

Classic Poetry Series

Arthur Symons
- poems -

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Arthur Symons(28 February 1865 – 22 January 1945)

Arthur William Symons, was a British poet, critic and magazine editor.

Life

Born in Milford Haven, Wales, of Cornish parents, Symons was educated privately, spending much of his time in France and Italy. In 1884–1886 he edited four of Bernard Quaritch's

His first volume of verse, *Days and Nights* (1889), consisted of dramatic monologues. His later verse is influenced by a close study of modern French writers, of

In 1892, *The Minister's Call*, Symons's first play, was produced by the Independent Theatre Society – a private club – to avoid censorship by the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

In 1902 Symons made a selection from his earlier verse, published as *Poems*. He translated from the Italian of Gabriele D'Annunzio *The Dead City* (1900) and *The Child of Pleasure* (1898), and from the French of Émile Verhaeren *The Dawn* (1898). To [The Poems of](#)

A Brother Of The Battuti

Shed, sinful flesh, these tears of blood,
For all thy vileness all too few;
Wash out, O holy healing flood,
The sins that always in God's view
Stand as a mountain day and night,
A mountain growing up from hell;
Smite, deluge of my torments, smite
Upon the burrowing base, and swell
Up, upward to the very brow.
Shall God no mercy have for me
When thou art shaken, even thou,
Hurled down and cast into the sea?
No mercy? Yea, doth God require
These cruel pangs, and all in vain
To save me from the flaming fire?
Shall all my blood pour forth like rain,
Nor fructify the barren sod,
Nor cleanse my scarlet sins like wool,
Nor turn the burning wrath of God?
Lo, all these years my hours are full
Of sorer suffering than of old
His martyrs bore, that triumphed still,
Gained grace, and heard the harps of gold,
And saw the city on the hill.
I have not tasted flesh, nor fed
On dainty fare, nor known the touch
Of joyous wine, nor bitten bread,
Save mouldy, and of that not much,
Sour crusts, with water old and stale,
And herbs and roots; no rest I take
Save when these vile limbs faint and fail,
But roaming all the night awake
I think on my exceeding sin.
God knows I take no rest at all,
Who haply, resting not, shall win
The final goal before I fall.
Yea, and not these alone; yea, these
Might all men do for heaven; but I,
In suns that scorch, in moons that freeze,

About my shuddering shoulders ply
This biting scourge of knotted cord,
And shout to feel the blood run down.
Wilt thou not think on this, dear Lord?
Yea, when the jewels of thy crown
Thou countest up remembering,
Wilt thou not, Lord, remember this,-
That is not, Lord, a little thing,-
And let me see thy heaven of bliss?
O Lord, my Love, my Life, my Love,
I swoon in ecstasy divine;
Take, take my blood and drink thereof,
A drink-offering of costly wine
Poured out into a sacred cup;
Take, take my blood poured freely out
And drain the winepress' fruitage up.
O Lord, I parch with burning drought,
I, whom the streams may not refresh;
Give me, my Lord, my Love, give me
Thy spirit, as I give my flesh
A living sacrifice to thee.

Arthur Symons

A Litany Of Lethe

O Lethe, hidden waters never dry,
We, all we weary and heavy-laden, cry,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

--All we have sinnèd, and yet the scars remain.
--And we, all we had sorrow.--And we had pain.
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou that dost flow from Death to Death through Sleep,
Whose waters are the tears of those that weep,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou that dost bring sweet peace to hospitals,
And to the captive openest prison-walls,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou that dost loose the soul from murdered Truth,
And youth from yesterday, and age from youth,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou from lost love remembered sett'st us free
From hopeless love, a lorn eternity;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou from repentance tak'st the sting, from vice
The memory of a forfeit Paradise;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou in our grief dost hide from us no less
The anguish of remembered happiness;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Thou that dost lay alike on all thy spell,
And free the saint from heaven, the wretch from hell,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Bring, bring soft sleep, and close all eyes for us,
Sleep without dreams, and peace oblivious;
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

We, all we weary and heavy-laden, cry,
Too tired to live, and yet too weak to die,
O Lethe, let us find thee and forget!

Arthur Symons

A Winter's Night

The pale moon shining from a pallid sky
Lit half the street, and over half she laid
Her folded mantle; through the dark-browed shade
White windows glittered, each a watchful eye.
The dim wet pavement lit irregularly
With shimmering streaks of gaslight, faint and frayed,
Shone luminous green where sheets of glass displayed
Long breadths of faded blinds mechanically.

the night was very still; above, below,
No sound, no breath, no change in anything;
Only, across the squares of damp lit street,
Shooting a mocking double from his feet,
With vague uncertain steps went to and fro
A solitary shadow wandering.

Arthur Symons

Airs For The Lute

I

When the sobbing lute complains,
Grieving for an ancient sorrow,
This poor sorrow that remains
Fain would borrow,
To give pleading unto sorrow,
Those uncapturable strains.

All, that hands upon the lute
Helped the voices to declare,
Voices mute
But for this, might I not share,
If, alas, I could but suit
Hand and voice unto the lute?

II

If time so sweetly
On true according viols make
Her own completely
The lawless laws of turn and shake;

How should I doubt then
Love, being tuned unto your mood,
Should bring about then
True time and measure of your blood?

III

Why are you sorrowful in dreams?
I am sad in the night;
The hours till morning are white,
I hear the hours' flight
All night in dreams.

Why do you send me your dreams?
For an old love's sake;
I dream if I sleep or wake,
And shall but one heart ache,
For the sake of dreams?

Pray that we sleep without dreams!
Ah, love, the only way

To put sorrow away,
Night or day, night or day,
From the way of dreams!

IV

Strange, to remember tears!
Yet I know that I wept;
And those hopes and those fears,
Strange, were as real as tears!

What's this delicate pain,
Twilight-coloured and grey?
Odour-like through my brain
Steals a shadowy pain.

What's this joy in the air?
Musical as the leaves,
When the white winds are there,
Faint joy breathes in the air.

Arthur Symons

Alla Dogana

Night, and the silence of the night,
In Venice; far away, a song;
As if the lyric water made
Itself a serenade;
As if the water's silence were a song
Sent up into the night.

Night, a more perfect day,
A day of shadows luminous,
Water and sky at one, at one with us;
As if the very peace of night,
The older peace than heaven or light,
Came down into the day.

Arthur Symons

Alle Zattere

Only to live, only to be
In Venice, is enough for me.
To be a beggar, and to lie
At home beneath the equal sky,
To feel the sun, to drink the night,
Had been enough for my delight;
Happy because the sun allowed
The luxury of being proud
Not to some only; but to all
The right to lie along the wall.
Here my ambition dies; I ask
No more than some half-idle task,
To be done idly, and to fill
Some gaps of leisure when I will.
I care not if the world forget
That it was ever in my debt;
I care not where its prizes fall;
I long for nothing, having all.
The sun each morning, on his way,
Calls for me at the Zattere;
I wake and greet him, I go out,
Meet him, and follow him about;
We spend the day together, he
Goes to bed early; as for me,
I make the moon my mistress, prove
Constant to my inconstant love.
For she is coy with me, will hie
To my arms amorously, and fly
Ere I have kissed her; ah! but she,
She it is, to eternity,
I adore only; and her smile
Bewilders the enchanted isle
To more celestial magic, glows
At once the crystal and the rose.
The crazy lover of the moon,
I hold her, on the still lagoon,
Sometimes I hold her in my arms;
'Tis her cold silver kiss that warms

My blood to singing, and puts fire
Into the heart of my desire.
And all desire in Venice dies
To such diviner lunacies.
Life dreams itself: the world goes on,
Oblivious, in oblivion;
Life dreams itself, contents to keep
Happy immortality, in sleep.

Arthur Symons

Amends To Nature

I have loved colours, and not flowers;
Their motion, not the swallows wings;
And wasted more than half my hours
Without the comradeship of things.

How is it, now, that I can see,
With love and wonder and delight,
The children of the hedge and tree,
The little lords of day and night?

How is it that I see the roads,
No longer with usurping eyes,
A twilight meeting-place for toads,
A mid-day mart for butterflies?

I feel, in every midge that hums,
Life, fugitive and infinite,
And suddenly the world becomes
A part of me and I of it.

Arthur Symons

An Ending

I will go my ways from the city, and then, maybe,
My heart shall forget one woman's voice, and her lips;
I will arise, and set my face to the sea,
Among stranger-folk and in the wandering ships.

The world is great, and the bounds of it who shall set?
It may be I shall find, somewhere in the world I shall find,
A land that my feet may abide in; then I shall forget
The woman I loved, and the years that are left behind.

But, if the ends of the world are not wide enough
To out-weary my heart, and to find for my heart some fold,
I will go back to the city, and her I love,
And look on her face, and remember the days of old.

Arthur Symons

April Midnight?

Side by side through the streets at midnight,
Roaming together,
Through the tumultuous night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

Roaming together under the gaslight,
Day's work over,
How the Spring calls to us, here in the city,
Calls to the heart from the heart of a lover!

Cool to the wind blows, fresh in our faces,
Cleansing, entrancing,
After the heat and the fumes and the footlights,
Where you dance and I watch your dancing.

Good it is to be here together,
Good to be roaming,
Even in London, even at midnight,
Lover-like in a lover's gloaming.

You the dancer and I the dreamer,
Children together,
Wandering lost in the night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

Arthur Symons

As A Perfume

As a perfume doth remain
In the folds where it hath lain,
So the thought of you, remaining
Deeply folded in my brain,
Will not leave me: all things leave me:
You remain.

Other thoughts may come and go,
Other moments I may know
That shall waft me, in their going,
As a breath blown to and fro,
Fragrant memories: fragrant memories
Come and go.

Only thoughts of you remain
In my heart where they have lain,
Perfumed thoughts of you, remaining,
A hid sweetness, in my brain.
Others leave me: all things leave me:
You remain.

Arthur Symons

At Burgos

Miraculous silver-work in stone
Against the blue miraculous skies,
The belfry towers and turrets rise
Out of the arches that enthrone
That airy wonder of the skies.

Softly against the burning sun
The great cathedral spreads its wings;
High up, the lyric belfry sings.
Behold Ascension Day begun
Under the shadow of those wings!

Arthur Symons

At Carbis Bay

Out of the night of the sea,
Out of the turbulent night,
A sharp and hurrying wind
Scourges the waters white:
The terror by night.

Out of the doubtful dark,
Out of the night of the land,
What is it breathes and broods,
Hoveringly at hand?
The menace of land.

Out of the night of heaven,
Out of the delicate sky,
Pale and serene the stars
In their silence reply:
The peace of the sky.

Arthur Symons

At Dieppe

The grey-green stretch of sandy grass,
Indefinitely desolate;
A sea of lead, a sky of slate;
Already autumn in the air, alas!

One stark monotony of stone,
The long hotel, acutely white,
Against the after-sunset light
Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone.

Listless and endless it outlies,
And means, to you and me, no more
Than any pebble on the shore,
Or this indifferent moment as it dies.

Arthur Symons

At Fontainebleau

It was a day of sun and rain,
Uncertain as a child's swift moods;
And I shall never spend again
So blithe a day among the woods.

Was it because the Gods were pleased
That they were awful in our eyes,
Whom we in very deed appeased
With barley-cakes of sacrifice?

The forest knew her and was glad,
And laughed for very joy to know
Her child was with her; then, grown sad,
She wept, because her child must go.

And Alice, like a little Faun,
Went leaping over rocks and ferns,
Coursing the shadow-race from dawn
Until the twilight-flock returns.

And she would spy and she would capture
The shyest flower that lit the grass;
The joy I had to watch her rapture
Was keen as even her rapture was.

The forest knew her and was glad,
And laughed and wept for joy and woe.
This was the welcome that she had
Among the woods of Fontainebleau.

