

A Wedding Day

"So doth New Life, old Life bereave
And leave behind, alone to die.
That she, with new-fledged wings, may cleave
New-companied, the new-hung sky—"

At the top of two long meadows which slope upward
to the gate, stands a grey cottage - Black winds
sweep round it when summer is gone, the sheltering trees,
the lullabies forgotten stand shadowy sentinels of the
lonely spot. A yellow plantain overspread the loosely-
built walls of the tiny garden: hundreds of chrome-
coloured eyes laugh out from a pale, gaunt green face.
There are fine flowers written, but their sure son
first stealing. Beyond the gate might be a wood.
- One will clamour a second welcome, & stand but
a moment in the porch, the sweet trait will have
its say. In winter long after the hour the robin
utter their first ~~first~~ ^{sharp} calls, & hop along the rounded
wall, as their habit is, trying to outstep each other,
when the friend Nature grows weary of them, & bids
them run to man. She berries of the holly tree, beneath
the window peer in to mock the under kitchen fire;
& the frozen pathway, much in the same humor
might & all warm kisses from unwinking eyes, in
the cold dawn. A little patch of grass, would perhaps
be veiled in white, in semblance of the snowy pillow.

from which you had just risen - its spotless wings might
~~tempt~~^{urge} you, for a moment to seize the chilly bed.
 But on this morning of early summer nothing tempts
 to slumber. The window is set wide open & the sun
 about to rise. The birds are shaking the trees around
 the house under a united stir - they announce their
 superiority to lagging mortals & calling each other in
 crescendos of agitation, lest any should oversleep
 themselves. A slothful chaffinch chaffinches has just
 flown out stupid & dithered, in answer to windy
 want twitterings, & a little martin hops to the
 Bride's window - still appears curious in.
 He listens & disdains to be gentle breathing, but
 he peeps & decamps quickly, to join a company
 gathered outside the Bridgroom's window, many
 fields away - He arrives there late, to find his
 comrades loudly reminding their personage of the
 wedding duty he has to do. These officious but
 kind little people are no unlearned advisors in
 the matter of bridal dress. What marriage morning
 has found them unready, undecided or silent?
 X Despite their friendliness for they are slightly scornful
 of the stalwart mortal who, ~~arrives~~ at their wedding
 array himself so soberly, & meets his maturing
 time without a song - Seeing the sun prepare to
 rise, chasing grey shades of timid dawn & spreading
 for it is a bridal morning, the tints of love through
 - out the sky - He, himself is an ardent lover -
 Evening will show the tears of blood he sheds
 over the earth he parts from. This is the first
 flush of parting, but there is to be a passionate
 leave-taking by day.

The daisies, catching his colour pretend it is ~~the~~ ^{their} own. But
 their half shut lids, pretend it is ~~their~~ ^{their} own. But
 alas! the maiden blush will soon forsake them, as they
 grow older, & stare upward with bold bright eyes.
 Is the bride more modest, since she seems to shun
 this crimson welcome? No. ~~for~~ such a red dawn
 will flood her waking face, when this has passed,
 & softer rays steal from those closed white lids,
 now shrouding the two deep mirrors whence her
 lover seeks his light. But she should rise to
 greet this wonderful morning spirit who creeps
 with so much tenderness & solicitude to her bedside.
 The gentle Visitant stands patiently awaiting her,
 with open arms, & cool benignant breath - still
 she sleeps! (Bride, I hear, often lies thus unconscious
 at the outset of their wedding day) -
 The trees round the casement whisper softly of her
 slowness, the flowers below are drowsily submitting
 to their morning bath of dew, & the birds grow
 noisily impatient of a sun they cannot shave.
 A robin perches on a neighbouring twig, & calls
 out sharply, but a comrade answers. They start
 a rival song. The challenger pitches his note too
 high, struggles toathing himself, fails & flies away.
 No matter, it was but a ruse to waken her.
 At night he will return to the same twig &
 end his morning lay. An old woman, in the
 porch below is chanting hers - Who hears it?
 God perhaps; the birds, the Bride, nature herself,
 will take no note of such a silent song -

