

**THEY WILL  
REMAIN**

**POEMS By  
SUSAN PENDLETON**

Selected and with a  
Postscript by  
Austin Warren

Basil and Peters, Ann Arbor

c

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Gift of S. Purinton Mance, '66

## Her Mark

I should like to write a poem  
Nobody could understand,  
Full of smoke blowing, and cinders—  
And one gleaming brand !

And if, turning, a disturbed one,  
A bewildered one should sigh,  
“But I saw Beauty burning !  
I heard her cry !”

## Secret

Thou Unseen who dost impart  
Lyrical, divine  
Fragments to enchant the heart,  
This kindling heart of mine,  
Though I breathless gather them  
Can I by any light  
Shining from Thy garment's hem  
Assemble them aright?

Let me, a beggar, rather ask  
Thy message fall entire.  
I am not equal to the task  
Of patching Thy white fire.  
I will hide it as the brook  
In winter hides its song  
Under ice where none may look  
Secretly along.

I will lock it tight away  
Under a clamped lid.  
(But will not people turn and say  
"She keeps something hid"?)  
My heart shall be its hiding place  
And it shall still be Thine.  
(But will it speak out through my face  
Or through my eyelids shine?)

Nay, I will break the vow I took,  
The golden secret spill !  
In every lane, in every nook,  
Through market place and mill.  
Will lightly haste, at morn, at even,  
Chanting it rapturously.  
The heart that holds one drop of heaven  
Must sing aloud or die.

**“Music Pours Upon Mortals Its  
Beautiful Disdain”**

Emerson

Fire was stolen from the gods, they tell us.  
Music was stolen, too.  
Men clutched it down from the heavens jealous,  
When it broke through.

But it is not tamed ! Within our portals,  
A wild, enchanted thing,  
It tears away at the hearts of mortals,  
Straining 'neath key and string.

Imparting its strange, ecstatic fever,  
Lulling our souls to sleep,  
Full of the promise it never,  
Never means to keep.

## To Be Shut Of Love

I am glad to be shut of love,  
To pull out of it and get by.

I looked at a red flower,  
Asked God to let me die.

I wished that the flower were redder;  
Perhaps it would numb the hurt.

And if I were dead—we don't  
Ache, do we, down in the dirt?

I look with a scornful wonder  
Back on those tides of pain;

I'm glad it's all over, all over—  
I wish it were here again.



## Fire

In her cold room  
(She hadn't a fire)  
She heard as fingers  
Touching a lyre.

Words fell singing  
From unseen lips  
In the faint light  
Of her tallow dip;

Stub of a pencil,  
Fingers blue,  
Catching at bits  
Of words that flew.

And she thought, if only  
I sat alone  
In the warm room,  
All the rest gone,

I could listen so  
And my hands could race  
By the bright fire  
In that pleasant place,

For if heaven jars open  
A little here,  
What must it be there  
In the warmth and cheer?

And it came so  
That she sat alone  
In the warm room,  
All the others gone;

With a bright light  
And a merry flame  
She sat waiting—  
And nothing came.

No notes falling  
From silver flute  
Nor fingers sweeping  
The lyre strings, mute.

.....

Let me go back  
To my place in the cold  
Where lyrics drop,  
Silver and gold.

Circling eager  
In shining bands.  
(Stub of a pencil  
Cold blue hands.)

## The Wild Carrot Field

Sun browned field,  
Wild carrots dipping;  
My task to pull them  
While the minutes go slipping.  
In beauty bending,  
Nodding in grace,  
Shimmering, pestilent  
Queen Anne's lace;

Two thousand, three thousand,  
Grime and stain.  
Last year, this year,  
Next year again.  
Some folks pity,  
Seeing me bend.  
"She has taken a task  
That will never end."

Yet there comes strangely,  
Plodding like this,  
Almost hopeless,  
Some hint of bliss.  
Red sun slanting,  
Shadows so fair!  
I pause to worship  
With head bare.

Wiping the sweat  
With torn sleeve.  
(There is a heaven  
I do believe.)  
Colors deepen  
With shadowing.  
Beauty holds me  
Imprisoning.

Little wind blowing  
Sets the lace shaking.  
Loveliness here  
For a heart breaking,  
Let me continue,  
Six, seven—  
If I stop too sudden  
It might snap heaven.

