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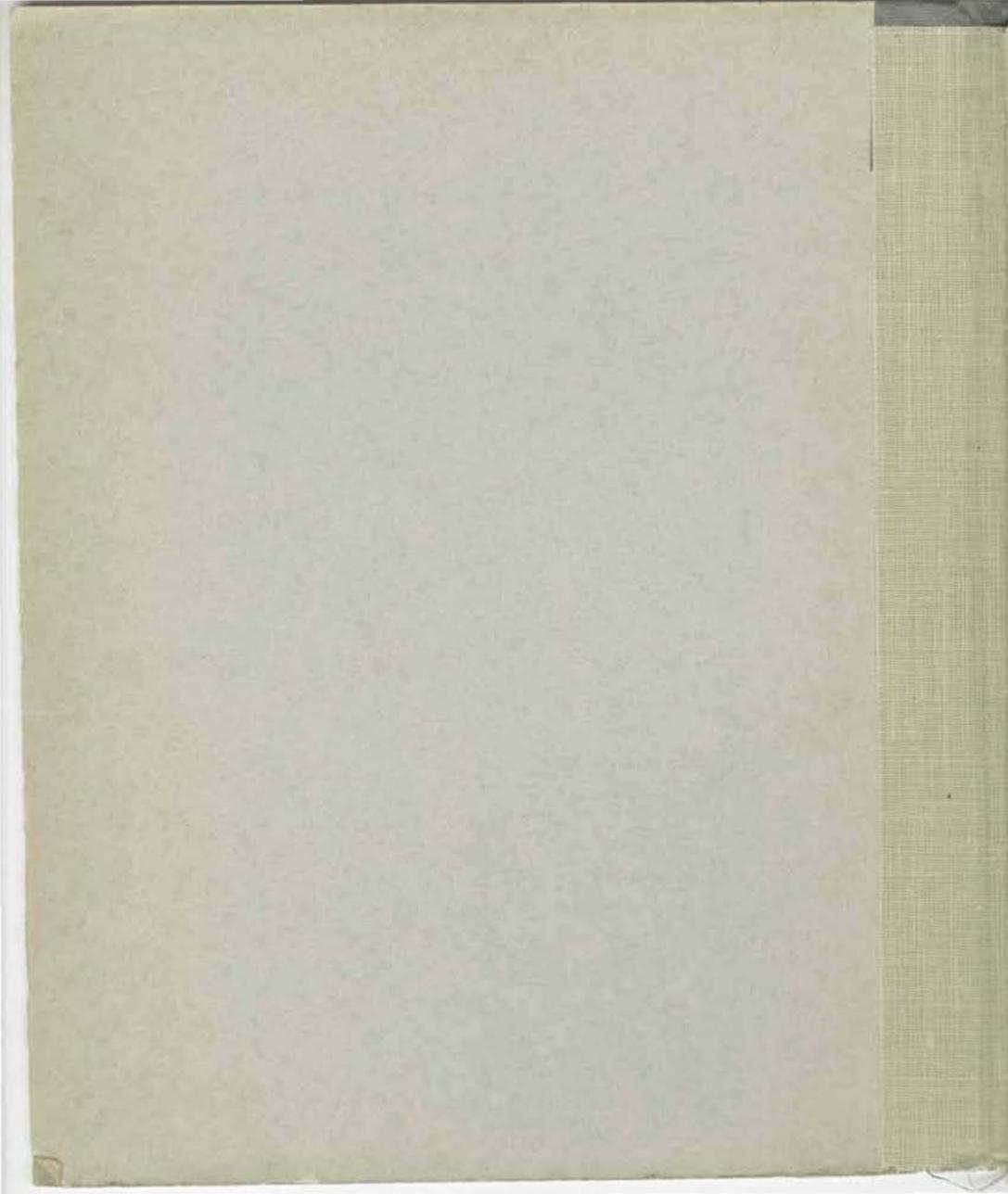
CHRYPELLA: THE ECHO OF A DREAM