It is easy for her to be active. she stands surveying the
 narrow path which, so soon the Bride must tread.
 It is wet, but with no tears of her shedding. Thus
 does Nature our weeping for us, that we may go
 about our business with clear eyes. She picks up
 a sweetbriar leaf to smell, & it is a courtly fashion,
 she has back a young woodbine tendril, possessed
 with youth's adventurous desire to stray, as she
 waits with beautiful patience, Time's best endow-
 ment for the little maiden who shuddered soon to be.
 The fire in the tiny living room is lit. & along the white
 wall ~~are~~ ranged a shining row of pots of pans, which
 catch in winter its first gleams. Now the sun is up,
 it send back to them defiant rays. These are the old
 woman's books, unless they are spotted she finds them
 undisturbed, so there is a mingling rubbing of them
 day & day. Some of us read Nature, bad & true, others
 con, for pastime or instruction? their own hearts' poor
 secrets. The Bridegroom's favourite primer is an old
 catholic psalter; the Bride's, his face - But for the
 old woman, her pots & pans suffice, & they say more to her
 as the years pass - they serve her for music too, though she
 could never listen patiently to the simplest air, the jangle
 of the beloved metal generates in her some pure delight.
 One of her favourite sayings, is of the kettle, kissing on
 the hob - 'Wark! it has changed its note' (The Bride
 remembers how she dreaded that domestic monster,
 used to peep fearfully from behind stiff cotton skirts,
 to catch his first mysterious hiss, & the first sight of
 his ghostly steam -) Besides these inspired sauce-
 pans, the old woman has ^{one} another volume - a big
 holiday Book, in the glittering of whose pages she

feels she has no part. On Sabbath afternoon, she
 sits with it before her, on the low window seat,
 glancing from it to the bright row of shining metal,
 turning the leave idly, one & one. Perhaps she tries to
 read it, if the day is dull, the pots & pans not very
 bright. As she stands at the door now, on the brink
 of her life's morning, she might, so placid & serene-
 faced, know nothing of tumultuous slumber. Yet she
 has been tossed in it, awakened from dreams of
 earth's longest night. Her sleep is a furor, a that the
 Bride knows better than any other. Her eyes are as
 bright as those of the child who will lurch up the path
 with the heavy milk bucket, & cry. Yet long since they
 saw the snow spread a pall of pallid indifference on
 the green face of earliest love. Her smile says,
 "It has been always summer, & wind, when they
 came were but the gentlest breezes, & sweeping it
 with cool fingers a too loving sun." But they
 had been vicious enough to bear all hopes of weather
 hearts away. Her lined brow with not in form for
 that the light beneath it, have been set as reasons
 to many sightless travellers, but the firm line of lips
 bears witness that there has been through no gentle
 cry. Her history is simple - those stiff-brown hands,
 clasped patiently, may tell it - a much of it a man
 may know. These, even the pots & pans first knew her,
 lay across the restless eyes of a man (he was her love)
 shutting out the world from him, that he might
 search his soul for a glimpse of heaven. They
 closed those same eyes, later, when earth ^{had} become
 all he could see.

Then, when it had been conqueror in a fight with hard
 resistance, it found a gentle cave. Early one winter
 morning, a half frozen boy woke on the threshold which
 today the Bride must cross. Had it forgotten to wake,
 the Bride would not be sleeping now, but the shei
 never to know. She being who keeps the secret is 70
 years old, but a heart & gray; but those tireless hands of
 hers are loth to yield their charge into another's keeping,
 & it must do, today - (The Bride could tell you, how
 children who never ^{saw} ~~heard~~ their Master's ~~voice~~ Face,
 might have felt his stress in through their limbs; but
 it shook their curls from the contact & ran away.
 She herself has pushed it, with unmeant cruelty
 the passage of those knotted fingers through her hair -
 & changed with passion, it conveyed a sense of irritating
 mystery, unendurable - the dumb endowment was
 a dreaded thing) She last knew of this short history, was
 the coming. A stranger to the cottage, a woman whose
 night's dream he the vision of any dawn. She sought
 the boy's ^{hands} fingers she had once disentangled from her
 breast, & found these stronger ones. They raised the
 fallen being, & she left them drenched in her first
 flood of human woe. From this baptism it will
 never be free. Such is their woe record. It will
 guard a grand heart when it beats no more.

