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Antiphony

Clara Louise Guild

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Antiphony

Hanging where the May tide splendor,
pouring down the arches blue,
Pierces, flooding with its fulness all the
chamber through and through, -
Swings a sage, alitt and vibrant with the
restless feet and wings
Of three glancing, golden feathered, wonder-
throated little things.

Little bits of living glory with a melody in-
breathed;
Pulses of a mighty music in the sunlight
caught and set free,
Till it grew concrete about them, shaped
a body and a bound
For the throbbing soul of sweetness stir-
ring ceaseless into sound.

Scanted in their glimpse of heaven, peering
with their witless eyes
Outward, where the unmeasured answer
to their untaught yearning lies;
Fluttering with a secret impulse kindred
to the summer breeze,
Springing to an unknown motion of the
far off forest trees.

So God plummeth many a spirit, still with
holding space to soar;
Bids it wait with folded pinion till He
openeth the door;
Seals a sense that still respondeth dimly
to some distant good,
Stirring all the mortal nature with an
unborn angelhood.

Sitting in the quiet chamber, where that
magic of the May
Glorified each dull surrounding with
the overflow of day,

Only their soft song and flutter moved the
silence of the room,
And the clock upon the mantel telling
out the strokes of doom.

Saying sternly, and repeating, with a cadence
sure and slow
While with onward march the minutes,
pauseless and returnless, go,
Speeding, speeding, ever speeding, ebbing,
ebbing, still away!
Minutes, hours, and breathe, and being! - life
and death, and night, and day!

Still I heard as me unheeding, listening
but the softened strain
Of the presumed joy that smote me with a
strange rebuke of pain;
So its semblance did interpret hindered hopes
my life had known.
Waiting God's divine blessing, as these
waited for mine own.

Rising up, with ready finger straight—
I set the door awide;

Swift they claimed the offered franchise,
with its compass satisfied.

Back and forth throughout the chamber,
in their joy they went and came;
Then, as in a still assurance, settled
o'er the window-frame.

Presently a clear, triumphant paragon left
the startled air;

Notes that flashed like falling rain-drops,
bright and sudden, everywhere;

Slender breaths of piercing sweetness, like
keen needleshafts of sound.

Then a slender, tremulous rapture, and
a quiet closing round.

Quiet. Yet from o'er the mantel came
those urgent strokes of time,
Meeting the unmeasured stillness as a
thought is pulsed with rhyme;

With their deep insistence uttering self-
same syllables alway, -
"Minutes, hours, and breath, and being! -
life, and death, and night, and day!"

While the birds above the casement, like
souls stricken into shame, -
All their sudden burst of joyance quivered
out, like taper-flame, -
Side by side sat hushed and awestruck,
hearkening as with holden breath;
Every little heart beat merging in those
cadences of death!

Ah, methought, the old incongruence! still the
strangeness and the strife!
Still the weary counterpoising, sense with soul,
and law with life!
Feeling only for a little, what it is to wear the
wings;
Just a breath of perfect music while the
uncaged spirit sings;

Then the confine shutting round us, and a
dull, relentless tone

Finer utterance overbearing with the pressure
of its own.

Yet, with all its hard repeating, tells the
letter less or more

Than the brief and sweet revealing of the
gospel gone before?