I shall become a dream, and through the little opening of your eyelids I shall slip into the depths of your sleep; and when you wake up and look round startled, like a twinkling firefly I shall flit out into the darkness.

When, on the great festival of puja, the neighbours’ children come and play about the house, I shall melt into the music of the flute and throb in your heart all day.

Dear auntie will come with puja-presents and will ask, “Where is our baby, sister?” Mother, you will tell her softly, “He is in the pupils of my eyes, he is in my body and in my soul.”

THE RECALL

The night was dark when she went away, and they slept.

The night is dark now, and I call for her, “Come back, my darling; the world is asleep; and no one would know, if you came for a moment while stars are gazing at stars.”

She went away when the trees were in bud and the spring was young.

Now the flowers are in high bloom and I call, “Come back, my darling. The children gather and scatter flowers in reckless sport. And if you come and take one little blossom no one will miss it.”

Those that used to play are playing still, so spend-thrift is life.

I listen to their chatter and call, “Come back, my
 darling, for mother's heart is full to the brim with love, and if you come to snatch only one little kiss from her 'no one will grudge it.'"

THE FIRST JASMINES

Ah, these jasmines, these white jasmines!
I seem to remember the first day when I filled my hands with these jasmines, these white jasmines.
I have loved the sunlight, the sky and the green earth;
I have heard the liquid murmur of the river through the darkness of midnight;
Autumn sunsets have come to me at the bend of a road in the lonely waste, like a bride raising her veil to accept her lover.
Yet my memory is still sweet with the first white jasmines that I held in my hands when I was a child.

* Many a glad day has come in my life, and I have laughed with merry-makers on festival nights.
On grey mornings of rain I have crooned many an idle song.
I have worn round my neck the evening wreath of bakula woven by the hand of love.
Yet my heart is sweet with the memory of the first fresh jasmines that filled my hands when I was a child.

THE BANYAN TREE

O you shaggy-headed banyan tree standing on the bank of the pond, have you forgotten the little child, like
the birds that have nestled in your branches and left you?

Do you not remember how he sat at the window and wondered at the tangle of your roots that plunged underground?

The women would come to fill their jars in the pond, and your huge black shadow would wriggle on the water like sleep struggling to wake up.

Sunlight danced on the ripples like restless tiny shuttles weaving golden tapestry.

Two ducks swam by the weedy margin above their shadows, and the child would sit still and think.

He longed to be the wind and blow through your rustling branches, to be your shadow and lengthen with the day on the water, to be a bird and perch on your topmost twig, and to float like those ducks among the weeds and shadows.

Benediction

Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss of heaven for our earth.

He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his mother’s face.

He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after gold.

Clasp him to your heart and bless him.

He has come into this land of a hundred cross-roads.

I know not how he chose you from the crowd, came to your door, and grasped your hand to ask his way.

He will follow you, laughing and talking, and not a doubt in his heart.
Keep his trust, lead him straight and bless him.
Lay your hand on his head, and pray that though the waves underneath grow threatening, yet the breath from above may come and fill his sails and waft him to the haven of peace.
Forget him not in your hurry, let him come to your heart and bless him.

THE GIFT
I want to give you something, my child, for we are drifting in the stream of the world.
Our lives will be carried apart, and our love forgotten.
But I am not so foolish as to hope that I could buy your heart with my gifts.
Young is your life, your path long, and you drink the love we bring you at one draught and turn and run away from us.
'You have your play and your playmates. What harm is there if you have no time or thought for us!
We, indeed, have leisure enough in old age to count the days that are past, to cherish in our hearts what our hands have lost for ever.
The river runs swift with a song, breaking through all barriers. But the mountain stays and remembers, and follows her with his love.

MY SONG
This song of mine will wind its music around you, my child, like the fond arms of love.
This song of mine will touch your forehead like a kiss of blessing.
When you are alone it will sit by your side and whisper in your ear, when you are in the crowd it will fence you about with aloofness.
My song will be like a pair of wings to your dreams, it will transport your heart to the verge of the unknown.
It will be like the faithful star overhead when dark night is over your road.
My song will sit in the pupils of your eyes, and will carry your sight into the heart of things.
And when my voice is silent in death, my song will speak in your living heart.

THE CHILD-ANGEL

They clamour and fight, they doubt and despair, they know no end to their wranglings.
Let your life come amongst them like a flame of light, my child, unflickering and pure, and delight them into silence.
They are cruel in their greed and their envy, their words are like hidden knives thirsting for blood.
Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, my child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the forgiving peace of the evening over the strife of the day.
Let them see your face, my child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and thus love each other.

Come and take your seat in the bosom of the limitless, my child. At sunrise open and raise your heart like a blossoming flower, and at sunset bend your head and in silence complete the worship of the day.
THE LAST BARGAIN

"Come and hire me," I cried, while in the morning I
was walking on the stone-paved road.
Sword in hand, the King came in his chariot.
He held my hand and said, "I will hire you with my
power."
But his power counted for naught, and he went away
in his chariot.

In the heat of the midday the houses stood with shut
doors.
I wandered along the crooked lane.
An old man came out with his bag of gold.
He pondered and said, "I will hire you with my
money."
He weighed his coins one by one, but I turned away.

It was evening. The garden hedge was all aflower.
The fair maid came out and said, "I will hire you
with a smile."
Her smile paled and melted into tears, and she went
back alone into the dark.

The sun glistened on the sand, and the sea waves
broke waywardly.
A child sat playing with shells.
He raised his head and seemed to know me, and said,
"I hire you with nothing."
From thenceforward that bargain struck in child's
play made me a free man.
THE GARDENER
THE GARDENER

I

Servant. Have mercy upon your servant, my queen!

Queen. The assembly is over and my servants are all gone. Why do you come at this late hour?

Servant. When you have finished with others, that is my time.

I come to ask what remains for your last servant to do.

Queen. What can you expect when it is too late?

Servant. Make me the gardener of your flower garden.

Queen. What folly is this?

Servant. I will give up my other work.

I throw my swords and lances down in the dust. Do not send me to distant courts; do not bid me undertake new conquests. But make me the gardener of your flower garden.

Queen. What will your duties be?

Servant. The service of your idle days.

I will keep fresh the grassy path where you walk in the morning, where your feet will be greeted with praise at every step by the flowers eager for death.

I will swing you in a swing among the branches of the saptaparna, where the early evening moon will struggle to kiss your skirt, through the leaves.

I will replenish with scented oil the lamp that burns by your bedside, and decorate your footstool with sandal and saffron paste in wondrous designs.

Queen. What will you have for your reward?

89
Servant. To be allowed to hold your little fists like tender lotus-buds and slip flower-chains over your wrists; to tinge the soles of your feet with the red juice of asboka petals and kiss away the speck of dust that may chance to linger there.

Queen. Your prayers are granted, my servant, you will be the gardener of my flower garden.

II

"Ah, poet, the evening draws near; your hair is turning grey.
"Do you in your lonely musing hear the message of the hereafter?"

"It is evening," the poet said, "and I am listening because some one may call from the village, late though it be.
"I watch if young straying hearts meet together, and two pairs of eager eyes beg for music to break their silence and speak for them.
"Who is there to weave their passionate songs, if I sit on the shore of life and contemplate death and the beyond?

"The early evening star disappears.
"The glow of a funeral pyre slowly dies by the silent river.
"Jackals cry in chorus from the courtyard of the deserted house in the light of the worn-out moon.
"If some wanderer, leaving home, come here to watch the night and with bowed head listen to the murmur of the darkness, who is there to whisper the
secrets of life into his ears if I, shutting my doors, should try to free myself from mortal bonds.

"It is a trifle that my hair is turning grey.
"I am ever as young or as old as the youngest and the oldest of this village.
"Some have smiles, sweet and simple, and some a sly twinkle in their eyes.
"Some have tears that well up in the daylight, and others tears that are hidden in the gloom.
"They all have need for me, and I have no time to brood over the after-life.
"I am of an age with each, what matter if my hair turns grey?"

III

IN the morning I cast my net into the sea.

I dragged up from the dark abyss things of strange aspect and strange beauty—some shone like a smile, some glistened like tears, and some were flushed like the cheeks of a bride.

When with the day's burden I went home, my love was sitting in the garden idly tearing the leaves of a flower.

I hesitated for a moment, and then placed at her feet all that I had dragged up, and stood silent.

She glanced at them and said, "What strange things are these? I know not of what use they are!"

I bowed my head in shame and thought, "I have not fought for these, I did not buy them in the market; they are not fit gifts for her."

Then the whole night through I flung them one by one into the street.
In the morning travellers came; they picked them up and carried them into far countries.

IV

AH me, why did they build my house by the road to the market town?
They moor their laden boats near my trees.
They come and go and wander at their will.
I sit and watch them; my time wears on.
Turn them away I cannot. And thus my days pass by.

Night and day their steps sound by my door.
Vainly I cry, "I do not know you."
Some of them are known to my fingers, some to my nostrils, the blood in my veins seems to know them, and some are known to my dreams.
Turn them away I cannot. I call them and say, "Come to my house whoever chooses. Yes, come."

In the morning the bell rings in the temple.
They come with their baskets in their hands.
Their feet are rosy-red. The early light of dawn is on their faces.
Turn them away I cannot. I call them and I say, "Come to my garden to gather flowers. Come hither."