Three fires of love burn brightly this sun-
 mer morning - the sun will extinguish none.
 What wonder if the Bridegroom's leaps & dances,
 asking more & more fuel as the Day wears on?
 The Bride has got to trim her hearth - the light
 play flickering round it - Indeed her fire has

has not long been liv; ^{it} struggles to answer the
 Bridegroom's exultant flames.
 There is still another. It has burnt through a long
 day. Here it is, if life ~~had~~ chilled me, I would
 choose to warm myself. Its glow is greater
 than the Bridegroom's, fiercer burning, or the Bride's
 transparent gleams. - This has the sun's power to sus-
 tain or paralyze existence, for those who come within
 its range. It can be neither summoned nor repelled.
 Its beauty is terrible, its strength divine, but its
 manifestation is a mystery still, though it has
 hung for centuries, to human view, upon an
 ancient Cross. - Passion passes. Affection springs
 in unexpected places. Love may be the sun of life,
 but it takes long to pierce the mists of the unhappy
 earth - It strives far off in the dark old woman's
 eyes - The Bride threads her needles: & since she
 can not see the clock, the birds outvie each other,
 eager to make her wake up now. She says some-
 time, how kindly an fairy care of her - The flowers
 guide her up the path, the sweet bird stops by
 at the door. All this to keep obscurity from those
 dear windows that the light of heaven may
 struggle through! Kindly it beams upon a little
 figure, staggering under a heavy milk bucket,
 coming up the path. The gate swings behind it.
 There is a lurch, a splash, the path is wet again.
 The child sets up a wail. It rises to the open
 casement. The Bride starts up, rushes bewild-
 ered to the window - to arrest the tale of woe -

This wait is no fit cry for a wedding morning, but
 the Bride's appearance quickens it, as she sends a
 swift smile down ward to the puffed ~~and~~ face
 of the small elfin ^{who is} seated ^{forlornly} in the midst
 of the white pool. As she ^{breaks through} bends forward through
~~the~~ a cobweb hung across the window,
 looses the sunlight with a gold thread ~~of~~ ^{of}
 Her tresses surpass its glitter. Down the tress
 about her face. Grey gleams begin to flash in
 out the yellow spaces, as she looks laughing
 down. Thus a game of hide & seek begins be-
 -tween eye & hair - the child detaches a bright
 sunbonnet, & shyly draws a veil of curls across
 the two blue windows of woe. While the game
 proceeds the two spectators, ^{is} (for ^{is} the child who's
 playing) see a vision - the Bride at the casement, &
 the old woman at the door. Before them stretch
 long lanes of magical child hood, they find no solace
 there. Eternal sadness hangs over them with the
 stars - Small feet, once the Bride's (fancies the
 dreamer at the door) send dying echoes down
 them, the woful sunbonnet, once the Bride's, takes, at
~~the~~ road's end a turn out of view. There is a
 sound of toes, laughter then a cry. ^{Far} The eye
 beneath the sunbonnet the moor looks lonely -
 The little figure disappears, the wait, & old ears
 grow faint, & dies away into those old skies of
 deep, untroubled blue.
 Those same skies hang over the Bride's picture -
 At the top of the same road she finds herself.

Before her stands a bent form, thus too long, she
never noticed, set like a beacon in the twilight of
groping youth - its arms are for ever stretched
towards, its eye for ever beckoning, & she hears
dreamily, mingled with the little milkmaid's
laughter, the warning of its eternal voice.
Up & down the familiar high way, people pass &
pause & loiter, but the same figure stands stead-
fast & radiant, a stern refuge, waiting her return.
Mists rise & shroud it, a storm gathers & sweeps round.
She feels herself a sunbonneted truant, growing cold.
But at length, raising a drenched head, she finds
the familiar form visible & patient - And then in the
Bride at the window the light grows dim.
In those old childish skies the sun begins to set.
A soft red tints the white locks of the old becker,
as the tiny maiden she once was runs towards
chastisement & rest. The shadows lengthen, & heaven
grows pale - Beyond the hills lies some mys-
terious morning - the one we know the
Bride was not awake to greet.
The empty milk bucket, & the small oven go through
the gate - The Bride watches them, & the old wo-
man below sends a glance up to scan her
face - She finds there a loveliness which other
eyes will never see. The Bride is young, but she
was once beautiful - It was when he loved
on their betrothal morning, told her, he found
her so - She being ^{who} ~~now~~ ~~meeting~~ meets he
glance has no such power - The window
frames a smile, (it is time the Bride arrayed
herself -) the old woman is defying tears -