Arthur Symons

At Glan-Y-Wern

White-robed against the threefold white
Of shutter, glass and curtains' lace,
She flashed into the evening light
The brilliance of her gipsy face:
I saw the evening in her light.

Clear, from the soft hair to the mouth,
Her ardent face made manifest
The sultry beauty of the South:
Below, a red rose, climbing, pressed
Against the roses of her mouth.

So, in the window's threefold white,
O'ertrailed with foliage like a bower,
She seemed, against the evening light,
Amongst the flowers herself a flower,
A tiger-lily sheathed in white.

Arthur Symons

At Seventeen

You were a child, and liked me, yesterday.
To-day you are a woman, and perhaps
Those softer eyes betoken the sweet lapse
Of liking into loving: who shall say?
Only I know that there can be for us
No liking more, nor any kisses now,
But they shall wake sweet shame upon your brow
Sweetly, or in a rose calamitous.

Trembling upon the verge of some new dawn
You stand, as if awakened out of sleep,
And it is I who cried to you, 'Arise!'
I who would fain call back the child that's gone,
And what you lost for me would have you keep,
Fearing to meet the woman of your eyes.

Arthur Symons

At Tarragona

If I could know but when and why
This piece of thoughtless dust begins
To think, and straightway I am I,
And these bright hopes and these brave sins,
That have been freer than the air,
Circle their freedom with my span;
If I could know but why this care
Is mine and not the care of man;
Why, thus unwilling, I rejoice,
And will the good I do not do,
And with the same particular voice
Speak the old folly and the new;
If I could know, seeing my soul
A white ship with a bending sail,
Rudderless, and without a goal,
Fly seaward, humble to the gale,
Why, knowing not from whence I came,
Nor why I seek I know not what,
I bear this heavy, separate name,
While winds and waters bear it not;
And why the unlimited earth delights
In life, not knowing breath from breath,
While I, that count my days and nights,
Fear thought in life, and life in death.

Arthur Symons

At The Ambassadeurs

TO YVETTE GUILBERT

That was Yvette. The blithe Ambassadeurs
Glitters, this Sunday of the Fête des Fleurs;
Here are the flowers, too, living flowers that blow
A night or two before the odours go;
And all the flowers of all the city ways
Are laughing, with Yvette, this day of days.
Laugh, with Yvette? But I must first forget,
Before I laugh, that I have heard Yvette.
For the flowers fade before her: see, the light
Dies out of that poor cheek, and leaves it white;
And a chill shiver takes me as she sings
The pity of unpitied human things;
A woe beyond all weeping, tears that trace
The very wrinkles of the last grimace.

Arthur Symons

At The Foresters

The shadows of the gaslit wings
Come softly crawling down our way;
Before the curtain someone sings,
The music sounds from far away;
I lounge beside you in the wings.

Prying and indiscreet, the lights
Illumine, if you haply move,
The prince's dress, the yellow tights,
That fit your figure like a glove:
You shrink a little from the lights.

Divinely rosy rouged, your face
Smiles, with its painted little mouth,
Half tearfully, a quaint grimace;
The charm and pathos of your youth
Mock the mock roses of your face.

And there is something in your look
(Ambiguous, independent Flo!)
As teasing as a half-shut book;
It lures me till I long to know
The many meanings of your look:

The tired defiance of the eyes,
Pathetically whimsical,
Childish and whimsical and wise;
And now, relenting after all,
The softer welcome of your eyes.

Arthur Symons

At The Stage Door

Kicking my heels in the street,
Here at the edge of the pavement I wait for you, sweet,
Here in the crowd, the blent noises, blurred lights, of the street.

Under the archway sheer,
Sudden and black as a hole in the placarded wall,
Faces flicker and veer,
Wavering out of the darkness into the light,
Wavering back into night;
Under the archway, suddenly seen, the curls
And thin, bright faces of girls,
Roving eyes, and smiling lips, and the glance
Seeking, finding perchance,
Here at the edge of the pavement, there by the wall,
One face, out of them all.

Steadily, face after face,
Cheeks with the blush of the paint yet lingering, eyes
Still with their circle of black ...
But hers, but hers?
Rose-leaf cheeks, and flower-soft lips, and the grace
Of the vanishing Spring come back,
And a child's heart blithe in the sudden and sweet surprise,
Subtly expectant, that stirs
In the smile of her heart to my heart, of her eyes to my eyes

Arthur Symons

At Toledo

The little stones chuckle against the fields:
'We are so small: God will not think of us;
We are so old already, we have seen
So many generations blunt their ploughs,
Tilling the fields we lie in; and we dream
Of our first sleep among the ancient hills.'
The grass laughs, thinking: 'I am born and die,
And born and die, and know not birth or death,
Only the going on of the green earth.'
The rivers pass and pass, and are the same,
And I, who see the beauty of the world,
Pass, and am not the same, or know it not,
And know the world no more. O is not this
Some horrible conspiracy of things,
That I have known and loved and lingered with
All my days through, and now they turn like hosts
Who have grown tired of a delaying guest?
They cast me out from their eternity:
God is in league with their forgetfulness.

Arthur Symons

At Toledo

The little stones chuckle against the fields:
'We are so small: God will not think of us;
We are so old already, we have seen
So many generations blunt their ploughs,
Tilling the fields we lie in; and we dream
Of our first sleep among the ancient hills.'
The grass laughs, thinking: 'I am born and die,
And born and die, and know not birth or death,
Only the going on of the green earth.'
The rivers pass and pass, and are the same,
And I, who see the beauty of the world,
Pass, and am not the same, or know it not,
And know the world no more. O is not this
Some horrible conspiracy of things,
That I have known and loved and lingered with
All my days through, and now they turn like hosts
Who have grown tired of a delaying guest?
They cast me out from their eternity:
God is in league with their forgetfulness.

Arthur Symons

Autumn Twilight

The long September evening dies
In mist along the fields and lanes;
Only a few faint stars surprise
The lingering twilight as it wanes.

Night creeps across the darkening vale;
On the horizon tree by tree
Fades into shadowy skies as pale
As moonlight on a shadowy sea.

And, down the mist-enfolded lanes,
Grown pensive now with evening,
See, lingering as the twilight wanes,
Lover with lover wandering.

Arthur Symons

Before Meeting

I know not how our eyes first met,
I only know that, night by night,
For one long instant we forget
All but our instant of delight.

Child, I have never heard you speak,
I know not of your face by day,
Nor if the rose upon your cheek
With night's spent roses faints away.

So far apart from me you seem,
Ever about to be so near,
I must have dreamed you in some dream,
I do but dream that you are here.

Well, no awakening may there be!
I look to you in fairy-land,
From fairy-land you look to me,
We smile, and seem to understand.

Arthur Symons

Before The Squall

The wind is rising on the sea,
The windy white foam-dancers leap;
And the sea moans uneasily,
And turns to sleep, and cannot sleep.

Ridge after rocky ridge uplifts,
Wild hands, and hammers at the land,
Scatters in liquid dust, and drifts
To death among the dusty sand.

On the horizon's nearing line,
Where the sky rests, a visible wall,
Grey in the offing, I divine,
The sails that fly before the squall.

Arthur Symons

Behind The Scenes: Empire

The little painted angels flit,
See, down the narrow staircase, where
The pink legs flicker over it!

Blonde, and bewigged, and winged with gold,
The shining creatures of the air
Troop sadly, shivering with cold.

The gusty gaslight shoots a thin
Sharp finger over cheeks and nose
Rouged to the colour of the rose.

All wigs and paint, they hurry in:
Then, bid their radiant moment be
The footlights' immortality!

Arthur Symons

Benedictine

The Benedictine scents and stains
the languor of your pallid lips;
My kiss shall be a bee that sips
A fainting roseleaf flushed with rains.

I thirst, and yet my thirst increases
With draining deep and deeper kisses;
The odour of your breath releases
Desires that dream of deeper blisses.

And on my lips your lips now pressed
Cling moist and close; your lips begin
Devouringly to gather in
Your kisses that my lips possessed.

The odour of your breath releases
Wafts of intoxicating blisses;
Yet still my thirst of you increases,
I think beneath your thirsty kisses.

No kisses more, this perilous day,
Or tempting, tempt me not in vain:
This day I dare not taste again
Your lips that suck my soul away!

Arthur Symons

Bianca

Her cheeks are hot, her cheeks are white;
The white girl hardly breathes to-night,
So faint the pulses come and go,
That waken to a smouldering glow
The morbid faintness of her white.

What drowsing heats of sense, desire
Longing and languorous, the fire
Of what white ashes, subtly mesh
The fascination of her flesh
Into a breathing web of fire?

Only her eyes, only her mouth,
Live, in the agony of drouth,
Athirst for that which may not be:
The desert of virginity
Aches in the hotness of her mouth.

I take her hands into my hands,
Silently, and she understands;
I set my lips upon her lips;
Shuddering to her finger-tips
She strains my hands within her hands.

I set my lips on hers; they close
Into a false and phantom rose;
Upon her thirsting lips I rain
A flood of kisses, and in vain;
Her lips inexorably close.

Through her closed lips that cling to mine,
Her hands that hold me and entwine,
Her body that abandoned lies,
Rigid with sterile ecstasies,
A shiver knits her flesh to mine.

Life sucks into a mist remote
Her fainting lips, her throbbing throat;

Her lips that open to my lips,
And, hot against her finger-tips,
The pulses leaping in her throat.

Arthur Symons

Bohemian Folk-Song

(From the French)

The moon was in the sky,
Pale, pale her light had grown
I went into the forest
All alone.

All alone,
My heart was well-nigh glad,
But when I thought of thee
Grief came and made me sad.

It came with the winds of autumn
When the dead leaves drop from the tree,
Because thy heart hath forgotten
Thy lover afar from thee.

It came with the rain fast falling
Through the dead leaves again,
Because that over a dead love
The heart must weep like rain.

Arthur Symons

By Loe Pool

The pool glitters, the fishes leap in the sun
With joyous fins, and dive in the pool again;
I see the corn in sheaves, and the harvestmen,
And the cows coming down to the water one by one.
Dragon-flies mailed in lapis and malachite
Flash through the bending reeds and blaze on the pool;
Sea-ward, where trees cluster, the shadow is cool;
I hear a singing, where the sea is, out of sight;
It is noontide, and the fishes leap in the pool.

Arthur Symons

By The Pool Of The Third Rosses

I heard the sighing of the reed
In the grey pool in the green land,
The sea-wind in the long reeds sighing
Between the green hill and the sand.

I heard the sighing of the reeds
Day after day, night after night;
I heard the whirring wild ducks flying,
I saw the sea-gull's wheeling flight.

I heard the sighing of the reeds
Night after night, day after day,
And I forgot old age, and dying,
And youth that loves, and love's decay.

I heard the sighing of the reeds
At noontide and at evening,
And some old dream I had forgotten
I seemed to be remembering.

I hear the sighing of the reeds:
Is it in vain, is it in vain
That some old peace I had forgotten
Is crying to come back again?

Arthur Symons

Caprice

Her mouth is all of roses,
Her eyes are violets;
And round her cheek at hide and seek
Love plays among the roses
That dimple on her cheek.

Her heart is all caprices,
Her will is yea and nay;
And with a smile can she beguile
My heart to the caprices
That dance upon her smile.

Her looks are merely sunshine,
Her tears are only rain;
But if she will I follow still
The flitting way of sunshine
Whatever way she will.

And if she will I love her,
And if she put me by,
Despite her will I follow still.
And will she let me love her?
Ha, ha! I think she will.

Arthur Symons

Clair De Lune

In the moonlit room your face,
Moonlight-coloured, fainting white,
And the silence of the place
Round about us in the night,
And my arms are round about you
In the silence of the night.