In the midday the gong sounds at the palace gate.
I know not why they leave their work and linger near my hedge.
The flowers in their hair are pale and faded; the notes are languid in their flutes.
Turn them away I cannot. I call them and say, "The shade is cool under my trees. Come, friends."
At night the crickets chirp in the woods.
Who is it that comes slowly to my door and gently knocks?
I vaguely see the face, not a word is spoken, the stillness of the sky is all around.
Turn away my silent guest I cannot. I look at the face through the dark, and hours of dreams pass by.

v

I AM restless. I am athirst for far-away things.
My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of the dim distance.
O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that I have no wings to fly, that I am bound in this spot evermore.

I am eager and wakeful, I am a stranger in a strange land.
Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.
Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own.
O Far-to-seek, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that I know not the way, that I have not the winged horse.

I am listless, I am a wanderer in my heart.
In the sunny haze of the languid hours, what vast vision of thine takes shape in the blue of the sky!
O Farthest End, O the keen call of thy flute!
I forget, I ever forget, that the gates are shut everywhere in the house where I dwell alone!

vi

The tame bird was in a cage, the free bird was in the forest.
They met when the time came, it was a decree of fate.

The free bird cries, "O my love, let us fly to the wood."

The cage bird whispers, "Come hither, let us both live in the cage."

Says the free bird, "Among bars, where is there room to spread one's wings?"

"Alas," cries the cage bird, "I should not know where to sit perched in the sky."

The free bird cries, "My darling, sing the songs of the woodlands."

The cage bird says, "Sit by my side, I'll teach you the speech of the learned."

The forest bird cries, "No, ah no! songs can never be taught."

The cage bird says, "Alas for me, I know not the songs of the woodlands."

Their love is intense with longing, but they never can fly wing to wing.

Through the bars of the cage they look, and vain is their wish to know each other.

They flutter their wings in yearning, and sing, "Come closer, my love!"

The free bird cries, "It cannot be, I fear the closed doors of the cage."

The cage bird whispers, "Alas, my wings are powerless and dead."

VII

O MOTHER, the young Prince is to pass by our door,—how can I attend to my work this morning?

Show me how to braid up my hair; tell me what garment to put on.
Why do you look at me amazed, mother?
I know well he will not glance up once at my window; I know he will pass out of my sight in the twinkling of an eye; only the vanishing strain of the flute will come sobbing to me from afar.

But the young Prince will pass by our door, and I will put on my best for the moment.

O mother, the young Prince did pass by our door, and the morning sun flashed from his chariot.

I swept aside the veil from my face, I tore the ruby chain from my neck and flung it in his path.

Why do you look at me amazed, mother?
I know well he did not pick up my chain; I know it was crushed under his wheels leaving a red stain upon the dust, and no one knows what my gift was nor to whom.

But the young Prince did pass by our door, and I flung the jewel from my breast before his path.

VIII

When the lamp went out by my bed I woke up with the early birds.

I sat at my open window with a fresh wreath on my loose hair.

The young traveller came along the road in the rosy mist of the morning.

A pearl chain was on his neck, and the sun’s rays fell on his crown. He stopped before my door and asked me with an eager cry, “Where is she?”

For very shame I could not say, “She is I, young traveller, she is I.”

It was dusk and the lamp was not lit.
I was listlessly braiding my hair.
The young traveller came on his chariot in the glow of the setting sun.
* His horses were foaming at the mouth, and there was dust on his garment.

He alighted at my door and asked in a tired voice, "Where is she?"

For very shame I could not say, "She is I, weary traveller, she is I."

It is an April night. The lamp is burning in my room.
The breeze of the south comes gently. The noisy parrot sleeps in its cage.
My bodice is of the colour of the peacock's throat, and my mantle is green as young grass.
I sit upon the floor at the window watching the deserted street.
Through the dark night I keep humming, "She is I, despairing traveller, she is I."

IX

WHEN I go alone at night to my love-tryst, birds do not sing, the wind does not stir, the houses on both sides of the street stand silent.

It is my own anklets that grow loud at every step and I am ashamed.

When I sit on my balcony and listen for his footsteps, leaves do not rustle on the trees, and the water is still in the river like the sword on the knees of a sentry fallen asleep.

It is my own heart that beats wildly—I do not know how to quiet it.

When my love comes and sits by my side, when my
body trembles and my eyelids droop, the night darkens, the wind blows out the lamp, and the clouds draw veils over the stars.

It is the jewel at my own breast that shines and gives light. I do not know how to hide it.

\[X\]

LET your work be, bride. Listen, the guest has come.

Do you hear, he is gently shaking the chain which fastens the door?

See that your anklets make no loud noise, and that your step is not over-hurried at meeting him.

Let your work be, bride, the guest has come in the evening.

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride, do not be frightened.

It is the full moon on a night of April; shadows are pale in the courtyard; the sky overhead is bright.

Draw your veil over your face if you must, carry the lamp to the door if you fear.

No, it is not the ghostly wind, bride; do not be frightened.

Have no word with him if you are shy; stand aside by the door when you meet him.

If he asks you questions, and if you wish to, you can lower your eyes in silence.

Do not let your bracelets jingle when, lamp in hand, you lead him in.

Have no word with him if you are shy.

Have you not finished your work yet, bride? Listen, the guest has come.

Have you not lit the lamp in the cowshed?
Have you not got ready the offering-basker for the evening service?

Have you not put the red lucky mark at the parting of your hair, and done your toilet for the night?
O bride, do you hear, the guest has come?
Let your work be!

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

If your braided hair has loosened, if the parting of your hair be not straight, if the ribbons of your bodice be not fastened, do not mind.

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

Come, with quick steps over the grass.
If the raddle come from your feet because of the dew, if the rings of bells upon your feet slacken, if pearls drop out of your chain, do not mind.

Come, with quick steps over the grass.

Do you see the clouds wrapping the sky?
Flocks of cranes fly up from the further river-bank and fitful gusts of wind rush over the heath.
The anxious cattle run to their stalls in the village.
Do you see the clouds wrapping the sky?

In vain you light your toilet lamp—it flickers and goes out in the wind.
Who can know that your eyelids have not been touched with lampblack? For your eyes are darker than rain-clouds.
In vain you light your toilet lamp—it goes out.

Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.
If the wreath is not woven, who cares; if the wrist-chain has not been linked, let it be.
The sky is overcast with clouds—it is late.
Come as you are; do not loiter over your toilet.

xii

If you would be busy and fill your pitcher, come, O come to my lake.
The water will cling round your feet and babble its secret.
The shadow of the coming rain is on the sands, and the clouds hang low upon the blue lines of the trees like the heavy hair above your eyebrows.
I know well the rhythm of your steps, they are beating in my heart.
Come, O come to my lake, if you must fill your pitcher.

If you would be idle and sit listless and let your pitcher float on the water, come, O come to my lake.
The grassy slope is green, and the wild flowers beyond number.
Your thoughts will stray out of your dark eyes like birds from their nests.
Your veil will drop to your feet.
Come, O come to my lake, if you must sit idle.

If you would leave off your play and dive in the water, come, O come to my lake.
Let your blue mantle lie on the shore; the blue water will cover you and hide you.
The waves will stand a-tiptoe to kiss your neck and whisper in your ears.
Come, O come to my lake, if you would dive in the water.

If you must be mad and leap to your death, come, O come to my lake.
It is cool and fathomlessly deep.
It is dark like a sleep that is dreamless.
There in its depths nights and days are one, and songs are silence.
Come, O come to my lake, if you would plunge to your death.

XIII

I asked nothing, only stood at the edge of the wood behind the tree.
Languor was still upon the eyes of the dawn, and the dew in the air.
The lazy smell of the damp grass hung in the thin mist above the earth.
Under the banyan tree you were milking the cow with your hands, tender and fresh as butter.
And I was standing still.

I did not say a word. It was the bird that sang unseen from the thicket.
The mango tree was shedding its flowers upon the village road, and the bees came humming one by one.
On the side of the pond the gate of Shiva's temple was opened and the worshipper had begun his chants.
With the vessel on your lap you were milking the cow.
I stood with my empty can.

I did not come near you.
The sky woke with the sound of the gong at the temple.
The dust was raised in the road from the hoofs of the driven cattle.
With the gurgling pitchers at their hips, women came from the river.
Your bracelets were jingling, and foam brimming over the jar.
The morning wore on and I did not come near you.

xiv

I was walking by the road, I do not know why, when the noonday was past and bamboo branches rustled in the wind.
The prone shadows with their outstretched arms clung to the feet of the hurrying light.
The koels were weary of their songs.
I was walking by the road, I do not know why.

The hut by the side of the water is shaded by an overhanging tree.
Some one was busy with her work, and her bangles made music in the corner.
I stood before this hut, I know not why.
The narrow winding road crosses many a mustard field, and many a mango forest.
It passes by the temple of the village and the market at the river landing-place.
I stopped by this hut, I do not know why.

Years ago it was a day of breezy March when the murmur of the spring was languorous, and mango blossoms were dropping on the dust.
The rippling water leapt and licked the brass vessel that stood on the landing-step.
I think of that day of breezy March, I do not know why.

