

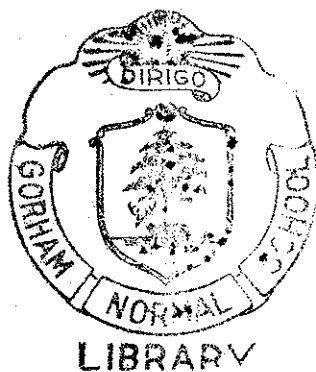


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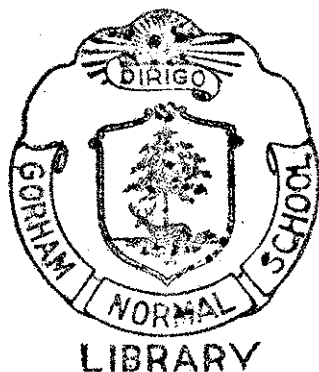
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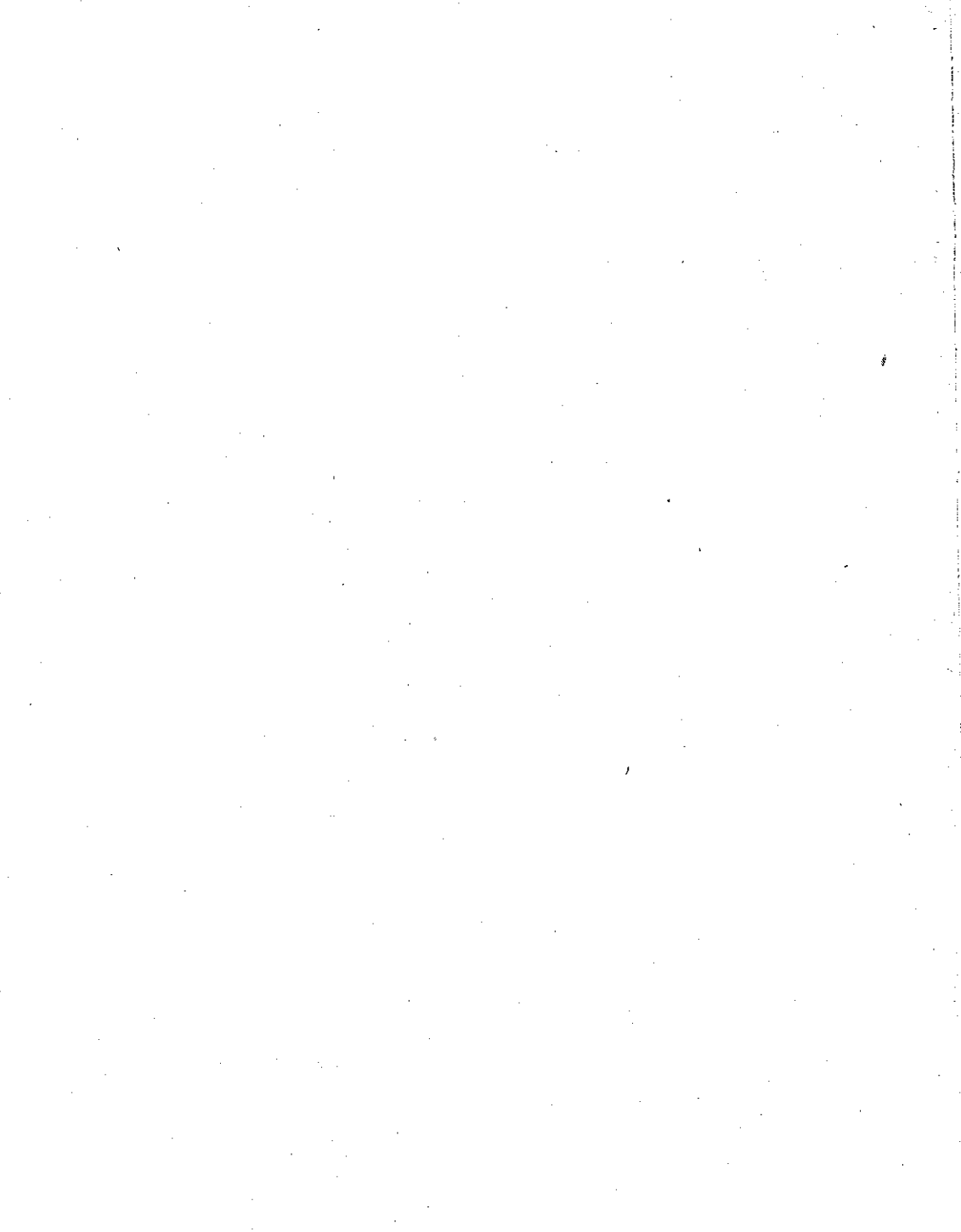
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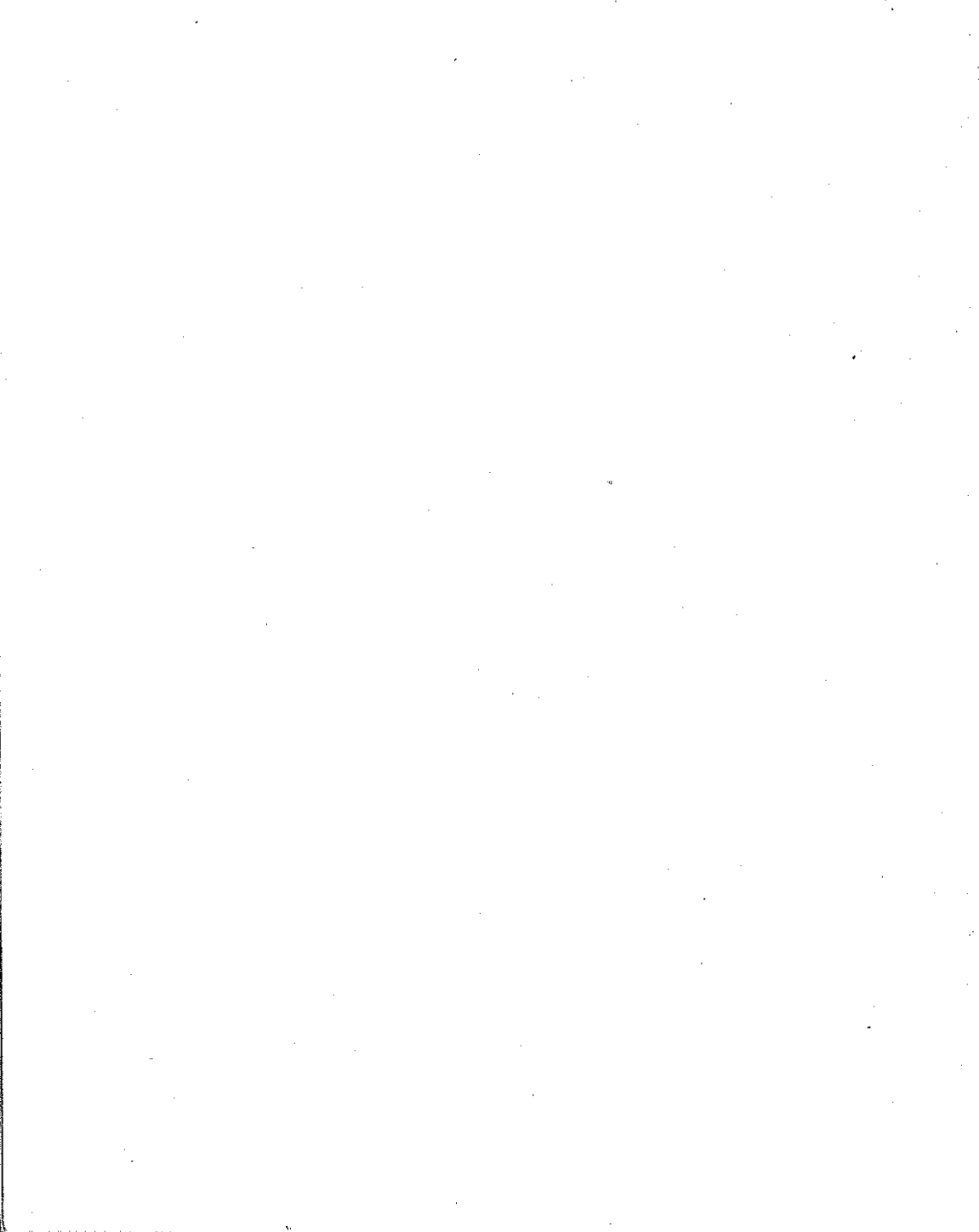
To Eastern State
Normal School
Castine, Maine
with the best wishes
of the author
Anna Hall





