his band of bright officer elves:

'Go into the homes of the happy
Where Pleasure stands page at the door,
Watch well how they live, and report what they give
To the hordes of God's suffering poor.
Keep track of each cent and each moment,
Yea, tell me each word, too, they use,
To silver line clouds for earth's suffering crowds,
And tell me, too, when they refuse.'

So, into our homes flew the fairies,
Though never a soul of us knew,
And with pencil and book, they sat by us, and took
Each action, if false or if true.
White marks for the deeds done for others,
Black marks for the deeds done for self,
And nobody hid what he said or he did,
For no one, of course, sees an elf.

Well, Christmas came all in its season
And Santa Claus, so I am told,
With a very light pack of small gifts on his back
And his reindeers all left in the fold,
Set out on a leisurely journey,
And finished ere midnight, they say,
And there never had been such surprise and chagrin,
Before on the breaking of day

As there was on that bright Christmas morning
When stockings and cupboards and shelves
Were ransacked and sought in for gifts that were not in-
But wasn't it fun for the elves?
And what did I get? You confuse me-
I got not one thing, and that's true,
But had I suspected my actions detected
I would have had gifts-wouldn't you?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Custer

BOOK FIRST.

I.

ALL valor died not on the plains of Troy.
Awake, my Muse, awake! be thine the joy
To sing of deeds as dauntless and as brave
As e'er lent luster to a warrior's grave.
Sing of that noble soldier, nobler man,
Dear to the heart of each American.
Sound forth his praise from sea to listening sea-
Greece her Achilles claimed, immortal Custer, we.

II.

Intrepid are earth's heroes now as when
The gods came down to measure strength with men.
Let danger threaten or let duty call,
And self surrenders to the needs of all;
Incurs vast perils, or, to save those dear,
Embraces death without one sigh or tear.
Life's martyrs still the endless drama play
Though no great Homer lives to chant their worth to-day.

III.

And if he chanted, who would list his songs,
So hurried now the world's gold-seeking throngs?
And yet shall silence mantle mighty deeds?
Awake, dear Muse, and sing though no ear heeds!
Extol the triumphs, and bemoan the end
Of that true hero, lover, son and friend
Whose faithful heart in his last choice was shown-
Death with the comrades dear, refusing flight alone.

IV.

He who was born for battle and for strife
Like some caged eagle frets in peaceful life;

So Custer fretted when detained afar
From scenes of stirring action and of war.
And as the captive eagle in delight,
When freedom offers, plumes himself for flight
And soars away to thunder clouds on high,
With palpitating wings and wild exultant cry,

V.

So lion-hearted Custer sprang to arms,
And gloried in the conflict's loud alarms.
But one dark shadow marred his bounding joy;
And then the soldier vanished, and the boy,
The tender son, clung close, with sobbing breath,
To her from whom each parting was new death;
That mother who like goddesses of old,
Gave to the mighty Mars, three warriors brave and bold,

VI.

Yet who, unlike those martial dames of yore,
Grew pale and shuddered at the sight of gore.
A fragile being, born to grace the hearth,
Untroubled by the conflicts of the earth.
Some gentle dove who reared young eaglets, might,
In watching those bold birdlings take their flight,
Feel what that mother felt who saw her sons
Rush from her loving arms, to face death-dealing guns.

VII.

But ere thy lyre is strung to martial strains
Of wars which sent our hero o'er the plains,
To add the cypress to his laureled brow,
Be brave, my Muse, and darker truths avow.
Let Justice ask a preface to thy songs,
Before the Indian's crimes declare his wrongs;
Before effects, wherein all horrors blend,
Declare the shameful cause, precursor of the end.

VIII.

When first this soil the great Columbus trod,
He was less like the image of his God
Than those ingenuous souls, unspoiled by art,
Who lived so near to Mother Nature's heart;
Those simple children of the wood and wave,
As frank as trusting, and as true as brave;
Savage they were, when on some hostile raid
(For where is he so high, whom war does not degrade?) .

IX.

But dark deceit and falsehood's shameless shame
They had not learned, until the white man came.
He taught them, too, the lurking devil's joy
In liquid lies, that lure but to destroy.
With wily words, as false as they were sweet,
He spread his snares for unsuspecting feet;
Paid truth with guile, and trampled in the dust
Their gentle childlike faith and unaffected trust.

X.

And for the sport of idle kings and knaves
Of Nature's greater noblemen, made slaves.
Alas, the hour, when the wronged Indian knows
His seeming benefactors are but foes.
His kinsmen kidnapped and his lands possessed,
The demon woke in that untutored breast.
Four hundred years have rolled upon their way-
The ruthless demon rules the red man to this day.

XI.

If, in the morning of success, that grand
Invincible discoverer of our land
Had made no lodge or wigwam desolate
To carry trophies to the proud and great;
If on our history's page there were no blot
Left by the cruel rapine of Cabot,
Of Verrazin, and Hudson, dare we claim
The Indian of the plains, to-day had been same?

XII.

For in this brief existence, not alone
Do our lives gather what our hands have sown,
But we reap, too, what others long ago
Sowed, careless of the harvests that might grow.
Thus hour by hour the humblest human souls
Inscribe in cipher on unending scrolls,
The history of nations yet to be;
Incite fierce bloody wars, to rage from sea to sea,

XIII.

Or pave the way to peace. There is no past,
So deathless are events-results so vast.
And he who strives to make one act or hour
Stand separate and alone, needs first the power
To look upon the breaking wave and say,
'These drops were bosomed by a cloud to-day,
And those from far mid-ocean's crest were sent.'
So future, present, past, in one wide sea are blent.

BOOK SECOND.

I.

Oh, for the power to call to aid, of mine
Own humble Muse, the famed and sacred nine.
Then might she fitly sing, and only then,
Of those intrepid and unflinching men
Who knew no homes save ever moving tents,
And who 'twixt fierce unfriendly elements
And wild barbarians warred. Yet unafraid,
Since love impels thy strains, sing, sing, my modest maid.

II.

Relate how Custer in midwinter sought
Far Washita's cold shores; tell why he fought
With savage nomads fortified in deep snows.
Woman, thou source of half the sad world's woes

And all its joys, what sanguinary strife
Has vexed the earth and made contention rife
Because of thee! For, hidden in man's heart,
Ay, in his very soul, of his true self a part,

III.

The natural impulse and the wish belongs
To win thy favor and redress thy wrongs.
Alas! for woman, and for man, alas!
If that dread hour should ever come to pass,
When, through her new-born passion for control,
She drives that beautiful impulse from his soul.
What were her vaunted independence worth
If to obtain she sells her sweetest rights of birth?

IV.

God formed fair woman for her true estate-
Man's tender comrade, and his equal mate,
Not his competitor in toil and trade.
While coarser man, with greater strength was made
To fight her battles and her rights protect.
Ay! to protect the rights of earth's elect
(The virgin maiden and the spotless wife)
From immemorial time has man laid down his life.

V.

And now brave Custer's valiant army pressed
Across the dangerous desert of the West,
To rescue fair white captives from the hands
Of brutal Cheyenne and Comanche bands,
On Washita's bleak banks. Nine hundred strong
It moved its slow determined way along,
Past frontier homes left dark and desolate
By the wild Indians' fierce and unrelenting hate;

VI.

Past forts where ranchmen, strong of heart and bold,
Wept now like orphaned children as they told,

With quivering muscles and with anguished breath,
Of captured wives, whose fate was worse than death;
Past naked bodies whose disfiguring wounds
Spoke of the hellish hate of human hounds;
Past bleaching skeleton and rifled grave,
On pressed th' avenging host, to rescue and to save.

VII.

Uncertain Nature, like a fickle friend,
(Worse than the foe on whom we may depend)
Turned on these dauntless souls a brow of wrath
And hurled her icy jav'lins in their path.
With treacherous quicksands, and with storms that blight,
Entrapped their footsteps and confused their sight.
'Yet on, ' urged Custer, 'on at any cost,
No hour is there to waste, no moment to be lost.'

VIII.

Determined, silent, on they rode, and on,
Like fabled Centaurs, men and steeds seemed one.
No bugle echoed and no voice spoke near,
Lest on some lurking Indian's list'ning ear
The sound might fall. Through swift descending snow
The stealthy guides crept, tracing out the foe;
No fire was lighted, and no halt was made
From haggard gray-lipped dawn till night lent friendly shade.

IX.

Then, by the shelt'ring river's bank at last,
The weary warriors paused for their repast.
A couch of ice and falling snows for spread
Made many a suffering soldier's chilling bed.
They slept to dream of glory and delight,
While the pale fingers of the pitying night
Wove ghostly winding sheets for that doomed score
Who, ere another eve, should sleep to wake no more.

X.

But those who slept not, saw with startled eyes
Far off, athwart dim unprotecting skies,
Ascending slowly with majestic grace,
A lustrous rocket, rising out of space.
'Behold the signal of the foe, ' cried one,
The field is lost before the strife's begun.
Yet no! for see! yon rays spread near and far;
It is the day's first smile, the radiant morning star.

XI.

The long hours counting till the daylight broke,
In whispered words the restless warriors spoke.
They talked of battles, but they thought of home
(For hearts are faithful though the feet may roam) .
Brave Hamilton, all eager for the strife,
Mused o'er that two-fold mystery-death and life;
'And when I die, ' quoth he, ' mine be the part
To fall upon the field, a bullet in my heart.'

XII.

At break of dawn the scouts crept in to say
The foe was camped a rifle shot away.
The baying of a dog, an infant's cry
Pierced through the air; sleep fled from every eye.
To horse! to arms! the dead demand the dead!
Let the grand charge upon the lodge be led!
Let the Mosaic law, life for a life
Pay the long standing debt of blood. War to the knife!

XIII.

So spake each heart in that unholy rage
Which fires the brain, when war the thoughts engage.
War, hideous war, appealing to the worst
In complex man, and waking that wild thirst
For human blood which blood alone can slake.
Yet for their country's safety, and the sake
Of tortured captives moaning in alarm
The Indian must be made to fear the law's strong arm.

XIV.

A noble vengeance burned in Custer's breast,
But, as he led his army to the crest,
Above the wigwams, ready for the charge
He felt the heart within him, swelling large
With human pity, as an infant's wail
Shrilled once again above the wintry gale.
Then hosts of murdered children seemed to rise;
And shame his halting thought with sad accusing eyes,

XV.

And urge him on to action. Stern of brow
The just avenger, and the General now,
He gives the silent signal to the band
Which, all impatient, waits for his command.
Cold lips to colder metal press; the air
Echoes those merry strains which mean despair
For sleeping chieftain and for toiling squaw,
But joy to those stern hearts which glory in the law

XVI.

Of murder paying murder's awful debt.
And now four squadrons in one charge are met.
From east and west, from north and south they come,
At call of bugle and at roll of drum.
Their rifles rain hot hail upon the foe,
Who flee from danger in death's jaws to go.
The Indians fight like maddened bulls at bay,
And dying shriek and groan, wound the young ear of day.

XVII.

A pallid captive and a white-browed boy
Add to the tumult piercing cries of joy,
As forth they fly, with high hope animate.

A hideous squaw pursues them with her hate;
Her knife descends with sickening force and sound;
Their bloody entrails stain the snow-clad ground.
She shouts with glee, then yells with rage and falls
Dead by her victims' side, pierced by avenging balls.

XVIII.

Now war runs riot, carnage reigns supreme.
All thoughts of mercy fade from Custer's scheme.
Inhuman methods for inhuman foes,
Who feed on horrors and exult in woes.
To conquer and subdue alone remains
In dealing with the red man on the plains.
The breast that knows no conscience yields to fear,
Strike! let the Indian meet his master now and here,

XIX.

With thoughts like these was Custer's mind engaged.
The gentlest are the sternest when enraged.
All felt the swift contagion of his ire,
For he was one who could arouse and fire
The coldest heart, so ardent was his own.
His fearless eye, his calm intrepid tone,
Bespoke the leader, strong with conscious power,
Whom following friends will bless, while foes will curse and cower.

XX.

Again they charge! and now among the killed
Lies Hamilton, his wish so soon fulfilled,
Brave Elliott pursues across the field
The flying foe, his own young life to yield.
But like the leaves in some autumnal gale
The red men fall in Washita's wild vale.
Each painted face and black befeathered head
Still more repulsive seems with death's grim pallor wed.

XXI.

New forces gather on surrounding knolls,
And fierce and fiercer war's red river rolls.
With bright-hued pennants flying from each lance
The gayly costumed Kiowas advance.
And bold Comanches (Bedouins of the land)
Infuse fresh spirit in the Cheyenne band.
While from the ambush of some dark ravine
Flash arrows aimed by hands, unerring and unseen.

XXIII.

The hours advance; the storm clouds roll away;
Still furious and more furious grows the fray.
The yellow sun makes ghastlier still the sight
Of painted corpses, staring in its light.
No longer slaves, but comrades of their griefs,
The squaws augment the forces of their chiefs.
They chant weird dirges in a minor key,
While from the narrow door of wigwam and tepee

XXIII.

Cold glittering eyes above cold glittering steel
Their deadly purpose and their hate reveal.
The click of pistols and the crack of guns
Proclaim war's daughters dangerous as her sons.
She who would wield the soldier's sword and lance
Must be prepared to take the soldier's chance.
She who would shoot must serve as target, too;
The battle-frenzied men, infuriate now pursue.

XXIV.

And blood of warrior, woman and papoose,
Flow free as waters when some dam breaks loose;
Consuming fire, the wanton friend of war
(Whom allies worship and whom foes abhor)

Now trails her crimson garments through the street,
And ruin marks the passing of her feet.
Full three-score lodges smoke upon the plain,
And all the vale is strewn with bodies of the slain.

XXV.

And those who are not numbered with the dead
Before all-conquering Custer now are led.
To soothe their woes, and calm their fears he seeks;
An Osage guide interprets while he speaks.
The vanquished captives, humbled, cowed and spent
Read in the victor's eye his kind intent.
The modern victor is as kind as brave;
His captive is his guest, not his insulted slave.

XXVI.

Mahwissa, sister of the slaughtered chief
Of all the Cheyennes, listens; and her grief
Yields now to hope; and o'er her withered face
There flits the stealthy cunning of her race.
Then forth she steps, and thus begins to speak:
'To aid the fallen and support the weak
Is man's true province; and to ease the pain
Of those o'er whom it is his purpose now to reign.

XXVII.

'Let the strong chief unite with theirs his life,
And take this black-eyed maiden for a wife.'
Then, moving with an air of proud command,
She leads a dusky damsel by the hand,
And places her at wondering Custer's side,
Invoking choicest blessings on the bride
And all unwilling groom, who thus replies.
'Fair is the Indian maid, with bright bewildering eyes,

XXVIII.

'But fairer still is one who, year on year,
Has borne man's burdens, conquered woman's fear;
And at my side rode mile on weary mile,
And faced all deaths, all dangers, with a smile,
Wise as Minerva, as Diana brave,
Is she whom generous gods in kindness gave
To share the hardships of my wandering life,
Companion, comrade, friend, my loved and loyal wife.

XXIX.

'The white chief weds but one. Take back thy maid.'
He ceased, and o'er Mahwissa's face a shade
Of mingled scorn and pity and surprise
Sweeps as she slow retreats, and thus replies:
'Rich is the pale-faced chief in battle fame,
But poor is he who but one wife may claim.
Wives are the red-skinned heroes' rightful spoil;
In war they prove his strength, in times of peace they toil.'

XXX.

But hark! The bugle echoes o'er the plains
And sounds again those merry Celtic strains
Which oft have called light feet to lilting dance,
But now they mean the order to advance.
Along the river's bank, beyond the hill
Two thousand foemen lodge, unconquered still.
Ere falls night's curtain on this bloody play,
The army must proceed, with feint of further fray.

XXXI.

The weary warriors mount their foam-flecked steeds,
With flags unfurled the dauntless host proceeds.
What though the foe outnumbered two to one?
Boldness achieves what strength oft leaves undone;
A daring mein will cause brute force to cower,

And courage is the secret source of power.
As Custer's column wheels upon their sight
The frightened red men yield the untried field by flight.

XXXII.

Yet when these conquering heroes sink to rest,
Dissatisfaction gnaws the leader's breast,
For far away across vast seas of snows
Held prisoners still by hostile Arapahoes
And Cheyennes unsubdued, two captives wait.
On God and Custer hangs their future fate.
May the Great Spirit nerve the mortal's arm
To rescue suffering souls from worse than death's alarm.

XXXIII.

But ere they seek to rescue the oppressed,
The valiant dead, in state, are laid to rest.
Mourned Hamilton, the faithful and the brave,
Nine hundred comrades follow to the grave;
And close behind the banner-hidden corse
All draped in black, walks mournfully his horse;
While tears of sound drip through the sunlit day.
A soldier may not weep, but drums and bugles may.

XXXIV.

Now, Muse, recount, how after long delays
And dangerous marches through untrodden ways,
Where cold and hunger on each hour attend,
At last the army gains the journey's end.
An Indian village bursts upon the eye;
Two hundred lodges, sleep-encompassed lie,
There captives moan their anguished prayers through tears,
While in the silent dawn the armed answer nears.

XXXV.

To snatch two fragile victims from the foe
Nine hundred men have traversed leagues of snow.
Each woe they suffered in a hostile land
The flame of vengeance in their bosoms fanned.
They thirst for slaughter, and the signal wait
To wrest the captives from their horrid fate.
Each warrior's hand upon his rifle falls,
Each savage soldier's heart for awful bloodshed calls.

XXXVI.

And one, in years a youth, in woe a man,
Sad Brewster, scarred by sorrow's blighting ban,
Looks, panting, where his captive sister sleeps,
And o'er his face the shade of murder creeps.
His nostrils quiver like a hungry beast
Who scents anear the bloody carnal feast.
He longs to leap down in that slumbering vale
And leave no foe alive to tell the awful tale.

XXXVII.

Not so, calm Custer. Sick of gory strife,
He hopes for rescue with no loss of life;
And plans that bloodless battle of the plains
Where reasoning mind outwits mere savage brains.
The sullen soldiers follow where he leads;
No gun is emptied, and no foeman bleeds.
Fierce for the fight and eager for the fray
They look upon their Chief in undisguised dismay.

XXXVIII.

He hears the murmur of their discontent,
But sneers can never change a strong mind's bent.
He knows his purpose and he does not swerve,
And with a quiet mien and steady nerve
He meets dark looks where'er his steps may go,
And silence that is bruising as a blow,

Where late were smiles and words of ardent praise.
So pass the lagging weeks of wearying delays.

XXXIX.

Inaction is not always what it seems,
And Custer's mind with plan and project teems.
Fixed in his peaceful purpose he abides
With none takes counsel and in none confides;
But slowly weaves about the foe a net
Which leaves them wholly at his mercy, yet
He strikes no fateful blow; he takes no life,
And holds in check his men, who pant for bloody strife.

XL.

Intrepid warrior and skilled diplomate,
In his strong hands he holds the red man's fate.
The craftiest plot he checks with counterplot,
Till tribe by tribe the tricky foe is brought
To fear his vengeance and to know his power.
As man's fixed gaze will make a wild beast cower,
So these crude souls feel that unflinching will
Which draws them by its force, yet does not deign to kill.

XLI.

And one by one the hostile Indians send
Their chiefs to seek a peaceful treaty's end.
Great councils follow; skill with cunning copes
And conquers it; and Custer sees his hopes
So long delayed, like stars storm hidden, rise
To radiate with splendor all his skies.
The stubborn Cheyennes, cowed at last by fear,
Leading the captive pair, o'er spring-touched hills appear.

XLII.

With breath suspended, now the whole command
Waits the approach of that equestrian band.
Nearer it comes, still nearer, then a cry,
Half sob, half shriek, goes piercing God's blue sky,
And Brewster, like a nimble-footed doe,
Or like an arrow hurrying from a bow,
Shoots swiftly through the intervening space
And that lost sister clasps, in sorrowing love's embrace.

XLIII.

And men who leaned o'er Hamilton's rude bier
And saw his dead dear face without a tear,
Strong souls who early learned the manly art
Of keeping from the eye what's in the heart,
Soldiers who look unmoved on death's pale brow,
Avert their eyes, to hide their moisture now.
The briny flood forced back from shores of woe,
Needs but to touch the strands of joy to overflow.

XLIV.

About the captives welcoming warriors crowd,
All eyes are wet, and Brewster sobs aloud.
Alas, the ravage wrought by toil and woe
On faces that were fair twelve moons ago.
Bronzed by exposure to the heat and cold,
Still young in years, yet prematurely old,
By insults humbled and by labor worn,
They stand in youth's bright hour, of all youth's graces shorn.

XLV.

A scanty garment rudely made of sacks
Hangs from their loins; bright blankets drape their backs;
About their necks are twisted tangled strings
Of gaudy beads, while tinkling wire and rings
Of yellow brass on wrists and fingers glow.
Thus, to assuage the anger of the foe
The cunning Indians decked the captive pair

Who in one year have known a lifetime of despair.

XLVI.

But love can resurrect from sorrow's tomb
The vanished beauty and the faded bloom,
As sunlight lifts the bruised flower from the sod,
Can lift crushed hearts to hope, for love is God.
Already now in freedom's glad release
The hunted look of fear gives place to peace,
And in their eyes at thought of home appears
That rainbow light of joy which brightest shines through tears.

XLVII.

About the leader thick the warriors crowd;
Late loud in censure, now in praises loud,
They laud the tactics, and the skill extol
Which gained a bloodless yet a glorious goal.
Alone and lonely in the path of right
Full many a brave soul walks. When gods requite
And crown his actions as their worth demands,
Among admiring throngs the hero always stands.

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XLVIII.

Back to the East the valorous squadrons sweep;
The earth, arousing from her long, cold sleep,
Throws from her breast the coverlet of snow,
Revealing Spring's soft charms which lie below.
Suppressed emotions in each heart arise,
The wooer wakens and the warrior dies.
The bird of prey is vanquished by the dove,
And thoughts of bloody strife give place to thoughts of love.

XLIX.

The mighty plains, devoid of whispering trees,
Guard well the secrets of departed seas.
Where once great tides swept by with ebb and flow
The scorching sun looks down in tearless woe.
And fierce tornadoes in ungoverned pain
Mourn still the loss of that mysterious main.
Across this ocean bed the soldiers fly-
Home is the gleaming goal that lures each eager eye.

L.

Like some elixir which the gods prepare,
They drink the viewless tonic of the air,
Sweet with the breath of startled antelopes
Which speed before them over swelling slopes.
Now like a serpent writhing o'er the moor,
The column curves and makes a slight detour,
As Custer leads a thousand men away
To save a ground bird's nest which in the footpath lay.

LI.

Mile following mile, against the leaning skies
Far off they see a dull dark cloud arise.
The hunter's instinct in each heart is stirred,
Beholding there in one stupendous herd
A hundred thousand buffaloes. Oh great
Unwieldy proof of Nature's cruder state,
Rough remnant of a prehistoric day,
Thou, with the red man, too, must shortly pass away.

LII.

Upon those spreading plains is there not room
For man and bison, that he seals its doom?
What pleasure lies and what seductive charm
In slaying with no purpose but to harm?
Alas, that man, unable to create,
Should thirst forever to exterminate,
And in destruction find his fiercest joy.

The gods alone create, gods only should destroy.

LIII.

The flying hosts a straggling bull pursue;
Unerring aim, the skillful Custer drew.
The wounded beast turns madly in despair
And man and horse are lifted high in air.
The conscious steed needs not the guiding rein;
Back with a bound and one quick cry of pain
He springs, and halts, well knowing where must fall
In that protected frame, the sure death dealing ball.

LIV.

With minds intent upon the morrow's feast,
The men surround the carcass of the beast.
Rolled on his back, he lies with lolling tongue,
Soon to the saddle savory steaks are hung.
And from his mighty head, great tufts of hair
Are cut as trophies for some lady fair.
To vultures then they leave the torn remains
Of what an hour ago was monarch of the plains.

LV.

Far off, two bulls in jealous war engage,
Their blood-shot eye balls roll in furious rage;
With maddened hoofs they mutilate the ground
And loud their angry bellowings resound;
With shaggy heads bent low they plunge and roar,
Till both broad bellies drip with purple gore.
Meanwhile, the heifer, whom the twain desire,
Stands browsing near the pair, indifferent to their ire.

LVI.

At last she lifts her lazy head and heeds

The clattering hoofs of swift advancing steeds.
Off to the herd with cumb'rous gait she runs
And leaves the bulls to face the threatening guns.
No more for them the free life of the plains,
Its mating pleasures and its warring pains.
Their quivering flesh shall feed unnumbered foes,
Their tufted tails adorn the soldiers' saddle bows.

LVII.

Now into camp the conquering hosts advance;
On burnished arms the brilliant sunbeams glance.
Brave Custer leads, blonde as the gods of old;
Back from his brow blow clustering locks of gold,
And, like a jewel in a brook, there lies,
Far in the depths of his blue guarded eyes,
The thought of one whose smiling lips upcurled,
Mean more of joy to him than plaudits of the world.

LVIII.

The troops in columns of platoons appear
Close to the leader following. Ah, here
The poetry of war is fully seen,
Its prose forgotten; as against the green
Of Mother Nature, uniformed in blue,
The soldiers pass for Sheridan's review.
The motion-music of the moving throng,
Is like a silent tune, set to a wordless song.

LIX.

The guides and trailers, weird in war's array,
Precede the troops along the grassy way.
They chant wild songs, and, with loud noise and stress,
In savage manner savage joy express.
The Indian captives, blanketed in red,
On ponies mounted, by the scouts are led.
Like sumach bushes, etched on evening skies,

Against the blue-clad troops, this patch of color lies.

LX.

High o'er the scene vast music billows bound,
And all the air is liquid with the sound
Of those invisible compelling waves.
Perchance they reach the low and lonely graves
Where sleep brave Elliott and Hamilton,
And whisper there the tale of victory won;
Or do the souls of soldiers tried and true
Come at the bugle call, and march in grand review?

LXI.

The pleased Commander watches in surprise
This splendid pageant surge before his eyes.
Not in those mighty battle days of old
Did scenes like this upon his sight unfold.
But now it passes. Drums and bugles cease
To dash war billows on the shores of Peace.
The victors smile on fair broad bosomed Sleep
While in her soothing arms, the vanquished cease to weep.

BOOK THIRD.

There is an interval of eight years between Books Second and Third.

I.

As in the long dead days marauding hosts
Of Indians came from far Siberian coasts,
And drove the peaceful Aztecs from their grounds,
Despoiled their homes (but left their tell-tale mounds) ,
So has the white man with the Indians done.
Now with their backs against the setting sun
The remnants of a dying nation stand
And view the lost domain, once their beloved land.

II.

Upon the vast Atlantic's leagues of shore
The happy red man's tent is seen no more;
And from the deep blue lakes which mirror heaven
His bounding bark canoe was long since driven.
The mighty woods, those temples where his God
Spoke to his soul, are leveled to the sod;
And in their place tall church spires point above,
While priests proclaim the law of Christ, the King of Love.

III.

The avaricious and encroaching rail
Seized the wide fields which knew the Indians' trail.
Back to the reservations in the West
The native owners of the land were pressed,
And selfish cities, harbingers of want,
Shut from their vision each accustomed haunt.
Yet hungry Progress, never satisfied,
Gazed on the western plains, and gazing, longed and sighed.

IV.

As some strange bullock in a pasture field
Compels the herds to fear him, and to yield
The juicy grass plots and the cooling shade
Until, despite their greater strength, afraid,
They huddle in some corner spot and cower
Before the monarch's all controlling power,
So has the white man driven from its place
By his aggressive greed, Columbia's native race.

V.

Yet when the bull pursues the herds at bay,
Incensed they turn, and dare dispute his sway.
And so the Indians turned, when men forgot
Their sacred word, and trespassed on the spot.

The lonely little spot of all their lands,
The reservation of the peaceful bands.
But lust for gold all conscience kills in man,
'Gold in the Black Hills, gold! ' the cry arose and ran

VI.

From lip to lip, as flames from tree to tree
Leap till the forest is one fiery sea,
And through the country surged that hot unrest
Which thirst for riches wakens in the breast.
In mighty throngs the fortune hunters came,
Despoiled the red man's lands and slew his game,
Broke solemn treaties and defied the law.
And all these ruthless acts the Nation knew and saw.

VII.

Man is the only animal that kills
Just for the wanton love of slaughter; spills
The blood of lesser things to see it flow;
Lures like a friend, to murder like a foe
The trusting bird and beast; and, coward like,
Deals covert blows he dare not boldly strike.
The brutes have finer souls, and only slay
When torn by hunger's pangs, or when to fear a prey.

VIII.

The pale-faced hunter, insolent and bold,
Pursued the bison while he sought for gold.
And on the hungry red man's own domains
He left the rotting and unused remains
To foul with sickening stench each passing wind
And rouse the demon in the savage mind,
Save in the heart where virtues dominate
Injustice always breeds its natural offspring- hate.

IX.

The chieftain of the Sioux, great Sitting Bull,
Mused o'er their wrongs, and felt his heart swell full
Of bitter vengeance. Torn with hate's unrest
He called a council and his braves addressed.
'From fair Wisconsin's shimmering lakes of blue
Long years ago the white man drove the Sioux.
Made bold by conquest, and inflamed by greed,
He still pursues our tribes, and still our ranks recede.

X.

'Fair are the White Chief's promises and words,
But dark his deeds who robs us of our herds.
He talks of treaties, asks the right to buy,
Then takes by force, not waiting our reply.
He grants us lands for pastures and abodes
To devastate them by his iron roads.
But now from happy Spirit Lands, a friend
Draws near the hunted Sioux, to strengthen and defend.

XI.

'While walking in the fields I saw a star;
Unconsciously I followed it afar-
It led me on to valleys filled with light,
Where danced our noble chieftains slain in fight.
Black Kettle, first of all that host I knew,
He whom the strong armed Custer foully slew.
And then a spirit took me by the hand,
The Great Messiah King who comes to free the land.

XII.

'Suns were his eyes, a speaking tear his voice,
.Whose rainbow sounds made listening hearts rejoice
And thus he spake: 'The red man's hour draws near
When all his lost domains shall reappear.
The elk, the deer, the bounding antelope,

Shall here return to grace each grassy slope.'
He waved his hand above the fields, and lo!
Down through the valleys came a herd of buffalo.

XIII.

'The wondrous vision vanished, but I knew
That Sitting Bull must make the promise true.
Great Spirits plan what mortal man achieves,
The hand works magic when the heart believes.
Arouse, ye braves! let not the foe advance.
Arm for the battle and begin the dance-
The sacred dance in honor of our slain,
Who will return to earth, ere many moons shall wane.'

XIV.

Thus Sitting Bull, the chief of wily knaves,
Worked on the superstitions of his braves.
Mixed truth with lies; and stirred to mad unrest
The warlike instinct in each savage breast.
A curious product of unhappy times,
The natural offspring of unnumbered crimes,
He used low cunning and dramatic arts
To startle and surprise those crude untutored hearts.

XV.

Out from the lodges pour a motley throng,
Slow measures chanting of a dirge-like song.
In one great circle dizzily they swing,
A squaw and chief alternate in the ring.
Coarse raven locks stream over robes of white,
Their deep set orbs emit a lurid light,
And as through pine trees moan the winds refrains,
So swells and dies away, the ghostly graveyard strains.

XVI.

Like worded wine is music to the ear,
And long indulged makes mad the hearts that hear.
The dancers, drunken with the monotone
Of oft repeated notes, now shriek and groan
And pierce their ruddy flesh with sharpened spears;
Still more excited when the blood appears,
With warlike yells, high in the air they bound,
Then in a deathlike trance fall prostrate on the ground.

XVII.

They wake to tell weird stories of the dead,
While fresh performers to the ring are led.
The sacred nature of the dance is lost,
War is their cry, red war, at any cost.
Insane for blood they wait for no command,
But plunge marauding through the frightened land.
Their demon hearts on devils' pleasures bent,
For each new foe surprised, new torturing deaths invent.

XVIII.

Staked to the earth one helpless creature lies,
Flames at his feet and splinters in his eyes.
Another groans with coals upon his breast,
While 'round the pyre the Indians dance and jest.
A crying child is brained upon a tree,
The swooning mother saved from death, to be
The slave and plaything of a filthy knave,
Whose sins would startle hell, whose clay defile a grave.

XIX.

Their cause was right, their methods all were wrong.
Pity and censure both to them belong.
Their woes were many, but their crimes were more.
The soulless Satan holds not in his store
Such awful tortures as the Indians' wrath

Keeps for the hapless victim in his path.
And if the last lone remnants of that race
Were by the white man swept from off the earth's fair face,

XX.

Were every red man slaughtered in a day,
Still would that sacrifice but poorly pay
For one insulted woman captive's woes.
Again great Custer in his strength arose,
More daring, more intrepid than of old.
The passing years had touched and turned to gold
The ever widening aureole of fame
That shone upon his brow, and glorified his name.

XXI.

Wise men make laws, then turn their eyes away,
While fools and knaves ignore them day by day;
And unmolested, fools and knaves at length
Induce long wars which sap a country's strength.
The sloth of leaders, ruling but in name,
Has dragged full many a nation down to shame.
A word unspoken by the rightful lips
Has dyed the land with blood, and blocked the sea with ships.

XXII.

The word withheld, when Indians asked for aid,
Came when the red man started on his raid.
What Justice with a gesture might have done
Was left for noisy war with bellowing gun.
And who save Custer and his gallant men
Could calm the tempest into peace again?
What other hero in the land could hope
With Sitting Bull, the fierce and lawless one to cope?

XXIII.

What other warrior skilled enough to dare
Surprise that human tiger in his lair?
Sure of his strength, unconscious of his fame
Out from the quiet of the camp he came;
And stately as Diana at his side
Elizabeth, his wife and alway bride,
And Margaret, his sister, rode apace;
Love's clinging arms he left to meet death's cold embrace.

XXIV.

As the bright column wound along its course,
The smiling leader turned upon his horse
To gaze with pride on that superb command.
Twelve hundred men, the picked of all the land,
Innured to hardship and made strong by strife
Their lithe limbed bodies breathed of out-door life;
While on their faces, resolute and brave,
Hope stamped its shining seal, although their thoughts were grave.

XXV.

The sad eyed women halted in the dawn,
And waved farewell to dear ones riding on.
The modest mist picked up her robes and ran
Before the Sun god's swift pursuing van.
And suddenly there burst on startled eyes,
The sight of soldiers, marching in the skies;
That phantom host, a phantom Custer led;
Mirage of dire portent, forecasting days ahead.

XXVI.

The soldiers' children, flaunting mimic flags,
Played by the roadside, striding sticks for nags.
Their mothers wept, indifferent to the crowd
Who saw their tears and heard them sob aloud.
Old Indian men and squaws crooned forth a rhyme

Sung by their tribes from immemorial time;
And over all the drums' incessant beat
Mixed with the scout's weird rune, and tramp of myriad feet.

XXVII.

So flawless was the union of each part
The mighty column (moved as by one heart)
Pulsed through the air, like some sad song well sung,
Which gives delight, although the soul is wrung.
Farther and fainter to the sight and sound
The beautiful embodied poem wound;
Till like a ribbon, stretched across the land
Seemed the long narrow line of that receding band.

XXVIII.

The lot of those who in the silence wait
Is harder than the fighting soldiers' fate.
Back to the lonely post two women passed,
With unaccustomed sorrow overcast.
Two sad for sighs, too desolate for tears,
The dark forebodings of long widowed years
In preparation for the awful blow
Hung on the door of hope the sable badge of woe.

XXIX.

Unhappy Muse! for thee no song remains,
Save the sad miséréré of the plains.
Yet though defeat, not triumph, ends the tale,
Great victors sometimes are the souls that fail.
All glory lies not in the goals we reach,
But in the lessons which our actions teach.
And he who, conquered, to the end believes
In God and in himself, though vanquished, still achieves.

XXX.

Ah, grand as rash was that last fatal raid
The little group of daring heroes made.
Two hundred and two score intrepid men
Rode out to war; not one came back again.
Like fiends incarnate from the depths of hell
Five thousand foemen rose with deafening yell,
And swept that vale as with a simoon's breath,
But like the gods of old, each martyr met his death.

XXXI.

Like gods they battled and like gods they died.
Hour following hour that little band defied
The hordes of red men swarming o'er the plain,
Till scarce a score stood upright 'mid the slain.
Then in the lull of battle, creeping near,
A scout breathed low in Custer's listening ear:
'Death lies before, dear life remains behind
Mount thy sure-footed steed, and hasten with the wind.'

XXXII.

A second's silence. Custer dropped his head,
His lips slow moving as when prayers are said-
Two words he breathed-'God and Elizabeth, '
Then shook his long locks in the face of death
And with a final gesture turned away
To join that fated few who stood at bay.
Ah! deeds like that the Christ in man reveal
Let Fame descend her throne at Custer's shrine to kneel.

XXXIII.

Too late to rescue, but in time to weep,
His tardy comrades came. As if asleep
He lay, so fair, that even hellish hate
Withheld its hand and dared not mutilate.
By fiends who knew not honor, honored still,

He smiled and slept on that far western hill.
Cast down thy lyre, oh Muse! thy song is done!
Let tears complete the tale of him who failed, yet won.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Custer: Book Second

I

Oh, for the power to call to aid, of mine
Own humble Muse, the famed and sacred nine.
Then might she fitly sing, and only then,
Of those intrepid and unflinching men
Who knew no homes save ever moving tents,
And who 'twixt fierce unfriendly elements
And wild barbarians warred. Yet unafraid,
Since love impels thy strains, sing, sing, my modest maid.

II

Relate how Custer in midwinter sought
Far Washita's cold shores; tell why he fought
With savage nomads fortified in deep snows.
Woman, thou source of half the sad world's woes
And all its joys, what sanguinary strife
Has vexed the earth and made contention rife
Because of thee! For, hidden in man's heart,
Ay, in his very soul, of his true self a part,

III

The natural impulse and the wish belongs
To win thy favor and redress thy wrongs.
Alas! for woman, and for man, alas!
If that dread hour should ever come to pass,
When, through her new-born passion for control,
She drives that beautiful impulse from his soul.
What were her vaunted independence worth
If to obtain she sells her sweetest rights of birth?

IV

God formed fair woman for her true estate-
Man's tender comrade, and his equal mate,
Not his competitor in toil and trade.
While coarser man, with greater strength was made

To fight her battles and her rights protect.
Ay! to protect the rights of earth's elect
(The virgin maiden and the spotless wife)
From immemorial time has man laid down his life.

V

And now brave Custer's valiant army pressed
Across the dangerous desert of the West,
To rescue fair white captives from the hands
Of brutal Cheyenne and Comanche bands,
On Washita's bleak banks. Nine hundred strong
It moved its slow determined way along,
Past frontier homes left dark and desolate
By the wild Indians' fierce and unrelenting hate;

VI

Past forts where ranchmen, strong of heart and bold,
Wept now like orphaned children as they told,
With quivering muscles and with anguished breath,
Of captured wives, whose fate was worse than death;
Past naked bodies whose disfiguring wounds
Spoke of the hellish hate of human hounds;
Past bleaching skeleton and rifled grave,
On pressed th' avenging host, to rescue and to save.

VII

Uncertain Nature, like a fickle friend,
(Worse than the foe on whom we may depend)
Turned on these dauntless souls a brow of wrath
And hurled her icy jav'lins in their path.
With treacherous quicksands, and with storms that blight,
Entrapped their footsteps and confused their sight.
'Yet on,' urged Custer, 'on at any cost,
No hour is there to waste, no moment to be lost.'

VIII

Determined, silent, on they rode, and on,
Like fabled Centaurs, men and steeds seemed one.

No bugle echoed and no voice spoke near,
Lest on some lurking Indian's list'ning ear
The sound might fall. Through swift descending snow
The stealthy guides crept, tracing out the foe;
No fire was lighted, and no halt was made
From haggard gray-lipped dawn till night lent friendly shade.

IX

Then, by the shelt'ring river's bank at last,
The weary warriors paused for their repast.
A couch of ice and falling shows for spread
Made many a suffering soldier's chilling bed.
They slept to dream of glory and delight,
While the pale fingers of the pitying night
Wove ghostly winding sheets for that doomed score
Who, ere another eve, should sleep to wake no more.

X

But those who slept not, saw with startled eyes
Far off, athwart dim unprotecting skies,
Ascending slowly with majestic grace,
A lustrous rocket, rising out of space.
'Behold the signal of the foe,' cried one,
The field is lost before the strife's begun.
Yet no! for see! yon rays spread near and far;
It is the day's first smile, the radiant morning star.

XI

The long hours counting till the daylight broke,
In whispered words the restless warriors spoke.
They talked of battles, but they thought of home
(For hearts are faithful though the feet may roam).
Brave Hamilton, all eager for the strife,
Mused o'er that two-fold mystery-death and life;
'And when I die,' quoth he, 'mine be the part
To fall upon the field, a bullet in my heart.'

XII

At break of dawn the scouts crept in to say
The foe was camped a rifle shot away.
The baying of a dog, an infant's cry
Pierced through the air; sleep fled from every eye.
To horse! to arms! the dead demand the dead!
Let the grand charge upon the lodge be led!
Let the Mosaic law, life for a life
Pay the long standing debt of blood. War to the knife!

XIII

So spake each heart in that unholy rage
Which fires the brain, when war the thoughts engage.
War, hideous war, appealing to the worst
In complex man, and waking that wild thirst
For human blood which blood alone can slake.
Yet for their country's safety, and the sake
Of tortured captives moaning in alarm
The Indian must be made to fear the law's strong arm.

XIV

A noble vengeance burned in Custer's breast,
But, as he led his army to the crest,
Above the wigwams, ready for the charge
He felt the heart within him, swelling large
With human pity, as an infant's wail
Shrilled once again above the wintry gale.
Then hosts of murdered children seemed to rise;
And shame his halting thought with sad accusing eyes,

XV

And urge him on to action. Stern of brow
The just avenger, and the General now,
He gives the silent signal to the band
Which, all impatient, waits for his command.
Cold lips to colder metal press; the air
Echoes those merry strains which mean despair
For sleeping chieftain and for toiling squaw,
But joy to those stern hearts which glory in the law

XVI

Of murder paying murder's awful debt.
And now four squadrons in one charge are met.
From east and west, from north and south they come,
At call of bugle and at roll of drum.
Their rifles rain hot hail upon the foe,
Who flee from danger in death's jaws to go.
The Indians fight like maddened bulls at bay,
And dying shriek and groan, wound the young ear of day.

XVII

A pallid captive and a white-browed boy
Add to the tumult piercing cries of joy,
As forth they fly, with high hope animate.
A hideous squaw pursues them with her hate;
Her knife descends with sickening force and sound;
Their bloody entrails stain the snow-clad ground.
She shouts with glee, then yells with rage and falls
Dead by her victims' side, pierced by avenging balls.

XVIII

Now war runs riot, carnage reigns supreme.
All thoughts of mercy fade from Custer's scheme.
Inhuman methods for inhuman foes,
Who feed on horrors and exult in woes.
To conquer and subdue alone remains
In dealing with the red man on the plains.
The breast that knows no conscience yields to fear,
Strike! let the Indian meet his master now and here.

XIX

With thoughts like these was Custer's mind engaged.
The gentlest are the sternest when enraged.
All felt the swift contagion of his ire,
For he was one who could arouse and fire
The coldest heart, so ardent was his own.
His fearless eye, his calm intrepid tone,
Bespoke the leader, strong with conscious power,

Whom following friends will bless, while foes will curse and cower.

XX

Again they charge! and now among the killed
Lies Hamilton, his wish so soon fulfilled,
Brave Elliott pursues across the field
The flying foe, his own young life to yield.
But like the leaves in some autumnal gale
The red men fall in Washita's wild vale.
Each painted face and black befeathered head
Still more repulsive seems with death's grim pallor wed.

XXI

New forces gather on surrounding knolls,
And fierce and fiercer war's red river rolls.
With bright-hued pennants flying from each lance
The gayly costumed Kiowas advance.
And bold Comanches (Bedouins of the land)
Infuse fresh spirit in the Cheyenne band.
While from the ambush of some dark ravine
Flash arrows aimed by hands, unerring and unseen.

XXIII

The hours advance; the storm clouds roll away;
Still furious and more furious grows the fray.
The yellow sun makes ghastlier still the sight
Of painted corpses, staring in its light.
No longer slaves, but comrades of their griefs,
The squaws augment the forces of their chiefs.
They chant weird dirges in a minor key,
While from the narrow door of wigwam and tepee

XXIII

Cold glittering eyes above cold glittering steel
Their deadly purpose and their hate reveal.
The click of pistols and the crack of guns
Proclaim war's daughters dangerous as her sons.
She who would wield the soldier's sword and lance

Must be prepared to take the soldier's chance.
She who would shoot must serve as target, too;
The battle-frenzied men, infuriate now pursue.

XXIV

And blood of warrior, woman and papoose,
Flow free as waters when some dam breaks loose;
Consuming fire, the wanton friend of war
(Whom allies worship and whom foes abhor)
Now trails her crimson garments through the street,
And ruin marks the passing of her feet.
Full three-score lodges smoke upon the plain,
And all the vale is strewn with bodies of the slain.

XXV

And those who are not numbered with the dead
Before all-conquering Custer now are led.
To soothe their woes, and calm their fears he seeks;
An Osage guide interprets while he speaks.
The vanquished captives, humbled, cowed and spent
Read in the victor's eye his kind intent.
The modern victor is as kind as brave;
His captive is his guest, not his insulted slave.

XXVI

Mahwissa, sister of the slaughtered chief
Of all the Cheyennes, listens; and her grief
Yields now to hope; and o'er her withered face
There flits the stealthy cunning of her race.
Then forth she steps, and thus begins to speak:
'To aid the fallen and support the weak
Is man's true province; and to ease the pain
Of those o'er whom it is his purpose now to reign.

XXVII

'Let the strong chief unite with theirs his life,
And take this black-eyed maiden for a wife.'
Then, moving with an air of proud command,

She leads a dusky damsel by the hand,
And places her at wondering Custer's side,
Invoking choicest blessings on the bride
And all unwilling groom, who thus replies.
'Fair is the Indian maid, with bright bewildering eyes,

XXVIII

'But fairer still is one who, year on year,
Has borne man's burdens, conquered woman's fear;
And at my side rode mile on weary mile,
And faced all deaths, all dangers, with a smile,
Wise as Minerva, as Diana brave,
Is she whom generous gods in kindness gave
To share the hardships of my wandering life,
Companion, comrade, friend, my loved and loyal wife.

XXIX

'The white chief weds but one. Take back thy maid.'
He ceased, and o'er Mahwissa's face a shade
Of mingled scorn and pity and surprise
Sweeps as she slow retreats, and thus replies:
'Rich is the pale-faced chief in battle fame,
But poor is he who but one wife may claim.
Wives are the red-skinned heroes' rightful spoil;
In war they prove his strength, in times of peace they toil.'

XXX

But hark! The bugle echoes o'er the plains
And sounds again those merry Celtic strains
Which oft have called light feet to lilting dance,
But now they mean the order to advance.
Along the river's bank, beyond the hill
Two thousand foemen lodge, unconquered still.
Ere falls night's curtain on this bloody play,
The army must proceed, with feint of further fray.

XXXI

The weary warriors mount their foam-flecked steeds,

With flags unfurled the dauntless host proceeds.
What though the foe outnumbered two to one?
Boldness achieves what strength oft leaves undone;
A daring mein will cause brute force to cower,
And courage is the secret source of power.
As Custer's column wheels upon their sight
The frightened red men yield the untried field by flight.

XXXII

Yet when these conquering heroes sink to rest,
Dissatisfaction gnaws the leader's breast,
For far away across vast seas of snows
Held prisoners still by hostile Arapahoes
And Cheyennes unsubdued, two captives wait.
On God and Custer hangs their future fate.
May the Great Spirit nerve the mortal's arm
To rescue suffering souls from worse than death's alarm.

XXXIII

But ere they seek to rescue the oppressed,
The valiant dead, in state, are laid to rest.
Mourned Hamilton, the faithful and the brave,
Nine hundred comrades follow to the grave;
And close behind the banner-hidden corse
All draped in black, walks mournfully his horse;
While tears of sound drip through the sunlit day.
A soldier may not weep, but drums and bugles may.

XXXIV

Now, Muse, recount, how after long delays
And dangerous marches through untrodden ways,
Where cold and hunger on each hour attend,
At last the army gains the journey's end.
An Indian village bursts upon the eye;
Two hundred lodges, sleep-encompassed lie,
There captives moan their anguished prayers through tears,
While in the silent dawn the armed answer nears.

XXXV

To snatch two fragile victims from the foe
Nine hundred men have traversed leagues of snow.
Each woe they suffered in a hostile land
The flame of vengeance in their bosoms fanned.
They thirst for slaughter, and the signal wait
To wrest the captives from their horrid fate.
Each warrior's hand upon his rifle falls,
Each savage soldier's heart for awful bloodshed calls.

XXXVI

And one, in years a youth, in woe a man,
Sad Brewster, scarred by sorrow's blighting ban,
Looks, panting, where his captive sister sleeps,
And o'er his face the shade of murder creeps.
His nostrils quiver like a hungry beast
Who scents anear the bloody carnal feast.
He longs to leap down in that slumbering vale
And leave no foe alive to tell the awful tale.

XXXVII

Not so, calm Custer. Sick of gory strife,
He hopes for rescue with no loss of life;
And plans that bloodless battle of the plains
Where reasoning mind outwits mere savage brains.
The sullen soldiers follow where he leads;
No gun is emptied, and no foeman bleeds.
Fierce for the fight and eager for the fray
They look upon their Chief in undisguised dismay.

XXXVIII

He hears the murmur of their discontent,
But sneers can never change a strong mind's bent.
He knows his purpose and he does not swerve.
And with a quiet mien and steady nerve
He meets dark looks where'er his steps may go,
And silence that is bruising as a blow,
Where late were smiles and words of ardent praise.
So pass the lagging weeks of wearying delays.

XXXIX

Inaction is not always what it seems,
And Custer's mind with plan and project teems.
Fixed in his peaceful purpose he abides
With none takes counsel and in none confides;
But slowly weaves about the foe a net
Which leaves them wholly at his mercy, yet
He strikes no fateful blow; he takes no life,
And holds in check his men, who pant for bloody strife.

XL

Intrepid warrior and skilled diplomate,
In his strong hands he holds the red man's fate.
The craftiest plot he checks with counterplot,
Till tribe by tribe the tricky foe is brought
To fear his vengeance and to know his power.
As man's fixed gaze will make a wild beast cower,
So these crude souls feel that unflinching will
Which draws them by its force, yet does not deign to kill.

XLI

And one by one the hostile Indians send
Their chiefs to seek a peaceful treaty's end.
Great councils follow; skill with cunning copes
And conquers it; and Custer sees his hopes
So long delayed, like stars storm hidden, rise
To radiate with splendor all his skies.
The stubborn Cheyennes, cowed at last by fear,
Leading the captive pair, o'er spring-touched hills appear.

XLII

With breath suspended, now the whole command
Waits the approach of that equestrian band.
Nearer it comes, still nearer, then a cry,
Half sob, half shriek, goes piercing God's blue sky,
And Brewster, like a nimble-footed doe,
Or like an arrow hurrying from a bow,

Shoots swiftly through the intervening space
And that lost sister clasps, in sorrowing love's embrace.

XLIII

And men who leaned o'er Hamilton's rude bier
And saw his dead dear face without a tear,
Strong souls who early learned the manly art
Of keeping from the eye what's in the heart,
Soldiers who look unmoved on death's pale brow,
Avert their eyes, to hide their moisture now.
The briny flood forced back from shores of woe,
Needs but to touch the strands of joy to overflow.

XLIV

About the captives welcoming warriors crowd,
All eyes are wet, and Brewster sobs aloud.
Alas, the ravage wrought by toil and woe
On faces that were fair twelve moons ago.
Bronzed by exposure to the heat and cold,
Still young in years, yet prematurely old,
By insults humbled and by labor worn,
They stand in youth's bright hour, of all youth's graces shorn.

XLV

A scanty garment rudely made of sacks
Hangs from their loins; bright blankets drape their backs;
About their necks are twisted tangled strings
Of gaudy beads, while tinkling wire and rings
Of yellow brass on wrists and fingers glow.
Thus, to assuage the anger of the foe
The cunning Indians decked the captive pair
Who in one year have known a lifetime of despair.

XLVI

But love can resurrect from sorrow's tomb
The vanished beauty and the faded bloom,
As sunlight lifts the bruised flower from the sod,
Can lift crushed hearts to hope, for love is God.

Already now in freedom's glad release
The hunted look of fear gives place to peace,
And in their eyes at thought of home appears
That rainbow light of joy which brightest shines through tears.

XLVII

About the leader thick the warriors crowd;
Late loud in censure, now in praises loud,
They laud the tactics, and the skill extol
Which gained a bloodless yet a glorious goal.
Alone and lonely in the path of right
Full many a brave soul walks. When gods requite
And crown his actions as their worth demands,
Among admiring throngs the hero always stands.

XLVIII

Back to the East the valorous squadrons sweep;
The earth, arousing from her long, cold sleep,
Throws from her breast the coverlet of snow,
Revealing Spring's soft charms which lie below.
Suppressed emotions in each heart arise,
The wooer wakens and the warrior dies.
The bird of prey is vanquished by the dove,
And thoughts of bloody strife give place to thoughts of love.

XLIX

The mighty plains, devoid of whispering trees,
Guard well the secrets of departed seas.
Where once great tides swept by with ebb and flow
The scorching sun looks down in tearless woe.
And fierce tornadoes in ungoverned pain
Mourn still the loss of that mysterious main.
Across this ocean bed the soldiers fly-
Home is the gleaming goal that lures each eager eye.

L

Like some elixir which the gods prepare,

They drink the viewless tonic of the air,
Sweet with the breath of startled antelopes
Which speed before them over swelling slopes.
Now like a serpent writhing o'er the moor,
The column curves and makes a slight detour,
As Custer leads a thousand men away
To save a ground bird's nest which in the footpath lay.

LI

Mile following mile, against the leaning skies
Far off they see a dull dark cloud arise.
The hunter's instinct in each heart is stirred,
Beholding there in one stupendous herd
A hundred thousand buffaloes. Oh great
Unwieldy proof of Nature's cruder state,
Rough remnant of a prehistoric day,
Thou, with the red man, too, must shortly pass away.

LII

Upon those spreading plains is there not room
For man and bison, that he seals its doom?
What pleasure lies and what seductive charm
In slaying with no purpose but to harm?
Alas, that man, unable to create,
Should thirst forever to exterminate,
And in destruction find his fiercest joy.
The gods alone create, gods only should destroy.

LIII

The flying hosts a straggling bull pursue;
Unerring aim, the skillful Custer drew.
The wounded beast turns madly in despair
And man and horse are lifted high in air.
The conscious steed needs not the guiding rein;
Back with a bound and one quick cry of pain
He springs, and halts, well knowing where must fall
In that protected frame, the sure death dealing ball.

LIV

With minds intent upon the morrow's feast,
The men surround the carcass of the beast.
Rolled on his back, he lies with lolling tongue,
Soon to the saddle savory steaks are hung.
And from his mighty head, great tufts of hair
Are cut as trophies for some lady fair.
To vultures then they leave the torn remains
Of what an hour ago was monarch of the plains.

LV

Far off, two bulls in jealous war engage,
Their blood-shot eye balls roll in furious rage;
With maddened hoofs they mutilate the ground
And loud their angry bellowings resound;
With shaggy heads bent low they plunge and roar,
Till both broad bellies drip with purple gore.
Meanwhile, the heifer, whom the twain desire,
Stands browsing near the pair, indifferent to their ire.

LVI

At last she lifts her lazy head and heeds
The clattering hoofs of swift advancing steeds.
Off to the herd with cumb'rous gait she runs
And leaves the bulls to face the threatening guns.
No more for them the free life of the plains,
Its mating pleasures and its warring pains.
Their quivering flesh shall feed unnumbered foes,
Their tufted tails adorn the soldiers' saddle bows.

LVII

Now into camp the conquering hosts advance;
On burnished arms the brilliant sunbeams glance.
Brave Custer leads, blonde as the gods of old;
Back from his brow blow clustering locks of gold,
And, like a jewel in a brook, there lies,
Far in the depths of his blue guarded eyes,
The thought of one whose smiling lips upcurled,
Mean more of joy to him than plaudits of the world.

LVIII

The troops in columns of platoons appear
Close to the leader following. Ah, here
The poetry of war is fully seen,
Its prose forgotten; as against the green
Of Mother Nature, uniformed in blue,
The soldiers pass for Sheridan's review.
The motion-music of the moving throng,
Is like a silent tune, set to a wordless song.

LIX

The guides and trailers, weird in war's array,
Precede the troops along the grassy way.
They chant wild songs, and with loud noise and stress,
In savage manner savage joy express.
The Indian captives, blanketed in red,
On ponies mounted, by the scouts are led.
Like sumach bushes, etched on evening skies,
Against the blue-clad troops, this patch of color lies.

LX

High o'er the scene vast music billows bound,
And all the air is liquid with the sound
Of those invisible compelling waves.
Perchance they reach the low and lonely graves
Where sleep brave Elliott and Hamilton,
And whisper there the tale of victory won;
Or do the souls of soldiers tried and true
Come at the bugle call, and march in grand review?

LXI

The pleased Commander watches in surprise
This splendid pageant surge before his eyes.
Not in those mighty battle days of old
Did scenes like this upon his sight unfold.
But now it passes. Drums and bugles cease
To dash war billows on the shores of Peace.

The victors smile on fair broad bosomed Sleep
While in her soothing arms, the vanquished cease to weep

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Custer: Book Third

I

As in the long dead days marauding hosts
Of Indians came from far Siberian coasts,
And drove the peaceful Aztecs from their grounds,
Despoiled their homes (but left their tell-tale mounds),
So has the white man with the Indians done.
Now with their backs against the setting sun
The remnants of a dying nation stand
And view the lost domain, once their beloved land.

II

Upon the vast Atlantic's leagues of shore
The happy red man's tent is seen no more;
And from the deep blue lakes which mirror heaven
His bounding bark canoe was long since driven.
The mighty woods, those temples where his God
Spoke to his soul, are leveled to the sod;
And in their place tall church spires point above,
While priests proclaim the law of Christ, the King of Love.

III

The avaricious and encroaching rail
Seized the wide fields which knew the Indians' trail.
Back to the reservations in the West
The native owners of the land were pressed,
And selfish cities, harbingers of want,
Shut from their vision each accustomed haunt.
Yet hungry Progress, never satisfied,
Gazed on the western plains, and gazing, longed and sighed.

IV

As some strange bullock in a pasture field
Compels the herds to fear him, and to yield
The juicy grass plots and the cooling shade
Until, despite their greater strength, afraid,

They huddle in some corner spot and cower
Before the monarch's all controlling power,
So has the white man driven from its place
By his aggressive greed, Columbia's native race.

V

Yet when the bull pursues the herds at bay,
Incensed they turn, and dare dispute his sway.
And so the Indians turned, when men forgot
Their sacred word, and trespassed on the spot,
The lonely little spot of all their lands,
The reservation of the peaceful bands.
But lust for gold all conscience kills in man,
'Gold in the Black Hills, gold!' the cry arose and ran

VI

From lip to lip, as flames from tree to tree
Leap till the forest is one fiery sea,
And through the country surged that hot unrest
Which thirst for riches wakens in the breast.
In mighty throngs the fortune hunters came,
Despoiled the red man's lands and slew his game,
Broke solemn treaties and defied the law.
And all these ruthless acts the Nation knew and saw.

VII

Man is the only animal that kills
Just for the wanton love of slaughter; spills
The blood of lesser things to see it flow;
Lures like a friend, to murder like a foe
The trusting bird and beast; and, coward like,
Deals covert blows he dare not boldly strike.
The brutes have finer souls, and only slay
When torn by hunger's pangs, or when to fear a prey.

VIII

The pale-faced hunter, insolent and bold,
Pursued the bison while he sought for gold.

And on the hungry red man's own domains
He left the rotting and unused remains
To foul with sickening stench each passing wind
And rouse the demon in the savage mind,
Save in the heart where virtues dominate
Injustice always breeds its natural offspring-hate.

IX

The chieftain of the Sioux, great Sitting Bull,
Mused o'er their wrongs, and felt his heart swell full
Of bitter vengeance. Torn with hate's unrest
He called a council and his braves addressed.
'From fair Wisconsin's shimmering lakes of blue
Long years ago the white man drove the Sioux.
Made bold by conquest, and inflamed by greed,
He still pursues our tribes, and still our ranks recede.

X

'Fair are the White Chief's promises and words,
But dark his deeds who robs us of our herds.
He talks of treaties, asks the right to buy,
Then takes by force, not waiting our reply.
He grants us lands for pastures and abodes
To devastate them by his iron roads.
But now from happy Spirit Lands, a friend
Draws near the hunted Sioux, to strengthen and defend.

XI

'While walking in the fields I saw a star;
Unconsciously I followed it afar-
It led me on to valleys filled with light,
Where danced our noble chieftains slain in fight.
Black Kettle, first of all that host I knew,
He whom the strong armed Custer foully slew.
And then a spirit took me by the hand,
The Great Messiah King who comes to free the land.

XII

'Suns were his eyes, a speaking tear his voice,
Whose rainbow sounds made listening hearts rejoice
And thus he spake: 'The red man's hour draws near
When all his lost domains shall reappear.
The elk, the deer, the bounding antelope,
Shall here return to grace each grassy slope.'
He waved his hand above the fields, and lo!
Down through the valleys came a herd of buffalo.

XIII

'The wondrous vision vanished, but I knew
That Sitting Bull must make the promise true.
Great Spirits plan what mortal man achieves,
The hand works magic when the heart believes.
Arouse, ye braves! let not the foe advance.
Arm for the battle and begin the dance-
The sacred dance in honor of our slain,
Who will return to earth, ere many moons shall wane.'

XIV

Thus Sitting Bull, the chief of wily knaves,
Worked on the superstitions of his braves.
Mixed truth with lies; and stirred to mad unrest
The warlike instinct in each savage breast.
A curious product of unhappy times,
The natural offspring of unnumbered crimes,
He used low cunning and dramatic arts
To startle and surprise those crude untutored hearts.

XV

Out from the lodges pour a motley throng,
Slow measures chanting of a dirge-like song.
In one great circle dizzily they swing,
A squaw and chief alternate in the ring.
Coarse raven locks stream over robes of white,
Their deep set orbs emit a lurid light,
And as through pine trees moan the winds refrains,
So swells and dies away, the ghostly graveyard strains.

XVI

Like worded wine is music to the ear,
And long indulged makes mad the hearts that hear.
The dancers, drunken with the monotone
Of oft repeated notes, now shriek and groan
And pierce their ruddy flesh with sharpened spears;
Still more excited when the blood appears,
With warlike yells, high in the air they bound,
Then in a deathlike trance fall prostrate on the ground.

XVII

They wake to tell weird stories of the dead,
While fresh performers to the ring are led.
The sacred nature of the dance is lost,
War is their cry, red war, at any cost.
Insane for blood they wait for no command,
But plunge marauding through the frightened land.
Their demon hearts on devils' pleasures bent,
For each new foe surprised, new torturing deaths invent.

XVIII

Staked to the earth one helpless creature lies,
Flames at his feet and splinters in his eyes.
Another groans with coals upon his breast,
While 'round the pyre the Indians dance and jest.
A crying child is brained upon a tree,
The swooning mother saved from death, to be
The slave and plaything of a filthy knave,
Whose sins would startle hell, whose clay defile a grave.

XIX

Their cause was right, their methods all were wrong.
Pity and censure both to them belong.
Their woes were many, but their crimes were more.
The soulless Satan holds not in his store
Such awful tortures as the Indians' wrath
Keeps for the hapless victim in his path.
And if the last lone remnants of that race

Were by the white man swept from off the earth's fair face,

XX

Were every red man slaughtered in a day,
Still would that sacrifice but poorly pay
For one insulted woman captive's woes.

Again great Custer in his strength arose,
More daring, more intrepid than of old.
The passing years had touched and turned to gold
The ever widening aureole of fame
That shone upon his brow, and glorified his name.

XXI

Wise men make laws, then turn their eyes away,
While fools and knaves ignore them day by day;
And unmolested, fools and knaves at length
Induce long wars which sap a country's strength.
The sloth of leaders, ruling but in name,
Has dragged full many a nation down to shame.
A word unspoken by the rightful lips
Has dyed the land with blood, and blocked the sea with ships.

XXII

The word withheld, when Indians asked for aid,
Came when the red man started on his raid.
What Justice with a gesture might have done
Was left for noisy war with bellowing gun.
And who save Custer and his gallant men
Could calm the tempest into peace again?
What other hero in the land could hope
With Sitting Bull, the fierce and lawless one to cope?

XXIII

What other warrior skilled enough to dare
Surprise that human tiger in his lair?
Sure of his strength, unconscious of his fame
Out from the quiet of the camp he came;

And stately as Diana at his side
Elizabeth, his wife and alway bride,
And Margaret, his sister, rode apace;
Love's clinging arms he left to meet death's cold embrace.

XXIV

As the bright column wound along its course,
The smiling leader turned upon his horse
To gaze with pride on that superb command.
Twelve hundred men, the picked of all the land,
Innured to hardship and made strong by strife
Their lithe limbed bodies breathed of out-door life;
While on their faces, resolute and brave,
Hope stamped its shining seal, although their thoughts were grave.

XXV

The sad eyed women halted in the dawn,
And waved farewell to dear ones riding on.
The modest mist picked up her robes and ran
Before the Sun god's swift pursuing van.
And suddenly there burst on startled eyes,
The sight of soldiers, marching in the skies;
That phantom host, a phantom Custer led;
Mirage of dire portent, forecasting days ahead.

XXVI

The soldiers' children, flaunting mimic flags,
Played by the roadside, striding sticks for nags.
Their mothers wept, indifferent to the crowd
Who saw their tears and heard them sob aloud.
Old Indian men and squaws crooned forth a rhyme
Sung by their tribes from immemorial time;
And over all the drums' incessant beat
Mixed with the scout's weird rune, and tramp of myriad feet.

XXVII

So flawless was the union of each part
The mighty column (moved as by one heart)

Pulsed through the air, like some sad song well sung,
Which gives delight, although the soul is wrung.
Farther and fainter to the sight and sound
The beautiful embodied poem wound;
Till like a ribbon, stretched across the land
Seemed the long narrow line of that receding band.

XXVIII

The lot of those who in the silence wait
Is harder than the fighting soldiers' fate.
Back to the lonely post two women passed,
With unaccustomed sorrow overcast.
Two sad for sighs, too desolate for tears,
The dark forebodings of long widowed years
In preparation for the awful blow
Hung on the door of hope the sable badge of woe.

XXIX

Unhappy Muse! for thee no song remains,
Save the sad miséréré of the plains.
Yet though defeat, not triumph, ends the tale,
Great victors sometimes are the souls that fail.
All glory lies not in the goals we reach,
But in the lessons which our actions teach.
And he who, conquered, to the end believes
In God and in himself, though vanquished, still achieves.

XXX

Ah, grand as rash was that last fatal raid
The little group of daring heroes made.
Two hundred and two score intrepid men
Rode out to war; not one came back again.
Like fiends incarnate from the depths of hell
Five thousand foemen rose with deafening yell,
And swept that vale as with a simoon's breath,
But like the gods of old, each martyr met his death.

XXXI

Like gods they battled and like gods they died.
Hour following hour that little band defied
The hordes of red men swarming o'er the plain,
Till scarce a score stood upright 'mid the slain.
Then in the lull of battle, creeping near,
A scout breathed low in Custer's listening ear:

'Death lies before, dear life remains behind
Mount thy sure-footed steed, and hasten with the wind.'

XXXII

A second's silence. Custer dropped his head,
His lips slow moving as when prayers are said-
Two words he breathed-'God and Elizabeth,'
Then shook his long locks in the face of death,
And with a final gesture turned away
To join that fated few who stood at bay.
Ah! deeds like that the Christ in man reveal
Let Fame descend her throne at Custer's shrine to kneel.

XXXIII

Too late to rescue, but in time to weep,
His tardy comrades came. As if asleep
He lay, so fair, that even hellish hate
Withheld its hand and dared not mutilate.
By fiends who knew not honor, honored still,
He smiled and slept on that far western hill.
Cast down thy lyre, oh Muse! thy song is done!
Let tears complete the tale of him who failed, yet won.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Daft

In the warm yellow smile of the morning,
She stands at the lattice pane,
And watches the strong young binders
Stride down to the fields of grain.
And she counts them over and over
As they pass her cottage door:
Are they six, she counts them seven;
Are they seven, she counts one more.

When the sun swings high in the heavens,
And the reapers go shouting home,
She calls to the household, saying,
'Make haste! for the binders have come
And Johnnie will want his dinner -
He was always a hungry child';
And they answer, 'Yes, it ia waiting';
Then tell you, 'Her brain is wild.'

Again, in the hush of the evening,
When the work of the day is done,
And the binders go singing homeward
In the last red rays of the sun,
She will sit at the threshold waiting,
And with her withered face lights with joy:
'Come, Johnnie, ' she says, as they pass her,
'Come into the house, my boy.'

Five summers ago her Johnnie
Went out in the smile of the morn,
Singing across the meadow,
Striding down through the corn -
He towered above the binders,
Walking on either side,
And the mother's heart within her
Swelled with exultant pride.

For he was the light of the household -
His brown eyes were wells of truth,
And his face was the face of the morning,

Lit with its pure, fresh youth,
And his song rang out from the hilltops
Like the mellow blast of a horn,
And he strode o'er the fresh shorn meadows,
And down through the rows of corn.

But hushed were the voices of singing,
Hushed by the presence of death,
As back to the cottage they bore him -
In the noontide's scorching breath,
For the heat of the sun had slain him,
Had smitten the heart in his breast,
And he who towered above them
Lay lower than all the rest.

The grain grows ripe in the sunshine,
And the summers ebb and flow,
And the binders stride to their labour
And sing as they come and go;
But never again from the hilltops
Echoes the voice like a horn;
Never up from the meadows,
Never back from the corn.

Yet the poor, crazed brain of the mother
Fancies him always near;
She is blest in her strange delusion,
For she knoweth no pain nor fear,
And always she counts the binders
As they pass by her cottage door;
Are they six, she counts them seven;
Are they seven, she counts one more.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Dawn

Day's sweetest moments are at dawn;
Refreshed by his long sleep, the Light
Kisses the languid lips of Night,
Ere she can rise and hasten on.
All glowing from his dreamless rest
He holds her closely to his breast,
Warm lip to lip and limb to limb,
Until she dies for love of him.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Dear Motherland Of France

DEDICATED TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF FRANCE

Our Motherland, dear Motherland,
The source of beauty and of Art,
Who but thy children understand
The love which permeates each heart!
We see, through rainbow-tints of tears,
Thy glory of a thousand years.
O country of the Great and Free,
We live for thee, we live for thee,
Dear Motherland of France.

O Motherland, both blithe and brave,
What magic lies in thy name-France!
Yet can thy radiant mien be grave,
And stern thy ever-smiling glance.
And when thy sons and daughters know
That enemies would lay thee low
And dim thy fame on land and sea,
We fight for thee, we fight for thee,
Dear Motherland of France.

Dear Motherland of joy and mirth,
Dear Motherland of faith divine,
A thousand years the wondering earth
Has seen thy star in splendour shine.
Still shall it see that star of France
Its splendour and its light enhance.
Dear Motherland, when it need be
We die for thee, we die for thee,
Dear Motherland of France.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Death Of Labour

Methought a great wind swept across the earth,
And all the toilers perished. Then I saw
Pale terror blanch the rosy face of mirth,
And careless eyes grow full of fear and awe.
The sounds of pleasure ceased; the laughing song
On folly's lip changed to an angry cures:
A nameless horror seized the idle throng,
And death and ruin filled the universe.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Delilah

In the midnight of darkness and terror,
When I would grope nearer to God,
With my back to a record of error
And the highway of sin I have trod,
There comes to me shapes I would banish –
The shapes of the deeds I have done;
And I pray and I plead till they vanish –
All vanish and leave me, save one.

That one, with a smile like the splendour
Of the sun in the middle-day skies –
That one, with a spell that is tender –
That one with a dream in her eyes –
Cometh close, in her rare southern beauty,
Her languor, her indolent grace;
And my soul turns its back on its duty
To live in the light of her face.

She touches my cheek, and I quiver –
I tremble with exquisite pains;
She sighs – like an overcharged river
My blood rushes on through my veins;
She smiles – and in mad-tiger fashion,
As a she-tiger fondles her own,
I clasp her with fierceness and passion,
And kiss her with shudder and groan.

Once more, in our love's sweet beginning,
I put away God and the World;
Once more, in the joys of our sinnings,
Are the hopes of eternity hurled.
There is nothing my soul lacks or misses
As I clasp the dream-shape to my breast;
In the passion and pain of her kisses
Life blooms to its richest and best.

O ghost of dead sin unrelenting,
Go back to the dust, and the sod!
Too dear and too sweet for repenting,

Ye stand between me and my God.
If I, by the Throne, should behold you,
Smiling up with those eyes loved so well,
Close, close in my arms I would fold you,
And dropp with you down to sweet Hell!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Dell And I

In a mansion grand, just over the way,
Lives bonny, beautiful Dell;
You may have heard of this lady gay,
For she is a famous belle.
I live in a low cot opposite,
You never have heard of me;
For when the lady moon shines bright,
Who would a pale star see?
But ah, well, ah, well! I am happier far than Dell,
As strange as that may be.

Dell has robes of the richest kind-
Pinks and purples and blues.
And she worries her maid and frets her mind
To know which one to choose.
Which shall it be now, silk or lace?
In which will I be most fair?
She stands by the mirror with anxious face,
And her maid looks on in despair.
Ah, well, ah, well! I am not worried, you see, like Dell,
For I have but
one
to wear.

Dell has lovers of every grade,
Of every age and style;
Suitors flutter about the maid,
And bask in her word and smile.
She keeps them all, with a coquette's art,
As suits her mood or mirth,
And vainly wonders if in one heart
Of all true love has birth.
Ah, well, ah, well! I never question myself like Dell,
For I
know
a true heart's worth.

Pleasure to Dell seems stale and old,
Often she sits and sighs;
Life to me is a tale untold,
Each day is a glad surprise.
Dell with marry, of course, some day
After her belleship is run;
She will cavil the matter in worldly way
And wed Dame Fortune's son.
But, ah, well, sweet to tell, I shall not dally and choose like Dell,
For I love and am loved by-
one

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Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Denied

The winds came out of the west one day,
And hurried the clouds before them;
And drove the shadows and mists away,
And over the mountains bore them.
And I wept, 'Oh, wind, blow into my mind,
Blow into my soul and heart,
And scatter the clouds that hang like shrouds,
And make the shadows depart.'

The rain came out of the leaden skies
And beat on the earth's cold bosom.
It said to the sleeping grass, 'Arise, '
And the young buds sprang in blossom.
And I wept in pain, 'Oh, blessed rain,
Beat into my heart to-day;
Thaw out the snows that are chilling it so,
Till it blossoms in hope, I pray.'

The sunshine fell on the bare-armed trees,
In a wonderful sheen of glory;
And the young leaves rustled and sang to the breeze,
And whispered a love-fraught story.
And 'Sun, oh, shine on this heart of mine,
And woo it to life, ' I cried;
But the wind, and sun, and rain, each one
The coveted boon denied

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Desolation

I think that the bitterest sorrow or pain
Of love unrequited, or cold death's woe,
Is sweet, compared to that hour when we know
That some grand passion is on the wane.

When we see that the glory, and glow, and grace
Which lent a splendour to night and day,
Are surely fading, and showing grey
And dull groundwork of the commonplace.

When fond expressions on dull ears fall,
When the hands clasp calmly without one thrill,
When we cannot muster by force of will
The old emotions that came at call.

When the dream has vanished we fain would keep,
When the heart, like a watch, runs out of gear,
And all the savour goes out of the year,
Oh, then is the time – if we could – to weep!

But no tears soften this dull, pale woe;
We must sit and face it with dry, sad eyes.
If we seek to hold it, the swifter joy flies –
We can only be passive, and let it go.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Discredited

Three million women without mates
In lonely homes on earth!
And Cupid sighs at heaven's gates,
Where many a spirit ego waits
Its call again to birth.

Three million women, meant to be
The mothers of the race!
But when war reaps on land and sea
Its harvests for Eternity,
Poor Hymen hides his face.

I think Earth has discredited
Itself in God's good sight:
He does not care to have souls bred,
Where peace, and love, and joy are fled,
Until we set things right.

He meant earth for a Garden Spot
Where spirits could return,
And build new heavens as they ought;
And now behold! what men have wrought
By deeds that blight and burn.

So, vain the waiting egos quest
For pathways back to birth:
And vain the longing and unrest
In many a cheated mother breast.
God does not like the earth!

It must be cleansed and purified
Of selfishness and strife,
Of grasping greed and lust and pride,
Before He lets His Angels guide

The egos back to life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Does It Pay?

If one poor burdened toiler o'er life's road,
Who meets us by the way,
Goes on less conscious of his galling load,
Then life, indeed, does pay.

If we can show the troubled heart the gain
That lies always in loss,
Why, then, we too are paid for all the pain
Of bearing life's hard cross.

If some despondent soul to hope is stirred,
Some sad lip made to smile,
By any act of ours, or any word,
Then, life has been worth while.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Don'T Drink

Don't drink, boys, don't!
There is nothing of happiness, pleasure, or cheer,
In brandy, in whiskey, in rum, ale, or beer.
If they cheer you when drunk, you are certain to pay
In headaches and crossness the following day.
Don't drink, boys, don't!

Boys, let it alone!
Turn your back on your deadliest enemy-Drink!
An assassin disguised; nor for one moment think,
As some rashly say, that
true
women admire
The man who can boast that he's playing with fire.
Boys, let it alone!

No, boys, don't drink!
If the habit's begun, stop now! stop to-day!
Ere the spirit of thirst leads you on and away
Into vice, shame, and drunkenness. This is the goal,
Where the spirit of thirst leads the slave of the bowl.
No, boys,
don't
drink!

Boys, touch not, nor taste!
Don't think you can stop at the social 'First Glass.'
Too many have boasted that power, alas!
And found they were slaves to this seeming good friend,
And have grown into drunkards and knaves, in the end.
Boys, touch not, nor taste!

Don't drink, boys,
Don't
!

If the loafers and idlers scoff, never heed:
True men and true women will wish you 'God-speed.'
There is nothing of purity, pleasure, or cheer
To be gotten from whiskey, wine, brandy, or beer.
Don't drink, boys,
Don't
!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Don'T Tease The Lion

If you saw a lion
Not within a cage,
Would you tease and fret him
Till he roared in rage?
Would you tempt his anger
And his savage power,
Knowing he could crush you,
Kill you, and devour?

Yet I know some people
Who, morn and noon and night,
Tease and fret with bitters
The lion-appetite.
It matters not what ails them,
For each disease and all
They seem to think there's healing
In demon alcohol.

So they fret the lion,
And anger him, until,
In his awful power,
He springs up to kill.
Let me warn you, children,
From this foolish way.
Do not tease the lion,
Nor tempt him any day.

Don't believe the doctors
If they say you need
Any wines or ciders;
For there are, indeed,
Better cures, and safer,
Than these drinks, that slay
More than a hundred people
Without fail each day.

Dorothy D.

I'm sick of 'musn'ts,' said Dorothy D.
Sick of musn'ts, as I can be.
From early dawn till the close of day
I hear a musn't, and never a may.

It's 'you musn't lie there like a sleepy head,'
And 'you musn't sit up when it's time for bed.'
'You musn't cry when I comb your curls,'
'You musn't play with those noisy girls.'
'You musn't be silent when spoken to,'
'You musn't chatter as parrots do.'
'You musn't be pert, and you musn't be proud,'
'You musn't giggle or laugh aloud.'
'You musn't rumple your nice clean dress,'
'You musn't nod, in the place of a 'yes.'"

So all day long the musn'ts go,
Till I dream at night of a great black row,
Of goblin 'musn'ts' with monstrous eyes
That stare at me in a shocked surprise.
Oh, I hope I will live to see the day
When some one will say to me, 'Dear, you may.'
For I'm sick of 'musn'ts,' said Dorothy D.
Sick of musn'ts, as I can be.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Dream Town

Now who is ready to go with me
Off and away to dream town?
Oh, such a journey as that will be,
All dressed in a snow white gown.
No shoe or stocking, they think it shocking
To wear such things in dream town street,
For it's paved with posies and leaves of roses,
So nothing can hurt your feet.

We leave our baggage and clothes behind
When we set out on this jaunt,
The folks who live there are very kind,
They give us whatever we want;
Sometimes a dolly we take, if she's jolly
And good all the day before.
But they've dolls without number in that land of slumber,
And of toys there's a wonderful store.

We shut up our eyes when we set out,
Though why I never have guessed,
There's some good reason I haven't a doubt,
Since every one says it is best.
I think we go faster and keep off disaster,
By folding our eyelids down;
By dropping that curtain I'm almost certain,
The sooner we get to dream town.

Just inside of the city gate,
Smiling and rosy and bright,
The boys and the girls of dream town wait
To play with us all the night.
So rocking and rocking, without shoe or stocking,
All dressed in a little white gown,
Singing and humming, we're coming, we're coming
Into the gates of dream town.

Drouth

Why do we pity those who weep? The pain
That finds a ready outlet in the flow
Of salt and bitter tears is blessed woe,
And does not need our sympathies. The rain
But fits the shorn field for new yield of grain;
While the red, brazen skies, the sun's fierce glow,
The dry, hot winds that from the tropics blow
Do parch and wither the unsheltered plain.
The anguish that through long, remorseless years
Looks out upon the world with no relief
Of sudden tempests or slow-dripping tears—
The still, unuttered, silent, wordless grief
That evermore doth ache, and ache, and ache—
This is the sorrow wherewith hearts do break.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Earthly Pride

How baseless is the mightiest earthly pride,
The diamond is but charcoal purified,
The lordliest pearl that decks a monarch's breast
Is but an insect's sepulchre at best.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

East And West

The Day has never understood the Gloaming or the Night;
Though sired by one Creative Power, and nursed at Nature's breast;
The White Man ever fails to read the Dark Man's heart aright;
Though from the self-same Source they came, upon the self-same quest;
So deep and wide, the Great Divide,
Between the East and West.

But like a shadow on a screen, mine eyes behold, above
The yawning gulf, a dim forecast, of structures strong and broad;
Where caste, and colour prejudice, by countless feet down trod,
With old traditions crushed by Time, pave smooth the bridge of Love;
And all the creed that men shall heed
Is consciousness of God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ernestness

The hurry of the times affects us so
In this swift rushing hour, we crowd and press
And thrust each other backward as we go,
And do not pause to lay sufficient stress
Upon that good, strong, true word, Earnestness.
In our impetuous haste, could we but know
Its full, deep meaning, its vast import, oh,
Then might we grasp the secret of success!
In that receding age when men were great,
The bone and sinew of their purpose lay
In this one word. God likes an earnest soul—
Too earnest to be eager. Soon or late
It leaves the spent horde breathless by the way,
And stands serene, triumphant at the goal.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Fading

All in the beautiful Autumn weather
One thought lingers with me and stays;
Death and winter are coming together,
Though both are veiled by the amber haze
I look on the forest of royal splendour!
I look on the face in my quiet room;
A face all beautiful, sad and tender,
And both are stamped with the seal of doom.

All through the days of Indian summer,
Minute by minute and hour by hour,
I feel the approach of a dreaded Comer –
A ghastly presence of awful power.
I hear the birds in the early morning,
As they fly from the fields that are turning brown,
And at noon and at night my heart takes warning,
For the maple leaves fall down and down.

The sumac bushes are all a-flaming!
The world is scarlet, and gold, and green,
And my darling's beautiful cheeks are shaming
The painted bloom of the ball-room queen.
Why talk of winter, amid such glory?
Why speak of death of a thing so fair?
Oh, but the forest king white and hoary
Is weaving a mantle for both to wear.

God! If I could by the soft deceiving
Of forests of splendour and cheeks of bloom
Lull my heart into sweet believing
Just for a moment and drown my gloom;
If I could forget for a second only
And rest from the pain of this awful dread
Of the days that are coming long and lonely
When the Autumn goes and she is dead.

But all the while the sun gilds wood and meadow
And the fair cheeks, hectic glows and cheats,
I know grim death sits veiled in shadow

Weaving for both their winding sheets.
I cannot help, and I cannot save her.
My hands are as weak as a babe's new-born;
I must yield her up to One who gave her
And wait for the resurrection morn.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Fading*

She sits beside the window. All who pass
Turn once again to gaze on her sweet face.
She is so fair; but soon, too soon, alas,
To lie down in her last resting-place.

