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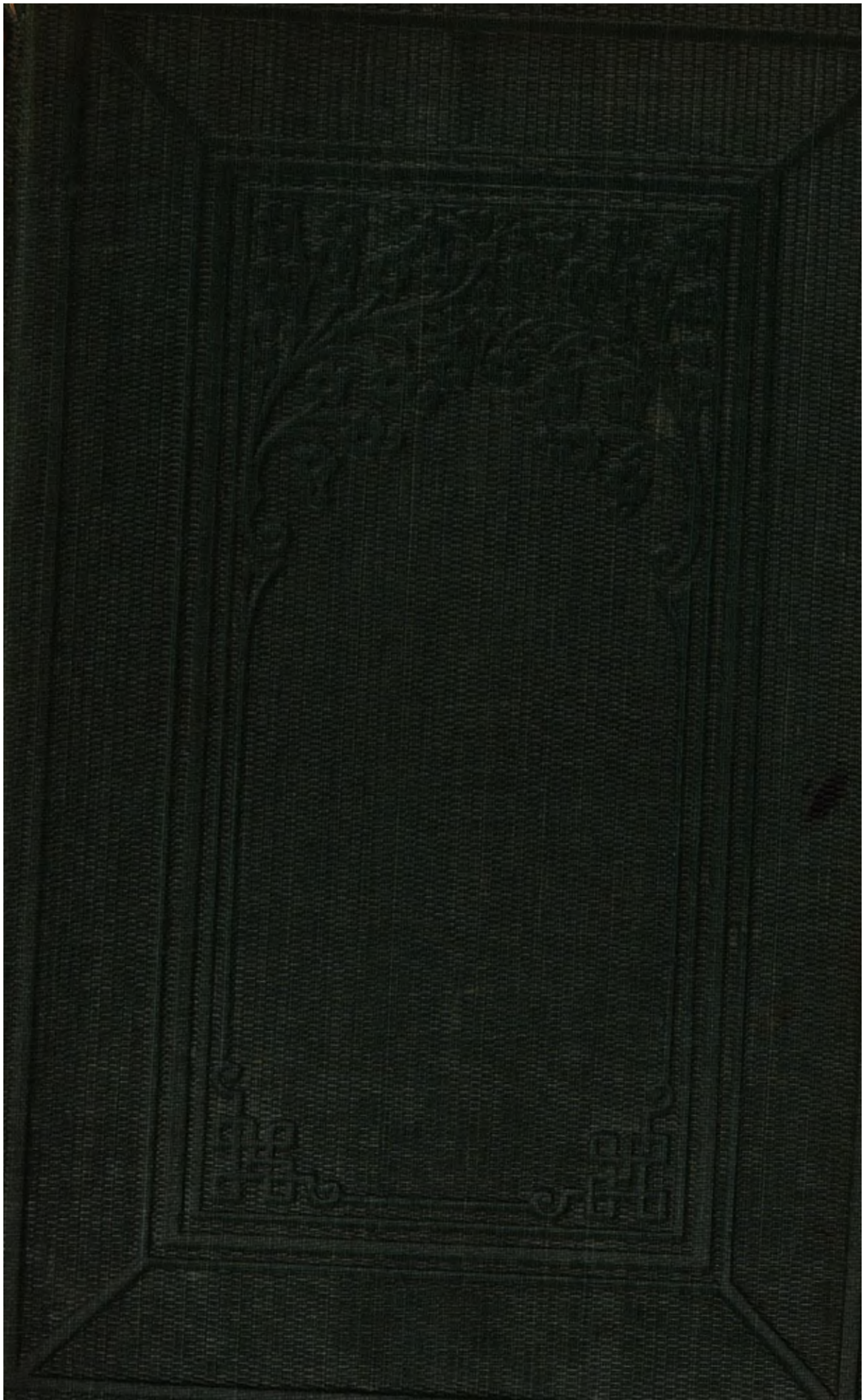
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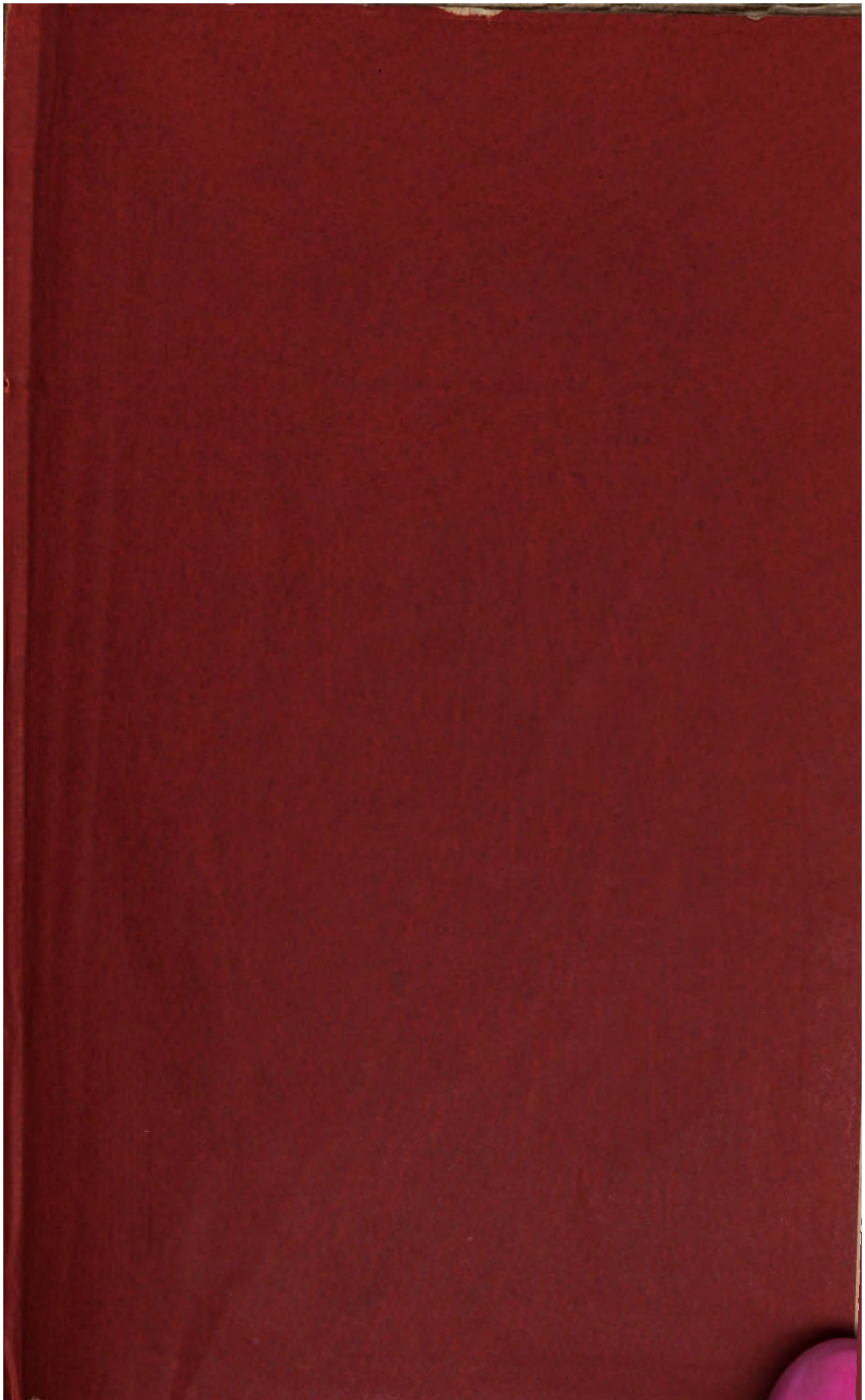
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LONDON:
A. and G. A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-street-Square.