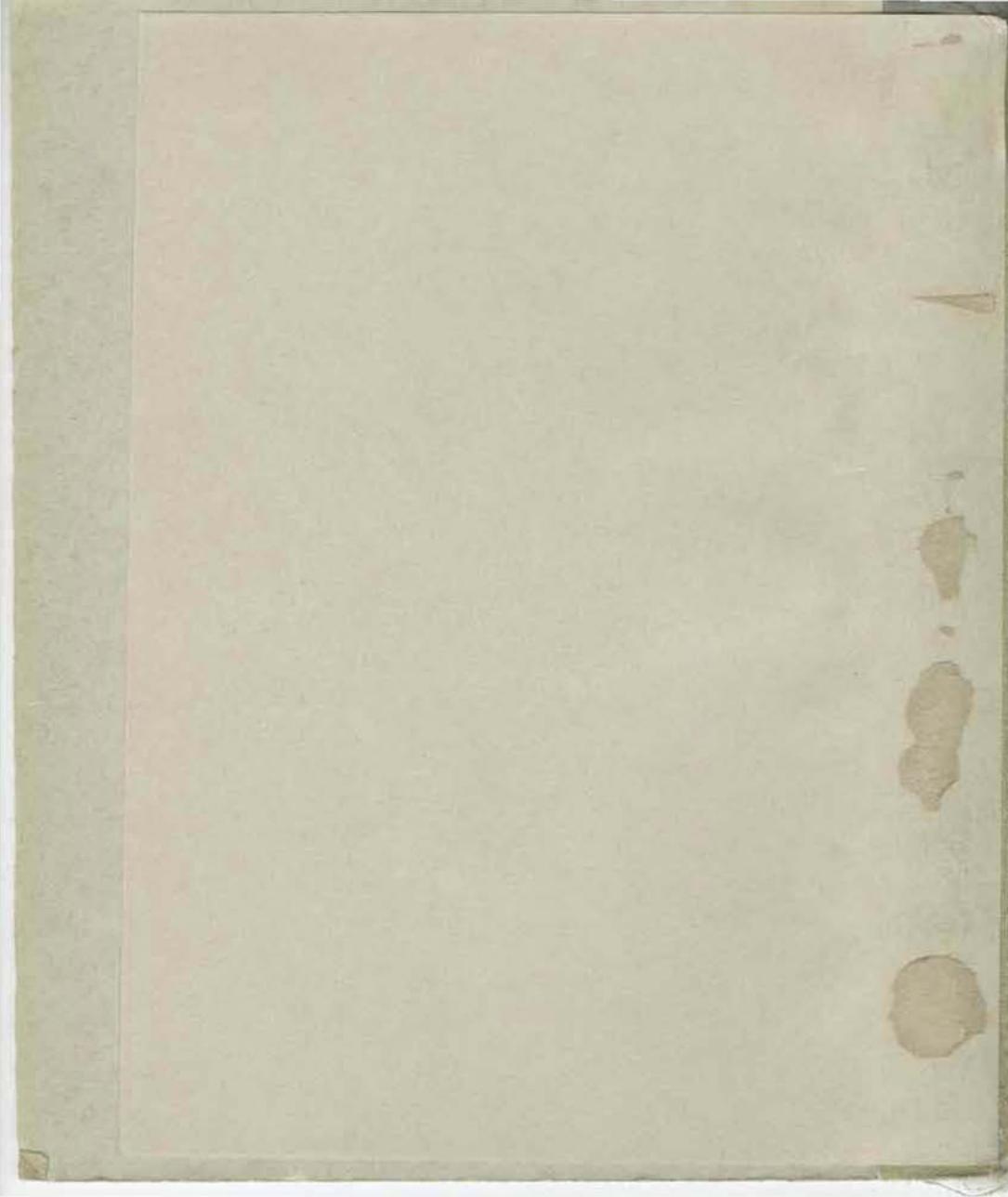
By

James Chester Rockwell



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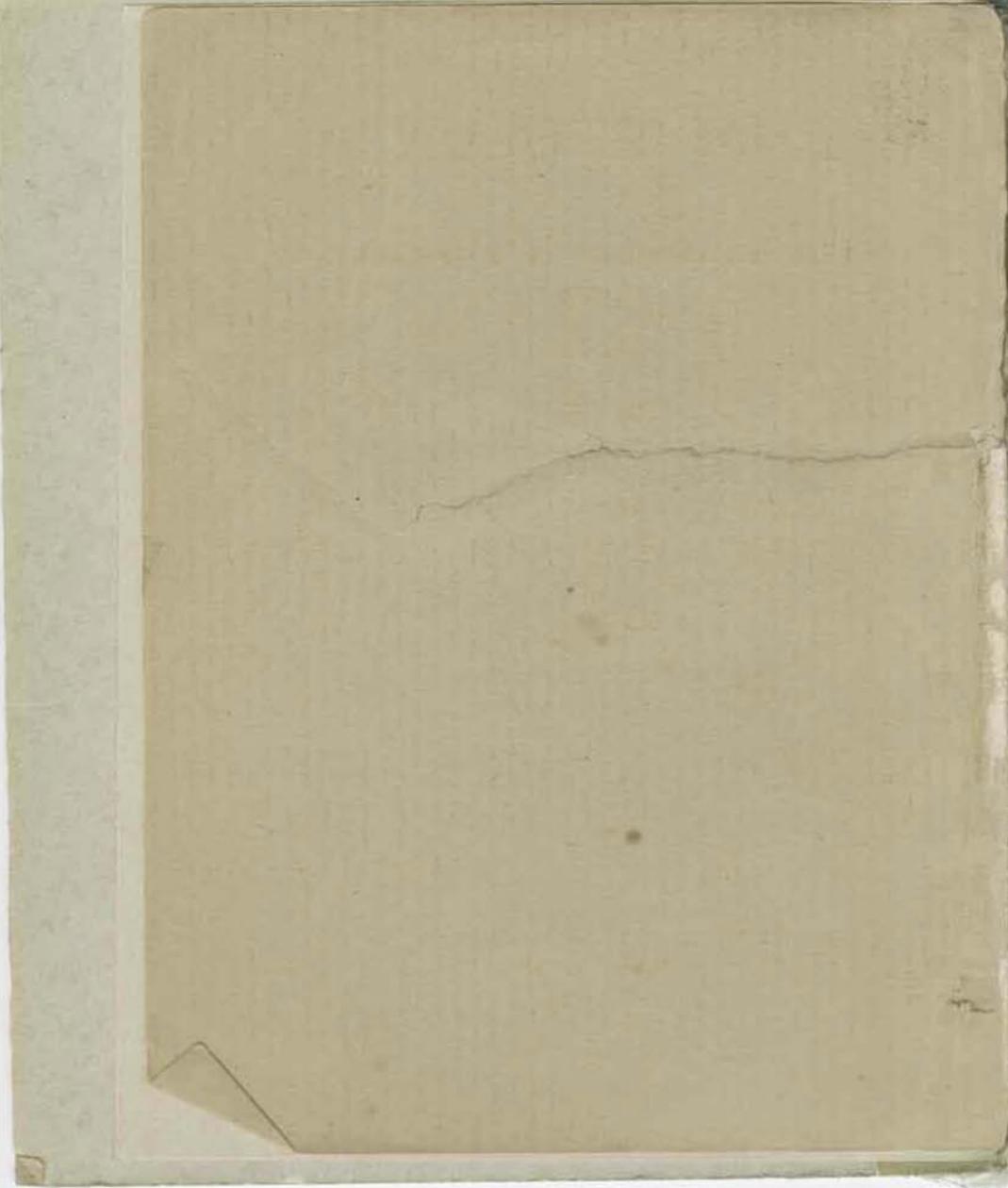




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Chrystella:

The Echo of a Dream.



North Carolina State Library
Raleigh

CHRYSTELLA:

THE ECHO OF A DREAM.

—BY—

JAMES CHESTER ROCKWELL.

Composed at 17.

Ye whose hearts are sympathetic,
Listen to this simple story.

PUBLISHED BY
ROCKWELL, TAYLOR & COMPANY,
VINELAND, N. C.
1887.

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AT THE FEET OF
MY MOTHER

I LAY THIS LITTLE VOLUME AS A TOKEN OF LOVING RE-
GARD FROM AN AFFECTIONATE HEART,—TRUSTING
THAT IN THE YEARS THAT ARE TO COME, I MAY
BE PERMITTED TO PRODUCE SOMETHING MORE
WORTHY THE SON OF SUCH A TRUE AND
NOBLE WOMAN.

THE AUTHOR.

Whiteville, N. C., December 1886.

2. 17. 1891

Dear Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst.

in relation to the matter of the ...
and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration. I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours truly,
[Signature]

Very respectfully,
[Signature]

I am, Sir, very respectfully,
Yours truly,
[Signature]

ANA

CHRYSTELLA :
THE ECHO OF A DREAM.

BY JAMES CHESTER ROCKWELL.

