

~~Jan. 11903~~

B237397

SWEET HOURS

BY

CARMEN SYLVA

DONATIUM

135830



LONDON

R. A. EVERETT & CO., LTD.

42 ESSEX STREET, W.C.

1904

[All rights reserved]

1956

Biblioteca Centrală Universitară

BUCUREȘTI

Cota

Inventar

79 162
C 135 830

pe 227/01

B.C.U. Bucuresti



C135830

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TO THE MEMORY OF QUEEN VICTORIA	I
A FRIEND	4
OUT OF THE DEEP	7
A CORONATION	10
DOWN THE STREAM	13
IN THE RUSHING WIND	16
UNDER THE SNOW	19
SOLITUDE	21
THE GNAT	24
REST.	27
THE SHADOW	32
THE GLOWWORM	35
A DREAM	37

Contents

IN THE DARK	40
THE SENTINEL	43
LETHE	47
A DEBTOR	51
"ENGANCE IS MINE," SAITH THE LORD	54
NIGHT	58
ROUSED	62
SADNESS	66
WHEN JOY IS DEAD	68
A ROOM	71
UNREST	74

TO THE MEMORY OF QUEEN
VICTORIA



THESE ever wakeful eyes are closed. They saw
Such grief, that they could see no more. The
heart—

That quick'ning pulse of nations—could not bear
Another throb of pain, and could not hear
Another cry of tortur'd motherhood.
Those uncomplaining lips, they sob no more
The soundless sobs of dark and burning tears,
That none have seen ; they smile no more, to breathe
A mother's comfort into aching hearts.

Sweet Hours

The patriarchal Queen, the monument
Of touching widowhood, of endless love,
And childlike purity—she sleeps. This night
Is watchful not. The restless hand, that slave
To duty, to a mastermind, to wisdom
That fathom'd history and saw beyond
The times, lies still in marble whiteness. Love
So great, so faithful, unforgetting and
Unselfish—must it sleep? Or will that veil,
That widow's veil unfold, and spread into
The dovelike wings, that long were wont to hover
In anxious care about her world-wide nest,
And now will soar and sing, as harpchords sing,
Whilst in their upward flight they breast the wind
Of Destiny. No rest for her, no tomb,
Nor ashes! Light eternal! Hymns of joy!
No silence now for her, who, ever silent,

Sweet Hours

Above misfortunes' storms and thund'ring billows,
Would stand with clear and fearless brow, so calm,
That men drew strength from out those dauntless
eyes,

And quiet from that hotly beating heart,
Kept still by stern command and unbent will
Beneath those tight shut lips. Not ashes, where
A beacon e'er will burn, a fire, like
The Altar's Soma, for the strong, the weak,
The true, the brave, and for the quailing. No,
Not ashes, but a light, that o'er the times
Will shed a gentle ray, and show the haven,
When all the world, stormshaken, rudderless, will
pray :

If but her century would shine again !

Oh, Lord ! Why hast thou ta'en thy peaceful Queen ?

A FRIEND



OLD age is gentle as an autumn morn ;
The harvest over, you will put the plough
Into another, stronger hand, and watch
The sowing you were wont to do.

Old age
Is like an alabaster room, with soft
White curtains. All is light, but light so mild,
So quiet, that it cannot hurt.

The pangs
Are hushed, for life is wild no more with strife,
Nor breathless uphill work, nor heavy with

Sweet Hours

The brewing tempests, which have torn away
So much, that nothing more remains to fear.
What once was hope, is gone. You know. You saw
The worst, and not a sigh is left of all
The heavy sighs that tore your heart, and not
A tear of all those tears that burnt your cheeks,
And ploughed the furrows into them.

You see

How others work again and weep again,
And hope and fear. Thy alabaster room
With marble floor and dainty hangings has
A look so still, that others wonder why
They feel it churchlike. All thy life is here;
Thy life hath built the vault and paved it, and
Thy hands have woven yonder curtains that
Surround thy seat, a shady sunshine.

Age

Sweet Hours

Is feeble not to thee, as all thy wishes
Are silent and demand no effort. Age
Is kind to thee, allows thee all the rest
That never came, when life was hard and toilsome.
Receive it with a smile and clothe thyself
In white, in Nature's silver crown, and sing
A lullaby of promise and of comfort.
Tell them that life is precious, after work,
And after grief and after all the deaths,
And not a loathsome burden of a life.
Old age is like a room of alabaster,
The curtains silken; thou art priest and Druid!
No mystery for thee, but Light from heaven!

OUT OF THE DEEP



THY soul grows silent, when its accents are
Disturbed, and low thy heart, when dark a
burden

Has deeply covered it. Thy soul is proud.
When thou hast made it free of wants and wishes,
Then art thou rich.

Our life is seldom open,
For love and fear have shut it. When we lay
It open, there is nought to show in it,
But wounds and burning pain.

Mysterious is

Sweet Hours

Thy power, great as it may be, a trial
Of thine own will and of the curb upon
Thyself; mysterious to thyself, the more,
The greater it has grown, surrounded as
We are by fear and pain.