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POEMS.

B





BALDER DEAD.

AN EPISODE.



1. *Sending.*

So on the floor lay Balder dead ; and round
Lay thickly strewn swords axes darts and spears
Which all the Gods in sport had idly thrown
At Balder, whom no weapon pierc'd or clove :
But in his breast stood fixt the fatal bough
Of mistletoe, which Lok the Accuser gave
To Hoder, and unwitting Hoder threw :
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.
And all the Gods and all the Heroes came
And stood round Balder on the bloody floor

Weeping and wailing ; and Valhalla rang
Up to its golden roof with sobs and cries :
And on the tables stood the untasted meats,
And in the horns and gold-rimm'd sculls the wine :
And now would Night have fall'n, and found them yet
Wailing ; but otherwise was Odin's will :
And thus the Father of the Ages spake : —

“ Enough of tears, ye Gods, enough of wail !
Not to lament in was Valhalla made.
If any here might weep for Balder's death
I most might weep, his Father ; such a son
I lose today, so bright, so lov'd a God.
But he has met that doom which long ago
The Nornies, when his mother bare him, spun,
And Fate set seal, that so his end must be.
Balder has met his death, and ye survive :
Weep him an hour ; but what can grief avail ?
For you yourselves, ye Gods, shall meet your doom,
All ye who hear me, and inhabit Heaven,

And I too, Odin too, the Lord of all ;
But ours we shall not meet, when that day comes,
With woman's tears and weak complaining cries—
Why should we meet another's portion so ?
Rather it fits you, having wept your hour,
With cold dry eyes, and hearts compos'd and stern,
To live, as erst, your daily life in Heaven :
By me shall vengeance on the murderer Lok,
The Foe, the Accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,
Be strictly car'd for, in the appointed day.
Meanwhile, tomorrow, when the morning dawns,
Bring wood to the seashore to Balder's ship,
And on the deck build high a funeral pile,
And on the top lay Balder's corpse, and put
Fire to the wood, and send him out to sea
To burn ; for that is what the dead desire."