LONG years ago, I had a dream,
Weird, wild and mournful, and so strange,
That o'er my soul it cast a spell,
Which lingers in my dreaming still.
And though the winds of time have swept
The leaves from memory's withered tree,
Yet sometimes to my heart there comes
The faint perfume of other days ;
And with the fragrance of the past,
The olden dream comes back again.

It has been long, long years ago,
Since first into my dream there came,
This vision, whose wan spectre now
Comes back to haunt my dreaming hours ;
And I have wished, aye, prayed in vain,
That from my heart and mind and life,
Each lingering trace of it might be
Forever blotted out and lost.

For all my life is full of gloom,
And in my heart a bitter pang
Uprises, when the vision comes,
And thrusts itself before my eyes ;
And often from my dreams I wake,
With beating heart and pallid lips,
And shudder when I know that I
Have dreamed the same old dream again.
I would forget :

But there are things
So deeply graven on some hearts,
Eternal ages cannot wear
The mark of one brief moment off.

I

SOMEWHERE, I know not where or when,—
For in my dream I knew no place,
And counted not the passing time,—
I wandered on a lonely shore,
By some blue sea, whose dreamy songs
Stole softly o'er my listening soul,
And filled my heart with melody.
I was alone ; and down the strand
I wandered aimless and content,
Nor heeded that the day was fast
Declining, and the sombre skies

Were growing dark before the storm,
 Which suddenly arose from out
 Then darkling stretch of restless sea.
 The sun sank in the distant west,
 Behind a screen of frowning clouds ;
 And out on the horizon's rim,
 I saw the sweeping tempest ride
 Upon the crest of foaming waves.
 Then darkness covered all ; and I
 Alone upon a lonely shore,
 Groped blindly through the blinding storm.
 And the rush of waters and the roar
 Of breakers dashing on the rocks,
 And falling broken at the feet
 Of giant cliffs, was in my ear ;
 I heard the angry waters shout
 Songs of vengeance and distress
 To hapless ships upon the sea :
 And well I knew that ere the morn,
 The direful threats would be fulfilled.

The clash of waves against the rocks,
 The rush and roar of battling winds,
 The wild, hoarse shout of Neptune's voice,
 Were not enough :

Long, loud and fierce,
 The thunders broke above the noise.

And heaven's artillery began
To echo through the frightened air.
Wild Chaos reigned and Discord played
Its wildest, loudest song upon
The organ of the Universe.

And still I wandered through the storm,
Adown the stretch of trembling sand,
Lost and bewildered in the clash
On nature's unrelenting war.

There was a moment's pause, and then
I thought I heard a human shriek—
The wailing voice of some one lost
Upon the sea, and crying out,
In wild despair, for hopeless aid.

My blood grew chill, and through my frame,
A horrifying shudder ran ;
And on my beaten brow, I felt
The burning sweat of anguish freeze ;
Wild horror sat upon my heart,
And deathly fears stole o'er my soul :
I would have fainted, but the thought
Of some one in distress sufficed
To keep the flame of life ablaze—
A million years in Dante's hell

Would be a thousand times more sweet
 Than that brief moment was to me ;
 I'd rather go through all the woes
 That human ears have ever heard,
 Than suffer through that night again ;
 I'd rather live a million years,
 And die ten thousand horrid deaths
 Than listen to that awful cry
 That came across the stormy sea.
 Upon that night of storm and woe—
Oh God, my horror stricken ears
Had listened to that voice before.

There came a blinding flash of light
 That told me all :

Upon the sea,

A fragile boat, tossed by the waves,
 And shooting wildly toward the rocks
 As helpless as a leaf before
 The wild and fierce November gale,
 Doomed to destruction without hope ;
 And in the boat—

My trembling hand

Would sooner far forget its art,
 Than write the records of that night :
 But fate impels me, and my dream
 Becomes the wonder of a day.

There was a woman in the boat—
Her hair was streaming in the wind,
Despite the wrath of rain and spray,
Which fell with cruel heartlessness
Upon her unprotected head ;
Her face was whiter than the dead ;
Her eyes were like two dying fires,
That burned upon a funeral pyre ;
And her fair, slender hands were clinched
In agony of dumb despair—
But it is vain for me to try—
I cannot picture her to you ;
For there are things beyond the reach
Of feeble mortal strength and aim.
I would not if I could, for it
Would freeze the life-blood in your veins,
If I should paint the scene to you,
Just as it was revealed to me.