Pictures still hang before the eye of the two dreamers,
when they meet in the cheery living room below.
One ~~shows~~ ^{painted in} the tints of spring, merging into gorgeous
summer - the other ~~is painted~~ in white shades of time,
in hues of pale death & delicate decay.
The sun is sole spectator of their last meal together,
there is no intrusion because no interest in his face.
He views it with a waving, indifferent air.
He takes little note of the chamber he illumines,
the Bride's transfigured face & the grinning pots &
pans above it as equally significant to him.
It is only the old woman's fancy, that his glare
grows brighter, as the Bride steps forth, & stands,
inresolute, beneath the sweet bower canopy, -
The King of light looks down, & the queen of love
looks up. But ~~they~~ we know the sun's bride is
a swarther maiden, & the one sees a lover
who will dye her cheeks a deeper crimson
with a colder gaze. Ere she pauses, scent's
surroundings, ^{her} uncertain of her fate - Fear
plants ^{tears} him deep ^{before her} in the path ~~way~~, an ungainly
giant, out of all proportion to the actors in
such a simple scene. She scans him, startled.
Meanwhile the trail ~~being~~ behind her give
unwilling place to tears - Through a mist of
them she strives to see - What is the strange
company stationed along the path, ^{which} the Bride
seems to take ^{unaware of} no note of ~~them~~? She sees ~~the~~
plain, ~~the~~ ^{fast} a shadowy babe clinging ~~to~~
to the low gate - Its fingers clutch the fastening

Shine a steady, but still tottering child play with
it, shaking a golden head. A sedate little person sits
knitting near them, her brilliant wools look dazzling
in the sunlight. (Did not the Bride claim them, we
might conclude the rainbow mats & cushions
strewn about the cottage parlour were her handwork.)
So engrossed is she, that though the two babes beg her
to join them, she wots a negative, without lifting
her busy head. — A taller girl stoops to rest a hand
on this industrious worker's ~~back~~ shoulder, while she
~~watches the~~ watches the children with clear & quiet
eyes. Immediately behind the slim figure stands
the Bride, whom all these unsubstantial beings
~~seem~~ persistently resemble. Truly, the baby's hair
is paler but it mimics curiously her waving tresses;
the maiden just in front of her regards the shadows;
seems assemblage with her own identical grey eyes;
the little person knitting assumes her sedulous smile.
Each robs her of some obvious lineament — let us
call them her fairy bride-maid — that should she
see the sweet spoilers she may bear them no ill-will.
As yet she is indifferent to them, startled & that image
of the unknown, clothed in the robes of Terror, which
she sees beyond the gate. Dis-mayed she turns
suddenly to kiss the clouded eyes behind her. This
caress shuts out the fairy vision, ~~the glistening veil~~
~~falls from the Adamant eyes~~ it vanishes away.
The invisible procession leads to Church, while the
two mortals follow, hand in hand. As they so down
the path the Bride stoops to gather a bunch of my-
nonnetis, & an overopen rose disperses petals on
her head. She ~~but~~ shakes them off smiling, one pink
flake clinging, soon to be dismissed, but as she rises
it drops sadly down —

Since the little brides maid forgot their duties, the
roses see that the path is lightly strewn - her progress
will not lack spectators, the morning, with their million
eyes, the daisies are staring upward, & tonight when they
grow weary, the stars with their million eyes will be
ready to look down. The breeze, her airy page, lifts
her skirt off the dusty road way, & the birds wave
sent the trees' green banners. as she goes. wave
shades