LATE
ADVENTURE







LATE ADVENTURE

Poems by Lena Hall



NEW YORK ✓ HAROLD VINAL

1926

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TO MY SISTER

Mar. 42

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LATE
ADVENTURE





Warning

*He who has heard the trumpet seven days
Compass a city of unholy dreams,
Where dragons riot, and the sorceress screams
Along the streets, wounding the narrow ways,—
Knows a stern shouting he can never still
Trembles reverberant above the wall
Of his doomed citadel,—the loud, loud call
Of a ram's horn, imperious and chill.*

*A watchman wakes in vain on that last day
From witless somnolence, stretching weak hands
Through thinning space to the ark-guided bands
Setting a bloodless battle in array.
He who has slept through the first trumpet blast
Keeps tryst with a spoiled city at the last.*

HORIZON

Value

When I was thin in years, and affluent
In elemental wisdom, proud and high,
A mountain, sharply etched against the sky
Could draw my feet wherever they were bent.
A swollen sun could crush a high intent;
An open sea hold me a fawning slave,
Prostrate before a salt wind and a wave;
For a spring flower a heritage I spent.

Full years have left me heavily endowed;
And I am troubled now by throbbing feet
Pounding the pavements of a city street;
Grief-stricken eyes that cry and cry aloud.
I never face a hill, a dawn-struck sea,
Or touch a flower, but these shadow me.

Mountains

I learned to walk where every village street
Led to a height, so I must always lift
A haunting look above the purple drift
Of a deep valley where the white stars beat.
I must feel great rocks underneath my feet,
And sunburned lichens,—I must watch clouds sift
Pitying shadows, marginal and swift,
Across the stunted and the incomplete.

I know that some men stare about a plain
With level laughter and a heart at rest;
That these men are immune from the slow pain
A deadly prairie gives a hill-born breast.
Let it be so,—but let me know again
Two dark hills that keep vigil in the west.

Let Me See Dawn

Some one must wake me
When the thick dark
Lies upon the sea.
That stillness,
That first rush
Of a white bird,
Must never be
Set on the screen, until
My urgent feet have found
The highest hill.

The thud of nets
Upon a dory's side,
The first long rift
That challenges
The night,
A tidal shift,
Must never miss
My safe applause
Out there
Upon the height.

O if a wing
Should quiver,
Or a flaming throat
Pour to the breathing sky
One note,
And I lay slain
With sleep,—
Let a new prophet,
Bold as Joshua,
Command the deep!

Sea Nurtured

Watchers beside sea water wear a calm.
In every port such tragedies are born
Through unrelenting nights,—such hands forlorn
Beat the brass heavens for a healing balm!
Lonely in city streets as a stripped palm
In redwood forests, these still watchers pass;
Alien as pansies in the meadow grass,
The sea born bear the movement of a psalm.

I would not dare to speak a wanton word
To these still faces, for I know the roar
Of wind-stung water on a sharpened shore;
The deadly undertow that drags unheard.
Speak softly the pale watchers of the sea,—
They hold strange concourse with immensity!