Shadows are deepening and cattle returning to their folds.
The light is grey upon the lonely meadows, and the villagers are waiting for the ferry at the bank.
I slowly return upon my steps, I do not know why.

XV

I run as a musk-deer runs in the shadow of the forest mad with his own perfume.
The night is the night of mid-May, the breeze is the breeze of the south.
I lose my way and I wander, I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.

From my heart comes out and dances the image of my own desire.
• The gleaming vision flits on.
  I try to clasp it firmly, it eludes me and leads me astray.
  I seek what I cannot get, I get what I do not seek.

XVI

Hands cling to hands and eyes linger on eyes: thus begins the record of our hearts.
It is the moonlit night of March; the sweet smell of henna is in the air; my flute lies on the earth neglected and your garland of flowers is unfinished.
This love between you and me is simple as a song.

Your veil of the saffron colour makes my eyes drunk.
The jasmine wreath that you wove me thrills to my heart like praise.
It is a game of giving and withholding, revealing and screening again; some smiles and some little shyness, and some sweet, useless struggles.
This love between you and me is simple as a song.

No mystery beyond the present; no striving for the impossible; no shadow behind the charm; no groping in the depth of the dark.
This love between you and me is simple as a song.

We do not stray out of all words into the ever silent; we do not raise our hands to the void for things beyond hope.
It is enough what we give and we get.
We have not crushed the joy to the utmost to wring from it the wine of pain.
This love between you and me is simple as a song.

XVII

The yellow bird sings in their tree and makes my heart dance with gladness.
We both live in the same village, and that is our one piece of joy.
Her pair of pet lambs come to graze in the shade of our garden trees.
If they stray into our barley field, I take them up in my arms.
The name of our village is Khanjanā, and Anjanā they call our river.
My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjanā.
Only one field lies between us.

Bees that have hived in our grove go to seek honey in theirs.

Flowers launched from their landing-stairs come floating by the stream where we bathe.

Baskets of dried kusum flowers come from their fields to our market.

The name of our village is Khanjanā, and Anjanā they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjanā.

The lane that winds to their house is fragrant in the spring with mango flowers.

When their linseed is ripe for harvest the hemp is in bloom in our field.

The stars that smile on their cottage send us the same twinkling look.

The rain that floods their tank makes glad our kadam forest.

The name of our village is Khanjanā, and Anjanā they call our river.

My name is known to all the village, and her name is Ranjanā.

XVIII

When the two sisters go to fetch water, they come to this spot and they smile.

They must be aware of somebody who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters whisper to each other when they pass this spot.

They must have guessed the secret of that somebody
who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

Their pitchers lurch suddenly, and water spills when they reach this spot.
They must have found out that somebody's heart is beating who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

The two sisters glance at each other when they come to this spot, and they smile.

There is a laughter in their swift-stepping feet, which makes confusion in somebody's mind who stands behind the trees whenever they go to fetch water.

XIX

You walked by the riverside path with the full pitcher upon your hip.
Why did you swiftly turn your face and peep at me through your fluttering veil?
That gleaming look from the dark came upon me like a breeze that sends a shiver through the rippling water and sweeps away to the shadowy shore.

It came to me like the bird of the evening that hurriedly flies across the lampless room from the one open window to the other, and disappears in the night.
You are hidden as a star behind the hills, and I am a passer-by upon the road.
But why did you stop for a moment and glance at my face through your veil while you walked by the riverside path with the full pitcher upon your hip?
Day after day he comes and goes away.
Go, and give him a flower from my hair, my friend.
If he asks who was it that sent it, I entreat you do not
tell him my name—for he only comes and goes away.

He sits on the dust under the tree.
Spread there a seat with flowers and leaves, my friend.
His eyes are sad, and they bring sadness to my heart.
He does not speak what he has in mind; he only comes
and goes away.

Why did he choose to come to my door, the wandering
youth, when the day dawned?
As I come in and out I pass by him every time, and
my eyes are caught by his face.
I know not if I should speak to him or keep silent.
Why did he choose to come to my door?

The cloudy nights in July are dark; the sky is soft
blue in the autumn; the spring days are restless with the
south wind.
He weaves his songs with fresh tunes every time.
I turn from my work and my eyes fill with the mist.
Why did he choose to come to my door?

When she passed by me with quick steps, the end of
her skirt touched me.
From the unknown island of a heart came a sudden
warm breath of spring.

106
A flutter of a flitting touch brushed me and vanished in a moment, like a torn flower-petal blown in the breeze.

It fell upon my heart like a sigh of her body and whisper of her heart.

*    

**XXIII**

**WHY do you sit there and jingle your bracelets in mere idle sport?**

Fill your pitcher. It is time for you to come home.

*    

**WHY do you stir the water with your hands and fitfully glance at the road for some one in mere idle sport?**

Fill your pitcher and come home.

*    

**The morning hours pass by—the dark water flows on.**

The waves are laughing and whispering to each other in mere idle sport.

*    

**The wandering clouds have gathered at the edge of the sky on yonder rise of the land.**

They linger and look at your face and smile in mere idle sport.

Fill your pitcher and come home.

**XXIV**

*    

**Do not keep to yourself the secret of your heart, my friend!**

Say it to me, only to me, in secret.

You who smile so gently, softly whisper, my heart will hear it, not my ears.

*    

**The night is deep, the house is silent, the birds' nests are shrouded with sleep.**

107
Speak to me through hesitating tears, through faltering smiles, through sweet shame and pain, the secret of your heart!

**XXV**

"Come to us, youth, tell us truly why there is madness in your eyes?"
"I know not what wine of wild poppy I have drunk, that there is this madness in my eyes."
"Ah, shame!"
"Well, some are wise and some foolish, some are watchful and some careless. There are eyes that smile and eyes that weep—and madness is in my eyes."

"Youth, why do you stand so still under the shadow of the tree?"
"My feet are languid with the burden of my heart, and I stand still in the shadow."
"Ah, shame!"
"Well, some march on their way and some linger, some are free and some are fettered—and my feet are languid with the burden of my heart."

**XXVI**

"What comes from your willing hands I take. I beg for nothing more."
"Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has."

"If there be a stray flower for me I will wear it in my heart."
"But if there be thorns?"
"I will endure them."
“Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.”

“If but once you should raise your loving eyes to my face it would make my life sweet beyond death.”
“But if there be only cruel glances?”
“I will keep them piercing my heart.”
“Yes, yes, I know you, modest mendicant, you ask for all that one has.”

XXVII

“Trust love even if it brings sorrow. Do not close up your heart.”
“Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.”

“The heart is only for giving away with a tear and a song, my love.”
“Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.”

“Pleasure is frail like a dewdrop, while it laughs it dies. But sorrow is strong and abiding. Let sorrowful love wake in your eyes.”
“Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.”

“The lotus blooms in the sight of the sun, and loses all that it has. It would not remain in bud in the eternal winter mist.”
“Ah, no, my friend, your words are dark, I cannot understand them.”

XXVIII

Your questioning eyes are sad. They seek to know my meaning as the moon would fathom the sea.

109
I have bared my life before your eyes from end to end, with nothing hidden or held back. That is why you know me not.

If it were only a gem, I could break it into a hundred pieces and string them into a chain to put on your neck.

If it were only a flower, round and small and sweet, I could pluck it from its stem to set it in your hair.

But it is a heart, my beloved. Where are its shores and its bottom?

You know not the limits of this kingdom, still you are its queen.

If it were only a moment of pleasure it would flower in an easy smile, and you could see it and read it in a moment.

If it were merely a pain it would melt in limpid tears, reflecting its inmost secret without a word.

But it is love, my beloved.

Its pleasure and pain are boundless, and endless its wants and wealth.

It is as near to you as your life, but you can never wholly know it.

XXIX

Speak to me, my love! Tell me in words what you sang.

The night is dark. The stars are lost in clouds. The wind is sighing through the leaves.

I will let loose my hair. My blue cloak will cling round me like night. I will clasp your head to my bosom; and there in the sweet loneliness murmur on your heart. I will shut my eyes and listen. I will not look in your face.

When your words are ended, we will sit still and silent. Only the trees will whisper in the dark.

110.
The night will pale. The day will dawn. We shall look at each other’s eyes and go on our different paths. Speak to me, my love! Tell me in words what you sang.

You are the evening cloud floating in the sky of my dreams.
I paint you and fashion you ever with my love longings.
You are my own, my own, Dweller in my endless dreams!

Your feet are rosy-red with the glow of my heart’s desire, Gleaner of my sunset songs!
Your lips are bitter-sweet with the taste of my wine of pain.
You are my own, my own, Dweller in my lonesome dreams!

With the shadow of my passion have I darkened your eyes, Haunter of the depth of my gaze!
I have caught you and wrapt you, my love, in the net of my music.
You are my own, my own, Dweller in my deathless dreams!

My heart, the bird of the wilderness, has found its sky in your eyes.
They are the cradle of the morning, they are the kingdom of the stars.
My songs are lost in their depths.
Let me but soar in that sky, in its lonely immensity.
Let me but cleave its clouds and spread wings in its sunshine.

XXXII

Tell me if this be all true, my lover, tell me if this be true.

When these eyes flash their lightning the dark clouds in your breast make stormy answer.

Is it true that my lips are sweet like the opening bud of the first conscious love?