And when the soul
Lifts up her voice and speaks, then must she go
Against the will of people, not her own,
The will that is herself, the soul's own might.
When heaven asks, we work with joy, a dear
Beloved business put into our hands.
We dream at first to make it daintily,
Like Nature's work, so careful and so rich,
And then the dream becomes a wish, then changes
To action, to be called by us our own
Free will. And when we feel alleviated
Of suffering, we call it hope. In each

Sweet Hours

Hard battle of our life, free will is quite
The same, unbending and undone, and gave
Us never yet a ray of satisfaction,
Nor of real joy, the bleeding conqueror.
And hope is e'er the same. It dwelleth not
In hearts that are too great for hope, too great
For wishes, and that fearless never ask
Why will is but obedience, power worthless,
The greatest strength a reed, and thought an echo.
Great hearts are free of either want or wish;
They may be proud and richly clothe themselves
In lofty, burdenless, mysterious Silence.

A CORONATION



WHEN in Bohemia there were kings and
queens,

The crown was laid upon the head that had
To bear and to exalt it—on the King's,
And then upon the shoulder of the Queen.

The shoulder bears the weight, the head the
burden;

The shoulder lifts, the head must carry. Great
For both the heaviness, the endless pain,

Sweet Hours

For both the thorns, for both hard labour, thankless
Unending work, the sorrow of their people,
The care of each and all, the scorching tears
Of all, that make their path a desert, and
Their robe so heavy, as if dew had changed
Into the icy hangings of the frost.

The shoulder oftentimes is wounded by
The crown, the head bowed low, the heart so heavy,
Much heavier than all that heavy weight,
And yet doth woman's frail and bending shoulder
Resist the load, and still her smiling eyes
And gentle lips make all the world believe
Her shoulder bleedeth not, her toil is easy,
The load they put upon her without asking
How great her strength, is like a toy. Oh, smile!
Ye heavy-laden Queens! Let not a sigh
Escape your loving hearts, and no complaint

Sweet Hours

Break from the lips God made to heal and
 bless!

Oh, smile! The world doth not forgive its slaves
For looking overworked. If thou canst bear
No more, then change the shoulder, tired Queen!

DOWN THE STREAM



FROM whence the brook? From where the
waters gather

In mountains' deep recesses, stone-black lakes
And dripping crevices. It ripples forth
Into the shining day with scarce a voice,
And with no strength at all, till mountain showers
And winter's snow and spring storms pour their flood
Into the dancing brook, that foams and starts
And rushes headlong down the steeps and throws
Into the Unknown all its youth and strength,
And thunders into hell, to rise again

Sweet Hours

In sheets of whiteness into dreamy veils,
To kiss the flowers' feet and overflow
The meadows ; thence, o'erbridged and caught and
fastened

To wheels, to grind and grind with irksome noise,
To lose all liberty, all winsome frolic,
And work till doomsday. On and on the stream
Goes widening into calm and mighty strength,
A hero of a stream, that bears the ships
Like toys, and carries legions.

Wider still

He grows, and stronger, as he drags the waters
Of hundred rivers with him to the sea.
At last his course is sluggish, tired, slow,
A living death, till, blended with the sea,
A rising tide will carry him away
Into oblivion. Such is life ! A stream

Sweet Hours

From unknown heights through storm and dangerous
fall,

Through unknown land and never-ending work
Unto Eternity's great, unknown sea.

You cannot rise above the height you come from,

You only widen and expand—but downwards,—

Your strength is gone, your impetus is quenched.

And then the world will call you great and grand,

And make a fortune out of all those waters :

Your tears, your blood, your work, and what you
spent ;

The strength of all your aims and all your falls !

IN THE RUSHING WIND



THE wind hath whirled the leaves from off the
tree.

The leaves were yellow, they had lived their time,
And lie a golden heap or fly away,
As if the butterflies had left their wings
Behind, when love's short summertime had gone,
And killed them. Lightly doth the leaves' great
shower

Whirl on and skim the ground, where ancient leaves
Lie rotten, trampled on, so featureless,
That you can hardly tell what formed that mould,

Sweet Hours

That never-ending burial-place of leaves.
And then the wind will shake and bend the tree,
And twist its branches off, burst it asunder,
Uproot the giant and bring low his head,
Upheave the granite block round which the roots
Had taken hold for countless centuries.
On goes the wind! The corn is green and soft—
Earth's wavy fur. It does but ripple lightly
In childish laughter at the harmless fun
That was a death-blow. But the sea awakes
And frowns and foams and rises into anger
So wild with wrath, and yet so powerless,
As if a thousand chains had chained it down,
To howl, to suffer, to rebel against
The heartless merriment of stronger powers.
On goes the wind, to shake the rock, to blow
Into a flame, the wild incendiary,



Sweet Hours

And never doth he look behind, to see,
To feel, to understand the horror he
Hath worked. The breath—the robe of Destiny—
Sweeps on, sweeps past, and never lists that hell
And heaven have awaked, in shrieking anguish,
But blows the clouds away, laughs at the sun,
And falls into unconscious, dreamless sleep.

