



I.—A FORERUNNER

CYTHEREA, in green gown,
Hair alight and purple crown,
Wendeth amid willows wan
In the ice dews by the lawn.

Cytherea, rapt in dreams,
Heareth not the thawing streams,
Doth not see the sprouting stalks,
No bird stirreth where she walks.

Yet where Cytherea moves
Hasten many a million loves ;
Primrose, wind-flower, daffodil,
Follow her without her will.

Cytherea silent passes
With wet feet among the grasses,
On her head a soft rain weepeth,
In her veiled eyes sunshine sleepeth.

Wheresoe'er hath passéd she
 All alive are bird and tree,
 Rivers running, leaves uncurled,
 Bud and bird-song glad the world.

Whither wendeth Cytherea,
 Spring's unrealised idea,
 Dear forerunner of our rapture,
 Fugitive whom none would capture?

Veiléd vestal, joy unknowing,
 Summer waits upon thy going ;
 Love sleep-walking, ere thou waken,
 Spring-tide laughs, and thou 'rt forsaken !

Somewhere, wilt thou in surprise
 Ope thy sweet, cold-lidded eyes,
 Look upon the red-veined rose,
 Bathe thee in the stream that flows ?

Wilt thou, in a dumb amaze,
 Turn thy slowly-kindling gaze
 On full-flowered banks and meadows,
 Wide with light and broad with shadows ?

Where abid'st thou when the peach,
 Within autumn's careless reach,
 Falls o'erwhelmed by its heart-sweetness,
 Failing through its own completeness ?

When all richly-coloured things,
 All wild creatures that have wings,
 Warm in sheath, or cold in grave,
 Winter slumber seek, or have,

Then upon some morning mellow,
 When grey skies are tinged with yellow,
 One who listens with fine ear,
 Thy returning step may hear !

II.—MEETING OF SPRING AND SUMMER

HER face is like the first wind flower,
 An arm, a knee, are bare.
 Gold, enough for a queen's dower,
 Is strewn upon her hair.
 It is the Spring-tide's perfect hour
 Say, if she is not fair !

Her hyacinthine draperies
 Are hastily caught up
 Across a youthful breast that is
 Round as an acorn cup,
 Under the giant forest trees,
 Where the young fairies sup.

From the high hills she hath come down
 Baptized by thawing snows,
 To where the turbid streams are brown,
 The ice-tarn overflows ;
 Their drops upon her primrose crown
 Bedew her as she goes.

Upon the pastures green and wide
 The little lambs, new-born,
 Run from their anxious mother's side
 To her in the dim morn.
 Beneath her feet she hath descried
 The early-springing corn.

Knee-deep in flowers advanceth she,
 Gathering the daffodil,
 And pansy and anemone,
 With these her lap doth fill.
 The wild hedge-rose on its high tree
 Grows redder at her will.

Deep in the meadow her foot stays.
 Each sweet familiar thing

Doth puzzle her in these green ways.
 Sure, somewhere used to sing
 With that same note, some other days,
 Yon lark upon the wing !

When was she here before, and why
 Was wrought her banishment ?
 The streamlet's song, the lambkin's cry
 Were hushed when she was sent
 Forth from this glory, suddenly,
 And into darkness went.

Whose was the voice that bade her go
 No further through these woods ?
 This day she will not falter, tho'
 The seas, with all their floods,
 To stay her feet should turn and flow
 Across the flowery roods.

Her memories, bright with bud and song,
 Give back no enemy,
 Nor sound of wrath, nor sight of wrong
 Within her mind hath she ;
 No fateful presence, harsh and strong,
 That was, and yet may be.

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Lo, bright amid full-foliaged trees
 Beside a glassy pool,
 Sudden Earth's rosy queen she sees,
 The Summer beautiful,
 Dipping her snow-white feet at ease
 Into the waters cool.

A crimson passion-flower entwines
 The Summer's dusky hair,
 Above her saffron garment shines
 A shoulder, rosy fair.

The purple shadow of dark pines
Surrounds her everywhere.

A nightingale his notes of love
Rains down upon her head.
Into her ear the shy wood-dove
Plains and is comforted.
Beyond her roof of boughs enwove
The golden sun turns red.

Spring's startled face irradiate grows,
Her dainty hands let down
The white bloom that the ice-wind knows
Out of her fluttering gown,
And stretch to pluck the flower that grows
In summer's rubied crown.

Now lifts the queen her dreamy gaze,
And laughs aloud to see
Her handmaiden in pale amaze,
Bewildered, even as she
The moon that into morning strays
And meets the sun, may be.

A step, and the last bird-note dies
Upon the air, as Spring
Toward the laughing Summer flies,
And all herself doth fling
Into her arms with gladsome cries,
Afar re-echoing.

Asleep upon the rosy breast
Of Summer, Spring is there
Kissed into her long swoon of rest
And couched in hiding where
Winter will find her in her nest
One day, and waken her.

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