So having spoke, the King of Gods arose
And mounted his horse Sleipner, whom he rode,
And from the hall of Heaven he rode away

To Lidskialf, and sate upon his throne,
The Mount, from whence his eye surveys the world.
And far from Heaven he turn'd his shining orbs
To look on Midgard, and the earth, and men :
And on the conjuring Lapps he bent his gaze
Whom antler'd reindeer pull over the snow ;
And on the Finns, the gentlest of mankind,
Fair men, who live in holes under the ground :
Nor did he look once more to Ida's plain,
Nor towards Valhalla, and the sorrowing Gods ;
For well he knew the Gods would heed his word,
And cease to mourn, and think of Balder's pyre.

But in Valhalla all the Gods went back
From around Balder, all the Heroes went ;
And left his body stretch'd upon the floor.
And on their golden chairs they sate again,
Beside the tables, in the hall of Heaven ;
And before each the cooks who serv'd them plac'd
New messes of the boar Serimner's flesh,

And the Valkyries crown'd their horns with mead.
So they, with pent-up hearts and tearless eyes,
Wailing no more, in silence ate and drank,
While Twilight fell, and sacred Night came on.

But the blind Hoder left the feasting Gods
In Odin's hall, and went through Asgard streets,
And past the haven where the Gods have moor'd
Their ships, and through the gate, beyond the wall.
Though sightless, yet his own mind led the God.
Down to the margin of the roaring sea
He came, and sadly went along the sand
Between the waves and black o'erhanging cliffs
Where in and out the screaming seafowl fly ;
Until he came to where a gully breaks
Through the cliff wall, and a fresh stream runs down
From the high moors behind, and meets the sea.
There in the glen Fensaler stands, the house
Of Frea, honour'd Mother of the Gods,
And shews its lighted windows to the main.

There he went up, and pass'd the open doors :
And in the hall he found those women old,
The Prophetesses, who by rite eterne
On Frea's hearth feed high the sacred fire
Both night and day ; and by the inner wall
Upon her golden chair the Mother sate,
With folded hands, revolving things to come :
To her drew Hoder near, and spake, and said : —

“ Mother, a child of bale thou bar'st in me.
For, first, thou barest me with blinded eyes,
Sightless and helpless, wandering weak in Heaven ;
And, after that, of ignorant witless mind
Thou barest me, and unforeseeing soul :
That I alone must take the branch from Lok,
The Foe, the Accuser, whom, though Gods, we hate,
And cast it at the dear-lov'd Balder's breast
At whom the Gods in sport their weapons threw—
'Gainst that alone had Balder's life no charm.
Now therefore what to attempt, or whither fly ?

For who will bear my hateful sight in Heaven? —
Can I, O Mother, bring them Balder back?
Or — for thou know'st the Fates, and things allow'd —
Can I with Hela's power a compact strike,
And make exchange, and give my life for his?"

He spoke; the Mother of the Gods replied: —
"Hoder, ill-fated, child of bale, my son,
Sightless in soul and eye, what words are these?
That one, long portion'd with his doom of death,
Should change his lot, and fill another's life,
And Hela yield to this, and let him go!
On Balder Death hath laid her hand, not thee;
Nor doth she count this life a price for that.
For many Gods in Heaven, not thou alone,
Would freely die to purchase Balder back,
And wend themselves to Hela's gloomy realm.
For not so gladsome is that life in Heaven
Which Gods and Heroes lead, in feast and fray,
Waiting the darkness of the final times,

That one should grudge its loss for Balder's sake,
Balder their joy, so bright, so lov'd a God.
But Fate withstands, and laws forbid this way.
Yet in my secret mind one way I know,
Nor do I judge if it shall win or fail:
But much must still be tried, which shall but fail."

And the blind Hoder answer'd her, and said:—
"What way is this, O Mother, that thou shew'st?
Is it a matter which a God might try?"