UNDER THE SNOW



I F green the corn and burning the volcano,
Though snowclad, buried under rocks of ice,
Why shall the heart not love and burn in waving
Expectant green, or rising flames of hot
Enthusiasm, or burst into a torrent
Of wrath, though snow the summit long hath
crowned?

Behold! The field is green, the seed has risen
That thou hast thrown into these aching furrows,
Once ploughed by Destiny, and sown with sorrow
And watered with the wells of tears, that dropped

Sweet Hours

Upon each grain and flowed through all the furrows.
They see the snow upon thine head, but not
The corn and not the threat'ning furnace of
Thy soul. They think it is extinct, they hope
Thou hast forgotten, that the gentle warmth
They feel is sunshine, not the stormy fire,
That cannot cease to burn : for it remembers.

SOLITUDE



THE greatest friend, the friend that dwells with
thee,

When the wild turmoil of the world is thrust
Aside, when e'en thy smile may rest, that
shield,

That weapon, armour, gauntlet, laid aside,
Will leave thy soul to sculpt thy features with
Her own deep chisel ; when before thyself
Thou standest, as before thy judge and master,
An outcry goeth forth from thee towards
Thyself, then will great solitude enfold

Sweet Hours

Thee, and her wings will hush the tempest.
Fear not that angel's gravity, the look
His searching eye will plunge into thy heart.
Fear not the whisp'ring of his lips: Remember!
For ev'ry word of thine, each working of
Thy soul is booked, indelible the writing,
It is encircled in the movement of
The worlds and has its history. Thy soul,
Itself a world, belongs to Solitude. It is
So lonely that no crowd of friends, nor e'en
One friend can take its loneliness away.
There is but Solitude that can surround
Thy soul with beings and thy heart with sight.
It opens wide the floodgates of thy thought,
And what the world repressed, hemmed in and
stifled,
Will rush like living waters through thy brain

Sweet Hours

And sweep away the nothingness of things.
Great Solitude will let thee listen. Hark!
The voices of the Infinite are singing,
The thoughts of thousands who have thought before
thee
Come crowding round thy brain and fill the air,
And seek a new expression on thy lips.
Thou art in such ennobling company,
That Solitude becomes the gorgeous feast,
For which thy soul is clothed in white and purple,
Thy feet unshod tread on the holy ground
Where God has spoken. Hark! Great Solitude
Hath thousand voices and a flood of light,
Be not afraid, enter the Sanctuary,
Thou wilt be taken by the hand and led
To Life's own fountain, never-ending Thought!

THE GNAT



A LONG-LEGGED gnat with airy wings, a dart
Sharp as a needle and a searching tusk,
Was flutt'ring round my lamp, clung to my book-
shelf,
And wandered over papers. Then I blew
On it, to chase it far away. But no,
Beneath the tempest of my breath it clung
Still faster to the paper's slender shelter
And moved not, till I thought my breath had killed it.

Sweet Hours

We watched each other; then it flew away.
I thought how Fate and we thus oft-times watch
Each other, till Fate blow us into atoms,
And we remain in some weak place, in Death's
Suspense, not knowing if again the storm
Will blow. But Fate is careless and will let
Us go, if but the wings that are to take
Us hence are still untorn, unsinged, uncrushed;
Or else we creep along and die unseen,
A wingless worm, not understanding what
Those papers and those shelves contain that are
No revelation, nought but a grave, whilst others
Suck life and food, from where the storm of
Fate
Hath torn us, unresisting, meaningless,
And watching with an instant's careless glance,
If we are really dead, or still may fly.

Sweet Hours

Cheat cruel Fate, keep still like death, move not,
Flutter not; then unfold thy wings, and go
Thy way, the coming morn is full of life,
Bury thy head in flowers, in the dew,
The sun is rising and thou art alive!

REST



AND did they say that rest was not so sweet,
Old age a sadness, no repose at all?
Then have they quite forgotten. They remember
No more the heartbreak of their early youth,
The battle fought for life, the angry clouds
That hid the sun, till he would shine no more,
The anguish of their nights, that made their bed
A furnace and a rack. They say: 'Twas but
A nightmare! And they smile, and yet that smile
Is sadder than a frown, much sadder than
A tear, as it is hopeless. For a tear

Sweet Hours

Has a bright spot, wherein the sun may sparkle.
That smile is sunless, be it e'er so sweet.
And know ye not how wildly ye have called
On Death, and tried to catch him by the wing,
Or let yourself be trodden under foot
By him? And wrung your hands in agony,
When he had passed you by. Ye dare not tell
Your heart what it has suffered, dare not look
Into the past again, for fear of turning
To stone, for whitelipp'd fear of waking from
Its sleep that heart to make it throb again,
Like millstones. You remember! Ah! You see!
You even try to do away with pity,
For fear of being tortured yet again,
And shaken yet again, and no more able
To quiet that unruly heart, that learnt
To fear. Oh! Have ye never known what fear

