

# THE WAYFARERS

BY

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## VITA VITTORIA.

*The stern high gods withhold not their best gift.  
Though in long strife the Dreamer's hope grows pale;  
Though neither steadfast watch nor prayer prevail;  
But derelicts of faith, forsaken, drift  
Athwart him in the darkness, and uplift  
Beseeching hands and voices of loud wail. . .  
Immortal strong Desire shall never fail:  
The stern high gods have granted their best gift.*

*O Dream, that in the night hast come to me;  
Thou Spirit of Desire, so long delayed,  
Whom, ever hungering for, my Muse hath made  
The idol of her low-tuned melody:  
Behold! my captive soul is lost in thee:  
I touch thy garment, and am not afraid.*

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### ERRATA.

P. 21, comma (,) to end line 10.

P. 27, last line, read "and ends his quest."



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### I.

The morn now came grey-vestured, but no Hope  
Stirred in our bosoms, though Despair had gone;  
And swift our bark against the leaden slope

Of billows without sail or helm drave on,  
While we amid her quivering deck did wait,  
Hungered and worn and silent every one.

I think we deemed some loveliness of fate  
E'en yet should dawn to end our miseries,  
Though in our spirits Hope sprang not elate.

What if no ray of promise tokened peace,  
Still were a blessed haven possible  
Beyond this weary torment of the seas!

### II.

Ah! we had tasted shadow grim as Hell:  
For Storm had bellowed in the firmament;  
And Death, with bolt and maw implacable,

Devoured our trembling mariners, and rent  
The hapless bark each seam and timber through,  
Nor left us when, three hundred long hours spent,

Foodless and in dumb agony, we knew  
This last day break across the leaden wave,  
As without oar or sail we onward flew.

(O God, whose arm is wonderful to save,  
 We pray Thee for the storm-racked mariner,  
 To shield him from the ravenous sea-grave !)

### III.

Thus o'er a deep where never ship did steer,  
 Beneath a heaven, I wis, where never sun  
 In his earth-conquering glory might appear,  
 Up hills of foamless grey the bark sped on,  
 Like to a mortal body quivering  
 Amid the wonder of a power unknown.

But we—scarce fearing aught that Doom might bring,  
 Since for her secrets we had given our all,  
 From land to land in endless sojourning  
 Seeking the vision of Life's coronal,  
 Seeking the marvel whose far gleams entice  
 Great human spirits onward to that fall  
 Wherefrom renewed and beautiful they rise,—  
 We, dumb and helpless, on the torn deck lay  
 And watched the heaving ocean and the skies.

### IV.

O vast Desire, with mortal hearts at play !  
 O dearly loved, sweet Hope, whose smiles were  
 O vast Desire, controlling men alway !— gone !

Yet, even yet, we yearned for things unknown ;  
Still, still we longed, ere the last darkness fell,  
Some unimagined splendour to be shown :

Nor did we deem our hands incapable  
Once more of headlong strife for victory,  
Albeit no tongue our wretchedness might tell.

V.

And now a humid mist obscured the sea,  
Chill as a northern night-wind, chill and wet,  
That numbed our helpless limbs so bitterly

We felt the Master triumphing; and yet  
The mist seemed on our lips like fragrant dew,  
Waking the old Spring dreams men ne'er forget.

Then scarce another thing our spirits knew  
Save darkness, and, the darkness brooding o'er,  
A music toward which the vessel drew,

Till, louder grown, its voice told of a shore  
Of towering rocky fangs above us spread,  
Whereon the surges broke for evermore,—

Whereon with mighty impetus we sped  
Like frail glass shattered, and in dreamless sleep  
Sank unto regions of the unknowing dead.

## VI.

How long soe'er our spirits in the deep  
    Forgetful realm of unformed being lay,  
Where never star its lonely watch doth keep,

Nor dream-thought thrill the gloom, I cannot say;  
    But when new vision wakened in our eyes,  
As unperceived the darkness rolled away,

Sweet through our bosoms panted the surmise  
    That we, beyond Life's margin, saw the bowers  
And heard the melody of Paradise:

For there we rested on celestial flowers,  
    Bright as the famed Sicilian mead could show  
Where sad Proserpin spent her virgin hours.

All softly swaying over us a bough  
    Of mingled blossoming and fruitage hung,  
Part-trailèd in the fragrant herb below;

Whereof such eagerness our beings stung,  
    We plucked the globèd crimson fruit and ate,  
Till in our pallid hearts new life-blood sprung:

And ere our hunger we might satiate,  
    The broken stems burst in fresh blossoming  
Of various hue and perfume blended sweet.