## Grass

I have sometimes thought about the grass  
As through the soft mid-summer fields I pass;  
Its colors rarer than the tints of spring,  
Kissed by the heavens to beauty ravishing.

Chrome, orange, yellow, rose, pearl, purple, grey  
Soft blue, old gold, in luring disarray.  
So do you lay your rich hues one by one,  
To fade, to mellow in the summer sun.

With gleaming silver and with golden sheen.  
Soft, soft ! nothing so soft was ever seen.  
How careless in old dreaming, fallow fields,  
How prodigal you vaunt your wasteful wields.

Along old roads where scythes forget to ply  
You spread your rapt enchantments to the eye.  
Do you, the more to uselessness you turn,  
The more in beauty exquisitely burn?

There something is in your bright, sunny looks  
That calls me like the speech of singing brooks.  
Guard you some secret, hidden, poignant thing,  
Men have not dreamed in their imagining?

And do you feel the ache, the urge, the smart,  
As I to know, your secret to impart?  
Is that what lends your blossoming tops that flood  
Of color, matchless, sensitive as blood?

If I should lie beneath, as they say, dead,  
You straying, wild, abandoned, over my head,  
It heartens me to think there then might be  
An intimacy between thee and me.

I babble now, you listen and tell naught.  
You hold your peace, with secret wisdom fraught.  
Ah, you talk then, fair, friendly, and I will  
Be confidante, be listener, very still.

## Blossomed Grass

The grass has looks inscrutable  
When it turns red and gray.  
It tantalizes while it charms  
By what it does not say.  
With sheen of silver and gleam of gold  
It ravishes the eye.  
It seems inclined to confidence,

Inviting passers by.  
Its tops of purple and rose and pearl  
Seem packed with cryptic speech,  
Provokingly denied the ear,  
However strained to reach.  
And it is like arrested surf  
Arching tumultuously.  
Like pelting rain turned upside down  
And lifting toward the sky;

Like something that has reached a goal  
And poises still in place,  
Rich as with knowledge unrevealed  
Lighting a quiet face.

## The Old Houses Of Hebron

The old houses of Hebron  
Have taken a hold on me.  
They stare and strain  
Through each lidded pane  
Silently, broodingly.  
Jealous, perhaps, of the living,  
Deep in our own affairs.  
Yet willingly, I  
Let mine fall by  
Under the spell of theirs.

In which house lived Ammi Rogers?  
His Reverend name bemeaned  
And his set face pale  
As they haled him to jail;  
A saint accused as a fiend.  
Through what tiny panes peered watchers,  
With mirth both scornful and sly,  
As riding out in his wagon, stout,  
Lorenzo Dow went by.

While behind him walked his Peggy,  
As to lighten the load she must.  
All of them gone and forgotten.  
Ashes, ashes and dust.  
And here lived a man once honored  
Whose name is not best to tell,  
For he poisoned a woman, a deed inhuman,  
And died in a prison cell.



Oh, I have heard such stories.  
Things that would blanch the cheek;  
Of maniacs' pains, staples and chains,  
You houses that stand so meek !  
Many the old time whispers  
That were handed down to me,  
Telling of cages with no escape,  
Fastened with lock and key.  
And sometimes I would seek a new home place,  
With no memories grim to arouse.  
All wiped away and forgotten.  
Where a house would be just a house.

But the old houses of Hebron  
They will not let me go free.  
If ever I squirm they hold me firm,  
Still keeping their hold upon me.

## The Mocker: A Legend Of Lorenzo Dow

Lorenzo Dow, famous Methodist Evangelist of more than 100 years ago, was born in Coventry, Conn. Legend has it that he thus silenced the ring leader of scoffers at one of his meetings in New London.

His pale yet burning eyes bored hers.  
A silence fell and spread.  
His finger pointed. "You shall have  
A husband soon," he said.  
"And you shall have a fertile farm  
Which shall be yours alone."  
(And there were those whose hearts stood still  
At something in his tone.)

"And you shall have a fine white gown  
With bridal blossoms graced."  
(His long locks down his shoulders fell.  
His wild beard swept his waist.)  
"Ah, that's good news. I like it well,"  
The flippant girl replied,  
While looking from the gallery rail  
In all her wilful pride.

The preacher raised his potent hands.  
Hushed was the very air.  
The bold young woman scoffer paled  
But held her mocking stare.  
There was no need for him to lift  
His voice above a breath.  
"Your fine white gown will be a shroud.  
Your bridegroom will be Death.