No gems are brighter than her sparkling eyes,
Her brow like polished marble, white and fair -
Her cheeks are glowing as the sunset skies -
You would not dream that Death was lurking there.

But, Oh! he lingers closely at her side,
And when the forest dons her Autumn dress,
We know that he will claim her as his bride,
And earth will number one fair spirit less.

She sees the meadow robed in richest green -
The laughing stream - the willows bending o'er.
With tear-dimmed eyes she views each sylvan scene,
And thinks earth never was so fair before.

We do not sigh for heaven, till we have known
Something of sorrow, something of grief and woe,
And as a summer day her life has flown.
Oh, can we wonder she is loth to go?

She has no friends in heaven: all are here.
No lost one waits her in that unknown land,
And life grows doubly, trebly sweet and dear
As day by day she nears the mystic strand.

We love her and we grieve to see her go.
But it is Christ who calls her to His breast,
And He shall greet her, and she soon shall know
The joys of souls that dwell among the blest.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

False

False! Good God, I am dreaming!
No, no, it never can be-
You who are so true in seeming,
You, false to your vows and me?
My wife and my fair boy's mother
The star of my life-my queen-
To yield herself to another
Like some light Magdalene!

Proofs! what are proofs-I defy them!
They never can shake my trust;
If you look in my face and deny them
I will trample them into the dust.
For whenever I read of the glory
Of the realms of Paradise,
I sought for the truth of the story
And found it in your sweet eyes.

Why, you are the shy young creature
I wooed in her maiden grace;
There was purity in each feature,
And my heaven I found in your face.
And, 'not only married but mated,'
I would say in my pride and joy;
And our hopes were all consummated
When the angels gave us our boy.

Now you could not blot that beginning
So beautiful, pure and true,
With a record of wicked sinning
As a common woman might do.
Look up in your old frank fashion,
With your smile so free from art;
And say that no guilty passion
Has ever crept into your heart.

How pallid you are, and you tremble!
You are hiding your face from view!
'Tho' a sinner, you cannot dissemble'-
My God! then the tale is true?
True and the sun above us
Shines on in the summer skies?
And men say the angels love us,
And that God is good and wise.

Yet he lets a wanton thing like you
Ruin my home and my name!
Get out of my sight ere I strike you
Dead in your shameless shame!
No, no, I was wild, I was brutal;
I would not take your life,
For the efforts of death would be futile
To wipe out the sin of a wife.
Wife-why, that word has seemed sainted,
I uttered it like a prayer.
And now to think it is tainted-
Christ! how much we can bear!
'Slay you!' my boy's stained mother-
Nay, that would not punish, or save;
A soul that has outraged another
Finds no sudden peace in the grave.
I will leave you here to
remember

The Eden that was your own,
While on toward my life's December
I walk in the dark alone.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Fame

If I should die, to-day,
To-morrow, maybe, the world would see
Would waken from sleep, and say,
"Why here was talent! why here was worth!
Why here was a luminous light o' the earth.
A soul as free
As the winds of the sea:
To whom was given
A dower of heaven.
And fame, and name, and glory belongs
To this dead singer of living songs.
Bring hither a wreath, for the bride of death!"
And so they would praise me, and so they would raise me
Mayhap, a column, high over the bed
Where I should be lying, all cold and dead.

But I am a living poet!
Walking abroad in the sunlight of God,
Not lying asleep, where the clay worms creep,
And the cold world will not show it,
E'en when it sees that my song should please;
But sneering says: "Avaunt, with thy lays
Do not sing them, and do not bring them
Into this rustling, bustling life.
We have no time, for a jingling rhyme,
In this scene of hurrying, worrying strife."
And so I say, there is but one way
To win me a name, and bring me fame.
And that is, to die, and be buried low,
When the world would praise me, an hour or so.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Father

He never made a fortune, or a noise
In the world where men are seeking after fame;
But he had a healthy brood of girls and boys
Who loved the very ground on which he trod.
They thought him just little short of God;
Oh you should have heard the way they said his name –
‘Father.’

There seemed to be a loving little prayer
In their voices, even when they called him ‘Dad.’
Though the man was never heard of anywhere,
As a hero, yet somehow understood
He was doing well his part and making good;
And you knew it, by the way his children had
Of saying ‘Father.’

He gave them neither eminence nor wealth,
But he gave them blood untainted with a vice,
And opulence of undiluted health.
He was honest, and unpurchable and kind;
He was clean in heart, and body, and in mind.
So he made them heirs to riches without price –
‘This father.’

He never preached or scolded; and the rod –
Well, he used it as a turning pole in play.
But he showed the tender sympathy of God.
To his children in their troubles, and their joys.
He was always chum and comrade with his boys,
And his daughters – oh, you ought to hear them say
‘Father.’

Now I think of all achievements ‘tis the least
To perpetuate the species; it is done
By the insect and the serpent, and the beast.
But the man who keeps his body, and his thought,
Worth bestowing on an offspring love-begot,
Then the highest earthly glory he was won,
When in pride a grown-up daughter or a son

Says 'That's Father.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Finis

An idle rhyme of the summer time,
Sweet, and solemn, and tender;
Fair with the haze of the moon's pale rays,
Bright with the sunset's splendour.

Summer and beauty over the lands -
Careless hours of pleasure;
A meeting of eyes and a touching of hands -
A change in the floating measure.

A deeper hue in the skies of blue,
Winds from the tropics blowing;
A softer grace in the fair moons face,
And the summer going, going.

The leaves drift down, the green grows brown,
And tears with smiles are blended;
A twilight hour and a treasured flower, -
And now the poem is ended.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Fishing

Maybe this is fun, sitting in the sun,
With a book and parasol, as my Angler wishes,
While he dips his line in the ocean brine,
Under the impression that his bait will catch the fishes.

'Tis romantic, yes, but I must confess
Thoughts of shady rooms at home somehow seem more inviting.
But I dare not move- 'Quiet, there, my love!'
Says my Angler, 'for I think monster fish is biting.'
Oh, of course it's bliss, but how hot it is!
And the rock I'm sitting on grows harder every minute;
Still my fisher waits, trying various baits,
But the basket at his side I see has nothing in it.

Oh, it's just the way to pass a July day,
Arcadian and sentimental, dreamy, idle, charming,
But how fierce the sunlight falls! and the way the insect crawls
Along my neck and down my back is really quite alarming.
'Any luck?' I gently ask of the angler at his task,
'There's something pulling at my line,' he says; 'I've almost caught it.'
But when, with blistered face, we our homeward steps retrace,
We take the little basket just as empty as we brought it.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Five Little Fingers

This is the baby who doesn't do a thing,
This is the lady who loves to wear a ring,
This is their big sister, this is another,
And this stout thumb is their great sturdy brother.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Five Little Toes At Night

This little toe is tired,
This little toe needs rocking,
This little toe is sleepy you know,
But this little toe keeps talking,
This toe big and tall is the mischief of all,
For he made a great hole in his stocking.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Five Little Toes In The Morning

This little toe is hungry-
This little toe is too,
This toe lies abed like a sleepy head,
And this toe cries 'Boo-hoo.'
This toe big and tall is the smartest of all
For he pops into stocking and shoe.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Fleeing Away

My thoughts soar not as they ought to soar,
Higher and higher on soul-lent wings;
But ever and often and more and more
They are dragged down earthward by little things,
By little troubles and little needs,
As a lark might be tangled among the weeds.

My purpose is not what it ought to be,
Steady and fixed, like a star on high,
But more like a fisherman's light at sea;
Hither and thither it seems to fly--
Sometimes feeble, and sometimes bright,
Then suddenly lost in the gloom of night.

My life is far from my dream of life--
Calmly contented, serenely glad;
But, vexed and worried by daily strife,
It is always troubled and oftentimes sad--
And the heights I had thought I should reach one day
Grow dimmer and dimmer, and farther away.

My heart never finds the longed-for rest;
Its worldly striving, its greed for gold,
Chilled and frightened the calm-eyed guest
Who sometimes sought me in days of old;
And ever fleeing away from me
Is the higher self that I long to be.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Floods

In the dark night, from sweet refreshing sleep

I wake to hear outside my window-pane

The uncurbed fury of the wild spring rain,

And weird winds lashing the defiant deep,

And roar of floods that gather strength and leap

Down dizzy, wreck-strewn channels to the main.

I turn upon my pillow and again

Compose myself for slumber.

Let them sweep;

I once survived great floods, and do not fear,

Though ominous planets congregate, and seem

To foretell strange disasters.

From a dream—

Ah! dear God! such a dream!—I woke to hear,

Through the dense shadows lit by no star's gleam,

The rush of mighty waters on my ear.

Helpless, afraid, and all alone, I lay;

The floods had come upon me unaware.

I heard the crash of structures that were fair;

The bridges of fond hopes were swept away

By great salt waves of sorrow. In dismay
I saw by the red lightning's lurid glare
That on the rock-bound island of despair
I had been cast. Till the dim dawn of day
I heard my castles falling, and the roll
Of angry billows bearing to the sea
The broken timbers of my very soul.
Were all the pent-up waters from the whole
Stupendous solar system to break free,
There are no floods that now can frighten me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Flowers of France

Flowers of France in the Spring,
Your growth is a beautiful thing;
But give us your fragrance and bloom,
Yea, give us your lives in truth,
Give us your sweetness and grace
To brighten the resting-place
Of the flower of manhood and youth,
Gone into the dust of the tomb.

This is the vast stupendous hour of Time,
When nothing counts but sacrifice and faith,
Service and self-forgetfulness. Sublime
And awful are these moments charged with death
And red with slaughter. Yet God's purpose thrives
In all this holocaust of human lives.

I say God's purpose thrives. Just in the measure
That men have flung away their lust for gain,
Stopped in their mad pursuit of worldly pleasure,
And boldly faced unprecedented pain
And dangers, without thinking of the cost,
So thrives God's purpose in the holocaust.

Death is a little thing: all men must die;
But when ideals die, God grieves in Heaven.
Therefore I think it was the reason why
This Armageddon to the world was given.
The Soul of man, forgetful of its birth,
Was losing sight of everything but earth.

Up from these many million graves shall spring
A shining harvest for the coming race.
An Army of Invisibles shall bring
A glorified lost faith back to its place.
And men shall know there is a higher goal
Than earthly triumphs for the human soul.

They are not dead-they are not dead, I say,
These men whose mortal forms are in the sod.
A grand Advance-Guard marching on its way,
Their Souls move upwards to salute their God!
While to their comrades who are in the strife
They cry, 'Fight on! Death is the dawn of life.'

We had forgotten all the depth and beauty
And lofty purport of that old true word
Deplaced by pleasure-that old good word duty.
Now by its meaning is the whole world stirred.
These men died for it; for it, now, we give,
And sacrifice, and serve, and toil, and live.

From out our hearts had gone a high devotion
For anything. It took a mighty wrath
Against great evil to wake strong emotion,
And put us back upon the righteous path.
It took a mingled stream of tears and blood
To cut the channel through to Brotherhood.

That word meant nothing on our lips in peace:
We had despoiled it by our castes and classes.
But when this savage carnage finds surcease
A new ideal will unite the masses.
And there shall be True Brotherhood with men-
The Christly Spirit stirring earth again.

For this our men have suffered, fought, and died.
And we who can but dimly see the end
Are guarded by their spirits glorified,
Who help us on our way, while they ascend.
They are not dead-they are not dead, I say,
These men whose graves we decorate to-day.

America and France walk hand in hand;
As one, their hearts beat through the coming years:
One is the aim and purpose of each land,
Baptised with holy water of their tears.
To-day they worship with one faith, and know
Grief's first Communion in God's House of Woe.

Great Liberty, the Goddess at our gates,
And great Jeanne d'Arc, are fused into one soul:
A host of Angels on that soul awaits
To lead it up to triumph at the goal.
Along the path of Victory they tread,
Moves the majestic cort?ge of our dead.

Flowers of France in the Spring,
Your growth is a beautiful thing;
But give us your fragrance and bloom-
Yea, give us your lives in truth,
Give us your sweetness and grace
To brighten the resting-place
Of the flower of manhood and youth,
Gone into the dust of the tomb.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Foes

Thank Fate for foes! I hold mine dear
As valued friends. He cannot know
The zest of life who runneth here
His earthly race without a foe.

I saw a prize, "Run," cried my friend;
"T is thine to claim without a doubt."
But ere I half-way reached the end,
I felt my strength was giving out.

My foe looked on the while I ran;
A scornful triumph lit his eyes.
With that perverseness born in man
I nerved myself, and won the prize.

All blinded by the crimson glow
Of sin's disguise I tempted Fate.
"I knew thy weakness!" sneered my foe,
I saved myself, and balked his hate.

For half my blessings, half my gain,
I needs must thank my trusty foe;
Despite his envy and disdain,
He serves me well wher'er I go.

So may I keep him to the end,
Nor may his enmity abate;
More faithful than the fondest friend,
He guards me with his hate.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Forbidden Speech

The passion you forbade my lips to utter
Will not be silenced. You must hear it in
The sullen thunders when they roll and mutter:
And when the tempest nears, with wail and din,
I know your calm forgetfulness is broken,
And to your heart you whisper, 'He has spoken.'

All nature understands and sympathises
With human passion. When the restless sea
Turns in its futile search for peace, and rises
To plead and to pursue, it pleads for me.
And with each desperate billow's anguished fretting.
Your heart must tell you, 'He is not forgetting.'

When unseen hands in lightning strokes are writing
Mysterious words upon a cloudy scroll,
Know that my pent-up passion is inditing
A cypher message for your woman's soul;
And when the lawless winds rush by you shrieking,
Let your heart say, 'Now his despair is speaking.'

Love comes, nor goes, at beck or call of reason,
Nor is love silent, though it says no word;
By day or night, in any clime or season,
A dominating passion must be heard.
So shall you hear, through Junes and through Decembers,
The voice of Nature saying, 'He remembers.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Forward

Let me look always forward. Never back.
Was I not formed for progress? Otherwise
With onward pointing feet and searching eyes
Would God have set me squarely on the track
Up which we all must labour with life's pack?
Yonder the goal of all this travel lies.
What matters it, if yesterday the skies
With light were golden, or with clouds were black?
I would not lose to-morrow's glow of dawn
By peering backward after sun's long set.
New hope is fairer than an old regret;
Let me pursue my journey and press on-
Nor tearful eyed, stand ever in one spot,
A briny statue like the wife of Lot.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Freedom

I care not who were vicious back of me,
No shadow of their sins on me is shed.
My will is greater than heredity.
I am no worm to feed upon the dead.

My face, my form, my gestures and my voice,
May be reflections from a race that was.
But this I know, and knowing it, rejoice,
I am Myself, a part of the Great Cause.

I am a spirit! Spirit would suffice,
If rightly used, to set a chained world free.
Am I not stronger than a mortal vice
That crawls the length of some ancestral tree?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Friendship

Dear friend, I pray thee, if thou wouldst be proving
Thy strong regard for me,
Make me no vows. Lip-service is not loving;
Let thy faith speak for thee.

Swear not to me that nothing can divide us-
So little such oaths mean.
But when distrust and envy creep beside us
Let them not come between.

Say not to me the depths of thy devotion
Are deeper than the sea;
But watch, lest doubt or some unkind emotion
Embitter them for me.

Vow not to love me ever and for ever,
Words are such idle things;
But when we differ in opinions, never
Hurt me by little stings.

I'm sick of words: they are so lightly spoken,
And spoken, are but air.
I'd rather feel thy trust in me unbroken
Than list thy words so fair.

If all the little proofs of trust are heeded,
It thou are always kind,
No sacrifice, no promise will be needed
To satisfy my mind.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Friendship After Love

After the fierce midsummer all ablaze
Has burned itself to ashes, and expires
In the intensity of its own fires,
There come the mellow, mild, St. Martin days
Crowned with the calm of peace, but sad with haze.
So after Love has led us, till he tires
Of his own throes, and torments, and desires,
Comes large-eyed Friendship: with a restful gaze.
He beckons us to follow, and across
Cool verdant vales we wander free from care.
Is it a touch of frost lies in the air?
Why are we haunted with a sense of loss?
We do not wish the pain back, or the heat;
And yet, and yet, these days are incomplete.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

From The Grave

When the first sere leaves of the year were falling,

I heard, with a heart that was strangely thrilled,

Out of the grave of a dead Past calling,

A voice I fancied forever stilled.

All through winter and spring and summer,

Silence hung over that grave like a pall,

But, borne on the breath of the last sad comer,

I listen again to the old-time call.

It is only a love of a by-gone season,

A senseless folly that mocked at me

A reckless passion that lacked all reason,

So I killed it, and hid it where none could see.

I smothered it first to stop its crying,

Then stabbed it through with a good sharp blade,

And cold and pallid I saw it lying,

And deep—ah' deep was the grave I made.

But now I know that there is no killing

A thing like Love, for it laughs at Death.

There is no hushing, there is no stilling

That which is part of your life and breath.

You may bury it deep, and leave behind you
The land, the people, that knew your slain;
It will push the sods from its grave, and find you
On wastes of water or desert plain.
You may hear but tongues of a foreign people,
You may list to sounds that are strange and new;
But, clear as a silver bell in a steeple,
That voice from the grave shall call to you.
You may rouse your pride, you may use your reason.
And seem for a space to slay Love so;
But, all in its own good time and season,
It will rise and follow wherever you go.
You shall sit sometimes, when the leaves are falling,
Alone with your heart, as I sit to-day,
And hear that voice from your dead Past calling
Out of the graves that you hid away.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ghosts

There are ghosts in the room.
As I sit here alone, from the dark corners there
They come out of the gloom,
And they stand at my side and they lean on my chair.

There's the ghost of a Hope
That lighted my days with a fanciful glow.
In her hand is the rope
That strangled her life out. Hope was slain long ago.

But her ghost comes to-night,
With its skeleton face and expressionless eyes,
And it stands in the light,
And mocks me, and jeers me with sobs and with sighs.

There's the ghost of a Joy,
A frail, fragile thing, and I prized it too much,
And the hands that destroy
Clasped it close, and it died at the withering touch.

There's the ghost of a Love,
Born with joy, reared with hope, died in pain and unrest,
But he towers above
All the others... this ghost: yet a ghost at the best.

I am weary, and fain
Would forget all these dead: but the gibbering host
Make my struggle in vain,
In each shadowy corner there lurketh a ghost.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Go Plant A Tree

God, what a joy it is to plant a tree,
And from the fallow earth to watch it rise,
Lifting its emerald branches to the skies
In silent adoration; and to see
Its strength and glory waxing with each spring.
Yes, 'tis a goodly, and a gladsome thing
To plant a tree.

Nature has many marvels; but a tree
Seems more than marvellous. It is divine.
So generous, so tender, so benign.
Not garrulous like the rivers; and yet free
In pleasant converse with the winds and birds;
Oh! privilege beyond explaining words,
To plant a tree.

Rocks are majestic; but, unlike a tree,
They stand aloof, and silent. In the roar
Of ocean billows breaking on the shore
There sounds the voice of turmoil. But a tree
Speaks ever of companionship and rest.
Yea, of all righteous acts, this, this is best,
To plant a tree.

There is an oak (oh! how I love that tree)
Which has been thriving for a hundred years;
Each day I send my blessing through the spheres
To one who gave this triple boon to me,
Of growing beauty, singing birds, and shade.
Wouldst thou win laurels that shall never fade?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

God Rules Always

Into the world's most high and holy places
Men carry selfishness, and graft and greed.
The air is rent with warring of the races;
Loud Dogmas drown a brother's cry of need.
The Fleet-of-Creeds, upon Time's ocean lurches;
And there is mutiny upon her decks;
And in the light of temples, and of churches,
Against life's shores drift wrecks and derelicts.
(God rules, God rules always.)

Right in the shadow of the lofty steeple,
Which crowns some costly edifice of faith,
Behold the throngs of hungry, unhoused people;
The 'Bread Line,' flanked by charity and death.
See yonder Churchman, opulently doing
Unnumbered deeds, which gladden and resound;
The while his thrifty tenant is pursuing
The white slave trade on sacred, untaxed ground.
(God rules, God rules always.)

For these are but the outward signs of fever;
Those flaunting signs, which through delirium burn;
And the clear-seeing eye of each Believer
Can note the coming crisis. It will turn,
For it has reached its summit. Convalescing,
The sick world shall arise to strength and peace,
And earth shall bloom, with each and every blessing
Life waits to give, when wars and conflicts cease.
(God rules, God rules always.)

This is a mighty hour. No sounds of drumming,
No flying flags, no heralds do appear;
No Wise Men of the East proclaim His coming;
Yet He is coming-nay, our Christ is here!
And man shall leave his fever dreams behind him;
Those dreams of avarice, and lust, and sin,

And seek his Lord; yea, he shall seek and find Him,
In his own soul, where He has always been.
(God rules, God rules alway.)

Man longs for God. Before the Christ we wot of,
With His brief mighty message, came to earth,
Before His life, or creed, or cross were thought of,
The love of love within man's breast had birth.
But blindly, through his carnal senses reaching,
He plucked dead fruit, and nothing has sufficed;
Nor can his soul find rest in any teaching,
Until he knows that he, himself, is Christ.
(God rules, God rules alway.)

Oh, when he knows this truth in all its splendour,
What majesty, what glory crowns his life:
And, one with God, his every thought is tender;
He cannot enter into war, or strife.
His love goes out to every race and nation;
His whole religion lies in being kind.

This is the creed that means the world's salvation;
The birth of christ in every mortal mind.

(God rules, God rules alway.)

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

God's Work

To J. J. H., Of Kentucky

Gathering brands from the burning,
Plucking them out of the fire,
Lifting the sheep that have wandered,
Out of the dust and the mire,
Bringing home sheaves from the harvest
To lay at the Master's feet-
Lord! all thy hosts of angels
Must smile on a life so sweet.

Speaking with fear of no man,
Speaking with love for all,
Warning the young and the thoughtless
From the wild beast-'Alcohol.'
Showing the snares that the tempter
Weaveth on every hand.
Lord! all thy dear, dear angels
Must smile on a life so grand.

Fighting the bloodless battle
With a heart that is true and bold;
Fighting it not for glory,
Fighting it not for gold,
But out of love for his neighbor,
And out of love for his Lord.
And I know that the hands of the angels
Will crown him with his reward.

For whoso works for the Master,
And whoso fights his fight,
The angels crown with a star-wreath,
And it glows with gems most bright.
They wear them for ever and ever,
The saints in that land of bliss,

And I know that heaven's best jewel
Is kept for a soul like this.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Going Away

Walking to-day on the Common,
I heard a stranger say
To a friend who was standing near him,
'Do you know I am going away? '
I had never seen their faces,
May never see them again;
Yet the words the stranger uttered,
Stirred me with nameless pain.

For I knew some heart would miss him,
Would ache at his going away!
And the earth would seem all cheerless
For many and many a day.
No matter how light my spirits,
No matter how glad my heart,
If I hear those two words spoken,
The teardrops always start.

They are so sad and solemn,
So full of a lonely sound;
Like dead leaves rustling downward,
And dropping upon the ground,
Oh, I pity the naked branches,
When the skies are dull and gray,
And the last leaf whispers softly,
'Good-bye, I am going away.'

In the dreary, dripping autumn,
The wings of the flying birds,
As they soar away to the south land,
Seem always to say those words.
Wherever they may be spoken,
They fall with a sob and a sigh;
And heartaches follow the sentence,
'I am going away, Good-bye.'

O God, in Thy blessed kingdom,
No lips shall ever say,
No ears shall ever harken

To the words 'I am going away.'
For no soul ever wearies
Of the dear, bright angel land,
And no saint ever wanders
From the sunny golden land.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Good Templars' Song

AIR-'O SUSANNAH!'

Ye soldiers in the temperance cause,
Our work is but begun.
Oh! sit not down in idleness
And think the field is won.
Our lambs are straying from the fold,
The wolves are on the track:
Oh! can you sit and see them go,
Nor strive to bring them back?

Chorus:

O Good Templars!
There's work for us to-day.
Then gird your armor on again,
And only pause to pray.

Whichever way the eye may turn,
It sees the rum-shop stand
With open door and flowing bowl,
A viper in the land.
The grapes are hanging from the vines,
All ready for the press.
Before, behind, on every side
Are seeds of drunkenness.

Our foes are all untiring,
But God is with the right,
And we will conquer at the last-
Then onward to the fight!
Ay, onward to the battle-field,
Each woman, child, and man!
King Alcohol shall yet go down
With all his demon clan.

Good-By To The Cradle

GOOD-BY to the cradle, the dear wooden cradle,
The rude hand of Progress has thrust it aside:
No more to its motion, o'er Sleep's fairy ocean,
Our play-weary wayfarers peacefully glide;
No more by the rhythm of slow-moving rocker
Their sweet, dreamy fancies are fostered and fed;
No more to low singing the cradle goes swinging--
The child of this era is put into bed!
Good-by to the cradle, the dear wooden cradle,--
It lent to the twilight a mystical charm:
When bees left the clover, when playtime was over,
How safe seemed this shelter from danger and harm;
How soft seemed the pillow, how distant the ceiling,
How weird were the voices that whispered around;
What dreams would come flocking as, rocking and rocking,
We floated away into slumber profound.
Good-by to the cradle, the old wooden cradle,
The babe of the day does not know it by sight;
When day leaves the border, with system and order
The child goes to bed, and we put out the light.
I bow to Progression; and ask no concession,
Though strewn be her pathway with wrecks of the Past.
So off with old lumber, that sweet ark of slumber,
The dear wooden cradle, is ruthlessly cast.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Gracia

Nay, nay, Antonio! nay, thou shalt not blame her,
My Gracia, who hath so deserted me.
Thou art my friend, but if thou dost defame her
I shall not hesitate to challenge thee.
'Curse and forget her?' So I might another,
One not so bounteous-natured or so fair;
But she, Antonio, she was like no other—
I curse her not, because she was so rare.
She was made out of laughter and sweet kisses;
Not blood, but sunshine, through her blue veins ran
Her soul spilled over with its wealth of blisses;
She was too great for loving but a man.
None but a god could keep so rare a creature:
I blame her not for her inconstancy;
When I recall each radiant smile and feature,
I wonder she so long was true to me.
Call her not false or fickle. I, who love her,
Do hold her not unlike the royal sun,
That, all unmated, roams the wide world over
And lights all worlds, but lingers not with one.
If she were less a goddess, more a woman,
And so had dallied for a time with me,
And then had left me, I, who am but human,
Would slay her and her newer love, maybe.
But since she seeks Apollo, or another
Of those lost gods (and seeks him all in vain)
And has loved me as well as any other
Of her men loves, why, I do not complain.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Grandpa's Christmas

In his great cushioned chair by the fender
An old man sits dreaming to-night,
His withered hands, licked by the tender,
Warm rays of the red anthracite,
Are folded before him, all listless;
His dim eyes are fixed on the blaze,
While over him sweeps the resistless
Flood-tide of old days.

He hears not the mirth in the hallway,
He hears not the sounds of good cheer,
That through the old homestead ring away
In the glad Christmas-time of the year.
He heeds not the chime of sweet voices
As the last gifts are hung on the tree.
In a long-vanished day he rejoices-
In his lost Used to be.

He has gone back across dead Decembers
To his childhood's fair land of delight;
And his mother's sweet smile he remembers,
As he hangs up his stocking at night.
He remembers the dream-haunted slumber
All broken and restless because
Of the visions that came without number
Of dear Santa Claus.

Again, in his manhood's beginning,
He sees himself thrown on the world,
And into the vortex of sinning
By Pleasure's strong arms he is hurled.
He hears the sweet Christmas bells ringing,
'Repent ye, repent ye, and pray;'
But he joins with his comrades in singing
A bacchanal lay.

Again he stands under the holly
With a blushing face lifted to his;
For love has been stronger than folly,
And has turned him from vice unto bliss;
And the whole world is lit with new glory
As the sweet vows are uttered again,
While the Christmas bells tell the old story
Of peace unto men.

Again, with his little brood 'round him,
He sits by the fair mother-wife;
He knows that the angels have crowned him
With the truest, best riches of life;
And the hearts of the children, untroubled,
Are filled with the gay Christmas-tide;
And the gifts for sweet Maudie are doubled,
'Tis her birthday, beside.

Again,-ah, dear Jesus, have pity-
He finds in the chill, waning day,
That one has come home from the city-
Frail Maudie, whom love led astray.
She lies with her babe on her bosom-
Half-hid by the snow's fleecy spread;
A bud and a poor trampled blossom-
And both are quite dead.

So fair and so fragile! just twenty-
How mocking the bells sound to-night!
She starved in this great land of plenty,
When she tried to grope back to the light.
Christ, are Thy disciples inhuman,
Or only for men hast Thou died?
No mercy is shown to a woman
Who once steps aside.

Again he leans over the shrouded

Still form of the mother and wife;
Very lonely the way seems, and clouded,
As he looks down the vista of life.
With the sweet Christmas chimes there is blended
The knell for a life that is done,
And he knows that his joys are all ended
And his waiting begun.

So long have the years been, so lonely,
As he counts them by Christmases gone.
'I am homesick,' he murmurs; 'if only
The Angel would lead the way on.
I am cold, in this chill winter weather;
Why, Maudie, dear, where have you been?
And you, too, sweet wife-and together-
O Christ, let me in.'

The children ran in from the hallway,
'Were you calling us, grandpa?' they said.
Then shrank, with that fear that comes always
When young eyes look their first on the dead.
The freedom so longed for is given.
The children speak low and draw near:
'Dear grandpa keeps Christmas in Heaven
With grandma, this year.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Greeting Poem

There was a sound in the wind to-day,
Like a joyous cymbal ringing!
And the leaves of the trees talked with the breeze,
And they altogether were singing,
For they knew that an army, both bold and strong,
A brave, brave army, was coming,
Not with the fife and sounds of strife,
With marshal music and drumming,
Not with stern faces and gleaming swords,
That would make blood to flow like water,
While brother and brother should slay each other
On wholesale fields of slaughter;
But rather like rills from a thousand hills,
That ripple through valley and heather,
On, on to the sea, with a song of glee,
Till they meet and mingle together.

They come from the South, and the East, and the West,
The bravest and best in the nation.
They come at no idle and aimless quest,
But to work for a world's salvation.
From the Scot's fair land and from England's strand,
O'er mountain and heather and ocean,
They come; and the foe by their coming shall know
The strength of a Templar's devotion.
On the earnest brows, in the thoughtful eyes,
We read the unchanging story-
They fight in their might for the truth and the right,
And not for vain name or glory.
O grandest of armies! O bravest of bands!
We give you a cordial greeting,
And the blood of our warm hearts beats in the hands
That are offered to you in meeting.
The heart of a Templar is never cold,
Nor stands it aloof from a brother,
And his hand is steady, and always ready
To clasp the hand of another.
In God's great Book, where but angels look,

On pages of spotless beauty
Are written in letters of living light
A Templar's vow and his duty.
'For ever and ever,' the promise reads,
For ever and ever 'twas given.
And who keeps or breaks the pledge that he takes
Must meet the record in heaven.

Our order is noble and grand and strong,
And is gathering strength each hour,
And the good of the earth proclaim its worth,
While the foe turns pale at its power.
And we of the State that men call great,
The nation's brave 'Badger' daughter,
Step by step as we go, are defeating the foe,
While we add to the hosts of cold water.

With a chief at our head whom the foe may well dread,
The Sherman or Grant of our battles,
By day and by night we fight the good fight,
Though never a cannon rattles.
For the tongue and the pen are the swords of our men,
And prayer keeps them whetted and polished;
They will let God's light in on the foe's licensed sin,
Till the traffic of death is abolished.

With cunning hands we fashioned the strands
Of a stout restraining tether,
To fasten the beast, for a season at least,
And our statesmen tied it together.
The beast strains the rope with the idle hope
Of making it weaker or longer,
But the Templars to-day are working away
To make it shorter and stronger.

We give you greeting-we need your aid!
There is work for many a morrow,
There are beautiful souls going down in the bowls,

There are homes that are burdened with sorrow,
There are mourning captives all over the earth,
Hugging the fetters that bind them.
We must show them the light, we must set them aright,
We must work for them all as we find them.

With a soaring 'Faith,' that is stronger than death,
We must work while the day hangs o'er us.
We are brave and strong, and our battle-song
Has 'Hope' for the ringing chorus.
With 'Charity' broad as the mercy of God,
We must lift up the fallen neighbor,
And the Lord's dear band, in the angel land,
Will smile on our blessed labor.

Welcome, brave warriors in God's holy cause!
The hearts in our bosoms are beating
As one heart to-night, filled with pride and delight-
Welcome, thrice welcome, our greeting.
And though soon between will lie long miles of green,
Though oceans divide us for ever,
The ties which now bind heart with heart, mind with mind,
The hand of Death only can sever.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Growing Old

Little by little the year grows old,
The red leaves drop from the maple boughs;
The sun grows dim, and the winds blow cold,
Down from the distant arctic seas.

Out of the skies the soft light dies,
And the shadows of autumn come creeping over,
And the bee and the bird are no longer heard
In grove or meadow, or field of clover.

Little by little our lives grow old,
Our faces no longer are fair to see;
For gray creeps into the curls of gold,
And the red fades out of the cheeks, ah me!

And the birds that sang till our heart strings rang
With strains of hope, and joy, and pleasure,
Have flown away; and our hearts today
Hear only the weird wind's solemn measure.

Youth and summer, and beauty and bloom,
Droop and die in the autumn weather,
But up from the gloom of the winter's tomb,
They shall rise, in God's good time, together.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Guerdon

Upon the white cheek of the Cherub Year

I saw a tear.

Alas! I murmured, that the Year should borrow

So soon a sorrow.

Just then the sunlight fell with sudden flame:

A tear became

A wondrous diamond sparkling in the light –

A beautiful sight.

Upon my soul there fell such woeful loss,

I said, 'The Cross

Is grievous for a life as young as mine.'

Just then, like wine,

God's sunlight shone from His high Heavens down;

And lo! a crown

Gleamed in the place of what I thought a burden –

My sorrow's guerdon.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Guilo

Yes, yes! I love thee, Guilo; thee alone.
Why dost thou sigh, and wear that face of sorrow?
The sunshine is to-day's, although it shone
On yesterday, and may shine on to-morrow.
I love but thee, my Guilo! be content;
The greediest heart can claim but present pleasure.
The future is thy God's. The past is spent.
To-day is thine; clasp close the precious treasure.
See how I love thee, Guilo! Lips and eyes
Could never under thy fond gaze dissemble.
I could not feign these passion-laden sighs;
Deceiving thee, my pulses would not tremble.
'So I loved Romney.' Hush, thou foolish one—
I should forget him wholly wouldst thou let me;
Or but remember that his day was done
From that supremest hour when first I met thee.
'And Paul?' Well, what of Paul? Paul had blue eyes,
And Romney gray, and thine are darkly tender!
One finds fresh feelings under change of skies—
A new horizon brings a newer splendor.

As I love thee
I never loved before;
Believe me, Guilo, for I speak most truly.
What though to Romney and to Paul I swore
The self-same words; my heart now worships newly.
We never feel the same emotion twice:
No two ships ever ploughed the self-same billow;
The waters change with every fall and rise;
So, Guilo, go contented to thy pillow.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Haunted

What are these nameless mysteries,
These subtleties of life and death,
That bring before our spirit eyes
The loved and lost; or, like a breath
Of lightest air, will touch the cheek,
And yet a wordless language speak?

In every breeze that blows, to-day,
One voice seems speaking unto me;
And north or south, whichever way
I turn my gaze, one face I see,
And closely, closely at my side
A mystic shadow seems to glide.

A motley crowd we move among,
We surge on with the mighty mass,
And yet no one in all the throng
Looks strangely on us as we pass.
No eye but mine own seems to see
The nameless thing that walks by me.

I cannot touch a proffered hand
But this strange shadow glides between.
Why came he from the spirit land?
What brought him from the world unseen?
Why am I troubled and oppressed
By the vague presence of my guest?

He was my friend! I should rejoice!
I loved him once! Why do I fear?
And yet I shudder as his voice
Speaks in the wind. I feel him near,
This restless spirit of the dead,
And shiver with a nameless dread.

I loved him once; he was my friend;
He held the first place in my heart,
And might have held it to the end.
But our two ways spread wide apart:
I kept the path upon the hill,
And he went down and down, until

He reached the depths of sin and shame,
And died as sots and drunkards die.
I ceased to even speak his name.
God knows I never thought that I,
Who blamed his lack of moral strength,
Might answer for his fall, at length!

O restless dead, lost friend of mine!
I might have saved you, had I tried.
I saw you lift the glass of wine,
And, seeing, had I warned you, cried,
'Touch not, taste not the drink accursed!'
I might have saved you from the thirst

That swallowed up your brain and soul.
But nay! I scorned you when you fell,
And, looking upward to my goal,
Left you to stagger down to hell.
Accusing spirit of the dead,
Your presence fills my heart with dread!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

He That Hath Ears

'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'-

St. John the Divine.

The Spirit says unto the churches,
'Ere ever the churches began
I lived in the centre of Being-
The life of the Purpose and Plan;
I flowed from the mind of the Maker
Through nature to man.

'I sleep in the glow of the jewel,
I wake in the sap of the tree,
I stir in the beast of the forest,
I reason in man, and am free
To turn on the path of Ascension
To the god yet to be.

'I was, and I am, and I will be;
I live in each church and each faith,
But yield to no bond and no fetter,
I animate all with my breath;
I speak through the voice of the living,
And I speak after death.'

The Spirit says unto the churches
'The dead are not gone, they are near;
And my voice, when I will it, speaks through them,
Speaks through them in messages clear.
And he that hath ears, in the silence
May listen and hear.'

The Spirit says unto the churches,

'So many the feet that have trod
The road leading up into knowledge,
The steep narrow path has grown broad;
And the curtain held down by old dogmas
Is lifted by God.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Her Last Letter

Sitting alone by the window,
Watching the moonlit street,
Bending my head to listen
To the well-known sound of your feet,
I have been wondering, darling,
How I can bear the pain,
When I watch, with sighs and tear-wet eyes;
And wait for your coming in vain.

For I know that a day approaches
When your heart will tire of me;
When by door and gate I may watch and wait
For a form I shall not see.
When the love that is now my heaven,
The kisses that make my life,
You will bestow on another,
And that other will be-your wife.

You will grow weary of sinning
(Though you do not call it so),
You will long for a love that is purer
Than the love that we two know.
God knows I have loved you dearly,
With a passion strong as true;
But you will grow tired and leave me,
Though I gave up all for you.

I was as pure as the morning
When I first looked on your face;
I knew I never could reach you
In your high, exalted place.
But I looked and loved and worshiped
As a flower might worship a star,
And your eyes shone down upon me,
And you seemed so far-so far.

And then? Well, then, you loved me,
Loved me with all your heart;
But we could not stand at the altar,
We were so far apart.
If a star should wed with a flower
The star must drop from the sky,
Or the flower in trying to reach it
Would droop on its stalk and die.

But you said that you loved me, darling,
And swore by the heavens above
That the Lord and all of His angels
Would sanction and bless our love.
And I? I was weak, not wicked.
My love was as pure as true,
And sin itself seemed a virtue
If only shared by you.

We have been happy together,
Though under the cloud of sin,
But I know that the day approaches
When my chastening must begin.
You have been faithful and tender,
But you will not always be,
And I think I had better leave you
While your thoughts are kind of me.

I know my beauty is fading-
Sin furrows the fairest brow-
And I know that your heart will weary
Of the face you smile on now.
You will take a bride to your bosom
After you turn from me;
You will sit with your wife in the moonlight,
And hold her babe on your knee.

Oh, God! I never could bear it;

It would madden my brain, I know;
And so while you love me dearly
I think I had better go.
It is sweeter to feel, my darling-
To know as I fall asleep-
That some one will mourn me and miss me,
That some one is left to weep,

Than to die as I should in the future,
To drop in the street some day,
Unknown, unwept and forgotten
After you cast me away.
Perhaps the blood of the Saviour
Can wash my garments clean;
Perchance I may drink of the waters
That flow through pastures green.

Perchance we may meet in heaven,
And walk in the streets above,
With nothing to grieve us or part us
Since our sinning was all through love.
God says, 'Love one another,'
And down to the depths of hell
Will he send the soul of a woman
Because she loved-and fell?

And so in the moonlight he found her,
Or found her beautiful clay,
Lifeless and pallid as marble,
For the spirit had flown away.
The farewell words she had written
She held to her cold, white breast,
And the buried blade of a dagger
Told how she had gone to rest.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Here And Now

HERE AND NOW.

Here, in the heart of the world,
Here, in the noise and the din,
Here, where our spirits were hurled
To battle with sorrow and sin,
This is the place and the spot
For knowledge of infinite things;
This is the kingdom where Thought
Can conquer the prowess of kings.

Wait for no heavenly life,
Seek for no temple alone;
Here, in the midst of the strife,
Know what the sages have known.
See what the Perfect Ones saw-
God in the depth of each soul,
God as the light and the law,
God as beginning and goal.

Earth is one chamber of Heaven,
Death is no grander than birth.
Joy in the life that was given,
Strive for perfection on earth.
Here, in the turmoil and roar,
Show what it is to be calm;
Show how the spirit can soar
And bring back its healing and balm.

Stand not aloof nor apart,
Plunge in the thick of the fight.
There in the street and the mart,
That is the place to do right.
Not in some cloister or cave,
Not in some kingdom above,
Here, on this side of the grave,
Here, should we labor and love.

High Noon

Time's finger on the dial of my life
Points to high noon! And yet the half-spent day
Leaves less than half remaining, for the dark,
Bleak shadows of the grave engulf the end.

To those who burn the candle to the stick,
The sputtering socket yields but little light.
Long life is sadder than early death.
We cannot count on raveled threads of age
Whereof to weave a fabric. We must use
The warp and woof the ready present yields
And toils while daylight lasts. When I bethink
How brief the past, the future still more brief,
Calls on to action, action! Not for me
Is time for retrospection or for dreams,
Not time for self-laudation or remorse.
Have I done nobly? Then I must not let
Dead yesterday unborn to-morrow shame.
Have I done wrong? Well, let the bitter taste
Of fruit that turned to ashes on my lip
Be my reminder in temptations hour,
And keep me silent when I could condemn.
Sometimes it takes the acid of a sin
To cleanse the clouded windows of our souls
So pity may shine through them.

Looking back,
My faults and errors seem like stepping-stones
That led the way to knowledge of the truth
And made me value virtue: sorrows shine
In rainbow colours o'er the gulf of years,
Where lie forgotten pleasures.

Looking forth,
Out to the westers sky still bright with noon,
I feel well spurred and booted for the strife
That ends not till Nirvana is attained.

Battling with fate, with men and with myself,

Up the steep summit of my life's forenoon,
Three things I learned, three things of precious worth
To guide and help me down the western slope.
I have learned how to pray, and toil, and save.
To pray for courage to receive what comes,
Knowing what comes to be divinely sent.
To toil for universal good, since thus
And only thus can good come unto me.
To save, by giving whatsoe'er I have
To those who have not, this alone is gain.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

His Youth

Dying? I am not dying. Are you mad?
You think I need to ask for heavenly grace?
\I\ think \you\ are a fiend, who would be glad
To see me struggle in death's cold embrace.

'But, man you lie! for I am strong-in truth
Stronger than I have been in years; and soon
I shall feel young again as in my youth,
My glorious youth-life's one great priceless boon.

'O youth, youth, youth! O God, that golden time,
When proud and glad I laughed the hours away.
Why, there's no sacrifice (perhaps no crime)
I'd pause at, could it make me young to-day.

'But I'm not \old\! I grew-just ill, somehow;
Grew stiff of limb, and weak, and dim of sight.
It was but sickness. I am better now,
Oh, vastly better, ever since last night.

'And I could weep warm floods of happy tears
To think my strength is coming back at last,
For I have dreamed of such an hour for years,
As I lay thinking of my glorious past.

'You shake your head? Why, man, if you were sane
I'd strike you to my feet, I would, in truth.
How dare you tell me that my hopes are vain?
How dare you say I have outlived my youth?

'In heaven I may regain it?' Oh, be still!
I want no heaven but what my glad youth gave.
Its long, bright hours, its rapture and its thrill-

O youth, youth, youth! it is my \youth\ I crave.

'There is no heaven! There's nothing but a deep
And yawning grave from which I shrink in fear.
I am not sure of even rest or sleep;
Perhaps we lie and \think\, as I have here.

'Think, think, think, think, as we lie there and rot,
And hear the young above us laugh in glee.
How dare you say I'm dying! \I am not\
I would curse God if such a thing could be.

'Why, see me stand! why, hear this strong, full breath-
Dare you repeat that silly, base untruth?'
A cry-a fall-the silence known as death
Hushed his wild words. Well, has he found his youth?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

How Does Love Speak?

In the faint flush upon the tell-tale cheek,
And in the pallor that succeeds it; by
The quivering lid of an averted eye -
The smile that proves the parent of a sigh:
Thus doth Love speak.

How does Love speak?

By the uneven heart-throbs, and the freak
Of bounding pulses that stand still and ache
While new emotions, like strange barges, make
Along vein-channels their disturbing course,
Still as the dawn, and with the dawn's swift force:
Thus doth Love speak.

How does Love speak?

In the avoidance of that which we seek
The sudden silence and reserve when near;
The eye that glistens with an unshed tear;
The joy that seems the counterpart of fear,
As the alarmed heart leads in the breast,
And knows, and names, and greets its godlike guest:
Thus doth Love speak.

How does Love speak?

In the proud spirit suddenly grown meek,
The haughty heart grown humble; in the tender
And unnamed light that floods the world with splendour;
In the resemblance which the fond eyes trace
In all fair things to one beloved face;
In the shy touch of hands that thrill and tremble;
In looks and lips that can no more dissemble:
Thus doth Love speak.

How does Love speak?

In wild words that uttered seem so weak
They shrink ashamed to silence; in the fire
Glance strikes with glance, swift flashing high and higher,
Like lightnings that precede the mighty storm
In the deep, soulful stillness; in the warm,

Impassioned tide that sweeps thro' throbbing veins,
Between the shores of keen delights and pains;
In the embrace where madness melts in bliss,
And in the convulsive rapture of a kiss:
Thus doth Love speak.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

How Is It?

You who are loudly crying out for peace,
You who are wanting love to vanquish hate.
How is it in the four walls of your home
The while you wait?

Do those who form your household welcome your approach in the morning
As the earth welcomes the presence of dawn,
Or do they dread your coming lest you censure and complain?
Do you begin the day with praise to God for each blessing you possess, and do
you speak frequent words of commendation to those about you?
Do those you claim to love often hear you talking in love's language,
Or is your softest tone and your sweetest speech saved for the sometime guest,
While the harsh voice and the sharp retort are used with those you love the best?

You who are praying for the Christ's return
And for the coming of the Promised Day,
How is it in the four walls of your home
The while you pray?

Are you trying to make your home a reflection of what you believe heaven will
be?
Unless you are you will never find heaven anywhere;
The foundations of our heavenly mansions must first be built on earth.
Unless you are striving to put in use some of the angelic virtues here and now,
No angelhood will be accorded you hereafter.

Unless you are illustrating your desire for peace by a peaceful, love-ruled home,
You have no right to clamour for a cessation of hostilities among nations;
Nations are only chains of individuals.
When each individual expresses nothing but love and peace in his daily life, there
will be no more war.

You who are loudly crying out for peace,
You who are wanting love to vanquish hate,
How is it in the four walls of your home
The while you wait?

How Salvator Won

The gate was thrown open, I rode out alone,
More proud than a monarch who sits on a throne.
I am but a jockey, yet shout upon shout
Went up from the people who watched me ride out;
And the cheers that rang forth from that warm-hearted crowd,
Were as earnest as those to which monarch e'er bowed.

My heart thrilled with pleasure so keen it was pain
As I patted my Salvator's soft silken mane;
And a sweet shiver shot from his hide to my hand
As we passed by the multitude down to the stand.

The great waves of cheering came billowing back,
As the hoofs of brave Tenny rang swift down the track;
And he stood there beside us, all bone and all muscle,
Our noble opponent, well trained for the tussle
That waited us there on the smooth, shining course.
My Salvator, fair to the lovers of horse,
As a beautiful woman is fair to man's sight-
Pure type of the thoroughbred, clean-limbed and bright,-
Stood taking the plaudits as only his due,
And nothing at all unexpected or new.

And then, there before us the bright flag is spread,
There's a roar from the grand stand, and Tenny's ahead;
At the sound of the voices that shouted 'a go!'
He sprang like an arrow shot straight from the bow.
I tighten the reins on Prince Charlie's great son-
He is off like a rocket, the race is begun.
Half-way down the furlong, their heads are together,
Scarce room 'twixt their noses to wedge in a feather;
Past grand stand, and judges, in neck-to-neck strife,
Ah, Salvator, boy! 'tis the race of your life.
I press my knees closer, I coax him, I urge,
I feel him go out with a leap and a surge;
I see him creep on, inch by inch, stride by stride,

While backward, still backward, falls Tenny beside.
We are nearing the turn, the first quarter is past-
'Twixt leader and chaser the daylight is cast.
The distance elongates, still Tenny sweeps on,
As graceful and free-limbed and swift as a fawn;
His awkwardness vanished, his muscles all strained-
A noble opponent, well born and well trained.
I glanced o'er my shoulder, ha! Tenny, the cost
Of that one second's flagging, will be-the race lost.
One second's weak yielding of courage and strength,
And the daylight between us has doubled its length.

The first mile is covered, the race is mine-no!
For the blue blood of Tenny responds to a blow.
He shoots through the air like a ball from a gun,
And the two lengths between us are shortened to one.
My heart is contracted, my throat feels a lump,
For Tenny's long neck is at Salvator's rump;
And now with new courage, grown bolder and bolder,
I see him once more running shoulder to shoulder.
With knees, hands and body I press my grand steed;
I urge him, I coax him, I pray him to heed!
Oh, Salvator! Salvator! list to my calls,
For the blow of my whip will hurt both if it falls.
There's a roar from the crowd like the ocean in storm,
As close to my saddle leaps Tenny's great form,
One more mighty plunge, and with knee, limb and hand,
I lift my horse first by a nose past the stand.
We are under the string now-the great race is done,
And Salvator, Salvator, Salvator won!
Cheer, hoar-headed patriarchs; cheer loud, I say
'Tis the race of a century witnessed to-day!
Though ye live twice the space that's allotted to men
Ye never will see such a grand race again.
Let the shouts of the populace roar like the surf
For Salvator, Salvator, king of the turf!
He has broken the record of thirteen long years;
He has won the first place in a vast line of peers.
'Twas a neck-to-neck contest, a grand, honest race,
And even his enemies grant him his place.
Down into the dust let old records be hurled,

And hang out 2.05 in the gaze of the world.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I Am

Am

I know not whence I came,
I know not whither I go;
But the fact stands clear that I am here
In this world of pleasure and woe.
And out of the mist and the murk
Another truth shines plain –
It is my power each day and hour
To add to its joy or its pain.

I know that the earth exists,
It is none of my business why;
I cannot find out what it's all about,
I would but waste time to try.
My life is a brief, brief thing,
I am here for a little space,
And while I stay I would like, if I may,
To brighten and better the place.

The trouble, I think, with us all
Is the lack of a high conceit.
If each man thought he was sent to this spot
To make it a bit more sweet,
How soon we could gladden the world,
How easily right all wrong,
If nobody shirked, and each one worked
To help his fellows along!

Cease wondering why you came –
Stop looking for faults and flaws;
Rise up to-day in your pride and say,
'I am part of the First Great Cause!
However full the world,
There is room for an earnest man.
It had need of me, or I would not be –
I am here to strengthen the plan.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I Love You

I love your lips when they're wet with wine
And red with a wild desire;
I love your eyes when the lovelight lies
Lit with a passionate fire.
I love your arms when the warm white flesh
Touches mine in a fond embrace;
I love your hair when the strands enmesh
Your kisses against my face.

Not for me the cold calm kiss
Of a virgin's bloodless love;
Not for me the saint's white bliss,
Nor the heart of a spotless dove.
But give me the love that so freely gives
And laughs at the whole world's blame,
With your body so young and warm in my arms,
It sets my poor heart aflame.

So kiss me sweet with your warm wet mouth,
Still fragrant with ruby wine,
And say with a fervor born of the South
That your body and soul are mine.
Clasp me close in your warm young arms,
While the pale stars shine above,
And we'll live our whole young lives away
In the joys of a living love.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I Shall Not Forget

I shall not forget you. The years may be tender,
But vain are their efforts to soften my smart;
And the strong hands of Time are too feeble and slender
To garland the grave that is made in my heart.

Your image is ever about me, before me,
Your voice floats abroad on the voice of the wind;
And the spell of your presence, in absence, is o'er me,
And the dead of the past, in the present I find.

I cannot forget you. The one boon ungiven,
The boon of your love, is the cross that I bear.
In the midnight of sorrow I vainly have striven
To crush in my heart the sweet image hid there;

To banish the beautiful dreams that are thronging
The halls of my memory, dreams worse than vain;
For the one drop withheld, I am thirsting and longing,
For the one joy denied, I am weeping in pain.

I would not forget you. I live to remember
The beautiful hopes that bloomed but to decay,
And brighter than June glows the bleakest December,
When peopled with ghosts of the dreams passed away.

Once loving you truly, I love you forever;
I mourn not in weak, idle grief for the past;
But the love in my bosom can never, oh never
Pass out, or another pass in, first or last.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I Step Across The Mystic Border-Land

I step across the mystic border-land,
And look upon the wonder-world of Art.
How beautiful, how beautiful its hills!
And all its valleys, how surpassing fair!

The winding paths that lead up to the heights
Are polished by the footsteps of the great.
The mountain-peaks stand very near to God:
The chosen few whose feet have trod thereon
Have talked with Him. and with the angels walked.

Here are no sounds of discord-no profane
Or senseless gossip of unworthy things-
Only the songs of chisels and of pens,
Of busy brushes, and ecstatic strains
Of souls surcharged with music most divine.
Here is no idle sorrow, no poor grief
For any day or object left behind-
For time is counted precious, and herein
Is such complete abandonment of Self
That tears turn into rainbows, and enhance
The beauty of the land where all is fair,
Awed and afraid, I cross the border-land.
Oh, who am I, that I dare enter here
Where the great artists of the world have trod-
The genius-crowned aristocrats of Earth?
Only the singer of a little song;
Yet loving Art with such a mighty love
I hold it greater to have won a place
Just on the fair land's edge, to make my grave,
Than in the outer world of greed and gain
To sit upon a royal throne and reign.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I Told You

I told you the winter would go, love,
I told you the winter would go,
That he'd flee in shame when the south wind came,
And you smiled when I told you so.
You said the blustering fellow
Would never yield to a breeze,
That his cold, icy breath had frozen to death
The flowers, the birds, and trees.

And I told you the snow would melt, love,
In the passionate glance o' the sun;
And the leaves o' the trees, and the flowers and bees,
Would come back again, one by one.
That the great, gray clouds would vanish,
And the sky turn tender and blue;
And the sweet birds would sing, and talk of the spring
And, love, it has all come true.

I told you that sorrow would fade, love,
And you would forget half your pain;
That the sweet bird of song would waken ere long,
And sing in your bosom again;
That hope would creep out of the shadows,
And back to its nest in your heart,
And gladness would come, and find its old home,
And that sorrow at length would depart.

I told you that grief seldom killed, love,
Though the heart might seem dead for awhile.
But the world is so bright, and full of warm light
That 'twould waken at length, in its smile.
Ah, love! was I not a true prophet?
There's a sweet happy smile on your face;
Your sadness has flown - the snow-drift is gone,
And the buttercups bloom in its place.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I Will Be Worthy Of It

It

I may not reach the heights I seek,
My untried strength may fail me;
Or, halfway up the mountain peak
Fierce tempests may assail me.
But though that place I never gain,
Herein lies the comfort for my pain –
I will be worthy of it.

I may not triumph in success,
Despite my earnest labour;
I may not grasp results that bless
The efforts of my neighbour.
But though my goal I never see,
This thought shall always dwell with me –
I will be worthy of it.

The golden glory of Love's light
May never fall on my way;
My path may always lead through night,
Like some deserted by-way.
But though life's dearest joy I miss,
There lies a nameless strength in this –
I will be worthy of it.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

I, Too

I saw fond lovers in that glow
That oft-times fades away too soon:
I saw and said, 'Their joy I know-
I, too, have had my honeymoon.'

A young expectant mother's gaze
Held earth and heaven within its scope:
My thoughts went back to holy days-
I said, 'I, too, have known that hope.'

I saw a stricken mother swayed
By sorrow's storm, like wind-blown grass:
I said, 'I, too, dismayed
Have seen the little white hearse pass.'

I saw a matron rich with years
Walk radiantly beside her mate:
I blessed them, and said through my tears,
'I, too, have known that high estate.'

I saw a woman swathed in black
So blind with grief she could not see:
I said, 'Not far need I look back-
I, too, have known Gethsemane.'

I saw a face so full of light,
It seemed with all God's truths to shine:
I said, 'I, too, have found my sight,
I, too, have touched the Fact Divine.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Idler's Song

I sit in the twilight dim
At the close of an idle day,
And I list to the soft sweet hymn,
That rises far away,
And dies on the evening air.
Oh, all day long,
They sing their song,
Who toil in the valley there.

But never a song sing I,
Sitting with folded hands,
The hours pass me by -
Dropping their golden sands -
And I list, from day to day,
To the 'tick, tick, tock'
Of the old brown clock,
Ticking my life away.

And I see the twilight fade,
And I see the night come on,
And then, in the gloom and shade,
I weep for the day that's gone -
Weep and wail in pain,
For the misspent day
That has flown away,
And will not come again.

Another morning beams,
And I forget the last,
And I sit in idle dreams
Till the day over - past.
Oh, the toiler's heart is glad!
When the day is gone
And the night comes on,
But mine is sore and sad.

For I dare not look behind!
No shining, golden sheaves
Can I ever hope to find:

Nothing but withered leaves.
Ah! dreams are very sweet!
But will not please
If only these
I lay at the Master's feet.

And what will the Master say
To dreams and nothing more?
Oh, idler, all the day!
Think, ere thy life is o'er!
And when the day grows late,
Oh, soul of sin!
Will He let you in,
There at the pearly gate?

Oh, idle heart, beware!
On, to the field of strife!
On, to the valley there!
And live a useful life!
Up, do not wait a day!
For the old brown clock,
With its 'tick, tick, tock, '
Is ticking your life away.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

If

Dear love, if you and I could sail away,
With snowy pennons to the wind unfurled,
Across the waters of some unknown bay,
And find some island far from all the world;

If we could dwell there, ever more alone,
While unrecorded years slip by apace,
Forgetting and forgotten and unknown
By aught save native song-birds of the place;

If Winter never visited that land,
And Summer's lap spilled o'er with fruits and flowers,
And tropic trees cast shade on every hand,
And twinèd boughs formed sleep-inviting bowers;

If from the fashions of the world set free,
And hid away from all its jealous strife,
I lived alone for you, and you for me--
Ah! then, dear love, how sweet were wedded life.

But since we dwell here in the crowded way,
Where hurrying throngs rush by to seek for gold,
And all is common-place and work-a-day,
As soon as love's young honeymoon grows old:

Since fashion rules and nature yields to art,
And life is hurt by daily jar and fret,
'T is best to shut such dreams down in the heart
And go our ways alone, love, and forget.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

If--

If I were a raindrop, and you were a leaf,
I would burst from the cloud above you
And lie on your breast in a rapture of rest,
And love you, love you, love you.

If I were a brown bee, and you were a rose,
I would fly to you, love, nor miss you;
I would sip and sip from your nectared lip,
And kiss you, kiss you, kiss you.

If I were a doe, dear, and you were a brook,
Ah, what would I do then, think you?
I would kneel by the bank, in the grasses dank,
And drink you, drink you, drink you.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

If Christ Came Questioning

If Christ came questioning His world to-day,
(If Christ came questioning,)
'What hast thou done to glorify thy God,
Since last My feet this lower earth plane trod?'
How could I answer Him; and in what way
One evidence of my allegiance bring;
If Christ came questioning.

If Christ came questioning, to me alone,
(If Christ came questioning,)
I could not point to any church or shrine
And say, 'I helped build up this house of Thine;
Behold the altar, and the corner stone';
I could not show one proof of such a thing;
If Christ came questioning.

If Christ came questioning, on His demand,
(If Christ came questioning,)
No pagan soul converted to His creed
Could I proclaim; or say, that word or deed
Of mine, had spread the faith in any land;
Or sent it forth, to fly on stronger wing;
If Christ came questioning.

If Christ came questioning the soul of me,
(If Christ came questioning,)
I could but answer, 'Lord, my little part
Has been to beat the metal of my heart,
Into the shape I thought most fit for Thee;
And at Thy feet, to cast the offering;
Shouldst Thou come questioning.

'From out the earth-fed furnaces of desire,
(Ere Thou cam'st questioning,)
This formless and unfinished gift I brought,
And on life's anvil flung it down, white hot:
A glowing thing, of selfishness and fire,
With blow on blow, I made the anvil ring;
(Ere Thou cam'st questioning).

'The hammer, Self-Control, beat hard on it;
(Ere Thou cam'st questioning,)
And with each blow, rose fiery sparks of pain;
I bear their scars, on body, soul, and brain.
Long, long I toiled; and yet, dear Lord, unfit,
And all unworthy, is the heart I bring,
To meet Thy questioning.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

If I Should Die

If I should die, how kind you all would grow!
In that strange hour I would not have one foe.
There are no words too beautiful to say
Of one who goes forevermore away
Across that ebbing tide which has no flow.
With what new lustre my good deeds would glow!
If faults were mine, no one would call them so,
Or speak of me in aught but praise that day,
If I should die.
Ah, friends! before my listening ear lies low,
While I can hear and understand, bestow
That gentle treatment and fond love, I pray,
The lustre of whose late though radiant way
Would gild my grave with mocking light, I know,
If I should die.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Impatience

How can I wait until you come to me?
The once fleet mornings linger by the way;
Their sunny smiles touched with malicious glee
At my unrest, they seem to pause, and play
Like truant children, while I sigh and say,
How can I wait?

How can I wait? Of old, the rapid hours
Refused to pause or loiter with me long;
But now they idly fill their hands with flowers,
And make no haste, but slowly stroll among
The summer blooms, not heeding my one song,
How can I wait?

How can I wait? The nights alone are kind;
They reach forth to a future day, and bring
Sweet dreams of you to people all my mind;
And time speeds by on light and airy wing.
I feast upon your face, I no more sing,
How can I wait?

How can I wait? The morning breaks the spell
A pitying night has flung upon my soul.
You are not near me, and I know full well
My heart has need of patience and control;
Before we meet, hours, days, and weeks must roll,
How can I wait?

How can I wait? Oh, Love, how can I wait
Until the sunlight of your eyes shall shine
Upon my world that seems so desolate?
Until your hand-clasp warms my blood like wine;
Until you come again, oh, Love of mine,
How can I wait?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In England

In England, there are wrongs no doubt,
Which should be righted; so men say,
Who seek to weed earth's garden out,
And give the roses right of way;
Yes, right of way, to fruit and rose,
Where now but poison ivy grows.

In England, there is wide unrest,
They tell me who should know; and yet
I saw but hedges, gayly dressed,
And eyes where love and kindness met;
Yes, love and kindness, met and made
Soft sunshine even in the shade.

In England, there are haunting things
Which follow one to other lands;
Like some pervading scent that clings
To laces touched by vanished hands;
Yes, touched by vanished hands, which made
A fragrance that defies the grave.

In England, centuries of art
Give common things a mellow tone;
And wake old memories in the heart
Of other lives the soul has known;
Yes, other lives in some past age
Start forth from canvas, and from page.

In England, there are simple joys,
The modern world has left all sweet;
In London's heart, are nooks where noise
Has entered but with slippered feet;
Yes, entered softly. Friend, believe,
To part from England is to grieve.

In Faith

When the soft sweet wind o' the south went by,
I dwelt in the light of a dark brown eye;
And out where the robin sang his song,
We lived and loved, while the days were long.

In the sweet, sweet eves, when the moon swung high,
We wandered under the starry sky;
Or sat in the porch, and the moon looked through
The latticed wall where the roses grew.

My lips, that had no lover's kiss,
You taught the art, till they thrilled in bliss;
And the moon, and the stars, and the roses knew
That the heart you won was pure and true.

But true hearts weary men, maybe,
For you grew weary of love, and me.
Over the porch the dead vines hang,
And a mourning dove sobs where the robin sang.

In a warmer clime does another sigh
Under the light of your dark brown eye?
Did you follow the soft sweet wing o' the south,
And are you kissing a redder mouth?

Lips may be redder, and eyes more bright;
The face may be fairer you see to-night;
But never, love, while the stars shall shine,
Will you find a heart that is truer than mine.

Sometime, perhaps, when south winds blow,
You will think of a love you used to know;
Sometime, perhaps, when a robin sings,
Your heart will go back to olden things.

Sometime you will weary of this world's arts,
Of deceit and change and hollow hearts,
And, wearying, sigh for the 'used to be, '
And your feet will turn to the porch, and me.

I shall watch for you here when days grow long;
I shall list for your step through the robin's song;
I shall sit in the porch where the moon looks through,
And a vacant chair will wait - for you.

You may stray, and forget, and rove afar,
But my changeless love, like the polar star,
Will draw you at length o'er land and sea -
And I know you will yet come back to me.

The years may come, and the years may go,
But sometime again, when south winds blow,
When roses bloom, and the moon swings high,
I shall live in the light of your dark brown eye.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In France I Saw A Hill

In France I saw a hill-a gentle slope
Rising above old tombs to greet the gleam
From soft spring skies. Beyond these skies dwells hope,
But those green graves bespeak a broken dream.

There was a row of narrow beds, new-made;
Each bore a starry banner and a cross.
And each the name of one who, ere he played
His rôle of warrior, met earth's final loss.

They were so young, so eager for the fray!
And thoughts of glory filled each boyish heart,
When over dangerous seas they sailed away
To face the foe and play some splendid part.

But in the tedious toil, the dull routine
Which must precede achievement on the field,
Disease, that secret enemy with mean
Sly tactics, forced them to disarm and yield.

So they were buried on that hill in France,
Before their ears had heard the battle din;
Before life gave them its dramatic chance-
A lasting fame, or glorious death to win.

Yet, looking up beyond their graves of green,
I seem to see them wearing band and star;
Men are rewarded in the Worlds Unseen
Not for the way they die, but what they are.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In Grandmamma's Kitchen

In grandmamma's kitchen, things got in a riot-
The cream in a pot on the shelf,
Where everything always seemed peaceful and quiet,
Got whipped, for I heard it myself.
And grandmamma said-such a queer thing to say,
That it made some things better to whip them that way.

Some bold naughty eggs that refused to be eaten,
On toast with their brothers may be,
Were stripped of their clothing and cruelly beaten
Right where all the dishes could see.
And grandmamma said though the poor things might ache,
The harder the beating, the lighter the cake.

The bright golden butter was petted and patted
And coaxed to be shapely and good.
But it finally had to be taken and spatting
Right hard with a paddle of wood.
When grandmamma carried the round balls away,
The buttermilk sulked, and looked sour all day.

The water declared that the coffee was muddy,
But an egg settled that little fuss.
Then the steak and the gridiron got in a bloody
And terrible broil! Such a muss!
And a flat-iron spat at grandma in the face,
And I ran away from the quarrelsome place.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In India's Dreamy Land

In India's land one listens aghast
To the people who scream and bawl;
For each caste yells at a lower caste,
And the Britisher yells at them all.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In Memoriam

Looking some papers over,
Dusty and dim and old,
I found some words that thrilled me
With their ring of genuine gold-
Words that were better than rubies,
And they stirred me even to tears,
For the hand that wrote them has rested
Under the sod for years.

O name to be spoken softly!
O sainted Thurlow Brown!
The world lost one of its heroes
When he dropped the cross for the crown.
And the cause he loved and fought for
Lost more than my tongue can tell
For he left no soul behind him
That could do the work so well.

When I think of his mighty labors,
My own seem weak and vain,
And I know that his place in the vineyard
Can never be filled again.
But the burning words that he uttered,
Or that dropped like coals from his pen,
Shall live for ever and ever
In the hearts and minds of men.

O God! if spirits do ever
Come down from heaven on high,
Let the spirit of this great hero
Sometimes be hovering nigh;
And give him the power to guide us
In all that we do or say
For the cause he loved and fought for.
Oh! grant it, Lord, I pray.

In The Cup

There is grief in the cup!

I saw a proud mother set wine on the board;
The eyes of her son sparkled bright as she poured
The ruddy stream into the glass in his hand.
The cup was of silver; the lady was grand
In her satins and laces; her proud heart was glad
In the love of her fair, noble son; but, oh! sad,
Oh! so sad ere a year had passed by,
And the soft light had gone from her beautiful eye.
For the boy that she loved, with a love strong as death,
In the chill hours of morn with a drunkard's foul breath
And a drunkard's fierce oath, reeled and staggered his way
To his home, a dark blot on the face of the day.

There is shame in the cup!

The tempter said, 'Drink,' and a fair maiden quaffed
Till her cheeks glowed the hue of the dangerous draught.
The voice of the tempter spoke low in her ear
Words that once would have started the quick, angry tear,
But wine blunts the conscience, and wine dulls the brain,
She listened and smiled, and he whispered again.
He lifted the goblet: 'Once more,' he said, 'drink,'
And the soul of the maiden was lost in the brink.
There is death in the cup!

A man in God's image, strong, noble, and grand,
With talents that crowned him a prince of the land,
Sipped the ruddy red wine!-sipped it lightly at first,
Until from its chains broke the demon of thirst.
And thirst became master, and man became slave,
And he ended his life in the drunkard's poor grave.
Wealth, fame, talents, beauty, and life swallowed up,
Grief, shame, death, destruction, are all in the cup.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In The Garden

One moment alone in the garden,
Under the August skies;
The moon had gone but the stars shone on, -
Shone like your beautiful eyes.
Away from the glitter and gaslight,
Alone in the garden there,
While the mirth of the throng, in laugh and song,
Floated out on the air.

You looked down through the starlight,
And I looked up at you;
And a feeling came that I could not name, -
Something strange and new.
Friends of a few weeks only, -
Why should it give me pain
To know you would go in the morrow,
And would not come again?

Formal friends of a season.
What matter that we must part?
But under the skies, with a swift surprise,
Each read the other's heart.
We did not speak, but your breath on my cheek
Was like a breeze of the south:
And your dark hair brushed my forehead
And your kiss fell on my mouth.

Some one was searching for me, -
Some one to say good-night;
And we went in from the garden,
Out of the sweet starlight,
Back to the glitter and music,
And we said 'Good-bye' in the hall,
When a dozen heard and echoed the word,
And then - well, that was all.

The river that rolls between us
Can never be crossed, I know,
For the waters are deep and the shores are steep,

And a maelstrom whirls below;
But I think we shall always remember,
Though we both may strive to forget,
How you looked in my eyes, 'neath the August skies,
After the moon had set; -

How you kissed my lips in the garden,
And we stood in a trance of bliss,
And our hearts seemed speaking together
In that one thrilling kiss.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In The Long Run

In the long run fame finds the deserving man.
The lucky wight may prosper for a day,
But in good time true merit leads the van,
And vain pretense, unnoticed, goes its way.
There is no Chance, no Destiny, no Fate,
But Fortune smiles on those who work and wait,
In the long run.

In the long run all goodly sorrow pays,
There is no better thing than righteous pain,
The sleepless nights, the awful thorn-crowned days,
Bring sure reward to tortured soul and brain.
Unmeaning joys enervate in the end,
But sorrow yields a glorious dividend
In the long run.

In the long run all hidden things are known,
The eye of truth will penetrate the night,
And good or ill, thy secret shall be known,
However well 't is guarded from the light.
All the unspoken motives of the breast
Are fathomed by the years and stand confest
In the long run.

In the long run all love is paid by love,
Though undervalued by the hosts of earth;
The great eternal Governemnt above
Keeps strict account and will redeem its worth.
Give thy love freely; do not count the cost;
So beautiful a thing was never lost
In the long run.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

In The Night

In the silent midnight watches,
When the earth was clothed in gloom,
And the grim and awful darkness
Crept unbidden to my room-
On the solemn, deathly stillness
Of the night, there broke a sound,
Like ten million wailing voices
Crying loudly from the ground.

From ten million graves came voices,
East and West, and North and South,
Leagues apart, and yet together
Spake they, e'en as with one mouth:
'Men and women! men and women!'
Cried these voices from the ground,
And the very earth was shaken
With the strange and awful sound-

'Ye who weep in selfish sorrow,
Ye who laugh in selfish mirth,
Hark! and listen for a moment
To the voices from the earth:
Wake and listen! ye who slumber,
Pause and listen! ye who feast,
To the warning of the voices
From the graves in West and East.

'We, the victims of a demon,
We, who one, and each, and all,
Can cry out before high heaven,
'We are slain by alcohol!'-
We would warn you, youths and maidens,
From the path that we have trod-
From the path that leads
to
ruin,

And away from peace and God.

'We, the millions who have fallen,
Warn you from the ruddy glow
Of the wine in silver goblets,
For
destruction
lies below.
Wine and gin, and rum and brandy,
Whiskey, cider, ale, and beer,
These have slain us and destroyed us-
These the foes that brought us here.

"You are safe,' you say. Ah heaven!
So
we
said, and drank, and died.
'We are safe!' we proudly boasted,
Yet we sank down in the tide.
There is never any safety
From the snares of alcohol
For the youth who looks on liquor,
Tastes or touches it at all.

'We beseech you, men and women,
Fathers, mothers, sons, and wives,
To arise, and slay the demon
That is threatening dear ones' lives!
Do not preach of
moderation

To your children; for, alas!
There is not a foe more subtle
Than the fateful 'social glass.'

'Thoughtless mother, wife, or sister,
Dash that poison cup away!
He, the husband, son, or brother

Who so gaily sips to-day,
May to-morrow stagger homeward,
Jeered and scorned by sober men.
Would you smile upon him proudly-
Would you say, 'I did it,' then?

'Ah! a vast and mighty number
Of the drunkards in all lands
Take the first step to destruction
Led by white and fragile hands.
Every smile you give the wine-cup,
Every glance, O lady fair!
Like a spade, digs down and hollows out
A drunkard's grave somewhere.

'Men in office, men in power,
Will you let this demon wild
Stalk unfettered through the nation,
Slaying woman, man, and child?
Oh! arouse, ye listless mortals,
There is work for every one!
We have warned you of your danger-
We have spoken, we have done.'

Round about me fell the silence
Of the solemn night once more,
And I heard the quiet ticking
Of the clock outside my door.
It was not a dreamer's fancy,
Not a romance of my brain,
But the warning of the victims
That old Alcohol had slain.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Independence Ode

Columbia, fair queen in your glory!
Columbia, the pride of the earth!
We crown you with song- wreath and story;
We honour the day of your birth!

The wrath of a king and his minions
You braved, to be free, on that day;
And the eagle sailed up on strong pinions,
And frightened the lion at bay.

Since the chains and the shackles are broken,
And citizens now replace slaves,
Since the hearts of your heros have spoken
How dear they held freedom - by graves.

Your beautiful banner is blotless
As it floats to the breezes unfurled,
And but for one blemish, all spotless
Is the record you show to the world.

Like a scar on the features of beauty,
Lies Utah, sin-cursed to the west.
Columbia! Columbia! your duty
Is to wipe out that stain with the rest!

Not only in freedom, and science,
And letters, should you lead the earth;
But let the earth learn your reliance
In honour and true moral worth.

When Liberty's torch shall be lighted,
Let her brightest most far-reaching rays
Discover no wrong thats unrighted -
Go challenge the jealous world's gaze!

Columbia, your star is ascending!
Columbia, all lands own your sway!
May your reign be as proud and unrending
As your glory is brilliant today.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Individuality

Ah yes, I love you, and with all my heart;
Just as a weaker woman loves her own,
Better than I love my beloved art,
Which, until you came, reigned royally, alone,
My king, my master. Since I saw your face
I have dethroned it, and you hold that place.

I am as weak as other women are –
Your frown can make the whole world like a tomb
Your smile shines brighter than the sun, by far;
Sometimes I think there is not space or room
In all the earth for such a love as mine,
And it soars up to breathe in realms divine.

I know that your desertion or neglect
Could break my heart, as women's hearts do break;
If my wan days had nothing to expect
From your love's splendour, all joy would forsake
The chambers of my soul. Yes this is true.
And yet, and yet – one thing I keep from you.

There is a subtle part of me, which went
Into my long pursued and worshipped art;
Though your great love fills me with such content,
No other love finds room now in my heart.
Yet that rare essence was my art's alone.
Thank God, you cannot grasp it; 'tis mine own.

Thank God, I say, for while I love you so,
With that vast love, as passionate as tender,
I feel an exultation as I know
I have not made you a complete surrender.
Here is my body; bruise it, if you will,
And break my heart; I have that something still.

You cannot grasp it. Seize the breath of morn,
Or bind the perfume of the rose as well.
God put it in my soul when I was born;
It is not mine to give away, or sell,

Or offer up on any alter shrine.
It was my art's; and when not art's, 'tis mine.

For Love's sake, I can put the art away,
Or anything which stands 'twixt me and you,
But that strange essence God bestowed, I say,
To permeate the work He gave to do:
And it cannot be drained, dissolved, or sent
Through any channel, save the one He meant.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Inspiration

Not like a daring, bold, aggressive boy,
Is inspiration, eager to pursue,
But rather like a maiden, fond, yet coy,
Who gives herself to him who best doth woo.

Once she may smile, or thrice, thy soul to fire,
In passing by, but when she turns her face,
Thou must persist and seek her with desire,
If thou wouldst win the favor of her grace.

And if, like some winged bird she cleaves the air,
And leaves thee spent and stricken on the earth,
Still must thou strive to follow even there,
That she may know thy valor and thy worth.

Then shall she come unveiling all her charms,
Giving thee joy for pain, and smiles for tears;
Then shalt thou clasp her with possessing arms,
The while she murmurs music in thine ears.

But ere her kiss has faded from thy cheek,
She shall flee from thee over hill and glade,
So must thou seek and ever seek and seek
For each new conquest of this phantom maid.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Integrity

Immortal life is something to be earned,
By slow, self-conquest, comradeship with pain,
And patient seeking after higher truths.
We cannot follow our own wayward wills
And feed our baser appetites and give
Loose reins to foolish tempers, year on year,
And then cry, 'Lord, forgive me, I believe --'
And straightway bathe in glory. Men must learn
God's system is too great a thing for that;
The spark divine dwells in each soul, and we
Can fan it to a steady flame of light,
Whose lustre guilds the pathway of the tomb
And shines on through eternity, or else
Neglect it till it simmers down to death
And leaves us but the darkness of the grave.
Each conquered passion feeds the living flame;
Each well-borne sorrow is a step toward God.
Faith cannot rescue, and no blood redeem
The soul that will not reason and resolve.
Lean on thyself, yet prop thyself with prayer,
For these are spirits, messengers of light,
Who come at call and fortify thy strength,
Make friends with thee and with thine inner self,
Cast out all envy, bitterness, and hate.
And keep the mind's fair tabernacle pure;
Shake hands with Pain, give greeting unto Grief,
Those angels in disguise and thy glad soul,
From light to light from star to shining star,
Shall climb and claim blest immortality.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Into The World

Out over childhood's borders,
Manhood's brave banners unfurled,
Weighed down with precepts and orders
A boy has gone into the world.

Nobody thinks it pathetic-
For he is a strong-armed youth.
But where is the vision prophetic
To forecast his future with truth?

No more a child to be petted
And sheltered away from the strife;
Henceforth-a man to be fretted
And worn with the worries of life.

Henceforth a man with others
To scramble and push in the race,
To jostle and crowd with his brothers,
To struggle for gain and place.

Now though his heart is breaking,
Henceforth his lids must be dry;
Now though his soul is aching,
He must not utter a cry.

Now if his brain is troubled,
Now if his courage has gone,
Still must his strength be doubled,
Still must the battle go on.

Now if success shall crown him,
Oh, how the world will cheer.
Now if misfortune shall down him,

Oh, how the scoffer will jeer.

Virtue and truth attend him,
Into the vortex whirled,
God and His angels defend him-
A boy has gone into the world.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Introductory Verses

Oh, you who read some song that I have sung –
What know you of the soul from whence it sprung?

Dost dream the poet ever speaks aloud
His secret thought unto the listening crowd?

Go take the murmuring sea-shell from the shore-
You have its shape, its colour – and no more.

It tells not one of those vast mysteries
That lie beneath the surface of the seas.

Our songs are shells, cast out by waves of thought;
Here, take them at your pleasure; but think not

You've seen the beneath the surface of the waves,
Where lie our shipwrecks, and our coral caves.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Is It Best?

O mother who sips sweetened liquors!
Look down at the child on your breast;
Think, think of the rough path before him,
And ask yourself then, 'Is it best?
Shall I foster a love for this poison,
Instil the thirst into his veins?
In the fountain he seeks at my bosom
Sow the rank seeds of death, grief, and pains?

'Shall I give him the thirst of the drunkard,
Bequeath him the weapons of crime?
Can we look for a glass of pure water
Dipped up from a fountain of slime?
Can we look for brave men, strong and noble,
Where the parents drink poison for food?
When the body and soul are corrupted,
Can we look for the works to be good?'

Oh! think of the future before him!
There are perils you cannot remove.
Yet this, the great highway of sorrow-
Oh! guard him from this with your love.
There are rough paths enough in the future
For the feet of the child on your breast;
And lower the glass you are lifting,
And ask yourself, then, 'Is it best?'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Is It Well?

Saw you the youth, with the face like the morning,
Refilling the glass, that foamed white as the sea?
Heard you the words that fell down like a warning,
'Lift not the glass: it holds sorrow for thee'?
He heeds not nor listens:
The red liquor glistens,
And he sees not the fangs of the serpent beneath.
And the fiends are elated,
And the voice wailleth 'Fated,'
As he drains out the glass: the dumb agent of death.

High had he set his mark. Fame, wealth, and glory,
All should be his ere the noon-tide of life.
A name that should live in the annals of story,
His was a heart that could battle with strife.
'Here's to youthful endeavor!'
He cries. 'Ah! for ever
Shall the ruddy glass cheer me on life's rugged way.
There is strength for all trouble
In each airy bubble.
Who dares prate of danger and sorrow, I pray?'

Where is the youth with the face like the morning?
Where are the hopes that glowed bright as the noon!
He who had heard and obeyed not the warning,
Oh! has he reaped the dire harvest so soon?
He quaffed, all unheeding
The small voice's pleading,
And he lieth to-night in a dark prison cell.
This is his glory,
The name carved in story.
This has the red glass done. Say, is it well?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Isaura

Dost thou not tire, Isaura, of this play?

'What play?' Why, this old play of winning hearts!

Nay, now, lift not thine eyes in that feigned way:

'Tis all in vain—I know thee and thine arts.

Let us be frank, Isaura. I have made

A study of thee; and while I admire

The practised skill with which thy plans are laid,

I can but wonder if thou dost not tire.

Why, I tire even of Hamlet and Macbeth!

When overlong the season runs, I find

Those master-scenes of passion, blood, and death,

After a time do pall upon my mind.

Dost thou not tire of lifting up thine eyes

To read the story thou hast read so oft—

Of ardent glances and deep quivering sighs,

Of haughty faces suddenly grown soft?

Is it not stale, oh, very stale, to thee,

The scene that follows? Hearts are much the same;

The loves of men but vary in degree—

They find no new expressions for the flame.

Thou must know all they utter ere they speak,
As I know Hamlet's part, whoever plays.
Oh, does it not seem sometimes poor and weak?
I think thou must grow weary of their ways.
I pity thee, Isaura! I would be
The humblest maiden with her dream untold
Rather than live a Queen of Hearts, like thee,
And find life's rarest treasures stale and old.
I pity thee; for now, let come what may,
Fame, glory, riches, yet life will lack all.
Wherewith can salt be salted? And what way
Can life be seasoned after love doth pall?
Ella Wheeler Wilcox

It All Will Come Out Right

Whatever is a cruel wrong,
Whatever is unjust,
The honest years that speed along
Will trample in the dust.
In restless youth I railed at fate
With all my puny might,
But now I know if I but wait
It all will come out right.

Though Vice may don the judge's gown
And play the censors' part,
And Fact be cowed by Falsehood's frown
And Nature ruled by art;
Though Labour toils through blinding tears
And idle Wealth is might,
I know that the honest, earnest years
Will bring it all out right.

Though poor and loveless creeds may pass
For pure religion's gold;
Though ignorance may rule the mass
While truth meets glances cold,
I know a law, complete, sublime,
Controls us with its might,
And in God's own appointed time
It all will come out right.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

It Might Have Been

We will be what we could be. Do not say,
'It might have been, had not this, or that, or this.'
No fate can keep us from the chosen way;
He only might who is.

We will do what we could do. Do not dream
Chance leaves a hero, all uncrowned to grieve.
I hold, all men are greatly what they seem;
He does, who could achieve.