Shore Line

When the dry land appeared, and seas were called
By name, there sprang a palpitating line
Of shore,—three days washed by a turbid brine,
Before a foot of man could stand enthralled.
He who has toyed with shores from his first days,
Scattering sand in showers, or slipping slow
Along a seaweed floor, alone can know
The thrill of that sixth day, its long amaze.

I may not stand on any wind-cropped hill,
But I must find somewhere the water's edge;
Or own an imagist with any will,
Till he knows how waves break upon a ledge.
I have indebtedness for one thing more,—
That God made not a man—and then a shore!

The Way of Water

Is there a way of water unextolled?
I have trailed burdened rivers from their birth
In a dark pool, and I have felt the worth
Of quick oases, by red stars patrolled.
The freshening way of slow rain has been told
Since the first twisted fruit tree hurt the earth;
And torrid oceans, infinite of girth,
Forever strive with interstellar cold.

He who would tell a new tale in his days,
Must set his compass reticent of ships;
He must go down by unfrequented ways—
By sunken roads, where sunlight never slips.
Songs he must know a very god might raise,
Of a cool cup lifted to self-damned lips!

All Seas

"The gathering of the waters called he Seas"
And it was good. Then I can safely stand
On any ship that breaks tryst with the land;
Under all skies I can dare lie at ease.
If I have shunned a writhing in old trees,
Or if scarred heavens made tremulous my hand,
It was before I learned to understand,
The gathering of the waters He called seas,
And it was good. Then every leaping crest
Kissing the stars, cradles me soft and warm
As a slight fledgling at a downy breast
Is sheltered, where the strange winds beat and storm;
And "Abba, Father," swings me into rest,
Beating a frail faith into fadeless form.

Wave Lengths

I

Now where we sit a frenzied wave falls down,
Splitting our laughter like a wooden ball—
Driving us sheer against the old sea wall,
To wear its wind-strung spray as a white crown.
Now the brown seaweed swirls and softly slips
After the shrinking water, and we stand,
Half creatures of the sea, half of the land,—
Scenting the fields, the wet salt on our lips.
Another wave will break and then another,
Blotting old footprints all its lonely length;
Folding the worn rocks like a careful mother,
Sweeping the restless sand with hidden strength;
Mighty in onslaught, glorious in flight,
Leaving its yielded spoil to mark its height.

II

Now where we stand a frenzied shout is lifted,
Cleaving the great crowd like a tongue of flame;
Rushing into the sky a burdened name,
By half a million hearts balanced and sifted.
Now each man slips along the patient street

After his crested hero, till the day
Halts in a burst of arrogant display,—
And we alone, counting our pulses' beat.
Another name will be a dominant word,
Sweep ancient pride from action and from sloth;
Another frenzied shouting will be heard,
As new hands grasp new laurels, nothing loath;
And we who rear a monumental stone
Ask what those hands have yielded of their own.

First Crocus

I wonder if a crocus knew that snow
Hung pitiless above each naked tree,
Ready to stiffen its quaint minstrelsy
To frozen tones, would it still choose to throw
A purpling cry along a wilderness
Of stark grass, winter-bleached and tempest-frayed,
Or would it wait the populous parade,
And tiptoe down the hours in patterned dress?

If I could register my only will
Whether a slow sun smite me at the last
For dancing days in crowds, or a quick blast
Shatter my voice upon a lonely hill,
Like the stern Baptist, I should cry and cry
The first faint blush of spring in a far sky.

Wood Path in Autumn

I've waded ankle deep in moving gold.
A golden mist has all enfolded me.
I have heard rhythmic murmurs, sounding low
The full-toned diapason of the sea.

I've walked through living flame without a fear;
Plucked burning brands where vivid sumacs throng.
O little birds, too early winging south,
What wealth of wasted fabric for a song!

Perspective

I folded trees as shepherds fold their flocks—
Watching them cut a pathway to the stars,
As a young lamb will spurn the pasture bars
To dare the peril of emancipate rocks.
I strode with shrinking moons the purple hills,
Till amber morning hung upon my lips;
And handled with orchestral finger tips
The miracle of fresh-blown daffodils.

Later, the stooping shoulders of a man
Building a highway, blotted out the sun;
And uncreative earth since time began
Fluttered in shade, subordinate and dun.
I am at peace to-day with dominant hands
Weaving a seamless robe from broken strands.

the first of these is the fact that the
the second is the fact that the
the third is the fact that the
the fourth is the fact that the
the fifth is the fact that the
the sixth is the fact that the
the seventh is the fact that the
the eighth is the fact that the
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HERITAGE

"I Knew It Not"

I slept with stones for a pillow,
And gave no name
To the strange thing that hurt me.
I saw the flame
From an eastward facing altar
Burn white and hot.
If there were stuff for a pillar
In my stones,
I knew it not.

A thud of years, and I see clear
Those naked stones.
They would be soft to my head to-night
As the tender tones
Of bird songs edging a rain-cooled day;
Soft as forgiveness dropping its mantle
On wrongs forgot.
I am late with my altar, Lord,—
You were there,
But I knew it not!

"Whether We Live"

I

A low sun caught the terror of his eye,
And deepened till its color was as blood.
Under his feet a dead tide turned to flood,
Great with the utter burden of his cry.
"I will not face it—there's no reason why,
Out of a bit of protoplasmic mud
A man should spring, and like a blighted bud
Consume in slow fire under a pitiless sky."
"I will not face it—I shall choose the way
Others have gone along the cruel years.
The sun slips into rest. Why should I stay
To cross with imminent, unchallenged fears?
I shall command the night, and loose the day
By slow steps, till it droops and disappears."

II

He shuddered at the lapping of a wave.
His choice had been the upward path till now.
If he but turned a furrow with a plough
He turned it straight, and every time he gave
His hand upon a word, a rush of brave,
Warm blood gave color to his simplest vow.

To-night he trembles at a creaking bough,
Penciling floor and gloomy architrave.
Black cliffs frown down upon him, and the shore
Slips sharp stones in the way he tries to pass.
Will that strange bell toll on forevermore?
Will he grow colder than the swaying grass
Beckoning to him from the old sea floor?
Will red grains then slip through a narrow glass?