Do the memories of vanished months of May linger in my limbs?

Does the earth, like a harp, shiver into songs with the touch of my feet?

Is it then true that the dewdrops fall from the eyes of night when I am seen, and the morning light is glad when it wraps my body round?

Is it true, is it true, that your love travelled alone through ages and worlds in search of me?

That when you found me at last, your age-long desire found utter peace in my gentle speech and my eyes and lips and flowing hair?

Is it then true that the mystery of the Infinite is written on this little forehead of mine?

Tell me, my lover, if all this be true.

XXXIII

I love you, beloved. Forgive me my love.

Like a bird losing its way I am caught.

When my heart was shaken it lost its veil and was naked. Cover it with pity, beloved, and forgive me my love.
If you cannot love me, beloved, forgive me my pain.
Do not look askance at me from afar.
I will steal back to my corner and sit in the dark.
With both hands I will cover my naked shame.
Turn your face from me, beloved, and forgive me my pain.

If you love me, beloved, forgive me my joy.
When my heart is borne away by the flood of happiness, do not smile at my perilous abandonment.
When I sit on my throne and rule you with my tyranny of love, when like a goddess I grant you my favour, bear with my pride, beloved, and forgive me my joy.

Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.
I have watched all night, and now my eyes are heavy with sleep.
I fear lest I lose you when I am sleeping.
Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

I start up and stretch my hands to touch you. I ask myself, “Is it a dream?”
Could I but entangle your feet with my heart and hold them fast to my breast!
Do not go, my love, without asking my leave.

LEST I should know you too easily, you play with me.
You blind me with flashes of laughter to hide your tears.
I know, I know your art,
You never say the word you would.
Lest I should not prize you, you elude me in a thousand ways.
Lest I should confuse you with the crowd, you stand aside.
I know, I know your art,
You never walk the path you would.

Your claim is more than that of others, that is why you are silent.
With playful carelessness you avoid my gifts.
I know, I know your art,
You never will take what you would.

XXXVI

He whispered, "My love, raise your eyes."
I sharply chid him, and said "Go!" But he did not stir.
He stood before me and held both my hands. I said, "Leave me!" But he did not go.

He brought his face near my ear. I glanced at him and said, "What a shame!" But he did not move.
His lips touched my cheek. I trembled and said, "You dare too much." But he had no shame.

He put a flower in my hair. I said, "It is useless!" But he stood unmoved.
He took the garland from my neck and went away.
I weep and ask my heart, "Why does he not come back?"

XXXVII

Would you put your wreath of fresh flowers on my neck, fair one?
But you must know that the one wreath that I had woven is for the many, for those who are seen in glimpses, or dwell in lands unexplored, or live in poets’ songs.

It is too late to ask my heart in return for yours.
There was a time when my life was like a bud, all its perfume was stored in its core.
Now it is squandered far and wide.
Who knows the enchantment that can gather and shut it up again?
My heart is not mine to give to one only, it is given to the many.

XXXVIII
My love, once upon a time your poet launched a great epic in his mind.
Alas, I was not careful, and it struck your ringing anklets and came to grief.
It broke up into scraps of songs and lay scattered at your feet.
All my cargo of the stories of old wars was tossed by the laughing waves and soaked in tears and sank.
You must make this loss good to me, my love.
If my claims to immortal fame after death are shattered, make me immortal while I live.
And I will not mourn for my loss nor blame you.

XXXIX
I try to weave a wreath all the morning, but the flowers slip and they drop out.
You sit there watching me in secret through the corner of your prying eyes.
Ask those eyes, darkly planning mischief, whose fault it was.

I try to sing a song, but in vain.
A hidden smile trembles on your lips; ask of it the reason of my failure.
Let your smiling lips say on oath how my voice lost itself in silence like a drunken bee in the lotus.

It is evening, and the time for the flowers to close their petals.
Give me leave to sit by your side, and bid my lips to do the work that can be done in silence and in the dim light of stars.

XL

An unbelieving smile flits on your eyes when I come to you to take my leave.
I have done it so often that you think I will soon return.
To tell you the truth I have the same doubt in my mind.

For the spring days come again time after time; the full moon takes leave and comes on another visit, the flowers come again and blush upon their branches year after year, and it is likely that I take my leave only to come to you again.

But keep the illusion awhile; do not send it away with ungentle haste.
When I say I leave you for all time, accept it as true, and let a mist of tears for one moment deepen the dark rim of your eyes.
Then smile as archly as you like when I come again.
I long to speak the deepest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, for fear you should laugh.
That is why I laugh at myself and shatter my secret in jest.
I make light of my pain, afraid you should do so.

I long to tell you the truest words I have to say to you; but I dare not, being afraid that you would not believe them.
That is why I disguise them in untruth, saying the contrary of what I mean.
I make my pain appear absurd, afraid that you should do so.

I long to use the most precious words I have for you; but I dare not, fearing I should not be paid with like value.
That is why I give you hard names and boast of my callous strength.
I hurt you, for fear you should never know any pain.

I long to sit silent by you; but I dare not lest my heart come out at my lips.
That is why I prattle and chatter lightly and hide my heart behind words.
I rudely handle my pain, for fear you should do so.

I long to go away from your side; but I dare not, for fear my cowardice should become known to you.
That is why I hold my head high and carelessly come into your presence.
Constant thrusts from your eyes keep my pain fresh for ever.
O mad, superbly drunk;
    If you kick open your doors and play the fool in public;
    If you empty your bag in a night, and snap your fingers at prudence;
    If you walk in curious paths and play with useless things;
    Reck not rhyme or reason;
    If unfurling your sails before the storm you snap the rudder in two,
    Then I will follow you, comrade, and be drunken and go to the dogs.

I have wasted my days and nights in the company of steady wise neighbours.
    Much knowing has turned my hair grey, and much watching has made my sight dim.
    For years I have gathered and heaped up scraps and fragments of things:
    Crush them and dance upon them, and scatter them all to the winds.
    For I know 'tis the height of wisdom to be drunken and go to the dogs.

Let all crooked scruples vanish, let me hopelessly lose my way.
    Let a gust of wild giddiness come and sweep me away from my anchors.
    The world is peopled with worthies, and workers, useful and clever.
    There are men who are easily first, and men who come decently after.
Let them be happy and prosper, and let me be foolishly futile.

For I know 'tis the end of all works to be drunken and go to the dogs.

I swear to surrender this moment all claims to the ranks of the decent.

I let go my pride of learning and judgment of right and of wrong.

I'll shatter memory's vessel, scattering the last drop of tears.

With the foam of the berry-red wine I will bathe and brighten my laughter.

The badge of the civil and staid I'll tear into shreds for the nonce.

I'll take the holy vow to be worthless, to be drunken and go to the dogs.

XLIII

No, my friends, I shall never be an ascetic, whatever you may say.

I shall never be an ascetic if she does not take the vow with me.

It is my firm resolve that if I cannot find a shady shelter and a companion for my penance, I shall never turn ascetic.

No, my friends, I shall never leave my hearth and home, and retire into the forest solitude, if rings no merry laughter in its echoing shade and if the end of no saffron mantle flutters in the wind; if its silence is not deepened by soft whispers.

I shall never be an ascetic.
XLIV

REVEREND sir, forgive this pair of sinners. Spring winds
to-day are blowing in wild eddies, driving dust and
deaf leaves away, and with them your lessons are all
lost.

Do not say, father, that life is a vanity.

For we have made truce with death for once, and only
for a few fragrant hours we two have been made
immortal.

Even if the King's army came and fiercely fell upon
us we should sadly shake our heads and say, "Brothers,
you are disturbing us. If you must have this noisy
game, go and clatter your arms elsewhere. Since only
for a few fleeting moments we have been made
immortal."

If friendly people came and flocked around us, we
should humbly bow to them and say, "This extravagant
good fortune is an embarrassment to us. Room is scarce
in the infinite sky where we dwell. For in the spring-
time flowers come in crowds, and the busy wings of
bees jostle each other. Our little heaven, where dwell
only we two immortals, is too absurdly narrow."

XLV

To the guests that must go bid God-speed and brush
away all traces of their steps.

Take to your bosom with a smile what is easy and
simple and near.

To-day is the festival of phantoms that know not
when they die.
Let your laughter be but a meaningless mirth like twinkles of light on the ripples.
Let your life lightly dance on the edges of Time like dew on the tip of a leaf.
Strike in chords from your harp fitful momentary rhythms.

XLVI

YOU left me and went on your way.
I thought I should mourn for you and set your solitary image in my heart wrought in a golden song.
But ah, my evil fortune, time is short.

Youth wanes year after year; the spring days are fugitive; the frail flowers die for nothing, and the wise man warns me that life is but a dewdrop on the lotus leaf.
Should I neglect all this to gaze after one who has turned her back on me?
That would be rude and foolish, for time is short.

Then, come, my rainy nights with pattering feet; smile, my golden autumn; come, careless April, scattering your kisses abroad.
You come, and you, and you also?
'My loves, you know we are mortals. Is it wise to break one’s heart for the one who takes her heart away? For time is short.

It is sweet to sit in a corner to muse and write in rhymes that you are all my world.
It is heroic to hug one’s sorrow and determine not to be consoled.
But a fresh face peeps across my door and raises its eyes to my eyes.
I cannot but wipe away my tears and change the tune of my song.
For time is short.