We will climb where we could climb. Tell me not
Of adverse storms that kept thee from the height.
What eagle ever missed the peak he sought?
He always climbs who might.

I do not like the phrase 'It might have been!'
It lacks force, and life's best truths perverts:
For I believe we have, and reach, and win,
Whatever our deserts.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Joy

My heart is like a little bird
That sits and sings for very gladness.
Sorrow is some forgotten word,
And so, except in rhyme, is sadness.

The world is very fair to me –
Such azure skies, such golden weather,
I'm like a long caged bird set free,
My heart is lighter than a feather.

I rise rejoicing in my life;
I live with love of God and neighbour;
My days flow on unmarred by strife,
And sweetened by my pleasant labour.

O youth! O spring! O happy days,
Ye are so passing sweet, and tender,
And while the fleeting season stays,
I revel care-free, in its splendour.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Karma

I

We cannot choose our sorrows. One there was
Who, reverent of soul, and strong with trust,
Cried, 'God, though Thou shouldst bow me to the dust,
Yet will I praise thy everlasting laws.
Beggared, my faith would never halt or pause,
But sing Thy glory, feasting on a crust.
Only one boon, one precious boon I must
Demand of Thee, O opulent great Cause.
Let Love stay with me, constant to the end,
Though fame pass by and poverty pursue.'
With freighted hold her life ship onward sailed;
The world gave wealth, and pleasure, and a friend,
Unmarred by envy, and whose heart was true.
But ere the sun reached midday, Love had failed.

II

Then from the depths, in bitterness she cried,
'Hell is on earth, and heaven is but a dream;
And human life a troubled aimless stream;
And God is nowhere. Would God so deride
A loving creature's faith?' A voice replied,
'The stream flows onward to the Source Supreme,
Where things that ARE replace the things that SEEM,
And where the deeds of all past lives abide.
Once at thy door Love languished and was spurned.
Who sorrow plants, must garner sorrow's sheaf.
No prayers can change the seedling in the sod.
By thine own heart Love's anguish must be learned.
Pass on, and know, as one made wise by grief,
That in thyself dwells heaven and hell and God.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Kingdom Of Love

In the dawn of the day when the sea and the earth
Reflected the sunrise above,
I set forth with a heart full of courage and mirth
To seek for the Kingdom of Love.
I asked of a Poet I met on the way
Which cross-road would lead me aright.
And he said: "Follow me, and not long you shall see
Its glittering turrets of light."

And soon in the distance a city shone fair,
"Look yonder," he said; "how it gleams!"
But alas! for the hopes that were doomed to despair,
It was only the "Kingdom of Dreams."
Then the next man I asked was a gay Cavalier,
And he said: "Follow me, follow me;"
And with laughter and song we went speeding along
By the shores of Life's beautiful sea.

Then we came to a valley more tropical far
Than the wonderful vale of Cashmere,
And I saw from a bower a face like a flower
Smile out on the gay Cavalier.
And he said: "We have come to humanity's goal:
Here love and delight are intense."
But alas and alas! for the hopes of my soul
It was only the "Kingdom of Sense."

As I journeyed more slowly I met on the road
A coach with retainers behind.
And they said: "Follow me, for our Lady's abode
Belongs in that realm, you will find."
'Twas a grand dame of fashion, a newly made bride,
I followed, encouraged and bold;
But my hopes died away like the last gleams of day,
For we came to the "Kingdom of Gold."

At the door of a cottage I asked a fair maid.
"I have heard of that realm," she replied;
"But my feet never roam from the "Kingdom of Home,"

So I know not the way," and she sighed.
I looked on the cottage; how restful it seemed!
And the maid was as fair as a dove.
Great light glorified my soul as I cried:
"Why home is the 'Kingdom of Love!'"

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Last Love

The first flower of the spring is not so fair
Or bright, as one the ripe midsummer brings.
The first faint note the forest warbler sings
Is not as rich with feeling, or so rare
As when, full master of his art, the air
Drowns in the liquid sea of song he flings
Like silver spray from beak, and breast, and wings.
The artist's earliest effort wrought with care,
The bard's first ballad, written in his tears,
Set by his later toil seems poor and tame.
And into nothing dwindles at the test.
So with the passions of maturer years
Let those who will demand the first fond flame,
Give me the heart's last love, for that is best.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Lay It Away

We will lay our summer away, my friend,
So tenderly lay it away.
It was bright and sweet to the very end,
Like one long, golden day.
Nothing sweeter could come to me,
Nothing sweeter to you.
We will lay it away, and let it be,
Hid from the whole world's view.

We will lay it away like a dear, dead thing –
Dead, yet for ever fair;
And the fresh green robes of a deathless spring,
Though dead, it shall always wear.
We will not hide it in grave or tomb,
But lay it away to sleep,
Guarded by beauty, and light, and bloom,
Wrapped in a slumber deep.

We were willing to let the summer go –
Willing to go our own ways;
But never on earth again I know
Will either find such days.
You are my friend, and it may seem strange,
But I would not see you again;
I would think of you, though all things change,
Just as I knew you then.

If we should go back to the olden place,
And the summer time went too,
It would be like looking a ghost in the face,
So much would be changed and new.
We cannot live it over again,
Not even a single day;
And as something sweet, and free from pain,
We had better let it away.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Let Me Lean Hard

Let me lean hard upon the Eternal Breast;
In all earth's devious ways, I sought for rest
And found it not. I will be strong, said I,
And lean upon myself. I will not cry
And importune all heaven with my complaint,
But not my strength fails, and I fall, I faint:
Let me lean hard.

Let me lean hard upon the unfailing Arm.
I said I will walk on, I fear no harm,
The spark divine within my soul will show
The upward pathway where my feet should go,
But now the heights to which I must aspire
Are lost in clouds. I stumble and I tire;
Let me lean hard.

Let me lean harder yet. That swerveless force
Which speeds the solar systems on their course
Can take, unfelt, the burden of my woe,
Which bears me to the dust and hurts me so;
I thought my strength enough for any fate,
But lo! I sink beneath my sorrow's weight:
Let me lean hard.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Let Them Go

Let the dream go. Are there not other dreams
In vastness of clouds hid from thy sight
That yet shall gild with beautiful gold gleams,
And shoot the shadows through and through with light?
What matters one lost vision of the night?
Let the dream go!!

Let the hope set. Are there not other hopes
That yet shall rise like new stars in thy sky?
Not long a soul in sullen darkness gropes
Before some light is lent it from on high;
What folly to think happiness gone by!
Let the hope set!

Let the joy fade. Are there not other joys,
Like frost-bound bulbs, that yet shall start and bloom?
Severe must be the winter that destroys
The hardy roots locked in their silent tomb.
What cares the earth for her brief time of gloom
Let the joy fade!

Let the love die. Are there not other loves
As beautiful and full of sweet unrest,
Flying through space like snowy-pinioned doves?
They yet shall come and nestle in thy breast,
And thou shalt say of each, 'Lo, this is best!'
Let the love die!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Leudeman's-On-The-River

Toward even when the day leans down,
To kiss the upturned face of night,
Out just beyond the loud-voiced town
I know a spot of calm delight.
Like crimson arrows from a quiver
The red rays pierce the water flowing,
While we go dreaming, singing, rowing,
To Leudeman's-on-the-River.

The hills, like some glad mocking-bird,
Send back our laughter and our singing,
While faint--and yet more faint is heard
The steeple bells all sweetly ringing.
Some message did the winds deliver
To each glad heart that August night,
All heard, but all heard not aright;
By Leudeman's-on-the-River.

Night falls as in some foreign clime,
Between the hills that slope and rise.
So dusk the shades at landing time,
We could not see each other's eyes.
We only saw the moonbeams quiver
Far down upon the stream! that night
The new moon gave but little light
By Leudeman's-on-the-River.

How dusky were those paths that led
Up from the river to the hall.
The tall trees branching overhead
Invite the early shades that fall.
In all the glad blithe world, oh, never
Were hearts more free from care than when
We wandered through those walks, we ten,
By Leudeman's-on-the-River.

So soon, so soon, the changes came.
This August day we two alone,
On that same river, not the same,

Dream of a night forever flown.
Strange distances have come to sever
The hearts that gayly beat in pleasure,
Long miles we cannot cross or measure--
From Leudeman's-on-the-River.

We'll pluck two leaves, dear friend, to-day.
The green, the russet! seems it strange
So soon, so soon, the leaves can change!
Ah, me! so runs all night away
This night wind chills me, and I shiver;
The summer time is almost past.
One more good-bye--perhaps the last
To Leudeman's-on-the-River.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Life

All in the dark we grope along,
And if we go amiss
We learn at least which path is wrong,
And there is gain in this.

We do not always win the race,
By only running right,
We have to tread the mountain's base
Before we reach its height.

The Christs alone no errors made;
So often had they trod
The paths that lead through light and shade,
They had become as God.

As Krishna, Buddha, Christ again,
They passed along the way,
And left those mighty truths which men
But dimly grasp to-day.

But he who loves himself the last
And knows the use of pain,
Though strewn with errors all his past,
He surely shall attain.

Some souls there are that needs must taste
Of wrong, ere choosing right;
We should not call those years a waste
Which led us to the light.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Life Is A Privilege

Life is a privilege. Its youthful days
Shine with the radiance of continuous Mays.
To live, to breathe, to wonder and desire,
To feed with dreams the heart's perpetual fire,
To thrill with virtuous passions, and to glow
With great ambitions – in one hour to know
The depths and heights of feeling – God! in truth,
How beautiful, how beautiful is youth!

Life is a privilege. Like some rare rose
The mysteries of the human mind uncloze.
What marvels lie in the earth, and air, and sea!
What stores of knowledge wait our opening key!
What sunny roads of happiness lead out
Beyond the realms of indolence and doubt!
And what large pleasures smile upon and bless
The busy avenues of usefulness!

Life is a privilege. Thought the noontide fades
And shadows fall along the winding glades,
Though joy-blooms wither in the autumn air,
Yet the sweet scent of sympathy is there.
Pale sorrow leads us closer to our kind,
And in the serious hours of life we find
Depths in the souls of men which lend new worth
And majesty to this brief span of earth.

Life is a privilege. If some sad fate
Sends us alone to seek the exit gate,
If men forsake us and as shadows fall,
Still does the supreme privilege of all
Come in that reaching upward of the soul
To find the welcoming Presence at the goal,
And in the Knowledge that our feet have trod
Paths that led from, and must wind back, to God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Life Is Too Short

Life is too short for any vain regretting;
Let dead delight bury its dead, I say,
And let us go upon our way forgetting
The joys and sorrows of each yesterday
Between the swift sun's rising and its setting
We have no time for useless tears or fretting:
Life is too short.

Life is too short for any bitter feeling;
Time is the best avenger if we wait;
The years speed by, and on their wings bear healing;
We have no room for anything like hate.

This solemn truth the low mounds seem revealing
That thick and fast about our feet are stealing:
Life is too short.

Life is too short for aught but high endeavor—
Too short for spite, but long enough for love.
And love lives on forever and forever;
It links the worlds that circle on above:
'Tis God's first law, the universe's lever.
In His vast realm the radiant souls sigh never
'Life is too short.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Life's Harmonies

Let no man pray that he know not sorrow,
Let no soul ask to be free from pain,
For the gall of to-day is the sweet of to-morrow,
And the moment's loss is the lifetime's gain.

Through want of a thing does its worth redouble,
Through hunger's pangs does the feast content,
And only the heart that has harbored trouble,
Can fully rejoice when joy is sent.

Let no man shrink from the bitter tonics
Of grief, and yearning, and need, and strife,
For the rarest chords in the soul's harmonies,
Are found in the minor strains of life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Life's Lesson Book

Life is a ponderous lesson-book, and Fate
The teacher. When I came to love's fair leaf
My teacher turned the page and bade me wait.
'Learn first,' she said, 'love's grief';
And o'er and o'er through many a long tomorrow
She kept me conning that sad page of sorrow.

Cruel the task; and yet it was not vain.
Now the great book of life I know by heart.
In that one lesson of love's loss and pain
Fate doth the whole impart.
For, by the depths of woe, the mind can measure
The beauteous unscaled summits of love's pleasure.

Now, with the book of life upon her knee,
Fate sits! the unread page of love's delight
By her firm hand is half concealed from me,
And half revealed to sight.
Ah Fate! be kind! so well I learned love's sorrow,
Give me its full delight to learn tomorrow.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Life's Scars

They say the world is round, and yet
I often think it square,
So many little hurts we get
From corners here and there.
But one great truth in life I've found,
While journeying to the West-
The only folks who really wound
Are those we love the best.

The man you thoroughly despise
Can rouse your wrath, 'tis true;
Annoyance in your heart will rise
At things mere strangers do;
But those are only passing ills;
This rule all lives will prove;
The rankling wound which aches and thrills
Is dealt by hands we love.

The choicest garb, the sweetest grace,
Are oft to strangers shown;
The careless mien, the frowning face,
Are given to our own.
We flatter those we scarcely know,
We please the fleeting guest,
And deal full many a thoughtless blow
To those who love us best.

Love does not grow on every tree,
Nor true hearts yearly bloom.
Alas for those who only see
This cut across a tomb!
But, soon or late, the fact grows plain
To all through sorrow's test:
The only folks who give us pain
Are those we love the best.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Limitless

There is nothing, I hold, in the way of work
That a human being may not achieve
If he does not falter, or shrink, or shirk,
And more than all, if he will believe.

Believe in himself and the power behind
That stands like an aid on a dual ground,
With hope for the spirit and oil for the wound,
Ready to strengthen the arm or mind.

When the motive is right and the will is strong
There are no limits to human power;
For that great force back of us moves along
And takes us with it, in trial's hour.

And whatever the height you yearn to climb,
Tho' it never was trod by foot of man,
And no matter how steep - I say you can,
If you will be patient - and use your time.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Lines From

I'd rather have my verses win
A place in common people's hearts,
Who, toiling through the strife and din
Of life's great thoroughfares, and marts,

May read some line my hand has penned;
Some simple verse, not fine, or grand,
But what their hearts can understand
And hold me henceforth as a friend,--

I'd rather win such quiet fame
Than by some fine thought, bolished so
But those of learned minds would know,
Just what the meaning of my song,--
To have the critics sound my name
In high-flown praises, loud and long.

I sing not for the critic's ear,
But for the masses. If they hear
Despite the turmoil, noise, and strife
Some least low note that gladdens life,
I shall be wholly satisfied,
Though critics to the end deride.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Lines On H---'s Foot

It may be you've seen her eyes,
Dark and deep like midnight skies;
You mayhap have seen them flash
Underneath the drooping lash,
And been dazzled by the light
Of those orbs, so dark and bright;
But-have you seen her foot,
In its little gaiter boot?

You have noticed, maybe, how
The lily spreads from chin to brow.
You have thought her cheek more fair
Than if roses lingered there;
(Roses would seem out of place
On her pale patrician face)
But-again I question you,
Have you seen her tiny shoe?

You have thought her mouth, no doubt,
Like a blush-rose half blown out;
Small and sweet, withal, beside,
Touched with scorn and curved with pride;
(Innate pride-not meant to chill)-
You have seen it there, and still-
Answer one more question, pray-
Have you seen her boot? I say.

Such a tiny, tiny thing,
Is that foot of which I sing;
No. 3 would hide it so
It could not be found, I know.
No. 2 must stand aside
All too long and large and wide,
No. 1
must
be the boot

For this maiden's little foot.

You may envy, sir, the clerk
In the shoe-store, hard at work,
Who tries the gaiter boot
On this cunning little foot.
On his knee, supporting it,
Saying, 'It's a perfect fit,'
Buttoning on the No. 1,
Looking sorry, when it's done.

You have seen her, slight and neat,
As she tripped along the street,
You have
heard
the pit-pat-fall
Of that foot so very small.
That she's fair, and pure, and good,
Bright, and sweet is understood,
But-have you
seen
that foot-
In its dainty gaiter boot?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Listen!

Whoever you are as you read this,
Whatever your trouble or grief,
I want you to know and to heed this:
The day draweth near with relief.

No sorrow, no woe is unending,
Though heaven seems voiceless and dumb;
So sure as your cry is ascending,
So surely an answer will come.

Whatever temptation is near you,
Whose eyes on this simple verse fall;
Remember good angels will hear you
And help you to stand, if you call.

Though stunned with despair I beseech you,
Whatever your losses, your need,
Believe, when these printed words reach you,
Believe you were born to succeed.

You are stronger, I tell you, this minute,
Than any unfortunate fate!
And the coveted prize - you can win it;
While life lasts 'tis never too late!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Little Kids

'Little kids,' you call us
As we are at play.
You were little children
Just the other day.

Now to-morrow nears us,
Soon we too shall stand
Men and women rulers
Of the sea and land.

'Little kids' at play time:
But at home or school
Think about our future,
Make us fit to rule.

Guide us wisely onward-
Teach us what is true.
Though we are but kiddies
We are watching you!

Give us good examples!
While we are at play,
Often we are aping
What you do and say.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Little Queen

Do you remember the name I wore –
The old pet-name of Little Queen –
In the dear, dead days that are no more,
The happiest days of our lives, I ween?
For we loved with that passionate love of youth
That blesses but once with its perfect bliss, -
A love that, in spite of its trust and truth,
Seems never to thrive, in a world like this.

I lived for you, and you lived for me;
All was centred in "Little Queen";
And never a thought in our hearts had we
That strife or trouble could come between,
What utter sinking of self it was!
How little we cared for the world of men!
For love's fair kingdom, and loves' sweet laws,
Were all of the world and life to us then.

But a love like ours was a challenge to fate;
She rang down the curtains and shifted the scene;
Yet sometimes now, when the day grows late,
I can hear you calling for Little Queen;
For a happy home and a busy life
Can never wholly crowd out our past;
In the twilight pauses that come from strife,
You will think of me while life shall last.

And however sweet the voice of fame
May sing to me of a great world's praise,
I shall long sometimes for the old pet-name
That you gave to me in the dear, dead days;
And nothing the angel band can say,
When I reach the shores of the great Unseen,
Can please me so much as on that day
To hear your greeting of "Little Queen."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Long Ago

I loved a maiden, long ago,
She held within her hand my fate;
And in the ruddy sunset glow
We lingered at the garden gate.

The splendor of the western skies
Lay in a halo on her hair.
I gazed with worship in her eyes,
And deemed her true and knew her fair.

'Good night,' I said, and turned away;
She held me with her subtle smile.
I saw her red lips whisper 'stay,'
And so I lingered yet awhile.

'I love you, love you, sweet!' I said,
She laughed, and whispered, 'I love you.'
I kissed her small mouth, ripe and red,
And knew her fair, and deemed her true.

'Twas very, very long ago,
And I was young, and so was she;
My faith as love was strong, for oh!
The maid was all the world to me.

But as the sunset died away
And left the heavens cold and blue,
So died my dream of love one day.
The maid was only fair,
not
true.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Lost

You left me with the autumn time;
When the winter stripped the forest bare,
Then dressed it in his spotless rime;
When frosts were lurking in the air
You left me here and went away.
The winds were cold; you could not stay.

You sought a warmer clime, until
The south wind, artful maid, should break
The winter's trumpets, and should fill
The air with songs of birds; and wake
The sleeping blossoms on the plain
And make the brooks to flow again.

I thought that the winter desolate,
And all times felt a sense of loss.
I taught my longing heart to wait,
And said, 'When Spring shall come across
The hills, with blossoms in her track,
The she, our loved one, will come back.'

And now the hills with grass and moss
The spring with cunning hands has spread,
And yet I feel my grievous loss.
My heart will not be comforted,
But crieth daily, 'Where is she
You promised should come back to me? '

Oh, love! where are you? day by day
I seek to find you, but in vain.
Men point me to a grave, and say:
'There is her bed upon the plain.'
But though I see no trace of you,
I cannot think their words are true.

You were too sweet to wholly pass
Away from earth, and leave no trace;
You were too fair to let the grass
Grow rank and tall above your face.

Your voice, that mocked the robin's trill,
I cannot think is hushed and still.

I thought I saw your golden hair
One day, and reached to touch a strand;
I found but yellow sunbeams there -
The bright rays fell aslant my hand,
And seemed to mock, with lights and shades,
The silken meshes of your braids.

Again, I thought I saw your hand
Wave, as if beckoning to me;
I found 'twas but a lily, fanned
By the cool zephyrs from the sea.
Oh, love! I find no trace of you -
I wonder if their words were true?

One day I heard a singing voice;
A burst of music, trill on trill.
It made my very soul rejoice;
My heart gave and exultant thrill.
I cried, 'Oh heart, we've found her - hush! '
But no - 'twas the silver-throated thrush.

And once I thought I saw your face,
And wild with joy I ran to you;
But found, when I had reached the place,
'Twas a blush rose, bathed in dew.
Ah, love! I think you must be dead;
And I believe the words they said.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love

The longer I live and the more I see
Of the struggle of souls towards the heights above,
The stronger this truth comes home to me---
That the Universe rests on the shoulders of love,
A love so limitless, deep, and broad,
That men have re-named it, and called it God.

And nothing that was ever born or evolved,
Nothing created by light or force
But deep in its system there lies dissolved
A shining drop from the great Love source;
A shining drop that shall live for aye;
Though kingdoms may perish and stars decay.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love Is Enough

Love is enough. Let us not ask for gold.
Wealth breeds false aims, and pride and selfishness;
In those serene, Arcadian days of old
Men gave no thought to princely homes and dress.
The gods who dwelt on fair Olympia's height
Lived only for dear love and love's delight.
Love is enough.

Love is enough. Why should we care for fame?
Ambition is a most unpleasant guest:
It lures us with the glory of a name
Far from the happy haunts of peace and rest.
Let us stay here in this secluded place
Made beautiful by love's endearing grace!
Love is enough.

Love is enough. Why should we strive for power?
It brings men only envy and distrust.
The poor world's homage pleases but an hour,
And earthly honours vanish in the dust.
The grandest lives are oftentimes desolate;
Let me be loved, and let who will be great.
Love is enough.

Love is enough. Why should we ask for more?
What greater gift have gods vouchsafed to men?
What better boon of all their precious store
Than our fond hearts that love and love again?
Old love may die; new love is just as sweet;
And life is fair and all the world complete:
Love is enough!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love Much

Love much. Earth has enough of bitter in it.
Cast sweets into its cup whene'er you can.
No heart so hard, but love at last may win it.
Love is the great primæval cause of man.
All hate is foreign to the first great plan.

Love much. Your heart will be led out to slaughter,
On altars built of envy and deciet.
Love on, love on! 'tis bread upon the water;
It shall be cast in loaves yet at your feet,
Unleavened manna, most divinely sweet.

Love much. Your faith will be dethroned and shaken,
Your trust betrayed by many a fair, false lure.
Remount your faith, and let new trusts awaken.
Though clouds obscure them, yet the stars are pure;
Love is a vital force and must endure.

Love much. Men's souls contract with cold suspicion;
Shine on them with warm love, and they expand.
'Tis love, not creeds, that from a low condition
Leads mankind up to heights supreme and grand.
Oh that the world could see and understand!

Love much. There is no waste in freely giving;
More blessed is it, even, than to receive.
He who loves much alone finds life worth living:
Love on, through doubt and darkness; and believe
There is no thing which Love may not achieve.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love Song

Once in the world's first prime,
When nothing lived or stirred,
Nothing but new-born Time,
Nor was there even a bird –
The Silence spoke to a Star,
But do not dare repeat
What it said to its love afar:
It was too sweet, too sweet.

But there, in the fair world's youth,
Ere sorrow had drawn breath,
When nothing was known but Truth,
Nor was there even death,
The Star to Silence wed,
And the Sun was priest that day,
And they made their bridal-bed
High in the Milky Way.

For the great white star had heard
Her silent lover's speech;
It needed no passionate word
To pledge them each to each.
O lady fair and far,
Hear, oh, hear, and apply!
Thou the beautiful Star –
The voiceless silence, I.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love Thyself Last

Love thyself last. Look near, behold thy duty
To those who walk beside thee down life's road;
Make glad their days by little acts of beauty,
And help them bear the burden of earth's load.

Love thyself last. Look far and find the stranger,
Who staggers 'neath his sin and his despair;
Go lend a hand, and lead him out of danger,
To heights where he may see the world is fair.

Love thyself last. The vastnesses above thee
Are filled with Spirit Forces, strong and pure.
And fervently, these faithful friends shall love thee:
Keep thou thy watch o'er others, and endure.

Love thyself last; and oh, such joy shall thrill thee,
As never yet to selfish souls was given.
Whate'er thy lot, a perfect peace will fill thee,
And earth shall seem the ante-room of Heaven.

Love thyself last, and thou shall grow in spirit
To see, to hear, to know, and understand.
The message of the stars, lo, thou shall hear it,
And all God's joys shall be at thy command.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love Will Wane

When your love begins to wane,
Spare me from the cruel pain
Of all speech that tells me so -
Spare me words, for I shall know,

By the half-averted eyes,
By the breast that no more sighs
By the rapture I shall miss
From your strangely-altered kiss;

By the arms that still enfold
But have lost their clinging hold,
And, too willing, let me go,
I shall know, love, I shall know.

Bitter will the knowledge be,
Bitterer than death to me.
Yet, 'twill come to me some day,
For it is sad world's way.

Make no vows - vows cannot bind
Changing hearts of wayward mind.
Men grow weary of a bliss
Passionate and fond as this.

Love will wane. But I shall know,
If you do not tell me so.
Know it, tho' you smile and say,
That you love me more each day.

Know it by the inner sight
That forever sees aright.
Words could not but increase my woe,
And without them, I shall know.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love's Coming

She had looked for his coming as warriors come,
With the clash of arms and the bugle's call;
But he came instead with a stealthy tread,
Which she did not hear at all.

She had thought how his armor would blaze in the sun,
As he rode like a prince to claim his bride:
In the sweet dim light of the falling night
She found him at her side.

She had dreamed how the gaze of his strange, bold eye
Would wake her heart to a sudden glow:
She found in his face the familiar grace
Of a friend she used to know.

She had dreamed how his coming would stir her soul,
As the ocean is stirred by the wild storm's strife:
He brought her the balm of a heavenly calm,
And a peace which crowned her life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love's Language

How does Love speak?

In the faint flush upon the tell-tale cheek,
And in the pallor that succeeds it; by
The quivering lid of an averted eye –
The smile that proves the parent to a sigh –
Thus doth Love speak.

How does Love speak?

By the uneven heart-throbs, and the freak
Of bounding pulses that stand still and ache,
While new emotions, like strange barques, make
Along vein-channels their disturbing course;
Still as the dawn, and with the dawn's swift force –
Thus doth Love speak.

How does Love speak?

In the avoidance of that which we seek –
The sudden silence and reserve when near –
The eye that glistens with an unshed tear –
The joy that seems the counterpart of fear,
As the alarmed heart leaps in the breast,
And knows, and names, the greets its god-like guest –
Thus doth Love speak.

How doth Love speak?

In the proud spirit suddenly grown meek –
The haughty heart grown humble; in the tender
And unnamed light that floods the world with splendour,
In the resemblance which the fond eyes trace
In all things to one beloved face;
In the shy touch of hands that thrill and tremble;
In looks and lips that can no more dissemble –
Thus doth Love speak.

How doth Love speak?

In the wild words that uttered seem so weak
They shrink ashamed to silence; in the fire
Glance strikes with glance, swift flashing high and higher,
Like lightnings that precede the mighty storm;

In the deep, soulful stillness; in the warm,
Impassioned tide that sweeps through throbbing veins,
Between the shores of keen delights and pains;
In the embrace where madness melts in bliss,
And in convulsive rapture of a kiss –
Thus doth Love speak.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Love's Supremacy

As yon great Sun in his supreme condition
Absorbs small worlds and makes them all his own,
So does my love absorb each vain ambition
Each outside purpose which my life has known.
Stars cannot shine so near that vast orb's splendor,
They are content to feed his flames of fire;
And so my heart is satisfied to render
Its strength, its all, to meet thy strong desire.

As in a forest when dead leaves are falling,
From all save some perennial green tree,
So one by one I find all pleasures palling
That are not linked with or enjoyed by thee.
And all the homage that the world may proffer,
I take as perfumed oils or incense sweet,
And think of it as one thing more to offer
And sacrifice to Love, at thy dear feet.

I love myself because thou art my lover,
My name seems dear since uttered by thy voice;
Yet argus-eyed I watch and would discover
Each blemish in the object of thy choice.
I coldly sit in judgment on each error,
To my soul's gaze I hold each fault of me,
Until my pride is lost in abject terror,
Lest I become inadequate to thee.

Like some swift-rushing and sea-seeking river,
Which gathers force the farther on it goes,
So does the current of my love forever
Find added strength and beauty as it flows.
The more I give, the more remains for giving,
The more receive, the more remains to win.
Ah! only in eternities of living
Will life be long enough to love thee in.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Master And Servant

The devil to Bacchus said, one day,
In a scowling, growling, petulant way,
As he came from earth to hell:
'There's a soul above that I cannot move,
And I've struggled long and well;
He's a manly youth, with an eye of truth,
A fellow of matchless grace;
And he looks me through with his eye of blue
Till I cower before his face.
The very power and strength of heaven
To this young, fearless soul were given;
For I've never an art that can reach his heart,
And I cannot snare his feet:
I have wasted days in devising ways,
And now must cry 'Defeat!'
And the devil scowled, and grumbled, and growled,
And beat about with his cane,
Till the demons fled over the burning waste
Out of his reach in hurrying haste,
Howling aloud in pain.

Bacchus laughed as he stooped and quaffed
A burning bumper of wine:
'Why, master,' said he, 'you soon shall see
The fellow down at your shrine;
Long ago, if you'd let me know,
We'd had him in our ranks.
And now, adieu! while I work for you;
Don't hurry about your thanks!
I'm going above; you know they love
The sight of my glowing face.
They call me a god! ho! ho! how odd!
With this for my dwelling-place.'
A youth with a dower of manly grace,
A maid with the morning in her face;
And she filleth a goblet full to the brim,
And giveth the bubbling draught to him.
'Drink!' she says, and the goblet sways

And shimmers under his eyes.
He tries to speak, but the tongue is weak,
And the words sink into sighs;
For the maid is fair, and she holds him there
With a spell that he cannot flee:
'Drink!' and she sips with her ruby lips-
'Drink but a draught with me.'
And the lovers quaffed, while the demons laughed,
And Bacchus laughed loud and long.
'Ho! ho!' cried he, 'what a victory!
Ho! ho! for the soul so strong
That my master was beat, and cried 'Defeat!'
But wine is a tempter, and love is sweet.'

Bacchus went back o'er the fiery track
Into the land below;
And the devil said, 'Well, what have you to tell
Of the thing I want to know?'
And Bacchus said he, 'Why, look and see!
There is your strong, brave youth
Reeling along, with a drunken song
Staining those lips of truth.
My work is done! You must go on
And finish the job I started;
And as long as I stay in your service, pray,
Don't ever be down-hearted.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Meg's Curse

The sun rode high in a cloudless sky
Of a perfect summer morn.
She stood and gazed out into the street,
And wondered why she was born.
On the topmost branch of a maple-tree
That close by the window grew,
A robin called to his mate enthralled:
'I love but you, but you, but you.'

A soft look came in her hardened face-
She had not wept for years;
But the robin's trill, as some sounds will,
Jarred open the door of tears.
She thought of the old home far away;
She heard the whir-r-r of the mill;
She heard the turtle's wild, sweet call,
And the wail of the whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will.

She saw again that dusty road
Whence he came riding down;
She smelled once more the flower she wore
In the breast of her simple gown.
Out on the new-mown meadow she heard
Two blue-jays quarrel and fret,
And the warning cry of a Phoebe bird:
'More wet, more wet, more wet.'

With a blithe 'hello' to the men below
Who were spreading the new-mown hay,
The rider drew rein at her window-pane-
How it all came back to-day!
How young she was, and how fair she was;
What innocence crowned her brow!
The future seemed fair, for Love was there-
And now-and now-and now.

In a dingy glass on the wall near by
She gazed on her faded face.
'Well, Meg, I declare, what a beauty you are?'
She sneered, 'What an angel of grace!
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!
What a thing of beauty and grace!'
She reached out her arms with a moaning sob:
'Oh, if I could go back!'
Then, swift and strange, came a sudden change;
Her brow grew hard and black.

'A curse on the day and a curse on that man,
And on all who are his,' she cried.
'May he starve and be cold, may he live to be old
When all who loved him have died.'
Her wild voice frightened the robin away
From the branch by the window-sill;
And little he knew as away he flew,
Of the memories stirred by his trill.

He called to his mate on the grass below,
'Follow me,' as he soared on high;
And as mates have done since the world begun
She followed, and asked not why.
The dingy room seemed curtained with gloom;
Meg shivered with nameless dread.
The ghost of her youth and her murdered truth
Seemed risen up from the dead.

She hurried out into the noisy street,
For the silence made her afraid;
To flee from thought was all she sought,
She cared not whither she strayed.
Still on she pressed in her wild unrest
Up avenues skirting the park,
Where fashion's throng moved gayly along
In Vanity Fair-when hark!

A clatter of hoofs down the stony street,
The snort of a frightened horse
That was running wild, and a laughing child
At play in its very course.
With one swift glance Meg saw it all.
'His child-my God! his child!'
She cried aloud, as she rushed through the crowd
Like one grown suddenly wild.

There, almost under the iron feet,
Hemmed in by a passing cart,
Stood the baby boy-the pride and joy
Of the man who had broken her heart.
Past swooning women and shouting men
She fled like a flash of light;
With her slender arm she gathered from harm
The form of the laughing sprite.

The death-shod feet of the mad horse beat
Her down on the pavings gray;
But the baby laughed out with a merry shout,
And thought it splendid play.
He pulled her gown and called to her: 'Say,
Dit up and do dat some more,
Das jus'ze way my papa play
Wiz me on ze nursery floor.'

When the frightened father reached the scene,
His boy looked up and smiled
From the stiffening fold of the arm, death-cold,
Of Meg, who had died for his child.
Oh! idle words are a woman's curse
Who loves a woman can;
For put to the test, she will bare her breast
And die for the sake of the man.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Memory's Mansion

In Memory's Mansion are wonderful rooms,
And I wander about them at will;
And I pause at the casements, where boxes of blooms
Are sending sweet scents o'er the sill.
I lean from a window that looks on a lawn;
From a turret that looks on the wave.
But I draw down the shade when I see on some glade
A stone standing guard by a grave.

To Memory's attic I clambered one day
When the roof was resounding with rain,
And there, among relics long hidden away,
I rummaged with heart ache and pain.
A hope long surrendered and covered with dust,
A pastime, out-grown and forgot,
And a fragment of love all corroded with rust,
Were lying heaped up in one spot.

And there on the floor of that garret was tossed
A friendship too fragile to last,
With pieces of dearly bought pleasures that cost
Vast fortunes of pain in the past,
A fabric of passion, once vivid and bright,
As the breast of a robin in Spring,
Was spread out before me-a terrible sight-
A moth-eaten rag of a thing.

Then down the deep stairway I hurriedly went,
And into fair chambers below;
But the mansion seemed filled with the old attic scent
Wherever my footsteps would go.
Though in Memory's House I still wander full oft,
No more to the garret I climb;
And I leave all the rubbish heaped there in the loft
To the hands of the Housekeeper, Time.

Memory's River

In Nature's bright blossoms not always reposes
That strange subtle essence more rare than their bloom,
Which lies in the hearts of carnations and roses,
That unexplained something by men called perfume.
Though modest the flower, yet great is its power
And pregnant with meaning each pistil and leaf,
If only it hides there, if only abides there,
The fragrance suggestive of love, joy and grief.

Not always the air that a master composes
Can stir human heart-strings with pleasure or pain.
But strange, subtle chords, like the scent of the roses,
Breathe out of some measures, though simple the strain.
And lo! when you hear them, you love them and fear them,
You tremble with anguish, you thrill with delight,
For back of them slumber old dreams without number,
And faces long vanished peer out into sight.

Those dear foolish days when the earth seemed all beauty,
Before you had knowledge enough to be sad;
When youth held no higher ideal of duty
Than just to lilt on through the world and be glad.
On harmony's river they seemed to float hither
With all the sweet fancies that hung round that time-
Life's burdens and troubles turn into air-bubbles
And break on the music's swift current of rhyme.

Fair Folly comes back with her spell while you listen
And points to the paths where she led you of old.
You gaze on past sunsets, you see dead stars glisten,
You bathe in life's glory, you swoon in death's cold.
All pains and all pleasures surge up through those measures,
Your heart is wrenched open with earthquakes of sound;
From ashes and embers rise Junes and Decembers,
Lost islands in fathoms of feeling refound.

Some airs are like outlets of memory's oceans,
They rise in the past and flow into the heart;
And down them float shipwrecks of mighty emotions,
All sea-soaked and storm-tossed and drifting apart:
Their fair timbers battered, their lordly sails tattered,
Their skeleton crew of dead days on their decks;
Then a crash of chords blending, a crisis, an ending-
The music is over, and vanished the wrecks.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Mesalliance

I am troubled to-night with a curious pain;
It is not of the flesh, it is not of the brain,
Nor yet of a heart that is breaking:
But down still deeper, and out of sight—
In the place where the soul and the body unite—
There lies the seat of the aching.
They have been lovers in days gone by;
But the soul is fickle, and longs to fly
From the fettering mesalliance:
And she tears at the bonds which are binding her so,
And pleads with the body to let her go,
But he will not yield compliance.
For the body loves, as he loved in the past,
When he wedded the soul; and he holds her fast,
And swears that he will not loose her;
That he will keep her and hide her away
For ever and ever and for a day
From the arms of Death, the seducer.
Ah! this is the strife that is wearying me—
The strife 'twixt a soul that would be free

And a body that will not let her.

And I say to my soul, 'Be calm, and wait;

For I tell ye truly that soon or late

Ye surely shall drop each fetter.'

And I say to the body, 'Be kind, I pray;

For the soul is not of thy mortal clay,

But is formed in spirit fashion.'

And still through the hours of the solemn night

I can hear my sad soul's plea for flight,

And my body's reply of passion.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Midsummer

After the May time and after the June time
Rare with blossoms and perfume sweet,
Cometh the round world's royal noon time,
The red midsummer of blazing heat,
When the sun, like an eye that never closes,
Bends on the earth its fervid gaze,
And the winds are still, and the crimson roses
Droop and wither and die in its rays.
Unto my heart has come this season,
O, my lady, my worshiped one,
When, over the stars of Pride and Reason,
Sails Love's cloudless, noonday sun.
Like a great red ball in my bosom burning
With fires that nothing can quench or tame,
It glows till my heart itself seems turning
Into a liquid lake of flame.
The hopes half shy and the sighs all tender,
The dreams and fears of an earlier day,
Under the noontide's royal splendor,
Droop like roses, and wither away.
From the hills of Doubt no winds are blowing,
From the isles of Pain no breeze is sent, -
Only the sun in a white heat glowing
Over an ocean of great content.
Sink, O my soul, in this golden glory!
Die, O my heart, in thy rapture-swoon!
For the Autumn must come with its mournful story.
And Love's midsummer will fade too soon.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Mockery

Why do we grudge our sweets so to the living
Who, God knows, find at best too much of gall,
And then with generous, open hands kneel, giving
Unto the dead our all?

Why do we pierce the warm hearts, sin or sorrow,
With idle jests, or scorn, or cruel sneers,
And when it cannot know, on some to-morrow,
Speak of its woe through tears?

What do the dead care, for the tender token—
The love, the praise, the floral offerings?
But palpitating, living hearts are broken
For want of just these things.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Momus, God Of Laughter

Though with gods the world is cumbered,
Gods unnamed, and gods unnumbered,
Never god was known to be
Who had not his devotee.
So I dedicate to mine,
Here in verse, my temple-shrine.

'Tis not Ares, - mighty Mars,
Who can give success in wars.
'Tis not Morpheus, who doth keep
Guard above us while we sleep,
'Tis not Venus, she whose duty
'Tis to give us love and beauty;
Hail to these, and others, after
Momus, gleesome god of laughter.

Quirinus would guard my health,
Plutus would insure me wealth;
Mercury looks after trade,
Hera smiles on youth and maid.
All are kind, I own their worth,
After Momus, god of mirth.

Though Apollo, out of spite,
Hides away his face of light,
Though Minerva looks askance,
Deigning me no smiling glance,
Kings and queens may envy me
While I claim the god of glee.

Wisdom wearies, Love had wings –
Wealth makes burdens, Pleasure stings,
Glory proves a thorny crown –
So all gifts the gods throw down
Bring their pains and troubles after;
All save Momus, god of laughter.
He alone gives constant joy.
Hail to Momus, happy boy.

Moon And Sea

You are the moon, dear love, and I the sea:
The tide of hope swells high within my breast,
And hides the rough dark rocks of life's unrest
When your fond eyes smile near in perigee.
But when that loving face is turned from me,
Low falls the tide, and the grim rocks appear,
And earth's dim coast-line seems a thing to fear.
You are the moon, dear one, and I the sea.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Morning Prayer

Let me to-day do something that shall take
A little sadness from the world's vast store,
And may I be so favoured as to make
Of joy's too scanty sum a little more.
Let me not hurt, by any selfish deed
Or thoughtless word, the heart of foe or friend;
Nor would I pass, unseeing, worthy need,
Or sin by silence when I should defend.
However meagre be my worldly wealth,
Let me give something that shall aid my kind –
A word of courage, or a thought of health,
Dropped as I pass for troubled hearts to find.
Let me to-night look back across the span
'Twixt dawn and dark, and to my conscience say –
Because of some good act to beast or man –
"The world is better that I lived today."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Mother's Kisses

Baby was playing and down he fell, down he fell, down he fell,
Mama will kiss him and make him well,
Oh! what a miracle this is!
Baby was running and stubbed his toe, stubbed his toe, stubbed his toe,
If mama will kiss him the pain will go-
Magical mother's kisses.

Once an angel fair and calm,
Brewed a wondrous soothing balm
From the sweet immortal flowers,
Growing in the heavenly bowers,

Then the mothers of the earth,
All were called and told its worth.
'But anoint your lips with this,'
Said the angel, 'and your kiss

Shall have magic in its touch.'
Now 'tis plain to see why such
Soothing balm for bruise or wound
In a mother's kiss is found.

Baby was playing and down he fell, down he fell, down he fell,
Mama will kiss him, and make him well,
Oh! what a miracle this is.
Baby was running and stubbed his toe, stubbed his toe, stubbed his toe,
If mama kisses him, pain will go-
Magical mother's kisses.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Mother's Loss

If I could clasp my little babe
Upon my breast to-night,
I would not mind the blowing wind
That shrieketh in affright.
Oh, my lost babe! my little babe,
My babe with dreamful eyes;
Thy bed is cold; and night wind bold
Shrieks woeful lullabies.

My breast is softer than the sod;
This room, with lighter hearth,
Is better place for thy sweet face
Than frozen mother earth.
Oh, my babe! oh, my lost babe!
Oh, babe with waxen hands,
I want thee so, I need thee so -
Come from thy mystic lands!

No love that, like a mother's fills
Each corner of the heart;
No loss like hers, that rends, and chills,
And tears the soul apart.
Oh, babe - my babe, my helpless babe!
I miss thy little form.
Would I might creep where thou dost sleep,
And clasp thee through the storm.

I hold thy pillow to my breast,
To bring a vague relief;
I sing the songs that soothed thy rest -
Ah me! no cheating grief.
My breathing babe! my sobbing babe!
I miss thy plaintive moan,
I cannot hear - thou art not near -
My little one, my own.

Thy father sleeps. He mourns thy loss,
But little fathers know
The pain that makes a mother toss

Through sleepless nights of woe.
My clinging babe! my nursing babe!
What knows thy father - man -
How my breasts miss thy lips' soft kiss -
None but a mother can.

Worn out, I sleep; I wake - I weep -
I sleep - hush, hush, my dear;
Sweet lamb, fear not - Oh, God! I thought -
I thought my babe was here.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Music In The Flat

When Tom and I were married, we took a little flat;
I had a taste for singing and playing and all that.
And Tom, who loved to hear me, said he hoped
 I would not stop
All practice, like so many wives who let their
 music drop.
So I resolved to set apart an hour or two each day
To keeping vocal chords and hands in trim to sing and play.

The second morning I had been for half an hour or more
At work on Haydn's masses, when a tap came at my door.
A nurse, who wore a dainty cap and apron, and a smile,
Ran down to ask if I would cease my music for awhile.
The lady in the flat above was very ill, she said,
And the sound of my piano was distracting to her head.

A fortnight's exercises lost, ere I began them, when,
The following morning at my door, there came that tap again;
A woman with an anguished face implored me to forego
My music for some days to come – a man was dead below.
I shut down my piano till the corpse had left the house,
And spoke to Tom in whispers and was quiet as a mouse.

A week of labour limbered up my stiffened hand and voice,
I stole an extra hour from sleep, to practice and rejoice;
When, ting-a-ling, the door-bell rang a discord in my trill –
The baby in the flat across was very, very ill.
For ten long days that infant's life was hanging by a thread,
And all that time my instrument was silent as the dead.

So pain and death and sickness came in one perpetual row,
When babies were not born above, then tenants died below.
The funeral over underneath, some one fell ill on top,
And begged me, for the love of God, to let my music drop.
When trouble went not up or down, it stalked across the hall,
And so in spite of my resolve, I do not play at all.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

My Comrade

Out from my window westward
I turn full oft my face;
But the mountains rebuke the vision
That would encompass space;
They lift their lofty foreheads
To the kiss of the clouds above,
And ask, "With all our glory,
Can we not win your love?"

I answer, "No, oh mountains!
I see that you are grand;
But you have not the breadth and beauty
Of the fields in my own land;
You narrow my range of vision
And you even shut from me
The voice of my old comrade,
The West Wind wild and free."

But to-day I climbed the mountains
On the back of a snow-white steed,
And the West Wind came to greet me--
He flew on the wings of speed.
His charger, and mine that bore me,
Went gaily neck to neck,
Till the town in the valley belkow us
Looked like a small, dark speck.

And oh! what tales he whispered
As he rode there by me,
Of friends whose smiling faces
I am so soon to see.
And the mountains frowned in anger,
Because I balked their spite,
And met my old-time comrade
There on their very height;

But I laughed up in their faces,
As I rode slowly back,
While the Wind went faster and faster,

Like a race-horse on the track.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

My Friend

When first I looked upon the face of Pain
I shrank repelled, as one shrinks from a foe
Who stands with dagger poised, as for a blow.
I was in search of Pleasure and of Gain;
I turned aside to let him pass: in vain;
He looked straight in my eyes and would not go.
'Shake hands,' he said; 'our paths are one, and so
We must be comrades on the way, 'tis plain.'
I felt the firm clasp of his hand on mine;
Through all my veins it sent a strengthening glow.
I straightway linked my arm in his, and lo!
He led me forth to joys almost divine;
With God's great truths enriched me in the end:
And now I hold him as my dearest friend.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

My Heritage

I into life so full of love was sent
That all the shadows which fall on the way
Of every human being could not stay,
But fled before the light my spirit lent.
I saw the world through gold and crimson dyes:
Men sighed and said, 'Those rosy hues will fade
As you pass on into the glare and shade!'
Still beautiful the way seems to mine eyes.
They said, 'You are too jubilant and glad;
The world is full of sorrow and of wrong.
Full soon your lips shall breathe forth sighs—not song.'
The day wears on, and yet I am not sad.
They said, 'You love too largely, and you must,
Through wound on wound, grow bitter to your kind.'
They were false prophets; day by day I find
More cause for love, and less cause for distrust.
They said, 'Too free you give your soul's rare wine;
The world will quaff, but it will not repay.'
Yet in the emptied flagons, day by day,
True hearts pour back a nectar as divine.

Thy heritage! Is it not love's estate?

Look to it, then, and keep its soil well tilled.

I hold that my best wishes are fulfilled

Because I love so much, and cannot hate.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

My Home

This is the place that I love the best,
A little brown house, like a ground-bird's nest,
Hid among grasses, and vines, and trees,
Summer retreat of the birds and bees.

The tenderest light that ever was seen
Sifts through the vine-made window screen--
Sifts and quivers, and flits and falls
On home-made carpets and gray-hung walls.

All through June the west wind free
The breath of clover brings to me.
All through the languid July day
I catch the scent of new-mown hay.

The morning-glories and scarlet vine
Over the doorway twist and twine;
And every day, when the house is still,
The humming-bird comes to the window-sill.

In the cunningest chamber under the sun
I sink to sleep when the day is done;
And am waked at morn, in my snow-white bed,
By a singing bird on the roof o'erhead.

Better than treasures brought from Rome,
Are the living pictures I see at home--
My aged father, with frosted hair,
And mother's face, like a painting rare.

Far from the city's dust and heat,
I get but sounds and odors sweet.
Who can wonder I love to stay,
Week after week, here hidden away,
In this sly nook that I love the best--
This little brown house like a ground-bird's nest?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

My Ships

If all the ships I have at sea
Should come a-sailing home to me,
From sunny lands, and lands of cold,
Ah well! the harbor could not hold
So many sails as there would be
If all my ships came in from sea.

If half my ships came home from sea,
And brought their precious freight to me,
Ah, well! I should have wealth as great
As any king who sits in state,
So rich the treasures that would be
In half my ships now at sea.

If just one ship I have at sea
Should come a-sailing home to me,
Ah well! the storm clouds then might frown,
For if the others all went down
Still rich and proud and glad I'd be,
If that one ship came back to me.

If that one ship were down at sea,
And all the others came to me,
Weighed down with gems and wealth untold,
With glory, honor, riches, gold,
The poorest soul on earth I'd be
If that one ship came not to me.

O skies be calm! O winds blow free--
Blow all my ships safe home to me.
But if thou sendest some awrack
To never more come sailing back,
Send any--all that skim the sea--
But bring my love-ship home to me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

My Vision

Wherever my feet may wander
Wherever I chance to be,
There comes, with the coming of even' time
A vision sweet to me.
I see my mother sitting
In the old familiar place,
And she rocks to the tune her needles sing,
And thinks of an absent face.

I can hear the roar of the city
About me now as I write;
But over an hundred miles of snow
My thought-steeds fly tonight,
To the dear little cozy cottage,
And the room where mother sits,
And slowly rocks in her easy chair
And thinks of me as she knits.

Sometimes with the merry dancers
When my feet are keeping time,
And my heart beats high, as young hearts will,
To the music's rhythmic chime.
My spirit slips over the distance
Over the glitter and whirl,
To my mother who sits, and rocks, and knits,
And thinks of her "little girl."

And when I listen to voices that flatter,
And smile, as women do,
To whispered words that may be sweet,
But are not always true;
I think of the sweet, quaint picture
Afar in quiet ways,
And I know one smile of my mother's eyes
Is better than all their praise.

And I know I can never wander
Far from the path of right,
Though snares are set for a woman's feet

In places that seem most bright.
For the vision is with me always,
Wherever I chance to be,
Of mother sitting, rocking, and knitting,
Thinking and praying for me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

National Anniversary Ode

Ho! for the day in the whole year the brightest!
Long may it live in the heart of the nation!
Long may it be ere the names are forgotten
That boldly were signed to the grand declaration!
Shout, sons of liberty! shout for the one land free
Under the sun!
On this thrice blessed day its bonds were struck away,
Its thongs undone!

Ho! for our banner, the emblem of freedom!
What can arouse a true hero's devotion-
What like the Stars and Stripes, floating above us?
Queen of all lands, and the peer of the ocean.
Oh! it is fair to see, oh! it is dear to me,
Flag of the brave!
Time's wheel shall cease to move, true hearts shall cease to love,
Ere it cease to wave.

But there's a blemish now staining our banner!
The bright stars are dimmed, and the fair stripes are spotted,
With the tears of the drunkard's wife, mother, and children,
With hot tears of shame is our flag blurred and blotted.
Victims of tyranny, strike till our land is free
From King Alcohol;
Strike down his whelps of sin, rum, brandy, beer, and gin
Strangle them all.

Up to the contest, and wipe out this blemish!
Columbia's son, and Columbia's daughter,
God speed the day when the one 'Land of Freedom'
Shall add to its title the 'Land of Cold Water!'
Three cheers for Columbia, and this, her natal day!
God bless the right,
And guard from a traitor's hand, this our beloved land,
And the Red, Blue, and White!

July 4th, 1871.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

New And Old

I and new love, in all its living bloom,
Sat vis-à-vis, while tender twilight hours
Went softly by us, treading as on flowers.
Then suddenly I saw within the room
The old love, long since lying in its tomb.
It dropped the cerecloth from its fleshless face
And smiled on me, with a remembered grace
That, like the noontide, lit the gloaming gloom.

Upon its shroud there hung the grave's green mould,
About it hung the odour of the dead;
Yet from its cavernous eyes such light was shed
That all my life seemed gilded, as with gold;
Unto the trembling new love "Go, " I said,
"I do not need thee, for I have the old."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

New Year

The New Year dawns again upon the earth,
And all our land re-echoes with its mirth.
From east to west, from north to south, we hear
The sounds of merriment and goodly cheer-
With feast and revelry, with dance and song,
The golden hours slip happily along,
And eyes are bright, and hearts are blithe and gay,
And all seems well upon this New Year Day.

Alas! alas! all is not well; for, oh!
White hands will plant the seeds of sin and woe-
Fair maids, with smiles and glances half divine,
Will lift the muddy glass of poison wine
To manly lips, and plead of them to quaff,
And loud will grow the careless jest and laugh;
And firm resolves, that gird up manly hearts
To brave the devil and withstand his arts,
Will fail before these fiends in forms so sweet,
And they will drain the glass and think it meet.

O shame too deep for tongue or pen to tell!
That woman opens wide the door of hell
For man to enter-woman, who should be
As true as truth and pure as purity.

But when they pass the drunkard in the street,
They lift their robes, lest they shall touch his feet,
And turn from him with scornful eye and lip,
Forgetting that perchance some maiden bade him sip-
Bade him with thrilling glance and tender tone,
Until the deadly habit, mighty grown,
Had mastered all his manhood, and he fell
Lower and lower to the depths of hell.

Go shout aloud fair woman's shame, O wind!

Tell it to nature, and to all mankind,
To hill and vale, and every forest tree,
To bird and beast, and to the mighty sea;
And let them all unite and sing her shame,
Until, with streaming eyes and cheeks aflame,
She makes a vow, and calls on God to hear,
That evermore her record shall be clear,
And she, with all her strength, will strive to save
Instead of aiding to the drunkard's grave.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

New Year

I saw on the hills of the morning,
The form of the New Year arise,
He stood like a statue adorning
The world with a background of skies.
There were courage and grace in his beautiful face,
And hope in his glorious eyes.

'I come from Time's boundless forever,'
He said, with a voice like a song.
'I come as a friend to endeavor,
I come as a foe to all wrong.
To the sad and afraid I bring promise of aid,
And the weak I will gird and make strong.

'I bring you more blessings than terrors,
I bring you more sunlight than gloom,
I tear out your page of old errors,
And hide them away in Time's tomb.
I reach you clean hands, and lead on to the lands
Where the lilies of peace are in bloom.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

New Year (II)

As the old year sinks down in Time's ocean,
Stand ready to launch with the new,
And waste no regrets, no emotion,
As the masts and the spars pass from view.
Weep not if some treasures go under,
And sink in the rotten ship's hold,
That blithe bonny barque sailing yonder
May bring you more wealth than the old.

For the world is forever improving,
All the past is not worth one today,
And whatever deserves our true loving,
Is stronger than death or decay.
Old love, was it wasted devotion?
Old friends, where they weak or untrue?
Well, let them sink there in mid ocean,
And gaily sail on to the new.

Throw overboard toil misdirected,
Throw overboard ill-advised hope.
With aims which, your soul has detected,
Have self as their centre and scope.
Throw overboard useless regretting
For deeds which you cannot undo,
And learn the great art of forgetting
Old things which embitter the new.

Sing who will of dead years departed,
I shroud them and bid them adieu,
And the song that I sing, happy-hearted,
Is a song of the glorious new.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

New Year: A Dialogue

MORTAL:

"The night is cold, the hour is late, the world is bleak and drear;
Who is it knocking at my door?"

THE NEW YEAR:

"I am Good Cheer."

MORTAL:

"Your voice is strange; I know you not; in shadows dark I grope.
What seek you here?"

THE NEW YEAR:

"Friend, let me in; my name is Hope."

MORTAL:

"And mine is Failure; you but mock the life you seek to bless. Pass
on."

THE NEW YEAR:

"Nay, open wide the door; I am Success."

MORTAL:

"But I am ill and spent with pain; too late has come your wealth. I cannot
use it."

THE NEW YEAR:

"Listen, friend; I am Good Health."

MORTAL:

"Now, wide I fling my door. Come in, and your fair statements
prove."

THE NEW YEAR:

"But you must open, too, your heart, for I am Love."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Noblesse Oblige

I hold it the duty of one who is gifted
And specially dowered I all men's sight,
To know no rest till his life is lifted
Fully up to his great gifts' height.

He must mould the man into rare completeness,
For gems are only in gold refined.
He must fashion his thoughts into perfect sweetness,
And cast out folly and pride from his mind.

For he who drinks from a god's gold fountain
Of art of music or rhythmic song
Must sift from his soul the chaff of malice,
And weed from his heart the roots of wrong.

Great gifts should be worn, like a crown befitting,
And not like gems in a beggar's hands!
And the toil must be constant and unremitting
Which lifts up the king to the crown's demands.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Not Quite The Same

Not quite the same the springtime seems to me,
Since that sad season when in separate ways
Our paths diverged. There are no more such days
As dawned for us in that last time when we
Dwelt in the realm of dreams, illusive dreams;
Spring may be just as fair now, but it seems
Not quite the same.

Not quite the same in life, since we two parted,
Knowing it best to go our ways alone.
Fair measures of success we both have known,
And pleasant hours; and yet something departed
Which gold, nor fame, nor anything we win,
Can all replace. And either life has been
Not quite the same.

Love is not quite the same, although each heart
Has formed new ties, that are both sweet and true;
But that wild rapture, which of old we knew,
Seems to have been a something set apart
With that lost dream. There is no passion, now,
Mixed with this later love, which seems, somehow,
Not quite the same.

Not quite the same am I. My inner being
Reasons and knows that all is for the best.
Yet vague regrets stir always in my breast,
As my souls eyes turn sadly backward, seeing
The vanished self, that evermore must be,
This side of what we call eternity,
Not quite the same.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Now I Lay Me

When I pass from earth away,
Palsied though I be and gray,
May my spirit keep so young
That my failing, faltering tongue
Frames that prayer so dear to me
Taught me at my mother's knee:

'Now I lay me down to sleep,'

(Passing to Eternal rest
On the loving parent breast)

'I pray the Lord my soul to keep;'

(From all danger safe and calm
In the hollow of His palm

'If I should die before I wake,'

(Drifting with a bated breath
Out of slumber into death,)

'I pray the Lord my soul to take.'

(From the body's claim set free
Sheltered in the Great to be.)
Simple prayer of trust and truth
Taught me in my early youth-
Let my soul its beauty keep
When I lay me down to sleep.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Old And New

Long have the poets vaunted, in their lays,
Old times, old loves, old friendships, and old wine
Why should the old monopolise all praise?
Then let the new claim mine.

Give me strong new friends, when the old prove weak,
Or fail me in my darkest hour of need;
Why perish with the ship that springs a leak,
Or lean upon a reed?

Give me new love, warm, palpitating, sweet,
When all the grace and beauty leaves the old;
When like a rose it withers at my feet,
Or like a hearth grows cold.

Give me new times, bright with a prosperous cheer,
In place of old, tear-blotted, burdened days;
I hold a sunlit present far more dear,
And worthy of my praise.

When the old creeds are threadbare, and worn through,
And all too narrow for the broadening soul,
Give me the fine, firm texture of the new,
Fair, beautiful and whole.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Old Rhythm And Rhyme

They tell me new methods now govern the Muses,
The modes of expression have changed with the times;
That low is the rank of the poet who uses
The old-fashioned verse with intentional rhymes.
And quite out of date, too, is rhythmical metre;
The critics declare it an insult to art.
But oh! the sweet swing of it, oh! the clear ring of it,
Oh! the great pulse of it, right from the heart,
Art or no art.

I sat by the side of that old poet, Ocean,
And counted the billows that broke on the rocks;
The tide lilted in with a rhythmical motion;
The sea-gulls dipped downward in time-keeping flocks.
I watched while a giant wave gathered its forces,
And then on the gray granite precipice burst;
And I knew as I counted, while other waves mounted,
I knew the tenth billow would rhyme with the first.

Below in the village a church bell was chiming,
And back in the woodland a little bird sang;
And, doubt it who will, yet those two sounds were rhyming,
As out o'er the hill-tops they echoed and rang.

The Wind and the Trees fell to talking together;
And nothing they said was didactic or terse;
But everything spoken was told in unbroken
And a beautiful rhyming and rhythmical verse.

So rhythm I hail it, though critics assail it,
And hold melting rhymes as an insult to art,
For oh! the sweet swing of it, oh! the dear ring of it,
Oh! the strong pulse of it, right from the heart,
Art or no art.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Old Times

Friend of my youth, let us talk of old times;
Of the long lost golden hours.
When "Winter" meant only Christmas chimes,
And "Summer" wreaths of flowers.
Life has grown old, and cold, my friend,
And the winter now, means death.
And summer blossoms speak all too plain
Of the dear, dead forms beneath.

But let us talk of the past to-night;
And live it over again,
We will put the long years out of sight,
And dream we are young as then.
But you must not look at me, my friend,
And I must not look at you,
Or the furrowed brows, and silvered locks,
Will prove our dream untrue.

Let us sing of the summer, too sweet to last,
And yet too sweet to die.
Let us read tales, from the book of the past,
And talk of the days gone by.
We will turn our backs to the West, my friend,
And forget we are growing old.
The skies of the Present are dull, and gray,
But the Past's are blue, and gold.

The sun has passed over the noontide line
And is sinking down the West.
And of friends we knew in days Lang Syne,
Full half have gone to rest.
And the few that are left on earth, my friend
Are scattered far, and wide.
But you and I will talk of the days
Ere any roamed, or died.

Auburn ringlets, and hazel eyes
Blue eyes and tresses of gold.
Winds joy laden, and azure skies,

Belong to those days of old.
We will leave the Present's shores awhile
And float on the Past's smooth sea.
But I must not look at you, my friend,
And you must not look at me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Older Than You

We are younger in years! Yes, that is true;
But in some things we are older than you.
For instance, you sometimes say with a smile,
'It will do to drink wine once in a while.'
We say, 'It will not do at all!'
Wine is an imp of old Alcohol.
So are gin and beer, and cider, too.
If you drink up them, they will eat up you.

'Cider is not a strong drink,' you say.
Ah! but, my friend, it opens the way
For brandy and whiskey to follow fast.
It has done it many a time in the past.
It tempts and teases the appetite.
Let it alone, boys, keep to the right;
Onward and upward we mean to go.
Heaven is reached that way, you know.

People who drink are behind the time.
They are back with darkness, and woe, and crime.
This age is progressive. You people who drink,
Though ever so little, just pause and think-
Think of the anguish that liquor makes;
Think of the hearts that it burdens and breaks.
Let it alone: stop drinking to-day-
This is what we, the children, say.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

On Seeing The Diabutsu--At Kamakura, Japan

Long have I searched, Cathedral shrine, and hall,
To find a symbol, from the hand of art,
That gave the full expression (not a part)
Of that ecstatic peace which follows all
Life's pain and passion. Strange it should befall
This outer emblem of the inner heart
Was waiting far beyond the great world's mart-
Immortal answer, to the mortal call.

Unknown the artist, vaguely known his creed:
But the bronze wonder of his work sufficed
To lift me to the heights his faith had trod.
For one rich moment, opulent indeed,
I walked with Krishna, Buddha, and the Christ,
And felt the full serenity of God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

One By One

Little by little and one by one,
Out of the ether, were worlds created;
Star and planet and sea and sun,
All in the nebulous Nothing waited
Till the Nameless One Who has many a name
Called them to being and forth they came.

All things mighty and all things small,
Stone and flower and sentient being,
Each is an answer to that one call,
A part of Himself that His will is freeing-
Freeing to go on the long, long way
That winds back home at the end of the day.

Little by little does mortal man
Build his castles for joy and glory,
And one by one time shatters each plan
And lowers his palaces, story by story-
Story by story, till earth is just
A row of graves in the lowly dust.

One by one, whatever was called,
Must be called back to the primal Centre.
Let no soul tremble or be appalled,
For the heart of the Maker is where we enter-
Is where we enter to gain new force
Before we are sent on another course.

And one by one, as He calls us back,
We shall find the souls that we loved with passion,
In the great way-stations along the track,
And clasp them again in the old, sweet fashion-
In the old, sweet fashion when earth we trod-
And journey along with them up to God.

One Of Us Two

The day will dawn when one of us shall hearken
In vain to hear a voice that has grown dumb.
And morns will fade, noons pale, and shadows darken,
While sad eyes watch for feet that never come.
One of us two must sometime face existence
Alone with the memories that but sharpen pain.
And these sweet days shall shine back in the distance,
Like dreams of summer dawns, in nights of rain.
One of us two, with tortured heart half broken,
Shall read long-treasured letters through salt tears,
Shall kiss with anguished lips each cherished token,
That speaks of these love-crowned, delicious years.
One of us two shall find all light, all beauty,
All joy on earth, a tale for ever done;
Shall know henceforth that life means only duty.
O God! O God! have pity on that one.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

One Woman's History

'The maiden free, the maiden wed.
Can never, never be the same,
A new life springs from out the dead.
And with the speaking of a name-
A breath upon the marriage bed,
She finds herself a something new.

'Where lay the shallows of the maid
No plummet line the wife can sound;
Where round the sunny islands played
The pulses of the great profound
Lies low the treacherous everglade.

'A wife is like an unknown sea,
Least known to him who thinks he knows
Where all the shores of Promise be,
And where the islands of Repose-
And where the rocks that he must flee.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

One Woman's Memory

Here is a lock of his soft, dark hair,
And here are the letters he wrote to me.
And the ring of gold that I used to wear
Is here in the casket-see!
I put them away ten years ago.
'What is it,' you ask, 'did I love in vain?
Was my lover unfaithful?' No, oh! no.
My heart was spared that pain.

He died in the bloom of his manhood's youth.
You say I have his memory, friend;
That he is not dead, but lives, in truth;
Wait till you hear the end.
Death in itself is a little thing,
It is only passing from here to there;
But a death of shame has a bitter sting
That makes it hard to bear.

He was good and true as a man could be,
Noble and pure, when I loved him first;
But all of his race were cursed, you see,
With a fiery, craving thirst.
And the tempter, morning and noon and night,
Was placed in his path by a mother's hand.
The woe of wine, and its blasting blight,
She did not understand.

I did not know, or I did not think,
Of the awful shame that was hidden there
When I saw him lift the glass, and drink
To the health of his 'lady fair.'
I knew and I thought when it was too late.
I reached out my hands, but I could not save.
He hurried on to his fearful fate,
And sank in a drunkard's grave.

He was good, and kind, and true, but weak
When the ruby wine danced o'er the brim.
And woe is me that I did not speak
One warning word to him!
If I had but told him to cast away,
To touch not and taste not the mocker, wine,
I need not have felt as I feel to-day
That blood stains these hands of mine.

O ye who have friends on the awful brink
That hangs o'er the river of ruin and death!
When you see them lift the glass, oh! think
Of the jagged rocks beneath.
Reach out a hand ere the deed is done.
Send forth a cry in the dear Lord's name.
Oh! stand not aloof while a precious one
Speeds down to a grave of shame.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Only A Sad Mistake

Only a blunder-a sad mistake;
All my own fault and mine alone.
The saddest error a heart can make;
I was so young, or I would have known.

Only his rare, sweet, tender smile;
Only a lingering touch of his hand.
I think I was dreaming all the while,
The reason I did not understand.

Yet, somewhere, I've read men woo this way;
That eyes speak, sometimes, before the tongue.
And I was sure he would speak some day;
Pardon the folly-I was so young.

Was I, say-for now I am old!
So old, it seems like a hundred years
Since I felt my heart growing hard and cold
With a pain too bitter and deep for tears.

I saw him lean over the stranger's chair,
With a warm, new light in his beautiful eyes;
And I woke from my dreaming, then and there,
And went out of my self-made Paradise.

He never loved me-I know, I see!
Such sad, sad blunders as young hearts make.
She did not win him away from me,
For he was not mine. It was my mistake.

A woman should wait for a man to speak
Before she dreams of his love, I own;
But I was a girl-girls' hearts are weak;

And the pain, like the fault, is mine alone.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Only A Simple Rhyme

Only a simple rhyme of love and sorrow,
Where 'blisses' rhymed with 'kisses,' 'heart,' with 'dart:'
Yet, reading it, new strength I seemed to borrow,
To live on bravely and to do my part.
A little rhyme about a heart that's bleeding—
Of lonely hours and sorrow's unrelief:
I smiled at first; but there came with the reading
A sense of sweet companionship in grief.
The selfishness of my own woe forsaking,
I thought about the singer of that song.
Some other breast felt this same weary aching;
Another found the summer days too long.
The few sad lines, my sorrow so expressing,
I read, and on the singer, all unknown,
I breathed a fervent though a silent blessing,
And seemed to clasp his hand within my own.
And though fame pass him and he never know it,
And though he never sings another strain,
He has performed the mission of the poet,
In helping some sad heart to bear its pain.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Only A Slight Flirtation

'Twas just a slight flirtation,
And where's the harm, I pray,
In that amusing pastime
So much in vogue to-day?

Her hand was plighted elsewhere
To one she held most dear,
But why should she sit lonely
When other men are near?

They walked to church together,
They sat upon the shore.
She found him entertaining,
He found her something more.

They rambled in the moonlight;
It made her look so fair,
She let him praise her beauty,
And kiss her flowing hair.

'Twas just a nice flirtation.
So sad the fellow died.
Was drowned one day while boating,
The week she was a bride.'

A life went out in darkness,
A mother's fond heart broke,
A maiden pined in secret –
With grief she never spoke.

While robed in bridal whiteness,
Queen of a festal throng,
She moved, whose slight flirtation
Had wrought this triple wrong.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Only Dreams

A maiden sat in the sunset glow
Of the shadowy, beautiful Long Ago,
That we see through a mist of tears.
She sat and dreamed, with lips apart,
With thoughtful eyes and a beating heart,
Of the mystical future years;
And brighter far than the sunset skies
Was the vision seen by the maiden's eyes.

There were castles built of the summer air,
And beautiful voices were singing there,
In a soft and floating strain.
There were skies of azure and fields of green,
With never a cloud to come between,
And never a thought of pain;
There was the music, sweet as the silvery notes
That flow from a score of thrushes' throats.

There were hands to clasp with a loving hold;
There were lips to kiss, and eyes that told
More than the lips could say.
And all the faces she loved were there,
With their snowy brows untouched by care,
And locks that were never grey.
And Love was the melody each heart beat,
And the beautiful vision was all complete.

But the castles built of the summer wind
I have vainly sought. I only find
Shadows, all grim and cold; -
For I was the maiden who thought to see
Into the future years, - Ah, me!
And I am grey and old.
My dream of earth was as fair and bright
As my hope of heaven is to-night.

Dreams are but dreams at the very best,
And the friends I loved lay down to rest
With their faces hid away.

They had furrowed brows and snowy hair,
And they willing laid one day.
A shadow came over my vision scene
As the clouds of sorrow came in between.

The hands that I thought to clasp are crossed,
The lips and the beautiful eyes are lost,
And I seek them all in vain.
The gushes of melody, sweet and clear,
And the floating voices, I do not hear,
But only a sob of pain;
And the beating hearts have paused to rest.
Ah! dreams are but dreams at the very best.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Optimism

Talk happiness. The world is sad enough
Without your woes. No path is wholly rough;
Look for the places that are smooth and clear,
And speak of those, to rest the weary ear
Of Earth, so hurt by one continuous strain
Of human discontent and grief and pain.

Talk faith. The world is better off without
Your uttered ignorance and morbid doubt.
If you have faith in God, or man, or self,
Say so. If not, push back upon the shelf
Of silence all your thoughts, till faith shall come;
No one will grieve because your lips are dumb.

Talk health. The dreary, never-changing tale
Of mortal maladies is worn and stale.
You cannot charm, or interest, or please
By harping on that minor chord, disease.
Say you are well, or all is well with you,
And God shall hear your words and make them true.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Origin Of The Liquor Dealer

The devil in hell gave a festival,
And he called his imps from their wine-
Called them up from the ruddy cup,
And marshalled them into line.
And each to his place sprang the imps apace,
And they stood there, side by side.
'Now, listen well, O ye hosts of hell!
And mark me,' the devil cried.
'There is work to do for all of you,
Held for this night in store.
Then stir up the fire, till it burneth higher
Than ever it burned before.
When the coals glow hot, set ye the pot
Half full of the best brimstone.
And three of the worst and the most accursed
Hell claimeth as its own
Of demons bring, when the pot shall sing,
And cast them into the boil.'
Then over the region scattered the legion
Away to the fiendish toil.

They work with a will, and they work until
Three imps are aboil in the pot;
And the devil stands, and stirs with his hands
The liquid, seething hot;
And the demons revel around the devil
With many a fiendish shout,
Till he cries 'Ho, ho!' and the demons go
And turn the liquid out.

Turn it in, to a lake of gin,
Where the devil bathes, to cool.
Then lift it up, and turn on a cup
Of wine they dip from a pool.
Then they dip it in ale, till it turneth pale,
In beer, till it gloweth red.
It? nay, HE! for the thing they see

Is a man, from heel to head.

And he clasps the hands of the devil who stands
Bowing before his face.
And he says, 'Dear friend, will you please to send
A lad to show me my place?'

And the devil winks sly: and he says, 'Ay, ay!'
Old fellow, I guess you'll do.
You can work more wrong with that oily tongue
Than all my malicious crew.

'You must go to the earth! In th' halls of mirth,
In the teeming city's heart-
In any place that you show your face
I will help you do your part.

I will give you a name-it is steeped in shame,
But the world will use you well.
It is 'Liquor Dealer.' It means
soul stealer

And Major-General of Hell.
Go forth, my friend, and work to the end,
I will pay you in gleaming gold;
For every soul you drown in the bowl,
I will give you wealth untold.'

Then forth he went, this fiend hell-sent,
And he doeth his work to-day-
Doeth it well; and the hosts of hell
Are singing his praise alway.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Our Atlas

Not Atlas, with his shoulders bent beneath the weighty world,
Bore such a burden as this man, on whom the Gods have hurled
The evils of old festering lands-yea, hurled them in their might
And left him standing all alone, to set the wrong things right.

It is the way the Fates have done since first Time's race began!
They open up Pandora's box before some chosen man;
And then, aloof, they wait and watch, to see if he will find
And wake the slumbering God that dwells in every mortal's mind.

Erect, our modern Atlas stands, with brave uplifted head,
And there is courage in his eyes, if in his heart be dread.
Not dread of foes, but dread of friends, who may not pull together,
To bring the lurching ship of State safe through the stormy weather.

Oh, never were there wilder waves or more stupendous seas,
Or rougher rocks or bleaker winds, or darker days than these.
Not Washington, not Lincoln knew so grave an hour of Time
As he who now stands face to face with War's world-shaking crime.

His brain is clear, his soul is brave, his heart is just and right,
He asks no honours of the earth, but favour in God's sight;
His aim is not to wear a crown or win imperial power,
But to use wisely for the race life's terrible great hour.

O Liberty, who lights the world with rays that come from God,
Shine on Columbia's troubled track, and make it bright and broad;
Shine on each heart, and give it strength to meet its pains and losses,
And give supernal strength to one who bears the whole world's crosses;
Take from his thought the fear of friends who may not pull together,
And bring the glorious ship of State safe through wild waves and weather.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Our Blessings

Sitting to-day in the sunshine,
That touched me with fingers of love,
I thought of the manifold blessings
God scatters on earth, from above;
And they seemed, as I numbered them over,
Far more than we merit, or need,
And all that we lack is the angels
To make earth a heaven indeed.

The winter brings long, pleasant evenings,
The spring brings a promise of flowers
That summer breathes to fruition,
And autumn brings glad, golden hours.
The woodlands re-echo with music,
The moonbeams ensilver the sea;
There is sunlight and beauty about us,
And the world is as fair as can be.

But mortals are always complaining,
Each one thinks his own a sad lot;
And forgetting the good things about him,
Goes mourning for those he has not.
Instead of the star-spangled heavens,
We look on the dust at our feet;
We drain out the cup that is bitter,
Forgetting the one that is sweet.

We mourn o'er the thorn in the flower,
Forgetting its odour and bloom;
We pass by a garden of blossoms,
To weep o'er the dust of the tomb.
There are blessings unnumbered about us, -
Like the leaves of the forest they grow;
And the fault is our own - not the Giver's -
That we have not an Eden below.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Our Lives

Our lives are songs. God writes the words,
And we set them to music at pleasure;
And the song grows glad, or sweet, or sad,
As we choose to fashion the measure.

We must write the music, whatever the song,
Whatever its rhyme, or metre;
And if it is sad, we can make it glad,
Or if sweet, we can make it sweeter.

One has a song that is free and strong;
But the music he writes is minor;
And the sad, sad strain is replete with pain,
And the singer becomes a repiner.

And he thinks God gave him a dirge-like lay,
Nor knows that the words are cheery;
And the song seems lonely and solemn-only
Because the music is dreary.

And the song of another has through the words
An under current of sadness;
But he sets it to music of ringing chords,
And makes it a pean of gladness.

So whether our songs are sad or not,
We can give the world more pleasure,
And better ourselves, by setting the words
To a glad, triumphant measure.

1872

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Out Of The Depths: Written After The Reformation Of A Brilliant And Talented Man

Out of the midnight, rayless and cheerless,
Into the morning's golden light;
Out of the clutches of wrong and ruin,
Into the arms of truth and right;
Out of the ways that are ways of sorrow,
Out of the paths that are paths of pain,
Yea, out of the depths has a soul arisen,
And 'one that was lost is found again.'

Lost in the sands of an awful desert,
Lost in the region of imps accursed,
With bones of victims to mark his pathway,
And burning lava to quench his thirst;
Lost in the darkness, astray in the shadows;
Father above, do we pray in vain?
Hark! on the winds come gleeful tidings,
Lo! he was lost, but is found again.

Found! and the sunlight of God's great mercy
Dispels the shadows, and brings the morn.
Found! and the hosts of the dear Redeemer
Are shouting aloud o'er a soul new born,
Plucked, like a brand, from the conflagration,
Cleansed, like a garment, free from stain,
Saved, pray God, for ever and ever;
Lost for a season, but found again.

'Out of the depths' by the grace of heaven,
Out of the depth of woe and shame,
And he blots his name from the roll of drunkards,
To carve it again on the heights of fame.
'Wine is a mocker, and strong drink raging.'
Glory to God, he has snapped the chain
That bound him with fetters of steel and iron,

And he that he was lost is found again.

Down with the cup, though it gleam like rubies;
Down with the glass, though it sparkle and shine,
'It bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder,'
There is woe, and sorrow, and shame in wine.
Keen though the sword be, and deadly its mission,
Three times its number the wine-cup has slain.
God, send thy grace unto those it has fettered-
God, grant the lost may be found again.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Over The Alley

Here in my office I sit and write
Hour on hour, and day on day,
With no one to speak to from morn till night,
Though I have a neighbour just over the way.
Across the alley that yawns between
A maiden sits sewing the whole day long;
A face more lovely is seldom seen
In hall or castle or country throng.

Her curling tresses are golden brown;
Her eyes, I think, are violet blue,
Though her long, thick lashes are always down,
Jealously hiding the orbs from view;
Her neck is slender, and round, and white,
And this way and that way her soft hair blows,
As there in the window from morn till night,
She sits in her beauty, and sings and sews.

And I in my office chair, lounge and dream,
In an idle way, of a sweet 'might be, '
While the maid at her window sews her seam,
With never a glance or a thought for me.
Perhaps she is angry because I look
So long and so often across the way,
Over the top of my ledger-book;
But those stolen glances brighten the day.

And I am blameless of any wrong; -
She is the transgressor, by sitting there
And making my eyes turn oft and long
To a face so delicate, pure and fair.
Work is forgotten; the page lies clean,
Untouched by the pen, while hours go by.
Oh, maid of the pensive air and mien!
Give me one glance of your violet eye.

Drop your thimble or spool of thread
Down in the alley, I pray, my sweet,
Or the comb or ribbon from that fair head,

That I may follow with nimble feet;
For how can I tell you my heart has gone
Across the alley, and lingers there,
Till I know your name, my beautiful one?
How could I venture, and how could I dare?

Just one day longer I'll wait and dream,
And then, if you grant me no other way,
I shall write you a letter: 'Maid of the seam,
You have stolen my property; now give pay,
Beautiful robber and charming thief!
Give me one glance for the deed you've done.'
Thus shall I tell you my loss and grief,
Over the alley, my beautiful one.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Over The Banisters

Over the banisters bends a face,
Daringly sweet and beguiling.
Somebody stands in careless grace,
And watches the picture, smiling.

The light burns dim in the hall below,
Nobody sees her standing,
Saying good-night again, soft and slow,
Half way up to the landing.

Nobody only the eyes of brown,
Tender and full of meaning,
That smile on the fairest face in town,
Over the banisters leaning.

Tired and sleepy, with drooping head,
I wonder why she lingers;
Now, when the good-nights all are said,
Why somebody holds her fingers.

He holds her fingers and draws her down,
Suddenly growing bolder,
Till the loose hair drops its masses brown,
Like a mantle over his shoulder.

Over the banisters soft hands, fair,
Brush his cheeks like a feather,
And bright brown tresses and dusky hair,
Meet and mingle together.

There's a question asked, there's a swift caress,
She has flown like a bird from the hallway,
But over the banisters drops a "yes,"
That shall brighten the world for him always.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Over The May Hill

All through the night time, and all through the day time,
Dreading the morning and dreading the night,
Nearer and nearer we drift to the May time
Season of beauty and season of blight,
Leaves on the linden, and sun on the meadow,
Green in the garden, and bloom everywhere,
Gloom in my heart, and a terrible shadow,
Walks by me, sits by me, stands by my chair.

Oh, but the birds by the brooklet are cheery,
Oh, but the woods show such delicate greens,
Strange how you droop and how soon you are weary-
Too well I know what that weariness means.
But how could I know in the crisp winter weather
(Though sometimes I notices a catch in your breath),
Riding and singing and dancing together,
How could I know you were racing with death?

How could I know when we danced until morning,
And you were the gayest of all the gay crowd-
With only that shortness of breath for a warning,
How could I know that you danced for a shroud?
Whirling and whirling through moonlight and star-light,
Rocking as lightly as boats on the wave,
Down in your eyes shone a deep light-a far light,
How could I know 'twas the light to your grave?

Day by day, day by day, nearing and nearing,
Hid under greenness, and beauty and bloom,
Cometh the shape and the shadow I'm fearing,
'Over the May hill' is waiting your tomb.
The season of mirth and of music is over-
I have danced my last dance, I have sung my last song,
Under the violets, under the clover,
My heart and my love will be lying ere long.

Over The Water

Think of it, think of it over the water
Thousands of men to-day march on to death,
Think how the sun shines on fields red with slaughter-
How the air chokes, with the cannon's hot breath.

How in the shadows, perchance, of this even,
Hundreds of hearts, will have paused in their beat,
Pale, ghastly brows, will be turned up to heaven-
Brows that were pressed by lips, tender and sweet.

Think of the homes that these battles are leaving
Destitute, desolate, dreary and dumb.
Think of the fond, patient, hearts that are grieving,
Breaking for loved ones, who never will come.

Ah! we so recently felt this same anguish,
Women-Oh! women who suffer and pray,
We well can weep with you, who weep and languish,
We have borne all you are bearing to-day.

'God speed the right,' we cry, 'God be with Prussia,'
Yet to the mourners of soldiers who fall,
Whether their tears flow in France, or in Russia,
Their dead are their dead, and we pity them all.

Think of it, think of it, hearts that are breaking,
Sorrowing, suffering, over the sea.
Think of the eyes that are blinded and aching
With watching for those whom they never will see.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Pain's Proof

I think men's great capacity for pain
Proves his immortal birthright. I am sure
No merely human mind could bear the strain
Of some tremendous sorrows we endure.

Art's most ingenious breastworks fail at length,
Beat by the mighty billows of the sea;
Only the God-formed shores possess the strength
To stand before their onslaughts, and not flee.

The structure that we build with careful toil,
The tempest lays in ruins in an hour;
While some grand tree that springs forth from the soil
Is bended but not broken by its power.