III

There is a light foot shining on the sand,
A white hand stretched,—“Come, Hubert, it is late.
A mother finds the hours long to wait
That hold her son. I could not understand
What urgent need above my own demand
Kept you from me. I’ve listened at the gate
For every tolling of the bell since eight,
Craving the usual motion of your hand.”
“Hubert, come home! The darkness of your face
I fear spreads equal shadow on my own.
There is a fearful clamor in this place
Of lawless voices always making moan;
An utter blackness intercepting space;
A dragging weight my feet have never known.”

IV

He sweeps her outstretched hand into the dark,
Self-carved to stone,—watches a lonely star
Cleave the blue deeps where unclassed creatures are;
And wonders if it failed or found its mark.
His keen eye clears fish houses, damp and stark,—
Black cameos along the moaning bar;
Clears the stanch light, signalling near and far
A fearful warning to a chartless bark.
And all the while she has not stepped nor spoken
A word,—as coldly carved as he, she turns
Fathomless eyes to catch a first slight token.
He knows that on her hair a white moon burns,
And like a gull's cry, hardly tempest-broken,
Thrusts her an answer where she dumbly yearns.

V

“Mother, go back,—my sternest will is set
To cast my lot with silence and with night.
I know the thing asked of me. I shall fight
No longer with unweaponed hands that fret
For freedom. Can you teach me to forget
The turmoil, the swift agony of fright
In that last battle? If the way was right
Why should the path with thorns be overset?”

His lips drew into a thin line of grey.
She did not speak, but her whole soul had heard
The sound of throbbing music, and of day
That sprang to being at a single Word.
She compassed light and shade, the interplay
Of hell and heaven, naked and unblurred.

VI

“Take any way you will,—if into hell
You choose to turn your feet, I shall be there.
Under the floods it will be more than fair;
Lying with sluggish ooze it shall be well.
I shall be there to weave a tender spell
About your torn feet, till they learn to dare
An unused path into the poignant air.
My heart will swing with every tolling bell
Till bells are done.—But if you choose to go
Into the battle with a flaming blade,
My breast will swell to take the hardest blow;
And cruel snares inexorably laid
In a dim path where poison-sumacs grow.
Shall pierce my feet till yours are unafraid.

VII

Her step slipped far and farther, but the sound
Was on each loosened stone that pressed his feet.
Circling the night, ineffable and sweet,
Frail threads of prayer were closing him around,
As on cool mornings he had seen the ground
Draw freshening mist about the golden wheat.
Slowly his unused hands were stretched to greet
A Presence, in the first light faintly found.
He heard old music,—“If I make my bed
In hell, lo, thou art there; if I ascend
Up into heaven, thou art there.” The red
Of a new dawn swept earth from end to end!
A mother at the gate with hands outspread
Caught a firm shadow at the east road’s bend.

No Room

The inn was crowded that December night
To the last bed, for David's house was there,
Waiting the tax great Caesar could not spare,—
Waiting, though no one knew, unlevied Light!
Joseph was late, and Mary at his side,
Heavy with promise, drooped a little space.
Was there in Bethlehem no yearning place
Fitly prepared? A stable door yawned wide
On strange, expectant beasts, with gentle eyes,
Turning the straw until their laden breath
Curved warmly round the group from Nazareth,—
Lordliest welcome in a lowly guise.
So seldom crowded places come to be
The chosen cradle of infinity!

Attended

No silent, white-robed form smoothed Mary's bed;
No dark, grave man with overarching brow
Stood at her side, telling her why or how;
No swift hand eased the pillow for her head.
A man was there, with faith enough to tread
His strange way; simple wisdom that could bow
To God's command; could keep a holy vow;
Walk velvet-shod the chamber of his dread.

And there were beasts, half knowing that the night
Was big with wonder; and a crib was there,
Sheeted with fragile breathings, coolly white;
And tremulous along the prescient air,
A cry—an ancient heraldry alight,—
The wise of all the earth at pause in prayer.

"Let Us Now Go"

And is it very far to Bethlehem?
About your town has not a crowded inn
Within the week sent down a word "No room"
To one who would have laid a priceless gift
Within its doors?

Can it be far to the abode of them
Who watched by night behind a veil so thin
That glory broke through centuries of gloom?
This morning, was there not a golden rift
Through grief of yours?

And is it far to seek the place
A child was born?
Look we for stranger house or race,
A single morn?
An hour ago a heart laid down
High pride, and told her wrong.
Her house touched yours. In the next town
A man stilled self with song.

Let us now go to Bethlehem,—
It is not far.
A sharp turn from a cold way,—
There shines the star!

Verity

My Christmas centered in a silent star,
An angel message, and a climbing song.
I walked with careful shepherds through a long
December night, in fields oracular.
My candles burned within the little town
Of Bethlehem; my gifts were as the wise.
From the still rapture of a mother's eyes
I wreathed my chaplet as a holy crown.

Then in a Christmas week I saw a man
Shrink through a railroad station, and his eye
Carried a horror past the overt cry!
Blighted my gifts, my song, my caravan
Of eastern camels,—but one star sufficed—
The very knowledge of the very Christ!

Answer

Had I been one of those proud lilies
When he said "Consider,"
I would have shot up to a star,
Quick with red!

Or had I been a small loaf
Near a dazed multitude,
I would have widened with laughter's leaven
Till the grass was fed.

But if I had been thorns in that crown,
I would have shrunk with shame
Till a tree died alone,
Without a name!

Aspen

Strew the way with pointed palms—
A King rides through the town.
Compass Him with hosannas!
Plunder earth for a crown!

Follow Him to a garden.
Olive boughs alone
Bend with aching pity
To His moan.

Watch three crosses rising
Upon a naked hill.
Strewers of palms,
Criers of psalms,—
Shouting still!

