

Dedicated
to
my mother Elizabeth

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Proem

Where are they – the Afterwhiles –
Luring us the lengthening miles
Of our lives? Where is the dawn
With the dew across the lawn
Stroked with eager feet the far
Way the hills and valleys are?
Were the sun that smites the frown
Of the eastward-gazer down?
Where the rifted wreaths of mist
O'er us, tinged with amethyst,
Round the mountain's steep defiles?
Where are the afterwhiles?

Afterwhile – and we will go
Thither, yon, and too and fro –
From the stifling city streets
To the country's cool retreats –
From the riot to the rest
Were hearts beat the placidest:
Afterwhile, and we will fall
Under breezy trees, and loll
In the shade, with thirsty sight
Drinking deep the blue delight
Of the skies that will beguile
Us as children – afterwhile.

Afterwhile – and one intends
To be gentler to his friends – ,
To walk with them, in the hush
Of still evenings, o'er the plush
Of home-leading fields, and stand
Long at parting, hand in hand:
One, in time, will joy to take

New resolves for some one's sake,
And wear then the look that lies
Clear and pure in other eyes—
We will soothe and reconcile
His own conscience— afterwhile.

Afterwhile— we have in view
A far scene to journey to—,
Where the old home is, and where
The old mother waits us there,
Peering, as the time grows late,
Down the old path to the gate— .
How we'll click the latch that locks
In the pinks and hollyhocks,
And leap up the path once more
Where she waits us at the door— !
How we'll greet the dear old smile,
And the warm tears— afterwhile!

Ah, the endless afterwhiles— !
Leagues on leagues, and miles on miles,
In distance far withdrawn,
Stretching on, and on, and on,
Till the fancy is footsore
And faints in the dust before
The last milestone's granite face,
Hacked with: Here Beginneth Space.
O far glimmering worlds and wings,
Mystic smiles and beckonings,
Lead us through the shadowy aisles
Out into the afterwhiles.

Herr Weiser

Herr Weiser— ! Three-score-years-and-ten— ,
A hale white rose of his country-men,

Transplanted here in the Hoosier loam,
And blossomy as his German home —
As blossomy and as pure and sweet
As the cool green glen of his calm retreat,
Far withdrawn from the noisy town
Where trade goes clamoring up and down,
Whose fret and fever, and stress and strife,
May not trouble his tranquil life!

Breath of rest, what a balmy gust —!
Quite of the city's heat and dust,
Jostling down by the winding road,
Through the orchard ways of his quaint abode — .
Tether the horse, as we onward fare
Under the pear-trees trailing there,
And thumping the wood bridge at night
With lumps of ripeness and lush delight,
Till the stream, as it maunders on till dawn,
Is powdered and pelted and smiled upon.

Herr Weiser, with his wholesome face,
And the gentle blue of his eyes, and grace
Of unassuming honesty,
Be there to welcome you and me!
And what though the toil of the farm be stopped
And the tireless plans of the place be dropped,
While the prayerful master's knees are set
In beds of pansy and mignonette
And lily and aster and columbine,
Offered in love, as yours and mine — ?

What, but a blessing of kindly thought,
Sweet as the breath of forget-me-not —!
What, but a spirit of lustrous love
White as the aster he bends above —!
What, but an odorous memory
Of the dear old man, made known to me

In days demanding a help like his — ,
As sweet as the life of the lily is —
As sweet as the soul of a babe, bloom-wise
Born of a lily in paradise.

The Beautiful City

The Beautiful City! Forever
Its rapturous praises resound;
We fain would behold it — but never
A glimpse of its dory is found:
We slacken our lips at the tender
White breasts of our mothers to hear
Of its marvellous beauty and splendor — ;
We see — but the gleam of a tear!

Yet never the story may tire us —
First graven in symbols of stone —
Rewritten on scrolls of papyrus
And parchment, and scattered and blown
By the winds of the tongues of all nations,
Like a litter of leaves wildly whirled
Down the rack of a hundred translations,
From the earliest lisp of the world.