Unless our souls had root in soil divine
We could not bear earth's overwhelming strife.
The fiercest pain that racks this heart of mine,
Convinces me of everlasting life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Pardoned Out

I'm pardoned out. Again the stars
Shine on me with their myriad eyes.
So long I've peered 'twixt iron bars,
I'm awed by this expanse of skies.
The world is wider than I thought,
And yet 'tis not so wide, I know,
But into its remotest spot
My tale of shame can go.

I'm pardoned out. Old Father Time
Who seemed to halt in horror, when
I strained my manhood by a crime,
With steady step moves on again,
And through the black appalling night,
That walled me in a gloom accurst,
The wonder of the morning light
In sudden glory burst.

I'm pardoned out. I shall be known
No more by number, but by name.
And yet each whispering wind has blown
Abroad the story of my shame.
I dread to see men shrink away
With startled looks of scorn or fear,
When in life's crowded marts some day,
That name falls on their ear.

I'm pardoned out, ah God! to roam
Like some whipped dog among my kind.
I have no friends, I have no home,
Save these bleak walls I leave behind.
How can I face the world of men,
My comrades in the days of yore?
Oh! hide me in my cell again,
And, warden lock the door.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Passing The Buck

Whatever the task that comes your way,
Just take it as part of your luck.
Look it right square in the eyes, and say,
'This is
my
task, I'll do it to-day':
Don't pass the buck.

Oh! whether you cook, or whether you fight,
Or whether you trundle a truck,
Just tackle your job and do it right:
Don't pass the buck.

The wheels of the earth have gone, alack!
Deep into war's mire and muck.
If you want to put it again on its track,
Don't shift your load on another man's back:
Don't pass the buck.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Peek-A-Boo

The cunningest thing that a baby can do
Is the very first time it plays peek-a-boo;

When it hides its pink little face in its hands,
And crows, and shows that it understands

What nurse, and mamma and papa, too,
Mean when they hide and cry, 'Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo.'

Oh, what a wonderful thing it is,
When they find that baby can play like this;

And everyone listens, and thinks it true
That baby's gurgle means 'Peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo';

And over and over the changes are rung
On the marvelous infant who talks so young.

I wonder if any one ever knew
A baby that never played peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo.

'Tis old as the hills are. I believe
Cain was taught it by Mother Eve;

For Cain was an innocent baby, too,
And I am sure he played peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo.

And the whole world full of the children of men,
Have all of them played that game since then.

Kings and princes and beggars, too,
Everyone has played peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo.

Thief and robber and ruffian bold,
The crazy tramp and the drunkard old,

All have been babies who laughed and knew
How to hide, and play peek-a-boo, peek-a-boo.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Penalty

Because of the fullness of what I had,
All that I have seems poor and vain.
If I had not been happy, I were not sad--
Tho' my salt is savorless, why complain?

From the ripe perfection of what was mine,
All that is mine seems worse than naught;
Yet I know, as I sit in the dark and pine,
No cup can be drained which has not been fraught.

From the throb and the thrill of a day that was,
The day that now is seems dull with gloom;
Yet I bear the dullness and darkness, because
'Tis but the reaction of glow and bloom.

From the royal feast that of old was spread
I am starved on the diet that now is mine;
Yet, I could not turn hungry from water and bread
If I had not been sated on fruit and wine.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Perfectness

All perfect things are saddening in effect.
The autumn wood robed in its scarlet clothes,
The matchless tinting on the royal rose
Whose velvet leaf by no least flaw is flecked,
Love's supreme moment, when the soul unchecked
Soars high as heaven, and its best rapture knows—
These hold a deeper pathos than our woes,
Since they leave nothing better to expect.
Resistless change, when powerless to improve,
Can only mar. The gold will pale to gray;
Nothing remains tomorrow as to-day;
The lose will not seem quite so fait, and love
Must find its measures of delight made less.
Ah, how imperfect is all Perfectness!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Perished

I called to the summer sun,
"Come over the hills to-day!
Unlock the rivers, and tell them to run,
And kiss the snow-drifts and melt them away."
And the sun came over – a tardy lover –
And unlocked the river, and told it to glide,
And kissed the snow-drift till it fainted and died.

I called to the robin, "Come back!
Come up from the south and sing! "
And robin sailed up on an airy track,
And smoothed down his feathers and oiled his wing.
And the notes came gushing, gurgling, rushing,
In trills and quavers, clear, mellow, and strong,
Till the glad air quivered and rang with song.

I said to the orchard, "Blow! "
I said to the meadow, "Bloom! "
And the trees stood white, like brides in a row,
And the breeze was laden with rare perfume.
And over the meadows, in lights and shadows,
The daisies white and violets blue,
And yellow-haired buttercups blossomed and grew.

I called to a hope, that died
With the death of the flowers and grass,
"Come back! For the river is free to glide –
The robin sings, and the daisies bloom." Alas!
For the hope I cherished too rudely perished
To ever awaken and live again,
Though a hundred summers creep over the plain.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ph. Best & Co.'s Lager-Beer

In every part of the thrifty town,
Whether my course be up or down,
In lane, and alley, and avenue,
Painted in yellow, and red, and blue,
This side and that, east and west,
Was this flaunting sign-board of 'Ph. Best.'

'Twas hung high up, and swung in the air
With a swaggering, bold-faced, 'devil-may-care-
It-is-none-of-your-business' sort of way;
Or, as if dreading the light o' the day,
It hung low, over a basement-stair,
And seemed ashamed when you saw it there.

Or it shone like a wicked and evil eye
From a 'restaurant' door on passers-by,
And seemed with a twinkling wink to say:
'Are you bound for hell? Then step this way;
This is the ticket-office of sin;
If you think of purchasing, pray, walk in.'

Or it glared from a window where the light
Of the lamps within shone full and bright,
And seemed to be saying, 'Come out of the storm!
Come into my haven snug and warm;
I will give you warmth from the flowing bowl,
And all I ask is your purse and soul.'

But whether on window, door, or stair,
Wherever I went, it was always there;
Painted in yellow, and red, and blue,
It stared from alley and avenue:
It was north, and south, and east, and west,
The lager-beer of this Philip Best.

And who was Philip Best, you ask?
Oh! he was a man, whose noble task
Was the brewing of beer-good beer, first-class-
That should sparkle, and bubble, and boil in the glass:
Should sparkle and flow till drank, and then
Feast like a vampire on brains of men.

Ah! Philip Best, you have passed from view,
But your name and your works live after you.
Come, brothers, raise him a monument,
Inscribed, 'Here lies the man who sent
A million of souls to the depths of hell;
Turned genius and worth to the prison-cell;

Stole bread from the mouth of the hungry child:
Made the father a brute, and the mother wild;
Filled happy homes with dread unrest:
Oh! a very great man was Philip Best.
O Ph. Best! you have passed from view,
But your name and your deeds live after you.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Philosophy

At morn the wise man walked abroad,
Proud with the learning of great fools.
He laughed and said, 'There is no God –
'Tis force creates, 'tis reason rules.'

Meek with the wisdom of great faith,
At night he knelt while angels smiled,
And wept and cried with anguished breath,
'Jehovah, God, save Thou my child.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Platonic

I knew it the first of the summer,
I knew it the same at the end,
That you and your love were plighted,
But couldn't you be my friend?
Couldn't we sit in the twilight,
Couldn't we walk on the shore
With only a pleasant friendship
To bind us, and nothing more?

There was not a word of folly
Spoken between us two,
Though we lingered oft in the garden
Till the roses were wet with dew.
We touched on a thousand subjects –
The moon and the worlds above, –
And our talk was tinctured with science,
And everything else, save love.

A wholly Platonic friendship
You said I had proven to you
Could bind a man and a woman
The whole long season through,
With never a thought of flirting,
Though both were in their youth,
What would you have said, my lady,
If you had known the truth!

What would you have done, I wonder,
Had I gone on my knees to you
And told you my passionate story,
There in the dusk and the dew?
My burning, burdensome story,
Hidden and hushed so long –
My story of hopeless loving –
Say, would you have thought it wrong?

But I fought with my heart and conquered,
I hid my wound from sight;
You were going away in the morning,

And I said a calm goodnight.
But now when I sit in the twilight,
Or when I walk by the sea
That friendship, quite Platonic,
Comes surging over me.
And a passionate longing fills me
For the roses, the dusk, the dew;
For the beautiful summer vanished,
For the moonlight walks – and you.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Possession

That which we had we still possess,
Though leaves may drop and stars may fall;
No circumstance can make it less
Or take it from us, all in all.

That which is lost we did not own;
We only held it for a day--
A leaf by careless breezes blown:
No fate could take our own away.

I hold it as a changeless law
From which no soul can ever sway or swerve,
We have that in us which will draw
Whate'er we need or most deserve.

Even as the magnet to the steel
Our souls are to the best desires;
The Fates have hearts and they can feel--
They know what each true heart requires.

We think we lose when most we gain;
We call joys ended ere begun;
When stars fade out do skies complain,
Or glory in the rising sun?

No fate could rob us of our own--
No circumstance can make it less;
What time removes was but a loan,
For what was ours we still possess.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Poverty And Wealth

The stork flew over a town one day,
And back of each wing an infant lay;
One to a rich man's home he brought,
And one he left at a labourer's cot.
The rich man said, 'My son shall be
A lordly ruler o'er land and sea.'
The labourer sighed, 'Tis the good God's will
That I have another mouth to fill.'
The rich man's son grew strong and fair,
And proud with the pride of a millionaire.
His motto in life was, 'Live while you may, '
And he crowded years in a single day.
He bought position and name and place,
And he bought him a wife with a handsome face.
He journeyed over the whole wide world,
But discontent his heart lay curled
Like a serpent hidden in leaves and moss,
And life seemed hollow and gold was dross.
He scoffed at woman, and doubted God,
And died like a beast and went back to the sod.
The son of the labourer tilled the soil,
And thanked God daily for health and toil.
He wedded for love in his youthful prime,
And two lives chorded in tune and time.
His wants were simple, and simple his creed,
To trust God fully: it served his need,
And lightened his labour, and helped him to die
With a smile on his lips and a hope in his eye.
When all is over and all is done,
Now which of these men was the richer one?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Prayer

Lord, let us pray.

Give us the open mind, O God,
The mind that dares believe
In paths of thought as yet untrod;
The mind that can conceive
Large visions of a wider way
Than circumscribes our world to-day.

May tolerance temper our own faith,
However great our zeal;
When others speak of life and death,
Let us not plunge a steel
Into the heart of one who talks
In terms we deem unorthodox.

Help us to send our thoughts through space,
Where worlds in trillions roll,
Each fashioned for its time and place,
Each portion of the whole;
Till our weak minds may feel a sense
Of Thy Supreme Omnipotence.

Let us not shame Thee with a creed
That builds a costly church
But blinds us to a brother's need
Because he dares to search
For truth in his own soul and heart
And finds his church in home and mart.

Give us the faith that makes us kind,
Give us the open sight and mind-
O God, the open mind
That lifts itself to meet the Ray
Of the New Dawning Day:
Lord, let us pray.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Preaching Vs Practice

It is easy to sit in the sunshine
And talk to the man in the shade;
It is easy to float in a well-trimmed boat,
And point out the places to wade.

But once we pass into the shadows,
We murmur and fret and frown,
And, our length from the bank, we shout for a plank,
Or throw up our hands and go down.

It is easy to sit in your carriage,
And counsel the man on foot,
But get down and walk, and you'll change your talk,
As you feel the peg in your boot.

It is easy to tell the toiler
How best he can carry his pack,
But no one can rate a burden's weight
Until it has been on his back.

The up-curved mouth of pleasure,
Can prate of sorrow's worth,
But give it a sip, and a wryer lip,
Was never made on earth.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Preparation

We must not force events, but rather make
The heart soil ready for their coming, as
The earth spreads carpets for the feet of Spring,
Or, with the strengthening tonic of the frost,
Prepares for Winter. Should a July noon
Burst suddenly upon a frozen world
Small joy would follow, even tho' that world
Were longing for the Summer. Should the sting
Of sharp December pierce the heart of June,
What death and devastation would ensue!
All things are planned. The most majestic sphere
That whirls through space is governed and controlled
By supreme law, as is the blade of grass
Which through the bursting bosom of the earth
Creeps up to kiss the light. Poor puny man
Alone doth strive and battle with the Force
Which rules all lives and worlds, and he alone
Demands effect before producing cause.

How vain the hope! We cannot harvest joy
Until we sow the seed, and God alone
Knows when that seed has ripened. Oft we stand
And watch the ground with anxious brooding eyes
Complaining of the slow unfruitful yield,
Not knowing that the shadow of ourselves
Keeps off the sunlight and delays result.
Sometimes our fierce impatience of desire
Doth like a sultry May force tender shoots
Of half-formed pleasures and unshaped events
To ripen prematurely, and we reap
But disappointment; or we rot the germs
With briny tears ere they have time to grow.
While stars are born and mighty planets die
And hissing comets scorch the brow of space
The Universe keeps its eternal calm.
Through patient preparation, year on year,
The earth endures the travail of the Spring
And Winter's desolation. So our souls
In grand submission to a higher law

Should move serene through all the ills of life,
Believing them masked joys.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Presumption

Whenever I am prone to doubt or wonder -
I check myself, and say, 'That mighty One
Who made the solar system cannot blunder -
And for the best all things are being done.'
Who set the stars on their eternal courses
Has fashioned this strange earth by some sure plan.
Bow low, bow low to those majestic forces,
Nor dare to doubt their wisdom - puny man.

You cannot put one little star in motion,
You cannot shape one single forest leaf,
Nor fling a mountain up, nor sink an ocean,
Presumptuous pigmy, large with unbelief.
You cannot bring one dawn of regal splendour
Nor bid the day to shadowy twilight fall,
Nor send the pale moon forth with radiance tender,
And dare you doubt the One who has done all?

'So much is wrong, there is such pain - such sinning.'
Yet look again - behold how much is right!
And He who formed the world from its beginning
Knows how to guide it upward to the light.
Your task, O man, is not to carp and cavil
At God's achievements, but with purpose strong
To cling to good, and turn away from evil -
That is the way to help the world along.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Progress

Let there be many windows to your soul,
That all the glory of the universe
May beautify it. Not the narrow pane
Of one poor creed can catch the radiant rays
That shine from countless sources. Tear away
The blinds of superstition; let the light
Pour through fair windows broad as truth itself
And high as God.
Why should the spirit peer
Through some priest-curtained orifice, and grope
Along dim corridors of doubt, when all
The splendor from unfathomed seas of space
Might bathe it with the golden waves of Love?
Sweep up the debris of decaying faiths;
Sweep down the cobwebs of worn-out beliefs,
And throw your soul wide open to the light
Of Reason and of knowledge. Tune your ear
To all the wordless music of the stars,
And to the voice of Nature; and your heart
Shall turn to truth and goodness as the plant
Turns to the sun. A thousand unseen hands
Reach down to help you to their peace-crowned heights,
And all the forces of the firmament
Shall fortify your strength. Be not afraid
To thrust aside half-truths and grasp the whole.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Protest

To sin by silence, when we should protest,
Makes cowards out of men. The human race
Has climbed on protest. Had no voice been raised
Against injustice, ignorance and lust,
The Inquisition yet would serve the law,
And guillotines decide our least disputes.
The few who dare, must speak and speak again
To right the wrongs of many. Speech, thank God,
No vested power in this great day and land
Can gag or throttle. Press and voice may cry
Loud disapproval of existing ills,
May criticise oppression and condemn
The lawlessness of wealth-protecting laws
That let the children and child-bearers toil
To purchase ease for idle millionaires.

Therefore do I protest against the boast
Of independence in this mighty land.
Call no chain strong which holds one rusted link,
Call no land free that holds one fettered slave.
Until the manacled, slim wrists of babes
Are loosed to toss in childish sport and glee,
Until the Mother bears no burden save
The precious one beneath her heart, until
God's soil is rescued from the clutch of greed
And given back to labor, let no man
Call this the land of freedom.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Queries

Well, how has it been with you since we met
That last strange time of a hundred times?
When we met to swear that we could forget—
I your caresses, and you my rhymes—
The rhyme of my lays that rang like a bell,
And the rhyme of my heart with yours, as well?
How has it been since we drank that last kiss,
That was bitter with lees of the wasted wine,
When the tattered remains of a threadbare bliss,
And the worn-out shreds of a joy divine,
With a year's best dreams and hopes, were cast
Into the rag-bag of the Past?
Since Time, the rag-buyer, hurried away,

With a chuckle of glee at a bargain made,
Did you discover, like me, one day,
That, hid in the folds of those garments frayed,
Were priceless jewels and diadems—
The soul's best treasures, the heart's best gems?
Have you, too, found that you could not supply
The place of those jewels so rare and chaste?
Do all that you borrow or beg or buy
Prove to be nothing but skilful paste?
Have you found pleasure, as I found art,
Not all-sufficient to fill your heart?
Do you sometimes sigh for the tattered shreds
Of the old delight that we cast away,
And find no worth in the silken threads
Of newer fabrics we wear to-day?
Have you thought the bitter of that last kiss
Better than sweets of a later bliss?
What idle queries!—or yes or no—
Whatever your answer, I understand
That there is no pathway by which we can go
Back to the dead past's wonderland;
And the gems he purchased from me, from you,
There is no rebuying from Time, the Jew

Rangoon

ust a changing sea of colour
Surging up and flowing down;
And pagodas shining golden, night and noon;
And a sun-burst-tinted throng
Of young priests that move along
Under sun-burst-hued umbrellas through the town.
That's Rangoon.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Realisation

Hers was a lonely, shadowed lot;
Or so the unperceiving thought,
Who looked no deeper than her face,
Devoid of chiselled lines of grace –
No farther than her humble grate,
And wondered how she bore her fate.

Yet she was neither lone nor sad;
So much of love her spirit had,
She found an ever-flowing spring
Of happiness in everything.

So near to her was Nature's heart
It seemed a very living part
Of her own self; and bud and blade,
And heat and cold, and sun and shade,
And dawn and sunset, Spring and Fall,
Held raptures for her, one and all.
The year's four changing seasons brought
To her own door what thousands sought
In wandering ways and did not find –
Diversion and content of mind.

She loved the tasks that filled each day –
Such menial duties; but her way
Of looking at them lent a grace
To things the world deemed commonplace.

Obscure and without place or name,
She gloried in another's fame.
Poor, plain and humble in her dress,
She thrilled when beauty and success
And wealth passed by, on pleasure bent;
They made earth seem so opulent.
Yet none of quicker sympathy,
When need or sorrow came, than she.
And so she lived, and so she died.

She woke as from a dream. How wide

And wonderful the avenue
That stretched to her astonished view!
And up the green ascending lawn
A palace caught the rays of dawn.
Then suddenly the silence stirred
With one clear keynote of a bird;
A thousand answered, till ere long
The air was quivering bits of song.
She rose and wandered forth in awe,
Amazed and moved by all she saw,
For, like so many souls who go

Away from earth, she did not know
The cord was severed.
□ Down the street,
With eager arms stretched forth to greet,
Came one she loved and mourned in youth;
Her mother followed; then the truth
Broke on her, golden wave on wave,
Of knowledge infinite. The grave,
The body and the earthly sphere
Were gone! Immortal life was here!
They led her through the Palace halls;
From gleaming mirrors on the walls
She saw herself, with radiant mien,
And robed in splendour like a queen,
While glory round about her shone.
'All this, ' Love murmured, 'is your own.'
And when she gazed with wondering eye,
And questioned whence and where and why,
Love answered thus: 'All Heaven is made
By thoughts on earth; your walls were laid,
Year after year, of purest gold;
The beauty of your mind behold
In this fair palace; ay, and more
Waits farther on, so vast your store.
I was not worthy when I died
To take my place here at your side;
I toiled through long and weary years
From lower planes to these high spheres;
And through the love you sent from earth
I have attained a second birth.

Oft when my erring soul would tire
I felt the strength of your desire;
I heard you breathe my name in prayer,
And courage conquered weak despair.
Ah! earth needs heaven, but heaven indeed
Of earth has just as great a need!

Across the terrace with a bound
There sped a lambkin with a hound
(Dumb comrades of the old earth land)
And fondled her caressing hand.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Recompense

Straight through my heart this fact to-day,
By Truth's own hand is driven:
God never takes one thing away,
But something else is given.

I did not know in earlier years,
This law of love and kindness;
I only mourned through bitter tears
My loss, in sorrow's blindness.

But, ever following each regret
O'er some departed treasure,
My sad repining heart was met
With unexpected pleasure.

I thought is only happened so;
But time this truth taught me –
No least thing from my life can go,
But something else is brought to me.

It is the Law, complete, sublime;
And now, with Faith unshaken,
In patience I but bide my time
When any joy is taken.

No matter if the crushing blow
May for the moment down me,
Still, back of it waits Love, I know
With some new gift to crown me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Refuted

'Anticipation is sweeter than realisation.'

It may be, yet I have not found it so.
In those first golden dreams of future fame
I did not find such happiness as came
When toil was crowned with triumph. Now I know
My words have recognition, and will go
Straight to some listening heart, my early aim,
To win the idle glory of a name,
Pales like a candle in the noonday's glow.

So with the deeper joys of which I dreamed:
Life yields more rapture than did childhood's fancies,
And each year brings more pleasure than I waited.
Friendship proves truer than of old it seemed,
And, all beyond youth's passion-hued romances,
Love is more perfect than anticipated.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Regret

There is a haunting phantom called Regret,
A shadowy creature robed somewhat like woe,
But fairer in the face, whom all men know
By her said mien, and eyes forever wet.
No heart would seek her; but once having met
All take her by the hand, and to and fro
They wander through those paths of long ago-
Those hallowed ways 'twere wiser to forget.

One day she led me to that lost land's gate
And bade me enter; but I answered 'No!
I will pass on with my bold comrade Fate;
I have no tears to waste on thee- no time-
My strength I hoard for heights I hope to climb,
No friend art thou, for souls that would be great.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Resolve

Build on resolve, and not upon regret,
The structure of thy future. Do not grope
Among the shadows of old sins, but let
Thine own soul's light shine on the path of hope
And dissipate the darkness. Waste no tears
Upon the blotted record of lost years,
But turn the leaf, and smile, oh! smile, to see
The fair white pages that remain for thee.

Prate not of thy repentance. But believe
The spark divine dwells in thee: let it grow.
That which the unpreaching spirit can achieve,
The grand and all creative forces know;
They will assist and strengthen as the light
Lifts up the acorn to the oak-tree's height.
Thou hast but to resolve, and lo! God's whole
Great universe shall fortify thy soul.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Response

I said this morning, as I leaned and threw
My shutters open to the Spring's surprise,
'Tell me, O Earth, how is it that in you
Year after year the same fresh feelings rise?
How do you keep your young exultant glee?
No more those sweet emotions come to me.
'I note through all your fissures how the tide
Of healthful life goes leaping as of old;
Your royal dawns retain their pomp and pride;
Your sunsets lose no atom of their gold.
How can this wonder be?' My soul's fine ear
Leaned, listening, till a small voice answered near:
'My days lapse never over into night;
My nights encroach not on the rights of dawn.
I rush not breathless after some delight;
I waste no grief for any pleasure gone.
My July noons burn not the entire year.
Heart, hearken well!' 'Yes, yes; go on; I hear.'
'I do not strive to make my sunsets' gold
Pave all the dim and distant realms of space.
I do not bid my crimson dawns unfold
To lend the midnight a fictitious grace.
I break no law, for all God's laws are good.
Heart, hast thou heard?' 'Yes, yes; and understood.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Reunited

Let us begin, dear love, where we left off;
Tie up the broken threads of that old dream;
And go on happy as before; and seem
Lovers again, though all the world may scoff.

Let us forget the graves, which lie between
Our parting and our meeting, and the tears
That rusted out the goldwork of the years;
The frosts that fell upon our gardens green.

Let us forget the cold malicious Fate
Who made our loving hearts her idle toys,
And once more revel in the old sweet joys
Of happy love. Nay, it is not too late!

Forget the deep-ploughed furrows in my brow;
Forget the silver gleaming in my hair;
Look only in my eyes! Oh! darling, there
The old love shone no warmer then than now.

Down in the tender depths of thy dear eyes,
I find the lost sweet memory of my youth,
Bright with the holy radiance of thy truth,
And hallowed with the blue of summer skies.

Tie up the broken threads, and let us go,
Like reunited lovers, hand in hand,
Back, and yet onward, to the sunny land
Of our To Be, which was our Long Ago.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Rich And Poor

By the castle-gate my lady stands,
Viewing broad acres and spreading lands.

Hill and valley and mead and plain
Are all her own, with their wealth of grain.

In the richest of rich robes she is dressed,
A jewel blazes upon her breast;

And her brow is decked with a diadem
That glitters with many a precious gem.

But what to the Lady Wendoline
Rich satin garments or jewels fine?

Or ripening harvests, or spreading lands-
See! she is wringing her milk-white hands!

And her finger is stained with crimson dew
Where the ring with the diamond star cut through.

And a look of pain and wild despair
Rests on the face, so young and fair.

To-morrow will be her bridal day,
And she will barter herself away

For added wealth and a titled name;
'Tis the curse of her station, and whose the blame!

She loathes the man who will call her wife,
And moans o'er her hapless, loveless life.

The joys of wooing she cannot know;
My lord, her father, has willed it so.

She's a piece of merchandise, bought and sold
For name, position, and bags of gold.

But people must wed in their own degree,
Though hearts may break in their agony.

Under the hill, in the castle's shade,
At a cottage door sits an humble maid;

In her cheek the blushes come and go
As she stitches away on a robe like snow;

And she sings aloud in her happiness-
In a joy she cannot hide or repress.

Close at her side her lover stands,
Watching the nimble, sun-browned hands

As they draw the needle to and fro
Through the robe as white as drift of snow.

Both hearts are singing a wordless lay,
For the morrow will be their bridal day.

They have only their hands, their love, their health,
In place of title, position, and wealth.

But which is the rich, and which the poor,
The maid at the gate, or the maid in the door?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

River And Sea

Under the light of the silver moon
We two sat, when our hearts were young;
The night was warm with the breath of June,
And loud from the meadow the cricket sung,
And darker and deeper, oh, love, than the sea,
Were your dear eyes, as they beamed to me.

The moon hung clear, and the night was still:
The waters reflected the glittering skies;
The nightingale sang on the distant hill;
But sweeter than all was the light in your eyes -
Your dear, dark eyes, your eyes like the sea -
And up from the depths shone love for me.

My heart, like a river, was mad and wild -
And a river is not deep, like the sea;
But I said your love was the love of a child,
Compared with the love that was felt by me;
A river leaps noisily, kissing the land,
But the sea is fathomless, deep and grand.

I vowed to love you, for ever and ever!
I called you cold, on that night in June,
But my fierce love, like a reckless river,
Dashed on, and away, and was spent too soon;
While yours - ah, yours was deep like the sea;
I cheated you, love, but you died for me!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Robin's Mistake

What do you think Red Robin
Found by a mow of hay?
Why, a flask brimful of liquor,
That the mowers brought that day
To slake their thirst in the hayfield.
And Robin he shook his head:
'Now, I wonder what they call it,
And how it tastes?' he said.

'I have seen the mowers drink it-
Why isn't it good for me?
So I'll just draw out the stopper
And get at the stuff, and see!'
But alas! for the curious Robin,
One draught, and he burned his throat
From his bill to his poor crop's lining,
And he could not utter a note.

And his head grew light and dizzy,
And he staggered left and right,
Tipped over the flask of brandy,
And spilled it, every mite.
But after awhile he sobered,
And quietly flew away,
And he never has tasted liquor,
Or touched it, since that day.

But I heard him say to his kindred.
In the course of a friendly chat,
'These men think they are above us,
Yet they drink such stuff as that!
Oh, the poor degraded creatures!
I am glad I am only a bird!'
Then he flew up over the meadow,
And that was all I heard.

Science

Alone I climb the steep ascending path
Which leads to knowledge. In the babbling throngs
That hurry after, shouting to the world
Small fragments of large truths, there is not one
Who comprehends my purpose, or who sees
The ultimate great goal. Why, even she,
My heaven intended Spouse, my other self,
Religion, turns her beauteous face on me
With hatred in the eyes, where love should dwell.
While those who call me Master blindly run,
Wounding the ear of Faith with blasphemies,
And making useless slaughter in my name.

Mine is the difficult slow task to blaze
A road of Facts, through labyrinths of dreams
To tear down Maybe and establish IS:
And substitute I Know for I Believe.
I follow closely where the Seers have led:
But that intangible dim path of theirs,
Which may be trodden but by other Seers,
I seek to render solid for the feet
Of all mankind. With reverent hands I lift
The mask from Mystery: and show the face
Of Reason, smiling bravely on the world.
The visions of the prophets, one by one,
Grew visible beneath my tireless touch:
And the white secrets of elusive stars
I tell aloud, to listening multitudes.

To fit the better world my toil ensures,
Time will impregnate with a better race
The Future's womb: and when the hour is ripe,
To ready eyes of men, the alien spheres
Shall seem as friendly neighbours: and my skill
Shall make their music audible to ears
Which will be tuned to those high harmonies.

Mine is the work to fashion, step by step,
The shining Way that leads from man to God.
Though I demolish obstacles of creeds
And blast tradition, from the face of earth,
My hand shall open wide the door of Truth,
Whose other name is Faith: and at the end
Of this most holy labour, I shall turn
To see Religion, with enlightened eyes,
Seeking the welcome of my outstretched arms.
While all the world stands hushed and awed before
The proven splendour of the Fact Supreme.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Searching

These quiet Autumn days,
My soul, like Noah's dove, on airy wings
Goes out and searches for the hidden things
Beyond the hills of haze.

With mournful, pleading cries,
Above the waters of the voiceless sea
That laps the shore of broad Eternity,
Day after day, it flies,

Searching, but all in vain,
For some stray leaf that it may light upon,
And read the future, as the days ago -
Its pleasures, and its pain.

Listening patiently
For some voice speaking from the mighty deep,
Revealing all the things that it doth keep
In secret there for me.

Come back and wait, my soul!
Day after day thy search has been in vain.
Voiceless and silent o'er the future's plain
Its mystic waters roll.

God, seeing, knoweth best,
And in His time the waters shall subside,
And thou shalt know what lies beneath the tide,
Then wait, my soul, and rest.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Seeking For Happiness

Seeking for happiness we must go slowly;
The road leads not down avenues of haste;
But often gently winds through by ways lowly,
Whose hidden pleasures are serene and chaste.
Seeking for happiness we must take heed
Of simple joys that are not found in speed.

Eager for noon-time's large effulgent splendour,
Too oft we miss the beauty of the dawn,
Which tiptoes by us, evanescent, tender,
Its pure delights unrecognised till gone.
Seeking for happiness we needs must care
For all the little things that make life fair.

Dreaming of future pleasures and achievements
We must not let to-day starve at our door;
Nor wait till after losses and bereavements
Before we count the riches in our store.
Seeking for happiness we must prize this-
Not what will be, or was, but that which is.

In simple pathways hand in hand with duty
(With faith and love, too, ever at her side),
May happiness be met in all her beauty
The while we search for her both far and wide.
Seeking for happiness we find the way
Doing the things we ought to do each day.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sestina

I wandered o'er the vast green plains of youth,
And searched for Pleasure. On a distant height
Fame's silhouette stood sharp against the skies.
Beyond vast crowds that thronged a broad highway
I caught the glimmer of a golden goal,
While from a blooming bower smiled siren Love.

Straight gazing in her eyes, I laughed at Love,
With all the haughty insolence of youth,
As past her bower I strode to seek my goal.
'Now will I climb to glory's dizzy height, '
I said, ' for there above the common way
Doth pleasure dwell companioned by the skies.'

But when I reached that summit near the skies,
So far from man I seemed, so far from Love-
'Not here, ' I cried, 'doth Pleasure find her way, '
Seen from the distant borderland of youth.
Fame smiles upon us from her sun-kissed height,
But frowns in shadows when we reach the goal.

Then were mine eyes fixed on that glittering goal,
Dear to all sense-sunk souls beneath the skies.
Gold tempts the artist from the lofty height,
Gold lures the maiden from the arms of Love,
Gold buys the fresh ingenuous heart of youth,
'And gold, ' I said, 'will show me Pleasure's way.'

But ah! the soil and discord of that way,
Where savage hordes rushed headlong to the goal,
Dead to the best impulses of their youth,
Blind to the azure beauty of the skies;
Dulled to the voice of conscience and of love,
They wandered far from Truth's eternal height.

Then Truth spoke to me from that noble height,
Saying: 'Thou didst pass Pleasure on the way,
She with the yearning eyes so full of Love,
Whom thou disdained to seek for glory's goal.'

Two blending paths beneath God's arching skies
Lead straight to Pleasure. Ah, blind heart of youth,
Not up fame's height, not toward the base god's goal,
Doth Pleasure make her way, but 'neath calm skies
Where Duty walks with Love in endless youth.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Settle The Question Right

However the battle is ended,
Though proudly the victor comes,
With flaunting flags and neighing nags
And echoing roll of drums;
Still truth proclaims this motto
In letters of living light,
No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

Though the heel of the strong oppressor
May grind the weak in the dust,
And the voices of fame with one acclaim
May call him great and just;
Let those who applaud take warning
And keep this motto in sight,
No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

Let those who have failed take courage,
Though the enemy seem to have won;
If he be in the wrong, though his ranks are strong,
The battle is not yet done.
For sure as the morning follows
The darkest hour of night,
No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

O men, bowed down with labour,
O women, young yet old,
O heart, oppressed in the toiler's breast
And crushed by the power of gold,
Keep on with your weary battle
Against triumphant might;
No question is ever settled
Until it is settled right.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Shovel And Tongs

The Poker proposed to the shovel
That they should be man and wife,
'I think,' said he, 'that we could agree
As we journey along through life.'

The Shovel blushed as she answered,
'I thank you kindly, Mister,
But my promise belongs to the faithful Tongs,
So I only can be your sister.'

And when the couple were married
The Stove gave the Shovel away;
And it seemed too bad that the Poker, poor lad,
Was the Tongs' best man on that day.

But the Poker soon after was wedded
To the hearth broom, slender and slick;
And 'twas whispered about Mrs. Tongs was put out
Because he found comfort so quick.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Show Me The Way

Show me the way that leads to the true life.
I do not care what tempests may assail me,
I shall be given courage for the strife;
I know my strength will not desert or fail me;
I know that I shall conquer in the fray:
Show me the way.

Show me the way up to a higher plane,
Where body shall be servant to the soul.
I do not care what tides of woe or pain
Across my life their angry waves may roll,
If I but reach the end I seek, some day:
Show me the way.

Show me the way, and let me bravely climb
Above vain grievings for unworthy treasures;
Above all sorrow that finds balm in time;
Above small triumphs or belittling pleasures;
Up to those heights where these things seem child's-play:
Show me the way.

Show me the way to that calm, perfect peace
Which springs from an inward consciousness of right;
To where all conflicts with the flesh shall cease,
And self shall radiate with the spirit's light.
Though hard the journey and the strife, I pray,
Show me the way.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sign-Board

I will paint you a sign, rumseller,
And hang it above your door;
A truer and better signboard
Than ever you had before.
I will paint with the skill of a master,
And many shall pause to see
This wonderful piece of painting,
So like the reality.

I will paint yourself, rumseller,
As you wait for that fair young boy,
Just in the morning of manhood,
A mother's pride and joy.
He has no thought of stopping,
But you greet him with a smile,
And you seem so blithe and friendly,
That he pauses to chat awhile.

I will paint you again, rumseller,
I will paint you as you stand,
With a foaming glass of liquor
Extended in your hand.
He wavers, but you urge him-
Drink, pledge me just this one!
And he takes the glass and drains it,
And the hellish work is done.

And next I will paint a drunkard-
Only a year has flown,
But into that loathsome creature
The fair young boy has grown.
The work was sure and rapid.
I will paint him as he lies
In a torpid, drunken slumber,
Under the wintry skies.

I will paint the form of the mother
As she kneels at her darling's side,
Her beautiful boy that was dearer
Than all the world beside.

I will paint the shape of a coffin,
Labeled with one word-'lost,'
I will paint all this, rumseller,
And will paint it free of cost.

The sin and the shame and the sorrow,
The crime and the want and the woe
That are born there in your workshop,
No hand can paint, you know.
But I'll paint you a sign, rumseller,
And many shall pause to view
This wonderful swinging signboard,
So terribly, fearfully true.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sing To Me

Sing to me! Something of sunlight and bloom,
I am so compassed with sorrow and gloom,
I am so sick with the world's noise and strife, -
Sing of the beauty and brightness of life -
Sing to me, sing to me!

Sing to me! Something that's jubilant, glad!
I am so weary, my soul so sad.
All my earth riches are covered with rust,
All my bright dreams are but ashes and dust.
Sing to me, sing to me!

Sing of the blossoms that open in spring,
How the sweet flowers blow, and the long lichens cling,
Say, though the winter is round about me,
There are bright summers and springs yet to be.
Sing to me, sing to me!

Sing me a song full of hope and of truth,
Brimming with all the sweet fancies of youth!
Say, though my sorrow I may not forget,
I have not quite done with happiness yet.
Sing to me, sing to me!

Lay your soft fingers just here, on my cheek;
Turn the light lower - there- no, do not speak,
But sing! My heart thrills at your beautiful voice;
Sing till I turn from my grief and rejoice.
Sing to me, sing to me!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Slain

Hollow a grave where the willows wave,
And lay him under the grasses,
Where the pitying breeze bloweth up from the seas,
And murmurs a chant as it passes.

Lay the beautiful face and the form of grace
Away from the gaze of mortal.
Let us hope that his soul has gained the goal
Over the shining portal.

Hope! Ah! we thrill with a terrible chill.
Ah! pen, can you tell the story
Of the one who died in his manhood's pride,
Slain in the morn of his glory?

There's a blemish of shame on the dear one's name,
For he died as the drunkard dieth.
The ruddy wine-mug was the fiend who dug
The grave where our darling lieth.

O God! and his soul, was it lost in the bowl?
Has it gone where the wicked goeth?
Shall he bear the sin, and the tempter go in
Where the beautiful city gloweth?

Hush! O my heart! act well thy part,
Nor question a Father's kindness,
And strive not to see the thing hid from thee
By a veil of earthly blindness.

But all through the wine may there shimmer and shine,
As it glimmers and glows in the glasses,
A coffin and grave, and the willows that wave
Over our dead 'neath the grasses.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Smiles

Smile a little, smile a little,
As you go along,
Not alone when life is pleasant,
But when things go wrong.
Care delights to see you frowning,
Loves to hear you sigh;
Turn a smiling face upon her –
Quick the dame will fly.

Smile a little, smile a little,
All along the road;
Every life must have its burden,
Every heart its load.
Why sit down in gloom and darkness
With your grief to sup?
As you drink Fate's bitter tonic,
Smile across the cup.

Smile upon the troubled pilgrims
Whom you pass and meet;
Frowns are thorns, and smiles are blossoms
Oft for weary feet.
Do not make the way seem harder
By a sullen face;
Smile a little, smile a little,
Brighten up the place.

Smile upon your undone labour;
Not for one who grieves
O'er his task waits wealth or glory;
He who smiles achieves.
Though you meet with loss and sorrow
In the passing years,
Smile a little, smile a little,
Even through your tears.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Smoke

Last summer, lazing by the sea,
I met a most entrancing creature,
Her black eyes quite bewildered me---
She had a Spanish cast of feature.

She often smoked a cigarette,
And did it in the cutest fashion.
Before a week passed by she set
My young heart in a raging passion.

I swore I loved her as my life,
I gave her gems (don't tell my tailor).
She promised to become my wife,
But whispered, 'Papa is my jailer.'

'We must be very sly, you see,
For Papa will not list to reason.
You must not come to call on me
Until he's gone from home a season.

'I'll send you word, now don't forget,
Take this as pledge, I will remember.'
She gave me a perfumed cigarette,
And turned and left me with September.

To-day she sent her 'cards' to me.
'My presence asked' to see her marry
That millionaire old banker C---
She has my 'presents,' so I'll tarry.

And still I feel a keen regret
(About the jewels that I gave her)
I've smoked the little cigarette---
It had a most delicious flavour.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

So Long In Coming

When shall I hear the thrushes sing,
And see their graceful, round throats swelling?
When shall I watch the bluebirds bring
The straws and twiglets for their dwelling?
When shall I hear among the trees
The little martial partridge drumming?
Oh! Hasten! Sights and sounds that please –
The summer is so long in coming.

The winds are talking with the sun;
I hope they will combine together
And melt the snow-drifts, one by one,
And bring again the golden weather.
Oh, haste, make haste, dear sun and wind,
I long to hear the brown bee humming;
I seek for blooms I cannot find,
The summer is so long in coming.

The winter has been cold, so cold;
Its winds are harsh, and bleak, and dreary,
And all its sports are stale and old;
We wait for something now more cheery.
Come up, O summer, from the south,
And bring the harps your hands are thrumming.
We pine for kisses from your mouth!
Oh! Do not be so long in coming.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Solitude

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone.
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.
Sing, and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air.
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go.
They want full measure of all your pleasure,
But they do not need your woe.
Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all.
There are none to decline your nectared wine,
But alone you must drink life's gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded;
Fast, and the world goes by.
Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
But no man can help you die.
There is room in the halls of pleasure
For a long and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on
Through the narrow aisles of pain.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Song Of America

And now, when poets are singing
Their songs of olden days,
And now, when the land is ringing
With sweet Centennial lays,
My muse goes wandering backward,
To the groundwork of all these,
To the time when our Pilgrim Fathers
Came over the winter seas.
The sons of a mighty kingdom,
Of a cultured folk were they;
Born amidst pomp and splendor,
Bred in it day by day.
Children of bloom and beauty,
Reared under skies serene,
Where the daisy and hawthorne blossomed,
And the ivy was always green.
And yet, for the sake of freedom,
For a free religious faith,
They turned from home and people,
And stood face to face with death.
They turned from a tyrant ruler,
And stood on the new world's shore,
With a waste of waters behind them,
And a waste of land before.
O, men of a great Republic;
Of a land of untold worth;
Of a nation that has no equal
Upon God's round green earth:
I hear you sighing and crying
Of the hard, close times at hand;
What think you of those old heroes,
On the rock 'twixt sea and land?
The bells of a million churches
Go ringing out to-night,
And the glitter of palace windows
Fills all the land with light;
And there is the home and college,
And here is the feast and ball,
And the angels of peace and freedom

Are hovering over all.
They had no church, no college,
No banks, no mining stock;
They had but the waste before them,
The sea, and Plymouth Rock.
But there in the night and tempest,
With gloom on every hand,
They laid the first foundation
Of a nation great and grand.
There were no weak repinings,
No shrinking from what might be,
But with their brows to the tempest,
And with their backs to the sea,
They planned out a noble future,
And planted the corner stone
Of the grandest, greatest republic,
The world has ever known.
O women in homes of splendor,
O lily-buds frail and fair,
With fortunes upon your fingers,
And milk-white pearls in your hair:
I hear you longing and sighing
For some new, fresh delight;
But what of those Pilgrim mothers
On that December night?
I hear you talking of hardships,
I hear you moaning of loss;
Each has her fancied sorrow,
Each bears her self-made cross.
But they, they had only their husbands,
The rain, the rock, and the sea,
Yet, they looked up to God and blessed Him,
And were glad because they were free.
O grand old Pilgrim heroes,
O souls that were tried and true,
With all of our proud possessions
We are humbled at thought of you:
Men of such might and muscle,
Women so brave and strong,
Whose faith was fixed as the mountain,
Through a night so dark and long.
We know of your grim, grave errors,

As husbands and as wives;
Of the rigid bleak ideas
That starved your daily lives;
Of pent-up, curbed emotions,
Of feelings crushed, suppressed,
That God with the heart created
In every human breast;
We know of that little remnant
Of British tyranny,
When you hunted Quakers and witches,
And swung them from a tree;
Yet back to a holy motive,
To live in the fear of God,
To a purpose, high, exalted,
To walk where martyrs trod,
We can trace your gravest errors;
Your aim was fixed and sure,
And e'en if your acts were fanatic,
We know your hearts were pure.
You lived so near to heaven,
You over-reached your trust,
And deemed yourselves creators,
Forgetting you were but dust.
But we with our broader visions,
With our wider realm of thought,
I often think would be better
If we lived as our fathers taught.
Their lives seemed bleak and rigid,
Narrow, and void of bloom;
Our minds have too much freedom,
And conscience too much room.
They over-reached in duty,
They starved their hearts for the right;
We live too much in the senses,
We bask too long in the light.
They proved by their clinging to Him
The image of God in man;
And we, by our love of license,
Strengthen a Darwin's plan.
But bigotry reached its limit,
And license must have its sway,
And both shall result in profit

To those of a latter day.
With the fetters of slavery broken,
And freedom's flag unfurled,
Our nation strides onward and upward,
And stands the peer of the world.
Spires and domes and steeples,
Glitter from shore to shore;
The waters are white with commerce,
The earth is studded with ore;
Peace is sitting above us,
And Plenty with laden hand,
Wedded to sturdy Labor,
Goes singing through the land.
Then let each child of the nation,
Who glories in being free,
Remember the Pilgrim Fathers
Who stood on the rock by the sea;
For there in the rain and tempest
Of a night long passed away,
They sowed the seeds of a harvest
We gather in sheaves to-day.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Song Of The Aviator

You may thrill with the speed of your thoroughbred steed,
You may laugh with delight as you ride the ocean,
You may rush afar in your touring car,
Leaping, sweeping, by things that are creeping-
But you never will know the joy of motion
Till you rise up over the earth some day,
And soar like an eagle, away-away.

High and higher above each spire,
Till lost to sight is the tallest steeple,
With the winds you chase in a valiant race,
Looping, swooping, where mountains are grouping,
Hailing them comrades, in place of people.
Oh! vast is the rapture the birdman knows,
As into the ether he mounts and goes.

He is over the sphere of human fear;
He has come into touch with things supernal.
At each man's gate death stands await;
And dying, flying, were better than lying
In sick-beds, crying for life eternal,
Better to fly half-way to God
Than to burrow too long like a worm in the sod.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Song Of The Rail

Oh, an ugly thing is an iron rail,
Black, with its face to the dust.
But it carries a message where winged things fail;
It crosses the mountains, and catches the trail,
While the winds and the sea make sport of a sail;
Oh, a rail is a friend to trust.

The iron rail, with its face to the sod,
Is only a bar of ore;
Yet it speeds where never a foot has trod;
And the narrow path where it leads, grows broad;
And it speaks to the world in the voice of God;
That echoes from shore to shore.

Though the iron rail, on the earth down flung,
Seems kin to the loam and the soil,
Wherever its high shrill note is sung,
Out of the jungle fair homes have sprung,
And the voices of babel find one tongue,
In the common language of toil.

Of priest, and warrior, and conquering king,
Of Knights of the Holy Grail,
Of wonders of winter, and glories of spring,
Always and ever the poets sing;
But the great God-Force, in a lowly thing,
I sing, in my song of the rail.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Song Of The Spirit

Too sweet and too subtle for pen or for tongue
In phrases unwritten and measures unsung,
As deep and as strange as the sounds of the sea,
Is the song that my spirit is singing to me.

In the midnight and tempest when forest trees shiver,
In the roar of the surf, and the rush of the river,
In the rustle of leaves and the fall of the rain,
And on the low breezes I catch the refrain.

From the vapours that frame and envelop the earth,
And beyond, from the realms where my spirit had birth,
From the mists of the land and the fogs of the sea,
For ever and ever the songs come to me.

I know not its wording - its import I know -
For the rhythm is broken, the measure runs low,
When vexed or allured by the things of this life
My soul is merged into its pleasures or strife.

When up to the hill tops of beauty and light
My soul like a lark in the ether takes flight,
And the white gates of heaven shine brighter and nearer,
The song of the spirit grows sweeter and clearer.

Up, up to the realms where no mortal has trod -
Into space and infinity near to my God -
With whiteness, and silence, and beautiful things,
I am bourn when the voice of eternity sings.

When once in the winds or the dropp of the rain
Thy spirit shall listen and hear the refrain,
Thy soul shall soar up like a bird on the breeze,
And the things that have pleased thee will never more please.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Song Of The Wheelman

Over my desk in a dark office bending.
Dim seems the sunlight and dull seems the day;
But when the afternoon draws toward an ending,
Here waits my steel steed-I mount, and away!
Like cobwebs of silver I see in the distance
The glint of bright wheels, I must follow and find.
What life in the air now! what zest in existence,
As faster and faster I race with the wind.

Down the smooth pavements, and out toward the heather-
Ho! fellows, ho! I am coming you see!

Breast to breast, now let us speed on together-
Who dares try mounting that hillside with me?
Over the bridge I go-past the green meadows,
Au revoir, boys, I will ride on alone!
For in yon cottage half hid in the shadows,
Waiting for me, is my sweetheart-my own.

She watches my wheel as it glitters and glistens
Down the steep crest of the daisy-starred hill.

Fair is her cheek as she waits there and listens
For the sure signal blown tenderly shrill.
Sweetheart, my sweetheart, I'm coming, I'm coming.
Here, sturdy steed, you may stand by the wall.

A bird to her mate has flown swift thro' the gloaming,
Love, youth and summer, thank God for them all.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Songs Of A Country Home

I

Who has not felt his heart leap up, and glow
What time the tulips first begin to blow,
Has one sweet joy, still left for him to know.

It is like early loves' imagining;
That fragile pleasure, which the Tulips bring,
When suddenly we see them, in the Spring.

Not all the gardens later royal train,
Not great triumphant Roses, when they reign,
Can bring that delicate delight again.

II

One of the sweetest hours is this;
(Of all I think we like it best
A little restful oasis,
Between the breakfast, and the post.
Just south of coffee, and of toast,
Just north of daily task and duty;
Just west of dreams, this Island gleams,
A fertile spot of peace and beauty.

We wander out across the lawn;
We idle by a bush in bloom;
The Household pets come following on;
Or if the day is one of gloom,
We loiter in a pleasant room
Or from a casement, lean and chatter.
Then comes the mail, like sudden hail,
And off we scatter.

III

When roses die, in languid August days,
We leave the Garden, to its fallen ways;
And seek the shelter of wide porticos,

Where Honeysuckle, in defiance blows
Undaunted by the Sun's too ardent rays.

The matron Summer, turns a wistful gaze
Across green valleys, back to tender Mays;
And something of her large contentment goes,
When roses die.

Yet all her subtle fascination stays
To lure us into idle sweet delays.
The lowered awning, by the hammock shows
Inviting nooks for dreaming and repose;
Oh, restful are the pleasures of those days
When roses die.

IV

The summer folk, fled back to town;
The green woods changed to red and brown;
A sound upon the frosty air
Of windows closing everywhere.

And then the log, lapped by a blaze.
Oh, what is better than these days;
With books and friends and love a-near;
Go on, gay world, but leave me here.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sonnet

Methinks oft times my heart is like some bee
That goes forth through the summer day and sings,
And gathers honey from all growing things
In garden plot, or on the clover lea.
When the long afternoon grows late, and she
Would seek her hive, she cannot lift her wings,
So heavily the too sweet burden clings,
From which she would not, and yet would, fly free.
So with my full fond heart; for when it tries
To lift itself to peace-crowned heights, above
The common way where countless feet have trod.
Lo! then, this burden of dear human ties,
This growing weight of precious earthly love,
Binds down the spirit that would soar to God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sorrow's Uses

The uses of sorrow I comprehend
Better and better at each year's end.

Deeper and deeper I seem to see
Why and wherefore it has to be

Only after the dark, wet days
Do we fully rejoice in the sun's bright rays.

Sweeter the crust tastes after the fast
Than the sated gourmand's finest repast.

The faintest cheer sounds never amiss
To the actor who once has heard a hiss.

To one who the sadness of freedom knows,
Light seem the fetters love may impose.

And he who has dwelt with his heart alone,
Hears all the music in friendship's tone.

So better and better I comprehend,
How sorrow ever would be our friend.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sorry

There is much in life that makes me sorry as I journey
down life's way.

And I seem to see more pathos in poor human
Lives each day.

I'm sorry for the strong brave men, who shield
the weak from harm,
But who, in their own troubled hours find no
Protecting arm.

I'm sorry for the victors who have reached
success, to stand
As targets for the arrows shot by envious failure's
hand.

I'm sorry for the generous hearts who freely
shared their wine,
But drink alone the gall of tears in fortune's
drear decline.

I'm sorry for the souls who build their own fame's
funeral pyre,
Derided by the scornful throng like ice deriding
fire.

I'm sorry for the conquering ones who know not
sin's defeat,
But daily tread down fierce desire 'neath scorched
and bleeding feet.

I'm sorry for the anguished hearts that break with
passions strain,
But I'm sorrier for the poor starved souls that
Never knew love's pain.
Who hunger on through barren years not tasting
joys they crave,
For sadder far is such a lot than weeping o'er a
grave.

I'm sorry for the souls that come unwelcomed
into birth,
I'm sorry for the unloved old who cumber up the

earth.

I'm sorry for the suffering poor in life's great
maelstrom hurled,
In truth I'm sorry for them all who make this
aching world.

But underneath whate'er seems sad and is not
understood,
I know there lies hid from our sight a mighty
germ of good.
And this belief stands firm by me, my sermon,
motto, text –
The sorriest things in this life will seem grandest
in the next.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sounds From The Baseball Field

Batter in the home place,
That was nobly done;
Try and get the first base-
Run!
Run
! RUN!
Ah, there, short stop, will you miss?
Hear the people cheer and hiss,
Hear them yell and shout.
Twinkling legs and flying feet-
(Oh, I wonder who will beat!)
Faster, faster, out!
Umpire, umpire, go along;
That was wrong, sir, that was wrong.

Pitcher pitches, four balls,
'Take your base, my man.'
Toward the second now he crawls-
'Steal it if you can.'
Oh, the ball has gone so high,
Can they catch it on the fly?
Ah, there is no doubt,
He will get his third, I vow-
Pshaw! the ball has got there now,
'Two men out!'
Umpire, umpire, that was wrong;
Go along, sir, go along.

One man on the first base,
Not a single run.
Boys are warming to the race-
Now look out for fun.
Pitcher's arm maybe is tired;
Batter sudden seems inspired,
Grounds the ball to win.
Run there, run there, run your best,
I am screaming with the rest

'Two men in!'
Umpire, umpire, go away;
Dead wrong, dead wrong, sir, I say.

What's the matter now, pray?
Taking breath, that's all;
But the restless people say
'Play ball, play ball.'
One ball, two strikes, two balls-'Foul.'
Umpire calls, and people howl:
'What is he about?'
Run, run, run, run, Run,
Run
, RUN!
Half the inning now is done,
'Three men out!'
Umpire, umpire, go along;
You are always, always wrong.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Speak

Obscured the sun, the world is dark;
Maid of Orleans, Joan of Arc,
Send down thy spark.

Let every heart in France be stirred,
By such an all-compelling word
As thou once heard.

Say to each soul, 'Lo! I am near;
My voice still speaks in accents clear.
Be still and hear.

'The France I saved can not be lost;
Though tempest-torn and terror-tossed,
Count not the cost.

'Give as the maid of Domrémy
Gave all-gave life itself to see
Her country free.

'Back of great France my spirit towers
To aid her through the darkest hours
With God's own powers!'

Maid of Orleans, Joan of Arc
Shine through the night, speak through the dark
The while we hark.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Spectres

How terrible these nights are when alone
With our scarred hearts, we sit in solitude,
And some old sorrow, to the world unknown,
Does suddenly with silent steps intrude.

After the guests departed, and the light
Burned dimly in my room, there came to me,
As noiselessly as shadows of the night,
The spectre of a woe that used to be.

Out of the gruesome darkness and the gloom
I saw it peering; and, in still despair,
I watched it gliding swift across the room,
Until it came and stood beside my chair.

Why, need I tell thee what its shape or name?
Thou hast thy secret hidden from the light:
And be it sin or sorrow, woe or shame,
Thou dost not like to meet it in the night.

And yet it comes. As certainly as death,
And far more cruel since death ends all pain,
On lonesome nights we feel its icy breath,
And turn and face the thing we fancied slain.

With shrinking hearts, we view the ghastly shape;
We look into its eyes with fear and dread,
And know that we can never more escape
Until the grave doth fold us with the dead.

On the swift maelstrom of the eddying world
We hurl our woes, and think they are no more.
But round and round by dizzy billows whirled,
They reach out sinewy arms and swim to shore.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Speech

Talk happiness. The world is sad enough
Without your woe. No path is wholly rough.
Look for the places that are smooth and clear,
And speak of them to rest the weary ear
Of earth; so hurt by one continuous strain
Of mortal discontent and grief and pain.

Talk faith. The world is better off without
Your uttered ignorance and morbid doubt.
If you have faith in God, or man, or self,
Say so; if not, push back upon the shelf
Of silence all your thoughts 'till faith shall come.
No one will grieve because your lips are dumb.

Talk health. The dreary, never-ending tale
Of mortal maladies is worn and stale;
You cannot charm or interest or please
By harping on that minor chord disease.
Say you are well, or all is well with you,
And God shall hear your words and make them true.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Summer Song

The meadow lark's trill and the brown thrush's whistle
From morning to evening fill all the sweet air,
And my heart is as light as the down of a thistle –
The world is so bright and the earth is so fair.
There is life in the wood, there is bloom on the meadow;
The air drops with songs that the merry birds sing.
The sunshine has won, in the battle with shadow,
And she's dressed the glad earth with robes of the spring.

The bee leaves his hive for the field of red clover
And the vale where the daisies bloom white as the snow,
And a mantle of warm yellow sunshine hangs over
The calm little pond, where the pale lillies grow.
In the woodland beyond it, a thousand gay voices
Are singing in chorus some jubilant air.
The bird and the bee and all nature rejoices,
The world is so bright, and the earth is so fair.

I am glad as a child, in this beautiful weather;
I have tossed all my burdens and trials away;
My heart is as light – yes, as light as a feather; -
I am care-free, and careless, and happy to-day.
Can it be there approaches a dark, dreary to-morrow?
Can shadows e'er fall on this beautiful earth?
Ah! To-day is my own! No forebodings of sorrow
Shall darken my skies, or shall dampen my mirth.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sunset

I saw the day lean o'er the world's sharp edge
And peer into night's chasm, dark and damp;
High in his hand he held a blazing lamp,
Then dropped it and plunged headlong down the ledge.
With lurid splendor that swift paled to gray,
I saw the dim skies suddenly flush bright.
'Twas but the expiring glory of the light
Flung from the hand of the adventurous day.
Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sunshine And Shadow

Life has its shadows, as well as its sun;
Its lights and its shades, all twined together.
I tried to single them out, one by one,
Single and count them, determining whether
There was less blue than there was grey,
And more of the deep night than of the day.
But dear me, dear me, my task's but begun,
And I am not half way into the sun.

For the longer I look on the bright side of earth,
The more of the beautiful do I discover;
And really, I never knew what life was worth
Till I searched the wide storehouse of happiness over.
It is filled from the cellar well up to the skies,
With things meant to gladden the heart and the eyes.
The doors are unlocked, you can enter each room,
That lies like a beautiful garden in bloom.

Yet life has its shadow, as well as its sun;
Earth has its storehouse of joy and sorrow.
But the first is so wide – and my task's but begun –
That the last must be left for a far-distant morrow.
I will count up the blessings God gave in a row,
But dear me! When I get through them, I know
I shall have little time left for the rest,
For life is a swift-flowing river at best.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Sweet Danger

The danger of war, with its havoc of life,
The danger of ocean, when storms are rife,
The danger of jungles, where wild beasts hide,
The danger that lies in the mountain slide---
Why, what are they but all mere child's play,
Or the idle sport of a summer day,
Beside those battles that stir and vex
The world forever, of sex with sex?

The warrior returns from the captured fort,
The mariner sails to a peaceful port;
The wild beast quails 'neath the strong man's eye,
The avalanche passes the traveller by---
But who can rescue from passion's pyre
The hearts that were offered to feed its fire?
Ah! he who emerges from that fierce flame
Is scarred with sorrow or blackened with shame.

Battle and billow, and beast of prey,
They only threaten the mortal clay;
The soul unfettered can take to wing,
But the danger of love is another thing.
Once under the tyrant Passion's control,
He crushes body, and heart, and soul.
An hour of rapture, an age of despair,
Ah! these are the trophies of love's warfare.

And yet forever, since time began,
Has man dared woman and woman lured man
To that sweet danger that lurks and lies
In the bloodless battle of eyes with eyes;
That reckless danger, as vast as sweet,
Whose bitter ending is joy's defeat.
Ah! thus forever, while time shall last,
On passion's altar must hearts be cast!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ten Thousand Men A Day

All the world was wearying,
All the world was sad;
Everything was shadow-filled;
Things were going bad.
Then a rumour stirred all hearts
As a wind stirs trees-
Ten thousand men a day
Coming over seas!

Soon we saw them marching by-
God! what a sight!-
Shoulders back, and heads erect,
Faces full of light.
Smiling like a morn in May,
Moving like a breeze,
Ten thousand men a day
Coming over seas.

Weary soldiers worn with war
Lifted up their eyes,
Shadows seemed to lift a bit,
Dawn was in the skies.
Hope sprang to troubled hearts,
Strength to tired knees:
Ten thousand men a day
Were coming over seas.

France and England swarmed with them,
Khaki-clad and young,
Filled with all the joy of life-
Into line they swung.
Waning valour rose anew
At the sight of these
Ten thousand men a day
Coming over seas.

Still they come-and still they come
In their strength and pride.
Victory with radiant mien
Marches on beside.
Victory is here to stay,
Every heart agrees,
With ten thousand men a day
Coming over seas.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Thanksgiving

We walk on starry fields of white
And do not see the daisies;
For blessings common in our sight
We rarely offer praises.
We sigh for some supreme delight
To crown our lives with splendor,
And quite ignore our daily store
Of pleasures sweet and tender.

Our cares are bold and push their way
Upon our thought and feeling.
They hang about us all the day,
Our time from pleasure stealing.
So unobtrusive many a joy
We pass by and forget it,
But worry strives to own our lives
And conquers if we let it.

There's not a day in all the year
But holds some hidden pleasure,
And looking back, joys oft appear
To brim the past's wide measure.

But blessings are like friends, I hold,
Who love and labor near us.
We ought to raise our notes of praise
While living hearts can hear us.

Full many a blessing wears the guise
Of worry or of trouble.
Farseeing is the soul and wise
Who knows the mask is double.
But he who has the faith and strength
To thank his God for sorrow
Has found a joy without alloy
To gladden every morrow.

We ought to make the moments notes
Of happy, glad Thanksgiving;

The hours and days a silent phrase
Of music we are living.
And so the theme should swell and grow
As weeks and months pass o'er us,
And rise sublime at this good time,
A grand Thanksgiving chorus.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

That's The Way

Just a little every day-
That's the way!
Seeds in darkness swell and grow,
Tiny blades push through the snow;
Never any flower of May
Leaps to blossom in a burst,
Slowly, slowly, as the first,
That's the way.
Just a little every day.

Just a little every day-
That's the way,
Children learn to read and write
Bit by bit and mite by mite,
Never any one I say
Leaps to knowledge and its power;
Slowly, slowly, hour by hour,
That's the way!
Just a little every day.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Actor

O man, with your wonderful dower,
O woman, with genius and grace,
You can teach the whole world with your power,
If you are but worthy the place.
The stage is a force and a factor
In moulding the thought of the day,
If only the heart of the actor
Is high as the theme of the play.

No discourse or sermon can reach us
Through feeling to reason like you;
No author can stir us and teach us
With lessons as subtle and true.
Your words and your gestures obeying
We weep or rejoice with your part,
And the player, behind all his playing,
He ought to be great at his art.

No matter what role you are giving,
No matter what skill you betray,
The everyday life you are living
Is certain to colour the play.
The thoughts we call secret and hidden
Are creatures of malice, in fact;
They steal forth unseen and unbidden,
And permeate motive and act.

The genius that shines like a comet
Fills only one part of God's plan,
If the lesson the word derives from it
Is marred by the life of the man.
Be worthy your work if you love it;
The king should be fit for the crown;
Stand high as your art, or above it,
And make us look up and not down.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Ah Goo Tongue

The queerest languages known to man,
Sanskrit, Hebrew, Hindoostan,
Are all translated and made as free
And comprehensive as A B C.

Yet the oldest language talked or sung,
The strange mysterious Ah Goo tongue,
The royal language of Babyland
No man living can understand.

Every soul in the world to-day
Was one time anchored in Babyland Bay,
And quarantined there for a year or more
Before he even could step on shore.

And everybody in Babyland Bay
Talks the Ah Goo tongue, so people say,
But once on land-why not a word
Do they understand of it when 'tis heard.

For the fairy rulers of Babyland
Who guard the kingdom on every hand,
Have willed that no one shall keep the key
Who crosses into the Grown-up Sea.

So the sweet court language has never been made
A common parlance of strife or trade,
But is kept in the kingdom where natives come
Versed in the language of Babydom.

They are all of them royal and that is how
The Grown-up people all kneel and bow,
When they hear that language talked or sung-
The strange mysterious Ah Goo tongue.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Barbarous Chief

There was a kingdom known as the Mind,
A kingdom vast as fair,
And the brave king, Brain, had the right to reign,
In royal splendor there.

Oh! that was a beautiful, beautiful land,
Which unto this king was given;
Filled with everything good and grand,
And it reached from earth to heaven.

But a savage monster came one day
From over a distant border;
He warred with the king and disputed his sway,
And set the whole land in disorder.
He mounted the throne, which he made his own,
He sunk the kingdom in grief.
There was trouble and shame from the hour he came-
Illtemper, the barbarous chief.

He threw down the castles of love and peace,
He burned up the altars of prayers.
He trod down the grain that was planted by Brain,
And scattered thistles and tares.
He wasted the store-house of knowledge and drove
Queen Wisdom away in fright;
And a terrible gloom, like the cloud of doom,
Shrouded that land in night.

Bent on more havoc away he rushed
To the neighboring kingdom, Heart;
And the blossoms of kindness and hope he crushed-
And patience he pierced with his dart,
And he even went on to the Isthmus Soul,
That unites the mind with God,
And its beautiful bowers of fragrant flowers
With a ruthless heel he trod.

To you is given this wonderful land
Where the lordly Brain has sway;
But the border ruffian is near at hand,
Be on your guard, I pray.
Beware of Illtemper, the barbarous chief,
He is cruel as vice or sin,
And your beautiful kingdom will come to grief
If once you let him in.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Beautiful Blue Danube

They drift down the hall together;
He smiles in her lifted eyes.
Like waves of that mighty river
The strains of the 'Danube' rise.
They float on its rhythmic measure,
Like leaves on a summer stream;
And here, in this scene of pleasure,
I bury my sweet dead dream.

Through the cloud of her dusky tresses,
Like a star, shines out her face;
And the form of his strong arm presses
Is sylph-like in its grace.
As a leaf on the bounding river
Is lost in the seething sea,
I know that for ever and ever
My dream is lost to me.

And still the viols are playing
That grand old wordless rhyme;
And still those two are swaying
In perfect tune and time.
If the great bassoons that mutter,
If the clarinets that blow,
Were given the chance to utter
The secret things they know.

Would the lists of the slain who slumber
On the Danube's battle-plains
The unknown hosts outnumber
Who die 'neath the 'Danube's' strains?
Those fall where the cannons rattle,
'Mid the rain of shot and shell;
But these, in a fiercer battle,
Find death in the music's swell.

With the river's roar of passion
Is blended the dying groan;
But here, in the halls of fashion,

Hearts break, and make no moan.
And the music, swelling and sweeping,
Like the river, knows it all;
But none are counting or keeping
The lists of those who fall.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Beautiful Land Of Nod

Come, cuddle your head on my shoulder, dear,
Your head like the golden-rod,
And we will go sailing away from here
To the beautiful land of Nod.
Away from life's hurry, and flurry, and worry,
Away from earth's shadows and gloom,
To a world of fair weather we'll float off together
Where the roses are always in bloom.

Just shut up your eyes, and fold your hands,
Your hands like the leaves of a rose,
And we will go sailing to those fair lands
That an atlas never shows.
On the North and the West they are bounded by rest,
On the South and the East by dreams;
'Tis the country ideal, where nothing is real,
But everything only seems.

Just dropp down the curtains of your dear eyes,
Those eyes like a bright blue-bell,
And we will sail out under starlit skies
To the land where the fairies dwell.
Down the river of sleep our barque shall sweep,
Till it reaches the mystical isle
Which no man has seen, but where all have been,
And there we will pause for awhile.
I will croon you a song as we float along,
To that shore that is blessed of God,
Then ho! for that fair land, we're off for that rare land,
That beautiful Land of Nod.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Belle's Soliloquy

Heigh Ho! Well, the season's over!
Once again we've come to Lent!
Programme's changes from balls and parties –
Now we're ordered to repent.
Forty days of self-denial!
Tell you what, I think it pays –
Know't'l freshen my complexion
Going slow for forty days.

No more savoury French suppers –
Such as Madame R- can give.
Well, I need a little thinning –
Just a trifle – sure's you live!
Sometimes been afraid my plumpness
Might grow into downright fat.
Rector urges need of fasting –
Think there's lot of truth in that.

We must meditate, he tells us,
On our several acts of sin,
And repent them. Let me see now –
Whereabouts shall I begin!
Flirting – yes, they say 'tis wicked;
Well, I'm awful penitent.
(Wonder if my handsome major
Goes to early Mass though Lent?)

Love of dress! I'm guilty there too –
Guess it's my besetting sin.
Still I'm somewhat like the lillies,
For I neither toil or spin.
Forty days I'll wear my plainest –
Could repentance be more true?
What a saving on my dresses!
They'll make over just like new.

Pride, and worldliness and all that,
Rector bade us pray about
Every day through Lenten season,

And I mean to be devout!
Papa always talks entrenchment –
Lent is just the very thing.
Hope he'll get enough in pocket
So we'll move up town next spring.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Birth Of The Opal

The Sunbeam loved the Moonbeam,
And followed her low and high,
But Moonbeam fled and hid her head,
She was so shy – so shy.

The Sunbeam wooed with passion;
Ah, he was a lover bold!
And his heart was afire with mad desire
For the moonbeam pale and cold.

She fled like a dream before him,
Her hair was a shining sheen,
And oh, that Fate would annihilate
The space that lay between!

Just as the day lay panting
In the arms of the twilight dim,
The Sunbeam caught the one he sought
And drew her close to him.

But out of his warm arms, startled
And stirred by Love's first shock,
She sprang afraid, like a trembling maid,
And hid in the niche of a rock.

And the Sunbeam followed and found her
And led her to Love's own feast;
And they were wed on that rocky bed,
And the dying day was priest.

And lo! the beautiful Opal –
That rare and wondrous gem –
Where the moon and the sun blend into one,
Is the child that was born to them.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Black Charger

There's a terrible steed that rests not night nor day,
But onward and onward, for ever away,
Through hamlet, through village, through country, through town,
Is heard the dread thud of his hoofs beating down;
Is seen the fierce eye, is felt the hot breath;
And before it, behind it, spreads ruin and death:
By castle, by cottage, by hut, and by hall,
Still faster and fiercer he passes them all.

He breathes on the youth with the face of the morn,
He leaves him a mark for the finger of scorn;
He cries, 'Mount and ride! I will bear you away
To the fair fields of pleasure. Come, mount me, I say!'
And, alas for the youth! he is borne like the wind,
And he leaveth his manhood, his virtue, behind;
And faster, still faster, he speeds down the track,
Where many shall follow, and few shall come back.

He breathes on the heart that is stricken with grief:
'Come, mount me! and fly to the plains of relief.
I will bear you away to the fair fields elysian,
Where your sorrows shall seem but a long-vanished vision.
With the future before you, forgetting the past,
You shall revel in pleasure, rejoicing at last.'
Ah! whoso shall mount shall ride to his doom:
Shall be sunk in the marshes of terror and gloom.

He breathes on the king, and he breathes on the slave;
On the young and the old from the crib to the grave;
On masterly minds, and they wither away
As the flower droops and dies 'neath a torrid sun's ray;
On beautiful souls that are pure as the light,
And they shrivel, polluted with mildew and blight:
The master, the servant, the high and the low,
He bears them all down to the regions of woe.

Ho! ho! temperance clan! rest ye not night nor day:
Watch, watch for the steed! starve him down! block his way!
Throw him into the dust! seize his long, flowing mane!
Bind his terrible limbs till he quivers in pain.
Stab him through to the heart! beat him down till he lies
Stark and stiff on the earth-beat him down till he dies!
Till never by castle, by cottage, by hall,
Shall again pass the black-hearted steed, Alcohol!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Black Sheep

'Black sheep, black sheep, have you any wool?'
'Yes, sir-yes, sir: three bags full.'

'I don't want any New Thought,' said he,
'Or any Theosophy, for, you see,
The faith I learned at my mother's knee
Is good enough for me.
Of course, I'm a wee bit broader than she,
Hearing one sermon where she heard three,
And I read my paper on Sunday, instead
Of the Bible only. My mother said
I was a black sheep, when she saw
I strayed a trifle away from the law,
And didn't think everyone left in the lurch
Who happened to go to a different church;
But, still, in the main, her creed is mine,
And I don't want anything more divine.'
Yet his mother's mother was more austere;
She taught her children a creed of fear,
And she called them 'black sheep' when, with a shock,
She saw them straying away from the flock,
Just far enough
To get around places they thought too rough,
Like infant damnation and endless hell.

But his mother's mother's mother would tell
How her mother thought it was God's sweet will
To punish and torture a heretic till
They drove out the devil that made him dare
Think for himself in the matter of prayer
And faith and salvation. So we see how it is
If we look back over the centuries-
The creeds men learned at their mother's knee
When Salem witches were hanged to a tree,
And the pious dames flocked thither to see,
Are not deemed Christian or holy to-day;
And the bold black sheep who went straying away
From rut-worn paths in their search for God,

And leaped over the fence into pastures broad,
Are the great trail-makers for mortal souls,
Leading the race up to higher goals
And a larger religion; where man must find
God dwelling ever within his mind,
Christ in his conduct, and heaven in his thought,
And hell but the places where love is not.
A mighty religion that makes this earth
But the cradle that fits us for death's new birth
And the life beyond it, that is so near
Its echoes may reach to the listening ear.

'Black sheep, black sheep, have you any wool?'
'Yes, sir-yes, sir: a whole world full.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Boys' And Girls' Thanksgiving Of 1892

Never since the race was started,
Had a boy in any clime,
Cause to be so thankful-hearted,
As the boys of present time.

Not a girl in old times living-
Let the world talk as it may-
Found such reasons for Thanksgiving,
As the girls who live to-day!

Grandmas, in their corners sitting,
Toiling till the day grew late,
What knew they with endless knitting,
Of the jolly roller-skate?

Grandpas sitting by the fender,
Reading by the faggots' blaze,
What knew they of modern splendor
Found in incandescent rays?

Where they toiled in bitter weather,
Braving rain and snow and sleet,
Gathering sticks of wood together,
We have radiators' heat.

But these fruits of modern science
They first planted seed by seed,
In their strength and self-reliance
We may find a noble creed.

With the dawn of great inventions,
Came the anti-warring days.
Men are sick of armed contentions,
God be thanked with heart-felt praise.

Once a boy was trained for fighting,
Now the world is better taught,
'Tis an age when wrongs are righting
By the force of common thought.

Once a girl was trained for sewing,
Spinning, knitting, nothing more.
She must never think of knowing
Aught of things outside her door.

If she soared above her spinning,
If she sought a life more broad,
She was looked upon as sinning
'Gainst the laws of man and God.

Now a girl is taught she's human,
Brain and body, soul and heart-
All are needed by the woman
Who to-day would play her part.

Swift and sure the world advances,
Let the critic carp who may.
God be praised for all the chances
Boys and girls enjoy to-day.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Brewer's Dog

The brewer's dog is abroad, boys,
Be careful where you stray,
His teeth are coated with poison,
And he's on the watch for prey.
The brewery is his kennel,
But he lurks on every hand,
And he seeks for easy victims
The children of the land.

His eyes gleam through the windows
Of the gay saloon at night,
And in many a first-class 'drug-store'
He is hiding out of sight.
Be careful where you enter,
And, if you smell his breath,
Flee as you would from a viper,
For its fumes are the fumes of death.

O boys! would you kill the bloodhound?
Would you slay the snarling whelp?
I know that you can do it
If every one will help.
You must make a solemn promise
To drink no ale or beer,
And soon the feeble death-wail
Of the brewer's dog we'll hear.
For, if all keep the promise,
You can starve him out, I know;
But, if boys and men keep drinking,
The dog will thrive and grow.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Camp Fire

When night hung low and dew fell damp,
There fell athwart the shadows
The gleaming watchfires of the camp,
Like glow-worms on the meadows.
The sentinel his measured beat
With measured tread was keeping,
While like bronze statues at his feet
Lay tired soldiers, sleeping.

On some worn faces of the men
There crept a homesick yearning,
Which made it almost seem again,
The child-look was returning.
While on full many a youthful brow,
Till now to care a stranger,
The premature grave lines told how
They had grown old through danger.

One, in his slumber, laughed with joy,
The laughing echoes mocked him,
He thought beside his baby boy
He sat and gaily rocked him.
O pitying angels! Thou wert kind
To end this brief elysian,
He found what he no more could find
Save in a dreamer's vision.

The clear note of a mocking bird-
That star of sound-came falling
Down thro' the night; one, wakeful, heard
And answered to the calling,
And then upon the ear there broke
That sweet, pathetic measure,
That song that wakes-as then it woke,
Such mingled pain and pleasure.

One voice at first, and then the sound
Pulsed like a great bell's swinging,
'Tenting to-night on the old camp ground,'
The whole roused camp was singing.
The sense of warfare's discontent
Gave place to warfare's glory;
Right merrily the swift hours went
With song, and jest, and story.

They sang the song of Old John Brown,
Whose march goes on forever;
It made them thirsty for renown,
It fired them with endeavor.
So much of that great heart lives still,
So much of that great spirit-
His very name shoots like a thrill
Through all men when they hear it.

They found in tales of march and fight
New courage as they listened,
And while they watched the weird camp-light,
And while the still stars glistened,
Like some stern comrade's voice, there broke
And swept from hill to valley
'Til all the sleeping echoes woke,-
The bugle's call to rally!

'To arms! to arms! the foe is near!'
Ah, brave hearts were ye equal
To hearing through without one fear
The whole tale's bloody sequel?
The laurel wreath, the victor's cry,
These are not all of glory;
The gaping wound, the glazing eye,
They, too, are in the story.

And when again their tents were spread,

And by campfires they slumbered,
The missing faces of the dead
The living ones outnumbered.
And yet, their memories animate
The hearts that still survive them,
And holy seems the task, and great,
For one hour to revive them.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Change

She leaned out into the soft June weather,
With her long loose tresses the night breeze played;
Her eyes were as blue as the bells on the heather:
Oh, what is so fair as a fair young maid!

She folded her hands, like the leaves of a lily,
'My life, ' she said, 'is a night in June,
Fair and quiet, and calm and stillly;
Bring me a change, O changeful moon!

'Who would drift on a lake forever?
Young hearts weary - it is not strange,
And sigh for the beautiful bounding river;
New moon, true moon, bring me a change! '

The rose that rivalled her maiden blushes
Dropped from her breast, at a strangers feet;
Only a glance; but the hot blood rushes
To mantle a fair face, shy and sweet.

To and fro, while the moon is waning,
They walk, and the stars shine on above;
And one is in earnest, and one is feigning -
Oh, what is so sweet as a sweet young love?

A young life crushed, and a young heart broken,
A bleak wind blows through the lovely bower,
And all that remains of the love vows spoken -
Is the trampled leaf of a faded flower.

The night is dark, for the moon is failing -
And what is so pale as a pale old moon?
Cold is the wind through the tree tops wailing -
Woe that the change should come so soon.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Christian's New Year Prayer

Thou Christ of mine, Thy gracious ear low bending
Through these glad New Year days,
To catch the countless prayers to heaven ascending –
For e'en hard hearts do raise
Some secret wish for fame, or gold, or power,
Or freedom from all care –
Dear, patient Christ, who listeneth hour on hour,
Hear now a Christian's prayer.

Let this young year, silent, walks beside me,
Be as a means of grace
To lead me up, no matter what betide me,
Nearer the Master's face.
If it need be ere I reach the Fountain
Where living waters play,
My feet should bleed from sharp stones on the mountain,
Then cast them in my way.

If my vain soul needs blows and bitter losses
To shape it for Thy crown,
Then bruise it, burn it, burden it with crosses,
With sorrows bear it down.
Do what Thou wilt to mould me to Thy pleasure,
And if I should complain,
Heap full of anguish yet another measure
Until I smile at pain.
Send dangers – deaths! but tell me how to dare them;
Enfold me in Thy care.
Send trials, tears! but give me strength to bear them –
This is a Christian's prayer.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The City

I own the charms of lovely Nature; still,
In human nature more delight I find.
Though sweet the murmuring voices of the rill,
I much prefer the voices of my kind.

I like the roar of cities. In the mart,
Where busy toilers strive for place and gain,
I seem to read humanity's great heart,
And share its hopes, its pleasures, and its pain.

The rush of hurrying trains that cannot wait,
The tread of myriad feet, all say to me:
'You are the architect of your own fate;
Toil on, hope on, and dare to do and be.'

I like the jangled music of the loud
Bold bells; the whistle's sudden shrill reply;
And there is inspiration in a crowd-
A magnetism flashed from eye to eye.

My sorrows all seem lightened and my joys
Augmented when the comrade world walks near;
Close to mankind my soul best keeps its poise.
Give me the great town's bustle, strife, and noise,
And let who will, hold Nature's calm more dear.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Coming Man

Oh, not for the great departed,
Who formed our country's laws,
And not for the bravest-hearted
Who died in freedom's cause,
And not for some living hero
To whom all bend the knee,
My muse would raise her song of praise-
But for the man to be.

For out of the strife which woman
Is passing through to-day,
A man that is more than human
Shall yet be born, I say.
A man in whose pure spirit
No dross of self will lurk;
A man who is strong to cope with wrong,
A man who is proud to work.

A man with hope undaunted,
A man with godlike power,
Shall come when he most is wanted,
Shall come at the needed hour.
He shall silence the din and clamor
Of clan disputing with clan,
And toil's long fight with purse-proud might
Shall triumph through this man.

I know he is coming, coming,
To help, to guide, to save.
Though I hear no martial drumming,
And see no flags that wave.
But the great soul travail of woman,
And the bold free thought unfurled,
Are heralds that say he is on the way-
The coming man of the world.

Mourn not for vanished ages
With their great heroic men,
Who dwell in history's pages

And live in the poet's pen.
For the grandest times are before us,
And the world is yet to see
The noblest worth of this old earth
In the men that are to be.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Common Lot

It is a common fate – a woman's lot –
To waste on one the riches of her soul,
Who takes the wealth she gives him, but cannot
Repay the interest, and much less the whole.

As I look up into your eyes, and wait
For some response to my fond gaze and touch,
It seems to me there is no sadder fate
Than to be doomed to loving overmuch.

Are you not kind? Ah, yes, so very kind –
So thoughtful of my comfort, and so true.
Yes, yes, dear heart; but I, not being blind,
Know that I am not loved, as I love you.

One tenderer word, a little longer kiss,
Will fill my soul with music and with song;
And if you seem abstracted, or I miss
The heart-tone from your voice, my world goes wrong.

And oftentimes you think me childish – weak –
When at some thoughtless word the tears will start;
You cannot understand how aught you speak
Has power to stir the depths of my poor heart.

I cannot help it, dear – I wish I could,
Or feign indifference where I now adore;
For if I seemed to love you less, you would,
Manlike, I have no doubt, love me the more.

'Tis a sad gift, that much applauded thing,
A constant heart; for fact doth daily prove
That constancy finds oft a cruel sting,
While fickle natures win the deeper love.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Coquette

Alone she sat with her accusing heart,
That, like a restless comrade frightened sleep,
And every thought that found her, left a dart
That hurt her so, she could not even weep.
Her heart that once had been a cup well filled
With love's red wine, save for some drops of gall
She knew was empty; though it had not spilled
Its sweets for one, but wasted them on all.
She stood upon the grave of her dead truth,
And saw her soul's bright armor red with rust,
And knew that all the riches of her youth
Were Dead Sea apples, crumbling into dust.
Love that had turned to bitter, biting scorn,
Hearthstones despoiled, and homes made desolate,
Made her cry out that she was ever born,
To loathe her beauty and to curse her fate
Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Creed

Whoever was begotten by pure love,
And came desired and welcome into life,
Is of immaculate conception. He
Whose heart is full of tenderness and truth,
Who loves mankind more than he loves himself,
And cannot find room in his heart for hate,
May be another Christ. We all may be
The Saviours of the world if we believe
In the Divinity which dwells in us
And worship it, and nail our grosser selves,
Our tempers, greeds, and our unworthy aims,
Upon the cross. Who giveth love to all;
Pays kindness for unkindness, smiles for frowns;
And lends new courage to each fainting heart,
And strengthens hope and scatters joy abroad—
He, too, is a Redeemer, Son of God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Creed To Be

Our thoughts are molding unmade spheres,
And, like a blessing or a curse,
They thunder down the formless years,
And ring throughout the universe.

