

Willis Boyd Allen



In the Morning

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Two sorrie Thynges there be,—

Ay, three:

A Neste from which ye Fledglings have been taken,

A Lamb forsaken,

A Petal from ye Wilde Rose rudely shaken.

Of gladde Thynges there be more,—

Ay, four:

A Larke above ye olde Neste blithely singing,

A Wilde Rose clinging

In safety to ye Rock, a Shepherde bringing

A Lamb, found, in his arms,—and Chrystemesse

Bells a-ringing.

IN THE MORNING.

VITA NUOVA.

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A desert, treeless, boundless,
The low sun round and red,
Air stifling, moveless, soundless—
And I alone with my dead.

Her head lay on my shoulder,
The crimson light ebbed fast;
Her face grew paler, colder—
The face of my own dead Past.

Then darkness, black and frightful,
Dropped from the eastern sky,
With never a star, but a night-full
Of horrors creeping by.

I saw how fiercely glistened
Their mad eyes, two by two,—
They screamed, and as I listened
They laughed like a demon crew.

See how that huge hyena
Grows bolder than the rest—

Slinks—snarls—in the arena,
For the corpse upon my breast!

I laughed like the brutes around me,
I snarled on my stony bed,
I severed the ties that bound me
And gnashed upon the dead.

The tawny-sided creatures,
Red claw and dripping fang,
The hideous, grinning features,
The awful mirth that rang,—
All vanished. Starless, boundless,
The night stretched o'er my head.
In the gray dawn, soulless, soundless,
I sat alone with my dead.

Then rustling forms drew nearer.
By the faint approaching day
The frightful things grew clearer,—
Great, unclean birds of prey
And carrion beasts, that waited
Until, on the booty rare,
Their hunger foul should be sated
With my poor Past, lying there.

Oh, I, too, sullen-hearted,
No word of anguish said;
Till bird and beast departed
I waited—dumb—by the dead.

The white east flickered with fire,

A lark flew singing by,
The glad light mounted higher,
Up-spread o'er all the sky.

My burden, fair and human,
Still rested on my hands,
When lo! a gracious Woman,
Swift walking o'er the sands,
Until she stood before me,
Breathed words of hope and cheer;
Her radiant eyes were o'er me,
Her presence warm and near,

And at her voice—oh, wonder!—
The dead herself awoke;
The birds no longer shunned her,
She smiled, and moved, and spoke,
Then, “FUTURE” named, to guide me
She softly sprang away;
The Woman stayed beside me—
Sun rose—it was full day.

NOT IN THE WHIRLWIND.

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A poet sat in his oaken chair,
The pen in his eager hand,
Awaiting the voice that should declare
His Lord's divine command.

The sad winds sobbed against the pane,
The tempest's tramp he heard
As it scourged the night with a hissing rain—
But the Poet wrote never a word.

Then came a burst of martial mirth,
And mighty cannon roared
Till they shook the beams of the steadfast earth—
'Twas not the voice of the Lord.

In the Poet's heart a memory rose
Of love's first passionate thrill
That, kindling, grows as the red fire glows—
But the pen was idle, still;

When lo, a timid voice at the door,
And a child, with sweet delight,
Called "Father!" and "Father!" over and o'er—
The poem was written that night.

DIAPASON.

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On the crags of a far-off mountain-top
At earliest dawn a snowflake fell;
The North Wind stooped and cried to her, "Stop!
There is room in my icy halls to dwell!"
The snowflake gleamed like a crystal clear,
Then wept herself to a single tear,
Paused, trembled, and slowly began to glide
Adown the slopes of the mountain-side.

Desolate ledges, frost-riven and bare,
A tiny rivulet bore on their breast;
Cloud-gray mosses and lichens fair
Mutely besought her to slumber and rest.
The rivulet shone in the morning sun,
And touching them tenderly, one by one,
With dewy lips, like the mountain mist,
Each waiting face as she passed she kissed.

Among the shadows of pine and fir
A stream danced merrily on her way;
A thrush from his hermitage sang to her:
"Why dost thou haste? Sweet messenger, stay!"
The noontide shadows were cool and deep,