"Ye Have a Watch"

They rolled a great stone to the dark tomb's mouth
To make it sure;
Set a strong watch, that no ill-omened trick
Their business should obscure.

They had not reckoned on the Christ;
Had clean forgotten Bethlehem,
The widow's son, that wild lake storm,
And her who touched the garment's hem.

And so they sealed the stone to make it sure.
Evil-enticed,
Kept loveless tryst that darkness might endure.
But who can watch the Christ!

CORNER REAPING

They Remember

Because I traced the first frail forms I knew
Where apple orchards own a quiet town,
Dust on a pane is not a dingy brown,
Or weary tenements a hopeless hue.
Between me and the thing I look upon
Are drifting petals, soft as April rain.
They like to hide the tragic face and wan,
Or on a sagging door that ugly stain.

Let apple orchards edge the whirling ways
Of hungry cities; let red fruit that fell
By a low wall, weave there a simple spell
Where hurt stars shrink before a tawdry blaze.
Old pavements will bear rubies, and pale Clare
Bind unaccustomed rose upon her hair.

Lower Broadway

If I had known a canon eye to eye,
Wearing strange color at its spanless waist,—
With lunging shoulders, dubious of taste,
Thrust at the utter stillness of the sky—
If I had ever heard an eagle scream
A challenge to the sun, or felt the rush
Of a hot wind threading the gray sagebrush—
How fugitive my interurban dream!

I had walked only in New England towns,
And those adventurous walls of chiseled stone,
Gripping the yawning streets where a word drowns
In querulous traffic, till you walk alone,
Staged me a desert paramount and nigh—
Where a street call was a coyote's cry.

Circle

I shall go on, for that grey, arid peak
Is not the last strong step. Dim planets call,
And the sheer ether, interlacing all,
Trembles with ancient lore it dare not speak.
There is a first step, hesitant and slow,
From a clean valley where the corn grows high;
A path impenitent, a slip, a cry,
For him who sets his foot the stars to know.

How strange to feel that when I surely leap
To the last star, out through a blinding morn;
Aroused from the impediment of sleep,
With elemental vision swiftly born,
I shall be found a keeper of the sheep
In a clean valley massed with yellow corn.

Inner History

(April 19, 1775)

I know a mother wise as Solomon,
Who trained a boy till he stood six foot three
Close to her well-poised will. It came that he
One sudden day backed up against the sun
And saw his shadow,—felt the long course run
Since dawn,—then told his mother's ears, "I'm free!"
Outwalking pride down the long shadow, she
Agreed with wisdom, and his cause was won.

And so I think the best of England's blood
Looked down the lengthening shadow of our land,
With frock outgrown whatever way she stood,
And out across the seas stretched a warm hand.
After wide years we own her motherhood,
And wise heart linked to heart, we understand.

The Musician Speaks After Recital

Was it so poor a thing that I should hear
A din of pleased flesh, clamorous hand on hand!
Have twenty crucial years dripped the red sand
Of torturing effort, that a lonely bier
Be laid for Beauty's body, while her shade
Is tossed above the shoulder, flower-strewn?
Did artistry rise like a mounting noon
Under my hand, till music shrank afraid?

Before the last grain slips the shrinking glass,
May I so walk with song, that from a sea
Of sentient faces and the heart of me
No prayer shall rise for sound. A wind shall pass
Over the soul of music, and a word
Trumpet above a grave till it be heard.

Obligato

When you hear a bird sing
In spring,
The sun goes riding high;
The wide sky
Is a glad blue cry;
Small leaves applaud,
And from the sod
Violets nod.

I heard a bird song
Long, long
Before spring.
Only a wind-worn pine,
And the grey whine
Of a lost thing
Accompanying.
No grace from the sky,
No lift from the sod;
But there was I,
Out of an old pain,
Out of blighting rain,
Touching God!

Message

It is not one that stabbed me overnight,
Or made my yesterday a color show;
It is not that one traveled fast or slow,
Or melted me to mirth or froze with fright;
But that these dexterous heraldings at all
Can leap the chasm of infinity,
Symbolled or sung, subservient or free,—
Slipping their anchorage beyond recall.

Trees clap their hands or uplift writhing arms
In wordless cry. Imminent clouds dart fire,
Or spread in gold where winter suns aspire.
Slow serpents flaunt their fangs or crested charms.
And messages go trailing down the years
From idlers, innocent of what appears!

Utterance

A north wind shouting through a narrow street
Will sweep it clean of crouching odors, hid
In a still corner, as a vagrant, chid
At every step, huddles from hurrying feet.
Shrieking their will into a blazing dome,
Garrulous cities, strong of heart and head,
Twirl iron fingers for a nation's bread,—
And it was cackling geese delivered Rome!

A man shall speak then, though his infant word,
Shapeless with inexperience may stand
Against the work of a maturer hand,—
As blue prints to an artist are absurd.
A multitude of words shall stalk abroad,
And prophets cry aloud, "Thus saith the Lord."

Valley of Decision

Only in humble places are the great
Decisions made, clean moulded out of stuff
Finer than thin-spun dreams, and firm enough
To hold a costly peace inviolate.

Corn in the valley silks beneath the moon,
Bursting with slow rain filtered from a height.
Grass in low places stretches to the light
Against the folly of a copper noon.

One lonely figure at the point of vision,
Drawing a scarlet cloak to hold the heat
From his own leaping pulses' isolate beat,—
"Multitudes in the valley of decision."

There is white blossoming and golden fruit,
Tang of the sky, and sweetness at the root.

The Way

The neighbors never understood
The way Jane bore her widowhood:

She was not young nor even gay;
She had no means to go away

To a far glamorous place, apart
From afterthrushes at a torn heart;

From whispered fling of lips off guard
That underneath Jane might be hard,

Or a stanch couple at a tea,
Who said when their Jack died at sea
Jane's tears fell fastest of the three.