We build our futures, by the shape
Of our desires, and not by acts.
There is no pathway of escape;
No priest-made creeds can alter facts.

Salvation is not begged or bought;
Too long this selfish hope sufficed;
Too long man reeked with lawless thought,
And leaned upon a tortured Christ.

Like shriveled leaves, these worn out creeds
Are dropping from Religion's tree;
The world begins to know its needs,
And souls are crying to be free.

Free from the load of fear and grief,
Man fashioned in an ignorant age;
Free from the ache of unbelief
He fled to in rebellious rage.

No church can bind him to the things
That fed the first crude souls, evolved;
For, mounting up on daring wings,
He questions mysteries all unsolved.

Above the chant of priests, above
The blatant voice of braying doubt,
He hears the still, small voice of Love,
Which sends its simple message out.

And clearer, sweeter, day by day,
Its mandate echoes from the skies,
"Go roll the stone of self away,
And let the Christ within thee rise."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Cry Of The People

Fire! Fire! Fire! the cry rang out on the night air,
The roving winds caught it up, and the very heavens resounded.
Louder and louder still, by voices grown hoarse with terror,
The cry went up and out and a nation stood still to listen.

'Come, for the love of God, and help us fight the demon!
Come and help us to chain the fiend that is making us homeless:
His hot and scorching breath has melted our hard-earned fortunes,
And, not contented with this, he is snatching our loved ones from us.
The air is thick with the stream that pours in clouds from his nostrils:
Come, for the love of God, and help us to fetter or slay him.'

The ear of the Nation heard, the heart of the Nation responded:
The smith left anvil and forge, and hastened to render assistance;
The clergyman went from the pulpit, the lawyer went from his office,
The houses of trade were closed, and a Nation was in commotion.
For the hungry tongue of Fire was lapping the skirts of the city,
The royal Queen of the West, and her people were crying in anguish.

Nobly and well they worked, till they chained and fettered the demon,
Bound him hand and foot, and hindered his work of destruction.
Over the land on wires, over the mighty cable,
Flashed the terrible truth: 'Ruin and destitution
Reigns where but yesterday there was lavish wealth and plenty.'
And up from the South came aid, and aid came down from the Northland,
And it came from East and West, wholesome food for the hungry,
Shelter for houseless heads, and clothes to cover the naked.

Hark! there's a sound abroad, like the cry of a suffering people,
Loud and louder it swells, and echoes from ocean to ocean,
The raving winds catch it up, and from throats that are hoarse with crying
The wail goes up and out, but is answered only by echoes.

'Come for the love of God, and help us to fetter the demon

That is taking the bread from our mouths, and the mouths of our helpless children;

He is walking abroad in the land, and all things perish before him:
Homesteads crumble away, and fortunes vanish like snow wreaths;
And, not contented with this, he is slaying our best and our fairest,
Stealing the brains of the wise, and bringing the young to the gallows;
He is making the home forlorn, and crowding the jails and the prisons,
He moves the hand of the thief-he drives the assassin's dagger.'

The ear of the Nation is deaf, the heart of the Nation is hardened:
The smith at his anvil and forge sings in the midst of his labor;
The clergyman stands in his pulpit, and prays for the soul of the sinner,
But says no word of the fiend who wrecked and ruined the mortal;
The lawyer smokes his cigar or sips his glass of Burgundy;
The merchant, day after day, thinks only of buying and selling.

And up and down through the land, night and day, walks the demon,
Poverty, sorrow, and shame follow the print of his footsteps.
The cry of the people goes up, a cry of anguish and pleading,
But only a few respond, a few too feeble to chain him.
The multitude stands aloof, or aids the fiend of destruction,
While he tramples under his hoofs hundreds and thousands of victims-
And the multitude's ear is deaf to the wail of the beggared orphans.

Shame, oh! shame to the Nation that leaves the demon of Traffic
Free to roam through the land, and pillage and rob the helpless.
Shame to the multitude that will not render assistance,
But leaves a few to do what many can only accomplish.

Arouse! ye listless hosts! and answer the suffering people!
Spring to the aid of the million, as ye sprang to the aid of the thousand:
As you fettered the demon Fire, fetter the demon Traffic,
Who slays his tens of thousands, where the other slew only hundreds.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Deadliest Sin

There are not many sins when once we sift them.
In actions of evolving human souls
Striving to reach high goals
And falling backward into dust and mire,
Some element we find that seems to lift them
Above our condemnation-even higher
Into the realm of pity and compassion.
So beautiful a thing as love itself can fashion
A chain of sins; descending to desire,
It wanders into dangerous paths, and leads
To most unholy deeds,
And light-struck, walks in madness toward the night.

Wrong oft-times is an over-ripened right,
A rank weed grown from some neglected flower,
The lightning uncontrolled: flames meant for joy
And beauty, used to ravage and destroy.
For sins like these repentance can atone.
There is one sin alone
Which seems all unforgivable, because
It springs from no temptation and no need
And no desire, save to make sweet faith bleed,
And to defame God's laws.
Oh! viler than the murderer or the thief
Who slays the body and who robs the purse,
Is he who strives to kill the mind's belief
And rob it of its hope
Of life beyond this little pain-filled span.
God has no curse
Quite dark enough to punish such a man,
Who, seeing how souls grope
And suffer in this world of mighty losses,
And how hearts stagger on beneath life's crosses,
Yet strives to rob them of their staff of faith
And make them think dark death
Ends all existence; think the worshipped child
Cold in its mother's arms is but a clod
And has not gone to God;

That souls united by love undefiled
And holy can by death be torn asunder
To meet no more.
It must be true that under
This earth of ours there lies a Purgatory
For those who seek to rob grief of the glory
That shines through hope of life immortal. In
Sin's lexicon this is the vilest sin-
Needless and cruel, ugly, gaunt and mean,
Without one poor excuse on which to lean,
A vandal sin, that with no hope of gain
Finds pleasure only in another's pain.

God! though all other sins on earth persist,
Strike dumb the blatant, loud-mouthed atheist.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Destroyer

With care, and skill, and cunning art
She parried Time's malicious dart,
And kept the years at bay,
Till passion entered in her heart
And aged her in a day!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Dirge Of The Winds

The four winds of earth, the North, South, East, and West,
Shrieked and groaned, sobbed and wailed, like the soul of unrest.

I stood in the dusk of the twilight alone,
And heard them go by with a terrible moan.

'What is it, O winds! that is grieving you so?

Come tell me your sorrow, and tell me your woe!'

'What is it?' I questioned. They shuddered, and said:

'We mourn for the dead! Oh! we mourn for the dead-

'For the dishonored dead that the wine-cup has slain;

For the wrecks that are lying on hill and on plain;

For the beautiful faces, so young and so fair,

That are lying down under the green grasses there;

For the masterful minds and beautiful souls

That were shattered, and drowned, and debased in the bowls;

For the graves that are scattered broadcast o'er the land,

The graves that were dug by King Alcohol's hand.

For the scenes that we saw, as we came on our way,

The sights and the sounds that degraded the day.

East and West, North and South, the tale is the same-

A tale of debasement, and sorrow, and shame.

And this is our sorrow, and this is our woe:

It is this, it is this, that is grieving us so.'

Three winds hushed their voices. The East wind alone

Told her tale in a moaning and sorrowful tone:

'I came yesterday, from the great Eastern land,

Where the mountains are high and the cities are grand;

But the devil walks there, night and day, in the streets,

And he offers red wine to each soul that he greets.

They drink, and the record of crimes and of sins,

And the record of shame and of sorrow begins.

I sped from the sin-burdened East to the West,

But I find not of balm for my agonized breast.

Wine blackens the West as it blackens the East.'

And the voice of the wind sobbed and wailed as it ceased.

'I come from the West!' another voice cried,
'Where the rivers are broad, and the prairies are wide.
There is vigor and strength in that beautiful land,
But the devil walks there with a bowl in his hand,
And the strongest grow weak, and the mightiest fall,
In the damnable reign of this King Alcohol.'

He ceased, and another came mournfully forth,
And spake: 'I came from the land of the North,
Where the streamlets are ice and the hillocks are snow,
And little of passions in mortal veins flow.
But the devil walks there in that land, day and night,
And he covers his face with a mask that is white;
And he smiles as he pours out the wine for his prey,
Nor counts up the legions he kills every day.'

The voice of the South wind spoke now in a sigh:
'And I, too, can tell of the thousands that die
By the hand of this king, in my soft, southern clime,
Where the sweet waters flow in a musical chime.
The devil walks there by King Alcohol's side,
And he pours out the wine till it flows in a tide;
It rushes along with a gurgling sound,
And thousands are caught in the current and drowned.'

Again the four winds cried aloud in their woe:
'It is this, it is this, that is grieving us so.
We see the mad legions go down to the grave,
Unable to warn them, unable to save,
We shriek and we groan, we shudder in pain,
For the souls that are lost, for the youths that are slain;
And the river flows onward, the river wine-red,
And we mourn for the dead, oh! we mourn for the dead.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Discontented Manicure Scissors

Said the manicure scissors one day,
'The shears always have their own way,
And I think it absurd
That I am deterred
From entering into life's fray.

My task might be jolly for snails,
But I must confess that it fails
To give pleasure to me;
I am sick as can be
Of snipping the ends of pink nails.

I want to do work like the shears!
So the scissors set out it appears,
And very much wroth
They tried to cut cloth,
And so split themselves open, my dears.

And the cloth, well you should have seen that;
It looked as if gnawed by a rat.
Now little folks, you
Must not think you can do
Whatever your elders are at.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Duel

Oh many a duel the world has seen
That was bitter with hate, that was red with gore.
But I sing of a duel by far more cruel
Than ever a poet was sung before.
It was waged by night, yea by day and by night,
With never a pause or halt or rest,
And the curious spot where this battle was fought
Was the throbbing heart in a woman's breast.

There met two rivals in deadly strife,
And they fought for this woman so pale and proud.
One was a man in the prime of his life,
And one was a corpse in a moldy shroud;
One wrapped in a sheet from his head to his feet,
The other one clothed in worldly fashion;
But a rival to dread is a man who is dead,
If he has been loved in life with passion.

The living lover he battled with sighs,
He strove for the woman with words that burned,
While stiff and stark lay the corpse in the dark,
And silently yearned and yearned and yearned.
One spoke of the rapture that life still held
For hearts that yielded to love's desire,
And one through the cold grave's earthly mold
Sent thoughts of a past that were fraught with fire.

The living lover seized hold of her hands –
"You are mine, " he cried, "and we will not part! "
But she felt the clutch of the dead man's touch
On the tense-drawn strings of her aching heart.
Yet the touch was of ice, and she shrank with fear –
Oh! the hands of the dead are cold, so cold –
And warm were the arms that waited near
To gather her close in their clinging fold.

And warm was the light in the living eyes,
But the eyes of the dead, how they stare and stare!
With sudden surrender she turned to the tender

And passionate lover who wooed her there.
Farewell to sorrow, hail, sweet to-morrow!
The battle was over, the duel was done.
They swooned in the blisses of love's fond kisses,
And the dead man stared on in the dark alone.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Duet

I was smoking a cigarette;
Maud, my wife, and the tenor McKey
Were singing together a blithe duet,
And days it were better I should forget
 Came suddenly back to me,
Days when life seemed a gay masque ball
And to love and be loved as the sum of it all.

As they sang together the whole scene fled,
The room's rich hangings, the sweet home air,
Stately Maud, with her proud blonde head,
And I seemed to see in her place instead
 A wealth of blue-black hair,
And a face, ah! your face, - yours, Lisette,
A face it were wiser I should forget.

We were back – well, no matter when or where,
But you remember, I know, Lisette,
I saw you, dainty, and debonnaire,
With the very same look you used to wear
 In the days I should forget.
And your lips, as red as the vintage we quaffed,
Were pearl-edged bumpers of wine when you laughed.

Two small slippers with big rosettes
Peeped out under your kilt-skirt there,
While we sat smoking our cigarettes
(Oh, I shall be dust when my heart forgets!)
 And singing that selfsame air;
And between the verses for interlude,
I kissed your throat, and your shoulders nude.

You were so full of a subtle fire,
You were so warm and so sweet, Lisette;
You were everything men admire,
And there were no fetters to make us tire;
 For you were – a pretty grisette.
 But you loved, as only such natures can,
With a love that makes heaven of hell for a man.



They have ceased singing that old duet,
Stately Maud and the tenor McKey.
'You are burning your coat with your cigarette,
And qu'avez-vous, dearest, your lids are wet, '
Maud says, as she leans o'er me.
And I smile, and lie to her, husband-wise,
'Oh, it is nothing but smoke in my eyes.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Empty Bowl

I held the golden vessel of my soul
And prayed that God would fill it from on high.
Day after day the importuning cry
Grew stronger-grew, a heaven-accusing dole
Because no sacred waters laved my bowl.
'So full the fountain, Lord, wouldst Thou deny
The little needed for a soul's supply?
I ask but this small portion of Thy whole.'
Then from the vast invisible Somewhere,
A voice, as one love-authorized by Him,
Spoke, and the tumult of my heart was stilled.
'Who wants the waters must the bowl prepare;
Pour out the self, that chokes it to the brim,
But emptied vessels, from the Source are filled.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Engine

Into the gloom of the deep, dark night,
With panting breath and a startled scream;
Swift as a bird in sudden flight
Darts this creature of steel and steam.

Awful dangers are lurking nigh,
Rocks and chasms are near the track,
But straight by the light of its great white eye
It speeds through the shadows, dense and black.

Terrible thoughts and fierce desires
Trouble its mad heart many an hour,
Where burn and smoulder the hidden fires,
Coupled ever with might and power.

It hates, as a wild horse hates the rein,
The narrow track by vale and hill;
And shrieks with a cry of startled pain,
And longs to follow its own wild will.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Englishman

Born in the flesh, and bred in the bone,
Some of us harbour still
A New World pride: and we flaunt or hide
The Spirit of Bunker Hill.
We claim our place, as a separate race,
Or a self-created clan:
Till there comes a day when we like to say,
'We are kin of the Englishman.'

For under the front that seems so cold,
And the voice that is wont to storm,
We are certain to find a big, broad mind
And a heart that is soft and warm.
And he carries his woes in a lordly way,
As only the great souls can:
And it makes us glad when in truth we say,
'We are kin of the Englishman.'

He slams his door in the face of the world,
If he thinks the world too bold.
He will even curse; but he opens his purse
To the poor, and the sick, and the old.
He is slow in giving to woman the vote,
And slow to pick up her fan;
But he gives her room in an hour of doom,
And dies-like an Englishman.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Falling Of Thrones

Above the din of commerce, above the clamor and rattle
Of labor disputing with riches, of Anarchists' threats and groans,
Above the hurry and hustle and roar of that bloodless battle,
Where men are fighting for riches. I hear the falling of thrones.

I see no savage host, I hear no martial drumming,
But down in the dust at our feet lie the useless crowns of kings;
And the mighty spirit of Progress is steadily coming, coming,
And the flag of one republic abroad to the world he flings.

The Universal Republic, where worth, not birth, is royal;
Where the lowliest born may climb on a self-made ladder to fame;
Where the highest and proudest born, if he be not true and loyal,
Shall find no masking title to cover and gild his shame.

Not with the bellow of guns and not with sabres whetting,
But with growing minds of men is waged this swordless fray;
While over the dim horizon the sun of royalty, setting,
Lights, with a dying splendor, the humblest toiler's way.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Farewell

'Tis not the untried soldier new to danger
Who fears to enter into active strife.
Amidst the roll of drums, the cannon's rattle,
He craves adventure, and thinks not of life.

But the scarred vetran knows the price of glory,
He does not court the conflict or the fray.
He has no longing to rehearse that gory
And most dramatic act, or wars dark play.

He who to love has always been a stranger,
All unafraid may linger in your spell.
My heart has known the warfare, and its danger.
It craves no repitition - so farewell.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Farewell To Clarimonde

Adieu, Romauld! But thou canst not forget me.
Although no more I haunt thy dreams at night,
Thy hungering heart forever must regret me,
And starve for those lost moments of delight.
Naught shall avail thy priestly rites and duties,
Nor fears of Hell, nor hopes of Heaven beyond:
Before the Cross shall rise my fair form's beauties—
The lips, the limbs, the eyes of Clarimonde.
Like gall the wine sipped from the sacred chalice
Shall taste to one who knew my red mouth's bliss,
When Youth and Beauty dwelt in Love's own palace,
And life flowed on in one eternal kiss.
Through what strange ways I come, dear heart, to reach thee,
From viewless lands, by paths no man e'er trod!
I braved all fears, all dangers dared, to teach thee
A love more mighty than thy love of God.
Think not in all His Kingdom to discover
Such joys, Romauld, as ours, when fierce yet fond
I clasped thee—kissed thee—crowned thee my one lover:
Thou canst not find another Clarimonde.
I knew all arts of love: he who possessed me
Possessed all women, and could never tire;
A new life dawned for him who once caressed me;
Satiety itself I set on fire.
Inconstancy I chained: men died to win me;
Kings cast by crowns for one hour on my breast:
And all the passionate tide of love within me
I gave to thee, Romauld. Wert thou not blest?
Yet, for the love of God, thy hand hath riven
Our welded souls. But not in prayer well conned,
Not in thy dearly-purchased peace of Heaven,
Canst thou forget those hours with Clarimonde.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Flowers Have Tender Little Souls

The flowers have tender little souls
That love, rejoice, aspire.
Each star that on its orbit rolls
Feels infinite desire.
The diamond longs to scintillate
When hid beneath the sod.
The universe is animate
With consciousness of God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Foolish Elm

The bold young Autumn came riding along
One day where an elm-tree grew.
'You are fair,' he said, as she bent down her head,
'Too fair for your robe's dull hue.
You are far too young for a garb so old;
Your beauty needs color and sheen.
Oh, I would clothe you in scarlet and gold
Befitting the grace of a queen.

'For one little kiss on your lips, sweet elm,
For one little kiss, no more,
I would give you, I swear, a robe more fair
Than ever a princess wore.
One little kiss on those lips, my pet,
And lo! you shall stand, I say,
Queen of the forest, and, better yet,
Queen of my heart always.'

She tossed her head, but he took the kiss-
'Tis the way of lovers bold-
And a gorgeous dress for that sweet caress
He gave ere the morning was old.
For a week and a day she ruled a queen
In beauty and splendid attire;
For a week and a day she was loved, I ween,
With the love that is born of desire.

Then bold-eyed Autumn went on his way
In search of a tree more fair;
And mob winds tattered her garments and scattered
Her finery here and there.
Poor and faded and ragged and cold
She rocked in her wild distress,
And longed for the dull green gown she had sold
For her fickle lover's caress.

And the days went by and Winter came,
And his tyrannous tempests beat
On the shivering tree, whose robes of flame
He had trampled under his feet.
I saw her reach up to the mocking skies
Her poor arms, bare and thin;
Ah, well-a-day! it is ever the way
With a woman who trades with sin.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Giddy Girl

A giddy young maiden with nimble feet,
Heigh-ho! alack and alas!
Declared she would far rather dance than eat,
And the truth of it came to pass.
For she danced all day and she danced all night;
She danced till the green earth faded white;
She danced ten partners out of breath;
She danced the eleventh one quite to death;
And still she redowaed up and down-
The giddiest girl in town.
With one, two, three; one, two, three; one, two, three-kick;
Chassée back, chassée back, whirl around quick.

The name of this damsel ended with E-
Heigh-ho! alack and a-day!
And she was as fair as a maiden need be,
Till she danced her beauty away.
She danced her big toes out of joint;
She danced her other toes all to a point;
She danced out slipper and boot and shoe;
She danced till the bones of her feet came through.
And still she redowaed, waltzed and whirled-
The giddiest girl in the world.
With one, two, three; one, two, three; one, two, three-kick;
Chassée back, chassée back, whirl around quick.

Now the end of my story is sad to relate-
Heigh-ho! and away we go!
For this beautiful maiden's final fate
Is shrouded in gloom and woe.
She danced herself into a patent top;
She whirled and whirled till she could not stop;
She danced and bounded and sprang so far,
That she stuck at last on a pointed star;
And there she must dance till the Judgment Day,
And after it, too, for she danced away
Her soul, you see, so she has no place anywhere out of space,

With her one, two, three; one, two, three; one, two, three-kick;
Chassée back, chassée back, whirl about quick.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Girl Of The U.S.A.

Oh! the maidens of France are certainly fine,
And I think every fellow will state
That the 'what-you-may-call-it' coiffured way
They put up their hair is great!
And they know how to dress, and they wear their clothes
In a fetching, frenchy way;
And yet to me, there is just one girl-
The girl of the U.S.A.

I like to listen when French girls talk,
Though I'm weak in the 'parlez-vous' game;
But the language of youth in every land
Is somehow about the same,
And I've learned a regular code of shrugs,
And they seem to know what I say!
But the girl whose voice goes straight to my heart
Is the girl of the U.S.A.

I haven't a word but words of praise
For these dear little girls of France;
And I will confess that I've felt a thrill
As I faced their line of advance!
But I haven't been taken a prisoner yet,
And I won't be, until the day
When I carry my colours to lay at the feet
Of a girl of the U.S.A.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Gossips

A rose in my garden, the sweetest and fairest,
Was hanging her head through the long golden hours;
And early one morning I saw her tears falling,
And heard a low gossiping talk in the bowers.
The yellow Nasturtium, a spinster all faded,
Was telling a Lily what ailed the poor Rose:
'That wild roving Bee who was hanging about her,
Has jilted her squarely, as everyone knows.

'I knew when he came, with his singing and sighing,
His airs and his speeches so fine and so sweet,
Just how it would end; but no one would believe me,
For all were quite ready to fall at his feet.'
'Indeed, you are wrong,' said the Lily-belle proudly,
'I cared nothing for him, he called on me once,
And would have come often, no doubt, if I'd asked him,
But, though he was handsome, I thought him a dunce.'

'Now, now, that's not true,' cried the tall Oleander.
'He has traveled and seen every flower that grows;
And one who has supped in the garden of princes,
We all might have known would not wed with the Rose.'
'But wasn't she proud when he showed her attention?
And she let him caress her,' said sly Mignonette;
'And I used to see it and blush for her folly.
The silly thing thinks he will come to her yet.'

'I thought he was splendid,' said pretty pert Larkspur,
'So dark, and so grand with that gay cloak of gold;
But he tried once to kiss me, the impudent fellow!
And I got offended; I thought him too bold.'
'Oh, fie!' laughed the Almond, 'that does for a story.
Though I hang down my head, yet I see all that goes;
And I saw you reach out trying hard to detain him,
But he just tapped your cheek and flew by to the Rose.

'He cared nothing for her, he only was flirting
To while away time, as I very well knew;
So I turned a cold shoulder on all his advances,
Because I was certain his heart was untrue.'
'The Rose is served right for her folly in trusting
An oily-tongued stranger,' quoth proud Columbine.
'I knew what he was, and thought once I would warn her,
But of course the affair was no business of mine.'

'Oh, well,' cried the Peony, shrugging her shoulders,
'I saw all along that the Bee was a flirt;
But the Rose has been always so praised and so petted,
I thought a good lesson would do her no hurt.'
Just then came the sound of a love-song sung sweetly,
I saw my proud Rose lifting up her bowed head;
And the talk of the gossips was hushed in a moment,
And the flowers all listened to hear what was said.

And the dark, handsome Bee, with his cloak o'er his shoulder,
Came swift through the sunlight and kissed the sad Rose,
And whispered: 'My darling, I've roved the world over,
And you are the loveliest flower that grows.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Hammock's Complaint

Who thinks how desolate and strange
To me must seem the autumn's change,
When housed in attic or in chest,
A lonely and unwilling guest,
I lie through nights of bleak December,
And think in silence, and remember.

I think of hempen fields, where I
Once played with insects floating by,
And joyed alike in sun and rain,
Unconscious of approaching pain.
I dwell upon my later lot,
Where, swung in some secluded spot
Between two tried and trusted trees,
All summer long I wooed the breeze.
With song of bee and call of bird
And lover's secrets overheard,
And sight and scent of blooming flowers,
To fill the happy sunlight's hours.
When verdant fields grow bare and brown,
When forest leaves come raining down,
When frost has mated with the weather
And all the birds go south together,
When drying boats turn up their keels,
Who wonders how the hammock feels?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Hen's Complaint

Beside an incubator stood
The would-be mother of a brood.

With drooping wings and nodding head,
These are the clucked-out words she said:

'O, vile invention of the age,
You fill me with a burning rage!

Unfeeling monster, moved by steam,
You rob me of life's sweetest dream!

Deprived of offspring which I crave,
I must go childless to my grave.

My aching wings which long to cover
A chirping brood of nestlings over,

No more may know that comfort sweet,
Since chickens may be hatched by heat.

Three weeks of quiet expectation
(Full many a flighty hen's salvation)

I am denied, for now men say
A hen should be content to lay,

And furnish eggs to incubate,
And setting hens are out of date.

Alas, for such a cruel fashion-'
The angry fowl paused, choked with passion,

While from behind a strong hand caught her
And doused her in a tub of water.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Hour

This is the world's stupendous hour-
The supreme moment for the race
To see the emptiness of power,
The worthlessness of wealth and place,
To see the purpose and the plan
Conceived by God for growing man.

And they who see and comprehend
That ultimate and lofty aim
Will wait in patience for the end,
Knowing injustice cannot claim
One lasting victory, or control
Laws that bar progress for the whole.

This is an epoch-making time;
God thunders through the universe
A message glorious and sublime,
At once a blessing and a curse.
Blessings for those who seek His light,
Curses for those whose law is might.

Ephemeral as the sunset glow
Is human grandeur. Mortal life
Was given that souls might seek and know
Immortal truths; and through the strife
That shakes the earth from land to land
The wise shall hear and understand.

Out of the awful holocaust,
Out of the whirlwind and the flood,
Out of old creeds to Bedlam tossed,
Shall rise a new earth washed in blood-
A new race filled with spirit power,
This is the world's stupendous hour.

The Island Of Endless Play

Said Willie to Tom 'Let us hie away
To the wonderful Island of Endless Play.

It lies off the border of 'No School Land'
And abounds with pleasures, I understand.

There boys go swimming whenever they please
In a lovely river right under the trees.

And marbles are free, no one has to buy;
And kites of all sizes are ready to fly.

We sail down the Isthmus of Idle Delight,
We sail and we sail for a day and a night.

And then if favored by billows and breeze
We land in the harbor of Do-as-you-please.

And their lies the Island of Endless Play
With no one to say to us Must or Nay.

Books are not known in that land so fair,
Teachers are stoned if they set foot there.

Hurrah for the Island so glad and free,
That is the country for you and me.'

So away went Willie and Tom together
On a pleasure boat, in the lazy weather,
And they sailed in the teeth of a friendly breeze
Right into the harbor of 'Do-as-you-please!'
Where boats and tackle and marbles and kites
Were waiting them there in this Land of Delights.
They dwelt on the Island of Endless Play
For five long years; then one sad day
A strange dark ship sailed up to the strand,
And 'Ho! for the voyage to Stupid Land.'

The Captain cried with a terrible noise

As he seized the frightened and struggling boys,
And threw them into the dark Ship's hold,
And off and away sailed the Captain bold.

They vainly begged him to let them out,
He answered only with scoff and shout.

'Boys that don't study or work,' said he,
'Must sail one day down the Ignorant Sea

To Stupid Land by the No-Book strait,
With Captain Time on the Pitiless Fate.'

Then he let out the sails and away went the three,
Over the waters of Ignorant Sea.

Out and away to Stupid Land,
And they live there yet, I understand.
And there's where every one goes, they say,
Who seeks the Island of Endless Play.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Jealous Gods

Oh life is wonderful,' she said,
'And all my world is bright;
Can Paradise show fairer skies,
Or more effulgent light?'
(Speak lower, lower, mortal heart,
The jealous gods may hear.)

She turned for answer; but his gaze
Cut past her like a lance,
And shone like flame on one who came
With radiant glance for glance.
(You spoke too loud, O mortal heart,
The jealous gods were near.)

They walked through green and sunlit ways;
And yet the earth seemed black,
For there were three, where two should be;
So runs the world, alack.
(The listening gods, the jealous gods,
They want no Edens here.)

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Kettle

There's many a house of grandeur,
With turret, tower and dome,
That knows not peace or comfort,
And does not prove a home.
I do not ask for splendour
To crown my daily lot,
But this I ask – a kitchen
Where the kettles always hot.

If things are not all ship-shape,
I do not fume or fret,
A little clean disorder
Does not my nerves upset.
But one thing is essential,
Or seems so in my thought,
And that's a tidy kitchen
Where the kettle's always hot.

In my Aunt Hattie's household,
Though skies outside are drear,
Though times are dark and troubled,
You'll always find good cheer.
And in her quaint old kitchen –
The very homiest spot –
The kettle's always singing,
The water's always hot.

And if you have a headache,
Whate'er the hour may be,
There is no tedious waiting
To get your cup of tea.
I don't know how she does it –
Some magic she has caught –
For the kitchen's cool in summer,
Yet the kettle's always hot.

Oh, there's naught else so dreary
In household kingdom found
As a cold and sullen kettle

That does not make a sound.
And I think that love is lacking
In the hearts in such a spot,
Or the kettle would be singing
And the water would be hot.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Khaki Boys Who Were Not At The Front

Oh! it is not just the men who face the guns,
Not the fighters at the Front alone, to-day
Who will bring the longed-for close to the bloody fray, for those
Could not carry on that fray without the ones
Who are working at war's problems far away.

You are all our splendid heroes in the strife,
And we class you with the warriors maimed and scarred,
Though you never have been near enough the battle din to hear,
While you laboured in the dull routine of life
In your khaki suits with sleeves that are not barred.

You have offered up yourselves to save the world;
You have felt the abnegation of the Christ:
And whatever work you do is a noble work and true;
Though it be not done with banners all unfurled,
You will find it has, in sight of God, sufficed.

While you carry back no medals when you go,
Not without you had the fighters borne war's brunt:
So just lift your heads uncowed, for your country will be proud
And its lasting love and honour will bestow
On the khaki boys who were not at the Front.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The King And The Siren

The harsh King--Winter--sat upon the hills,
And reigned and ruled the earth right royally.
He locked the rivers, lakes, and all the rills--
"I am no puny, maudlin king," quoth he,
"But a stern monarch, born to rule, and reign;
And I'll show my power to the end.
The summer's flowery retinue I've slain,
And taken the bold, free North Wind for my friend.

"Spring, Summer, Autumn--feeble queens they were,
With their vast troops of flowers, birds and bees,
Soft winds, that made the long green grasses stir--
They lost their own identity in things like these!
I scorn them all! nay, I defy them all!
And none can wrest the sceptre from my hand.
The trusty North Wind answers to my call,
And breathes this icy breath upon the land."

The Siren--South Wind--listening the while,
Now floated airily across the lea.
"Oh King!" she cried, with tender tone and smile,
"I come to do all homage unto thee.
In all the sunny region, whence I came,
I find none like thee, King, so brave and grand!
Thine is a well deserved, unrivaled fame;
I kiss, in awe, dear King, thy cold white hand."

Her words were pleasing, and most fair her face.
He listened wrapt, to her soft-whispered praise.
She nestled nearer, in her Siren grace.
"Dear King," she said, "henceforth my voice shall raise
But songs of thy unrivaled splendor! Lo!
How white thy brow is! How thy garments shine!
I tremble 'neath thy beaming glance, for Oh,
Thy wondrous beauty mak'st thee seem divine."

The rain King listened, in a trance of bliss,
To this most sweet-voiced Siren from the South,
She nestled close, and pressed a lingering kiss

Upon the stern white pallor of his mouth.
She hung upon his breast, she pressed his cheek,
And he was nothing loth to hold her there,
While she such tender, loving words did speak,
And combed his white locks with her fingers fair.

And so she bound him, in her Siren wiles,
And stole his strength, with every kiss she gave,
And stabbed him through and through with tender smiles,
And with her tender words she dug his grave;
And then she left him, old, and weak, and blind,
And unlocked all the rivers, lakes, and rills,
While the queen Spring, with her whole troop behind,
Of flowers, and birds, and bees, came o'er the hills.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The King Of Candyland

Have you heard of the king of Candy land?
Well, listen while I sing,
He has pages on every hand,
For he is a mighty king,
And thousands of children bend the knee,
And bow to this ruler of high degree.

He has a smile, oh! like the sun!
And his face is round and bland,
His bright eyes twinkle and glow with fun,
As the children kiss his hand.
And everything toothsome, melting, sweet,
He scatters freely before their feet.

But wo! for the children who follow him,
With loving praises and laughter,
For he is a monster ugly and grim
That they go running after.
And when they get well into the chase
He lifts his masque and shows his face.

And ah! but that is a gruesome sight
For the followers of the king.
The cheeks grow pale that once were bright,
And they sob instead of sing.
And their teeth drop out and their eyes grow red,
And they cannot sleep when they go to bed.

And after they see the monster's face,
They have no peaceful hour.
And they have aches in every place,
And what was sweet seems sour.
Oh wo! for that sorrowful foolish band
Who follow the king of Candy land.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Kingdom Of Love

In the dawn of the day, when the sea and the earth
Reflected the sunrise above,
I set forth, with a heart full of courage and mirth,
To seek for the Kingdom of Love.
I asked of a Poet I met on the way,
Which cross-road would lead me aright,
And he said: "Follow me, and ere long you will see
Its glistening turrets of Light."

And soon in the distance a city shone fair;
"Look yonder," he said, "there it gleams!"
But alas! for the hopes that were doomed to despair,
It was only the Kingdom of Dreams.
Then the next man I asked was a gay cavalier,
And he said: "Follow me, follow me."
And with laughter and song we went speeding along
By the shores of life's beautiful sea,

Till we came to a valley more tropical far
Than the wonderful Vale of Cashmere,
And I saw from a bower a face like a flower
Smile out on the gay cavalier,
And he said: "We have come to humanity's goal---
Here love and delight are intense."
But alas! and alas! for the hope of my soul---
It was only the Kingdom of Sense.

As I journeyed more slowly, I met on the road
A coach with retainers behind,
And they said: "Follow us, for our lady's abode
Belongs in the realm you would find."
'Twas a grand dame of fashion, a newly-wed bride;
I followed, encouraged and bold.
But my hope died away, like the last gleams of day,
For we came to the Kingdom of Gold.

At the door of a cottage I asked a fair maid.
"I have heard of that Realm," she replied,
"But my feet never roam from the Kingdom of Home,

So I know not the way," and she sighed.
I looked on the cottage, how restful it seemed!
And the maid was as fair as a dove.
Great light glorified my soul as I cried,
"Why, home is the Kingdom of Love!"

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Lady And The Dame

So thou hast the art, good dame, thou swearest,
To keep Time's perishing touch at bay
From the roseate splendor of the cheek so tender,
And the silver threads from the gold away;
And the tell-tale years that have hurried by us
Shall tiptoe back, and, with kind good-will,
They shall take their traces from off our faces,
If we will trust to thy magic skill.

Thou speakest fairly; but if I listen
And buy thy secret and prove its truth,
Hast thou the potion and magic lotion
To give me also the heart of youth?
With the cheek of rose and the eye of beauty,
And the lustrous locks of life's lost prime,
Wilt thou bring thronging each hope and longing
That made the glory of that dead Time?

When the sap in the trees sets young buds bursting,
And the song of the birds fills the air like spray,
Will rivers of feeling come once more stealing
From the beautiful hills of the far-away?
Wilt thou demolish the tower of reason
And fling forever down into the dust,
The caution time brought me, the lessons life taught me,
And put in their places my old sweet trust?

If Time's footprint from my brow is driven,
Canst thou, too, take with thy subtle powers
The burden of thinking, and let me go drinking
The careless pleasures of youth's bright hours?
If silver threads from my tresses vanish,
If a glow once more in my pale cheek gleams,
Wilt thou slay duty and give back the beauty
Of days untroubled by aught but dreams?

When the soft, fair arms of the siren Summer
Encircle the earth in their languorous fold,
Will vast, deep oceans of sweet emotions
Surge through my veins as they surged of old?
Canst thou bring back from a day long vanished
The leaping pulse and the boundless aim?
I will pay thee double for all thy trouble,
If thou wilt restore all these, good dame.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Land Of Nowhere

Do you know where the summer blooms all the year 'round,
Where there never is rain on a pic-nic day?
Where the thornless rose in its beauty blows
And little boys never are called from play?
Then, oh! hey! it is far away-
In the wonderful land of Nowhere.

Would you like to live where nobody scolds,
Where you never are told 'it is time for bed,'
Where you learn without trying and laugh without crying,
Where snarls never pull when they comb your head?
Then, oh! hey! it is far away
In the wonderful land of Nowhere.

Do you long to dwell where you never need wait,
Where no one is punished or made to cry,
Where a supper of cakes is not followed by aches
And little folks thrive on a diet of pie?
Then, oh! hey! you must go away
To the wonderful land of Nowhere.

You must drift down the river of idle dreams,
Close to the border of No-man's-land.
For a year and a day you must sail away
And then you will come to an unknown strand
And oh! hey! if you get there-stay
In the wonderful land of Nowhere!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Land Of The Gone-Away Souls

Oh! that is a beautiful land, I wis,
The land of the Gone-away Souls.
Yes, a lovelier region by far than this
(Though this is a world most fair).
The goodliest goal of all good goals,
Else why do our friends stay there?

I walk in a world that is sweet with friends,
And earth I have ever held dear;
Yes, love with duty and beauty blends
To render the earth-place bright.
But faster and faster, year on year,
My comrades hurry from sight.

They hurry away to the Over-There,
And few of them say farewell;
Yes, they go away with a secret air
As if on a secret quest.
And they come not back to earth to tell
Why that land seems the best.

Messages come from the mystic sphere,
But few know the code of that land,
Yes, many the message but few who hear,
In the din of the world below,
Or hearing the message, can understand
Those truths which we long to know.

But it must be the goal of all good goals,
And I think of it more and more.
Yes, think of that land of the Gone-Away Souls
And its growing hosts of friends
Who will hail my bark when it touches shore
Where the last brief journey ends.

The Law

The sun may be clouded, yet ever the sun
Will sweep on its course till the cycle is run.
And when onto chaos the systems are hurled,
Again shall the Builder reshape a new world.

Your path may be clouded, uncertain your goal;
Move on, for the orbit is fixed for your soul.
And though it may lead into darkness of night,
The torch of the Builder shall give you new light.

You were, and you will be: know this while you are,
Your spirit has travelled both long and afar.
It came from the Source, to the Source it returns;
The spark that was lighted, eternally burns.

It slept in the jewel, it leaped in the wave,
It roamed in the forest, it rose in the grave,
It took on strange garbs for long eons of years,
And now in the soul of yourself it appears.

From body to body your spirit speeds on;
It seeks a new form when the old one is gone;
And the form that it finds is the fabric you wrought
On the loom of the mind, with the fibre of thought.

As dew is drawn upward, in rain to descend,
Your thoughts drift away and in destiny blend.
You cannot escape them; or petty, or great,
Or evil, or noble, they fashion your fate.

Somewhere on some planet, sometime and somehow,
Your life will reflect all the thoughts of your now.
The law is unerring; no blood can atone;
The structure you rear you must live it alone.

From cycle to cycle, through time and through space,
Your lives with your longings will ever keep pace.
And all that you ask for, and all you desire,
Must come at your bidding, as flames out of fire.

Once list to that voice and all tumult is done,
Your life is the life of the Infinite One'
In the hurrying race you are conscious of pause,
With love for the purpose and love for the cause.

You are your own devil, you are your own God,
You fashioned the paths that your footsteps have trod;
And no one can save you from error or sin,
Until you shall hark to the spirit within.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Little Bird

The father sits in his lonely room,
Outside sings a little bird.
But the shadows are laden with death and gloom,
And the song is all unheard.
The father's heart is the home of sorrow;
His breast is the seat of grief!
Who will hunt the paper for him on the morrow -
Who will bring him sweet relief
From wearing his thoughts with innocent chat?
Who will find his slippers and bring his hat?
Still the little bird sings
And flutters her wings;
The refrain of her song is, 'Gos knows best!
He giveth His little children rest.'
What can she know of these sorrowful things?

The mother sits by the desolate hearth,
And weeps o'er a vacant chair.
Sorrow has taken the place of mirth -
Joy has resigned to despair.
Bitter the cup the mother is drinking,
So bitter the tear-drops start.
Sad are the thoughts the mother is thinking -
Oh, they will break her heart.
Who will on errands, and romp and play,
And mimic the robins the livelong day?
Still the little bird sings
And flutters her wings;
'God reigns in heaven, and He will keep
The dear little children that fall asleep.'
What can she know of these sorrowful things?

Grandmother sits by the open door,
And her tears fall down like rain.
Was there ever a household so sad before,
Will it ever be glad again?
Many unwelcome thoughts come flitting
Into the granddame's mind.
Who will take up the stitches she drops in knitting?

Who will her snuff-box find?
Who'll bring her glasses, and wheel her chair,
And tie her kerchief, and comb her hair?
Still the little bird sings
And flutters her wings;
'God above doeth all things well,
I sang it the same when my nestlings fell.'
Ah! this knows the bird of these sorrowful things.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Little Lady Of The Bullock Cart

Now is the time when India is gay
With wedding parties; and the radiant throngs
Seem like a scattered rainbow taking part
In human pleasures. Dressed in bright array,
They fling upon the bride their wreaths of songs-
The Little Lady of the Bullock Cart.

Here is the temple ready for the rite:
The large-eyed bullocks halt; and waiting arms
Lift down the bride. All India's curious art
Speaks in the gems with which she is bedight,
And in the robes which hide her sweet alarms-
The Little Lady of the Bullock Cart.

This is her day of days: her splendid hour
When joy is hers, though love is all unknown.
It has not dawned upon her childish heart.
But human triumph, in a temporal power,
Has crowned her queen upon a one-day throne-
The Little Lady of the Bullock Cart.

Ah, Little Lady! What will be your fate?
So long, so long, the outward-reaching years:
So brief the joy of this elusive part;
So frail the shoulders for the loads that wait:
So bitter salt the virgin widow's tears-
O Little Lady of the Bullock Cart.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Little White Hearse

Somebody's baby was buried to-day –
The empty white hearse from the grave rumbled back,
And the morning somehow seemed less smiling and gay
As I paused on the sidewalk while it crossed on its way,
And a shadow seemed drawn o'er the sun's golden track.

Somebody's baby was laid out to rest,
White as a snowdrop, and fair to behold,
And the soft little hands were crossed over the breast,
And those hands and the lips and the eyelids were pressed
With kisses as hot as the eyelids were cold.

Somebody saw it go out of her sight,
Under the coffin lid – out through the door;
Somebody finds only darkness and blight
All through the glory of summer-sun light;
Somebody's baby will waken no more.

Somebody's sorrow is making me weep:
I know not her name, but I echo her cry,
For the dearly bought baby she longed so to keep,
The baby that rode to its long-lasting sleep
In the little white hearse that went rumbling by.

I know not her name, but her sorrow I know;
While I paused on the crossing I lived it once more,
And back to my heart surged that river of woe
That but in the breast of a mother can flow;
For the little white hearse has been, too, at my door.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Lodge-Room

Don't bring into the lodge-room
Anger, and spite, and pride.
Drop at the gate of the temple
The strife of the world outside.
Forget all your cares and trials,
Forget every selfish sorrow,
And remember the cause you meet for,
And haste ye the glad to-morrow.

Drop at the gate of the temple
Envy, and spite, and gloom.
Don't bring personal quarrels
And discord into the room.
Forget the slights of a sister,
Forget the wrongs of a brother,
And remember the new commandment,
That ye all love one another.

Bring your heart into the lodge-room,
But leave yourself outside,
That is, your personal feelings,
Ambition, vanity, pride.
Centre each thought and power
On the cause for which you assemble,
Fetter the demon liquor,
And make ye the traffic tremble.

Ay! to fetter and to chain him,
And cast him under our feet,
This is the end we aim at,
The object for which we meet.
Then don't bring into the lodge-room,
Envy, or strife, or pride,
Or aught that will mar our union,
But leave them all outside.

The London 'Bobby'

A Tribute To The Policemen Of Englands Capital

Here in my cosy corner,
Before a blazing log,
I'm thinking of cold London
Wrapped in its killing fog;
And, like a shining beacon
Above the picture grim,
I see the London 'Bobby, '
And sing my song for him.

I see his stalwart figure,
I see his kindly face,
I hear his helpful answer
At any hour or place.
For, though you seek some by-way
Long miles from his own beat,
He tells you all about it,
And how to find the street.

He looks like some bold Viking,
This king of earth's police –
Yet in his voice lies feeling,
And in his eyes lies peace;
He knows and does his duty –
(What higher praise is there?)
And London's lords and paupers
Alike receive his care.

He has a regal bearing,
Yet one that breathes repose;
It is the look and manner
Of one who thinks and knows.
Oh, men who govern nations,
In old worlds or new,
Turn to the London 'Bobby'
And learn a thing or two.

The Lost Garden

There was a fair green garden sloping
From the south-east side of the mountain-ledge;
And the earliest tint of the dawn came groping
Down through its paths, from the day's dim edge.
The bluest skies and the reddest roses
Arched and varied its velvet sod;
And the glad birds sang, as the soul supposes
The angels sing on the hills of God.
I wandered there when my veins seemed bursting
With life's rare rapture and keen delight,
And yet in my heart was a constant thirsting
For something over the mountain-height.
I wanted to stand in the blaze of glory
That turned to crimson the peaks of snow,
And the winds from the west all breathed a story
Of realms and regions I longed to know.
I saw on the garden's south side growing
The brightest blossoms that breathe of June;
I saw in the east how the sun was glowing,
And the gold air shook with a wild bird's tune;
I heard the drip of a silver fountain,
And the pulse of a young laugh throbbed with glee
But still I looked out over the mountain
Where unnamed wonders awaited me.
I came at last to the western gateway,
That led to the path I longed to climb;
But a shadow fell on my spirit straightway,
For close at my side stood gray-beard Time.
I paused, with feet that were fain to linger,
Hard by that garden's golden gate,
But Time spoke, pointing with one stern finger;
'Pass on,' he said, 'for the day goes late.'
And now on the chill gray cliffs I wander,
The heights recede which I thought to find,
And the light seems dim on the mountain yonder,
When I think of the garden I left behind.
Should I stand at last on its summit's splendor,
I know full well it would not repay
For the fair lost tints of the dawn so tender

That crept up over the edge o' day.
I would go back, but the ways are winding,
If ways there are to that land, in sooth,
For what man succeeds in ever finding
A path to the garden of his lost youth?
But I think sometimes, when the June stars glisten,
That a rose scent dufts from far away,
And I know, when I lean from the cliffs and listen,
That a young laugh breaks on the air like spray.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Maniac

I saw them sitting in the shade;
The long green vines hung over,
But could not hide the gold-haired maid
And Earl, my dark-eyed lover.
His arm was clasped so close, so close,
Her eyes were softly lifted,
While his eyes drank the cheek of rose
And breasts like snowflakes drifted.

A strange noise sounded in my brain;
I was a guest unbidden.
I stole away, but came again
With two knives snugly hidden.
I stood behind them. Close they kissed,
While eye to eye was speaking;
I aimed my steels, and neither missed
The heart I sent it seeking.

There were two death-shrieks mingled so
It seemed like one voice crying.
I laughed-it was such bliss, you know,
To hear and see them dying.
I laughed and shouted while I stood
Above the lovers, gazing
Upon the trickling rills of blood
And frightened eyes fast glazing.

It was such joy to see the rose
Fade from her cheek forever;
To know the lips he kissed so close
Could answer never, never.
To see his arm grow stark and cold,
And know it could not hold her;
To know that while the world grew old
His eyes could not behold her.

A crowd of people thronged about,
Brought thither by my laughter;
I gave one last triumphant shout-

Then darkness followed after.
That was a thousand years ago;
Each hour I live it over,
For there, just out of reach, you know,

She
lies, with Earl, my lover.

They lie there, staring, staring so
With great, glazed eyes to taunt me.
Will no one bury them down low,
Where they shall cease to haunt me?
He kissed her lips, not mine; the flowers
And vines hung all about them
Sometimes I sit and laugh for hours
To think just how I found them.

And then I sometimes stand and shriek
In agony of terror:
I see the red warm in her cheek,
Then laugh loud at my error.
My cheek was all too pale he thought;
He deemed hers far the brightest.
Ha! but my dagger touched a spot
That made
her
face the whitest!

But oh, the days seem very long,
Without my Earl, my lover;
And something in my head seems wrong
The more I think it over.
Ah! look-she is not dead-look there!
She's standing close beside me!
Her eyes are open-how they stare!
Oh, hide me! hide me! hide me!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Masquerade

Look in the eyes of trouble with a smile,
Extend your hand and do not be afraid.
'Tis but a friend who comes to masquerade,
And test your faith and courage for awhile.

Fly, and he follows fast with threat and jeer.
Shrink, and he deals hard blow on stinging blow,
But bid him welcome as a friend, and lo!
The jest is off – the masque will disappear.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Meeting Of The Centuries

A CURIOUS vision, on mine eyes unfurled
In the deep night. I saw, or seemed to see,
Two Centuries meet, and sit down vis-a-vis,
Across the great round table of the world.
One with suggested sorrows in his mien
And on his brow the furrowed lines of thought.
And one whose glad expectant presence brought
A glow and radiance from the realms unseen.
Hand clasped with hand, in silence for a space,
The Centuries sat; the sad old eyes of one
(As grave paternal eyes regard a son)
Gazing upon that other eager face.
And then a voice, as cadenceless and gray
As the sea's monody in winter time,
Mingled with tones melodious, as the chime
Of bird choirs, singing in the dawns of May.

THE OLD CENTURY SPEAKS:

By you, Hope stands. With me, Experience walks.
Like a fair jewel in a faded box,
In my tear-rusted heart, sweet pity lies.
For all the dreams that look forth from your eyes,
And those bright-hued ambitions, which I know
Must fall like leaves and perish in Time's snow,
(Even as my soul's garden stands bereft,)
I give you pity! 'tis the one gift left.

THE NEW CENTURY:

Nay, nay, good friend! not pity, but Godspeed,
Here in the morning of my life I need.
Counsel, and not condolence; smiles, not tears,
To guide me through the channels of the years.
Oh, I am blinded by the blaze of light
That shines upon me from the Infinite.
Blurred is my vision by the close approach
To unseen shores, whereon the times encroach.

THE OLD CENTURY:

Illusion, all illusion. List and hear
The Godless cannons, booming far and near.
Flaunting the flag of Unbelief, with Greed
For pilot, lo! the pirate age in speed
Bears on to ruin. War's most hideous crimes
Besmirch the record of these modern times.
Degenerate is the world I leave to you, --
My happiest speech to earth will be -- adieu.

THE NEW CENTURY:

You speak as one too weary to be just.
I hear the guns-I see the greed and lust.
The death throes of a giant evil fill
The air with riot and confusion. Ill
Ofttimes makes fallow ground for Good; and Wrong
Builds Right's foundation, when it grows too strong.
Pregnant with promise is the hour, and grand
The trust you leave in my all-willing hand.

THE OLD CENTURY:

As one who throws a flickering taper's ray
To light departing feet, my shadowed way
You brighten with your faith. Faith makes the man.
Alas, that my poor foolish age outran
Its early trust in God. The death of art
And progress follows, when the world's hard heart
Casts out religion. 'Tis the human brain
Men worship now, and heaven, to them, means gain.

THE NEW CENTURY:

Faith is not dead, tho' priest and creed may pass,
For thought has leavened the whole unthinking mass.
And man looks now to find the God within.
We shall talk more of love, and less of sin,
In this new era. We are drawing near
Unatlassed boundaries of a larger sphere.
With awe, I wait, till Science leads us on,

Into the full effulgence of its dawn.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Message

I have not the gift of vision,
I have not the psychic ear,
And the realms that are called Elysian
I neither see nor hear;
Yet oft when the shadows darken
And the daylight hides its face,
The soul of me seems to hearken
For the truths that speak through space.

They speak to me not through reason,
They speak to me not by word;
Yet my soul would be guilty of treason
If it did not say it had heard.
For Space has a message compelling
To give to the ear of Earth;
And the things which the Silence is telling
In the bosom of God have birth.

Now this is the truth as I hear it-
That ever through good or ill,
The will of the Ruling Spirit
Is moving and ruling still.
In the clutch of the blood-red terror
That holds the world in its might,
The Race is learning its error
And will find its way to the light.

And this is the Truth as I see it-
Whoever cries out for peace,
Must think it, and live it, and be it,
And the wars of the world will cease.
Men fight that man may awaken,
And no longer want to kill;
Wars rage, and the heavens are shaken
That man may learn how to be still.

In the silence, he finds his Saviour-
The God Who is dwelling within;
And only by Christ-behaviour
Is the soul of him saved from sin.
There is only one Source-no other-
One Light, and each soul is a ray;
And he who would slaughter his brother,
Himself he is seeking to slay.

Now these are the Truths we are learning
Through evils and horrors untold;
For the thought of the race is turning
Away from its methods of old.
And the mind of the race is sated,
With the things that it prized of yore,
And the monster of war is hated,
As never on earth before.

Oh, slow are God's mills in the grinding,
But they grind exceedingly small;
And slow is man's soul in the finding,
That he is a part of the All.
Through æons and æons, his story
Is bloody and blackened with crime;
But he will come out into glory
And stand on the summits sublime.

He will stand on the summits of Knowledge,
In the splendour of Light from the Source;
And the methods of church and of college
Will all of them change by his force.
For the creeds that are blind and cruel,
And the teachings by rule and by rod,
Will all be turned into fuel
To light up the pathway to God.

This is the Truth as I hear it-

The clouds are rolling away,
And spirit will talk with Spirit
In the swift approaching day.
War from the world shall be driven,
From evil shall come forth good;
And men shall make ready for Heaven
Through living in Brotherhood.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Messenger

She rose up in the early dawn,
And white and silently she moved
About the house. Four men had gone
To battle for the land they loved,
And she, the mother and the wife,
Waited for tidings from the strife.
How still the house seemed! and her tread
Was like the footsteps of the dead.

The long day passed; the dark night came.
She had not seen a human face.
Some voice spoke suddenly her name.
How loud it echoed in that place,
Where, day on day, no sound was heard
But her own footsteps. 'Bring you word,'
She cried to whom she could not see,
'Word from the battle-plain to me?'

A soldier entered at the door,
And stood within the dim firelight;
'I bring you tidings of the four,'
He said, 'who left you for the fight.'
'God bless you, friend,' she cried, 'speak on!
For I can bear it. One is gone?'
'Ay, one is gone!' he said. 'Which one?'
'Dear lady, he, your eldest son.'

A deathly pallor shot across
Her withered face; she did not weep.
She said: 'It is a grievous loss,
But God gives His beloved sleep.
What of the living-of the three?
And when can they come back to me?'
The soldier turned away his head:
'Lady, your husband, too, is dead.'

She put her hand upon her brow;
A wild, sharp pain was in her eyes.
'My husband! Oh, God, help me now!'
The soldier heard her shuddering sighs.
The task was harder than he thought.
'Your youngest son, dear madam, fought
Close at his father's side; both fell
Dead, by the bursting of a shell.'

She moved her lips and seemed to moan.
Her face had paled to ashen gray:
'Then one is left me-one alone,'
She said, 'of four who marched away.
Oh, overruling, All-wise God,
How can I pass beneath Thy rod!'
The soldier walked across the floor,
Paused at the window, at the door,

Wiped the cold dew-drops from his cheek
And sought the mourner's side again.
'Once more, dear lady, I must speak:
Your last remaining son was slain
Just at the closing of the fight,
'Twas he who sent me here to-night.'
'God knows,' the man said afterward,
'The fight itself was not so hard.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Mother's Prayer

A mother kneels by the cradle,
Where her little infant lies,
And she sees the ghastly shadows
Creeping around his eyes.
And she clasps her hands together,
And her heart beats loud and wild,
And she cries in a gush of anguish,
'O Father! save my child.

'Oh! do not, do not take him
So soon to the home on high;
My beautiful, dark-eyed darling,
O God! he must not die.
I cannot pray in meekness,
'My Father's will be done.'
I can only cry in anguish,
'Oh! save my infant son.'

Slowly the ghastly shadows
Crept from the baby's eyes,
And the mother saw the bright orbs
Open in sweet surprise.
And she heard the lisping prattle
And the childish laugh again,
And she clasped him close to her bosom,
And her glad tears fell like rain.

The mother stands at the window,
Watching the night come down,
As it settles slowly, slowly,
Over the busy town.
And the withered face is troubled,
And she sighs in a weary way:
'Oh! where does my darling tarry,
Now at the close of day?

'Surely his task is ended:
Why is it he does not come?'
Ah! mother, one word will answer,
And that one word is Rum.
He stands at the bar this moment,
Draining the tempter's bowl;
And your beautiful boy has entered
His name on the drunkards' roll.

Ah! well, your prayer was answered:
You prayed that he might not die,
That he might not join the angels
Who dwell in their home on high.
O mother! say, is it better,
Or is it worse than death,
To see your darling stagger,
And feel his rum-foul breath?

You could not pray, 'My Father,
Thy will, not mine, be done,'
But cried, in your deaf, blind sorrow,
'Oh! save my infant son.'
And is he saved, fond mother?
And which is better, pray,
To know he is there in the rum-shop,
Or under the grass, to-day?

O God of a mighty nation!
When shall the glad day be
That the liquor reign is ended,
And our land is truly free?-
When our darling boys may wander
Through all its length and breadth,
With never a serpent lurking
To slay them in their strength?

Full many a year has vanished

Since the grand triumphant day
When we stood in bold defiance
Of a tyrant monarch's sway;
And now in a blood-red torrent,
At the price of a million graves,
We have swept the bonds and shackles
From the hands of a million slaves.

And yet we are under a tyrant,
And yet we are slaves to-day,
And we do not bid defiance
To the baleful liquor sway.
Up! O ye mourning captives!
Strike at the tyrant's hand!
Loosen his hold for ever-
Deliver a bondaged land!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Muse And The Poet

The Muse said, Let us sing a little song
Wherein no hint of wrong,
No echo of the great world need, or pain,
Shall mar the strain.
Lock fast the swinging portal of thy heart;
Keep sympathy apart.
Sing of the sunset, of the dawn, the sea;
Of any thing or nothing, so there be
No purpose to thy art.
Yea, let us make, art for Art's sake.
And sing no more unto the hearts of men,
But for the critic's pen.
With songs that are but words, sweet sounding words,
Like joyous jargon of the birds.
Tune now thy lyre, O Poet, and sing on.
Sing of

THE DAWN

The Virgin Night, all languorous with dreams
Of her beloved Darkness, rose in fear,
Feeling the presence of another near.
Outside her curtained casement shone the gleams
Of burning orbs; and modestly she hid
Her brow and bosom with her dusky hair.
When lo! the bold intruder lurking there
Leaped through the fragile lattice, all unbid,
And half unveiled her. Then the swooning Night
Fell pale and dead, while yet her soul was white
Before that lawless Ravisher, the Light.

The Muse said, Poet, nay; thou hast not caught
My meaning. For there lurks a thought
Back of thy song.
In art, all thought is wrong.
Re-string thy lyre; and let the echoes bound
To nothing but sweet sound.
Strike now the chords

And sing of

WORDS

One day sweet Ladye Language gave to me
A little golden key.
I sat me down beside her jewel box
And turned its locks.
And oh, the wealth that lay there in my sight.
Great solitaires of words, so bright, so bright;
Words that no use can commonize; like God,
And Truth, and Love; and words of sapphire blue;
And amber words; with sunshine dripping through;
And words of that strange hue
A pearl reveals upon a wanton's hand.

Again the Muse:
Thou dost not understand;
A thought within thy song is lingering yet.
Sing but of words; all else forget, forget.
Nor let thy words convey one thought to men.
Try once again.

Down through the dusk and dew there fell a word;
Down through the dew and dusk.
And all the garments of the air it stirred
Smelled sweet as musk;
And all the little waves of air it kissed
Turned gold and amethyst.
There in the dew and dusk a heart it found;
There in the dusk and dew
The sodden silence changed to fragrant sound;
And all the world seemed new.
Upon the path that little word had trod,
There shone the smile of God.

The Muse said, Drop thy lyre.
I tire, I tire.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Musicians

The strings of my heart were strung by Pleasure,
And I laughed when the music fell on my ear,
For he and Mirth played a joyful measure,
And they played so loud that I could not hear
The wailing and mourning of souls a-weary -
The strains of sorrow that floated around,
For my heart's notes rang out loud and cheery,
And I heard no other sound.

Mirth and Pleasure, the music brothers,
Played louder and louder in joyful glee;
But sometimes a discord was heard by others -
Though only the rhythm was heard by me.
Louder and louder, faster and faster
The hands of the brothers played strain on strain,
When all of a sudden a Mighty Master
Swept them aside; and Pain,

Pain, the musician, the soul-refiner,
Restrung the strings of my quivering heart,
And the air that he played was a plaintive minor,
So sad that the tear-drops were forced to start;
Each note was an echo of awful anguish,
As shrill as solemn, as sharp as slow,
And my soul for a reason seemed to languish
And faint with its weight of woe.

With skilful hands that were never weary,
This Master of Music played strain on strain,
And between the bars of the miserere,
He drew up the strings of my heart again,
And I was filled with a vague, strange wonder,
To see that they did not snap in two.
'They are drawn so tight, they will break assunder, '
I thought, but instead, they grew,

In the hands of the Master, firmer and stronger;
And I could hear on the stilly air -
Now my ears were deafened by Mirth no longer -

The sound of sorrow, and grief, and despair;
And my soul grew kinder and tender to others,
My nature grew sweeter, my mind grew broad,
And I held all men to be my brothers,
Linked by the chastening rod.

My soul was lifted to God and heaven,
And when on my heart-strings fell again
The hands of Mirth, and Pleasure, even,
There was never a discord to mar the strain.
For Pain, the musician, and soul-refiner,
Attuned the strings with a master hand,
And whether the music be major or minor,
It is always sweet and grand.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Needle And Thread

The Needle and Thread one day were wed,
The Thimble acted as priest,
A paper of Pins, and the Scissors twins
Were among the guests at the feast.

That dandy trim the Bodkin slim
Danced with Miss Tape-measure,
But he stepped on her trail, and she called him 'a whale,'
And that put an end to their pleasure.

Wrinkled and fat the Beeswax sat
And talked with the Needle-case.
'I am glad,' she said, 'that my niece, the Thread,
Has married into this race.

'Her mother, the Spool, was a dull old fool,
And the Needle and Thread were shy;
The result you see came all through me,
I taught her to catch his eye.'

The Emery-ball just there had a fall-
She had danced too long at one time,
And that put a stop to the merry hop,
And that brings an end to my rhyme.

The groom and the bride took their wedding ride
Down a long white-seam to the shore,
And the guests all said there never was wed
So fair a couple before.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Ogre Slam-The-Door

There is a certain castle that is beautiful and fair,
And plants, and birds, and pretty things, fill every room and hall,
But alas! for the unhappy folks who make their dwelling there,
A dreadful ogre haunts the house and tries to kill them all.
Some day I fear will find them dead and stretched out in their gore
The victims of this ogre grim, this wicked Slam-the-door!

He's a very tiny ogre just about as tall as you!
He never carries hidden arms, or plays with guns and knives.
And yet he almost splits the heads of people thro' and thro.'
And I think him very dangerous to comfort and to lives.
And he often shakes the castle from the ceiling to the floor.
This awful, awful ogre known as little Slam-the-door.

He gets up bright and early, and he's, oh, so wide awake!
And wo! to all the sleepy heads and invalids who doze,
They dream the sky is caving in, or that a vast earthquake
Has suddenly convulsed the world and ended their repose,
As to and fro, and up and down, still noisier than before,
They hear the hurrying, flurrying feet of ogre Slam-the-door.

Though the Princess of the Castle has a headache, and is ill,
Though the Prince is in his study and wants quiet for an hour,
This wicked little ogre won't be quiet-or keep still
I almost think he sometimes knows he has them in his power.
Alas, alas for all the folks, their sorrows I deplore-
The folks shut in that castle with the ogre Slam-the-door.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Old Moon In The New Moon's Arms

The beautiful and slender young New Moon,
In trailing robes of pink and palest blue,
Swept close to Venus, and breathed low: 'A boon,
A precious boon, I ask, dear friend, of you.'

'O queen of light and beauty, you have known
The pangs of love - its passions and alarms;
Then grant me this one favour, let my own -
My lost Old Moon be once more in my arms.'

Swift thro' the vapours and the golden mist -
The Full Moon's shadowy shape shone on the night,
The New Moon reached out clasping arms and kissed
Her phantom lover in the whole world's sight.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Old Wooden Cradle

Good-bye to the cradle, the dear wooden cradle
The rude hand of Progress has thrust it aside.
No more to its motion o'er sleep's fairy ocean,
Our play-weary wayfarers peacefully glide.

No more by the rhythm of slow-moving rocker,
Their sweet dreamy fancies are fostered and fed;
No more to low singing the cradle goes swinging –
The child of this era is put into bed.

Good-bye to the cradle, the dear wooden cradle,
It lent to the twilight a strange, subtle charm;
When bees left the clover, when play-time was over,
How safe seemed this shelter from danger or harm.

How soft seemed the pillow, how distant the ceiling,
How weird were the voices that whispered around,
What dreams would come flocking, as rocking and rocking,
We floated away into slumber profound.

Good-bye to the cradle, the old wooden cradle,
The babe of to-day does not know it by sight.
When day leaves the border, with system and order,
The child goes to bed and we put out the light.

I bow to Progression and ask no concession,
Though strewn be her pathway with wrecks of the past;
So off wit old lumber, that sweet ark of slumber,
The old wooden cradle, is ruthlessly cast.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Optimist

The fields were bleak and sodden. Not a wing
Or note enlivened the depressing wood,
A soiled and sullen, stubborn snowdrift stood
Beside the roadway. Winds came muttering
Of storms to be, and brought the chilly sting
Of icebergs in their breath. Stalled cattle moed
Forth plaintive pleadings for the earth's green food.
No gleam, no hint of hope in anything.

The sky was blank and ashen, like the face
Of some poor wretch who drains life's cup too fast.
Yet, swaying to and fro, as if to fling
About chilled Nature its lithe arms of grace,
Smiling with promise in the wintry blast,
The optimistic Willow spoke of spring.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Past

I fling the past behind me, like a robe
Worn threadbare at the seams, and out of date.
I have outgrown it. Wherefore should I weep
And dwell upon its beauty, and its dyes
Of oriental splendor, or complain
That I must needs discard it? I can weave
Upon the shuttles of the future years
A fabric far more durable. Subdued,
It may be, in the blending of its hues,
Where somber shades commingle, yet the gleam
Of golden warp shall shoot it through and through,
While over all a fadeless luster lies,
And starred with gems made out of crystallized tears,
My new robe shall be richer than the old.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Pessimist

The pessimist locust, last to leaf,
Though all the world is glad, still talks of grief.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Phantom Ball

You remember the hall on the corner?
To-night as I walked down street
I heard the sound of music,
And the rhythmic beat and beat,
In time to the pulsing measure
Of lightly tripping feet.

And I turned and entered the doorway-
It was years since I had been there-
Years, and life seemed altered:
Pleasure had changed to care.
But again I was hearing the music
And watching the dancers fair.

And then, as I stood and listened,
The music lost its glee;
And instead of the merry waltzers
There were ghosts of the Used-to-be-
Ghosts of the pleasure-seekers
Who once had danced with me.

Oh, 'twas a ghastly picture!
Oh, 'twas a gruesome crowd!
Each bearing a skull on his shoulder,
Each trailing a long white shroud,
As they whirled in the dance together,
And the music shrieked aloud.

As they danced, their dry bones rattled
Like shutters in a blast;
And they stared from eyeless sockets
On me as they circled past;
And the music that kept them whirling
Was a funeral dirge played fast.

Some of them wore their face-cloths,
Others were rotted away.
Some had mould on their garments,
And some seemed dead but a day.
Corpses all, but I knew them
As friends, once blithe and gay.

Beauty and strength and manhood-
And this was the end of it all:
Nothing but phantoms whirling
In a ghastly skeleton ball.
But the music ceased-and they vanished,
And I came away from the hall.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Poor Little Toe

I am all tired out, said the mouth, with a pout,
I am all tired out with talk.
Just wait, said the knee, till you're lame as you can be-
And then have to walk-walk-walk.

My work, said the hand, is the hardest in the land.
Nay, mine is harder yet, said the brain;
When you toil, said the eye, as steadily as I,
O then you'll have reason to complain.

Then a voice, faint and low, of the poor little toe
Spoke out in the dark with a wail:
It is seldom I complain, but you all will bear your pain
With more patience if you hearken to my tale.

I'm the youngest of five, and the others live and thrive,
They are cared for, and considered and admired.
I am overlooked and snubbed, I am pushed upon and rubbed,
I am always sick and ailing, sore and tired.

But I carry all the weight of the body, small or great,
Yet no one ever praises what I do;
I am always in the way, and 'tis I who have to pay
For the folly and the pride of all of you.

Then the mouth and the brain and the hand said, 'tis plain
Though troubled be our lives with woe,
The hardest lot of all, does certainly befall
The poor little, humble little toe,
The snubbed little, rubbed little toe.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Princess's Finger-Nail: A Tale Of Nonsense Land

All through the Castle of High-bred Ease,
Where the chief employment was do-as-you-please,
Spread consternation and wild despair.
The queen was wringing her hands and hair;
The maids of honor were sad and solemn;
The pages looked blank as they stood in column;
The court-jester blubbered, 'Boo-hoo, boo-hoo';
The cook in the kitchen dropped tears in the stew;
And all through the castle went sob and wail,
For the princess had broken her finger-nail:
The beautiful Princess Red-as-a-Rose,
Bride-elect of the Lord High-Nose,
Broken her finger-nail down to the quick-
No wonder the queen and her court were sick.
Never sorrow so dread before
Had dared to enter that castle door.
Oh! what would my Lord His-High-Nose say
When she took off her glove on her wedding-day?
The fairest princess in Nonsense Land,
With a broken finger-nail on her hand!
'Twas a terrible, terrible accident,
And they called a meeting of parliament;
And never before that royal Court
Had come such question of grave import
As 'How could you hurry a nail to grow?'
And the skill of the kingdom was called to show.
They sent for Monsieur File-'em-off;
He smoothed down the corners so ragged and rough.
They sent for Madame la Diamond-Dust,
Who lived on the fingers of upper-crust;
They sent for Professor de Chamois-Skin,
Who took her powder and rubbed it in;
They sent for the pudgy nurse Fat-on-the-bone
To bathe her finger in eau de Cologne;
And they called the Court surgeon, Monsieur Red-Tape,
To hear what he thought of the new nail's shape.
Over the kingdom the telegrams flew
Which told how the finger-nail thrived and grew;
And all through the realm of Nonsense Land

They offered up prayers for the princess's hand.
At length the glad tidings were heard with a shout
That the princess's finger-nail had grown out:
Pointed and polished and pink and clean,
Befitting the hand of a some-day queen.
Salutes were fired all over the land
By the home-guard battery pop-gun band;
And great was the joy of my Lord High-Nose,
Who straightway ordered his wedding clothes,
And paid his tailor, Don Wait-for-aye,
Who died of amazement the self-same day.
My lord by a jury was judged insane;
For they said, and the truth of the saying was plain,
That a lord of such very high pedigree
Would never be paying his bills, you see,
Unless he was out of his head; and so
They locked him up without more ado.
And the beautiful Princess Red-as-a-Rose
Pined for her lover, my Lord High-Nose,
Till she entered a convent and took the veil-
And this is the end of my nonsense tale.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Question

Beside us in our seeking after pleasures,
Through all our restless striving after fame,
Thorough all our search for worldly gains and treasures
There walketh one whom no man likes to name.
Silent he follows, veiled of form and feature,
Indifferent if we sorrow or rejoice,
Yet that day comes when every living creature
Must look upon his face and hear his voice.

When that day comes to you, and Death, unmasking,
Shall bar your path, and say, "Behold the end, "
What are the questions that he will be asking
About your past? Have you considered, friend?
I think he will not chide you for your sinning,
Nor for your creeds or dogmas will he care;
He will but ask, "From your life's first beginning
How many burdens have you helped to bear? "

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Rainbow Of Promise

In the face of the sun are great thunderbolts hurled,
And the storm-clouds have shut out its light;
But a Rainbow of Promise now shines on the world,
And the universe thrills at the sight.

Tis the flag of our Union, the red, white, and blue,
Our Star-spangled Banner-our pride;
Fair symbol of all that is noble and true,
Flung out over continents wide.

Flung out in its glory o'er land and o'er sea,
With a message from God in each star;
And a glorious promise of peace yet to be
In the fluttering folds of each bar.

A Rainbow of Promise, bright emblem of hope,
Fair flag of each cause that is just;
No longer in doubt or in darkness we grope-
In the Star-spangled Banner we trust.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Rape Of The Mist

High o'er the clouds a Sunbeam shone,
And far down under him,
With a subtle grace that was all her own,
The Mist gleamed, fair and dim.

He looked at her with burning eyes
And longed to fall at her feet;
Of all sweet things there under the skies,
He thought her the thing most sweet.

He had wooed oft, as a Sunbeam may,
Wave, and blossom, and flower;
But never before had he felt the sway
Of a great love's mighty power.

Tall cloud-mountains and vast space-seas,
Wind, and tempest, and fire –
What obstacles such as these
To a heart that is filled with desire?

Boldly he trod over cloud and star,
Boldly he swam through space,
She caught the glow of his eyes afar
And veiled her delicate face.

He was so strong and he was so bright,
And his breath was a breath of flame;
The Mist grew pale with a vague, strange fright,
As fond, yet fierce, he came.

Close to his heart she was clasped and kissed;
She swooned in love's alarms,
And dead lay the beautiful pale-faced Mist
In the Sunbeam's passionate arms.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The River

I am a river flowing from God's sea
Through devious ways. He mapped my course for me;
I cannot change it; mine alone the toil
To keep the waters free from grime and soil
The winding river ends where it began;
And when my life had compassed its brief span
I must return to that mysterious source.
So let me gather daily on my course
The perfume from the blossoms as I pass,
Balm from the pines, and healing from the grass,
And carry down my current as I go
Not common stones but precious gems to show;
And tears (the holy water from sad eyes)
Back to God's sea, from which all rivers rise,
Let me convey, not blood from wounded hearts,
Nor poison which the upas-tree imparts.
When over flowery vales I leap with joy,
Let me not devastate them, nor destroy,
But rather leave them fairer to the sight;
Mine be the lot to comfort and delight.
And if down awful chasms I needs must leap,
Let me not murmur at my lot, but sweep
On bravely to the end without one fear,
Knowing that He who planned my ways stands near.
For Love is all, and over all. Amen.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The River Of Sleep

There are curious isles in the River of Sleep,
Curious isles without number.
We'll visit them all as we leisurely creep
Down the winding stream whose current is deep,
In our beautiful barge of Slumber.

The very first isle in this wonderful stream
Quite close to the shore is lying,
And after a supper of cakes and cream
We come to the Night-Mare-Isle with a scream,
And hurry away from it crying.

And next is the Island-of-Lullaby,
And every one there rejoices.
The winds are only a perfumed sigh,
And the birds that sing in the treetops try
To imitate Mothers' voices.

A little beyond is the Isle-of-Dreams;
Oh, that is the place to be straying.
Everything there is just as it seems;
Dolls are real and sunshine gleams,
And no one calls us from playing.

And then we come to the drollest isle,
And the funniest sounds come pouring
Down from its borderlands once in a while,
And we lean o'er our barge and listen and smile;
For that is the Isle-of-Snoring.

And the very last isle in the River of Sleep
Is the sunshiny Isle-of-Waking.
We see it first with our eyes a-peep,
And we give a yawn-then away we leap,
The barge of Slumber forsaking.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Room Beneath The Rafters

Sometimes when I have dropped asleep,
Draped in soft luxurious gloom,
Across my drowsy mind will creep
The memory of another room,
Where resinous knots in roofboards made
A frescoing of light and shade,
And sighing poplars brushed their leaves
Against the humbly sloping eaves.

Again I fancy in my dreams
I'm lying in my trundle-bed.
I seem to see the bare old beams
And unhewn rafters overhead;
The hornet's shrill falsetto hum
I hear again, and see him come
Forth from his mud-walled hanging house,
Dressed in his black and yellow blouse.

There, summer dawns, in sleep I stirred,
And wove into my fair dream's woof
The chattering of a martin bird,
Or rain-drops pattering on the roof.
Or, half awake, and half in fear,
I saw the spider spinning near
His pretty castle, where the fly
Should come to ruin by and by.

And there I fashioned from my brain
Youth's shining structures in the air,
I did not wholly build in vain,
For some were lasting, firm and fair.
And I am one who lives to say
My life has held more good than gray,
And that the splendor of the real
Surpassed my early dream's ideal.

But still I love to wander back
To that old time and that old place;
To thread my way o'er Memory's track,

And catch the early morning's grace
In that quaint room beneath the rafter,
That echoed to my childish laughter;
To dream again the dreams that grew
More beautiful as they came true.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Saddest Hour

The saddest hour of anguish and of loss
Is not that season of supreme despair
When we can find no least light anywhere
To gild the dread, black shadow of the Cross;
Not in that luxury of sorrow when
We sup on salt of tears, and drink the gall
Of memories of days beyond recall—
Of lost delights that cannot come again.
But when, with eyes that are no longer wet,
We look out on the great, wide world of men,
And, smiling, lean toward a bright to-morrow,
Then backward shrink, with sudden keen regret,
To find that we are learning to forget:
Ah! then we face the saddest hour of sorrow.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Same Old Strain

Each day that I live I am persuaded anew,
A maxim I long have believed in, is true.
Each day I grow firmer in this, my belief,
Strong drink causes half the world's trouble and grief.

Do I take up a paper, I read of a fight,
Tom's fist in his eye deprived Jamie of sight;
Both fellows were drinking before it began,
And drink made a brute of a peaceable man.

Next, Jones kills his wife, such an awful affair!
She was throttled, and pounded, and drawn by the hair;
Cause-'Jones had been drinking-not in his sane mind.'
(Few men
are
who tip up the bottle, I find.)

Then, a man is assaulted and dirked in the dark
By two 'jolly boys' who are out on a 'lark;'
They have ever been peaceable boys-but, you see,
They drank, and 'were hardly themselves' on this spree.

Just over the street lives the man who is known
To be honest and kind, when he lets drink alone;
But whenever he quaffs from the full, flowing bowl,
He is more like a beast than a man with a soul.

Next door lives the husband who frets at his wife;
With his temper and spleen, she's no peace of her life.
Well I know-do you? he muddles his head
Every night with hot toddy, ere going to bed.

'We temperance croakers harp on the same strain?'
Well-the cause is one story again and again;
Fights-tragedy-troubles-all stirred up by drink,

Good reason we have to keep
harping
, I think.

We harp to these words; strong drink drives the knife
To the heart of a friend, and deprives him of life;
It turns sober boys into rowdies and knaves-
It steals from the household to fill up the graves.

Who loves it the most first falls by its art;
It first wins its victim-then strikes to the heart.
But one thing is certain-it never was known
To do a man harm if he let it alone.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Signboard

I will paint you a sign, rumseller,
And hang it above your door;
A truer and better signboard
Than ever you had before.
I will paint with the skill of a master,
And many shall pause to see
This wonderful piece of painting,
So like the reality.

I will paint yourself, rumseller,
As you wait for that fair young boy,
Just in the morning of manhood,
A mother's pride and joy.
He has no thought of stopping,
But you greet him with a smile
And you seem so blithe and friendly,
That he pauses a chat awhile.

I will paint you again, rumseller,
I will paint you as you stand,
With a foaming glass of liquor
Extended in your hand.
He wavers, but you urge him –
Drink, pledge me just this one!
And he takes the glass and drains it,
And the hellish work is done.

And next I will paint a drunkard –
Only a year has flown,
But into that loathesome creature
The fair young boy has grown.
The work was sure and rapid.
I will paint him as he lies
In a torpid, drunken slumber,
Under the wintry skies.

I will paint the form of the mother
As she kneels at her darling's side,
Her beautiful boy that was dearer

Than all the world beside.
I will paint the shape of a coffin
Labelled with one word – 'Lost'
I will paint all this, rumseller,
And will paint it free of cost.

The sin and the shame and the sorrow,
The crime and the want and the woe
That are born there in your workshop,
No hand can paint, you know
But I'll paint you a sign, rumseller,
And many shall pause to view
This wonderful swinging signboard,
So terribly, fearfully true.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Song Of The Allies

We are the Allies of God to-day,
And the width of the earth is our right of way.
Let no man question or ask us why,
As we speed to answer a wild world cry;
Let no man hinder or ask us where,
As out over water and land we fare;
For whether we hurry, or whether we wait,
We follow the finger of guiding fate.

We are the Allies. We differ in faith,
But are one in our courage at thought of death.
Many and varied the tongues we speak,
But one and the same is the goal we seek.
And the goal we seek is not power or place,
But the peace of the world, and the good of the race.
And little matters the colour of skin,
When each heart under it beats to win.

We are the Allies; we fight or fly,
We wallow in trenches like pigs in a sty,
We dive under water to foil a foe,
We wait in quarters, or rise and go.
And staying or going, or near or far,
One thought is ever our guiding star:
We are the Allies of God to-day,
We are the Allies-make way! make way!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Song Of The Sandwich

We
met at night in the season's hight,
Mid revel and mirth and song.
I looked in your eye with a mute, mute cry,
As you elbowed your way through the throng.

Alone in that crowd of men who bowed,
And flattered, and flirted around,
Your quick thought guessed the woe in my breast,
And you sprang to my side with a bound.

In a whisper as faint as a south wind's plaint,
I murmured my need to you.
'A sandwich!' I wailed, then your strong eye quailed,
For oh! they were thin and few.

And about them hustled and pushed and tussled,
A score of desperate men.
But you drew your breath, and you hissed "Sdeath!"
And then you turned back again.

'Ladye!' you cried with haughty pride,
While your dark eye flashed on me,
'If I risk my life in yon seething strife
What shall my guerdon be?'

'May I hope for a line that shall be all mine,
A song by the world unheard?
From rivals detested, shall the sandwich be wrested,
If thou wilt but say the word.'

'If you reach that goal, I vow by my soul,
(I spoke in a desperate tone)

And I live till that time, I will write you a rhyme,
A rhyme to be all your own.'

'Nay more, if you try, and in warfare die,
As sometimes befalls the brave,
In lines of glory I'll wreath your story
And lay them upon your grave.'

Like a knight of old, with an air that was bold,
You turned from my side and went,
Past salad dish, past deviled fish,
Past cake and condiment.

With a step unswerving and a speed deserving
A better reward-alack!
You crossed the room 'neath the red globes' gloom,
Bent on the sandwich's track

My heart stood still in a nameless chill,
As I saw you stride away,
For fair girls' smiles, and punch bowl's wiles,
Both by your roadside lay.

With the fever fire of hunger dire,
I saw you pass them straight,
And I almost wept as your bold hand swept
To the waning sandwich plate.

Then back you came with your cheek aflame,
And the victor's glow in your eye;
Oh! it was grand to see you stand
With the sandwich held on high.

So here and now, I keep my vow;
(Tho' the sandwich is no more)

I would rise from my hearse and write that verse,
If it were not written before.

Envoi

Poet, we know that many men go,
Forth on that self-same track,
With purpose as high, to do or die,
But they bring no sandwich back.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Soul's Farewell to the Body

So we must part forever; and although
I long have beat my wings and cried to go,
Free from your narrow limiting control,
Forth into space, the true home of the soul,

Yet now, yet now that hour is drawing near,
I pause reluctant, finding you so dear.
All joys await me in the realm of God-
Must you, my comrade, moulder in the sod?

I was your captive, yet you were my slave;
Your prisoner, yet obedience you gave
To all my earnest wishes and commands.
Now to the worm I leave those willing hands

That toiled for me or held the books I read,
Those feet that trod where'er I wished to tread,
Those arms that clasped my dear ones, and the breast
On which one loved and loving heart found rest,

Those lips which my prayers to God have risen,
Those eyes that were the windows to my prison.
From these, all these, Death's Angel bids me sever;
Dear Comrade Body, fare thee well forever!

I go to my inheritance, and go
With joy that only the freed soul can know;
Yet in my spirit wanderings I trust
I may sometimes pause near your sacred dust.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Speech Of Silence

The solemn Sea of Silence lies between us;

I know thou livest, and them lovest me,

And yet I wish some white ship would come sailing

Across the ocean, beating word from thee.

The dead calm awes me with its awful stillness.

No anxious doubts or fears disturb my breast;

I only ask some little wave of language,

To stir this vast infinitude of rest.