Sweet Hours

Can make of you? The wandering of your clock,
That hammers nails into your brain and hands,
The coming of the dawn, that cruel dawn,
With icy, deathlike eyes and hollow voice,
Announcing mercilessly that the day
Hath come? And were you not afraid, when night
Set in again, with redhot eyeballs, with
The lonely wringing of your soul between
Her hands, like linen, that she washed in tears,
In blood, in rivers of despair? Oh, see!
Here comes with gentle wing and loving eye
Sweet Rest, and lays her mantle round your shoulders,
And bids you fear no more, but listen to
The birds' first Alleluia to the morn,
That dances o'er the dew, up to the dawn,
And be it e'er so cold, so lifeless, like
The last of all the dawns they sang to. Fear

Sweet Hours

Is banished, anguish quenched in all the waters
That grief has steeped you in. You know that ne'er
Another day can be so dark again,
As Rest forbids the cruel dawn to break
With threat'ning eyes, as Rest shuts out the night,
And leaves thee lonely not, but fills thy sight
With loving faces at the gates of heaven.
Sweet Rest is round thee, like an autumn sun,
And sheds thy rays upon the striving young ones.
Ye long for bed again, like little children;
No longer doth the pillow seem on fire,
Your couch a bed of coals. The weary head
Is cool, the limbs lie still, and thought comes gently
Like a nurse's well-known ditty, that will lull
To sleep thee with its sameness. Rest hath come
At last, and looks into thy room, into
Thy heart, and sends forgetfulness, like balm,

Sweet Hours

Like a flower's perfume through thy silent chamber.
The clock is peaceful with its quiet beat,
And night and morn are one; they bring no struggle.
Sweet Rest hath come, great, wingèd, heaven-born,
To lead thee to thy home with angels' hands.

THE SHADOW



THE shadow of your threshold is so full
Of meaning, that the stranger knows what
home
Is yours, if peace dwell here, or strife, or restless
Unsatisfied ambition. As the tree's
Deep shadow meaneth rest and comfort, or
Is poison, sleep eternal, such the house
That is a home's sweet shadow or a dark
Abode of sin, of lurking lie and danger.
The shadow of your life, that is so small
In bright midday and summer's burning sun,

Sweet Hours

Begins to lengthen when your evening comes,
And shows the beauty of the tree in outline,
Its graceful forms, its harmony and power ;
And never did its beauty strike before,
As now, when lost in thought, you contemplate
The shadow on the lawn. The golden rays
That flood it, make it higher, nobler, and
Its shadow ever greater, till the night
Calls forth the moon, to make it deep and weird
As if unspoken pain had darkened it,
As if the silvery paleness of the moon
Sharpened its features into hardness almost.
Behold the shadow of thy life! Look well if
It be a threshold that reveals the strong
Unbending will, the height of all your aims,
Your passions' darkness, and the harmony
Of all the branches that were put into

Sweet Hours

Your care! Look at the shadow when your
day

Is done, and winter's moon will draw its line
In naked truth, without the flattering leaves
Upon your windingsheet's unruffled snow.

THE GLOWWORM



THE mountains lost in clouds, the giant firs
Standing out 'gainst the never-ceasing
lightning,
Shaken by thunderpeals, in threefold strength,
As all the valleys echoed through the night.
The mighty heads stormbent, the branches tossed
Into the sheets of water, sky and earth
In lurid light, a never-ceasing flame.
There in the grass, beneath a tiny leaf
A firefly put forth its wondrous ray,
As if no storm, no rain, no hail were nigh,

Sweet Hours

A peaceful little flame, and yet so strong,
That it outshone the lightning. It would say:
I am the same as lightning! Storm thy life
And threat'ning thunder, but thy flame O minstrel,
Thy heart's own fire, is as strong, as true,
As elementary as Fate's wild raving,
And though it throws its light but on a leaf,
That leaf may be eternal by the light
Thy soul hath shed on it. That steady flame
Burns on, when all the clouds have spent their fire,
And when the bowels of the earth have ceased
To growl in answer. Undisturbed, thy flame
Will live, defying Fate's alarm, a fearless,
Undying mighty word, as strong as lightning
And love's own sheen, thy soul's unwavering beacon.

A DREAM



METHOUGHT that unto God I prayed : Oh,
Lord!

If thou wouldst deign to let poor me behold
Thy greatness, so that with my human brain
I understood it! Thus I spoke, and Lo!
I stood alone upon a mountain rock,
In utter darkness, towering rocks beyond
The dread abyss, that at my feet lay black
And fathomless, yielding no answer to
The searching eye. And, measureless, the sky
Above was dark'ning into endless night.