XLVII
If you would have it so, I will end my singing.
If it sets your heart aflutter, I will take away my eyes from your face.
If it suddenly startles you in your walk, I will step aside and take another path.
If it confuses you in your flower-weaving, I will shun your lonely garden.
If it makes the water wanton and wild, I will not row my boat by your bank.

XLVIII
Free me from the bonds of your sweetness, my love!
No more of this wine of kisses.
This mist of heavy incense stifles my heart.
Open the doors, make room for the morning light.
I am lost in you, wrapped in the folds of your caresses.
Free me from your spells, and give me back the manhood to offer you my freed heart.

XLIX
I hold her hands and press her to my breast.
I try to fill my arms with her loveliness, to plunder her sweet smile with kisses, to drink her dark glances with my eyes.
Ah, but where is it? Who can strain the blue from the sky?
I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me, leaving only
the body in my hands.
Baffled and weary I come back.
How can the body touch the flower which only the
spirit may touch?

LOVE, my heart longs day and night for the meeting
with you—for the meeting that is like all-devouring
death.
Sweep me away like a storm; take everything I have;
break open my sleep and plunder my dreams. Rob me
of my world.
In that devastation, in the utter nakedness of spirit,
let us become one in beauty.
Alas for my vain desire! Where is this hope for union
except in thee, my God?

THEN finish the last song and let us leave.
Forget this night when the night is no more.
Whom do I try to clasp in my arms? Dreams can
never be made captive.
My eager hands press emptiness to my heart and it
bruises my breast.

WHY did the lamp go out?
I shaded it with my cloak to save it from the wind,
that is why the lamp went out.

Why did the flower fade?
I pressed it to my heart with anxious love, that is
why the flower faded.
Why did the stream dry up? 
I put a dam across it to have it for my use, that is why the stream dried up.

Why did the harp-string break? 
I tried to force a note that was beyond its power, that is why the harp-string is broken.

LIII

Why do you put me to shame with a look? 
I have not come as a beggar.
Only for a passing hour I stood at the end of your courtyard outside the garden hedge. 
Why do you put me to shame with a look?

Not a rose did I gather from your garden, not a fruit did I pluck. 
I humbly took my shelter under the wayside shade where every strange traveller may stand.  
Not a rose did I pluck.

Yes, my feet were tired, and the shower of rain came down. 
The winds cried out among the swaying bamboo branches. 
The clouds ran across the sky as though in the flight from defeat. 
My feet were tired.

I know not what you thought of me or for whom you were waiting at your door. 
Flashes of lightning dazzled your watching eyes.
How could I know that you could see me where I stood in the dark?
I know not what you thought of me.

The day is ended, and the rain has ceased for a moment.
I leave the shadow of the tree at the end of your garden and this seat on the grass.
It has darkened; shut your door; I go my way.
The day is ended.

LIV
WHERE do you hurry with your basket this late evening when the marketing is over?
They all have come home with their burdens; the moon peeps from above the village trees.
The echoes of the voices calling for the ferry run across the dark water to the distant swamp where wild ducks sleep.
Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over?

Sleep has laid her fingers upon the eyes of the earth.
The nests of the crows have become silent, and the murmurs of the bamboo leaves are silent.
The labourers home from their fields spread their mats in the courtyards.
Where do you hurry with your basket when the marketing is over?

LV
It was midday when you went away.
The sun was strong in the sky.
I had done my work and sat alone on my balcony when you went away.

Fitful gusts came winnowing through the smells of many distant fields.
The doves cooed tireless in the shade, and a bee strayed in my room humming the news of many distant fields.

The village slept in the noonday heat. The road lay deserted.
In sudden fits the rustling of the leaves rose and died.
I gazed at the sky and wove in the blue the letters of a name I had known, while the village slept in the noonday heat.

I had forgotten to braid my hair. The languid breeze played with it upon my cheek.
The river ran unruffled under the shady bank.
The lazy white clouds did not move.
I had forgotten to braid my hair.

It was midday when you went away.
The dust of the road was hot and the fields panting.
The doves cooed among the dense leaves.
I was alone in my balcony when you went away.

LVI
I was one among many women busy with the obscure daily tasks of the household.
Why did you single me out and bring me away from the cool shelter of our common life?
Love unexpressed is sacred. It shines like gems in the
gloom of the hidden heart. In the light of the curious
day it looks pitifully dark.
Ah, you broke through the cover of my heart and
dragged my trembling love into the open place, destroy-
ing for ever the shady corner where it hid its nest.

The other women are the same as ever.
No one has peeped into their inmost being, and they
themselves know not their own secret.
Lightly they smile, and weep, chatter, and work.
Daily they go to the temple, light their lamps, and fetch
water from the river.

I hoped my love would be saved from the shivering
shame of the shelterless, but you turn your face away.
Yes, your path lies open before you, but you have cut
off my return, and left me stripped naked before the
world with its lidless eyes staring night and day.

LVII

I PLUCKED your flower, O world!
I pressed it to my heart and the thorn pricked.
When the day waned and it darkened, I found that
the flower had faded, but the pain remained.

More flowers will come to you with perfume and
pride, O world!
But my time for flower-gathering is over, and through
the dark night I have not my rose, only the pain
remains.
LVIII

ONE morning in the flower garden a blind girl came to offer me a flower-chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.
I put it round my neck, and tears came to my eyes.
I kissed her and said, "You are blind even as the flowers are.
"You yourself know not how beautiful is your gift."

LIX

O woman, you are not merely the handiwork of God, but also of men; these are ever endowing you with beauty from their hearts.

Poets are weaving for you a web with threads of golden imagery; painters are giving your form ever new immortality.

The sea gives its pearls, the mines their gold, the summer gardens their flowers to deck you, to cover you, to make you more precious.

The desire of men's hearts has shed its glory over your youth.
You are one-half woman and one-half dream.

LX

AMIDST the rush and roar of life, O Beauty, carved in stone, you stand mute and still, alone and aloof.

Great Time sits enamoured at your feet and murmurs:
"Speak, speak to me, my love; speak, my bride!"

But your speech is shut up in stone, O Immovable Beauty!

LXI

PEACE, my heart, let the time for the parting be sweet.
Let it not be a death but completeness.
Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.
Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the wings over the nest.
Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like the flower of the night.
Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say your last words in silence.
I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your way.

LXII

In the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life.

Her house stood at the end of a desolate street.
In the evening breeze her pet peacock sat drowsing on its perch, and the pigeons were silent in their corner.

She set her lamp down by the portal and stood before me.
She raised her large eyes to my face and mutely asked, "Are you well, my friend?"
I tried to answer, but our language had been lost and forgotten.

I thought and thought; our names would not come to my mind.
Tears shone in her eyes. She held up her right hand to me. I took it and stood silent.

Our lamp had flickered in the evening breeze and died.
TRAVELLER, must you go?
The night is still and the darkness swoons upon the forest.
The lamps are bright in our balcony, the flowers all fresh, and the youthful eyes still awake.
Is the time for your parting come?
Traveller, must you go?

We have not bound your feet with our entreating arms.
Your doors are open. Your horse stands saddled at the gate.
If we have tried to bar your passage it was but with our songs.
Did we ever try to hold you back it was but with our eyes.
Traveller, we are helpless to keep you. We have only our tears.

What quenchless fire glows in your eyes?
What restless fever runs in your blood?
What call from the dark urges you?
What awful incantation have you read among the stars in the sky, that with a sealed secret message the night entered your heart, silent and strange?

If you do not care for merry meetings, if you must have peace, weary heart, we shall put our lamps out and silence our harps.
We shall sit still in the dark in the rustle of leaves, and the tired moon will shed pale rays on your window.
O traveller, what sleepless spirit has touched you from the heart of the midnight?
LXIV

I spent my day on the scorching hot dust of the road.
Now, in the cool of the evening, I knock at the door
of the inn. It is deserted and in ruins.
A grim ash tree spreads its hungry clutching roots
through the gaping fissures of the walls.

Days have been when wayfarers came here to wash
their weary feet.
They spread their mats in the courtyard in the dim
light of the early moon, and sat and talked of strange
lands.
They woke refreshed in the morning when birds
made them glad, and friendly flowers nodded their
heads at them from the wayside.
But no lighted lamp awaited me when I came here.
The black smudges of smoke left by many a for-
gotten evening lamp stare, like blind eyes, from the
wall.
Fireflies flit in the bush near the dried-up pond, and
bamboo branches fling their shadows on the grass-grown
path.
I am the guest of no one at the end of my day.
The long night is before me, and I am tired.

LXV

Is that your call again?
The evening has come. Weariness clings round me
like the arms of entreat ing love.
Do you call me?

I had given all my day to you, cruel mistress, must
you also rob me of my night?
Somewhere there is an end to everything, and the
loneness of the dark is one's own.
Must your voice cut through it and smite me?

Has the evening no music of sleep at your gate?
Do the silent-winged stars never climb the sky above
your pitiless tower?
Do the flowers never drop on the dust in soft death
in your garden?

Must you call me, you unquiet one?
Then let the sad eyes of love vainly watch and weep.
Let the lamp burn in the lonely house.
Let the ferry-boat take the weary labourers to their
home.
I leave behind my dreams and I hasten to your call.