I am oppressed with this great sense of loving;

So much I give, so much receive from thee;

Like subtle incense, rising from a censer,

So floats the fragrance of thy love round me.

All speech is poor, and written words unmeaning;

Yet such I ask, blown hither by some wind,

To give relief to this too perfect knowledge,

The Silence so impresses on my mind.

How poor the love that needeth word or message,

To banish doubt or nourish tenderness!

I ask them but to temper love's convictions

The Silence all too fully doth express.

Too deep the language which the spirit utters;
Too vast the knowledge which my soul hath stirred.
Send some white ship across the Sea of Silence,
And interrupt its utterance with a word.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Spirit Of Great Joan

Back of each soldier who fights for France,
Aye, back of each woman and man
Who toils and prays through these long tense days.
Is the spirit of Great Joan.
For the love she gave, and the life she gave,
In the eyes of God sufficed
To crown her with light, and power, and might,
That made her second to Christ.

And so in that hour at the Marne she came,
To the seeing eyes of men;
And the blind of view still felt and knew
That her spirit had come again.
And she will come in each crucial hour
And joy shall follow despair,
For Joan sees her France on its knees
And she hears the voice of its prayer.

There is no hate in the heart of France,
But a mighty moral force
That takes its stand for her worshipped land,
And cannot be swerved from its course.
For this is the way with France to-day,
Her courage comes from faith,
And she bends her knee ere she straightens her arm;
In her forward rush toward death.

A jungle of beasts in the heart of the Hun-
War to the world laid bare.
And war has revealed, that France concealed,
Only the lion's lair.
A lioness fighting to save her own,
She fights as a lioness can,
And strength to the end shall the Unseen send,
In the spirit of Great Joan.

The Squanderer

God gave him passions, splendid as the sun,
Meant for the lordliest purposes; a part
Of nature's full and fertile mother heart,
From which new systems and new stars are spun.
And now, behold, behold, what he has done!
In Folly's court and carnal Pleasures' mart
He flung the wealth life gave him at the start.
(This, of all mortal sins, the deadliest one.)

At dawn he stood, potential, opulent,
With virile manhood, and emotions keen,
And wonderful with God's creative fire.
At noon he stands, with Love's large fortune spent
In petty traffic, unproductive, mean-
A pauper, cursed with impotent desire.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Stevedores

We are the army stevedores, lusty and virile and strong,
We are given the hardest work of the war, and the hours are long.
We handle the heavy boxes, and shovel the dirty coal;
While soldiers and sailors work in the light, we burrow below like a mole.
But somebody has to do this work, or the soldiers could not fight!
And whatever work is given a man, is good if he does it right.

We are the army stevedores, and we are volunteers.
We did not wait for the draft to come, to put aside our fears;
We flung them away on the winds of fate, at the very first call of our land,
And each of us offered a willing heart and the strength of a brawny hand.
We are the army stevedores, and work as we must and may,
The cross of honour will never be ours to proudly wear away.

But the men at the Front could never be there,
And the battles could not be won,
If the stevedores stopped in their dull routine
And left their work undone.
Somebody has to do this work, be glad that it isn't you!
We are the army stevedores-give us our due!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Story

They met each other in the glade –
She lifted up her eyes;
Alack the day! Alack the maid!
She blushed in swift surprise.
Alas! Alas! the woe that comes from lifting up the eyes.

The pail was full, the path was steep –
He reached to her his hand;
She felt her warm young pulses leap,
But did not understand.
Alas! Alas! the woe that comes from clasping hand with hand.

She sat beside him in the wood –
He wooed with words and sighs;
Ah! love in spring seems sweet and good,
And maidens are not wise.
Alas! Alas! the woe that comes from listing lovers' sighs.

The summer sun shone fairly down,
The wind blew from the south;
As his blue eyes gazed in eyes of brown,
His kiss fell on her mouth.
Alas! Alas! the woe that comes from kisses on the mouth.

And now the autumn time is near,
The lover roves away,
With breaking heart and falling tear,
She sits the livelong day.
Alas! Alas! for breaking hearts when lovers rove away.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Story Of Grumble Tone

There was a boy named Grumble Tone, who ran away to sea.
'I'm sick of things on land,' he said, 'as sick as I can be,
A life upon the bounding wave is just the life for me!'
But the seething ocean billows failed to stimulate his mirth,
For he did not like the vessel or the dizzy rolling berth,
And he thought the sea was almost as unpleasant as the earth.

He wandered into foreign lands, he saw each wondrous sight,
But nothing that he heard or saw seemed just exactly right,
And so he journeyed on and on, still seeking for delight.
He talked with kings and ladies grand; he dined in courts, they say,
But always found the people dull and longed to get away
To search for that mysterious land where he should want to stay.

He wandered over all the world, his hair grew white as snow,
He reached that final bourne at last where all of us must go,
But never found the land he sought; the reason would you know?
The reason was that north or south, where'er his steps were bent,
On land or sea, in court or hall, he found but discontent,
For he took his disposition with him, everywhere he went.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Suicide

Last was the wealth I carried in life's pack-
Youth, health, ambition, hope and trust but Time
And Fate, those robbers fit for any crime
Stole all, and left me but the empty sack.
Before me lay a long and lonely track
Of darkling hills and barren steeps to climb;
Behind me lay in shadows the sublime
Lost lands of Love's delight. Alack! Alack!

Unwearied, and with springing steps elate,
I had conveyed my wealth along the road.
The empty sack proved now a heavier load:
I was borne down beneath its worthless weight.
I stumbled on, and knocked at Death's dark gate.
There was no answer. Stung by sorrow's goad
I
forced
my way into that grim abode,
And laughed, and flung Life's empty sack to Fate

Unknown and uninvited I passed in
To that strange land that hangs between two goals,
Round which a dark and solemn river rolls-
More dread its silence than the loud earth's din.
And now, where was the peace I hoped to win?
Black-masted ships slid past me in great shoals,
Their bloody decks thronged with mistaken souls.
(God punishes mistakes sometimes like sin.)

Not rest and not oblivion I found.
My suffering self dwelt with me just the same;
But here no sleep was, and no sweet dreams came
To give me respite. Tyrant Death, uncrowned
By my own hand, still King of Terrors, frowned
Upon my shuddering soul, that shrank in shame
Before those eyes where sorrow blent with blame,

And those accusing lips that made no sound.

What gruesome shapes dawned on my startled sight!
What awful sighs broke on my listening ear!
The anguish of the earth, augmented here
A thousand-fold, made one continuous night.
The sack I flung away in impious spite
Hung yet upon me, filled. I saw in fear,
With tears that rained from earth's adjacent sphere,
And turned to stones in falling from that height.

And close about me pressed a grieving throng,
Each with his heavy sack, which bowed him so
His face was hidden. One of these mourned: 'Know
Who enters here but finds the way more long
To those fair realms where sounds the angels' song
There is no man-made exit out of woe;
Ye cannot dash the locked door down and go
To claim thy rightful joy through paths of wrong.'

He passed into the shadows dim and gray,
And left me to pursue my path alone.
With terror greater than I yet had known.
Hard on my soul the awful knowledge lay,
Death had not ended life nor found God's way;
But, with my same sad sorrows still my own,
Where by-roads led to by-roads, thistle-sown,
I had but wandered off and gone astray.

With earth still near enough to hear its sighs,
With heaven afar and hell but just below,
Still on and on my lonely soul must go
Until I earn the right to Paradise.
We cannot force our way into God's skies,
Nor rush into the rest we long to know;
But patiently, with bleeding steps and slow,
Toil on to where selfhood in Godhood dies.

The Summer Girl

She's the jauntiest of creatures, she's the daintiest of misses,
With her pretty patent leathers or her alligator ties,
With her eyes inviting glances and her lips inviting kisses,
As she wanders by the ocean or strolls under country skies.

She's a captivating dresser, and her parasols are stunning,
Her fads will take your breath away, her hats are dreams of style;
She is not so very bookish, but with repartee and punning
She can set the savants laughing and make even dudelets smile.

She has no attacks of talent, she is not a stage-struck maiden;
She is wholly free from hobbies, and she dreams of no 'career';
She is mostly gay and happy, never sad or care-beladen,
Though she sometimes sighs a little if a gentleman is near.

She's a sturdy little walker and she braves all kinds of weather,
And when the rain or fog or mist drive rival crimps a-wreck,
Her fluffy hair goes curling like a kinked-up ostrich feather
Around her ears and forehead and the white nape of her neck.

She is like a fish in water; she can handle reins and racket;
From head to toe and finger-tips she's thoroughly alive;
When she goes promenading in a most distracting jacket,
The rustle round her feet suggests how laundresses may thrive.

She can dare the wind and sunshine in the most bravado manner,
And after hours of sailing she has merely cheeks of rose;
Old Sol himself seems smitten and at most will only tan her,
Though to everybody else he gives a danger-signal nose.

She's a trifle sentimental, and she's fond of admiration,
And she sometimes flirts a little in the season's giddy whirl;
But win her if you can, sir, she may prove your life's salvation,

For an angel masquerading oft is she, the summer girl.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Summons

Some day, when the golden glory
Of June is over the earth,
And the birds are singing together
In a wild, mad strain of mirth;
When the skies are as clear and cloudless
As the skies in June can be,
I would like to have the summons
Sent down from God to me.

Some glowing, golden morning
In the heart of the summer time,
As I stand in the perfect vigour
And strength of my youth's glad prime;
When my heart is light and happy,
And the word seems to bright to me,
I would like to dropp from this earth life,
As a green leaf drops from a tree.

I would not wait for the furrows -
For the faded eyes and hair;
But pass out swift and sudden,
Ere I grow heart-sick with care;
I would break some morn in my singing -
Or fall in my springing walk
As a full-blown flower will sometimes
Drop, all a-bloom, from the stalk.

I think the leaf would sooner
Be the first to break away,
Than to hang alone in the orchard
In the bleak November day.
And I think the fate of the flower
That falls in the midst of bloom
Is sweeter than if it lingered
To die in the autumn's gloom.

And so, in my youth's glad morning,
While the summer walks abroad,
I would like to hear the summons,

That must come, sometime, from God.
I would pass from the earth's perfection
To the endless June above:
From the fullness of living and loving,
To the noon of Immortal Love.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Swan Of Dijon

I was in Dijon when the war's wild blast
Was at its loudest; when there was no sound
From dawn to dawn, save soldiers marching past,
Or rattle of their wagons in the street.
When every engine whistle would repeat
Persistently, with meaning tense, profound,
'We carry men to slaughter' or 'we bring
Remnants of men back as war's offering.'

And there in Dijon, the out-gazing eye
Grew weary of the strife-suggesting scene;
But, searching, found one quiet spot hard by
Where war was not; a little lake whereon
Moved leisurely a stately, tranquil swan,
Majestic and imposing, yet serene.

I was in Dijon, when no sound or sight
Woke thoughts of peace, save this one speck of white,
Sailing 'neath skies of menace, unafraid
While silver fountains for his pleasure played.
Dear Swan of Dijon, it was your good part
To rest a tired heart.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Tavern Of Last Times

At Box Hill, Surrey

A modern hour from London (as we spin
Into a silver thread the miles of space
Between us and our goal), there is a place
Apart from city traffic, dust, and din,
Green with great trees, where hides a quiet Inn.
Here Nelson last looked on the lovely face
Which made his world; and by its magic grace
Trailed rosy clouds across each early sin.
And, leaning lawnward, is the room where Keats
Wrote the last one of those immortal songs
(Called by the critics of his day 'mere rhymes').
A lark, high in the boxwood bough repeats
Those lyric strains, to idle passing throngs,
There by the little Tavern-of-Last-Times.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Temperance Army

Though you see no banded army,
Though you hear no cannons rattle,
We are in a mighty contest,
We are fighting a great battle.
We are few, but we are right:
And we wage the holy fight,
Night and day, and day and night.

If we do not fail or falter,
If we do not sleep or slumber,
We shall win in this great contest,
Though the foe is twice our number.
This the burden of our song,
'We are few, but we are strong,
And right must triumph over wrong.'

O my sisters! O my brothers!
There is death all round about us.
Must we, then, sit down discouraged?
Will you let the wine-cup rout us?
Hear the drunkard's awful wail!
See the mourners, bowed and pale!
Will you, coward, then say 'fail'?

Say not that your heart is with us
When you do not help or aid us.
All who love the cause sincerely
Can do something: God has made us
Tongues to talk with: you can say
Something, if you will, each day,
That will help us on our way,

Though you are not highly gifted,
Though you are not bard or poet,
Though you cannot preach or lecture,

You can love the cause, and show it
Boldly, in each thing you do.
Seeking all that's pure and true,
This will be a help from you.

You can say the liquor traffic
Is a curse to any nation;
You can say that prohibition
Is a blessing and salvation.
You can sow good seeds, and, though
You may never see them grow,
They will not be lost, I know.

In this mighty temperance contest,
Where no guns or cannons rattle,
Though you cannot lead the army
Or be chieftain of the battle,
With that mighty sword, the tongue,
You can fight against the wrong,
You can sing some temperance song.

Say not that you cannot aid us!
Drops of water make the river-
Make the mighty Mississippi,
That flows on hand on for ever.
Every word you say for Right
Gives us courage, gives us might,
And brings nearer, morn and night.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Tendril's Faith

Under the snow in the dark and the cold,
A pale little sprout was humming;
Sweetly it sang, 'neath the frozen mold,
Of the beautiful days that were coming.

"How foolish your songs, " said a lump of clay,
"What is there, I ask, to prove them?
Just look at the walls between you and the day,
Now, have you the strength to move them? "

But under the ice and under the snow
The pale little sprout kept singing,
"I cannot tell how, but I know, I know,
I know what the days are bringing."

"Birds, and blossoms, and buzzing bees,
Blue, blue skies above me,
Bloom on the meadows and buds on the trees,
And the great glad sun to love me."

A pebble spoke next: "You are quite absurd."
It said, "with your song's insistence;
For I never saw a tree or a bird,
So of course there are none in existence."

"But I know, I know, " the tendril cried,
In beautiful sweet unreason;
Till lo! from its prison, glorified,
It burst in the glad spring season.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Tiger

In the still jungle of the senses lay
A tiger soundly sleeping, till one day
A bold young hunter chanced to come that way.

'How calm,' he said, 'that splendid creature lies,
I long to rouse him into swift surprise!'
The well aimed arrow-shot from amorous eyes,

And lo! the tiger rouses up and turns,
A coal of fire his glowing eyeball burns,
His mighty frame with savage hunger yearns.

He crouches for a spring; his eyes dilate-
Alas! bold hunter, what shall be thy fate?
Thou canst not fly, it is too late, too late.

Once having tasted human flesh, ah! then,
Woe, woe unto the whole rash world of men,
The wakened tiger will not sleep again.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Times

The times are not degenerate. Man's faith
Mounts higher than of old. No crumbling creed
Can take from the immortal soul the need
Of that supreme Creator, God. The wraith
Of dead beliefs we cherished in our youth
Fades but to let us welcome new-born Truth.

Man may not worship at the ancient shrine
Prone on his face, in self-accusing scorn.
That night is past. He hails a fairer morn,
And knows himself a something all divine;
No humble worm whose heritage is sin,
But, born of God, he feels the Christ within.

Not loud his prayers, as in the olden time,
But deep his reverence for that mighty force,
That occult working of the great all Source,
Which makes the present era so sublime.
Religion now means something high and broad,
And man stood never half so near to God.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Traveled Man

Sometimes I wish the railroads all were torn out,
The ships all sunk among the coral strands.
I am so very weary, yea, so worn out,
With tales of those who visit foreign lands.

When asked to dine, to meet these traveled people,
My soup seems brewed from cemetery bones.
The fish grows cold on some cathedral steeple,
I miss two courses while I stare at thrones.

I'm forced to leave my salad quite untasted,
Some musty, moldy temple to explore.
The ices, fruit and coffee all are wasted
While into realms of ancient art I soar.

I'd rather take my chance of life and reason,
If in a den of roaring lions hurled
Than for a single year, ay, for one season,
To dwell with folks who'd traveled round the world.

So patronizing are they, so oppressive,
With pity for the ones who stay at home,
So mighty is their knowledge, so aggressive,
I oftentimes wish they had not ceased to roam.

They loathe the new, they quite detest the present;
They revel in a pre-Columbian morn;
Just dare to say America is pleasant,
And die beneath the glances of their scorn.

They are increasing at a rate alarming,
Go where I will, the traveled man is there.
And now I think that rustic wholly charming
Who has not strayed beyond his meadows fair.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Traveller

Reply to Rudyard Kipling's 'He travels the fastest who travels alone.'

Who travels alone with his eye on the heights,
Though he laughs in the day time oft weeps on the nights;

For courage goes down at the set of the sun,
When the toil of the journey is all borne by one.

He speeds but to grief though full gaily he ride
Who travels alone without love at his side.

Who travels alone without lover or friend
But hurries from nothing, to naught at the end.

Though great be his winnings and high be his goal,
He is bankrupt in wisdom and beggared in soul.

Life's one gift of value to him is denied
Who travels alone without love at his side.

It is easy enough in this world to make haste
If one live for that purpose – but think of the waste;

For life is a poem to leisurely read,
And the joy of the journey lies not in its speed.

Oh! vain his achievement and petty his pride
Who travels alone without love at his side.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Trio

We love but once. The great gold orb of light
From dawn to eventide doth cast his ray;
But the full splendour of his perfect might
Is reached but once throughout the live-long day.

We love but once. The waves, with ceaseless motion,
Do day and night plash on the pebbled shore;
But the strong tide of the resistless ocean
Sweeps in but one hour of the twenty-four.

We love but once. A score of times, perchance,
We may be moved in fancy's fleeting fashion –
May treasure up a word, a tone, a glance,
But only once we feel the soul's great passion.

We love but once. Love walks with death and birth
(The saddest, the unkindest of the three):
And only once while we sojourn on earth
Can that strange trio come to you or me.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Truth Teller

The Truth Teller lifts the curtain,
And shows us the people's plight;
And everything seems uncertain,
And nothing at all looks right.
Yet out of the blackness groping,
My heart finds a world in bloom;
For it somehow is fashioned for hoping,
And it cannot live in the gloom.

He tells us from border to border,
That race is warring with race;
With riot and mad disorder,
The earth is a wretched place;
And yet ere the sun is setting
I am thinking of peace, not strife;
For my heart has a way of forgetting
All things save the joy of life.

I heard in my Youth's beginning
That earth was a region of woe,
And trouble, and sorrow, and sinning:
The Truth Teller told me so.
I knew it was true, and tragic;
And I mourned over much that was wrong;
And then, by some curious magic,
The heart of me burst into song.

The years have been going, going,
A mixture of pleasure and pain;
But the Truth Teller's books are showing
That evil is on the gain.
And I know that I ought to be grieving,
And I should be too sad to sing;
But somehow I keep on believing
That life is a glorious thing.

The Tryst

Just when all hope had perished in my soul,
And balked desire made havoc with my mind,
My cruel Ladye suddenly grew kind,
And sent those gracious words upon a scroll:
"When knowing Night her dusky scarf has tied
Across the bold, intrusive eyes of day,
Come as a glad, triumphant lover may,
No longer fearing that he be denied."

I read her letter for the hundredth time,
And for the hundredth time my gladdened sight
Blurred with the rapture of my vast delight,
And swooned upon the page. I caught the chime
Of far off bells, and at each silver note
My heart on tiptoe pressed its eager ear
Against my breast; it was such a joy to hear
The tolling of the hour of which she wrote.

The curious day still lingered in the skies
And watched me as I hastened to the tryst.
And back, beyond great clouds of amethyst,
I saw Night's soft, reassuring eyes.
"Oh, Night, " I cried, "dear Love's considerate friend,
Haste from the far, dim valleys of the west,
Rock the sad striving earth to quiet rest,
And bid the day's insistent vigil end."

Down brooding streets, and past the harboured ships
The Night's young handmaid, Twilight, walked with me.
A spent moon leaned inertly o'er the sea;
A few, pale, phantom stars were in eclipse.
There was the house, My Ladye's sea-girt bower
All draped in gloom, save for one taper's glow,
Which lit the path, where willing feet would go.
There was the house, and this the promised hour.

The tide was out; and from the sea's salt path
Rose amorous odours, filtering through the night
And stirring all the senses with delight;

Sweet perfumes left since Aphrodite's bath.
Back in the wooded copse, a whip-poor-will
Gave love's impassioned and impatient call.
On pebbled sands I heard the waves kiss fall,
And fall again, so hushed the hour and still.

Light was my knock upon the door, so light,
And yet the sound seemed rude. My pulses beat
So loud they drowned out the coming of her feet
The arrow of her taper pierced the gloom –
The portal closed behind me. She was there –
Love on her lips and yielding in her eyes
And but the sea to hear our vows and sighs.
She took my hand and led me up the stair.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Tulip Bed At Greeley Square

You know that oasis, fresh and fair
In the city desert, as Greeley square?

That bright triangle of scented bloom
That lies surrounded by grime and gloom?

Right in the breast of the seething town
Like a gleaming gem or a wanton's gown?

Ah, wonderful things that tulip bed
Unto my listening soul has said.

Over the rattle and roar of the street
I hear a chorus of voices sweet,

Day and night, when I pass that way,
And these are the things the voices say:

"Here, in the heart of the foolish strife,
We live a simple and natural life.

"Here, in the midst of the clash and din,
We know what it is to be calm within.

"Here, environed by sin and shame,
We do what we can with our pure white flame.

"We do what we can with our bloom and grace,
To make the city a fairer place.

"It is well to be good though the world is vile,
And so through the dust and the smoke we smile,

"We are but atoms in chaos tossed,
Yet never a purpose for truth was lost."

Ah, many a sermon is uttered there
By the bed of blossoms in Greeley square.

And he who listens and hears aright,
Is better equipped for the world's hard fight.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Two Armies

Once over the ocean in distant lands,
In an age long past, were two hostile bands-
Two armies of men, both brave, both strong,
And their hearts beat high as they marched along
To fight the battle of right and wrong.

Never, I think, did the Eye of heaven
Look down on two armies so nearly even
In well-trained soldiers, in strength and might.
But one was the
Wrong
, and one was the
Right
,
And the last was the stronger in heaven's sight.
And these hostile armies drew near, one night,
And pitched their tents on two hill-sides green,
With only the brow of a hill between.

With the first red beams of the morning light
Both knew would open the awful fight,
And one of the armies lay hushed and still,
And slept in the tents on the green side-hill.
Heart beat with heart: and they all were as one
In the thought of the battle to be begun
With the first bright glance of the morning sun.
Their aim was ignoble, their cause was wrong,
But they were
united
, and so they were strong.

Not so the army just over the hill:
While the ranks of the foe were hushed and still,
The ranks of the
Right
were torn with strife,

And with noise and confusion the air was rife.
Disputes and quarrels, dissensions and jars,
And the sound of fighting, and civil wars;
And, ere the morning, brother and brother,
Instead of the enemy, fought with each other.

Over the hill, the foe, in glee,
Listened and laughed. 'Ho ho!' quoth he.
'There is strife in the enemy's ranks, I see,
And the bright red beams of the rising sun
Will see a victory easily won.
It matters little how strong the foe,
This is a truth we all do know:

There is no success without unity,

However noble the cause may be.
The day is ours before it's begun.
Ho! for the triumph so easily won.'

And on the morrow, the ranks of the Right
Were routed and beaten, and put to flight,
And the Wrong was the victor, and gained the fight.

There are two armies abroad to-day,
As in the age that has passed away.
The makers, and venders, and patrons, and all
Who aid in the traffic of Alcohol,
These are the warriors, bold and strong,
Who swell the ranks of the army of Wrong.
And we are the soldiers, true and brave,
Who are striving with heart and hand to save
The youths of our land from the deep, dark grave
That the foe is digging by day and by night.
Only
one thing
can defeat the Right.
There is nothing but triumph for us, unless

Dissension

, that crafty foe to success,

Creeps into our ranks. Oh! let us

unite

!

Let heart beat with heart as we enter the fight;

Let the whole mighty army be

one

for the time,

And sweep on the foe in a column sublime

In its unity, earnestness, oneness, and might,

Till the foe stands aghast at the wonderful sight,

Till the enemy cowers and shivers, afraid

Of the awful approach of the grand cavalcade.

Close up the ranks, brothers! sisters, draw near,

We are fighting one fight, we are all kinsmen here.

Closer, still closer! in nearness lies might.

Love is our watchword-on to the fight!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Two Glasses

There sat two glasses, filled to the brim,
On a rich man's table, rim to rim.
One was ruddy and red as blood,
And one was clear as the crystal flood.

Said the glass of wine to his paler brother,
"Let us tell tales of the past to each other;
I can tell of banquet, and revel, and mirth,
Where I was a king, for I ruled in might;
For the proudest and grandest souls on earth
Fell under my touch, as though struck with blight.
From the heads of kings I have torn the crown;
From the heights of fame I have hurled men down.
I have blasted many an honored name;
I have taken virtue and given shame;
I have tempted the youth with a sip, a taste,
That has made his future a barren waste.
Far greater than any king am I,
Or than any army beneath the sky.
I have made the arm of the driver fail,
And sent the train from the iron rail.
I have made good ships go down at sea,
And the shrieks of the lost were sweet to me.
Fame, strength, wealth, genius before me fall;
Ho, ho! pale brother," said the wine,
"Can you boast of deeds as great as mine?"

Said the water-glass: "I cannot boast
Of a king dethroned, or a murdered host,
But I can tell of hearts that were sad
By my crystal drops made bright and glad;
Of thirsts I have quenched, and brows I have laved;
Of hands I have cooled, and souls I have saved.
I have leaped through the valley, dashed down the mountain,
Slept in the sunshine, and dripped from the fountain.
I have burst my cloud-fetters, and dropped from the sky,
And everywhere gladdened the prospect and eye;
I have eased the hot forehead of fever and pain;
I have made the parched meadows grow fertile with grain.

I can tell of the powerful wheel of the mill,
That ground out the flower, and turned at my will.
I can tell of manhood debased by you,
That I have uplifted and crowned anew;
I cheer, I help, I strengthen and aid;
I gladden the heart of man and maid;
I set the wine-chained captive free,
And all are better for knowing me."

These are the tales they told each other,
The glass of wine and its paler brother,
As they sat together, filled to the brim,
On a rich man's table, rim to rim.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Two Ships

On the sea of life they floated,
Brothers twain in manhood's pride,
And the good ship 'Temperance' bore them,
Safely o'er the stormy tide.
Not a thought of rock or breaker,
Not a fear of wreck had they,
For their ship was strong and steady-
Faithful, trusty, night and day.

So they floated on together,
Full of youth's elastic joy,
Floated till the air was startled
With the cry of 'Boat ahoy!'
And they saw a craft beside them,
Dainty, jaunty, frail, and fair,
And its banner showed a wine-glass,
Painted as its symbol there.

And again the stranger shouted,
'Boat ahoy! a friend is near!
Captain of yon gallant vessel,
Do you see, and do you hear?
We're the 'Social Glass,' my hearties,
And a jolly, jovial crew.
We are bound for Pleasure Valley,
And we would be friends with you.'

But the brothers stood in silence,
Though they could not help but hear,
And the elder's heart was throbbing
With a vague and chilling fear.
And again the stranger pleaded,
'Come aboard the 'Social Glass!'
We will entertain you warmly,
And the time will quickly pass.'

Still the elder stood unheeding,
Still he did not move or turn,
And his mien was cold and haughty,
And his face was dark and stern.
But the younger whispered to him,
'Surely, we are churls to stand
In this sullen, boorish silence;
Let us offer friendship's hand.

'See! they beckon us to join them!
Beckon us with word and smile.
I will not refuse them longer,
I will join them for a while.'
Then the 'Social Glass' rowed nearer,
And he joined the jovial throng,
And they gathered round about him,
Greeting him with laugh and song.

Then the elder cried in anguish,
Loud and wild his accents fell:
'Know you not, O brother, brother!
Yonder ship is bound for hell?
See the clouds that hover o'er you!
And the day is growing dark:
There is ruin and destruction
For each soul upon that bark.

'Oh! come back! Why did you leave me?
It is certain death to stay,
Do not loiter! do not linger!
Brother, brother, come away!'
But the wild winds only answered
To his agonizing plea;
And the 'Social Glass' went bounding
Lightly o'er the troubled sea.

He could hear their shouts of laughter,

He could see their goblets shine,
He could see his darling brother
With his lips all red with wine.
Ah! a seething, boiling maelstrom
Lay within their very track,
And he warned them of their danger,
And he strove to turn them back.

But they did not, would not heed him:
On they went in wildest glee!
Nearer, nearer to the whirlpool,
Nearer to the boiling sea,
Till the 'Social Glass' was buried
In the seething, rushing wave,
And each mad and wreckless voyager
Found a dark and awful grave.

And the lonely brother floated
Calmly o'er the stormy tide,
For the good ship 'Temperance' bore him
Safely o'er the waters wide.
And he never left her shelter
Till the voyage of life was o'er,
And he anchored where the angels
Waited for him on the shore.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Unattained

A vision beauteous as the morn,
With heavenly eyes and tresses streaming,
Slow glided o'er a field late shorn
Where walked a poet idly dreaming.
He saw her, and joy lit his face.
"Oh, vanish not at human speaking,"
He cried, "thou form of magic grace,
Thou art the poem I am seeking.

"I've sought thee long! I claim thee now---
My thought embodied, living, real."
She shook the tresses from her brow.
"Nay, nay!" she said, "I am ideal.
I am the phantom of desire---
The spirit of all great endeavour,
I am the voice that says, 'Come higher.'
That calls men up and up for ever.

"'Tis not alone the thought supreme
That here upon thy path has risen;
I am the artist's highest dream,
The ray of light he cannot prison.
I am the sweet ecstatic note
Than all glad music gladder, clearer,
That trembles in the singer's throat,
And dies without a human hearer.

"I am the greater, better yield,
That leads and cheers thy farmer neighbour,
For me he bravely tills the field
And whistles gaily at his labour.
Not thou alone, O poet soul,
Dost seek me through an endless morrow,
But to the toiling, hoping whole
I am at once the hope and sorrow.
The spirit of the unattained,
I am to those who seek to name me,
A good desired but never gained.
All shall pursue, but none shall claim me."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Undiscovered Country

Man has explored all countries and all lands,
And made his own the secrets of each clime.
Now, ere the world has fully reached its prime,
The oval earth lies compassed with steel bands,
The seas are slaves to ships that touch all strands,
And even the haughty elements sublime
And bold, yield him their secrets for all time,
And speed like lackeys forth at his commands.

Still, though he search from shore to distant shore,
And no strange realms, no unlocated plains
Are left for his attainment and control,
Yet is there one more kingdom to explore.
Go, know thyself, O man! there yet remains
The undiscovered country of thy soul!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Universal Route

As we journey along, with a laugh and a song,
We see, on youth's flower-decked slope,
Like a beacon of light, shining fair on the sight,
The beautiful Station of Hope.

But the wheels of old Time roll along as we climb,
And our youth speeds away on the years;
And with hearts that are numb with life's sorrows we come
To the mist-covered Station of Tears.

Still onward we pass, where the milestones, alas!
Are tombs of our dead, to the West,
Where glitters and gleams, in the dying sunbeams,
The sweet, silent Station of Rest.

All rest is but change, and no grave can estrange
The soul from its Parent above;
And, scorning the rod, it soars back to God,
To the limitless City of Love.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Valley Of Fear

In the journey of life, as we travel along
To the mystical goal that is hidden from sight,
You may stumble at times into Roadways of Wrong,
Not seeing the sign-board that points to the right.
Through caverns of sorrow your feet may be led,
Where the noon of the day will like midnight appear.
But no matter whither you wander or tread,
Keep out of the Valley of Fear.

The Roadways of Wrong will wind out into light
If you sit in the silence and ask for a Guide;
In the caverns of sorrow your soul gains its sight
Of beautiful vistas, ascending and wide.
In by-paths of worry and trouble and strife
Full many a bloom grows bedewed by a tear,
But wretched and arid and void of all life
Is the desolate Valley of Fear.

The Valley of Fear is a maddening maze
Of paths that wind on without exit or end,
From nowhere to nowhere lead all of its ways,
And shadows with shadows in more shadows blend.
Each guide-post is lettered, 'This way to Despair,'
And the River of Death in the darkness flows near,
But there is a beautiful Roadway of Prayer
This side of the Valley of Fear.

This beautiful Roadway is narrow and steep,
And it runs up the side of the Mountain of Faith.
You may not perceive it at first if you weep,
But it rises high over the River of Death.
Though the Roadway is narrow and dark at the base,
It widens ascending, and ever grows clear,
Till it shines at the top with the Light of God's face,
Far, far from the Valley of Fear.

When close to that Valley your footsteps shall fare,
Turn, turn to the Roadway of Prayer-
The beautiful Roadway of Prayer.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Voice

I dreamed a Voice, of one God-authorized,
Cried loudly thro' the world, 'Disarm! Disarm! '
And there was consternation in the camps;
And men who strutted under braid and lace
Beat on their medalled breasts, and wailed,
 'Undone! '

The word was echoed from a thousand hills,
And shop and mill, and factory and forge,
Where throve the awful industries of death,
Hushed into silence. Scrawled upon the doors,
The passer read, 'Peace bids her children
 Starve.'

But foolish women clasped their little sons
And wept for joy, not reasoning like men.

Again the Voice commanded: 'Now go forth
And build a world for Progress and for Peace.
This world had waited since the earth was
 Shaped;
But men were fighting, and they could not
 Toil.
The needs of life outnumbered needs of death.
Leave death with God. Go forth, I say, and
 Build.'

And then a sudden comprehensive joy
Shone in the eyes of men; and one who thought
Only of conquests and of victories
Woke from his gloomy reverie and cried,
'Ay, come and build! I challenge all to try.
And I will make a world more beautiful
Then Eden was before the serpent came.'
And like a running flame on western wilds,
Ambition spread from mind to listening mind,
And lo! the looms were busy once again,
And all the earth resounded with men's toil.

Vast palaces of Science graced the world;
Their banquet tables spread with feasts of truth

For all who hungered. Music kissed the air,
Once rent with boom of cannons. Statues gleamed
From wooded ways, where ambushed armies hid
In times of old. The sea and air were gay
With shining sails that soared from land to land.
A universal language of the world
Made nations kin, and poverty was known

But as a word marked 'obsolete, ' like war.
The arts were kindled with celestial fire;
New poets sang so Homer's fame grew dim;
And brush and chisel gave the wondering race
Sublimer treasures than old Greece displayed.
Men differed still; fierce argument arose,
For men are human in this human sphere;
But unarmed Arbitration stood between
And Reason settled in a hundred hours
What War disputed for a hundred years.

Oh, that a Voice, of one God-authorised
Might cry to all mankind, Disarm! Disarm!

Remembered

His art was loving; Eres set his sign
Upon that youthful forehead, and he drew
The hearts of women, as the sun draws dew.
Love feeds love's thirst as wine feeds love of wine;
Nor is there any potion from the vine
Which makes men drunken like the subtle brew
Of kisses crushed by kisses; and he grew
Inebriated with that draught divine.

Yet in his sober moments, when the sun
Of radiant summer paled to lonely fall,
And passion's sea had grown an ebbing tide,
From out the many, Memory singled one
Full cup that seemed the sweetest of them all –
The warm red mouth that mocked him and denied.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Watcher

I think I hear the sound of horses' feet
Beating upon the graveled avenue.
Go to the window that looks on the street,
He would not let me die alone, I knew.'
Back to the couch the patient watcher passed,
And said: 'It is the wailing of the blast.'

She turned upon her couch and, seeming, slept,
The long, dark lashes shadowing her cheek;
And on and on the weary moments crept,
When suddenly the watcher heard her speak:
'I think I hear the sound of horses' hoofs-'
And answered, "'Tis the rain upon the roofs.'

Unbroken silence, quiet, deep, profound.
The restless sleeper turns: 'How dark, how late!
What is it that I hear-a trampling sound?
I think there is a horseman at the gate.'
The watcher turns away her eyes tear-blind:
'It is the shutter beating in the wind.'

The dread hours passed; the patient clock ticked on;
The weary watcher moved not from her place.
The gray dim shadows of the early dawn
Caught sudden glory from the sleeper's face.
'He comes! my love! I knew he would!' she cried;
And smiling sweetly in her slumbers, died.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Way Of It

This is the way of it, wide world over,
One is beloved, and one is the lover,
One gives and the other receives.
One lavishes all in a wild emotion,
One offers a smile for a life's devotion,
One hopes and the other believes,
One lies awake in the night to weep,
And the other drifts off in a sweet sound sleep.

One soul is aflame with a godlike passion,
One plays with love in an idler's fashion,
One speaks and the other hears.
One sobs, 'I love you, ' and wet eyes to show it,
And one laughs lightly, and says, 'I know it, '
With smiles for the other's tears.
One lives for the other and nothing beside,
And the other remembers the world is wide.

This is the way of it, sad earth over,
The heart that breaks is the heart of the lover,
And the other learns to forget.
'For what is the use in endless sorrow?
Though the sun goes down, it will rise tomorrow;
And life is not over yet.'
Oh! I know this truth, if I know no other,
That passionate Love is Pain's own mother.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Way To Wonderland

Who knows the way to wonderland?
Oh, I know, Oh, I know!
Trotty-te-trot on mama's knee,
Then over the billows of sleepy sea,
Down through the straits of by-lo,
Oh, who but mama could understand
The ways that lead to wonderland.

Now we are off to wonderland,
You and I, you and I,
Into the harbor of happy dreams,
Oh how misty and fair it seems,
Rock, rock a-by;
Ah! no one but mama could understand
The way that leads to wonderland

Now we will anchor at wonderland.
Slow-slow-slow-slow.
The magic place where angels keep
Dreams for babies who fall to sleep,
Down we go, down we go,
Oh, who but mama could understand
How to anchor at wonderland.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Wheel Of The Breast

Through rivers of veins on the nameless quest
The tide of my life goes hurriedly sweeping,
Till it reaches that curious wheel o' the breast,
The human heart, which is never at rest.
Faster, faster, it cries, and leaping,
Plunging, dashing, speeding away,
The wheel and the river work night and day.
I know not wherefore, I know not whither,
This strange tide rushes with such mad force:
It glides on hither, it slides on thither,
Over and over the selfsame course,
With never an outlet and never a source;
And it lashes itself to the heat of passion
And whirls the heart in a mill-wheel fashion.
I can hear in the hush of the still, still night,
The ceaseless sound of that mighty river;
I can hear it gushing, gurgling, rushing,
With a wild, delirious, strange delight,
And a conscious pride in its sense of might,
As it hurries and worries my heart forever.
And I wonder oft as I lie awake,
And list to the river that seethes and surges
Over the wheel that it chides and urges—
I wonder oft if that wheel will break
With the mighty pressure it bears, some day,
Or slowly and wearily wear away.
For little by little the heart is wearing,
Like the wheel of the mill, as the tide goes tearing
And plunging hurriedly through my breast,
In a network of veins on a nameless quiet,
From and forth, unto unknown oceans,
Bringing its cargoes of fierce emotions,
With never a pause or an hour for rest.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Wild Blue-Bells

Came a bouquet from the city,
Fragrant, rich and debonair -
Sweet carnation and geranium,
Heliotrope and roses rare.

Down beside the crystal river,
Where the moss-grown rocks are high,
And the ferns, from niche and crevice,
Stretch to greet the azure sky;

In the chaste October sunlight,
High above the path below,
Grew a tuft of lovely blue-bells,
Softly wind-swung to and fro.

Reached a dainty hand to grasp them,
Bore them home with loving care,
Tenderly and proudly placed them
'Mid the flowers so sweet and fair.

But my timid little blue-bells,
Children of the leafy wild,
Dazzled by their city sisters,
Turned away and, tearful, smiled.

When alone, I bent to kiss them,
Pleadingly they sighed to me,
'Take us, when we die, we pray thee,
Back beneath the dear old tree.'

'We would sleep where first the sunshine
Kissed us in the dewy morn;
Where, while soft, warm zephyrs fanned us,
Leaf and bud and flower were born.'

So I bore them, when they faded,
Back to where love sighed for them;
Laid them near the ferns and mosses,
'Neath the dear old parent stem; -

Deeply grieved that all things lovely
Must so soon forever die, -
That upon the gentle blue-bells
Winter's cold, deep snow must lie.

And I half arraigned the goodness
That made Death king everywhere -
Stretching forth his cruel sceptre -
Lord of sea, and earth and air.

Summer came, and all the hillsides
Wore a shim'ring robe of green;
And with rifts of sky and cloudlet
Flashed the river's golden sheen.

I was walking the old pathway,
When a tiny shout I hears;
Harken! was it elfin fairy,
Or some truant mocking bird?

No! a family of blue-bells
Waved their slender arms on high
Clapped their tiny arms in triumph,
Crying, 'See! we did not die.'

'Never more distrust the Master,
Love and Truth his ways attend
Death is but a darkened portal
Of a life that ne'er shall end

'Loved ones, parted from in anguish,
Your glad eyes again shall see, -
Brighter than the hopes you cherished
Shall the glad fruition be.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Winds Of Fate

One ship drives east and another drives west
With the selfsame winds that blow.
Tis the set of the sails
And not the gales
Which tells us the way to go.
Like the winds of the seas are the ways of fate,
As we voyage along through the life:
Tis the set of a soul
That decides its goal,
And not the calm or the strife.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Wish

Should some great angel say to me to-morrow,
"Thou must re-tread thy pathway from the start,
But God will grant, in pity, for thy sorrow,
Some one dear wish, the nearest to thy heart.'

This were my wish! from my life's dim beginning
Let be what has been! wisdom planned the whole;
My want, my woe, my errors, and my sinning,
All, all were needed lessons for my soul.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The World's Need

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind,
Is all the sad world needs.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Year

What can be said in New Year rhymes,
That's not been said a thousand times?

The new years come, the old years go,
We know we dream, we dream we know.

We rise up laughing with the light,
We lie down weeping with the night.

We hug the world until it stings,
We curse it then and sigh for wings.

We live, we love, we woo, we wed,
We wreath our prides, we sheet our dead.

We laugh, we weep, we hope, we fear,
And that's the burden of a year.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

The Yellow-Covered Almanac

I left the farm when mother died and changed my place of dwelling
To daughter Susie's stylish house right on the city street:
And there was them before I came that sort of scared me, telling
How I would find the town folks' ways so difficult to meet;
They said I'd have no comfort in the rustling, fixed-up throng,
And I'd have to wear stiff collars every weekday, right along.

I find I take to city ways just like a duck to water;
I like the racket and the noise and never tire of shows;
And there's no end of comfort in the mansion of my daughter,
And everything is right at hand and money freely flows;
And hired help is all about, just listenin' to my call –
But I miss the yellow almanac off my old kitchen wall.

The house is full of calendars from the attic to the cellar,
They're painted in all colours and are fancy like to see,
But in this one in particular I'm not a modern feller,
And the yellow-covered almanac is good enough for me.
I'm used to it, I've seen it round from boyhood to old age,
And I rather like the jokin' at the bottom of the page.

I like the way its 'S' stood out to show the week's beginning,
(In these new-fangled calendars the days seem sort of mixed) ,
And the man upon the cover, though he wa'n't exactly winnin',
With lungs and liver all exposed, still showed how we are fixed;
And the letters and credentials hat was writ to Mr. Ayer
I've often on a rainy day found readin' pretty fair.

I tried to buy one recently; there wa'n't none in the city!
They toted out great calendars, in every shape and style.
I looked at them in cold disdain, and answered 'em in pity –
'I'd rather have my almanac than all that costly pile.'
And though I take to city life, I'm lonesome after all
For that old yellow almanac upon my kitchen wall.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Then And Now

A little time ago, a few brief years,
And there was peace within our beauteous borders;
Peace, and a prosperous people, and no fears
Of war and its disorders.
Pleasure was ruling goddess of our land; with her attendant Mirth
She led a jubilant, joy-seeking band about the riant earth.

Do you recall those laughing days, my Brothers,
And those long nights that trespassed on the dawn?
Those throngs of idle dancing maids and mothers
Who lilted on and on-
Card mad, wine flushed, bejewelled and half stripped,
Yet women whose sweet mouth had never sipped
From sin's black chalice-women good at heart
Who, in the winding maze of pleasure's mart,
Had lost the sun-kissed way to wholesome pleasures of an earlier day.

Oh! You remember them! You filled their glasses;
You 'cut in' at their games of bridge; you left
Your work to drop in on their dancing-classes
Before the day was cleft
In twain by noontide. When the night waxed late
You led your partner forth to demonstrate
The newest steps before a cheering throng,
And Time and Peace danced by your side along.

Peace is a lovely word, and we abhor that red word 'War';
But look ye, Brothers, what this war has done for daughters and for son,
For manhood and for womanhood, whose trend
Seemed year on year toward weakness to descend.
Upon this woof of darkness and of terror, woven by human error,
Behold the pattern of a new race-soul,
And it shall last while countless ages roll.

At the loud call of drums, out of the idler and the weakling comes

The hero valiant with self-sacrifice, ready to pay the price
War asks of men, to help a suffering world.
And out of the arms of pleasure, where they whirled
In wild unreasoning mirth, behold the splendid women of the earth
Living new selfless lives-the toiling mothers, sister, daughters, wives
Of men gone forth as target for the foe.

Ah, now we know
Man is divine; we see the heavenly spark
Shining above the smoke and gloom and dark
Which was not visible in peaceful days.
God! wondrous are Thy ways,
For out of chaos comes construction; out of darkness and of doubt
And the black pit of death comes glorious faith;
From want and waste comes thrift, from weakness strength and power,
And to the summits men and women lift
Their souls from self-indulgence in this hour,
This crucial hour of life:
So shines the golden side of this black shield of strife.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Theory And Practice

The man of God stands, on the Sabbath-day,
Warning the sinners from the broad highway
That leads to death. He rolls his pious eye,
And tells how wily demons hidden lie
To spring upon the thoughtless souls who pass
Along. He lifts his hands, and cries, 'Alas!
That such things be! O sinners! pause;
Gird on God's armor; let the devil see
Thou hast espoused a high and holy cause,
And all his arts are powerless on thee.'

'Tis thus the man of God in warning cries,
And tears of heart-felt sorrow fill his eyes;
And then he doffs his surplice and his gown,
And calls for wine to wash his sorrow down.
Ah! follower of the meek and lowly One,
And is it thus that thou wouldst have men shun
The road to death? Is this the better way,
Of which thou tellest on the Sabbath-day?
This wine you sip to quench your pious thirst,
Of all the devil's arts, he reckons first.
And countless legions go down to the dead,
Slain soul and body by the demon red.
Is this the holy principle you teach?
Or shall men practise, while you only preach?

The righteous churchman reads a tale of strife,
One of those countless tragedies of city life;
He sighs, and shakes his head, and sighs again,
And thanks his God he's not as other men.
And then he sips his glass of ale or rum,
And wonders if the time shall ever come
When such things cease to be. I answer, 'When
You who bear the names of Christian men
Shall with your wines, and ales, and beers dispense,
And choose the motto, 'Total Abstinence.'

The politician sighs at the nation's debt,
And groans at his heavy tax. And yet
He calls his jolly friends from near and far,
And does not sigh or groan before the bar,
But 'treats' them with a free and lavish hand,
Thus swelling the liquor tax upon the land.
And so the world goes; and will always go
As long as fools live. And their lives are long,
As all may see who look around, and so
I'll let it waggle on, and cease my song,
Hoping 'gainst hope, that some poor struggling ray
Of common sense may find its weary way
Into the stupid hearts and brains of those
Who prate of any evil this world knows,
And sip their wines and beer, and say to men,
'We only drink a little-now and then.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

There's Work To Be Done

'Tis the song of the morning,
The words of the sun,
As he swings o'er the mountains:
'There's work to be done:
I must wake up the sleepers,
And banish the night;
I must paint up the heavens,
Tuck the stars out of sight;

'Dry the dew on the meadows,
Put warmth in the air,
Chase the fog from the lowlands,
Stay gloom everywhere.
No pausing, no resting,
There's work to be done.
It is upward and onward,
Still on,' says the sun.

'Tis the song of our soldiers
Who bravely march on:
'There are souls to be gathered,
There's work to be done:
We must wake up the sleepers,
And teach them to think;
We must paint in full horrors
The breakers of drink;

'Dry the tears of the mourners,
Put the cups out of sight,
And, Eastward and Westward,
Proclaim, 'There is light.'
'Tis the Marseillaise of Progress-
There's work to be done,'
The song of our soldiers,
The song of the sun.

They Shall Not Win

Whatever the strength of our foes is now,
Whatever it may have been,
This is our slogan, and this our vow-
They shall not win, they shall not win.

Though out of the darkness they call the aid
Of the evil forces of Sin,
We utter our slogan unafraid-
They shall not win, they shall not win.

We know we are right, and know they are wrong.
So to God above and within-
We make our vow and we sing our song
They shall not win, they shall not win.

It rises over the shriek of shell,
And over the cannons' din:
Our slogan shall scatter the hosts of Hell-
They shall not win, they shall not win.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Thou Dost Not Know

Thou dost not know it! but to hear
One word of praise from thee,
There is no pain I would not bear,
No task too great for me.

My hands could tireless toil all day,
My feet could tireless run,
If at the close thy lips would say,
'Brave, noble heart, well done.'

* * * * *

Thou dost not know it! but to win
Approval from thine eyes,
My soul has conquered many a sin,
And conquering neared the skies.

And though the reward may not be given,
In all my earthly days,
I feel that after death, in heaven,
Thy lips will give me praise.

* * * * *

Thou dost not know, may never know,
That all I strive to be,
All things praiseworthy that I do,
I strive, and do, for thee.

And though I seldom see thy face,
Or touch thy hand, my friend,
Those meetings are the means of grace,
That help me to the end.

* * * * *

Thou dost not know that thy grand life
Has been my beacon light.
I aim to conquer in the strife,

That I may reach thy height.

I strive to live, so that my feet
May walk the fields most fair,
For the after-life, seems, oh! so sweet,
Because thou wilt be there.

* * * * *

Thou dost not know how brave and strong
A woman's heart can be.
But few could hide so well and long
What mine has hid from thee.

So well, that should this idyl chance
To meet thine eye, my friend,
Thou'd scan it with a careless glance,
Nor dream to whom 'twas penned.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Thought-Magnets

With each strong thought, with every earnest longing
For aught thou deemest needful to thy soul,
Invisible vast forces are set thronging
Between thee and that goal.

'Tis only when some hidden weakness alters
And changes thy desire, or makes it less,
That this mysterious army ever falters
Or stops short of success.

Thought is a magnet; and the longed-for pleasure
Or boon, or aim, or object, is the steel;
And is attainment hangs but on the measure
Of what thy soul can feel.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Three And One

Sometimes she seems so helpless and mild,
So full of sweet unreason and so weak,
So prone to some capricious whim or freak;
Now gay, now tearful, and now anger-wild,
By her strange moods of waywardness beguiled
And entertained, I stroke her pretty cheek,
And soothing words of peace and comfort speak;
And love her as a father loves a child.

Sometimes when I am troubled and sore pressed
On every side by fast advancing care,
She rises up with such majestic air,
I deem her some Olympian goddess-guest,
Who brings my heart new courage, hope, and rest.
In her brave eyes dwells balm for my despair,
And then I seem, while fondly gazing there,
A loving child upon my mothers breast.

Again, when her warm veins are full of life,
And youth's volcanic tidal wave of fire
Sends the swift mercury of her pulses higher,
Her beauty stirs my heart to maddening strife,
And all the tiger in my blood is rife;
I love her with a lover's fierce desire,
And find in her my dream, complete, entire,
Child, Mother, Mistress – all in one word – Wife.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Three Friends

Of all the blessings which my life has known,
I value most, and most praise God for three:
Want, Loneliness and Pain, those comrades true,

Who, masquerade in the garb of foes
For many a year, and filled my heart with dread.
Yet fickle joys, like false, pretentious friends,
Have proved less worthy than this trio. First,

Want taught me labor, led me up the steep
And toilsome paths to hills of pure delight,
Trod only by the feet that know fatigue,
And yet press on until the heights appear.

Then loneliness and hunger of the heart
Sent me upreaching to the realms of space,
Till all the silences grew eloquent,
And all their loving forces hailed me friend.

Last, pain taught me prayer! placed in my hand the staff
Of close communion with the over-soul,
That I might lean upon it to the end,
And find myself made strong for any strife.

And then these three who had pursued my steps
Like stern, relentless foes, year after year,
Unmasked, and turned their faces full on me,
And lo! they were divinely beautiful,
For through them shone the lustrous eyes of Love.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Three Souls

Three Souls there were that reached the Heavenly Gate,
And gained permission of the Guard to wait.
Barred from the bliss of Paradise by sin,
They did not ask or hope to enter in.
'We loved one woman (thus their story ran);
We lost her, for she chose another man.
So great our love, it brought us to this door;
We only ask to see her face once more.
Then will we go to realms where we belong,
And pay our penalty for doing wrong.'

'And wert thou friends on earth?' (The Guard spake thus.)
'Nay, we were foes; but Death made friends of us.
The dominating thought within each Soul
Brought us together, comrades, to this goal,
To see her face, and in its radiance bask
For one great moment-that is all we ask.
And, having seen her, we must journey back
The path we came-a hard and dangerous track.'
'Wait, then,' the Angel said, 'beside me here,
But do not strive within God's Gate to peer
Nor converse hold with Spirits clothed in light
Who pass this way; thou hast not earned the right.'

They waited year on year. Then, like a flame,
News of the woman's death from earth-land came.
The eager lovers scanned with hungry eyes
Each Soul that passed the Gates of Paradise.
The well-beloved face in vain they sought,
Until one day the Guardian Angel brought
A message to them. 'She has gone,' he said,
'Down to the lower regions of the dead;
Her chosen mate went first; so great her love
She has resigned the joys that wait above
To dwell with him, until perchance some day,
Absolved from sin, he seeks the Better Way.'

Silent, the lovers turned. The pitying Guard
Said: 'Stay (the while his hand the door unbarred),
There waits for thee no darker grief or woe;
Enter the Gates, and all God's glories know.
But to be ready for so great a bliss,
Pause for a moment and take heed of this:
The dearest treasure by each mortal lost
Lies yonder, when the Threshold has been crossed,
And thou shalt find within that Sacred Place
The shining wonder of her worshipped face.
All that is past is but a troubled dream;
Go forward now and claim the Fact Supreme.'

Then clothed like Angels, fitting their estate,
Three Souls went singing, singing through God's Gate.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Three Women

My love is young, so young;
Young is her cheek, and her throat,
And life is a song to be sung
With love the word for each note.

Young is her cheek and her throat;
Her eyes have the smile o' May.
And love is the word for each note
In the song of my life to-day.

Her eyes have the smile o' May;
Her heart is the heart of a dove,
And the song of my life to-day
Is love, beautiful love.

Her heart is the heart of a dove,
Ah, would it but fly to my breast
Where love, beautiful love,
Has made it a downy nest.

Ah, would she but fly to my breast,
My love who is young, so young;
I have made her a downy nest
And life is a song to be sung.

1

I.
A dull little station, a man with the eye
Of a dreamer; a bevy of girls moving by;
A swift moving train and a hot Summer sun,
The curtain goes up, and our play is begun.
The drama of passion, of sorrow, of strife,
Which always is billed for the theatre Life.
It runs on forever, from year unto year,
With scarcely a change when new actors appear.
It is old as the world is-far older in truth,

For the world is a crude little planet of youth.
And back in the eras before it was formed,
The passions of hearts through the Universe stormed.

Maurice Somerville passed the cluster of girls
Who twisted their ribbons and fluttered their curls
In vain to attract him; his mind it was plain
Was wholly intent on the incoming train.
That great one eyed monster puffed out its black breath,
Shrieked, snorted and hissed, like a thing bent on death,
Paused scarcely a moment, and then sped away,
And two actors more now enliven our play.

A graceful young woman with eyes like the morn,
With hair like the tassels which hang from the corn,
And a face that might serve as a model for Peace,
Moved lightly along, smiled and bowed to Maurice,
Then was lost in the circle of friends waiting near.
A discord of shrill nasal tones smote the ear,
As they greeted their comrade and bore her from sight.
(The ear oft is pained while the eye feels delight
In the presence of women throughout our fair land:
God gave them the graces which win and command,
But the devil, who always in mischief rejoices,
Slipped into their teachers and ruined their voices.)
There had stepped from the train just behind Mabel Lee
A man whose deportment bespoke him to be
A child of good fortune. His mien and his air
Were those of one all unaccustomed to care.
His brow was not vexed with the gold seeker's worry,
His manner was free from the national hurry.
Repose marked his movements. Yet gaze in his eye,
And you saw that this calm outer man was a lie;
And you knew that deep down in the depths of his breast
There dwelt the unmerciful imp of unrest.

He held out his hand; it was clasped with a will
In both the firm palms of Maurice Somerville.
'Well, Reese, my old Comrade;' 'Ha, Roger, my boy,'

They cried in a breath, and their eyes gemmed with joy
(Which but for their sex had been set in a tear),
As they walked arm in arm to the trap waiting near,
And drove down the shining shell roadway which wound
Through forest and meadow, in search of the Sound.

Roger:

I smell the salt water-that perfume which starts
The blood from hot brains back to world withered hearts;
You may talk of the fragrance of flower filled fields,
You may sing of the odors the Orient yields,
You may tell of the health laden scent of the pine,
But give me the subtle salt breath of the brine.
Already I feel lost emotions of youth
Steal back to my soul in their sweetness and truth;
Small wonder the years leave no marks on your face,
Time's scythe gathers rust in this idyllic place.
You must feel like a child on the Great Mother's breast,
With the Sound like a nurse watching over your rest?

Maurice:

There is beauty and truth in your quaint simile,
I love the Sound more than the broad open sea.
The ocean seems always stern, masculine, bold,
The Sound is a woman, now warm, and now cold.
It rises in fury and threatens to smite,
Then falls at your feet with a coo of delight;
Capricious, seductive, first frowning, then smiling,
And always, whatever its mood is, beguiling.
Look, now you can see it, bright beautiful blue,
And far in the distance there loom into view
The banks of Long Island, full thirty miles off;
A sign of wet weather to-morrow. Don't scoff!
We people who chum with the waves and the wind
Know more than all wise signal bureaus combined.

But come, let us talk of yourself-for of me

There is little to tell which your eyes may not see.
Since we finished at College (eight years, is it not?)
I simply have dreamed away life in this spot.
With my dogs and my horses, a book and a pen,
And a week spent in town as a change now and then.
Fatigue for the body, disease for the mind,
Are all that the city can give me, I find.
Yet once in a while there is wisdom I hold
In leaving the things that are dearer than gold,-
Loved people and places-if only to learn
The exquisite rapture it is to return.
But you, I remember, craved motion and change;
You hated the usual, worshiped the strange.
Adventure and travel I know were your theme:
Well, how did the real compare with the dream?
You have compassed the earth since we parted at Yale,
Has life grown the richer, or only grown stale?

Roger:

Stale, stale, my dear boy! that's the story in short,
I am weary of travel, adventure and sport;
At home and abroad, in all climates and lands,
I have had what life gives when a full purse commands
I have chased after Pleasure, that phantom faced elf,
And lost the best part of my youth and myself.
And now, barely thirty, I'm heart sick and blue;
Life seems like a farce scarcely worth sitting through.
I dread its long stretch of dissatisfied years;
Ah! wealth is not always the boon it appears.
And poverty lights not such ruinous fires
As gratified appetites, tastes and desires.
Fate curses, when letting us do as we please-
It stunts a man's soul to be cradled in ease.

Maurice:

You are right in a measure; the devil I hold
Is oftener found in full coffer of gold
Than in bare, empty larders. The soul, it is plain,

Needs the conflicts of earth, needs the stress and the strain
Of misfortune, to bring out its strength in this life-
The Soul's calisthenics are sorrow and strife.
But, Roger, what folly to stand in youth's prime
And talk like a man who could father old Time.
You have life all before you; the past,-let it sleep;
Its lessons alone are the things you should keep.
There is virtue sometimes in our follies and sinnings;
Right lives very often have faulty beginnings.
Results, and not causes, are what we should measure.
You have learned precious truths in your search after pleasure.
You have learned that a glow worm is never a star,
You have learned that Peace builds not her temples afar.
And now, dispossessed of the spirit to roam,
You are finely equipped to establish a home.
That's the one thing you need to lend savor to life,
A home, and the love of a sweet hearted wife,
And children to gladden the path to old age.

Roger:

Alas! from life's book I have torn out that page;
I have loved many times and in many a fashion,
Which means I know nothing at all of the passion.
I have scattered my heart, here and there, bit by bit,
'Til now there is nothing worth while left of it;
And, worse than all else, I have ceased to believe
In the virtue and truth of the daughters of Eve.
There's tragedy for you-when man's early trust
In woman, experience hurls to the dust!

Maurice:

Then you doubt your own mother?

Roger:

She passed heavenward
Before I remember; a saint, I have heard,

While she lived; there are scores of good women to-day,
Temptation has chanced not to wander their way.
The devil has more than his lordship can do,
He can't make the rounds, so some women keep true.

Maurice:

You think then each woman, if tempted, must fall?

Roger:

Yes, if tempted her way-not one way suits them all-
They have tastes in their sins as they have in their clothes,
The tempter, of course, has to first study those.
One needs to be flattered, another is bought;
One yields to caresses, by frowns one is caught.
One wants a bold master, another a slave,
With one you must jest, with another be grave.
But swear you're a sinner whom she has reformed
And the average feminine fortress is stormed.
In rescuing men from abysses of sin
She loses her head-and herself tumbles in.
The mind of a woman was shaped for a saint,
But deep in her heart lies the devil's own taint.
With plans for salvation her busy brain teems,
While her heart longs in secret to know how sin seems.
And if with this question unanswered she dies,
Temptation came not in the right sort of guise.
There's my estimate, Reese, of the beautiful sex;
I see by your face that my words wound and vex,
But remember, my boy, I'm a man of the world.

Maurice:

Thank God, in the vortex I have not been hurled.
If experience breeds such a mental disease,
I am glad I have lived with the birds and the bees,
And the winds and the waves, and let people alone.
So far in my life but good women I've known.

My mother, my sister, a few valued friends-
A teacher, a schoolmate, and there the list ends.
But to know one true woman in sunshine and gloom,
From the zenith of life to the door of the tomb,
To know her, as I knew that mother of mine,
Is to know the whole sex and to kneel at the shrine.

Roger:

Then you think saint and woman synonymous terms?

Maurice:

Oh, no! we are all, men and women, poor worms
Crawling up from the dampness and darkness of clay
To bask in the sunlight and warmth of the day.
Some climb to a leaf and reflect its bright sheen,
Some toil through the grass, and are crushed there unseen.
Some sting if you touch them, and some evolve wings;
Yet God dwells in each of the poor, groping things.
They came from the Source-to the Source they go back;
The sinners are those who have missed the true track.
We can not judge women or men as a class,
Each soul has its own distinct place in the mass.
There is no sex in sin; it were folly to swear
All women are angels, but worse to declare
All are devils as you do. You're morbid, my boy,
In what you thought gold you have found much alloy
And now you are doubting there is the true ore.
But wait till you study my sweet simple store
Of pure sterling treasures; just wait till you've been
A few restful weeks, or a season, within
The charmed circle of home life; then, Roger, you'll find
These malarial mists clearing out of your mind.
As a ship cuts the fog and is caught by the breeze,
And swept through the sunlight to fair, open seas,
So your heart will be caught and swept out to the ocean
Of youth and youth's birthright of happy emotion.
I'll wager my hat (it was new yesterday)
That you'll fall in love, too, in a serious way.

Our girls at Bay Bend are bewitching and fair,
And Cupid lurks ever in salt Summer air.

Roger:

I question your gifts as a prophet, and yet,
I confess in my travels I never have met
A woman whose face so impressed me at sight,
As one seen to-day; a mere girl, sweet and bright,
Who entered the train quite alone and sat down
Surrounded by parcels she'd purchased in town.
A trim country lass, but endowed with the beauty
Which makes a man think of his conscience and duty.
Some women, you know, move us that way-God bless them,
While others rouse only a thirst to possess them
The face of the girl made me wish to be good,
I went out and smoked to escape from the mood.
When conscience through half a man's life has been sleeping
What folly to wake it to worry and weeping!

Maurice:

The pessimist role is a modern day fad,
But, Roger, you make a poor cynic, my lad.
Your heart at the core is as sound as a nut,
Though the wheels of your mind have dropped into the rut
Of wrong thinking. You need a strong hand on the lever
Of good common sense, and an earnest endeavor
To pull yourself out of the slough of despond
Back into the highway of peace just beyond.
And now, here we are at Peace Castle in truth,
And there stands its Chatelaine, sweet Sister Ruth,
To welcome you, Roger; you'll find a new type
In this old-fashioned girl, who in years scarcely ripe,
And as childish in heart as she is in her looks,
And without worldly learning or knowledge of books,
Yet in housewifely wisdom is wise as a sage.
She is quite out of step with the girls of her age,
For she has no ambition beyond the home sphere.
Ruth, here's Roger Montrose, my comrade of dear College days.

The gray eyes of the girl of nineteen
Looked into the face oft in fancy she'd seen
When her brother had talked of his comrade at Yale.
His stature was lower, his cheek was more pale
Than her thought had portrayed him; a look in his eye
Made her sorry, she knew not for what nor knew why,
But she longed to befriend him, as one needing aid.
While he, gazing down on the face of the maid,
Spoke some light words of greeting, the while his mind ran
On her 'points' good and bad; for the average man
When he looks at a woman proceeds first to scan her
As if she were horse flesh, and in the same manner
Notes all that is pleasing, or otherwise. So
Roger gazed at Ruth Somerville.

'Mouth like a bow

And eyes full of motherhood; color too warm,
And too round in the cheek and too full in the form
For the highest ideal of beauty and art.
Domestic-that word is the cue to her part
She would warm a man's slippers, but never his veins;
She would feed well his stomach, but never his brains.
And after she looks on her first baby's face,
Her husband will hold but a second-class place
In her thoughts or emotions, unless he falls ill,
When a dozen trained nurses her place can not fill.
She is sweet of her kind; and her kind since the birth
Of this sin ridden, Circe-cursed planet, the Earth,
Has kept it, I own, with its medleys of evil
From going straight into the hands of the devil.
It is not through its heroes the world lives and thrives,
But through its sweet commonplace mothers and wives.
We love them, and leave them; deceive, and respect them,
We laud loud their virtues and straightway neglect them.
They are daisy and buttercup women of earth
Who grace common ways with their sweetness and worth.
We praise, but we pass them, to reach for some flower
That stings when we pluck it, or wilts in an hour.
'You are thornless, fair Ruth! you are useful and sweet!
But lovers shall pass you to sigh at the feet
Of the selfish and idle, for such is man's way;
Your lot is to work, and to weep, and to pray.
To give much and get little; to toil and to wait

For the meager rewards of indifferent fate.
Yet so wholesome your heart, you will never complain;
You will feast on life's sorrow and drink of its pain,
And thank God for the banquet; 'tis women like you
Who make the romancing of preachers seem true.
The earth is your debtor to such large amounts
There must be a heaven to square up accounts,
Or else the whole scheme of existence at best
Is a demon's poor effort at making a jest.'

That night as Ruth brushed out her bright hazel hair
Her thoughts were of Roger, 'His bold laughing air
Is a cloak to some sorrow concealed in his breast,
His mind is the home of some secret unrest.'
She sighed; and there woke in her bosom once more
The impulse to comfort and help him; to pour
Soothing oil from the urn of her heart on his wounds.
Where motherhood nature in woman abounds
It is thus Cupid comes; unannounced and unbidden,
In sweet pity's guise, with his arrows well hidden.
But once given welcome and housed as a guest,
He hurls the whole quiver full into her breast,
While he pulls off his mask and laughs up in her eyes
With an impish delight at her start of surprise.
So intent is this archer on bagging his game
He scruples at nothing which gives him good aim.

Ruth's heart was a virgin's, in love menaced danger
While she sat by her mirror and pitied the stranger.
But just as she blew out her candle and stood
Robed for sleep in the moonlight, a change in her mood
Quickly banished the dreamer, and brought in its stead
The practical housekeeper. Sentiment fled;
And she puzzled her brain to decide which were best,
Corn muffins or hot graham gems, for the guest!

2

II.

The short-sighted minister preached at Bay Bend

His long-winded sermon quite through to the end,
Unmindful there sat in the Somerville pew
A stranger whose pale handsome countenance drew
All eyes from his own reverend self; nor suspected
What Ruth and her brother too plainly detected
That the stranger was bored.
'Though his gaze never stirred
From the face of the preacher, his heart has not heard,'
Ruth said to herself; and her soft mother-eye
Was fixed on his face with a look like a sigh
In its tremulous depths, as they rose to depart.
Then suddenly Roger, alert, seemed to start
And his dull, listless glance changed to one of surprise
And of pleasure. Ruth saw that the goal of his eyes
Was her friend Mabel Lee in the vestibule; fair
As a saint that is pictured with sun tangled hair
And orbs like the skies in October. She smiled,
And the saint disappeared in the innocent child
With an unconscious dower of beauty and youth
She paused in the vestibule waiting for Ruth
And seemed not to notice the warm eager gaze
Of two men fixed upon her in different ways.
One, the look which souls lift to a being above,
The other a look of unreasoning love
Born of fancy and destined to grow in an hour
To a full fledged emotion of mastering power.

She spoke, and her voice disappointed the ear;
It lacked some deep chords that the heart hoped to hear.
It was sweet, but not vibrant; it came from the throat,
And one listened in vain for a full chested note.
While something at times like a petulant sound
Seemed in strange disaccord with the peace so profound
Of the eyes and the brow.
Though our sight is deceived
The ear is an organ that may be believed.
The faces of people are trained to conceal,
But their unruly voices are prone to reveal
What lies deep in their natures; a voice rarely lies,
But Mabel Lee's voice told one tale, while her eyes
Told another. Large, liquid, and peaceful as lakes

Where the azure dawn rests, ere the loud world awakes,
Were the beautiful eyes of the maiden. 'A saint,
Without mortal blemish or weak human taint,'
Said Maurice to himself. To himself Roger said:
'The touch of her soft little hands on my head
Would convert me. What peace for a world weary breast
To just sit by her side and be soothed into rest.'

Daring thoughts for a stranger. Maurice, who had known
Mabel Lee as a child, to himself would not own
Such bold longings as those were. He held her to be
Too sacred for even a thought that made free.
And the voice in his bosom was silenced and hushed
Lest the bloom from her soul by his words should be brushed.
There are men to whom love is religion; but woman
Is far better pleased with a homage more human.
Though she may not be able to love in like fashion,
She wants to be wooed with both ardor and passion.
Had Mabel Lee read Roger's thoughts of her, bold
Though they were, they had flattered and pleased her, I hold.
The stranger was duly presented.

Roger:

Miss Lee,
I am sure, has no least recollection of me,
But the pleasure is mine to have looked on her face
Once before this.

Mabel:

Indeed? May I ask where?

Roger:

The place
Was the train, and the time yesterday.

Mabel:

'Then I came
From my shopping excursion in town by the same
Fast express which brought you? Had I known that the friend
Of my friends, was so near me en route for Bay Bend,
I had waived all conventions and asked him to take
One-half of my parcels for sweet pity's sake.

Roger:

You sadden me sorely. As long as I live
I shall mourn the great pleasure chance chose not to give.

Maurice:

Take courage, mon ami. Our fair friend, Miss Lee,
Fills her time quite as full of sweet works as the bee;
Like the bee, too, she drives out the drones from her hive.
You must toil in her cause, in her favor to thrive.

Roger:

She need but command me. To wait upon beauty
And goodness combined makes a pleasure of duty.

Maurice:

Who serves Mabel Lee serves all Righteousness too.
Pray, then, that she gives you some labor to do.
The cure for the pessimist lies in good deeds.
Who toils for another forgets his own needs,
And mischief and misery never attend
On the man who is occupied fully.

Ruth:

Our friend

Has the town on her shoulders. Whatever may be
The cause that is needy, we look to Miss Lee.
Have you gold? She will make you disgorge it ere long;
Are you poor? Well, perchance you can dance-sing a song-
Make a speech-tell a story, or plan a charade.
Whatever you have, gold or wits, sir, must aid
In her numerous charities.

Mabel:

Riches and brain

Are but loans from the Master. He meant them, 'tis plain,
To be used in His service; and people are kind,
When once you can set them to thinking. I find
It is lack of perception, not lack of good heart
Which makes the world selfish in seeming. My part
Is to call the attention of Plenty to need,
And to bid Pleasure pause for a moment and heed
The woes and the burdens of Labor.

Roger:

One plea

From the rosy and eloquent lips of Miss Lee
Would make Avarice pour out his coffers of gold
At her feet, I should fancy; would soften the cold,
Selfish heart of the world to compassionate sighs,
And bring tears of pity to vain Pleasure's eyes.

As the sunset a color on lily leaves throws,
The words and the glances of Roger Montrose
O'er the listener's cheeks sent a pink tinted wave;
While Maurice seemed disturbed, and his sister grew grave.
The false chink of flattery's coin smites the ear
With an unpleasant ring when the heart is sincere.
Yet the man whose mind pockets are filled with this ore,
Though empty his brain cells, is never a bore

To the opposite sex.
While Maurice knew of old
Roger's wealth in that coin that does duty for gold
In Society dealings, it hurt him to see
The cheap metal offered to sweet Mabel Lee.

(Yet, perchance, the hurt came, not so much that 'twas offered,
As in seeing her take, with a smile, what was proffered.)
They had walked, two by two, down the elm shaded street,
Which led to a cottage, vine hidden, and sweet
With the breath of the roses that covered it, where
Mabel paused in the gateway; a picture most fair.
'I would ask you to enter,' she said, 'ere you pass,
But in just twenty minutes my Sunday-school class
Claims my time and attention; and later I meet
A Committee on Plans for the boys of the street.
We seek to devise for these pupils in crime
Right methods of thought and wise uses of time.

Roger:

I am but a vagrant, untutored and wild,
May I join your street class, and be taught like a child?

Mabel:

If you come I will carefully study your case.

Maurice:

I must go along, too, just to keep him in place.

Mabel:

Then you think him unruly?

Maurice:

Decidedly so.

Roger:

I was, but am changed since one-half hour ago.

Mabel:

The change is too sudden to be of much worth;
The deepest convictions are slowest of birth.
Conversion, I hold, to be earnest and lasting,
Begins with repentance and praying and fasting,
And (begging your pardon for such a bold speech),
You seem, sir, a stranger to all and to each
Of these ways of salvation.

Roger:

Since yesterday, miss,
When, unseen, I first saw you (believe me in this),
I have deeply repented my sins of the past.
To-night I will pray, and to-morrow will fast-
Or, make it next week, when my shore appetite
May be somewhat subdued in its ravenous might.

Maurice:

That's the way of the orthodox sinner! He waits
Until time or indulgence or misery sates
All his appetites, then his repentance begins,
When his sins cease to please, then he gives up his sins
And grows pious. Now prove you are morally brave
By actually giving up something you crave!
We have fricasseed chicken and strawberry cake
For our dinner to-day.

Roger:

For dear principle's sake
I could easily do what you ask, were it not
Most unkind to Miss Ruth, who gave labor and thought
To that menu, preparing it quite to my taste.

Ruth:

But the thought and the dinner will both go to waste,
If we linger here longer; and Mabel, I see,
Is impatient to go to her duties.

Roger:

The bee
Is reluctant to turn from the lily although
The lily may obviously wish he would go
And leave her to muse in the sunlight alone.
Yet when the rose calls him, his sorrow, I own,
Has its recompense. So from delight to delight
I fly with my wings honeyladen.
Good night.

3

III.

prologue

Oh, love is like the dawnlight
That turns the dark to day,
And love is like the deep night
With secrets hid away.

And love is like the moonlight
Where tropic Summers glow,
And love is like the twilight
When dreams begin to grow.

Oh, love is like the sunlight
That sets the world ablaze.
And love is like the moonlight
With soft, illusive rays.

And love is like the starlight
That glimmers o'er the skies.
And love is like the far light
That shines from God's great eyes.

Maurice Somerville from his turreted den
Looked out of the window and laid down his pen.
A soft salty wind from the water was blowing,
Below in the garden sat Ruth with her sewing.
And stretched on the grass at her feet Roger lay
With a book in his hand.
Through the ripe August day,
Piped the Katydids' voices, Jack Frost's tally-ho
Commanding Queen Summer to pack up and go.
Maurice leaned his head on the casement and sighed,
Strong and full in his heart surged love's turbulent tide.
And thoughts of the woman he worshiped with longing
Took shape and like angels about him came thronging.
The world was all Mabel! her exquisite face
Seemed etched on the sunlight and gave it its grace;
Her eyes made the blue of the heavens, the sun
Was her wonderful hair caught and coiled into one
Shining mass. With a reverent, worshipful awe,
It was Mabel, fair Mabel, dear Mabel he saw,
When he looked up to God.
They had been much together
Through all the bright stretches of midsummer weather,
Ruth, Roger, and Mabel and he. Scarce a day
But the four were united in work or in play.
And much of the play to a man or a maid
Not in love had seemed labor. Recital, charade,
Garden party, church festival, musical, hop,
Were all planned by Miss Lee without respite or stop.
The poor were the richer; school, hospital, church,

The heathen, the laborer left in the lurch
By misfortune, the orphan, the indigent old,
Our kind Lady Bountiful aided with gold
Which she filched from the pockets of pleasure-God's spoil,
And God's blessing will follow such lives when they toil
Through an infinite sympathy.

Fair Mabel Lee

Loved to rule and to lead. She was eager to be
In the eyes of the public. That modern day craze
Possessed her in secret, and this was its phase.
An innocent, even commendable, fad
Which filled empty larders and cheered up the sad.
She loved to do good. But, alas! in her heart,
She loved better still the authoritative part
Which she played in her town.

'Neath the saint's aureole

Lurked the feminine tyrant who longed to control,
And who never would serve; but her sway was so sweet,
That her world was contented to bow at her feet.

Who toils in the great public vineyard must needs
Let other hands keep his own garden from weeds.
So busy was Mabel with charity fairs
She gave little thought to her home or its cares.
Mrs. Lee, like the typical modern day mother,
Was maid to her daughter; the father and brother
Were slaves at her bidding; an excellent plan
To make a tyrannical wife for some man.
Yet where was the man who, beholding the grace
Of that slight girlish creature, and watching her face
With its infantile beauty and sweetness, would dare
Think aught but the rarest of virtues dwelt there?
Rare virtues she had, but in commonplace ones
Which make happy husbands and home loving sons
She was utterly lacking. Ruth Somerville saw
In sorrow and silence this blemishing flaw
In the friend whom she loved with devotion! Maurice
Saw only the angel with eyes full of peace.
The faults of plain women are easily seen.
But who cares to peer back of beauty's fair screen
For things which are ugly to look on?

The lover

Is not quite in love when his sharp eyes discover
The flaws in his jewel.

Maurice from his room

Looked dreamily down on the garden of bloom,
Where Ruth sat with Roger; he smiled as he thought
How quickly the world sated cynic was brought
Into harness by Cupid. The man mad with drink,
And the man mad with love, is quite certain to think
All other men drunkards or lovers. In truth
Maurice had expected his friend to love Ruth.
'She was young, she was fair; with her bright sunny art
She could scatter the mists from his world befogged heart.
She could give him the one heaven under God's dome,
A peaceful, well ordered, and love-guarded home.
And he? why of course he would worship her! When
Cupid finds the soft spot in the hearts of such men
They are ideal husbands.' Maurice Somerville
Felt the whole world was shaping itself to his will.
And his heart stirred with joy as, by thought necromancy,
He made the near future unfold to his fancy,
And saw Ruth the bride of his friend, and the place
She left vacant supplied with the beauty and grace
Of this woman he longed for, the love of his life,
Fair Mabel, his angel, his sweet spirit wife.
Maurice to his desk turned again and once more
Began to unburden his bosom and pour
His heart out on paper-the poet's relief,
When drunk with life's rapture or sick with its grief.

Song.

When shall I tell my lady that I love her?
Will it be while the sunshine woos the world,
Or when the mystic twilight bends above her,
Or when the day's bright banners all are furled?
Will wild winds shriek, or will the calm stars glow,
When I shall tell her that I love her so,
I love her so?

I think the sun should shine in all his glory;
Again, the twilight seems the fitting time.
Yet sweet dark night would understand the story,
So old, so new, so tender, so sublime.
Wild storms should rage to chord with my desire,
Yet faithful stars should shine and never tire,
And never tire.

Ah, if my lady will consent to listen,
All hours, will times, shall hear my story told.
In amorous dawns, on nights when pale stars glisten
In dim hushed gloamings and in noon hours bold,
While thunders crash, and while the winds breathe low,
Will I re-tell her that I love her so.
I love her so.

4

IV.

The October day had been luscious and fair
Like a woman of thirty. A chill in the air
As the sun faced the west spoke of frost lurking near
All day the Sound lay without motion, and clear
As a mirror, and blue as a blond baby's eyes.
A change in the tide brought a change to the skies.
The bay stirred and murmured and parted its lips
And breathed a long sigh for the lost lovely ships,
That had gone with the Summer.
Its calm placid breast
Was stirred into passionate pain and unrest.
Not a sail, not a sail anywhere to be seen!
The soft azure eyes of the sea turned to green.
A sudden wind rose; like a runaway horse
Unchecked and unguided it sped on its course.
The waves bared their teeth, and spat spray in the face
Of the furious gale as they fled in the chase.
The sun hurried into a cloud; and the trees
Bowed low and yet lower, as if to appease
The wrath of the storm king that threatened them Close
To the waves at their wildest stood Roger Montrose.

The day had oppressed him; and now the unrest
Of the wind beaten sea brought relief to his breast,
Or at least brought the sense of companionship. Lashed
By his higher emotions, the man's passions dashed
On the shore of his mind in a frenzy of pain,
Like the waves on the rocks, and a frenzy as vain.

Since the day he first looked on her face, Mabel Lee
Had seemed to his self sated nature to be,
On life's troubled ocean, a beacon of light,
To guide him safe out from the rocks and the night.
Her calm soothed his passion; her peace gave him poise;
She seemed like a silence in life's vulgar noise.
He bathed in the light which her purity cast,
And felt half absolved from the sins of the past.
He longed in her mantle of goodness to hide
And forget the whole world. By the incoming tide
He talked with his heart as one talks with a friend
Who is dying. 'The summer has come to an end
And I wake from my dreaming,' he mused. 'Wake to know
That my place is not here-I must go I must go.
Who dares laugh at Love shall hear Love laughing last,
As forth from his bowstring barbed arrows are cast.
I scoffed at the god with a sneer on my lip,
And he forces me now from his chalice to sip
A bitter sweet potion. Ah, lightly the part
Of a lover I've played many times, but my heart
Has been proud in its record of friendship. And now
The mad, eager lover born in me must bow
To the strong claims of friendship. I love Mabel Lee;
Dared I woo as I would, I could make her love me.
The soul of a maid who knows not passion's fire
Is moth to the flame of a man's strong desire.
With one kiss on her lips I could banish the nun
And wake in her virginal bosom the one
Mighty love of her life. If I leave her, I know
She will be my friend's wife in a season or so.
He loves her, he always has loved her; 'tis he
Who ever will do all the loving; and she
Will accept it, and still be the saint to the end,
And she never will know what she missed; but my friend

Has the right to speak first. God! how can he delay?
I marvel at men who are fashioned that way.
He has worshiped her since first she put up her tresses,
And let down the hem of her school-girlish dresses
And now she is full twenty-two; were I he
A brood of her children should climb on my knee
By this time! What a sin against love to postpone
The day that might make her forever his own.
The man who can wait has no blood in his veins.
Maurice is a dreamer, he loves with his brains
Not with soul and with senses. And yet his whole life
Will be blank if he makes not this woman his wife.
She is woof of his dreams, she is warp of his mind;
Who tears her away shall leave nothing behind.
No, no, I am going: farewell to Bay Bend
I am no woman's lover-I am one man's friend.
Still-born in the arms of the matron eyed year
Lies the beautiful dream that my life buries here.
Its tomb was its cradle; it came but to taunt me,
It died, but its phantom shall ever more haunt me.'

He turned from the waves that leaped at him in wrath
To find Mabel Lee, like a wraith, in his path.
The rose from her cheek had departed in fear;
The tip of her eyelash was gemmed with a tear.
The rude winds had disarranged mantle and dress,
And she clung with both hands to her hat in distress.
'I am frightened,' she cried, in a tremulous tone;
'I dare not proceed any farther alone.
As I came by the church yard the wind felled a tree,
And invisible hands seemed to hurl it at me;
I hurried on, shrieking; the wind, in disgust,
Tore the hat from my head, filled my eyes full of dust,
And otherwise made me the butt of its sport.
Just then I spied you, like a light in the port,
And I steered for you. Please do not laugh at my fright!
I am really quite bold in the calm and the light,
But when a storm gathers, or darkness prevails,
My courage deserts me, my bravery fails,
And I want to hide somewhere and cover my ears,
And give myself up to weak womanish tears.'