We compass the earth and the ocean,
From the Orient's uttermost light,
To where the last ripple in motion
Lips hem of the skirt of the night — ,
But the Beautiful City evades us —
No spire of it glints in the sun —
No glad-bannered battlement shades us
When all our Journey is done.

Where lies it? We question and listen;
We lean from the mountain, or mast,
And see but dull earth, or the glisten

Of seas inconceivably vast:
The dust of the one blurs our vision,
The glare of the other our brain,
Nor city nor island Elysian
In all of the land or the main!

We kneel in dim fanes where the thunders
Of organs tumultuous roll,
And the longing heart listens and wonders,
And the eyes look aloft from the soul:
But the chanson grows fainter and fainter,
Swoons wholly away and is dead;
AND our eyes only reach where the painter
Has dabbled a saint overhead.

The Beautiful City! O mortal,
Fare hopefully on in thy quest,
Pass down through the green grassy portal
That leads to the Valley of Rest;
There first passed the One who, in pity
Of all thy great yearning, awaits
To point out The Beautiful City,
And loosen the trump at the gates.

Lockerbie Street

Such a dear little street it is, nestled away
From the noise of the city and heat of the day,
In cool shady coverts of whispering trees,
With their leaves lifted up to shake hands with the breeze
Which in all its wide wanderings never may meet
With a resting-place fairer than Lockerbie street!

There is such a relief, from the clangor and din
Of the heart of the town, to go loitering in
Through the dim, narrow walks, with the sheltering shade

Of the trees waving over the long promenade,
And littering lightly the ways of our feet
With the gold of the sunshine of Lockerbie street.

And the nights that come down the dark pathways of dusk,
With the stars in their tresses, and odors of musk
In their moon-woven raiments, bespangled with dews,
And looped up with lilies for lovers to use
In the songs that they sing to the tinkle and beat
Of their sweet serenadings through Lockerbie street.

O my Lockerbie street! You are fair to be seen —
Be it noon of the day, or the rare and serene
Afternoon of the night — you are one to my heart,
And I love you above all the phrases of art,
For no language could frame and no lips could repeat
My rhyme-haunted raptures of Lockerbie street.

Das Krist Kindel

I had fed the fire and stirred it, till the sparkles in delight
Snapped their saucy little fingers at the chill December night;
And in dressing-gown and slippers, I had tilted back "my throne —"
The old split-bottomed rocker — and was musing all alone.

I could hear the hungry Winter prowling round the outer door,
And the tread of muffled footsteps on the white piazza floor;
But the sounds came to me only as the murmur of a stream
That mingled with the current of a lazy-flowing dream.

Like a fragrant incense rising, curled the smoke of my cigar,
With the lamplight gleaming through it like a mist-enfolded star —;
And as I gazed, the vapor like a curtain rolled away,
With a sound of bells that tinkled, and the clatter of a sleigh.

And in a vision, painted like a picture in the air,
I saw the elfish figure, of a man with frosty hair —
A quaint old man that chuckled with a laugh as he appeared,
And with ruddy cheeks like embers in the ashes of his beard.

He poised himself grotesquely, in an attitude of mirth,
On a damask-covered hassock that was sitting on the hearth;
And at a magic signal of his stubbly little thumb,
I saw the fireplace changing to a bright proscenium.

And looking there, I marvelled as I saw a mimic stage
Alive with little actors of a very tender age;
And some so very tiny that they tottered as they walked,
And lisped and purled and gurgled like the brooklets, when they
talked.

And their faces were like lilies, and their eyes like purest dew,
And their tresses like the shadows that the shine is woven through;
And they each had little burdens, and a little tale to tell
Of fairy lore, and giants, and delights delectable.

And they mixed and intermingled, weaving melody with joy,
Till the magic circle clustered round a blooming baby-boy;
And they threw aside their treasures in an ecstasy of glee,
And bent, with dazzled faces and with parted lips, to see.

'Twas a wondrous little fellow, with a dainty double-chin
And chubby-cheeks, and dimples for the smiles to blossom in;
And he looked as ripe and rosy, on his bed of straw and reeds,
As a mellow little pippin that had tumbled in the weeds.

