



*POEMS BY SIGOURNEY THAYER*

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BY

SIGOURNEY THAYER

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For his daughter  
EUGENIE SIGOURNEY THAYER

## FOREWORD

**S**IGOURNEY THAYER was born in Southborough, Massachusetts, March 24, 1896. He went to Saint Mark's School, graduated in 1914 and then went to Amherst College. He entered World War I before graduation. He was with the 12th Aero Squadron and was Flight Commander. Later he transferred to the 95th Aero Squadron, which was a pursuit squadron, and was given a citation. It was during his early years that these poems were written.

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POEMS

*WHEN I WAS A CHILD*

WHEN I was a child, a little child,  
The golden hours were free;  
The songs of birds my heart beguiled,  
When I was a child, a little child,  
For swift were my racing thoughts, and wild,  
As the winds mad minstrelsy;  
And when my eyes were dimmed in sleep,  
I prayed the Lord my soul to keep.

But now the golden splendor dies,  
The shrivelled boughs are bare;  
No lispings leaves, no sweet birds cries,  
For now the golden splendor dies,  
And all the world in shadow lies,  
But in my heart, a prayer;  
And when dark waters shoreward creep  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

*BALLAD OF THE GOLDEN SCARECROW*

LONG were the shadows at close of day,  
Dark was the shaded lane,  
I glanced where the rustling river lay  
Flanked by the fields of grain,

I glanced where the rustling river rolled  
Towards the blaze of the western sky  
When a sparkle of silver, a glint of gold,  
Shone in my dazzled eye.

I said, 'tis indeed the silver gleam  
From a plumed and girded knight,  
Resting in prayer by the river stream,  
Bold hearted champion of right,

But as I stood gazing in raptured awe  
The sky to the westward paled,  
And my warrior changed to a man of straw  
High on a fence-pole nailed,

A bundle of rags to scare the crows  
Bleached by the wind and rain,  
With a can for a head, a kettle for nose  
And a mop to cover his brain,

And first did I laugh in a scoffing way  
At this dupe for plundering crows  
Till something within me seemed to say,  
Perhaps you are wrong, who knows?

For maybe this dangling form on the spike  
Is more of a knight than you,  
Since silver and drab look quite alike  
From different points of view.

*THE SINGING HEART*

WHEN all the world is going wrong  
And life new cares keeps bringing,  
I tune my laden heart with song,  
And find delight in singing.

The weariness of dreary days,  
The drabness of my living,  
Is lost amid the golden lays  
Which thrill with joyful giving.

So if you, too, are thrown, at times  
Through worlds devoid of gladness,  
With laughing songs and jingling rhymes  
Drive out that sordid sadness.

## *THE STRONG*

FAR to the East where the curve of the sea  
Meets with the line of the sky  
Stars rise out of eternity,  
Storm-driven clouds sweep by.

Twilight has faded, shadowed and grim,  
Deep in the flaring West,  
Gone is the gleam from the mountain's rim,  
Dark is each snow-capped crest.

Out of eternity courage shall rise  
Radiant as stars, divine;  
Strength from the mountain, light from the skies,  
Take them—the world is thine.

## LYRICS

### I

SOME seek to burst beyond life's narrow bars,  
Into new worlds and spheres their fancy runs;  
They search for wisdom higher than the stars,  
Scanning the sky for satellites and suns.

But what care I for glory, pomp, and pride;  
Let others seek the worlds their minds have planned,  
For all God ever dreamt of, sought for, tried,  
Flames deep within me when I touch your hand.

### II

The winding path at length must reach the wall;  
The endless road at last must meet the sea;  
Fighting the foe we either stand or fall,  
And nature shackles those who would be free.

But yet the pool wherein you lightly dream  
Stirs with unfathomed mysteries, my friend;  
Elusive as the dancing sunbeam's gleam  
You are, and ever will be to the end.

## *LIFE AND DEATH*

LIFE and death go hand in hand  
Through this world of ours so drear  
And the things we hold most dear  
Live but for a day, and pass  
Like a foot-print on the sand  
Or a breath upon a glass.