Sweet Hours

Then, from the deep did vapours seem to rise
In white procession, denser, and yet denser,
Until into a rising column they
Began to form—a column like a mountain,
That rose and rose and rose up to the vaults
Of darkness which it seemed to carry, all
One mass of light. And when I looked again,
That column built itself of millions and
Millions of milk-white stars that moved and shone
And seemed to lift the skies unto a height
That human sight and human word could not
Attain. And whilst I looked and wondered at
The seething worlds, the column changed and formed
Itself into the statue Buonarroti
Has made of Moses, only reaching from
The deep into the heavens, white and bright,
As if three suns, themselves invisible,

Sweet Hours

Had shed their light upon the statue, or
As if an inner light shone out from it.
The socle, not on earth, but far beyond,
Was standing on the Parthenon, that shone
As bright again with endless rows of columns.
Here was the answer: Millions and yet millions
Of rising worlds, and every people's art,
And all religions may but serve to form
My human likeness, so that men behold
Me great as mortal eye and brain encompass.
For days I walked on clouds, I lived my dream.
I heard not, saw not, thought not, but beheld
The world's Creator in the silent night,
And felt the blessing so unspeakable
Of God's own answer to my childish prayer.

IN THE DARK



THE Moon has but one side of light and beauty,
The other, steeped in never-ending night,
Seems worse than dead, as in the harmony
Of spheres, she cannot even echo. And
She died they say, for love of her great brother,
The glorious Sun, whom she may never reach,
Condemned to be apart, for that great sin
Of love. He was the light and life and joy
Of all her world, how could she then refrain
And love not, when her brother was a god?
But then she died, you see, and was forgiven.

Sweet Hours

Wherefore is Earth so dark and yet alive?
Wherefore doth fire still melt the gold in depths
So fathomless, that not a spark may light
The poor outside? She wanders through the worlds,
Unknown, without a ray, and yet alive
With foaming waters and with words as proud
As flowing hair. Why art thou dark, O Earth?
If thou wert sinless, would not dancing rays
Laugh through the night and gladden other planets?
Would not thy bosom's warmth give life again
To yonder ghost, thy mate in misery?
What hast thou done to be condemned to darkness,
To be a living hell, wherein the souls
Of millions suffer until death? Thy heart
Is gold: hast thou betrayed the sun? Or hast
Thou stolen wondrous goods, in gliding from
The sun? Therefore is Death to be thy child,

Sweet Hours

A curse to wander on thy lovely sides,
That oft are torn and ever motherly
Will comfort the offender with her off'rings.
Or art thou dark because thy womb must be
The grave of all thy children, Mother Earth?

THE SENTINEL



EACH flower is a sentinel of God,
And ev'ry tree and ev'ry grassblade. Not
An unseen little stem, but that will stand
And wait and shine, and never ask wherefore
It came and why it has to wither. Thou
Art such a sentinel, O Heart! Thou hast
To stand and bloom and love beside the others,
And wither when thy work is done, the spot
Being given to another, whereupon
Thou standest. And that other heart is growing

Sweet Hours

And blooming into life beneath thy shade,
As strong as thine, as ruby-red as thine,
To wither and to fall beneath the scythe,
As thine has done. Why ask and why despair?
Why not be happy with the sun, the dew,
The other flowery hearts that, full of life
Unfold their petals, which are deep like thine,
And rich as thine? Ye are to be a glorious
And many-coloured meadow. Is it not
Enough? And must ye grumble? Must ye
strive
To take away the light and dew, that fall
Not to your share? Behold the scythe! And
sow
Thy seed and ask not where it falls. The wind
Of fate has carried it away, to place
Another sentinel, as unknown, as

Sweet Hours

Unsought for as thyself, in a far land,
To live when thou art gone, to bloom into
Some unexpected beauty with thy strength,
Thy blood, the thoughts that were companions
once

To thee and that the wind hath blown so far
Away. Thou shalt not say unto thy seed:
"Fly thither!" It obeyeth not thy will.
Thou shalt not long to be another plant;
Thy tragedy is useless, and thy will
Is nought. With all thy strength thou art but
what

Is wanted—tree or grassblade—never ask
Wherefore? Here is no answer. Fate itself
Knows not wherefore it blows, or tells thee
not,

But takes thy noblest self to other climes

Sweet Hours

And leaves thee to the scythe. Complain not!

Mourn not!

Long not to live another day, when thou
Art called, but bow thy head without a sigh,
In gentle acquiescence, sentinel!

LETHE



WHEN dark thy childhood, tears and grief have
filled

Thy swelling heart, that understood too much,
Yet not enough to be forgiving, when
The sun was pale, and darkness lonely, when
The fear of unknown evil made thy lips
Turn cold, and wonder changed to horror, then
To dumb despair, to childhood's hopelessness,
More hopeless than old age's iron clutch
Of unbelief, the shadow of the past
Will cast a pall o'er all thy life, then say:

Sweet Hours

Go down, Remembrance, into Lethe, go!
When work was hard and sacrifice in vain,
And stones were hurled at thee, thy flowers trodden
Into the soil, that, soaked with all thy blood,
Could not resist, and giving way would swallow
Thy noblest thoughts, and teach thee to undo
Thyself, gainsay thyself, as if a coward
Were crouching on thy shoulders, making thee
Believe that all thy heroism was
A sham—then say: Go down to Lethe, Thought,
And darken not the hour when I rise
Out of myself, out of the past, into
The open day of wide forgetfulness.
When shame has crept into the rocky strength,
Into the pure recess a spotless soul
Had lent thee, and with fiery coals has burnt
A mark no rivers wash away, no winds

Sweet Hours

Can cool, that sends a shudder through thy
heart,

Like snakes of cold disgust, then say again:

Go down to Lethe, not to rise and sting.

