

SECOND APRIL

BY
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HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

SECOND APRIL

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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SECOND APRIL

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE HARP-WEAVER AND OTHER POEMS

A FEW FIGS FROM THISTLES

SECOND APRIL.



THREE PLAYS

ARIA DA CAPO

TWO SLATTERNS AND A KING

THE LAMP AND THE BELL

THE KING'S HENCHMAN



TO
MY BELOVÈD FRIEND
CAROLINE B. DOW

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SPRING

To what purpose, April, do you return again?

Beauty is not enough.

You can no longer quiet me with the redness

Of little leaves opening stickily.

I know what I know.

The sun is hot on my neck as I observe

The spikes of the crocus.

The smell of the earth is good.

It is apparent that there is no death.

But what does that signify?

Not only under ground are the brains of men

Eaten by maggots.

Life in itself

Is nothing,

An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs.

It is not enough that yearly, down this hill,

April

Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

CITY TREES

THE trees along this city street,
Save for the traffic and the trains,
Would make a sound as thin and sweet
As trees in country lanes.

And people standing in their shade
Out of a shower, undoubtedly
Would hear such music as is made
Upon a country tree.

Oh, little leaves that are so dumb
Against the shrieking city air,
I watch you when the wind has come,—
I know what sound is there.

THE BLUE-FLAG IN THE BOG

God had called us, and we came;
Our loved Earth to ashes left;
Heaven was a neighbor's house,
Open flung to us, bereft.

Gay the lights of Heaven showed,
And 'twas God who walked ahead;
Yet I wept along the road,
Wanting my own house instead.

Wept unseen, unheeded cried,
"All you things my eyes have kissed,
Fare you well! We meet no more,
Lovely, lovely tattered mist!

Weary wings that rise and fall
All day long above the fire!"—
Red with heat was every wall,
Rough with heat was every wire—

“Fare you well, you little winds
That the flying embers chase!
Fare you well, you shuddering day,
With your hands before your face!

And, ah, blackened by strange blight,
Or to a false sun unfurled,
Now forevermore goodbye,
All the gardens in the world!

On the windless hills of Heaven,
That I have no wish to see,
White, eternal lilies stand,
By a lake of ebony.

But the Earth forevermore
Is a place where nothing grows,—
Dawn will come, and no bud break;
Evening, and no blossom close.

Spring will come, and wander slow
Over an indifferent land,
Stand beside an empty creek,
Hold a dead seed in her hand."

God had called us, and we came,
But the blessed road I trod
Was a bitter road to me,
And at heart I questioned God.

"Though in Heaven," I said, "be all
That the heart would most desire,
Held Earth naught save souls of sinners
Worth the saving from a fire?

Withered grass,—the wasted growing!
Aimless ache of laden boughs!"
Little things God had forgotten
Called me, from my burning house.

“Though in Heaven,” I said, “be all
That the eye could ask to see,
All the things I ever knew
Are this blaze in back of me.”

“Though in Heaven,” I said, “be all
That the ear could think to lack,
All the things I ever knew
Are this roaring at my back.”

It was God who walked ahead,
Like a shepherd to the fold;
In his footsteps fared the weak,
And the weary and the old,

Glad enough of gladness over,
Ready for the peace to be,—
But a thing God had forgotten
Was the growing bones of me.

And I drew a bit apart,
And I lagged a bit behind,
And I thought on Peace Eternal,
Lest He look into my mind:

And I gazed upon the sky,
And I thought of Heavenly Rest,—
And I slipped away like water
Through the fingers of the blest!

All their eyes were fixed on Glory,
Not a glance brushed over me;
“Alleluia! Alleluia!”
Up the road,—and I was free.

And my heart rose like a fashet,
And it swept me on before,
Giddy as a whirling stick,
Till I felt the earth once more.

All the Earth was charred and black,
Fire had swept from pole to pole;
And the bottom of the sea
Was as brittle as a bowl;

And the timbered mountain-top
Was as naked as a skull,—
Nothing left, nothing left,
Of the Earth so beautiful!

“Earth,” I said, “how can I leave you?”
“You are all I have,” I said;
“What is left to take my mind up,
Living always, and you dead?”

“Speak!” I said, “Oh, tell me something!
Make a sign that I can see!
For a keepsake! To keep always!
Quick!—before God misses me!”

And I listened for a voice;—
But my heart was all I heard;
Not a screech-owl, not a loon,
Not a tree-toad said a word.

And I waited for a sign;—
Coals and cinders, nothing more;
And a little cloud of smoke
Floating on a valley floor.

And I peered into the smoke
Till it rotted, like a fog:—
There, encompassed round by fire,
Stood a blue-flag in a bog!

Little flames came wading out,
Straining, straining towards its stem,
But it was so blue and tall
That it scorned to think of them!

Red and thirsty were their tongues,
As the tongues of wolves must be,
But it was so blue and tall—
Oh, I laughed, I cried, to see!

All my heart became a tear,
All my soul became a tower,
Never loved I anything
As I loved that tall blue flower!

It was all the little boats
That had ever sailed the sea,
It was all the little books
That had gone to school with me;

On its roots like iron claws
Rearing up so blue and tall,—
It was all the gallant Earth
With its back against a wall!