Sometimes, though, a passing breath  
Leaves upon the glass a trace  
Which all time cannot erase  
And for endless years there stands  
When all else has passed in death  
One small foot-print on the sands.



## *THY HEART*

Thy heart is a silver sounding lyre.  
To him alone it sings  
Whose fingers, burnt with new desire,  
Caress its silver strings.

Thy heart is his, his music thine,  
Clear-toned thy songs arise  
Light as the storm-cloud's gilded line  
Through deep star-scattered skies.

Soft as the surge of foam-flecked seas  
In a fluted cockle curled,  
Chiming immortal melodies  
From a dim forgotten world.

*AN IMITATION OF SWINBURNE*

If life were just pretending  
And all were but a dream  
I'd weave enchantments round you  
Till love and passion bound you  
In ecstasies unending,  
For you would be my queen,  
If life were just pretending  
And all were but a dream.

If life were but a story  
And I a mighty king  
My heart would ne'er aspire  
New kingdoms to acquire,  
But all my power and glory  
Before your feet I'd fling,  
If life were but a story  
And I a mighty king.

If life were filled with laughter  
And love were but a song,  
Our hearts, together clinging,  
Would thrill with joyful singing,  
And all our days hereafter  
Would cheerfully pass along,  
If life were filled with laughter  
And love were but a song.

If love were void of sorrow  
And life were free from pain  
My heart could bear to leave you  
And partings would not grieve you  
Since surely on the morrow  
We two would meet again,  
If love were void of sorrow  
And life were free from pain.

## VISIONS

OFTENTIMES, when shadows creep  
O'er the sky; when lulled to sleep  
By soft winds, I gently lie  
In the twilight, dreaming;  
When the moonbeams shine afar  
Through the dark, when each bright star  
Hangs above, a tiny spark  
In the heavens, gleaming;

Then it is that visions bright  
Flitter by, a wondrous sight,  
Whence they wander from and why  
Is beyond my knowing;  
But from out the dark they run  
Through the gloom, till one by one,  
Just as mist makes dim the moon,  
Fade they, fainter glowing.

Mighty kings before me pass  
In array, with shields of brass,  
Belts of gold and banners gay,  
Swords and spears agleaming;  
Stately queens with jewelled hair,  
Laughing boys and maidens fair  
Shyly blushing through their curls,  
Visions, though not seeming.

Tales they tell of death and hate,  
Tales of war and tourneys great,  
Tales of love ne'er told before,  
Fraught with pain and gladness;  
Sometimes laughter, rising clear,  
Fills the sky for all to hear,  
Sometimes, too, the laughter dies  
In a wail of sadness.

. . . . .  
When that voice from out the skies  
Calls at last and bids me rise,  
May these visions of the past  
Help me in my roaming;  
May these phantoms of the night  
Mark the way which leads to light  
Till I, too, at close of day,  
Vanish in the gloaming.

*TRIOLET*

I LOVE the soft, elusive gleam  
That streaks thy star-lit eyes;  
Too swift for child-like thought 'twould seem,  
I love the soft, elusive gleam,  
The echo of some early dream  
Which dances there and dies;  
I love the soft, elusive gleam  
That streaks thy star-lit eyes.

## TOMORROW

YOUTHFUL men and strong grow gray,  
Youthful eyes grow dimmer,  
All bright hopes of yesterday  
Now but faintly glimmer;  
From our hearts which once were free  
Gone is joy and gladness,  
So we wander aimlessly,  
Through a world of sadness.

We have lived in dear delight,  
We have had our laughter,  
We have danced throughout the night,  
Bitter tears come after,  
All bright hopes of higher things  
Now are gone forever,  
Darkness comes and with it brings  
Death and lost endeavor.

Is there, then, no hope at all  
Of another morning,  
Is there not one chance, though small,  
Of a new light dawning?  
Let me close my tired eyes  
From this world of sorrow  
Knowing that my soul will rise  
With the sun tomorrow.