But when those eyes, that were thy sun, are shut,

When blind with tears thy gaze hath yet behold

The angel wings that carried through unknown

Untold of space thy life, thy heart, thy hope—

No Lethe then! And no forgetfulness!

But open wide thy soul: It is the sun,

The sun that sends its beauteous rays into

The dark, into the cold, into the night

And terror of thy life. If grief hath ploughed

The soil, fear not! The corn is rising, young

And green and full of hope; the sun hath called;

The sun shines full into that heart that was

So torn, so weak, that could not lift itself

Sweet Hours

Unto the heavens. They are open now,
Flooded with light; take not thine eyes away,
Bend not thy look unto the earth again,
But rise on shining wings toward the rays
That draw thee, call thee, bear thee to the light!

A DEBTOR



O H, do not say that thanklessness has been
Thy sole reward! What? Wouldst thou be
rewarded?

When God had laid the gift into thy heart,
Thy hand, upon the road thou hadst to tread?
Lay all thy thanks before the feet of him
Who did not shun thy help, thy gift, thy love,
But bore the humiliation and the weakness,
And bared his heart before thy human gaze,
The heart where none but God e'er read the truth,

Sweet Hours

The burning record of despair. Be humble,
Thyself, and touch not roughly, where the wound
Is open, see the beads of anguish on
The furrowed brow, the tightdrawn lips, and hear
The tremor in the whispered words, that roll
So heavily from off the heart, and leave
It crushed, sometimes for ever. Dost thou know
What lifeblood it hath cost to speak to thee,
What tortured nights have gone before, what
cry
Of anguish rose towards that God, who seemed
So merciless to him and overkind
To thee, allowing thee to be his angel,
To answer when a living word of love
Had to be spoken, and a hand put out to help.
Make him forget what he has told thee,
Let him not feel that thou hast not forgotten,

Sweet Hours

But make him help thee in his turn, when thine
The pain, the care, the fear; allow him then
To tend thee, and to pay his debt to thy
Humility, and to thy thankfulness.

“VENGEANCE IS MINE,” SAITH
THE LORD



THOU wouldst not be avenged if thou hadst but
Insight enough into the human heart,
Into its frailty and its cowardice.

Thou wouldst not be avenged if thou but sawest
How mad, how childish and how selfish are
The helpless ones, that did thee harm because
They thought—Ah! What then thought they!

That perchance

You hated them, or trod them down, or took

Sweet Hours

Their sun away ; and e'en for love will they
Destroy thee, meaning well with thee—so well,
That they as lief would see thee dead, not to
Belong to what they hate—thy work, thy friend,
Thy strong ambition, or the gift that God
Hath put into thy soul, that calleth thee
Away to other heights and other temples,
Then where they long have worshipped. They dis-
like

Thy road, thy word, they call it strange and dark,
And they would lead thee back to where they
started

So long ago with thee, and show the wrong
Thou doest quite unwittingly. A sigh,
A smile is all thine answer, but thy way
Is chosen ; then the hue and cry is raised
Against thee, and thy staunchest friends will pile

Sweet Hours

With eager hands the wood on which to burn
Thy very soul, and not a tear will quench
That fire, not a hand will save thee, for
Thou art misunderstood, misjudged, despised,
And hated by the friends, who once believed
In thee as in their God. And what revenge
Could help thee? Falling back on thee, thy arm
Struck to the ground, thy heart a desert, not
Devastated to bloom again, but burnt
To lava by your heart's own flame of vengeance.
And if forgiveness be too great for thee,
Go past, turn not thy head, speak not a word
That cannot be recalled, and that will bar
The road for ever, that will cut the cloth
Between thy foes and thee. The present hour
Hath made that foe, who may come back to thee,
And see thy truth. Be great and say: I have

Sweet Hours

No foe! I smile, and they are nought! A breath
May lay them low, so low that they must call
To me for help! Then is thy vengeance ripe!
Give help with gentle pity. Feel that thou
Art ready with a well of living waters,
With flowers still more lovely than before.
Keep down the flames that make thee a volcano.
Let lovely warmth be all their strength. For thou
Art called upon to love and not to hate,
To help and not to punish, as thine eyes
Are far too weak to see the consequence
Of human anger. Even the volcano
Is aimless, powerless, like Fate itself,
And thou canst not be Fate. Ah! Be thou then
A human heart amongst poor human hearts!

