

The Vale of Tempe

By Madison J. Cawein

All night I lay upon the rocks:
And now the dawn comes up this way,
One great star trembling in her locks
Of rosy ray.

I can not tell the things I've seen;
The things I've heard I dare not speak.—
The dawn is breaking gold and green
O'er vale and peak.

My soul hath kept its tryst again
With *her* as once in ages past,
In that lost life, I know not when,
Which was my last.

When she was Dryad, I was Faun,
And lone we loved in Tempe's Vale,
Where once we saw Endymion
Pass passion-pale:

Where once we saw him clasp and meet
Among the pines, with kiss on kiss,
Moon-breasted and most heavenly sweet,
White Artemis.

Where often, Bacchus-borne, we heard
The Mænad shout, wild-revelling;
And filled with witchcraft, past all word,
The Linnad sing.

Bloom-bodied 'mid the twilight trees
We saw the Oread, who shone
Fair as a form Praxiteles
Carved out of stone.

And oft, goat-footed, in a glade
We marked the Satyrs dance: and great,
Man-muscled, like the oaks that shade
Dodona's gate,

Fierce Centaurs hoof the torrent's bank

With wind-swept manes, or leap the crag,
While swift, the arrow in its flank,
Swept by the stag.

And, minnow-white, the Naiad there
We watched, foam-shouldered, in her stream
Wringing the moisture from her hair
Of emerald gleam.

We saw the oak unclose and, brown,
Sap-scented, from its door of bark
The Hamadryad's form step down:
Or, crouching dark

Within the oak's deep heart, we felt
Her eyes that pierced the fibrous gloom;
Her breath, that was the nard we smelt,
The wild perfume. . . .

There is no flower, that opens glad
Soft eyes of dawn and sunset hue,
As fair as the Limoniad
We saw there too:

That flow'r-divinity, rose-born,
Of sunlight and white dew, whose blood
Is fragrance, and whose heart of morn
A crimson bud.

There is no star, that rises white
To tip-toe down the deeps of dusk,
Sweet as the moony Nymphs of Night
With breasts of musk,

We met among the mystery
And hush of forests,—where, afar,
We watched their hearts beat glimmeringly,
Each heart a star.—

There is no beam, that rays the marge
Of mist that trails from cape to cape,
From panther-haunted gorge to gorge,
Bright as the shape

Of her, the one Auloniad,
That, born of wind and grassy gleams,

Silvered upon our sight, dim-clad
In foam of streams.

All, all of these I saw again,
Or dreamed I saw, as there, ah me!
Upon the cliffs, above the plain,
In Thessaly,

I lay, while Mount Olympus helmed
Its brow with moon-effulgence deep,
And, far below, vague, overwhelmed
With reedy sleep,

Peneus flowed, and, murmuring, sighed,
Meseemed, for its dead gods, whose ghosts
Through its dark forests seemed to glide
In shadowy hosts.

'Mid whose pale shapes again I spoke
With her, my soul, as I divine,
Dim 'neath some gnarled Olympian oak,
Or Ossan pine,

Till down the slopes of heaven came
Those daughters of the dawn, the Hours,
Clothed on with raiment blue of flame,
And crowned with flowers;

When she, with whom my soul once more
Had trysted—limbed of light and air—
Whom to my breast, (as oft of yore
In Tempe there,

When she was Dryad, I was Faun,)
I clasped and held, and pressed and kissed,
Within my arms, as broke the dawn,
Became a mist.