

A NEW SEA-SONG

To Nellie

I

BY the far west lonely islands, foam-flecked by a
narrow bay
In the cruel teeth of the North-east wind, fronting
the light and the day,
I heard the song of the sworded Sea, red-lipped with
her bloody gain;
O thou of the winds and the highlands far, bring me
thy songs again!

II

I knew no dream of thy purple floods, no thought of
thy yearning will,
Till thy white sea-winds cried out to me, calling and
calling me still:
I had no thought of the wildest dream that ever a man
might know,
Till I saw thee armed and risen from time millions of
ages ago!

III

I saw the sharded armour that had given the will to slay,
The murmurous song of the morning star aflame o'er
the birth of day,
Guarding the cradle of wars unborn, slumbering in
the slime,
Gray-shadowed by terror of all the past, thrust back
in the throat of Time.

IV

And even as now the wet winds call, call far and
farther to me,
I see the things of the distant world, born in the eyes
of the sea,—
The things that shall hold the world agape, the terrors
undreamt, unsung,
Float out on the edge of the windy surge, far out to
the wet coast flung.

V

O pitiless rain! O stern dark sea, sweet foster-mother
of death!
Bride of the pain that is yet to be, stealer of love and
breath,—
O Wanton wild with the foaming eyes deep-set in
the splendid brows,
I stand as a wondering babe of earth stolen in to thy
carouse.

VI

So as I stand by this western shore, thy breath in my
hair and mouth,
Thy kisses wet on my lips—ah, gods! again! thou
wind of the south—
Kiss me to death, and let me die apart in the sight of
thee,
Mother of pain and mystery, my leman, my bride,
my sea!

VII

For I had a dream of the islands that hold the gates
of day;
The blood of the morning was shed for me, that I
might praise and pray,
That I might sing—ah! what wild songs—to the lonely
vision that sped
Roaring over the peaks of the sea; that whispered to
me and fled.

VIII

Dead dreams, dead dreams, dead dreams of mine,
sweet dreams of a world unborn,
Never to be, oh, never to be; oh, the strength of the
sea's wild scorn, . . .
“Thrust yourself on my breast, and see what be the
Mother's will,
Thou who standest in idle dream at the foot of the
windy hill!

IX

"Follow the track of the birds, the birds, the white-
 winged gulls that fly
 So close, so close to the face of me, with the low winds
 rushing by;
 Take my face, and kiss, and kiss, and I will grant
 thee sleep
 Under my heaving breast, my son; thou shalt dream
 there long and deep.

X

"For the passionate way of the island home is far, far
 under the sky,
 A foam-white thought of a foam-white bird, a foam-
 white dream to die;
 The pallor of time is on my face, the noise of the
 world in my ears,
 And the thunder-call of the wingèd dawn comes down
 to me in my fears.

XI

"Hast thou a dream to spare to me, who hast journeyed
 and thought and sung—
 Thou with the wounded heart and mouth, thou with
 the honeyed tongue?
 Liar and coward and fool art thou, who standest agape,
 a-dream,
 While the wild winds bellow the song of me in a
 wind-wrought flaming stream.

XII

“So, for a dream, and the dream of a dream, so vague
that it may not be
More than a tremulous breath of death, a shadowy
fear of me,
Thou must stand as an idle child, a fool stunned by
my shadowed grace—
Come! O ye wild wet winds, to me, O come and un-
veil my face! . . .

XIII

“Lie thou under the starless Dark, lie still in the
night and weep;
Thou who art thrust from the ways of light, buried so
deep, so deep.
Lie thou alone, and dream of me, a scornful Wanton
wild,
Lie still and sleep the inmost sleep, the sleep of a
dreaming child.

XIV

“But the ways, the ways of me know thou still; for-
get not me and mine,
The island way far over the steep, the glad salt spray-
ing brine,
For that I love, I come to thee, with the wild sweet
scent of earth,
Bacchanal-wild, Thalassian, strong to bear thy babes
to birth.

XV

“Come down, come down, the stars are hid, the way
is bleak and bare,
Thou hast only the dying dream of me, of the tangled
mass of my hair,
And my ripe, red lips that are sweet with brine, and
my heart like a homing bird’s;
Come thou and dream, and dream with me the things
that have no words.

XVI

“For I have set men’s hearts aflame, nor quenched
the fire with brine,
And I have cast a secret glance on the flaming dream
of thine;
Come thou, nor sleep, nor sleep, nor sleep until thou
sleep with me,
The wind in our hair, and the spray in our mouth, and
my breath in the throat of thee. . . .

XVII

“For the hidden stars look down, look down, and the
secret winds—hush!—call;
The sway of light is over the lands; Night lurks in her
silent hall;
The way, the way is before thee now, and the wet
winds gather and blow. . . .”
Mother of all things lost and drowned, secret Mother
I go.