

# Ethelean Tyson Gaw

## Selected Poems



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January 23, 1877 [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania] –

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[Ethelean Tyson was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the daughter of Israel Tyson and his wife Julia Reynolds. She became the wife (1909) of the noted educator and author Allison Gaw (1877 – 1954). Ethelean Gaw co-wrote and co-produced the play *Pharaoh's Daughter* (1927), with her husband, and became the editor of *The Lyric West* publication (1925). Mrs Gaw won a prize from the Patriotic League for her poem 'Battle Song of Democracy.' Her husband, Allison Gaw, was born in Philadelphia, and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. He then taught at Temple University from 1901-06, State College of Washington at Pullman 1909-11. He joined the University of Southern California's English department in 1911 and became head of the department from 1914-1924. From 1921-38 he was the chairman of the division of English Language and Literature, Speech, Journalism and Comparative Literature. In 1925 he and Ethelean founded the *Lyric West*, a magazine of American verse.]

*Pharaoh's Daughter* (play) , 1927.

*Drums of El Dorado, and Other Poems.* Exposition Press, 1951.

*Misty Sundown.* Camas Press, 1959.

# Drums of El Dorado

TO JOHN STEVEN MCGROARTY

POET · LAUREATE OF CALIFORNIA

From the battlements of sunset  
Sound far drums of El Dorado,  
Mystic drums ·  
That throb and summon—

Juan Rodriquez Cabrillo,  
Almirante de la mar,  
heard the drums of El Dorado  
as he looked . upon his galleons  
Victoria and San Salvador  
tugging at their holding anchors  
in a frenzy to be gone.  
From Navidad Cabrillo lifted anchor,  
turned his venturous prows to  
northward, cleaving strange  
tumultuous billows beneath cloud  
battlements of .dawn.  
Northward still he sailed  
where wonder beckoned  
through the isles of California,  
saw. their · beauty with amazement,  
gave them haunting . Spanish names-  
Isla Desiertas, 1542  
San Miguel, the Archangel,  
Islas Santa Catalina, sleeping gems  
in co halt sea.  
Bahia de • Ios Fumos, de las Pinos,  
Santa Monica, Ensenada,  
Isla de la Posesi6n.  
Touched, unknowing, · the fabled mainland.

Called it Point Concepcion.

So rode Juan ·Rodriquez Cabrillo  
down sea-lanes of history to his  
rendezvous with fame-  
The first white man to touch and hold  
Alta California for the world.

Down four centuries following after  
Came stout-hearted men of Spain,  
seeking gold and high adventure.

Peon or conquistador,  
Still they heard, as once Cabrillo,  
The far drums of El Dorado throb  
and summonTierra  
de Oro,

Gold!· gold! and glory  
And the majesty of Spain!

FRANCIS DRAKE

In “tidy little Plymouth”

Frands Drake in childhood played  
with ships,

Dreaming, starry-eyed, of far horizons.

Heard the drums of El Dorado throb  
and summon~

“Come, come, fellow-traveller of the sunne!”

And Drake answered-ploughed  
the seven seas of wonder

For Saint · George and GlbHana:

On a fateful hour stood silent on  
a peak in . Darien.

Saw in reverent amazement what  
no English eye had seenBouridless  
waters heaving westward  
to the last rim of the world!

“God . give me life and leave,” he prayed  
“to sail an English galleon  
on yonder unknown sea.”

1572

Magellan's doom-dark straits  
 were passed  
 And where no English keel had  
 ventured rode the intrepid  
 Colden . Hind.  
 Louder now the . mystic drum-beatsEl  
 Dorado! for Saint George and  
 Merrie England!  
 Northward-west, the isles of California,  
 east, the shoreward mountains toweredThrough  
 the Golden Gate reached harbor of a  
 "fair and goodly land."  
 High Drake set the English standard of  
 her majesty, Queen Bess;..  
 Called the gracious land "New Albion."  
 And the Golden Hind · rode onward,  
 thrust the sunset fires behind her,  
 Crested every· barrier waiting,  
 THI ·once more he.faced the sunrise  
 Where lay "tidy little Plymouth,,  
 With the silver mists around her  
 Of a sweet, new English dawn.  
 Down the centuries following after  
 voyagers . from · Merrie England  
 Sought out Drake's New Albion.  
 Still the luring drums were calling  
 Englishmen both high and low-  
 California! El Dorado!  
 And Drake's drum in Buckland Abbey  
 echoes softly, ·  
 Saint George · and Gloriana ·  
 and the circling of the globe!

