

**STORM-DRIFT:  
POEMS  
AND SONNETS**

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Storm-drift: poems and sonnets by H. E. Clarke

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**H. E. CLARKE**

**STORM-DRIFT:  
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AND SONNETS**



*With P.S.'s Compliments.*

# STORM-DRIFT:

Poems and Sonnets.

BY

H. E. CLARKE.

AUTHOR OF 'SONGS IN EXILE,' 'REBEL TUNES,' ETC.



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1882.

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## STORM - DRIFT.

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*Day and the storm, their long fight o'er, die  
On the red field together, shattered and spent;  
The thunder's roar sinks to a low lament,  
The wind's shout to the shadow of a sigh,  
And o'er heaven the mingled armies fly  
Headlong, with trailing blood-stained banners rent,  
In one wild whirl of rout and ruin sent  
To night's abyss beneath the western sky.*

*Rags of crimsoned cloud by tempest torn,  
Dyed with day's blood, fierce shapes that change and shift,  
Passions and sorrows and sins in mingled flight;  
But sometimes some faint ray of a moon unborn,  
Or thro' the horror of the hurrying drift  
A star of Hope on the steadfast brows of night.*

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# STORM-DRIFT :

## POEMS AND SONNETS.

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### A STORY OF SALERNO.

Tancred, Prince of Salerno, puts his daughter's lover to death, and sends his heart to her in a golden cup; she pours water upon it which she had poisoned, and so dies.

BOCCACCIO'S DECAMERON.

TOO beautiful for weeds of widowhood,  
Too fair a bride for sorrow seem'd she;  
Love's fire in her dark eyes still unsubdu'd  
Smouldered unseen, and youth's blood warm and  
free  
Glowed in her perfect face deliciously,  
And still to come was all the best of life—  
She had not loved, though she had been a wife.



The old dotard duke, her father's choice, was dead—

God give him peace!—and she was free as air;  
Full many a mass for his soul's sake was said;

Morning and night she breathed his name in  
prayer;

But she was young, and life was very fair,  
And freedom after bondage fairer still;  
She could not grieve e'en if she had the will.

There, in her father's court, she dwelt once more

As when a maiden, brightest of the throng  
Of high-born beauties. Even as of yore

The days were wooed to death with dance and  
song,

And broidery work, and yet were sometimes  
long;

Not always could the ladies' jests beguile;

There seemed a sameness in the courtiers' smile.

This thin court-life was but a gilded toy,

A jingling bauble, a poor hollow shell;  
No pulse of nature—no full-blooded joy—

True-ringing mirth—true passion's heave and  
swell—

Did ever break the dreary, deadening spell.  
And day by day there grew in Ghismond's breast  
Impatient longings, not to be suppressed.

O, for a life that should be worth the name—  
A human life of Love and Hope and Grief,  
Of plan and deed and failure, praise and blame,  
Strained anxiety and sweet relief;  
A woman's life of firm and fond belief,  
Devotion deep and high as seas and skies,  
And silent, unbeheld self-sacrifice!

No gay court butterfly her heart could gain,  
Though many a lordling for the treasure strove,  
To flutter shattered from her bright disdain,  
And deem for days that he must die of love.  
Not any prayer that haughty heart could move,  
And many thought that Ghismond heart had  
none;  
Ah, they shall know the truth e'er all be done.

That fortress, to their arms impregnable,  
Without a siege shall soon capitulate,  
And Love within the inmost citadel  
Shall as a monarch rule with regal state.  
He comes whose touch can open every gate,  
Yet humbly clad and in no conqueror's guise,  
Wearing nor silk nor gold to catch her eyes;

With neither wealth, nor lands, nor ancient name,  
Nor pride of place—with knightly spurs to win,

With shield unblazoned, without friends or fame.

Yet ope your gates, O fortress, and begin  
To sound, ye trumpets, ere he enter in.  
Nay, silently he comes whose steps ere long  
Shall thrill her soul like music or sweet song.

Over the battlements as in a dream,

One eve she leaned, and gazed upon the sea ;  
Below Salerno's lights began to gleam,  
Yet never on the grim old town looked she,  
But on the far horizon ceaselessly,  
As one whose vision, clear and unconfined,  
Pierced to the Land of Dreams that lay behind.

What doth she see in that mysterious land

With those deep, liquid, wonder-haunted eyes ?  
'Tis well for her she doth not understand  
All the dread secret that before her lies—  
Only she sees Love fade from Youth that dies—  
And as she turns a tear is on her face ;  
Her bosom heaves beneath its snowy lace.

But hark—a careless song doth fill her ear,

And first she starts, so silent was the night,  
Then stays to think how musical and clear  
The singer's voice is, and his song how bright  
And mirthful ; in the wan moonlight