Lips that are not mine to kiss,
Lips how often kissed in vain,
Broken seal of memories,
Where the kisses come again
That the lips of all your lovers
Laid upon your lips in vain;

Eyes that are not mine to keep
In the mirror of mine eyes,
Where I tremble lest from sleep
Other ghosts should re-arise;
Why enthrall me with your magic,
Haunting lips, triumphant eyes?

For the silence of the night
Swims around me like a stream,
And your eyes have caught the light
Of a moon-enchanted dream,
And your arms glide round about me,
And I fade into a dream.

Arthur Symons

Colour Studies {at Dieppe}

The grey-green stretch of sandy grass,
Indefinitely desolate;
A sea of lead, a sky of slate;
Already autumn in the air, alas!

One stark monotony of stone,
The long hotel, acutely white,
Against the after-sunset light
Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone.

Listless and endless it outlies,
And means, to you and me, no more
Than any pebble on the shore,
Or this indifferent moment as it dies.

Arthur Symons

Dawn

Here in the little room
You sleep the sleep of innocent tired youth,
While I, in very sooth,
Tired, and awake beside you in the gloom,
Watch for the dawn, and feel the morning make
A loneliness about me for your sake.

You are so young, so fair,
And such a child, and might have loved so well;
And now, I cannot tell,
But surely one might love you anywhere,
Come to you as a lover, and make bold
To beg for that which all may buy with gold.

Your sweet, scarce lost, estate
Of innocence, the candour of your eyes,
Your childlike pleased surprise,
Your patience: these afflict me with a weight
As of some heavy wrong that I must share
With God who made, and man who found you, fair.

Arthur Symons

De Profundis Clemadi

I did not know; child, child, I did not know,
Who now in lonely wayfare go,
Who wander lonely of you, O my child,
And by myself exiled.
I did not know, but, O white soul of youth,
So passionate of truth,
So amorous of duty, and so strong
To suffer, not to suffer wrong,
Is there for me no pity, who am weak?
Spare me this silence, speak!
I did not know: I wronged you; I repent:
But will you not relent?
Must I still wander, outlawed, and go on
The old weary ways alone,
As in the old intolerable days
Before I saw you face to face,
The doubly darkened ways since you withdraw
Your light, that was my law?
I charge you by your soul, pause, ere you hurl
Sheer to destruction, girl,
A poor soul that had midway struggled out,
Still midway clogged about,
And for the love of you had turned his back
Upon the miry track,
That had been as a grassy wood-way, dim
With violet-beds, to him.
I wronged you, but I loved you; and to me
Your love was purity;
I rose, because you called me, and I drew
Nearer to God, in you.
I fall, and if you leave me, I must fall
To that last depth of all,
Where not the miracle of even your eyes
Can bid the dead arise.
I charge you that you save not your own sense
Of liliated innocence,
By setting, at the roots of that fair stem,
A murdered thing, to nourish them.

Declaration

Child, I will give you rings to wear,
And, if you love them, dainty dresses,
Flowers for your bosom and your hair,
And, if you love them, fond caresses;

And I will give you of my days,
And I will leave, when you require it,
My dreams, my books, my wonted ways,
Content if only you desire it.

Love's captive, now his fugitive,
All this I give you, for my part.
I ask but what I cannot give,
I ask no more than this: your heart.

Arthur Symons

Degrees Of Love

When your eyes opened to mine eyes,
Without desire, without surprise,
I knew your soul awoke to see
All, dreams foretold, but could not be,
Yet loving me, not loving me.

When your eyes drooped before mine eyes,
As though some secret made them wise,
Some wisdom veiled them secretly,
I knew your heart began to be
In love with love, in love with me.

When your eyes tawnd against mine eyes,
With beaten hunger, and with cries,
In bitter pride's humility,
Love, wholly mine, had come to be.
Hatred of love for loving me.

Arthur Symons

Emmy

Emmy's exquisite youth and her virginal air,
Eyes and teeth in the flash of a musical smile,
Come to me out of the past, and I see her there
As I saw her once for a while.

Emmy's laughter rings in my ears, as bright,
Fresh and sweet as the voice of a mountain brook,
And still I hear her telling us tales that night,
Out of Boccaccio's book.

There, in the midst of the villainous dancing-hall,
Leaning across the table, over the beer,
While the music maddened the whirling skirts of the ball,
As the midnight hour drew near,

There with the women, haggard, painted and old,
One fresh bud in a garland withered and stale,
She, with her innocent voice and her clear eyes, told
Tale after shameless tale.

And ever the witching smile, to her face beguiled,
Paused and broadened, and broke in a ripple of fun,
And the soul of a child looked out of the eyes of a child,
Or ever the tale was done.

O my child, who wronged you first, and began
First the dance of death that you dance so well?
Soul for soul: and I think the soul of a man
Shall answer for yours in hell.

Arthur Symons

Fête Champêtre

Under the shadow of the trees
We sat together, you and I;
Our hearts were sweetly ill at ease
Under the shadow of the trees.

In the green circle of the grass
We saw the fairies passing by;
The wake, the fairy wake it was
Upon the circle of green grass.

And softly with their fairy chain
They wove a circle round about,
And round our hearts; ah, not in vain
They bound us with their fairy chain!

With shadowy bonds thy bound us fast,
They wove their circle in and out;
Ah, Céleste, when the fairies passed,
With what strong bonds they bound us fast!

Arthur Symons

Flora Of The Eden: Antwerp

Eyes that sought my eyes, an-hungered, as a fire;
Hands that sought and caught my hands in their desire;
Hands and eyes that clipt and lipt me as a hungering fire!

But I turned away from your ecstatic eyes,
But my heart was silent to your eager sighs,
But I turned to other eyes from your imploring eyes.

Hands that I rejected, you were fain to give;
Eyes that for their moment loved me, as I live;
Mouth that kissed me: Flora of the Eden, O forgive!

Arthur Symons

Gipsy Love

The gipsy tents are on the down,
The gipsy girls are here;
And it's O to be off and away from the town
With a gipsy for my dear!

We'd make our bed in the bracken
With the lark for a chambermaid;
The lark would sing us awake in the morning,
Singing above our head.

We'd drink the sunlight all day long
With never a house to bind us;
And we'd only flout in a merry song
The world we left behind us.

We would be free as birds are free
The livelong day, the livelong day;
And we would lie in the sunny bracken
With none to say us nay.

The gipsy tents are on the down,
The gipsy girls are here;
And it's O to be off and away from the town
With a gipsy for my dear!

Arthur Symons

Grey Hours: Naples

There are some hours when I seem so indifferent; all things fade
To an indifferent greyness, like that grey of the sky;
Always at evening-ends, on grey days; and I know not why,
But life, and art, and love, and death, are the shade of a shade.
Then, in those hours, I hear old voices murmur aloud,
And memory forgoes desire, too weary at heart for regret;
Dreams come with beckoning fingers, and I forget to forget;
The world as a cloud drifts by, or I drift by as a cloud.

Arthur Symons

Hands

The little hands too soft and white
To have known more laborious hours
Than those which die upon a night
Of kindling wine and fading flowers;

The little hands that I have kissed,
Finger by finger, to the tips,
And delicately about each wrist
Have set a bracelet with my lips;

Dear soft white little morbid hands,
Mine all one night, with what delight
Shall I recall in other lands,
Dear hands, that you were mine one night!

Arthur Symons

Haschisch

Behind the door, beyond the light,
Who is it waits there in the night?
When he has entered he will stand,
Imposing with his silent hand
Some silent thing upon the night.

Behold the image of my fear.
O rise not, move not, come not near!
That moment, when you turned your face,
A demon seemed to leap through space;
His gesture strangled me with fear.

And yet I am the lord of all,
And this brave world magnificent,
Veiled in so variable a mist
It may be rose or amethyst,
Demands me for the lord of all!

Who said the world is but a mood
In the eternal thought of God?
I know it, real though it seem,
The phantom of a haschisch dream
In that insomnia which is God.

Arthur Symons

Her Eyes Say Yes

Her eyes say Yes, her lips say No.
Ah, tell me, Love, when she denies,
Shall I believe the lips or eyes?
Bid eyes no more dissemble,
Or lips too tremble
The way her heart would go!

Love may be vowed by lips, although
Cold truth, in unsundering eyes,
The armistice of lips denies.
But can fond eyes dissemble,
Or false lips tremble
To this soft Yes in No?

Arthur Symons

Hesterna Rosa

When a girl's fancy flutters to a man,
It is but as a bird that flies and cries;
She has a winged thing's April memories
Of sunshine, and the morning Spring began.

Love at her heart, importuning a tryst,
Finds in her senses little heed of it;
But her bright lips most girlishly admit
The simple homeliness of being kissed.

Kiss and be friends, or, when the kissing closes,
Part, as we were together, merely friends;
Why should we weep because the summer ends,
And some sweet moments ended with the roses?

Arthur Symons

Idealism

I know the woman has no soul, I know
The woman has no possibilities
Of soul or mind or heart, but merely is
The masterpiece of flesh: well, be it so.
It is her flesh that I adore; I go
Thirsting afresh to drain her empty kiss.
I know she cannot love: it is not this
My vanquished heart implores in overthrow.
Tyrannously I crave, I crave alone,
Her splendid body, Earth's most eloquent
Music, divinest human harmony;
Her body now a silent instrument,
That 'neath my touch shall wake and make for me
The strains I have but dreamed of, never known.

Arthur Symons

In Fountain Court

The fountain murmuring of sleep,
A drowsy tune;
The flickering green of leaves that keep
The light of June;
Peace, through a slumbering afternoon,
The peace of June.

A waiting ghost, in the blue sky,
The white curved moon;
June, hushed and breathless, waits, and I
Wait too, with June;
Come, through the lingering afternoon,
Soon, love, come soon.

Arthur Symons

In The Meadows At Mantua

But to have lain upon the grass
One perfect day, one perfect hour,
Beholding all things mortal pass
Into the quiet of green grass;

But to have lain and loved the sun,
Under the shadow of the trees,
To have been found in unison,
Once only, with the blessed sun;

Ah! in these flaring London nights,
Where midnight withers into morn,
How quiet a rebuke it writes
Across the sky of London nights!

Upon the grass at Mantua
These London nights were all forgot.
They wake for me again: but ah,
The meadow-grass at Mantua!

Arthur Symons

In The Stalls

My life is like a music-hall,
Where, in the impotence of rage,
Chained by enchantment to my stall,
I see myself upon the stage
Dance to amuse a music-hall.

'Tis I that smoke this cigarette,
Lounge here, and laugh for vacancy,
And watch the dancers turn; and yet
It is my very self I see
Across the cloudy cigarette.

My very self that turns and trips,
Painted, pathetically gay,
An empty song upon the lips
In make-believe of holiday:
I, I, this thing that turns and trips!

The light flares in the music-hall,
The light, the sound, that weary us;
Hour follows hour, I count them all,
Lagging, and loud, and riotous:
My life is like a music-hall.

Arthur Symons

In The Temple

When Lilian comes I scarcely know
If Winter wraps the world in snow,
Or if 'tis Summer strikes a-glow
The fountain in the court below,
When Lilian comes.
Her flower-like eyes, her soft lips bring
The warmth and welcome of the Spring,
And round my room, a fairy ring,
See violets, violets blossoming,
When Lilian comes.

When Lilian goes I hear again
The infinite despair of rain
Drip on my darkening window-pane
The tears of Winter on the wane,
When Lilian goes.
Yet still about my lonely room
The visionary violets bloom,
And with her presence still perfume
The tedious page that I resume
When Lilian goes.

Arthur Symons

In The Vale Of Llangollen

In the fields and the lanes again!
There's a bird that sings in my ear
Messages, messages;
The green cool song that I long to hear.

It pipes to me out of a tree
Messages, messages;
This is the voice of the sunshine,
This is the voice of grass and the trees.

It is the joy of Earth
Out of the heaven of the trees:
The voice of a bird in the sunshine singing me
Messages, messages.