FRAY JUNIP;ERO SERRA  
 In Petra, Mallorca, in the church ,  
 of San Bernardino  
 Knelt Miguel Jose Serra wrapped  
 in holy. ecstasy.

High enthroned, the praying Virgin  
with hertwelve-starred aureola ‘  
Circled by her angelic chorU:s, seemed  
to. sway in . benediction  
Toward her suppliant worshipper,  
touching his closed eyes with vision  
Of . a harvest of immortal souls awaiting  
In Our ·Lady’s mystic . vineyard  
On a strange and distant shore.  
In · his reverent heart the stripling  
heard . the heavenly mandate saying  
“Go, reap . that harvest, Serra,  
For Madre de Dios and the glory of the Lord.”  
Obedient · to the heavenly v1s10n  
Far J unipero journeyed, preachingPetra,  
Palma, Cadiz,-  
Across the wide Atlantic-  
Vera Cruz and San Fernando · in strange  
Nova Mexico,  
Treading thorny paths undaunted,  
through the wild Sierra .. Gordo,  
Bringing stubborn pagans -kneeling  
to the fold of Mother Church.  
Onward, northward~into Alta CaliforniaThere  
one day he raised an altar,  
. Holy incense Roating over silver cross  
and golden poppy,  
Where the gloaming breakers thundered  
underneath the evening star.

1726

1749

So Fray Serra consecrated Mission  
San Diego de Ascala-  
The first jewel of his mission. rosary.  
Onward, northward, on El Camino Real.  
With lips touched with live coals from off God’s altar  
He preached his burning message, added jewel~ to  
his mission rosary.

Through the years, he labored, tireless, reaping,  
in his mystic vineyard  
Garnering heathen souls in safety to the fold  
of ..M other Church.

In the Mission of San Carlos, in serene 1784  
Carmelo Valley, ·

Serra · reached the appointed hour  
and his fruitful journey ended.

“REQUIESCAT IN PACE”

While you ·rest in quiet slumber  
Thousand tread your · sandalled foot-steps  
Down El Camino Real bearing gifts of crafts and  
learning and the deeper spirit. light.  
Men of Spain still hear the throbbing  
· of the drum-beats

As you · heard them, Father Serra,  
Calling, calling,  
California! El Dorado! for  
Madre de Dias and the glory  
of the Lord!

SEVEN FLAGS

Severi Rags have Roated bravely  
over Alta California.

Down the centuries since · Cabrillo

Many races, many peoples have sent  
questing voyagers  
Bearing gifts while seeking  
treasure

Fusing new and ancient cultures,  
California, in your golden crucible.

SAN FRANCISCO

From every clime and kindred and  
nations from afar

To the city of Saint Francis a mighty  
concourse thronge~ 1945

They had come. with standards  
· lifted surging through dawn-winds of hope

That were blowing sure and steady from far  
templed hills of Peace;  
Steadfast purpose held men's hearts  
There was hope and . quiet courage  
kindling many . a war-dulled eye  
And the . goal their mind's eye visioned  
never dimmed.  
Dedicated men wrought, tireless, through long days  
with . patient . daring  
To lay down a sure foundation of a wide  
untrammelled highway  
Through the jungles of man's warring:  
To establish for all time, for every people  
That broad thoroughfare that through . the ages  
. Pioneering souls in thought have trod  
toward the spirit's El Dorado where abide  
The Parliament of Reason,  
The Brotherhood of . Nations,  
and  
The Fatherhood of God.