At the top of the church, and steps the Bride, room
waits them - ~~The then walk up the stairs~~
Between the quiet sleepers it takes their way, the lovers
leading, while the old woman lags behind.
Within the sunshine meet them - bold streams through
the shut-holes of tent colours, flung in the chancel.
The very shreds speak glory's message to our
victorious man. The fair sunlight does that mocked
his ^{boyish} claims have vindicated them - Woman is won
today - The tailor's flag proclaims it - With a
true victor's gallantry, he leads his first sweet
capture, a hostage from her fellows, sent up the
aisle; Turning a tender & exultant glance on he
which says - "Wonderful, vanquished stranger,
thy face is won with thee!" she muses it. The
eyes have caught a fancy of the sunlight, playing
with that shield upon a tomb - the upper corners ~~the~~
^{he in} ~~caught~~ shadow, ~~which~~ leaving the centre roughly heart-shaped
the symbolic trifle, pleases her - The Bride, room does
not see, ^{his} face is fixed once more on the torn banners,
the old woman has found the fairy brides maids,
dancing in tour the rays of sunlight, & long to
catch the faintest to her breast! How dare they play
thus these laughing children, ~~for they are so young~~
a demure maidens, while the Bride, in whose
face are mirrored all their fleeting & smiles,
stands still opate? ~~The other spectators take no~~

~~note of them~~ - A kneeling Knight, confronting his cold
lady's prayer shifts a ~~statue~~ a blessing on the scene.
It is beneath his dignity to recognize them, but his more
obedient mates are watching them with half shut eyes.
Two little cupids peep roguishly from behind their
patrons' classic robes, not ~~for~~ longing to join them, but
they dare not have the wrath of the colossal virgin who
stands behind their lord. Perhaps, if whispering
to reach other, when she decides to place the threatening
laurel wreath upon his brow, they may steal ~~off~~ ^{at}
~~the moment~~. It must amuse him, till he gets it, then
his remember true, as if the little bridemaids, mock
obedience, she has been half a century waiting of her
husband! The three mortals stand in the chancel row
beneath the tattered ~~robes~~ ^{flap}, beside the poor little
gods of love & the bygone gentlemen's chilly wives -
Hearts are lovely mechanisms, but what playthings!
The good old priest at the altar knows nothing of their
structure, & dabbles dreamily with his Father's
magic toys - But an end to pastime & its hour
is past - Oh! you poor little shadowy bridemaids,
where are you now? ~~you~~! To a is that new look
on the Bride's face that banished you? She's your
sister, you must be longer, you will never come
back again - 'No matter' say the cold beruffled
dames to their stately spouse, the years will bring
her plenty more -' they ignore them courteous &
still prays on -

At the bottom of the two long meadows, which
lead upward to the college, ~~the effect~~ at noon, the
Bride pauses to say 'Good bye' - But for a day,
she whispers to the stern being before her, who has
dealt finally with tears - Silence encircles ~~the~~
this party. These wrinkled hairs, whose ~~history~~ ^{history} fate we know,
make an appeal. The Bridegroom clasps them -

They ~~the~~ credit his assurance. And what of the Bride?
Her lids are lowered. Late the light beneath have shone
strange gleams, flashes her old guardian coned not an-
swer, though she strove piteously to reply - She found no
Ray to those bewildering glances, in the Bride's childish
eyes - Now drawing the lovers' hand together, she
yields. That new-born woman hood to him, who ~~she~~
claims it; the mystery leaves her keeping, as she
creeps, a lonely figure homeward - On her way she
catches up a burden - It is like that which laughs
he first the speed of holy touches - Can it be one of the
truant fairy bridesmaids? No, the tinsels of them all!
It's little step, ev'ning feet kept poor pace, with the dews, &
in their haste they left it - she rocks & clasps it,
singing as she goes - But when at her fire side, she
stoops to kiss it, it is cold, its eyes are shut -