Arthur Symons

In The Wood Of Finvara

I have grown tired of sorrow and human tears;
Life is a dream in the night, a fear among fears,
A naked runner lost in a storm of spears.

I have grown tired of rapture and love's desire;
Love is a flaming heart, and its flames aspire
Till they cloud the soul in the smoke of a windy fire.

I would wash the dust of the world in a soft green flood:
Here, between sea and sea, in the fairy wood,
I have found a delicate, wave-green solitude.

Here, in the fairy wood, between sea and sea,
I have heard the song of a fairy bird in a tree,
And the peace that is not in the world has flown to me.

Arthur Symons

Javanese Dancers

Twitched strings, the clang of metal, beaten drums,
Dull, shrill, continuous, disquieting:
And now the stealthy dancer comes
Undulantly with cat-like steps that cling;

Smiling between her painted lids a smile,
Motionless, unintelligible, she twines
Her fingers into mazy lines,
The scarves across her fingers twine the while.

One, two, three, four glide forth, and, to and fro,
Delicately and imperceptibly,
Now swaying gently in a row,
Now interthreading slow and rhythmically,

Still, with fixed eyes, monotonously still,
Mysteriously, with smiles inanimate,
With lingering feet that undulate,
With sinuous fingers, spectral hands that thrill

In measure while the gnats of music whirr,
The little amber-coloured dancers move,
Like painted idols seen to stir
By the idolators in a magic grove.

Arthur Symons

Kisses

Sweet, can I sing you the song of your kisses?
How soft is this one, how subtle this is,
How fluttering swift as a bird's kiss that is,
As a bird that taps at a leafy lattice;
How this one clings and how that uncloses
From bud to flower in the way of roses;
And this through laughter and that through weeping
Swims to the brim where Love lies sleeping;
And this in a pout I snatch, and capture
That in the ecstasy of rapture,
When the odorous red-rose petals part
That my lips may find their way to the heart
Of the rose of the world, your lips, my rose.
But no song knows
The way of my heart to the heart of my rose.

Arthur Symons

La Mélinite: Moulin Rouge

Olivier Metra's Waltz of Roses
Sheds in a rhythmic shower
The very petals of the flower;
And all is roses,
The rouge of petals in a shower.

Down the long hall the dance returning
Rounds the full circle, rounds
The perfect rose of lights and sounds,
The rose returning
Into the circle of its rounds.

Alone, apart, one dancer watches
Her mirrored, morbid grace;
Before the mirror, face to face,
Alone she watches
Her morbid, vague, ambiguous grace.

Before the mirror's dance of shadows
She dances in a dream,
And she and they together seem
A dance of shadows;
Alike the shadows of a dream.

The orange-rosy lamps are trembling
Between the robes that turn;
In ruddy flowers of flame that burn
The lights are trembling:
The shadows and the dancers turn.

And, enigmatically smiling,
In the mysterious night,
She dances for her own delight,
A shadow smiling
Back to a shadow in the night.

Arthur Symons

Laus Mortis

I bring to thee, for love, white roses, delicate Death!
White lilies of the valley, dropping gently tears,
The white camellia, the seal of perfect years,
The misty white azalea, flickering as a breath.
White flowers I bring, and all the flowers I bring for thee,
Discreet and comforting Death! for those pale hands of thine;
O hands that I have fled, soft hands now laid on mine,
Softer than these white flowers of life, thy hands to me,
Most comfortable Death, mother of many dreams,
And gatherer of many dreams of men,
Dreams that come desolately flying back again,
With soiled and quivering wings, from undiscovered streams.
I have been fearful of thee, mother, all life long,
For I have loved a warm, alluring, treacherous bride,
Life, and she loved thee not; to hold me from thy side,
She closed her arms about my heart, to do thee wrong.
O gay and bitter bride of such divine desires,
Too fiercely passionate Life, that wast so prodigal
Of thine eternal moments, at the end of all
Take my forgiveness: I have passed through all thy fires.
Nothing can hurt me now, and having gained and lost
All things, and having loved, and having done with life,
I come back to thy arms, mother, and now all strife
Ceases; and every homeward-flying dream, wind-tossed,
My soul that looks upon thy face and understands,
My throbbing heart that at thy touch is quieted,
And all that once desired, and all desire now dead,
Are gathered to the peace and twilight of thy hands.

Arthur Symons

Laus Virginitatis

The mirror of men's eyes delights me less,
O mirror, than the friend I find in thee;
Thou lovest, as I love, my loveliness,
Thou givest my beauty back to me.

I to myself suffice; why should I tire
The heart with roaming that would rest at home?
Myself the limit to my own desire,
I have no desire to roam.

I hear the maidens crying in the hills:
'Come up among the bleak and perilous ways,
Come up and follow after Love, who fills
The hollows of our nights and days;

'Love the deliverer, who is desolate,
And saves from desolation; the divine
Out of great suffering; Love, compassionate,
Who is thy bread and wine,

'O soul, that faints in following after him.'
I hear; but what is Love that I should tread
Hard ways among the perilous passes dim,
Who need no succouring wine and bread?

Enough it is to dream, enough to abide
Here where the loud world's echoes fall remote,
Untroubled, unawakened, satisfied;
As water-lilies float

Lonely upon a shadow-sheltered pool,
Dreaming of their own whiteness; even so,
I dwell within a nest of shadows cool,
And watch the vague hours come and go.

They come and go, but I my own delight
Remain, and I desire no change in aught:
Might I escape indifferent Time's despite,
That ruins all he wrought!

This dainty body formed so curiously,
So delicately and wonderfully made,
Mine own, that none hath ever shared with me,
Mine own, and for myself arrayed;

All this that I have loved and not another,
My one desire's delight, this, shall Time bring
Where Beauty hath the abhorred worm for brother,
The dust for covering?

At least I bear it virgin to the grave,
Pure, and apart, and rare, and casketed;
What, living, was mine own and no man's slave,
Shall be mine own when I am dead.

But thou, my friend, my mirror, dost possess
The shadow of myself that smiles in thee,
And thou dost give, with thine own loveliness,
My beauty back to me.

Arthur Symons

Leves Amores

I

Your kisses, and the way you curl,
Delicious and distracting girl,
Into one's arms, and round about,
Luxuriously in and out
Twining inextricably, as twine
The clasping tangles of the vine;
Strong to embrace and long to kiss,
And strenuous for the sharper bliss,
Insatiably enamoured of
The ultimate ecstasy of love.
So loving to be loved, so gay
And greedy for our holiday;
And then how prettily you sleep!
You nestle close, and let me keep
My straying fingers in the nest
Of your warm comfortable breast;
And as I lie and dream awake,
Unsleeping for your sleeping sake,
I feel the very pulse and heat
Of your young life-blood beat, and beat
With mine; and you are mine, my sweet!

II

The little bedroom papered red,
The gas's faint malodorous light,
And one beside me in the bed,
Who chatters, chatters, half the night.

I drowse and listen, drowse again,
And still, although I would not hear,
Her stream of chatter, like the rain,
Is falling, falling on my ear.

The bed-clothes stifle me, I ache
With weariness, my eyelids prick;
I hate, until I long to break,
That clock for its tyrannic tick.

And still beside me, through the heat

Of this September night, I feel
Her body's warmth upon the sheet
Burn through my limbs from head to heel.

And still I see her profile lift
Its tiresome line above the hair,
That streams, a dark and tumbled drift,
Across the pillow that I share

Arthur Symons

Lillian

I. PROEM.

This was a sweet white wildwood violet
I found among the painted slips that grow
Where, under hot-house glass, the flowers forget
How the sun shines, and how the cool winds blow.

The violet took the orchid's colouring,
Tricked out its dainty fairness like the rest;
Yet still its breath was as the breath of Spring,
And the wood's heart was wild within its breast.

The orchid mostly is the flower I love,
And violets, the mere violets of the wood,
For all their sweetness, have not power to move
The curiosity that rules my blood.

Yet here, in this spice-laden atmosphere,
Where only nature is a thing unreal,
I found in just a violet, planted here,
The artificial flower of my ideal.

II. CHRISTMAS-EVE.

April-hearted Lillian,
April with our love began;
Winter comes, but April violets
Linger on.

So the fancy of an hour,
Born of sudden sun and shower,
Braves the winter, and has blossomed
Into flower.

Arthur Symons

Love And Sleep

I have laid sorrow to sleep;
Love sleeps.
She who oft made me weep
Now weeps.

I loved, and have forgot,
And yet
Love tells me she will not
Forget.

She it was bid me go;
Love goes
By what strange ways, ah! no
One knows.

Because I cease to weep,
She weeps.
Here by the sea in sleep,
Love sleeps.

Arthur Symons

Love In Autumn

It is already Autumn, and not in my heart only,
The leaves are on the ground,
Green leaves untimely browned,
The leaves bereft of Summer, my heart of Love left lonely.

Swift, in the masque of seasons, the moment of each mummer,
And even so fugitive
Love's hour, Love's hour to live:
Yet, leaves, ye have had your rapture, and thou, poor heart, thy Summer!

Arthur Symons

Love's Paradox

Once I smiled when I saw you, when I saw you smile I was glad,
And the joy of my heart was as foam that the sea-wind shakes from the sea;
But the smile of your eyes grows strange, and the smile that my lips have had
Trembles back to my heart, and my heart trembles in me.

Once you laughed when you met me, when you met me your voice was gay
As the voice of a bird in the dawn of the day on a sunshiny tree;
But the sound of your voice grows strange, and the words that you do not say
Thrill from your heart to mine, and my heart trembles in me.

Arthur Symons

Love's Secret

As a most happy mother feels the stir
Of that new life which quickens with her life,
And knows that virtue has gone forth from her
To doubly sanctify the name of wife;
Yet, for her joy's sake, and because pride
Is too unutterably sanctified,
And all the heaven of heavens within her breast
Too dearly and too intimately possessed,
Speaks not a word, but folds her new delight
With a rapt silence, comforting as night;
So, when I felt the quickening life that came
To bid my life's long-slumbering currents move,
I set the seal of silence on your name,
And, for my love's sake, never told my love.

Arthur Symons

Madrigal

May we not love as others do,
Dearest, because we love,
A mistress I, a husband you?
Nay, our delights must prove
Either the double or the part
Of those who love with single heart.

Sweet friend, I find not any wrong
In your divided soul;
Nor you, that mine should not belong
Entire to one control.
Let simple lovers if they will
Contemn us, we outwit them still.

For small and poor and cold indeed
Is any heart that can
Hold but the measure of the need,
The joy, of any man.
Both spare and prodigal were we,
To love but you, to love but me.

Arthur Symons

Magnificat

Praise God, who wrought for you and me
Your subtle body made for love;
God, who from all eternity
Willed our divided ways should move
Together, and our love should be.

I wandered all these years among
A world of women, seeking you.
Ah, when our fingers met and clung,
The pulses of our bodies knew
Each other: our hearts leapt and sung.

It was not any word of mine,
It was not any look of yours;
Only we knew, and knew for sign
Of Love that comes, Love that endures,
Our veins the chalice of his wine.

Because God willed for us and planned
One perfect love, excelling speech
To tell, or thought to understand,
He made our bodies each for each,
Then put your hand into my hand.

Arthur Symons

Margery Of The Fens

I

Yes, I'm dying by inches; the Devil has got his way:
I fought him fourscore years, but he's gripped me hard to-day.
No, not God, not a word of God! For I let him be.
The Devil is waiting, I tell you, but God has forgotten me.

II

Sir, you know I'm a witch? Look here, lean closer down:
If you tossed me into the dyke, you know I couldn't drown;
If you pricked me over with pins, I never could feel a pin;
For the Devil has sealed me his, and I've sinned the Original Sin.

III

Fourscore years have I lived, here in the heart of the Fens,
Dragging ages of years, but fourscore years of men's;
And the pools 'll stir, and the fogs 'll rise, and the winds 'll moan;--
Ay, there were others along with me, once; but they're gone, they're gone.