*SONNET*

OH, let me live those early years again  
And may Youth clasp me in his strong embrace  
That I may meet life fairly, face to face  
With all its stinging joys and blissful pain;  
Alas! A faded flower, an old refrain,  
This tear-stained page my fingers faintly trace;  
These are but all, for Time, with fleeting pace,  
Speeds on, and only memories remain.

Might I but stand again where once I stood,  
Rekindled with that early fire divine,  
And o'er my trembling shoulders feel the hood  
Enshroud me in its fold before thy shrine,  
No dreams of youth, though stars had darkly set,  
Would ever link with memory—regret.



## *THE DREAM CHILD*

THOU of the dark and dreamy eyes  
Which tell their own sweet story,  
Within whose depths the cloudless skies  
Reflect celestial glory,  
Thy voice is but the echoing  
Of all the songs the angels sing.

Far, far between thy life and mine  
There flows a mighty ocean,  
Which drowns, beneath its stream, the sign  
Of all my deep devotion,  
But may my spirit lead thee on  
When every thought of me is gone.

When, in the night, thy heart is torn  
With sorrow, pain, and doubting,  
And when, without, the wind forlorn  
Begins its doleful shouting,  
Then, may my whispers of the past  
Uplift thy soul and hold thee fast.

Might I but always gaze within  
Thy dreamy eyes of wonder  
No evil thoughts or tempting sin  
Would tear my soul asunder,  
But all within me that was base  
Must die before thy wondrous face.

## *PRAYER*

God grant me, through the paths of life's endeavor,  
One touch of her small hand within my own,  
Then, though dark sorrows shadow me forever,  
Remembering, I shall not feel alone.

I do not ask for laurel-crowned successes  
To hearten me along sun-scattered ways,  
But may I dream of how her soft caresses  
Had brushed my flaming cheek in other days.

May her sweet voice, with echoes of my yearning,  
Float back to me on strong and guiding wings,  
Nor will I grudge my heart's relentless burning  
If only I may hear the song she sings.

## OUR WORLD

Our world has a far horizon  
Which skirts a wide, wide sky,  
But love, through cloud-drifts shining,  
With lesser lights combining,  
Has dimmed the star we used to reckon by.

For life with its cherished visions  
Our souls no longer yearn.  
What use are endless dreamings  
Before these brighter gleamings  
Whose golden rays our waking hearts discern?

We turn to the light, forgetting  
The ways our fathers trod,  
For deeper loves have brought us  
Across these silent waters  
To bow before new and greater God.

*AFTER ALL*

WHY think of things we never can forget,  
What use to weep when once the die is cast?  
The surging seas of life are deep and vast,  
And on their far horizon, suns have set.

All love is turned to longing and regret,  
For life is transient, youth is quickly past;  
Our joys delight us only while they last,  
But early sorrows linger with us yet.

So through a dreary world we trudge along  
With drooping heads and hearts that cannot know  
The joy of life that thrills the skylark's song,  
The radiance within the sunset's glow.

Yet should I, waking, chance to find that I  
Had gained the world, what else to do but die?

## *SAIN'T MARK'S*

*(To the tune of Senior Song, Amherst College)*

CHILDREN once, we gathered 'neath the Cloisters,  
Tossed in Life's strange, bewildering tide,  
Young and friendless, lost in new surroundings,  
Facing a life untried;  
Groping for hands to lead us on  
Turned we with waking hearts to you,  
Faithful guardian o'er the ivied portal,  
Lion, strong and true!

As we climb from youth to early manhood  
Conq'ring with courage, doubts and fears,  
In our hearts a bond that nought can sever  
Strengthens with passing years;  
Now a love no longer new  
Fans into flame these youthful sparks;  
Guide our feet to paths of greater glory,  
Lion of Saint Mark's!

## *THE DEAD*

I FEARED the lonely dead, so old were they,  
Decrepit, tired beings, ghastly white  
With withered breasts and eyes devoid of sight  
Forever mute beneath the sodden clay;  
I feared the lonely dead, and turned away  
From thoughts of sombre death and endless night;  
Thus, through the dismal hours I longed for light  
To drive my utter hopelessness away.

