

SONNETS TO A LOVER

By Myrtle Reed

I—THE VINEYARD

UPON the hill beyond the grove of pine
All through the vineyard tiny tendrils run,
Where, marked with fleeting shadow and with sun,
The shimmering leaves and fragrant creepers twine;
September here has made her sparkling wine,
And in the silences of night begun
The fairy spinners mystic lace have spun
Around the clustered purple of the vine.

So through the world's vast vineyard thou and I
Are pledged to walk together side by side
And travel on the way that He has willed.
Though saddest failure in our cups may lie
When we have trod the grapes, He will not chide,
Because with love our wine has been distilled.

II—A LOST APRIL

Is this September? In a golden light
The sudden rain has passed, and sparkling dew
Is dripping from the trees, each drop pierced through
With quivering sun threads, shining silver white.
The thrush's note ascends in rapturous flight,
And every meadow lark that upward flew
From clover fields at dawn is singing, too,
As if there were no Autumn and no night.

Is this September? Nay, for on the earth
In radiant beauty April treads again,
And woos the robins with her smiles and tears.
And so, if dead Spring has another birth,
We have not lost our love's first sweetness then—
It waits somewhere adown the aisle of years.

III—HARVEST

The slanting beams of afternoon have traced,
Where slender shafts of ripening grain unfold,
A mystic pattern wrought of palest gold,
With blood-red poppies closely interlaced.

THE SMART SET

And so the distant harvest fields are graced
 With drifted blooms that wander uncontrolled,
 And when night's dusky fabrics are unrolled,
 In every chalice cup a pearl is placed.

So when my doubtful harvest shall begin,
 With such small store of grain as chaff can yield,
 And I have naught to give that may atone,
 I know the Reaper, seeing far within,
 Will grant me pardon for my barren field,
 Because thy poppies in my wheat have grown.

IV—INDIAN SUMMER

A purple haze lies on the distant hill
 And fallow fields an alien beauty wear;
 There seems mysterious promise in the air
 Which passing Summer lingers to fulfil.
 The silvery music of the tinkling rill
 Has died away as if in silent prayer;
 The winds have left the murmuring maples bare,
 And all the woodland ways are strangely still.

December waits, with winding sheets of snow,
 And that fair field, athrill to Autumn's kiss,
 A sleeper in an unmarked grave shall be;
 They say love has its seasons; even so
 The Winter in my heart must be like this,
 Because through Summer I have walked with thee.

V—AN OLD GARDEN

Along the wall the lengthening shadows creep
 And questing honey bees have homeward flown
 O'er meadow grass and weeds now overgrown
 Upon the crimson clover lying deep.
 Strange sentinels the larkspur's watches keep
 And drowsily the thistledown is blown;
 White morning-glories vagrant blooms have sown
 Where that forgotten garden lies asleep.

Far down the path, beside the broken gate,
 In seeming portent stands a cypress tree;
 And royal, lonely, like a thing apart,
 A single golden rose has challenged Fate.
 Thus at the last may it be given me
 To sleep with thy dead roses on my heart.

VI—LAVENDER

The memory of old gardens gently clings
 Around these broken flowers, now gray and dead,
 While childish dreams and visions, long since fled,
 Come back once more on swift and kindly wings.

Again the meadow lark at sunrise sings,
 And fairy webs all through the woodland spread,
 With drops of crystal strung on every thread,
 Bring back the sweetness of forgotten Springs.

The lavender is dead—yet 'tis not death,
 For stores of snowy linen, finely spun,
 Shall hold its subtle fragrance through the year.
 And so, as linen scented by its breath,
 In all my life must be a little sun
 Because I know that thou hast loved me, dear!

VII—A VIOLIN

Dark night and storm and passioned breakers' din,
 The sea-bird's note, the vastness of the tide
 And softest winds that through the forest sighed
 Are with this fibre strangely woven in.
 The organ tones of surge and sea begin
 Within this mystic temple, sanctified
 By all the vanished years that, ere they died,
 Had hid their sweetness in a violin.

Some day the buried music shall be found
 When master hands awake the sleeping voice
 To some great song that in crescendo rings;
 And thus, as silence changed to rapturous sound,
 My wakened heart must ever more rejoice
 Because thy fingers touched the hidden strings.

VIII—FORGIVENESS

Dear, why shouldst thou for my forgiveness plead
 And take the blame in knightly lover's way,
 When thou must know I could not tell thee nay,
 Since my unflinching pardon is thy need?
 Of my mistakes thou hast not taken heed,
 But yet I fear thy clearer vision may
 Discern behind thy dream my faulty clay—
 Then of thy grace shall I have greater need.