IV

Ages of years alone! There was Dickon, my man, he died,
And the child didn't die, but her father was on the Almighty's side,
And he took him away to himself; but he left the girl to hell,
And me he left to the Devil, with hardly a soul to sell.

V

Cursed and motherless girl, motherless girl that was mine!
I brought her up on my knees, and she left 'em to herd with swine;
I never have named her name these twoscore years save three:
She cast me off to be harlot, and I cast her off from me.

VI

What's that crying and wailing? The wind? Oh, ay, the wind.
And the wages of sin is death, and the soul shall die that hath sinned.
She cast me off, and she came back home with her baby again;
And I spoke no word, and I shut the door in her face in the rain.

VII

And the baby wailed and wailed on the threshold out in the night;
And all night long she lay at the door, and I sat upright;
And at morn she rose, and I spoke no word, and she went her way;
And the wages of sin is death, and it's I must die to-day.

VIII

Inch by inch I'm dying, and Satan's at watch hard by,
For he'll have my soul,--it was all I had,--when I come to die;
For my man that was he died, and my girl that was she fell,

And I flung my soul away, and the Devil caught it for hell.

IX

Twoscore years save three I've lived the life of a witch,
And I've plagued the cattle and folk with cramp and murrain and stitch;
And I've sold my soul, for my girl she killed my heart: let be;
She cast me off to be harlot, and I cast her off from me.

X

Go, and leave me alone. I'm past your help. I shall lie,
As she lay, through the night, and at morn, as she went in the rain, I shall die.
Go, and leave me alone. Let me die as I lived. But oh,
If the wind wouldn't cry and wail with the baby's cry as I go!

Arthur Symons

Mauve, Black, And Rose

Mauve, black, and rose,
The veils of the jewel, and she, the jewel, a rose.

First, the pallor of mauve,
A soft flood flowing about the body I love.

Then, the flush of the rose,
A hedge of roses about the mystical rose.

Last, the black, and at last
The feet that I love, and the way that my love has passed.

Arthur Symons

Modern Beauty

I am the torch, she saith, and what to me
If the moth die of me? I am the flame
Of Beauty, and I burn that all may see
Beauty, and I have neither joy nor shame.
But live with that clear light of perfect fire
Which is to men the death of their desire.

I am Yseult and Helen, I have seen
Troy burn, and the most loving knight lies dead.
The world has been my mirror, time has been
My breath upon the glass; and men have said,
Age after age, in rapture and despair,
Love's poor few words, before my image there.

I live, and am immortal; in my eyes
The sorrow of the world, and on my lips
The joy of life, mingle to make me wise;
Yet now the day is darkened with eclipse:
Who is there lives for beauty? Still am I
The torch, but where's the moth that still dares die?

Arthur Symons

Montserrat

Peace waits among the hills;
I have drunk peace,
Here, where the blue air fills
The great cup of the hills,
And fills with peace.

Between the earth and sky,
I have seen the earth
Like a dark cloud go by,
And fade out of the sky;
There was no more earth.

Here, where the Holy Graal
Brought secret light
Once, from beyond the veil,
I, seeing no Holy Graal,
See divine light.

Light fills the hills with God,
Wind with his breath,
And here, in his abode,
Light, wind, and air praise God,
And this poor breath.

Arthur Symons

Night And Wind

The night is light and chill,
Stars are awake in the sky,
There's a cloud over the moon;
Round the house on the hill
The wind creeps with its cry
Between a wail and a croon.

I hear the voice of the wind,
The voice of the wind in the night,
Cry and sob and weep,
As the voice of one that hath sinned
Moaning aloud in its might
In the night when he cannot sleep.

Sleep? No sleep is about.
What remembering sin
Wakes and watches apart?...
The wind wails without,
And my heart is wailing within,
And the wind is the voice of my heart.

Arthur Symons

Nora On The Pavement

As Nora on the pavement
Dances, and she entrances the grey hour
Into the laughing circle of her power,
The magic circle of her glances,
As Nora dances on the midnight pavement;

Petulant and bewildered,
Thronging desires and longing looks recur,
And memorably re-incarnate her,
As I remember that old longing,
A footlight fancy, petulant and bewildered;

There where the ballet circles,
See her, but ah! not free her from the race
Of glittering lines that link and interlace;
This colour now, now that, may be her,
In the bright web of those harmonious circles.

But what are these dance-measures,
Leaping and joyous, keeping time alone
With Life's capricious rhythm, and all her own,
Life's rhythm and hers, long sleeping,
That wakes, and knows not why, in these dance-measures?

It is the very Nora;
Child, and most blithe, and wild as any elf,
And innocently spendthrift of herself,
And guileless and most unbeguiled,
Herself at last, leaps free the very Nora.

It is the soul of Nora,
Living at last, and giving forth to the night,
Bird-like, the burden of its own delight,
All its desire, and all the joy of living,
In that blithe madness of the soul of Nora.

Arthur Symons

O Flame Of Living Love

O flame of living love,
That dost eternally
Pierce through my soul with so consuming heat,
Since there's no help above,
Make thou an end of me,
And break the bond of this encounter sweet.

O burn that burns to heal!
O more than pleasant wound!
And O soft hand, O touch most delicate,
That dost new life reveal,
That dost in grace abound,
And, slaying, dost from death to life translate!

O lamps of fire that shined
With so intense a light,
That those deep caverns where the senses live,
Which were obscure and blind,
Now with strange glories bright,
Both heat and light to his beloved give!

With how benign intent
Rememberest thou my breast,
Where thou alone abidest secretly;
And in thy sweet ascent,
With glory and good possessed,
How delicately thou teachest love to me!

Arthur Symons

O, Water, Voice Of My Heart...

O water, voice of my heart, crying in the sand,
All night long crying with a mournful cry,
As I lie and listen, and cannot understand
The voice of my heart in my side or the voice of the sea,
O water, crying for rest, is it I, is it I?
All night long the water is crying to me.

Unresting water, there shall never be rest
Till the last moon droop and the last tide fail,
And the fire of the end begin to burn in the west;
And the heart shall be weary and wonder and cry like the sea,
All life long crying without avail,
As the water all night long is crying to me.

Arthur Symons

Of Charity

A beggar died last night; his soul
Went up to God, and said:
'I come uncalled, forgive it, Lord;
I died for want of bread.'

Then answered him the Lord of heaven:
'Son, how can this thing be?
Are not my saints on earth? and they
Had surely succoured thee.'

'Thy saints, O Lord,' the beggar said,
'Live holy lives of prayer;
How should they know of such as we?
We perish unaware.'

'They strive to save our wicked souls
And fit them for the sky;
Meanwhile, not having bread to eat,
(Forgive!) our bodies die.'

Then the Lord God spake out of heaven
In wrath and angry pain:
'O men, for whom my Son hath died,
My Son hath lived in vain!'

Arthur Symons

Old Age

It may be, when this city of the nine gates
Is broken down by ruinous old age,
And no one upon any pilgrimage
Comes knocking, no one for an audience waits,
And no bright foraging troop of bandit moods
Rides out on the brave folly of any guest,
But weariness, the restless shadow of rest,
Hoveringly upon the city broods;
It may be, then, that those remembering
And sleepless watchers on the crumbling towers
Shall lose the count of the disastrous hours
Which God may have grown tired of reckoning.

Arthur Symons

On An Air Of Rameau

A melancholy desire of ancient things
Floats like a faded perfume out of the wires;
Pallid lovers, what unforgotten desires,
Whispered once, are retold in your whisperings?

Roses, roses, and lilies with hearts of gold,
These you plucked for her, these she wore in her breast;
Only Rameau's music remembers the rest,
The death of roses over a heart grown cold.

But these sighs? Can ghosts then sigh from the tomb?
Life then wept for you, sighed for you, chilled your breath?
It is the melancholy of ancient death
The harpsichord dreams of, sighing in the room.

Arthur Symons

On The Doorstep

Midnight long is over-past
As we loiter, and the rain falls fast,
As we loiter on your doorstep,
And the rain falls fast.

Will the watchful mother hear,
As we whisper, is your mother near,
Keeping there behind the curtain
An attentive ear?

But we have so much to say,
As we linger, ere I go my way,
In the dark upon your doorstep,
We could talk till day.

There is no one in the street,
As I hold you in my arms, my sweet,
As I kiss you on your doorstep,
As I kiss you for good-night, my sweet.

Arthur Symons

On The Stage

Lights, in a multi-coloured mist,
From indigo to amethyst,
A whirling mist of multi-coloured lights;
And after, wigs and tights,
Then faces, then a glimpse of profiles, then
Eyes, and a mist again;
And rouge, and always tights, and wigs, and tights.

You see the ballet so, and so,
From amethyst to indigo;
You see a dance of phantoms, but I see
A girl, who smiles to me;
Her cheeks, across the rouge, and in her eyes
I know what memories,
What memories and messages for me.

Arthur Symons

Opals

My soul is like this cloudy, flaming opal ring.
The fields of earth are in it, green and glimmering,
The waves of the blue sky, night's purple flower of noon,
The vanishing cold scintillations of the moon,
And the red heart that is a flame within a flame.
And as the opal dies, and is re-born the same,
And all the fire that is its life-blood seems to dart
Through the veined variable intricacies of its heart,
And ever wandering ever wanders back again,
So must my swift soul constant to itself remain.
Opal, have I not been as variable as you?
But, cloudy opal flaming green and red and blue,
Are you not ever constant in your varying,
Even as my soul, O captive opal of my ring?

Arthur Symons

Palm Sunday

Because it is the day of Palms,
Carry a palm for me,
Carry a palm in Santa Chiara,
And I will watch the sea;
There are no palms in Santa Chiara
To-day or any day for me.

I sit and watch the little sail
Lean side-ways on the sea,
The sea is blue from here to Sorrento,
And the sea-wind comes to me,
And I see the white clouds lift from Sorrento
And the dark sail lean upon the sea.

I have grown tired of all these things,
And what is left for me?
I have no place in Santa Chiara,
There is no peace upon the sea;
But carry a palm in Santa Chiara,
Carry a palm for me.

Arthur Symons

Paris

My Paris is a land where twilight days
Merge into violent nights of black and gold;
Where, it may be, the flower of dawn is cold:
Ah, but the gold nights, and the scented ways!

Eyelids of women, little curls of hair,
A little nose curved softly, like a shell,
A red mouth like a wound, a mocking veil:
Phantoms, before the dawn, how phantom-fair!

And every woman with beseeching eyes,
Or with enticing eyes, or amorous,
Offers herself, a rose, and craves of us
A rose's place among our memories.

Arthur Symons

Pastel: Masks And Faces

The light of our cigarettes
Went and came in the gloom:
It was dark in the little room.

Dark, and then, in the dark,
Sudden, a flash, a glow,
And a hand and a ring I know.

And then, through the dark, a flush
Ruddy and vague, the grace
(A rose!) of her lyric face.

Arthur Symons

Perfume

Shake out your hair about me, so,
That I may feel the stir and scent
Of those vague odours come and go
The way our kisses went.
Night gave this priceless hour of love,
But now the dawn steals in apace,
And amorously bends above
The wonder of your face.

'Farewell' between our kisses creeps,
You fade, a ghost, upon the air;
Yet ah! the vacant place still keeps
The odour of your hair.

Arthur Symons

Renée

Rain, and the night, and the old familiar door,
And the archway dim, and the roadway desolate;
Faces that pass, and faces, and more, yet more:
Renée! come, for I wait.

Pallid out of the darkness, adorably white,
Pale as the spirit of rain, with the night in her hair,
Renée undulates, shadow-like, under the light,
Into the outer air.