She saw me there upon the shore,
And seeing knew me—though long years
Had passed since last we two had met ;
But she remembered ; and she shrieked
Again, as if she thought that I
Were some Nemesis, come to mock
Her in her hour of agony.

And then I saw the boat no more ;
But when another flash did come
I looked again ; but naught but foam
Now rode upon the surging waves.
The boat was gone. The waiting rocks
Rejoiced above their prey at last.

I knew no more. Upon the sands
I sank as one who falls before
The flash of some dread foeman's steel.

II.

How long the night, I do not know ;
I never knew how long I slept,
Because I did not care to ask.

One morn I woke in vague surprise,
To find myself, I knew not where,
And little cared ; for I had left
My life behind me in the storm.
Kind faces bent above my bed,
Kind voices greeted me with joy ;
But all was strange, and like a dream
Of some magacian's wondrous skill ;
I did not comprehend nor care
What meaning lay within it all.
My mind was clouded, and my soul

Was like a blinded, wingless bird,
Voiceless, yet knowing not its plight.
All was mysterious, and my life
Seemed like a lonely, barren stretch
Of dead and useless desert sands,
And I a thoughtless wanderer,
Just passing aimlessly across.

Another morn, and I awoke ;
For in my slumber I had heard
A strange voice utter near my ear,
A name familiar unto me,
But which I had not heard for years.
It startled me, but no one saw
The change that came across my face ;
And so I closed my eyes, and lay
And listened to the voice that spoke.

How I could listen to that tale,
And give no sign of having heard,
Is still a mystery to me ;
But no one ever knew that I
Had caught the sound of every word
That fell from those strange lips that told
The story full of pain and grief.

I heard the story and, I tell
It just as it was told that day.

III.

“It is a story strange and sad,
And more like some romance of old,
Than like a tale of modern truth ;
Yet it is true ; and if you wish.
I will relate the story now :

“Ah, she was fair,—Chrystella Vane,—
Much fairer than most women are ;
And her sweet face was said to be
Aurora’s rival in the race
For matchless freshness and the bloom
Of youthful beauty ; and her eyes
Were full of that sweet, languid light,
Which wakes and flashes into life
When roused from dreaming ; and her hair
Like that of fair Berenice,
Was beautiful enough to float,
A constellation in the skies.
An artist struggled, it is said,
Day after day, to paint for her
A portrait of herself. At last
He gave the effort o’er, and vowed
That Art could never quite succeed
In doing justice to her beauty.

“ I cannot picture her to you—
Think of an angel, and perhaps
Some vision then will greet your mind,
And bring to you the lovely face
Of sweet and fair Chrystella Vane.

“ It has been years, long years ago,
Since she was young and beautiful—
I can't remember when ; for I
Was still unborn when she was young.
My father said he used to be
Her sweetheart in the olden days.
Perhaps he was. A childish tie
May once have bound his heart to hers ;
But time brings changes. He forgot,
In after years, the little girl
Who used to wait for him to pass
Along the street, and throw to him
A kiss from dainty finger tips.
Ah me, the years are fast, and time
Makes many changes with us all.
But I am wandering. Let me turn
To what I started out to say.

“ I said that she was very fair,—
Ah well, she was, and many came
As suitors for her dainty hand,

But she was coy, and would not give
Her heart without a parting thought.
She gave no hope to pleading swains,
But, one by one, sent them away
To find such comfort as they could.
She would not marry, so she said,
Until she found a perfect man—
Not perfect unto every one,
But perfect in her loving eyes.

“ At last she found him ; and she gave
Her heart and soul and love to him ;
She gave him all, and was content
To know he gave his heart to her ;
He had no more—his heart and life—
He gave her these, and that was all.

“ But bye and bye another came ;
He brought a fortune in his hand,
And offered her a noble heart,
Rich with the hidden love of years.
His was a manly heart and true,
But not more noble than the one
Already beating with her own.

“ Her heart was gone ; she could not give
To him what was not her's to give.

There was no hope ; but still he plead,
'Give me your hand, and I will win
Your heart whenever you are mine ;
Refuse my love, and life to me
Henceforward is a wretched farce.'
She knew he meant it, for his heart
Was seen in every word he said.

"She bade him go. He went away,
But left a lurking ghost behind.

"His name was Cecil whom she loved,
And Adrian was the other's name.
'Tis said that they were handsome youths,
And both of noble birth and mien,
With hearts as true as ever beat ;
But poverty became the lot
Of him who was the most beloved ;
While Adrian's purse was always full.
I never knew them, but they say
That it was hard for two such lives
To have been wrecked and lost because
Of one fair woman's love ; but such
Will sometimes be the consequence,
When hearts are weak and love is strong.

“ And so she wedded Adrian—
Nay, do not start— her love was true
To Cecil, but her heart was weak ;
And when she knew that Adrian’s life
Was being wrecked because of her,
Her sympathy was greater than
The power of her truest love—
No, do not say that she was false,
Nor that her heart was seeking for
Some worldly, mercenary end.
It was not that. Her’s was a strange,
Queer heart, the counterpart of which
Has never yet been known by men.

“ And Cecil, being poor, could not
Insist that she should wait for him ;
And so he bade her act as she
Thought best for her own happiness.
His heart was strong ; he could endure—
At least he said that he could bear
To go through any thing for her.

“ But it is easier far to talk
Of bearing trouble, than to stand
And face the storm whene’er it comes :
And so it proved in Cecil’s case.

“I said she wedded Adrian ;
And he, not knowing that she loved
Another one, was satisfied
And happy in his victory.
But time shows all things ; and alas,
For those whom time doth prove untrue.

“It has been years, long years since then,
And oh, what changes have been wrought ;
Now Adrian fills an unknown grave,
And Cecil—no one knows of him.
Their lives were blighted, ruined, wrecked,
Because of one fair woman’s love.

“Chrystella could not hide her heart ;
And bye and bye it came to light
That Adrian did not own her love ;
He woke as one from dreams of bliss
Awakes to find his loved one dead ;
He woke from happy dreams to learn
That life and love were but a farce ;
His heart was broken, and he knew
That death were better far than life.

“And so he died : but no one knows
His resting place. Like some bright star,

That flashes forth with promises
 For one brief moment, and, ere long,
 Fades from the bosom of the sky,
 He came and went. Kind charity
 Would draw a veil around his death.

“ But what of Cecil ? On the morn
 Which brought his doom before his eyes,
 He went away ; and never more
 Came back to look upon the face
 Which made his life a barren waste.
 They never knew what was his fate ;
 No word was ever heard from him ;
 And like a sad pathetic dream,
 He faded from the minds of men.

“ And what of her who caused it all ?
 Ah me, my tongue can never tell
 One half the sorrow of her life—
 Her’s was the saddest fate of all.

“ I saw her once, some years ago—
 I did not wish to see again :
 For yet there lingers in my mind
 The picture of that wild, sad face,
 Which cast on me such woeful eyes,

So full of mournful, pleading pain,
And dead despair, that o'er my heart
It threw a melancholy spell,
Which I have never quite forgot —
She looked the picture of Despair
Above the grave of buried Hope.—
Her hair was white as Christmas snow,
And fell in wild disorder down
Around her pale and wrinkled face ;—
But vain the task—I cannot tell,
In fitting terms, her lonely plight,
E'en Niobe, in all her woe,
Ne'er suffered more than her who grieved
Because of lives that she had wrecked.

“But all things end ; and every grief
Is some time blotted out at last ;
And every heart that suffers pain,
Some day will sleep and rest in peace.

“Some lives are tragic ; and some deaths
Are tragedies within themselves.
Chrystella's life was strange ; her death
Was stranger still.

“You know it stormed
Last Friday night—an awful storm,

Such as we have not had for years ;
A night of terror, and I pray
That it may never come again.

“The fishers say that Friday eve,
Just as the storm began to rise,
A boat was seen far out at sea,
Rocking upon the waves. But they
Were powerless to send relief ;
Because the tempest and the night
So quickly hid the boat from view.
They waited there upon the beach,
To be of service, if they could,
To any who might come ashore.

“They knew not who was in the boat,
But trusted that some chance might come,
Whereby the boat would not be lost.
But it is vain to hope against
Such storms as that of Friday night.

“A cry was heard above the roar
Of angry waves and battling winds—
A cry of anguish and despair,
Which smote the hearts of those that heard ;
It was a woman's wailing voice,

And on the winds there came the cry
Of '*Cecil, Cecil, oh, my love!*'

"And that was all.

The morning came,
And on the sands they found a form,
All bruised and beaten by the rocks ;
And in the cold, dead hands there lay
Clinched tightly in the clasp of death,
A bit of paper—just a scrap—
And written on it were these words :
'*Oh Cecil, my beloved one,
Come back and love me once again!*'

"And there upon the ocean sands,
Within the reach of rising tides,
The wavelets breaking at her feet,
The seaweeds tangled in her hair,
And salt-sea spray upon her brow,
Chrystella Vane lay dead at last."

IV.

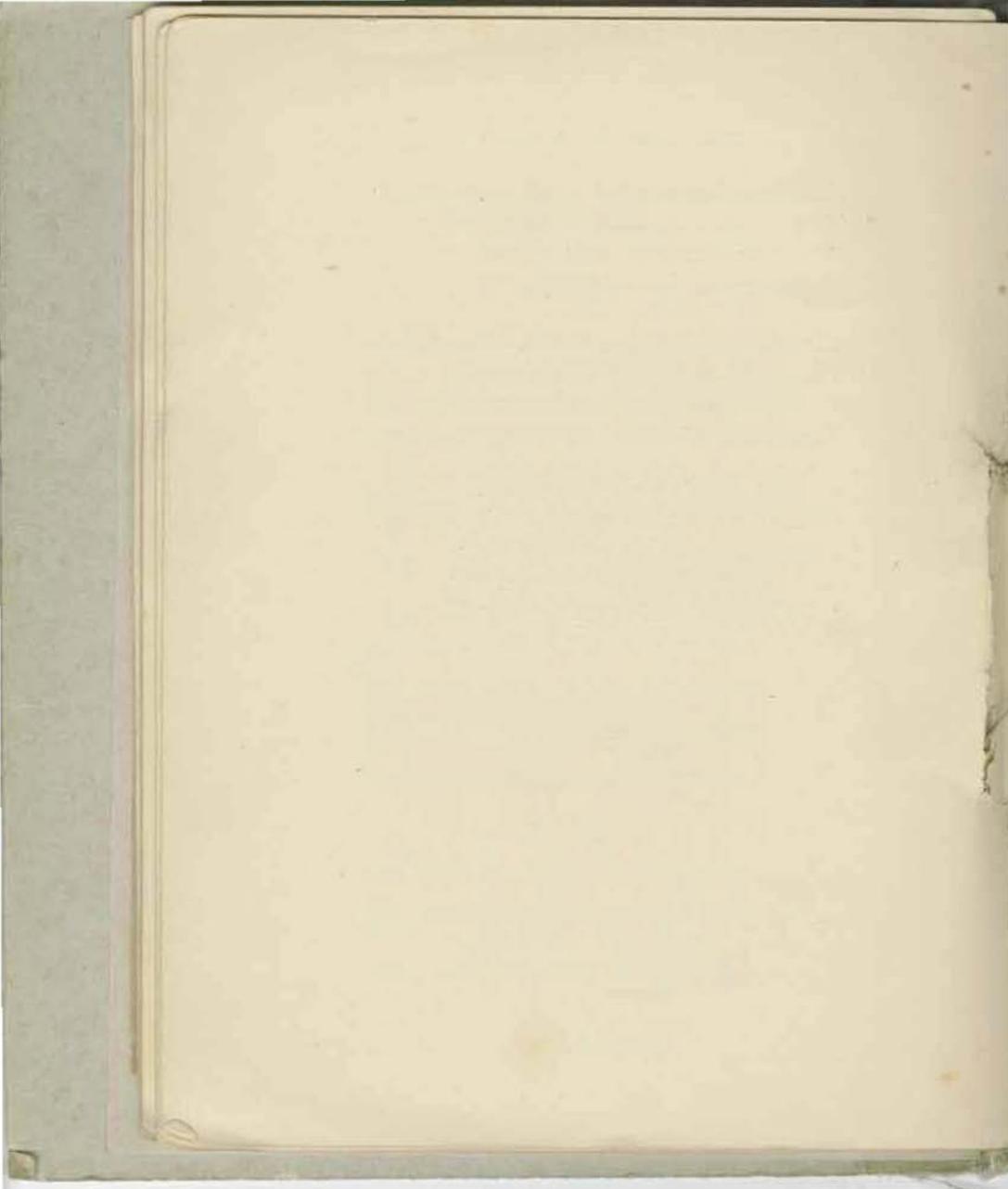
THE voice grew still—aye still as death ;
The falling sunlight seemed to breathe,
So strangely silent was the room ;
And then I strained my listening ear,

And heard the heart of silence beat.
 There was a moment of suspense—
 An awful moment, and so long
 It was more like eternity.

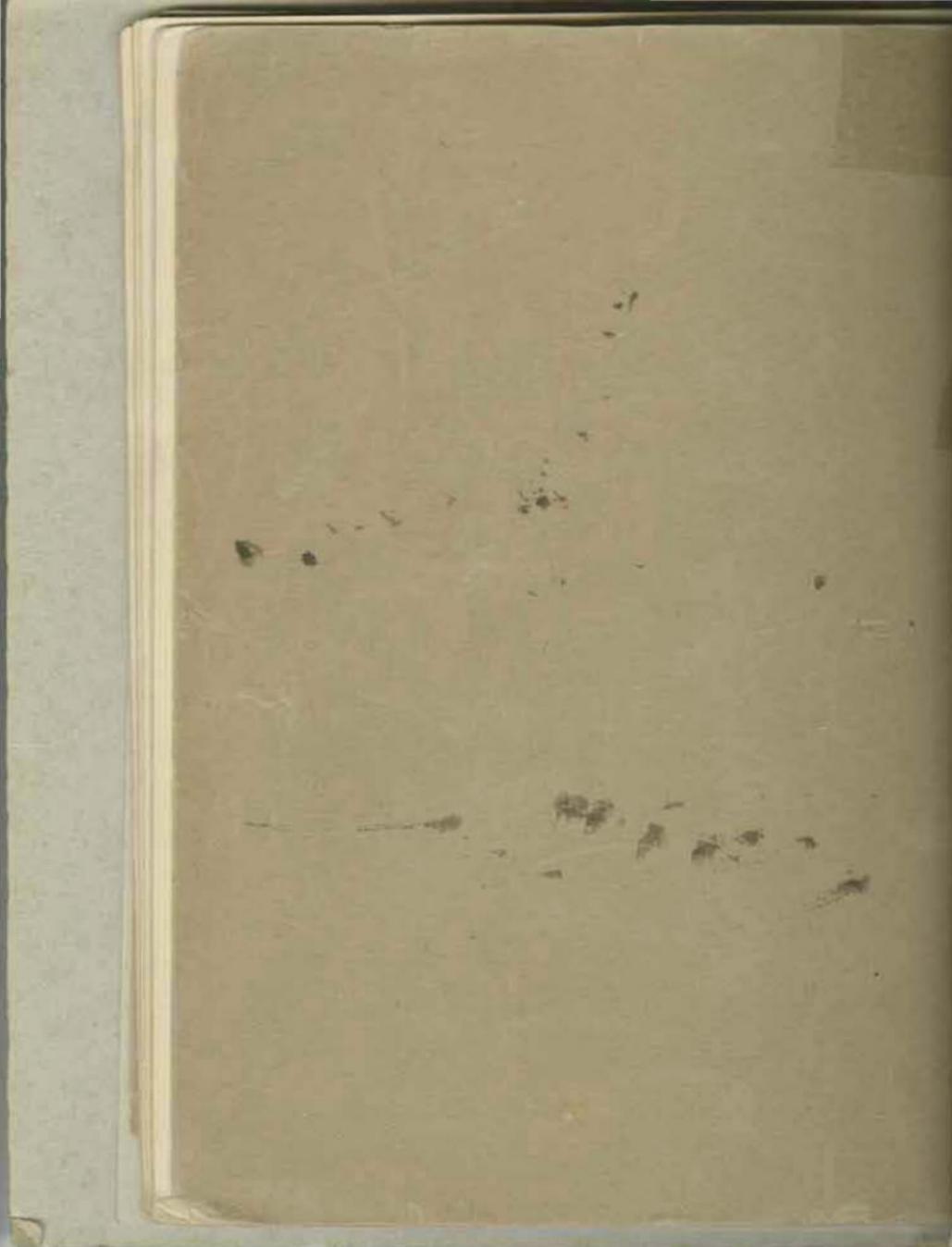
And then I heard a sweet, clear voice,
 That echoed in my dreaming ear,
 And put to flight the phantom forms,
 That came to haunt my sleeping hours.

A little hand steals into mine,
 Soft eyes look down and smile on me :
 Fair fingers deftly curl my hair,
 And smiling lips uncloset and say,
 "O Cecil, do not dream again."

FINIS.



IANA



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NORTH CAROLINIANA
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