The lovers, sealed no, with far - ~~The~~
~~in breathless greeting, the~~ life reads itself, before them
a gold tipped height - The noon is breathless, greeting
the morning in their hearts, with warm embraces of
dreamy ease. The lanes come for them of pasture
where the streams say what they cannot of flowing - of
the indissoluble union of currents when they reach the sea,
love's great ocean, in the wave, which they have not
the a fall - In the hedgerows, the roses mock, with
reluctant maiden scorn, those rival ribbon slapping the
Bride's dress - This is no time for recalling lovers' quarrels
but she remembers suddenly, a day of storm, & when
she ~~the~~ ^{there} ~~these~~ ^{these} gay favours to arrest the ~~fatal~~ fatal ceremony
of today - That black afternoon, she pictures herself
a she sat mentally disposing them as a cap. The
old woman was to wear - This, on subsequent joy-de-
-minded sabbaths ~~she~~ ^{was to} remind a spiteful maiden
of man's frailty - But with the rose these pink rosettes
resumed their posts, stationed & absolving fingers, &
the admonitoring headgear was never worn -
Then a faint breeze stirring some willows, murmurs

resting, of a bygone winter night - Beside is
stream, how despairing, ⁱⁿ parted! ^{for} ^{the} ^{whisper} to
the Bride "chose ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~own~~ ^{own} endless slumber, ~~and~~
~~in~~ ⁱⁿ a sheltered corner in the churchyard, ^{losing}
in warm sheets to cherish the aspiration - ? & for -
(the Bride room romance) sought the Blue Boar with
a certain wild complacency, & went to join yet more
heavy-eyed than saet - Thus the road tells old
tale to them, in viting comments of new love.
At interval, it speaks of the lonely cottage, its occupant -
But here indignant Union, a colossal figure, plants
herself in their path - she puts an indignant finger
on their lips, & points with threatening meaning to the
Solitary Spirit, standing beside her, & bids them choose
between her & her naked foe. Eventually she triumphs,
& the Solitary Spirit stride off, a stand loser, scornful,
indifferent; ~~one who waits for~~ ^{the} ^{lover} ^{wander}
in wedded silence, pondering life's great ^{while} ^{life} ^{fe} ^{fe} ^{fe}
One sits, & her heart in a far off cottage is ^{leaving} ^{leaving}
with motionless lips, to frame its 'No' -
The Solitary Spirit looks in at the open window, &
breathes a message through - 'Is it a blessing or a promise
that falls so lightly on the great Books' open leaf;
lying on the old woman's knee?

It is late afternoon - the descending sun-
light slants across the ~~floor~~ ^{floor} - Its rays catch
the brass corner of an old wooden work box - The neat
polished exterior hides a lining in pasteboard, with
the corners bugged. The workmanship is that of
clumsy childish ~~hand~~ ^{hand} - so for it pass -
Its owner ~~remembers~~ ^{is} thinking of its unaccountable
disappearance, & triumphant return, placed in her
lap while baby hands, shrouded her view; how many
years ago? She reasons slowly - Countless inci-
dents of uneventful youth present their selves to aid
the calculation - She makes it, at length, & a
shute claims her at the meaning of the cunning

pear, & torturing diplomatist, until tears claim the
smile - she feels a sweep of curls across her cheek,
the touch of the hot & over lived fingers, relaxing words
of hers in abstruse slumber, ~~she holds again the~~
~~long burden, as in the~~ as if she were sitting again
holding the long burden, in the twilight of their winter
day. Surely this is sweet companion ship?
But she will tell you - she is not thinking of the Bride.
The hours go slow - The Book before her lies unread,
the poet's opaque dangle her attempt to scan them,
or is it the mist before her eyes, that makes them
seem so far away - The shadows will not fall.
The sun who rode so early seems loth to set -
stay! something brushed her forehead, like a kiss.
The cold red authors must be put behind her -
Those lips were smiling too - She has slept, she
tells herself, while this sweet rage of solitude
was planned. Let the touch cling with feeble
magic - It may be but a curtain edge, frayed
& swaying in the faint stirring air.
Her lids begin to sport with slumber - This
sensitive devotion is not sleep - Shall she rise
& discover the dear intruder? - Ah, there is
her morning maiden come back again, stooping
slightly forward in the doorway, arms open,
lips apart - gone! The Book falls
at her tragic start - ~~she~~ It is recaptured with
a poignant vision of lovers sitting on the bridge
perhaps, embracing - many miles away.
Breath in her ear - 'Dear soul, the child
still loves thee!' It is useless - she will
say sobbing, that it is tea time - she was not
thinking of the Bride at all -
But oh! the hours go slow -!