Mournful, beautiful, calm with that vague unrest,
Sad with that sensitive, vaguely ironical mouth;
Eyes that flame with the loveliest, deadliest
Fire of her passionate youth;

Mournful, beautiful, sister of night and rain,
Elemental, fashioned of tears and fire,
Ever desiring, ever desired in vain,
Mother of vain desire;

Renée comes to me, she the sorceress, Fate,
Subtly insensible, softly invincible, she:
Renée, who waits for another, for whom I wait,
To linger a moment with me.

Arthur Symons

Rosa Flammea

Beautiful demon, O veil those eyes of fire,
Cover your breasts that are whiter than milk, and ruddy
With dewy buds of the magical rose, your body,
Veil your lips from the shining of my desire!
As a rose growing up from hell you waver before me,
Shaking an odorous breath that is fire within;
The Lord Christ may not pardon me this sweet sin,
But the scent of the rose that is rooted in hell steals o'er me.
O Lord Christ, I am lost, I am lost, I am lost!
Her eyes are as stars in a pool and their spell is on me;
She lifts her unsearchable lids, chill fire is upon me,
It shudders through every vein, and my brain is tossed
As the leaves of a tree when the wind coils under and over;
She smiles, and I hear the heart beat in my side;
She lifts her hands, and I swirl in a clutching tide;
But shall my soul not burn in flame if I love her?
She shall veil those eyes, those lips, ah! that breast.
Demon seeking my soul, I do adjure thee,
In the name of him for whose tempted sake I endure thee,
Trouble my sight no more: lost soul, be at rest!
She smiles, and the air grows into a mist of spices,
Frankincense, cinnamon, labdanum, and myrrh
Rise in sweet smoke about the feet of her
Before whom the sweets of the world are as sacrifices.
Cinnamon, frankincense, labdanum, and myrrh
Smoke in the air, the fume of them closes round me;
Help, ere the waves of the flood of odours have drowned me,
Help, ere it be too late! There has no help come,
And I feel that the rose of the pit begins to blossom
Into the likeness of a lost soul on fire,
And the soul that was mine is emptied of all but desire
Of the rose of her lips and the rose of her bosom.
Ah! she smiles the great smile, the immortal shame:
Her mouth to my mouth, though hell be the price hereafter!...
I hear in the whirling winds her windy laughter,
And my soul for this shall whirl in the winds of flame.

Arthur Symons

Rubies

There are nine rubies in this Indian ring,
And every blood-red ruby is a part
Of the nine-petalled rose that is my heart,
The elaborate rose of my own fashioning.
Not out of any garden have I sought
The rose that is more brief than dawn or dew:
Stones of the flame and ice, I find in you
The image of the heart that I have wrought.
For you are cold and burn as though with fire,
For you are hard, yet veil soft depths below,
And each divided ruby seems to glow
With the brief passion of its own desire.
Rose of my heart, shall this too be the same?
For, when one light catches the wandering rays,
They rush together in one consuming blaze
Of indivisible and ecstatic flame.

Arthur Symons

Satiety

I have outlived my life, and linger on,
Knowing myself the ghost of one that was.
Come, kindly death, and let my flesh (being grass)
Nourish some beast's sad life when I am gone.
What joy is left in all I look upon?
I cannot sin, it wearies me. Alas!
I loathe the laggard moments as they pass;
I tire of all but swift oblivion.

Yet, if all power to taste the dear deceit
Be not outworn and perished utterly;
If it could be, then surely it were sweet--
I go down on my knees and pray: O God,
Send me some last illusion, ere I be
A clod--perhaps at rest--within a clod.

Arthur Symons

Serata Di Fiesta

Here in a city made for love
I wander loveless and alone,
Longing for the unknown,
Desiring one thing only, and above
Desire in love with love.

The beauty of the starlight dies
Over the city, as a flower
Droops, an unheeded hour;
Ah! barren beauty, when no lovelier eyes
Behold it as it dies.

I wander loveless and alone,
Alone with memory: she sings
Of other wanderings;
Even London half-divine, had I but known
What 'tis to be alone.

Had I but known! Could I but know
If here, or here, for surely here
The answer waits my ear,
Some lips my lips, some hands my hands; but oh,
Could these, could I, but know!

We seek each other, can I doubt?
For man is man, and woman kind,
And he who seeks shall find,
World without end; but how to ravel out
The inextricable doubt?

I am a shipwrecked sailor, lost
For lack of water on the sea:
Water, but none for me;
Water, but I, thirsting and fever-tossed,
In much abundance lost.

Arthur Symons

Soror Tua

For the statue of Lorenzetti, in the Venice Exhibition, 1887, representing a chained and recumbent figure larger than life; who, if she broke the silence of her misery, might speak thus:--

Ye that pass by, come near and look on me;
I am despised, rejected and out-thrust;
My garments are acquainted with the dust,
My soul is bosom-mate of misery.

Come near and look upon me, sons of men.
Would I were dead; yea, peace is with the dead,
The dead are happy, having no desire.
I rise and fall, and rise and fall again,
Something is in me, famishing for bread,
Baffled and unappeasable as fire.
Woe, woe is me, I tire and may not tire!
Eternal strength in weariness is mine.
Raise me, I call. Come nearer, I am thine.
What? Knowest thou not thy sister? I am she.

Arthur Symons

Stella Maris

Why is it I remember yet
You, of all women one has met
In random wayfare, as one meets
The chance romances of the streets,
The Juliet of a night? I know
Your heart holds many a Romeo.
And I, who call to mind your face
In so serene a pausing-place,
Where the bright pure expanse of sea,
The shadowy shore's austerity,
Seems a reproach to you and me,
I too have sought on many a breast
The ecstasy of love's unrest,
I too have had my dreams, and met
(Ah me!) how many a Juliet.
Why is it, then, that I recall
You, neither first nor last of all?
For, surely as I see tonight
The glancing of the lighthouse light,
Against the sky, across the bay,
As turn by turn it falls my way,
So surely do I see your eyes
Out of the empty night arise,
Child, you arise and smile to me
Out of the night, out of the sea,
The Nereid of a moment there,
And is it seaweed in your hair?

O lost and wrecked, how long ago,
Out of the drownèd past, I know,
You come to call me, come to claim
My share of your delicious shame.
Child, I remember, and can tell,
One night we loved each other well;
And one night's love, at least or most,
Is not so small a thing to boast.
You were adorable, and I
Adored you to infinity,
That nuptial night too briefly borne

To the oblivion of morn.
Oh, no oblivion! for I feel
Your lips deliriously steal
Along my neck and fasten there;
I feel the perfume of your hair,
And your soft breast that heaves and dips,
Desiring my desirous lips,
And that ineffable delight
When souls turn bodies, and unite
In the intolerable, the whole
Rapture of the embodied soul.

That joy was ours, we passed it by;
You have forgotten me, and I
Remember you thus strangely, won
An instant from oblivion.
And I, remembering, would declare
That joy, not shame, is ours to share,
Joy that we had the will and power,
In spite of fate, to snatch one hour,
Out of vague nights, and days at strife,
So infinitely full of life.
And 'tis for this I see you rise,
A wraith, with starlight in your eyes,
Here, where the drowsy-minded mood
Is one with Nature's solitude;
For this, for this, you come to me
Out of the night, out of the sea.

Arthur Symons

The Abandoned

The moonlight touched the sombre waters white.
Beneath the bridge 'twas darker. Was she cold?
She shivered. Her poor shawl was worn and old,
And she was desolate, and it was night.
The slow canal crept onward; to her sight
It seemed to beckon, and the lapping told
Of rest and quiet sleep: how sweet to fold
The hands from toil and close the eyes from light,
And so shut out all memory, and go
There where men sleep, and dreams, perhaps, are not.
O never any dreams, she murmured; so,
Longing for sleep, the sleep that comes with death,
She fell, she felt the water, and forgot
All, save the drowning agony of breath.

Arthur Symons

The Andante Of Snakes

They weave a slow andante as in sleep,
Scaled yellow, swampy black, plague-spotted white;
With blue and lidless eyes at watch they keep
A treachery of silence; infinite

Ancestral angers brood in these dull eyes
Where the long-lineaged venom of the snake
Meditates evil; woven intricacies
Of Oriental arabesque awake,

Unfold, expand, contract, and raise and sway
Swoln heart-shaped heads, flattened as by a heel,
Erect to suck the sunlight from the day,
And stealthily and gradually reveal

Dim cabalistic signs of spots and rings
Among their folds of faded tapestry;
Then these fat, foul, unbreathing, moving things
Droop back to stagnant immobility.

Arthur Symons

The Beggars

It is the beggars who possess the earth.
Kings on their throne have but a narrow girth
Of some poor known dominion; these possess
All the unknown, and that vast happiness
Of the uncertainty of human things.
Wandering on eternal wanderings,
They know the world; and tasting but the bread
Of charity, know man; and, strangely led
By some vague, certain, and appointed hand,
Know fate; and being lonely, understand
Some little of the thing without a name
That sits by the roadside and talks with them,
When they are silent; for the soul is shy
If more than its own shadow loiter by.
They and the birds are old acquaintances,
Knowing the dawn together; theirs it is
To settle on the dusty land like crows,
The ragged vagabonds of the air; who knows
How they too shall be fed, day after day,
And surer than the birds, for are not they
The prodigal sons of God, our piteous
Aliens, outcast and accusing us?
Do they not ask of us their own, and wait,
Humbly, among the dogs about the gate,
While we are feasting? They will wait till night:
Who shall wait longer? Dim, shadowy, white,
The highway calls; they follow till it ends,
And all the way they walk among their friends,
Sun, wind, and rain, their tearful sister rain,
Their brother wind. Forest and hill and plain
Know them and are forgotten. Grey and old,
Their feet begin to linger, brown arms fold
The heavy peace of earth about their heart,
And soon, and without trouble, they depart
On the last journey. As the beggar lies,
With naked face, remembering the skies,
I think he only wonders: Shall I find
A good road still, a hayrick to my mind,

A tavern now and then upon the road?
He has been earth's guest; he goes; the old abode
Drops to the old horizon, the old way
Of yesterday and every yesterday.
We, heavy laden, miserably proud
Because our hands ache and our backs are bowed
With dusty treasures, have so much to quit:
He, nothing, nor the memory of it.
O, the one happiness, when, out of breath,
Our feet slip, and we stumble upon death!

Arthur Symons

The Broken Tryst

That day a fire was in my blood;
I could have sung: joy wrapt me round;
The men I met seemed all so good,
I scarcely knew I trod the ground.

How easy seemed all toil! I laughed
To think that once I hated it.
The sunlight thrilled like wine, I quaffed
Delight, divine and infinite.

The very day was not too long;
I felt so patient; I could wait,
Being certain. So, the hours in song
Chimed out the minutes of my fate.

For she was coming, she, at last,
I knew: I knew that bolts and bars
Could stay her not; my heart throbbed fast,
I was not more certain of the stars.

The twilight came, grew deeper; now
The hour struck, minutes passed, and still
The passionate fervour of her vow
Ran in my heart's ear audible.

I had no doubt at all: I knew
That she would come, and I was then
Most certain, while the minutes flew:
Ah, how I scorned all other men!

Next moment! Ah! it was--was not!
I heard the stillness of the street.
Night came. The stars had not forgot.
The moonlight fell about my feet.

So I rebuked my heart, and said:
"Be still, for she is coming, see,
Next moment--coming. Ah, her tread,
I hear her coming--it is she!"

And then a woman passed. The hour
Rang heavily along the air.
I had no hope, I had no power
To think--for thought was but despair.

A thing had happened. What? My brain
Dared not so much as guess the thing.
And yet the sun would rise again
Next morning! I stood marvelling.

Arthur Symons

The Coming Of Spring

Spring is come back, and the little voices are calling,
The birds are calling, the little green buds on the trees,
A song in the street, and an old and sleepy tune;
All the sounds of the spring are falling, falling,
Gentle as rain, on my heart, and I hear all these
As a sick man hears men talk from the heart of a swoon.