# Oil Fields in California

Like a too · fruitful woman lies the earth,  
Her beauty ravaged as her teeming breast,  
Suckling the titan brood she brought · to birth  
Feels strong dark lips in lusty hunger pressed.  
Her garlands wither-veils of misty lace,  
Old Ocean's gift, in dingy tatters sway,  
But bounteous, splendid, in her tarnished grace,  
She feeds importunate hunger night and day.  
Fruition gilds with light the mother soul,  
As her dark milk feeds wonder progeny  
Wheels manifold to speed man toward his goal,  
The armadas' power, the winged sky argosy.  
So though her virgin loveliness is spent,  
This Science-ravished Beauty smiles, content.

# Sunset at Coronado

A trireme of El Dorado is plunging down the . blueMisty  
oars of silver flame, hull of burnished gold,  
Shrouds of lordlier, purple .than Tyrian ever knew,  
Over spars of amethyst · rainbow clouds uprolled-  
A trireme of El Dorado through seas of faery light  
To the dash of magic cymbals is plunging toward the night.

Her burnished hold bears treasure freight down the shining blueStout  
Balboa's dauntless Hope, CabriHo's golden Dream,  
Holy Serra's flaming Faith conquering anew,  
Questing feet of Argonauts · following the Gleam-  
High Adventure's treasure-trove crowded in her hold,  
The transmuted glory-fires of California gold.

## From Point Concepcion

I saw the new . day like · a flower blossoming,  
When by . the sea-edge my footsteps were · stayed;  
Dawn was a daffodil spreading golden petals  
In a green bowl, a wide bowl. of . mandarin jade.  
(Shy songs come winging  
Beckoning me on  
I would be a minstrel  
In the lyric dawn.)

I saw the warm. noon Hf ting from · the ocean  
Steeped· in rarer pigment than painter ever . knew;  
Noon was a gentian flower trailing silken fringes  
In a deep bowl, a wide bowl of old delft blue.  
(Duties throng about me,  
Night comes soon.  
I would be a worker  
In the virile moon.)

Might, majesty and · power herald day's departing,  
Beauty, keen and fire-edged as .a poet's dream,  
Sunset flames are tulip blooms, crimson, rose and golden,  
Flaunting in a crystal bowl that flings back their · gleam.  
(Songs, duties, ecstasy,  
Every good I know.  
I am a monarch crowned  
In the sunset glow.)

# Carmen From the Gallery

In Los Angeles

Dark eyes flashing and blue-black curls,  
Reek of garlic and spearmint gum,  
Swarthy gallants and red-cheeked girls,  
From foot-hill and mesa and town they . come  
    Tawdry world in a garish light-  
    When the gallery lamps are bright.

Purple headlands of lordly Spain,  
Joy of youth and love's wild desire,  
Music and madne.ss and passionate pain,  
Sway in a mist of rainbow fire-  
    Old Romance in a golden glow  
    When the gallery lamps are low.

# Summer Storm in Los Angeles

When a July storm sweeps down from the blue-black Sierras  
The trees in the park murmur together,  
Surprised ,  
And a little abashed.  
They stand looking away from the mountains,  
Murmuring to each other,  
Like well-bred people at an afternoon · tea  
Who talk at random, politely oblivious  
When an awkward maid upsets the tea-wagon.

The pepper tree,  
A luscious Spanish dowager,  
Trailing oriental perfume,  
Vivid in green satin,  
With many antique rubies sewn in her bodice,  
Rustles her fair rotundity aggrievedly.

The royal palm,  
A slender, silver-gowned princess debutante,  
Bashfully digs tiny silver-shod feet into the moist grass,  
And droops shyly ,  
With a delicious beckoning motion of her graceful limbs.

There is no nonsense about the English oak.  
The cloudless skies of his adopted home bore him at times,  
When memories of gray Atlantic combers,  
Thunderously climbing the white · cliffs of · Albion,  
Stir in his subconsciousness.  
So he lifts . his head challengingly to meet the rushing wind.  
He chuckles in his deep voice,  
Glorying in combat.