NIGHT



O NIGHT! Thou friend of Thought, of Song,
of winged

Inspiration! So gentle is thy tread,
Thy hand so soft, thy look so deep, the sea
Is not so deep as thy mysterious gaze.
Revealest thou what worlds have thought in distant,
Unfathomable dream? Thou knowest wonders,
And tellest them in whispers to the dreamer.
Thou art alive with silence, gentle Night,
The silence of the Past and of the Future,

Sweet Hours

Of things untold, but not forgotten, dreams
Unreal, yet full of burning truth, and clad
In image, that they startle not our heart,
Nor wake its nerveless beating till it sounds.
In silence, wondrous Night, thou teachest what
The noisy Day would never understand:
Thou makest us descend into the mine
Yet unexplorèd of our soul, that hoards
The many destinies of thousand years
And other thousand years it wandered through.
Search in the darkness of that mine, behold!
The gold that shineth forth into thine eyes,
The treasures of those other lives that death
Transformed and left them unremembered. In
The stillness that surrounds thy search thy soul
Will show thee all its strength and weakness, all
Those errors that condemned it to another

Sweet Hours

And yet another life, to die again,
And rise again and wander, yet a stranger,
Into the changing world, but laden with
The knowledge of the past it seems to learn
And calls it history, perchance its own
Forgotten past, the very person that
It seemed to be. And now it wonders why
That person acted so and erred and wrought
Such destinies. And all the time it is
Itself that learns itself. Neglect not dreams
Nor call them worthless. Great the truths they
bring,
Revealed in sights and legendary lore.
When understood they are a blessing. Learn
To understand the vision's soul, the thought
Which it conveys, the future it reveals,
The past it fetches out of yonder mine

Sweet Hours

Thy brain was far too tired or far too weak
To search. When plunged in sleep that brain that
now

Is thine will listen and may learn such things
Thy soul will tell, as never book or school
Or present life will teach. Oh, blessed Night!
Spread o'er my soul thy wings and carry me
Into those worlds my brain can never reach!
Fathom not memories, but let me feel
At one with all those lights that lie upon
Thy bosom, breathing, shining there in silence.

ROUSED



SLUMBER not! Rest not! Dream not! Thou
art called!

The blast has rung out o'er thy living grave;
The clouds that hung so low above thy head
Poured out their flame into thy soul, and yet
Left more, much more alive there than thou knewest
of.

Awake! the years stand at thy gate, and knock
To call thee forth, the dead past comes to life,
And drives thee, with its flood of whirling waters,
Onward to action, not to idle dreaming.

Sweet Hours

Arise! walk on those waves, for they will bear
thee.

Trust thine own strength, and tread the flakes of
foam

Lightly, with wingèd feet, with wingèd soul!

And thou shalt see that gales have left untouched

The springtime in thy heart, still breaking forth

In admiration, thankfulness and love.

Yes, not even love is quenched, and still undimmed

Enthusiasm's banner waves on high above thee.

Thou fearest the world? And what then is the
world?

The shadow of a cloud—no more. Thou wouldst
not

Suffer it to become a stone to crush thee?

Up! Shake thy shining wings upon the Dawn,

And laugh the world to shame. 'Tis but a pageant,

Sweet Hours

A mockery; give up thy heart to life
In all its fulness—never to the world!
And though the world should crush thine heart and
say

“Behold! 'tis dust and ashes!”—though it scatter
Those ashes to the winds—yet art thou still
Pure and unconquerable, O my heart!
Thou art of those to whom an open foe
Is but a friend disguised; to whom each blow
Serves as a force to send thee ever higher,
Far above yawning gulf and raging whirlpool.
O heart of mine, be strong! Doubt not, for
doubt

Was ever the one deadly foe, whose toils
Might strangle thee. Up! fight that monster,
trample

Its venom under foot. The hour has come

Sweet Hours

For thee to step forth, young again and free,
A new Sir Galahad, brave, pure and strong,
Around whom angels hover as he stretches
His spotless shield to meet the early rays
Of Heaven's bright, cloudless, joyous Morning-sun!

SADNESS



THY sadness is a leaden shroud, a rock
Of Sisyphus, which thou must upward roll
By night and day, on, on. Its downward rush
Is no relief, no help, since it but seems
Heavier at each fresh start. And still thy strength
Is waning, and thy heart aches with the tears—
The unshed tears that lie like stones upon it,
While those that flowed are rivers in thy path—
Unfathomable, fordless, dark and deep.
These thou must wade, with all thy burdens—
wade

Sweet Hours

And sink with every step as 'twere thy last,
And feel such deadly weakness seize on thee
As though some raging fever laid thee low.
Thy sadness is a Nessus robe, that clings
In burning folds about thee, sears thy flesh,
And eats into thy bones. 'Tis like a weapon
A man turns on himself, whose wound nought
heals,
Since it is dealt against his inmost soul.
If, then, through clouds of sadness, thou perceivest
The world, well mayst thou say of it: 'Tis hell!
For spring itself is dark, the birds' sweet carol
Cheerless and dull, thy life a very desert,
Where human faces pass like spectral visions,
And gladness is a thing so clean forgotten,
As if it ne'er had been—its very name
Become a soundless word, a ghostly whisper!

