

**LOVE SONNETS  
TO ERMINGARDE**

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Love Sonnets to Ermingarde by Edward O. Jackson

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**EDWARD O. JACKSON**

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# Love Sonnets to Ermingarde

By  
Edward G. Jackson

*"O learn to read what silent love has writ,  
To hear with eyes belongs to Love's fine wit.*

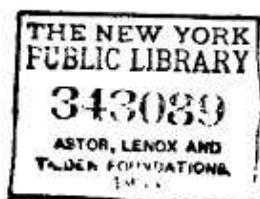


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**Dedicated**

**WITH GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THOUGHTFUL  
FRIENDSHIP  
TO VIRGINIA**

## I

Not Summer's breathing, spiced with pink and rose,  
 Nor Beauty that is felt beyond the day,  
 Upon my spirit more refreshment throws  
 Than do those beams that from thy wild eyes play;  
 Nor have I more admired the fragrancy  
 And many colors of the gaudy Spring  
 Than that bright hue which every day I see  
 Upon thy lips and damask cheeks to cling:  
 For thou art Nature's sweet compendium  
 Of her delights, abridged in thy small frame,  
 And so thy haunt is Love's emporium,  
 Whose busy suitors give thee forth to fame.  
 And I, in these poor words, have power to make  
 Even thy matchless charms new glories take.

## II

Then do not scorn me when, with lowly mien,  
 I creep into the summer of thy glance,  
 For that thy dear delights are by me seen  
 Can do thee neither spite nor sufferance.  
 I count me rich with but the silent bliss  
 Of gazing on thy star-ennobled face,  
 And thou, though conscious of my joy in this,  
 Need not enhance by art one single grace;  
 For, as the candle to night's winging moth,  
 Or to the Magian the sacred star,  
 Art thou to me, and am I nothing loth  
 To perish where thy fateful beauties are:  
 But thou wilt not, with cruel treachery,  
 Betray to scorn one who so worships thee.



### III

So Ermingarde, the Lady of the Maine,  
Is made to live by poet's words of fire,  
Long after Time, that made her sweet, has slain  
And buried from our sight the world's desire.  
So, Ermingarde, my Lady of Delight,  
To thy great name I dedicate my pen,  
That when thou sink'st below the marge of night,  
Thy excellence shall still flame forth to men.  
Oh! may my verse like that great music sound  
That echoes in the cadence of thy voice,  
And with its subtlety enwheel thee round,  
Within the wonder of a poet's choice:  
Then, though thou perish in thy living form,  
Still shalt thou live in language ever warm.

### IV

Oh, never tell me that the rose is red,  
When on thy cheeks I see the rose's shame,  
Nor with the violet be astonishèd,  
When thy fair eyes outgo the violet's fame:  
Thou art the chronicler of every sweet,  
And every beauty's bright historian  
That in the world doth speed its mission fleet,  
And with a single season's pride is gone.  
Oh, can it be that such Perfection's power  
Is not eternal, but must fade away,  
If slower, yet as surely as the flower —  
That emblem of immortal joy's decay?  
Immortal shalt thou be, if through my will  
Thy beauties in my happy verse distill.

## V

Ah, what a barrier hath thy beauty built  
 Between thy glory and my faultiness;  
 And here, I pray, absolve me of the guilt  
 Of publishing my love's extreme distress:  
 For when the heart is freighted with despair,  
 And lonely woe outweighs the world's delight,  
 Then some lament, though sighed in empty air,  
 Makes sorrow's burden for a time more light.  
 And if strange eyes dwell on my halting lines,  
 I have the blame and thou hast all the praise —  
 They smile at one who all his all resigns  
 To make one fair shine in his labored lays:  
 But, while they scorn the poet, they express  
 Marvel at thy inspiring loveliness.

## VI

And yet emblazoning thy brilliancy  
 Hath to the poet's heart its compensation,  
 Which comforts, with its swift resiliency  
 Of praise, his obscure slighted occupation:  
 Thou canst not stand too high for my intent  
 Of rightful praise to compass all thy bloom,  
 And set thee forth with all that Nature meant  
 Of ornament thy beauty to illumine.  
 And in this task I work with Nature's might,  
 And high permission of her laws' decree,  
 To give thy charms their full desert of light,  
 That all who read thy deathless grace may see.  
 And this dear privilege is precious,  
 And hath in it enlargement spacious.

## VII

As snow upon the highest mountain-tops  
Is never melted by the summer's sun,  
But an eternal whiteness keeps, nor stops  
Its sacred purity when winter's run;  
As flowers more beauteous every day succeed  
The season's steps to Autumn's golden prime,  
Keeping, with glorious pace, the fleeting speed  
Of Spring's wild race, and Summer's spacious time:  
So thou, my Flower of exceeding fame,  
Wastes not thy sweetness as the seasons go,  
Nor doth the summer heat of life inflame  
Thy spirit's citadel of chastest snow —  
Add thou to sweetness greater sweetness still,  
To chastest conduct yet a chaster will.

## VIII

I cannot whisper to thee in the ear  
The words of love my foolish heart doth make,  
For thy bright eyes inspire a laggard fear,  
Which from my tongue its eloquence doth take:  
But in that silence of delicious thrill  
When our eyes meet I find the nourishment  
For later speech, surpassing poet's skill,  
In whose feigned lines are truth and flourish blent;  
And, though I want the glib and oily art  
To pour my words into thy flattered ears,  
How much more true and just is this, my part,  
To set thee forth where nought but truth appears:  
For all my verse is lit at Truth's bright wick —  
Scorning the aid of lying rhetoric.