Upon a noon I pilgrimed through
A pasture, mile by mile,
Unto the place where last I saw
My dead Love’s living smile.

And sorrowing I lay me down
Upon the heated sod:
It seemed as if my body pressed
The very ground she trod.

I lay, and thought: and in a trance
She came and stood thereby —
The same, even to the marvellous ray
That used to light her eye.

“You draw me, and I come to you,
My faithful one,” she said,
In voice that had the moving tone
It bore ere she was wed.

“Seven years have circled since I died:
Few now remember me:
My husband clasps another bride:
My children’s love has she.

‘My brethren, sisters, and my friends
Care not to meet my sprite:
Who prized me most I did not know
Till I passed down from sight.”

I said: “My days are lonely here;
I need thy smile alway:
I'll use this night my ball or blade,  
And join thee ere the day."

A tremor stirred her tender lips,  
Which parted to dissuade:  
"That cannot be, O friend," she cried;  
"Think, I am but a Shade!

"A Shade but in its mindful ones  
Has immortality:
By living, me you keep alive,  
By dying you slay me.

"In you resides my single power  
Of sweet continuance here;
On your fidelity I count  
Through many a coming year."

— I started through me at her plight,  
So suddenly confessed:
Dismissing late distaste for life,  
I craved its bleak unrest.

"I will not die, my One of all! —  
To lengthen out thy days
I'll guard me from minutest harms  
That may invest my ways!"

She smiled and went.  Since then she comes  
Oft when her birth-moon climbs,  
Or at the seasons' ingresses,  
Or anniversary times:

But grows my grief.  When I surcease,  
Through whom alone lives she,
Her spirit ends its living lease,
  Never again to be!

1898

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