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# **A Woman's Love Letters**

Sophia Margaret Hensley

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**The Fleur de Lis Poets.**

**A WOMAN'S  
LOVE LETTERS.**

**BY**

**SOPHIE M. ALMON-HENSLEY**





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## A Dream.

I stood far off above the haunts of men  
Somewhere, I know not, when the sky was dim  
From some worn glory, and the morning hymn  
Of the gay oriole echoed from the glen.  
Wandering, I felt earth's peace, nor knew I sought  
A visioned face, a voice the wind had caught.

I passed the waking things that stirred and gazed,  
Thought-bound, and heeded not; the waking flowers  
Drank in the morning mist, dawn's tender showers,  
[Pg 2] And looked forth for the Day-god who had blazed  
His heart away and died at sundown. Far  
In the gray west faded a loitering star.

It seemed that I had wandered through long years,  
A life of years, still seeking gropingly  
A thing I dared not name; now I could see  
In the still dawn a hope, in the soft tears  
Of the deep-hearted violets a breath  
Of kinship, like the herald voice of Death.

Slow moved the morning; where the hill was bare  
Woke a reluctant breeze. Dimly I knew  
My Day was come. The wind-blown blossoms threw  
Their breath about me, and the pine-swept air  
Grew to a shape, a mighty, formless thing,  
A phantom of the wood's imagining.  
[Pg 3]

And as I gazed, spell-bound, it seemed to move  
Its tendril limbs, still swaying tremulously  
As if in spirit-doubt; then glad and free  
Crystalled the being won from waiting grove  
Into a human likeness. There he stood,

The vine-browed shape of Nature's mortal mood.

"Now have I found thee, Vision I have sought  
These years, unknowing; surely thou art fair  
And inly wise, and on thy tasselled hair  
Glow's Heaven's own light. Passion and fame are naught  
To thy clear eyes, O Prince of many lands, —  
Grant me thy joy," I cried, and stretched my hands.

No answer but the flourish of the breeze  
Through the black pines. Then, slowly, as the wind  
[Pg 4] Parts the dense cloud-forms, leaving naught behind  
But shapeless vapor, through the budding trees  
Drifted some force unseen, and from my sight  
Faded my god into the morning light.

Again alone. With wistful, straining eyes  
I waited, and the sunshine flecked the bank  
Happy with arbutus and violets where I sank  
Hearing, near by, a host of melodies,  
The rapture of the woodthrush; soft her mood  
The love-mate, with such golden numbers woo'd.

He ceased; the fresh moss-odors filled the grove  
With a strange sweetness, the dark hemlock boughs  
Moved soft, as though they heard the brooklet rouse  
To its spring soul, and whisper low of love.  
[Pg 5] The white-robed birches stood unbendingly  
Like royal maids, in proud expectancy.

Athwart the ramage where the young leaves press  
It came to me, ah, call it what you will  
Vision or waking dream, I see it still!  
Again a form born of the woodland stress  
Grew to my gaze, and by some secret sign

Though shadow-hid, I knew the form was thine.

The glancing sunlight made thy ruddy hair  
A crown of gold, but on thy spirit-face  
There was no smile, only a tender grace  
Of love half doubt. Upon thy hand a rare  
Wild bird of Paradise perched fearlessly  
With radiant plumage and still, lustrous eye.

And as I gazed I saw what I had deemed  
A shadow near thy hand, a dusky wing,  
A bird like last year's leaves, so dull a thing  
Beside its fellow; as the sunshine gleamed  
[Pg 6] Each breast showed letters bright as crystallized rain,  
The fair bird bore "Delight," the other "Pain."

Then came thy voice: "O Love, wilt have my gift?"  
I stretched my glad hands eagerly to grasp  
The heaven-blown bird, gold-hued, and longed to clasp  
It close and know it mine. Ere I might lift  
The shining thing and hold it to my breast  
Again I heard thy voice with vague unrest.

"These are twin birds and may not parted be."  
Full in thine eyes I gazed, and read therein  
The paradox of life, of love, of sin,  
As on a night of cloud and mystery  
One darting flash makes bright the hidden ways,  
And feet tread knowingly though thick the haze.  
[Pg 7]

Thy gift, if so I chose,—no other hand  
Save thine.—I reached and gathered to my heart  
The quivering, sentient things.—Sometimes I start  
To know them hidden there.—If I should stand  
Idly, some day, and *one*,—God help me!—breast

A homing breeze, — my *brown* bird knows *its* nest.  
[Pg 8]

## Dream-Song.

Can'st thou not nigh to me  
In that one glimpse of thee  
When thy lips, tremblingly,  
Said: "My Beloved."  
'Twas but a moment's space,  
And in that crowded place  
I dared not scan thy face  
O! my Beloved.

Yet there may come a time  
(Though loving be a crime  
Only allowed in rhyme  
To us, Beloved),  
When safe 'neath sheltering arm  
I may, without alarm,  
Hear thy lips, close and warm,  
Murmur: "Beloved!"  
[Pg 9]



## Doubt.

I do not know if all the fault be mine,  
Or why I may not think of thee and be  
At peace with mine own heart. Unceasingly  
Grim doubts beset me, bygone words of thine  
Take subtle meaning, and I cannot rest  
Till all my fears and follies are confessed.

Perhaps the wild wind's questioning has brought  
My heart its melancholy, for, alone  
In the night stillness, I can hear him moan  
In sobbing gusts, as though he vainly sought  
Some bygone bliss. Against the dripping pane  
In storm-blown torrents beats the driving rain.  
[Pg 10]

Nay I will tell thee all, I will not hide  
One thought from thee, and if I do thee wrong  
So much the more must I be brave and strong  
To show my fault. And if thou then shouldst chide  
I will accept reproof most willingly  
So it but bringeth peace to thee and me.

I dread thy past. Phantoms of other days  
Pursue my vision. There are other hands  
Which thou hast held, perchance some slender bands  
That draw thee still to other woodland ways  
Than those which *we* have known, some blissful hours  
I do not share, of love, and June, and flowers.

I dread her most, that woman whom thou knewest  
Those years ago, — I cannot bear to think  
That she can say: "My lover praised the pink  
[Pg 11] Of palm, or ear," "The violets were bluest  
In that dear copse," and dream of some fair day

When thou didst while her summer hours away.

I dread them too, those light loves and desires  
That lie in the dim shadow of the years;  
I fain would cheat myself of all my fears  
And, as a child watching warm winter fires,  
Dream not of yesterday's black embers, nor  
To-morrow's ashes that may strew the floor.

I did not dream of this while thou wert near,  
But now the thought that haunts me day by day  
Is that the things I love, the tender way  
Of mastery, the kisses that are dear  
As Heaven's best gifts, to other lips and arms  
Owe half their blessedness and all their charms.  
[Pg 12]

Tell me that I am wrong, O! Man of men,  
Surely it is not hard to comfort me,  
Laugh at my fears with dear persistency,  
Nay, if thou must, lie to me! There, again,  
I hear the rain, and the wind's wailing cry  
Stirs with wild life the night's monotony.  
[Pg 13]

## Song.

If I had known  
That when the morrow dawned the roses would be dead  
I would have filled my hands with blossoms white and red.  
If I had known!

If I had known  
That I should be to-day deaf to all happy birds  
I would have lain for hours to listen to your words.  
If I had known!

If I had known  
That with the morning light you would be gone for aye  
I would have been more kind;—sweet Love had won his way  
If I had known.  
[Pg 14]