But now my nights are filled with flowered dreams  
Of singing warriors, beautiful and young,  
Strong men and boys within whose eyes there gleams  
The triumph song of worlds unknown, unsung;  
Grim fear has vanished, leaving in its stead  
The shining glory of the living dead.

*QUI ANTE DIEM PERIIT*

My blood-stained head wears a glittering crown  
Like mist on a stagnant river  
And a shower of stars has tumbled down  
From the hand of a bountiful giver.

Loosed at last are the silver dreams  
Which the shackles of life encumbered,  
And the golden sun more golden seems  
For my days and hours are numbered.

The dizzied heights I had hoped to try  
Are lost in the haze behind me,  
But the world I dreamed in lights the sky  
And its radiant rays shall find me.

So I do not weep though the lost winds moan,  
Though the sound of my voice be hollow,  
The dark blood burns but the choice was my own,  
Death leads me the way—I follow.

*AVE, AVIATOR!*

UPON the breath of worlds he rides serene,  
Aurora's brilliance shining in his eyes  
As o'er the death-strewn lines his planes careen,  
With wingèd challenge, through the flaming skies.

Triumphantly, his daring heart outsings  
The cries of foolish fear and vain alarms;  
God's glory dips with gold his soaring wings,  
"And underneath, the Everlasting Arms."



*MARCH 3rd 1918*

FROM the reel of the war's mad whirl,  
From its hoarse blood-strangled cry,  
I will turn to the dreams that lie  
In the dancing eyes of a girl;

I will turn to the thoughts of spring,  
Of blossomy boughs, wind-tossed,  
Till the shrieking of shells is lost  
In a far brook's murmuring;

I will cherish on death-scarred ways  
The charm of a tall red rose  
Whose lingering sweetness blows  
O'er the breath of desirous days;

And I'll hold through a world defiled  
By the daubs of a demon's art  
The bond of a proud young heart  
Where rise the glad songs of a child.

## *THE FLOWER GIRL*

THERE'S a little girl I know  
With eyes quite wide apart  
And golden hair,  
Who all night long sells flowers  
In a crowded, noisy place where music plays;  
She holds them in her little hands,  
Orchids and bright carnations,  
Walking about, among the silly, laughing faces,  
Until the rose tint leaves the softness of her cheeks  
And the corners of her little smiling mouth,  
Which she shows to all but keeps for one,  
Droop.

*TO JULIA WITH A BOOK OF POEMS*

JULIA, light of heart and limb,  
Blithe in all you do or say,  
In your glance is much of him  
Who is fighting far away,  
In your swift young eyes there gleams  
Sunlight from his shining dreams.

Take this book and read it through,  
Humble token joyfully sent,  
May its singing bring to you  
Courage, strength, and merriment,  
That your heart, like his, may be  
Straight and fearless, strong and free.

*TO MARJIE*

LITTLE Marjie—girl, so fair,  
Laughing eyes and golden hair,  
All my heart is lonely  
Longing so for you—  
Who you are or who you've been  
What your faults or what your sin  
Matter not, if only  
You will love me true.

In your smile the sunlight plays  
Brighter than your gay bouquets,  
Love and beauty blended  
In your face I see—  
Sell your flowers through the night  
Little princess of delight  
But when work is ended  
Come and dance with me.

*THE ROSE*

THE lily's breath is fair to greet,  
It roves with the wind on dancing feet  
Yielding its bloom to the lips that yearn  
Yet giving nor caring aught in return;

And the orchid, whose heavy blossoms stir  
With the scented breath of honeyed myrrh,  
Courts sweet desire from its lover's eyes  
Then swoons at the first caress and dies;

But the tall red rose—how it stings and clings  
As each soft exultant petal flings  
A kiss to the heart its briars entwine,  
Supple and swift and fragrant as wine.