As two surprised savage ·chieftains,  
The sentinel palms  
Stand stiffly at the gate  
In their slender dark nakedness,

Shaking their tufted headdresses in bewilderment.

The flower-like foreigner,  
The Japanese maple,  
Crouches low, blushing a shy, bright red,  
When the importunate wind woos her too roughly.  
She looks toward the blue-black Sierras,  
Thinking in her heart of white Fujiyama.

The date palm,  
Swaggering like a corpulent brigand,  
A bag of gold nuggets clasped closely to his breast,  
Rattles his daggers threateningly.  
Yet he throws his golden nuggets aH about him,  
As if offering his treasures to appease  
This sudden wrath of the storm gods of the mountains.

But when the July storm is over  
And the trees in the park look again on the familiar blue skies of  
California,  
They preen · themselves complacently  
As---not daring to look each other in the eye-  
They murmur politely, “It was nothing—an awkward contretemps—but  
diverting.”

# Minor Poet

I climbed. a holy .hill  
Sheathed in gold flame.  
Down from that glory height  
Winged I came.

I saw the smile of God  
Born of Love's eyes  
Caught in my web of song  
Love fainting lies.

I heard the morning stars  
Croon to the sea  
Could I but snare in words  
That mystery!

Oh, Psyche kissed my heart,  
Phoebus my eyes,  
But on my eager lips  
Dumb magic lies!

# Poet on the Dole

1929

I cannot sing the old songs now, my friend.  
    My magic casements ppening on the foam  
    Are empty of the argosies that roam  
Down beauty's sea-lanes to the rainbow's end.  
No apples of Hesperides may lend  
    Enchantment now, nor many-colored dome  
    Of Kubla Khan fling glory, nor heady foam  
On poesy's bright flagon make amend.  
For I have looked on life without her veils,  
    And grappled fate without illusion's sword,  
    I've watched faith's ivory walls go crashing down.  
Yet, prisoner of hope, I front the gales  
    Of untoward circumstance and stoutly hoard  
    My soul's inviolate spark and being's crown.  
Not all the valor of Thermopylae  
    Moves me as shuffling picket lines, where men,  
    Dogged, bewildered, strive to turn again  
Onrushing spears of savage penury.  
Once I could bow unthinking reverent knee  
    To Mary-Mother, angel-bowered-and then  
    I wept my son, still-born in slum-gray den,  
And felt his blight dim Mary's radiancy.  
Brave wings I love . of golden Samothrace,  
    The wings of Pegasus-of Mercury-  
    Poor splendid wings! Fallen now in evil plight  
Turned birds of prey to devastate the race.  
    Bitter my wine of song, friend . . . yet still I see  
    Man's staggering feet set toward the hills of light.

# The First Time I Saw Paris

June 10, 1940-Paris Falls

The first time I saw Paris  
A mist like faery lace  
Veiled with intriguing witchery  
Her loveliness and grace.

The trees down misty boulevards  
Stood guardian vestals there  
With milk-white candles in their hands  
And pearl wreaths in their hair.

Through mist-old Notre-Dame lomed more  
Than miracle in stone;  
It towered, the soul's white ecstasy,  
Toward God's eternal throne.

The statues round about the Louvre  
Advanced in cloudy state,  
A glamorous cavalcade who kept  
A rendezvous with fate.

The first time I saw Paris  
In every church there shone  
A many-candled luminescence  
In honor of Saint Joan.

But now the altar lamps are dim  
As foolish evil men  
Betray the living soul of France  
As the blond beast prowls again.

Now may another Joan arise  
From Rquen's fiery stake  
To sound the drums of Orleans  
And stab men's souls awake.

# Answer to a Pessimist

You say "Creation's futile course is run  
From chaos dawn to night oblivion" ...

