

The New York Ledger
XVI:43:6 Dec 29, 1860

A DIRGE BY THE SEA.
BY SALLIE M. BRYAN.

They folded calm in your white hands,
They shut up calm in your blue eyes,
And then—they hid you in the shores' wild sands
By waves that sleep in sighs
And wake in passionate groans.

Here, oft the shells with wayward start,
Heave to the pulses of the flood,
Like fragments of the ocean's broken heart,
Dyed rosy with his blood,
And haunted with his moans.

Oft will the mermaid-nun below
Forget to count her beads of pearls,
Because the amber-lights she kneels by glow
Like your sun-golden curls
And mind her you are—dead.

And oft, while tending coral-blooms,
She'll think upon your lip, and pale,
And hide her face among the ancient glooms
Of that dim water-vail
That binds her cloistered head.

Here, like a bright, enchanted chain,
Th' equator binds the summer fast;
And, like great, scented drops of red light-rain
From some flushed morning cast,
The roses shine around.

Here, in the flower-mosaick'd calms,
Near skies with splendor starred and mooned!
Live drifts of colored light lodge in the palms,
And songs, like sunshine tuned,
Drop richly to the ground.

Here, Night is Catholic, and wears
A cross to prove her faith; here, slow,
Like ships of music sailing crystal airs,
The breezes come and go
In many a fairy fleet.

Here, like gigantic birds, the years
 Sit in the trees, on flaming plumes,
And shake down glittering fruits! but fever-fears
 Haunt all the painted glooms
 That else were Eden-sweet.

And here, by glaring tropic lights,
 Drunk with the spicy wind like wine,
Storms break their thunders over you of nights,
 Nor stir the Rest divine
 That holds you in its arms.

Your fiery youth's swift pulses beat
 To martial-music; you have worn
Young brilliant honors, in the battle-heat
 Where plumes were bowed and torn
 Around your stately charms.

Now, lands may rise, and shake their chains
 Till tyrants stagger by their thrones,
And earthquake wars may walk the sounding plains,
 And storm the clouds with moans,
 And yet, you do not wake.

Ah, on your bosom, like a stone,
 Silence is pressing, cold and white,
And, o'er that silence, moss-like darks are grown
 That cannot see the light
 Until the grave-roofs break.

You were my friend: your tears have stirr'd
 The violet-glooms they used to fill,
If I have chanced to say one mournful word—
 Oh, for your friendship still,
 Far-wandered one and bright.

And I—I loved you—as I love
 A sun-rise or a star, and weep
Such tears for you, as autumn sheds above
 A buried summer's sleep
 From moonless, misty night.

You knew I lacked the golden gifts
 Men prize so much—you knew, you knew,
My life was like a pale sea-flower that drifts,
 With tempest-tears for dew,
 Lone on a lonesome wave.

Yet, you'd have grasped the homeless flower,
And worn it your life—but oh,
I could not see you take the blighting dower
And whispered you to go—
But not—not to the grave.

Now, by a phantom-sorrow kissed,
I think of all your vanished grace,
While whirling winds break up the rain to mist,
And dash it in my face,
Like elemental hate.

I think how in a brilliant light,
'Mid music, gems, and mockery,
You clasped some hands, and said to some, Good night!
And only bowed to me,
And left me to—my fate.

I think how drearily the falls
Fling their gray hazes on the hills,
And stain with rose and gold the forest-walls,
And freight the wind with chills
To freeze my haunting trust.

I think the passionate tears that start
Above a *lover's* grave to flow,
Would be a sweeter offering to your heart
Than these—but then—I know—
Your *heart* is—only dust.

Yes, while my glory-visions fly,
Like birds of Paradise—*away*—
You never walk the night, you never sigh.
Or ask a dream to stay,
Or feel a chained thrall.

But, in your grave—away—away!
You have no grave—my dreams were mad—
God never changed your beauty into clay—
That thought were funeral-sad:
No, no—you have no grave.

But, clasped in purple calms of sky,
Fed by the flying stars with light,
And listening to the awful lullaby
Those stars sing to the night,
You are *all soul*, blest one.

There, in that radiant nest of clouds,
Your winged songs must grow for years,
Till they are strong enough to meet the crowds
Of music in the spheres—
 Away, above the sun.