And I saw the happy mother, and a group surrounding her
That knelt with costly presents of frankincense and myrrh;
And I thrilled with awe and wonder, as a murmur on the air
Came drifting o'er the hearing in a melody of prayer — :

By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the sea,
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee,
We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the knee
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.

Thy messenger has spoken, and our doubts have fled and gone
As the dark and spectral shadows of the night before the dawn;
And in kindly shelter of the light around us drawn,
We would nestle down forever in the breast we lean upon.

You have given us a shepherd — You have given us a guide,
And the light of Heaven grew dimmer when You sent him from
Your side —,
But he comes to lead Thy children where the gates will open wide
To welcome his returning when his works are glorified.

By the splendor in the heavens, and the hush upon the sea,
And the majesty of silence reigning over Galilee —,
We feel Thy kingly presence, and we humbly bow the knee
And lift our hearts and voices in gratefulness to Thee.

Then the vision, slowly failing, with the words of the refrain,
Fell swooning in the moonlight through the frosty window-pane;
And I heard the clock proclaiming, like an eager sentinel
Who brings the world good tidings —, "It is Christmas — all is well!"

Anselmo

Years did I vainly seek the good Lord's grace —,
Prayed, fasted, and did penance dire and dread;
Did kneel, with bleeding knees and rainy face,
And mouth the dust, with ashes on my head;
Yea, still with knotted scourge the flesh I flayed,
Rent fresh the wounds, and moaned and shrieked insanely;
And froth oozed with the pleadings that I made,

And yet I prayed on vainly, vainly, vainly!

A time, from out of swoon I lifted eye,
To find a wretched outcast, gray and grim,
Bathing my brow, with many a pitying sigh,
And I did pray God's grace might rest on him — .
Then, lo! A gentle voice fell on mine ears —
"Thou shalt not sob in suppliance hereafter;
Take up thy prayers and wring them dry of tears,
And lift them, white and pure with love and laughter!"

So is it now for all men else I pray;
So is it I am blest and glad alway.

A Home-Made Fairy Tale

Bud, come here to your uncle a spell,
And I'll tell you something you mustn't tell —
For it's a secret and shore-'nuf true,
And maybe I oughtn't to tell it to you — !
But out in the garden, under the shade
Of the apple-trees, where we romped and played
Till the moon was up, and you thought I'd gone
Fast asleep — , That was all put on!
For I was a-watchin' something queer
Goin' on there in the grass, my dear — !
'Way down deep in it, there I see
A little dude-Fairy who winked at me,
And snapped his fingers, and laughed as low
And fine as the whine of a mus-kee-to!
I kept still — watchin' him closer — and
I noticed a little guitar in his hand,
Which he leant 'ginst a little dead bee — and laid
His cigarette down on a clean grass-blade,
And then climbed up on the shell of a snail —
Carefully dusting his swallowtail —

And pulling up, by a waxed web-thread,
This little guitar, you remember. I said!
And there he trinkled and trilled a tune—,
"My Love, so Fair, Tans in the Moon!"
Till presently, out of the clover-top
He seemed to be singing to, came k'pop!
The purtiest, daintiest Fairy face
In all this world, or any place!
Then the little ser'nader waved his hand,
As much as to say, "We'll excuse you!" and
I heard, as I squinted my eyelids to,
A kiss like the drip of a drop of dew!

The South Wind and the Sun

O The South Wind and the Sun!
How each loved the other one
Full of fancy -- full folly --
Full of jollity and fun!
How they romped and ran about,
Like two boys when school is out,
With glowing face, and lispng lip,
Low laugh, and lifted shout!

And the South Wind -- he was dressed
With a ribbon round his breast
That floated, flapped and fluttered
In a riotous unrest,
And a drapery of mist
From the shoulder and the wrist
Flowing backward with the motion
Of the waving hand he kissed.

And the Sun had on a crown
Wrought of gilded thistle-down,
And a scarf of velvet vapor,