*WIDE TILTED EYES*

WIDE tilted eyes,  
And a smile with a softness as rare  
As the fragrance of lilacs  
In rose-scented June;

Wide tilted eyes,  
And the gleam of spun-gold in your hair  
As the spray o'er dark waters  
Made bright by the moon.

Wide tilted eyes,  
With dark lashes that flutter and close,  
Too afraid, yet, to answer  
The glance in my own;

Wide tilted eyes,  
That are gleaming with love such as those  
Whom the Bards call immortal  
In dreams must have known.

*A BOUQUET FOR MY SICK-A-BED LADY*

WITH me, ('tis surely so  
With every one who sees you),  
No greater joy I'd know  
Might I but only please you,

So take these little flowers,  
And may they charm your eye  
And cause your ailing hours  
To pass more swiftly by.

And may whatever sweetness  
Their fragrance brings to you  
Delight the greater sweetness  
Which always clings to you.

*AN IMAGIST POEM*

WHENE'ER I look at you, I smile;  
Not laughingly;  
                    Though silver laughter,  
Soft, clear, bright delightful laughter,  
Rich in re-awakening echoes,  
Clings to you forever;

Not lightly meant—  
Though everything is light and fragrant  
Soft and sweetly meaningless  
When once your eyes, with dancing glance  
Entrancingly have caught  
The look in mine.

But sadly do I smile—  
For well I know that you are mine  
For one sweet fleeting moment only,  
That is all;  
                    Tomorrow I may raise my eyes  
To meet your lingering glance  
And find you—gone.



*DEDICATION*

SOME like the songs  
I sing, quite well,  
I've had them tell  
Me they were fine;

And others praise  
My songs, although  
They do not know  
The songs are mine;

One loves my songs  
Wholeheartedly,  
Alone for me  
Her spirit yearns,

Yet every song  
My thoughts create  
I dedicate  
To her who spurns.

## *THE RIDER*

The gray dust flurries under galloping hoofs. Behind, a mist rises from colorless hills. And shapeless clouds hide the crest of the mountains.

Whither are you hurrying, comrade? Your horse's flanks are flecked with crimson dyed foam, Your slouching form droops in the saddle, Your sightless eyes no longer watch for stones in the road or signs by the way.

The rider cannot answer. He has no thoughts for the mist behind nor the endless plain before.

Dark birds circle the starless sky and the flapping of their heavy wings beats time to the rising wind and thunder. He only hears in his ears the crying of meaningless voices and he rides forward toward the sound of a friendly shouting as if from a distant shore.

Whither are you hurrying, stranger? The city lies far behind, and it is only the echo of dead voices which you hear, calling you on to a wreck-strewn shore.

The gray dust flurries under galloping hoofs. Behind, a mist rises from colorless hills. And shapeless clouds hide the crest of the mountains.

*FROM THE FRENCH OF DE MUSSET*

We must be always loving many things  
To find at last the things we hold most dear,  
Horses and hounds, a wind-bent boat to steer,  
A rose, a girl, the song the wood-thrush sings;  
We must press on, nor heed the hand that clings,  
Say many times, farewell, shed many a tear,  
Leaving behind like flowers of yester-year  
But bitter scents from other longed-for springs.

Of all those transient joys we let slip by  
The best that's left us is an old-time friend;  
We quarrel, part, by chance again draw nigh,  
Hand touches hand, we smile, and in the end  
Remember, from old times long sped away,  
That love lives on, today as yesterday.

*NO WORD SHALL BE SPOKEN*

THOUGH I could . . . deck you with my jewelled  
rhyme  
And spread my songs a carpet at your feet  
Where men might trace unchanged through change-  
ful time  
Your face a pattern in sad songs or sweet.  
Though I could blow your honor o'er the earth  
Or strum your gentleness in silver lays  
Or trump abroad your beauty or your worth,  
Yet these, my dear, are all imperfect ways.  
Rather in muted mystery shall I keep  
The heart's short song.  
No words of mine can mar  
No words of mine enrich  
The bliss of sleep—the solace of soft prayer—a falling  
star,  
All lovely things that worship and rejoice,  
Shall weave a spell of silence for my voice.