LXVI

A WANDERING madman was seeking the touchstone,
with matted locks; tawny and dust-laden, and body
worn to a shadow, his lips tight-pressed, like the shut-
up doors of his heart, his burning eyes like the lamp of
a glow-worm seeking its mate.

Before him the endless ocean roared.
The garrulous waves ceaselessly talked of hidden
treasures, mocking the ignorance that knew not their
meaning.
Maybe he now had no hope remaining, yet he would
not rest, for the search had become his life,—
Just as the ocean for ever lifts its arms to the sky for
the unattainable—
Just as the stars go in circles, yet seeking a goal that can never be reached—
Even so on the lonely shore the madman with dusty tawny locks still roamed in search of the touchstone.

One day a village boy came up and asked, "Tell me, where did you come at this golden chain about your waist?"
The madman started—the chain that once was iron was verily gold; it was not a dream, but he did not know when it had changed.
He struck his forehead wildly—where, O where had he without knowing it achieved success?
It had grown into a habit, to pick up pebbles and touch the chain, and to throw them away without looking to see if a change had come; thus the madman found and lost the touchstone.

The sun was sinking low in the west, the sky was of gold.
The madman returned on his footsteps to seek anew the lost treasure, with his strength gone, his body bent, and his heart in the dust, like a tree uprooted.

LXVII

Though the evening comes with slow steps and has signalled for all songs to cease;
Though your companions have gone to their rest and you are tired;
Though fear broods in the dark and the face of the sky is veiled;
Yet, bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.
That is not the gloom of the leaves of the forest, that is the sea swelling like a dark black snake.
That is not the dance of the flowering jasmine, that is flashing foam.
Ah, where is the sunny green shore, where is your nest?
Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

The lone night lies along your path, the dawn sleeps behind the shadowy hills.
The stars hold their breath counting the hours, the feeble moon swims the deep night.
Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

There is no hope, no fear for you.
There is no word, no whisper, no cry.
There is no home, no bed of rest.
There is only your own pair of wings and the pathless sky.
Bird, O my bird, listen to me, do not close your wings.

LXVIII

None lives for ever, brother, and nothing lasts for long. Keep that in mind and rejoice.
Our life is not the one old burden, our path is not the one long journey.
One sole poet has not to sing one aged song.
The flower fades and dies; but he who wears the flower has not to mourn for it for ever.
Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

There must come a full pause to weave perfection into music.
Life droops toward its sunset to be drowned in the
golden shadows.
Love must be called from its play to drink sorrow
and be borne to the heaven of tears.
Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

We hasten to gather our flowers lest they are
plundered by the passing winds.
It quickens our blood and brightens our eyes to
snatch kisses that would vanish if we delayed.
Our life is eager, our desires are keen, for time tolls
the bell of parting.
Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

There is not time for us to clasp a thing and crush it
and fling it away to the dust.
The hours trip rapidly away, hiding their dreams in
their skirts.
Our life is short; it yields but a few days for love.
Were it for work and drudgery it would be endlessly
long.
Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.

Beauty is sweet to us, because she dances to the same
fleeting tune with our lives.
Knowledge is precious to us, because we shall never
have time to complete it.
All is done and finished in the eternal Heaven.
But earth’s flowers of illusion are kept eternally fresh
by death.
Brother, keep that in mind and rejoice.
LXIX

I HUNT for the golden stag.
You may smile, my friends, but I pursue the vision that eludes me.
I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands, because I am hunting for the golden stag.
You come and buy in the market and go back to your homes laden with goods, but the spell of the homeless winds has touched me I know not when and where.
I have no care in my heart; all my belongings I have left far behind me.
I run across hills and dales, I wander through nameless lands—because I am hunting for the golden stag.

LXX

I REMEMBER a day in my childhood I floated a paper boat in the ditch.
It was a wet day of July; I was alone and happy over my play.
I floated my paper boat in the ditch.

Suddenly the storm-clouds thickened, winds came in gusts, and rain poured in torrents.
Ralls of muddy water rushed and swelled the stream and sunk my boat.
Bitterly I thought in my mind that the storm came on purpose to spoil my happiness; all its malice was against me.

The cloudy day of July is long to-day, and I have been musing over all those games in life wherein I was loser.
I was blaming my fate for the many tricks it played on me, when suddenly I remembered the paper boat that sank in the ditch.

LXXI

The day is not yet done, the fair is not over, the fair on the river-bank.
I had feared that my time had been squandered and my last penny lost.
But no, my brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The selling and buying are over.
All the dues on both sides have been gathered in, and it is time for me to go home.
But, gatekeeper, do you ask for your toll?
Do not fear, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The lull in the wind threatens storm, and the lowering clouds in the west bode no good.
The hushed water waits for the wind.
I hurry to cross the river before the night overtakes me.

O ferryman, you want your fee!
Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

In the wayside under the tree sits the beggar. Alas, he looks at my face with a timid hope!
He thinks I am rich with the day's profit.
Yes, brother, I have still something left. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

The night grows dark and the road lonely. Fireflies gleam among the leaves.
Who are you that follow me with stealthy silent steps?
Ah, I know, it is your desire to rob me of all my gains. I will not disappoint you!
For I still have something left, and my fate has not cheated me of everything.

At midnight I reach home. My hands are empty.
You are waiting with anxious eyes at my door, sleepless and silent.
Like a timorous bird you fly to my breast with eager love.
Ay, ay, my God, much remains still. My fate has not cheated me of everything.

LXXII

With days of hard travail I raised a temple. It had no doors or windows, its walls were thickly built with massive stones.
I forgot all else, I shunned all the world, I gazed in rapt contemplation at the image I had set upon the altar.
It was always night inside, and lit by the lamps of perfumed oil.
The ceaseless smoke of incense wound my heart in its heavy coils.
Sleepless, I carved on the walls fantastic figures in
mazy bewildering lines—winged horses, flowers with human faces, women with limbs like serpents.

No passage was left anywhere through which could enter the song of birds, the murmur of leaves, or hum of the busy village.

The only sound that echoed in its dark dome was that of incantations which I chanted.

My mind became keen and still like a pointed flame, my senses swooned in ecstasy.

I knew not how time passed till the thunderstone had struck the temple, and a pain stung me through the heart.

The lamp looked pale and ashamed; the carvings on the walls, like chained dreams, stared meaningless in the light as they would fain hide themselves.

I looked at the image on the altar. I saw it smiling and alive with the living touch of God. The night I had imprisoned had spread its wings and vanished.

LXXIII

INFINITE wealth is not yours, my patient and dusky mother dust!

You toil to fill the mouths of your children, but food is scarce.

The gift of gladness that you have for us is never perfect.

The toys that you make for your children are fragile.

You cannot satisfy all our hungry hopes, but should I desert you for that?

Your smile which is shadowed with pain is sweet to my eyes.
Your love which knows not fulfilment is dear to my heart.
From your breast you have fed us with life but not immortality, that is why your eyes are ever wakeful.
For ages you are working with colour and song, yet your heaven is not built, but only its sad suggestion.
Over your creations of beauty there is the mist of tears.
I will pour my songs into your mute heart, and my love into your love.
I will worship you with labour.
I have seen your tender face and I love your mournful dust, Mother Earth.

LXXIV

In the world's audience hall the simple blade of grass sits on the same carpet with the sunbeam and the stars of midnight.
Thus my songs share their seats in the heart of the world with the music of the clouds and forests.
But, you man of riches, your wealth has no part in the simple grandeur of the sun's glad gold and the mellow gleam of the musing moon.
The blessing of the all-embracing sky is not shed upon it.
And when death appears, it pales and withers and crumbles into dust.

LXXV

At midnight the would-be ascetic announced:
"This is the time to give up my home and seek for God. Ah, who has held me so long in delusion here?"
God whispered, "I," but the ears of the man were stopped.

With a baby asleep at her breast lay his wife, peacefully sleeping on one side of the bed.

The man said, "Who are ye that have fooled me so long?"

The voice said again, "They are God," but he heard it not.

The baby cried out in its dream, nestling close to its mother.

God commanded, "Stop, fool, leave not thy home," but still he heard not.

God sighed and complained, "Why does my servant wander to seek me, forsaking me?"

LXXVI

The fair was on before the temple. It had rained from the early morning and the day came to its end.

Brighter than all the gladness of the crowd was the bright smile of a girl who bought for a farthing a whistle of palm leaf.

The shrill joy of that whistle floated above all laughter and noise.

An endless throng of people came and jostled together. The road was muddy, the river in flood, the field under water in ceaseless rain.

Greater than all the troubles of the crowd was a little boy's trouble—he had not a farthing to buy a painted stick.

His wistful eyes gazing at the shop made this whole meeting of men so pitiful.
LXXVII

The workman and his wife from the west country are to make bricks for the kiln.

Their little daughter goes to the landing-place by the river; there she has no end of scouring and scrubbing of pots and pans.

Her little brother, with shaven head and brown, naked, mud-covered limbs, follows after her and waits patiently on the high bank at her bidding.

She goes back home with the full pitcher poised on her head, the shining brass pot in her left hand, holding the child with her right—she the tiny servant of her mother, grave with the weight of the household cares.

