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Poems of Cheer

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)

ISBN: 978-3-8491-9801-5

www.tredition.com

www.tredition.de

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POEMS OF CHEER

by

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

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This Volume contains the poems published under the title "Poems of Life," with the exception of about half a dozen, which appear in my other volumes. I have also added a few new verses.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

April 12th, 1910.

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.

WORTH WHILE

It is easy enough to be pleasant
When life flows by like a song,
But the man worth while is the 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 honour on 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.

THE HOUSE OF LIFE

All wondering, and eager-eyed, within her portico
I made my plea to Hostess Life, one morning long ago.

"Pray show me this great house of thine, nor close a single door;
But let me wander where I will, and climb from floor to floor!"

For many rooms, and curious things, and treasures great and small
Within your spacious mansion lie, and I would see them all."

Then Hostess Life turned silently, her searching gaze on me,
And with no word, she reached her hand, and offered up the key.

It opened first the door of Hope, and long I lingered there,
Until I spied the room of Dreams, just higher by a stair.

And then a door whereon the one word "Happiness" was writ;
But when I tried the little key I could not make it fit.

It turned the lock of Pleasure's room, where first all seemed so
bright -
But after I had stayed awhile it somehow lost its light.

And wandering down a lonely hall, I came upon a room
Marked "Duty," and I entered it – to lose myself in gloom.

Along the shadowy halls I groped my weary way about,
And found that from dull Duty's room, a door of Toil led out.

It led out to another door, whereon a crimson stain
Made sullenly against the dark these words: "The Room of Pain."

But oh the light, the light, the light, that spilled down from above
And upward wound, the stairs of Faith, right to the Tower of Love!

And when I came forth from that place, I tried the little key -
And lo! the door of Happiness swung open, wide and free.

A SONG OF LIFE

In the rapture of life and of living,
I lift up my heart 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.

PRAYER

I do not undertake to say
That literal answers come from Heaven,
But I know this – that when I pray
A comfort, a support is given
That helps me rise o'er earthly things
As larks soar up on airy wings.

In vain the wise philosopher
Points out to me my fabric's flaws,
In vain the scientists aver
That "all things are controlled by laws."
My life has taught me day by day
That it availeth much to pray.

I do not stop to reason out
The why and how. I do not care,
Since I know this, that when I doubt,
Life seems a blackness of despair,
The world a tomb; and when I trust,
Sweet blossoms spring up in the dust.

Since I know in the darkest hour,
If I lift up my soul in prayer,
Some sympathetic, loving Power
Sends hope and comfort to me there.
Since balm is sent to ease my pain,
What need to argue or explain?

Prayer has a sweet, refining grace,
It educates the soul and heart.
It lends a lustre to the face,
And by its elevating art
It gives the mind an inner sight

That brings it near the Infinite.

From our gross selves it helps us rise
To something which we yet may be.
And so I ask not to be wise,
If thus my faith is lost to me.
Faith, that with angel's voice and touch
Says, "Pray, for prayer availeth much."