And straight the Mother of the Gods replied:—
"There is a way which leads to Hela's realm,
Untrodden, lonely, far from light and Heaven.
Who goes that way must take no other horse
To ride, but Sleipner, Odin's horse, alone.
Nor must he choose that common path of Gods
Which every day they come and go in Heaven,
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
Past Midgard Fortress, down to Earth and men;

But he must tread a dark untravell'd road
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and ride
Nine days, nine nights, towards the northern ice,
Through valleys deep-engulph'd, with roaring
streams.

And he will reach on the tenth morn a bridge
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
Not Bifrost, but that bridge a Damsel keeps,
Who tells the passing troops of dead their way
To the low shore of ghosts, and Hela's realm.
And she will bid him northward steer his course :
Then he will journey through no lighted land,
Nor see the sun arise, nor see it set ;
But he must ever watch the northern Bear
Who from her frozen height with jealous eye
Confronts the Dog and Hunter in the south,
And is alone not dipt in Ocean's stream.
And straight he will come down to Ocean's strand ;
Ocean, whose watery ring enfolds the world,
And on whose marge the ancient Giants dwell.

But he will reach its unknown northern shore,
Far, far beyond the outmost Giant's home,
At the chink'd fields of ice, the waste of snow :
And he will fare across the dismal ice
Northward, until he meets a stretching wall
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.
But then he must dismount, and on the ice
Tighten the girths of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
And make him leap the grate, and come within.
And he will see stretch round him Hela's realm,
The plains of Nifheim, where dwell the dead,
And hear the roaring of the streams of Hell.
And he will see the feeble shadowy tribes,
And Balder sitting crown'd, and Hela's throne.
Then he must not regard the wailful ghosts
Who all will flit, like eddyng leaves, around ;
But he must straight accost their solemn Queen,
And pay her homage, and entreat with prayers,
Telling her all that grief they have in Heaven
For Balder, whom she holds by right below :

If haply he may melt her heart with words,
And make her yield, and give him Balder back."

She spoke : but Hoder answer'd her and
said : —

"Mother, a dreadful way is this thou shew'st.
No journey for a sightless God to go."

And straight the Mother of the Gods replied : —

"Therefore thyself thou shalt not go, my son.
But he whom first thou meetest when thou com'st
To Asgard, and declar'st this hidden way,
Shall go, and I will be his guide unseen."

She spoke, and on her face let fall her veil,
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.
But at the central hearth those Women old
Who while the Mother spake had ceas'd their toil
Began again to heap the sacred fire :
And Hoder turn'd, and left his mother's house,

Fensaler, whose lit windows look to sea ;
And came again down to the roaring waves,
And back along the beach to Asgard went,
Pondering on that which Frea said should be.

But Night came down, and darken'd Asgard
streets.

Then from their loathed feast the Gods arose,
And lighted torches, and took up the corpse
Of Balder from the floor of Odin's hall,
And laid it on a bier, and bare him home
Through the fast-darkening streets to his own house
Breidablik, on whose columns Balder grav'd
The enchantments, that recall the dead to life:
For wise he was, and many curious arts,
Postures of runes, and healing herbs he knew ;
Unhappy : but that art he did not know
To keep his own life safe, and see the sun : —
There to his hall the Gods brought Balder home,
And each bespoke him as he laid him down : —

“ Would that ourselves, O Balder, we were borne
Home to our halls, with torchlight, by our kin,
So thou might'st live, and still delight the Gods.”

They spake: and each went home to his own
house.

But there was one, the first of all the Gods
For speed, and Hermod was his name in Heaven ;
Most fleet he was, but now he went the last,
Heavy in heart for Balder, to his house
Which he in Asgard built him, there to dwell,
Against the harbour, by the city wall :
Him the blind Hoder met, as he came up
From the sea cityward, and knew his step ;
Nor yet could Hermod see his brother's face,
For it grew dark ; but Hoder touch'd his arm :
And as a spray of honeysuckle flowers
Brushes across a tired traveller's face
Who shuffles through the deep dew-moisten'd dust,
On a May evening, in the darken'd lanes,

And starts him, that he thinks a ghost went by —
So Hoder brush'd by Hermod's side, and said : —

“ Take Sleipner, Hermod, and set forth with dawn
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back :
And they shall be thy guides, who have the power.”

He spake, and brush'd soft by, and disappear'd.
And Hermod gaz'd into the night, and said : —

“ Who is it utters through the dark his hest
So quickly, and will wait for no reply ?
The voice was like the unhappy Hoder's voice.
Howbeit I will see, and do his hest ;
For there rang note divine in that command.”