One day I saw this naked boy sitting with legs outstretched.

In the water his sister sat rubbing a drinking-pot with a handful of earth, turning it round and round.

Near by a soft-haired lamb stood grazing along the bank.

It came close to where the boy sat and suddenly bleated aloud, and the child started up and screamed.

His sister left off cleaning her pot and ran up.

She took up her brother in one arm and the lamb in the other, and dividing her caresses between them bound in one bond of affection the offspring of beast and man.

LXXVIII

It was in May. The sultry noon seemed endlessly long. The dry earth gaping with thirst in the heat.

When I heard from the riverside a voice calling, "Come, my darling!"

I shut my book and opened the window to look out.
I saw a big buffalo with mud-stained hide standing near the river with placid, patient eyes; and a youth, knee-deep in water, calling it to its bath.

I smiled amused and felt a touch of sweetness in my heart.

LXXIX

I often wonder where lie hidden the boundaries of recognition between man and the beast whose heart knows no spoken language.

Through what primal paradise in a remote morning of creation ran the simple path by which their hearts visited each other?

Those marks of their constant tread have not been effaced though their kinship has been long forgotten.

Yet suddenly in some wordless music the dim memory wakes up and the beast gazes into the man’s face with a tender trust, and the man looks down into its eyes with amused affection.

It seems that the two friends meet masked, and vaguely know each other through the disguise.

LXXX

With a glance of your eyes you could plunder all the wealth of songs struck from poets’ harps, fair woman!

But for their praises you have no ear, therefore I come to praise you.

You could humble at your feet the proudest heads in the world.

But it is your loved ones, unknown to fame, whom you choose to worship, therefore I worship you.

The perfection of your arms would add glory to kingly splendour with their touch.
But you use them to sweep away the dust, and to make clean your humble home, therefore I am filled with awe.

LXXXI

Why do you whisper so faintly in my ears, O Death, my Death?

When the flowers droop in the evening and cattle come back to their stalls, you stealthily come to my side and speak words that I do not understand.

Is this how you must woo and win me, with the opiate of drowsy murmur and cold kisses, O Death, my Death?

Will there be no proud ceremony for our wedding?

Will you not tie up with a wreath your tawny coiled locks?

Is there none to carry your banner before you, and will not the night be on fire with your red torch-lights, O Death, my Death?

Come with your conch-shells sounding, come in the sleepless night.

Dress me with a crimson mantle, grasp my hand and take me.

Let your chariot be ready at my door with your horses neighing impatiently.

Raise my veil and look at my face proudly, O Death, my Death!

LXXXII

We are to play the game of death to-night, my bride and I.

The night is black, the clouds in the sky are capricious, and the waves are raving at sea.
We have left our bed of dreams, flung open the door and come out, my bride and I.

We sit upon a swing, and the storm-winds give us a wild push from behind.

My bride starts up with fear and delight, she trembles and clings to my breast.

Long have I served her tenderly.

I made for her a bed of flowers and I closed the doors to shut out the rude light from her eyes.

I kissed her gently on her lips and whispered softly in her ears till she half swooned in languor.

She was lost in the endless mist of vague sweetness.

She answered not to my touch, my songs failed to arouse her.

To-night has come to us the call of the storm from the wild.

My bride has shivered and stood up, she has clasped my hand and come out.

Her hair is flying in the wind, her veil is fluttering, her garland rustles over her breast.

The push of death has swung her into life.

We are face to face and heart to heart, my bride and I.

LXXXIII

She dwelt on the hillside by the edge of a maize-field, near the spring that flows in laughing rills through the solemn shadows of ancient trees. The women came there to fill their jars, and travellers would sit there to rest and talk. She worked and dreamed daily to the tune of the bubbling stream.

One evening the stranger came down from the cloud-hidden peak; his locks were tangled like drowsy snakes.
We asked in wonder, "Who are you?" He answered not but sat by the garrulous stream and silently gazed at the hut where she dwelt. Our hearts quaked in fear and we came back home when it was night.

Next morning when the women came to fetch water at the spring by the deodar trees, they found the doors open in her hut, but her voice was gone and where was her smiling face? The empty jar lay on the floor and her lamp had burnt itself out in the corner. No one knew where she had fled to before it was morning—and the stranger had gone.

In the month of May the sun grew strong and the snow melted, and we sat by the spring and wept. We wondered in our mind, "Is there a spring in the land where she has gone and where she can fill her vessel in these hot thirsty days?" And we asked each other in dismay, "Is there a land beyond these hills where we live?"

It was a summer night; the breeze blew from the south; and I sat in her deserted room where the lamp stood still unlit. When suddenly from before my eyes the hills vanished like curtains drawn aside. "Ah, it is she who comes. How are you, my child? Are you happy? But where can you shelter under this open sky? And, alas! our spring is not here to allay your thirst."

"Here is the same sky," she said, "only free from the fencing hills,—this is the same stream grown into a river,—the same earth widened into a plain." "Everything is here," I sighed, "only we are not." She smiled sadly and said, "You are in my heart." I woke up and heard the babbling of the stream and the rustling of the deodars at night.
LXXXIV

Over the green and yellow rice-fields sweep the shadows of the autumn clouds followed by the swift-chasing sun.

The bees forget to sip their honey; drunken with light they foolishly hover and hum.

The ducks in the islands of the river clamour in joy for mere nothing.

Let none go back home, brothers, this morning, let none go to work.

Let us take the blue sky by storm and plunder space as we run.

Laughter floats in the air like foam on the flood.

Brothers, let us squander our morning in futile songs.

LXXXV

Who are you, reader, reading my poems an hundred years hence?

I cannot send you one single flower from this wealth of the spring, one single streak of gold from yonder clouds.

Open your doors and look abroad.

From your blossoming garden gather fragrant memories of the vanished flowers of an hundred years before.

In the joy of your heart may you feel the living joy that sang one spring morning, sending its glad voice across an hundred years.
CHITRA
This lyrical drama is based on the following story from the *Mahabharata*.

In the course of his wanderings, in fulfilment of a vow of penance, Arjuna came to Manipur. There he saw Chitrāngadā, the beautiful daughter of Chitravāhana, the king of the country. Smitten with her charms, he asked the king for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Chitravāhana asked him who he was, and learning that he was Arjuna the Pandava, told him that Prabhanjana, one of his ancestors in the kingly line of Manipur, had long been childless. In order to obtain an heir, he performed severe penances. Pleased with these austerities, the god Shiva gave him this boon, that he and his successors should each have one child. It so happened that the promised child had invariably been a son. He, Chitravāhana, was the first to have only a daughter Chitrāngadā to perpetuate the race. He had, therefore, always treated her as a son, and had made her his heir. Continuing, the king said:

"The one son that will be born to her must be the perpetuator of my race. That son will be the price that I shall demand for this marriage. You can take her, if you like, on this condition."

Arjuna promised and took Chitrāngadā to wife, and lived in her father's capital for three years. When a son was born to them, he embraced her with affection, and taking leave of her and her father, set out again on his travels.
THE CHARACTERS

Gods:

MADANA (Eros)

VASANTA (Lycoris)

Mortals:

CHITRA, daughter of the King of Manipur

ARJUNA, a prince of the house of the Kurus. He is of the Kshatriya or "warrior" caste, and during the action is living as a Hermit retired in the forest

Villagers from an outlying district of Manipur

Note.—The dramatic poem "Chitra" has been performed in India without scenery—the actors being surrounded by the audience. Proposals for its production here having been made to the author, he went through this translation and provided stage directions, but wished these omitted if it were printed as a book.
CHITRA

SCENE I

Chitra. Art thou the god with the five darts, the Lord of Love?

Madana. I am he who was the first born in the heart of the Creator. I bind in bonds of pain and bliss the lives of men and women!

Chitra. I know, I know what that pain is and those bonds.—And who art thou, my lord?

Vasanta. I am his friend—Vasanta—the King of the Seasons. Death and decrepitude would wear the world to the bone but that I follow them and constantly attack them. I am Eternal Youth.

Chitra. I bow to thee, Lord Vasanta.

Madana. But what stern vow is thine, fair stranger? Why dost thou wither thy fresh youth with penance and mortification? Such a sacrifice is not fit for the worship of love. Who art thou and what is thy prayer?

Chitra. I am Chitra, the daughter of the kingly house of Manipur. With godlike grace Lord Shiva promised to my royal grandsire an unbroken line of male descent. Nevertheless, the divine word proved powerless to change the spark of life in my mother's womb—so invincible was my nature, woman though I be.

Madana. I know, that is why thy father brings thee up as his son. He has taught thee the use of the bow and all the duties of a king.

Chitra. Yes, that is why I am dressed in man's attire
and have left the seclusion of a woman's chamber. I know no feminine wiles for winning hearts. My hands are strong to bend the bow, but I have never learnt Cupid's archery, the play of eyes.

Madana. That requires no schooling, fair one. The eye does its work untaught, and he knows how well, who is struck in the heart.