I've seen new-minted ; stars on slumberous seas,  
The . desert swooning in the sun's caress,  
Young April's mystic sacrament of Bowers,  
And known .. heart's · ease in earth's dear loveliness.

I've seen, across the mind's drab commonplace,  
Thought's shining scimitar leap, sudden, strong,  
Cleaving through swarms of witless, yokel words,  
And gain the royal citadel of song.

Respite I've . known from · shadows dosing round  
That well of loneliness where each soul lies,  
When the abyss grew rimmed with sudden Harne  
From love's aurora pulsing in the skies.

Beauty and song and lbve-these I have won,  
And life is good to live-though earth, stars, sun  
Whirl on their course toward black oblivion.

# Wings Over All

Primeval night . where slimy things spawn  
Stir of a quickening breath-  
Wings in the · d~wn!

Strong men of Nineveh reach from the clod,  
Groping, to fashion  
A winged bull-god.

Ageless. the wine-dark. Nile . billows roll  
Where · the winged scarabaeus  
Speaks of the soul.

Jerusalem desolate, bearing Cain's mark  
Still the wings of the cherubim  
Shadow the · ark.

Over glory-drenched Hellas the centuries long  
From rainbowed Olympus  
Swift-winged .gods throng.

Through · Andean jungles, down the highway of kings  
Shattered . stones blazon  
The serpent with wings.

Alone with his dreams, through wide startled skies  
Over lost Atlantis  
The Lone Eagle flies.

Up through the aeons, .from primeval clod,  
Fashioning pinions,  
Man battles toward God.

# An Aeroplane Writes on the Sky

A thousand poets dreamed your silver wings,  
A thousand seers foretold your hurtling flight,  
A thousand men of science toiled and died  
To train your pinions on that sun-drenched height.

Conqueror and lord of gravitation's law,  
Treader of sun-roadsthrough the uncharted air,  
Dream of the world come true-on azure steeps  
What word of magic do you blazon there?

Against the dome of burning deep turquoise  
The letters leap in cloudy silhouettes;  
Dazzled, the glad eye waits the enchanted word,  
When, lo-you name a brand of cigarettes!

The half-god Hercules stooped in trivial tasks,  
Prometheus chained on cloudy pinnacle,  
And blinded Samson grinding alien corn,  
Were kin to thee in shame, oh winged miracle!

# Dryad's Lament

Apropos of the Volstead Act

There's a miserere throbbing through the vales of Thessaly.  
Like the immemorial crooning of the ageless weary sea  
Beats its bitter lamentation on the wings of melody.  
"Weep! For laughing Dionysus,  
Madly dancing Dionysus,  
Rosy, vine-crowned Dionysus  
Reigns no more!"

There are shadows falling chilly where the amber clusters twine,  
For the cold white powers have triumphed o'er the rosy god of wine,  
And they drive him from his vineyards, from his gold and purple shrine.  
"Weep for uncrowned Dionysus,  
Wan and broken Dionysus,  
Fallen, conquered Dionysus  
Evermore!"

Sadly moves a long procession through Ionian valleys fair,  
Dryads, oreads, fair bacchantes, nymphs with flower-wreathed hair:  
Swells the moaning chant of sorrow on the honey-laden air.  
"Weep! For laughing Dionysus,  
Madly dancing Dionysus,  
Rosy, vine-crowned Dionysus  
Reigns no more!"

And they follow where he journeys toward that  
cloud-wrapped holy height,  
Where the conquered gods are sitting in the misted starry light  
Of their lost immortal glory through the long, unending night.  
"Weep for uncrowned Dionysus,  
Wan and broken Dionysus,  
Fallen, conquered Dionysus  
Evermore!"

Now across the sun-drenched pathway, silver-fringed the shadows fall,

As the gates of high Olympus yawn to greet him last of all  
Where the silent gods are throned in their glory-haunted hall.  
“Weep! For cold and white Olympus,  
Starry-bosomed, chaste Olympus,  
Holds the golden Dionysus  
Evermore!”





























































































































