To still the loose chat, Joel's wife,
One who had known Jane all her life,

Asked what the others pricked to know,—
How she could lift from such a blow
Like a lithe sapling struck with snow.

Jane answered her appealing word
With simple speech, "It is the Lord."

And suddenly her eye looked far
To pillared heights where lilies are,
The last reach of a breathing star.

In that still moment, Joel's wife,
She who had known Jane all her life,

Became a stranger, and the door,
Accustomed but an hour before,

Swung on quaint hinge to let her pass
Over new fields of greying grass.

The neighbors never understood
The way Jane bore her widowhood;

But when her quiet feet went by
They bowed their heads,—yet knew not why.

Antidote

Forsythia is comforting,
And when it showers golden rain
Upon the dust, a heart must sing.

One red cardinal at the brink
Of a bright pool, fern-tenanted,
Pulls at dull lips until they drink.

And where a jonquil-painted throat,
Pulsing with praise, arrests the dawn,
Canker has found first antidote.

Discovery

Curious ships are nerved from mast to keel
For slow repulsions, shouldered one by one
Where elemental stiffness chides a sun,
Adventure leaning hard upon the wheel.
Hot in the jungles man and beast will eye
Each other, halting for a frozen space
Where weak sands slip above a dark pool's face,
Featuring an unuttered tragedy.

A woman holds her child through the long night,
Nerved to resistance, impotent of breath,
Swinging a slow adventure with the wild
Entanglement and weakness of her fright,
Till a quick morning leaves her unbeguiled,—
Apprised that death is the slow fear of death.

Old Houses

Houses I know grown old with lapse of years
Alone, undowered, bare of circumstance;
Drawing from hungry eyes the unnurtured glance
Of desert wanderers whom no water cheers.
Houses I know whose windows give no sign
Of crowding faces, indistinct and dear;
Chimneys that etch the heavens overclear;
Thin-breasted gardens, where starved creepers twine.

One house I know distilling life as dew
Utters the flaming story of the sun;
A doorway worn and widened, overrun
With bounding brilliance, perilously new.
One house I know, hill-poised, oracular,
Whose every gable intercepts a star!

Pioneer

Worn roadways wind around a continent,
As old ships sweep a closely charted sea.
Blind to the color of a strange event
The weary heavens with the earth agree.
Men go from place to burdened place again,
And every port is as it was before,—
Mimicry of the sun and slanting rain
Censored at will before my mother's door.

There is a way a caravan may trail,
Hazard of ships, curse of conventional feet,
Where a man with another man can meet
Level of eye, telling his paramount tale.
The slothful hear an ample roar without,—
And there are thorns for those who play with doubt!

Levels

One can get used to levels,—he can see
On any side a wide horizon stare
Without an arching eyebrow anywhere
Over grey marshes crying for a tree;
And he can glide through any day's routine
With measured step, until a sudden view
Of undulating clouds against the blue
Features a hillside pasture, wide and clean.

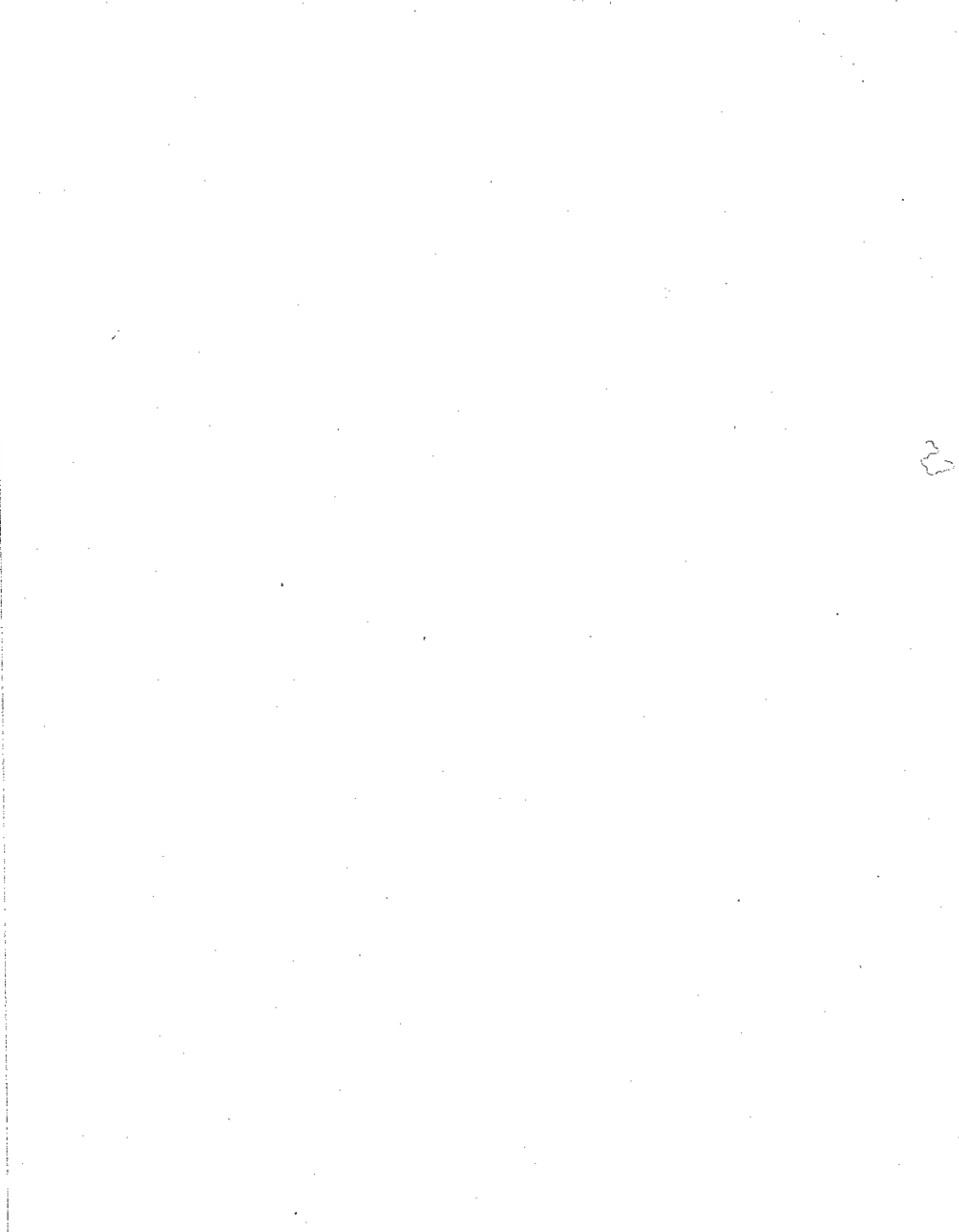
One can get used to levels,—if he must;
But when his first adventures all were made
With swift allowance for a changing grade,
And deadly horizontals held in trust,—
The accustomed knock upon his dreary door
May wake no step along the even floor.