* I hear the Bride from far away, magnificent
space a eulogy to their benignant sky, while
the Bride bends to tie a ~~shoe~~ generous etc

She rises to prepare the meal. Her pains span beam
tenderly upon her, but she does not note them -
she has heard a distant sound of footsteps - They
pause & stagger - She must not vanish them by
motion, & stands still, listening - Perhaps the
fair bridesmaids are coming back.

Whisper softs 'Dearest heart, indeed thy come!'
This too is useless - Mark his gesture, countenance

but imperative - for wronged her. She ~~was~~ had
quite forgotten the Bride. She was not even
thinking of the little feet that might soon be
starting from eternity to meet her; though she
had spoken of such a fancy to the Bridegroom
only yesterday. For he stumbles among the craggy
the Rattle ring, the change on his persistent
note - she takes no heed of it - At last a cup
steams fragrance into the warm air.

She can taste nothing - Oh! Cover fast, the
soda of joy attend you! - I hear the Bride-
groom far away, ~~the three halls of the palace,~~

~~spare a eulogy with fine beneficence for their~~
~~beneficent story. A generous young man, stout not~~
son praise - Heaven may hear them, though it
hang over other realms than those of earth.

A fly finds fate in the old woman's leacup -
she rescues it with trembling hand - The im-
pudence is new, but she greets & welcomes it, as one
should a stranger, with unquestioning grace.
Yet the sense of unfamiliar weakness makes
her restless - she knows not how to entertain
the unknown comer, & she grows mistrustful,
almost angry with this self which plays her false.

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A strange, insistent anticipation steal over her, & she
expected, she knows not whom. ~~At first~~ She rejects
the feeling until it becomes masterful possessing her.
Then with characteristic decision she goes up stairs -
The steep steps made new demands, she mounts
slowly, & rests, & exhausted at the top of the short flight.
When she ^{has} summoned enough energy to don the
clean cap & apron, for which the ascent was made,
she makes a long & thoughtful choice, hesitating, the
rank of her mysterious visitor is doubtful, be-
tween degrees of finery. At length she decks
herself, with curious care, painfully delayed &
feeleriness, in her finest & most spotted garb.
Preparing to descend, a thought ~~that~~ arrests her.
The Bride's bed has not been made - This neglect
& simple duty tortures her - She asks, is memory
forsaking her, or has absence begun so soon to
plunder love? The little chamber is disordered,
the bed clothes thrown back hastily, as the late
sleeper left, then, startled & the little milk-maid's
cry. The old woman stands in the doorway, leaning
against it, her gaze travelling over through the
white curtained window, & back again to the dis-
hevelled bed. The pillow pushed aside, shows
an ^{unmistakable} ~~no mistaking~~ of the sleeper's head - The spectator
sees that wakened & sleeper start up, as she
does each morning, at the sound of a fan well-
known for its use outside the door - She sees the light
being cast of slumber with a involuntary welcome -
Tomorrow morning - Implacable Thought says
slowly, 'she will not be here - It is incredible -
will God ~~that~~ withhold the dawn? It seems
futile - She accords Thought placed scorn -

But what allow he to parley thus, while work waits to be done? She ~~could not~~ ^{is} ~~ready~~ ready is attack it, but stops, seized suddenly by a convincing testimony within - The room itself assures her, as she enters - The Bride wakes & sleeps here no more - It is true then, & God does keep back the day! The place is infinitely empty.