WHEN JOY IS DEAD



BE still! A corpse lies there, a poor dead
thing,

With upturned face, white-lipped, the haggard
features,

Whereon once played a smile that gladdened hearts,
Now set and cold. Circled with black and sunken
Are now the eyes where stars were wont to sparkle,
And Fate has drawn deep lines between the brows,
That but a short time since seemed arched for mis-
chief,

And full of childish mirth. Close to the temples

Sweet Hours

The hair clings straight and dull and colourless.
And it was golden once, like living rays,
And waved about the head, a sunrise-halo!

The hands are folded—rigid, waxen, cold,
They that were once like rose-leaves, in whose
veins

The blood coursed swiftly, full of generous warmth
And loving gifts, and flowers, and balm for sorrow.
Cold are they now, as had they never yet
Clasped children to the heart, nor with deft touch
Broidered such fairy work, nor scattered broadcast
Such fairy gifts. The feet that danced along,
Leaving no trace upon the flower-petals,
Lie stiff out-stretched, and round about them hang
In heavy folds, as were they carved in marble,
The robes that fluttered lightly in the breeze,
Like opalescent wings.

Sweet Hours

Ah! cold and dark
The grave to thee, thou Sun-child! ray of bright-
ness!
Beloved messenger of God! Arise!
Canst thou be dead? and canst thou look so stern?
Ah, no! not stern, but martyred! Cruel hands
Have rent thy garments, dragged thee by the hair,
Burnt out thine eyes, and filled thy cup with
poison,
As fit requital of thy priceless gifts,
Kind Joy, true friend! And now they see thee
dead
With careless eyes, and point, and feign to think
Thou ne'er hast been! Ah, Joy! sweet Joy! arise!
Be stronger than thy foes! But no! 'tis vain!
Poor Joy was deadly tired, and now she sleeps!

A ROOM



WHITEWASHED or panelled, filled with
books, with light,

With flowers, with trifles sacred to the heart,
And work so pure and sweet that morning-dew
Might settle there and feel itself at home
As though 'mid garden fragrance; while the carol
Of birds streams through the window joyously,
Mistaking that abode of peace and love
For their own woodland haunts! And in that room
A woman's dainty hands ever at work,
A woman's loving heart ever awake

Sweet Hours

For others' happiness, a woman's thought
Alive in tender memories that embalm
The past in mute forgiveness. Enter then
As 'twere a sanctuary, lay aside
Thy load of care, and yield thy weary soul
To the deep sense of comfort reigning there.
Not many words—nay, not a single word—
Need tremble through the stillness, not a sigh
With untoward avowal break the peace
That folds thee to its heart and asks no question.
Such perfect peace pervades a room like this,
'Twould seem the raging storm, the roaring sea,
Might lay themselves to rest upon its threshold.
The ghosts that haunt it come in guise of
 angels,
With rosy finger-tips laid on their lips,
To hush our voices to the whispered tones

Sweet Hours

Of children's prayers. Enter, thou weary wanderer,
Enter! and have no fear, for pain and anguish
Have long been wept away, and have but left
Their precious perfume and the healing balm
Of self-forgetfulness to comfort thee!

UNREST



TO toss with fevered brain and throbbing pulses
Upon thy bed at night—thine aching eyes,
Straining into the darkness, hot and weary,
Thy heart like lead, yet ever wildly bounding
Within thee, like a gun made loose in shipwreck,
That rolls from side to side, an unchained danger,
Thy pillows fire, thy couch a rack, whereon
Thy tortured limbs seem cords strung by the storm,
Thy thoughts a tangled skein, unclear, disordered,
And all the past that should have been forgotten
Rising up ghostly, in fantastic guise,

Sweet Hours

To make the present worse, to slay all hope,
To quench the beacon that till now has been
Thy only stay in night's deep gloom and horror!
This, O my soul! is Unrest, and thou knowest
Its misery but too well! All the old scars
Of former battles bleed once more within thee,
As if thy life were oozing, drop by drop.
And thou wert fain with trembling fingers seize
That foolish heart, and fling it in thy path
To trample under foot, or, further still,
Sink it in sea-depths, and then turn away
Calm and indifferent, deeming all were well
Were but its restlessness thus stilled, and thou
Free from its tumult.

Yet that heart of thine
Has weathered may a gale, and still might stand
Unshaken at the helm of life's wrecked craft,

Sweet Hours

A gallant pilot, waiting for the sign
That bids the clouds disperse, hushes the winds,
And, having calmed the waves, shall guide thy course
To sun-lit shores, sweet with immortal flowers.
Be brave, poor heart, for thou drawest near the
 haven,
And though thy beacon be extinguished, though
Thy rudder has been snapped, thy compass lost,
Thou still art safe, for the same Mighty Hand
That sent thee forth upon the stormy sea
Shall lead thee home and give thee rest at last!

VERIFICAT
2007



Colston & Coy. Limited. Printers, Edinburgh

VERIFICAT
2017