Primals We Forget

Of hills that bear the evening star
I sang,—and they were proud of head!
At the same hour,
Out on a sun-swept plain,
Clean wheat grew for my bread.

I sang of giant minds, that delved
For hidden knowledge. Up the street,
Strong shoulders, swinging in the sun,
Built a safe highway for my feet.

Star sift and brain dust, let them pour
Their golden measure full,—and yet,
Leave generous vessels,
Pressed to the warm earth,
For primals we forget.



CAMEO

Himself

He was not modeled by a pattern set
With hand retrained upon the ordered years.
Ten standard asters hurt his eyes; his ears
Were pained by major thirds. He could forget,—
Swift as a young June drops the violet,—
That sea of waving white, trumpeting cheers,
Honor that scales a height and disappears
Before the early fields lie cool and wet.

His path lay out of line. An unclassed flower,
Sole of its kind upon a perilous crag,
His language knew; and hour by patient hour,
Leaving the moulded forms that dull and drag,
He built a place, nor cared that his strange tower
Drew hound and archer like a sharpened stag.

Restraint

Esther would bend the clean-strung harp
To a will proud and strong,
But that she fears she might be heard
Above the song.

Paul knows if he but speak a word
He sets a multitude aflame.
But if the crowd forget their flag,
Shouting his name!

And John would have his neighbor's boys
Fed, schooled, and shod,
But that he knows the perilous price,—
They might miss God!

Vision

He walked a prophet of irradiant things
Through a war's hellishness, nor ever deemed
A wanton murder other than it seemed,
Or crested serpents innocent of stings.
Black nights and days indelible he knew,
And hate-scarred heavens above the moustrous breast
Of an unpitying earth, that could not rest
From carnage, or give justice overdue.

But through the curst bombs' internecine thunder,
There trails for him a scarlet thread of song.
Is it too strange, when hurt towns draw him under
An ample wreckage, and still others lie,
That he should see a swift avenging throng,
Blotting the blackness from a gangrenous sky?

Loosed

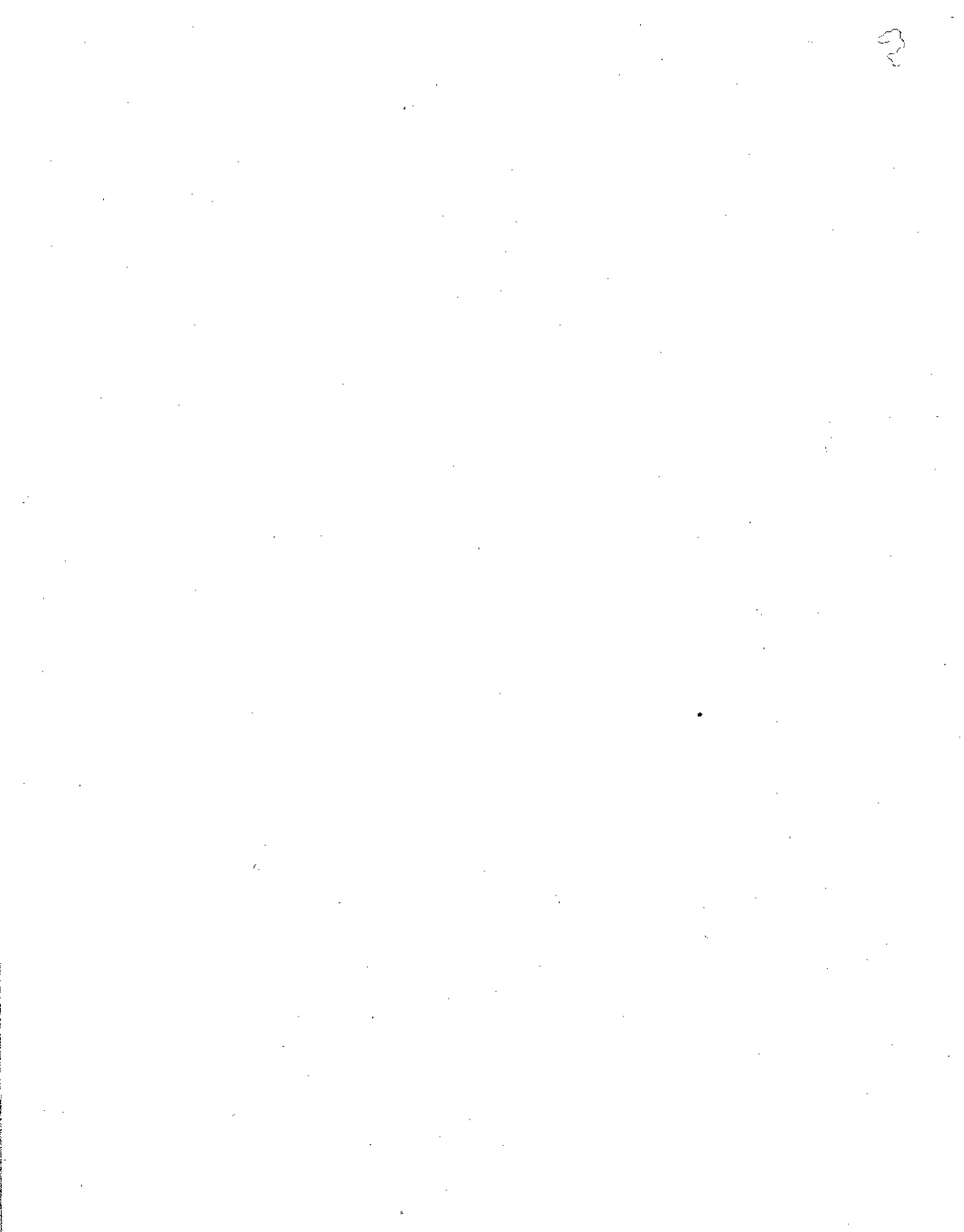
A door lets in a narrow line of light,
Down which she passes with reluctant feet,
Till shadows close around. She is aware
That a slow mist, chilling and irritant,
Drips from the ungemmed chalice of the night.
She knows, too, that along a tiresome street,
Crossed with routine, and heavy-walled with care,
There is an alley paved with adamant.