Forgive thee, dearest? It were passing strange
 To grant thee pardon for a single fault
 When all of mine must balance with thy one;
 I have thy love, beyond the reach of change,
 Which all my erring future must exalt—
 And I forgive thee all thou hast not done.

IX—CROWNED

I hear no coronation hymns ascend
 Where loyal peoples marble arches raise;
 Within no palace halls I pass my days,
 Before my throne no lords and ladies bend.

THE SMART SET

No trumpet-tongued salutes my paths attend
 Nor cries of silver bugles sound my praise;
 For me no fires of splendid triumph blaze—
 I have no mighty kingdom to defend.

Yet I am royal, for thy lips have said:
 "My queen, I love thee even more than life,
 And my believing heart to thee I bring."
 So shalt thou place a crown upon my head
 And bring me purple with the name of wife,
 Because thou art my lover and my king.

X—NIGHT

Adown the lane come flocks of weary sheep
 With muffled tinklings to the waiting fold;
 Dim grayness lies upon the sun's last gold,
 And timid stars into the shadow creep.
 A gracious darkness on the rocky steep
 Has fallen where the drowsy sheep-bells tolled,
 And far afield the drooping poppies hold
 Within their dusky petals softest sleep.

Twilight and hush, and then the mystic hours
 When Dian moves along her starry ways,
 From day-long bondage of the sun set free;
 My soul has opened as night-blooming flowers
 That fear the heat and splendor of the days—
 Ah, Love, 'tis night, and I am waiting thee!

XI—STAR-BREAK

As if by magic sunset gates unbar
 And through the portals Day goes home to rest;
 The crimson clouds, massed in the golden west,
 Foundations of celestial cities are.
 The flaming beacons shed their light afar
 Till twilight comes upon the mountain crest;
 Gray shadows deepen on Night's quiet breast,
 That bears the jewel of a single star.

Then out upon the meadows, strangely white,
 Where like a ghostly veil lies Autumn mist,
 The thousand lights of heaven softly shine.
 Like this thy love has risen on my night,
 Thy arms around me keep a lover's tryst—
 Star-break and thee, and thy lips close on mine!



THE SPLENDOR OF DEAD DAYS

By Marvin Dana

THE lover of luxury must reflect with sadness on the fact that the site of Sybaris is now only a malodorous marsh. That city, once the home of all material enjoyments, where pleasure was practiced as the chief science, and from whose name our language derives its most forceful words expressive of luxurious leisure, is lost to sight forever in malarious mists, and its only monody is the shrilling of waterfowl. Yet this city, of all places in the world in any age, was supremely the City of Sumptuous Delights—delights compared to which our artificial enjoyments of to-day are crude and vulgar.

In our age civilization is noisy. Our great centres—London, Paris, New York—are pandemoniums. The Sybarites forbade any employment of a noisy sort within the city limits, lest the slumbrous ease of the citizens be disturbed. As by this law of quiet, so by the cultivation of many other vital principles of the art of enjoyment the ancients demonstrated themselves our superiors in æstheticism. To-day we are utilitarian; our very extravagance smacks of the useful. We rarely revel in ornate magnificence that does not cover convenience. The voluptuaries of old indulged their whims, however wild. They had no fear of press criticism, no guide save imperious fancy.

Beneath the placid surface of Diana's Mirror—the Lake Nemi, near Genzano, in Italy—the remains of a Roman state galley have lain for centuries. One Roman museum possesses a ponderous beam, ornamented with bronze, which was taken from the bottom of the lake four hundred

years ago. Rather recently the remnants of the vessel were located on the lake's bottom, buried nearly a hundred feet deep in the mud, and divers brought up many fragments, such as decorative lions and wolves of bronze. Enough has been discovered to show that an imperial palace once floated on Nemi's beautiful waters. The huge craft supported a gorgeous royal residence, surrounded by a dainty park thick with trees and odorous with blossoms. Statues gleamed along the paths, and lining the boat's sides massive stone parapets that served as bulwarks were adorned with sculptured columns and brazen beasts, while the palace itself was richly ornamented with elaborate carvings. To this retreat, so magnificent yet so tranquil as it floated on gentle waves, the Emperor Trajan retired from the cares of state.

The Roman ruler was not unique in his conception of such a palace, for Athenæus describes the splendors of similar vessels owned by Heron II. of Syracuse and by Ptolemy IV. One looks in vain among the house-boats on the Thames for beauties such as these displayed. Even the most ornate of modern yachts are not comparable for luxury of furnishing.

Such aquatic craft were not designed for voyaging. The ancients were, however, often most munificent in the adorning of boats intended for traveling purposes. On that romantic journey when Cleopatra sailed for Tarsus to attend Antony's court, the wayward beauty occupied a vessel of superb magnificence. The sails were of purple silk, thick-woven; music timed the rowers' strokes; the