TO A CITY

Firkins, Chester, 1882-1915

And thou art now the master; I, the slave;
The days of my defiance are as dust
On the departed years' swift-crumbling pave;
The sword of my rebellion is but rust; Against thy spell I am no longer brave.

Nine breathless summers I have seen the kill
Of blood-beamed suns upon the stony street;
Nine winters I have watched the wanton spill —
The price of lives at Pleasure's dancing feet;
Nine years beheld man worship his own will —
Pure Faith forgot and Truth made obsolete.

And every staring face among the throng —
Poor puny sons of greed-besotten men —
Turned me with yearning to the calm, the strong,
The clear-browed people of my West again;
And every roaring day but made me long
For benign silence in some mountain glen.

Today I am returned from the clean wild,
Where only Storm's deep organ preludes mar
The hush of wood-cathedrals, river-aisled;
Where Earth's pure altars of communion are,
'Neath ceilings of the night, inlaid and tiled
With ivory of moonlight, pearl of star.

I am returned unto the man-made hills —
The windowed cliffs, whose crevices are homes —
But a new light my startled being thrills!
Here storm is slaved! The human river roams
O'er bedded lightning, tamed to human wills,
'Mid thunder, through subaquean catacombs.

I hear the tumult of the conquered seas
That beat their vain rebellion 'gainst thy wall;
Eld Night illumed in burning harmonies
Of lights that fashion morn from even-fall;
Time, sound, the winds and the wide distances
Are but the serfs and vassals of thy hall.
And thou art now the master; I, the slave;
   But 'round my bondage is a glory thrown;
I have found Peace upon thy echoing pave,
   Silence in throngs, beauty in builded stone —
Where Nature yields, I dare not lift the glaive!