Chitra. One day in search of game I roved alone to the forest on the bank of the Purna river. Tying my horse to a tree-trunk I entered a dense thicket on the track of a deer. I found a narrow sinuous path meandering through the dusk of the entangled boughs, the foliage vibrated with the chirping of crickets, when of a sudden I came upon a man lying on a bed of dried leaves, across my path. I asked him haughtily to move aside, but he heeded not. Then with the sharp end of my bow I pricked him in contempt. Instantly he leapt up with straight, tall limbs, like a sudden tongue of fire from a heap of ashes. An amused smile flickered round the corners of his mouth, perhaps at the sight of my boyish countenance. Then for the first time in my life I felt myself a woman, and knew that a man was before me.

Madana. At the auspicious hour I teach the man and the woman this supreme lesson to know themselves. What happened after that?

Chitra. With fear and wonder I asked him, "Who are you?" "I am Arjuna," he said, "of the great Kuru clan." I stood petrified like a statue, and forgot to do him obeisance. Was this indeed Arjuna, the one great idol of my dreams? Yes, I had long ago heard how he had vowed a twelve-years' celibacy. Many a day my young ambition had spurred me on to break my lance
with him, to challenge him in disguise to single combat, and prove my skill in arms against him. Ah, foolish heart, whither fled thy presumption? Could I but exchange my youth with all its aspirations for the clod of earth under his feet, I should deem it a most precious grace. I knew not in what whirlpool of thought I was lost, when suddenly I saw him vanish through the trees. O foolish woman, neither didst thou greet him, nor speak a word, nor beg forgiveness, but stoodest like a barbarian boor while he contemptuously walked away! . . . Next morning I laid aside my man's clothing. I donned bracelets, anklets, waist-chain, and a gown of purple-red silk. The unaccustomed dress clung about my shrinking shame; but I hastened on my quest, and found Arjuna in the forest temple of Shiva.

Madana. Tell me the story to the end. I am the heart-born god, and I understand the mystery of these impulses.

Chitra. Only vaguely can I remember what things I said, and what answer I got. Do not ask me to tell you all. Shame fell on me like a thunderbolt, yet could not break me to pieces, so utterly hard, so like a man am I. His last words as I walked home pricked my ears like red-hot needles. "I have taken the vow of celibacy. I am not fit to be thy husband!" Oh, the vow of a man! Surely thou knowest, thou god of love, that unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered the merits of their lifelong penance at the feet of a woman. I broke my bow in two and burnt my arrows in the fire. I hated my strong, lithe arm, scored by drawing the bow-string. O Love, god Love, thou hast laid low in the dust the vain pride of my manlike strength; and all my man's training lies crushed under thy feet. Now

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teach me thy lessons; give me the power of the weak and
the weapon of the unarmed hand.

Madana. I will be thy friend. I will bring the world-
conquering Arjuna a captive before thee, to accept his
rebellion's sentence at thy hand.

Chitra. Had I but the time needed, I could with his
heart by slow degrees, and ask no help of the gods. I
would stand by his side as a comrade, drive the fierce
horses of his war-chariot, attend him in the pleasures
of the chase, keep guard at night at the entrance of his
tent, and help him in all the great duties of a Kshatriya,
rescuing the weak, and meting out justice where it is
due. Surely at last the day would have come for him to
look at me and wonder, "What boy is this? Has one of
my slaves in a former life followed me like my good
deeds into this?" I am not the woman who nourishes
her despair in lonely silence, feeding it with nightly
tears and covering it with the daily patient smile, a
widow from her birth. The flower of my desire shall
never drop into the dust before it has ripened to fruit.
But it is the labour of a lifetime to make one's true self
known and honoured. Therefore I have come to thy
door, thou world-vanquishing Love, and thou, Vasanta,
youthful Lord of the Seasons, take from my young body
this primal injustice, an unattractive plainness. For a
single day make me superbly beautiful, even as beauti-
ful as was the sudden blooming of love in my heart.
Give me but one brief day of perfect beauty, and I will
answer for the days that follow.

Madana. Lady, I grant thy prayer.

Vasanta. Not for the short span of a day, but for one
whole year the charm of spring blossoms shall nestle
round thy limbs.
SCENE II

Arjuna. Was I dreaming or was what I saw by the lake truly there? Sitting on the mossy turf, I mused over bygone years in the sloping shadows of the evening, when slowly there came out from the folding darkness of foliage an apparition of beauty in the perfect form of a woman, and stood on a white slab of stone at the water's brink. It seemed that the heart of the earth must heave in joy under her bare white feet. Methought the vague veilings of her body should melt in ecstasy into air as the golden mist of dawn melts from off the snowy peak of the eastern hill. She bowed herself above the shining mirror of the lake and saw the reflection of her face. She started up in awe and stood still; then smiled, and with a careless sweep of her left arm unloosed her hair and let it trail on the earth at her feet. She bared her bosom and looked at her arms, so flawlessly modelled, and instinct with an exquisite caress. Bending her head she saw the sweet blossoming of her youth and the tender bloom and blush of her skin. She beamed with a glad surprise. So, if the white lotus-bud on opening her eyes in the morning were to arch her neck and see her shadow in the water, would she wonder at herself the livelong day. But a moment after the smile passed from her face and a shade of sadness crept into her eyes. She bound up her tresses, drew her veil over her arms, and sighing slowly, walked away like a beauteous evening fading into the night. To me the supreme fulfilment of desire seemed to have been revealed in a flash and then to have vanished. . . . But who is it that pushes the door?

(Enter Chitra, dressed as a woman)
Ah! it is she. Quiet, my heart!

Fear me not, lady! I am a Kshatriya.

Chitra. Honoured sir, you are my guest. I live in this temple. I know not in what way I can show you hospitality.

Arjuna. Fair lady, the very sight of you is indeed the highest hospitality. If you will not take it amiss I would ask you a question.

Chitra. You have permission.

Arjuna. What stern vow keeps you immured in this solitary temple, depriving all mortals of a vision of so much loveliness?

Chitra. I harbour a secret desire in my heart, for the fulfilment of which I offer daily prayers to Lord Shiva.

Arjuna. Alas, what can you desire, you who are the desire of the whole world? From the easternmost hill on whose summit the morning sun first prints his fiery foot to the end of the sunset land have I travelled. I have seen whatever is most precious, beautiful and great on the earth. My knowledge shall be yours, only say for what or for whom you seek.

Chitra. He whom I seek is known to all.

Arjuna. Indeed! Who may this favourite of the gods be, whose fame has captured your heart?

Chitra. Sprung from the highest of all royal houses, the greatest of all heroes is he.

Arjuna. Lady, offer not such wealth of beauty as is yours on the altar of false reputation. Spurious fame spreads from tongue to tongue like the fog of the early dawn before the sun rises. Tell me who in the highest of kingly lines is the supreme hero?

Chitra. Hermit, you are jealous of other men's fame. Do you not know that all over the world the royal house
of the Kurus is the most famous?

Arjuna. The house of the Kurus!

Chitra. And have you never heard of the greatest name of that far-famed house?

Arjuna. From your own lips let me hear it.

Chitra. Arjuna, the conqueror of the world. I have culled from the mouths of the multitude that imperishable name and hidden it with care in my maiden heart. Hermit, why do you look perturbed? Has that name only a deceitful glitter? Say so, and I will not hesitate to break this casket of my heart and throw the false gem to the dust.

Arjuna. Be his name and fame, his bravery and prowess false or true, for mercy's sake do not banish him from your heart—for he kneels at your feet even now.

Chitra. You, Arjuna!

Arjuna. Yes, I am he, the love-hungered guest at your door.

Chitra. Then it is not true that Arjuna has taken a vow of chastity for twelve long years?

Arjuna. But you have dissolved my vow even as the moon dissolves the night's vow of obscurity.

Chitra. Oh, shame upon you! What have you seen in me that makes you false to yourself? Whom do you seek in these dark eyes, in these milk-white arms, if you are ready to pay for her the price of your probity? Not my true self, I know. Surely this cannot be love, this is not man's highest homage to woman. Alas, that this frail disguise, the body, should make one blind to the light of the deathless spirit! Yes, now indeed I know, Arjuna, the fame of your heroic manhood is false.

Arjuna. Ah, I feel how vain is fame, the pride of prowess! Everything seems to me a dream. You alone

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are perfect; you are the wealth of the world, the end of all poverty, the goal of all efforts, the one woman! Others there are who can be but slowly known, while to see you for a moment is to see perfect completeness once and for ever.

Chitra. Alas, it is not I, not I, Arjuna! It is the deceit of a god. Go, go, my hero, go! Woo not falsehood, offer not your great heart to an illusion. Go!

·SCENE III

Chitra. No, impossible! To face that fervent gaze that almost grasps you like clutching hands of the hungry spirit within; to feel his heart struggling to break its bounds, urging its passionate cry through the entire body—and then to send him away like a beggar—no, impossible!

(Enter Madana and Vasanta)

Ah, god of love, what fearful flame is this with which thou hast enveloped me? I burn, and I burn whatever I touch.

Madana. I desire to know what happened last night.

Chitra. At evening I lay down on a grassy bed strewn with the petals of spring flowers, and recollected the wonderful praise of my beauty I had heard from Arjuna—drinking drop by drop the honey that I had stored during the long day. The history of my past life like that of my former existences was forgotten. I felt like a flower, which has but a few fleeting hours to listen to all the humming flatteries and whispered murmurs of the woodlands and then must lower its eyes from the sky, bend its head and at a breath give itself