The farm whose title you will hold  
Will be six feet of sod.  
O sinner," rang the trumpet voice,  
"Prepare To Meet Thy God."  
Smiling, she left the meeting-house  
But in her ears a knell  
Kept ringing. "Mother, crazy Dow  
Has cast on me a spell."

She cared no more to laugh or dance,  
But languished from that night,  
And curious eyes on her were turned.  
"What makes the maid so white?"  
Old women in New London town  
Still tell with bated breath,  
How quickly went the stricken girl  
To meet her bridegroom, Death.

## Rear Approaches

I like to glimpse old houses  
Sometimes from the back,  
Where things are homely and off guard,  
Natural and slack;

Where skin-like paint is peeling  
To show an older tint,  
Like something hidden peeping out,  
Giving a swift hint

That all that uniformity,  
That conscious, proper air,  
Is masquerade the fronts put on,  
In rows everywhere.

I saw a woman's grave once,  
Back from a kitchen door;  
The grey stone had brooded there  
A hundred years or more;

A grind-stone by a well-sweep,  
A leach-stone tarrying,  
Something merciless and strange  
For hogs' butchering;

Dwarf, hardy pansies,  
Self-sowed from long ago,  
Little worn, beaten paths  
To the barn and fro;

Beautiful, naive or sad,  
Cruel, humble, gay,  
That the stiff fronts would conceal  
If they had their way.

Sometimes in human beings  
Such a glimpse I catch,  
As if some jealous, guarded gate  
Surprised with lifted latch—

As if I'd interrupted  
A spirit from the rear,  
All its brave defenses down  
For trespassers to peer.

I've caught a halo gleaming,  
A beast crouched to spring,  
At once have made acquaintance  
Years might never bring.

I have caught such anguish,  
Such heaven, such despair,  
Such pretty, humble happiness  
The fronts hide everywhere.

And if I have my reasons  
For hedging more and more,  
Lest any soul should pounce upon  
My soul's back door!

## Just A Minute

This minute is mine.  
I shall do nothing in it  
From the time I begin it,  
All the way it extends  
To the minute it ends;  
Just lounging here, lazy,  
With a mind that is hazy,  
The while I delight  
Every duty to slight  
Sixty seconds so long,  
Though the clock's going strong.  
Don't disturb, on my door  
Keeps away every bore  
And prolongs, by that measure,  
This inertia I treasure.  
Oh, it's only begun.  
Let it run on and on.  
Tick tock, says the timer,  
And here lolls the rhymer,  
Completely in clover.  
What ! What ! Minute's over?

## Past-Present

The moments hang together so !  
Each second to the last;  
Each instant to the one to come,  
Till future jostles past.  
O, they do press so loud and close  
They seem like chiseled things;  
That camouflage of permanence  
That nature slyly flings.  
For the old dame has a marvelous gift;  
That shifting like the sea,  
Changeful as winds she makes to seem  
Immutability.

## The Signal

When huckleberry bushes  
Had borne their sober fruit  
There came a time of patience  
While they waited, mute.

And then, as at a signal,  
Changing their dull green,  
They put on colors richest  
That men or gods have seen.

Touched by the sun's magic,  
They stand transfigured,  
Brighter than coals glowing,  
Redder than blood is red.

As if in exultation  
At that far, homing call  
We hear with apprehension  
Pallid, averse, withal.

And I who cringe at dying  
Look with a kind of shame,  
Watching you caught to heaven  
In chariots of flame.



## Hollow In The Hills

Down in Murder Hollow  
All the trees were bare.  
The brook ran under the stone bridge.  
Spring was in the air.  
The water took such voices  
It sounded like the birds;  
Like the chuckles of the grackles,  
Like the bobolink's words.

The birds took up the chorus  
With a medley of notes and trills,  
Till the valley shook with music  
And its echoes touched the hills.

## Sweet Fern, Bayberry

Bayberry, let me shake you.  
Let me crush you and break you,  
Bruise you with careless hand,  
Sweet fern, at my command,  
Loosing, for my delight  
Aroma exquisite.  
Must you be broken and bleed  
Or ever your incense is freed?  
Do the great ones above on their part,  
Toy thus with the human heart?  
Ah, do our sorrows rise,  
Perfuming the craving skies?