Her ripple of talk allowed Roger Montrose
A few needed moments to calm and compose
His excited emotions; to curb and control
The turbulent feelings that surged through his soul
At the sudden encounter.
'I quite understand,'
He said in a voice that was under command
Of his will, 'All your fears in a storm of this kind.
There is something uncanny and weird in the wind;
Intangible, viewless, it speeds on its course,
And forests and oceans must yield to its force.
What art has constructed with patience and toil,
The wind in one second of time can despoil.
It carries destruction and death and despair,
Yet no man can follow it into its lair
And bind it or stay it-this thing without form.
Ah! there comes the rain! we are caught in the storm.
Put my coat on your shoulders and come with me where
Yon rock makes a shelter-I often sit there
To watch the great conflicts 'twixt tempest and sea.
Let me lie at your feet! 'Tis the last time, Miss Lee,
I shall see you, perchance, in this life, who can say?
I leave on the morrow at break o' the day.'

Mabel:

Indeed? Why, how sudden! and may I inquire
The reason you leave us without one desire
To return? for your words seem a final adieu.

Roger:

I never expect to return, that is true,
Yet my wish is to stay.

Mabel:

Are you not your own master?

Roger:

Alas, yes! and therein lies the cause of disaster.
Myself bids me go, my calm, reasoning part,
The will is the man, not the poor, foolish heart,
Which is ever at war with the intellect. So
I silence its clamoring voices and go.
Were I less my own master, I then might remain.

Mabel:

Your words are but riddles, I beg you explain.

Roger:

No, no, rather bid me keep silent! To say
Why I go were as weak on my part as to stay.

Mabel:

I think you most cruel! You know, sir, my sex
Loves dearly a secret. Then why should you vex
And torment me in this way by hinting at one?

Roger:

Let us talk of the weather, I think the storm done.

Mabel:

Very well! I will go! No, you need not come too,
And I will not shake hands, I am angry with you.

Roger:

And you will not shake hands when we part for all time?

Mabel:

Then read me your riddle!

Roger:

No, that were a crime
Against honor and friendship; girl, girl, have a care-
You are goading my poor, tortured heart to despair.

His last words were lost in the loud thunder's crash;
The sea seemed ablaze with a sulphurous flash.
From the rocks just above them an evergreen tree
Was torn up by the roots and flung into the sea.
The waves with rude arms hurled it back on the shore;
The wind gained in fury. The glare and the roar
Of the lightning and tempest paled Mabel Lee's cheek.
Her pupils dilated; she sprang with a shriek
Of a terrified child lost to all save alarm,
And clasped Roger Montrose with both hands by the arm,
While her cheek pressed his shoulder. An agony, sweet
And unbearable, thrilled from his head to his feet,
His veins were like rivers, with billows of fire:
His will lost control; and long fettered desire
Slipped its leash. He caught Mabel Lee to his breast,
Drew her face up to his, on her frightened lips pressed
Wild caresses of passion that startled and shocked.
Like a madman he looked, like a madman he talked,
Waiting not for reply, with no pause but a kiss,
While his iron arms welded her bosom to his.
'Girl, girl, you demanded my secret,' he cried;
'Well, that bruise on your lips tells the story! I tried,
Good God, how I tried! to be silent and go
Without speaking one word, without letting you know
That I loved you; yet how could you look in my eyes

And not see love was there like the sun in the skies?
Ah, those hands on my arm-that dear head lightly pressed
On my shoulder! God, woman, the heart in my breast
Was dry powder, your touch was the spark; and the blame
Must be yours if both lives are scorched black with the flame.
Do you hate me, despise me, for being so weak?
No, no! let me kiss you again ere you speak!
You are mine for the moment; and mine-mine alone
Is the first taste of passion your soft mouth has known.
Whoever forestalls me in winning your hand,
Between you and him shall this mad moment stand-
You shall think of me, though you think only to hate.
There-speak to me-speak to me-tell me my fate;
On your words, Mabel Lee, hangs my whole future life.
I covet you, covet you, sweet, for my wife;
I want to stay here at your side. Since I first
Saw your face I have felt an unquenchable thirst
To be good-to look deep in your eyes and find God,
And to leave in the past the dark paths I have trod
In my search after pleasure. Ah, must I go back
Into folly again, to retread the old track
Which leads out into nothingness? Girl, answer me,
As souls answer at Judgment.'
The face of the sea
Shone with sudden pink splendor. The riotous wind
Swooned away with exhaustion. Each dark cloud seemed lined
With vermilion. The tempest was over. A word
Floated up like a feather; the silence was stirred
By the soul of a sigh. The last remnant of gray
In the skies turned to gold, as a voice whispered, 'Stay.'

5

V.

prologue

God grinds His poor people to powder
All day and all night I can hear,
Their cries growing louder and louder.
Oh, God, have You deadened Your ear?

The chimes in old Trinity steeple

Ring in the sweet season of prayer,
And still God is grinding His people,
He is grinding them down to despair.

Mind, body and muscle and marrow,
He grinds them again and again.
Can He who takes heed of the sparrow
Be blind to the tortures of men?

In a bare little room of a tenement row
Of the city, Maurice sat alone. It was so
(In this nearness to life's darkest phases of grief
And despair) that his own bitter woe found relief.
Joy needs no companion; but sorrow and pain
Long to comrade with sorrow. The flowery chain
Flung by Pleasure about her gay votaries breaks
With the least strain upon it. The chain sorrow makes
Links heart unto heart. As a bullock will fly
To far fields when an arrow has pierced him, to die,
So Maurice had flown over far oceans to find
No balm for his wounds, and no peace for his mind.
Cosmopolitan, always, is sorrow; at home
In all countries and lands, thriving well while we roam
In vain efforts to slay it. Toil only, brings peace
To the tempest tossed heart. What in travel Maurice
Failed to find-self-forgetfulness-came with his work
For the suffering poor in the slums of New York.
He had wandered in strange heathen countries-had been
Among barbarous hordes; but the greed and the sin
Of his own native land seemed the shame of the hour.
In his gold there was balm, in his pen there was power
To comfort the needy, to aid and defend
The unfortunate. Close in their midst, as a friend
And companion, for more than twelve months he had dwelt.
Like a ray of pure light in a cellar was felt
This strong, wholesome presence. His little room bare
Of all luxuries, taught the poor souls who flocked there
For his counsel and aid, how by mere cleanliness
The grim features of want lose some lines of distress.
The slips from the plants on his window ledge, given

To beauty starved souls, spoke more clearly of heaven
And God than did sermons or dry creedy tracts.
Maurice was no preacher; and yet his kind acts
Of mercy and self-immolation sufficed
To wake in dark minds a bright image of Christ-
The Christ often heard of, but doubted before.
Maurice spoke no word of religion. Of yore
His heart had accepted the creeds of his youth
Without pausing to cavil, or question their truth.
Faith seemed his inheritance. But, with the blow
Which slew love and killed friendship, faith, too, seemed to go.

It is easy to be optimistic in pleasure,
But when Pain stands us up by her portal to measure
The actual height of our trust and belief,
Ah! then is the time when our faith comes to grief.
The woes of our fellows, God sends them, 'tis plain;
But the devil himself is the cause of our pain.
We question the wisdom that rules o'er the world,
And our minds into chaos and darkness are hurled.

The average scoffer at faith goes about
Pouring into the ears of his fellows each doubt
Which assails him. One truth he fails wholly to heed;
That a doubt oft repeated may bore like a creed.
Maurice kept his thoughts to himself, but his pen
Was dipped in the gall of his heart now and then,
And his muse was the mouthpiece. The sin unforgiven
I hold by the Cherubim chanting in heaven
Is the sin of the poet who dares sing a strain
Which adds to the world's awful chorus of pain
And repinings. The souls whom the gods bless at birth
With the great gift of song, have been sent to the earth
To better and brighten it. Woe to the heart
Which lets its own sorrow embitter its art.
Unto him shall more sorrow be given; and life
After life filled with sorrow, till, spent with the strife,
He shall cease from rebellion, and bow to the rod
In submission, and own and acknowledge his God.

Maurice, with his unwilling muse in the gloom
Of a mood pessimistic, was shut in his room.
A whistle, a step on the stairway, a knock,
Then over the transom there fluttered a flock
Of white letters. The Muse, with a sigh of content,
Left the poet to read them, and hurriedly went
Back to pleasanter regions. Maurice glanced them through:
There were brief business epistles from two
Daily papers, soliciting work from his pen;
A woman begged money for Christ's sake; three men
Asked employment; a mother wrote only to say
How she blessed him and prayed God to bless him each day
For his kindness to her and to hers; and the last
Was a letter from Ruth. The pale ghost of the past
Rose out of its poor shallow grave, with the scent
And the mold of the clay clinging to it, and leant
O'er Maurice as he read, while its breath fanned his cheek.

'Forgive me,' wrote Ruth; 'for at last I must speak
Of the two whom you wish to forget. Well I know
How you suffered, still suffer, from fate's sudden blow,
Though I am a woman, and women must stay
And fight out pain's battles where men run away.
But my strength has its limit, my courage its end,
The time has now come when I, too, leave Bay Bend.
Maurice, let the bitterness housed in your heart
For the man you long loved as a comrade, depart,
And let pity replace it. Oh, weep for his sorrow-
From your fountain of grief, held in check, let me borrow;
I have so overdrawn on the bank of my tears
That my anguish is now refused payment. For years
You loved Mabel Lee. Well, to some hearts love speaks
His whole tale of passion in brief little weeks.
As Minerva, full grown, from the great brow of Jove
Sprang to life, so full blown from our breasts may spring Love.
Love hid like a bee in my heart's lily cup;
I knew not he was there till his sting woke me up.
Maurice, oh, Maurice! Can you fancy the woe
Of seeing the prize which you coveted so
Misused, or abused, by another? The wife

Of the man whom I worshiped is spoiling the life
That was wax in her hands, wax to shape as she chose.
You were blind to her faults, so was Roger Montrose.
Both saw but the saint; well, let saints keep their places,
And not crowd the women in life's hurried races.
As saint, Mabel Lee might succeed; but, oh brother,
She never was meant for a wife or a mother.
Her beautiful home has the desolate air
Of a house that is ruled by its servants. The care-
The thought of the woman (that sweet, subtle power
Pervading some rooms like the scent of a flower),
Which turns house into home-that is lacking. She goes
On her merciful rounds, does our Lady Montrose,
Looking after the souls of the heathen, and leaving
The poor hungry soul of her lord to its grieving.
He craves her companionship; wants her to be
At his side, more his own, than the public's. But she
Holds such love is but selfish; and thinks he should make
Some sacrifice gladly for charity's sake.
Her schools, and her clubs, and her fairs fill her time;
He wants her to travel; no, that were a crime
To go seeking for pleasure, and leave duty here.
God had given her work and her labor lay near.
A month of the theater season in town?
No, the stage is an evil that needs putting down
By good people. So, scheme as he will, the poor man
Has to finally yield every project and plan
To this sweet stubborn saint; for the husband, you see,
Stands last in her thoughts. He has come, after three
Patient years, to that knowledge; his wishes, his needs
Must always give way to her whims, or her creeds.
She knows not the primer of loving; her soul
Is engrossed with the poor petty wish to control,
And she chafes at restriction. Love loves to be bound,
And its sweetest of freedom in bondage is found.
She pulls at her fetters. One worshiping heart
And its faithful devotion play but a small part
In her life. She would rather be lauded and praised
By a crowd of inferior followers, raised
To the pitiful height of their leader, than be
One man's goddess. There, now, is the true Mabel Lee!
Grieve not that you lost her, but grieve for the one

Who with me stood last night by the corpse of his son,
And with me stood alone. Ah! how wisely and well
Could Mabel descant on Maternity! tell
Other women the way to train children to be
An honor and pride to their parents! Yet she,
From the first, left her child to the nurses. She found
'Twas a tax on her nerves to have baby around
When it worried and cried. The nurse knew what to do,
And a block down the street lived Mama! 'twixt the two
Little Roger would surely be cared for. She must
Keep her strength and be worthy the love and the trust
Of the poor, who were yearly increasing, and not
Bestow on her own all the care and the thought-
That were selfishness, surely.
Well, the babe grew apace,
But yesterday morning a flush on its face
And a look in its eye worried Roger. The mother
Was due at some sort of convention or other
In Boston-I think 'twas a grand federation
Of clubs formed by women to rescue the Nation
From man's awful clutches; and Mabel was made
The head delegate of the Bay Bend Brigade.
Once drop in a small, selfish nature the seed
Of ambition for place, and it grows like a weed.
The fair village angel we called Mabel Lee,
As Mrs. Montrose, has developed, you see,
To a full fledged Reformer. It quite turned her head
To be sent to the city of beans and brown bread
As a delegate! (Delegate! magical word!
The heart of the queer modern woman is stirred
Far more by its sound than by aught she may hear
In the phrases poor Cupid pours into her ear.)
Mabel chirped to the baby a dozen good-byes,
And laughed at the trouble in Roger's grave eyes,
As she leaned o'er the lace ruffled crib of her son
And talked baby-talk: 'Now be good, 'ittle one,
While Mama is away, and don't draw a long breath,
Unless 'oo would worry Papa half to death.
And don't cough, and, of all things, don't sneeze, 'ittle dear,
Or Papa will be thrown into spasms of fear.
Now, good-bye, once again, 'ittle man; mother knows
There is no other baby like Roger Montrose

In the whole world to-day.'
So she left him. That night
The nurse sent a messenger speeding in fright
For the Doctor; a second for Grandmama Lee
And Roger despatched still another for me.
All in vain! through the gray chilly paths of the dawn
The soul of the beautiful baby passed on
Into Mother-filled lands.
Ah! my God, the despair
Of seeing that agonized sufferer there;
To stand by his side, yet denied the relief
Of sharing, as wife, and as mother, his grief.
Enough! I have borne all I can bear. The role
Of friend to a lover pulls hard on the soul
Of a sensitive woman. The three words in life
Which have meaning to me are home, mother and wife-
Or, rather, wife, mother and home. Once I thought
Men cared for the women who found home the spot
Next to heaven for happiness; women who knew
No ambition beyond being loyal and true,
And who loved all the tasks of the housewife. I learn,
Instead, that from women of that kind men turn,
With a yawn, unto those who are useless; who live
For the poor hollow world and for what it can give,
And who make home the spot where, when other joys cease,
One sleeps late when one wishes.
You left me Maurice
Left the home I have kept since our dear Mother died,
With such sisterly love and such housewifely pride,
And you wandered afar, and for what cause, forsooth?
Oh! because a vain, self-loving woman, in truth,
Had been faithless. The man whom I worshiped, ignored
The love and the comfort my woman's heart stored
In its depths for his taking, and sought Mabel Lee.
Well, I'm done with the role of the housewife. I see
There is nothing in being domestic. The part
Is unpicturesque, and at war with all art.
The senile old Century leers with dim eyes
At our sex and demands that we shock or surprise
His thin blood into motion. The home's not the place
To bring a pleased smile to his wicked old face.
To the mandate I bow; since all strive for that end,

I must join the great throng! I am leaving Bay Bend
This day week. I will see you in town as I pass
To the college at C--, where I enter the class
Of medical students-I fancy you will
Like to see my name thus-Dr. Ruth Somerville.'

Maurice dropped the long, closely written epistle,
Stared hard at the wall, and gave vent to a whistle.
A Doctor! his sweet, little home-loving sister.
A Doctor! one might as well prefix a Mister
To Ruth Somerville, that most feminine name.
And then in the wake of astonishment came
Keen pity for all she had suffered. 'Poor Ruth,
She writes like an agonized woman, in truth,
And like one torn with jealousy. Ah, I can see,'
He mused, 'how the pure soul of sweet Mabel Lee
Revolts at the bondage and shrinks from the ban
That lies in the love of that sensual man.
He is of the earth, earthy. He loves but her beauty,
He cares not for conscience, or honor or duty.
Like a moth she was dazzled and lured by the flame
Of a light she thought love, till she learned its true name;
When she found it mere passion, it lost all its charms.
No wonder she flies from his fettering arms!
God pity you, Mabel! poor ill mated wife;
But my love, like a planet, shall watch o'er your life,
Though all other light from your skies disappear,
Like a sun in the darkness my love shall appear.
Unselfish and silent, it asks no return,
But while the great firmament lasts it shall burn.'

Muse, muse, awake, and sing thy loneliest strain,
Song, song, be sad with sorrow's deepest pain,
Heart, heart, bow down and never bound again,
My Lady grieves, she grieves.

Night, night, draw close thy filmy mourning veil,
Moon, moon, conceal thy beauty sweet and pale,
Wind, wind, sigh out thy most pathetic wail,

My Lady grieves, she grieves.
Time, time, speed by, thou art too slow, too slow,
Grief, grief, pass on, and take thy cup of woe,
Life, life, be kind, ah! do not wound her so,
My Lady grieves, she grieves.

Sleep, sleep, dare not to touch mine aching eyes,
Love, love, watch on, though fate thy wish denies,
Heart, heart, sigh on, since she, my Lady, sighs,
My Lady grieves, she grieves.

6

VI.

prologue

The flower breathes low to the bee,
'Behold, I am ripe with bloom.
Let Love have his way with me,
Ere I fall unwed in my tomb.'

The rooted plant sighs in distress
To the winds by the garden walk
'Oh, waft me my lover's caress,
Or I shrivel and die on my stalk.'

The whippoorwill utters her love
In a passionate 'Come, oh come,'
To the male in the depths of the grove,
But the heart of a woman is dumb.

The lioness seeks her mate,
The she-tiger calls her own-
Who made it a woman's fate
To sit in the silence alone?

Wooed, wedded and widowed ere twenty. The life
Of Zoe Travers is told in that sentence. A wife

For one year, loved and loving; so full of life's joy
That death, growing jealous, resolved to destroy
The Eden she dwelt in. Five desolate years
She walked robed in weeds, and bathed ever in tears,
Through the valley of memory. Locked in love's tomb
Lay youth in its glory and hope in its bloom.
At times she was filled with religious devotion,
Again crushed to earth with rebellious emotion
And unresigned sorrow.
Ah, wild was her grief!
And the years seemed to bring her no balm of relief.
When a heart from its sorrow time cannot estrange,
God sends it another to alter and change
The current of feeling. Zoe's mother, her one
Tie to earth, became ill. When the doctors had done
All the harm which they dared do with powder and pill,
They ordered a trial of Dame Nature's skill.
Dear Nature! what grief in her bosom must stir
When she sees us turn everywhere save unto her
For the health she holds always in keeping; and sees
Us at last, when too late, creeping back to her knees,
Begging that she at first could have given!
'Twas so
Mother Nature's heart grieved o'er the mother of Zoe,
Who came but to die on her bosom. She died
Where the mocking bird poured out its passionate tide
Of lush music; and all through the dark days of pain
That succeeded, and over and through the refrain
Of her sorrow, Zoe heard that wild song evermore.
It seemed like a blow which pushed open a door
In her heart. Something strange, sweet and terrible stirred
In her nature, aroused by the song of that bird.
It rang like a voice from the future; a call
That came not from the past; yet the past held her all.
To the past she had plighted her vows; in the past
Lay her one dream of happiness, first, only, last.
Alone in the world now, she felt the unrest
Of an unanchored boat on the wild billow's breast.
Two homes had been shattered; the West held but tombs.
She drifted again where the magnolia blooms
And the mocking bird sings. Oh! that song, that wild strain,
Whose echoes still haunted her heart and her brain!

How she listened to hear it repeated! It came
Through the dawn to her heart, and the sound was like flame.
It chased all the shadows of night from her room,
And burst the closed bud of the day into bloom.
It leaped to the heavens, it sank to the earth
It gave life new rapture and love a new birth.
It ran through her veins like a fiery stream,
And the past and its sorrow-was only a dream.

The call of a bird in the spring for its lover
Is the voice of all Nature when winter is over.
The heart of the woman re-echoed the strain,
And its meaning, at last, to her senses was plain.

Grief's winter was over, the snows from her heart
Were melted; hope's blossoms were ready to start.
The spring had returned with its siren delights,
And her youth and emotions asserted their rights.
Then memory struggled with passion. The dead
Seemed to rise from the grave and accuse her. She fled
From her thoughts as from lepers; returned to old ways,
And strove to keep occupied, filling her days
With devotional duties. But when the night came
She heard through her slumber that song like a flame,
And her dreams were sweet torture. She sought all too soon
To chill the warm sun of her youth's ardent noon
With the shadows of premature evening. Her mind
Lacked direction and purpose. She tried in a blind,
Groping fashion to follow an early ideal
Of love and of constancy, starving the real
Affectional nature God gave her. She prayed
For God's help in unmaking the woman He made,
As if He repented the thing He had done.
With the soul of a Sappho, she lived like a nun,
Hid her thoughts from all women, from men kept apart,
And carefully guarded the book of her heart
From the world's prying eyes. Yet men read through the cover,
And knew that the story was food for a lover.
(The dullest of men seemed possessed of the art
To read what the passions inscribe on the heart.

Though written in cipher and sealed from the sight,
Yet masculine eyes will interpret aright.)
Worn out with the unceasing conflict at last,
Zoe fled from herself and her sorrowful past,
And turned to new scenes for diversion from thought.

New York! oh, what magic encircles that spot
In the feminine mind of the West! There, it seems,
Waits the realization of beautiful dreams.
There the waters of Lethe unceasingly roll,
With blessed forgetfulness free to each soul,
While the doorways that lead to success open wide,
With Fame in the distance to beckon and guide.
Mirth lurks in each byway, and Folly herself
Wears the look of a semi-respectable elf,
And is to be courted and trusted when met,
For she teaches one how to be gay and forget,
And to start new account books with life.
It was so,
Since she first heard the name of the city, that Zoe
Dreamed of life in New York. It was thither she turned
To smother the heart that with restlessness burned,
And to quiet and calm an unsatisfied mind.
Her plans were but outlines, crude, vague, undefined,
Of distraction and pleasure. A snug little home,
With seclusion and comfort; full freedom to roam
Where her fancy and income permitted; new faces,
New scenes, new environments, far from the places
Where brief joy and long sorrow had dwelt with her; free
From the curious eyes that seemed ever to be
Bent upon her. She passed like a ship from the port,
Without chart or compass; the plaything and sport
Of the billows of Fate.

The parks were all gay
And busy with costuming duties of May
When Zoe reached New York. The rain and the breeze
Had freshened the gowns of the Northern pine trees
Till they looked bright as new; all the willows were seen
In soft dainty garments of exquisite green.

Young buds swelled with life, and reached out to invite
And to hold the warm gaze of the wandering light.
The turf exhaled fragrance; among the green boughs
The unabashed city birds plighted their vows,
Or happy young house hunters chirped of the best
And most suitable nook to establish a nest.
There was love in the sunshine, and love in the air;
Youth, hope, home, companionship, spring, everywhere.
There was youth, there was spring in her blood; yet she only,
In all the great city, seemed loveless and lonely.

The trim little flat, facing north on the park,
Was not homelike; the rooms seemed too sombre and dark
To her eyes, sun-accustomed; the neighbors too near
And too noisy. The medley of sounds hurt her ear.
Sudden laughter; the cry of an infant; the splash
Of a tenant below in his bath-tub; the crash
Of strong hands on a keyboard above, and the light,
Merry voice of the lady who lived opposite,
The air intertwined in a tangled sound ball,
And flung straight at her ear through the court and the hall.

Ah, what loneliness dwelt in the rush and the stir
Of the great pushing throngs that were nothing to her,
And to whom she was nothing! Her heart, on its quest
For distraction, seemed eating itself in her breast.
She longed for a comrade, a friend. In the church
Which she frequented no one abetted her search,
For the faces of people she met in its aisle
Gazed calmly beyond her, without glance or smile.
The look in their eyes, when translated, read thus,
'We worship God here, what are people to us?'
In some masculine eyes she read more, it is true.
What she read made her gaze at the floor of her pew.

The blithe little blonde who lived over the hall,
In the opposite rooms, was the first one to call
Or to show friendly feeling. She seemed sweet and kind,
But her infantile face hid a mercantile mind.

Her voice had the timbre of metal. Each word
Clinked each word like small change in a purse; and you heard,
In the rustling silk of her skirts, just a hint
Of new bills freshly printed and right from the mint.
There was that in her airs and her chatter which made
Zoe question and ponder, and turn half afraid
From her proffers of friendship. When one July day
The fair neighbor called for a moment to say,
'I am off to Long Branch for the summer, good-bye,'
Zoe seemed to breathe freer-she scarcely knew why,
But she reasoned it out as alone in the gloom
Of the soft summer evening she sat in her room.
'The woman is happy,' she said; 'at the least,
Her heart is not starving in life's ample feast.
She lives while she lives, but I only exist,
And Fate laughs in my face for the things I resist.'

New York in the midsummer seems like the gay
Upper servant who rules with the mistress away.
She entertains friends from all parts of the earth;
Her streets are alive with a fictitious mirth.
She flaunts her best clothes with a devil-may-care
Sort of look, and her parks wear a riotous air.
There is something unwholesome about her at dusk;
Her trees, and her gardens, seem scented with musk;
And you feel she has locked up the door of the house
And, half drunk with the heat, wanders forth to carouse,
With virtue, ambition and industry all
Packed off (moth-protected) with garments for Fall.

Zoe felt out of step with the town. In the song
Which it sang, where each note was a soul of the throng,
She seemed the one discord. Books gave no distraction.
She cared not for study, her heart longed for action,
For pleasure, excitement. Wild impulses, new
To her mind, came like demons and urged her to do
All sorts of mad things. Mischief breathed through the air.
One could do as one liked in New York-who would care-
Who would know save the God who had left her alone
In his world, unprotected, unloved? From her own

Restless mind and sick heart she attempted once more
To escape. One reads much of gay life at the shore-
Narragansett, she fancied, would suit her. The sea
Would at least prove a friend; and, perchance, there might be
Some heart, like her own, seeking comradeship there.
The days brought no friend. But the moist, salty air
Was a stimulant, giving existence new charms.
The sea was a lover who opened his arms
Every day to embrace her. And life in this place
Held something of pleasure, and sweetness and grace,
Though the eyes of the men were too ardent and bold,
And the eyes of the women suspicious and cold,
She yet had the sea-the sea, strong and mighty,
Both father and mother of fair Aphrodite.

7

VII.

Mabel grieved for her child with a sorrow sincere,
But she bowed to the will of her Maker. No tear
Came to soften the hard, stony look in the eye
Of her husband; she heard no complaint and no sigh
From his lips, but he turned with impatience whenever
She spoke of religion, or made one endeavor
To lead his thoughts up from the newly turned sod
Where the little form slept, to its spirit with God.

Long hours by that grave, Roger passed, and alone.
The woes of her neighbors his wife made her own,
But her husband she pointed to Christ; and in grief
Prayed for light to be cast on his dark unbelief.

She flung herself into good works more and more,
And saw not that the look which her husband's face wore
Was the look of a man starved for love. In the mold
Of a nun she was fashioned, chaste, passionless, cold.
(Such women sin more when they take marriage ties
Than the love-maddened creature who lawlessly lies
In the arms of the man whom she worships. The child
Not conceived in true love leaves the mother defiled.

Though an army of clergymen sanction her vows,
God sees 'illegitimate' stamped on the brows
Of her offspring. Love only can legalize birth
In His eyes-all the rest is but spawn of the earth.)

Mabel Lee, as the maid, had been flattered and pleased
By the passion of Roger; his wild wooing teased
That inquisitive sense, half a fault, half a merit,
Which the daughters of Eve, to a woman, inherit.
His love fanned her love for herself to a glow;
She was stirred by the thought she could stir a man so.
That was all. She had nothing to give in return.
One can't light a fire with no fuel to burn;
And the love Roger dreamed he could rouse in her soul
Was not there to be wakened. He stood at his goal
As the Arctic explorer may finally stand,
To see all about him an ice prisoned land,
White, beautiful, useless.
Some women are chaste,
Like the snows which envelop the bleak and waste
Of the desert; once melted, alas! what remains
But the poor, unproductive, dry soil of the plains?
The flora of Cupid will never be found,
However he toil there, to thrive in such ground.

Mabel Montrose was held in the highest esteem
By her neighbors; I think neighbors everywhere deem
Such women to be all that's noble. They sighed
When they spoke of her husband; they told how she tried
To convert him, and how they had thought for a season
His mind was bent Christ-ward; and then, with no reason,
He seemed to drift back to the world, and grew jealous
Of Mabel, and thought her too faithful and zealous
In duty to others.
The death of his child
Only hardened his heart against God. He grew wild,
Took to drink; spent a week at a time in the city,
Neglecting his saint of a wife-such a pity.
It was true. Our friends keep a sharp eye on our deeds
But the fine interlining of causes-who heeds?

The long list of heartaches which lead to rash acts
Would bring pity, not blame, if the world knew the facts.

There are women so terribly free from all evil,
They discourage a man, and he goes to the devil.
There are people whose virtues result in appalling,
And they prove a great aid to his majesty's calling.

Roger's wife rendered goodness so dreary and cold,
His tendril-like will lost its poor little hold
On the new better life he was longing to reach,
And slipped back to the dust. Oh! to love, not to preach.
Is a woman's true method of helping mankind.
The sinner is won through his heart, not his mind.
As the sun loves the seed up to life through the sod,
So the patience of love brings a soul to its God.
But when love is lacking, the devil is sure
To stand in the pathway with some sort of lure.
Roger turned to the world for distraction. The world
Smiled a welcome, and then like an octopus curled
All its tentacles 'round him, and dragged him away
Into deep, troubled waters.

One late summer day
He awoke with a headache, which will not surprise,
When you know that his bedtime had been at sunrise,
And that gay Narraganset, the world renowned 'Pier,'
Was the scene. Through the lace curtained window the clear
Yellow rays of the hot August sun touched his bed
And proclaimed it was mid-day. He rose, and his head
Seemed as large and as light as an air filled balloon
While his limbs were like lead.
In the glare of the noon,
The follies of night show their makeup, and seem
Like hideous monsters evoked by some dream.

The sea called to Roger: 'Come, lie on my breast
And forget the dull world. My unrest shall give rest

To your turbulent feelings; the dregs of the wine
On your lips shall be lost in the salt touch of mine.
Come away, come away. Ah! the jubilant mirth
Of the sea is not known by the stupid old earth.'

The beach swarmed with bathers-to be more exact,
Swarmed with people in costumes of bathers. In fact,
Many beautiful women bathed but in the light
Of men's eyes; and their costumes were made for the sight,
Not the sea. From the sea's lusty outreaching arms
They escaped with shrill shrieks, while the men viewed their charms
And made mental notes of them. Yet, at this hour,
The waves, too, were swelling sea meadows, a-flower
With faces of swimmers. All dressed for his bath,
Roger paused in confusion, because in his path
Surged a crowd of the curious; all eyes were bent
On the form of a woman who leisurely went
From her bathing house down to the beach. 'There she goes,'
Roger heard a dame cry, as she stepped on his toes
With her whole ample weight. 'What, the one with red hair?
Why, she isn't as pretty as Maude, I declare.'
A man passing by with his comrade, cried: 'Ned,
Look! there is La Travers, the one with the red
Braid of hair to her knees. She's a mystery here,
And at present the topic of talk at the Pier.'
Roger followed their glances in time to behold
For a second a head crowned with braids of bright gold,
And a form like a Venus, all costumed in white.
Then she plunged through a billow and vanished from sight.

It was half an hour afterward, possibly more,
As Roger swam farther and farther from shore,
With new life in his limbs and new force in his brain,
That he heard, just behind him, a sharp cry of pain.
Ten strokes in the rear on the crest of a wave
Shone a woman's white face. 'Keep your courage; be brave;
I am coming,' he shouted. 'Turn over and float.'
His strong shoulder plunged like the prow of a boat
Through the billows. Six overhand strokes brought him close
To the woman, who lay like a wilted white rose

On the waves. 'Now, be careful,' he cried; 'lay your hand
Well up on my shoulder; my arms, understand,
Must be free; do not touch them-please follow my wishes,
Unless you are anxious to fatten the fishes.'
The woman obeyed him. 'You need not fear me,'
She replied, 'I am wholly at home in the sea.
I knew all the arts of the swimmer, I thought,
But confess I was frightened when suddenly caught
With a cramp in my knee at this distance from shore.'
With slow even breast strokes the strong swimmer bore
His fair burden landward. She lay on the billows
As lightly as if she were resting on pillows
Of down. She relinquished herself to the sea
And the man, and was saved; though God knows both can be
False and fickle enough; yet resistance or strife,
On occasions like this, means the forfeit of life.
The throng of the bathers had scattered before
Roger carried his burden safe into the shore
And saw her emerge from the water, a place
Where most women lose every vestige of grace
Or of charm. But this mermaid seemed fairer than when
She had challenged the glances of women and men
As she went to her bath. Now her clinging silk suit
Revealed every line, from the throat to the foot,
Of her beautiful form. Her arms, in their splendor,
Gleamed white like wet marble. The round waist was slender,
And yet not too small. From the twin perfect crests
And the virginlike grace of her beautiful breasts
To the exquisite limbs and the curve of her thigh,
And the arch of her proud little instep, the eye
Drank in beauty. Her face was not beautiful; yet
The gaze lingered on it, for Eros had set
His seal on her features. The mouth full and weak,
The blue shadow drooping from eyelid to cheek
Like a stain of crushed grapes, and the pale, ardent skin,
All spoke of volcanic emotions within.
By her tip tilted nose and low brow, it was plain
To read how her impulses ruled o'er her brain.
She had given the chief role of life to her heart,
And her intellect played but a small minor part.
Her eyes were the color the sunlight reveals
When it pierces the soft, furry coat of young seals.

The thickly fringed lids seemed unwilling to rise,
But drooped, half concealing them; wonderful eyes,
Full of secrets and bodings of sorrow. As coarse
And as thick as the mane of a finely groomed horse
Was her bright mass of hair. The sea, with rough hands,
Had made free with the braids, and unloosened the strands
Till they hung in great clusters of curls to her knees.
Her voice, when she spoke, held the breadth and the breeze
Of the West in its tones; and the use of the R
Made the listener certain her home had been far
From New England. Long after she vanished from view
The eye and the ear seemed to sense her anew.
There was that in her voice and her presence which hung
In the air like a strain of a song which is sung
By a singer, and then sings itself the whole day,
And will not be silenced.

As birds flock away
From meadow to tree branch, now there and now here,
So, from beach to Casino, each day at the Pier
Flock the gay pleasure seekers. The balconies glow
With beauty and color. The belle and the beau
Promenade in the sunlight, or sit tete-a-tete,
While the chaperons gossip together. Bands play,
Glasses clink; and 'neath sheltering lace parasols
There are plans made for meeting at drives or at balls.

Roger sat at a table alone, with his glass
Of mint julep before him, and watched the crowd pass.
There were all sorts of people from all sorts of places.
He thought he liked best the fair Baltimore faces.
The South was the land of fair women, he mused,
Because they were indolent. Women who used
Mind or body too freely. Changed curves into angles,
For beauty forever with intellect wrangles.
The trend of the fair sex to-day must alarm
Every lover of feminine beauty and charm.

As he mused Roger watched with a keen interest
For a sight of his Undine. 'All coiffured and drest,
With her wonderful body concealed, and her hair

Knotted up, well, I doubt if she seem even fair,'
He soliloquized. 'Ah!' the word burst from his lips,
For he saw her approaching. She walked from the hips
With an undulous motion. As graceful and free
From all effort as waves swinging in from the sea
Were her movements. Her full molded figure seemed slight
In its close fitting gown of black cloth; and the white
Of her cheek seemed still whiter by contrast. Her clothes
Were tasteful and quiet; yet Roger Montrose
Knew in some subtle manner he could not express
('Tis an instinct men have in the matters of dress)
That they never were made in New York. By her hat
One can oft read a woman's whole character. That
Which our fair Undine wore was a thing of rich lace,
Flowers and ribbons like others one saw in the place,
Yet the width of the brim, or the twist of its bows,
Or the way it was worn made it different from those.
As it drooped o'er the eyes full of mystery there,
It seemed, all at once, both a menace and dare;
A menace to women, a dare to the men.
She bowed as she passed Roger's table; and then
Took a chair opposite, spread her shade of red silk,
Called a waiter and ordered a cup of hot milk,
Which she leisurely sipped. She seemed unaware
Of the curious eyes she attracted. Her air
Was of one quite at home, and entirely at ease
With herself, the sole person she studied to please.
She had been for three weeks at the Pier, and alone,
Without maid or escort, and nothing was known
Of her there, save the name which the register bore,
'Mrs. Travers, New York.' Men were mad to learn more
But the women were distant. One can't, at such places,
Accept as credentials good figures or faces.
There was an unnameable something about
Mrs. Travers which filled other women with doubt
And all men with interest. Roger, blasé,
Disillusioned with life as he was, felt the sway
Of her strong personality, there as she sat
Looking out 'neath the rim of her coquettish hat
With dark eyes on the sea. Few people had power
To draw his gray thoughts from himself for an hour
As this woman had done; she was food for his mind,

And he sought by his inner perceptions to find
In what class she belonged. 'An adventuress? No,
Though I fancy three-fourths of the women think so
And one-half of the men; but that role leaves a trace,
An expression, I fail to detect in her face.
Her past is not shadowed; my judgment would say
That her sins lie before her, and not far away.
She's a puzzle, I think, to herself; and grim Fate
Will aid her in solving the riddle too late.
Her soul dreams of happiness; but in her eyes
The sensuous foe to all happiness lies.
As the rain is drawn up by some moods of the sun,
Some natures draw trouble from life; her's is one.'

She rose and passed by him again, and her gown
Brushed his knee. A light tremor went shivering down
His whole body. She left on the air as she went
A subtle suggestion of perfume; the scent
Which steals out of some fans, or old laces, and seems
Full of soft fragrant fancies and languorous dreams.
She haunted the mind, though she passed from the sight.
When Roger Montrose sought his pillow that night,
'Twas to dream of La Travers. He thought she became
A burning red rose, with each leaf like a flame.
He stooped down and plucked it, and woke with a start,
As it turned to an adder and struck at his heart.

The dream left its impress, as certain dreams should,
For, as warnings of evil, precursors of good,
They are sent to our souls o'er a mystical line,
Night messages, couched in a cipher divine.

Roger knew much of life, much of women, and knew
Even more of himself and his weaknesses. Few
Of us mortals look inward; our gaze is turned out
To watch what the rest of the world is about,
While the rest of the world watches us.
Roger's reason
And logic were clear. But his will played him treason.

If you looked at his hand, you would see it. Hands speak
More than faces. His thumb (the first phalanx) was weak,
Undeveloped; the second, firm jointed and long,
Which showed that the reasoning powers were strong,
But the will, from disuse, had grown feeble.

That morning

He looked on his dream in the light of a warning
And made sudden plans for departure. 'To go
Is to fly from some folly,' he said, 'for I know
What salt air and dry wine, and the soft siren eyes
Of a woman, can do under midsummer skies
With a man who is wretched as I am. Unrest
Is a tramp, who goes picking the locks on one's breast
That a whole gang of vices may enter. A thirst
For strong drink and chance games, those twin comrades accursed,
Are already admitted. Oh Mabel, my wife,
Reach, reach out your arms, draw me into the life
That alone is worth living. I need you to-day,
Have pity, and love me, oh love me, I pray.
I will turn once again from the bad world to you.
Though false to myself, to my vows I am true.'

When a soul strives to pull itself up out of sin
The devil tries harder to push it back in.
And the man who attempts to retrace the wrong track
Needs his God and his will to stand close at his back.

Through what are called accidents, Roger was late
At the train. Are not accidents servants of Fate?
The first coach was filled; he passed on to the second.
That, too, seemed complete, but a gentleman beckoned
And said, 'There's a seat, sir; the third from the last
On your left.' Roger thanked him and leisurely passed
Down the aisle, with his coat on his arm, to the place
Indicated. The seat held a lady, whose face
Was turned to the window. 'Pray pardon me, miss'
(For he judged by her back she was youthful), 'is this
Seat engaged?' As he spoke, the face turned in surprise,
And Roger looked into the long, languid eyes
Of La Travers. She smiled, moved her wraps from the seat,

And he sat down beside her. The same subtle, sweet
Breath of perfume exhaled from her presence, and made
The place seem a boudoir. The deep winey shade
'Neath her eyes had grown larger, as if she had wept
Or a late, lonely vigil with memory kept.

A man who has rescued a woman from danger
Or death, does not seem to her wholly a stranger
When next she encounters him; yet both essayed
To be formal and proper; and each of them made
The effort a failure. The jar of a train
At times holds a mesmeric spell for the brain
And a tense excitation for nerves; and the shriek
Of the engine compels one to lean near to speak
Or to list to his neighbor. Formality flies
With the smoke of the train and floats off to the skies.
Roger led his companion to talk; and the theme
Which he chose, was herself, her life story. The dream
Of the previous night was forgotten. The charm
Of the woman outweighed superstitious alarm.

When the sunlight began to play peek-a-boo
Through the tunnels, which told them the journey was through,
Roger looked at his time-piece; the train for Bay Bend
Left in just twenty minutes; but what a rude end
To the day's pleasant comradeship-rushing away
With a hurried good-bye! He decided to stay
Over night in the city. He was not expected
At home. Mrs. Travers was quite unprotected,
And almost a stranger in Gotham. He ought
To see her safe into her doorway, he thought.
At the doorway she gave him her hand, with a smile;
'I have known you,' she said, 'such a brief little while,
Yet you seem like a friend of long standing; I say
Good-bye with reluctance.'
'Perhaps, then, I may
Call and see you to-morrow?' the words seemed to fall
Of themselves from his lips; words he longed to recall
When once uttered, for deep in his conscience he knew
That the one word for him to speak now, was adieu.

The lady's soft, cushion-like hand rested still
In his own, and the contact was pleasant. A thrill
From the finger tips quickened his pulses.
'You may
Call to-morrow at four.' The soft hand slipped away
And left his palm lonely.
'The call must be brief,'
He said to himself, with a sense of relief,
As he ran down the steps, 'for at five my train goes.'
Yet the five o'clock train bore no Roger Montrose
From New York. Mrs. Travers had asked him to dine.
A tete-a-tete dinner with beauty and wine,
To stir the man's senses and deaden his brain.
(The devil keeps always good chefs in his train.)
It was ten when he rose for departure. The room
Seemed a garden of midsummer fragrance and bloom.
The lights with their soft rosy coverings made
A glow like late sunsets, in some tropic glade.
The world seemed afar, with its dullness and duty,
And life was a rapture of love and of beauty.

God knows how it happened; they never knew how.
He turned with a formal conventional bow,
And some well chosen words of politeness, to go.
Her mouth was a rose Love had dropped in the snow
Of her face. It smiled up to him, luscious and sweet.
In the tip of each finger he felt his heart beat,
Like five hearts all in one, as her hand touched his own.
She murmured 'good-night,' in a tremulous tone.
White, intense, through the soft golden mist which the wine
Had cast over his vision, he saw her face shine.
Her low lidded eyes held a lion-like glow.
You have seen sudden storms lash the ocean? You know
How the cyclone, unheralded, rises in wrath,
And leaves devastation and death in its path?
So swift, sudden passion may rise in its power,
And ruin and blight a whole life in an hour.
Two unanchored souls in its maelstrom were whirled,
Drawn down by love's undertow, lost to the world.
The dark, solemn billows of night shut them in.
Like corpses afloat on the ocean of sin

They must seem to their true, better selves, when again
The tide drifts them back to the notice of men.

8

VIII.

prologue

Forget me, dear; forget and cease to love me,
I am not worth one memory, kind or true,
Let silent, pale Oblivion spread above me
Her winding sheet, for I am dead to you.
Forget, forget.

Sin has resumed its interrupted story;
I am enslaved, who dreamed of being free.
Say for my soul, in life's dark purgatory,
One little prayer, then cease to think of me.
Forget, forget.

I ask you not to pity or to pardon;
I ask you to forget me. Tear my name
From out your heart; the wound will heal and harden.
Death does not dig so deep a grave as shame.
Forget, forget.

Roger's Letter to Mabel.

Farewell! I shall never again seek your side;
I will stay with my sins and leave you with your pride.
Let the swift flame of scorn dry the tears of regret,
Shut me out of your life, lock the door and forget.
I shall pass from your skies as a vagabond star
Passes out of the great solar system afar
Into blackness and gloom; while the heavens smile on,
Scarce knowing the poor erring creature is gone.
Say a prayer for the soul sunk in sinning; I die
To you, and to all who have known me. Good-bye.

Mabel's Letter to Maurice.

I break through the silence of years, my old friend,
To beg for a favor; oh, grant it! I send
Roger's letter in confidence to you, and ask,
In the name of our sweet early friendship, a task,
Which, however painful, I pray you perform.
Poor Roger! his bark is adrift in the storm.
He has veered from the course; with no compass of faith
To point to the harbor, he goes to his death.
You are giving your talents and time, I am told,
To aiding the poor; let this victim of gold
Be included. His life has not learned self-control,
And luxury stunted the growth of his soul.
In blindness of spirit he took the wrong track,
But he sees his great error and longs to come back.
Oh, help me to reach him and save him, Maurice.
My heart yearns to show him the infinite peace
Found but in God's love. Let us pity, forgive
And help him, dear friend, to seek Christ and to live
In the light of His mercy. I know you will do
What I ask, you were ever so loyal and true.

Maurice to Mabel.

Though bitter the task (why, your heart must well know),
Your wish shall be ever my pleasure. I go
On the search for the prodigal. Not for his sake,
But because you have asked me, I willingly make
This effort to find him. Sometimes, I contend,
It is kinder to let a soul speed to the end
Of its swift downward course than to check it to-day,
But to see it to-morrow pursue the same way.
The man who could wantonly stray from your side
Into folly and sin has abandoned all pride.
There is little to hope from him. Yet, since his name
Is the name you now bear, I will save him from shame,
God permitting. To serve and obey you is still
Held an honor, Madame, by Maurice Somerville.

Maurice to Mabel Ten Days Later.

The search for your husband is finished. Oh, pray
Tear all love and all hope from your heart ere I say

What I must say. The man has insulted your trust;
He has dragged the most sacred of ties in the dust,
And ruined the fame of a woman who wore,
Until now, a good name. He has gone. Close the door
Of your heart in his face if he seeks to come back.
The sleuth hounds of justice were put on his track,
And his life since he left you lies bare to my gaze.
He sailed yesterday on the 'Paris.' For days
Preceding the journey he lived as the guest
Of one Mrs. Zoe Travers, who comes from the West!
A widow, young, fair, well-connected. I hear
He followed her back to New York from the Pier,
And now he has taken the woman abroad.
My letter sounds brutal and harsh. Would to God
I might soften the facts in some measure; but no,
In matters like this the one thing is to know
The whole truth, and at once. Though the pain be intense
It pulls less on the soul than the pangs of suspense.
Like a surgeon of fate, with my pen for a knife,
I cut out false hopes which endanger your life.
Let the law, like a nurse, cleanse the wound-there is shame
And disgrace for you now in the man's very name.
Though justice is blindfolded, yet she can hear
When the chink of gold dollars sounds close in her ear.
One needs but to give her this musical hint
To save you the sight of your sorrows in print.
Closed doors, private hearing; a sentence or two
In the journals; then dignified freedom for you.
When love, truth and loyalty vanish, the tie
Which binds man to woman is only a lie.
Undo it! remember at all times I stand
As a friend to rely on-a serf to command.

Some women there are who would willingly barter
A queen's diadem for the crown of a martyr.
They want to be pitied, not envied. To know
That the world feels compassion makes joy of their woe;
And the keenest delight in their misery lies,
If only their friends will look on with wet eyes.

In fact, 'tis the prevalent weakness, I find,
Of the sex. As a mass, women seem disinclined
To be thought of as happy; they like you to feel
That their bright smiling faces are masks which conceal
A dead hope in their hearts. The strange fancy clings
To the mind of the world that the rarest of things-
Contentment-is commonplace; and, that to shine
As something superior, one must repine,
Or seem to be hiding an ache in the breast.
Yet the commonest thing in the world is unrest,
If you want to be really unique, go along
And act as if Fate had not done you a wrong,
And declare you have had your deserts in this life.

The part of the patient, neglected young wife
Contained its attractions for Mabel Montrose.
She was one of the women who live but to pose
In the eyes of their friends; and she so loved her art
That she really believed she was living the part.
The suffering martyr who makes no complaint
Was a role more important, by far, than the saint
Or reformer. As first leading lady in grief,
Her pride in herself found a certain relief.

The ardent and love-selfish husband had not
Been so dear to her heart, or so close to her thought,
As this weak, reckless sinner, who woke in her soul
Its dominant wish-to reform and control.

(How often, alas, the reformers of earth,
If they studied their purpose, would find it had birth
In this thirst to control; in the poor human passion
The minds and the manners of others to fashion!

We sigh o'er the heathen, we weep o'er his woes,
While forcing him into our creeds and our clothes.
If he adds our diseases and vices as well,
Still, at least we have guided him into our hell

And away from his own heathen hades. The pleasure
Derived from that thought but reformers can measure.)

The thing Mabel Montrose loved best on this earth
Was a sinner, and Roger but doubled his worth
In her eyes when he wrote her that letter. And still
When the last message came from Maurice Somerville
And the bald, ugly facts, unsuspected, unguessed,
Lay before her, the woman awoke in her breast,
And the patient reformer gave way to the wife,
Who was torn with resentment and jealousy's strife.
Ah, jealousy! vain is the effort to prove
Your right in the world as the offspring of love;
For oftener far, you are spawned by a heart
Where Cupid has never implanted a dart.
Love knows you, indeed, for you serve in his train,
But crowned like a monarch you royally reign
Over souls wherein love is a stranger.
No thought
Came to Mabel Montrose that her own life was not
Free from blame. (How few women, indeed, think of this
When they grieve o'er the ruin of marital bliss!)
She was shocked and indignant. Pain gave her a new
Role to play without study; she missed in her cue
And played badly at first, was resentful and cried
Against Fate for the blow it had dealt to her pride
(Though she called it her love), and declared her life blighted.
It is one thing, of course, for a wife to be slighted
For the average folly the world calls a sin,
Such as races, clubs, games; when a woman steps in
The matter assumes a new color, and Mabel,
Who dearly loved sinners, at first seemed unable
To pardon, or ask God to pardon, the crime
Of her husband; an angry disgust for a time
Drove all charity out of her heart. For a thief,
For a forger, a murderer, even, her grief
Had been mingled with pity and pardon; the one
Thing she could not forgive was the thing he had done.
It was wicked, indecent, and so unrefined.
To the lure of the senses her nature was blind,
And her mantle of charity never had been

Wide enough to quite cover that one vulgar sin.

In the letter she sent to Maurice, though she said
Little more than her thanks for his kindness, he read
All her tense nervous feelings between its few lines.
Though we study our words, the keen reader divines
What we thought while we penned them; thought odors reveal
What words not infrequently seek to conceal.

Maurice read the grief, the resentment, the shame
Which Mabel's heart held; to his own bosom came
Stealing back, masked demurely as friendly regard,
The hope of a lover-that hope long debarred.
His letters grew frequent; their tone, dignified,
Unselfish, and manly, appealed to her pride.
Sweet sympathy mingled with praise in each line
(As a gentle narcotic is stirred into wine),
Soothed pain, stimulated self love, and restored her
The pleasure of knowing the man still adored her.

Understand, Mabel Montrose was not a coquette,
She lacked all the arts of the temptress; and yet
She was young, she was feminine; love to her mind
Was extreme admiration; it pleased her to find
She was still, to Maurice, an ideal. A woman
Must be quite unselfish, almost superhuman,
And full of strong sympathy, who, in her soul,
Feels no wrench when she knows she has lost all control
O'er the heart of a man who once loved her.
Months passed,
And Mabel accepted her burden at last
And went back to her world and its duties. Her eyes
Seemed to say when she looked at you, 'please sympathize,
On the slight graceful form or the beautiful face.
'Twas a sorrow of mind, not a sorrow of heart,
And the two play a wholly dissimilar part
In the life of a woman.
Maurice Somerville
Kept his place as good friend through sheer force of his will.

But his heart was in tumult; he longed for the time
When, free once again from the legalized crime
Of her ties, she might listen to all he would say.
There was anguish, and doubt, and suspense in delay,
Yet Mabel spoke never of freedom. At length
He wrote her, 'My will has exhausted its strength.
Read the song I enclose; though my lips must be mute,
The muse may at least improvise to her lute.'

Song.

There was a bird as blithe as free,
(Summer and sun and song)
She sang by the shores of a laughing sea,
And oh, but the world seemed fair to me,
And the days were sweet and long.

There was a hunter, a hunter bold,
(Autumn and storm and sea)
And he prisoned the bird in a cage of gold,
And oh, but the world grew dark and cold,
And the days were sad to me.

The hunter has gone; ah, what cares he?
(Winter and wind and rain)
And the caged bird pines for the air and the sea,
And I long for the right to set her free
To sing in the sun again.

The hunter has gone with a sneer at fate,
(Spring and the sea and the sun)
Let the bird fly free to find her mate,
Ere the year of love grow sere and late.
Sweet ladye, my song is done.

Mabel's Letter to Maurice.

To the song of your muse I have listened. Oh, cease
To think of me but as a friend, dear Maurice.
Once a wife, a wife alway. I vowed from my heart,
'For better, for worse, until death do us part.'
No mention was made in the service that day
Of breaking my fetters if joy flew away.
'For better, for worse,' a vow lightly spoken,
When Fate brings the 'worse,' how lightly 'tis broken!
The 'worse,' in my case, is the worst fate can give.
Tho' I shrank from the blow, I must bear it and live,
Not for self, but for duty; nor strive to evade
Fulfilling the promise I willingly made.
While Roger has sinned, and his sinning would be,
In the eyes of the law, proof to render me free,
It was God heard my vows and the Church sealed the bond.
Until one of us passes to death's dim beyond,
Though seas and though sins may divide us for life,
We are bound to each other as husband and wife.
In God's Court of Justice divorce is a word
Which falls without import or meaning when heard;
And the women who cast off old fetters that way,
To give place to the new, on the great Judgment Day
Must find, in the last summing up, that they stand
Side by side, in God's eyes, with the Magdalene band.
Dear Maurice, be my brother, my counselor, friend.
We are lonely without you and Ruth, at Bay Bend.
Come sometimes and brighten our lives; put away
The thoughts which are making you restless today
And give me your strong noble friendship; indeed
'Tis a friend that I crave, not a lover I need.

Maurice to Mabel.

You write like a woman, and one, it is plain,
Whose sentiment hangs like a cloud o'er her brain.
You gaze through a sort of traditional mist,
And behold a mirage of God's laws which exist
But in fancy. God made but one law-it is love.
A law for the earth, and the kingdoms above,
A law for the woman, a law for the man,
The base and the spire of His intricate plan

Of existence. All evils the world ever saw
Had birth in man's breaking away from this law.
God cancels a marriage when love flies away.
'Till death do us part' should be altered to say,
'Till disgust or indifference part us.' I know
You never loved Roger, my heart tells me so.
He won you, I claim, through a mesmeric spell;
You dreamed of an Eden, and wakened in hell.
You pitied his weakness, you struggled to save him,
He paid with a crime the devotion you gave him.
And the blackest of insults relentlessly hurled
At your poor patient heart in the gaze of the world.
In God's mighty ledger the stroke of a pen
Has been drawn through your record of marriage. Though men
Call you wedded I hold you are widowed. Why cling
To the poor, empty, meaningless form of a thing-
To the letter, devoid of all spirit? God never
Intended a woman to hopelessly sever
Herself from all possible joy, or to make
True faithfulness suffer for faithlessness' sake.
When I think of your wrongs, when I think of my woes,
That black word divorce like a bright planet glows
In the skies of the future. Oh, Mabel, be fair
To yourself and to me. For the years of despair
I have suffered you owe me some recompense, surely.
The heart that has worshipped so long and so purely
Ought not to be slighted for mere sentiment.
We must live as our century bids us. Its bent
Is away from the worn ruts of thought. Where of old
The life of a woman was run in the mold
Of man's wishes and passions, to-day she is free;
Free to think and to act; free to do and to be
What she pleases. The poor, pining victim of fate
And man's cruelty, long ago went out of date.
In the mansion of Life there were some things askew,
Which the strong hand of Progress has righted. The new,
Better plan puts old notions of sex on the shelf.
Who is true to a knave, is untrue to herself.
Oh, be true to yourself, and have pity on one
Who has long dwelt in shadow and pines for the sun.
Love, starving on memories, begs for one taste
Of sweet hope, ere the remnant of youth goes to waste.

You write like a man who sees self as his goal.
You speak of your woes-yet my travail of soul
Seems mere sentiment to you. Maurice, pause and think
Of the black, bitter potion life gave me to drink
When I dreamed of love's nectar. Too fresh is the taste
Of its gall on my lip for my heart in such haste
To reach out for the cup that is proffered anew.
A certain respect to my sorrows is due.
I am weary of love as men know it. The calm
Of a sweet, tranquil friendship would act like a balm
On the wounds of my heart; that platonic regard,
Which we read of in books, or hear sung by the bard,
But so seldom can find when we want it. I thought,
For a time, you had conquered mere self, and had brought
Such a friendship to comfort and rest me. But no,
That dream, like full many another, must go.
The love that is based on attraction of sex
Is a love that has brought me but sorrow. Why vex
My poor soul with the same thing again? If you love
With a higher emotion, you know how to prove
And sustain the assertion by conduct. Maurice,
Love must rise above passion, to infinite peace
And serenity, ere it is love, to my mind.
For the women of earth, in the ranks of mankind
There are too many lovers and not enough friends.
'Tis the friend who protects, 'tis the lover who rends.
He who can be a friend while he would be a lover
Is the rarest and greatest of souls to discover.
Have I found, dear Maurice, such a treasure in you?
If not, I must say with this letter-adieu.

As he finished the letter there seemed but one phrase
To the heart of the reader. It shone on his gaze
Bright with promise and hope. 'Too fresh is the taste
Of its gall on my lip for my heart in such haste
To reach out for the cup that is offered anew.'
'In such haste.' Ah, how hope into certainty grew
As he read and re-read that one sentence. 'Let fate
Take the whole thing in charge, I can wait-I can wait.
I have lived through the night; though the dawn may be gray
And belated, it heralds the coming of day.'

So he talked with himself, and grew happy at last.
The five hopeless years of his sorrow were cast
Like a nightmare behind him. He walked once again
With a joy in his personal life, among men.
There seemed to be always a smile on his lip,
For he felt like a man on the deck of a ship
Who has sailed through strange seas with a mutinous crew,
And now in the distance sights land just in view.

The house at Bay Bend was re-opened. Once more,
Where the waves of the Sound wash the New England shore,
Walked Maurice; and beside him, young hope, with the tip
Of his fair rosy fingers pressed hard on his lip,
Urging silence. If Mabel Montrose saw the boy
With the pursed prudent mouth and the eyes full of joy
She said nothing. Grave, dignified (Ah, but so fair!),
There was naught in her modest and womanly air
To feed or encourage such hope. Yet love grew
Like an air plant, with only the night and the dew
To sustain it; while Mabel rejoiced in the friend,
Who, in spite of himself, had come back to Bay Bend,
Yielding all to her wishes. Such people, alone,
Who gracefully gave up their plans for her own,
Were congenial to Mabel. Though looking the sweet,
Fragile creature, with feminine virtues replete,
Her nature was stubborn. Beneath that fair brow
Lurked an obstinate purpose to make others bow
To herself in small matters. She fully believed
She was right, always right; and her friends were deceived,
As a rule, into thinking the same; for her eyes
Held a look of such innocent grief and surprise
When her will was opposed, that one felt her misused,
And retired from the field of dispute, self-accused.

The days, like glad children, went hurrying out
From the schoolhouse of time; months pursued the same route
More sedately; a year, then two years, passed away,
Yet hope, unimpaired, in the lover's heart lay,
As a gem in the bed of a river might lie,
Unharmd and unmoved while its waters ran by.

His toil for the poor still continued, but not
With that fervor of zeal which a dominant thought
Lends to labor. Fair love gilded dreams filled his mind,
While the corners were left for his suffering kind.
He was sorry for sorrow; but love made him glad,
And nothing in life now seemed hopeless or sad.
His tete-a-tete visits with Mabel were rare;
She ordered her life with such prudence and care
Lest her white name be soiled by the gossips. And yet,
Though his heart, like a steed checked too closely, would fret
Sometimes at these creed-imposed fetters, he felt
Keen delight in her nearness; in knowing she dwelt
Within view of his high turret window. Each day
Which gave him a glimpse of her, love laid away
As a poem in life's precious folio. Night
Held her face like a picture, dream-framed for his sight.
So he fed on the crumbs from love's table, the while
Fate sat looking on with a cynical smile.

IX

SONGS FROM THE TURRET.

I

In the day my thoughts are tender
When I muse on my ladye fair.
There is never one to offend her,
For each is pure as a prayer.
They float like spirits above her,
About her and always near;
And they scarce dare sigh that they love her,
Because she would blush to hear.

But in dreams my thoughts grow bolder;
And close to my lips of fire,
I reach out my arms and enfold her,
My ladye, my heart's desire.

And she who, in earthly places,
Seems cold as the stars above,
Unmasks in those fair dream spaces
And gives me love for love.

On day, with your thoughts of duty
Cross over the sunset streams,
And give me the night of beauty
And love in the Land of Dreams.
For there in the mystic, shady,
Fair isle of the Slumber Sea,
I read the heart of my ladye
That here she hides from me.

II

Some day, some beauteous day,
Joy will come back again.
Sorrow must fly away.

Hope, on her harp will play
The old inspiring strain
Some day, some beauteous day.

Through the long hours I say,
'The night must fade and wane,
Sorrow must fly away.'

The morn's bewildering ray
Shall pierce the night of rain,
Some day, some beauteous day.

Autumn shall bloom like May,
Delight shall spring from pain;
Sorrow must fly away.

Though on my life, grief's gray
Bleak shadow long hath lain,
Some day, some beauteous day,
Sorrow must fly away.

III

When love is lost, the day sets toward the night.
Albeit the morning sun may still be bright,
And not one cloud ship sails across the sky.
Yet from the places where it used to lie,
Gone is the lustrous glory of the light.

No splendor rests on any mountain height,
No scene spreads fair, and beauteous, to the sight.
All, all seems dull and dreary to the eye,
When love is lost.

Love lends to life its grandeur and its might,
Love goes, and leaves behind it gloom and blight.
Like ghosts of time the pallid hours drag by,
And grief's one happy thought is that we die.
Ah! what can recompense us for its flight,
When love is lost.

IV

Life is a ponderous lesson book, and Fate
The teacher. When I came to love's fair leaf
My teacher turned the page and bade me wait.
'Learn first,' she said, 'love's grief';
And o'er and o'er through many a long to-morrow
She kept me conning that sad page of sorrow.

Cruel the task; and yet it was not vain.
Now the great book of life I know by heart.

In that one lesson of love's loss and pain
Fate doth the whole impart.
For, by the depths of woe, the mind can measure
The beauteous unscaled summits of love's pleasure.

Now, with the book of life upon her knee,
Fate sits! the unread page of love's delight
By her firm hand is half concealed from me,
And half revealed to sight.
Ah Fate! be kind! so well I learned love's sorrow,
Give me its full delight to learn to-morrow.

V

If I were a rain drop, and you were a leaf,
I would burst from the cloud above you
And lie on your breast in a rapture of rest,
And love you, love you, love you.

If I were a brown bee, and you were a rose,
I would fly to you, love, nor miss you;
I would sip and sip from your nectared lip,
And kiss you, kiss you, kiss you.

If I were a doe, dear, and you were a brook,
Ah, what would I do then, think you?
I would kneel by your bank, in the grasses dank,
And drink you, drink you, drink you.

VI

Time owes me such a heavy debt,
How can he ever make things right?
For suns that with no promise set
To help me greet the morning light,

For dreams that no fruition met,
For joys that passed from bud to blight,
Time owes me such a heavy debt;
How can he ever make things right?

For passions balked, with strain and fret
Of hopes delayed, or perished quite,
For kisses that I did not get
On many a love impelling night,
Time owes me such a heavy debt;
How can he ever make things right?

VII

As the king bird feeds on the heart of the bee,
So would I feed on the sweets of thee.

As the south wind kisses the leaf at will,
From the leaf of thy lips I would drink my fill.

As the sun pries into the heart of a rose,
I would pry in thy heart, and its thoughts disclose.

As a dewdrop mirrors the loving sky,
I would see myself in thy tear wet eye.

As the deep night shelters the day in its arms,
I would hide thee, dear, from the world's alarms.

VIII

Now do I know how Paradise doth seem,
Now do I know the deep red depths of hell.
Swift from those fair supernal heights I fell
To burning flames of hades, in a dream.

Methought my ladye rested by a stream
Which rippled through the verdure of a dell.
She lay like Eve; dear God, I dare not tell
Of her perfections; of the glow and gleam
Of tinted flesh, and undulating hair,
Of sudden thigh, and sweetly rounded breast.
Then, like a cloud, he came, from God knows where,
And on her eyes and mouth mad kisses pressed.
I fell, and fell, through leagues of scorching space,
And always saw his lips upon her face.

IX

Love is the source of all supreme delight,
Love is the bitter fountain of despair;
Who follows Love shall stand upon the height,
Yet through the darkest depths, Love, too, leads there.

Courage needs he who would with bold Love fare,
Let him set forth with all his strength bedight;
Yet in his heart this song to banish care-
'Love is the source of all supreme delight.'

And he must sing this song both day and night,
Though he be led down shadowy pathways where
Black waters moan, through valleys struck with blight,
'Love is the bitter fountain of despair.'

Let him be brave, and bravely let him dare
Whate'er betide, and feel no coward fright.
Who shares the worst, the best deserves to share;
Who follows Love shall stand upon the height.

Ah! sweet is peace to those who faced the fight,
And bright the crown those faithful ones shall wear,
Who whispered, when the shadows veiled their sight,
'Yet through the darkest depths, Love, too, leads there.'

To hearts that best know Love, his dark is fair,
His sorrow gladness, and his wrong is right.
All joys lie waiting on his winding stair;
All ways, all paths of Love lead to the light.
Love is the source.

X

My ladye's eyes are wishing wells,
Wherein I gaze with silent yearning;
Deep in their depths my future dwells.
My ladye's eyes are wishing wells,
But not one sign my fate foretells,
While my poor heart with love is burning.
My ladye's eyes are wishing wells,
Wherein I gaze with silent yearning.

XI

Three things my ladye seemeth like to me-
She seems like moonlight on a waveless sea.

And like the delicate fragrance, which exhales,
When Day's warm garments brush the dewy vales.

And when my heart grows weary of earth's sound,
She seems like silence-restful and profound.

XII

The moon flower, grown from a slip so slender,
Has burst in a star bloom, full and white.
The air is filled with a perfume tender,
The breath that blows from that garden height.
Yet moments lag that should take their flight

On wings, like the wings of a homing dove,
And the world goes wrong where it should go right,
For this is a night that is lost to love.

Again, like a queen, who would rashly spend her
Dower of wealth in a single night,
The proud moon seems, on her track of splendor,
Enriching the world with her silver light.
She flings on the crest of each billow a bright
Pure gem, from the casket of jewels above.
But I sigh as I gaze on the glorious sight,
'This is a night that is lost to love.'

Oh, I would that the moon might never wend her
Way through the skies in royal might,
Till the haughty heart of my lady surrender
And the faithful love of a life requite.
For the moon was made for a lover's delight;
And grayer than gloom must its luster prove
To the soul that sighs under sorrow's blight,
'This is a night that is lost to love.'

L'Envoi.

Fate, have pity upon my plight,
And the heart of my lady to mercy move.
For the saddest words that youth can write
Are, 'This is a night that is lost to love.'

XIII

As the waves of the outgoing sea
Leave the rocks and the drift wood bare,
When your thoughts are for others than me,
My heart is the strand of despair-
Beloved,
Where bleak suns glare,
And joy, like a desolate mourner, gropes

In the wrecks of broken hopes.

As the incoming waves of the sea,
The rocks and the sandbar hide,
When your thoughts flow back to me,
My heart leaps up on the tide-
Beloved,
Where my glad hopes ride
With joy at the wheel, and the sun above
In a glorious sky of love.

XIV

There was a bard all in the olden time,
When bards were men to whom the world gave ear,
And song an art the great gods deemed sublime,
Who sought to make his willful lady hear
By weaving strange new melodies of rhyme,
Which voiced his love, his sorrow, and his fear.

Sweetheart, my soul is heavy now with fear,
Lest thou shalt frown upon me for all time.
Ah! would that I had skill to weave a rhyme
Worthy to win the favor of thine ear.
Tho' all the world were deaf, if thou didst hear
And smile, my song would seem to me sublime.

But ah! too vast, too awful and sublime,
Is my great passion, born of grief and fear,
To clothe in verse. Why, if the world could hear
And understand my love, then for all time,
So long as there was sound or listening ear,
All space would ring and echo with my rhyme.

Such passion seems belittled by a rhyme
It needs the voice of nature. The sublime,
Loud thunder crash, that hurts the startled ear,

And stirs the heart with awe, akin to fear,
The weird, wild winds of equinoctial time;
These voices tell my love, wouldst thou but hear.

And listening at the flood tides, thou might'st hear
The love I bear thee surging through the rhyme
Of breaking billows, many a moon full time.
Why, I have heard thee call the sea sublime,
When every wave but voiced the anguished fear
Of my man's heart to thy unconscious ear.

Vain, then, the hope that thou wilt lend thine ear
To any song of mine, or deign to hear
My lays of longing or my strains of fear.
Vain is the hope to weave for thee a rhyme,
Or sweet or sad, or subtle or sublime,
Which wins thy gracious favor for all time.

Oh, cruel time! my lady will not hear,
Though in her ear love sings a song sublime,
And my sad rhyme ends, like my love, in fear.

X

prologue

Bright like the comforting blaze on the hearth,
Sweet like the blooms on the young apple tree,
Fragrant with promise of fruit yet to be
Are the home-keeping maidens of earth.

Better and greater than talent is worth,
And where is the glory of brush or of pen
Like the glory of mothers and molders of men-
The home-keeping women of earth?

Crowned since the great solar system had birth,
They reign unsurpassed in their beautiful sphere.
They are queens who can look in God's face without fear-
The home-keeping women of earth.

A man whose mere name was submerged in the sea
Of letters which followed it, B. A., M. D.,
And Minerva knows what else, held forth at Bellevue
On what he believed some discovery new
In medical Science (though, mayhap, a truth
That was old in Confucius' earliest youth),
And a bevy of bright women students sat near,
Absorbing his wisdom with eye and with ear.

Close by, lay the corpse of a man, half in view.
Dear shades of our dead and gone grandmamas! you
Whose modesty hung out red flags on each cheek,
Danger signals-if some luckless boor chanced to speak
The words 'leg' or 'liver' before you, I think
Your gray ashes, even, would deepen to pink
Should your ghost happen into a clinic or college
Where your granddaughters congregate seeking for knowledge.
Forced to listen to what they are eager to hear,
No doubt you would fancy the world out of gear,
And deem modesty dead, with last century belles

Honored ghosts, you would err! for true modesty dwells
In the same breast with knowledge, and takes no offense.
Truth never harmed anything yet but pretense.

There are fashions in modesty; what in your time
Had been deemed little less than an absolute crime
In matters of dress, or behavior, to-day
Is the custom. And however daring you may
Deem our manners and modes, yet, were facts fully known,

Our morals compare very well with your own.

The women composing the class at Bellevue
Were young-under thirty; some pleasing to view,
Some plain. Roman features prevailed, with brown hair,
But one was so feminine, soft eyed and fair
That she seemed out of place in a clinic, as though
A rose in a vegetable garden should grow.
While her face was intelligent, none would avow
That cold intellect dwelt on that fair oval brow,
Or looked out of the depths of those golden gray eyes,
The color of smoke against clear, sunny skies.
'Twas a warm woman face, made for fireside nooks,
Not a face to be bent over medical books.
There was nothing aggressive in features or form;
She was meant for still harbors, and not for the storm
And the strife of rude waters. The swell of her breast
Suggested love's sweet downy cushion of rest
For the cheeks of fair children. Her plump little hands,
Seemed fashioned for sewing small gussets and bands
And fussing with laces and ribbons, instead
Of cutting cold flesh and dissecting the dead.
And yet, as a student she ranked with the first.
But conscience, in labor once chosen, not thirst
For such knowledge, had spurred her to action. This day
She seemed inattentive, her air was distraught,
As if thought had slipped free of the bridle and rein
And galloped away over memory's plain.

It was true; it was strange, too, but there in the class,
While the learned man was talking, her mind seemed to pass
Out, away from the clinic, away from the town,
To a New England midsummer garden close down
By the salt water's edge; and she felt the wind blowing
Among her loose locks as she leaned o'er her sewing,
While the voice of a man stirred her heart into song.
She was called from her dream by the clang of the gong
Which foretells an arrival at Bellevue. The class
Was dismissed for the day. In the hall, forced to pass
By the stretcher (low brougham of misery), she
Whom we know was Ruth Somerville, looked down to see
The white, haggard face of the man whom her mind
Had strayed off in a waking day vision to find

But a moment before.
The wild, passionate cry
Which arose in her heart, was held back, nor passed by
The white sentinels set on her lip. The serene,
Lofty look which deep feeling controlled gives the mien
Marked her air as she turned to the surgeon and said:
'This man lying here, either dying or dead,
Was a classmate, at Yale, of my brother's; my friend
Is his wife. Let me stay by his side to the end,
If the end has not come.'
It was Roger Montrose,
Grown old with his sins and grown gaunt with his woes,
Lying low in his manhood before her.
His eyes
Opened slowly; a wondering look of surprise
Met the soft orbs above him. 'Ruth-Ruth Somerville,'
He said feebly. 'Tell Mabel'-then sighed, and was still.

But it was not the stillness of death. There was life
In that turbulent heart yet; that heart torn with strife,
Scarred with passion, and wracked by the pangs of remorse.
'Death's swift leaden messenger missed in its course
By the breadth of a hair,' said the surgeon. 'The ball
Lies in there by the shoulder. His chances are small
For a new start on earth. While a sober man might
Hope to conquer grim Death in this hand-to-hand fight,
Here old Alcohol stands as Death's second, fierce, cruel,
And stronger than Life's one aid, skill, in the duel.
You tell me the wife of this man is your friend?
He was shot by a woman, who then made an end
Of her own life. I hope it was not-' 'Oh, no-no,
Not his wife,' Ruth replied, 'for he left her to go
With this other, his victim-poor creature-they say
She was good till she met him. Ah! what a black way
For love's rose scented path to lead down to, and end.
God pity her, pity her.' 'Her, not your friend?
Not his wife?'
There was gentle reproof in the tone
Of the staid old physician. Ruth's eyes met his own
In brave, silent warfare; the blue and the gray
Again faced each other in battle array.

Ruth:

I pity the woman who suffered. His wife
Goes her way well contented. Love was in her life
But an incident; while to this other, dear God,
It was all; on what sharp, burning ploughshares she trod,
Down what chasms she leaped, how she tossed the whole world,
Like a dead rose, behind her, to lie and be whirled
In the maelstrom of love for one moment. Ah, brief
Is the rapture such souls find, and long is their grief,
Black their sin, blurred their record, and scarlet their shame.
And yet when I think of them, sorrow, not blame,
Stirs my being. Blind passion is only the weed
Of fair, beautiful love. Both are sprung from one seed;
One grows wild, one is trained and directed. Condemn
The hand that neglected-but ah! pity them.

Surgeon:

You speak with much feeling. But now, if the friends
Of this man are to see him before his life ends,
I recommend action on your part. His stay
On this planet, I fear, will be finished to-day.
A man who neglects and abuses his wife,
Who gives her at best but the dregs of his life,
In the hey day of health, when he's drained his last cup
Has a fashion of wanting to settle things up.
Craves forgiveness, and hopes with a few final tears
To wash out the sins and the insults of years.
Call your friend; bid her hasten, lest lips that are dumb,
Having wasted life's feast, shall refuse her death's crumb.

Ruth:

There are souls to whom crumbs are sufficient, at least
They seem not to value love's opulent feast.
They neglect, they ignore, they abuse, or destroy
What to some poor starved life had been earth's rarest joy.

'Tis a curious fact that love's banqueting table
Full often is spread for the guest the least able
To do the feast justice. The gods take delight
In offering crusts to the starved appetite
And rich fruits, to the sated or sickly.

The eyes

Of the surgeon were fixed on Ruth's face with a wise
Knowing look in their depths, and he said to himself,
'There's a mystery here which young Cupid, sly elf,
Could account for. I judge by her voice and her face
That the wife of this man holds no very warm place
In Miss Somerville's heart, though she names her as friend.
Ah, full many a drama has come to an end
'Neath the walls of Bellevue, and the curtain will fall
On one actor to-night; though the audience call,
He will make no response, once he passes from view,
For Death is the prompter who gives him the cue.'

The wisest minds err. When a clergyman tries
To tell a man where he will go when he dies,
Or when a physician makes bold to aver
Just the length of a life here, both usually err.
So it is not surprising that Roger, at dawn,
Sat propped up by pillows, still haggard and wan,
But seemingly stronger, and eager to tell
His story to Ruth ere the death shadows fell.

'If I go before Mabel can reach me,' he sighed,
'Tell her this: that my heart was ail hers when I died,
Was all hers while I lived. Ah! I see how you start,
But that other-God pity her-not with my heart,
But my sensual senses I loved her. The fire
Of her glance blinded men to all things save desire.
It called to the beast chained within us. Her lips
Held the nectar that makes a man mad when he sips.
Her touch was delirium. In the fierce joys
Of her kisses there lurked the fell curse which destroys
All such rapture-satiety. When passion dies,

And the mind finds no pleasure, the spirit no ties
To replace it, disgust digs its grave. Ay! disgust
Is ever the sexton who buries dead lust.

When two people wander from virtue's straight track,
One always grows weary and longs to go back.
Well, I wearied. God knows how I struggled to hide
The truth from the poor, erring soul at my side.
And God knows how I hated my life when I first
Found that passion's mad potion had palled on my thirst.
Once false to my virtues, now false to my sin,
I seemed less to myself than I ever had been.
We parted. This bullet hole here in my breast
Proceeds with the story and tells you the rest.
She smiled, I remember, in saying adieu:
Then two swift, sharp reports-and I woke in Bellevue
With one ball in my breast.

Ruth:

And the other in hers.
No more with wild sorrow that sad bosom stirs.
She is dead, sir, the woman you led to her ruin.

Roger:

The woman led me. Ah! not all the undoing
In these matters lies at man's door. In the mind
Of full many a so-called chaste woman we find
Unchaste longings. The world heaps on man its abuse
When he woos without wedding; yet women seduce
And betray us; they lure us and lead us to shame;
As they share in the sin, let them share in the blame.

Ruth:

Hush! the woman is dead.

Roger:

And I dying. But truth
Is not changed by the death of two people! Oh, Ruth,
Be just ere you judge me! the death of my child
Half unbalanced my reason; weak, wretched and wild
With drink and with sorrows, the devil's own chance
Flung me down by the side of a woman whose glance
Was an opiate, lulling the conscience. I fell,
With the woman who tempted me, down to dark hell.
In the honey of sin hides the sting of the bee.
The honey soon sated-the sting stayed with me.
Like a damned soul I looked from my Hades, above
To the world I had left, and I craved the pure love
That but late had seemed cold, unresponsive. Her eyes,
Mabel's eyes, shone in dreams from the far distant skies
Of the lost world of goodness and virtue. Like one
Who is burning with thirst 'neath a hot desert sun,
I longed for her kiss, cool, reluctant, but pure.
Ah! man's love for good women alone can endure,
For virtue is God, the Eternal. The rest
Is but chaos. The worst must give way to the best.
Tell Mabel-Ruth, Ruth, she is here, oh thank God.

She stood, like a violet sprung from the sod,
By his bedside; pale, beautiful, dewy with tears.
The spectre of death bridged the chasm of years:
He sighed on her bosom. 'Forgive, oh forgive!'
She kissed his pale forehead and answered him: 'Live,
Live, my husband! oh plead with the angels to stay
Until God, too, has pardoned your sins. Let us pray.'

Ruth slipped from the room all unnoticed. She seemed
Like a sleeper who awakens and knows he has dreamed
And is dazed with reality. On, as if led
By some presence unseen, to the inn of the dead
She passed swiftly; the pale silent guest whom she sought
Lay alone on her narrow and unadorned cot.
No hand had placed blossoms about her; no tear

Of love or of sorrow had hallowed that bier.
The desperate smile life had left on her face
Death retained; but he touched, too, her brow with a grace
And a radiance, subtle, mysterious. Under
The half drooping lids lay a look of strange wonder,
As if on the sight of those sorrowing eyes
The unexplored country had dawned with surprise.

The pure, living woman leaned over the dead,
Lovely sinner, and kissed her. 'God rest you,' she said.
'Poor suffering soul, you were forged in that Source
Where the lightnings are fashioned. Love guided, your force
Would have been like a current of life giving joys,
And not like the death dealing bolt which destroys.
Oh, shame to the parents who dared give you birth,
To live and to love and to suffer on earth,
With the serious lessons of life unexplained,
And your passionate nature untaught and untrained.
You would not lie here in your youth and your beauty
If your mother had known what was motherhood's duty.
The age calls to woman, 'Go, broaden your lives,'
While for lack of good mothers the Potter's Field thrives.
But you, poor unfortunate, you shall not lie
In that dust heap of death; while the summers roll by
You shall sleep where green hillsides are kissed by the wave,
And the soft hand of pity shall care for your grave.

XI

Ruth's Letter to Maurice, Six Months Later

.

The springtime is here in our old home again,
Which again you have left. Oh, most worthy of men,
Why grieve for unworthiness? Why waste your life
For a woman who never was meant for a wife?
Mabel Lee has no love in her nature. Your heart
Would have starved in her keeping. She plays her new part,
As the faithful, forgiving, sweet spouse, with content.

I think she is secretly glad Roger went
Astray for a season. She stands up still higher
On her pedestal, now, for Bay Bend to admire.
She is pleased with herself. As for Roger, he trots
Like a lamb in her wake, with the blemishing spots
Of his sins washed away by the Church. Oh I seem
To myself, in these days, like one waked from a dream
To blessed reality. Off in the Bay
I saw a fair snowy sailed ship yesterday.
The masts shone like gold, and the furrowed waves laughed,
To be beat into foam by the beautiful craft.
But close in the harbor I saw the ship lying;
What seemed like the wings of a sea gull when flying,
Were weather stained sheets; there were no masts of gold,
And the craft was uncleanly, unseaworthy, old.
Well, the man whom I loved, and loved vainly, and whom
I fancied had shadowed my whole life with gloom,
Has been shown to my sight like that ship in the Bay,
And all my illusions have vanished away.
The man is by nature weak, selfish, unstable.
I think if some woman more loving than Mabel,
More tender, more tactful, less painfully good,
Had directed his home-life, perchance Roger would
Have evolved his best self, that pure atom of God,
Which lies deep in each heart like a seed in the sod.
'Tis the world's over-virtuous women, ofttimes,
Who drive men of weak will into sexual crimes
I pity him. (God knows I pity, each, all
Of the poor striving souls who grope blindly and fall
By the wayside of life.) But the love which unbidden
Crept into my heart, and was guarded and hidden
For years, that has vanished. It passed like a breath,
In the gray Autumn morning when Roger faced death,
As he thought, and uncovered his heart to my sight.
Like a corpse, resurrected and brought to the light,
Which crumbles to ashes, the love of my youth
Crumbled off into nothingness. Ah, it is truth;
Love can die! You may hold it is not the true thing,
Not the genuine passion, which dies or takes wing;
But the soil of the heart, like the soil of the earth,
May, at varying times of the seasons, give birth
To bluebells, and roses, and bright goldenrod.