The clamours of spring are the same old delicate noises,
The earth renews its magical youth at a breath,
And the whole world whispers a well-known, secret thing;
And I hear, but the meaning has faded out of the voices;
Something has died in my heart: is it death or sleep?
I know not, but I have forgotten the meaning of spring.

Arthur Symons

The Dogs

My desires are upon me like dogs, I beat them back,
Yet they yelp upon my track;
And I know that my soul one day shall lie at their feet,
And my soul be these dogs' meat.

My soul walks robed in white where the saints sing psalms,
Among the lilies and palms,
Beholding the face of God through the radiant bars
Of the mystical gate of stars;
The robes of my soul are whiter than snow, she sings
Praise of immortal things;
Yet still she listens, still, in the night, she hears
The dogs' yelp in her ears.

O Most High! I will pray, look down through the seven
Passionate veils of heaven,
Out of eternal peace, where the world's desire
Enfolds thee in veils of fire;
Holy of Holies, the immaculate Lamb,
Behold me, the thing I am!
I, the redeemed of thy blood, the bought with a price,
The reward of thy sacrifice,
I, who walk with thy saints in a robe of white,
And who worship thee day and night,
Behold me, the thing I am, and do thou beat back
These feet that burn on my track!

I have prayed, God has heard; I have prayed to him, he has heard;
But he has not spoken a word;
My soul walks robed in white among lilies and palms,
And she hears the triumphing psalms;
But louder than all, by day and by night, she hears
The dogs' yelp in her ears;
And I know that my soul one day shall lie at their feet,
And my soul be these dogs' meat.

Arthur Symons

The Fisher's Widow

The boats go out and the boats come in
Under the wintry sky;
And the rain and foam are white in the wind,
And the white gulls cry.

She sees the sea when the wind is wild
Swept by a windy rain;
And her heart's a-weary of sea and land
As the long days wane.

She sees the torn sails fly in the foam,
Broad on the sky-line gray;
And the boats go out and the boats come in,
But there's one away.

Arthur Symons

The Last Memory

When I am old, and think of the old days,
And warm my hands before a little blaze,
Having forgotten love, hope, fear, desire,
I shall see, smiling out of the pale fire,
One face, mysterious and exquisite;
And I shall gaze, and ponder over it,
Wondering, was it Leonardo wrought
That stealthy ardency, where passionate thought
Burns inward, a revealing flame, and glows
To the last ecstasy, which is repose?
Was it Bronzino, whose Borghese eyes?
And, musing thus among my memories,
O unforgotten! you will come to seem,
As pictures do, remembered, some old dream.
And I shall think of you as something strange,
And beautiful, and full of helpless change,
Which I beheld and carried in my heart;
But you, I loved, will have become a part
Of the eternal mystery, and love
Like a dim pain; and I shall bend above
My little fire, and shiver, being cold,
When you are no more young, and I am old.

Arthur Symons

The Loom Of Dreams

I broider the world upon a loom,
I broider with dreams my tapestry;
Here in a little lonely room
I am master of earth and sea,
And the planets come to me.

I broider my life into the frame,
I broider my love, thread upon thread;
The world goes by with its glory and shame,
Crowns are bartered and blood is shed;
I sit and broider my dreams instead.

And the only world is the world of my dreams,
And my weaving the only happiness;
For what is the world but what it seems?
And who knows but that God, beyond our guess,
Sits weaving worlds out of loneliness?

Arthur Symons

The Obscure Night Of The Soul

Upon an obscure night,
Fevered with love in love's anxiety,
(O hapless-happy plight!)
I went, none seeing me,
Forth from my house where all things quiet be.

By night, secure from sight,
And by the secret stair, disguisedly,
(O hapless-happy plight!)
By night, and privily,
Forth from my house where all things quiet be.

Blest night of wandering,
In secret, where by none might I be spied,
Nor I see anything;
Without a light or guide,
Save that which in my heart burnt in my side.

That light did lead me on,
More surely than the shining of noontide,
Where well I knew that one
Did for my coming bide;
Where he abode might none but he abide.

O night that didst lead thus,
O night more lovely than the dawn of light,
O night that broughtest us,
Lover to lover's sight,
Lover with loved in marriage of delight!

Upon my flowery breast,
Wholly for him, and save himself for none,
There did I give sweet rest
To my beloved one;
The fanning of the cedars breathed thereon.

When the first moving air
Blew from the tower, and waved his locks aside.
His hand, with gentle care,

Did wound me in the side,
And in my body all my senses died.

All things I then forgot,
My cheek on him who for my coming came;
All ceased, and I was not,
Leaving my cares and shame
Among the lilies, and forgetting them.

Arthur Symons

The Old Women

They pass upon their old, tremulous feet,
Creeping with little satchels down the street,
And they remember, many years ago,
Passing that way in silks. They wander, slow
And solitary, through the city ways,
And they alone remember those old days
Men have forgotten. In their shaking heads
A dancer of old carnivals yet treads
The measure of past waltzes, and they see
The candles lit again, the patchouli
Sweeten the air, and the warm cloud of musk
Enchant the passing of the passionate dusk.
Then you will see a light begin to creep
Under the earthen eyelids, dimmed with sleep,
And a new tremor, happy and uncouth,
Jerking about the corners of the mouth.
Then the old head drops down again, and shakes,
Muttering.

Sometimes, when the swift gaslight wakes
The dreams and fever of the sleepless town,
A shaking huddled thing in a black gown
Will steal at midnight, carrying with her
Violet bags of lavender,
Into the taproom full of noisy light;
Or, at the crowded earlier hour of night,
Sidle, with matches, up to some who stand
About a stage-door, and, with furtive hand,
Appealing: "I too was a dancer, when
Your fathers would have been young gentlemen!"
And sometimes, out of some lean ancient throat,
A broken voice, with here and there a note
Of unspoiled crystal, suddenly will arise
Into the night, while a cracked fiddle cries
Pantingly after; and you know she sings
The passing of light, famous, passing things.
And sometimes, in the hours past midnight, reels
Out of an alley upon staggering heels,
Or into the dark keeping of the stones

About a doorway, a vague thing of bones
And draggled hair.

And all these have been loved.
And not one ruinous body has not moved
The heart of man's desire, nor has not seemed
Immortal in the eyes of one who dreamed
The dream that men call love. This is the end
Of much fair flesh; it is for this you tend
Your delicate bodies many careful years,
To be this thing of laughter and of tears,
To be this living judgment of the dead,
An old gray woman with a shaking head.

Arthur Symons

The Pale Woman

I spoke to the pale and heavy-lidded woman, and said:
O pale and heavy-lidded woman, why is your cheek
Pale as the dead, and what are your eyes afraid lest they speak?
And the woman answered me: I am pale as the dead,
For the dead have loved me, and I dream of the dead.

But I see in the eyes of the living, as a living fire,
The thing that my soul in triumph tells me I have forgot;
And therefore mine eyelids are heavy, and I raise them not,
For always I see in the eyes of men the old desire,
And I fear lest they see that I desire their desire.

Arthur Symons

The Price

Pity all faithless women who have loved. None knows
How much it hurts a woman to do wrong to love.
The mother who has felt the child within her move,
Shall she forget her child, and those ecstatic throes?

Then pity faithless women who have loved. These have
Murdered within them something born out of their pain.
These mothers of the child whom they have loved and slain
May not so much as lay the child within a grave.

Arthur Symons

The Primrose Dance

Skirts like the amber petals of a flower,
A primrose dancing for delight
In some enchantment of a bower
That rose to wizard music in the night;

A rhythmic flower whose petals pirouette
In delicate circles, fain to follow
The vague aerial minuet,
The mazy dancing of the swallow;

A flower's caprice, a bird's command
Of all the airy ways that lie
In light along the wonder-land,
The wonder-haunted loneliness of sky:

So, in the smoke-polluted place,
Where bird or flower might never be,
With glimmering feet, with flower-like face,
She dances at the Tivoli.

Arthur Symons

The Rapture

I drank your flesh, and when the soul brimmed up
In that sufficing cup,
Then, slowly, steadfastly, I drank your soul;
Thus I possessed you whole;
And then I saw you, white, and vague, and warm,
And happy, as that storm
Enveloped you in its delirious peace,
And fearing but release,
Perfectly glad to be so lost and found,
And without wonder drowned
In little shuddering quick waves of bliss;
Then I, beholding this
More wonderingly than a little lake
That the white moon should make
Her nest among its waters, being free
Of the whole land and sea,
Remembered, in that utmost pause, that heaven
Is to each angel given
As wholly as to Michael or the Lord,
And of the saints' reward
There is no first or last, supreme delight
Being one and infinite.
Then I was quieted, and had no fear
That such a thing, so dear
And so incredible, being thus divine,
Should be, and should be mine,
And should not suddenly vanish away.
Now, as the lonely day
Forgets the night, and calls the world from dreams,
This, too, with daylight, seems
A thing that might be dreaming; for my soul
Seems to possess you whole,
And every nerve remembers: can it be
This young delight is old as memory?

Arthur Symons

The Temptation Of St. Anthony

-After a design by Félicien Rops-

The Cross, the Cross is tainted! O most Just,
Be merciful, and save me from this snare.
The Tempter lures me as I bend in prayer
Before the sacred symbol of our trust.
Yea, that most Holy of Holies feeds my lust,
The body of thy Christ; for, unaware,
Even as I kneel and pray, lo, She is there,
The temptress, she the wanton; and she hath thrust
The bruised body off, and all her own,
Shameless, she stretches on the cross, arms wide,
Limbs pendent, in libidinous mockery.
She draws mine eyes to her--Ah, sin unknown!
She smiles, she triumphs; but the Crucified
Falls off into the darkness with a cry.

Arthur Symons

The Unloved

These are the women whom no man has loved.
Year after year, day after day has moved.
These hearts with many longings, and with tears,
And with content; they have received the years
With empty hands, expecting no good thing;
Life has passed by their doors, not entering.
In solitude, and without vain desire,
They have warmed themselves beside a lonely fire;
And, without scorn, beheld as in a glass
The blown and painted leaves of Beauty pass.
Their souls have been made fragrant with the spice
Of costly virtues lit for sacrifice;
They have accepted life, the unpaid debt,
And looked for no vain day of reckoning. Yet
They too in certain windless summer hours
Have felt the stir of dreams, and dreamed the powers
And the exemptions and the miracles
And the cruelty of Beauty. Citadels
Of many-walled and deeply-moated hearts
Have suddenly surrendered to the arts
Of so compelling magic; entering,
They have esteemed it but a little thing
To have won so great a conquest; and with haste
They have cast down, and utterly laid waste,
Tower upon tower, and sapped their roots with flame;
And passed on that eternity of shame
Which is the way of Beauty on the earth.
And they have shaken laughter from its mirth,
To be a sound of trumpets and of horns
Crying the battle-cry of those red morns
Against a sky of triumph. On some nights
Of delicate Springtide, when the hesitant lights
Begin to fade, and glimmer, and grow warm,
And all the softening air is quick with storm,
And the ardours of the young year, entering in,
Flush the grey earth with buds; when trees begin
To feel a trouble mounting from their roots,
And all their green life blossoming into shoots,
They too, in some obscure, unblossoming strife,

Have felt the stirring of the sap of life.
And they have wept, with bowed heads; in the street
They hear the twittering of little feet,
The rocking of the cradles in their hearts.

This is a mood, and, as a mood, departs
With the dried tears; and they resume the tale
Of the dropt stitches; these must never fail
For a dream's sake; nor, for a memory,
The telling of a patient rosary.