## Jesus Sat At Meat

Jesus, who died upon the cross,  
Whose life for man was spent,  
Had lesser creatures die for Him,  
Unwilling, innocent.  
The fish he ate,  
The flesh of beasts,  
Grapes for the sacred wine,  
Perished for Him, and did not know  
They fed their Lord, divine.

## A Window Through

I heard the minister speaking loud.  
I was only ten.  
I heard his voice go on and on.  
I heard "Amen."  
But I was looking out at the sky,  
The window through.  
Lost in that pure, ethereal,  
Celestial hue.  
Nothing the minister preached about,  
Could I recall,  
Rapt in that azure, blue, blue,  
That Heaven let fall.  
And so I worshipped, in my small way,  
That color, air.  
Or was it true that I worshipped God?  
And was it a prayer?

## A Praying

At the piano, lonely,  
I bend down near  
And play a question only  
For the gods to hear.  
Not a word saying.  
If I keep on any more  
Will something start swaying?  
The opening of a door?  
I'm *praying* with my fingers.  
They hear me in the sky.  
A breath like incense lingers  
And seems like a reply.

## Do Not Pray Too Hard

I pray because I promised to.  
I try. I try.  
But what the plea I dare invoke,  
How framed my cry,  
So feeble sounds,  
Is stressed so little  
So brittle is, and dry,  
How can it soar on high?  
But once I wanted ! Tore the sky apart !  
God in reply like thunder spoke !  
My prayer was granted.  
And my heart broke.

## Insomnia

With poets' words, like singing birds,  
I cajole myself, of sleep instead,  
On sleepless bed.

With churchly hymns and sacred psalms  
My restless soul itself becalms.

Or with such proud and pompous things  
As names of presidents and kings.

With dates and lists of prepositions,  
Books of the Bible, conjured visions,

I me beguile, the darkness, while,  
Me still imprisons.

My all night vigil thus I keep.

What ! Is it morning. Did I sleep?

## Keep It Dark

I was always afraid of the world.  
But I looked it in the eye,  
As if daring it coolly, face to face.  
I shall be afraid till I die.  
Oh, I could conquer this fright;  
Have done with this quiver and quake;  
I could take my stand, be ready to fight.  
The while I shiver and shake.  
Am I talking about it too loud?  
Better speak cautious and low.  
Folks who are afraid of the world  
Mustn't let other folks know.



## It Is There

Only God and yourself know.  
Not those you meet  
To and fro in the street.  
It is there,  
Like hair cloth and nettles  
Tormenting the breast,  
In secret to wear,  
A living unrest.

## They Will Remain

At this I marvel. I shall be gone,  
Though Fawn Brook and Mill Brook  
Go murmuring on,  
And still the Ungushot  
Will glimmer and glide  
Through Hebron and Marlborough,  
Side by side.

I must believe it. There will be, still,  
Burrows Hill tarrying,  
Gilead Hill, Dug Hill, and Burnt Hill,  
And Meeting House Lane,  
Quiet, unchanging,  
They will remain.

[Ungushot is the Indian name of Blackledge River.]

## Postscript

Susan Pendleton, of Hebron, Connecticut, was born in 1870,—one of the five children of Dr. Cyrus Pendleton, an Amherst College graduate of scholarly tastes, who spent his life as a country doctor. She taught school in Hebron and nearby Columbia for a few years, then substituted writing, as Hebron correspondent, for newspapers in Norwich, Colchester, Hartford, and Manchester.

At 95, she still writes the Hebron news for the *Manchester Herald*, and still writes poetry, some of her best. She has published her poems in 'little magazines' like *Troubadour* and *Voices* and in newspapers like the *Hartford Courant*. Five of them appeared in *Connecticut Poets*, edited by Lucia Trent and Ralph Cheyney (N.Y., 1932), an anthology including also poems by her niece, Helen Gilbert (Sellers).

Some of her poems will remind the reader of another village and New England poet, Emily Dickinson (with whose work she met in 1901); but Susan Pendleton is too independent a spirit to imitate another either in life or writing.

Hebron is an old town, with a past which includes the Tory author-Episcopalian, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Peters, the Rev. Benjamin Pomeroy ('New-Light' Congregationalist), the Methodist itinerant preacher, Lorenzo Dow and a State governor,—and a present which includes a genuine poet from whose poems (unedited) I offer what, in my judgment, are the best.

Austin Warren