



## THE SONG OF LIFE'S FINE FLOWER

AMALFI, March 1887.

### I

#### WHEREFORE OF JOY REMEMBERED

Wherefore of joy remembered should I sing—  
Do any bells for bygone bridals ring?  
For nesting joy of years and years ago?  
Do the birds chant, upon the wheat a-swing?

Nay, sharp as joy-thrill breaks the sudden song,  
Cleaving the murmur of the cornland's throng,  
For this glad morn, for these young ones that flit  
On balanced wing the summer flowers among.

I sing because my love desires a lay—  
New as new bliss, and old as Love's old May:  
I sing a song of love fresh-garneréd  
From Love's last volume, clasped in his old way.

## II

## IN MORNING SHINE

In morning shine I wrote Love's good and ill—  
 Echoes, they say, from some Sicilian hill  
 Of linked arms, and seas that separate,  
 And eyes like wells where Love might drink his fill.

Yet who dare say what songs are new or old?  
 Great Omar's scroll at either end was rolled,  
 And in the midst he read one single line—  
 A shadowy NOW traced on the gleaming gold!

Unroll which way you will, from that great now,  
 And read the script, I care not when nor how,  
 There will you see, blazoned in blood of men,  
 Love, hate; joy, sorrow; faith, and broken vow!

## III

## NO NEW SONG

No new song then I sing, no note of new,  
 Save new joy's marvel ringing through and through—  
 Only of Love and Her and Italy—  
 Alas! unworthy I, God keep me true.

Hither from England, lying bleak and grey,  
 We came. Ah, wondrous WE! To this fair bay  
 Of white Amalfi, whose mysterious hue  
 Gleams blue and bluer fifty miles away.

Sweet, sweet above the dash of waves, to catch  
 The shine of eyes, to mark the light winds snatch  
 A lock precise to gentler negligence,  
 Or the kissed cheek's responsive red to watch.

## IV

## THESE MAKE MORE FAIR

These make more fair the girdling Apennine,  
 Brighter the changing sapphire of the brine,  
     Cut in ten myriad facets multiform—  
 As various as this joy of mine and thine.

Behold the Apennine! Ethereal  
 As the white throne set in God's judgment hall,  
     Between the inmost sea and outmost Heaven  
 They wait His pleasure and the close of all.

Draw in the breaths from many an orange tree,  
 And drink the bursting passion of the sea—  
     Strange welling perfume from the morning flowers,  
 This Southland's half-awakened mystery.

## V

## LO! CLIFF ON CLIFF

Lo! cliff on cliff in surge tumultuous,  
 In passionate protest overfrowning thus  
     The waves' dull clamour and white Judas kiss,  
 Whose silver sparkles scatter tremulous.

Which love we best? Still day of upturned Heaven,  
 The blue-globed sea and sky a marvel given,  
     Turned by its Maker's hand, perfect as God,  
 Wherein our souls dream, waking, sorrow-shriven?

Or this fresh, dewy, air-stirred earth,  
 A wide, glad place, wherein is room for mirth,  
     Where earth and sea and sky talk each to each,  
 New merged in some diviner bath of birth.

## VI

## TO EACH GREEN TERRACE

To each green terrace clings the dark stone pine,  
 The cliff's grim ruin breaks the black sea line':  
 And oranges of orb'd Hesperian gold,  
 Like chalice'd cups, hang rich with scented wine.

Grey tower, bright dome, white winding loops of road  
 Flashing and twining like the serpent rod,  
 The prophet cast to earth by Nile's old flood—  
 Shall tell us 'Lo! sweet Italy you trod!'

White bending sprays of spineless strange hawthorn,  
 Pure favours by a bride's tire-maidens worn,  
 Weep blinding sheets of tears, or distant shine  
 In mourning argent o'er a land forlorn.

## VII

## HOW MEN HAVE LOVED THEE

How men have loved thee, Italy divine,  
 How the Greek pledged thee in his Chian wine,  
 And set his temples' magic colonnades,  
 At Paestum and Girgenti, o'er the brine.

From the far burning East thy lovers came  
 To weary thee with war's fierce amorous game.  
 Till through the death song of imperial Rome  
 Pealed the wild clamour of Muhammed's name.

Now Mahmoud's moon is old. But fiercely then  
 The crescent swayed o'er hosts of swaying men.  
 Ah! never more shall sabre flash attest  
 The surging glory of the Saracen.

## VIII

## THAT WAS ITALIA'S GLORIOUS AFTERNOON

That was Italia's glorious afternoon :  
It is her twilight now. Pray ye that soon  
Over the Adriatic may arise  
The glowing crescent of a worthier moon.

Even now it shines upon the solemn seas,  
Sifts on us as we pace the terraces  
Of bursting vine—and in this high-piled town  
Transmutes to faery pearl her palaces.

O for one flash of the old dead renown,  
To make this Italy the whole world's crown.  
For Rome is gone. Her name is all of her—  
And all her gods' high temples broken down.

S. R. CROCKETT.

