



SUMMER-NIGHT SADNESS

SAVE for the night-wind crisp and cool,
That vaguely thrills a sullen wave,
The calm that broods above this pool
Is deeper than the grave.

Lizard, nor vole with velvet fur,
Steals trembling near the water's edge ;
There is no pulse of life astir
In reed and rush and sedge.

Darkness and slumbrous silence lie
Where noonday heard the warbler sing,
And watched the unresting dragon-fly
Flitter on filmy wing.

One sole rift in the cloudy cope
Is dimly lit by one lone star ;
The haggard trees that fringe the slope
Like spectral shadows are.

How sweet to die, if this were death !
Not swathed in cerements of the tomb,
But quivering still with blood and breath
In Nature's kindly womb.

For if this conscious soul, dispersed,
 Sleep in cold clay or senseless clod,
 Shall I be glad when blossoms burst
 Beneath the smile of God ?

Shall I delight in yellowing grain,
 In leaf unfurled or crinkled germ,
 When through this subtle-chambered brain
 Travails the winding worm ?

What though the all-kindling sun behold
 New races run their measured span,
 And light through centuries untold
 The myriad march of man ;

Though lovers walk beneath the moon,
 That slowly fills her silvery urn
 From pure twin-cusp to plenilune ;
 Though stars and tides return ;

Though Summer crown the crest of Spring
 With blood-red rose for primrose pale,
 If sun and moon and seasons bring
 To me no boon or bale ?

But if my death-change bring to birth
 Some soul of sense that will not die,
 Fain would I linger on the earth
 Wherein these ashes lie.

I long for no divine abode,
 No golden harp, no white array,
 Nor glimpses of the light that glowed
 On Israel's trackless way.

Earth's song is more to my desire
 Than echoes of the heavenly hymn,
 And dearer is the woodland quire
 Than hosts of seraphim.

O mother! if my love aright
Hath given thee all that love could give,
Quench not its frail and flickering light,
But bid my spirit live,

To mingle with the mountain-stream
That down the long strath serpentines,
Or melt in a melodious dream
Amid the murmuring pines ;

Thence, wafted by the wandering breeze,
To wanton over heath and holm,
And float on wildered waste of seas
In plumes of feathery foam ;

Or, if against thee I have sinned,
Oh let me haunt this ghostly pool,
Where on my brows the twilight wind
Even now breathes crisp and cool !

W. J. ROBERTSON.