Each one is a gift from the garden of God,
Though it dies when its season is over. Why cling
To the withered dead stalk of the blossoms of spring
Through a lifetime, Maurice? It is stubbornness only,
Not constancy, which makes full many lives lonely.
They want their own way, and, like cross children, fling
Back the gifts which, in place of the lost flowers of spring,
Fate offers them. Life holds in store for you yet
Better things, dear Maurice, than a dead violet,
As it holds better things than dead daisies for me.
To Roger Montrose, let us leave Mabel Lee,
With our blessing. They seem to be happy; or she
Seems content with herself and her province; while he
Has the look of one who, overfed with emotion,
Tries a diet of spiritual health-food, devotion.
He is broken in strength, and his face has the hue
Of a man to whom passion has bidden adieu.
He has time now to worship his God and his wife.
She seems better pleased with the dregs of his life
Than she was with the bead of it.
Well, let them make
What they will of their future. Maurice, for my sake
And your own, put them out of your thoughts. All too brief
And too broad is this life to be ruined by grief
Over one human atom. Like mellowing rain,
Which enriches the soil of the soul and the brain,
Should the sorrow of youth be; and not like the breath
Of the cyclone, which carries destruction and death.
Come, Maurice, let philosophy lift you above
The gloom and despair of unfortunate love.
Sometimes, if we look a woe straight in the face,
It loses its terrors and seems commonplace;
While sorrow will follow and find if we roam.
Come, help me to turn the old house into home.
We have youth, health, and competence. Why should we go
Out into God's world with long faces of woe?
Let our pleasures have speech, let our sorrows be dumb,
Let us laugh at despair and contentment will come.
Let us teach earth's repiners to look through glad eyes,
For the world needs the happy far more than the wise.
I am one of the women whose talent and taste
Lie in home-making. All else I do seems mere waste

Of time and intention; but no woman can
Make a house seem a home without aid of a man.
He is sinew and bone, she is spirit and life.
Until the veiled future shall bring you a wife,
Me a mate (and both wait for us somewhere, dear brother),
Let us bury old corpses and live for each other.
You will write, and your great heart athrob through your pen
Shall strengthen earth's weak ones with courage again.
Where your epigrams fail, I will offer a pill,
And doctor their bodies with 'new woman' skill.
(Once a wife, I will drop from my name the M. D.
I hold it the truth that no woman can be
An excellent wife and an excellent mother,
And leave enough purpose and time for another
Profession outside. And our sex was not made
To jostle with men in the great marts of trade.
The wage-earning women, who talk of their sphere,
Have thrown the domestic machine out of gear.
They point to their fast swelling ranks overjoyed,
Forgetting the army of men unemployed.
The banner of Feminine 'Rights,' when unfurled,
Means a flag of distress to the rest of the world.
And poor Cupid, depressed by such follies and crimes,
Sits weeping, alone, in the Land of Hard Times.
The world needs wise mothers, the world needs good wives,
The world needs good homes, and yet woman strives
To be everything else but domestic. God's plan
Was for woman to rule the whole world,
through a man

.

There is nothing a woman of sweetness and tact
Can not do without personal effort or act.
She needs but infuse lover, husband or son
With her own subtle spirit, and lo! it is done.
Though the man is unconscious, full oft, of the cause,
And fancies himself the sole maker of laws.
Well, let him. The cannon, no doubt, is the prouder
For not knowing its noise is produced by the powder.
Yet this is the law:

Who can love, can command.

)

But I wander too far from the subject in hand,

Which is, your home coming. Make haste, dear; I find
More need every day of your counseling mind.
I work well in harness, but poorly alone.
Until that bright day when Fate brings us our own,
Let us labor together. I see many ways,
Many tasks, for the use of our talents and days.
Your wisdom shall better the workingmen's lives,
While I will look after their daughters and wives,
And teach them to cook without waste; for, indeed,
It is knowledge like this which the poor people need,
Not the stuff taught in schools. You shall help them to think,
While I show them what they can eat and can drink
With least cost, and most pleasure and benefit. Please
Write me and say you will come, dear Maurice.
Home, sister, and duty are all waiting here;
Who keeps close to duty finds pleasure dwells near.

XII

Maurice's Letter to Ruth

:

No, no. I have gambled with destiny twice,
And have staked my whole hopes on a home; but the dice
Thrown by Fate made me loser. Henceforward, I know
My lot must be homeless. The gods will it so.

I fought, I rebelled; I was bitter. I strove
To outwit the great Cosmic Forces, above,
Or beyond, or about us, who guide and control
The course of all things from the moat to the soul.

The river may envy the peace of the pond,
But law drives it out to the ocean beyond.
If it roars down abysses, or laughs through the land,
It follows the way which the Forces have planned.

So man is directed. His only the choice
To help or to hinder-to weep or rejoice.
But vain is refusal-and vain discontent,
For at last he must walk in the way that was meant.

My way leads through shadow, alone to the end
I must work out my karma, and follow its trend.
I must fulfill the purpose, whatever it be,
And look not for peace till I merge in God's sea.

Though bankrupt in joy, still my life has its gain;
I have climbed the last round in the ladder of pain.
There is nothing to dread. I have drained sorrow's cup
And can laugh as I fling it at Fate bottom up.

I have missed what I sought; yet I missed not the whole.
The best part of love is in loving. My soul
Is enriched by its prodigal gifts. Still, to give
And to ask no return, is my lot while I live.

Such love may be blindness, but where are love's eyes?
Such love may be folly, love seldom is wise.
Such love may be madness, was love ever sane?
Such love must be sorrow, for all love is pain.

Love goes where it must go, and in its own season.
Love cannot be banished by will or by reason.
Love gave back your freedom, it keeps me its slave.
I shall walk in its fetters, unloved, to my grave.

So be it. What right has the ant, in the dust,
To cry that the world is all wrong, and unjust,
Because the swift foot of a messenger trod
Down the home, and the hopes, that were built in the sod?

What is man but an ant, in this universe scheme?
Though dear his ambition, and precious his dream,
God's messengers speed all unseen on their way,
And the plans of a lifetime go down in a day

No matter. The aim of the Infinite mind,
Which lies back of it all, must be great, must be kind.
Can the ant or the man, though ingenious and wise,
Swing the tides of the sea-set a star in the skies?

Can man fling a million of worlds into space,
To whirl on their orbits with system and grace?
Can he color a sunset, or create a seed,
Or fashion one leaf of the commonest weed?

Can man summon daylight, or bid the night fall?
Then how dare he question the Force which does all?
Where so much is flawless, where so much is grand,
All, all must be right, could our souls understand.

Ah, man, the poor egotist! Think with what pride
He boasts his small knowledge of star and of tide.
But when fortune fails him, or when a hope dies,

The Maker
of stars and of seas he denies!

I questioned, I doubted. But that is all past;
I have learned the true secret of living at last.
It is, to accept what Fate sends, and to know
That the one thing God wishes of man-is to grow.

Growth, growth out of self, back to him-the First Cause:
Therein lies the purpose, the law of all laws.
Tears, grief, disappointment, well, what are all these
To the Builder of stars and the Maker of seas?

Does the star long to shine, when He tells it to set,
As the heart would remember when told to forget?
Does the sea moan for flood tide, when bid to be low,
As a soul cries for pleasure when given life's woe?

In the Antarctic regions a volcano glows,
While low at its base lie the up-reaching snows.
With patient persistence they steadily climb,
And the flame will be quenched in the passage of time.

My heart is the crater, my will is the snow,
Which yet may extinguish its volcanic glow.
When self is once conquered, the end comes to pain,
And that is the goal which I seek to attain.

I seek it in work, heaven planned, heaven sent;
In the kingdom of toil waits the crown of content.
Work, work! ah, how high and divine was its birth,
When God, the first laborer, fashioned the earth.

The world cries for workers; not toilers for pelf,
But souls who have sought to eliminate self.
Can the lame lead the race? Can the blind guide the blind?
We must better ourselves ere we better our kind.

There are wrongs to be righted; and first of them all,
Is to lift up the leaners from Charity's thrall.
Sweet, wisdomless Charity, sowing the seed
Which it seeks to uproot, of dependence and need.

For vain is the effort to give man content
By clothing his body, by paying his rent.
The garment re-tatters, the rent day recurs;
Who seeks to serve God by such charity errs.

Give light to the spirit, give strength to the mind,
And the body soon cares for itself, you will find.
First, faith in God's wisdom, then purpose and will,
And, like mist before sunlight, shall vanish each ill.

To the far realm of Wisdom there lies a short way.
To find it we need but the password-Obey.
Obey like the acorn that falls to the sod,
To rise, through the heart of the oak tree, to God.

Though slow be the rising, and distant the goal,
Serenity waits at the end for each soul.
I seek it. Not backward, but onward I go,
And since sorrow means growth, I will welcome my woe.

In the ladder of lives we are given to climb,
Each life counts for only a second of time.
The one thing to do in the brief little space,
Is to make the world glad that we ran in the race.

No soul should be sad whom the Maker deemed worth
The great gift of song as its dower at birth.
While I pass on my way, an invisible throng
Breathes low in my ear the new note of a song.

So I am not alone; for by night and by day
These mystical messengers people my way.
They bid me to hearken, they bid me be dumb
And to wait for the true inspiration to come.

THE END

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Three-Fold

Somewhere I've read a thoughtful mind's reflection:
'All perfect things are three-fold'; and I know
Our love has the rare symbol of perfection;
The brain's response, the warm blood's rapturous glow,
The soul's sweet language, silent and unspoken.
All these unite us with a deathless tie.
For when our frail, clay tenement is broken,
Our spirits will be lovers still, on high.

My dearest wish, you speak before I word it.
You understand the workings of heart.
My soul's thought, breathed where only God has heard it,
You fathom with your strange divining art.
And Like a fire, that cheers, and lights, and blesses,
And floods a mansion full of happy heat,
So does the subtle warmth of your caresses,
Pervade me with rapture, keen as sweet.

And so sometimes, as you and I together
Exult in all dear love's three-fold delights,
I cannot help but vaguely wonder whether
When our free souls attain their spirit heights,
E'en if we reach that upper realm where God is,
And find the tales of heavenly glory true,
I wonder if we shall not miss our bodies,
And long, at times, for hours on earth we knew.

As now, we sometimes pray to leave our prison
And soar beyond all physical demands,
So may we not sigh, when we have arisen,
For just one old-time touch of lips and hands?
I know, dear heart, a thought like this seems daring
Concerning God's vast Government above,
Yet, even There, I shrink from wholly sparing
One element, from this, our Three-fold Love.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Through The Valley

(After James Thomson)

As I came through the Valley of Despair,
As I came through the valley, on my sight,
More awful than the darkness of the night,
Shone glimpses of a Past that had been fair,
And memories of eyes that used to smile,
And wafts of perfume from a vanished isle,
As I came through the valley.

As I came through the valley I could see,
As I came through the valley, fair and far,
As drowning men look up and see a star,
The fading shore of my lost Used-to-be;
And like an arrow in my heart I heard
The last sad notes of Hope's expiring bird,
As I came through the valley.

As I came through the valley desolate,
As I came through the valley, like a beam
Of lurid lightning I beheld a gleam
Of Love's great eyes that now were full of hate.
Dear God! dear God! I could bear all but that;
But I fell down soul-stricken, dead, thereat,
As I came through the valley.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Thy Ship

Hadst thou a ship, in whose vast hold lay stored
The priceless riches of all climes and lands,
Say, woudst thou let it float upon the seas
Unpiloted, of fickle winds the sport,
And of wild waves and hidden rocks the prey?

Thine is that ship; and in its depths concealed
Lies all the wealth of this vast universe –
Yea, lies some part of God's omnipotence
The legacy divine of every soul.

Thy will, O man, thy will is that great ship,
And yet behold it drifting here and there –
One moment lying motionless in port,
Then on high seas by sudden impulse flung,

Then drying on the sands, and yet again
Sent forth on idle quests to no-man's land
To carry nothing and to nothing bring;
Till worn and fretted by the aimless strife
And buffeted by vacillating winds
It flounders on a rock, or springs a leak
With all its unused treasures in the hold.

Go save thy ship, thou sluggard; that the wheel
And steer to knowledge, glory and success.
Great mariners have made the pathway plain
For thee to follow; hold thou to the course
Of Concentration Channel, and all things
Shall come in answer to thy swerveless wish
As comes the needle to the magnet's call,
Or sunlight to the prisoned blade of grass
That yearns all winter for the kiss of spring.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Time And Love

Time flies. The swift hours hurry by
And speed us on to untried ways;
New seasons ripen, perish, die,
And yet love stays.

The old, old love – like sweet at first,
At last like bitter wine –
I know not if it blest or curst,
Thy life and mine.

Time flies. In vain our prayers, our tears,
We cannot tempt him to delays;
Down to the past he bears the years,
And yet love stays.
Through changing task and varying dream
We hear the same refrain,
As one can hear a plaintive theme
Run through each strain.

Time flies. He steals out pulsing youth,
He robs us of our care-free days,
He takes away our trust and truth,
And yet love stays.
O Time! take love! When love is vain,
When all its best joys die –
When only its regrets remain –
Let love, too, fly.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Time Enough

I know it is early morning,
And hope is calling aloud,
And your heart is afire with Youth's desire
To hurry along with the crowd.
But linger a bit by the roadside,
And lend a hand by the way,
'Tis a curious fact that a generous act
Brings leisure and luck to a day.

I know it is only the noontime –
There is chance enough to be kind;
But the hours run fast when the noon has passed,
And the shadows are close behind.
So think while the light is shining,
And act ere the set of the sun,
For the sorriest woe that a soul can know
Is to think what it might have done.

I know it is almost evening,
But the twilight hour is long.
If you listen and heed each cry of need
You can right full many a wrong.
For when we have finished the journey
We will all look back and say:
'On life's long mile there was nothing worth while
But the good we did by the way.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Time's Defeat

Time has made conquest of so many things
That once were mine. Swift-footed, eager youth
That ran to meet the years; bold brigand health,
That broke all laws of reason unafraid,
And laughed at talk of punishment. Close ties

Of blood and friendship, and that joy of life,
Which reads its music in the major key
And will not listen to a minor strain-
These things and many more are spoils of time.

Yet as a conqueror who only storms
The outposts of a town, and finds the fort
Too strong to be assailed, so time retreats
And knows his impotence. He cannot take
My three great jewels from the crown of life;
Love, sympathy, and faith; and year on year
He sees them grow in lustre and in worth,
And glowers by me, plucking at his beard,
And dragging as he goes, a useless scythe.
Once in the dark he plotted with his friend
Grim death, to steal my treasures. Death replied:
'They are immortal, and beyond thy reach:
I could but set them in another sphere,
To shine with greater lustre.'

Time and Death
Passed on together, knowing their defeat;
And I am singing by the road of life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Time's Hymn Of Hate

Oh, boastful, wicked land, that once was beautiful and great,
How bitter and how black must be your self-invited fate,
While Time goes down the centuries and sings his hymn of hate!

Time's voice is just. His words ring true. For as the past recedes,
The clear-eyed Future slowly writes the story of its deeds;
And as Time toward the Infinite his ceaseless flight is winging
He shall go singing
The hymn of hate, of men and gods, for all your deeds of lust,
For all your acts of cruelty and hell-concocted schemes
(More hideous than the darkest plot of which a devil dreams)
Which sprang from your Medusa head before it touched the dust.
Beneath the strangling hand of Fate
That strident voice of yours
Shall hush to silence, soon or late
That Justice that endures
Will mobilise its mighty ranks and free the human race,
Then shall all Space,
Yea, all the chains of sphere on sphere,
With that loud hymn be ringing,
Which Time goes singing
His far flight winging
And all the cherubims of God that dwell in regions o'er us
Shall swell the chorus.

Oh, boastful, wicked land, that once was beautiful and great,
How desolate and dark must be your self-invited fate,
While Time goes down the centuries and sings his hymn of hate!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Tired

I am tired to-night, and something,
The wind maybe, or the rain,
Or the cry of a bird in the copse outside,
Has brought back the past and its pain.
And I feel as I sit here thinking,
That the hand of a dead old June
Has reached out hold of my heart's loose strings,
And is drawing them up in tune.

I am tired to-night, and I miss you,
And long for you, love, through tears;
And it seems but to-day that I saw you go –
You, who have been gone for years.
And I seem to be newly lonely –
I, who am so much alone;
And the strings of my heart are well in tune,
But they have not the same old tone.

I am tired; and that old sorrow
Sweeps down the bed of my soul,
As a turbulent river might suddenly break
Away from a dam's control.
It beareth a wreck on its bosom,
A wreck with a snow-white sail,
And the hand on my heart-strings thrums away,
But they only respond with a wail.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Tis The Set Of The Sail -- Or -- One Ship Sails East

But to every mind there openeth,
A way, and way, and away,
A high soul climbs the highway,
And the low soul gropes the low,
And in between on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.

But to every man there openeth,
A high way and a low,
And every mind decideth,
The way his soul shall go.

One ship sails East,
And another West,
By the self-same winds that blow,
'Tis the set of the sails
And not the gales,
That tells the way we go.

Like the winds of the sea
Are the waves of time,
As we journey along through life,
'Tis the set of the soul,
That determines the goal,
And not the calm or the strife.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

To An Astrologer

Nay, seer, I do not doubt thy mystic lore,
Nor question that the tenor of my life,
Past, present and the future, is revealed
There in my horoscope. I do believe
That yon dead moon compels the haughty seas
To ebb and flow, and that my natal star
Stands like a stern-browed sentinel in space
And challenges events; nor lets one grief,
Or joy, or failure, or success, pass on
To mar or bless my earthly lot, until
It proves its Karmic right to come to me.

All this I grant, but more than this I know!
Before the solar systems were conceived,
When nothing was but the unnamable,
My spirit lived, an atom of the Cause.
Through countless ages and in many forms
It has existed, ere it entered in
This human frame to serve its little day
Upon the earth. The deathless Me of me,
The spark from that great all-creative fire
Is part of that eternal source called God,
And mightier than the universe.

Why, he
Who knows, and knowing, never once forgets
The pedigree divine of his own soul,
Can conquer, shape and govern destiny
And use vast space as 'twere a board for chess
With stars for pawns; can change his horoscope
To suit his will; turn failure to success,
And from preordained sorrows, harvest joy.

There is no puny planet, sun or moon,
Or zodiacal sign which can control
The God in us! If we bring that to bear
Upon events, we mold them to our wish,
Tis when the infinite 'neath the finite gropes
That men are governed by their horoscopes.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

To Marry Or Not To Marry?

A Girl's Reverie

Mother says, 'Be in no hurry,
Marriage oft means care and worry.'

Auntie says, with manner grave,
'Wife is synonym for slave.'

Father asks, in tones commanding,
'How does Bradstreet rate his standing? '

Sister, crooning to her twins,
Sighs, 'With marriage care begins.'

Grandma, near life's closing days,
Murmurs, 'Sweet are girlhood's ways.'

Maud, twice widowed ('sod and grass')
Looks at me and moans 'Alas! '

They are six, and I am one,
Life for me has just begun.

They are older, calmer, wiser:
Age should aye be youth's adviser.

They must know – and yet, dear me,
When in Harry's eyes I see

All the world of love there burning –
On my six advisers turning,

I make an answer, 'Oh, but Harry
Is not like most men who marry.'

'Fate has offered me a prize,
Life with love means Paradise.'

'Life without it is not worth

All the foolish joys of earth.'

So, in spite of all they say,
I shall name the wedding day.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

To Men

Sirs, when you pity us, I say
You waste your pity. Let it stay,
Well corked and stored upon your shelves,
Until you need it for yourselves.

We do appreciate God's thought
In forming you, before He brought
Us into life. His art was crude,
But oh, so virile in its rude

Large elemental strength: and then
He learned His trade in making men;
Learned how to mix and mould the clay
And fashion in a finer way.

How fine that skilful way can be
You need but lift your eyes to see;
And we are glad God placed you there
To lift your eyes and find us fair.

Apprentice labour though you were,
He made you great enough to stir
The best and deepest depths of us,
And we are glad he made you thus.

Ay! we are glad of many things.
God strung our hearts with such fine strings
The least breath movces them, and we hear
Music where silence greets your ear.

We suffer so? but women's souls
Like violet powder dropped on coals,
Give forth their best in anguish. Oh,
The subtle secrets that we know,

Of joy in sorrow, strange delights
Of ecstasy in pain-filled nights,
And mysteries of gain in loss
Known but to Christ upon the Cross!

Our tears are pitiful to you?
Look how the heaven-reflecting dew
Dissolves its life in tears. The sand
Meanwhile lies hard upon the strand.

How could your pity find a place
For us, the mothers of the race?
Men may be fathers unaware,
So poor the title is you wear,

But mothers -? Who that crown adorns
Knows all its mingled blooms and thorns;
And she whose feet that path hath trod
Has walked upon the heights with God.

No, offer us not pity's cup.
There is no looking down or up
Between us: eye looks straight in eye:
Born equals, so we live and die.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Transformation

She waited in a rose-hued room;
A wanton-hearted creature she,
But beautiful and bright to see
As some great orchid just in bloom.
Upon wide cushions stretched at ease
She lolled in garments filmy fine,
Which but enhanced each rounded line;
A living picture, framed to please.

A bold electric eye of light
Leered through its ruddy screen of lace
And feasted on her form and face
As some wine-crimsoned roue might.

From wall and niche, nude nymph beguiled
Fair goddess of world-wide fame,
But Psyche's self was put to shame
By one who from the cushions smiled.

Exotic blossoms from a vase
Their sweet narcotic breath exhaled;
The lights, the objects round her paled –
She lost the sense of time and place.

She seemed to float upon the air,
Untrammelled, unrestricted, free;
And rising from a vapory sea
She saw a form divinely fair.

A beautiful being in whose face
Shone all the things sweet and true and good.
The innocence of maidenhood,
The motherhood of the race.

The warmth which comes from heavenly fire,
The strength which leads the weaker man
To climb to God's Eternal plan
And conquer and control desire.

She shook as with a mighty awe,
For, gazing on this shape which stood
Embodying all true womanhood,
She knew it was herself she saw.

She woke as from a dream. But when
The laughter lover, light and bold
Came with his talk of wine and gold
He gazed, grew silent, gazed again;

Then turned abashed from those calm eyes
Where lurked no more the lure to sin.
Her higher self had entered in,
Her path now led to Paradise.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

True Charity

I gave a beggar from my little store
Of well-earned gold. He spent the shining ore
And came again, and yet again, still cold
 And hungry, as before.

I gave a thought, and through that thought of mine
He found himself, the man, supreme, divine!
Fed, clothed, and crowned with blessings manifold.
 And now he begs no more.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Twilight Thoughts

The God of the day has vanished,
The light from the hills has fled,
And the hand of an unseen artist
Is painting the west all red.
All threaded with gold and crimson,
And burnished with amber dye,
And tipped with purple shadows,
The glory flameth high.

Fair, beautiful world of ours!
Fair, beautiful world, but oh,
How darkened by pain and sorrow,
How blackened by sin and woe.
The splendour pales in the heavens
And dies in a golden gleam,
And alone in the hush of twilight,
I sit, in a chequered dream.

I think of the souls that are straying,
In the shadows as black as the night,
Of hands that are groping blindly
In search of a shining light;
Of hearts that are mutely crying,
And praying for just one ray,
To lead them out of the shadows
Into the better way.

And I think of the Father's children
Who are trying to walk alone,
Who have dropped the hand of the Parent,
And wander in ways unknown.
Oh, the paths are rough and thorny,
And I know they cannot stand.
They will faint and fall by the wayside,
Unguarded by God's right hand.

And I think of the souls that are yearning
To folow the good and true;
They are striving to live unsullied,

Yet I know not what to do.
And I wonder when God, the Master,
Shall end this weary strife,
And lead us out of the shadows
Into the deathless life.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Twin-Born

He who possesses virtue at its best,
Or greatness in the true sense of the word,
Has one day started even with that herd
Whose swift feet now speed, but at sin's behest.
It is the same force in the human breast
Which makes men gods or demons. If we gird
Those strong emotions by which we are stirred
With might of will and purpose, heights unguessed
Shall dawn for us; or if we give them sway
We can sink down and consort with the lost.
All virtue is worth just the price it cost.
Black sin is oft white truth, that missed its way,
And wandered off in paths not understood.
Twin-born I hold great evil and great good.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Two Loves

The woman he loved, while he dreamed of her,
Danced on till the stars grew dim,
But alone with her heart, from the world apart
Sat the woman who loved him.

The woman he worshipped only smiled
When he poured out his passionate love.
But the other somewhere, kissed her treasure most rare,
A book he had touched with his glove.

The woman he loved betrayed his trust,
And he wore the scars for life;
And he cared not, nor knew, that the other was true;
But no man called her his wife.

The woman he loved trod festal halls,
While they sang his funeral hymn,
But the sad bells tolled, ere the year was old,
For the woman that loved him.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Two Nights

(Suggested by the lives of Napoleon and Josephine.)

I.

ONE night was full of rapture and delight-
Of reunited arms and swooning kisses,
And all the unnamed and unnumbered blisses
Which fond souls find in love of love at night.

Heart beat with heart, and each clung into each
With twining arms that did but loose their hold
To cling still closer; and fond glances told
These truths for which there is no uttered speech.

There was sweet laughter and endearing words,
Made broken by the kiss that could not wait,
And cooing sounds as of dear little birds
That in spring-time love and woo and mate.

And languid sighs that breathed of love's content
And all too soon this night of rapture went.

II.

One night was full of anguish and of pain,
Of nerveless arms and mockery of kisses;
And those caresses where one sick heart misses
The quick response the other cannot feign.

Hands idly clasped and unclasped, and lost hold,
And the averted eyes that turned away,
And in whose depths no love nor longing lay,
The saddest of all truths too plainly told.

There was salt sorrow and the gall of tears,
Some useless words that ended in a moan,
And a dull dread of long unending years

When one must walk forever more alone.
Deep shuddering sighs told more than lips could say;
And the long night of sorrow wore away.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Two Roses

A humble wild-rose, pink and slender,
Was plucked and placed in a bright bouquet,
Beside a Jacqueminot's royal splendour,
And both in my lady's boudoir lay.

Said the haughty bud, in a tone of scorning,
'I wonder why you are called a rose?
Your leaves will fade in a single morning;
No blood of mine in your pale cheek glows.

'Your course green stalk shows dust of the highway,
You have no depths of fragrant bloom;
And what could you learn in a rustic byway
To fit you to lie in my lady's room?

'If called to adorn her warm, white bosom,
What have you to offer for such a place,
Beside my fragrant and splendid blossom,
Ripe with colour and rich with grace?

Said the sweet wild-rose, 'Despite your dower
Of finer breeding and deeper hue,
Despite your beauty, fair, high-bred flower,
It is I who should lie on her breast, not you.

'For small account is your hot-house glory
Beside the knowledge that came to me
When I heard by the wayside love's old story
And felt the kiss of the amorous bee.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Two Sinners

There was a man, it was said one time,
Who went astray in his youthful prime.
Can the brain keep cool and the heart keep quiet
When the blood is a river that's running riot?
And boys will be boys the old folks say,
And the man is better who's had his day.

The sinner reformed; and the preacher told
Of the prodigal son who came back to the fold.
And Christian people threw open the door,
With a warmer welcome than ever before.
Wealth and honour were his to command,
And a spotless woman gave him her hand.

And the world strewed their pathway with blossoms aboom,
Crying 'God bless ladye, and God bless groom! '

There was a maiden who went astray
In the golden dawn of her life's young day.
She had more passion and heart than head,
And she followed blindly where fond Love led,
And Love unchecked is a dangerous guide
To wander at will by a fair girl's side.

The woman repented and turned from sin,
But no door opened to let her in.
The preacher prayed that she might be forgiven,
But told her to look for mercy – in Heaven.

For this is the law of the earth, we know:
That the woman is stoned, while the man may go.

A brave man wedded her after all,
But the world said, frowning, 'We shall not call.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Two Sunsets

In the fair morning of his life,
When his pure heart lay in his breast,
Panting, with all that wild unrest
To plunge into the great world's strife

That fills young hearts with mad desire,
He saw a sunset. Red and gold
The burning billows surged and rolled,
And upward tossed their caps of fire.

He looked. And as he looked the sight
Sent from his soul through breast and brain
Such intense joy, it hurt like pain.
His heart seemed bursting with delight.

So near the Unknown seemed, so close
He might have grasped it with his hand.
He felt his inmost soul expand,
As sunlight will expand a rose.

One day he heard a singing strain--
A human voice, in bird-like trills.
He paused, and little rapture-rills
Went trickling downward through each vein.

And in his heart the whole day long,
As in a temple veiled and dim,
He kept and bore about with him
The beauty of that singer's song.

And then? But why relate what then?
His smoldering heart flamed into fire--
He had his one supreme desire,
And plunged into the world of men.

For years queen Folly held her sway.
With pleasures of the grosser kind
She fed his flesh and drugged his mind,
Till, shamed, he sated turned away.

He sought his boyhood's home. That hour
Triumphant should have been, in sooth,
Since he went forth an unknown youth,
And came back crowned with wealth and power.

The clouds made day a gorgeous bed;
He saw the splendor of the sky
With unmoved heart and stolid eye;
He knew only West was red.

Then suddenly a fresh young voice
Rose, bird-like, from some hidden place,
He did not even turn his face;
It struck him simply as a noise.

He trod the old paths up and down.
Their ruf-hued leaves by Fall winds whirled--
How dull they were--how dull the world--
Dull even in the pulsing town.

O! worst of punishments, that brings
A blunting of all finer sense,
A loss of feelings keen, intense,
And dulls us to the higher things.

O! penalty most dire, most sure,
Swift following after gross delights,
That we no more see beauteous sights,
Or hear as hear the good and pure.

O! shape more hideous and more dread
Than Vengeance takes in creed-taught minds,
This certain doom that blunts and blinds,
And strikes the holiest feelings dead.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Two Women

I know two women, and one is chaste
And cold as the snows on a winters waste,
Stainless ever I act and thought
(As a man, born dumb, in speech errs not) .
But she has malice toward her kind,
A cruel tongue and a jealous mind.
Void of pity and full of greed,
She judges the world by her narrow creed;
A brewer of quarrels, a breeder of hate,
Yet she holds the key to 'Society's' Gate.

The other woman, with heart of flame,
Went mad for a love that marred her name:
And out of the grave of her murdered faith
She rose like a soul that has passed through death.
Her aims are noble, her pity so broad,
It covers the world like the mercy of God.
A soother of discord, a healer of woes,
Peace follows her footsteps wherever she goes.
The worthier life of the two, no doubt,
And yet 'Society' locks her out.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Unanswered Prayers

Like some school master, kind in being stern,
Who hears the children crying o'er their slates
And calling, "Help me master! " yet helps not,
Since in his silence and refusal lies
Their self-development, so God abides
Unheeding many prayers. He is not deaf
To any cry sent up from earnest hearts,
He hears and strengthens when He must deny.
He sees us weeping over life's hard sums
But should He give us the key and dry our tears
What would it profit us when school were done
And not one lesson mastered?

What a world

Where this if all our prayers were answered. Not
In famed Pandora's box were such vast ills
As lie in human hearts. Should our desires
Voiced one by one in prayer ascend to God
And come back as events shaped to our wish
What chaos would result!

In my fierce youth

I sighed out a breath enough to move a fleet
Voicing wild prayers to heaven for fancied boons
Which were denied; and that denial bends
My knee to prayers of gratitude each day
Of my maturer years. Yet from those prayers
I rose always regirded for the strife
And conscious of new strength. Pray on, sad heart,
That which thou pleadest for may not be given
But in the lofty altitude where souls
Who supplicate God's grace are lifted there
Thou shalt find help to bear thy daily lot
Which is not elsewhere found.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Unconquered

However skilled and strong art thou, my foe,
However fierce is thy relentless hate
Though firm thy hand, and strong thy aim, and straight
Thy poisoned arrow leaves the bended bow,
To pierce the target of my heart, ah! know
I am the master yet of my own fate.
Thou canst not rob me of my best estate,
Though fortune, fame and friends, yea love shall go.

Not to the dust shall my true self be hurled;
Nor shall I meet thy worst assaults dismayed.
When all things in the balance are well weighed,
There is but one r in the world-
Thou canst not force my soul to wish thee ill,
That is the only evil that can kill.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Uncontrolled

The mighty forces of mysterious space
Are one by one subdued by lordly man.
The awful lightning that for eons ran
Their devastating and untrammeled race,
Now bear his messages from place to place
Like carrier doves. The winds lead on his van;
The lawless elements no longer can
Resist his strength, but yield with sullen grace.

His bold feet scaling heights before untrod,
Light, darkness, air and water, heat and cold
He bids go forth and bring him power and pelf.
And yet though ruler, king and demi-god
He walks with his fierce passions uncontrolled
The conquerer of all things – save himself.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Under The Sheet

What a terrible night! Does the Night, I wonder-
The Night, with her black veil down to her feet
Like an ordained nun, know what lies under
That awful, motionless, snow-white sheet?
The winds seem crazed, and, wildly howling,
Over the sad earth blindly go.
Do they and the dark clouds over them scowling,
Do they dream or know?

Why, here in the room, not a week or over-
Tho' it must be a week, not more than one-
(I cannot reckon of late or discover
When one day is ended or one begun),
But here in this room we were laughing lightly,
And glad was the measure our two hearts beat;
And the royal face that was smiling so brightly
Lies under that sheet.

I know not why-it is strange and fearful,
But I am afraid of her, lying there;
She who was always so gay and cheerful,
Lying so still with that stony stare:
She who was so like some grand sultana,
Fond of color and glow and heat,
To lie there clothed in that awful manner
In a stark white sheet.

She who was made out of summer blisses,
Tropical, beautiful, gracious, fair,
To lie and stare at my fondest kisses-
God! no wonder it whitens my hair.
Shriek, oh, wind! for the world is lonely;
Trail cloud-veil to the nun Night's feet.
For all that I prized in life is only
A shape and a sheet.

Until The Night

Over the ocean of life's commotion
We sail till the night comes on.
Sail and sail in a tiny boat,
Drifting wherever the billows go.
Out on the treacherous sea afloat,
Beat by the cruel winds that blow,
Hither and thither our boat is drawn,
Till the day dies out and the night comes on.

Over a meadow of light and shadow
We wander with weary feet,
Seeking a bauble men call "Fame, "
Grasping the dead-sea fruit named "wealth, "
Finding each but an empty name,
And the night – the night steals on by stealth,
And we count the season of slumber sweet,
When hope lies dead in the arms of defeat.

Over the river a great Forever
Stretches beyond our sight.
But I know by the glistening pearly gates
Afar from the region of strife and sin,
A beautiful angel always waits
To welcome the sheep of the shepherd in.
And out of the shadows of gloom and night,
They enter the mansion of peace and light.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Upon The Sand

All love that has not friendship for its base,
Is like a mansion built upon the sand.
Though brave its walls as any in the land,
And its tall turrets lift their heads in grace;
Though skillful and accomplished artists trace
Most beautiful designs on every hand,
And gleaming statues in dim niches stand,
And mountains play in some flow'r-hidden place:

Yet, when from the frowning east a sudden gust
Of adverse fate is blown, or sad rains fall
Day in, day out, against its yielding wall,
Lo! the fair structure crumbles to the dust.
Love, to endure life's sorrow and earth's woe,
Needs friendship's solid masonwork below.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Vanity Fair

In Vanity Fair, as we bow and smile,
As we talk of the opera after the weather,
As we chat of fashion and fad and style,
We know we are playing a part together.
You know that the mirth she wears, she borrows;
She knows you laugh but to hide your sorrows;
We know that under the silks and laces,
And back of beautiful, beaming faces,
Lie secret trouble and grim despair,
In Vanity Fair.

In Vanity Fair, on dress parade,
Our colors look bright and our swords are gleaming;
But many a uniform's worn and frayed,
And most of the weapons, despite their seeming,
Are dull and blunted and badly battered,
And close inspection will show how tattered
And stained are the banners that float above us.
Our comrades hate, while they swear to love us;
And robed like Pleasure walks gaunt-eyed Care,
In Vanity Fair.

In Vanity Fair, as we strive for place,
As we rush and jostle and crowd and hurry,
We know the goal is not worth the race-
We know the prize is not worth the worry;
That all our gain means loss for another;
That in fighting for self we wound each other;
That the crown of success weighs hard and presse
The brow of the victor with thorns-not caresses;
That honors are empty and worthless to wear,
In Vanity Fair.

But in Vanity Fair, as we pass along,
We meet strong hearts that are worth the knowing;
'Mong poor paste jewels that deck the throng,

We see a solitaire sometimes glowing.
We find grand souls under robes of fashion,
'Neath light demeanors hide strength and passion;
And fair fine honor and Godlike resistance.
In halls of pleasure may have existence;
And we find pure altars and shrines of prayer,
In Vanity Fair.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Veils

Veils, everywhere float veils; veils long and black,
Framing white faces, oft-times young and fair,
But, like a rose touched by untimely frost,
Showing the blighting marks of sorrow's track.

Veils, veils, veils everywhere. They tell the cost
Of man-made war. They show the awful toll
Paid by the hearts of women for the crimes,
The age-old crimes by selfishness ill-named
'Justice' and 'Honour' and 'The call of Fate'-
High words men use to hide their low estate.
About the joy and beauty of this world
A long black veil is furled.
Even the face of Heaven itself seems lost
Behind a veil. It takes a fervent soul
In these tense times
To visualise a God so long defamed
By insolent lips, that send out prayers, and prate
Of God's collaboration in dark deeds,
So foul they put to shame the fiends of hell.

Yet One
does
dwell
In Secret Centres of the Universe-
The Mighty Maker; and He hears and heeds
The still small voice of soulful, selfless faith;
And He is lifting now the veil of death,
So long down-dropped between those worlds and earth.
Yea! He is giving faith a great new birth
By letting echoes from the hidden places
Where dwell our dead, fall on love's listening ear.
Hearken, and you shall hear
The messages which come from those star-spaces!
That is the reason why
God let so many die;
That the vast hordes of suffering hearts might wake

Mighty vibrations, and the silence break
Between the neighbouring worlds, and lift the veil
'Twixt life on earth, and life Beyond. All hail
To great Jehovah, Who has given life
Eternal, everlasting, after strife!

Veils, long black veils, you shall be bridal white.
Eyes, blind with tears, you shall receive your sight,
And see your dead alive in Worlds of Light.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Voice Of The Voiceless

I am the Voice of the Voiceless
Through me the dumb shall speak
Till the world's deaf ear be made to hear
The wrongs of the wordless weak.
Oh shame on the mothers of mortals
Who do not stoop to teach
The sorrow that lies in dear dumb eyes
The sorrow that has no speech.
From street, from cage, from kennel
From stable and from zoo
The wall of my tortured kin proclaims the sin
Of the mighty against the frail.
But I am my brother's keeper
And I shall fight their fight
And speak the word for beast and bird
Till the world shall set things right.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Wanted--A Little Girl

Where have they gone to-the little girls
With natural manners and natural curls;
Who love their dollies and like their toys,
And talk of something besides the boys?

Little old women in plenty I find,
Mature in manners and old of mind;
Little old flirts who talk of their 'beaux,'
And vie with each other in stylish clothes.

Little old belles who, at nine and ten,
Are sick of pleasure and tired of men;
Weary of travel, of balls, of fun,
And find no new thing under the sun.

Once, in the beautiful long ago,
Some dear little children I used to know;
Girls who were merry as lambs at play,
And laughed and rollicked the livelong day.

They thought not at all of the 'style' of their clothes,
They never imagined that boys were 'beaux'-
'Other girls' brothers' and 'mates' were they,
Splendid fellows to help them play.

Where have they gone to? If you see
One of them anywhere send her to me.
I would give a medal of purest gold
To one of those dear little girls of old,
With an innocent heart and an open smile,
Who knows not the meaning of 'flirt' or 'style.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

War

I

There is no picturesqueness and no glory,
No halo of romance, in war to-day.
It is a hideous thing; Time would turn grey
With horror, were he not already hoary
At sight of this vile monster, foul and gory.
Yet while sweet women perish as they pray,
And new-born babes are slaughtered, who dare say
'Halt!' till Right pens its 'Finis' to the story!
There is no pathway, but the path through blood,
Out of the horrors of this holocaust.
Hell has let loose its scalding crimson flood,
And he who stops to argue now is lost.
Not brooms of creeds, not Pacifistic words
Can stem the tide, but swords-uplifted swords!

II

Yet, after Peace has turned the clean white page
There shall be sorrow on the earth for years;
Abysmal grief, that has no eyes for tears,
And youth that hobbles through the earth like age.
But better to play this part upon life's stage
Than to aid structures that a tyrant rears,
To live a stalwart hireling torn with fears,
And shamed by feeding on a conqueror's wage.
Death, yea, a thousand deaths, were sweet in truth
Rather than such ignoble life. God gave
Being, and breath, and high resolve to youth
That it might be Wrong's master, not its slave.
Our road to Freedom is the road to guns!
Go, arm your sons! I say, Go, arm your sons!

III

Arm! arm! that mandate on each wind is whirled.

Let no man hesitate or look askance,
For from the devastated homes of France
And ruined Belgium the cry is hurled.
Why, Christ Himself would keep peace banners furled
Were He among us, till, with lifted lance,
He saw the hosts of Righteousness advance
To purify the Temples of the world.
There is no safety on the earth to-day
For any sacred thing, or clean, or fair;
Nor can there be, until men rise and slay
The hydra-headed monster in his lair.
War! horrid War! now Virtue's only friend;
Clasp hands with War, and battle to the end!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

War Mothers

There is something in the sound of drum and fife
That stirs all the savage instincts into life.

In the old times of peace we went our ways,
Through proper days
Of little joys and tasks. Lonely at times,
When from the steeple sounded wedding chimes,
Telling to all the world some maid was wife—
But taking patiently our part in life
As it was portioned us by Church and State,
Believing it our fate.

Our thoughts all chaste
Held yet a secret wish to love and mate
Ere youth and virtue should go quite to waste.
But men we criticised for lack of strength,
And kept them at arm's length.
Then the war came—
The world was all aflame!
The men we had thought dull and void of power
Were heroes in an hour.
He who had seemed a slave to petty greed
Showed masterful in that great time of need.
He who had plotted for his neighbour's pelf,
Now for his fellows offers up himself.
And we were only women, forced by war
To sacrifice the things worth living for.

Something within us broke,
Something within us woke,
The wild cave-woman spoke.

When we heard the sound of drumming,
As our soldiers went to camp,
Heard them tramp, tramp, tramp;
As we watched to see them coming,
And they looked at us and smiled
(Yes, looked back at us and smiled),
As they filed along by hillock and by hollow,
Then our hearts were so beguiled

That, for many and many a day,
We dreamed we heard them say,
'Oh, follow, follow, follow!'
And the distant, rolling drum
Called us 'Come, come, come!'
Till our virtue seemed a thing to give away.

War had swept ten thousand years away from earth.
We were primal once again.
There were males, not modern men;
We were females meant to bring their sons to birth.
And we could not wait for any formal rite,
We could hear them calling to us, 'Come to-night;
For to-morrow, at the dawn,
We move on!'
And the drum
Bellowed, 'Come, come, come!'
And the fife
Whistled, 'Life, life, life!'

So they moved on and fought and bled and died;
Honoured and mourned, they are the nation's pride.
We fought our battles, too, but with the tide
Of our red blood, we gave the world new lives.
Because we were not wives
We are dishonoured. Is it noble, then,
To break God's laws only by killing men
To save one's country from destruction?
We took no man's life but gave our chastity,
And sinned the ancient sin
To plant young trees and fill felled forests in.

Oh, clergy of the land,
Bible in hand,
All reverently you stand,
On holy thoughts intent
While barren wives receive the sacrament!
Had you the open visions you could see
Phantoms of infants murdered in the womb,
Who never knew a cradle or a tomb,
Hovering about these wives accusingly.

Bestow the sacrament! Their sins are not well known—
Ours to the four winds of the earth are blown.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Warned

They stood at the garden gate.
By the lifting of a lid
She might have read her fate
In a little thing he did.

He plucked a beautiful flower,
Tore it away from its place
On the side of the blooming bower,
And held it against his face.

Drank in its beauty and bloom,
In the midst of his idle talk;
Then cast it down to the gloom
And dust of the garden walk.

Ay, trod it under his foot,
As it lay in his pathway there;
Then spurned it away with his boot,
Because it had ceased to be fair.

Ah! the maiden might have read
The doom of her young life then;
But she looked in his eyes instead,
And thought him the king of men.

She looked in his eyes and blushed,
She hid in his strong arms' fold;
And the tale of the flower, crushed
And spurned, was once more told.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Warning

High in the heavens I saw the moon this morning,
Albeit the sun shone bright;
Unto my soul it spoke, in voice of warning,
 'Remember Night! '

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Were I Man Grown

Were I man grown, I'd stand
With clean heart, soul, and hand,
An honor to this land.

I would be good and true.
I would not
smoke
and
chew

As many grown men do.

Tobacco is foul stuff.

Hogs
root it from the trough,
And serve it right enough.

I wish I'd every seed
And plant of that bad weed,
I'd make a fire indeed!

And these two lips of mine
Should never
taste of wine
,
Though it might glow and shine.

No wine, no beer, no gin,
No ale, no rum-within
Each drink lurk shame and sin.

And I'd not swear. Ah! when
We boys grow into men,
You'll see true manhood then.

For we shall be and do
Just what I've said; and you
Had better try it, too.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What Had He Done?

I saw the farmer, when the day was done,
And the proud sun had sought his crimson bed,
And the mild stars came forward one by one-
I saw the sturdy farmer, and I said:
'What have you done to-day,
O farmer! say?'

'Oh! I have sown the wheat in yonder field,
And pruned my orchard to increase its yield,
And turned the furrow for a patch of corn:
This have I done, with other things, since morn.'

I saw the blacksmith in his smithy-door,
When day had vanished and the west grew red,
And all the busy noise and strife were o'er-
I saw the kingly blacksmith, and I said:
'What have you done to-day,
O blacksmith! say?'

'Oh! I have made two plough-shares all complete,
And nailed the shoes on many horses' feet;
And-O my friend! I cannot tell you half,'
The man of muscle answered, with a laugh.

I saw the miller, when the day had gone,
And all the sunlight from the hills had fled,
And tender shadows crept across the lawn-
I saw the trusty miller, and I said:
'What have you done to-day,
O miller gray?'

'Oh! I have watched my mill from morn to night,
And never saw yon flour so snowy white.
And many are the mouths to-day I've fed,

I ween,' the merry miller laughed and said.

I saw another, when the night grew nigh,
And turned each daily toiler from his task,
When gold and crimson banners decked the sky-
I saw another, and I paused to ask:
'What have you done to-day,
Rumseller, say?'

But the rumseller turned with dropping head,
And not a single word in answer said.
What had he done? His work he knew full well
Was plunging human souls in deepest hell.

Alas! rumseller, on that awful day,
When death shall call you, and your race is run,
How can you answer? What can you hope to say?
When God shall ask you, 'What have you done?'
How can you meet the eye
Of the Most High?

When night approaches and the day grows late,
Think you to find the way to heaven's gate?
Think you to dwell with souls of righteous men?
Think you to enter in? If not, what then?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What I Have Seen #1

I saw a mother give wine to her boy-
The rain-drops fall and fall:
The pride of his parents, a household joy,
A mother's blessing, her all.

I saw the cheek of the youth grow red-
The rain falls over the lea:
The light of his eye shone like jewels, they said:
It spoke of ruin to me.

I saw the youth drink again and again-
The rain falls heavy and fast:
I saw the mother's brow furrowed with pain,
She was reaping her harvest at last.

I saw the youth go staggering by-
The rain-drops beat and beat:
Dulled was the light of his beautiful eye;
I saw him fall in the street.

I heard the rabble cry, 'Shame! oh! shame!'
The rain-drops sob and sob:
I heard the drunkard's once-honored name
Shouted aloud by the mob.

I saw the youth carried home to his door-
The rain-drops sob and sigh:
Saw the friends shun him, who sought him before,
Saw him sink lower, and die.

I saw the stone that bore only his name-
The rain-drops mutter and rave:
I saw the mother with sorrow and shame
Bowed to the brink of the grave.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What I Have Seen #2

I saw a maid with her chivalrous lover:
He was both tender and true;
He kissed her lips, vowing over and over,
'Darling, I worship you.'
Sing, sing, bird of the spring,
Tell of the flowers the summer will bring.

I saw the maiden, sweet, loving, confiding,
Smile when he whispered 'Mine,'
Saw her lips meet his with no word of chiding,
Though his breath fumed with wine.
Wail, wail, Nightingale,
Sing of a mourner bowed and pale.

I saw the lover and maid at the altar,
Bound by the bands divine;
Heard the responses-they fail not nor falter-
Saw the guests pledge in wine.
Howl, howl, ominous Owl,
Shriek of the terrible tempest's scowl.

I saw the drunkard's wife weeping in anguish,
Saw her struck down by a blow;
I saw the husband in prison-cells languish-
Thus ends the tale of woe.
Shriek, shriek, O Raven! speak
Of the terrible midnight, dark and bleak.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What I Have Seen #3

I saw two youths: both were fair in the face,
They had set out foot to foot in life's race;
But one said to the other, 'I say now, my brother,
You are going a little too slow;
The world will look on, and say, 'See Josy John,'
We must put on more style, now, you know.'

So he tipped a plug hat on one side of his pate,
And strutted along with a Jockey Club gait;
And he carried a cane, and said, 'It is plain,
I am too fine a fellow to toil.
I can gamble and bet, and a good living get;
But my hands are too pretty to soil.

'My friend in the rear, you are slow, I am fast;
I am up with the times-I am first, you are last.
So I guess I will leave you-aw, if it won't grieve you;
I'll wait for you when I get through;
Or, when up on the hill, I'll remem-bah you still,
And-aw, mayhap I'll come and help you.'

I saw him pass on with a strut through the street;
Saw him stopped by a score of 'good boys' for a treat.
While the calm 'Josy John' went quietly on,
And kept his lips free from the bowl;
Worked at whatever came, turned from sin and from shame,
And wrote 'Purity,' 'Truth,' in his soul.

I saw two men: one was fair to behold;
The other, a drunken sot, bloated and bold.
One stood on the mountain and drank of God's fountain,
The other drank beer in the street.
Yet both started alike; but one made a 'strike,'
Which ended, you see, in defeat.

What I Have Seen #4

I saw a youth, one of God's favored few,
Crowned with beauty, and talents, and health;
He had climbed the steep pathway, and cut his way through
To the summit of glory and wealth.
The day is breaking, hearts are waking,
Refreshed for the field of labor:
Arise, arise, like the king of the skies,
With a greeting for friend and neighbor.

He had toiled hard for the honors he'd won,
He had climbed over high rocks, forded streams;
Braved the bleak winter snow, the hot summer sun,
He was reaching the goal of his dreams.
The day hangs around us, the sun hath bound us
With fetters silken and yellow:
Flow, flow away, fleeting day,
Golden-hearted and mellow.

I saw the youth lift a mug to his mouth,
Drink the last drop of the fearful first glass!
Ah! his veins thrill in a fierce, scorching drouth,
He fills it again, again drinks it! alas!
The day is dying, hearts are sighing,
Crushed with a weight of sorrow:
Sleep, oh! sleep, in a slumber deep,
And wait for a bright to-morrow.

I saw him low in the dust at my feet,
Gone beauty, health, wealth, strength, talents, all;
From the summit of Fame to the slime of the street,
He had bartered his soul for the fiend Alcohol.
The night hangs o'er us, the wind's wild chorus
Shrieks like a demons' revel:
Weep, sob, weep, for the fog is deep,
And the world is sold to the devil.

What I Have Seen #5

I saw a Christian, a temperance man,
Casting his ballot one day at the polls:
One who believes he does what he can
Toward the reclaiming and saving of souls.
And may be he does-may be he does!
I don't say he doesn't, but may be he does!

I saw his candidate sipping his beer,
Wiping his moustache and lapping his jaws;
And I said to myself, 'It's decidedly queer,
If this is the man that should help make our laws.'
But may be he is-may be he is!
I won't say it outright, but may be he is!

I saw an old drunkard fall in the street:
I saw my Christian man mournfully pass,
And mournfully say to the sot at his feet:
'I have done what I could for such wrecks, but, alas!'
Well, may be he had-may be he had!
I don't say he hadn't, but may be he had!

I know a party that's forming to-day,
Made out of men that are loyal and brave:
They will sweep liquor taxes and tariffs away,
For they never will vote for a drinking old knave.
You see if they do! you see if they do!
I don't say I know, but you see if they do!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What Is Flirtation?

What is flirtation? Really,
How can I tell you that?
But when she smiles I see its wiles,
And when he lifts his hat.

'Tis walking in the moonlight,
'Tis buttoning on a glove,
'Tis lips that speak of plays next week,
While eyes are talking love.

Tis meeting in the ball-room,
'Tis whirling in the dance;
'Tis something hid beneath the lid,
More than a simple glance.

'Tis lingering in the hallway,
'Tis sitting on the stair,
'Tis bearded lips on finger-tips,
If mamma isn't there.

'Tis tucking in the carriage,
'Tis asking for a call;
'Tis long good-nights in tender lights,
And that is-no, not all!

'Tis parting when it's over,
And one goes home to sleep;
Best joys must end, tra la, my friend,
But one goes home to weep!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What Shall We Do?

Here now, for evermore, our lives must part.
My path leads there, and yours another way.
What shall we do with this fond love, dear heart?
It grows a heavier burden day by day.

Hide it? In all earth's caverns, void and vast,
There is not room enough to hide it, dear;
Not even the mighty storehouse of the past
Could cover it, from our own eyes, I fear.

Drown it? Why, were the contents of each ocean
Merged into one great sea, too shallow then
Would be its waters, to sink this emotion
So deep it could not rise to life again.

Burn it? In all the furnace flames below,
It would not in a thousand years expire.
Nay! It would thrive, exult, expand and grow,
For from its very birth it fed on fire.

Starve it? Yes, yes, that is the only way.
Give it no more food, of glance, or word, or sigh,
No memories, even, of any bygone day;
No crumbs of vain regrets – so let it die.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What Uncle Rob Says

Uncle Rob says,
That once on a time the fire flies
Were stars with the others up in the skies.

They used to shimmer, and dance and play,
Night after night in the Milky Way.

But when their papa, the stern old Sun
Said 'off to bed with you every one,'

These bold little stars refused to obey,
'Let's hide in that cloud and then run away.'

'Let's run to the earth,' these bad stars said
'We are quite too old to be sent to bed.'

So then they were exiled out of the skies,
And that's how we came with the fire flies,
So Uncle Rob says.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What We Want

We have scores of temperance men,
Bold and earnest, brave and true,
Fighting with the tongue and pen,
And we value what they do.
But, my friends,
To gain our ends,
You must use the ballot, too.

When we tell about our cause,
Politicians only smile;
While they mould and make our laws,
What care they for rank or file?
"Preach and pray,"
They sneer and say;
"We'll make liquor laws the while."

We want men who dare to fling
Party ties and bonds away;
Who will cast them off, and cling
To the RIGHT, and boldly say,
"No beer bloats
Shall get our votes."
Then shall our cause gain the day.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

What Would It Be?

Now what were the words of Jesus,
And what would He pause and say,
If we were to meet in home or street,
The Lord of the world to-day?
Oh, I think He would pause and say:
'Go on with your chosen labour;
Speak only good of your neighbour;
Widen your farms, and lay down your arms,
Or dig up the soil with each sabre.'

Now what were the answer of Jesus
If we should ask for a creed,
To carry us straight to the wonderful gate
When soul from body is freed?
Oh, I think He would give us this creed:
'Praise God whatever betide you;
Cast joy on the lives beside you;
Better the earth, by growing in worth,
With love as the law to guide you.'

Now what were the answer of Jesus
If we should ask Him to tell
Of the last great goal of the homing soul
Where each of us hopes to dwell?
Oh, I think it is this He would tell:
'The soul is the builder-then wake it;
The mind is the kingdom-then take it;
And thought upon thought let Eden be wrought,
For heaven will be what you make it.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Whatever Is - Is Best

I know as my life grows older,
And mine eyes have clearer sight,
That under each rank of wrong, somewhere
There lies the root of right;
That each sorrow has its purpose,
By the sorrowing oft unguessed,
But as sure as the sun brings morning,
Whatever is – is best.

I know that each sinful action,
As sure as the night brings shade,
Is somewhere, sometime punished,
Though the hour be long delayed.
I know that the soul is sided
Sometimes by the heart's unrest,
And to grow means often to suffer –
But whatever is – is best.

I know there are no errors
In the great Eternal plan,
And all things work together
For the final good of man.
And I know as my soul speeds onward,
In its grand Eternal quest,
I shall say as I look back earthward,
Whatever is – is best.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

When

I dwell in the western inland,
Afar from the sounding sea,
But I seem to hear it sobbing
And calling aloud to me,
And my heart cries out for the ocean
As a child for its mother's breast,
And I long to lie on its waters
And be lulled in its arms to rest.

I can close my eyes and fancy
That I hear its mighty roar,
And I see its blue waves splashing
And plunging against the shore;
And the white foam caps the billow,
And the sea-gulls wheel and cry,
And the cool wild wind is blowing,
And the ships go sailing by.

Oh, wonderful, mighty ocean!
When shall I ever stand,
Where my heart has gone already,
There on thy gleaming strand!
When shall I ever wander
Away from the inland west,
And strand by thy side, dear ocean,
And rock on thy heaving breast?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

When I Am Dead

When I am dead, if some chastened one
Seeing the 'item, ' or hearing it said
That my play is over and my part done
And I lie asleep in my narrow bed -
If I could know that some soul would say,
Speaking aloud or silently,
'In the heat and the burden of the day
She gave a refreshing draught to me';

Or, 'When I was lying nigh unto death
She nursed me to life and to strength again,
And when I laboured and struggled for breath
She smoothed and quieted down my pain';
Or, 'When I was groping in grief and doubt,
Lost, and turned from the light o'er the day,
Her hand reached me and helped me out
And led me up to the better way';

Or, 'When I was hated and shunned by all,
Bowing under my sin and shame,
She, once in passing me by, let fall
Words of pity and hope, that came
Into my heart like a blessed calm
Over the waves of the stormy sea,
Words of comfort like oil and balm,
She spake, and the desert blossomed for me';

Better, by far, than a marble tomb -
Than a monument towering over my head
(What shall I care, in my quiet room,
For headboard or footboard when I am dead?):
Better than glory, or honours, or fame
(Though I am striving for those to-day) ,
To know that some heart would cherish my name
And think of me kindly, with blessings, always.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

When Love Is Lost

When love is lost, the day sets towards the night,
Albeit the morning sun may still be bright,
And not one cloud-ship sails across the sky.
Yet from the places where it used to lie
Gone is the lustrous glory of the light.

No splendour rests in any mountain height,
No scene spreads fair and beautiful to the sight;
All, all seems dull and dreary to the eye
When love is lost.

Love lends to life its grandeur and its might;
Love goes, and leaves behind it gloom and blight;
Like ghosts of time the pallid hours drag by,
And grief's one happy thought is that we die.
Ah, what can recompense us for its flight
When love is lost?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

When You Go Away

When you go away, my friend,
When you say your last good-bye,
Then the summer time will end,
And the winter will be nigh.

Though the green grass decks the heather,
And the birds sing all the day,
There will be no summer weather
After you have gone away.

When I look into your eyes,
I shall thrill with deepest pain,
Thinking that beneath the skies
I may never look again.

You will feel a moment's sorrow,
I shall feel a lasting grief;
You forgetting on the morrow,
I to mourn with no relief.

When we say the last sad word,
And you are no longer near,
And the winds and all the birds
Cannot keep the summer here,

Life will lose its full completeness---
Lose it not for you, but me;
All the beauty and the sweetness
Each can hold, I shall not see.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Where Are The Temperance People? In Reply To A Query

Where are the temperance people?

Well, scattered here and there:

Some gathering in their produce

To show at the autumn fair;

Some threshing wheat for market,

And others threshing rye,

That will go to the fat distiller

For whiskey by-and-by.

And some are selling their hop crops

At a first-rate price, this year,

And the seller pockets the money,

While the drunkard swallows the beer.

And some 'staunch temperance workers'(?)

Who'd do anything for the cause,

Save to give it a dime or a moment,

Or work for temperance laws,

May be seen from now to election,

Near any tavern stand

Where liquor flows in plenty,

With a voter on either hand.

And these temperance office-seekers

That we hear of far and near

Are the ones who furnish the money

That buys the lager-beer.

But these are only the black sheep

Who want the temperance name

Without living up to the precepts,

And so bring themselves to shame.

And the true, brave temperance people,

Who have the cause at heart,

Are doing the work that's nearest,

Each his allotted part:

Some lifting the fallen drunkard,
Some preaching unto men,
Some aiding the cause with money,
And others with the pen.
Each has a different mission,
Each works in a different way,
But their works shall melt together
In one grand result, some day.

And one, our chief (God bless him),
Is working day and night:
With his sword of burning eloquence,
He is fighting the noble fight.
Whether in lodge or convention,
Whether at home or abroad,
He is reaping a golden harvest
To lay at the feet of God.

Where are the temperance people?
All scattered here and there,
Sowing the seeds of righteous deeds,
That the harvest may be fair.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Wherefore

Wherefore in dreams are sorrows born anew,
A healed wound opened, or the past revived?
Last night in my deep sleep I dreamed of you –
Again the old love woke in me, and thrived
On looks of fire, and kisses, and sweet words
Like silver waters purling in a stream,
Or like the amorous melodies of birds:
A dream – a dream.

Again upon the glory of the scene
There settled that dread shadow of the cross
That, when hearts love too well, falls in between –
That warns them of impending woe and loss.
Again I saw you drifting from my life,
As barques are rudely parted in a stream;
Again my heart was torn with awful strife:
A dream – a dream.

Again the deep night settled on me there,
Alone I groped, and heard strange waters roll.
Lost in that blackness of supreme despair
That comes but once to any living soul.
Alone, afraid, I called your name aloud –
Mine eyes, unveiled, beheld white stars a gleam,
And lo! awake, I cried, "Thank God, thank God,
A dream – a dream."

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Which Are You?

There are two kinds of people on earth to-day;
Just two kinds of people, no more, I say.

Not the sinner and saint, for it's well understood,
The good are half bad, and the bad are half good.

Not the rich and the poor, for to rate a man's wealth,
You must first know the state of his conscience and health.

Not the humble and proud, for in life's little span,
Who puts on vain airs, is not counted a man.

Not the happy and sad, for the swift flying years
Bring each man his laughter and each man his tears.

No; the two kinds of people on earth I mean,
Are the people who lift, and the people who lean.

Wherever you go, you will find the earth's masses,
Are always divided in just these two classes.

And oddly enough, you will find too, I ween,
There's only one lifter to twenty who lean.

In which class are you? Are you easing the load,
Of overtaxed lifters, who toil down the road?

Or are you a leaner, who lets others share
Your portion of labor, and worry and care?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Who Is A Christian?

Who is a Christian in this Christian land
Of many churches and of lofty spires?
Not he who sits in soft upholstered pews
Bought by the profits of unholy greed,
And looks devotion, while he thinks of gain.
Not he who sends petitions from the lips
That lie to-morrow in the street and mart.
Not he who fattens on another's toil,
And flings his unearned riches to the poor,
Or aids the heathen with a lessened wage,
And builds cathedrals with an increased rent.
Christ, with Thy great, sweet, simple creed of love,
How must Thou weary of Earth's 'Christian' clans,
Who preach salvation through Thy saving blood
While planning slaughter of their fellow men.
Who is a Christian? It is one whose life
Is built on love, on kindness and on faith;
Who holds his brother as his other self;
Who toils for justice, equity and PEACE,
And hides no aim or purpose in his heart
That will not chord with universal good.
Though he be pagan, heretic or Jew,
That man is Christian and beloved of Christ.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Why The Daisies Are Not All White

Uncle Rob says:

Once the daisies all were white,
Till a baby fellow
Ate his supper down one night,
And stained his face all yellow.

Smear'd with butter, off to bed
Crept the sleepy flower.
'Fie!' the good nurse dew-drop said,
Come now to my bower.

'Let me wash you clean, I pray,
Like the pink and rosy.'
But the daisy pulled away
Like a stubborn posy.
All unwashed he went to sleep,
Naughty little fellow.
Ever since he's had to keep
That great patch of yellow.
So Uncle Rob says.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Why The Spring Is Late

To Miss Eva Russell.

The spring time is deaf to our pleading,
The meadows are brown as can be.
The hilltops are bleak and unlovely,
No thrush sits and sings on the tree.
I hear many practical people
Explain why the spring loiters so,
But, dear one, they all are mistaken:
The true reason I alone know.

The South-wind, Spring's hand-maiden, told me
Her mistress declared, o'er and o'er,
That, till you were here to give greeting,
She'd visit our prairies no more.
And all her vast household stand by her!
The thrush says he cannot come here
And sing the old songs that you loved so,
Unless you are lingering near.

The wild pinks that rival your blushes,
The violets blue as the sky,
Declare it no pleasure to blossom
Unseen by your beautiful eye.
Oh darling! I'm loath to upbraid you,
So come without further delay.
Each moment you linger, remember
You are keeping the spring time away.
Then come! we are waiting to welcome
The birds and the flowers, 'tis true;
But warmer than all is the welcome,
Fair girl, that is waiting for you.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Widows

The world was widowed by the death of Christ:
Vainly its suffering soul for peace has sought
And found it not.
For nothing, nothing, nothing has sufficed
To bring back comfort to the stricken house
From whence has gone the Master and the Spouse.

In its long widowhood the world has striven
To find diversion. It has turned away
From the vast awefull silences of Heaven
(Which answer but with silence when we pray)
And sought for something to assuage its grief.
Some surcease and relief
From sorrow, in pursuit of mortal joys.
It drowned God's stillness in a sea of noise;
It lost God's presence in a blur of forms;
Till, bruised and bleeding with life's brutal storms,
Unto immutable and speechless space
The World lifts up its face,
Its haggard, tear-drenched face,
And cries aloud for faith's supreme reward,
The promised Second Coming of its Lord.
So many widows, widows everywhere,
The whole earth teems with widows.
Guns that blare-
Winged monsters of the air-
And deep-sea monsters leaping through the water,
Hell bent on slaughter,
All these plough paths for widows. Maids at dawn,
And brides at noon, ere eventide pass on
Into the ranks of widows: but to weep
Just for a little space; then will grief sleep
In their young bosoms, where sweet hope belongs,
New love will sing once more its age-old songs,
And life bloom as a rose-tree blooms again
After a night of rain.
There are complacent widows clothed in crêpe
Who simulate a grief that is not real.
Through paths of seeming sorrow they escape

From disappointed hopes to some ideal,
Or, from the penury of unloved wives
Walk forth to opulent lives.
And there are widows who shed all their tears
Just at the first
In one wild burst,
And then go lirting lightly down the years:
Black butterflies, they flit from flower to flower
And live in the thin pleasures of the hour;
Merging their tender memories of the dead
In tenderer dreams of being once more wed.

But there are others: women who have proved
That loving greatly means so being loved.
Women who through full beauteous years have grown
Into the very body, souls, and heart
Of their dear comrades. When death tears apart
Such close-knit bonds as these, and one alone
Out to the larger freer life is called,
And one is left-
Then God in heaven must sometimes be appalled
At the wild anguish of the soul bereft,
And unto His Son must say, 'I did not know
Mortals could suffer so.'
But Christ, remembering Gethsemane,
Will answer softly, 'It was known to Me.'
God's alchemist, old Time, will merge to calm
That bitter anguish; but there is no balm
Save the sweet certitude that each long day
Is one step in a stair
That circles up to where freed spirits stay.

Widows, so many widows everywhere.

The world was widowed by the death of Christ,
And nothing, nothing, nothing has sufficed
To bring back comfort to the stricken house
From whence has gone the Master and the Spouse.
Hasten, dear Lord, with Thy Millennium,
Hasten and come.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Wild Oats

I saw a fair youth, with a brow broad and white,
And an eye that was beaming with intellect's light:
And his face seemed to glow with the wealth of his mind;
And I said, 'He will grace and ennoble mankind:
He is Nature's own king.'

We met yet again. I saw the youth stand
With a bowl that was flowing and red in his hand;
And he filled it again, and again did he quaff,
And his friends gathered round him, and said with a laugh,
'He is sowing his oats.'

Ah! his eye was too bright, and his cheek was too red,
And I gazed on the youth with a feeling of dread;
And again as he laughingly lifted the bowl,
I turned from the scene with a shuddering soul:
It was terrible seed!

We met but once more. I found in the street
A corpse half-enveloped in mud and in sleet:
A foul, bloated thing; but I saw in the face
A something that told of its boyhood's grace:
He had reaped the dire crop.

O youths who are sowing wild oats! do you know
That the terrible seed you are planting will grow?
Have you thought how your God will require some day
An account of the life you are throwing away?
Have you thought, O rash youth?

It will soon be too late, there is no time to waste;
Then throw down the cup! do not touch, do not taste!
It is filled with destruction and sorrow and pain:
Throw it down! throw it down! do not lift it again:

It will soon be too late!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Will

There is no chance, no destiny, no fate,
Can circumvent or hinder or control
The firm resolve of a determined soul.
Gifts count for nothing; will alone is great;
All things give way before it, soon or late.
What obstacle can stay the mighty force
Of the sea-seeking river in its course,
Or cause the ascending orb of day to wait?
Each well-born soul must win what it deserves.
Let the fool prate of luck. The fortunate
Is he whose earnest purpose never swerves,
Whose slightest action or inaction serves
The one great aim. Why, even Death stands still,
And waits an hour sometimes for such a will.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Winter Rain

Falling upon the frozen world last night,
I heard the slow beat of the Winter rain-
Poor foolish drops, down-dripping all in vain;
The ice-bound Earth but mocked their puny might,
Far better had the fixedness of white
And uncomplaining snows-which make no sign,
But coldly smile, when pitying moonbeams shine-
Concealed its sorrow from all human sight.
Long, long ago, in blurred and burdened years,
I learned the uselessness of uttered woe.
Though sinewy Fate deals her most skilful blow,
I do not waste the gall now of my tears,
But feed my pride upon its bitter, while
I look straight in the world's bold eyes, and smile.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Wishing

Do you wish the world were better?
Let me tell you what to do:
Set a watch for your actions,
Keep them always straight and true;
Rid your mind of selfish motives;
Let your thoughts be clean and high.
You can make a little Eden
Of the sphere you occupy.

Do you wish the world were wiser?
Well, suppose you made a start,
By accumulating wisdom
In the scrapbook of your heart:
Do not waste one page on folly;
Live to learn, and learn to live.
If you want to give men knowledge
You must get it, ere you give.

Do you wish the world were happy?
Then remember day by day
Just to scatter seeds of kindness
As you pass along the way;
For the pleasures of the many
May oftentimes traced to one,
As the hand that plants an acorn
Shelters armies from the sun.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Wishing -- Or Fate And I

Wise men tell me thou, O Fate,
Art invincible and great.
Well, I own thy prowess; still
Dare I flout thee, with my will.
Thou canst shatter in a span
All the earthly pride of man.
Outward things thou canst control
But stand back - I rule my soul!
Death? 'Tis such a little thing -
Scarcely worth the mentioning.
What has death to do with me,
Save to set my spirit free?
Something in me dwells, O Fate,
That can rise and dominate.
Loss, and sorrow, and disaster,
How, then, Fate, art thou my master?
In the great primeval morn
My immortal will was born.
Part of the stupendous Cause
Which conceived the Solar Laws.
Lit the suns and filled the seas,
Royalest of pedigrees.
That great Cause was Love, the Source,
Who most loves has most of Force.
He who harbors hate one hour
Saps the soul of Peace and Power.
He who will not hate his foe
Need not dread life's hardest blow.
In the realm of brotherhood
Wishing no man aught but good.
Naught but good can come to me.
This is love's supreme decree.
Since I bar my door to hate,
What have I to fear, O Fate?
Since I fear not - Fate, I vow,
I the ruler am, not thou!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Woman

Give us that grand word 'woman' once again,
And let's have done with 'lady': one's a term
Full of fine force, strong, beautiful, and firm,
Fit for the noblest use of tongue or pen;
And one's a word for lackeys. One suggests
The Mother, Wife, and Sister! One the dame
Whose costly robe, mayhap, gives her the name,
One word upon its own strength leans and rests;
The other minces tiptoe. Who would be
The perfect woman must grow brave of heart
And broad of soul to play her troubled part
Well in life's drama. While each day we see
The 'perfect lady' skilled in what to do
And what to say, grace in each tone and act
('Tis taught in schools, but needs some native tact) ,
Yet narrow in her mind as in her shoe.
Give the first place then to the nobler phrase,
And leave the lesser word for lesser praise.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Woman And War

We women teach our little sons how wrong
And how ignoble blows are; school and church
Support our precepts and inoculate
The growing minds with thoughts of love and peace.
'Let dogs delight to bark and bite, ' we say;
But human beings with immortal souls
Must rise above the methods of the brute
And walk with reason and with self-control.

And then – dear God! you men, you wise, strong men,
Our self-announced superiors in brain,
Our peers in judgement, you go forth to war!
You leap at one another, mutilate
And starve and kill your fellow men, and ask
The world's applause for such heroic deeds.
You boast and strut; and if no song is sung,
No laudatory epic writ in blood,
Telling how many widows you have made,
Why then, penforce, you say our bards are dead
And inspiration sleeps to wake no more.
And we, the women, we whose lives you are –
What can we do but sit in silent homes
And wait and suffer? Not for us the blare
Of trumpets and the bugle's call to arms –
For us no waving banners, no supreme,
Triumphant hour of conquest. Ours the slow
Dread torture of uncertainty, each day
The bootless battle with the same despair.
And when at best your victories reach our ears,
There reaches with them to our pitying hearts
The thought of countless homes made desolate
And other women weeping for their dead.

O men, wise men, superior beings, say,
Is there no substitute for war in this
Great age and ere? If you answer 'No'
Then let us rear our children to be wolves
And teach them from the cradle how to kill.
Why should we women take waste our time and work

In talking peace, when men declare for war?

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Woman To Man

You do but jest, sir, and you jest not well,
How could the hand be enemy of the arm,
Or seed and sod be rivals! How could light
Feel jealousy of heat, plant of the leaf
Or competition dwell 'twixt lip and smile?
Are we not part and parcel of yourselves?
Like strands in one great braid we intertwine
And make the perfect whole. You could not be,
Unless we gave you birth; we are the soil
From which you sprang, yet sterile were that soil
Save as you planted. (Though in the Book we read
One woman bore a child with no man's aid
We find no record of a man-child born
Without the aid of woman! Fatherhood
Is but a small achievement at the best
While motherhood comprises heaven and hell.)
This ever-growing argument of sex
Is most unseemly, and devoid of sense.
Why waste more time in controversy, when
There is not time enough for all of love,
Our rightful occupation in this life.
Why prate of our defects, of where we fail
When just the story of our worth would need
Eternity for telling, and our best
Development comes ever thro' your praise,
As through our praise you reach your highest self.
Oh! had you not been miser of your praise
And let our virtues be their own reward
The old established, order of the world
Would never have been changed. Small blame is ours
For this unsexing of ourselves, and worse
Effeminizing of the male. We were
Content, sir, till you starved us, heart and brain.
All we have done, or wise, or otherwise
Traced to the root, was done for love of you.
Let us taboo all vain comparisons,
And go forth as God meant us, hand in hand,
Companions, mates and comrades evermore;
Two parts of one divinely ordained whole.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Womanhood

She must be honest, both in thought and deed,
Of generous impulse, and above all greed;
Not seeking praise, or place, or power, or pelf,
But life's best blessings for her higher self,
Which means the best for all.

She must have faith,
To make good friends of Trouble, Pain, and Death,
And understand their message.

She should be
As redolent with tender sympathy
As a rose is with fragrance.

Cheerfulness
Should be her mantle, even though her dress
May be of Sorrow's weaving.

On her face
A loyal nature leaves its seal of grace,
And chastity is in her atmosphere.
Not that chill chastity which seems austere
(Like untrod snow-peaks, lovely to behold
Till once attained – then barren, loveless, cold):
But the white flame that feeds upon the soul
And lights the pathway to a peaceful goal.
A sense of humour, and a touch of mirth,
To brighten up the shadowy spots of earth;
And pride that passes evil – choosing good.
All these unite in perfect womanhood.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Words From The Wind

I called to the wind of the Winter,
As he sped like a steed on his way,
'Oh! rest for awhile on thy journey,
And answer these questions, I pray.

'Who is the foe to all virtue,
Who is the chieftain of crime?
Who blackens the forehead of beauty,
And cheateth the finger of time?
Who maketh the heart to be aged,
In the beautiful morning of youth?
Who is the herald of sorrow,
And who the assassin of Truth?
Who is the help-meet of Satan,
The agent of regions below?
Who the promoter of vices?
Who loadeth the bosom with woe?
Who stealeth the strength of the mighty?
Who stealeth the wits of the wise?
Who maketh the good and the noble
A thing that the meanest despise?'

And the wind of the wild Winter answered,
In a voice like a clarion call:
"Tis a beast legion-headed, a demon
Whom men christened 'King Alcohol.'
This is the help-meet that Satan
Sends out from the kingdom of hell,
A many-faced demon, who doeth
The work of the master right well;
For he weaveth his web round the noble,
And slayeth the soul with his breath.
Ah! this is the foe to all virtue,
And this is the agent of death.'

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Work For Woman

Woman, sitting at your ease,
In the midst of luxuries,
Bound by chains of selfishness,
With no aim but 'how to dress,'
Does the thought ne'er come to you
Of the thing that you could do?
Could, and yet do not,
To crush out the liquor trade,
That is making, and has made,
Sin and shame, and woe and tears
In our land, for years and years-
Have you never thought?

You will chat for hours and hours
Over ribbons, silks, and flowers,
But you will not talk or think
Of this growing evil-drink.
You will weep and smile and laugh
Over trashy books of chaff,
But you will not read
Any truthful temperance tale.
'They are all so dry and stale-
Just the same old thing,' you say
As you yawn, and turn away
From the truths you need.

You have time for rout, and ball,
Concert, theatre, and all
Lectures, save on this one theme.
'Oh! these temperance lectures seem
So extremely dull,' you cry,
With a listless air and eye.
O my friend! forsake
That absorbing theme of DRESS,
Drop for once your selfishness,
Think of all there is to do!
See the work that waits for you!

Up! arouse! awake!

There are men for you to save
From the wretched drunkard's grave.
There are feet that strayed away
Into paths of sin one day.
You can bring them, if you will,
To the paths upon the hill.
There's enough to do!
There's much to do and little done,
Women, sisters, every one,
Lend a helping hand, nor shirk
Any part of God's great work.
Come! we've need of you!

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Worldly Wisdom

If it were in my dead Past's power
To let my Present bask
In some lost pleasure for an hour,
This is the boon I'd ask:

Re-pedestal from out the dust
Where long ago 'twas hurled,
My beautiful incautious trust
In this unworthy world.

The symbol of my souls own truth –
I saw it go with tears –
The sweet unwisdom of my youth –
That vanished with the years.

Since knowledge brings us only grief,
I would return again
To happy ignorance and belief
In motives and in men.

For worldly wisdom learned in pain
Is in itself a cross,
Significant mayhap of gain,
Yet sign of saddest loss.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Worth While

It is easy enough to be pleasant,
When life flows by like a song,
But the man worth while is one who will smile,
When everything goes dead wrong.
For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years,
And the smile that is worth the praises of earth
Is the smile that shines through tears.

It is easy enough to be prudent,
When nothing tempts you to stray,
When without or within no voice of sin
Is luring your soul away;
But it's only a negative virtue
Until it is tried by fire,
And the life that is worth the honor of earth
Is the one that resists desire.

By the cynic, the sad, the fallen,
Who had no strength for the strife,
The world's highway is cumbered to-day;
They make up the sum of life.
But the virtue that conquers passion,
And the sorrow that hides in a smile,
It is these that are worth the homage on earth
For we find them but once in a while.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Worthy The Name Of Sir Knight

I

Sir Knight of the world's oldest order,
Sir Knight of the Army of God,
You have crossed the strange mystical border,
The ground floor of truth you have trod;
You have entered the sanctum sanctorum,
Which leads to the temple above,
Where you come as a stone, and a Christ-chosen one,
In the kingdom of Friendship and Love.

II

As you stand in this new realm of beauty,
Where each man you meet is your friend,
Think not that your promise of duty
In hall, or asylum, shall end;
Outside, in the great world of pleasure,
Beyond, in the clamor of trade,
In the battle of life and its coarse daily strife
Remember the vows you have made.

III

Your service, majestic and solemn,
Your symbols, suggestive and sweet,
Your uniformed phalanx in column
On gala days marching the street;
Your sword and your plume and your helmet,
Your 'secrets' hid from the world's sight;
These things are the small, lesser parts of the all
Which are needed to form the true Knight.

IV

The martyrs who perished rejoicing
In Templary's glorious laws,
Who died 'midst the fagots while voicing
The glory and worth of their cause-

They honored the title of 'Templar'
No more than the Knight of to-day
Who mars not the name with one blemish of shame,
But carries it clean through life's fray.

V

To live for a cause, to endeavor
To make your deeds grace it, to try
And uphold its precepts forever,
Is harder by far than to die.
For the battle of life is unending,
The enemy, Self, never tires,
And the true Knight must slay that sly foe every day
Ere he reaches the heights he desires.

VI

Sir Knight, have you pondered the meaning
Of all you have heard and been told?
Have you strengthened your heart for its weaning
From vices and faults loved of old?
Will you honor, in hours of temptation,
Your promises noble and grand?
Will your spirit be strong to do battle with wrong,
'And having done all, to stand?'

VII

Will you ever be true to a brother
In actions as well as in creed?
Will you stand by his side as no other
Could stand in the hour of his need?
Will you boldly defend him from peril,
And lift him from poverty's curse-
Will the promise of aid which you willingly made,
Reach down from your lips to your purse?

VIII

The world's battle field is before you!
Let Wisdom walk close by your side,

Let Faith spread her snowy wings o'er you,
Let Truth be your comrade and guide;
Let Fortitude, Justice and Mercy
Direct all your conduct aright,
And let each word and act tell to men the proud fact,
You are worthy the name of 'Sir Knight'.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Ye Agents

These agent men! these agent men!
We hear the dreaded step again,
We see a stranger at the door;
And brace ourselves for war once more.
He bows and smiles. 'Walk in,' we say,

He smiles again. 'I come to-day,
Dear Madam, with a great invention;
And Sir, pray give me
your
attention;
Now here, you see, is something new,
And just the thing, my friends, for you.'

In vain we interrupt and say:
'We shall not buy of you to-day.'
'But, Madam, Sir, you have not seen
The beauties of this new machine;
When thus arranged, your old affair,
'Tis plain to see, is just nowhere.'
'No doubt,' I say; 'Tis very fine,
And quite superior to mine.'
This gives him courage. On he goes,
And every sentence glibly flows,
Until his lesson is repeated
To 'warranted if fitly treated.'

'Yes, new and fine, and grand,' we say,
'But still we shall not buy to-day.'
'But, Madam, Sir, pray list to reason,
'Twill buy itself in half a season;
You see the thing is bound to go.'
'Oh certainly, we see, we know,
But still we do not wish to buy.'
He turns and leaves us with a sigh,
And while we hasten to our labor

He goes and persecutes our neighbor.

But lo! another follows on,
Before the last is fairly gone.
One day a reaper, next a mower,
And then a fanning mill, and sower;
Machines of all kinds 'neath the sun,
Each better than the other one;
A rocker for each dining chair,
A brace to hold the broom in air,
A book, just out, and you must buy
Or give a proper reason why.

So if we sometimes turn away
Abruptly, Sirs, you must remember,
That we have heard your tale each day
From early Spring to late December.
Why! if we listened to you all,
And gave you the required attention,
I think ere long each one would call,
The 'county house,' the
best
invention.

1869

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

You Never Can Tell

You never can tell when you send a word,
Like an arrow shot from a bow
By an archer blind, be it cruel or kind,
Just where it may chance to go.
It may pierce the breast of your dearest friend,
Tipped with its poison or balm,
To a stranger's heart in life's great mart,
It may carry its pain or its calm.

You never can tell when you do an act
Just what the result will be;
But with every deed you are sowing a seed,
Though the harvest you may not see.
Each kindly act is an acorn dropped
In God's productive soil
You may not know, but the tree shall grow,
With shelter for those who toil.

You never can tell what your thoughts will do,
In bringing you hate or love;
For thoughts are things, and their airy wings
Are swifter than carrier doves.
They follow the law of the universe –
Each thing must create its kind,
And they speed o'er the track to bring you back
Whatever went out from your mind.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

You Will Forget Me

You will forget me. The years are so tender,
They bind up the wounds which we think are so deep,
This dream of our youth will fade out as the splendour
Fades from the skies when the sun sinks to sleep,
The cloud of forgetfulness, over and over
Will banish the last rosy colours away,
And the fingers of time will weave garlands to cover
The scar which you think is a life-mark today.

You will forget me. The one boon you covet
Now above all things will soon seem no prize,
And the heart, which you hold not in keeping to prove it
True or untrue, will lose worth in your eyes.
The one drop to-day, that you deem only wanting
To fill your life-cup to the brim, soon will seem
But a valueless mite; and the ghost that is haunting
The aisles of your heart will pass out with the dream.

You will forget me, will thank me for saying
The words which you think are so pointed with pain.
Time loves a new lay, and the dirge he is playing
Will change for you soon to a livelier strain.
I shall pass from your life, I shall pass out forever,
And these hours we have spent will be sunk in the past.
Youth buries its dead, grief kills seldom or never
And forgetfulness covers all sorrows at last.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox