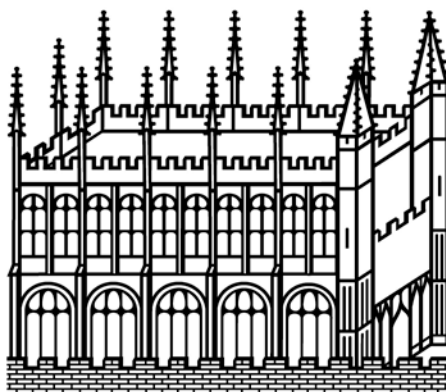




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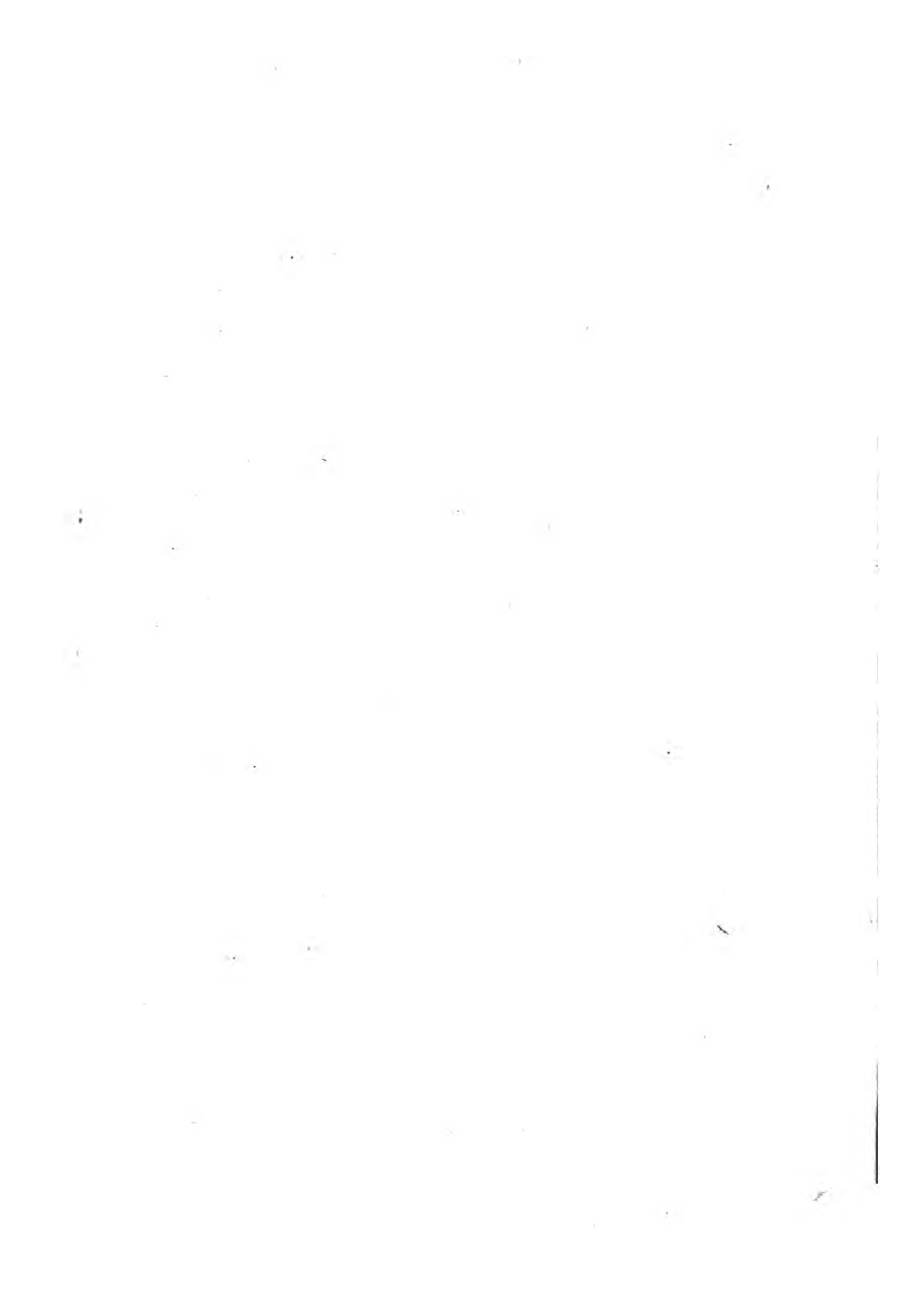
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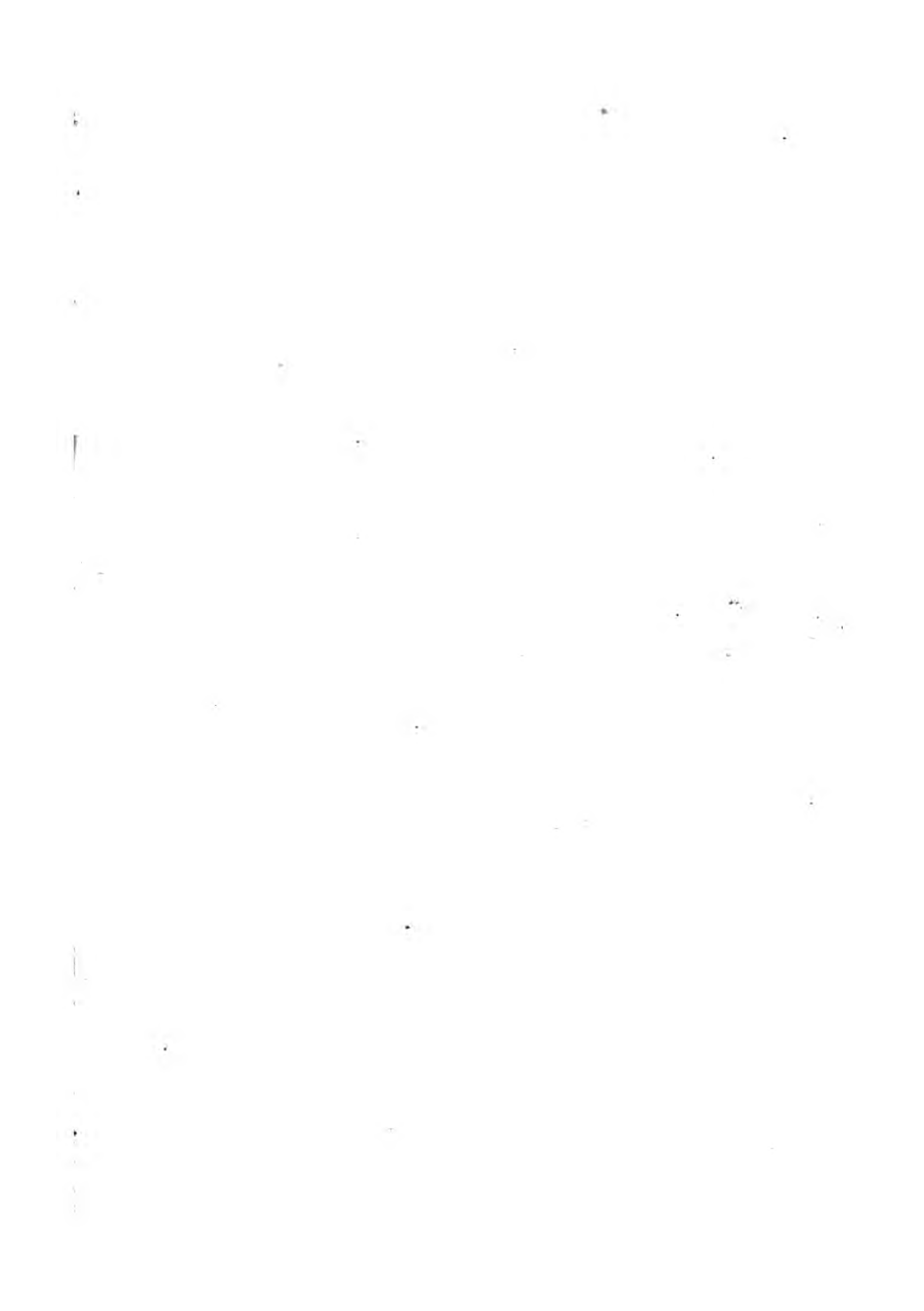
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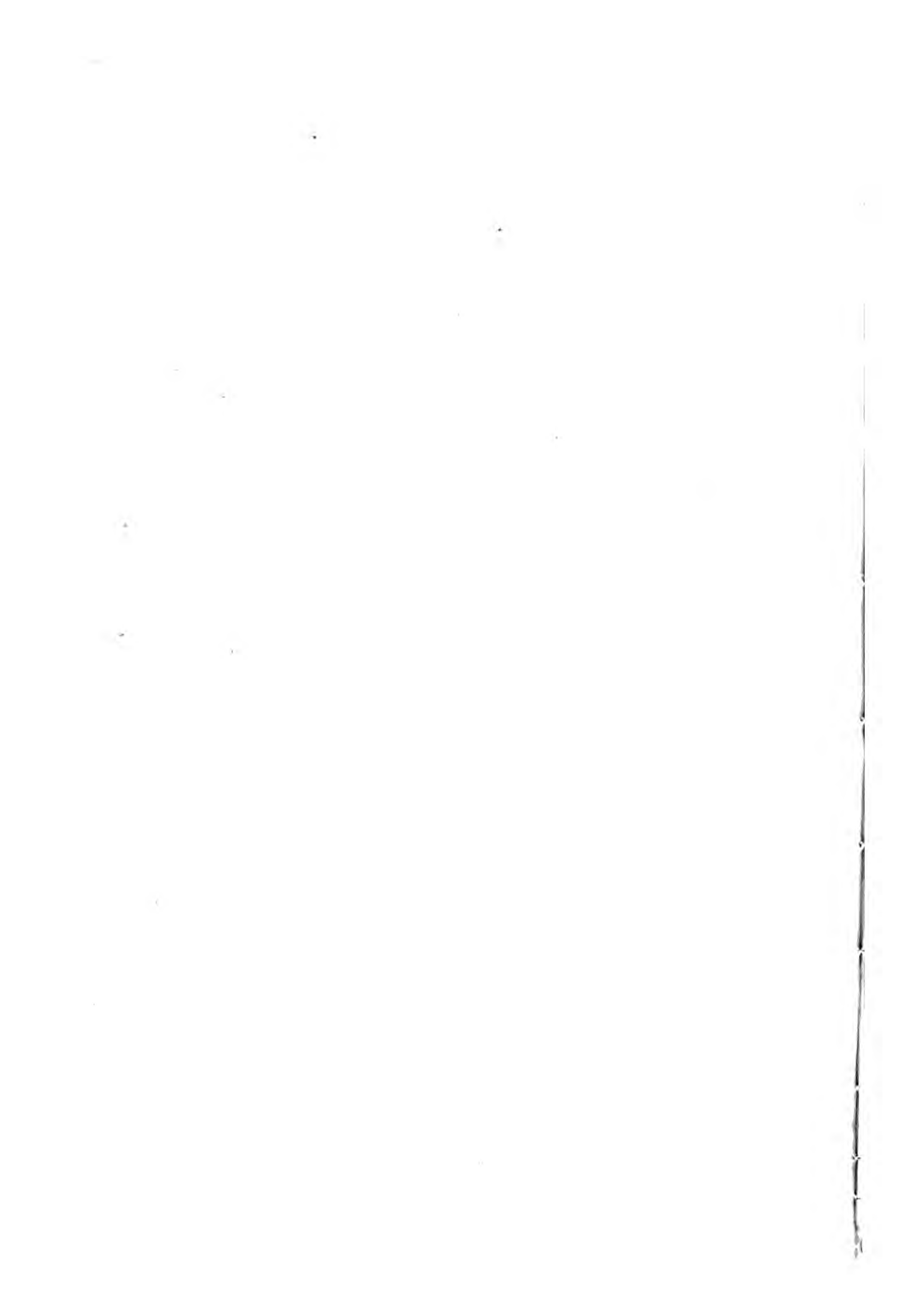
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This micrograph shows a cross-section of a polymer matrix. The matrix is a light, granular material. Embedded within it is a large, dark, irregularly shaped region that appears to be a dense, granular filler or a different phase of the material. The interface between the matrix and the filler is somewhat irregular.

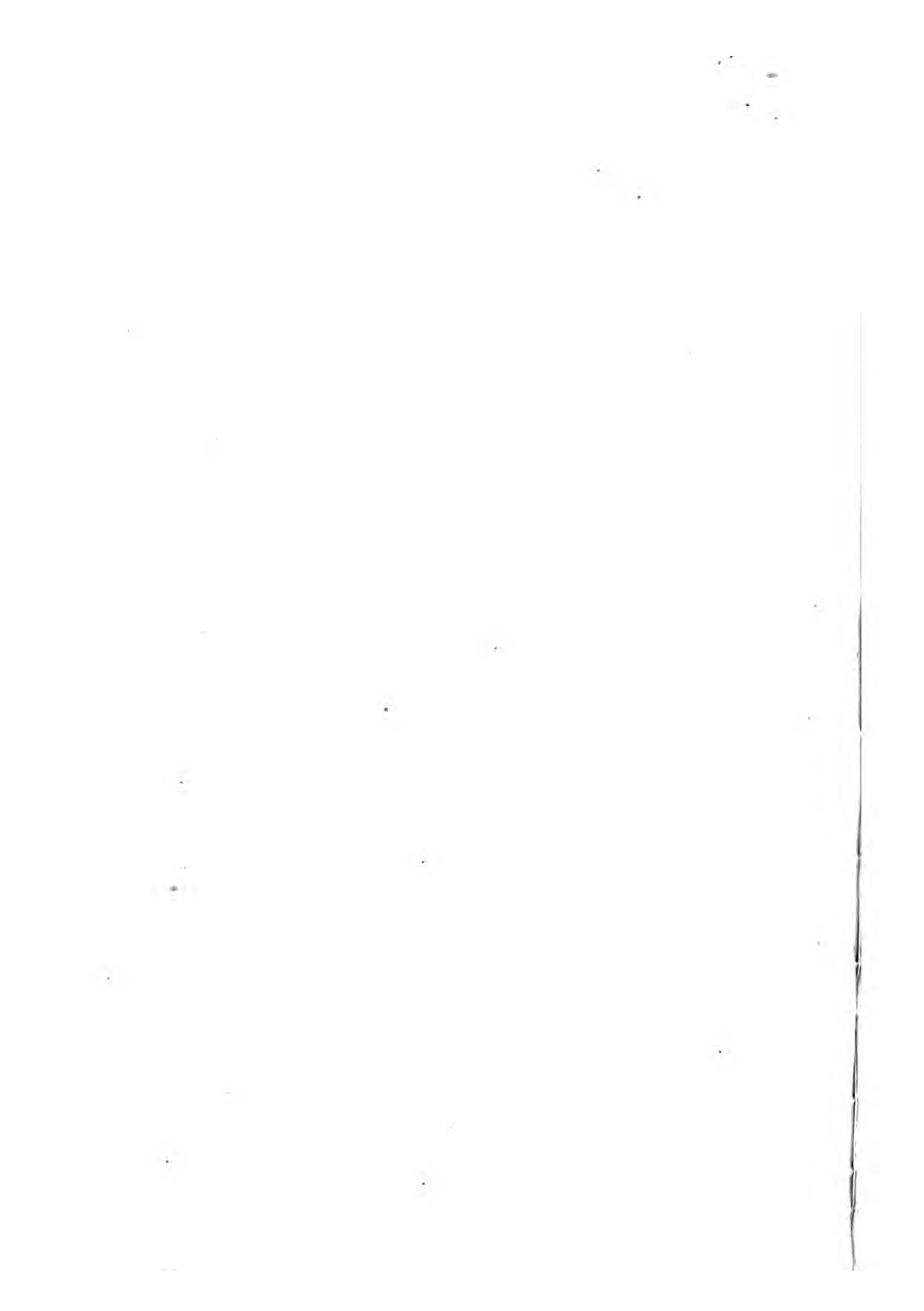








SELECTION
FROM
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S
POETRY



A SELECTION FROM THE
POETRY
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

FIRST SERIES

New Edition

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1884



It has been attempted to retain and to dispose the characteristics of the general poetry, whence this is an abstract, according to an order which should allow them the prominence and effect they seem to possess when considered in the larger, not exclusively the lesser works of the poet. A musician might say, such and such chords are repeated, others made subordinate by distribution, so that a single movement may imitate the progress of the whole symphony. But there are various ways of modulating up to and connecting any given harmonies ; and it will be neither a surprise nor a pain to find that better could have been done, as to both selection and sequence, than, in the present case, all care and the profoundest veneration were able to do.

R. B.

LONDON : November, 1865.

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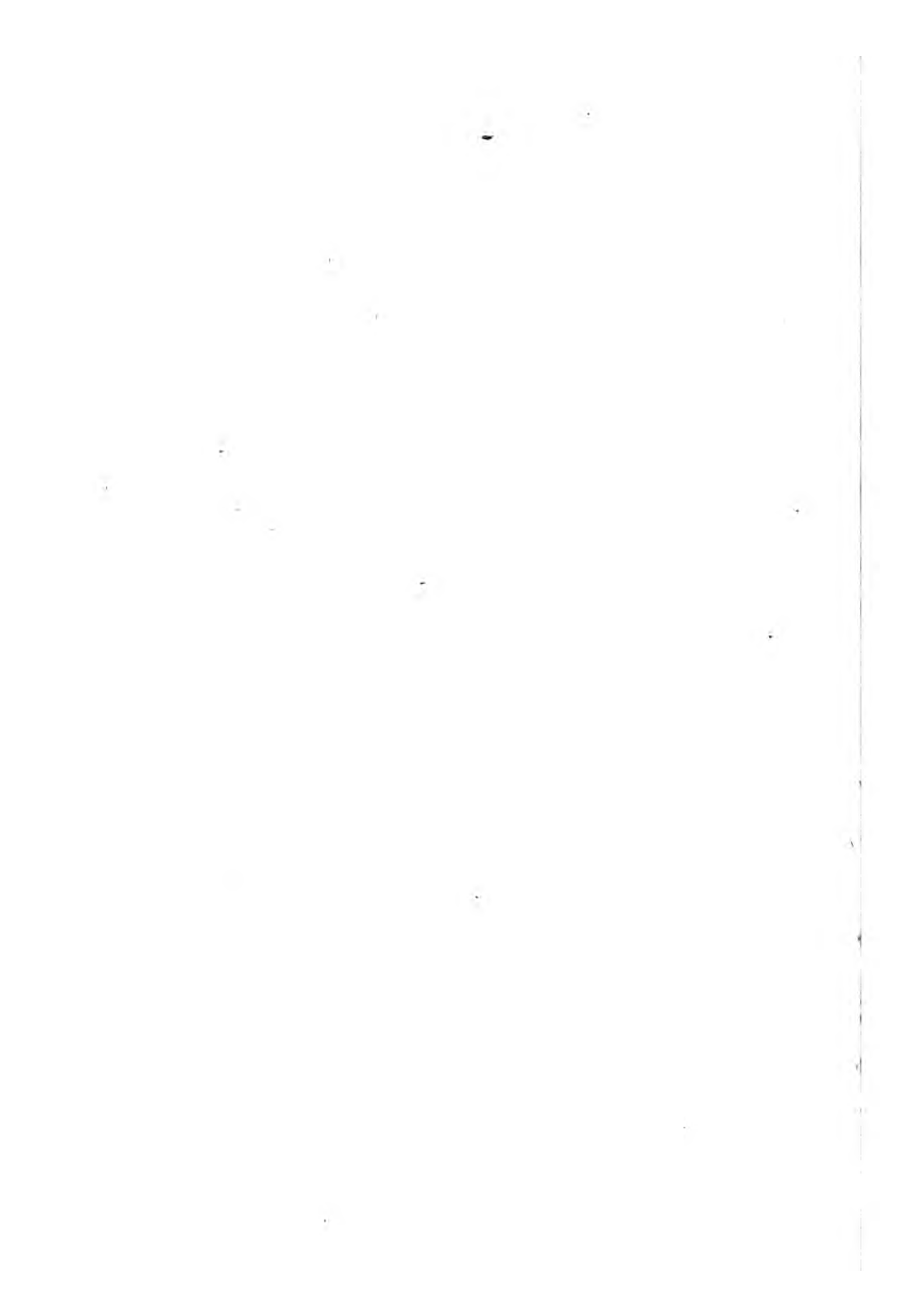
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HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

NINE years old ! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come :
Yet when *I* was nine, I said
No such word ! I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring ;
I had life, like flowers and bees,
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth everything.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the " Rain, rain, come to-morrow,"
Said for charm against the rain.

Such a charm was right Canidian
Though you meet it with a jeer !
If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear ;

And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors :
We our tender spirits drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
In the footsteps of the showers.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade !
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rhymer such as I am
Scarce can sing his dignity.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies,
Nose of gillyflowers and box ;
Scented grasses put for locks,
Which a little breeze at pleasure
Set a-waving round his eyes :

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light ;
Purple violets for the mouth,

Breathing perfumes west and south ;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight :

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf ;
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist ;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

And who knows (I sometimes wondered)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life ?

Who could know ? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound !
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy
With an *οτοτοτοτο* ?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round ?

It was hard to answer, often :
But the birds sang in the tree,
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
 And white blossoms sleek with rain !
 Oh, my garden rich with pansies !
 Oh, my childhood's bright romances !
 All revive, like Hector's body,
 And I see them stir again.

And despite life's changes, chances,
 And despite the deathbell's toll,
 They press on me in full seeming.
 Help, some angel ! stay this dreaming !
 As the birds sang in the branches,
 Sing God's patience through my soul !

That no dreamer, no neglecter
 Of the present's work unsped,
 I may wake up and be doing,
 Life's heroic ends pursuing,
 Though my past is dead as Hector,
 And though Hector is twice dead.

*THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.*

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
 'Mid the beeches of a meadow
 By a stream-side on the grass,
 And the trees are showering down
 Doubles of their leaves in shadow
 On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by,
 And her feet she has been dipping
 In the shallow water's flow :
 Now she holds them nakedly

In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses
Fills the silence like a speech,
While she thinks what shall be done,
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses—"I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds :
He shall love me without guile,
And to *him* I will discover
The swan's nest among the reeds.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath :
And the lute he plays upon
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

"And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind,
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

"But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face :
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace !'

6 *THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.*

“Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand,
Till I answer, ‘Rise and go !
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand.’

“Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say :
Nathless maiden-brave, ‘Farewell,’
I will utter, and dissemble—
‘Light to-morrow with to-day !

“Then he ’ll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong ;
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

“Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
‘Lo, my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity’s counting !
What wilt thou exchange for it ?’

“And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,
And the second time, a glove ;
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—‘Pardon,
If he comes to take my love.’

“Then the young foot-page will run,
Then my lover will ride faster,

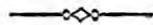
Till he kneeleth at my knee :
'I am a duke's eldest son,
Thousand serfs do call me master,
But, O Love, I love but *thee* !'

"He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his deeds :
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds."

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,
And went homeward round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the two.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads,
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
And a rat had gnawed the reeds !

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not ; but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds !



THE LOST BOWER.

IN the pleasant orchard-closes,
"God bless all our gains," say we ;
But "May God bless all our losses,"
Better suits with our degree.

Listen, gentle—ay, and simple ! listen, children on the
knee !

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade ;
Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade
to glade.

There is one hill I see nearer,
In my vision of the rest ;
And a little wood seems clearer
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland
crest.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart that after climbing beateth quickly through
content.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-tops bound ;
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground :
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and
glad with sound.

For you harken on your right hand
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all ;
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful
 madrigal.

On your left the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows towards the vale
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their
 " All hail ! "

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of
 paradise.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods alsò,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine
 and the snow.

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and fair survey ;
'T was a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay ;
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holi-
 day.

But the wood, all close and clenching,
Bough in bough and root in root,—

No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it by a glamour past
dispute !

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into
the sun.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow :
I could pierce them ! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so :
Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children climb and creep
where they would go.

And the poets wander (said I)
Over places all as rude :
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sat to meet him in a wood :
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving in their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the barrier
branches strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was gladdened unaware.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily
across.

Here a linden-tree stood, bright'ning
All adown its silver rind ;
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where it
was shrined.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew ;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing of thus
to you.

'T was a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide :
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-
cunning plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,

With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than for footsteps on the
walk !

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place ;
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the
base.

And the ivy veined and glossy
Was enwrought with eglantine ;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly
entwine.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set, a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the
wall.

As I entered, mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid
(Through quick motions made before me)
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

“Is such a pavement in a palace?”
So I questioned in my thought :
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my
doubt.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing
well.

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it in partaking of the
grace.

Where's no foot of human creature
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of nature,
Why has nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild-work? It was hard to
understand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause in tender rueing
Here of all her sylvan scorn?
Or in mock of art's deceiving was the sudden mildness
worn?

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,

Who, surviving all that chancèd
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true poet's
song?

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed
Sabbath days?

So, young muser, I sat listening
To my fancy's wildest word :
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music which was rather felt
than heard.

Softly, finely, it enwound me ;
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing : but indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest river-
head.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the
mark.

Never nightingale so singeth :
Oh, she leans on thorny tree
And her poet-song she flingeth
Over pain to victory !
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to
me.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes
Nor small finches sing so sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer
heavens complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seem'd
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dream'd,
While it sat in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent
mouth.

If it *were* a bird ?—ah, sceptic,
Give me "yea" or give me "nay"—
Though my soul were nympholeptic
As I heard that virëlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far
away !

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards—such a silence
followed it !

Heart and head beat through the quiet
Full and heavily, though slower :

In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me
to the Hour.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past,
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine I all consciously was
cast.

Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies and most debonair
goodwill.

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
Of the beauty of the truth ;
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,
"I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus, fashioned half in
Chance and half in Nature's play ;
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay."

"Henceforth, I will be the fairy
Of this bower not built by one ;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have
won."

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning !
This is truth in its pure grace !)
The next morning all had vanished, or my wandering
missed the place.

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew,
By the advent of the snow-drop, by the rosemary and
rue,—

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore upon it turned my mortal countenance.

I affirm* that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair ;
Never garden-creeper crossed it
With so deft and brave an air,
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them
there.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith,
Under leaf and over brier,
Through the thickets, out of breath ;
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as
long as death.

But his sword of mettle clash'd,
And his arm smote strong, I ween,

And her dreaming spirit flash'd
Through her body's fair white screen,
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys
green :

But for me I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart ;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave-place 'mid Colone's olives swart.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun ;
So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up and I looked
down.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
As the little bower did then ;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again ?
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother
men !

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit vigour
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
Many a hope and many a power—
Studios health and merry leisure,
The first dew on the first flower !
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done,

The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompleteness, in the face of what is
won—

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is ;
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss ;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very shame
of bliss.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break ;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to
take.

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me ;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye perchance would look away,—
Ye would answer me, " Farewell ! you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you
say."

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial
All the sun and all the shower :
And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the
bower.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat ;
Yet the wind that struck it riseth, and the tempest shall
be great.

One who knew me in my childhood
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes
overcame !

By this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower
arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind ;
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined ;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither
grown nor pined.

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red
For the winters and the summers which have passed me
overhead.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves :

Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me to the trembling of the
leaves.

Is the bower lost, then? who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the solstice and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and utter-
most—

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His throne;
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—"All is
lost . . . and won!"



THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for beads
The dews of the eventide.

"O young page," said the knight,
"A noble page art thou!
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow;
And once in the tent, and twice in the fight.
Didst ward me a mortal blow."

“O brave knight,” said the page,
“Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
Of the bloody battle-game ;
But here, below this greenwood bough,
I cannot speak the same.

“Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new ;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
Tread deep the shadows through ;
And in my mind, some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

“The woodland calm is pure—
I cannot choose but have
A thought from these, o’ the beechen-trees
Which in our England wave,
And of the little finches fine
Which sang there while in Palestine
The warrior hilt we drave.

“Methinks, a moment gone,
I heard my mother pray !
I heard, Sir Knight, the prayer for me
Wherein she passed away ;
And I know the heavens are leaning down
To hear what I shall say.”

The page spake calm and high,
As of no mean degree ;
Perhaps he felt in nature’s broad,
Full heart, his own was free :
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly—

“Sir Page, I pray your grace !
Certes, I meant not so

To cross your pastoral mood, Sir Page,
With the crook of the battle-bow ;
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I ween, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.

"And this I meant to say—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet
My page from Palestine ;
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

"And this I meant to fear—
Her bower may suit thee ill ;
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
Thy *talk* was somewhat still :
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear
Than thy tongue for my lady's will !"

Slowly and thankfully
The young page bowed his head ;
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
Until he blushed instead,
And no lady in her bower, pardie,
Could blush more sudden red :
"Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me
Is suited well," he said

Beati, beati mortui !

From the convent on the sea,
One mile off, or scarce so nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,

And the Lady Abbess dead before it,
 And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
 Her voice did charge and bless,—
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,
 Chanting with a solemn breath
 Because that they are thinking less
 Upon the dead than upon death.

Beati, beati mortui !

Now the vision in the sound
 Wheeleth on the wind around ;
 Now it sweepeth back, away—
 The uplands will not let it stay
 To dark the western sun :

Mortui !—away at last,—

Or ere the page's blush is past :

And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

“ A boon, thou noble knight,
 If ever I serv'd thee !
 Though thou art a knight and I am a page,
 Now grant a boon to me ;
 And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
 If little loved or loved aright
 Be the face of thy ladye.”

Gloomily looked the knight—

“ As a son thou hast serv'd me,
 And would to none I had granted boon
 Except to only thee !
 For haply then I should love aright,
 For then I should know if dark or bright
 Were the face of my ladye.

“ Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue
 To grudge that granted boon,
 That heavy price from heart and life
 I paid in silence down ;

The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame : I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won !

“ Earl Walter was a brave old earl,
He was my father's friend ;
And while I rode the lists at court
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud
Against a slanderer lying loud
He rose up to defend.

“ Oh, calm below the marble grey
My father's dust was strown !
Oh, meek above the marble grey
His image prayed alone !
The slanderer lied : the wretch was brave—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

“ Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit :
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

“ I would mine hand had fought that fight
And justified my father !
I would mine heart had caught that wound
And slept beside him rather !

I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend and marriage ring
Forced on my life together.

“Wail shook Earl Walter’s house ;
His true wife shed no tear ;
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier :
Till—‘ Ride, ride fast,’ she said at last,
‘ And bring the avenged’s son anear !
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can flee,
For white of blee with waiting for me
Is the corse in the next chambère.’

“ I came, I knelt beside her bed ;
Her calm was worse than strife :
‘ My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely when thou wast not here
His own and eke my life.
A boon ! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father’s sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife.’

“ I said, ‘ My steed neighs in the court,
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior’s vow I am under now
To free the pilgrim’s shrine ;
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde
While I am in Palestine.’

“ In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast
prayed,
And wedded fast were we.

Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we knelt to wed,
And the bride rose from her knee
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

"My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
That the tears run down thy face?"

"Alas, alas ! mine own sistèr
Was in thy lady's case :
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
To the very battle-place."

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,
A careless laugh laughed he :
"Well done it were for thy sistèr,
But not for my ladye !
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be."

The page stopped weeping and smiled cold—
"Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear ;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well, I dare to hold,
By truth, or by despair."

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
But passionate he spake—
"Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake !
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
For one belovèd's sake !—

And her little hand, defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
Most woman-pure did make !”

“ Well done it were for thy sistèr,
Thou tellest well her tale !
But for my lady, she shall pray
I’ the kirk of Nydesdale.
Not dread for me but love for me
Shall make my lady pale ;
No casque shall hide her woman’s tear ;
It shall have room to trickle clear
Behind her woman’s veil.”

“ But what if she mistook thy mind
And followed thee to strife,
Then kneeling did entreat thy love
As paynims ask for life ?”
—“ I would forgive, and evermore
Would love her as my servitor,
But little as my wife.

“ Look up—there is a small bright cloud
Alone amid the skies !
So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman’s honour lies.”
The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welkin unto hill.
Ha ! who rides there ?—the page is ’ware,
Though the cry at his heart is still :
And the page seeth all and the knight seeth none,
Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—

“ Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide.”

“ Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
And keep thou at my side.”

“ Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
Thy faithful page precede,
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
The shoulder of my steed ;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

“ Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride !
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side.”
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
No smile the word had won ;
Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
I ween he had never gone :
Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
I ween he had turned anon,
For dread was the woe in the face so young,
And wild was the silent geste that flung
Casque, sword, to earth, as the boy down-sprung
And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands as if to hold
His soul's great agony—

“ Have I renounced my womanhood
For wifehood unto *thee*,
And is this the last, last look of thine
That ever I shall see ?

“ Yet God thee save, and may'st thou have
A lady to thy mind,
More woman-proud and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind !
And God me take with HIM to dwell—
For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind.”

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful heavens to seek ;
That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her loved did speak :
How bright the little cloud appears !
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
And the tears down either cheek.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The paynims round her coming !
The sound and sight have made her calm,—
False page, but truthful woman ;
She stands amid them all unmoved :
A heart once broken by the loved
Is strong to meet the foeman.

“ Ho, Christian page ! art keeping sheep,
From pouring wine-cups resting ? ’ —
“ I keep my master's noble name,
For warring, not for feasting !
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay the questing.”

“Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him?”—
“Now search the lea and search the wood,
And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him.”

“Give smoother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying!”—
“I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
’T were better at replying!”
They cursed her deep, they smote her low
They cleft her golden ringlets through;
The Loving is the Dying.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lips serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly,
As over wood and over lea
Bodily the wind did carry
The great Altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o’er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
And the weary nuns with hearts that faintly
Beat along their voices saintly—

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
Dirge for Abbess laid in shroud

Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead,
 Page or lady, as we said,
 With the dews upon her head,
 All as sad if not as loud.
 Ingemisco, ingemisco!
 Is ever a lament begun
 By any mourner under sun,
 Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?



RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun
 Toll slowly.
 And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is music for the Dead
 When the rebecks are all done."

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the north side in a
 row
 Toll slowly.
 And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
 Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west a small river runs in
 haste,
 Toll slowly.
 And, between the river flowing and the fair green trees
 a-growing,
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sat that day, up against a willow grey :
 Toll slowly.
 Through the rain of willow branches I could see the low
 hill-ranges
 And the river on its way.

There I sat beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,

Toll slowly.

While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the solemn noises,—

Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There I read this ancient Rhyme while the bell did all the time

Toll slowly.

And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,

Toll slowly.

And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary wood,

Like a full heart having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

And but little thought was theirs of the silent antique years,

In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt large and red on the towers of Linteged,—

Toll slowly.

Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery light,

While the castle stood in shade.

There the castle stood up black with the red sun at its
back,

Toll slowly.

Like a sullen smouldering pyre with a top that flickers fire
When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,

Toll slowly.

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights
had stood

And to-night was near its fall.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride
did come,

Toll slowly.

One who proudly trod the floors and softly whispered in
the doors,

“ May good angels bless our home.”

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,

Toll slowly.

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where the untired smile
of youth

Did light outward its own sighs !

’T was a Duke’s fair orphan-girl, and her uncle’s ward—
the Earl,

Toll slowly.

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of
dowry gold,

To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of
womanhood,

Toll slowly.

Unto both these Lords of Leigh spake she out right
sovrantly,

“ My will runneth as my blood.

"And while this same blood makes red this same right
hand's veins," she said,

Toll slowly.

"'T is my will as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged."

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful
youth,—

Toll slowly.

"Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft
and small
For so large a will, in sooth."

She too smiled by that same sign, but her smile was cold
and fine,—

Toll slowly.

"Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it were not worth
the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine !"

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly
in his teeth,

Toll slowly.

"He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an
she loathed,
Let the life come or the death."

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might
rise,—

Toll slowly.

"Thy hound's blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy
knightly heel," quoth she,
"And he moans not where he lies :

"But a woman's will diés hard, in the hall or on the
sword—

Toll slowly.

By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl
and dowered lady,

I deny you wife and ward ! ”

Unto each she bowed her head and swept past with lofty
tread.

Toll slowly.

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the
priest

Blessed her, Bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode
amain :

Toll slowly.

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on
the turf,

In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pur-
sued amain,

Toll slowly.

Steed on steed-track, dashing off,—thickening, doubling
hoof on hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed
of might,

Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no
harm,

Smiling out into the night.

“ Dost thou fear ? ” he said at last : “ Nay,” she answered
him in haste,—

Toll slowly.

“ Not such death as we could find—only life with one
behind.

Ride on fast as fear, ride fast ! ”

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground,
and fetlocks spread,—

Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered,
down the banks,

To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus
tossed about,

Toll slowly.

In the courtyard rose the cry, “Live the Duchess and
Sir Guy !”

But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane
and kissed his neck,—

Toll slowly.

“I had happier died by thee than lived on, a Lady Leigh,”
Were the first words she did speak.

But a three months’ joyaunce lay ’twixt that moment
and to-day,

Toll slowly.

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle
wall

To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black with the red sun at its
back,

Toll slowly.

And a fortnight’s siege is done, and, except the Duchess,
none

Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so
grey of blee,

Toll slowly.

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold white gnash-
ing of his teeth,

Gnashed in smiling, absently,

Cried aloud, "So goes the day, bridegroom fair of
Duchess May !

Toll slowly.

Look thy last upon that sun ! if thou seest to-morrow's
one,

'T will be through a foot of clay.

"Ha, fair bride ! dost hear no sound save that moaning
of the hound ?

Toll slowly.

Thou and I have parted troth, yet I keep my vengeance-
oath,

And the other may come round.

"Ha ! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past
compare,—

Toll slowly.

Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a thing
to have,

As the will of lady fair.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove ! If a wife's name thee
behave,

Toll slowly.

Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has
hid the sorrow

Of thy last ill-mated love.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back
troth ;

Toll slowly.

He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at
least

'I forbid you, I am loth !'

"I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my
mail,

Toll slowly.

'Little hand and muckle gold' close shall lie within my
hold,

As the sword did, to prevail."

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put
away

All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

Toll slowly.

"Tower is strong and will is free : thou canst boast, my
Lord of Leigh,

But thou boastest little wit."

In her tire-glass gazèd she, and she blushed right
womanly :

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain, half, her beauty was
so plain,

—"Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh !"

Straight she called her maidens in—"Since ye gave me
blame herein,

Toll slowly.

That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make
it fine,

Come and shrive me from that sin.

"It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand
away :

Toll slowly.

Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state
in them,

While we keep the foe at bay.

“On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth and
crown it fair :

Toll slowly.

I would look in purple pall from this lattice down the
wall,

And throw scorn to one that 's there !”

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west :

Toll slowly.

On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his
sword,

With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate :

Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there-
withal

With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered, snapped upon
the stone,—

Toll slowly.

“Sword,” he thought, with inward laugh, “ill thou servest
for a staff

When thy nobler use is done !

“Sword, thy nobler use is done ! tower is lost, and shame
begun !

Toll slowly.

If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to
speech,

We should die there, each for one.

"If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,
Toll slowly.

But if *I* die here alone,—then I die who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

"Five true friends lie for my sake in the moat, and in the
brake,

Toll slowly.

Thirteen warriors lie at rest with a black wound in the
breast,

And not one of these will wake.

"So, no more of this shall be ! heart-blood weighs too
heavily,—

Toll slowly.

And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the
brave

Heaped around and over me.

"Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a
plighted faith,

Toll slowly.

Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when
Ronald speaks,

Albeit never a word she saith—

"These shall never die for me : life-blood falls too
heavily :

Toll slowly.

And if *I* die here apart, o'er my dead and silent heart

They shall pass out safe and free.

"When the foe hath heard it said—'Death holds Guy of
Linteged,'"

Toll slowly.

That new corse new peace shall bring, and a blessed,
blessed thing

Shall the stone be at its head.

“Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my
memory,

Toll slowly.

Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my
widowed bride

Whose sole sin was love of me :

“With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front
her and entreat,

Toll slowly.

And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting
head

While her tears drop over it.

“She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her
woman's prayers,

Toll slowly.

But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring
again

By the suntime of her years.

“Ah, sweet May ! ah, sweetest grief !—once I vowed thee
my belief,

Toll slowly.

That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets,
in completeness !

Now my May-day seemeth brief.”

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown
strange and dim,

Toll slowly.

Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there
face to face

With the foe instead of him.

“One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to do
and dare !

Toll slowly.

Tower must fall and bride be lost—swear me service
worth the cost !”

Bold they stood around to swear.

“Each man clasp my hand and swear, by the deed we
failed in there,

Toll slowly.

Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow
to-night !”

Pale they stood around to swear.

“One last boon, young Ralph and Clare ! faithful hearts
to do and dare !

Toll slowly.

Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before
you all,

Guide him up the turret-stair.

“Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this
height ;

Toll slowly.

Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong
and far :

He shall bear me far to-night.”

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him
speaking so ;

Toll slowly.

“’Las ! the noble heart,” they thought, “he in sooth is
grief-distraught :

Would we stood here with the foe !”

But a fire flashed from his eye, ’twixt their thought and
their reply,—

Toll slowly.

“Have ye so much time to waste ? We who ride, here,
must ride fast

As we wish our foes to fly.”

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he
did wear,

Toll slowly.

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes
of the floors,

But they goad him up the stair.

Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess
May repair :

Toll slowly.

“ Tell me now what is your need,” said the lady, “ of this
steed,

That ye goad him up the stair ?”

Calm she stood ; unbodkined through, fell her dark hair
to her shoe ;

Toll slowly.

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

“ Get thee back, sweet Duchess May ! hope is gone like
yesterday.

Toll slowly.

One half-hour completes the breach : and thy lord grows
wild of speech.

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray !

“ In the east tower, high’st of all, loud he cries for steed
from stall :

Toll slowly.

‘ He would ride as far,’ quoth he, ‘ as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.’

“ And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof
did fall :

Toll slowly.

Wifely prayer meets deathly need : may the sweet
Heavens hear thee plead

If he rides the castle-wall !”

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on
the floor,

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

“Get thee in, thou soft ladye ! here is never a place for
thee !

Toll slowly.

Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in
its moan

May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.”

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,

Toll slowly.

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering,
seems to look

Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the
stone beside,—

Toll slowly.

“Go to, faithful friends, go to ! judge no more what
ladies do,

No, nor how their lords may ride !”

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did
kiss and stroke :

Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then followed up the
stair

For the love of her sweet look.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair
around

Toll slowly.

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside
her treading

Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a
hoof did fall,—

Toll slowly.

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble steed and lovely
lady,

Calm as if in bower or stall.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up
silently,

Toll slowly.

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within
her eyes

Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife, and the sweet saints
bless thy life !

Toll slowly.

In this hour I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed,
But no more of my noble wife."

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under
sun,

Toll slowly.

But by all my womanhood, which is proved so, true and
good,

I will never do this one.

"Now by womanhood's degree and by wifhood's verity,

Toll slowly.

In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan
steed,

Thou hast also need of *me*.

"By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè,

Toll slowly.

If this hour, on castle-wall can be room for steed from
stall,

Shall be also room for *me*.

"So the sweet saints with me be," did she utter solemnly,

Toll slowly.

"If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*."

Oh, he sprang up in the selle and he laughed out bitter-
well,—

Toll slowly.

"Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on
other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell?"

She clung closer to his knee—"Ay, beneath the cypress
tree!

Toll slowly.

Mock me not, for otherwhere than along the greenwood
fair

Have I ridden fast with thee.

"Fast I rode with new-made vows from my angry
kinsman's house:

Toll slowly.

What, and would you men should reck that I dared
more for love's sake
As a bride than as a spouse:

"What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, be-
fore all,

Toll slowly.

That a bride may keep your side while through castle-
gate you ride,
Yet eschew the castle-wall?"

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin and roars up against her
suing,

Toll slowly.

With the inarticulate din and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain, but the small hands
closed again.

Toll slowly.

Back he reined the steed—back, back ! but she trailed
along his track

With a frantic clasp and strain.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window
and door,

Toll slowly.

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of
“kill !” and “flee !”

Strike up clear amid the roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain, but they closed and
clung again,

Toll slowly.

While she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon
the rood,

In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute with her shuddering
lips half-shut ;

Toll slowly.

Her head fallen as half in swoond, hair and knee swept
on the ground,

She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery
coping-stone ;

Toll slowly.

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind
Whence a hundred feet went down :

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank
bestrode,—

Toll slowly.

“ Friends and brothers, save my wife ! Pardon, Sweet, in
change for life,—
But I ride alone to God.”

Straight as if the holy name had upbreathed her like a
flame,

Toll slowly.

She upsprang, she rose upright, in his selle she sat in
sight,

By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast where she smiled as one
at rest,—

Toll slowly.

“ Ring,” she cried, “ O vesper-bell in the beechwood’s old
chappelle—

But the passing-bell rings best ! ”

They have caught out at the rein which Sir Guy threw
loose—in vain,

Toll slowly.

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised
in air,

On the last verge rears amain.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and his nostrils
curdle in,

Toll slowly.

Now he shivers head and hoof, and the flakes of foam
fall off,

And his face grows fierce and thin :

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go,

Toll slowly.

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
Of the headlong death below,—

And, "Ring, ring, thou passing bell," still she cried, "i' the
old chapelle!"

Toll slowly.

Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung
out to wrack,

Horse and riders overfell.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,

Toll slowly.

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the churchyard, while
the chime

Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did
run,

Toll slowly.

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and
its change,

Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree I a little grave did see,

Toll slowly.

Where was graved,—HERE, UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD,
A THREE-YEAR CHILD,

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode so fast that day,

Toll slowly.

Did star-wheels and angel wings with their holy win-
nowings

Keep beside you all the way?

Though in passion ye would dash with a blind and heavy
crash,

Toll slowly.

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in
the field,—

Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now, your will is all unwilling, now, your pulses are all
stilled,

Toll slowly.

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the
child,

Whose small grave was lately filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,

Toll slowly.

And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups
from your mould

Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in
spring,

Toll slowly.

Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out
on it,

Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong, cold and heat ye take not
wrong,

Toll slowly.

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,

Toll slowly.

And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with
death,

And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,

Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our
incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.



BERTHA IN THE LANE.

PUT the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done :
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon
I am weary. I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding gown.

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat !
No one standeth in the street?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

Lean thy face down ; drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold :
'T is a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth.

Thou art younger by seven years :
Ah !—so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise ?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such.
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much ?

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear ?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
“ Child, be mother to this child ” ?

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
Love that left me with a wound,
Life itself that turneth round !

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,
In a molten glory shrined
That rays off into the gloom !
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,
I sob in it, and grow weak.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul,
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole !

On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering
When the night hides everything.

Little sister, thou art pale !
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.
Lean down closer—closer still !
I have words thine ear to fill,
And would kiss thee at my will.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
When we all went gathering
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so ! think instead
How the sunshine overhead
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

What a day it was, that day !
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away
At the sight of the great sky :
And the silence, as it stood
In the glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud, and bud.

Through the winding hedgerows green,
How we wandered, I and you,
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the view !
How we talked there ! thrushes soft
Sang our praises out, or oft
Bleatings took them, from the croft :

Till the pleasure grown too strong
Left me muter evermore,
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before,
And so, wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

I sat down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
Did not promise any pain ;
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so, do not shake,
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

Yes, and HE too ! let him stand
In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed with hasty claim ?
That was wrong perhaps—but then
Such things be—and will, again.
Women cannot judge for men.

Had he seen thee when he swore
He would love but me alone ?
Thou wast absent, sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.

When he saw thee who art best
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

Could we blame him with grave words,
Thou and I, Dear, if we might ?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds
Flying straightway to the light :
Mine are older.—Hush !—look out—
Up the street ! Is none without ?
How the poplar swings about !

And that hour—beneath the beech,
When I listened in a dream,
And he said in his deep speech
That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain.

I fell flooded with a dark,
In the silence of a swoon.
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night ; I saw the moon :
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand,
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,
Somewhat coldly, with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a “Poor thing” negligence.

And I answered coldly too,
 When you met me at the door ;
 And I only *heard* the dew
 Dripping from me to the floor :
 And the flowers I bade you see,
 Were too withered for the bee,—
 As my life, henceforth, for me.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm !
 All was best as it befell.
 If I say he did me harm,
 I speak wild,—I am not well.
 All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me. Only, blood
 Runs so faint in womanhood !

Then I always was too grave,—
 Liked the saddest ballad sung,—
 With that look, besides, we have
 In our faces, who die young.
 I had died, Dear, all the same ;
 Life's long, joyous, jostling game
 Is too loud for my meek shame.

We are so unlike each other,
 Thou and I, that none could guess
 We were children of one mother,
 But for mutual tenderness.
 Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
 And meant verily to hold
 Life's pure pleasures manifold.

I am pale as crocus grows
 Close behind a rose-tree's root ;
 Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
 Treads the crocus underfoot.

I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree,
Thou, like merry summer-bee,—
Fit, that I be plucked for thee !

Yet who plucks me ?—no one mourns,
I have lived my season out,
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry ! How the light
Comes and goes ! If it be night
Keep the candles in my sight.

Are there footsteps at the door ?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay ?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay ? So best !—so angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

Colder grow my hands and feet.
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,
That if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, Sweet !) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the dark up, day and night.

On that grave drop not a tear !
Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessèd one,
Thinking of me in the sun,
Or forget me—smiling on !

Art thou near me ? nearer ! so—
Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly, as it used to rise
When I watched the morning-grey
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

So,—no more vain words be said !
The hosannas nearer roll,
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
I am death-strong in my soul.
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above loss !

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
Love's divine self-abnegation,
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
And absorb the poor libation !
Wind my thread of life up higher.
Up, through angels' hands of fire !
I aspire while I expire.



CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH
HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

ON the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long : adieu !
Hope withdraws her peradventure ;
Death is near me,—and not *you*.
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
“Sweetest eyes, were ever seen !”

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but harkened that of yours—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
“Blessed eyes mine eyes have been
If the sweetest, HIS have seen !”

But all changes. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
“Love, I love you,” as before,—
Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen ?

Yes. I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,

You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew :
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

But, ah me ! you only see me,
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan ;
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen—"

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale.
O my poet,
Come and show it :
Come, of latest love, to glean
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go ?

Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
“Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?”

No reply. The fountain’s warble
In the courtyard sounds alone.
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan
From love-sighing
To this dying.
Death forerunneth Love to win
“Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.”

Will you come? When I’m departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid,
Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid;
Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry, beneath the cypress green,
“Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!”

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—“Is earth unclean,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?”

When beneath the palace-lattice
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there, that is
Not the old familiar one,—

Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
“Here ye watched me morn and e’en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?”

When the palace-ladies, sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
“Poet, sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,”
Will you tremble
Yet dissemble,—

Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
“Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?”

“Sweetest eyes!” how sweet in flowings
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.

I can hear it
’Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene—
“Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!”

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn-high than these.

Miserere

For the weary!
Oh, no longer for Catrine
“Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!”

Keep my riband, take and keep it
(I have loosed it from my hair),*
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,

* She left him the riband from her hair.

Since with saintly
Watch unfaintly
Out of heaven shall o'er you lean
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

But—but *now*—yet unremov'd
Up to heaven, they glisten fast ;
You may cast away, Belov'd,
In your future all my past :
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen !"

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing ?
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS !
Death has boldness
Beside coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

I will look out to his future ;
I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen !



LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—*A room in Wycombe Hall.*

TIME—*Late in the evening.*

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my
spirit o'er you !
Down the purple of this chamber tears should scarcely
run at will.
I am humbled who was humble. Friend, I bow my head
before you :
You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces are
too still.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—she is proud and she
is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes the
perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eye to
trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her
hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by
the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and
command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her
acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of
the land.

I.

F

There are none of England's daughters who can show a
prouder presence :

Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her
disdain.

She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English
peasants ;

What was *I* that I should love her, save for competence
to pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her case-
ment,

As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other
things.

Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my
abasement,

In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their
doorways ;

She has blest their little children, as a priest or queen
were she :

Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor
was,

For I thought it was the same smile which she used to
smile on *me*.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the
palace,

And of all the fair court ladies, few have jewels half as
fine ;

Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine
and the chalice :

Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my
Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her : I was born to
poet-uses,
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of
fair.
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call
the Muses ;
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to
star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public
praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's
fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies
that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the
salt.

And they praised me in her presence ;—" Will your book
appear this summer ?"
Then returning to each other—" Yes, our plans are for
the moors."
Then with whisper dropped behind me—" There he is !
the latest comer.
Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she endures.

" Quite low-born, self-educated ! somewhat gifted though
by nature,
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very
kind.
You may speak, he does not hear you ! and besides, he
writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural
sting behind."

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there
among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning
scorched my brow ;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-
rung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature
through.

I looked upward and beheld her : with a calm and reg-
nant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before
them all—
“ Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that able to
confer it
You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to
Wycombe Hall ? ”

Here she paused ; she had been paler at the first word of
her speaking,
But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as
for shame,
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—“ I
am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of
my claim.

“ Ne’ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a
woman,”
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, over-
flowed her mouth,)
“ But because my woods in Sussex have some purple
shades at gloaming
Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

“I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly
speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the
thrushes first :
And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my
beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands,—for the human
world, at worst.”

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed
around right queenly,
And I bowed—I could not answer ; alternated light and
gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye
serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from
the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex ! I can hear them still
around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the
wind.
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex ! where the hunter's
arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad
and blind !

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous
guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding
feet ;
And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly
freighted
All the air about the windows with elastic laughs
sweet.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the
terrace
Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual
shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the
heiress,
Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music
in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and
singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the
dark ;
But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight-
ringing
And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of
the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her
silver-corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with the converse and
the jest,
Oft I sat apart and, gazing on the river through the
beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice
o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed and
laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them
in the hills,
While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside
her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels
and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bareheaded,
with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her
throat,
And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by
her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to
float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held
above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and
the skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to
love her,
And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her
eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly ; her lips have
serious sweetness,
And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on the
cheek ;
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in
discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to
speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the
garden,
And I walked among her noble friends and could not
keep behind.
Spake she unto all and unto me—"Behold, I am the
warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to
their mind.

“ But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk
 brings us,
 Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in
 reverent fear,
 I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
 Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough
 to hear.

“ The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender jet
 of water
 Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting
 saint :
 Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping, (Lough the
 sculptor wrought her,)
 So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush !—a fancy quaint.

“ Mark how heavy white her eyelids ! not a dream be-
 tween them lingers ;
 And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon
 the cheek :
 While the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack
 within the fingers,—
 Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will
 not speak !

“ That the essential meaning growing may exceed the
 special symbol,
 Is the thought as I conceive it : it applies more high
 and low.
 Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness
 grow humble,
 And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.”

“Nay, your Silence,” said I, “truly, holds her symbol-
rose but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our
ken :
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or
walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men.

“Let the poets dream such dreaming ! madam, in these
British islands.
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that
exceeds.
Soon we shall have nought but symbol : and, for statues
like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the
weed's.”

“Not so quickly,” she retorted,—“I confess, where'er
you go, you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure
gold for honour clear :
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw
you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down
with Silence here.”

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in
indignation ;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her
lovers deemed her fair :
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted
station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in
sunny air !

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their
 vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and out-
 ward move,
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be
 warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light
 above.

'T is a picture for remembrance. And thus, morning
 after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet.
Why, her greyhound followed also ! dogs—we both were
 dogs for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay
 through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite
 of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed
 along,
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns
 to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a
 song.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sat down in
 the gowans,
With the forest green behind us and its shadows cast
 before,
And the river running under, and across it from the
 rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it
 bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the
poems
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of
our own ;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle inter-
flowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here 's the book, the leaf is
folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut
deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined hu-
manity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my
making :
Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,
For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you
are speaking,
And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which you
drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence
round us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at
the breast,
She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland
singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is
divinest,
For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on
the tune,
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song ; and when
the notes are finest,
'T is the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell
them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her voice, so
cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul ! a music without
bars :
While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round
where we were walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet, as skies about the
stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she
always thought them ;
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on
branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought
them
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the
grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she
speaks lightly,
Has a grace in being gay which even mournful souls
approve,
For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck
so rightly
As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather ! upon all things,
substance, shadow,
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the reapers in
the corn,
Of the little children from the schools, seen winding
through the meadow,
Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by
its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher
stature,
And the only men that speak aloud for future times to
hear ;
So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into
nature,
Yet will lift the cry of “progress,” as it trod from sphere
to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—“The
Age culls simples,
With a broad clown’s back turned broadly to the glory of
the stars.
We are gods by our own reck’ning, and may well shut up
the temples,
And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of
our cars.

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-
admiring,
With, at every mile run faster,—‘O the wondrous, won-
drous age !’
Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,
Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

“Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature’s deep resources

But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright
without bane?

When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic
white horses,

Are we greater than the first men, who led black ones by the mane?

“ If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in
rising,

If we wrapped the globe intently with one hot electric
breath,

'T were but power within our tether, no new spirit-power
comprising,

And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death."

She was patient with my talking ; and I loved her, loved
her, certes,

As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands ;

As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the virtues,

In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely ; thought no idiot Hope
was raising

Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that sat
alone :

Out, alas ! the stag is like me, he that tries to go on
grazing

With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels
with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand had many
suits ;
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did the
waves,
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot press
their futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning as I sat alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought
serene,
For I had been reading Camöens, that poem you re-
member,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in as the sweetest ever
seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it,
taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would over-
come it,
Springs up freely from his clasping and goes swinging in
the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur ; it grew deep as it grew
longer,
Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Geraldine, you
would !"
And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in accents
stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric
good.

Well I knew that voice ; it was an earl's, of soul that
 matched his station,
 Soul completed into lordship, might and right read on
 his brow ;
 Very finely courteous ; far too proud to doubt his domi-
 nation
 Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes of
 less expression
 Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other
 men,
 As steel, arrows ; unelastic lips which seem to taste pos-
 session
 And be cautious lest the common air should injure or
 distrain.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing
 by his order
 With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of art and letters
 too ;
 Just a good man made a proud man,— as the sandy rocks
 that border
 A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and
 flow.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could not help
 the harkening :
 In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart
 within
 Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on all
 sides darkening,
 And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my feet
 that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake, for
wealth, position,
For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be
done—
And she interrupted gently, "Nay, my lord, the old tradi-
tion
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is,
should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in his he
either drew it
Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied,
"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best
eschew it
And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to
decide."

What he said again, I know not: it is likely that his
trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in
slow scorn,
"And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall
be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he
was born."

There, I maddened! her words stung me. Life swept
through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-statured
in an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic
NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimes to
power?

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame
about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn
out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow
ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what
spirits can.

I was mad, inspired—say either ! (anguish worketh inspi-
ration)
Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when
speared ;
And I walked on, step by step along the level of my
passion—
Oh my soul ! and passed the doorway to her face, and
never feared.

He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved
my coming,
But for *her*—she half arose, then sat, grew scarlet and
grew pale.
Oh, she trembled ! 't is so always with a worldly man or
woman
In the presence of true spirits ; what else *can* they do but
quail ?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-
brothers
Far too strong for it ; then, drooping, bowed her face
upon her hands ;
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and
others :
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with
my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though
leaf-verdant,
Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple
and the gold,
All the “landed stakes” and lordships, all that spirits pure
and ardent
Are cast out of love and honour because chancing not to
hold.

“For myself I do not argue,” said I, “though I love you,
madam,
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours
have trod :
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to
Adam
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

“Yet, O God,” I said, “O grave,” I said, “O mother’s
heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and
little child !
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of
heart-closing ;
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies
defiled.

“Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—
that needs no learning,
That comes quickly, quick as sin does, ay, and culmi-
nates to sin ;
But for Adam’s seed, MAN ! Trust me, ’t is a clay above
your scorning,
With God’s image stamped upon it, and God’s kindling
breath within.

“What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace-mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers,
to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God, and nothing more?

“Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God,
the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned, with your lovely spirit-face
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace,

“What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn,
despise, revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,—
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your mouth?

“Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were less earthly,
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me!
I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a king.

“As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this
stain upon her,
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and
you again,
Love you, madam, dare to love you, to my grief and your
dishonour,
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain !”

More mad words like these—mere madness ! friend, I
need not write them fuller,
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers
of tears.
Oh, a woman ! friend, a woman ! why, a beast had scarce
been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of
the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating
with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up
like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered ? She looked up,
as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and said—“ Bertram ! ”
it was all.

If she had cursed me, and she might have, or if even
with queenly bearing,
Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and
said,
“ Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a
full hearing :
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat
less, instead ! ”—

I had borne it : but that " Bertram "—why, it lies there on
the paper
A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot judge
the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion : I seemed
drowning in a vapour ;
And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made
desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow
of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of
abstract truth,
By a logic agonising through unseemly demonstration,
And by youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs
of youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
wisely
I spake basely—using truth, if what I spake indeed was
true,
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sat there
weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I
could do !—

By such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and
occasioned,—
As a wild horse through the city runs with lightning in
his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,
impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly
drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her—do you blame me,
friend, for weakness?
'T was my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her
like a stone;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me on its roaring
wheels of blackness:
When the light came I was lying in this chamber and
alone.

Oh, of course she charged her lacqueys to bear out the
sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not *beyond* the
gate;
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to
pardon
Such a man as I; 't were something to be level to her hate.

But for me—you are conscious why, my friend, I write
this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life
undone.
I shall leave her house at dawn; I would to-night, if I
were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for
the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no last
gazes,
No weak moanings (one word only, left in writing for
her hands),
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign
lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief—I am
abstemious.

I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes
of a Phemius :

Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not die
till then.

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence
ever

Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every leaf.
Having ended he leans backward in his chair, with lips
that quiver

From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten
thoughts of grief.

Soh ! how still the lady standeth ! 'T is a dream—a
dream of mercies !

'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how she standeth still
and pale !

'T is a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-
curses,

Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing through me ! are ye
eyes that did undo me ?

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-
stone !

Underneath that calm white forehead are ye ever burning
torrid

O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life un-
done ? "

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air the purple
curtain
Swellleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale
brows,
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for
ever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's
slant repose.

Said he—"Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand
there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I cannot hope or
doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of
silent passion,
Curv'd like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows
out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured
pace;
With her two white hands extended as if praying one
offended,
And a look of supplication gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or
stir of vesture!
Let the bless'd apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush, no breathing! or my heart must
swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of
Geraldine!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes and tenderly :—
“Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far
above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one
as *I*?”

Said he—“I would dream so ever, like the flowing of
that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea !
So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full completeness
Would my heart and life flow onward, deathward, through
this dream of THEE !”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of
her cheeks ;
Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she
softly told him,
“Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 't is the vision only
speaks.”

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell
before her,
And she whispered low in triumph, “It shall be as I
have sworn.
Very rich he is in virtues, very noble—noble, certes ;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him
lowly born.”

LORD WALTER'S WIFE.

“BUT why do you go?” said the lady, while both sat
under the yew,
And her eyes were alive in their depth, as the kraken
beneath the sea-blue.

“Because I fear you,” he answered ;—“because you are
far too fair,
And able to strangle my soul in a mesh of your gold-
coloured hair.”

“Oh, that,” she said, “is no reason ! Such knots are
quickly undone,
And too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too much
sun.”

“Yet farewell so,” he answered ;—“the sun-stroke’s fatal
at times.
I value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop rings
still from the limes.”

“Oh, that,” she said, “is no reason. You smell a rose
through a fence :
If two should smell it, what matters ? who grumbles, and
where’s the pretence ?”

“But I,” he replied, “have promised another, when love
was free,
To love her alone, alone, who alone and afar loves me.”

"Why, that," she said, "is no reason. Love's always free,
I am told.

Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday,
and think it will hold?"

"But you," he replied, "have a daughter, a young little
child, who was laid

In your lap to be pure; so, I leave you: the angels would
make me afraid."

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason. The angels keep out
of the way;

And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you
should please me and stay."

At which he rose up in his anger,—“Why, now, you no
longer are fair!

Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful,
I swear."

At which she laughed out in her scorn.—“These men!
Oh, these men over-nice,

Who are shocked if a colour, not virtuous, is frankly put
on by a vice."

Her eyes blazed upon him—“And *you*! You bring us
your vices so near

That we smell them! You think in our presence a
thought 't would defame us to hear!

“What reason had you, and what right,—I appeal to your
soul from my life,—

To find me too fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure,
and a wife.

"Is the day-star too fair up above you? It burns you
not. Dare you imply
I brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter
had set me as high?

"If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply
adapted too much
To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise!—shall I thank
you for such?

"Too fair?—not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once
in a while,
You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer too
fair, but too vile.

"A moment, I pray your attention!—I have a poor word
in my head
I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down
better unsaid.

"You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed
you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter!—I've
broken the thing.

"You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my
side now and then
In the senses—a vice, I have heard, which is common to
beasts and some men.

"Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on
high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, en-
dures, and fulfils.

" I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maude, though you
faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what was it? an eyebrow? or, less
still, a mole on a cheek?

" And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to
the frivolous cant
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray and
supplant,

" I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you
might dream or avow
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than
you have now.

" There! look me full in the face!—in the face. Under-
stand, if you can,
That the eyes of such women as I am, are clean as the
palm of a man.

" Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear we
should cost you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the women
we are.

" You wronged me: but then I considered . . . there's
Walter! And so at the end,
I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the
hand of a friend.

" Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits then. Nay,
friend of my Walter, be mine!
Come, Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask
him to dine."

BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES.

THE cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would hold,
And saintly moonlight seemed to search
And wash the whole world clean as gold ;
The olives crystallised the vales'
Broad slopes until the hills grew strong :
The fireflies and the nightingales
Throbbled each to either, flame and song.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

Upon the angle of its shade
The cypress stood, self-balanced high ;
Half up, half down, as double made,
Along the ground, against the sky.
And *we* too ! from such soul-height went
Such leaps of blood, so blindly driven,
We scarce knew if our nature meant
Most passionate earth or intense heaven.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

We paled with love, we shook with love,
We kissed so close we could not vow ;
Till Giulio whispered, " Sweet, above –
God's Ever guarantees this Now."
And through his words the nightingales
Drove straight and full their long clear call,
Like arrows through heroic mails,
And love was awful in it all.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

O cold white moonlight of the north,
Refresh these pulses, quench this hell !

O coverture of death drawn forth
 Across this garden-chamber . . . well !
 But what have nightingales to do
 In gloomy England, called the free . . .
 (Yes, free to die in ! . . .) when we two
 Are sundered, singing still to me ?
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

I think I hear him, how he cried
 " My own soul's life " between their notes.
 Each man has but one soul supplied,
 And that's immortal. Though his throat's
 On fire with passion now, to *her*
 He can't say what to me he said !
 And yet he moves her, they aver.
 The nightingales sing through my head,
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

He says to *her* what moves her most.
 He would not name his soul within
 Her hearing,—rather pays her cost
 With praises to her lips and chin.
 Man has but one soul, 't is ordained,
 And each soul but one love, I add ;
 Yet souls are damned and love's profaned.
 These nightingales will sing me mad !
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

I marvel how the birds can sing.
 There's little difference, in their view,
 Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring
 As vital flames into the blue,
 And dull round blots of foliage meant
 Like saturated sponges here
 To suck the fogs up. As content
 Is *he* too in this land, 't is clear.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

My native Florence ! dear, foregone !
I see across the Alpine ridge
How the last feast-day of St. John
Shot rockets from Carraia bridge.
The luminous city, tall with fire,
Trode deep down in that river of ours,
While many a boat with lamp and choir
Skimmed birdlike over glittering towers.
I will not hear these nightingales.

I seem to float, *we* seem to float
Down Arno's stream in festive guise ;
A boat strikes flame into our boat
And up that lady seems to rise
As then she rose. The shock had flashed
A vision on us ! What a head,
What leaping eyeballs !—beauty dashed
To splendour by a sudden dread.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

Too bold to sin, too weak to die ;
Such women are so. As for me,
I would we had drowned there, he and I,
That moment, loving perfectly.
He had not caught her with her loosed
Gold ringlets . . . rarer in the south . . .
Nor heard the "Grazie tanto" bruised
To sweetness by her English mouth.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

She had not reached him at my heart
With her fine tongue, as snakes indeed
Kill flies ; nor had I, for my part,
Yearned after, in my desperate need,

And followed him as he did her
 To coasts left bitter by the tide,
 Whose very nightingales, elsewhere
 Delighting, torture and deride !
 For still they sing, the nightingales.

A worthless woman ! mere cold clay
 As all false things are ! but so fair,
 She takes the breath of men away
 Who gaze upon her unaware.
 I would not play her larcenous tricks
 To have her looks ! She lied and stole,
 And spat into my love's pure pyx
 The rank saliva of her soul.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

I would not for her white and pink,
 Though such he likes—her grace of limb,
 Though such he has praised—nor yet, I think,
 For life itself, though spent with him,
 Commit such sacrilege, affront
 God's nature which is love, intrude
 'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
 Like spiders, in the altar's wood.
 I cannot bear these nightingales.

If she chose sin, some gentler guise
 She might have sinned in, so it seems :
 She might have pricked out both my eyes,
 And I still seen him in my dreams !
 —Or drugged me in my soup or wine,
 Nor left me angry afterward :
 To die here with his hand in mine,
 His breath upon me, were not hard.
 (Our Lady hush these nightingales !)

But set a springe for *him*, “mio ben,”
My only good, my first last love!—
Though Christ knows well what sin is, when
He sees some things done they must move
Himself to wonder. Let her pass.
I think of her by night and day.
Must *I* too join her . . . out, alas! . . .
With Giulio, in each word I say?
And evermore the nightingales!

Giulio, my Giulio!—sing they so,
And you be silent? Do I speak,
And you not hear? An arm you throw
Round some one, and I feel so weak?
—Oh, owl-like birds! They sing for spite,
They sing for hate, they sing for doom!
They’ll sing through death who sing through night,
They’ll sing and stun me in the tomb—
The nightingales, the nightingales.



THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

FIRST PART.

“ONORA, Onora,”—her mother is calling;
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
With dew as with blossom, and calls home the maiden,
“Night cometh, Onora.”

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end where the green arbour is—

“ Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found
 her,
 While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
 Night cometh—Onora !”

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
 Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done,
 And the choristers sitting with faces aslant
 Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant :
 * “ Onora, Onora !”

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
 “ Onora, art coming ? ”—what is it she seeth ?
 Nought, nought but the grey border-stone that is wist
 To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist :
 “ My daughter ? ” Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so
 She is 'ware of her little son playing below :
 “ Now where is Onora ? ” He hung down his head
 And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
 “ At the tryst with her lover.”

But his mother was wroth : in a sternness quoth she,
 “ As thou play'st at the ball art thou playing with me ?
 When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
 And the saints know above that she loveth but one
 And will ne'er wed another ? ”

Then the boy wept aloud ; 't was a fair sight yet sad
 To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had :
 He stamped with his foot, said—“ The saints know I lied
 Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide !
 Must I utter it, mother ? ”

In his vehement childhood he hurried within
 And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin ;

But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
“Oh ! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
At nights in the ruin—

“ The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof,
Where no singing-birds build and the trees gaunt and grey
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing ?

“ A nun in the east wall was buried alive
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,
And shrieked such a curse, as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
With an Ave half-spoken.

“ I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground—
A brave hound, my mother ! a brave hound, ye wot !
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat
In the pass of the Brocken.

“ At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer ?
Stoop low, mother, low ! If we went there to see
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even !

“ Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even ?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven ?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary
And a face turned from heaven ?

“ St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams, and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile ;



But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—' Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora
The Tempted is sinning.' ”

“ Onora, Onora ! ” They heard her not coming,
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming ;
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning :

It touches her lips but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes ;
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory
Between clouds of amber ;

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word ;
While—O soft !—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 't is a twilight of sound
And floats through the chamber.

“ Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,” said she,
“ I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me ;
And I know, by the hills, that the battle is done,
That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,
'Neath the eyes that behold thee.”

Her mother sat silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss :
But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought
“ O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought !
If he cometh, who told thee ? ”

“ I know by the hills,” she resumed calm and clear
“ By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear :

Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu ?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
As St. Agnes in sleeping !”

Half ashamed and half softened the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek :
She bowed down to kiss him : dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,
That he shrank away weeping ?

SECOND PART.

A bed. ONORA sleeping. Angels, out not near.

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair ?

Second Angel.

As bodies be

First Angel.

And she so mild ?

Second Angel.

As spirits when

They meeken, not to God, but men.

First Angel.

And she so young, that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing
That at her waking she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep.
How hath she sinned ?

Second Angel.

In bartering love ;

God's love for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this, not only her :
Let me approach to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before :
While, in a mother undefiled,
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word : is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more !
The place is filled.
[Angels vanish.

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream ! too near to
heaven it leaned.

Onora, in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this ! 't is but a dream,
sweet fiend !

Evil Spirit. It is a thought.

Onora, in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good :
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend ! it cannot, if it
would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the
kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream !

Onora, in sleep.

Nay, let me dream at least.

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast :
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream !

Onora, in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go !

I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so !
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard
stone,

Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight ! they move at
nights alone :

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth
tenderly,

“Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the
fields with me !”

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a
sign.

Onora, in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied, my word shall answer
thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was
praying,

I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in :
What shall I do—tread down the dew and pull the
blossoms blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the
rowen ?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where
 thou dost stand
 Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in
 hand,
 And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause and
 kind,
 Which not to break, in sleep or wake thou bearest on thy
 mind.

Onora, in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause ;
 I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong, the spirits laughed
 applause :
 The spirits trailed alone the pines low laughter like a
 breeze,
 While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared
 to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow
 was made.

Onora, in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death and I shrank back
 afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine ! I did not fear to
 die—

I wish I were a young dead child and had thy company !
 I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
 And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that
 smiled !

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed
 twain,

For death itself I did not fear—'t is love that makes the
 pain :

Love feareth death. I was no child, I was betrothed
 that day ;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas! no more
mine own—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were
white in grave?

How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a
throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her*! that else he loveth
none?

Though e'er so high I sat above, though e'er so low he
spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might
take,

That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes—ah me, while
very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven!) would darken
down to *him*!

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wast called to death?

Onora, in sleep.

I sat all night beside thee;

The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to
hide thee,

And ever he flapped his heavy wing all brokenly and
weak,

And the long grass waved against the sky, around his
gasping beak.

I sat beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay
forlorn

Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud in ghastly
fragments torn:

And through the night, and through the hush, and over
the flapping wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the angels murmur-
ing:

We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the days
to seven,
And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of
heaven ;
"And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,
For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of her."

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

Onora, in sleep.

And then I heard thee say—

"I count upon my rosary brown the hours thou hast to
stay ;
Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,
Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of
thee.

And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
Thy true love gazing on thy face shall guess what angels
be ;

Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . . Alas !—my father's
hand 's a-cold,

The meadows seem . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told.

Onora, in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique
beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the
weeds,

This rosary brown which is thine own,—lost soul of
buried nun !

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike
undone,—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow
should break,

A pledge always of living days 't was hung around my
neck—

I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father, look not so !)
*I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my
woe.*

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . .

Onora, in sleep.

O love, my love ! I felt him near again !
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the
plain !

Was this no weal for me to feel ? Is greater weal than
this ?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels
heard but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done !

Onora, in sleep.

Ah me, the sun ! the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ah me, how dread can look the Dead ! Aroint thee,
father mine !

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through
the night.

There is nought ; the great willow, her lattice before
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor :
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and, free
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal ; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the greenwood that skirts the
chappelle,

And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing ;

While down through the wood rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
All the maids sigh demurely and think for the nonce,
"And so endeth a wooing !"

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say :
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,
And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath
When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing before,
She seeth her little son stand at the door :
Is it play that he seeketh ?

Is it play, when his eyes wander innocent-wild
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child ?
He trembles not, weeps not ; the passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
On his head like a glory.

"O fair-featured maids, ye are many !" he cried,
"But in fairness and vileness who matcheth the bride ?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many, but whom
For the courage and woe can ye match with the groom
As ye see them before ye ?"

Out spake the bride's mother, "The vileness is thine
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine !"

Out spake the bride's lover, "The vileness be mine
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine
And the charge be unprov'd.

"Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it
aloud:

Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud!"

—"O father, thou seest, for dead eyes can see,
How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary*,
O my father beloved!"

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths by the old chapel-wall:

"So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother," quoth he,
"She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady."

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train;
Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her
And calmly knelt down on the high altar-stair—
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view
That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

"In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for heaven;

But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
 Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead :
 O shrive her and wed not ! ”

In tears, the bride's mother,—“ Sir priest, unto thee
 Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company.”
 In wrath, the bride's lover,—“ The lie shall be clear !
 Speak it out, boy ! the saints in their niches shall hear :
 Be the charge proved or said not ! ”

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
 And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place,—
 “ Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
 How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosary* !
 Is it used for the praying ? ”

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
 And the maidens' lips trembled from smiles shut within :
 Quoth the priest, “ Thou art wild, pretty boy ! Blessèd she
 Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
 To a worldly arraying.”

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride,
 And before the high altar they stood side by side :
 The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,
 They have knelt down together to rise up as one.
 Who laughed by the altar ?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around.
 The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the
 sound ;
 And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
 Gazing cold at the priest without gesture of prayer,
 As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
 He felt a power on him too strong for his will ;

And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

“I have sinnëd,” quoth he, “I have sinnëd, I wot”—
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought :
They dropped fast on the book, but he read on the same,
And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
As the choristers told it

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done
They who knelt down together, arise up as one :
Fair riseth the bride—oh, a fair bride is she,
But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,
No saint at her praying !

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares blank and
wide ;
Then suddenly turning he kisseth the bride ;
His lip stung her with cold ; she glanced upwardly mute :
“Mine own wife,” he said, and fell stark at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up, but his head sinks away,
And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor !
Let his bride gaze upon him.

Long and still was her gaze while they chafëd him there
And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed
her ;
But when they stood up—only *they* ! with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart :
She has lived, and foregone him !

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
 “Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?
 Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
 To the world’s cold without thee. Come, keep me from
 harm
 In a calm of thy teaching!”

She looked in his face earnest-long, as in sooth
 There were hope of an answer, and then kissed his
 mouth;
 And, with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
 “Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!
 God, hear my beseeching!”

She was ’ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay,
 She was ’ware of a presence that withered the day:
 Wild she sprang to her feet,—“I surrender to *thee*
 The broken vow’s pledge, the accursed rosary,—
 I am ready for dying!”

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground
 Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird music-sound
 Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
 As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers’ hymn
 And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:
 “I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk.
 I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro,
 Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below.
 All things are the same but I,—only I am dreary,
 And, mother, of my dreariness behold me very weary.

"Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the
spring
And smiled to think I should smile more upon their
gathering :
The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them,
dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine !"
—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted
in the spring,
And her and them all mournfully to Agnes' shrine did
bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and gently shook her
head—
"The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,"
she said :
"The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may
lay,
For those are used to look at heaven,—but *I* must turn
away,
Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face."

She spoke with passion after pause—"And were it wisely
done
If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth
alone?
If we whose virtue is so weak should have a will so
strong,
And stand blind on the rocks to choose the right path
from the wrong?

"To choose perhaps a lovelit hearth, instead of love and
heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree which beareth seven times
seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the
breast,—
Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the
best !”
Then breaking into tears,—“ Dear God,” she cried, “and
must we see
All blissful things depart from us or e’er we go to THEE ?
We cannot guess Thee in the wood or hear Thee in the
wind ?
Our cedars must fall round us ere we see the light
behind ?
Ay sooth, we feel too strong, in weal, to need Thee on
that road,
But woe being come, the soul is dumb that crieth not
on ‘God.’”

Her mother could not speak for tears ; she ever musèd
thus,
“ *The bees will find out other flowers,—but what is left
for us ?*”
But her young brother stayed his sobs and knelt beside
her knee,
—“ Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word
for me ?”
She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his
cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers
bloomed no more.
The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour
before.
Both perished mute for lack of root, earth’s nourishment
to reach.
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness out
of each !

A REED.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed ;
No flattering breath shall from me lead
 A silver sound, a hollow sound :
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
 Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
 Left flat upon a dismal shore ;
Yet if a little maid or child
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild
 This reed will answer evermore.

I am no trumpet, but a reed ;
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
 Their nets along the river's edge,
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands, if they should fall :
 Then let them leave me in the sedge.



TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

LOVING friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
 Through thy lower nature,
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
 Gentle fellow-creature !

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
 Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast
Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
 Alchemize its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold
 With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
 Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
 Leaping like a charger.

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
 Canopied in fringes ;
Leap ! those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine
 Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
 That I praise thy rareness ;
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears
 And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
 Day and night unweary,

Watched within a curtained room
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning ;
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone
Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow ;
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing ;
This dog only watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech
Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears
Or a sigh came double,
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast
In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blither choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
"Come out !" praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour :
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore and for ever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee !
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee !

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping !
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup
Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats aointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations ;

Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations !

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straitly
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessèd to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature ;
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature !



MY DOVES.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea ;
For, ever there the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond

And green leaves round, to interpose
 Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers ! Of living loves
 Theirs hath the calmest fashion,
Their living voice the likeliest moves
 To lifeless intonation,
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
 From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
 And tempest-clouded airs,—
My little doves, who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue.

And now, within the city prison,
 In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
 For sounds of past content,
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,
 The triumph of the mart,
The gold and silver as they clash on
 Man's cold metallic heart,
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
 Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
 What human musings mean,

(Their eyes with such a plaintive shine
Are fastened upwardly to mine)—

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
 Beneath the sunny zone ;
For love that stirred it in their breast
 Has not aweary grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love, that keeps the music, fills
 With pastoral memories ;
All echoings from out the hills,
 All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
 My little doves ! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
 Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'T was hard, to sing by Babel's stream—
 More hard, in Babel's street :
But if the soulless creatures deem
 Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
Who wear immortal wings within !

To me, fair memories belong
 Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song
 And lasting thankfulness ;
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields ;
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent, dewy fields :
My spirit and my God shall be
My sea-ward hill, my boundless sea.



THE SEA-MEW.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A little shade, the only one,
But shadows ever man pursue.

Familiar with the waves and free
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart upon the heart of ocean
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

And such a brightness in his eye
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place where he might view

The flowers that curtsey to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim ;
And when earth's dew around him lay
He thought of ocean's wingèd spray,
And his eye waxèd sad and dim.

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade ;
And dropped his wing, and mournèd he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move
And teach him what was human love :
He thought it a strange mournful thing.

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky
That hath no waves) because, alas !
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

*THE SLEEP.*

OF all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward into souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace surpassing this—
"He giveth His belovèd, sleep" ?

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,
The patriot's voice to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown to light the brows?—
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake :
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

“Sleep soft, beloved !” we sometimes say
Who have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep :
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

O earth, so full of dreary noises !
O men, with wailing in your voices !
O delvèd gold, the wailers heap !
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall !
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His beloved, sleep.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap :
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man

Confirmed in such a rest to keep ;
 But angels say, and through the word
 I think their happy smile is *heard*—
 “He giveth His belovèd, sleep.”

For me, my heart that erst did go
 Most like a tired child at a show,
 That sees through tears the mummers leap,
 Would now its wearied vision close,
 Would childlike on His love repose
 Who giveth His belovèd, sleep.

And friends, dear friends, when it shall be
 That this low breath is gone from me,
 And round my bier ye come to weep,
 Let One, most loving of you all,
 Say, “Not a tear must o’er her fall !
 He giveth His belovèd, sleep.”



COWPER'S GRAVE.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's
 decaying ;
 It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their
 praying :
 Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence
 languish :
 Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave
 her anguish.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless
 singing !
 O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was
 clinging !

O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths
beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while
ye were smiling !

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming
tears his story,
How discord on the music fell and darkness on the
glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering
lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-
hearted,—

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adora-
tion ;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God
hath taken.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon
him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven
hath won him,
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love to
blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird
could find him ;

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick
poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious in-
fluences :

The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its
number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a
slumber.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his
home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses :
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's
ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and
loving.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of
that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of
providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while phrenzy desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her
kisses,—
That turns his fevered eyes around—"My mother !
where's my mother?"—
As if such tender words and deeds could come from any
other !—

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending
o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unweary love she
bore him !—
Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever
gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic eyes which closed in death
to save him.

Thus? oh, not *thus*! no type of earth can image that
awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round
him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—“*My Saviour! not*
deserted!”

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in dark-
ness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning
drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one*
should be deserted?

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence
rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son
and Father:
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath
shaken—
It went up single, echoless, “*My God, I am forsaken!*”

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of deso-
lation!
That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar
not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a
vision.

CROWNED AND BURIED.

NAPOLEON !—years ago, and that great word
Compact of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

Napoleon !—nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse ; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame ;
And dying men on trampled battle-sods
Near their last silence uttered it for God's.

Napoleon !—sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem ; children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call ;
Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs ; and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sat alone.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid ;
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries : and the Egyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand "For ever."

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness,—shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

The world's face changed to hear it, kingly men
Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment
From autocratic places, each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing : then
The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

Napoleon !—even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.
Napoleon !—from the Russias west to Spain :
And Austria trembled till ye heard her chain.

And Germany was 'ware ; and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
To serve a newer : ay ! but Frenchmen cast
A future from them nobler than her past :

For verily though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world, none gave so much
As she in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped
paralyzed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along
Her Paris streets, did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream of all so won was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

Napoleon !—'t was a high name lifted high :
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear

Our compassing and covering atmosphere
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire ; this of earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

The kings crept out—the peoples sat at home,
And finding the long-invoked peace
(A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered, cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose ;
The nations stood up mute to count their dead ;
And he who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to its noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

O wild St. Helen ! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

Nay, not so long ! France kept her old affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse ;
Until, dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, " Behold, thou England ! I would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave."

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—
" Take back thy dead ! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me."

Amen, mine England ! 't is a courteous claim :
But ask a little room too—for thy shame !

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that heart
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England, men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek !

I would that hostile fleets had scarred Torbay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun :
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done !

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile. We return
Orestes to Electra—in his urn.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day a four-years child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling, "Let the burden 'bide !"
Orestes to Electra !—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music, under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz !

Napoleon ! he hath come again, borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks p rpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room !
Room for the dead in Paris ! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column !

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts !—and this he may : for, dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

And yet . . . Napoleon !—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world ; and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won,
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth !
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted !
But the *avros* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French ; he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied :

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
“Ye have my glory !”—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true ! but none
Were ruled like slaves : each felt Napoleon.

I do not praise this man : the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ ! his knee unbent,

His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,
Better than shouts. I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all.
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not : angels may.



A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

WE are born into life—it is sweet, it is strange.
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery
Which smiles with a change !
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,
The heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the stars that we see ;
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth ;
And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
The apple of Life which another has found ;
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore !

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther ;
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees ;
And, as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,

And the cedars are brushing the archangels' feet,
And time is eternity, love is divine,
 And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond !
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
 And the earth rings again ;
And we breathe out, " O beauty ! " we cry out, " O truth ! "
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline :
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the
 brain,—
What is this exultation ? and what this despair ?—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
 And we lie in a trance at its feet ;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
 Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
And we think him so near he is this side the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
 Which hideth the soul :
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-
 course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.
And we shout so aloud, " We exult, we rejoice,"
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around :

And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
 We are deaf to God's voice.
 And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears,
 Yet we are not ashamed,
 And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
 Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
 Help us, God ! trust us, man, love us, woman ! " I hold
 Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
 Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
 'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
 That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
 I love thee, I leave thee,
 Live for thee, die for thee !
 I prove thee, deceive thee,
 Undo evermore thee !
 Help me, God ! slay me, man !—one is mourning for both.
 And we stand up though young near the funeral-sheet
 Which covers old Cæsar and old Pharamond,
 And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Art thou fair, *art* thou sweet ?

Then we act to a purpose, we spring up erect :
 We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
 We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked,
 We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,
 Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
 Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole.
 Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll !
 " While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
 Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn ?
 Let us sit on the thrones
 In a purple sublimity,
 And grind down men's bones
 To a pale unanimity.

Speed me, God ! serve me, man ! I am God over men !
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again ;
 'Neath the stripe and the bond,
 Lie and mourn at my feet !"
O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we grow into thought, and with inward ascensions
 Touch the bounds of our Being.
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions,
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
 Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides
 With its infinite tides
About and above us,—until the strong arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling
Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue
 The sense of the mystical march :
And we cry to them softly, " Come nearer, come nearer,
And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,
 And teach us the song that ye sung !"
And we smile in our thought as they answer or no,
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.
 Wonders breathe in our face
 And we ask not their name ;
 Love takes all the blame
 Of the world's prison-place.
And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud,
And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
 Untired through the cloud
To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts ;
Yet the angels look down and the mortals look up
 As the little wings beat,

And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
 'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a poet despond ?
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
 And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,
 And, bringing our lives to the level of others,
 Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
 " Help me, God ! love me, man ! I am man among men,
 And my life is a pledge
 Of the ease of another's ! "

From the fire and the water we drive out the steam
 With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream :
 And the car without horses, the car without wings,
 Roars onward and flies
 On its grey iron edge

'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes :
 And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
 Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,
 And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
 Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers,
 While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms,
 By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.

And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
 Of the souls of our brothers,
 We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
 " God," " Liberty," " Truth,"—which they hearken and
 think

And work into harmony, link upon link.
 Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
 Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
 On the dark of eclipse.

Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
 As from shores of a star

In aphelion, the new generations that cry
 Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply,

“God,” “Liberty,” “Truth !”
We are glorious forsooth,
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Help me, God ! help me, man ! I am low, I am weak,
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins,
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains
 From my spirit's serene,
And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
 On my organized clay ;
 I sob not, nor shriek,
 Yet I faint fast away :
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
 On the heaven-heights of truth.
 Oh, the soul keeps its youth !
But the body faints sore, it is tired in the race,
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
 It is weak, it is cold,
 The rein drops from its hold,
It sinks back, with the death in its face.
 On, chariot ! on, soul !
 Ye are all the more fleet,—
 Be alone at the goal
 Of the strange and the sweet !

Love us, God ! love us, man ! we believe, we achieve :
 Let us love, let us live,
 For the acts correspond ;
 We are glorious, and DIE :
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
 That smiles with a change,
 Here we lie.
 O DEATH, O BEYOND,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange !

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west :
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly !
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
Why their tears are falling so ?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago ;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost :
But the young, young children, O my brothers
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland ?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy ;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,
"Our young feet," they say, "are very weak ;
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek :

Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old."

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time :"
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her :
Was no room for any work in the close clay !
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, "Get up, little Alice ! it is day."
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries :
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes :
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
"It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children ! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have :
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do ;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine ?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine !

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or lean ;

If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
 To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
 We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
 Through the coal-dark, underground,
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

“ For all day, the wheels are droning, turning ;
 Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
 And the walls turn in their places :
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
 Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
 All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,
 And sometimes we could pray,
“ O ye wheels,” (breaking out in a mad moaning)
 “ Stop ! be silent for to-day ! ”

Ay, be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing
 For a moment, mouth to mouth !
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
 Of their tender human youth !
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
 Is not all the life God fashions or reveals :
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
 That they live in you, or under you, O wheels !
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
 Grinding life down from its mark
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
 Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
 To look up to Him and pray ;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
 Will bless them another day.
They answer, " Who is God that He should hear us,
 While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred ?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
 Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
 Strangers speaking at the door :
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
 Hears our weeping any more ?

" Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
 And at midnight's hour of harm,
" Our Father," looking upward in the chamber,
 We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words except " Our Father,"
 And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
 And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
" Our Father ! " If He heard us, He would surely
 (For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
 " Come and rest with me, my child."

" But, no ! " say the children, weeping faster,
 " He is speechless as a stone :
And they tell us, of His image is the master
 Who commands us to work on.
Go to ! " say the children,— " up in heaven,
 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving :
 We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
 O my brothers, what ye preach ?

For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you !
They are weary ere they run ;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom ;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm ;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm :
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep ! let them weep !

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
“How long,” they say, “how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path !
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.”



*A SONG FOR THE RAGGED SCHOOLS OF
LONDON.*

WRITTEN IN ROME.

I AM listening here in Rome.
“England's strong,” say many speakers,
“If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail, to the breakers.”

“England’s rich in coal and oak,”
Adds a Roman, getting moody,
“If she shakes a travelling cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi.”

“England’s righteous,” they rejoin,
“Who shall grudge her exaltations,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the nations?”

I am listening here in Rome.
Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
“England’s cruel! save us some
Of these victims in her keeping!”

As the cry beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people’s shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for no man,

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
Other poets praise my land here :
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, “God forgive her grandeur.”

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin sits commissioned?
In God’s liberal blue air
Peter’s dome itself looks wizened ;

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb, despondent plain,
Heaped with jawbones of a people.

Lordly English, think it o’er,
Cæsar’s doing is all undone !
You have cannons on your shore,
And free parliaments in London.

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,
Tents for soldiers, ships for seamen,—
Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

Women leering through the gas,
(Just such bosoms used to nurse you)
Men, turned wolves by famine—pass !
Those can speak themselves, and curse you.

But these others—children small,
Spilt like blots about the city,
Quay, and street, and palace-wall—
Take them up into your pity !

Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment
Know the names of, to repeat
When they come on you for payment.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
Huddled up out of the coldness
On your doorsteps, side by side,
Till your footman damns their boldness.

In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying little rebels
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

Patient children—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—ponder !
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder.

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
And old foreheads ! there are many
With no pleasures except sins,
Gambling with a stolen penny.

Sickly children, that whine low
 To themselves and not their mothers,
 From mere habit,—never so
 Hoping help or care from others.

Healthy children, with those blue
 English eyes, fresh from their Maker,
 Fierce and ravenous, staring through
 At the brown loaves of the baker.

I am listening here in Rome,
 And the Romans are confessing,
 “English children pass in bloom
 All the prettiest made for blessing.

“*Angli angeli!*” (resumed
 From the mediæval story)
 “Such rose angelhoods, emplumed
 In such ringlets of pure glory!”

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
 O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
 Our hearts’ pulses? Can we bear
 The sweet looks of our own children,

While those others, lean and small,
 Scurf and mildew of the city,
 Spot our streets, convict us all
 Till we take them into pity?

“Is it our fault?” you reply,
 “When, throughout civilization,
 Every nation’s empery
 Is asserted by starvation?”

“All these mouths we cannot feed,
 And we cannot clothe these bodies.”
 Well, if man’s so hard indeed,
 Let them learn at least what God is!

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver !

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

O my sisters ! not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleeping,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat 's in daily keeping,—

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

O my sisters ! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city—
Our own babes cry in them all,
Let us take them into pity !



A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her liveness, in her liveness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight :
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her liveness, in her liveness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

"For if I wait," said she,
"Till time for roses be,
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal dusk-rose,

"What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty !

"Nay, let me in," said she,
"Before the rest are free,
In my liveness, in my liveness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

"For I would lonely stand
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

“ Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine !
What addressing, what caressing,
And what thanks and praise and blessing !

“ A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

“ Insects that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn as to a brightness,—

“ And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o’er me, wheeling o’er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

“ Three larks shall leave a cloud
To my whiter beauty vowed,
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

“ Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

“ I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When below on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy :

“ And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling.”

So praying did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her !
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas :
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence !

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown ;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, “Ha, snow !
And art thou fallen so ?
Thou, who wast enthroned stately
All along my mountains lately ?

“Holla, thou world-wide snow !
And art thou wasted so,
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee ?”

—Poor Rose, to be misknown !
Would she had ne’er been blown,
In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
All the sadder for that oneness !

Some word she tried to say,
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway !
But the passion did o’ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

—Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet’s foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, “Verily and thus
“It chances too with *us*
Poets, singing sweetest snatches
While that deaf men keep the watches :

“Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a lonesness, in a lonesness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

“ Holy in voice and heart,
To high ends, set apart :
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

“ But if alone we be,
Where is our empery ?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature ?

“ What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone ?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimed ringing ?

“ What angel but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim ?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration.

“ And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season ?

“ Drop, leaf ! be silent, song !
Cold things we come among :
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

“ Howbeit ” (here his face
Lightened around the place,
So to mark the outward turning
Of its spirit’s inward burning)

“ Something it is, to hold
In God’s worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

“Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty’s sign and shadow !

“Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us,

“Though none us deign to bless,
Blessèd are we, nathless ;
Blessèd still and consecrated
In that, rose, we were created.

“Oh, shame to poet’s lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi* !

“Shame, shame to poet’s soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit !

“Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones !
And if, sooth, the world decry you
Let it pass unchallenged by you.

“Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

“In prayers, that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

"In faith, that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition,—

"In hope, that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly,—

"In thanks, for all the good
By poets understood,
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

"For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

"For life, so lovely vain,
For death, which breaks the chain,
For this sense of present sweetness,
And this yearning to completeness!"



WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES
FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC.,
TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

If old Bacchus were the speaker
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By Queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine,
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
Would become your Cyprus wine :
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
While his one eye over leered,
Nor too large were mouth of Titan
Drinking rivers down his beard.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat :
While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry, "O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste !"

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink,
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink :
Since you heard them speak the last time,
They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

Ah, my friend ! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now ?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

Do not mock me ! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed ;

I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Anacreon used to feed :
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

Go,—let others praise the Chian !
This is soft as Muses' string,
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as his spring,
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet ;
And the brown bees of Hymettus
Make their honey not so sweet.

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly !
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
Change before me suddenly :
As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek :
Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep's-bells tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for *ais* and *ois*.

Then, what golden hours were for us
While we sat together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air !

How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapæstic
Curled like vapour over shrines :
Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous,
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarléd oak beneath !
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place,
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace !
Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres !
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals !—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that 's meant for souls.
And my Plato, the divine one,
If men knew the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light !
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek !
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.
Yet your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold ;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old :
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—

Who forged first his linkèd stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech :
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

Do you mind that deed of Atè
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading " De Virginitate "
From the first line to the last ?
How I said at ending, solemn
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do ?

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said,
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread :
And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
Stained the purple they would fold.

For the rest—a mystic moaning,
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in,
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake :
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow, slower,
Till he stood discrowned, resigned,—
But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND.

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,
And more learned, and a man ;
Yet that shadow, the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids, ran
Both our spirits to one level :
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,
To your eyes that could not see.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day !
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed their fragrance in your way !
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sat in the chamber,
And the poets poured us wine ?

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus,—it is well,
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better œnomel ;
And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

THE CYCLOPS.

(THEOCRITUS, Idyll XI.)

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,
 The ancient Polyphemus, who in youth
 Loved Galatea while the manhood grew
 Adown his cheeks and darkened round his mouth.
 No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses ;
 Love made him mad : the whole world was neglected,
 The very sheep went backward to their closes
 From out the fair green pastures, self-directed.
 And singing Galatea, thus, he wore
 The sunrise down along the weedy shore,
 And pined alone, and felt the cruel wound
 Beneath his heart, which Cypris' arrow bore,
 With a deep pang ; but, so, the cure was found ;
 And sitting on a lofty rock he cast
 His eyes upon the sea, and sang at last :—

“ O whitest Galatea, can it be
 That thou shouldst spurn me off who love thee so ?
 More white than curds, my girl, thou art to see,
 More meek than lambs, more full of leaping glee
 Than kids, and brighter than the early glow
 On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour like thee !
 Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep,
 And with the fragrant sleep thou goest from me ;
 Thou fliest . . fliest as a frightened sheep
 Flies the grey wolf !—yet Love did overcome me,
 So long ;—I loved thee, maiden, first of all
 When down the hills (my mother fast beside thee)
 I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-fall
 Of hyacinth bells, and went myself to guide thee :
 And since my eyes have seen thee, they can leave thee
 No more, from that day's light ! But thou . . by Zeus,

Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it grieve thee !

I know thee, fair one, why thou springest loose
From my arm round thee. Why ? I tell thee, Dear !

One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudging road
Straight through my ample front, from ear to ear,—

One eye rolls underneath ; and yawning, broad
Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near.

Yet . . ho, ho !—*I*,—whatever I appear,—

Do feed a thousand oxen ! When I have done,
I milk the cows, and drink the milk that 's best !

I lack no cheese, while summer keeps the sun ;
And after, in the cold, it's ready prest !

And then, I know to sing, as there is none
Of all the Cyclops can, . . a song of thee,
Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair tree,
And of myself who love thee . . till the west
Forgets the light, and all but I have rest.

I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair does,

And all in fawn ; and four tame whelps of bears.
Come to me, Sweet ! thou shalt have all of those

In change for love ! I will not halve the shares.
Leave the blue sea, with pure white arms extended

To the dry shore ; and, in my cave's recess,
Thou shalt be gladder for the noonlight ended,—

For here be laurels, spiral cypresses,
Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves enfold
Most luscious grapes ; and here is water cold,

The wooded *Ætna* pours down through the trees
From the white snows,—which gods were scarce too bold
To drink in turn with nectar. Who with these

Would choose the salt wave of the lukewarm seas ?
Nay, look on me ! If I am hairy and rough,

I have an oak's heart in me ; there 's a fire
In these grey ashes which burns hot enough ;

And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge the pyre
No fuel . . not my soul, nor this one eye,—

Most precious thing I have, because thereby
I see thee, Fairest ! Out, alas ! I wish
My mother had borne me finned like a fish,
That I might plunge down in the ocean near thee,
 And kiss thy glittering hand between the weeds,
If still thy face were turned ; and I would bear thee
 Each lily white, and poppy fair that bleeds
Its red heart down its leaves !—one gift, for hours
 Of summer,—one, for winter ; since, to cheer thee,
I could not bring at once all kinds of flowers.
Even now, girl, now, I fain would learn to swim,
 If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I wis,—
 That I may know how sweet a thing it is
To live down with you, in the deep and dim !
Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,
 And having come, forget again to go !
As I, who sing out here my heart's emotion,
 Could sit for ever. Come up from below !
Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk my kine,—
 Come, press my cheese, distrain my whey and curd !
Ah, mother ! she alone . . . that mother of mine . . .
 Did wrong me sore ! I blame her !—Not a word
Of kindly intercession did she address
Thine ear with for my sake ; and ne'ertheless
 She saw me wasting, wasting, day by day ;
 Both head and feet were aching, I will say,
All sick for grief, as I myself was sick.
 O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast thou sent
 Thy soul on fluttering wings ? If thou wert bent
On turning bowls, or pulling green and thick
 The sprouts to give thy lambkins,—thou wouldst make
 thee
 A wiser Cyclops than for what we take thee.
Milk dry the present ! Why pursue too quick
That future which is fugitive aright ?
 Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,—
 Or else a maiden fairer and more kind ;

For many girls do call me through the night,
And, as they call, do laugh out silverly.
I, too, am something in the world, I see !”

While thus the Cyclops love and lambs did fold,
Ease came with song, he could not buy with gold.

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO : FROM ACHILLES TATIUS.

IF Zeus chose us a king of the flowers in his mirth,
He would call to the rose and would royally crown it ;
For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the grace of the earth,
Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it :
For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the eye of the flowers,
Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,
Is the lightning of beauty that strikes through the bowers
On pale lovers who sit in the glow unaware.
Ho, the rose breathes of love ! ho, the rose lifts the cup
To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest !
Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet leaves for the world,
Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
As they laugh to the wind as it laughs from the west !

ANACREON'S ODE TO THE SWALLOW.

THOU indeed, little Swallow,
A sweet yearly comer,
Art building a hollow
New nest every summer,
And straight dost depart
Where no gazing can follow,
Past Memphis, down Nile !
Ah, but Love all the while

Builds his nest in my heart,
Through the cold winter-weeks :
And as one Love takes flight,
Comes another, O Swallow,
In an egg warm and white,
And another is callow !
And the large gaping beaks
Chirp all day and all night :
And the Loves who are older
Help the young and the poor Loves,
And the young Loves grown bolder
Increase by the score Loves—
Why, what can be done ?
If a noise comes from one,
Can I bear all this rout of a hundred and more Loves ?

THE DEAD PAN.

GODS of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence ?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide ? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore ?
Pan, Pan is dead.

In what revels are ye sunken,
In old Æthiopia ?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips, that shiver
Like the lotus in the river ?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Do ye sit there still in slumber
In gigantic Alpine rows ?

The black poppies out of number
 Nodding, dripping from your brows
 To the red lees of your wine,
 And so kept alive and fine?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corsés
 Where the silver spheres roll on,
 Stung to life by centric forces
 Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
 While the smoke of your old altars
 Is the shroud that round you welters?

Great Pan is dead.

“Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,”
 Said the old Hellenic tongue,—
 Said the hero-oaths, as well as
 Poets’ songs the sweetest sung :
 Have ye grown deaf in a day?
 Can ye speak not yea or nay,

Since Pan is dead?

Do you leave your rivers flowing
 All alone, O Naiades,
 While your drenchèd locks dry slow in
 This cold feeble sun and breeze?
 Not a word the Naiads say,
 Though the rivers run for aye ;

For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
 O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
 At the rushing thunderstroke, would
 No sob tremble through the tree?
 Not a word the Dryads say,
 Though the forests wave for aye ;

For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills.
Of the everlasting hills:

Pan, Pan is dead.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities,
Now Pan is dead!

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.

Pan, Pan is dead.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!

Pan, Pan is dead.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
 Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,
 And no hero take inspiring
 From the god-Greek of her lips?
 'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
 Mars the mighty, cursing it?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus ! on the panther
 He swoons, bound with his own vines ;
 And his Mænads slowly saunter,
 Head aside, among the pines,
 While they murmur dreamingly,
 " Evohe—ah—evohe— ! "

Ah, Pan is dead !

Neptune lies beside the trident,
 Dull and senseless as a stone ;
 And old Pluto deaf and silent
 Is cast out into the sun :
 Ceres smileth stern thereat,
 " We *all* now are desolate

Now Pan is dead."

Aphrodite ! dead and driven
 As thy native foam, thou art ;
 With the cestus long done heaving
 On the white calm of thine heart !
Ai Adonis ! at that shriek,
 Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead.

And the Loves, we used to know from
 One another, huddled lie,
 Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
 Close beside her tenderly ;
 As if each had weakly tried
 Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
 All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,
 And the ivy blindly crawleth
 Round thy brave caduceus?
 Hast thou no new message for us,
 Full of thunder and Jove-glories?

Nay, Pan is dead.

Crown'd Cybele's great turret
 Rocks and crumbles on her head;
 Roar the lions of her chariot
 Toward the wilderness, unfed:
 Scornful children are not mute,—
 "Mother, mother, walk afoot

Since Pan is dead!"

In the fiery-hearted centre
 Of the solemn universe,
 Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
 To consume thee with this curse?
 Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
 O thou palsied Mystery!

For Pan is dead.

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—
 Ye return nor voice nor sign!
 Not a votary could secure you
 Even a grave for your Divine:
 Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie.

Pan, Pan is dead.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
 Calls the obolus outworn;
 And the hoarse deep-throated ages
 Laugh your godships unto scorn:
 And the poets do disclaim you,
 Or grow colder if they name you—

And Pan is dead.

Gods bereav'd, gods belated,
 With your purples rent asunder !
 Gods discrowned and desecrated,
 Disinherited of thunder !
 Now, the goats may climb and crop
 The soft grass on Ida's top—
 Now, Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
 When a cry more loud than wind,
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
 From the piled Dark behind ;
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,
 Breathed against by the great wail—
 “ Pan, Pan is dead.”

And the rowers from the benches
 Fell, each shuddering on his face,
 While departing Influences
 Struck a cold back through the place ;
 And the shadow of the ship
 Reeled along the passive deep—
 “ Pan, Pan is dead.”

And that dismal cry rose slowly
 And sank slowly through the air,
 Full of spirit's melancholy
 And eternity's despair !
 And they heard the words it said—
 PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
 PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

'T was the hour when One in Sion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross ;
 When His brow was chill with dying,
 And His soul was faint with loss ;
 When His priestly blood dropped downward,
 And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
 Then, Pan was dead.

By the love He stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete,
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat ;
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—

Pan, Pan was dead.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine ;
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine ;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only :

Pan, Pan was dead.

Pythia staggered, feeling o'er her
Her lost god's forsaking look ;
Straight her eyeballs filled with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook,
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.

Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore !
And I dash down this old chalice
Whence libations ran of yore.
See, the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must,
Since Pan is dead.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track !
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades call you back,
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

By your beauty, which confesses
 Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
 By our grand heroic guesses
 Through your falsehood at the True,—
 We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
 Heir to each god's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
 Sung beside her in her youth,
 And those debonair romances
 Sound but dull beside the truth,
 Phœbus' chariot-course is run :
 Look up, poets, to the sun !

Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels ;
 And the whole earth and the skies
 Are illumed by altar-candles
 Lit for blessèd mysteries ;
 And a Priest's hand through creation
 Waveth calm and consecration :

And Pan is dead.

Truth is fair : should we forego it ?
 Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
 God Himself is the best Poet,
 And the Real is His song.
 Sing His truth out fair and full,
 And secure His beautiful.

Let Pan be dead !

Truth is large : our aspiration
 Scarce embraces half we be.
 Shame, to stand in His creation
 And doubt truth's sufficiency !—
 To think God's song unexcelling
 The poor tales of our own telling—

When Pan is dead !

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure,
All of praise that hath admonisht,
All of virtue, shall endure ;
These are themes for poet's uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses,
Ere Pan was dead.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole :
Look up Godward ; speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul :
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty !
Pan, Pan is dead.

*SONNETS.**THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.*

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night,
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air :
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexed minors : deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear, and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur, "Where is any certain tune
Or measured music in such notes as these ?"
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Are not so minded ; their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for ? Say, to toil ;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign ; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines.
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses ;
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes ! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering :
Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she woke,)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting !

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

YOU see this dog ; it was but yesterday
I mused forgetful of his presence here
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear :
When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray !
I started first as some Arcadian
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove,
But as the bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
The sea, beside the shore ; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends,
The flesh rocks round and every breath it sends
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
Make room for rest, around me ! out of sight
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
Till in deep calms of space my soul may right
Her nature, shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand ! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can :
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light ! that thou to woman's claim
And man's, might'st join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman ! dost deny
The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity ?
Ah, vain denial ! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name : and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire !

LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point in space ;
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round,
In all the countless worlds with time and place
For their conditions, down to the central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast profound,
In full antiphony, by a common grace ?
I think this sudden joyaunce which illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs :
I think this passionate sigh, which half-begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

LOVE you seek for, presupposes
 Summer heat and sunny glow.
 Tell me, do you find moss-roses
 Budding, blooming in the snow?
 Snow might kill the rose-tree's root—
 Shake it quickly from your foot,
 Lest it harm you as you go.

From the ivy where it dapples
 A grey ruin, stone by stone,
 Do you look for grapes or apples,
 Or for sad green leaves alone?
 Pluck the leaves off, two or three—
 Keep them for morality
 When you shall be safe and gone.

*INCLUSIONS.*

OH, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine?
 As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and pine.
 Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, unfit to plight with thine.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to thine own?
 My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run down.
 Now leave a little space, Dear, lest it should wet thine own.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with thy soul?—
 Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand; the part is in the whole;
 Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is joined to soul.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung .
 Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
 Who each one in a gracious hand appears
 To bear a gift for mortals, old or young :
 And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
 I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
 The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
 Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
 A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
 So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
 Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair ;
 And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—
 "Guess now who holds thee !"—"Death," I said. But,
 there,
 The silver answer rang,—“Not Death, but Love.”

II

BUT only three in all God's universe
 Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
 Thee speaking, and me listening ! and replied
 One of us . . . *that* was God, . . . and laid the curse
 So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
 My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
 The death-weights, placed there, would have signified
 Less absolute exclusion. “Nay” is worse
 From God than from all others, O my friend !
 Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
 Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend ;
 Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars :
 And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
 We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely Heart !
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree ?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV

THOU hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems ! where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine ? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door ?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof !
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation ! there 's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my Belovéd, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand further off then ! go !

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore—
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII

THE face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here ;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so ; not cold,—but very poor instead.
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther ! let it serve to trample on.

IX

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
 To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
 As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
 Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
 Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
 For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
 That this can scarce be right! We are not peers
 So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
 That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
 Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
 I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
 Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
 Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
 And worthy of acceptance. Fire is bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light
 Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:
 And love is fire. And when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee—in thy sight
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
 And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
 Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI

AND therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
A melancholy music,—why advert
To these things? O Belovèd, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place !
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace
To live on still in love, and yet in vain,—
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost,—
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own :
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul, we must be meek !)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
 The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
 And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
 Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
 I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
 My hand to hold my spirit so far off
 From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof
 In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
 Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
 Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
 Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
 And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
 By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
 Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV

IF thou must love me, let it be for nought
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say
 "I love her for her smile—her look—her way
 Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
 That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
 For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
 Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore
 Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

XV

ACCUSE me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine ;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline ;
Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory ;
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low !
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth !

XVII

MY poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
 God set between His After and Before,
 And strike up and strike off the general roar
 Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats
 In a serene air purely. Antidotes
 Of medicated music, answering for
 Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
 From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
 Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
 How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use ?
 A hope, to sing by gladly ? or a fine
 Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse ?
 A shade, in which to sing—of palm or pine ?
 A grave, on which to rest from singing ? Choose.

XVIII

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
 To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
 Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
 I ring out to the full brown length and say
 "Take it." My day of youth went yesterday ;
 My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
 Nor plant I it from rose- or myrtle-tree,
 As girls do, any more : it only may
 Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
 Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
 Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
 Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years,
 The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandize ;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
And from my poet's forehead to my heart
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
As purply black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart, . . .
The bay crown's shade, Belovéd, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black !
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadows safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth ;
Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX

BELOVÉD, my Belovéd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sat alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,
Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder ! Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing ! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI

SAY over again, and yet once over again,
 That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
 Should seem a "cuckoo-song," as thou dost treat it.
 Remember, never to the hill or plain,
 Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
 Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
 Belovéd, I, amid the darkness greeted
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
 Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!" Who can fear
 Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
 Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
 Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
 The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
 To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII

WHEN our two souls stand up erect and strong,
 Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
 Until the lengthening wings break into fire
 At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
 Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
 Be here contented? Think! In mounting higher,
 The angels would press on us and aspire
 To drop some golden orb of perfect song
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
 Rather on earth, Belovéd,—where the unfit
 Contrarious moods of men recoil away
 And isolate pure spirits, and permit
 A place to stand and love in for a day,
 With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Belov'd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . . so much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV

LET the world's sharpness like a clasping knife
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer;
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV

A HEAVY heart, Belovèd, have I borne
 From year to year until I saw thy face,
 And sorrow after sorrow took the place
 Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
 As the stringed pearls, each lifted in its turn
 By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
 Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
 Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
 My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
 And let it drop adown thy calmly great
 Deep being ! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
 Which its own nature does precipitate,
 While thine doth close above it, mediating
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI

I LIVED with visions for my company
 Instead of men and women, years ago,
 And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played to me.
 But soon their trailing purple was not free
 Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
 Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours, (better, yet the same,
 As river-water hallowed into fonts)
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants :
 Because God's gifts puts man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII

MY own Belovéd, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss ! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
And I who looked for only God, found *thee* !
I find thee ; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel,
Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII

MY letters ! all dead paper, mute and white !
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said,—he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend : this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it !—this, . . . the paper's light . . .
Said, *Dear I love thee* ; and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past.
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last !

XXIX

I THINK of thee !—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there 's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better ! Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence ; as a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee,
Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered everywhere !
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX

I SEE thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Belovéd, is it thou
Or I, who makes me sad ? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow,
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen.
Belovéd, dost thou love ? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
For my soul's eyes ? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come—falling hot and real ?

XXXI

THOU comest ! all is said without a word.
 I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
 In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
 Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
 Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
 In that last doubt ! and yet I cannot rue
 The sin most, but the occasion—that we two
 Should for a moment stand unministered
 By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
 Thou dove-like help ! and, when my fears would rise,
 With thy broad heart serenely interpose :
 Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
 These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
 Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII

THE first time that the sun rose on thine oath
 To love me, I looked forward to the moon
 To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
 And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
 Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe ;
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
 For such man's love !—more like an out-of-tune
 Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
 To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
 I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
 A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
 'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
 And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII

YES, call me by my pet-name ! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God—call God !—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

XXXIV

WITH the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise ! is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy ?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought, break from solitude ;
Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—
Not as to a single good, but all my good !
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV

IF I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors, another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove,
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI

WHEN we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
Lest these enclasp'd hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
And Love, be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should make
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranity, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit.
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write ;
And ever since, it grew more clean and white,
Slow to world-greetings, quick with its " Oh, list,"
When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed !
That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third upon my lips was folded down
In perfect, purple state ; since when, indeed,
I have been proud and said, " My love, my own."



XXXIX

BECAUSE thou hast the power and own'st the grace
 To look through and behind this mask of me,
 (Against which, years have beat thus blanchingly
 With their rains,) and behold my soul's true face,
 The dim and weary witness of life's race,—
 Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
 Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
 The patient angel waiting for a place
 In the new Heavens,—because nor sin nor woe,
 Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
 Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,
 Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed,—
 Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest, teach me so
 To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good !

XL

OH, yes ! they love through all this world of ours !
 I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth :
 I have heard love talked in my early youth,
 And since, not so long back but that the flowers
 Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
 For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
 Slips on the nut if, after frequent showers,
 The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
 Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate
 Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
 A lover, my Belovèd ! thou canst wait
 Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
 And think it soon when others cry "Too late."

XLI

I THANK all who have loved me in their hearts,
 With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
 Who paused a little near the prison-wall
 To hear my music in its louder parts
 Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
 Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
 But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
 When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
 Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot
 To harken what I said between my tears, . . .
 Instruct me how to thank thee ! Oh, to shoot
 My soul's full meaning into future years,
 That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
 Love that endures, from Life that disappears !

XLII

" My future will not copy fair my past "—
 I wrote that once ; and thinking at my side
 My ministering life-angel justified
 The word by his appealing look upcast
 To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
 And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
 To angels in thy soul ! Then I, long tried
 By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
 While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
 Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled.
 I seek no copy now of life's first half :
 Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
 And write me new my future's epigraph,
 New angel mine, unhopèd for in the world !

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of everyday's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
 I love thee freely, as men strive for Right ;
 I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
 I love thee with the passion put to use
 In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
 I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
 With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
 Smiles, tears, of all my life !—and, if God choose,
 I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many flowers
 Plucked in the garden, all the summer through,
 And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
 In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
 So, in the like name of that love of ours,
 Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
 And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
 From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
 Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
 And wait thy weeding ; yet here's eglantine,
 Here's ivy !—take them, as I used to do
 Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
 Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
 And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.

CALLS ON THE HEART

FREE Heart, that singest to-day
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world
Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer thine own will bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the free behind?
Heart, wilt thou go?

—“No, no !

“Free hearts are better so.”

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand ;
The world goes riding it fair and grand,
While the truth is bought and sold ;
World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest
“Come hither, come hither and be our guest.
Heart, wilt thou go?

—“No, no !

“Good hearts are calmer so.”

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
With a golden heft to his knife ;
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life ;
World's Gain, with a brow knit down ;
World's Fame, with a laurel crown
Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown :
Heart, wilt thou go?

—“No, no !

“Calm hearts are wiser so.”

Hast heard that Proserpina
 (Once fooling) was snatched away
 To partake the dark king's seat,
 And the tears ran fast on her feet
 To think how the sun shone yesterday?
 With her ankles sunken in asphodel
 She wept for the roses of earth which fell
 From her lap when the wild car drave to hell.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 “Wise hearts are warmer so.”

And what is this place not seen,
 Where Hearts may hide serene?
 “’T is a fair still house well-kept,
 “Which humble thoughts have swept,
 “And holy prayers made clean.
 “There, I sit with Love in the sun,
 “And we two never have done
 “Singing sweeter songs than are guessed by *one*.”
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 “Warm hearts are fuller so.”

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
 That Love may be kept too near.
 Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
 How Love may be false and frail
 To a Heart once holden dear?
 —“But this true Love of mine
 “Clings fast as the clinging vine,
 “And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.”
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“No, no!
 “Full hearts beat higher so.”

O Heart, O Love, beware !
Look up, and boast not there,
For who has twirled at the pin ?
'T is the World, between Death and Sin,—
The World and the World's Despair !
And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own place.
Heart, wilt thou go ?
—“ Still, no !
“ High hearts must grieve even so.”

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,
The thorn, prickd through to the song :
If summer doeth no wrong
The winter will, they say.
Sing, Heart ! what heart replies ?
In vain we were calm and wise,
If the tears unkissed stand on in our eyes.
Heart, wilt thou go ?
—“ Ah, no !
“ Grieved hearts must break even so.”

Howbeit all is not lost.
The warm noon ends in frost,
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells die off from us
On the desert hills cloud-crossed :
Yet through the silence shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And “ Come up hither,” recover all.
Heart, wilt thou go ?
—“ I go !
“ Broken hearts triumph so.”

CONFESSIONS.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw
her :

God and she and I only, there I sat down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession,—“Speak, I am
holding thee fast,

As the angel of resurrection shall do it at the last !”

“My cup is blood-red

With my sin,” she said,

“And I pour it out to the bitter lees,

As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the
last

Or as thou wert as these.”

When God smote His hands together, and struck out thy
soul as a spark

Into the organized glory of things, from deeps of the
dark,—

Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honour
the power in the form,

As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the little
ground-worm?

“I have sinned,” she said,

“For my seed-light shed

Has smouldered away from His first decrees.

The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth
the worm ;

I am viler than these.”

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample
thee straight

With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light
found inadequate ;

When He only sent thee the north-wind, a little searching
 and chill,
 To quicken thy flame—didst thou kindle and flash to
 the heights of His will?
 “ I have sinned,” she said,
 “ Unquickened, unspread
 My fire dropt down, and I wept on my knees :
 I only said of His winds of the north as I shrank from
 their chill,
 What delight is in these ? ”

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as such,
 But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the
 world to thy touch,
 At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to
 prove it afar,
 Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it
 out like a star ?
 “ I have sinned,” she said,
 “ And not merited
 The gift He gives, by the grace He sees !
 The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side praiseth
 the star ;
 I am viler than these.”

Then I cried aloud in my passion,—“ Unthankful and
 impotent creature,
 To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents in
 thy beggarly nature !
 If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so unduly,
 what then
 Hast thou done to the weak and the false and the
 changing,—thy fellows of men ? ”
 “ I have *loved*,” she said,
 (Words bowing her head
 As the wind the wet acacia-trees,)

“ I saw God sitting above me, but I . . . I sat among men,
And I have loved these.”

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing
breaks

On the air with it solemn and clear,—“ Behold ! I have
sinned not in this !

Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have
verily loved not amiss.

Let the living,” she said,

“ Inquire of the dead,

In the house of the pale-fronted images :

My own true dead will answer for me, that I have not
loved amiss

In my love for all these.

“ The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it
by day and by night ;

Their least step on the stair, at the door, still throbs
through me, if ever so light ;

Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off
in the long-ago years,

Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through
the crystals of tears.

Dig the snow,” she said,

“ For my churchyard bed,

Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,

If one only of these my beloveds, shall love me with
heart-warm tears,

As I have loved these !

“ If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own
life was sore ;

If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their
memory more :

Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes
called sweet ;
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down
straight at their feet.
 I have loved," she said,—
 " Man is weak, God is dread,
 Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured such an unguent of love but once on the
 Saviour's feet,
 As I lavished for these."

" Go," I cried, " thou hast chosen the Human, and left
the Divine !
Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their
wild berry-wine?
Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers
approached thee with blame,
Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved
thee the same ?"
 But she shrunk and said,
 " God, over my head,
 Must sweep in the wrath of His judgment-seas,
If *He* shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed the
 same
 And no gentler than these."



A MANS REQUIREMENTS.

LOVE me, Sweet, with all thou art,
 Feeling, thinking, seeing ;
Love me in the lightest part,
 Love me in full being.

Love me with thine open youth
In its frank surrender ;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting ;
Taking colour from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting ?

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting ;
Love me with thine heart, that all
Neighbours then see beating.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open-minded :
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me ;
Love me with thy blush that burns
When I murmur, *Love me !*

Love me with thy thinking soul,
Break it to love-sighing ;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady ;
Love me gaily, fast and true,
As a winsome lady.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,
And for something higher.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, Dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half a year—
As a man is able.



THE LADY'S YES.

"YES," I answered you last night ;
"No," this morning, sir, I say :
Colours seen by candle-light
Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
Lamps above and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

Call me false or call me free,
Vow, whatever light may shine,—
No man on your face shall see
Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both ;
Time to dance is not to woo ;
Wooing light makes fickle troth,
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death,
With a loyal gravity.

THE LADY'S YES.

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies ;
Guard her by your truthful words,
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true, as wives of yore ;
And her *yes*, once said to you,
SHALL be Yes for evermore.

*MAY'S LOVE.*

YOU love all, you say,
Round, beneath, above me :
Find me then some way
Better than to love me,
Me, too, dearest May !
O world-kissing eyes
Which the blue heavens melt to !
I, sad, otherwise,
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
All things—men and flies.

You love all, you say :
Therefore, Dear, abate me
Just your love, I pray !
Shut your eyes and hate me—
Only *me*—fair May !

*AMY'S CRUELTY.*

FAIR Amy of the terraced house,
Assist me to discover
Why you who would not hurt a mouse
Can torture so your lover.

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

But when *he* haunts your door . . the town
Marks coming and marks going . .
You seem to have stitched your eyelids down
To that long piece of sewing !

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a ' Good-morning,'
To keep his long day warm and blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

She shook her head—" The mouse and bee
For crumb or flower will linger :
The dog is happy at my knee,
The cat purrs at my finger.

" But *he* . . to *him*, the least thing given
Means great things at a distance ;
He wants my world, my sun, my heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

" They say love gives as well as takes ;
But I 'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

" I only know my mother's love
Which gives all and asks nothing,
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

" Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him :
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt, . . deny him.

" He 's sweetest friend, or hardest foe,
 Best angel, or worst devil ;
 I either hate or . . love him so,
 I can't be merely civil !

" You trust a woman who puts forth,
 Her blossoms thick as summer's ?
 You think she dreams what love is worth,
 Who casts it to new-comers ?

" Such love 's a cowslip-ball to fling,
 A moment's pretty pastime ;
 I give . . all me, if anything,
 The first time and the last time.

" Dear neighbour of the trellised house,
 A man should murmur never,
 Though treated worse than dog or mouse,
 Till doted on for ever !"



MY KATE.

SHE was not as pretty as women I know,
 And yet all your best made of sunshine and snow
 Drop to shade, melt to nought in the long-trodden ways,
 While she 's still remembered on warm and cold days—
My Kate.

Her air had a meaning, her movements a grace ;
 You turned from the fairest to gaze on her face :
 And when you had once seen her forehead and mouth,
 You saw as distinctly her soul and her truth—
My Kate.

Such a blue inner light from her eyelids outbroke,
 You looked at her silence and fancied she spoke :

When she did, so peculiar yet soft was the tone,
 Though the loudest spoke also, you heard her alone—
 My Käte.

I doubt if she said to you much that could act
 As a thought or suggestion : she did not attract
 In the sense of the brilliant or wise : I infer
 'T was her thinking of others, made you think of her—
 My Kate.

She never found fault with you, never implied
 Your wrong by her right ; and yet men at her side
 Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the whole town
 The children were gladder that pulled at her gown—
 My Kate.

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers in thrall ;
 They knelt more to God than they used,—that was all ;
 If you praised her as charming, some asked what you
 meant,
 But the charm of her presence was felt when she went—
 My Kate.

The weak and the gentle, the ribald and rude,
 She took as she found them, and did them all good :
 It always was so with her : see what you have !
 She has made the grass greener even here . . with her
 grave—
 My Kate.

My dear one !—when thou wast alive with the rest,
 I held thee the sweetest and loved thee the best :
 And now thou art dead, shall I not take thy part
 As thy smiles used to do for thyself, my sweet Heart—
 My Kate ?



A FALSE STEP

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.
 Pass ! there's a world full of men
 And women as fair as thou art
 Must do such things now and then.
 Thou only hast stepped unaware,—
 Malice, not one can impute ;
 And why should a heart have been there
 In the way of a fair woman's foot ?
 It was not a stone that could trip,
 Nor was it a thorn that could rend :
 Put up thy proud underlip !
 'T was merely the heart of a friend.
 And yet peradventure one day
 Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
 Remarking the bloom gone away,
 Where the smile in its dimplement was,
 And seeking around thee in vain
 From hundreds who flattered before,
 Such a word as, " Oh, not in the main
 Do I hold thee less precious, but more !"
 Thou 'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,
 " Of all I have known or can know,
 I wish I had only that Heart
 I trod upon ages ago !"

*THE MASK.*

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
 I have a jest for all I meet,
 I have a garland for my head
 And all its flowers are sweet,—
 And so you call me gay, she said.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold ;
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled
And what now will you say ? she said.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness dying suns diffuse :
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,
The ending of my day, she said.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,
It were the happier way, she said.

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve !
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear ;
'T is bought with pangs long nourish'd,
And rounded to despair :
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

Ye weep for those who weep ? she said—
Ah fools ! I bid you pass them by.

Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say ? she said.



A YEAR'S SPINNING.

HE listened at the porch that day,
To hear the wheel go on, and on ;
And then it stopped, ran back away,
While through the door he brought the sun :
But now my spinning is all done.

He sat beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun :
I smiled—believing for us both,
What was the truth for only one.
And now my spinning is all done.

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun :
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
For I have, since, a harder known !
And now my spinning is all done.

I thought—O God !—my first-born's cry
Both voices to mine ear would drown :
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence* made me groan !
And now my spinning is all done.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave
(Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)
And my dead baby's (God it save !)
Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone !

Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead,
 " This sinner was a loving one—
 And now her spinning is all done."

And let the door ajar remain,
 In case he should pass by anon ;
 And leave the wheel out very plain,—
 That HE, when passing in the sun,
 May see the spinning is all done.



CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

FIVE months ago, the stream did flow,
 The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
 And we were lingering to and fro,
 Where none will track thee in this snow,
 Along the stream, beside the hedge.
 Ah, Sweet, be free to love and go !
 For if I do not hear thy foot,
 The frozen river is as mute,
 The flowers have dried down to the root :
 And why, since these be changed since May,
 Shouldst *thou* change less than *they* ?

And slow, slow as the winter snow,
 The tears have drifted to mine eyes ;
 And my poor cheeks, five months ago
 Set blushing at thy praises so,
 Put paleness on for a disguise.
 Ah, Sweet, be free to praise and go !
 For if my face is turned too pale,
 It was thine oath that first did fail,—
 It was thy love proved false and frail :
 And why, since these be changed enow,
 Should *I* change less than *thou* ?

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my breast
 The last drop of milk that was good ;
 And now, in a dream, suck the rest,
 Lest the real should trouble thy blood.
 Suck, little lips dispossessed,
 As we kiss in the air whom we would.
 Sleep.

O lips of thy father ! the same,
 So like ! Very deeply they swore
 When he gave me his ring and his name,
 To take back, I imagined, no more !
 And now is all changed like a game,*
 Though the old cards are used as of yore ?
 Sleep.

"Void in law," said the courts. Something wrong
 In the forms ? Yet, "Till death part us two,
 I, James, take thee, Jessie," was strong,
 And ONE witness competent. True
 Such a marriage was worth an old song,
 Heard in Heaven, though, as plain as the New.
 Sleep.

Sleep, little child, his and mine !
 Her throat has the antelope curve,
 And her cheek just the colour and line
 Which fade not before him nor swerve :
 Yet *she* has no child !—the divine
 Seal of right upon loves that deserve.
 Sleep.

My child ! though the world take her part,
 Saying, "She was the woman to choose,
 He had eyes, was a man in his heart,"—
 We twain the decision refuse :
 We . . . weak as I am, as thou art, . . .
 Cling on to him, never to loose.
 Sleep.

He thinks that, when done with this place,
 All 's ended? he 'll new-stamp the ore?
 Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case.

Let him learn we are waiting before
 The grave's mouth, the Heaven's gate, God's face,
 With implacable love evermore.
 Sleep.

He 's ours, though he kissed her but now;
 He 's ours, though she kissed in reply;
 He 's ours, though himself disavow,
 And God's universe favour the lie;
 Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours below,
 Ours above, . . . if we live, if we die.
 Sleep.

Ah baby, my baby, too rough
 Is my lullaby? What have I said?
 Sleep! When I 've wept long enough
 I shall learn to weep softly instead,
 And piece with some alien stuff
 My heart to lie smooth for thy head.
 Sleep.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet;
 Two loves led thee out to the sun:
 Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
 If the one who remains (only one)
 Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat
 To thine enemy,—were it well done?
 Sleep.

May He of the manger stand near
 And love thee! An infant He came
 To His own who rejected Him here,
 But the Magi brought gifts all the same
 I hurry the cross on my Dear!
 My gifts are the griefs I declaim!
 Sleep.

MY HEART AND I.

ENOUGH ! we're tired, my heart and I.
We sit beside the headstone thus,
And wish that name were carved for us.
The moss reprints more tenderly
The hard types of the mason's knife,
As Heaven's sweet life renews earth's life
With which we're tired, my heart and I.

You see we're tired, my heart and I.
We dealt with books, we trusted men,
And in our own blood drenched the pen,
As if such colours could not fly.
We walked too straight for fortune's end,
We loved too true to keep a friend ;
At last we're tired, my heart and I.

How tired we feel, my heart and I !
We seem of no use in the world ;
Our fancies hang grey and uncurled
About men's eyes indifferently ;
Our voice which thrilled you so, will let
You sleep ; our tears are only wet :
What do we here, my heart and I ?

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !
It was not thus in that old time
When Ralph sat with me 'neath the lime
To watch the sunset from the sky.
"Dear love, you're looking tired," he said :
I, smiling at him, shook my head.
'T is now we're tired, my heart and I.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !
Though now none takes me on his arm
To fold me close and kiss me warm

Till each quick breath end in a sigh
 Of happy languor. Now, alone,
 We lean upon this graveyard stone,
 Uncheered, unkissed, my heart and I.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
 Suppose the world brought diadems
 To tempt us, crusted with loose gems
 Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.
 We scarcely care to look at even
 A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,
 We feel so tired, my heart and I.

Yet who complains? My heart and I?
 In this abundant earth no doubt
 Is little room for things worn out :
 Disdain them, break them, throw them by !
 And if before the days grew rough
 We *once* were loved, used,—well enough,
 I think, we 've fared, my heart and I.



THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD.

WHAT 's the best thing in the world ?
 June-rose, by May-dew impearled ;
 Sweet south-wind, that means no rain ;
 Truth, not cruel to a friend ;
 Pleasure, not in haste to end ;
 Beauty, not self-decked and curled
 Till its pride is over-plain ;
 Light, that never makes you wink ;
 Memory, that gives no pain ;
 Love, when, so, you 're loved again.
 What 's the best thing in the world ?
 —Something out of it, I think.

"DIED . . ."

(The "Times" Obituary.)

WHAT shall we add now? He is dead.
And I who praise and you who blame,
With wash of words across his name,
Find suddenly declared instead—
"On Sunday, third of August, dead."

Which stops the whole we talked to-day.
I, quickened to a plausible glance
At his large general tolerance
By common people's narrow way,
Stopped short in praising. Dead, they say.

And you, who had just put in a sort
Of cold deduction—"rather, large
Through weakness of the continent marge,
Than greatness of the thing contained"—
Broke off. Dead!—there, you stood restrained.

As if we had talked in following one
Up some long gallery. "Would you choose
An air like that? The gait is loose—
Or noble." Sudden in the sun
An oubliette winks. Where *is* he? Gone.

Dead. Man's "I was" by God's "I am"—
All hero-worship comes to that.
High heart, high thought, high fame, as flat
As a gravestone. Bring your *Facet jam*—
The epitaph's an epigram.

Dead. There's an answer to arrest
All carping. Dust's his natural place?
He'll let the flies buzz round his face
And, though you slander, not protest?
—From such an one, exact the Best?

Opinions gold or brass are null.
 We chuck our flattery or abuse,
 Called Cæsar's due, as Charon's dues,
 I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,
 To mend the grinning of a skull.

Be abstinent in praise or blame.
 The man 's still mortal, who stands first,
 And mortal only, if last and worst.
 Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
 Or softly drop so poor a shame.



ONLY A CURL.

FRIENDS, of faces unknown and a land
 Unvisited over the sea,
 Who tell me how lonely you stand
 With a single gold curl in the hand
 Held up to be looked at by me,—
 While you ask me to ponder and say
 What a father and mother can do,
 With the bright fellow-locks put away
 Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay
 Where the violets press nearer than you.
 Shall I speak like a poet, or run
 Into weak woman's tears for relief?
 Oh, children !—I never lost one,—
 Yet my arm 's round my own little son,
 And Love knows the secret of Grief.
 And I feel what it must be and is,
 When God draws a new angel so
 Through the house of a man up to His,
 With a murmur of music, you miss,
 And a rapture of light, you forego.

How you think, staring on at the door,
Where the face of your angel flashed in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

"God lent him and takes him," you sigh
—Nay, there let me break with your pain :
God's generous in giving, say I,—
And the thing which He gives, I deny
That He ever can take back again.

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes—in the hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us,—while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power,

And the babe cries !—has each of us known
By apocalypse (God being there
Full in nature) the child is our own,
Life of life, love of love, moan of moan.
Through all changes, all times, everywhere.

He's ours and for ever. Believe,
O father !—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance. To give
Means with God not to tempt or deceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

He gives what He gives. Be content !
He resumes nothing given,—be sure !
God lend ? Where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant He went
And scourged away all those impure.

He lends not ; but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it seem

That He draws back a gift, comprehend
 'T is to add to it rather,—amend,
 And finish it up to your dream,—

Or keep,—as a mother will toys
 Too costly, though given by herself,
 Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
 And the children more fit for such joys,
 Kept over their heads on the shelf.

So look up, friends, you, who indeed
 Have possessed in your house a sweet piece
 Of the Heaven which men strive for, must need
 Be more earnest than others are,—speed
 Where they loiter, persist where they cease.

You know how one angel smiles there.
 Then weep not. 'T is easy for you
 To be drawn by a single gold hair
 Of that curl, from earth's storm and despair,
 To the safe place above us. Adieu.



A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN, JULY 1848. DIED, NOVEMBER 1849.

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth,
 What country should we give her?
 Instead of any on the earth,
 The civic Heavens receive her.

And here among the English tombs
 In Tuscan ground we lay her,
 While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
 Our English words of prayer.

A little child !—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned :
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

Bright-featured, as the July sun
Her little face still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her ;
She looked such kinship to the flowers,
Was but a little taller.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence.

We could not wish her whiter,—her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom !

This July creature thought perhaps
Our speech not worth assuming ;
She sat upon her parents' laps
And mimicked the gnat's humming ;

Said " father," " mother "—then left off,
For tongues celestial, fitter ;
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter.

Babes ! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them.
" Let little children come to Me,
And do not thou forbid them."

So, unforbidding, have we met,
 And gently here have laid her,
 Though winter is no time to get
 The flowers that should o'erspread her :

We should bring pansies quick with spring,
 Rose, violet, daffodilly,
 And also, above everything,
 White lilies for our Lily.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts,—
 Glad, grateful attestations
 Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
 With calm renunciations.

Her very mother with light feet
 Should leave the place too earthy,
 Saying, "The angels have thee, Sweet,
 Because we are not worthy."

But winter kills the orange-buds,
 The gardens in the frost are,
 And all the heart dissolves in floods,
 Remembering we have lost her.

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too weak
 To miss the July shining !
 Poor heart !—what bitter words we speak
 When God speaks of resigning !

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
 Thou God, the self-existent !
 We catch up wild at parting saints,
 And feel Thy heaven too distant.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
 Has ruffled all our vesture :
 On the shut door that let them in,
 We beat with frantic gesture,—

"To us, us also, open straight !
The outer life is chilly ;
Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait
Till next year for our Lily?"

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure,
At every word I write like these,
Clasped close with stronger pressure :

Too well my own heart understands,—
At every word beats fuller—
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's colour !

But God gives patience, Love learns strength,
And Faith remembers promise,
And Hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,
Through struggle, made more glorious :
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
Renouncing yet victorious.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts
With spirit unbereaven,—
"God will not all take back His gifts ;
My Lily's mine in Heaven.

"Still mine ! maternal rights serene
Not given to another !
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

"Meanwhile," the mother cries, "content !
Our love was well divided :
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.

“ Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness ;
To us, the empty room and cot,—
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

“ To us, this grave,—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in ;
To us, the silence in the house,—
To her, the choral singing.

“ For her, to gladden in God's view,—
For us, to hope and bear on.
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon !

“ Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
In love more calm than this is,
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses !

“ While none shall tell thee of our tears,
These human tears now falling,
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in—

“ Child, father, mother—who, left out ?
Not mother, and not father !
And when, our dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

“ Some smiling angel close shall stand
In old Correggio's fashion,
And bear a LILY in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION.



LITTLE MATTIE.

DEAD ! Thirteen a month ago !
Short and narrow her life's walk.
Lover's love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk :
Too young to be glad of youth,
Missing honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this
And for all the loss it is,
You, her mother, with wet face,
Having had all in your case ?

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death.
Meek, obedient in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday ! Yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched ! An hour matures :
You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid :
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
Down her patient locks of silk,
Cold and passive as in truth
You your fingers in spilt milk
Drew along a marble floor ;
But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
"Yes," or "No," or such a thing :

Though you call and beg and wreak
Half your soul out in a shriek,
She will lie there in default
And most innocent revolt.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be
She would answer like the Son,
"What is now 'twixt thee and me?"
Dreadful answer! better none.

Yours on Monday, God's to-day!
Yours, your child, your blood, your heart,
Called . . . you called her, did you say,
"Little Mattie" for your part?
Now already it sounds strange,
And you wonder, in this change,
What He calls His angel-creature,
Higher up than you can reach her.

'T was a green and easy world
As she took it; room to play,
(Though one's hair might get uncurled
At the far end of the day).

What she suffered she shook off
In the sunshine; what she sinned
She could pray on high enough
To keep safe above the wind.
If reproved by God or you,
'T was to better her, she knew;
And if crossed, she gathered still
T was to cross out something ill.

You, you had the right, you thought,
To survey her with sweet scorn,
Poor gay child, who had not caught
Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
Of your larger wisdom! Nay,
Now, your places are changed so,

In that same superior way
She regards you dull and low
As you did herself exempt
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
Of the spirits risen awhile,
Who look back with such a smile !

There 's the sting of 't. That, I think,
Hurts the most a thousandfold.
To feel sudden, at a wink,
Some dear child we used to scold,
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease
Teach and tumble as our own,
All its curls about our knees,—
Rise up suddenly full-grown.
Who could wonder such a sight
Made a woman mad outright ?
Show me Michael with the sword
Rather than such angels, Lord !

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

EMPEROR, Emperor !
From the centre to the shore,
From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore
By their manhood's right divine
So to elect and legislate,
This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate
And leagued kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.
Emperor
Evermore.

With a universal shout
They took the old regalia out
 From an open grave that day ;
 From a grave that would not close,
Where the first Napoleon lay
 Expectant, in repose,
As still as Merlin, with his conquering face
 Turned up in its unquenchable appeal
To men and heroes of the advancing race,—
 Prepared to set the seal
Of what has been on what shall be.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

The thinkers stood aside
 To let the nation act.
 Some hated the new-constituted fact
Of empire, as pride treading on their pride.
Some quailed, lest what was poisonous in the past
 Should graft itself in that Druidic bough
 On this green Now.
Some cursed, because at last
The open heavens to which they had look'd in vain
For many a golden fall of marvellous rain
Were closed in brass ; and some
Wept on because a gone thing could not come ;
And some were silent, doubting all things for
 That popular conviction,—evermore
 Emperor.

That day I did not hate
 Nor doubt, nor quail nor curse.
I, reverencing the people, did not bate
My reverence of their deed and oracle,
Nor vainly prate
 Of better and of worse

Against the great conclusion of their will.
 And yet, O voice and verse,
 Which God set in me to acclaim and sing
 Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
 We gave no music to the patent thing,
 Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb and swim
 About the name of him
 Translated to the sphere of domination
 By democratic passion !
 I was not used, at least,
 Nor can be, now or then,
 To stroke the ermine beast
 On any kind of throne,
 (Though builded by a nation for its own,)
 And swell the surging choir for kings of men—
 “ Emperor
 Evermore.”

But now, Napoleon, now
 That, leaving far behind the purple throng
 Of vulgar monarchs, thou
 Tread'st higher in thy deed
 Than stair of throne can lead,
 To help in the hour of wrong
 The broken hearts of nations to be strong,—
 Now, lifted as thou art
 To the level of pure song,
 We stand to meet thee on these Alpine snows !
 And while the palpitating peaks break out
 Ecstatic from somnambular repose
 With answers to the presence and the shout,
 We, poets of the people, who take part
 With elemental justice, natural right,
 Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
 We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this height
 At last, and find thee great enough to praise.

Receive the poet's chrism; which smells beyond
The priest's, and pass thy ways !
An English poet warns thee to maintain
God's word, not England's :—let His truth be true,
And all men liars ! with His truth respond
To all men's lie. Exalt the sword and smite
On that long anvil of the Apennine
Where Austria forged the Italian chain in view
Of seven consenting nations, sparks of fine
Admonitory light,
Till men's eyes wink before convictions new.
Flash in God's justice to the world's amaze,
Sublime Deliverer !—after many days
Found worthy of the deed thou art come to do—
Emperor
Evermore.

But Italy, my Italy,
Can it last, this gleam ?
Can she live and be strong,
Or is it another dream
Like the rest we have dreamed so long ?
And shall it, must it be,
That after the battle-cloud has broken
She will die off again
Like the rain,
Or like a poet's song
Sung of her, sad at the end
Because her name is Italy,—
Die and count no friend ?
Is it true,—may it be spoken,—
That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast,
And a flower in her hand,
And a grave-stone under her head,
While every nation at will

Beside her has dared to stand,
 And flout her with pity and scorn,
 Saying, "She is at rest,
 She is fair, she is dead,
 And, leaving room in her stead
 To Us who are later born,
 This is certainly best!"
 Saying, "Alas, she is fair,
 Very fair, but dead,—give place,
 And so we have room for the race,"
 —Can it be true, be true,
 That she lives anew?
 That she rises up at the shout of her sons,
 At the trumpet of France,
 And lives anew?—is it true
 That she has not moved in a trance,
 As in Forty-eight?

When her eyes were troubled with blood
 Till she knew not friend from foe,
 Till her hand was caught in a strait
 Of her cerement and baffled so
 From doing the deed she would;
 And her weak foot stumbled across
 The grave of a king,
 And down she dropt at heavy loss,
 And we gloomily covered her face and said,
 "We have dreamed the thing;
 She is not alive, but dead."

Now, shall we say
 Our Italy lives indeed?
 And if it were not for the beat and bray
 Of drum and trump of martial men,
 Should we feel the underground heave and strain,
 Where heroes left their dust as a seed
 Sure to emerge one day?

And if it were not for the rhythmic march
Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,
Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book, and stone,
That Italy is not dead at all?
Ay, if it were not for the tears in our eyes,
These tears of a sudden passionate joy,
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked are overthrown,
Italy, Italy? loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy
When the hand that bears the flag is brave,
And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown
Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass !

Ay, it is so, even so.
Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and missed her way
Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.
And each man stands with his face in the light
Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,

As a man and a patriot can.
 Piedmontese, Neapolitan,
 Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
 Each man's body having a soul,—
 Count how many they stand,
 All of them sons of the land,
 Every live man there
 Allied to a dead man below,
 And the dearest with blood to spare
 To quicken a living hand
 In case it should ever be slow.
 Count how many they come
 To the beat of Piedmont's drum,
 With faces keener and grayer
 Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
 All set against the foe.
 "Emperor
 Evermore."

Out of the dust, where they ground them,
 Out of the holes, where they dogged them,
 Out of the hulks, where they wound them
 In iron, tortured and flogged them ;
 Out of the streets, where they chased them,
 Taxed them, and then bayoneted them,—
 Out of the homes, where they spied on them,
 (Using their daughters and wives),
 Out of the church, where they fretted them,
 Rotted their souls and debased them,
 Trained them to answer with knives,
 Then cursed them all at their prayers !—
 Out of cold lands, not theirs,
 Where they exiled them, starved them, lied on them—
 Back they come like a wind, in vain
 Cramped up in the hills, that roars its road
 The stronger into the open plain ;

Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,
Serving better the ends of the potter ;
Or like a restrained word of God.
Fulfilling itself by what seems to hinder.
“ Emperor
Evermore.”

Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the helper and doer.
Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring,
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the council and charge !
Shout for the head of Cavour ;
And shout for the heart of a King
That 's great with a nation's joy !
Shout for France and Savoy !

Take up the child, Macmahon, though
Thy hand be red
From Magenta's dead,
And riding on, in front of the troop,
In the dust of the whirlwind of war
Through the gate of the city of Milan, stoop
And take up the child to thy saddle-bow,
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower of his smile as
clear as a star !
Thou hast a right to the child, we say,
Since the women are weeping for joy as they
Who, by thy help and from this day,
Shall be happy mothers indeed.

They are raining flowers from terrace and roof :
 Take up the flower in the child.
 While the shout goes up of a nation freed
 And heroically self-reconciled,
 Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof
 Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
 And all those cold white marble fires
 Of mounting saints on the Duomo-spires
 Flicker against the Blue.
 "Emperor
 Evermore."

Ay, it is He,
 Who rides at the King's right hand !
 Leave room to his horse and draw to the side
 Nor press too near in the ecstasy
 Of a newly delivered impassioned land :
 He is moved, you see,
 He who has done it all.
 They call it a cold stern face :
 But this is Italy
 Who rises up to her place !—
 For this he fought in his youth,
 Of this he dreamed in the past ;
 The lines of the resolute mouth
 Tremble a little at last.
 Cry, he has done it all !
 "Emperor
 Evermore."

It is not strange that he did it,
 Though the deed may seem to strain
 To the wonderful, unpermitted,
 For such as lead and reign.
 But he is strange, this man :
 The people's instinct found him
 A wind in the dark that ran

Through a chink where was no door),
And elected him and crowned him
Emperor
Evermore.

Autocrat ? let them scoff,
Who fail to comprehend
That a ruler incarnate of
The people, must transcend
All common king-born kings.
These subterranean springs
A sudden outlet winning
Have special virtues to spend.
The people's blood runs through him,
Dilates from head to foot,
Creates him absolute,
And from this great beginning
Evokes a greater end
To justify and renew him—
Emperor
Evermore.

What ! did any maintain
That God or the people (think !)
Could make a marvel in vain ?—
Out of the water-jar there,
Draw wine that none could drink ?
Is this a man like the rest,
This miracle, made unaware
By a rapture of popular air,
And caught to the place that was best ?
You think he could barter and cheat
As vulgar diplomates use,
With the people's heart in his breast ?
Prate a lie into shape
Lest truth should cumber the road ;
Play at the fast and loose
Till the world is strangled with tape ;

Maim the soul's complete
 To fit the hole of a toad ;
 And filch the dogman's meat
 To feed the offspring of God ?

Nay, but he, this wonder,
 He cannot palter nor prate,
 Though many around him and under,
 With intellects trained to the curve
 Distrust him in spirit and nerve
 Because his meaning is straight.
 Measure him ere he depart
 With those who have governed and led ;
 Larger so much by the heart,
 Larger so much by the head.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

He holds that, consenting or dissident,
 Nations must move with the time ;
 Assumes that crime with a precedent
 Doubles the guilt of the crime ;
 —Denies that a slaver's bond,
 Or a treaty signed by knaves,
 (*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
 Was one of an honest name)
 Gives an inexpugnable claim
 To abolish men into slaves.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

He will not swagger nor boast
 Of his country's meeds, in a tone
 Missuiting a great man most
 If such should speak of his own ;
 Nor will he act, on her side,
 From motives baser, indeed,

Than a man of noble pride
Can avow for himself at need ;
Never, for lucre or laurels,
Or custom, though such should be rife,
Adapting the smaller morals
To measure the larger life.
He, though the merchants persuade,
And the soldiers are eager for strife,
Finds not his country in quarrels
Only to find her in trade,—
While still he accords her such honour
As never to flinch for her sake
Where men put service upon her,
Found heavy to undertake
And scarcely like to be paid :
Believing a nation may act
Unselfishly—shiver a lance
(As the least of her sons may, in fact)
And not for a cause of finance.
Emperor
Evermore.

Great is he,
Who uses his greatness for all.
His name shall stand perpetually
As a name to applaud and cherish,
Not only within the civic wall
For the loyal, but also without
For the generous and free.
Just is he,
Who is just for the popular due
As well as the private debt.
The praise of nations ready to perish
Fall on him,—crown him in view
Of tyrants caught in the net,
And statesmen dizzy with fear and doubt!
And though, because they are many

And he is merely one,
 And nations selfish and cruel
 Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
 To kill the body of high intents,
 And burn great deeds from their place,
 Till this, the greatest of any,
 May seem imperfectly done ;
 Courage, whoever circumvents !
 Courage, courage, whoever is base !
 The soul of a high intent, be it known,
 Can die no more than any soul
 Which God keeps by Him under the throne ;
 And this, at whatever interim,
 Shall live, and be consummated
 Into the being of deeds made whole.
 Courage, courage ! happy is he,
 Of whom (himself among the dead
 And silent), this word shall be said :
 —That he might have had the world with him,
 But chose to side with suffering men,
 And had the world against him when
 He came to deliver Italy.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLAFRANCA.

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say ?
 What !—with the enemy's guns in our ears ?
 With the country's wrong not rendered back ?
 What !—while Austria stands at bay
 In Mantua, and our Venice bears
 The cursed flag of the yellow and black ?
 Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 And this the Mincio ? Where's the fleet,
 And where's the sea ? Are we all blind

Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,
 Ignoring Italy under our feet,
 And seeing things before, behind ?

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
 What !—uncontested, undenied ?
 Because we triumph, we succumb ?
 A pair of Emperors stand in the way,
 (One of whom is a man, beside)
 To sign and seal our cannons dumb ?

No, not Napoleon !—he who mused
 At Paris, and at Milan spake,
 And at Solferino led the fight :
 Not he we trusted, honoured, used
 Our hopes and hearts for . . . till they break—
 Even so, you tell us . . . in his sight.

Peace, peace, is still your word ?
We say you lie then !—that is plain.
 There *is* no peace, and shall be none.
 Our very dead would cry “Absurd !”
 And clamour that they died in vain,
 And whine to come back to the sun.

Hush ! more reverence for the dead !
They ’ve done the most for Italy
 Evermore since the earth was fair.
 Now would that *we* had died instead,
 Still dreaming peace meant liberty,
 And did not, could not mean despair !

Peace, you say ?—yes, peace, in truth !
 But such a peace as the ear can achieve
 ’Twixt the rifle’s click and the rush of the ball,
 Twixt the tiger’s spring and the crunch of the tooth,
 ’Twixt the dying atheist’s negative
 And God’s face—waiting, after all !

A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA.

TOLD IN TUSCANY.

My little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight ;
And why your Florence of delight
Is mourning as you see.

A great man (who was crowned one day)
Imagined a great Deed :
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower : from heart and brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
To help a people's need.

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face :
“ O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base !
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace ! ”

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
“ What monster have we here ?
A great Deed at this hour of day ?
A great just deed—and not for pay ?
Absurd,—or insincere.”

“ And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,

For where 's our blessed 'status quo,'
Our holy treaties, where,—
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair?"

Some muttered that the great Deed meant
A great pretext to sin ;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of "great" and "just?"
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust
Of time and law falls in.

A great Deed in this world of ours?
Unheard of the pretence is :
It threatens plainly the great Powers ;
Is fatal in all senses.
A just Deed in the world?—call out
The rifles ! be not slack about
The national defences !

And many murmured, "From this source
What red blood must be poured !"
And some rejoined, "'T is even worse ;
What red tape is ignored !"
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord !

Some said, it could not be explained,
Some, could not be excused ;
And others, "Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed."
And all cried, "Crush it, maim it, gag it !
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
Truncated and traduced !"

But HE stood sad before the sun,
 (The peoples felt their fate).
"The world is many,—I am one ;
 My great Deed was too great.
God's fruit of justice ripens slow :
Men's souls are narrow ; let them grow.
 My brothers, we must wait."

The tale is ended, child of mine,
 Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
 Are English : it may be :
And yet I 've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
 At Venice by the sea.

Ah, child ! ah, child ! I cannot say
 A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
 We see our Florence grieve.
Ah, child, look up into the sky !
In this low world, where great Deeds die,
 What matter if we live ?



A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA.

1861.

OVER the dumb Campagna-sea,
 Out in the offing through mist and rain,
Saint Peter's Church heaves silently
 Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle and strain.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
 Soundless breakers of desolate land :

The sullen surf of the mist devours
 That mountain-range upon either hand,
 Eaten away from its outline grand.

And over the dumb Campagna-sea
 Where the ship of the Church heaves on to wreck,
 Alone and silent as God must be,
 The Christ walks. Ay, but Peter's neck
 Is stiff to turn on the foundering deck.

Peter, Peter, if such be thy name,
 Now leave the ship for another to steer,
 And proving thy faith evermore the same,
 Come forth, tread out through the dark and drear,
 Since He who walks on the sea is here.

Peter, Peter ! He does not speak ;
 He is not as rash as in old Galilee :
 Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,
 Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea !
 And he 's got to be round in the girth, thinks he.

Peter, Peter ! He does not stir ;
 His nets are heavy with silver fish ;
 He reckons his gains, and is keen to infer
 —“ The broil on the shore, if the Lord should wish ;
 But the sturgeon goes to the Cæsar's dish.”

Peter, Peter ! thou fisher of men,
 Fisher of fish wouldst thou live instead ?
 Haggling for pence with the other Ten,
 Cheating the market at so much a head,
 Gripping the Bag of the traitor Dead ?

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock
 Thou weep'st not, thou, though thine eyes be dazed.
 What bird comes next in the tempest-shock ?
 —Vultures ! see,—as when Romulus gazed,—
 To inaugurate Rome for a world amazed !

A COURT LADY.

HER hair was tawny with gold, her eyes with purple were
dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and restless
spark.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name and in race ;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in the face.

Never was lady on earth more true as woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder in manners and
life.

She stood in the early morning, and said to her maidens,
" Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at the court of the
king.

" Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid, clear of the
mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp me the small
at the throat.

" Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds to fasten
the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a powder of snow
from the eaves."

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight which gathered her up
in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage, she to the hospital
came.

In she went at the door, and gazing from end to end,
" Many and low are the pallets, but each is the place of a
friend."

Up she passed through the wards, and stood at a young
man's bed :

Bloody the band on his brow, and livid the droop of his
head

" Art thou a Lombard, my brother? Happy art thou,"
she cried,

And smiled like Italy on him : he dreamed in her face
and died.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on still to a second :
He was a grave hard man, whose years by dungeons were
reckoned.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in his life were
sorer.

" Art thou a Romagnole ?" Her eyes drove lightnings
before her

" Austrian and priest had joined to double and tighten the
cord

Able to bind thee, O strong one,—free by the stroke of
a sword.

" Now be grave for the rest of us, using the life overcast
To ripen our wine of the present, (too new,) in glooms of
the past."

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a face like a
girl's

Young, and pathetic with dying,—a deep black hole in
the curls.

" Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and seest thou,
dreaming in pain,

Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching the List of the
slain ?"

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his cheeks with
her hands :

“ Blessed is she who has borne thee, although she should
weep as she stands.”

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm carried off by a
ball :

Kneeling, . . “ O more than my brother ! how shall I
thank thee for all ?

“ Each of the heroes around us has fought for his land
and line,

But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong
not thine.

“ Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dis-
possessed :

But blessed are those among nations, who dare to be
strong for the rest ! ”

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a couch where
pined

One with a face from Venetia, white with a hope out of
mind.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the
name,

But two great crystal tears were all that faltered and
came.

Only a tear for Venice ?—she turned as in passion and
loss,

And stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she were
kissing the cross.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved on *then* to
another,

Stern and strong in his death. “ And dost thou suffer,
my brother ? ”

Holding his hands in hers :—" Out of the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom ! sweetest to live or to
die on."

Holding his cold rough hands,—“ Well, oh, well have ye
done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble
alone."

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet with
a spring,—
“ That was a Piedmontese ! and this is the Court of the
King."

PARTING LOVERS.

SIENA, 1860.

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio !
Some call me cold, and some demure ;
And if thou hast ever guessed that so
I loved thee . . . well, the proof was poor,
And no one could be sure.

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes
To suit my name) did I undo
The persian ? If it stirred sometimes,
Thou hast not seen a hand push through
A foolish flower or two.

My mother listening to my sleep,
Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—
The short sigh rippling on the deep,
When hearts run out of breath and sight
Of men, to God's clear light.

When others named thee,—thought thy brows
Were straight, thy smile was tender,—“ Here

He comes between the vineyard-rows !"—

I said not "Ay," nor waited, Dear,
To feel thee step too near.

I left such things to bolder girls,—

Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
When that Clotilda, through her curls,
Held both thine eyes in hers one day,
I marvelled, let me say.

I could not try the woman's trick :

Between us straightway fell the blush
Which kept me separate, blind and sick.
A wind came with thee in a flush,
As blown through Sinai's bush.

But now that Italy invokes

Her young man to go forth and chase
The foe or perish,—nothing chokes.

My voice or drives me from the place.
I look thee in the face.

I love thee. It is understood,

Confest : I do not shrink or start.
No blushes ! all my body's blood
Has gone to greaten this poor heart,
That, loving, we may part.

Our Italy invokes the youth

To die if need be. Still there 's room,
Though earth is stained with dead in truth :
Since twice the lilies were in bloom
They have not grudged a tomb.

And many a plighted maid and wife

And mother, who can say since then
" My country,"—cannot say through life
" My son," " my spouse," " my flower of men,"
And not weep dumb again.

Heroic males the country bears,—
 But daughters give up more than sons :
 Flags wave, drums beat, and unawares
 You flash your souls out with the guns,
 And take your Heaven at once.

But we !—we empty heart and home
 Of life's life, love ! We bear to think
 You 're gone,—to feel you may not come,—
 To hear the door-latch stir and clink,
 Yet no more you ! . . . nor sink.

Dear God ! When Italy is one,
 Complete, content from bound to bound,
 Suppose, for my share, earth 's undone,
 By one grave in 't !—as one small wound
 Will kill a man, 't is found.

What then ? If love's delight must end,
 At least we 'll clear its truth from flaws.
 I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend !
 Now take my sweetest without pause,
 And help the nation's cause.

And thus, of noble Italy
 We 'll both be worthy. Let her show
 The future how we made her free,
 Not sparing life . . . nor Giulio,
 Nor this . . . this heartbreak ! Go.



MOTHER AND POET.

TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA, 1861.

DEAD ! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
 And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
 Dead ! both my boys ! When you sit at the feast
 And are wanting a great song for Italy free,
 Let none look at *me* !

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman, men said ;
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized here,
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head
For ever instead.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain !
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain ?
Ah boys, how you hurt ! you were strong as you pressed,
And I proud, by that test.

What art 's for a woman ? To hold on her knees
Both darlings ; to feel all their arms round her throat ;
Cling, strangle a little, to sew by degrees
And 'broider the long-clothes and neat little coat ;
To dream and to doat.

To teach them . . . It stings there ! *I* made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country*. *I* taught them, no
doubt,
That a country 's a thing men should die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

* And when their eyes flashed . . . O my beautiful eyes ! . . .
I exulted ; nay, let them go forth at the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But then the surprise
When one sits quite alone ! Then one weeps, then one
kneels !
God, how the house feels !

At first, happy news came, in gay letters moiled
With my kisses,—of camp-life and glory, and how
They both loved me ; and, soon coming home to be
spoiled,
In return would fan off every fly from my brow
With their green laurel-bough.

Then was triumph at Turin : "Ancona was free !"
 And someone came out of the cheers in the street,
 With a face pale as stone, to say something to me.
 My Guido was dead ! I fell down at his feet,
 While they cheered in the street.

I bore it ; friends soothed me ; my grief looked sublime
 As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained
 To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time
 When the first grew immortal, while both of us strained
 To the height he had gained.

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more strong,
 Writ now but in one hand, "I was not to faint,—
 One loved me for two—would be with me ere long :
 And *Viva l' Italia !*—he died for, our saint,
 Who forbids our complaint."

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and aware
 Of a presence that turned off the balls,—was imprest
 It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,
 And how 't was impossible, quite dispossessed,
 To live on for the rest."

On which, without pause, up the telegraph-line,
 Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta :—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah, "his," "their" mother,—not
 "mine,"
 No voice says "*My mother*" again to me. What !
 You think Guido forgot ?

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,
 They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe ?
 I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven
 Through *THAT* Love and Sorrow which reconciled so
 The Above and Below.

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'dst through the dark
To the face of Thy mother ! consider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes turned
away,
And no last word to say !

Both boys dead ? but that's out of nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house must always keep
one.

'T were imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall ;
And, when Italy's made, for what end is it done
If we have not a son ?

Ah, ah, ah ! when Gaeta's taken, what then ?
When the fair wicked queen sits no more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men ?
When the guns of Cavalli with final retort
Have cut the game short ?

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,
When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and
red,
When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,
(And *I* have my Dead)—

What then ? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly ! *My* country is *there*,
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow :
My Italy's *THERE*, with my brave civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair !

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn ;
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length
Into wail such as this—and we sit on forlorn
When the man-child is born.

Dead ! One of them shot by the sea in the east,
 And one of them shot in the west by the sea,
 Both ! both my boys ! If in keeping the feast
 You want a great song for your Italy free,
 Let none look at *me*.

[This was Laura Savio, of Turin, a poetess and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona and Gaeta.]



NATURE'S REMORSES.

ROME, 1861.

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed
 From the sucking-bottle used in her race,
 On starch and water (for mother's milk
 Which gives a larger growth instead),
 And, out of the natural liberal grace,
 Was swaddled away in violet silk.
 And young and kind, and royally blind,
 Forth she stepped from her palace-door
 On three-piled carpet of compliments,
 Curtains of incense drawn by the wind
 In between her for evermore
 And daylight issues of events.
 On she drew, as a queen might do,
 To meet a Dream of Italy,—
 Of magical town and musical wave,
 Where even a god, his amulet blue
 Of shining sea, in an ecstasy
 Dropt and forgot in a nereid's cave.
 Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,
 To live more smoothly than mortals can,
 To love and to reign as queen and wife,
 To wear a crown that smells of a rose,
 And still, with a sceptre as light as a fan,
 Beat sweet time to the song of life.

What is this? As quick as a kiss,
Falls a smile from her girlish mouth !
The lion-people has left its lair,
Roaring along her garden of bliss,
And the fiery under-world of the south
Scorched a way to the upper air.

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a man,
Burningly, boundingly, fatal and fell,
Bowling the kingdom down ! Where was the king?
She had heard somewhat, since life began,
Of terrors on earth, and horrors in hell,
But never, never of such a thing !

You think she dropped when her dream was stopped,
When the blotch of Bourbon blood inlay,
Lividly rank, her new lord's cheek ?
Not so. Her high heart overtopped
The royal part she had come to play.
Only the men in that hour were weak.

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,
And twice a queen by her kingdom lost,
She braved the shock and the counter-shock
Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,
While Italy pushed, like a vengeful ghost,
That son of the Cursed from Gaeta's rock.

What will ye give her, who could not deliver,
German Princesses? A laurel-wreath
All over-scored with your signatures,
Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever ?
Mock her not, fresh from the truth of Death,
Conscious of dignities higher than yours.

What will ye put in your casket shut,
Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's name ?
Guizot's daughter, what have you brought her ?

Withered immortelles, long ago cut
 For guilty dynasties perished in shame,
 Putrid to memory, Guizot's daughter?

Ah poor queen ! so young and serene !
 What shall we do for her, now hope 's done,
 Standing at Rome in these ruins old,
 She too a ruin and no more a queen ?
 Leave her that diadem made by the sun
 Turning her hair to an innocent gold.

Ay, bring close to her, as 't were a rose, to her,
 Yon free child, from an Apennine city
 Singing for Italy,—dumb in the place !
 Something like solace, let us suppose, to her
 Given, in that homage of wonder and pity,
 By his pure eyes to her beautiful face.

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded ;
 Ruined all queendom and dogmas of state :
 Then in reaction remorseful and mild,
 Rescues the womanhood, nearly eluded,
 Shows her what 's sweetest in womanly fate—
 Sunshine from Heaven, and the eyes of a child.



A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
 Down in the reeds by the river ?
 Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
 Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
 And breaking the golden lilies afloat
 With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
 From the deep cool bed of the river :
 The limpid water turbidly ran,

And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river ;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river !)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan,
(Laughed while he sat by the river,)
"The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed
He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan !
Piercing sweet by the river !
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan !
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man :
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

ROME, MAY, 1861.

“ Now give us lands where the olives grow,”
Cried the North to the South,
“ Where the sun with a golden mouth can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard-row !”
Cried the North to the South.

“ Now give us men from the sunless plain,”
Cried the South to the North,
“ By need of work in the snow and the rain,
Made strong and brave by familiar pain !”
Cried the South to the North.

“ Give lucider hills and intenser seas,”
Said the North to the South,
“ Since ever by symbols and bright degrees
Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord’s knees,”
Said the North to the South.

“ Give strenuous souls for belief and prayer,”
Said the South to the North,
“ That stand in the dark on the lowest stair,”
While affirming of God, ‘ He is certainly there,’ ”
Said the South to the North.

“ Yet oh, for the skies that are softer and higher !”
Sighed the North to the South ;
“ For the flowers that blaze, and the trees that aspire,
And the insects made of a song or a fire !”
Sighed the North to the South.

“ And oh, for a seer to discern the same !”
Sighed the South to the North !

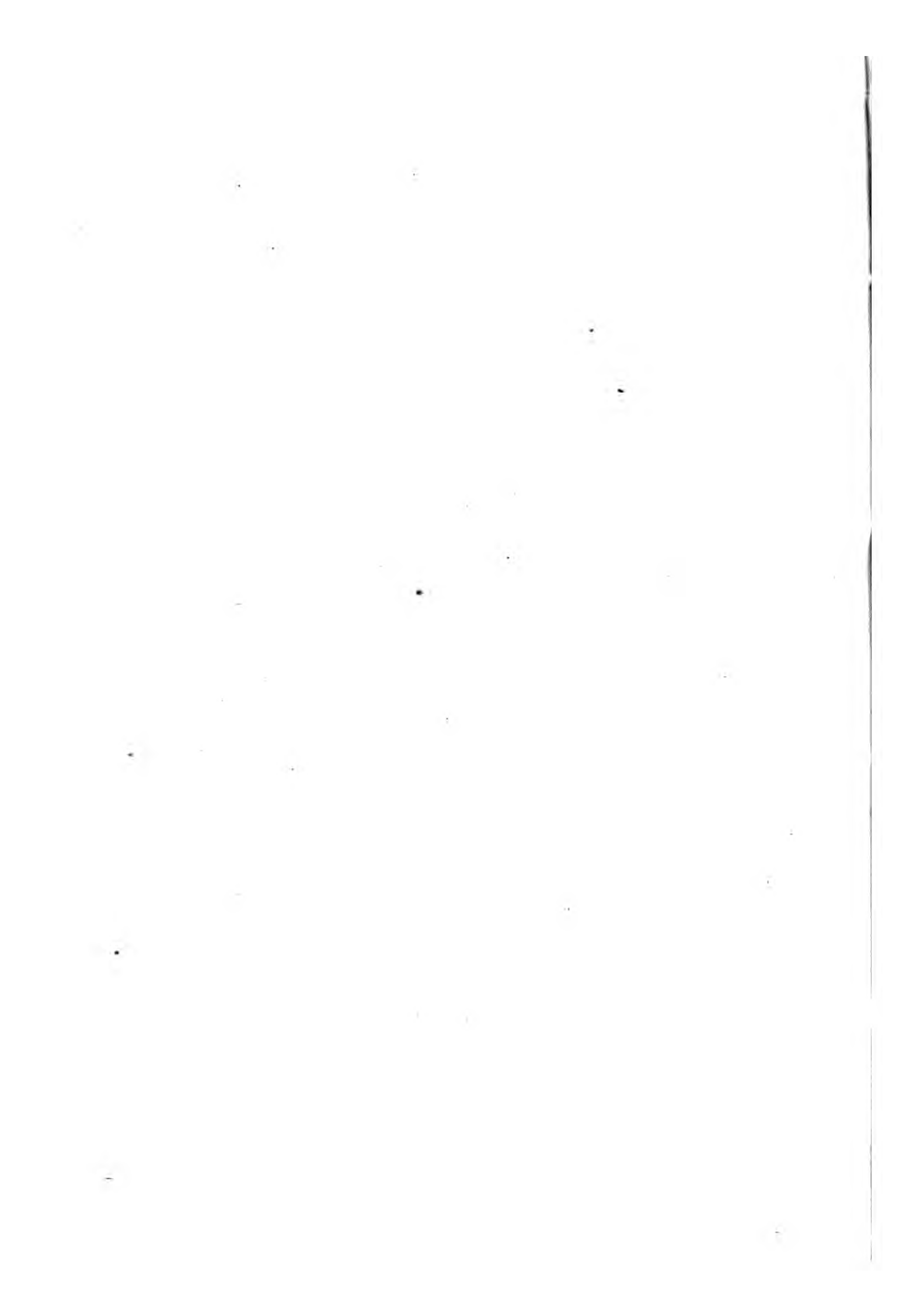
“ For a poet’s tongue of baptismal flame,
To call the tree or the flower by its name ! ”
Sighed the South to the North.

The North sent therefore a man of men
As a grace to the South ;
And thus to Rome came Andersen.
—“ *Alas, but must you take him again ?* ”
Said the South to the North.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway !

While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine :

There 's a little fair brown nightingale who, sitting in the gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine !"

The poet went out weeping ; the nightingale ceased chanting :

"Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done ?"

—"I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,

Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun."

The poet went out weeping, and died abroad, bereft there ;

The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails :

And when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there

Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.



THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite ;
And, wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I ;
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him,
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud :—

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)
A child would bring it all its praise
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed :
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken,
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward ;
We draw the moral afterward,
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall :

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white ;
How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories ; till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees, nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round : anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are ;
No more for me ! myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

5

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
 " The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
 My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
 Did I look up to pray !

The time is past ; and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
 As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
 The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
 That happy child again.



THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
 For my thoughts to live in,
When for earth too fancy-loose,
 And too low for heaven :

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

Hush ! I talk my dream aloud,
I build it bright to see,—
I build it on the moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
Faced with amber column,
Crowned with crimson cupola
From a sunset solemn :
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
Pale and glimmering,
With a sunbeam hid in each
And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
Veined by the lightning :
Use one with an iris-stain
For the door so thin,
Turning to a sound like rain
As I enter in.

Build a spacious hall thereby
Boldly, never fearing ;
Use the blue place of the sky
Which the wind is clearing :
Branched with corridors sublime,
Flecked with winding stairs,
Such as children wish to climb
Following their own prayers.

In the mutest of the house,
I will have my chamber ;
Silence at the door shall use
Evening's light of amber,

Solemnizing every mood,
Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
As I turn the key.

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless, glorified
When the sunbeams come here—
Wandering harpers, harping on
Waters stringed for such,
Drawing colour, for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut-forest,
Bring a purple from the hill
When the heat is sorest ;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room,
Named as Fancy weeneth ;
Some be Junos, without eyes,
Naiads, without sources,
Some be birds of paradise,
Some, Olympian horses.

Bring the dews the birds shake off
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
From the lilies' edges :

From our England's field and moor,
Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
For Love's self-delighting.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
Where the lark is singing,
(Something of the song at least
Unlost in the bringing) :
That shall be a morning-chair
Poet-dream may sit in
When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

Bring the red cloud from the sun,
While he sinketh catch it ;
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for poet's finest thought
At the curfew-sounding ;
Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh.
'Las, they come together !
Cloudy walls divide and fly
As in April weather.
Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see,
Gone ! except that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

Let them ! Wipe such visionings
From the fancy's cartel :
Love secures some fairer things,
Dowered with his immortal.

The sun may darken, heaven be bowed
But still unchanged shall be,—
Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with THEE !



A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

THE ship went on with solemn face ;
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward :
I bowed down weary in the place,
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me
And kept my inner self apart
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight !
The waters round me, turbulent,
The skies impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
Half-glorified by that intent
Of holding the day-glory !

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic :
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic,

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.
The sun !—he came up to be viewed,
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run
As red wine through the hills, and break
Through many a mist's inurning ;
But, here, no earth profaned the sun :
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

Away with thoughts fantastical !
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded as self-doubted :
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves ;
I would not praise the pageant high
Yet miss the dedicature :
I, carried toward the sunless graves
By force of natural things,—should I
Exult in only nature ?

And could I bear to sit alone
'Mid nature's fixed benignities,
While my warm pulse was moving ?
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving !

It seems a better lot than so,
To sit with friends beneath the beech,
And feel them dear and dearer ;

Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
As the church-bells ring nearer.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day !
The sea sings round me while ye roll
Afar the hymn unaltered,
And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
And bless me deeper in the soul,
Because the voice has faltered.

And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stol'd minister
Or chanting congregation,
God's Spirit brings communion, HE
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,
Where keep the saints with harp and song
An endless sabbath morning,
And on that sea commixed with fire
Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.



AN ISLAND.

All goeth but Goddis will.—OLD POET.

My dream is of an island-place
Which distant seas keep lonely,
A little island on whose face
The stars are watchers only.
Those bright still stars ! they need not seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

An island full of hills and dells,
All rumpled and uneven
With green recesses, sudden swells,
And odorous valleys driven
So deep and straight that always there
The wind is cradled to soft air.

Hills running up to heaven for light
Through woods that half-way ran,
As if the wild earth mimicked right
The wilder heart of man :
Only it shall be greener far
And gladder than hearts ever are.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
Of Dante's paradise,
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
In falling from the skies ;
Bringing within it, all the roots
Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits :

For saving where the grey rocks strike
Their javelins up the azure,
Or where deep fissures miser-like
Hoard up some fountain treasure,
(And e'en in them, stoop down and hear,
Leaf sounds with water in your ear,—)

The place is all awave with trees,
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,
Acacias having drunk the lees
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,
And wan grey olive-woods which seem
The fittest foliage for a dream.

Trees, trees on all sides ! they combine
Their plummy shades to throw,

Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine
 Whene'er the sun may go,
The ground beneath he deeply stains,
As passing through cathedral panes.

But little needs this earth of ours
 That shining from above her,
When many Pleiades of flowers
 (Not one lost) star her over,
The rays of their unnumbered hues
Being all refracted by the dews.

Wide-petalled plants that boldly drink
 The Amreeta of the sky,
Shut bells that dull with rapture sink,
 And lolling buds, half shy ;
I cannot count them, but between
Is room for grass and mosses green,

And brooks, that glass in different strengths
 All colours in disorder,
Or, gathering up their silver lengths
 Beside their winding border,
Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

Nor think each arch'd tree with each
 Too closely interlaces
To admit of vistas out of reach,
 And broad moon-lighted places
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

For all this island 's creature-full,
 (Kept happy not by halves)
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull,
 Then low back at their calves

With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for love.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unrul'd by shepherds :
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

And birds that live there in a crowd,
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud
Self-sphered in those grand tails ;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem :
No guns nor springes in my dream !

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
The curlews to green change ;
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by.

One dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it :
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
To meet the bounding waves ;
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves :
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

Long winding caverns, glittering far
 Into a crystal distance !
Through clefts of which, shall many a star
 Shine clear without resistance
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

I said that two or three might choose
 Their dwelling near mine own :
Those who would change man's voice and use,
 For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,
 Shall play a faithful part ;
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
 The monstrous at our heart :
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
 As doth the moon of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
 Our thoughts a light and motion :
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

No sod in all that island doth
 Yawn open for the dead ;
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;
 No earth, a mourner's tread ;
We cannot say by stream or shade,
" I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed."

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh
 To shifting cloud or hour,

And use our only epitaph
To some bud turned a flower :
Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in pleasure or in love.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
From fairest island-birds,
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
Born singing ! then our words
Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of those prodigious fantasies.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
Our smile-tuned lips shall reach ;
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,
Shall glide into our speech :
(What music, certes, can you find
As soft as voices which are kind ?)

And often, by the joy without
And in us, overcome,
We, through our musing, shall let float
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
He died in, longer knowing ;
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
Been lost in Meles, flowing ;
Or Poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,
To make a place for prayer,
And I will choose a praying voice
To pour our spirits there :

How silverly the echoes run !
Thy will be done,—thy will be done.

Gently yet strangely uttered words !
 They lift me from my dream ;
 The island fadeth with its swards
 That did no more than seem :
 The streams are dry, no sun could find—
 The fruits are fallen, without wind.

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth !
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
 Which morning light subdueth !
 And who would murmur and misdoubt,
 When God's great sunrise finds him out ?



THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ἡδὴ νοερούς
 Πετασαί τάρσους.

SYNESIUS.

I DWELL amid the city ever.
 The great humanity which beats
 Its life along the stony streets,
 Like a strong and unsunned river
 In a self-made course,
 I sit and harken while it rolls.
 Very sad and very hoarse
 Certes is the flow of souls ;
 Infinitest tendencies
 By the finite prest and pent,
 In the finite, turbulent :
 How we tremble in surprise

When sometimes, with an awful sound,
God's great plummet strikes the ground !

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by ;
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity ;
The trail on the street of the poor man's broom,
That the lady who walks to her palace-home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust ;
The tread of the business-men who must
Count their per-cents by the paces they take ;
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother
Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake ;
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks,
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day ;
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate ;
The cabman's cry to get out of the way ;
The dustman's call down the area-grate ;
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,
The fight in the street which is backed for gold,
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall ;
The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff
As he trades in his own grief's sacredness,
The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh,
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding,
(The grinder's face being nevertheless
Dry and vacant of even woe
While the children's hearts are leaping so
At the merry music's winding ;)
The black-plumed funerals' creeping train
Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life though it hurry and strain !)

Creeping the populous houses through
And nodding their plumes at either side,—
At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried,—
At many a house where sitteth a bride
Trying to-morrow's coronals
With a scarlet blush to-day :

 Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living must go away
 To multiply the dead.

 Hark ! an upward shout is sent,
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
 The bells ring out,
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young queen goes to her parliament ;
She turneth round her large blue eyes
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people ;
On either side she bows her head

 Lowly, with a queenly grace,
And smile most trusting-innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother ;
The thousands press before each other
 To bless her to her face ;
And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum,—“ May the queen rejoice
 In the people's liberties ! ”

 I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly :
I hear the confluence and sum of each,
 And that is melancholy !
Thy voice is a complaint, O crown'd city,
The blue sky covering thee like God's great pity !

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peak'd hill
Out to the last verge of ocean,
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the emotion
Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh, we spirits fly at will
Faster than the wing'd steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thundercloud,—
Smoother than Sabrina's chair
Gliding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters nightly,
Through her dripping hair.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by ;
All looks feed not from the eye
Nor all hearings from the ear :
We can harken and espy
Without either, we can journey
Bold and gay as knight to tourney ;
And, though we wear no visor down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

I am gone from peopled town !
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound,

For now another sound, another
Vision, my soul's senses have—
O'er a hundred valleys deep
Where the hills' green shadows sleep
Scarce known because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images,
O'er a hundred hills each other
Watching to the western wave,
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

I have found a grassy niche
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur which
Is aspectable from the place,
Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June ;
A cavelike nook which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral ;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread
Instead of spar and stalactite,
Cowslips and daisies gold and white :
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high.

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep

To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet ;
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two :
You can hear them as they greet,
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise more old
Than Nereid's singing, the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent ;
And when you harken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's communion
Albeit you witness not the union.

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which when you cull
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's strength :
And as they touch your soul, they borrow
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

Alway ! alway ? must this be ?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan ?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity ?
Green visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,

May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd? Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude
And fit it to our straitest mood?
O fair, fair Nature, are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities, that still
Leave us vacant and defiled
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,
Kissed soft against his will?

God, God !
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God !

Thou knowest, eyelids, raised not always up
Unto Thy love (as none of ours are) droop
As ours, o'er many a tear ;
Thou knowest, though Thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all :
Thou knowest, Thou who art so prodigal
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods, that care for none
Of those delightful flowers they die upon.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls, self-spoilt !—by that strong passion
Which paled Thee once with sighs, by that strong death
Which made Thee once unbreathing—from the wrack
Themselves have called around them, call them back,
Back to Thee in continuous aspiration !

For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly, vainly pass
From city-pavement to untrodden sward
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass

Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain
 The greatest speed of all these souls of men
 Unless they travel upward to the throne
 Where sittest THOU the satisfying ONE,
 With help for sins and holy perfectings
 For all requirements : while the archangel, raising
 Unto 'Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
 Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings.

*THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.*

WHEN ye stood up in the house
 With your little childish feet,
 And, in touching Life's first shows,
 First the touch of Love did meet—
 Love and Nearness seeming one,
 By the heartlight cast before,
 And of all Beloveds, none
 Standing farther than the door ;
 Not a name being dear to thought,
 With its owner beyond call ;
 Not a face, unless it brought
 Its own shadow to the wall ;
 When the worst recorded change
 Was an apple dropt from bough,
 When love's sorrow seemed more strange
 Than love's treason can seem now ;—
 Then, the Loving took you up
 Soft, upon their elder knees,
 Telling why the statues droop
 Underneath the churchyard trees,
 And how ye must lie beneath them
 Through the winters long and deep,
 Till the last trump overbreathe them,
 And ye smile out of your sleep.

Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail ;
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale—
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead !

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago,
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know ;
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena ;
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart, half-immortal,
Met the *keitai* with a cry ;
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race
Blank and passive through the dun light,
Staring blindly in his face ;
How that true wife said to Pœtus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,
" Sweet, it hurts not ! " How Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart ;
How King Arthur proved his mission,
And Sir Roland wound his horn,
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye
read,
That this Death, then, must be found
A Valhalla for the crowned,
The heroic who prevail :

None, be sure can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale—
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead !

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head !
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud.
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within.
All things changed : you rose up straightway,
And saluted Death and Sin.
Since, your outward man has rallied,
And your eye and voice grown bold ;
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told.
Happy places have grown holy :
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament.
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain.
Household names, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,—
God's Divinest ye could utter

With less trembling in your prayers.
 Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye
 tread

On your own hearts in the path
 Ye are called to in His wrath,
 And your prayers go up in wail
 —“Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
 O Thou agonized on cross?
 Art thou reading all its tale?”
 So mournfully ye think upon the Dead!

Pray, pray, thou who also weepst,
 And the drops will slacken so.
 Weep, weep, and the watch thou keepest,
 With a quicker count will go.
 Think : the shadow on the dial
 For the nature most undone,
 Marks the passing of the trial,
 Proves the presence of the sun.
 Look, look up, in starry passion,
 To the throne above the spheres :
 Learn : the spirit's gravitation
 Still must differ from the tear's.
 Hope : with all the strength thou usest
 In embracing thy despair.
 Love : the earthly love thou lovest
 Shall return to thee more fair.
 Work : make clear the forest-tangles
 Of the wildest stranger-land.
 Trust : the blessed deathly angels
 Whisper, “Sabbath hours at hand!”
 By the heart's wound when most gory,
 By the longest agony,
 Smile!—Behold in sudden glory
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee*!
 And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,

" My Belovëd, is it so ?
 Have ye tasted of my woe ?
 Of my Heaven ye shall nôt fail ! "
 He stands brightly where the shade is,
 With the keys of Death and Hades,
 And there, ends the mournful tale—
 So hopefully ye think upon the Dead !



THE POET.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
 He views with the first glory. Fair and good
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
 But stand before him holy and undressed
 In week-day false conventions, such as would
 Drag other men down from the altitude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all His heavens, as soon
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon !
 And therefore hath He set thee in the midst
 Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,
 And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.



NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,
 With a somewhat paler brow
 Than she giveth to the ocean ?
 He, without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands,

Lifting his invoking hands
Like a seer before a sprite,
To catch her oracles of light :
But thy soul out-trembles now
Many pulses on thy brow.
Where be all thy laughs clear,
Others laughed alone to hear ?
Where thy quaint jests, said for fame ?
Where thy dances, mixed with game ?
Where thy festive companies,
Moonëd o'er with ladies' eyes
All more bright for thee, I trow ?
'Neath my moon what doest thou ?

THE MERRY MAN.

I AM digging my warm heart
Till I find its coldest part ;
I am digging wide and low,
Further than a spade will go,
Till that, when the pit is deep
And large enough, I there may heap
All my present pain and past
Joy, dead things that look aghast
By the daylight : now 't is done.
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
Treasures which my hands have holden,
Till the chillness made them ache ;
Of childhood's hopes that used to wake
If birds were in a singing strain,
And for less cause, sleep again ;
Of the moss-seat in the wood
Where I trysted solitude ;
Of the hill-top where the wind

Used to follow me behind,
Then in sudden rush to blind
Both my glad eyes with my hair,
Taken gladly in the snare ;
Of the climbing up the rocks,
Of the playing 'neath the oaks
Which retain beneath them now
Only shadow of the bough ;
Of the lying on the grass
While the clouds did overpass,
Only they, so lightly driven,
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven ;
Of the little prayers serene,
Murmuring of earth and sin ;
Of large-leaved philosophy
Leaning from my childish knee ;
Of poetic book sublime,
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,
Greek or English, ere I knew
Life was not a poem too :—
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun.

—Of the glorious ambitions
Yet unquenched by their fruitions ;
Of the reading out the nights ;
Of the straining at mad heights ;
Of achievements, less descried
By a dear few than magnified ;
Of praises from the many earned
When praise from love was undiscerned :
Of the sweet reflecting gladness
Softened by itself to sadness :—
Throw them in, by one and one !
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than these
Throw in dearer memories !—
Of voices whereof but to speak
Makes mine own all sunk and weak ;
Of smiles the thought of which is sweeping
All my soul to floods of weeping ;
Of looks whose absence fain would weigh
My looks to the ground for aye ;
Of clasping hands—ah me, I wring
Mine, and in a tremble fling
Downward, downward all this paining !
Partings with the sting remaining,
Meetings with a deeper throe
Since the joy is ruined so,
Changes with a fiery burning,
(Shadows upon all the turning,)
Thoughts of . . with a storm they came,
Them I have not breath to name :
Downward, downward be they cast
In the pit ! and now at last
My work beneath the moon is done,
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
All my treasures darkly over :
I will speak not in thine ears,
Only tell my beaded tears
Silently, most silently.
When the last is calmly told,
Let that same moist rosary
With the rest sepúlchred be.
Finished now ! The darksome mould
Sealeth up the darksome pit.
I will lay no stone on it,
Grasses I will sow instead,
Fit for Queen Titania's tread ;

Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
 And *ai ai* written upon none ;
 Thus, whenever saileth by
 The Lady World of dainty eye,
 Not a grief shall here remain,
 Silken shoon to damp or stain :
 And while she lisps, " I have not seen
 Any place more smooth and clean " . .
 Here she cometh !—Ha, ha !—who
 Laughs as loud as I can do ?



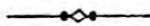
MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
 Did look upon the earth and say—
 " Purple cloud, the hill-top binding,
 Folded hills, the valleys wind in,
 Valleys, with fresh streams among you,
 Streams, with bosky trees along you,
 Trees, with many birds and blossoms,
 Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,
 Blossoms, dropping dew that wreathes you
 To your fellow flowers beneath you,
 Flowers, that constellate on earth,
 Earth, that shakest to the mirth
 Of the merry Titan ocean,
 All his shining hair in motion !
 Why am I thus the only one
 Who can be dark beneath the sun ?

But when the summer day was past,
 He looked to heaven and smiled at last,
 Self-answered so—

" Because, O cloud,
 Pressing with thy crumpled shroud

Heavily on mountain top,—
 Hills, that almost seem to drop
 Stricken with a misty death
 To the valleys underneath,—
 Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
 Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—
 Branchless trees, that shake your head
 Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
 Where the common flowers are found,—
 Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—
 Ground, that shrieketh while the sea
 With his iron smiteth thee—
 I am, besides, the only one
 Who can be bright *without* the sun."



A SEA-SIDE WALK.

WE walked beside the sea
 After a day which perished silently
 Of its own glory—like the princess weird
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,
 Uttered with burning breath, "Ho, victory!"
 And sank adown, a heap of ashes pale :
 So runs the Arab tale.

The sky above us showed
 A universal and unmoving cloud
 On which the cliffs permitted us to see
 Only the outline of their majesty,
 As master-minds when gazed at by the crowd :
 And shining with a gloom, the water grey
 Swang in its moon-taught way.

Nor moon, nor stars were out ;
 They did not dare to tread so soon about,

Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun :
 The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
 Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,
 And silence's impassioned breathings round
 Seemed wandering into sound.

O solemn-beating heart
 Of nature ! I have knowledge that thou art
 Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever ;
 And, what time they are slackened by him ever,
 So to attest his own supernal part,
 Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
 The slackened cord along.

For though we never spoke
 Of the grey water and the shaded rock,
 Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
 Into the plaintive speaking that we used
 Of absent friends and memories unforsook ;
 And, had we seen each other's face, we had
 Seen haply each was sad.



AN APPREHENSION.

IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
 Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
 That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
 For life than pity—I should yet be slow
 To bring my own heart nakedly below
 The palm of such a friend, that he should press
 Motive, condition, means, appliances,
 My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
 Out full to light and knowledge ; I should fear
 Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime
 In the free voice. O angels, let your flood

Of bitter scorn dash on me ! do ye hear
What *I* say who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face to face with GOD ?



THE POET'S VOW.

— O be wiser thou,
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love!
WORDSWORTH.

PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE.

EVE is a twofold mystery ;
The stillness Earth doth keep,
The motion wherewith human hearts
Do each to either leap
As if all souls between the poles
Felt "Parting comes in sleep."

The rowers lift their oars to view
Each other in the sea ;
The landsmen watch the rocking boats
In a pleasant company ;
While up the hill go gladlier still
Dear friends by two and three.

The peasant's wife hath looked without
Her cottage door and smiled,
For there the peasant drops his spade
To clasp his youngest child
Which hath no speech, but its hand can reach
And stroke his forehead mild.

A poet sate that eventide
Within his hall alone,
As silent as its ancient lords
In the confined place of stone,

When the bat hath shrunk from the praying monk,
And the praying monk is gone.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
Beneath the cerement's roll :
His lips refusing out in words
Their mystic thoughts to dole,
His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,
As burning out his soul.

You would not think that brow could e'er
Ungentle moods express,
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
Too calm for gentleness,
When the very star that shines from far
Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

It lacked, all need, the softening light
Which other brows supply :
We should conjoin the scathed trunks
Of our humanity,
That each leafless spray entwining may
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

None gazed within the poet's face,
The poet gazed in none ;
He threw a lonely shadow straight
Before the moon and sun,
Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling creatures
With wrong to nature done ;

Because this poet daringly,
—The nature at his heart,
And that quick tune along his veins
He could not change by art,—
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
To a stagnant place apart.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
Or grief's fantastic whim,
But, weights and shows of sensual things
Too closely crossing him,
On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid
And made its vision dim.

And darkening in the dark he strove
'Twixt earth and sea and sky
To lose in shadow, wave and cloud,
His brother's haunting cry :
The winds were welcome as they swept,
God's five-day work he would accept,
But let the rest go by.

He cried " O touching, patient Earth
That weapest in thy glee,
Whom God created very good,
And very mournful, we !
Thy voice of moan doth reach His throne,
As Abel's rose from thee.

" Poor crystal sky with stars astray !
Mad winds that howling go
From east to west ! perplex'd seas
That stagger from their blow !
O motion wild ! O wave defiled !
Our curse hath made you so.

" *We !* and *our* curse ! do *I* partake
The desiccating sin ?
Have *I* the apple at my lips ?
The money-lust within ?
Do *I* human stand with the wounding hand,
To the blasting heart akin ?

" Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn joy designed !

Behold, submissive to your cause,
An holy wrath I find
And, for your sake, the bondage break
That knits me to my kind.

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant yea and no,
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow,
His changing love—with stars above,
His pride—with graves below.

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
His greetings by the way,
His answering looks, his systemed books,—
All man, for aye and aye.

"That so my purged, once human heart,
From all the human rent,
May gather strength to pledge and drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me all blessingly
The woe mine Adam sent.

"And I shall feel your unseen looks
Innumerable, constant, deep
And soft as haunted Adam once,
Though sadder, round me creep,—
As slumbering men have mystic ken
Of watchers on their sleep.

"And ever, when I lift my brow
At evening to the sun,—
No voice of woman or of child
Recording 'Day is done,'—

Your silences shall a love express,
More deep than such an one."

PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DECLARED.

THE poet's vow was inly sworn,
The poet's vow was told.
He shared among his crowding friends
The silver and the gold,
They clasping bland his gift,—his hand
In a somewhat slacker hold.

They wended forth, the crowding friends,
With farewells smooth and kind.
They wended forth, the solaced friends,
And left but twain behind :
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind.

He said, " My friends have wended forth
With farewells smooth and kind ;
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
Ye need not stay behind :
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind.

" And when beside your wassail board
Ye bless your social lot,
I charge you that the giver be
In all his gifts forgot,
Or alone of all his words recall
The last,—Lament me not."

She looked upon him silently
With her large, doubting eyes,

Like a child that never knew but love
Whom words of wrath surprise,
Till the rose did break from either cheek
And the sudden tears did rise.

She looked upon him mournfully,
While her large eyes were grown
Yet larger with the steady tears,
Till, all his purpose known,
She turned slow, as she would go—
The tears were shaken down.

She turned slow, as she would go,
Then quickly turned again,
And gazing in his face to seek
Some little touch of pain,
“I thought,” she said,—but shook her head,—
She tried that speech in vain.

“I thought—but I am half a child
And very sage art thou—
The teachings of the heaven and earth
Should keep us soft and low.
They have drawn *my* tears in early years,
Or ere I wept—as now.

“But now that in thy face I read
Their cruel homily,
Before their beauty I would fain
Untouched, unsoftened be,—
If I indeed could look on even
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven
As thou canst look on me !

“And couldst thou as coldly view
Thy childhood's far abode,
Where little feet kept time with thine
Along the dewy sod,

And thy mother's look from holy book
Rose like a thought of God?

“ O brother,—called so, ere her last
Betrothing words were said !
O fellow-watcher in her room,
With hush'd voice and tread !
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,
O friend, O lover, we did stand,
And knew that she was dead ?

“ I will not live Sir Roland's bride,
That dower I will not hold ;
I tread, below my feet that go,
These parchments bought and sold :
The tears I weep, are mine to keep,
And worthier than thy gold.”

The poet and Sir Roland stood
Alone, each turned to each,
Till Roland brake the silence left
By that soft-throbbing speech :
“ Poor heart ! ” he cried, “ it vainly tried
The distant heart to reach.

“ And thou, O distant, sinful heart
That climbest up so high
To wrap and blind thee with the snows
That cause to dream and die,
What blessing can, from lips of man,
Approach thee with his sigh ?

“ Ay, what from earth—create for man
And moaning in his moan ?
Ay, what from stars—revealed to man
And man-named one by one ?
Ay, more ! what blessing can be given

Where the Spirits seven do show in heaven
A MAN upon the throne ?

“ A man on earth HE wandered once,
All meek and undefiled,
And those who loved Him said ‘ He wept ’—
None ever said He smiled ;
Yet there might have been a smile unseen,
When He bowed His holy face, I ween,
To bless that happy child.

“ And now HE pleadeth up in heaven
For our humanities,
Till the ruddy light on seraphs’ wings
In pale emotion dies.
They can better bear their Godhead’s glare
Than the pathos of His eyes.

“ I will go pray our God to-day
To teach thee how to scan
His work divine, for human use
Since earth on axle ran,—
To teach thee to discern as plain
His grief divine, the blood-drop’s stain
He left there, MAN for man.

“ So, for the blood’s sake shed by Him
Whom angels God declare,
Tears like it, moist and warm with love,
Thy reverent eyes shall wear
To see i’ the face of Adam’s race
The nature God doth share.”

“ I heard,” the poet said, “ thy voice
As dimly as thy breath :
The sound was like the noise of life
To one anear his death,—

Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
Sere leaf they roll beneath.

“And still between the sound and me
White creatures like a mist
Did interfloat confusedly,
Mysterious shapes unwist :
Across my heart and across my brow
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,
To still the pulse they kist.

“The castle and its lands are thine—
The poor's—it shall be done.
Go, *man*, to love ! I go to live
In Courland hall, alone :
The bats along the ceilings cling,
The lizards in the floors do run,
And storms and years have worn and reft
The stain by human builders left
In working at the stone.”

PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT.

HE dwelt alone, and sun and moon
Were witness that he made
Rejection of his humanness
Until they seemed to fade ;
His face did so, for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

The self-poised God may dwell alone
With inward glorying,
But God's chief angel waiteth for
A brother's voice, to sing ;
And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
It is an awful thing.

An awful thing that feared itself ;
While many years did roll,
A lonely man, a feeble man,
A part beneath the whole,
He bore by day, he bore by night
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul.

The poet at his lattice sate
And downward lookèd he.
Three Christians wended by to prayers,
With mute ones in their ee ;
Each turned above a face of love
And called him to the far chapèlle
With voice more tuneful than its bell :
But still they wended three.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
A bridegroom and his dame ;
He speaketh low for happiness,
She blusheth red for shame :
But never a tone of benison
From out the lattice came.

A little child with inward song,
No louder noise to dare,
Stood near the wall to see at play
The lizards green and rare—
Unblessed the while for his childish smile
Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE KEEPING OF THE VOW.

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind
As white and still as they ;

And the old nurse that watched her bed
Rose up with "Well-a-day!"
And oped the casement to let in
The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
Which droppeth from the grass and bough
Sans wind and bird, none knoweth how—
To cheer her as she lay.

The old nurse started when she saw
Her sudden look of woe :
But the quick wan tremblings round her mouth
In a meek smile did go,
And calm she said, "When I am dead,
Dear nurse it shall be so.

"Till then, shut out those sights and sounds,
And pray God pardon me
That I without this pain no more
His blessed works can see !
And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse
What thy last love should be."

The loving nurse leant over her,
As white she lay beneath,—
The old eyes searching, dim with life,
The young ones dim with death,
To read their look if sound forsook
The trying, trembling breath.

"When all this feeble breath is done
And I on bier am laid,
My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
My body in shroud arrayed,
Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
As if that still I prayed.

"And heap beneath mine head the flowers
You stoop so low to pull,

The little white flowers from the wood
Which grow there in the cool,
Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,
Went plucking, knowing not their names,
And filled thine apron full.

" Weep not ! *I* weep not. Death is strong,
The eyes of Death are dry !
But lay this scroll upon my breast
When hushed its heavings lie,
And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
Which shineth presently.

" And when it shineth, straightway call
Thy youngest children dear,
And bid them gently carry me
All barefaced on the bier ;
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
That waveth long anear.

" And up the bank where I used to sit
And dream what life would be,
Along the brook with its sunny look
Akin to living glee,—
O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,
Let them gently carry me.

" And through the piny forest still,
And down the open moorland
Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland ;
And let them chant that hymn I know,
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the ancient hall of Courland.

" And when withal they near the hall,
In silence let them lay

My bier before the bolted door,
And leave it for a day :
For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,
And not be turned away."

The old nurse looked within her eyes
Whose mutual look was gone ;
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,
Whose answering voice was done ;
And nought she heard, till a little bird
Upon the casement's woodbine swinging
Broke out into a loud sweet singing
For joy o' the summer sun :
"Alack ! alack !" — she watched no more,
With head on knee she wail'd sore,
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

THE poet oped his bolted door
The midnight sky to view ;
A spirit-feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare
Whenever his breath he drew ;
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
Upon the swinging tide,
Upon the narrow track of beach
And the murmuring pebbles pied :
They shine on every lovely place,

They shine upon the corpse's face,
As *it* were fair beside.

It lay before him, humanlike,
Yet so unlike a thing !
More awful in its shrouded pomp
Than any crown'd king :
All calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret, glorying.

A heavier weight than of its clay
Clung to his heart and knee :
As if those folded palms could strike
He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan,
The meek close mouth that smiled alone,
Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

" I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
A woman scarce in years.
I come to thee, a solemn corpse
Which neither feels nor fears.
I have no breath to use in sighs ;
They laid the dead-weights on mine eyes
To seal them safe from tears.

" Look on me with thine own calm look :
I meet it calm as thou.
No look of thine can change *this* smile,
Or break thy sinful vow :
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth—thine earth, a part :
It cannot vex thee now.

" But out, alas ! these words are writ,
By a living, loving one

Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life
The warm quick tears do run :
Ah, let the unloving corpse control
Thy scorn back from the loving soul
Whose place of rest is won !

" I have prayed for thee with bursting sobs,
When passion's course was free ;
I have prayed for thee with silent lips,
In the anguish none could see :
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth soft'—
But I only prayed for thee.

" Go to! I pray for thee no more :
The corpse's tongue is still,
Its folded fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill :
No farther wrong, no farther woe
Hath license from the sin below
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

" I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
And the dead's silentness,
To wring from out thy soul a cry
Which God shall hear and bless !
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,
And pale among the saints I stand,
A saint companionless."

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind !
He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind :
'T was a dread sight to see them so,
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro
With the wail of his living mind.

But dreader sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did lie,
Whose long-subjected humanness
Gave out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,
'T would haunt you in court and mart,
And in merry feast until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart.

O broken heart, O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature !
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith i' the presence high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain—
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace
To his dying heart and brain !)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
For both one dwelling deep ;
To which, when years had mossed the stone,
Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap.
And when the happy boy would rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the tree,

"Nay, boy, look downward," said his father,
 "Upon this human dust asleep :
 And hold it in thy constant ken
 That God's own unity compresses
 (One into one) the human many,
 And that his everlastingness is
 The bond which is not loosed by any :
 That thou and I this law must keep,
 If not in love, in sorrow then,—
 Though smiling not like other men,
 Still, like them we must weep."



A VISION OF POETS.

O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
 How may I lightly stile thy great power?
Echo. Power.
 Power ! but of whence ? under the greenwood spraye
 Or liv'st in Heaven ? *saye.*
Echo. In Heavens aye.
 In Heavens aye ! tell, may I it obtayne
 By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine ?
Echo. By paine.
 Show me the paine, it shall be undergone :
 I to mine end will still go on.
Echo. Go on.
Britannia's Pastorals.

A POET could not sleep aright,
 For his soul kept up too much light
 Under his eyelids for the night.
 And thus he rose disquieted
 With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
 And in the forest wander'd
 Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
 The moon had drawn long colonnades
 Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver, pavement fair
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would dare
To foot-print o'er, had such been there,—

Would rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes, to see
The consecrated sight. But HE

The poet who, with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument :

Nor jarred it with his humour as,
With a faint stirring of the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared, another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then, as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim ;

Much less a lady riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,
" What ho, sir poet ! dost thou pace
Our woods at night in ghostly chace

“ Of some fair Dryad of old tales
Who chants between the nightingales
And over sleep by song prevails ? ”

She smiled ; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone. “ Now, nay,”
He answered, “ slumber passed away,

“ Compelled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread.”

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake : “ The moon’s regality
Will hear no praise ; she is as I.

“ She is in heaven, and I on earth ;
This is my kingdom : I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.”

He brake in with a voice that mourned ;
“ To their worth, lady ? They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

“ To their worth ? Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold, and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

“ The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

“ Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets !—why should I be moved
In saying, both are more beloved ? ”

"The south can judge not of the north,"
She resumed calmly ; "I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

"Yea, verily, to anoint them all
With blessed oils which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

"As sweet," the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, "as flowers are, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young .

"As sweet as window-eglantine,
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign :

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet !
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

"Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who having lived, dies well ;
And wholly sweet the asphodel

"Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls, from this.

"Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless Death, and even before :
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

"What, dost thou judge it a strange thing
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the ring ?

‘Come on with me, come on with me,
And learn in coming : let me free
Thy spirit into verity.”

She ceased : her palfrey’s paces sent
No separate noises as she went ;
’T was a bee’s hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and spare
O’erswim the masses everywhere

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently ;
The air blows up more fresh and free :

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large heaven-heart, bare with night,

A fiery throb in every star
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God’s life afar.

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleamings, blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood ;

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
Fixed in the spectral train and throe
Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree, alone,
That will not bend in storms, nor groan,
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
Upon the pool where, javelin-like,
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

" Drink," said the lady, very still—
" Be holy and cold." He did her will
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
Was bare of trees ; there, only grew
Straight flags, and lilies just a few

Which sullen on the water sate
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

" Drink," said the lady, grave and slow—
" *World's use* behoveth thee to know."
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes
And flaunting weeds and reeds and rushes
That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime ; the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

" Drink," said the lady, sad and slow—
" *World's love* behoveth thee to know."
He looked to her commanding so ;

Her brow was troubled but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly :

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were downcast

From yew and alder and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew : who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up,

He hears a silent gliding coil,
The snakes strain hard against the soil,
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats but dimly scanned
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek :
" Must I drink *here* ? " he seemed to seek
The lady's will with utterance meek :

" Ay, ay, " she said, " it so must be ; "
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
" Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*."

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth
As if from rivers of the south ;

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With death and life at each extreme :

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this ;
His eyelids flew back for the bliss—

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread ;
The moonshine seemed dishevellèd

In her sleek tresses manifold
Like Danae's in the rain of old
That dripped with melancholy gold :

But SHE was holy, pale and high
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

“Rise up !” said she with voice where song
Eddied through speech, “rise up ; be strong :
And learn how right avenges wrong.”

The poet rose up on his feet :
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament with vessels meet

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof
And thence refracting eddied off
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,
Then, poising its white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave

Where now in dark and now in light
The countless columns, glimmering white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite :

Plunged halfway up the shaft they showed,
In that pale shifting incense-cloud
Which flowed them by and overflowed

Till mist and marble seemed to blend
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The nichèd saints to come and go :

Alone amid the shifting scene
That central altar stood serene
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God ; his lips and jaw
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's law

They could enunciate and refrain
From vibratory after-pain,
And his brow's height was sovereign.

On the vast background of his wings
Rises his image, and he flings
From each plumed arc pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes,
While at his side 'twixt lights and glooms
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar ; pale and bound
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot nor to forget :

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him—
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current : these were poets true,
Who died for Beauty as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were ; of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world : O eyes sublime
With tears and laughters for all time !

Here Æschylus, the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did : he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips, that could be wild
And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's-look which down the trees
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.
And Sappho, with that gloriole

Of ebon hair on calmèd brows—
O poet-woman ! none foregoes
The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each,
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high ;
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe and said " No God—"

Finding no bottom : he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God : his face is stern
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed ;
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one : the Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri ; and fancy-willed
Boiardo, who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm And, not without
The wreath he died in and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine ; and grave Corneille,
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

From whose brainlighted heart were thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the *Lusiad*,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial, Calderon.

And bold De Vega, who breathed quick
Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetorick.

And Goethe, with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't,
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine ;
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim :
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne, with smiles they drew
From outward nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben,
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes : deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind. And Keats the real
Adonis with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave
And salt as life ; forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)
The lighted altar looming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

All their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone and yet intense ;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone were carved and not by sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their feet

Drop after drop—dropped heavily
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant, as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard,

“ *World's use* is cold, *world's love* is vain,
World's cruelty is bitter bane,
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

“ Harken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood : dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

“ His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

“ A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified—

“ Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK (יְבָרַךְ)
Breathes back this music, folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack,

“ And men walk in it, crying, ‘ Lo
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so :

“ ‘ The stars move statelier round the edge
Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge
Their light for nobler privilege :

“ ‘ No little flower but joys or grieves,
Full life is rustling in the sheaves,
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.’

“ So works this music on the earth,
God so admits it, sends it forth
To add another worth to worth—

“ A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

“ Now harken ! ” Then the poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o’er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences :

Then rose and fell (with swell and swoond
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys : the tones were mixed,
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word :

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,

A Harmony that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument,

Up, upward like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse :

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplext chords, and soared at once
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature ; strong to pass :

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood,
Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals
And burn in all their aureoles ;

But she the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,
Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which fell
Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovranly :
“ Tried poets, harken and reply !

“ Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the jubilant,—

“ If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance, and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss—

“ If, as two colours must be viewed
In a visible image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good—

“ If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature blends—

“ If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian to make just
Their oracles and merit trust—

“ If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world must pale their lips
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

“ If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,
Because that bolt (in man’s reverse)

“ Was shot to the heart o’ the wood and lies
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

“ From influent angels, must shut down
Their eyelids first to sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

“ If ONE who did redeem you back,
By His own loss, from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

“ Those temporal sorrows till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

“ If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found,—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

“ What say ye unto this?— refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

“ Or, O ye gifted givers ! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me
To make the world this harmony,

“ Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world’s help ? ”

The Spirits bent

Their awful brows, and said, “ Content.”

Content ! it sounded like *amen*
Said by a choir of mourning men ;
An affirmation full of pain

And patience—ay, of glorying
And adoration, as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad until the place
Grew larger for a moment’s space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off and all
Stood in the noon-sun,— “ Lo, I call
To other hearts as liberal.

“ This pedal strikes out in the air :
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

“ Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

“What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift.”

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile ;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest
As if the world were dispossessed,
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid, as he should faint ;
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralized on worldly taint ;

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods ! or—not to think.

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow
If they walked to instead of fro ;

And some, with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony ;

And some, composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear ;

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,
Exaggerate with mock and mow—

So mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked
An inch of any ; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it ; one his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate
Like Æschylus, and tried to prate
On trolling tongue of fate and fate ;

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's ; one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard-shut lips ; and one that drew
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise ;

So with the rest : it was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all, in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—"Thus,
O angel who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,

"Fit service from sufficient soul,
Hand-service to receive world's dole,
Lip-service in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show :

"Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

"To give our hearts up? fie! that rage
Barbaric antedates the age;
It is not done on any stage.

"Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back,—must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave;
No, nor yet martyrs; if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to—summer eve :

"And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie."

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising between his smiles fair-fed
Each separate phrase till finish'd ;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn,

Ay, jetted such brave fire that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely : they had passed

And he our pilgrim-poet saw
Only their places, in deep awe,
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison ;

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying, " If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it :

" For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door
To pay shortcomings evermore.

" Accept me therefore : not for price
And not for pride my sacrifice
Is tendered, for my soul is nice

" And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

" I soar, I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud : so high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

" I ask no wages, seek no fame :
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

" I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use ;

" I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance, but not in vain—
Upon the sweetness of that strain ;

" Only project beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice and live on in its sound ;

" Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past."

The angel's smile grew more divine,
The mortal speaking ; ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below ;
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid ;

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son :

My soul, which might have seen, grew blind
By what it looked on : I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so, as erst,
A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst :

With giant march from floor to roof
Rose the full notes, now parted off
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders, now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
Exultant in a mounting throng,
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors, wavelike sounds
Re-eddying into silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds :

And every rhythm that seemed to close
Survived in confluent underflows
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened, with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,

Waved backward (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared, and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision, as a soul
Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward with a gradual gold,
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned ;
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed : the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark, and there and so
She melted as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted slow :

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously
Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round : he was alone.
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that smeared the ground ;

The far wood-pines like offing ships ;
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,
World's cruelty attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still ;
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild delightful melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood
And prayed along the solitude
Betwixt the pines, " O God, my God ! "

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood
He prayed along the solitude,
" THOU, Poet-God, art great and good !

" And though we must have, and have had
Right reason to be earthly sad,
THOU, Poet-God, are great and glad ! "

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart ,
We press too close in church and mart
To keep a dream or grave apart :

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round ;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way, and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges and apply

Back to their song : 'twixt dew and bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word :

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good.

But hark ! a distant sound that grows,
A heaving, sinking of the boughs,
A rustling murmur, not of those,

A breezy noise which is not breeze !
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees,

Fair little children morning-bright,
With faces grave yet soft to sight,
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs and shake from each

A rain of dew till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed ; but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup as might do

A frightened song-bird ; and a child
Who seemed the chief said very mild
“ Hush ! keep this morning undefiled.”

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
“ What are your palms for ? ” “ To be spread ”
He answered, “ on a poet dead.

“ The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,

"Commands the palms ; they must be strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, " Did he foresee
Any such honour ? " " Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he.

" But this I know, I fain would lay
My own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

" A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

" Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

" With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad
The images of things bestowed

" By the chief Poet. ' God ! ' he cried,
' Be praised for anguish which has tried,
For beauty which has satisfied :

" ' For this world's presence half within
And half without me—thought and scene—
This sense of Being and Having been.

" ' I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world : both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

" ' I am content to be so weak :
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

“ ‘ I am content to be so bare
Before the archers, everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

“ ‘ I laid my soul before Thy feet
That images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

“ ‘ I am content to feel the step
Of each pure image : let those keep
To mandragore who care to sleep.

“ ‘ I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

“ ‘ Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter, Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

“ ‘ Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn and its scent outgive :
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

“ ‘ In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

“ ‘ *I know*—is all the mourner saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And Life is perfected by Death.’ ”

The child spake nobly : strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did appear ;

And fair to see, his form and face
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew ;
An orient beam which pierced it through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown :

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below—

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

“And so he died,” I whispered. “Nay,
Not so,” the childish voice did say,
“That poet turned him first to pray

“In silence, and God heard the rest
’Twixt the sun’s footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

“Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—‘Come,’
He said, ‘come nearer ! Let the bloom

“‘Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

“‘Come, kiss me !’ So the one in truth
Who loved him best,—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth :

“ And in that kiss of love was won
Life’s manumission. All was done :
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

“ But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His,
To words of truth and uprightness.”

The child’s voice trembled, his lips shook
Like a rose leaning o’er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

“ And who,” I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, “ was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved ? ”

“ *I*,” softly said the child ; and then,
“ *I*,” said he louder, once again :
“ His son, my rank is among men :

“ And now that men exalt his name
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy love may hallow fame.

“ He did not die alone, nor should
His memory live so, ’mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

“ Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
Saying, ‘ Come nearer : ’ and I come.

“ Glory to God ! ” resum’d he,
And his eyes smiled for victory
O’er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—
“ That poet now has entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

“And while he rests, his songs in troops
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companioned by diviner hopes.”

“But *thou*,” I murmured to engage
The child’s speech farther—“hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage.”

“Glory to God—to God !” he saith,
“KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH.”



INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony :
But, like a wind-exposed distorted tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak,
The effluence of each is false to all,
And what we best conceive we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall,
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration without let or thrall.



TWO SKETCHES.

I

H. B.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect Greek,
But when you front her, you would call the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak ;
For one who smiles so, has no need to speak
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart !
Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—
For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
“ Methinks there 's still some warmer place within.”

II

A. B.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee ;
Her fair superfluous ringlets without check
Drop after one another down her neck,
As many to each cheek as you might see
Green leaves to a wild rose ; this sign outwardly,
And a like woman-covering seems to deck
Her inner nature, for she will not fleck
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
Must call her in Love's name ! and then, I know,
She rises up, and brightens as she should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
To smell this flower, come near it ! such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

THE simple goatherd between Alp and sky,
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more patiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist,
While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,
Into the air around him. Learn from hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
Your way still onward up to eminence !
Ye are not great because creation drew
Large revelations round your earliest sense,
Nor bright because God's glory shines for you.

*FELICIA HEMANS.*

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THE POETESS.

THOU bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned
Dead art bowing,
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow
throwing,
And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music
wedding,
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes the tears not of their
shedding !—

Take music from the silent Dead whose meaning is
completer,
Reserve thy tears for living brows where all such tears
are meeter,

And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou treadest :

No flowers for her ! no need of flowers, albeit "bring flowers," thou saidest.

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute," since both may come to breaking,

Or flowers, to greet the "bride"—the heart's own beating works its aching ;

Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's free bosom gathered,

Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered :

But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human seeming,

Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming :

And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,

Her spherèd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more bright and holy.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was mourning :

Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the burning ?

The minstrel harp, for the strained string ? the tripod, for the afflated

Woe ? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone dilated ?

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her brow was wreathing,

But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in all her breathing,

Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions high and moving,

Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

Such visionings have paled in sight ; the Saviour she
 descrieth,
 And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His
 bosom lieth:
 The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments
 flowing,
 There learneth she the sweet "new song" she will not
 mourn in knowing.

Be happy, crowned and living One ! and as thy dust
 decayeth
 May thine own England say for thee what now for Her
 it sayeth—
 "Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
 The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her
 singing."



L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

From her poem written during the voyage to the Cape.

"Do you think of me as I think of you,
 My friends, my friends?"—She said it from the sea,
 The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,
 While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
 Her heart grew dark, and groped there as the blind
 To reach across the waves friends left behind—
 "Do you think of me as I think of you?"

It seemed not much to ask—"as *I* of *you*?"
 We all do ask the same ; no eyelids cover
 Within the meekest eyes that question over :
 And little in the world the Loving do
 But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
 The echo of their own love evermore—
 "Do you think of me as I think of you?"

Love-learn'd she had sung of love and love,—
 And like a child that, sleeping with dropt head
 Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
 Whatever household noises round him move,
 Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
 Even so suggestive to her inward sense,
 All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
 When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
 Were broken in her visionary eyes
 By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
 Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
 She asked not,—“ Do you praise me, O my land ? ”
 But,—“ Think ye of me, friends, as I of you ? ”

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
 Love's silver phrase for England, smooth and well.
 Would God, her heart's more inward oracle
 In that lone moment might confirm her dear !
 For when her questioned friends in agony
 Made passionate response, “ We think of thee,”
 Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath ?
 Was she content, content with ocean's sound
 Which dashed its mocking infinite around
 One thirsty for a little love ?—beneath
 Those stars content, where last her song had gone,—
 They mute and cold in radiant life, as soon
 Their singer was to be, in darksome death ? ¹

Bring your vain answers—cry, “ We think of thee ! ”
 How think ye of her, warm in long ago
 Delights ? or crowned with budding bays ? Not so.
 None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,

¹ Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

With all her visions unfulfilled save one,
Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun—
And lo ! their shadow on her sepulchre !

“ Do you think of me as I think of you ? ”—
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood
Of all the world ! what are we that we should
For covenants of long affection sue ?
Why press so near each other when the touch
Is barred by graves ? Not much, and yet too much
Is this “ Think of me as I think of you.”

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues, verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
A vocal pathos rolls ; and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all tasted death,
By death and life and love, appealing saith,
Do you think of me as I think of you ?



THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

Can my affections find out nothing best,
But still and still remove ?

QUARLES.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
The yew-tree leaf will suit .
But when its shade is o'er you laid,
Turn round and pluck the fruit.
Now reach my harp from off the wall
Where shines the sun aslant ;
The sun may shine and we be cold !
O harken, loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaunt,
Margret, Margret.

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river side
Which runneth on with a merry tone
Her merry thoughts to guide :
It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found
A way more pleasant still.
Margret, Margret.

The night is in her hair
And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight on her forehead white
Like a spirit's hand is laid ;
Her lips part with a smile
Instead of speakings done :
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none.
Margret, Margret.

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings :
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Absorbed from her living things ;
That dream by that ladye
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold stars
With a tender human look.
Margret, Margret.

The lady's shadow lies
Upon the running river ;
It lieth no less in its quietness,
For that which resteth never :
Most like a trusting heart
Upon a passing faith,
Or as upon the course of life
The steadfast doom of death.
Margret, Margret.

The lady doth not move,
 The lady doth not dream,
 Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
 In rest upon the stream :
 It shaketh without wind,
 It parteth from the tide,
 It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight,
 It sitteth at her side.

Margret, Margret.

Look in its face, ladye,
 And keep thee from thy swoond ;
 With a spirit bold thy pulses hold
 And hear its voice's sound :
 For so will sound thy voice
 When thy face is to the wall,
 And such will be thy face, ladye,
 When the maidens work thy pall.

Margret, Margret.

" Am I not like to thee?"
 The voice was calm and low,
 And between each word you might have heard
 The silent forests grow ;
 "*The like may sway the like ;*
 By which mysterious law
 Mine eyes from thine and my lips from thine
 The light and breath may draw.

Margret, Margret.

" My lips do need thy breath,
 My lips do need thy smile,
 And my pallid eyne, that light in thine
 Which met the stars erewhile :
 Yet go with light and life
 If that thou lovest one
 In all the earth who loveth thee
 As truly as the sun,

Margret, Margret.'

Her cheek had waxed white
 Like cloud at fall of snow ;
 Then like to one at set of sun,
 It waxed red alsò ;
 For love's name maketh bold
 As if the loved were near :
 And then she sighed the deep long sigh
 Which cometh after fear.
 Margret, Margret.

“ Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
 Shall never fear thee now ! ”
 (And a noble sight was the sudden light
 Which lit her lifted brow.)
 “ Can earth be dry of streams,
 Or hearts of love ? ” she said ;
 “ Who doubteth love, can know not love :
 He is already dead.”
 Margret, Margret.

“ I have ” . . . and here her lips
 Some word in pause did keep,
 And gave the while a quiet smile
 As if they paused in sleep,—
 “ I have . . . a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame !
 I broidered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name.
 Margret, Margret.

“ I fed his grey goshawk,
 I kissed his fierce bloodhound,
 I sate at home when he might come
 And caught his horn's far sound :
 I sang him hunter's songs,
 I poured him the red wine,
 He looked across the cup, and said,
I love thee, sister mine.”
 Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter ;
The sounding river which rolled, for ever
Stood dumb and stagnant after :
“ Brave knight thy brother is !
But better loveth he
Thy chalice wine than thy chaunted song,
And better both than thee,
Margret, Margret.”

The lady did not heed
The river's silence while
Her own thoughts still ran at their will,
And calm was still her smile.
“ My little sister wears
The look our mother wore :
I smooth her locks with a golden comb,
I bless her evermore.”
Margret, Margret.

“ I gave her my first bird
When first my voice it knew ;
I made her share my posies rare
And told her where they grew :
I taught her God's dear name
With prayer and praise to tell,
She looked from heaven into my face
And said, *I love thee well.*”
Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter ;
You could see each bird as it woke and stared
Through the shrivelled foliage after.
“ Fair child thy sister is !
But better loveth she
Thy golden comb than thy gathered flowers,
And better both than thee,
Margret, Margret.”

Thy lady did not heed
 The withering on the bough ;
 Still calm her smile albeit the while
 A little pale her brow :
 " I have a father old,
 The lord of ancient halls
 An hundred friends are in his court
 Yet only me he calls.

Margret, Margret.

" An hundred knights are in his court
 Yet read I by his knee ;
 And when forth they go to the tourney show
 I rise not up to see :
 'T is a weary book to read,
 My tryst 's at set of sun,
 But loving and dear beneath the stars
 Is his blessing when I 've done."

Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
 With a low, shadowy laughter ;
 And moon and star though bright and far
 Did shrink and darken after.
 " High lord thy father is !
 But better loveth he
 His ancient halls than his hundred friends,
 His ancient halls, than thee,

Margret, Margret."

The lady did not heed
 That the far stars did fail ;
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while . . .
 Nay, but she is not pale !
 " I have more than a friend
 Across the mountains dim :
 No other's voice is soft to me,
 Unless it nameth *him*."

Margret, Margret.

" Though louder beats my heart
 I know his tread again,
 And his fair plume aye, unless turned away,
 For the tears do blind me then :
 We brake no gold, a sign
 Of stronger faith to be,
 But I wear his last look in my soul,
 Which said, *I love but thee !*"
 Margret, Margret.

IT trembled on the grass
 With a low, shadowy laughter ;
 And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
 Were sped by the church-bell after ;
 And shadows, 'stead of light,
 Fell from the stars above,
 In flakes of darkness on her face
 Still bright with trusting love.
 Margret, Margret.

" He *loved* but only thee !
 That love is transient too.
 The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
 I' the mouth that vowed thee true :
 Will he open his dull eyes,
 When tears fall on his brow ?
 Behold, the death-worm to his heart
 Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
 Margret, Margret."

Her face was on the ground—
 None saw the agony ;
 But the men at sea did that night agree
 They heard a drowning cry : -
 And when the morning brake,
 Fast rolled the river's tide,
 With the green trees waving overhead
 And a white corse laid beside.
 Margret, Margret.

A knight's bloodhound and he
 The funeral watch did keep ;
 With a thought o the chase he stroked its face
 As it howled to see him weep.
 A fair child kissed the dead,
 But shrank before its cold ;
 And alone yet proudly in his hall
 Did stand a baron old.

Margret, Margret.

Hang up my harp again !
 I have no voice for song.
 Not song but wail, and mourners pale
 Not bards, to love belong.
 O failing human love !
 O light, by darkness known !
 O false, the while thou treadest earth !
 O deaf beneath the stone !

Margret, Margret.



A CHILD ASLEEP.

How he sleepeth, having drunken
 Weary childhood's mandragore !
 From its pretty eyes have sunken
 Pleasures to make room for more ;
 Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled the
 day before.

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking ;
 Throw them earthward where they grew ;
 Dim are such beside the breaking
 Amaranths he looked unto :
 Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
From the palms they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath :
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and
of his breath.

Vision unto vision calleth
While the young child dreameth on :
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won !
Darker wast thou in the garden yesternorn by summer
sun.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee, were the clouds away :
'T is the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay—
Singing ! stars that seem the mutest go in music all the
way.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood as if drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,
While thou smilest . . . not in sooth
Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some ætherial
mouth.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see
it fade.

Softly, softly ! make no noises !
Now he lieth dead and dumb ;
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room :
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as
they come.

Speak not ! he is consecrated ;
Breathe no breath across his eyes :
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies
In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral sanctities.

Could ye bless him, father—mother,
Bless the dimple in his cheek ?
Dare ye look at one another
And the benediction speak ?
Would ye not break out in weeping and confess yourselves too weak ?

He is harmless, ye are sinful ;
Ye are troubled, he, at ease :
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase.
Dare not bless him ! but be blessed by his peace, and go
in peace.

*A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.*

THEY say that God lives very high ;
But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God ; and why ?
And if you dig down in the mines
You never see Him in the gold ;
Though from Him all that 's glory shines.

God is so good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across His face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.
But still I feel that His embrace
Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place.
As if my tender mother laid
On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,
Half-waking me at night, and said
"Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?"



SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing :
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in.
On your curls' full roundness stand
Golden lights serenely ;
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
Folds the dimple inly :
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lips half shut,
Slants the shining azure.
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So you lie and slumber :
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.
I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you ?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you ?



Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth :
I will smile too ! patience mild
Pleasure's token weareth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss :
I shall sleep though losing !
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

And God knows who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure.
Very soon too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly.
Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
Given to my keeping :
Differing in this, that I
Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder :
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me ?
Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me ?)—
That while you I thus recall .
From your sleep, I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
With reveillie holy.

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

—so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.
SHAKESPEARE.

To rest the weary nurse has gone :
An eight-day watch had watchèd she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee,
Till Isobel its mother said
“The fever waneth—wend to bed,
For now the watch comes round to me.”
Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and slept and dreamed :
For, as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her face,
She saw or seemed to see, but dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite hill,
The seven tall poplars on the hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined and still
As blossoms in frost,
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly crossed,
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see
—Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily.
She only dreamed ; for all the while
'T was Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby, and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,

Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as rose of Harpocrate
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a seal'd rest.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice, dull and wild
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being one ;
As momentarily time's segments fall
On the ear of God, who hears through all

Eternity's unbroken monotone :
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then cries aloud
As one at the sorest,
Self-stung, self-driven,
And rises up to its very tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,
Dilating with a tempest-soul
The trees that with their dark hands break
Through their own outline, and heavy roll
Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven
Across the castle lake.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well ;
She knew not that she smiled ;
She knew not that the storm was wild ;
Through the uproar drear she could not hear
The castle clock which struck anear—
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

O sight for wondering look !
 While the external nature broke
 Into such abandonment,
 While the very mist, heart-rent
 By the lightning, seemed to eddy
 Against nature, with a din,—
 A sense of silence and of steady
 Natural calm appeared to come
 From things without, and enter in
 The human creature's room.

So motionless she sate,
 The babe asleep upon her knees,
 You might have dreamed their souls had gone
 Away to things inanimate,
 In such to live, in such to moan ;
 And that their bodies had ta'en back,
 In mystic change, all silences
 That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
 Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
 In water safe from their own sound :
 Only she wore
 The deepening smile I named before,
 And *that* a deepening love expressed ;
 And who at once can love and rest ?

In sooth the smile that then was keeping,
 Watch upon the baby sleeping,
 Floated with its tender light
 Downward, from the drooping eyes,
 Upward, from the lips apart,
 Over cheeks which had grown white
 With an eight-day weeping :
 All smiles come in such a wise
 Where tears shall fall or have of old—
 Like northern lights that fill the heart
 Of heaven in sign of cold.

Motionless she sate
Her hair had fallen by its weight
On each side of her smile and lay
Very blackly on the arm
Where the baby nestled warm,
Pale as baby carved in stone
Seen by glimpses of the moon
Up a dark cathedral aisle :
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell
Upon the child of Isobel—
Perhaps you saw it by the ray
Alone of her still smile.

A solemn thing it is to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps,
Wearing in its spirit-deeps
The undeveloped mystery
Of our Adam's taint and woe,
Which, when they developed be,
Will not let it slumber so ;
Lying new in life beneath
The shadow of the coming death,
With that soft, low, quiet breath,
As if it felt the sun ;
Knowing all things by their blooms.
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky
Only by the warmth that comes
Out of each, earth only by
The pleasant hues that o'er it run,
And human love by drops of sweet
White nourishment still hanging round
The little mouth so slumber-bound :
All which broken sentience
And conclusion incomplete,
Will gather and unite and climb
To an immortality -
Good or evil, each sublime,

Through life and death to life again.
 O little lids, now folded fast,
 Must ye learn to drop at last
 Our large and burning tears?
 O warm quick body, must thou lie,
 When the time comes round to die,
 Still from all the whirl of years,
 Bare of all the joy and pain?
 O small frail being, wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand,
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes
 Dilated by great destinies,
 To an endless waking? thrones and seraphim.
 Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
 Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise,
 But thine alone on Him?
 Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless place,
 (God keep thy will!) feel thine own energies
 Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,
 The sleepless deathless life within thee grasp,—
 While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
 With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere
 And overcome thee with thine own despair?

More soft, less solemn images
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart
 Silently as snow.
 She had seen eight days depart
 Hour by hour, on bended knees,
 With pale-wrung hands and prayings low
 And broken, through which came the sound
 Of tears that fell against the ground,
 Making sad stops :—"Dear Lord, dear Lord!"
 She still had prayed, (the heavenly word
 Broken by an earthly sigh)
 —"Thou who didst not erst deny
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,

Blessèd in the blessèd child
Which harkened in meek babyhood
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
To all that music interfused
In breasts of angels high and good !
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
Oh, take not to thy songful heaven
The pretty baby thou hast given,
Or ere that I have seen him play
Around his father's knees and known
That *he* knew how my love has gone
From all the world to him.
Think, God among the cherubim,
How I shall shiver every day
In thy June sunshine, knowing where
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
Still cheeks : and feel, at every tread,
His little body, which is dead
And hidden in thy turfy fold,
Doth make thy whole warm earth a-cold !
O God, I am so young, so young—
 I am not used to tears at nights
Instead of slumber—not to prayer
With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung !
Thou knowest all my prayings were
 ‘ I bless thee, God, for past delights—
Thank God ! ’ I am not used to bear
Hard thoughts of death ; the earth doth cover
No face from me of friend or lover :
And must the first who teaches me
The form of shrouds and funerals, be
Mine own first-born beloved ? he
Who taught me first this mother-love ?
Dear Lord who spreadest out above
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—

Pierce not my heart, my tender heart
Thou madest tender ! Thou who art
So happy in thy heaven alway,
Take not mine only bliss away ! ”

She so had prayed : and God, who hears
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,
From that belovèd babe had ta'en
The fever and the beating pain.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well,
(She knew not that she smiled, I wis)
Until the pleasant gradual thought
Which near her heart the smile enwrought,
Now soft and slow, itself did seem
To float along a happy dream,
Beyond it into speech like this.

“ I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God has heard my prayer !
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together undefiled
By men's repinings, will kneel down
Upon His earth which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet !) to us twain,
And give Him thankful praise.”

Dully and wildly drives the rain :
Against the lattices drives the rain.

“ I thank Him now, that I can think
Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mother's knee.
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me ! ”

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain.

“ But now, O baby mine, together,
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather,
When we shall sit and interwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and mother !
Two human loves make one divine.”

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

“ My little child, what wilt thou choose ?
Now let me look at thee and ponder.
What gladness, from the gladnesses
Futurity is spreading under
Thy gladsome sight ? Beneath the trees
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose
Thy spirit with the river seen
Intermittently between
The winding beechen alleys,—
Half in labour, half repose,
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
Thou, with only thoughts to keep
Which never a bound will overpass,
And which are innocent as those
That feed, among Arcadian valleys,
Upon the dewy grass ? ”

The large white owl that with age is blind,
That hath sat for years in the old tree hollow,
Is carried away in a gust of wind ;
His wings could bear him not as fast
As he goeth now the lattice past ;
He is borne by the winds, the rains do follow,

His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
He hooteth in going,
And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter
His round unblinking eyes.

“ Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise,
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities
For men to breathe anew, and win
A deeper-seated life within?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn?
Or a poet, broadly spreading
The golden immortalities
Of thy soul on natures lorn
And poor of such, them all to guard
From their decay,—beneath thy treading,
Earth’s flowers recovering hues of Eden,—
And stars, drawn downward by thy looks,
To shine ascendant in thy books?”

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,
How it screams to the lightning, with its wet
Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet!
And at the lady’s door the hound
Scratches with a crying sound.

“ But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
Close, fast upon thy cheek,
And not a dream of power and sheen
Can make a passage up between.
Thy heart is of thy mother’s made,
Thy looks are very meek,
And it will be their chosen place
To rest on some beloved face,

As these on thine, and let the noise
Of the whole world go on nor drown
The tender silence of thy joys :
Or when that silence shall have grown
Too tender for itself, the same
Yearning for sound,—to look above
And utter its one meaning, LOVE,
That *He* may hear His name."

No wind, no rain, no thunder !
The waters had trickled not slowly,
The thunder was not spent
Nor the wind near finishing ;
Who would have said that the storm was
diminishing ?"
No wind, no rain, no thunder !
Their noises dropped asunder
From the earth and the firmament,
From the towers and the lattices,
Abrupt and echoless
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken wholly,
As life in death.
And sudden and solemn the silence fell,
Startling the heart of Isobel
As the tempest could not :
Against the door went panting the breath
Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,
And she, constrained howe'er she would not,
Lifted her eyes and saw the moon
Looking out of heaven alone
Upon the poplared hill,—
A calm of God, made visible
That men might bless it at their will.

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold ;

The mother's looks have fallen back
 To the same place :
 Because no moon with silver rack,
 Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies
 Has power to hold
 Our loving eyes,
 Which still revert, as ever must
 Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

The moonshine on the baby's face
 Cold and clear remaineth ;
 The mother's looks do shrink away,—
 The mother's looks return to stay,
 As charm'd by what paineth :
 Is any glamour in the case ?
 Is it dream or is it sight ?
 Hath the change upon the wild
 Elements that signs the night,
 Passed upon the child ?
 It is not dream, but sight.

The babe has awakened from sleep
 And unto the gaze of its mother
 Bent over it, lifted another—
 Not the baby-looks that go
 Unaimingly to and fro,
 But an earnest gazing deep
 Such as soul gives soul at length
 When by work and wail of years
 It winneth a solemn strength
 And mourneth as it wears.
 A strong man could not brook
 With pulse unhurried by fears,
 To meet that baby's look
 O'er glazed by manhood's tears,
 The tears of a man full grown,
 With a power to wring our own,

In the eyes all undefiled
Of a little three-months' child—
To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought
 To judgment's prodigy,
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'erleaned,
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving
 Except the speechless cry)
Quickened to mind's expression,
Shaped to articulation,
Yea, uttering words, yea, naming woe,
 In tones that with it strangely went
 Because so baby-innocent,
As the child spake out to the mother, so :—

“ O mother, mother, loose thy prayer !
 Christ's name hath made it strong.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
With its most loving cruelty,
 For floating my new soul along
 The happy heavenly air.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me !
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God.¹

“ Mother, mother, can I dream
 Beneath your earthly trees?
I had a vision and a gleam,
 I heard a sound more sweet than these

¹ “ For I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.”—Matt. xviii. 10.

When rippled by the wind :
 Did you see the Dove with wings
 Bathed in golden glisterings
 From a sunless light behind,
 Dropping on me from the sky,
 Soft as mother's kiss, until
 I seemed to leap and yet was still ?
 Saw you how His love-large eye
 Looked upon me mystic calms,
 Till the power of his divine
 Vision was indrawn to mine ?
 Oh, the dream within the dream !
 I saw celestial places even.
 Oh, the vistas of high palms
 Making finites of delight
 Through the heavenly infinite,
 Lifting up their green still tops
 To the heaven of heaven !
 Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
 Shade like light across the river
 Glorified in its for ever
 Flowing from the Throne !
 Oh, the shining holinesses
 Of the thousand, thousand faces
 God-sunned by the thronéd ONE
 And made intense with such a love
 That, though I saw them turned above,
 Each loving seemed for also me !
 And, oh, the Unspeakable, the He,
 The manifest in secrecies
 Yet of mine own heart partaker
 With the overcoming look
 Of One who hath been once forsook
 And blesseth the forsaker !
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Toward the Face that looketh so !

Through the mystic wingèd Four
Whose are inward, outward eyes
Dark with light of mysteries
And the restless evermore
“Holy holy, holy,”—through
The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view
Of cherubim and seraphim,—
Through the four-and-twenty crowned
Stately elders white around,
Suffer me to go to Him !

“Is your wisdom very wise,
Mother, on the narrow earth,
Very happy, very worth
That I should stay to learn ?
Are these air-corrupting sighs
Fashioned by unlearnèd breath
Do the students' lamps that burn
All night, illumine death ?
Mother, albeit this be so,
Loose thy prayer and let me go
Where that bright chief angel stands
Apart from all his brother bands,
Too glad for smiling, having bent
In angelic wilderment
O'er the depths of God, and brought
Reeling thence one only thought
To fill his own eternity.
He the teacher is for me—
He can teach what I would know—
Mother, mother, let me go !

Can your poet make an Eden
No winter will undo,
And light a starry fire while heeding
His hearth's is burning too ?
Drown in music the earth's din,
And keep his own wild soul within

The law of his own harmony ?

Mother, albeit this be so,

Let me to my heaven go !

A little harp me waits thereby,
A harp whose strings are golden all
And tuned to music spherical,
Hanging on the green life-tree,
Where no willows ever be.

Shall I miss that harp of mine ?

Mother, no !—the Eye divine

Turned upon it, makes it shine ;

And when I touch it, poems sweet
Like separate souls shall fly from it,
Each to the immortal fytte.

We shall all be poets there,

Gazing on the chiefest Fair.

“ Love ! earth's love ! and *can* we love

Fixedly where all things move ?

Can the sinning love each other ?

Mother, mother,

I tremble in thy close embrace,

I feel thy tears adown my face,

Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—

O dreary earthly love !

Loose thy prayer and let me go

To the place which loving is

Yet not sad ; and when is given

Escape to *thee* from this below,

Thou shalt behold me that I wait

For thee beside the happy Gate,

And silence shall be up in heaven

To hear our greeting kiss.”

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,

And starts to see beside her bed

The lady with a grandeur spread

Like pathos o'er her face, as one
God-satisfied and earth-undone.

The babe upon her arm was dead :
And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—
She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

“ Wake, nurse ! ” the lady said ;

“ *We* are waking—he and I—

I, on earth, and he, in sky :

And thou must help me to o'erlay
With garment white this little clay
Which needs no more our lullaby.

“ I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and prayed
That God would do His will ; and thus
He did it, nurse ! He parted us :
And His sun shows victorious
The dead calm face,—and *I* am calm,
And Heaven is harkening a new psalm.

“ This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence.”

And a sense of tune,
A satisfièd love meanwhile
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul.

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so named who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil !
Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad, loving will.

DE PROFUNDIS.

THE face which, duly as the sun,
Rose up for me with life begun,
To mark all bright hours of the day
With hourly love, is dimmed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

The tongue which, like a stream, could run
Smooth music from the roughest stone,
And every morning with "Good day"
Make each day good, is hushed away—
And yet my days go on, go on.

The heart which, like a staff, was one
For mine to lean and rest upon,
The strongest on the longest day
With steadfast love, is caught away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

And cold before my summer's done,
And deaf in Nature's general tune,
And fallen too low for special fear,
And here, with hope no longer here,—
While the tears drop, my days go on.

The world goes whispering to its own,
"This anguish pierces to the bone ;"
And tender friends go sighing round,
"What love can ever cure this wound ?"
My days go on, my days go on.

The past rolls forward on the sun
And makes all night. O dreams begun,
Not to be ended ! Ended bliss,
And life that will not end in this !
My days go on, my days go on.

Breath freezes on my lips to moan :
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

I knock and cry,—Undone, undone !
Is there no help, no comfort,—none ?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains
Where others drive their loaded wains ?
My vacant days go on, go on.

This Nature, though the snows be down,
Thinks kindly of the bird of June :
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me,
Whose days so winterly go on ?

No bird am I, to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Nature's
To give away to better creatures,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

I ask less kindness to be done,—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon,
(Too early worn and grimed) with sweet
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on—

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has grown,
Some cubit-space, and say, " Behold,
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that fold,
Forgetting how the days go on."

What harm would that do ? Green anon
The sward would quicken, overshone
By skies as blue ; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and night
While my new rest went on, went on.

From gracious Nature have I won
Such liberal bounty ? may I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe, who now am tried
By days that painfully go on ?

—A Voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's when the drone
Of bees is sweetest and more deep
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder on.

God's Voice, not Nature's ! Night and noon
He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creatures' praise.
What babble we of days and days ?
The Day-spring He, whose days go on.

He reigns above, He reigns alone ;
Systems burn out and leave His throne ;
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid all,—
Ancient of Days, whose days go on.

He reigns below, He reigns alone,
And, having life in love foregone
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,
He reigns the Jealous God. Who mourns
Or rules with Him, while days go on ?

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear Him charge His saints that none
Among His creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against Him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

Take from my head the thorn-wreath brown !
No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O súpreme Love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for THEE
Whose days eternally go on !

For us,—whatever 's undergone,
Thou knowest, willest what is done.
Grief may be joy misunderstood ;
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

Whatever 's lost, it first was won ;
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here,
That Heaven's new wine might show more clear.
I praise Thee while my days go on.

I praise Thee while my days go on ;
I love Thee while my days go on :
Through dark and dearth, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on.

And having in thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one),
As a child drops his pebble small
Down some deep well, and hears it fall
Smiling—so I. THY DAYS GO ON.

BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astounded fell and could not pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
“Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sackcloth spun,
As in that purple!”—But I answered, Nay!
What child his filial heart in words can loose
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? Can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.



CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken ; there are left behind
Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind :
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring
Where “dust to dust” the love from life disjoined,
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth)
Crying “Where are ye, O my loved and loving?”—
I know a Voice would sound, “Daughter, I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN and not for earth?”

LOVE.

WE cannot live, except thus mutually
 We alternate, aware or unaware,
 The reflex act of life ; and when we bear
 Our virtue outward most impulsively,
 Most full of invocation, and to be
 Most instantly compellant, certes there
 We live most life, whoever breathes most air
 And counts his dying years by sun and sea.
 But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
 Throw out her full force on another soul,
 The conscience and the concentration both
 Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole
 And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
 As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.



THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
 God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate Heaven
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.
 The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
 Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
 For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory ! heaven is high ;
 Sing, poet with the sorrow ! earth is low ;
 The universe's inward voices cry
 " Amen " to either song of joy or woe :
 Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally !

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

My lonely chamber next the sea
Is full of many a flower set free
By summer's earliest duty :
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk
To pull the least in beauty.

A thousand flowers, each seeming one
That learnt by gazing on the sun
To counterfeit his shining ;
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven has won anew
A glory, in declining.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
The nightingale's being over ;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

Deep violets, you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal ;
And cactuses, a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal.

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss
A jewel in the mirror ;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

Love's language may be talked with these ;
To work out choicest sentences,
 No blossoms can be meeter ;
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
 Or meanings be the sweeter.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
 Their longer bloom decreeing,
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
 Too earnestly for seeing.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
 A type which seemeth worthy
Of that fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago
 Then perished as the earthy.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
 Their rainbow colours viewing
May feel them, with a silent start,
The covenant, his childish heart
 With nature made, renewing

No flowers our gardened England hath
To match with these, in bloom and breath
 Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
 The elements presiding.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
 With prodigal rewarding,

(For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
To light her through the garden).

But here, all summers are comprised,
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine ;
And every wind with stol'd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses that
No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show
In posies newly gathered ?
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,
A little flower half-withered.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened ;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows :
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 't was only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
In pale refraction driven !
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of heaven !

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on.

But SHE for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh, if her face she turn'd then,
Let none say 't was to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon !

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies, warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
Belov'd friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing !

*A DEAD ROSE.*

O ROSE, who dares to name thee?
No longer roseate now, nor soft nor sweet,
But pale and hard and dry as stubble wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer, thy titles shame thee.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedgerow thorns, and take away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now, unsweetened would forego thee.

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
If shining now, with not a hue would light thee.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined because
It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
If dropping now, would darken where it met thee.

The fly that 'lit upon thee
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
If 'lighting now, would coldly overrun thee.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
If passing now, would blindly overlook thee.

The heart doth recognize thee,
Alone, alone ! the heart doth smell thee sweet
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,
Perceiving all those changes that disguise thee.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose, than to any roses bold
Which Julia wears at dances, smiling cold :—
Lie still upon this heart which breaks below thee !



LOVED ONCE.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
 Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
 The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
 The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
 But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
 Than these words,—“ I loved ONCE.”

And who saith, “ I loved ONCE ” ?
 Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,
 Love, through eternity,
 And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown-name casting
 A light too broad for blasting :
 The great God changing not from everlasting,
 Saith never, “ I loved ONCE.”

Oh, never is “ Loved ONCE.”
 Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprizèd friend !
 Thy cross and curse may rend,
 But having loved Thou lovest to the end.
 This is man's saying—man's : too weak too move
 One spherèd star above,
 Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
 By his No More, and Once.

How say ye, “ We loved once,”
 Blasphemers ? Is your earth not cold enow,
 Mourners, without that snow ?
 Ah, friends, and would ye wrong each other so ?
 And could ye say of some whose love is known,
 Whose prayers have met your own,
 Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone
 So long—“ We loved them ONCE ” ?

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
 Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight?
 When hearts of better right
 Stand in between me and your happy light?
 Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
 Ye find my colours fade,
 And all that is not love in me, decayed?
 Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

Could ye, "We loved her once"
 Say cold of me when further put away
 In earth's sepulchral clay,
 When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?
 Not so! not then—least then! When life is shriven
 And death's full joy is given,—
 Of those who sit and love you up in heaven,
 Say not, "We loved them once."

Say never, ye loved ONCE:
 God is too near above, the grave, beneath,
 And all our moments breathe
 Too quick in mysteries of life and death,
 For such a word. The eternities avenge
 Affections light of range.
 There comes no change to justify that change,
 Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

And yet that same word ONCE
 Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
 Shaking a discrowned head,
 "We ruled once,"—dotards, "We once taught and led,"
 Cripples once danced i' the vines, and bards approved,
 Were once by scornings moved:
 But love strikes one hour—LOVE! those *never* loved
 Who dreamed that they loved ONCE.



SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some belovèd voice that was to you
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
 And silence against which you dare not cry,
 Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
 What hope? what help? what music will undo
 That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
 Not reason's subtle count; not melody
 Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunas blew;
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales
 Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees
 To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
 Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet All hail,
 Met in the smile of God: nay, none of these.
 Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.



COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
 Who art not missed by any that entreat.
 Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!
 And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
 Let my tears drop like amber while I go
 In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
 In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
 To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
 He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving ! lighter, none befell
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! what are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing ; at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps, and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only ! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs,—look up ! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless ;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air,
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it ; the marble eyelids are not wet :
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

FUTURITY.

AND, O belov'd voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call because erelong
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song
 We sang together softly, to enrich
 The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
 Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
 The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
 In Heaven to hold our idols ; and albeit
 He brake them to our faces and denied
 That our close kisses should impair their white,
 I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
 The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
 New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

*THE TWO SAYINGS.*

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
 Like pulses in the Church's brow and breast,
 And by them we find rest in our unrest
 And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
 God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.
 The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
 And sweetest waters on the record sweet :
 And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,
 LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
 By help of having loved a little and mourned,
 That look of sovran love and sovran pain
 Which HE, who could not sin yet suffered, turned
 On him who could reject but not sustain !

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
 No gesture of reproach ; the Heavens serene,
 Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
 Their thunders that way : the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
 What that look was, none guess ; for those who have seen
 Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
 Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
 Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
 And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
 “ I never knew this man ”—did quail and fall
 As knowing straight THAT God ; and turned free
 And went out speechless from the face of all,
 And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.



THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
 “ Thou, Peter ! art thou then a common stone
 Which I at last must break my heart upon,
 For all God’s charge to His high angels may
 Guard my foot better ? Did I yesterday
 Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
 Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun ?
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray ?
 The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
 For when thy final need is dreariest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here ;
 My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.”

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
 In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
 Of yon grey blank of sky, we might grow faint
 To muse upon eternity's constraint
 Round our aspirant souls ; but since the scope
 Must widen early, is it well to droop,
 For a few days consumed in loss and taint ?
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
 Singing beside the hedge ! What if the bread
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
 To meet the flints ? At least it may be said,
 " Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God."

*EXAGGERATION.*

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
 Imagination (given us to bring down
 The choirs of singing angels overshadowed
 By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake
 The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,
 To cover all the corn ; we walk upon
 The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
 And pant like climbers : near the alderbrake
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
 O brothers, let us leave the shame and sin
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
 The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein,
 That by the grief of ONE came all our good.

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
 And ruffled without cause, complaining on,
 Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
 Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
 Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
 Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
 A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.
 But what time through the heart and through the brain
 God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
 Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
 We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
 And hear, submissive o'er the stormy main
 God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

*PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.*

"O DREARY life," we cry, "O dreary life!"
 And still the generations of the birds
 Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
 Serenely live while we are keeping strife
 With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
 Against which we may struggle! Ocean girds
 Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
 Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn, and rife
 Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees
 To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
 In their old glory: O thou God of old,
 Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these!—
 But so much patience as a blade of grass
 Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
 To die alone, with none beside thy bed
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
 Pray then alone, “O Christ, come tenderly !
 By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red
 Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
 And the lone garden where Thine agony
 Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine !
 No earthly friend being near me, interpose
 No deathly angel ’twixt my face and Thine,
 But stoop Thyself to gather my life’s rose,
 And smile away my mortal to Divine !”

*WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.*

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
 A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole ;
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
 Far more than of her flax ; and yet the reel
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
 With quick adjustment, provident control,
 The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
 To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
 Our Father’s business in these temples mirk,
 Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent and strong ;
 While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
 Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
 The better for the sweetness of our song.

ADEQUACY.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Belov'd England, doth the earth appear
Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
Strong stars without significance insphere
Our habitation : we, meantime, our ills
Heap up against this good and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

*THE PRISONER.*

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,
A strange wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine,
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades, and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills transfigured to Divine.

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart."

LOWELL.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever-golden,
 Cankered not the whole year long !
 Do ye teach us to be strong,
 Howsoever pricked and holden
 Like your thorny blooms, and so
 Trodden on by rain and snow,
 Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow ?

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
 Do ye teach us to be glad
 When no summer can be had,
 Blooming in our inward bosoms ?
 Ye, whom God preserveth still,
 Set as lights upon a hill,
 Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still !

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
 From that academic chair
 Canopied with azure air,
 That the wisest word man reaches
 Is the humblest he can speak ?
 Ye, who live on mountain peak,
 Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek !

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
 Knelt beside you on the sod,
 For your beauty thanking God,—
 For your teaching, ye should see us
 Bowing in prostration new !
 Whence arisen,—if one or two
 Drops be on our cheeks—O world, they are not tears
 but dew.

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wing to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die,

I would not waste my strength on those,
As thou,—for summer has a close,
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey-gold I see,
Could delve from roses easily,

I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich and leave me poor.

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud,

I would not build my eyrie throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone
Which the next storm may trample down.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut-up window heard,
Like Love's sweet yes too long deferred,

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight
Till the new spring returned to sight.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said,—

“If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

“I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

“I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—halfway 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above and judge within.

“I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—towards fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

“I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,
But take God's freedom, using it.

“I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

“Then sing, O singer!—but allow,
Beast, fly and bird, called foolish now
Are wise (for all they scorn) as thou.”



TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say
As better poets use, "These *flowers* I lay,"
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat
Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
With heart as open to love as theirs to May,
—"Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true
Though not as precious." Thou art unperplexed,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—
To preach a sermon on so known a text !

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY
B. R. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn ! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free

Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist :
 No portrait this, with Academic air !
 This is the poet and his poetry.



TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD FRIEND OF GOETHE.

" I have the second sight, Goethe ! "—*Letters of a Child.*

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
 Upturning worship and delight
 With such a loving duty
 To his grand face, as women will,
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still ?

—Before his shrine to doom thee,
 Using the same child's smile
 That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
 For the first time, won from thee
 Ere star and flower grew dim and dead
 Save at his feet and o'er his head ?

—Digging thine heart and throwing
 Away its childhood's gold,
 That so its woman-depth might hold
 His spirit's overflowing ?
 (For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
 Their channel in the heart have found.)

O child, to change appointed,
 Thou hadst not second sight !
 What eyes the future view aright
 Unless by tears anointed ?
 Yea, only tears themselves can show
 The burning ones that have to flow.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight !
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope came back to thee
Without a leaf : art laying
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly ?

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight !
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye ;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

Where 's childhood ? where is Goethe ?
The tears are in thine eyes,
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganize
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The childlike poet undefiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.



HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS BLINDNESS.

GOD would not let the spheric lights accost
 This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
 With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff
 Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
 Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
 To catch fair visions rendered full enough
 By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
 Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's Spring,
 And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes :
 Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
 Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing.



HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVED friend, who living many years
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
 To visible nature's elemental cheers !
 God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
 Because thou wast aweary of this one ;—
 I think thine angel's patience first was done,
 And that he spake out with celestial tears,
 " Is it enough, dear God ? then lighten so
 This soul that smiles in darkness ! "

Steadfast friend,
 Who never didst my heart or life misknow,

Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—
How can I wonder when I see thee go
To join the Dead found faithful to the end?

*HUGH STUART BOYD.*

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus,
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
Of stars whose motion is melodious.
The books were those I used to read from, thus
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
The darkness of his eyes ; now, mine they mock,
Blinded in turn by tears : now, murmurous
Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago
Entoning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
In silence on the shelf there, within gaze ;
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these parting-days !

*A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.*

FROM BION.

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead,
Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves are lamenting
Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-strewed bed :
Arise, wretch stoled in black ; beat thy breast
unrelenting,
And shriek to the worlds, “ Fair Adonis is dead.”

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.
He lies on the hills in his beauty and death ;
The white tusk of a boar has transpierced his white
thigh.

Cytherea grows mad at his thin gasping breath,
While the black blood drips down on the pale ivory,
And his eyeballs lie quenched with the weight of his
brows,

The rose fades from his lips, and upon them just parted
The kiss dies the goddess consents not to lose,
Though the kiss of the Dead cannot make her glad-
hearted :

He knows not who kisses him dead in the dews.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.

Deep, deep in the thigh is Adonis' wound,
But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom presenting.

The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,
And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,
And the poor Aphrodité, with tresses unbound,
All dishevelled, unsandaled, shrieks mournful and shrill
Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing
her feet,

Gather up the red flower of her blood which is holy,
Each footstep she takes ; and the valleys repeat
The sharp cry she utters, and draw it out slowly.

She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him
Her own youth, while the dark blood spreads over his
body,

The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,
And the bosom once ivory, turning to ruddy.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! the Loves are lamenting :

She lost her fair spouse and so lost her fair smile ;
When he lived she was fair, by the whole world's con-
senting,

Whose fairness is dead with him : woe worth the while !

All the mountains above and the oaklands below

Murmur, ah, ah Adonis ! the streams overflow
Aphrodité's deep wail ; river fountains in pity

Weep soft in the hills, and the flowers as they blow

Redden outward with sorrow, while all hear her go

With the song of her sadness through mountain and city.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! Adonis is dead,

Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers, Adonis !

Who weeps not for Cypris, when bowing her head

She stares at the wound where it gapes and astonies ?

—When, ah, ah !—she saw how the blood ran away

And empurpled the thigh, and, with wild hands flung
out,

Said with sobs, “ Stay Adonis ! unhappy one, stay,

Let me feel thee once more, let me ring thee about

With the clasp of my arms, and press kiss into kiss !

Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me again,

For the last time, beloved,—and but so much of this

That the kiss may learn life from the warmth of the strain !

—Till thy breath shall exude from thy soul to my mouth,

To my heart, and, the love-charm I once more receiving,

May drink thy love in it and keep of a truth

That one kiss in the place of Adonis the living.

Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me far,

My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron portal,—

To Hell's cruel King goest down with a scar,

While I weep and live on like a wretched immortal,

And follow no step ! O Persephoné, take him,

My husband !—thou 'rt better and brighter than I,

So all beauty flows down to thee : *I* cannot make him

Look up at my grief ; there 's despair in my cry,
Since I wail for Adonis who died to me—died to me—
Then, I fear *thee* !—Art thou dead, my Adored ?
Passion ends like a dream in the sleep that 's denied to
me,
Cypris is widowed, the Loves seek their lord
All the house through in vain. Charm of cestus has ceased
With thy clasp ! O too bold in the hunt past preventing,
Ay, mad, thou so fair, to have strife with a beast ! ”
Thus the goddess wailed on—and the Loves are
lamenting.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! Adonis is dead.
She wept tear after tear with the blood which was shed,
And both turned into flowers for the earth's garden—
close—
Her tears, to the wind-flower—his blood to the rose.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.
Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea, thy lover !
So, well : make a place for his corse in thy bed,
With the purples thou sleepest in, under and over.
He 's fair though a corse—a fair corse, like a sleeper.
Lay him soft in the silks he had pleasure to fold
When, beside thee at night, holy dreams deep and
deeper
Enclosed his young life on the couch made of gold.
Love him still, poor Adonis ; cast on him together
The crowns and the flowers : since he died from the
place,
Why, let all die with him ; let the blossoms go wither,
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on his face.
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is best fall a-pining,
Since the myrrh of his life from thy keeping is swept.
Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples reclining ;
The Loves raised their voices around him and wept.

They have shorn their bright curls off to cast on Adonis ;
 One treads on his bow,—on his arrows, another,—
 One breaks up a well-feathered quiver, and one is
 Bent low at a sandal, untying the strings,
 And one carries the vases of gold from the springs,
 While one washes the wound,—and behind them a
 brother
 Fans down on the body sweet air with his wings.

Cytherea herself how the Loves are lamenting.
 Each torch at the door Hymenæus blew out ;
 And, the marriage-wreath dropping its leaves as repenting,
 No more “ Hymen, Hymen,” is chanted about.
 But the *ai ai* instead—“ ai alas ” is begun
 For Adonis, and then follows “ ai Hymenæus ! ”
 The Graces are weeping for Cinyris’ son,
 Sobbing low each to each, “ His fair eyes cannot see us ! ”
 Their wail strikes more shrill than the sadder Dioné’s.
 The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis, Adonis,
 Deep chanting ; he hears not a word that they say :
 He *would* hear, but Persephoné has him in keeping.
 —Cease moan, Cytherea ! leave pomps for to-day,
 And weep new when a new year refits thee for weeping.



ILLUSTRATIONS OF ANTIQUE GEMS.

FROM APULEIUS.

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul, put on
 The cruelty of Fate, in place of strength :
 She raised the lamp to see what should be done,
 And seized the steel, and was a man at length

In courage, though a woman ! Yes, but when
 The light fell on the bed whereby she stood
 To view the "*beast*" that lay there,—certes, then,
 She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast in wood—
 Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god ! more beauteous
 For that sweet sleep across his eyelids dim.
 The light, the lady carried as she viewed,
 Did blush for pleasure as it lighted him,
 The dagger trembled from its aim unduteous ;
 And *she* . . oh, *she*—amazed and soul-distraught,
 And fainting in her whiteness like a veil,
 Slid down upon her knees, and, shuddering, thought
 To hide—though in her heart—the dagger pale !
 She would have done it, but her hands did fail
 To hold the guilty steel, they shivered so :
 And feeble, exhausted, unawares she took
 To gazing on the god, till, look by look,
 Her eyes with larger life did fill and glow.
 She saw his golden head alight with curls,—
 She might have guessed their brightness in the dark
 By that ambrosial smell of heavenly mark !
 She saw the milky brow, more pure than pearls,
 The purple of the cheeks, divinely sundered
 By the globed ringlets, as they glided free,
 Some back, some forwards,—all so radiantly,
 That, as she watched them there, she never wondered
 To see the lamplight, where it touched them, tremble ;
 On the god's shoulders, too, she marked his wings
 Shine faintly at the edges and resemble
 A flower that 's near to blow. The poet sings
 And lover sighs, that Love is fugitive ;
 And certes, though these pinions lay reposing,
 The feathers on them seemed to stir and live
 As if by instinct, closing and unclosing,
 Meantime the god's fair body slumbered deep,
 All worthy of Venus, in his shining sleep ;

While at the bed's foot lay the quiver, bow,
And darts,—his arms of godhead. Psyche gazed
With eyes that drank the wonders in,—said,—“Lo,
Be these my husband's arms?”—and straightway raised
An arrow from the quiver-case, and tried
Its point against her finger,—trembling till
She pushed it in too deeply (foolish bride !)
And made her blood some dewdrops small distil,
And learnt to love Love, of her own goodwill.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock forsaken,
Alone, despairing, dreading,—gradually
By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and taken
Still trembling,—like the lilies planted high,—
Through all her fair white limbs. Her vesture spread,
Her very bosom eddying with surprise,—
He drew her slowly from the mountain-head,
And bore her down the valleys with wet eyes,
And laid her in the lap of a green dell
As soft with grass and flowers as any nest,
With trees beside her, and a limpid well :
Yet Love was not far off from all that Rest.

PSYCHE AND PAN.

(METAMORPH., Lib. V.)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honour,
Because he used to warm the very wave,
Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,
And cast up Psyche, with a reflux brave,

Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and sinning.
 Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was leaning
 Along the brow of waters as they wound,
 Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank to ground,
 And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning,
 To run her voice in music after his
 Down many a shifting note : (the goats around,
 In wandering pasture and most leaping bliss,
 Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair.)
 And as the hoary god beheld her there,
 The poor, worn, fainting Psyche !—knowing all
 The grief she suffered, he did gently call
 Her name, and softly comfort her despair :—

“O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,
 And yet experienced through my weary age !
 And if I read aright, as soothsayer should,
 Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,
 Thy paleness, deep as snow we cannot see
 The roses through,—thy sighs of quick returning,
 Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two souls in mourn-
 ing—

Thou lovest, girl, too well and bitterly !
 But hear me : rush no more to a headlong fall :
 Seek no more deaths ! leave wail, lay sorrow down,
 And pray the sovran god ; and use withal
 Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,
 Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from thy mouth
 And feel them stir the myrtle of his crown.”

—So spake the shepherd-god ; and answer none
 Gave Psyche in return : but silently
 She did him homage with a bended knee
 And took the onward path.

PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld her,
 While Psyche touched, with reverent fingers meek,
 The temple's scythes ; and with a cry compelled her :—
 “O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to seek
 Thy wandering footsteps round the weary earth,
 Anxious and maddened, and adjures thee forth
 To accept the imputed pang, and let her wreak
 Full vengeance with full force of deity !
 Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple here,
 Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,
 And daring to have thoughts that are not fear !”
 —But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved
 Rained tears along their track, tear, dropped on tear,
 And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,
 And still, with passionate prayer, the charge disproved :—
 “Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks
 Of golden corn,—and by thy gladsome rites
 Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights
 Shut safe and mute in chests,—and by the course
 Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driving force
 Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes profound,—
 By thy swift chariot,—by thy steadfast ground,—
 By all those nuptial torches that departed
 With thy lost daughter,—and by those that shone
 Back with her, when she came again glad-hearted,—
 And by all other mysteries which are done
 In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech thee,
 O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain
 From giving to my soul extremest pain
 Who am the wretched Psyche ! Let me teach thee
 A little mercy, and have thy leave to spend
 A few days only in thy garnered corn,
 Until that wrathful goddess, at the end,

Shall feel her hate grow mild, the longer borne,—
Or till—alas !—this faintness at my breast

Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend
From life-long woe a breath-time hour of rest !”
But Ceres answered, “I am moved indeed

By prayers so moist with tears, and would defend
The poor beseecher from more utter need :

But where old oaths, anterior ties, commend,
I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,
As Venus is to *me*. Depart with speed !”

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove’s rapacious Bird, the regal
High percher on the lightning, the great eagle
Drove down with rushing wings ; and,—thinking how,
By Cupid’s help, he bore from Ida’s brow
A cup-boy for his master,—he inclined
To yield, in just return, an influence kind ;
The god being honoured in his lady’s woe.
And thus the Bird wheeled downward from the track,
Gods follow gods in, to the level low
Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack.
—“ Now fie, thou simple girl !” the Bird began ;
“ For if thou think to steal and carry back
A drop of holiest stream that ever ran,
No simpler thought, methinks, were found in man.
What ! know’st thou not these Stygian waters be
Most holy, even to Jove ? that as, on earth,
Men swear by gods, and by the thunder’s worth,
Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth
Their oaths by Styx’s flowing majesty ?
And yet, one little urnful, I agree
To grant thy need !” Whereat, all hastily,

He takes it, fills it from the willing wave,
And bears it in his beak, incarnadined
By the last Titan-prey he screamed to have ;
And, striking calmly out, against the wind,
Vast wings on each side,—there, where Psyche stands,
He drops the urn down in her lifted hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal necks,
And heads in grand proportion ; vast as fear,
With jaws that bark the thunder out that breaks
In most innocuous dread for ghosts anear,
Who are safe in death from sorrow : he reclines
Across the threshold of queen Proserpine's
Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for Pluto's spouse,
Doth guard the entrance of the empty house.
When Psyche threw the cake to him, once amain
He howled up wildly from his hunger-pain,
And was still, after.

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine
In the dark house, and straightway did decline
With meek denial the luxurious seat,
The liberal board for welcome strangers spread,
But sate down lowly at the dark queen's feet,
And told her tale, and brake her oaten bread.
And when she had given the pyx in humble duty,
And told how Venus did entreat the queen
To fill it up with only one day's beauty
She used in Hades, star-bright and serene,

To beautify the Cyprian, who had been
 All spoilt with grief in nursing her sick boy,—
 Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,
 Smiled in the shade, and took the pyx, and put
 A secret in it ; and so, filled and shut,
 Gave it again to Psyche. Could she tell
 It held no beauty, but a dream of hell ?

PSYCHE AND VENUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what was sent
 By Pluto's spouse ; the paler, that she went
 So low to seek it, down the dark descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO OLYMPUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god Mercury
 To float up Psyche from the earth. And she
 Sprang at the first word, as the fountain springs,
 And shot up bright and rustling through his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Jove's right-hand approached the ambrosial bowl
 To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared yet to smile,—
 " Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint thy soul
 With deathless uses, and be glad the while !
 No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely side ;
 Thy marriage-joy begins for never ending."
 While yet he spake,—the nuptial feast supplied,—
 The bridegroom on the festive couch was bending

O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the same,
 On Juno, and the other deities,
 Alike ranged round. The rural cup-boy came
 And poured Jove's nectar out with shining eyes,
 While Bacchus, for the others did as much,
 And Vulcan spread the meal ; and all the Hours
 Made all things purple with a sprinkle of flowers,
 Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch
 Of their sweet fingers ; and the Graces glided
 Their balm around, and the Muses, through the air,
 Struck out clear voices, which were still divided
 By that divinest song Apollo there
 Intoned to his lute ; while Aphroditè fair
 Did float her beauty along the tune, and play
 The notes right with her feet. And thus, the day
 Through every perfect mood of joy was carried.
 The Muses sang their chorus ; Satyrus
 Did blow his pipes ; Pan touched his reed ;—and thus
 At last were Cupid and his Psyche married.

FROM NONNUS.

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE SLEEPING.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the desolate
 And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight
 Was mixed with love in his great golden eyes ;
 He turned to his Bacchantes in surprise,
 And said with guarded voice,—“ Hush ! strike no more
 Your brazen cymbals ; keep those voices still
 Of voice and pipe ; and since ye stand before
 Queen Cypris, let her slumber as she will !
 And yet the cestus is not here in proof.
 A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has stolen aloof :

In which case, as the morning shines in view,
 Wake this Aglaia !—yet in Naxos, who
 Would veil a grace so ? Hush ! And if that she
 Were Hebe, which of all the gods can be
 The pourer-out of wine ? or if we think
 She's like the shining moon by ocean's brink,
 The guide of herds,—why, could she sleep without
 Endymion's breath on her cheek ! or if I doubt
 Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread
 These shores,—even *she* (in reverence be it said)
 Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep
 With the blue waves. The Loxian goddess might
 Repose so from her hunting-toil aright
 Beside the sea, since toil gives birth to sleep,
 But who would find her with her tunic loose,
 Thus ? Stand off, Thracian ! stand off ! Do not leap,
 Not this way ! Leave that piping, since I choose,
 O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest !
 And yet if she be Pallas . . . truly guessed . . .
 Her lance is—where ? her helm and ægis—where ? ”
 —As Bacchus closed, the miserable Fair
 Awoke at last, sprang upward from the sands,
 And gazing wild on that wild throng that stands
 Around, around her, and no Theseus there !—
 Her voice went moaning over shore and sea,
 Beside the halcyon's cry ; she called her love ;
 She named her hero, and raged maddeningly
 Against the brine of waters ; and above,
 Sought the ship's track, and cursed the hours she slept ;
 And still the chiefest execration swept
 Against queen Paphia, mother of the ocean ;
 And cursed and prayed by times in her emotion
 The winds all round.

 Her grief did make her glorious ; her despair
 Adorned her with its weight. Poor wailing child !

She looked like Venus when the goddess smiled
 At liberty of godship, debonair ;
 Poor Ariadne ! and her eyelids fair
 Hid looks beneath them lent her by Persuasion
 And every Grace, with tears of Love's own passion.
 She wept long ; then she spake :—" Sweet sleep did come
 While sweetest Theseus went. O, glad and dumb,
 I wish he had left me still ! for in my sleep
 I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep
 My new bride-state within my Theseus' hall !
 And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the call
 Of 'Ariadne, Ariadne,' sung
 In choral joy ; and there, with joy I hung
 Spring-blossoms round love's altar !—ay, and wore
 A wreath myself ; and felt *him* evermore,
 Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty
 Grave head bowed down in prayer to Aphroditè !
 Why, what a sweet, sweet dream ! *He* went with it
 And left me here unwedded where I sit.
 Persuasion help me ! The dark night did make me
 A brideship, the fair morning takes away ;
 My Love had left me when the Hour did wake me ;
 And while I dreamed of marriage, as I say,
 And blest it well, my blessed Theseus left me :
 And thus the sleep, I loved so, has bereft me.
 Speak to me, rocks, and tell thy grief to-day,
 Who stole my love of Athens ? " . . .

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow crossed :---
 " O maiden, dost thou mourn for having lost
 The false Athenian heart ? and dost thou still
 Take thought of Theseus, when thou may'st at will

Have Bacchus for a husband? Bacchus bright!

A god in place of mortal! Yes, and though
The mortal youth be charming in thy sight,
That man of Athens cannot strive, below
In beauty and valour, with my deity!

Thou 'lt tell me of the labyrinthine dweller,
The fierce man-bull he slew: I pray thee, be,
Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller,
And mention thy clue's help! because, forsooth,
Thine armed Athenian hero had not found
A power to fight on that prodigious ground,
Unless a lady in her rosy youth

Had lingered near him: not to speak the truth
Too definitely out till names be known—
Like Paphia's—Love's—and Ariadne's own.
Thou wilt not say that Athens can compare

With Æther, nor that Minos rules like Zeus,
Nor yet that Gnosus has such golden air

As high Olympus. Ha! for noble use
We came to Naxos! Love has well intended
To change thy bridegroom! Happy thou, defended
From entering in thy Theseus' earthly hall,
That thou may'st hear the laughs rise and fall

Instead, where Bacchus rules! Or wilt thou choose
A still-surpassing glory?—take it all,—
A heavenly house, Kronion's self for kin,—
A place where Cassiopeia sits within
Inferior light, for all her daughter's sake,
Since Perseus, even amid the stars, must take
Andromeda in chains æthereal!

But *I* will wreath *thee*, sweet, an astral crown,
And as my queen and spouse thou shalt be known—
Mine, the crown-lover's!" Thus, at length, he proved
His comfort on her; and the maid was moved;
And casting Theseus' memory down the brine,
She straight received the troth of her divine

Fair Bacchus ; Love stood by to close the rite.
The marriage-chorus struck up clear and light,
Flowers sprouted fast about the chamber green,
And with spring-garlands on their heads, I ween,
The Orchomenian dancers came along
And danced their rounds in Naxos to the song.
A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit
Right shrilly : and a Naiad sat beside
A fountain, with her bare foot shelving it,
And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous bride,
Whom thus the god of grapes had deified.
Ortygia sang out, louder than her wont,
An ode which Phœbus gave her to be tried,
And leapt in chorus, with her steadfast front,
While prophet Love, the stars have called a brother,
Burnt in his crown, and twined in one another
His love-flower with the purple roses, given
In type of that new crown assigned in heaven.

FROM HESIOD.

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

(THEOG. 947.)

THE golden-hair'd Bacchus did espouse
That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daughter,
And made her wifehood blossom in the house ;
Where such protective gifts Kronion brought her
Nor Death nor Age could find her when they sought her.

FROM HOMER.

HÉCTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(ILIAD, Lib. VI.)

SHE rushed to meet him : the nurse following
Bore on her bosom the unsaddened child,

A simple babe, prince Hector's well-loved son,
 Like a star shining when the world is dark :
 Scamandrius, Hector called him ; but the rest
 Named him Astyanax, the city's prince,
 Because that Hector, only, had saved Troy.
 He, when he saw his son, smiled silently ;
 While, dropping tears, Andromache pressed on,
 And clung to his hand, and spake, and named his name.

" Hector, my best one,—thine own nobleness
 Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou none
 For this young child, and this most sad myself,
 Who soon shall be thy widow—since that soon
 The Greeks will slay thee in the general rush—
 And then, for me, what refuge, 'reft of *thee*,
 But to go graveward ? Then, no comfort more
 Shall touch me, as in the old sad times thou know'st—
 Grief only—grief ! I have no father now,
 No mother mild ! Achilles the divine,
He slew my father, sacked his lofty Thebes,
 Cilicia's populous city, and slew its king,
 Eëtion—father !—did not spoil the corse,
 Because the Greek revered him in his soul,
 But burnt the body with its dædal arms,
 And poured the dust out gently. Round that tomb
 The Oreads, daughters of the goat-nursed Zeus,
 Tripped in a ring, and planted their green elms.
 There were seven brothers with me in the house,
 Who all went down to Hades in one day,—
 For *he* slew all, Achilles the divine,
 Famed for his swift feet,—slain among their herds
 Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking sheep !
 My mother too, who queened it o'er the woods
 Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil,
 Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed too late,—
 Since, as she went home, arrowy Artemis

Met her and slew her at my father's door.
 But—oh my Hector,—thou art still to me
 Father and mother!—yes, and brother dear,
 O thou, who art my sweetest spouse beside!
 Come now, and take me into pity! Stay
 I' the town here with us! Do not make thy child
 An orphan, nor a widow, thy poor wife!
 Call up the people to the fig-tree, where
 The city is most accessible, the wall
 Most easy of assault!—for thrice thereby
 The boldest Greeks have mounted to the breach,—
 Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,
 Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one
 Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some wise seer,
 Or by their own souls prompted and inspired.”

Great Hector answered :—“ Lady, for these things
 It is my part to care. And I fear most
 My Trojans, and their daughters, and their wives,
 Who through their long veils would glance scorn at me
 If, coward-like, I shunned the open war.
 Nor doth my own soul prompt me to that end!
 I learnt to be a brave man constantly,
 And to fight foremost where my Trojans fight,
 And vindicate my father's glory and mine—
 Because I know, by instinct and my soul,
 The day comes that our sacred Troy must fall,
 And Priam and his people. Knowing which,
 I have no such grief for all my Trojans' sake,
 For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king,
 Not for my brothers', who so many and brave
 Shall bite the dust before our enemies,—
 As, sweet, for *thee*!—to think some mail'd Greek
 Shall lead thee weeping and deprive thy life
 Of the free sun-sight—that, when gone away
 To Argos, thou shalt throw the distaff there,

Not for thy uses—or shalt carry instead
 Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as doom,
 The water of Greek wells—Messeis' own,
 Or Hyperea's !—that some stander-by,
 Marking my tears fall, shall say, ' This is She,
 The wife of that same Hector who fought best
 Of all the Trojans, when all fought for Troy—'
 Ay !—and, so speaking, shall renew thy pang
 That, 'reft of Him so named, thou shouldst survive
 To a slave's life ! But earth shall hide my corse
 Ere that shriek sound, wherewith thou art dragged from
 'Troy.'

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his arms to his child.
 Against the nurse's breast, with childly cry,
 The boy clung back, and shunned his father's face,
 And feared the glittering brass and waving hair
 Of the high helmet, nodding horror down.
 The father smiled, the mother could not choose
 But smile too. Then he lifted from his brow
 The helm, and set it on the ground to shine :
 Then, kissed his dear child—raised him with both arms,
 And thus invoked Zeus and the general gods :—

" Zeus, and all godships ! grant this boy of mine
 To be the Trojans' help, as I myself,—
 To live a brave life and rule well in Troy !
 Till men shall say, ' The son exceeds the sire
 By a far glory.' Let him bring home spoil
 Heroic, and make glad his mother's heart."

With which prayer, to his wife's extended arms
 He gave the child ; and she received him straight
 To her bosom's fragrance—smiling up her tears.
 Hector gazed on her till his soul was moved ;
 'Then softly touched her with his hand and spake.
 'My best one—'ware of passion and excess

In any fear. There's no man in the world
 Can send me to the grave apart from fate,—
 And no man . . . Sweet, I tell thee . . . can fly fate—
 No good nor bad man. Doom is self-fulfilled.
 But now, go home, and ply thy woman's task
 Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens haste
 Their occupation. War's a care for men—
 For all men born in Troy, and chief for me."

Thus spake the noble Hector, and resumed
 His crested helmet, while his spouse went home;
 But as she went, still looked back lovingly,
 Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(*Odys.*, Lib. XX.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
 The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin:
 They were left orphans in their father's house.
 And Aphrodite came to comfort them
 With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine;
 And Hera gave them beauty of face and soul
 Beyond all women; purest Artemis
 Endowed them with her stature and white grace;
 And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
 Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
 Toward far Olympus, Aphrodite went
 To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
 And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
 How best to crown those other gifts with love
 And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,
 The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,
 And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
 To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into
 thrall—
 The gods slew their parents ; the orphans were left in
 the hall.
 And there came, to feed their young lives, Aphrodite
 divine,
 With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-
 smelling wine
 Here brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty
 of face ;
 And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might
 have grace :
 And Athenè instructed their hands in her works of
 renown ;
 Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphrodite moved on.
 To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,
 She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and know-
 ledge of fate,
 Whether mortals have good chance or ill. But the
 Harpies alate
 In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave
 them to wait,
 With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly
 hate.

 FROM EURIPIDES.

AURORA AND TITHONUS.

(TROADES, ANTISTROPHE, 853.)

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the Dardan portals,
 Because of Heavenly passion !
 Who once didst lift up Troy in exultation,
 To mingle in thy bond the high Immortals !—

Love, turned from his own name
 To Zeus's shame,
 Can help no more at all.
 And Eos's self, the fair, white-steeded Morning,—
Her light which blesses other lands, returning,
 Has changed to a gloomy pall !
 She looked across the land with eyes of amber,—
 She saw the city's fall,—
 She who, in pure embraces,
 Had held there, in the hymeneal chamber,
 Her children's father, bright Tithonus old,
 Whom the four steeds with starry brows and paces
 Bore on, snatched upward, on the car of gold,
 And with him, all the land's full hope of joy !
 The love-charms of the gods are vain for Troy.

NOTE.—Rendered after Mr. Burges' reading, in some respects—
not quite all.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour."
Revelation.

GOD, who with thunders and great voices kept
 Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
 Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
 Melodious angels round,—canst intercept
 Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
 All back, all back, (said he in Patmos placed)
 To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
 Which lasted half an hour !—lo, I who have wept
 All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
 And by that dread response of curse and groan
 Men alternate across these hemispheres,
 Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
 In compensation for our stormy years :
 As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan !

THE PROSPECT.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view :
And thus, alas, since God the maker drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,
We miss the prospect which we are called unto
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
O man, my brother ! hold thy sobbing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong :
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch, along
The sunset, consummation-lights of death.



PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will ! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast,
Upon the fulness of the heart at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled ; yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food :
Dear Christ ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as bird or bee
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But, now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more fatally
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it, but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

A DENIAL.

WE have met late—it is too late to meet,
O friend, not more than friend!
Death's forecome shroud is tangled round my feet,
And if I step or stir, I touch the end.
In this last jeopardy
Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?
How shall I answer thy request for love?
Look in my face and see.

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go
In silence; drop my hand.
If thou seek roses, seek them where they blow
In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.
Can life and death agree,
That thou shouldst stoop thy song to my complaint?

I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,
Look in my face and see.

I might have loved thee in some former days.

Oh, then, my spirits had leapt

As now they sink, at hearing thy love-praise !

Before these faded cheeks were overwept,

Had this been asked of me.

To love thee with my whole strong heart and head,—

I should have said still . . . yes, but *smiled* and said,

“ Look in my face and see ! ”

But now . . . God sees me, God, who took my heart

And drowned it in life's surge.

In all your wide warm earth I have no part—

A light song overcomes me like a dirge.

Could Love's great harmony

The saints keep step to when their bonds are loose,

Not weigh me down ? am *I* a wife to choose ?

Look in my face and see—

While I behold, as plain as one who dreams,

Some woman of full worth,

Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver stream's,

Shall prove the fountain-soul which sends it forth

One younger, more thought-free

And fair and gay than I thou must forget,

With brighter eyes than these . . . which are not wet.

Look in my face and see !

So farewell thou, whom I have known too late

To let thee come so near.

Be counted happy while men call thee great,

And one beloved woman feels thee dear !—

Not I !—that cannot be.

I am lost, I am changed,—I must go farther, where

The change shall take me worse, and no one dare

Look in my face and see.

Meantime I bless thee. By these thoughts of mine
I bless thee from all such !
I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,
Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal touch
Of loyal troth. For me,
I love thee not, I love thee not !—away !
Here 's no more courage in my soul to say
“ Look in my face and see.”

PROOF AND DISPROOF.

DOST thou love me, my Belovéd ?
Who shall answer yes or no ?
What is provéd or disprovéd
When my soul inquireth so,
Dost thou love me, my Belovéd ?

I have seen thy heart to-day,
Never open to the crowd,
While to love me aye and aye
Was the vow as it was vowed
By thine eyes of steadfast grey.

Now I sit alone, alone—
And the hot tears break and burn.
Now, Belovéd, thou art gone,
Doubt and terror have their turn.
Is it love that I have known ?

I have known some bitter things,—
Anguish, anger, solitude.
Year by year an evil brings,
Year by year denies a good ;
March winds violate my springs.

I have known how sickness bends,
I have known how sorrow breaks,—
How quick hopes have sudden ends,
How the heart thinks till it aches
Of the smile of buried friends.

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave
Noble thinker, lover, doer !
The best knowledge last I have.
But thou comest as the thrower
Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

Count what feelings used to move me !
Can this love assort with those ?
Thou, who art so far above me,
Wilt thou stoop so, for repose ?
Is it true that thou canst love me ?

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.
I can call love by its name
When thine arm is wrapt about me ;
But even love seems not the same,
When I sit alone, without thee.

In thy clear eyes I descried
Many a proof of love, to-day ;
But to-night, those unbelied
Speechful eyes being gone away
There 's the proof to seek, beside.

Dost thou love me, my Belovèd ?
Only *thou* canst answer yes !
And, thou gone, the proof 's disprovèd,
And the cry rings answerless—
Dost thou love me, my Belovèd ?



LIFE AND LOVE.

FAST this Life of mine was dying,
Blind already and calm as death,
Snowflakes on her bosom lying
Scarcely heaving with her breath.

Love came by, and having known her
In a dream of fabled lands,
Gently stooped, and laid upon her
Mystic chrism of holy hands ;

Drew his smile across her folded
Eyelids, as the swallow dips ;
Breathed as finely as the cold did,
Through the locking of her lips.

So, when Life looked upward, being
Warmed and breathed on from above,
What sight could she have for seeing,
Evermore . . . but only LOVE?

*A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.*

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
She has counted six, and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well tried—
Oh, each a worthy lover !
They “give her time ;” for her soul must slip
Where the world has set the grooving :
She will lie to none with her fair red lip—
But love seeks truer loving.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some*,
From her eyelids rising and falling ;
Speaks common words with a blushful air,
Hears bold words, unreproving ;
But her silence says—what she never will swear—
And love seeks better loving.

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar
And drop a smile to the bringer,
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an in-door singer.
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes ;
Glance lightly, on their removing ;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
But dare not call it loving.

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm ;
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
That all men else go with him ;
Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants proving ;
Unless you can swear, " For life, for death !"—
Oh, fear to call it loving !

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
On the absent face that fixed you ;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you ;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving ;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
Oh, never call it loving !



SOUNDS.

ἤκουσας ἢ οὐκ ἤκουσας ; —
ÆSCHYLUS.

HARKEN, harken !
 The rapid river carrieth
 Many noises underneath
 The hoary ocean :
 Teaching his solemnity
 Sounds of inland life and glee
 Learnt beside the waving tree
 When the winds in summer prank
 Toss the shades from bank to bank,
 And the quick rains, in emotion
 Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,
 Count and visibly rehearse
 The pulses of the universe
 Upon the summer leaves—
 Learnt among the lilies straight,
 When they bow them to the weight
 Of many bees whose hidden hum
 Seemeth from themselves to come—
 Learnt among the grasses green
 Where the rustling mice are seen
 By the gleaming, as they run,
 Of their quick eyes in the sun ;
 And lazy sheep are browsing through
 With their noses trailed in dew ;
 And the squirrel leaps adown
 Holding fast the filbert brown ;
 And the lark, with more of mirth
 In his song than suits the earth,
 Droppeth some in soaring high,
 To pour the rest out in the sky ;
 While the woodland doves apart
 In the copse's leafy heart,
 Solitary, not ascetic,

Hidden and yet vocal, seem
Joining, in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a singing in a dream.

All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,

In the ocean's ear :

Ay, and ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

Harken, harken !

The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way ;
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride
While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,
The marriage bells do swing ;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear at the self-same time
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in summer air,
Save when he droppeth his voice adown
To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear :
And a baby cries with a feeble sound

'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found,
And an old man groans,—with his testament
Only half-signed,—for the life that 's spent ;
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, "For aye, for aye ;"
And foemen twain, while Earth their mother
Looks greenly upward, curse each other :
A school-boy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks ;
A lonely student cries aloud
Eureka ! clasping at his shroud ;
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering ;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting-stone ;
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail,
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale,
A muttering gamester shakes the dice,
A reaper foretells good luck from the skies,
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them ;
A patriot, leaving his native land to them,
Cries to the world against perjured state ;
A priest disserts
Upon linen skirts,
A sinner screams for one hope more,
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor ;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear ;
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enough, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

Harken, harken !
God speaketh to thy soul,

Using the supreme voice which doth confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one,—
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John
(For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future) turned to *see*
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation
Striking, and in its stroke resembling
The memory of a solemn vow
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
The cup with a sudden trembling.

Harken, harken !
God speaketh in thy soul,
Saying " O thou that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of Mine,
To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven and see how, like a scroll,
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping ! thou, that lovest
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
And also what change mars and tombs pollute—
I am the end of love ! give love to Me !
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
Than all thy sin ! sit still beneath My rood,
And count the droppings of My victim-blood,
And seek none other sound !"

Harken, harken !
Shall we hear the lapsing river
And our brother's sighing ever,
And not the voice of God ?

WHERE'S AGNES?

NAY, if I had come back so,
And found her dead in her grave,
And if a friend I know
Had said, "Be strong, nor rave :
She lies there, dead below :

"I saw her, I who speak,
White, stiff, the face one blank :
The blue shade came to her cheek
Before they nailed the plank,
For she had been dead a week."

Why, if he had spoken so,
I might have believed the thing,
Although her look, although
Her step, laugh, voice's ring
Lived in me still as they do.

But dead that other way,
Corrupted thus and lost ?
That sort of worm in the clay ?
I cannot count the cost,
That I should rise and pay.

My Agnes false ? such shame ?
She ? Rather be it said
That the pure saint of her name
Has stood there in her stead,
And tricked you to this blame.

Her very gown, her cloak
Fell chastely : no disguise,
But expression ! while she broke
With her clear grey morning-eyes
Full upon me and then spoke.

She wore her hair away
From her forehead,—like a cloud
Which a little wind in May
Peels off finely : disallowed
Though bright enough to stay.

For the heavens must have the place
To themselves, to use and shine in,
As her soul would have her face
To press through upon mine, in
That orb of angel grace.

Had she any fault at all,
'T was having none, I thought too :
There seemed a sort of thrall ;
As she felt her shadow ought to
Fall straight upon the wall.

Her sweetness strained the sense
Of common life and duty ;
And every day's expense
Of moving in such beauty
Required, almost, defence.

What good, I thought, is done
By such sweet things, if any ?
This world smells ill i' the sun
Though the garden-flowers are many,—
She is only one.

Can a voice so low and soft
Take open actual part
With Right,—maintain aloft
Pure truth in life or art,
Vexed always, wounded oft ?

She fit, with that fair pose
Which melts from curve to curve,

To stand, run, work with those
Who wrestle and deserve,
And speak plain without glose?

But I turned round on my fear
Defiant, disagreeing :
What if God has set her here
Less for action than for Being?—
For the eye and for the ear.

Just to show what beauty may,
Just to prove what music can,—
And then to die away
From the presence of a man,
Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray?

As a door, left half ajar
In heaven, would make him think
How heavenly-different are
Things glanced at through the chink,
Till he pined from near to far.

That door could lead to hell?
That shining merely meant
Damnation? What! She fell
Like a woman, who was sent
Like an angel, by a spell?

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
Turned mere dirt? My Agnes,—mine!
Called so! felt of too much worth
To be used so! too divine
To be breathed near, and so forth!

Why, I dared not name a sin
In her presence : I went round,
Clipped its name and shut it in
Some mysterious crystal sound,—
Changed the dagger for the pin.

Now you name herself *that word*?
• O my Agnes ! O my saint !
Then the great joys of the Lord
Do not last ? Then all this paint
Runs off nature ? leaves a board ?

Who 's dead here ? No, not she :
Rather I ! or whence this damp
Cold corruption's misery ?
While my very mourners stamp
Closer in the clods on me.

And my mouth is full of dust
Till I cannot speak and curse—
Speak and damn him . . . "Blame's unjust ?
Sin blots out the universe,
All because she would and must ?"

She, my white rose, dropping off
The high rose-tree branch ! and not
That the night-wind blew too rough,
Or the noon-sun burnt too hot,
But, that being a rose—'t was enough !

Then henceforth, may earth grow trees !
No more roses !—hard straight lines
To score lies out ! none of these
Fluctuant curves, but firs and pines,
Poplars, cedars, cypresses !



FROM HEINE.

I.

OUT of my own great woe
I make my little songs,
Which rustle their feathers in throngs
And beat on her heart even so.

They found the way, for their part,
Yet come again, and complain,
Complain, and are not fain
To say what they saw in her heart.

II.

ART thou indeed so adverse?
Art thou so changed indeed?
Against the woman who wrongs me
I cry to the world in my need.

O recreant lips unthankful,
How could ye speak evil, say,
Of the man who so well has kissed you
On many a fortunate day?

III.

MY child, we were two children,
Small, merry by childhood's law ;
We used to crawl to the hen-house
And hide ourselves in the straw.

We crowed like cocks, and whenever
The passers near us drew—
Cock-a-doodle ! they thought
'T was a real cock that crew.

The boxes about our courtyard
We carpeted to our mind,
And lived there both together—
Kept house in a noble kind.

The neighbour's old cat often
Came to pay us a visit ;
We made her a bow and curtsey,
Each with a compliment in it.

After her health we asked,
Our care and regard to evince—
(We have made the very same speeches
To many an old cat since).

We also sat and wisely
Discoursed, as old folks do,
Complaining how all went better
In those good times we knew,—

How love and truth and believing
Had left the world to itself,
And how so dear was the coffee,
And how so rare was the pelf.

The children's games are over,
The rest is over with youth—
The world, the good games, the good times,
The belief, and the love, and the truth.

IV.

THOU lovest me not, thou lovest me not !
'T is scarcely worth a sigh :
Let me look in thy face, and no king in his place
Is a gladder man than I.

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me well—
Thy little red mouth has told :
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however it is,
My child, I am well consoled.

V.

MY own sweet Love, if thou in the grave,
The darksome grave, wilt be,
Then will I go down by the side, and crave
Love-room for thee and me.

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
Thou still, thou cold, thou white !
I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
Turn to a corpse at the sight.

The Dead stand up, the midnight calls,
They dance in airy swarms—
We two keep still where the grave-shade falls,
And I lie on in thine arms.

The Dead stand up, the Judgment-day
Bids such to weal or woe—
But nought shall trouble us where we stay
Embraced and embracing below.

VI.

THE years they come and go,
The races drop in the grave,
Yet never the love doth so,
Which here in my heart I have.

Could I see thee but once, one day,
 And sink down so on my knee,
 And die in thy sight while I say,
 "Lady, I love but thee!"



THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI.

"*Questa è per me.*"—KING VICTOR EMANUEL.

WHEN Victor Emanuel the King,
 Went down to his Lucca that day,
 The people, each vaunting the thing
 As he gave it, gave all things away,—
 In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
 As they tore out their hearts for the King.

—Gave the green forest-walk on the wall,
 With the Apennine blue through the trees ;
 Gave the palaces, churches, and all
 The great pictures which burn out of these :
 But the eyes of the King seemed to freeze
 As he gazed upon ceiling and wall.

"Good," said the King as he passed.
 Was he cold to the arts?—or else coy
 To possession? or crossed, at the last,
 (Whispered some) by the vote in Savoy?
 Shout! Love him enough for his joy!
 "Good," said the King as he passed.

He, travelling the whole day through flowers
 And protesting amenities, found
 At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
 Of red roses, the "Orphans," (renowned
 As the heirs of Puccini) who wound
 With a sword through the crowd and the flowers.

"'T is the sword of Castruccio, O King,—
In that strife of intestinal hate,
Very famous ! Accept what we bring,
We who cannot be sons, by our fate,
Rendered citizens by thee of late,
And endowed with a country and king.

"Read ! Puccini has willed that this sword
(Which once made in an ignorant feud
Many orphans) remain in our ward
Till some patriot its pure civic blood
Wipe away in the foe's and make good,
In delivering the land by the sword."

Then the King exclaimed, "This is for *me* !"
And he dashed out his hand on the hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly,
And his heart overboiled till it spilt
A hot prayer,—“God ! the rest as thou wilt !
But grant me this !—*This* is for *me*."

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
The sword is for *thee*, and the deed,
And nought for the alien, next spring,
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon agreed—
But for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us—our King !



SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUBLICS OUT OF IT.)

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
When our Italy stands at full stature,
A year ago tied down so fast
That the cord cut the quick of her nature !

You 'll honour the deed and its scope,
 Then, in logical sequence upon it,
 Will use up the remnants of rope
 By hanging the men who have done it.

The speech in the Commons, which hits you
 A sketch off, how dungeons must feel,—
 The official despatch, which commits you
 From stamping out groans with your heel,—
 Suggestions in journal or book for
 Good efforts,—are praised as is meet :
 But what in this world can men look for
 Who only achieve and complete ?

True, you 've praise for the fireman who sets his
 Brave face to the axe of the flame,
 Disappears in the smoke, and then fetches
 A babe down, or idiot that 's lame,—
 For the boor even, who rescues through pity
 A sheep from the brute who would kick it :
 But saviours of nations !—'t is pretty,
 And doubtful : they *may* be so wicked :

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
 Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen !—here 's
 Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
 Imperial cousins and cozeners—
 Arese, Laiatico,—courtly
 Of manners, if stringent of mouth :
 Garibaldi ! we 'll come to him shortly,
 (As soon as he *ends* in the South).

Napoleon—as strong as ten armies,
 Corrupt as seven devils—a fact
 You accede to, then seek where the harm is
 Drained off from the man to his act,

And find—a free nation ! Suppose
Some hell-brood, in Eden's sweet greenery,
Convoked for creating—a rose !
Would it suit the infernal machinery ?

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,
Who his own thought so craftily marries—
What is he but just a thin wire
For conducting the lightning from Paris ?
Yes, write down the two as compeers,
Confessing (you would not permit a lie)
He bore up his Piedmont ten years
Till she suddenly smiled and was Italy.

And the King, with that "stain on his scutcheon,"¹
Savoy—as the calumny runs ;
(If it be not his blood,—with his clutch on
The sword, and his face to the guns.)
O first, where the battle-storm gathers,
O loyal of heart on the throne,
Let those keep the "graves of their fathers,"
Who quail, in a nerve, from their own !

For *thee*—through the dim Hades-portal
The dream of a voice—"Blessed thou
Who hast made all thy race twice immortal !
No need of the sepulchres now !
—Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs, who fester
Above-ground with worm-eaten souls,
While the ghost of some pale feudal jester
Before them strews treaties in holes."

But hush !—am I dreaming a poem
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice ? Not I ;
I began too far off, in my proem,
With what men believe and deny :

¹ Blue Book. Diplomatical Correspondence.

And on earth, whatsoever the need is,
(To sum up as thoughtful reviewers)
The moral of every great deed is—
The virtue of slandering the doers.

*THE FORCED RECRUIT.*

SOLFERINO, 1859.

IN the ranks of the Austrian you found him,
He died with his face to you all ;
Yet bury him here where around him
You honour your bravest that fall.

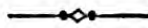
Venetian, fair-featured and slender,
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,
Though alien the cloth on his breast,
Underneath it how seldom a greater
Young heart, has a shot sent to rest !

By your enemy tortured and goaded
To march with them, stand in their file,
His musket (see) never was loaded,
He facing your guns with that smile !

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,
He yearned to your patriot bands ;—
“ Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your hands !

" Aim straightly, fire steadily ! spare me
 A ball in the body which may
 Deliver my heart here, and tear me
 This badge of the Austrian away !"
 So thought he, so died he this morning.
 What then ? many others have died.
 Ay, but easy for men to die scorning
 The death-stroke, who fought side by side—
 One tricolor floating above them ;
 Struck down 'mid triumphant acclaims
 Of an Italy rescued to love them
 And blazon the brass with their names.
 But he,—without witness or honour,
 Mixed, shamed in his country's regard,
 With the tyrants who march in upon her,
 Died faithful and passive : 't was hard.
 'T was sublime. In a cruel restriction
 Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
 With most filial obedience, conviction,
 His soul kissed the lips of her guns.
 That moves you ? Nay, grudge not to show it,
 While digging a grave for him here :
 The others who died, says your poet,
 Have glory,—let *him* have a tear.



GARIBALDI.

HE bent his head upon his breast
 Wherein his lion-heart lay sick :—
 " Perhaps we are not ill-repaid ;
 Perhaps this is not a true test ;
 Perhaps this was not a foul trick ;
 Perhaps none wronged, and none betrayed.

“ Perhaps the people’s vote which here
United, there may disunite,
And both be lawful as they think ;
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
For chartering nations, can with right
Disfranchise those who hold the ink.

“ Perhaps men’s wisdom is not craft ;
Men’s greatness, not a selfish greed ;
Men’s justice, not the safer side ;
Perhaps even women, when they laughed,
Wept, thanked us that the land was freed,
Not wholly (though they kissed us) lied.

“ Perhaps no more than this we meant,
When up at Austria’s guns we flew,
And quenched them with a cry apiece,
Italia !—Yet a dream was sent . . .
The little house my father knew,
The olives and the palms of Nice.”

He paused, and drew his sword out slow,
Then pored upon the blade intent,
As if to read some written thing ;
While many murmured,—“ He will go
In that despairing sentiment
And break his sword before the King.”

He, poring still upon the blade,
His large lid quivered, something fell.
“ Perhaps,” he said, “ I was not born
With such fine brains to treat and trade,—
And if a woman knew it well,
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

“ Yet through Varese’s cannon-smoke
My eye saw clear : men feared this man
At Como, where this sword could seal

Death's protocol with every stroke :
 And now . . . the drop there scarcely can
 Impair the keenness of the steel.

" So man and sword may have their use ;
 And if the soil beneath my foot
 In valour's act is forfeited,
 I 'll strike the harder, take my dues
 Out nobler, and all loss confute
 From ampler heavens above my head.

" My King, King Victor, I am thine !
 So much Nice-dust as what I am
 (To make our Italy) must cleave.
 Forgive that." Forward with a sign
 He went.

You 've seen the telegram?
Palermo's taken, we believe.



CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ὡς βασιλει, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

THE Pope on Christmas Day
 Sits in St. Peter's chair ;
 But the peoples murmur and say,
 " Our souls are sick and forlorn,
 And who will show us where
 Is the stable where Christ was born ? "

The star is lost in the dark ;
 The manger is lost in the straw ,
 The Christ cries faintly . . . hark ! . . .
 Through bands that swaddle and strangle—
 But the Pope in the chair of awe
 Looks down the great quadrangle.

The magi kneel at his foot,
Kings of the east and west,
But, instead of the angels, (mute
Is the "Peace on earth" of their song),
The peoples, perplexed and opprest,
Are sighing, "How long, how long?"

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in
Shadow of aisle and dome,
The bear who tore up the children,
The fox who burnt up the corn,
And the wolf who suckled at Rome
Brothers to slay and to scorn.

Cardinals left and right of him,
Worshippers round and beneath,
The silver trumpets at sight of him
Thrill with a musical blast :
But the people say through their teeth,
"Trumpets? we wait for the Last!"

He sits in the place of the Lord,
And asks for the gifts of the time ;
Gold, for the haft of a sword,
To win back Romagna averse,
Incense, to sweeten a crime,
And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

Then a king of the west said, "Good!—
I bring thee the gifts of the time ;
Red, for the patriot's blood,
Green, for the martyr's crown,
White, for the dew and the rime,
When the morning of God comes down."

—O mystic tricolor bright !
The Pope's heart quailed like a man's :
The cardinals froze at the sight,

Bowing their tonsures hoary :
And the eyes in the peacock-fans
Winked at the alien glory.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
“ Now blessed be he who has brought
These gifts of the time to the Pope,
When our souls were sick and forlorn.
—And *here* is the star we sought,
To show us where Christ was born !



ITALY AND THE WORLD.

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena—
When you named them a year ago,
So many graves reserved by God, in a
Day of Judgment, you seemed to know,
To open and let out the resurrection.

And meantime, (you made your reflection
If you were English), was nought to be done
But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and gone,
Till the new earth and heaven made ready.

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent,—“ Good,” you added, “ good
In all things ! mourn on sure and steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome food
For our European wandering asses.

‘ The date of the resurrection passes
Human fore-knowledge : men unborn
Will gain by it (even in the lower classes),
But none of these. It is not the morn
Because the cock of France is crowing.

“Cocks crow at midnight, seldom knowing
Starlight from dawn-light ! 't is a mad
Poor creature.” Here you paused, and growing
Scornful,—suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves were open.

Life and life and life ! agrope in
The dusk of death, warm hands, stretched out
For swords, proved more life still to hope in,
Beyond and behind. Arise with a shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried !

Hill to hill and turret to turret
Flashing the tricolor,—newly created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

Rise ; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,—
Statesmen draping self-love's conclusion
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

Bring us the higher example ; release us
Into the larger coming time :
And into Christ's broad garment piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunting
Nor taunted ;—no more England nor France !
But one confederate brotherhood planting
One flag only, to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity

For fully developed Christianity
Is civilization perfected.

“Count the ships,” in national vanity,
 “Measure the frontier,” shall it be said?
 —Count the nation’s heart-beats sooner.

For, though behind by a cannon or schooner,
 That nation still is predominant
 Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to oppugn or
 Succour another, in wrong or want,
 Passing the frontier in love and abhorrence.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
 Open us out the wider way!
 Dwarf, in that chapel of old St. Laurence,
 Your Michel Angelo’s giant Day,
 With the grandeur of this Day breaking o’er us!

Ye who, restrained as an ancient chorus,
 Mute while the choryphæus spake,
 Hush your separate voices before us,
 Sink your separate lives for the sake
 Of one sole Italy’s living for ever!

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never
 Grudging that purple of yours at the best,—
 By your heroic will and endeavour,
 Each sublimely dispossessed,
 That all may inherit what each surrenders!

Earth shall bless you, O noble emenders
 On egotist nations! Ye shall lead
 The plough of the world, and sow new splendours
 Into the furrow of things for seed,—
 Ever the richer for what ye have given.

Lead us and teach us, till earth and heaven
 Grow larger around us and higher above.
 Our sacrament-bread has a bitter leaven;
 We bait our traps with the name of love,
 Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

Oh, this world : this cheating and screening
Of cheats ! this conscience for candle-wicks,
Not beacon-fires ; this over-weening
Of under-hand diplomatical tricks,
Dared for the country while scorned for the counter !

Oh, this envy of those who mount here,
And oh, this malice to make them trip !
Rather quenching the fire there, drying the fount here,
To frozen body and thirsty lip,
Than leave to a neighbour their ministration.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
Viewing my England o'er Alp and sea.
I loved her more in her ancient fashion :
She carries her rifles too thick for me,
Who spares them so in the cause of a brother.

Suspicion, panic ? end this pother.
The sword, kept sheathless at peace-time, rusts.
None fears for himself while he feels for another :
The brave man either fights or trusts,
And wears no mail in his private chamber.

Beautiful Italy ! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover and traitor !
Thou who hast drawn us on to remember,
Draw us to hope now : let us be greater
By this new future than that old story,

Till truer glory replaces all glory,
As the torch grows blind at the dawn of day ;
And the nations, rising up, their sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the teacher enters :

Till Love's one centre devour these centres
Of many self-loves ; and the patriot's trick

To better his land by egotist ventures,
 Defamed from a virtue, shall make men sick,
 As the scalp at the belt of some red hero.

For certain virtues have dropped to zero,
 Left by the sun on the mountain's dewy side ;
 Churchman's charities, tender as Nero,
 Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
 Service to rights divine, proved hollow :

And Heptarchy patriotisms must follow.
 —National voices, distinct yet dependent,
 Ensphering each other, as swallow does swallow,
 With circles still widening and ever ascendant,
 In multi-form life to united progression,—

These shall remain. And when, in the session
 Of nations, the separate language is heard,
 Each shall aspire, in sublime indiscretion,
 To help with a thought or exalt with a word
 Less her own than her rival's honour.

Each Christian nation shall take upon her
 The law of the Christian man in vast :
 The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,
 And last shall be first while first shall be last,
 And to love best shall still be, to reign unsurpassed.

—◆—

THE DANCE.



YOU remember down at Florence our Cascine,
 Where the people on the feast-days walk and drive,
 And, through the trees, long-drawn in many a green way,
 O'er-roofing hum and murmur like a hive,
 The river and the mountains look alive ?

You remember the piazzone there, the stand-place
 Of carriages a-brim with Florence beauties,

Who lean and melt to music as the band plays,
Or smile and chat with some one who a-foot is,
Or on horseback, in observance of male duties?

'T is so pretty, in the afternoons of summer,
So many gracious faces brought together !
Call it rout, or call it concert, they have come here,
In the floating of the fan and of the feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine weather.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays (because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every carriage-door ;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

And last season, when the French camp had its station
In the meadow-ground, things quickened and grew
gayer

Through the mingling of the liberating nation
With this people ; groups of Frenchmen everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly—" who was fair."

Then the noblest lady present took upon her
To speak nobly from her carriage for the rest :
" Pray these officers from France to do us honour
By dancing with us straightway." The request
Was gravely apprehended as addressed.

And the men of France bareheaded, bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to the space
Which the startled crowd had rounded for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in his face,
Not presuming through the symbol, on the grace.

There was silence in the people : some lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music, at a glance :
And the daughters of our princes, thus assembled,
Stepped the measure with the gallant sons of France :
Hush ! it might have been a Mass, and not a dance.

And they danced there till the blue that overskied us,
 Swooned with passion, though the footing seemed
 sedate ;

And the mountains, heaving mighty hearts beside us,
 Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to dilate,
 And touch the holy stone where Dante sate.

Then the sons of France bareheaded, lowly bowing,
 Led the ladies back where kinsmen of the south
 Stood, received them ; till, with burst of overflowing
 Feeling—husbands, brothers, Florence's male youth,
 Turned, and kissed the martial strangers mouth to
 mouth.

And a cry went up, a cry from all that people !
 —You have heard a people cheering, you suppose,
 For the Member, mayor—with chorus from the steeple ?
 This was different : scarce as loud perhaps, (who
 knows ?)
 For we saw wet eyes around us ere the close.

And we felt as if a nation, too long borne in
 By hard wrongers,—comprehending in such attitude
 That God had spoken somewhere since the morning,
 That men were somehow brothers, by no platitude,—
 Cried exultant in great wonder and free gratitude.



CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

PART I.

I HEARD last night a little child go singing
 'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the church,
O bella libertà, O bella !—stringing
 The same words still on notes he went in search
 So high for, you concluded the upspringing
 Of such a nimble bird to sky from perch

Must leave the whole bush in a tremble green,
And that the heart of Italy must beat,
While such a voice had leave to rise serene
'Twixt church and palace of a Florence street :
A little child, too, who not long had been
By mother's finger steadied on his feet,
And still *O bella libertà* he sang.

Then I thought, musing, of the innumerable
Sweet songs which still for Italy outrang
From older singers' lips who sang not thus
Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang
Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart of us
So finely that the pity scarcely pained.
I thought how Filicaja led on others,
Bewailers for their Italy enchained,
And how they called her childless among mothers,
Widow of empires, ay, and scarce refrained
Cursing her beauty to her face, as brothers
Might a shamed sister's,—“ Had she been less fair
She were less wretched ; ”—how, evoking so
From congregated wrong and heaped despair
Of men and women writhing under blow,
Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,
Some personating Image wherein woe
Was wrapt in beauty from offending much,
They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,
Where all the world might drop for Italy
Those cadenced tears which burn not where they
touch,—
“ Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we ?
And was the violet that crowned thy head
So over-large, though new buds made it rough,
It slipped down and across thine eyelids dead,
O sweet, fair Juliet ? ” Of such songs enough,
Too many of such complaints ! behold, instead,

Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough : ¹
As void as that is, are all images
Men set between themselves and actual wrong,
To catch the weight of pity, meet the stress
Of conscience, —since 't is easier to gaze long
On mournful masks and sad effigies
Than on real, live, weak creatures crushed by strong.

For me who stand in Italy to-day
Where worthier poets stood and sang before,
I kiss their footsteps yet their words gainsay.
I can but muse in hope upon this shore
Of golden Arno as it shoots away
Through Florence' heart, beneath her bridges four :
Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like bows,
And tremble while the arrowy undertide
Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it goes,
And strikes up palace-walls on either side,
And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,
By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out
From any lattice there, the same would fall
Into the river underneath, no doubt,
It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.
How beautiful ! the mountains from without
In silence listen for the word said next.
What word will men say,—here where Giotto planted
His campanile like an unperplexed
Fine question Heaven-ward, touching the things granted
A noble people who, being greatly vexed
In act, in aspiration keep undaunted ?
What word will God say ? Michel's Night and Day
And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble scorn ²

¹ They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet, an empty trough of stone.

² These famous statues recline in the Sagrestia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of

Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched on clay
 From whence the Medicean stamp 's outworn,
 The final putting off of all such sway
 By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn
 In Florence and the great world outside Florence.
 Three hundred years his patient statues wait
 In that small chapel of the dim Saint Laurence :
 Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate
 Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence
 On darkness and with level looks meet fate,
 When once loose from that marble film of theirs ;
 The Night has wild dreams in her sleep, the Dawn
 Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight wears
 A sort of horror ; as the veil withdrawn
 'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs
 Of speechless thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,
 Of angers and contempts, of hope and love :
 For not without a meaning did he place
 The princely Urbino on the seat above
 With everlasting shadow on his face,
 While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove
 The ashes of his long-extinguished race
 Which never more shall clog the feet of men.

I do believe, divinest Angelo,
 That winter-hour in Via Larga, when
 They bade thee build a statue up in snow
 And straight that marvel of thine art again
 Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow,
 Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic passion,
 Thawing too in drops of wounded manhood, since,
 To mock alike thine art and indignation,
 Laughed at the palace-window the new prince,—
 ("Aha ! this genius needs for exaltation,

Urbino, his grandson. Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Michel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.

¹ This mocking task was set by Pietro, the unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

When all 's said and howe'er the proud may wince,
A little marble from our princely mines !")
I do believe that hour thou laughedst too
For the whole sad world and for thy Florentines,
After those few tears, which were only few !
That as beneath the sun, the grand white lines
Of thy snow statue trembled and withdrew,—
The head, erect as Jove's, being palsied first,
The eyelids flattened, the full brow turned blank,
The right-hand, raised but now as if it cursed,
Dropt, a mere snowball, (till the people sank
Their voices, though a louder laughter burst
From the royal window)—thou couldst proudly thank
God and the prince for promise and presage,
And laugh the laugh back, I think verily,
Thine eyes being purged by tears of righteous rage
To read a wrong into a prophecy,
And measure a true great man's heritage
Against a mere great-duke's posterity.
I think thy soul said then, " I do not need
A princedom and its quarries, after all ;
For if I write, paint, carve a word, indeed,
On book or board or dust, on floor or wall,
The same is kept of God who taketh heed
That not a letter of the meaning fall
Or ere it touch and teach His world's deep heart,
Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships, sir !
So keep your stone, beseech you, for your part,
To cover up your grave-place and refer
The proper titles ! *I* live by my art.
The thought I threw into this snow shall stir
This gazing people when their gaze is done ;
And the tradition of your act and mine,
When all the snow is melted in the sun,
Shall gather up, for unborn men, a sign
Of what is the true princedom,—ay, and none
Shall laugh that day, except the drunk with wine.

Amen, great Angelo ! the day 's at hand.
 If many laugh not on it, shall we weep?
 Much more we must not, let us understand.
 Through rhymers sonneteering in their sleep
 And archaists mumbling dry bones up the land
 And sketchers lauding ruined towns a-heap,—
 Through all that drowsy hum of voices smooth,
 The hopeful bird mounts carolling from brake,
 The hopeful child, with leaps to catch his growth,
 Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet sake :
 And I, a singer also from my youth,
 Prefer to sing with those who are awake,
 With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear
 The baptism of the holy morning dew,
 (And many of such wakers now are here,
 Complete in their anointed manhood, who
 Will greatly dare and greatlier persevere,)
 Than join those old thin voices with my new,
 And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh
 Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah,—
 Nay, hand in hand with that young child, will I
 Go singing rather, "*Bella Libertà*,"
 Than, with those poets, croon the dead or cry
 "*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia !*"

"Less wretched if less fair." Perhaps a truth
 Is so far plain in this, that Italy,
 Long trammelled with the purple of her youth
 Against her age's ripe activity,
 Sits still upon her tombs, without death's ruth
 But also without life's brave energy.
 "Now tell us what is Italy?" men ask :
 And others answer "Virgil, Cicero,
 Catullus, Cæsar." What beside? to task
 The memory closer—"Why, Boccaccio,
 Dante, Petrarca,"—and if still the flask

Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow,—
“Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese,”—all
Whose strong hearts beat through stone, or charged again
The paints with fire of souls electrical,
Or broke up heaven for music. What more then?
Why, then, no more. The chaplet’s last beads fall
In naming the last saintship within ken,
And, after that, none prayeth in the land.
Alas, this Italy has too long swept
Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;
Of her own past, impassioned nympholept!
Consenting to be nailed here by the hand
To the very bay-tree under which she stept
A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch;
And, licensing the world too long indeed
To use her broad phylacteries to staunch
And stop her bloody lips, she takes no heed
How one clear word would draw an avalanche
Of living sons around her, to succeed
The vanished generations. Can she count
These oil-eaters with large live mobile mouths
Agape for macaroni, in the amount
Of consecrated heroes of her south’s
Bright rosary? The pitcher at the fount,
The gift of gods, being broken, she much loathes
To let the ground-leaves of the place confer
A natural bowl. So henceforth she would seem
No nation, but the poet’s pensioner,
With arms from every land of song and dream:
While aye her pipers sadly piped of her
Until their proper breaths, in that extreme
Of sighing, split the reed on which they played:
Of which, no more. But never say “no more”
To Italy’s life! Her memories undismayed
Still argue “evermore;” her graves implore

Her future to be strong and not afraid ;
Her very statues send their looks before.

We do not serve the dead—the past is past.
God lives, and lifts His glorious mornings up
Before the eyes of men awake at last,
Who put away the meats they used to sup,
And down upon the dust of earth outcast
The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,
Then turn to wakeful prayer and worthy act.
The Dead, upon their awful 'vantage ground,
The sun not in their faces, shall abstract
No more our strength ; we will not be discrowned
As guardians of their crowns, nor deign transact
A barter of the present, for a sound
Of good so counted in the foregone days.
O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us
With rigid hands of dessicating praise,
And drag us backward by the garment thus,
To stand and laud you in long-drawn virelays !
We will not henceforth be oblivious
Of our own lives, because ye lived before,
Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.
We thank you that ye first unlatched the door,
But will not make it inaccessible
By thankings on the threshold any more.
We hurry onward to extinguish hell
With our fresh souls, our younger hope, and God's
Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
Die also ! and, that then our periods
Of life may round themselves to memory
As smoothly as on our graves the burial-sods,
We now must look to it to excel as ye,
And bear our age as far, unlimited
By the last mind-mark ; so, to be invoked
By future generations, as their Dead,

'T is true that when the dust of death has choked
 A great man's voice, the common words he said
 Turn oracles, the common thoughts he yoked
 Like horses, draw like griffins : this is true
 And acceptable. I, too, should desire,
 When men make record, with the flowers they strew,
 " Savonarola's soul went out in fire
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza,¹ and burned through
 A moment first, or ere he did expire,
 The veil betwixt the right and wrong, and showed
 How near God sate and judged the judges there,—"
 Upon the self-same pavement overstrewn
 To cast my violets with as reverent care,
 And prove that all the winters which have snowed
 Cannot snow out the scent, from stones and air,
 Of a sincere man's virtues. This was he,
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
 With his whole boat-load, called courageously
 " Wake Christ, wake Christ !"—who, having tried the
 tank
 Of old church-waters used for baptistry
 Ere Luther came to spill them, swore they stank ;
 Who also by a princely deathbed cried,
 " Loose Florence, or God will not loose thy soul !"
 Then fell back the Magnificent and died
 Beneath the star-look shooting from the cowl,
 Which turned to wormwood-bitterness the wide
 Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
 To grudge Savonarola and the rest
 Their violets : rather pay them quick and fresh !
 The emphasis of death makes manifest
 The eloquence of action in our flesh ;
 And men who, living, were but dimly guessed,

¹ Savonarola was burnt for his testimony against papal corruptions as early as March, 1498 ; and, as late as our own day, it has been the custom in Florence to strew with violets the pavement where he suffered, in grateful recognition of the anniversary.

When once free from their life's entangled mesh,
Show their full length in graves, or oft indeed
Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
To noble admirations which exceed
Most nobly, yet will calculate in that
But accurately. We, who are the seed
Of buried creatures, if we turned and spat
Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
Bring violets rather. If these had not walked
Their furlong, could we hope to walk our mile?
Therefore bring violets. Yet if we self-baulked
Stand still, a-strewing violets all the while,
These moved in vain, of whom we have vainly talked.
So rise up henceforth with a cheerful smile,
And having strewn the violets, reap the corn,
And having reaped and garnered, bring the plough
And draw new furrows 'neath the healthy morn,
And plant the great Hereafter in this Now.

Of old 't was so. How step by step was worn,
As each man gained on each securely!—how
Each by his own strength sought his own Ideal,—
The ultimate Perfection leaning bright
From out the sun and stars to bless the leal
And earnest search of all for Fair and Right
Through doubtful forms by earth accounted real!
Because old Jubal blew into delight
The souls of men with clear-piped melodies,
If youthful Asaph were content at most
To draw from Jubal's grave, with listening eyes,
Traditionary music's floating ghost
Into the grass-grown silence, were it wise?
And was 't not wiser, Jubal's breath being lost,
That Miriam clashed her cymbals to surprise
The sun between her white arms flung apart,
With new glad golden sounds? that David's strings

O'erflowed his hand with music from his heart ?
 So harmony grows full from many springs,
 And happy accident turns holy art.

You enter, in your Florence wanderings,
 The church of Saint Maria Novella. Pass
 The left stair, where at plague-time Machiavel¹
 Saw One with set fair face as in a glass,
 Dressed out against the fear of death and hell,
 Rustling her silks in pauses of the Mass,
 To keep the thought off how her husband fell, .
 When she left home, stark dead across her feet,—
 The stair leads up to what the Orgagnas save
 Of Dante's dæmons ; you, in passing it,
 Ascend the right stair from the farther nave
 To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit
 By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave,
 That picture was accounted, mark, of old :
 A king stood bare before its sovran grace,²
 A reverent people shouted to behold
 The picture, not the king, and even the place
 Containing such a miracle grew bold,
 Named the Glad Borgo from that beauteous face
 Which thrilled the artist, after work, to think
 His own ideal Mary-smile should stand
 So very near him,—he, within the brink
 Of all that glory, let in by his hand
 With too divine a rashness ! Yet none shrink
 Who come to gaze here now : albeit 't was planned
 Sublimely in the thought's simplicity :
 The Lady, throned in empyreal state,

¹ See his description of the plague in Florence.

² Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's "bottega." The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

Minds only the young Babe upon her knee,
 While sidelong angels bear the royal weight,
 Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly,
 Oblivion of their wings ; the Child thereat
 Stretching its hand like God. If any should,
 Because of some stiff draperies and loose joints,
 Gaze scorn down from the heights of Raffaelhood
 On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven anoints
 The head of no such critic, and his blood
 The poet's curse strikes full on and appoints
 To ague and cold spasms for evermore.
 A noble picture ! worthy of the shout
 Wherewith along the streets the people bore
 Its cherub-faces which the sun threw out
 Until they stooped and entered the church door.
 Yet rightly was young Giotto talked about,
 Whom Cimabue found among the sheep,¹
 And knew, as gods know gods, and carried home
 To paint the things he had painted, with a deep
 And fuller insight, and so overcome
 His chapel-Lady with a heavenlier sweep
 Of light : for thus we mount into the sun
 Of great things known or acted. I hold, too,
 That Cimabue smiled upon the lad
 At the first stroke which passed what he could do,
 Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
 Such sweetness in 't. All great men who foreknew
 Their heirs in art, for art's sake have been glad,
 And bent their old white heads as if uncrowned,
 Fanatics of their pure Ideals still
 Far more than of their triumphs, which were found
 With some less vehement struggle of the will.

¹ How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari,—who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died “infatidito” of the successes of the new school.

If old Margheritone trembled, swooned
And died despairing at the open sill
Of other men's achievements, (who achieved,
By loving art beyond the master) he
Was old Margheritone, and conceived
Never, at first youth and most ecstasy,
A Virgin like that dream of one, which heaved
The death-sigh from his heart. If wistfully
Margheritone sickened at the smell
Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go !
For Cimabue stood up very well
In spite of Giotto's, and Angelico
The artist-saint kept smiling in his cell
The smile with which he welcomed the sweet slow
Inbreak of angels, (whitening through the dim
That he might paint them) while the sudden sense
Of Raffael's future was revealed to him
By force of his own fair works' competence.
The same blue waters where the dolphins swim
Suggest the tritons. Through the blue Immense
Strike out, all swimmers ! cling not in the way
Of one another, so to sink ; but learn
The strong man's impulse, catch the freshening spray
He throws up in his motions, and discern
By his clear westering eye, the time of day.
Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts to earn
Besides Thy heaven and Thee ! and when I say
There 's room here for the weakest man alive
To live and die, there 's room too, I repeat,
For all the strongest to live well, and strive
Their own way, by their individual heat,—
Like some new bee-swarm leaving the old hive,
Despite the wax which tempts so violet-sweet.
Then let the living live, the dead retain
Their grave-cold flowers !—though honour 's best sup-
plied
By bringing actions, to prove theirs not vain.

Cold graves, we say? it shall be testified
That living men who burn in heart and brain,
Without the dead were colder. If we tried
To sink the past beneath our feet, be sure
The future would not stand. Precipitate
This old roof from the shrine, and, insecure,
The nesting swallows fly off, mate from mate.
How scant the gardens, if the graves were fewer!
The tall green poplars grew no longer straight
Whose tops not looked to Troy. Would any fight
For Athens, and not swear by Marathon?
Who dared build temples, without tombs in sight?
Or live, without some dead man's benison?
Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive for right,
If, looking up, he saw not in the sun
Some angel of the martyrs all day long
Standing and waiting? Your last rhythm will need
Your earliest key-note. Could I sing this song,
If my dead masters had not taken heed
To help the heavens and earth to make me strong,
As the wind ever will find out some reed
And touch it to such issues as belong
To such a frail thing? None may grudge the Dead,
Libations from full cups. Unless we choose
To look back to the hills behind us spread,
The plains before us sadden and confuse;
If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to use,
And pour fresh oil in from the olive-grove,
To furnish them as new lamps. Shall I say
What made my heart beat with exulting love
A few weeks back?—

The day was such a day
As Florence owes the sun. The sky above,
Its weight upon the mountains seemed to lay,

And palpitate in glory, like a dove
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted—take away
The image ! for the heart of man beat higher
That day in Florence, flooding all her streets
And piazzas with a tumult and desire.
The people, with accumulated heats
And faces turned one way, as if one fire
Both drew and flushed them, left their ancient beats
And went up toward the palace-Pitti wall
To thank their Grand-duke who, not quite of course,
Had graciously permitted, at their call,
The citizens to use their civic force
To guard their civic homes. So, one and all,
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the source
Of this new good at Florence, taking it
As good so far, presageful of more good,—
The first torch of Italian freedom, lit
To toss in the next tiger's face who should
Approach too near them in a greedy fit,—
The first pulse of an even flow of blood
To prove the level of Italian veins
Towards rights perceived and granted. How we gazed
From Casa Guidi windows while, in trains
Of orderly procession—banners raised,
And intermittent bursts of martial strains
Which died upon the shout, as if amazed
By gladness beyond music—they passed on !
The Magistracy, with insignia, passed,—
And all the people shouted in the sun,
And all the thousand windows which had cast
A ripple of silks in blue and scarlet down,
(As if the houses overflowed at last,)
Seemed growing larger with fair heads and eyes.
The Lawyers passed,—and still arose the shout,
And hands broke from the windows to surprise
Those grave calm brows with bay-tree leaves thrown out.

The Priesthood passed,—the friars with worldly-wise
Keen sidelong glances from their beards about
The street to see who shouted ; many a monk
Who takes a long rope in the waist, was there :
Whereat the popular exultation drunk
With indrawn “vivas” the whole sunny air,
While through the murmuring windows rose and sunk.
A cloud of kerchiefed hands,—“ The church makes fair
Her welcome in the new Pope’s name.” Ensued
The black sign of the “ Martyrs ”—(name no name,
But count the graves in silence.) Next were viewed
The Artists ; next, the Trades ; and after came
The People,—flag and sign, and rights as good—
And very loud the shout was for that same
Motto, “ Il popolo.” IL POPOLO,—
The word means dukedom, empire, majesty,
And kings in such an hour might read it so.
And next, with banners, each in his degree,
Deputed representatives a-row
Of every separate state of Tuscany :
Siena’s she-wolf, bristling on the fold
Of the first flag, preceded Pisa’s hare,
And Massa’s lion floated calm in gold,
Pienza’s following with his silver stare,
Arezzo’s steed pranced clear from bridle-hold,—
And well might shout our Florence, greeting there
These, and more brethren. Last, the world had sent
The various children of her teeming flanks—
Greeks, English, French—as if to a parliament
Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
Each bearing its land’s symbol reverent ;
At which the stones seemed breaking into thanks
And rattling up the sky, such sounds in proof
Arose ; the very house-walls seemed to bend ;
The very windows, up from door to roof,
Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to mend

•

With passionate looks the gesture's whirling off
A hurricane of leaves. Three hours did end
While all these passed ; and ever in the crowd,
Rude men, unconscious of the tears that kept
Their beards moist, shouted ; some few laughed aloud,
And none asked any why they laughed and wept :
Friends kissed each other's cheeks, and foes long
vowed
More warmly did it ; two-months babies leapt
Right upward in their mothers' arms, whose black
Wide glittering eyes looked elsewhere ; lovers pressed
Each before either, neither glancing back ;
And peasant maidens smoothly 'tired and tressed
Forgot to finger on their throats the slack
Great pearl-strings ; while old blind men would not rest,
But pattered with their staves and slid their shoes
Along the stones, and smiled as if they saw.
O heaven, I think that day had noble use
Among God's days ! So near stood Right and Law,
Both mutually forborne ! Law would not bruise,
Nor Right deny, and each in reverent awe
Honoured the other. And if, ne'ertheless,
That good day's sun delivered to the vines
No charta, and the liberal Duke's excess
Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibelline's
In any special actual righteousness
Of what that day he granted, still the signs
Are good and full of promise, we must say,
When multitudes approach their kings with prayers
And kings concede their people's right to pray
Both in one sunshine. Grievs are not despairs,
So uttered, nor can royal claims dismay
When men from humble homes and ducal chairs,
Hate wrong together. It was well to view
Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face
Inscribed, " Live freedom, union, and all true

Brave patriots who are aided by God's grace !”

Nor was it ill when Leopoldo drew
His little children to the window-place

He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
They too should govern as the people willed.

What a cry rose then ! some, who saw the best,
Declared his eyes filled up and overfilled

With good warm human tears which unrepressed
Ran down. I like his face ; the forehead's build

Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps
Sufficient comprehension,—mild and sad,

And careful nobly,—not with care that wraps
Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make mad,

But careful with the care that shuns a lapse
Of faith and duty, studious not to add

A burden in the gathering of a gain.

And so, God save the Duke, I say with those

Who that day shouted it ; and while dukes reign,
May all wear in the visible overflows

Of spirit, such a look of careful pain !
For God must love it better than repose.

And all the people who went up to let

Their hearts out to that Duke, as has been told—

Where guess ye that the living people met,

Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose leaders, first unrolled
Their banners ?

In the Loggia ? where is set
Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze or gold,
(How name the metal, when the statue flings
Its soul so in your eyes ?) with brow and sword
Superbly calm, as all opposing things,
Slain with the Gorgon, were no more abhorred
Since ended ?

No, the people sought no wings
From Perseus in the Loggia, nor implored

An inspiration in the place beside

From that dim bust of Brutus, jagged and grand,
Where Buonarroti passionately tried

From out the close-clenched marble to demand
The head of Rome's sublimest homicide,

Then dropt the quivering mallet from his hand,
Despairing he could find no model-stuff

Of Brutus in all Florence where he found
The gods and gladiators thick enough.

Nor there ! the people chose still holier ground :

The people, who are simple, blind and rough,

Know their own angels, after looking round.

Whom chose they then ? where met they ?

On the stone

Called Dante's,—a plain flat stone scarce discerned
From others in the pavement,—whereupon

He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned
To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone

The lava of his spirit when it burned :
It is not cold to-day. O passionate

Poor Dante who, a banished Florentine,
Didst sit austere at banquets of the great

And muse upon this far-off stone of thine
And think how oft some passer used to wait

A moment, in the golden day's decline,
With " Good-night, dearest Dante !"—well, good-night !

I muse now, Dante, and think verily,
Though chapelled in the byeway out of sight,

Ravenna's bones would thrill with ecstasy,
Couldst know thy favourite stone's elected right

As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to foresee
Their earliest chartas from. Good-night, good morn,

Henceforward, Dante ! now my soul is sure
That thine is better comforted of scorn,

And looks down earthward in completer cure

Than when, in Santa Croce church, forlorn
 Of any corpse, the architect and hewer
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb.¹
 For now thou art no longer exiled, now
 Best honoured : we salute thee who art come
 Back to the old stone with a softer brow
 Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some
 Good lovers of our age to track and plough²
 Their way to, through time's ordures stratified,
 And startle broad awake into the dull
 Bargello chamber : now thou 'rt milder-eyed,—
 Now Beatrix may leap up glad to cull
 Thy first smile, even in heaven and at her side,
 Like that which, nine years old, looked beautiful
 At May-game. What do I say? I only meant
 That tender Dante loved his Florence well,
 While Florence, now, to love him is content ;
 And, mark ye, that the piercingest sweet smell,
 Of love's dear incense by the living sent
 To find the dead, is not accessible
 To lazy livers—no narcotic,—not
 Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,—
 But trod out in the morning air by hot
 Quick spirits who tread firm to ends foreshown,
 And use the name of greatness unforgot,
 To meditate what greatness may be done.

For Dante sits in heaven and ye stand here,
 And more remains for doing, all must feel,
 Than trysting on his stone from year to year
 To shift processions, civic toe to heel,
 The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye freer
 For what was felt that day? a chariot-wheel

¹ The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese refused the body of Dante (demanded of them "in a late remorse of love"), have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave.

² In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of Giotto's fresco portrait of Dante.

May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll.

But if that day suggested something good,
And bettered, with one purpose, soul by soul,—

Better means freer. A land's brotherhood,
Is most puissant : men, upon the whole,
Are what they can be,—nations, what they would.

Will therefore, to be strong, thou Italy !

Will to be noble ! Austrian Metternich
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree ;

And thine is like the lion's when the thick
Dews shudder from it, and no man would be

The stroker of his mane, much less would prick
His nostril with a reed. When nations roar

Like lions, who shall tame them and defraud
Of the due pasture by the river-shore ?

Roar, therefore ! shake your dew-laps dry abroad :
The amphitheatre with open door

Leads back upon the benches who applaud
The last spear-thruster.

Yet the Heavens forbid

That we should call on passion to confront
The brutal with the brutal and, amid

This ripening world, suggest a lion-hunt
And lion's-vengeance for the wrongs men did

And do now, though the spears are getting blunt.
We only call, because the sight and proof

Of lion-strength hurts nothing ; and to show
A lion-heart, and measure paw with hoof,

Helps something, even, and will instruct a foe
As well as the onslaught, how to stand aloof :

Or else the world gets past the mere brute blow
Or given or taken. Children use the fist

Until they are of age to use the brain ;
And so we needed Cæsars to assist

Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain
God's counsel, when a point was nearly missed,

Until our generations should attain
Christ's stature nearer. Not that we, alas,
Attain already ; but a single inch
Will raise to look down on the swordsman's pass,
As knightly Roland on the coward's flinch :
And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
We find out slowly what the bee and finch
Have ready found, through Nature's lamp in each,—
How to our races we may justify
Our individual claims, and, as we reach
Our own grapes, bend the top vines to supply
The children's uses,—how to fill a breach
With olive-branches,—how to quench a lie
With truth, and smite a foe upon the cheek
With Christ's most conquering kiss. Why these are
things
Worth a great nation's finding, to prove weak
The "glorious arms" of military kings.
And so with wide embrace, my England, seek
To stifle the bad heat and flickerings
Of this world's false and nearly expended fire !
Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,
And twang abroad thy high hopes and thy higher
Resolves, from that most virtuous altitude !
Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
By looking up to thee, and learn that good
And glory are not different. Announce law
By freedom ; exalt chivalry by peace ;
Instruct how clear calm eyes can overawe,
And how pure hands, stretched simply to release
A bond slave, will not need a sword to draw
To be held dreadful. O my England, crease
Thy purple with no alien agonies,
No struggles towards encroachment, no vile war !
Disband thy captains, change thy victories,
Be henceforth prosperous as the angels are,
Helping, not humbling.

Drums and battle-cries

Go out in music of the morning-star—
 And soon we shall have thinkers in the place
 Of fighters, each found able as a man
 To strike electric influence through a race,
 Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.
 The poet shall look grander in the face
 Than even of old, (when he of Greece began
 To sing "that Achillean wrath which slew
 So many heroes,")—seeing he shall treat
 The deeds of souls heroic toward the true,
 The oracles of life, previsions sweet
 And awful like divine swans gliding through
 White arms of Ledas, which will leave the heat
 Of their escaping godship to endue
 The human medium with a heavenly flush

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
 Not popular passion, to arise and crush,
 But popular conscience, which may covenant
 For what it knows. Concede without a blush
 To grant the "civic guard" is not to grant
 The civic spirit, living and awake :
 Those lappets on your shoulders, citizens,
 Your eyes strain after sideways till they ache,
 (While still, in admirations and amens,
 The crowd comes up on festa-days to take
 The great sight in)—are not intelligence,
 Not courage even—alas, if not the sign
 Of something very noble, they are nought ;
 For every day ye dress your sallow kine
 With fringes down their cheeks, though unbesought
 They loll their heavy heads and drag the wine
 And bear the wooden yoke as they were taught
 The first day. What ye want is light—indeed
 Not sunlight—(ye may well look up surprised

To those unfathomable heavens that feed
Your purple hills)—but God's light organized
In some high soul, crowned capable to lead
The conscious people, conscious and advised,—
For if we lift a people like mere clay,
It falls the same. We want thee, O unfound
And sovran teacher ! if thy beard be grey
Or black, we bid thee rise up from the ground
And speak the word God giveth thee to say,
Inspiring into all this people round,
Instead of passion, thought, which pioneers
All generous passion, purifies from sin,
And strikes the hour for. Rise up, teacher ! here 's
A crowd to make a nation !—best begin
By making each a man, till all be peers
Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs in
Knowing and daring. Best unbar the doors
Which Peter's heirs keep locked so overclose
They only let the mice across the floors,
While every churchman dangles, as he goes,
The great key at his girdle, and abhors
In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide the house,
Concede the entrance to Christ's liberal mind,
And set the tables with His wine and bread.
What ! "commune in both kinds ?" In every kind—
Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, unlimited,
Nothing kept back. For when a man is blind
To starlight, will he see the rose is red ?
A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's foot—
"Væ ! meâ culpâ !" —is not like to stand
A freedman at a despot's and dispute
His titles by the balance in his hand,
Weighing them "suo jure." Tend the root
If careful of the branches, and expand
The inner souls of men before you strive
For civic heroes.

But the teacher, where?
From all these crowded faces, all alive,
Eyes, of their own lids flashing themselves bare,
And brows that with a mobile life contrive
A deeper shadow,—may we in no wise dare
To put a finger out and touch a man,
And cry “this is the leader”? What, all these!
Broad heads, black eyes,—yet not a soul that ran
From God down with a message? all, to please
The donna waving measures with her fan,
And not the judgment-angel on his knees,
(The trumpet just an inch off from his lips)
Who when he breathes next, will put out the sun?

Yet mankind's self were foundered in eclipse,
If lacking doers, with great works to be done;
And lo, the startled earth already dips
Back into light; a better day's begun;
And soon this leader, teacher, will stand plain,
And build the golden pipes and synthesize
This people-organ for a holy strain.
We hold this hope, and still in all these eyes,
Go sounding for the deep look which shall drain
Suffused thought into channelled enterprise.
Where is the teacher? What now may he do,
Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird his waist
With a monk's rope, like Luther? or pursue
The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in haste,
Like Masaniello when the sky was blue?
Keep house, like other peasants, with inlaced
Bare brawny arms about a favourite child,
And meditative looks beyond the door,
(But not to mark the kidling's teeth have filed
The green shoots of his vine which last year bore
Full twenty bunches), or, on triple-piled
Throne-velvets sit at ease to bless the poor,

Like other pontiffs in the Poorest's name ?
 The old tiara keeps itself aslope
 Upon his steady brows which, all the same,
 Bend mildly to permit the people's hope ?

Whatever hand shall grasp this oriflamme,
 Whatever man (last peasant or first pope
 Seeking to free his country) shall appear,
 Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses, fill
 These empty bladders with fine air, insphere
 These wills into a unity of will,
 And make of Italy a nation—dear
 And blessed be that man ! the Heavens shall kill
 No leaf the earth lets grow for him, and Death
 Shall cast him back upon the lap of Life
 To live more surely, in a clarion-breath
 Of hero-music. Brutus with the knife,
 Rienzi with the fasces, throb beneath
 Rome's stones,—and more who threw away joy's life
 Like Pallas, that the beauty of their souls
 Might ever shine untroubled and entire :
 But if it can be true that he who rolls
 The Church's thunders, will reserve her fire
 For only light,—from eucharistic bowls
 Will pour new life for nations that expire,
 And rend the scarlet of his papal vest
 To gird the weak loins of his countrymen,—
 I hold that he surpasses all the rest
 Of Romans, heroes, patriots ; and that when
 He sat down on the throne, he dispossessed
 The first graves of some glory. See again,
 This country-saving is a glorious thing :
 And if a common man achieved it ? well.
 Say, a rich man did ? excellent. A king ?
 That grows sublime. A priest ? improbable.
 A pope ? Ah, there we stop, and cannot bring.

Our faith up to the leap, with history's bell
So heavy round the neck of it—albeit
We fain would grant the possibility
For *thy* sake, Pio Nono !

Stretch thy feet
In that case—I will kiss them reverently
As any pilgrim to the papal seat :
And, such proved possible, thy throne to me
Shall seem as holy a place as Pellico's
Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's grate
At which the Lombard woman hung the rose
Of her sweet soul by its own dewy weight,
To feel the dungeon round her sunshine close,
And, pining so, died early, yet too late
For what she suffered. Yea, I will not choose
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the spot
Marked red for ever, spite of rains and dews,
Where Two fell riddled by the Austrian's shot,
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
With one same mother-voice and face (that what
They speak may be invincible) the sins
Of earth's tormentors before God the just,
Until the unconscious thunder-bolt begins
To loosen in His grasp.

And yet we must
Beware, and mark the natural kiths and kins
Of circumstance and office, and distrust
The rich man reasoning in a poor man's hut,
The poet who neglects pure truth to prove
Statistic fact, the child who leaves a rut
For a smoother road, the priest who vows his glove
Exhales no grace, the prince who walks afoot,
The woman who has sworn she will not love,
And this Ninth Pius in Seventh Gregory's chair,
With Andrea Doria's forehead !

Count what goes
 To making up a pope, before he wear
 That triple crown. We pass the world-wide throes
 Which went to make the popedom,—the despair
 Of free men, good men, wise men ; the dread shows
 Of women's faces, by the faggot's flash
 Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb
 O' the white lips, the least tremble of a lash,
 To glut the red stare of a licensed mob ;
 The short mad cries down oubliettes, and plash
 So horribly far off ; priests trained to rob,
 And kings that, like encouraged nightmares, sate
 On nations' hearts most heavily distressed
 With monstrous sights and apophthegms of fate—
 We pass these things,—because “ the times ” are prest
 With necessary charges of the weight
 Of all this sin, and “ Calvin, for the rest,
 Made bold to burn Servetus. Ah, men err ! ”—
 And so do *Churches* ! which is all we mean
 To bring to proof in any register
 Of theological fat kine and lean :
 So drive them back into the pens ! refer
 Old sins (with pourpoint, “ quotha ” and “ I ween, ”)
 Entirely to the old times, the old times ;
 Nor ever ask why this preponderant
 Infalible pure Church could set her chimes
 Most loudly then, just then,—most jubilant,
 Precisely then, when mankind stood in crimes
 Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judgments were not scant.
 Inquire still less, what signifies a Church
 Of perfect inspiration and pure laws
 Who burns the first man with a brimstone-torch,
 And grinds the second, bone by bone, because
 The times, forsooth, are used to rack and scorch !
 What *is* a holy Church unless she awes
 The times down from their sins ? Did Christ select

Such amiable times, to come and teach
Love to, and mercy? The whole world were wrecked
If every mere great man, who lives to reach
A little leaf of popular respect,
Attained not simply by some special breach
In the age's customs, by some precedence
In thought and act, which, having proved him higher
Than those he lived with, proved his competence
In helping them to wonder and aspire.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's sense.
My soul has fire to mingle with the fire
Of all these souls, within or out of doors
Of Rome's church or another. I believe
In one Priest, and one temple with its floors
Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and eve
By countless knees of earnest auditors,
And crystal walls too lucid to perceive,
That none may take the measure of the place
And say, "So far the porphyry, then, the flint—
To this mark mercy goes, and there ends grace,"
Though still the permeable crystals hint
At some white starry distance, bathed in space.
I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep the dint
Of undersprings of silent Deity.
I hold the articulated gospels which
Show Christ among us crucified on tree.
I love all who love truth, if poor or rich
In what they have won of truth possessively.
No altars and no hands defiled with pitch
Shall scare me off, but I will pray and eat
With all these—taking leave to choose my ewers—
And say at last, "Your visible churches cheat
Their inward types; and, if a church assures
Of standing without failure and defeat,
The same both fails and lies."

To leave which lures
 Of wider subject through past years,—behold,
 We come back from the popedom to the pope,
 To ponder what he *must* be, ere we are bold
 For what he *may* be, with our heavy hope
 To trust upon his soul. So, fold by fold,
 Explore this mummy in the priestly cope,
 Transmitted through the darks of time, to catch
 The man within the wrappage, and discern
 How he, an honest man, upon the watch
 Full fifty years for what a man may learn,
 Contrived to get just there ; with what a snatch
 Of old-world oboli he had to earn
 The passage through ; with what a drowsy sop,
 To drench the busy barkings of his brain ;
 What ghosts of pale tradition, wreathed with hop
 'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to entertain
 For heavenly visions ; and consent to stop
 The clock at noon, and let the hour remain
 (Without vain windings-up) inviolate
 Against all chimings from the belfry. Lo,
 From every given pope you must abate,
 Albeit you love him, some things—good, you know—
 Which every given heretic you hate,
 Assumes for his, as being plainly so.
 A pope must hold by popes a little,—yes,
 By councils, from Nicæa up to Trent,—
 By hierocratic empire, more or less
 Irresponsible to men,—he must resent
 Each man's particular conscience, and repress
 Inquiry, meditation, argument,
 As tyrants faction. Also, he must not
 Love truth too dangerously, but prefer .
 “ The interests of the Church,” (because a blot
 Is better than a rent, in miniver)—
 Submit to see the people swallow hot

Husk-porridge, which his chartered churchmen stir

Quoting the only true God's epigraph,

"Feed my lambs, Peter!"—must consent to sit

Attesting with his pastoral ring and staff

To such a picture of our Lady, hit

Off well by artist-angels, (though not half

As fair as Giotto would have painted it)—

To such a vial, where a dead man's blood

Runs yearly warm beneath a churchman's finger,—

To such a holy house of stone and wood,

Whereof a cloud of angels was the bringer

From Bethlehem to Loreto. Were it good

For any pope on earth to be a flinger

Of stones against these high-niched counterfeits?

Apostates only are iconoclasts.

He dares not say, while this false thing abets

That true thing, "this is false." He keeps his fasts

And prayers, as prayer and fast were silver frets

To change a note upon a string that lasts,

And make a lie a virtue. Now, if he

Did more than this, higher hoped, and braver dared,

I think he were a pope in jeopardy

Or no pope rather, for his truth had barred

The vaulting of his life,—and certainly,

If he do only this, mankind's regard

Moves on from him at once, to seek some new

Teacher and leader. He is good and great

According to the deeds a pope can do ;

Most liberal, save those bonds ; affectionate,

As princes may be, and, as priests are, true ;

But only the ninth Pius after eight,

When all 's praised most. At best and hopefullest,

He 's pope—we want a man ! his heart beats warm,

But, like the prince enchanted to the waist,

He sits in stone and hardens by a charm

Into the marble of his throne high-placed.

Mild benediction waves his saintly arm—
So, good ! but what we want 's a perfect man,
Complete and all alive : half travertine
Half suits our need, and ill subserves our plan.
Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies divine
Were never yet too much for men who ran
In such hard ways as must be this of thine,
Deliverer whom we seek, whoe'er thou art,
Pope, prince, or peasant ! If, indeed, the first,
The noblest, therefore ! since the heroic heart
Within thee must be great enough to burst
Those trammels buckling to the baser part
Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed and cursed
With the same finger.

Come, appear, be found,
If pope or peasant, come ! we hear the cock,
The courtier of the mountains when first crowned
With golden dawn ; and orient glories flock
To meet the sun upon the highest ground.
Take voice and work ! we wait to hear thee knock
At some one of our Florentine nine gates,
On each of which was imaged a sublime
Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for hate's
And love's sake, both, our Florence in her prime
Turned boldly on all comers to her states,
As heroes turned their shields in antique time
Emblazoned with honourable acts. And though
The gates are blank now of such images,
And Petrarch looks no more from Nicolo
Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia-trees,
Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we know,
Despite the razing of the blazonries,
Remains the consecration of the shield :
The dead heroic faces will start out
On all these gates, if foes should take the field,

And blend sublimely, at the earliest shout,
With living heroes who will scorn to yield
A hair's-breadth even, when, gazing round about,
They find in what a glorious company
They fight the foes of Florence. Who will grudge
His one poor life, when that great man we see
Has given five hundred years, the world being judge
To help the glory of his Italy?
Who, born the fair side of the Alps, will budge,
When Dante stays, when Ariosto stays,
When Petrarch stays for ever? Ye bring swords,
My Tuscans? Ay, if wanted in this haze,
Bring swords: but first bring souls!—bring thoughts and
words,
Unruled by a tear of yesterday's
Yet awful by its wrong,—and cut these cords,
And mow this green lush falseness to the roots,
And shut the mouth of hell below the swathe!
And, if ye can bring songs too, let the lute's
Recoverable music softly bathe
Some poet's hand, that, through all bursts and bruits
Of popular passion, all unripe and rathe
Convictions of the popular intellect,
Ye may not lack a finger up the air,
Annunciative, reproving, pure, erect,
To show which way your first Ideal bare
The whiteness of its wings when (sorely pecked
By falcons on your wrists) it unaware
Arose up overhead and out of sight.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the world
Breathe back the deep breath of their old delight,
To swell the Italian banner just unfurled.
Help, lands of Europe! for, if Austria fight,
The drums will bar your slumber. Had ye curled
The laurel for your thousand artists' brows,

if these Italian hands had planted none?
Can any sit down idle in the house
Nor hear appeals from Buonarroti's stone
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and to rouse?
Where's Poussin's master? Gallic Avignon
Bred Laura, and Vaucluse's fount has stirred
The heart of France too strongly, as it lets
Its little stream out, (like a wizard's bird
Which bounds upon its emerald wing and wets
The rocks on each side) that she should not gird
Her loins with Charlemagne's sword when foes beset
The country of her Petrarch. Spain may well
Be minded how from Italy she caught,
To mingle with her tinkling Moorish bell,
A fuller cadence and a subtler thought.
And even the New World, the receptacle
Of freemen, may send glad men, as it ought,
To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door.
While England claims, by trump of poetry,
Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,
And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole
Than Langlande's Malvern with the stars in flower.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
Last June, beloved companion!—where sublime
The mountains live in holy families,
And the slow pinewoods ever climb and climb
Half up their breasts, just stagger as they seize
Some grey crag, drop back with it many a time,
And straggle blindly down the precipice.
The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn as thick
That June-day, knee-deep with dead beechen leaves,
As Milton saw them ere his heart grew sick
And his eyes blind. I think the monks and bees
Are all the same too: scarce have they changed the
wick

On good St. Gualbert's altar which receives
The convent's pilgrims ; and the pool in front
(Wherein the hill-stream trout are cast, to wait
The beatific vision and the grunt
Used at refectory) keeps its weedy state,
To baffle saintly abbots who would count
The fish across their breviary nor 'bate
The measure of their steps. O waterfalls
And forests ! sound and silence ! mountains bare
That leap up peak by peak and catch the palls
Of purple and silver mist to rend and share
With one another, at electric calls
Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot dare
Fix your shapes, count your number ! we must think
Your beauty and your glory helped to fill
The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
He never more was thirsty when God's will
Had shattered to his sense the last chain-link
By which he had drawn from Nature's visible
The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,
Remembering Vallombrosa. Therefore is
The place divine to English man and child,
And pilgrims leave their souls here in a kiss.

For Italy's the whole earth's treasury, piled
With reveries of gentle ladies, flung
Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's worn stuff ;
With coins of scholars' fancy, which, being rung
On work-day counter, still sound silver-proof ;
In short, with all the dreams of dreamers young,
Before their heads have time for slipping off
Hope's pillow to the ground. How oft, indeed,
We 've sent our souls out from the rigid north,
On bare white feet which would not print nor bleed,
To climb the Alpine passes and look forth,

Where booming low the Lombard rivers lead
 To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is worth,—
 Sights, thou and I, Love, have seen afterward
 From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide awake,¹

When, standing on the actual blessed sward
 Where Galileo stood at nights to take
 The vision of the stars, we have found it hard,
 Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make
 A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all
 Refreshed in England or in other land,
 By visions, with their fountain-rise and fall,
 Of this earth's darling,—we, who understand
 A little how the Tuscan musical
 Vowels do round themselves as if they planned
 Eternities of separate sweetness,—we,
 Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,
 Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith or glee,—
 Who loved Rome's wolf with demi-gods at suck,
 Or ere we loved truth's own divinity,—
 Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,
 And Ovid's dreaming tales and Petrarch's song,
 Or ere we loved Love's self even,—let us give
 The blessing of our souls, (and wish them strong
 To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,
 When faithful spirits pray against a wrong),
 To this great cause of southern men who strive
 In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail !
 Behold, they shall not fail. The shouts ascend
 Above the shrieks, in Naples, and prevail.
 Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the end
 Of burial, seem to smile up straight and pale
 Into the azure air and apprehend

¹ Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on an eminence called Bellosguardo.

That final gun-flash from Palermo's coast
Which lightens their apocalypse of death.

So, let them die ! The world shows nothing lost ;
Therefore, not blood. Above or underneath,

What matter, brothers, if ye keep your post
On duty's side ? As sword returns to sheath,
So dust to grave, but souls find place in Heaven.
Heroic daring is the true success,

The eucharistic bread requires no leaven ;
And though your ends were hopeless, we should bless
Your cause as holy. Strive—and, having striven,
Take, for God's recompense, that righteousness !

PART II.

I WROTE a meditation and a dream,
Hearing a little child sing in the street :
I leant upon his music as a theme,
'Till it gave way beneath my heart's full beat
Which tried at an exultant prophecy
But dropped before the measure was complete—
Alas, for songs and hearts ! O Tuscany,
O Dante's Florence, is the type too plain ?
Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty
As little children take up a high strain
With unintentioned voices, and break off
To sleep upon their mothers' knees again ?
Couldst thou not watch one hour ? then, sleep enough—
That sleep may hasten manhood and sustain
The faint pale spirit with some muscular stuff.

But we, who cannot slumber as thou dost,
We thinkers, who have thought for thee and failed,
We hopers, who have hoped for thee and lost,
We poets, wandered round by dreams,¹ who hailed

¹ See the opening passage of the 'Agamemnon' of Æschylus.

From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-post
Which still drips blood,—the worse part hath prevailed)
The fire-voice of the beacons to declare
Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened through
A crimson sunset in a misty air,
What now remains for such as we, to do?
God's judgments, peradventure, will He bare
To the roots of thunder, if we kneel and sue?

From Casa Guidi windows I looked forth,
And saw ten thousand eyes of Florentines
Flash back the triumph of the Lombard north,—
Saw fifty banners, freighted with the signs
And exultations of the awakened earth,
Float on above the multitude in lines,
Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision went.
And so, between those populous rough hands
Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold outleant,
And took the patriot's oath which henceforth stands
Among the oaths of perjurers, eminent
To catch the lightnings ripened for these lands.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke Leopold?
What need to swear? What need to boast thy blood
Unspoilt of Austria, and thy heart unsold
Away from Florence? It was understood
God made thee not too vigorous or too bold;
And men had patience with thy quiet mood,
And women, pity, as they saw thee pace
Their festive streets with premature grey hairs.
We turned the mild dejection of thy face
To princely meanings, took thy wrinkling cares
For ruffling hopes, and called thee weak, not base.
Nay, better light the torches for more prayers
And smoke the pale Madonnas at the shrine,
Being still "our poor Grand-duke, our good Grand-duke,
Who cannot help the Austrian in his line,"—

Than write an oath upon a nation's book
 For men to spit at with scorn's blurring brine !
 Who dares forgive what none can overlook ?

For me, I do repent me in this dust
 Of towns and temples which makes Italy,—
 I sigh amid the sighs which breathe a gust
 Of dying century to century

Around us on the uneven crater-crust
 Of these old worlds,—I bow my soul and knee.

Absolve me, patriots, of my woman's fault
 That ever I believed the man was true !

These sceptred strangers shun the common salt,
 And, therefore, when the general board's in view

And they stand up to carve for blind and halt,
 The wise suspect the viands which ensue.

I much repent that, in this time and place
 Where many corpse-lights of experience burn

From Cæsar's and Lorenzo's festering race,
 To enlighten groping reasoners, I could learn

No better counsel for a simple case
 Than to put faith in princes, in my turn.

Had all the death-piles of the ancient years
 Flared up in vain before me? knew I not

What stench arises from some purple gears?
 And how the sceptres witness whence they got

Their briar-wood, crackling through the atmosphere's
 Foul smoke, by princely perjuries, kept hot?

Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—Brutus, thou,
 Who trailest downhill into life again

Thy blood-weighted cloak, to indict me with thy slow
 Reproachful eyes!—for being taught in vain

That, while the illegitimate Cæsars show
 Of meaner stature than the first full strain,

(Confessed incompetent to conquer Gaul)
 They swoon as feebly and cross Rubicons

As rashly as any Julius of them all !
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which runs
Through absolute races, too unsceptical !
I saw the man amongst his little sons,
His lips were warm with kisses while he swore ;
And I, because I am a woman, I,
Who felt my own child's coming life before
The prescience of my soul, and held faith high,—
I could not bear to think, whoever bore,
That lips, so warmed, could shape so cold a lie.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked out,
Again looked, and beheld a different sight.
The Duke had fled before the people's shout
"Long live the Duke !" A people, to speak right,
Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest a doubt
Should curdle brows of gracious sovereigns, white.
Moreover that same dangerous shouting meant
Some gratitude for future favours, which
Were only promised, the Constituent
Implied, the whole being subject to the hitch
In "motu proprio," very incident
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulovitch.
Whereat the people rose up in the dust
Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted still
And loudly ; only, this time, as was just,
Not "Live the Duke," who had fled for good or ill,
But "Live the People," who remained and must,
The unrenounced and unrenounceable.

Long live the people ! How they lived ! and boiled
And bubbled in the cauldron of the street :
How the young blustered, nor the old recoiled,
And what a thunderous stir of tongues and feet
Trode flat the palpitating bells and foiled
The joy-guns of their echo, shattering it !

How down they pulled the Duke's arms everywhere !
How up they set new café-signs, to show
Where patriots might sip ices in pure air—
(The fresh paint smelling somewhat) ! To and fro
How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare
When boys broke windows in a civic glow !
How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes,
And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres :
How all the Circoli grew large as moons,
And all the speakers, moonstruck,—thankful greeters
Of prospects which struck poor the ducal boons,
A mere free Press, and Chambers !—frank repeaters
Of great Guerazzi's praises—"There 's a man,
The father of the land, who, truly great,
Takes off that national disgrace and ban,
The farthing tax upon our Florence-gate,
And saves Italia as he only can !"
How all the nobles fled, and would not wait,
Because they were most noble,—which being so,
How liberals vowed to burn their palaces,
Because free Tuscans were not free to go !
How grown men raged at Austria's wickedness,
And smoked,—while fifty striplings in a row
Marched straight to Piedmont for the wrong's redress !
You say we failed in duty, we who wore
Black velvet like Italian democrats,
Who slashed our sleeves like patriots, nor forswore
The true republic in the form of hats ?
We chased the archbishop from the Duomo-door,
We chalked the walls with bloody caveats
Against all tyrants. If we did not fight
Exactly, we fired muskets up the air
To show that victory was ours of right.
We met, had free discussion everywhere
(Except perhaps i' the Chambers) day and night.
We proved the poor should be employed.—that 's fair,—

And yet the rich not worked for anywise,—
Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,—
Full work secured, yet liabilities
To over-work excluded,—not one bated
Of all our holidays, that still, at twice
Or thrice a week, are moderately rated.
We proved that Austria was dislodged, or would
Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms
Should, would dislodge her, ending the old feud ;
And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms,
For the simple sake of fighting, was not good—
We proved that also. “ Did we carry charms
Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush
On killing others ? what, desert herewith
Our wives and mothers ?—was that duty ? tush ! ”
At which we shook the sword within the sheath
Like heroes—only louder ; and the flush
Ran up the cheek to meet the future wreath.
Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted,
(Especially the boys did) boldly planting
That tree of liberty, whose fruit is doubted,
Because the roots are not of nature’s granting !
A tree of good and evil : none, without it,
Grow gods ; alas and, with it, men are wanting !

O holy knowledge, holy liberty,
O holy rights of nations ! If I speak
These bitter things against the jugglery
Of days that in your names proved blind and weak,
It is that tears are bitter. When we see
The brown skulls grin at death in churchyards bleak,
We do not cry, “ This Yorick is too light,”
For death grows deathlier with that mouth he makes.
So with my mocking : bitter things I write
Because my soul is bitter for your sakes,
O freedom ! O my Florence !

Men who might
Do greatly in a universe that breaks
And burns, must ever *know* before they do.
Courage and patience are but sacrifice ;
And sacrifice is offered for and to
Something conceived of. Each man pays a price
For what himself counts precious, whether true
Or false the appreciation it implies.
But here,—no knowledge, no conception, nought !
Desire was absent, that provides great deeds
From out the greatness of prevenient thought :
And action, action, like a flame that needs
A steady breath and fuel, being caught
Up, like a burning reed from other reeds,
Flashed in the empty and uncertain air,
Then wavered, then went out. Behold, who blames
A crooked course, when not a goal is there
To round the fervid striving of the games ?
An ignorance of means may minister
To greatness, but an ignorance of aims
Makes it impossible to be great at all.
So, with our Tuscans ! Let none dare to say,
“ Here virtue never can be national ;
Here fortitude can never cut a way
Between the Austrian muskets, out of thrall : ”
I tell you rather that whoever may
Discern true ends here, shall grow pure enough
To love them, brave enough to strive for them,
And strong to reach them though the roads be rough :
That having learnt—by no mere apophthegm—
Not just the draping of a graceful stuff
About a statue, broidered at the hem—
Not just the trilling on an opera-stage
Of “ *libertà* ” to bravos—(a fair word,
Yet too allied to inarticulate rage
And breathless sobs, for singing, though the chord

Were deeper than they struck it)—but the gauge
Of civil wants sustained and wrongs abhorred,
The serious sacred meaning and full use
Of freedom for a nation,—then, indeed,
Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody dew
Of some new morning, rising up agreed
And bold, will want no Saxon souls or thews
To sweep their piazzas clear of Austria's breed.

Alas, alas, it was not so this time.
Conviction was not, courage failed, and truth
Was something to be doubted of. The mime
Changed masks, because a mime. The tide as smooth
In running in as out, no sense of crime
Because no sense of virtue,—sudden ruth
Seized on the people : they would have again
Their good Grand-duke and leave Guerazzi, though
He took that tax from Florence. " Much in vain
He takes it from the market-carts, we trow,
While urgent that no market-men remain,
But all march off and leave the spade and plough,
To die among the Lombards. Was it thus
The dear paternal Duke did? Live the Duke !"
At which the joy-bells multitudinous,
Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly shook.
Call back the mild archbishop to his house,
To bless the people with his frightened look,—
He shall not yet be hanged, you comprehend !
Seize on Guerazzi ; guard him in full view,
Or else we stab him in the back, to end !
Rub out those chalked devices, set up new
The Duke's arms, doff your Phrygian caps, and mend
The pavement of the piazzas broke into
By barren poles of freedom : smooth the way
For the ducal carriage, lest his highness sigh
" Here trees of liberty grew yesterday !".

“ Long live the Duke ! ”—how roared the cannonry,
How rocked the bell-towers, and through thickening
spray
Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs tossed on high,
How marched the civic guard, the people still
Being good at shouts, especially the boys !
Alas, poor people, of an unfledged will
Most fitly expressed by such a callow voice !
Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable
Of being worthy even of so much noise !

You think he came back instantly, with thanks
And tears in his faint eyes, and hands extended
To stretch the franchise through their utmost ranks ?
That having, like a father, apprehended,
He came to pardon fatherly those pranks
Played out and now in filial service ended ?
That some love-token, like a prince, he threw
To meet the people's love-call, in return ?
Well, how he came I will relate to you ;
And if your hearts should burn, why, hearts *must* burn,
To make the ashes which things old and new
Shall be washed clean in—as this Duke will learn.

From Casa Guidi windows gazing, then,
I saw and witness how the Duke came back.
The regular tramp of horse and tread of men
Did smite the silence like an anvil black
And sparkless. With her wide eyes at full strain,
Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, “ Alack, alack,
Signora ! these shall be the Austrians.” “ Nay,
Be still,” I answered, “ do not wake the child ! ”
—For so, my two-months' baby sleeping lay
In milky dreams upon the bed and smiled,
And I thought “ he shall sleep on, while he may,
Through the world's baseness : not being yet defiled,

Why should he be disturbed by what is done?"
Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn street
Live out, from end to end, full in the sun,
With Austria's thousand ; sword and bayonet,
Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons rolling on
Like blind slow storm-clouds gestant with the heat
Of undeveloped lightnings, each bestrode
By a single man, dust-white from head to heel,
Indifferent as the dreadful thing he rode,
Like a sculptured Fate serene and terrible.
As some smooth river which has overflowed
Will slow and silent down its current wheel
A loosened forest, all the pines erect,
So swept, in mute significance of storm,
The marshalled thousands ; not an eye deflect
To left or right, to catch a novel form
Of Florence city adorned by architect
And carver, or of Beauties live and warm
Scared at the casements,—all, straightforward eyes
And faces, held as steadfast as their swords,
And cognizant of acts, not imageries.
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the wards !
Ye asked for mimes,—these bring you tragedies :
For purple,—these shall wear it as your lords.
Ye played like children,—die like innocents.
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch,—the crack
Of the actual bolt, your pastime circumvents.
Ye called up ghosts, believing they were slack
To follow any voice from Gilboa's tents,—
Here's Samuel !—and, so, Grand-dukes come back !

And yet, they are no prophets though they come :
That awful mantle, they are drawing close,
Shall be searched, one day, by the shafts of Doom
Through double folds now hoodwinking the brows.
Resuscitated monarchs disentomb

Grave-reptiles with them, in their new life-throes.

Let such beware. Behold, the people waits,
Like God : as He, in His serene of might,
So they, in their endurance of long straits.

Ye stamp no nation out, though day and night

Ye tread them with that absolute heel which grates
And grinds them flat from all attempted height.

You kill worms sooner with a garden-spade
Than you kill peoples : peoples will not die ;

The tail curls stronger when you lop the head :
They writhe at every wound and multiply

And shudder into a heap of life that's made
Thus vital from God's own vitality.

'T is hard to shrivel back a day of God's
Once fixed for judgment ; 't is as hard to change

The peoples, when they rise beneath their loads
And heave them from their backs with violent wrench

To crush the oppressor : for that judgment-rod's
The measure of this popular revenge.

Meanwhile, from Casa Guidi windows, we
Beheld the armament of Austria flow

Into the drowning heart of Tuscany :
And yet none wept, none cursed, or, if 't was so,

They wept and cursed in silence. Silently
Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading foe ;

They had learnt silence. Pressed against the wall,
And grouped upon the church-steps opposite,

A few pale men and women stared at all.
God knows what they were feeling, with their white
Constrained faces, they, so prodigal

Of cry and gesture when the world goes right,

Or wrong indeed. But here was depth of wrong,
And here, still water ; they were silent here ;

And through that sentient silence, struck along
That measured tramp from which it stood out clear,

Distinct the sound and silence, like a gong
At midnight, each by the other awfuller,—
While every soldier in his cap displayed
A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing !
Was such plucked at Novara, it is said ?

A cry is up in England, which doth ring
The hollow world through, that for ends of trade
And virtue and God's better worshipping,
We henceforth should exalt the name of Peace
And leave those rusty wars that eat the soul,—
Besides their clippings at our golden fleece.
I, too, have loved peace, and from bole to bole
Of immemorial undeciduous trees
Would write, as lovers use upon a scroll,
The holy name of Peace and set it high
Where none could pluck it down. On trees, I say,—
Not upon gibbets !—with the greenery
Of dewy branches and the flowery May,
Sweet mediation betwixt earth and sky
Providing, for the shepherd's holiday.
Not upon gibbets ! though the vulture leaves
The bones to quiet, which he first picked bare.
Not upon dungeons ! though the wretch who grieves
And groans within, less stirs the outer air
Than any little field-mouse stirs the sheaves.
Not upon chain-bolts ! though the slave's despair
Has dulled his helpless miserable brain
And left him blank beneath the freeman's whip
To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.
Nor yet on starving homes ! where many a lip
Has sobbed itself asleep through curses vain.
I love no peace which is not fellowship
And which includes not mercy. I would have
Rather the raking of the guns across
The world, and shrieks against Heaven's architrave ;

Rather the struggle in the slippery fosse
Of dying men and horses, and the wave
Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said !—by Christ's own
cross,

And by this faint heart of my womanhood,
Such things are better than a Peace that sits
Beside a hearth in self-commended mood,
And takes no thought how wind and rain by fits
Are howling out of doors against the good
Of the poor wanderer. What ! your peace admits
Of outside anguish while it keeps at home ?
I loathe to take its name upon my tongue.

'T is nowise peace ; 't is treason, stiff with doom,—
'T is gagged despair and inarticulate wrong,
Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,
And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf
On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress
The life from these Italian souls, in brief.
O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of Righteousness,
Constrain the anguished worlds from sin and grief,
Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,
And give us peace which is no counterfeit !

But wherefore should we look out any more
From Casa Guidi windows ? Shut them straight,
And let us sit down by the folded door,
And veil our saddened faces and, so, wait
What next the judgment-heavens make ready for.

I have grown too weary for these windows. Sights
Come thick enough and clear enough in thought,
Without the sunshine ; souls have inner lights.
And since the Grand-duke has come back and brought
This army of the North which thus requites
His filial South, we leave him to be taught.
His South, too, has learnt something certainly,

Whereof the practice will bring profit soon ;
And peradventure other eyes may see,
From Casa Guidi windows, what is done
Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they be,
Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

Record that gain, Mazzini !—it shall top
Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock, so named,
Shall lure no vessel any more to drop
Among the breakers. Peter's chair is shamed
Like any vulgar throne the nations lop
To pieces for their firewood unreclaimed,—
And, when it burns too, we shall see as well
In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.

The cross, accounted still adorable,
Is Christ's cross only !—if the thief's would earn
Some stealthy genuflexions, we rebel ;
And here the impenitent thief's has had its turn,
As God knows ; and the people on their knees
Scoff and toss back the crosiers stretched like yokes
To press their heads down lower by degrees.
So Italy, by means of these last strokes,
Escapes the danger which preceded these,
Of leaving captured hands in cloven oaks,—
Of leaving very souls within the buckle
Whence bodies struggled outward,—of supposing
That freemen may like bondsmen kneel and truckle,
And then stand up as usual, without losing
An inch of stature.

Those whom she-wolves suckle
Will bite as wolves do in the grapple-closing
Of adverse interests. This at last is known,
(Thank Pius for the lesson) that albeit
Among the popedom's hundred heads of stone
Which blink down on you from the roof's retreat
In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral, Joan

And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may greet,
 A harlot and a devil,—you will see
 Not a man, still less angel, grandly set
 With open soul to render man more free.
 The fishers are still thinking of the net,
 And, if not thinking of the hook too, we
 Are counted somewhat deeply in their debt ;
 But that 's a rare case—so, by hook and crook
 They take the advantage, agonizing Christ
 By rustier nails than those of Cedron's brook,
 I' the people's body, very cheaply priced,—
 And quote high priesthood out of Holy book,
 While buying death-fields with the sacrificed.

Priests, priests,—there 's no such name !—God's own,
 except
 Ye take most vainly. Through heaven's lifted gate
 The priestly ephod in sole glory swept
 When Christ ascended, entered in, and sate
 (With victor face sublimely overwept)
 At Deity's right hand, to mediate
 He alone, He for ever. On His breast
 The Urim and the Thummim, fed with fire
 From the full Godhead, flicker with the unrest
 Of human pitiful heartbeats. Come up higher,
 All Christians ! Levi's tribe is dispossessed.
 That solitary alb ye shall admire,
 But not cast lots for. The last chrism, poured right,
 Was on that Head, and poured for burial
 And not for domination in men's sight.
 What *are* these churches ? The old temple-wall
 Doth overlook them juggling with the sleight
 Of surplice, candlestick and altar-pall ;
 East church and west church, ay, north church and
 south,
 Rome's church and England's,—let them all repent,

And makes concordats 'twixt their soul and mouth,
 Succeed St. Paul by working at the tent,
 Become infallible guides by speaking truth,
 And excommunicate their pride that bent
 And cramped the souls of men.

Why, even here
 Priestcraft burns out, the twin'd linen blazes ;
 Not, like asbestos, to grow white and clear,
 But all to perish !—while the fire-smell raises
 To life some swooning spirits who, last year,
 Lost breath and heart in these church-stifled places.
 Why, almost, through this Pius, we believed
 The priesthood could be an honest thing,—he smiled
 So saintly while our corn was being sheaved
 For his own granaries ! Showing now defiled
 His hireling hands, a better help 's achieved
 Than if they blessed us shepherd-like and mild.
 False doctrine, strangled by its own amen,
 Dies in the throat of all this nation. Who
 Will speak a pope's name as they rise again ?
 What woman or what child will count him true ?
 What dreamer, praise him with the voice or pen ?
 What man, fight for him ?—Pius takes his due.

Record that gain, Mazzini !—Yes, but first
 Set down thy people's faults ; set down the want
 Of soul-conviction ; set down aims dispersed,
 And incoherent means, and valour scant
 Because of scanty faith, and schisms accursed
 That wrench these brother-hearts from covenant
 With freedom and each other. Set down this,
 And this, and see to overcome it when
 The seasons bring the fruits thou wilt not miss
 If wary. Let no cry of patriot men
 Distract thee from the stern analysis

Of masses who cry only ! keep thy ken
 Clear as thy soul is virtuous. Heroes' blood
 Splashed up against thy noble brow in Rome ;
 Let such not blind thee to an interlude
 Which was not also holy, yet did come
 'Twixt sacramental actions,—brotherhood
 Despised even there, and something of the doom
 Of Remus in the trenches. Listen now—
 Rossi died silent near where Cæsar died.

HE did not say, "My Brutus, is it thou?"
 But Italy unquestioned testified
 "I killed him ! I am Brutus—I avow."
 At which the whole world's laugh of scorn replied,
 "A poor maimed copy of Brutus !"

Too much like,

Indeed, to be so unlike ! too unskilled
 At Philippi and the honest battle-pike,
 To be so skilful where a man is killed
 Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers strike
 At unawares i' the throat. Was thus fulfilled
 An omen once of Michel Angelo?—
 When Marcus Brutus he conceived complete,
 And strove to hurl him out by blow on blow
 Upon the marble, at Art's thunderheat,
 Till haply (some pre-shadow rising slow
 Of what his Italy would fancy meet
 To be called BRUTUS) straight his plastic hand
 Fell back before his prophet-soul, and left
 A fragment, a maimed Brutus,—but more grand
 Than this, so named at Rome, was !

Let thy weft

Present one woof and warp, Mazzini ! Stand
 With no man hankering for a dagger's heft,
 No, not for Italy !—nor stand apart,
 No, not for the Republic !—from those pure
 Brave men who hold the level of thy heart

In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
Albeit they will not follow where thou art
As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust fewer ;
And so bind strong and keep unstained the cause
Which (God's sign granted) war-trumps newly blown
Shall yet annunciate to the world's applause.

But now, the world is busy ; it has grown
A Fair-going world. Imperial England draws
The flowing ends of the earth from Fez, Canton,
Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and Madrid,
The Russias and the vast Americas,
As if a queen drew in her robes amid
Her golden cincture,—isles, peninsulas,
Capes, continents, far inland countries hid
By jasper-sands and hills of chrysopras,
All trailing in their splendours through the door
Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace. Every nation,
To every other nation strange of yore,
Gives face to face the civic salutation,
And holds up in a proud right hand before
That congress the best work which she can fashion
By her best means. “ These corals, will you please
To match against your oaks ? They grow as fast
Within my wilderness of purple seas.”—
“ This diamond stared upon me as I passed
(As a live god's eye from a marble frieze)
Along a dark of diamonds. Is it classed ? ”—
“ I wove these stuffs so subtly that the gold
Swims to the surface of the silk like cream
And curdles to fair patterns. Ye behold ! ”—
“ These delicatest muslins rather seem
Than be, you think ? Nay, touch them and be bold,
Though such veiled Chakhi's face in Hafiz' dream.”—
“ These carpets—you walk slow on them like kings,

Inaudible like spirits, while your foot
 Dips deep in velvet roses and such things."—
 "Even Apollonius might commend this flute : ¹
 The music, winding through the stops, upsprings
 To make the player very rich : compute !"
 "Here's goblet-glass, to take in with your wine
 The very sun its grapes were ripened under :
 Drink light and juice together, and each fine."—
 "This model of a steam-ship moves your wonder ?
 You should behold it crushing down the brine
 Like a blind Jove who feels his way with thunder."—
 "Here's sculpture ! Ah, *we* live too ! why not throw
 Our life into our marbles ? Art has place
 For other artists after Angelo."—
 "I tried to paint out here a natural face ;
 For nature includes Raffael, as we know,
 Not Raffael nature. Will it help my case ?"—
 "Methinks you will not match this steel of ours !"—
 "Nor you this porcelain ! One might dream the clay
 Retained in it the larvæ of the flowers,
 They bud so, round the cup, the old Spring-way."—
 "Nor you these carven woods, where birds in bowers
 With twisting snakes and climbing cupids, play."

O Magi of the east and of the west,
 Your incense, gold and myrrh are excellent !—
 What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye with the rest ?
 Your hands have worked well : is your courage spent
 In handwork only ? Have you nothing best,
 Which generous souls may perfect and present,
 And He shall thank the givers for ? no light
 Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor
 Who sit in darkness when it is not night ?

¹ Philostratus relates of Apollonius how he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, that it could not enrich or beautify. The historian of music in our day would satisfy the philosopher on one point at least.

No cure for wicked children? Christ,—no cure!

No help for women sobbing out of sight

Because men made the laws? no brothel-lure

Burnt out by popular lightnings? Hast thou found

No remedy, my England, for such woes?

No outlet, Austria, for the scourged and bound,

No entrance for the exiled? no repose,

Russia, for knouted Poles worked underground,

And gentle ladies bleached among the snows?

No mercy for the slave, America?

No hope for Rome, free France, chivalric France?

Alas, great nations have great shames, I say.

No pity, O world, no tender utterance

Of benediction, and prayers stretched this way

For poor Italia, baffled by mischance?

O gracious nations, give some ear to me!

You all go to your Fair, and I am one.

Who at the roadside of humanity

Beseech your alms,—God's justice to be done.

So, prosper!

In the name of Italy,

Meantime, her patriot Dead have benison.

They only have done well; and, what they did

Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let them slumber:

No king of Egypt in a pyramid

Is safer from oblivion, though he number

Full seventy cerements for a coverlid.

These Dead be seeds of life, and shall encumber

The sad heart of the land until it loose

The clammy clods and let out the Spring-growth

In beatific green through every bruise.

The tyrant should take heed to what he doth,

Since every victim-carrion turns to use,

And drives a chariot, like a god made wroth,

Against each piled injustice. Ay, the least,

Dead for Italia, not in vain has died;

Though many vainly, ere life's struggle ceased,

To mad dissimilar ends have swerved aside ;
Each grave her nationality has pieced
By its own majestic breadth, and fortified
And pinned it deeper to the soil. Forlorn
Of thanks be, therefore, no one of these graves !
Not Hers,—who, at her husband's side, in scorn,
Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing waves
Until she felt her little babe unborn
Recoil, within her, from the violent staves
And bloodhounds of the world,—at which, her life
Dropt inwards from her eyes and followed it
Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife
And child died so. And now, the sea-weeds fit
Her body, like a proper shroud and coif,
And murmurously the ebbing waters grit
The little pebbles while she lies interred
In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying thus,
She looked up in his face (which never stirred
From its clenched anguish) as to make excuse
For leaving him for his, if so she erred.
He well remembers that she could not choose.
A memorable grave ! Another is
At Genoa. There, a king may fitly lie,
Who, bursting that heroic heart of his
At lost Novara, that he could not die—
(Though thrice into the cannon's eyes for this
He plunged his shuddering steed, and felt the sky
Reel back between the fire-shocks)—stripped away
The ancestral ermine ere the smoke had cleared,
And, naked to the soul, that none might say
His kingship covered what was base and bleared
With treason, went out straight an exile, yea,
An exiled patriot. Let him be revered.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died well ;
And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,

The sin pass softly with the passing-bell :
For he was shriven, I think, in cannon-smoke,
And, taking off his crown, made visible
A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's yoke
He shattered his own hand and heart. "So best,"
His last words were upon his lonely bed,
"I do not end like popes and dukes at least—
Thank God for it." And now that he is dead,
Admitting it is proved and manifest
That he was worthy, with a discrowned head,
To measure heights with patriots, let them stand
Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,
And each vouchsafe to take him by the hand,
And kiss him on the cheek, and say aloud,—
"Thou, too, hast suffered for our native land !
My brother, thou art one of us ! be proud."

Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon.
Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the stranger's hate.
Still Niobe ! still fainting in the sun,
By whose most dazzling arrows violate
Her beauteous offspring perished ! Has she won
Nothing but garlands for the graves, from Fate ?
Nothing but death-songs ?—Yes, be it understood,
Life throbs in noble Piedmont ! while the feet
Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft in blood,
Grow flat with dissolution and, as meet,
Will soon be shovelled off like other mud,
To leave the passage free in church and street.
And I, who first took hope up in this song.
Because a child was singing one,—behold,
The hope and omen were not, haply, wrong !
Poets are soothsayers still, like those of old
Who studied flights of doves ; and creatures young
And tender, mighty meanings, may unfold.

The sun strikes, through the windows, up the floor ;
Stand out in it, my own young Florentine,
Not two years old, and let me see thee more !
It grows along thy amber curls, to shine
Brighter than elsewhere. Now, look straight before,
And fix thy brave blue English eyes on mine,
And from my soul, which fronts the future so,
With unabashed and unabated gaze,
Teach me to hope for, what the angels know
When they smile clear as thou dost. Down God's ways
With just alighted feet, between the snow
And snowdrops, where a little lamb may graze,
Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the road,
Albeit in our vain-glory we assume
That, less than we have, thou hast learnt of God.
Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet !—thou, to whom
The earliest world-day light that ever flowed,
Through Casa Guidi windows chanced to come !
Now shake the glittering nimbus of thy hair,
And be God's witness that the elemental
New springs of life are gushing everywhere
To cleanse the water-courses, and prevent all
Concrete obstructions which infest the air !
That earth 's alive, and gentle or ungentle
Motions within her, signify but growth !—
The grounds swells greenest o'er the labouring moles.
Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed and wroth,
Young children, lifted high on parent souls,
Look round them with a smile upon the mouth,
And take for music every bell that tolls ;
(WHO said we should be better if like these ?)
But *we* sit murmuring for the future though
Posterity is smiling on our knees,
Convicting us of folly. Let us go—
We will trust God. The blank interstices
Men take for ruins, He will build into

With pillared marbles rare, or knit across
With generous arches, till the fane 's complete.
This world has no perdition, if some loss.

Such cheer I gather from thy smiling, Sweet !
The self-same cherub-faces which emboss
The Vail, lean inward to the Mercy-seat.

THE END.



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