To-morrow she will measure all her strength
Against those rust-bound hinges, till the flame
Of a full noon blazes an open way,—
And she can walk articulate at length,
Routine-expanded, adamant of aim,
Her only care, a cankered yesterday.

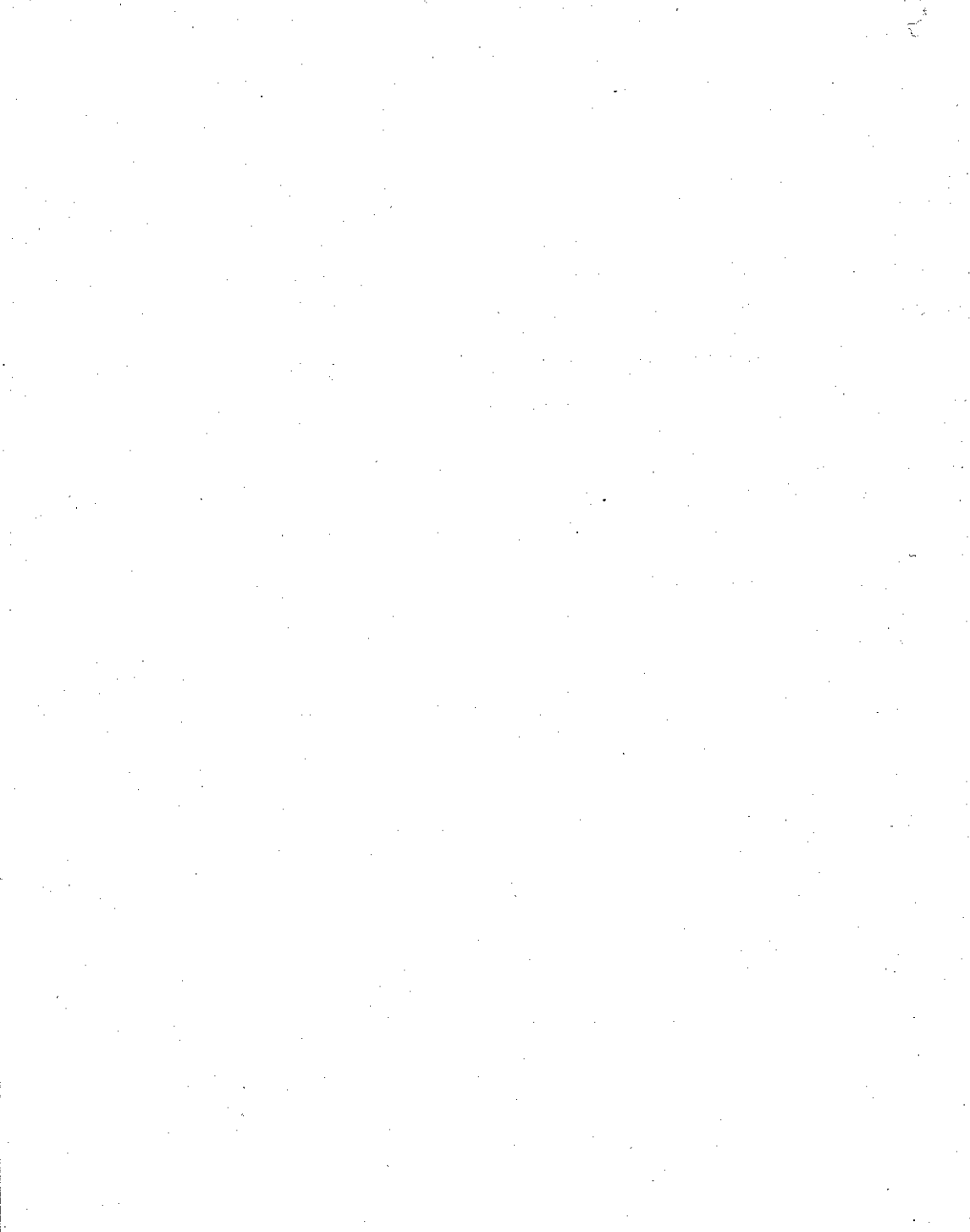
Late Adventure

Adventurous he seemed to all his neighbors,—
Daring the sky above a frightening height;
Trysting with crawling ice streams over night,
Where a star purples, and a great hill labors.
And they had seen him stand against a man
Slingless and stoneless, or with even breath
And care free eye juggle with instant death
Where the slow Somme in sterile crimson ran.

He was a youth, and now with iron hair
Invokes the perilous more than he knew
When, innocent of years, he caught and slew
Like David, his young lion and his bear.
To-day he saw a truth above his kind
And spoke it, to a people deaf and blind!



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