Arthur Symons

The Wood-Nymph

-After a picture by Burne Jones-
The green leaves, ah, the green leaves cover me:
Would I might lose this unloved human life
And share the happy being of the leaves!
For lo, they live and grow and drink the sun
And sip the nectar of the heavenly showers
And have no sorrow with it; but they grow
Happily, and Pan at even blesses them.
While I, alas me hapless, I am joined
Part to their life, and all in longing to them;
Part to the gods, the bright gods whom I see
Flash through the woods at even or morn, and make
The beautiful familiar trees seem strange;
And part to mortals and their little life.
Green leaves that cover me, to you I mourn,
My sisters, my more happy sisters, ye
Rustle, rustle in the summer air,
With happy cries of birds among your boughs:
Be happy, though I am not happy. Nay,
I am not all unhappy, evermore.
One while a bird sings on the topmost bough
And my heart sings, forgetting life and death
And sorrow: so forgetting I were blest,
And bliss the gods deny me. When they walk
The forest before sundawn--Artemis,
Girt for the chase and followed by her hounds,
Queen Herê or another, ere the dawn,
Or Aphrodite with the rosy dawn--
I may not speak my longings, but they pass,
Pass unregardful to their happy heaven.
They see me not--not me, akin to Gods!
These tears are vain.--When mortals pass at eve,
Treading a delicate path between the trees,
Pale mortal men and women, with their loves--
It pains me that I see them, for I know
I am not as they are, and cannot share
The little love that fills their little life--
Vain, vain; and they too pass and see me not.
Ah me, dear leaves, forsaken of gods and men,

And sad because I cannot live their life,
Will you not love me whom none others love?
Will you not teach me how to live your life,
My sisters, my more happy sisters?--live
In peace and quietness and still content,
And freshen and fade and freshen and have no care
And have no longing, full of peace to live,
Forgetting thus for ever life and death
And Gods and men and sorrow and delight.

Arthur Symons

To A Dancer

Intoxicatingly

Her eyes across the footlights gleam,
(The wine of love, the wine of dream)
Her eyes, that gleam for me!

The eyes of all that see

Draw to her glances, stealing fire
From her desire that leaps to my desire;
Her eyes that gleam for me!

Subtly, deliciously,

A quickening fire within me, beat
The rhythms of her poising feet;
Her feet that poise to me!

Her body's melody,

In silent waves of wandering sound,
Thrills to the sense of all around,
Yet thrills alone for me!

And oh, intoxicatingly,

When, at the magic moment's close,
She dies into the rapture of repose,
Her eyes that gleam for me!

Arthur Symons

To A Gitana Dancing

Because you are fair as souls of the lost are fair,
And your eyelids laugh with desire, and your laughing feet
Are winged with desire, and your hands are wanton, and sweet
Is the promise of love in your lips, and the rose in your hair
Sweet, unfaded, a promise sweet to be sought,
And the maze you tread is as old as the world is old,
Therefore you hold me, body and soul, in your hold,
And time, as you dance, is not, and the world is as nought.
You dance, and I know the desire of all flesh, and the pain
Of all longing of body for body; you beckon, repel,
Entreat, and entice, and bewilder, and build up the spell,
Link by link, with deliberate steps, of a flower-soft chain.
You laugh, and I know the despair, and you smile, and I know
The delight of your love, and the flower in your hair is a star.
It brightens, I follow; it fades, and I see it afar;
You pause: I awake; have I dreamt? was it longer ago
Than a dream that I saw you smile? for you turn, you turn,
As a startled beast in the toils: it is you that entreat,
Desperate, hating the coils that have fastened your feet,
The desire you desired that has come; and your lips now yearn,
And your hands now ache, and your feet faint for love.
Longing has taken hold even on you,
You, the witch of desire; and you pause, and anew
Your stillness moves, and you pause, and your hands move.
Time, as you dance, is as nought, and the moments seem
Swift as eternity; time is at end, for you close
Eyes and lips and hands in sudden repose;
You smile: was it all no longer ago than a dream?

Arthur Symons

To a Grey Dress

There's a flutter of grey through the trees:

Ah, the exquisite curves of her dress as she passes
Fleet with her feet on the path where the grass is!

I see not her face, I but see

The swift re-appearance, the flitting persistence—
There!—of that flutter of grey in the distance.

It has flickered and fluttered away:

What a teasing regret she has left in my day-dream,
And what dreams of delight are the dreams that one may
dream!

It was only a flutter of grey;

But the vaguest of raiment's impossible chances
Has set my heart beating the way of old dances.

Arthur Symons

To Muriel: At The Opera

Roses and rose-buds, red and white,
Nestled between your breasts to-night,
And, lying there with drowsy breath,
Sweetly resigned themselves to death.
Ah, cruel child! that would not so
Suffer the perfumed life to go,
But, hungering for the rose's heart
Of midmost sweetness, plucked apart
Petal from petal: 'Ah!' you said
(With lips that kissed white roses red)
'To live on love and roses!'

Well,
But if the rose were Muriel?

Arthur Symons

To One In Alienation

I

Last night I saw you decked to meet
The coming of those most reluctant feet:
The little bonnet that you wear
When you would fain, for his sake, be more fair;
The primrose ribbons that so grace
The perfect pallor of your face;
The dark gown folded back about the throat,
And folds of lacework that denote
All that beneath them, just beneath them, lies:
God, for his eyes!

So the man came and took you; and we lay
So near and yet so far away,
You in his arms, awake for joy, and I
Awake for very misery,
Cursing a sleepless brain that would but scrawl
Your image on the aching wall,
That would but pang me with the sense
Of that most sweet accursed violence
Of lovers' hands that weary to caress
(Those hands!) your unforbidden loveliness.

And with the dawn that vision came again
To an unrested and recurrent brain:
To think your body, warm and white,
Lay in his arms all night;
That it was given him to surprise,
With those unhallowed eyes,
The secrets of your beauty, hid from me,
That I may never (may I never?) see:
I who adore you, he who finds in you
(Poor child!) a half-forgotten point of view.

II

As I lay on the stranger's bed,
And clasped the stranger-woman I had hired,
Desiring only memory dead
Of all that I had once desired;

It was then that I wholly knew
How dearly I had loved you, my lost friend;
While I am I, and you are you,
How I must love you to the end.

For I lay in her arms awake,
Awake and cursing the indifferent night,
That ebbed so slowly, for your sake,
My heart's desire, my soul's delight;

For I lay in her arms awake,
Awake in such a solitude of shame,
That when I kissed her, for your sake,
My lips were sobbing on your name.

Arthur Symons

Toys

I have laid you away as we lay
The toys of a little dead child,
You know you are safe in my heart;
You know I have set you apart
In my heart, and hid you away,
Because joy that prattled and smiled
In the heart becomes grief to the heart,
Laying its youth away
With the toys of a little dead child.

Arthur Symons

Variations Upon Love

I

For God's sake, let me love you, and give over
These tedious protestations of a lover;
We're of one mind to love, and there's no let:
Remember that, and all the rest forget.
And let's be happy, mistress, while we may,
Ere yet to-morrow shall be called to-day.
To-morrow may be heedless, idle-hearted:
One night's enough for love to have met and parted.
Then be it now, and I'll not say that I
In many several deaths for you would die;
And I'll not ask you to declare that you
Will longer love than women mostly do.
Leave words to them whom words, not doings, move,
And let our silence answer for our love.

II

Oh, woman! I am jealous of the eyes
That look upon you; all my looks are spies
That do but lurk and follow you about,
Restless to find some guilty secret out.
I am unhappy if I see you not,
Unhappy if I see you; tell me what
That smile betokens? what close thing is hid
Beneath the half-way lifting of a lid?
Who is it, tell me, I so dread to meet,
Just as we turn the corner of the street?
Daily I search your baffling eyes to see
Who knows what new admitted company?
And, sick with dread to find the thing I seek,
I tremble at the name you do not speak.

III

I know your lips are bought like any fruit;
I know your love, and of your love the root;
I know your kisses toll for love that dies
In kissing, to be buried in your eyes;
I know I am degraded for your sake,
And that my shame will not so much as make
Your glory, or be reckoned in the debt
Of memories you are mindful to forget.

All this I know, and, knowing it, I come
Delighted to my daily martyrdom;
And, rich in love beyond the common store,
Become for you a beggar, to implore
The broken crumbs that from your table fall,
Freely, in your indifference, on all.

IV

I loved her; and you say she loved me not.
Well, if I loved her? And if she forgot,
Well, I have not forgotten even yet:
Time, and spent tears, may teach me to forget.
And so she loves another, and did then
When she was heaven and earth to me, and when,
Truly, she made me happy. It may be:
I only know how good she was to me.
Friend, to have loved, to have been made happy thus,
What better fate has life in store for us,
The dream of life from which we have to wake,
Happier, why not? why not for a dream's sake?
To have been loved is well, and well enough
For any man: but 'tis enough to love.

Arthur Symons

Veneta Marina

The masts rise white to the stars,
White on the night of the sky,
Out of the water's night,
And the stars lean down to them white.
Ah! how the stars seem nigh;
How far away are the stars!

And I too under the stars,
Alone with the night again,
And the water's monotone;
I and the night alone,
And the world and the ways of men
Farther from me than the stars.

Arthur Symons

Venetian Night

Her eyes in the darkness shone, in the twilight shed
By the gondola bent like the darkness over her head.
Softly the gondola rocked, lights came and went;
A white glove shone as her black fan lifted and leant
Where the silk of her dress, the blue of a bittern's wing,
Rustled against my knee, and, murmuring
The sweet slow hesitant English of a child,
Her voice was articulate laughter, her soul smiled.
Softly the gondola rocked, lights came and went;
From the sleeping houses a shadow of slumber leant
Over our heads like a wing, and the dim lagoon,
Rustling with silence, slumbered under the moon.
Softly the gondola rocked, and a pale light came
Over the waters, mild as a silver flame;
She lay back, thrilling with smiles, in the twilight shed
By the gondola bend like the darkness over her head;
I saw her eyes shine subtly, then close awhile:
I remember her silence, and, in the night, her smile.

Arthur Symons

Venice

Water and marble and that silentness
Which is not broken by a wheel or hoof;
A city like a water-lily, less
Seen than reflected, palace wall and roof,
In the unfruitful waters motionless,
Without one living grass's green reproof;
A city without joy or weariness,
Itself beholding, from itself aloof.

Arthur Symons

White Heliotrope

The feverish room and that white bed,
The tumbled skirts upon a chair,
The novel flung half-open where
Hat, hair-pins, puffs, and paints, are spread;

The mirror that has sucked your face
Into its secret deep of deeps,
And there mysteriously keeps
Forgotten memories of grace;

And you, half-dressed and half awake,
Your slant eyes strangely watching me,
And I, who watch you drowsily,
With eyes that, having slept not, ache;

This (need one dread? nay, dare one hope?)
Will rise, a ghost of memory, if
Ever again my handkerchief
Is scented with White Heliotrope.

Arthur Symons

White Magic

Against the world I closed my heart,
And, half in pride and half in fear,
I said to Love and Lust: Depart;
None enters here.

A gipsy witch has glided in,
She takes her seat beside my fire;
Her eyes are innocent of sin,
Mine of desire.

She holds me with an unknown spell,
She folds me in her heart's embrace;
If this be love, I cannot tell:
I watch her face.

Her sombre eyes are happier
Than any joy that e'er had voice;
Since I am happiness to her,
I too rejoice.

And I have closed the door again,
Against the world I close my heart;
I hold her with my spell; in vain
Would she depart.

I hold her with a surer spell,
Beyond her magic, and above:
If hers be love, I cannot tell,
But mine is love.

Arthur Symons

You Remain

As a perfume doth remain
In the folds where it hath lain,
So the thought of you, remaining
Deeply folded in my brain,
Will not leave me; all things leave me -
You remain.

Other thoughts may come and go,
Other moments I may know
That shall waft me, in their going,
As a breath blown to and fro,
Fragrant memories; fragrant memories
Come and go.

Only thoughts of you remain
In my heart where they have lain,
Perfumed thoughts of you, remaining,
A hid sweetness, in my brain.
Others leave me; all things leave me -
You remain.

Arthur Symons