She ~~A figure falls, across the bed~~ rings in mid air across the bed - The slave of anguish, tears & utterance forsaking her, ^{she} rises in a moment, her form almost erect - Looking with dry, searched eyes across the meadows, she sees her darling's chosen time yet alien resting place, hung with ^{these} gay curtains, which she helped ~~but three days~~ to sew - Dare these gaudy blossoms mock this snowy waste from which none spring? She ~~stroke~~ ^{strokes} the flowerless hangings, absently, leaves a caress on the deserted pillow - May the Bride tonight, as she yields to others, be spared the revelation of ^{one} ~~what~~ she leaves behind!

The room is left untouched - Tomorrow - A voice breaks in - 'your guest will soon be here' - The old woman, goes down ^{she} wearily, smoothing the spotted apron ^{and} ~~to the cap~~ ^{to the cap}. Down stairs, the pots & pans ~~look down on her~~ ^{perceive her faint}, ~~she~~ ^{she} ~~sees~~ ^{sees} a dim figure in the twilight, sitting passively & spectant, her hands crossed, the big Book, to which she seems to have forsaken them, open, unread, upon her knee.

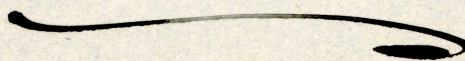
It is growing late - Through the fading hours of daylight ~~as~~ the birds are all astir, warning the Bride & Bridegroom of the hour. As the sun dies, their evening song grows fierful but there is much twittering discussion, mingled

with scrap of melody. Gradually the smile to silence -
The daisies are already sleeping; the stars look
down from distant fields of blue. The lovers stand
in the deepening darkness, hand in hand, in the
small bridal chamber. Tomorrow, if they do not
close the casement, they will hear together Sunday
bells pealing across the dewy fields. Tomorrow
say the Bridegroom, they must make amends
for the solitude snatched today - 'Tomorrow'
lies on the Bride's lips unspoken - the heart
~~knows~~ words no tomorrow - it cannot pass
the mystic circle thrown around tonight -
It is well - The present is eternity, Nature has
observed her lovers, that they may find it
not in each others' eyes: with shrouded hand
she demanded silence, that when passion
become too breathless, even for love's whisper, they
may hear the beating of each others' heart.
And so there is no sound - A few little
flowers may sigh perhaps, beneath their windows
"lamenting some enforced chastity" - But they
they do not hear, the breeze will not bear it,
lest the very breath that fans her cheeks should
not be his - Thus let us leave them - We
forebore to awaken the Bride this morning,
nor will we now intrude upon the Bride-
groom's hour - We bid them - (or may their
angels for us) - Good night -

As they stand embracing the moon seems
to be watching them, but she is looking on
another sight - Her wan face smiles back at
her dimly from the pots & pans in the cottage
where ~~she~~ the old woman ^{waits} - And is quiet
there - She sits, stiff as the white apparel
she ~~has~~ donned for her unknown guest.

And when at last, the moon's pale face grows tired
of watching, & sinks wearing back with blue pillow,
she still sits motionless, & does not stir.

For her watch is over. Sometime between midnight
& morning the great angel came. Softly she stole
across the radiant floor - She stretched out
arms of welcome ere he reached her, & meeting
his eyes, her own grew blind to any other sight.
He laid a hand charged with eternal rest upon
her heart, & smoothed with a kiss the line on her
clear brow. With a silencing finger he sealed
her parted lips, parted to welcome him,
In her ear he breathed a secret; hearing it
she feared to hear no voice of earth again -
willing, his spirit fled with him, but she bade
him leave her body let the Bride might wish
to bid it farewell - A great stillness hangs
about it - ~~But~~ yet we need not whisper - The
birds will sing a lusty a eve, when its twake.
Nor need we tread soft, though those who know
less of the night's quiet doings ~~may~~ may.
This grand quiet chamber shined not be darkened.
~~The~~ Never, did it ~~be~~ ^{long} solitary occupant shun.
The day lighter less - Yet tomorrow (the Bride's
morrow) there will be some wishing to hush earth's
purest music, & were it not ~~useless~~ ^{useless} via the
birds, begone - They will forget she hears no note
of it; they will draw the faded curtains to shut
out day - They will not notice how the frail
being sits boldly fronting dawn -
Nay, they may even pity one, who met thus,
alone & smiling the Terror of men's dreams -



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