So speaking, the fleet-footed Hermod came
Home, and lay down to sleep in his own house,
And all the Gods lay down in their own homes.
And Hoder too came home, distraught with grief,

Loathing to meet, at dawn, the other Gods :
And he went in, and shut the door, and fixt
His sword upright, and fell on it, and died.

But from the hill of Lidskialf Odin rose,
The throne, from which his eye surveys the
world ;
And mounted Sleipner, and in darkness rode
To Asgard. And the stars came out in Heaven,
High over Asgard, to light home the King.
But fiercely Odin gallop'd, mov'd in heart ;
And swift to Asgard, to the gate, he came :
And terribly the hoofs of Sleipner rang
Along the flinty floor of Asgard streets ;
And the Gods trembled on their golden beds
Hearing the wrathful Father coming home ;
For dread, for like a whirlwind, Odin came :
And to Valhalla's gate he rode, and left
Sleipner ; and Sleipner went to his own stall :
And in Valhalla Odin laid him down.

But in Breidablik Nanna, Balder's wife,
Came with the Goddesses who wrought her will,
And stood round Balder lying on his bier :
And at his head and feet she station'd Scalds
Who in their lives were famous for their song ;
These o'er the corpse inton'd a plaintive strain,
A dirge ; and Nanna and her train replied.
And far into the night they wail'd their dirge :
But when their souls were satisfied with wail,
They went, and laid them down, and Nanna went
Into an upper chamber, and lay down ;
And Frea seal'd her tired lids with sleep.

And 'twas when Night is bordering hard on
Dawn,
When air is chilliest, and the stars sunk low,
Then Balder's spirit through the gloom drew near,
In garb, in form, in feature as he was
Alive, and still the rays were round his head
Which were his glorious mark in Heaven ; he stood

Over against the curtain of the bed,
And gaz'd on Nanna as she slept, and spake :—

“ Poor lamb, thou sleepest, and forgett'st thy woe.
Tears stand upon the lashes of thine eyes,
Tears wet the pillow by thy cheek ; but thou,
Like a young child, hast cried thyself to sleep.
Sleep on : I watch thee, and am here to aid.
Alive I kept not far from thee, dear soul,
Neither do I neglect thee now, though dead.
For with tomorrow's dawn the Gods prepare
To gather wood, and build a funeral pile
Upon my ship, and burn my corpse with fire,
That sad, sole honour of the dead ; and thee
They think to burn, and all my choicest wealth,
With me, for thus ordains the common rite :
But it shall not be so : but mild, but swift,
But painless shall a stroke from Frea come,
To cut thy thread of life, and free thy soul,
And they shall burn thy corpse with mine, not thee.

And well I know that by no stroke of death,
Tardy or swift, wouldst thou be loath to die,
So it restor'd thee, Nanna, to my side,
Whom thou so well hast lov'd : but I can smooth
Thy way, and this at least my prayers avail.
Yes, and I fain would altogether ward
Death from thy head, and with the Gods in Heaven
Prolong thy life, though not by thee desir'd :
But Right bars this, not only thy desire.
Yet dreary, Nanna, is the life they lead
In that dim world, in Hela's mouldering realm ;
And doleful are the ghosts, the troops of dead,
Whom Hela with austere controul presides ;
For of the race of Gods is no one there
Save me alone, and Hela, solemn Queen :
And all the nobler souls of mortal men
On battle-field have met their death, and now
Feast in Valhalla, in my Father's hall ;
Only the inglorious sort are there below,
The old, the cowards, and the weak are there,

Men spent by sickness, or obscure decay.
But even there, O Nanna, we might find
Some solace in each other's look and speech,
Wandering together through that gloomy world,
And talking of the life we led in Heaven,
While we yet liv'd, among the other Gods."

He spake, and straight his lineaments began
To fade : and Nanna in her sleep stretch'd out
Her arms towards him with a cry ; but he
Mournfully shook his head, and disappear'd.
And as the woodman sees a little smoke
Hang in the air, afield, and disappear —
So Balder faded in the night away.
And Nanna on her bed sunk back : but then
Frea, the Mother of the Gods, with stroke
Painless and swift, set free her airy soul,
Which took, on Balder's track, the way below :
And instantly the sacred Morn appear'd.



2. Journey to The Dead.

FORTH from the East, up the ascent of Heaven,
Day drove his courser with the Shining Mane ;
And in Valhalla, from his gable perch,
The golden-crested Cock began to crow :
Hereafter, in the blackest dead of night,
With shrill and dismal cries that Bird shall crow,
Warning the Gods that foes draw nigh to Heaven ;
But now he crew at dawn, a cheerful note,
To wake the Gods and Heroes to their tasks.
And all the Gods, and all the Heroes, woke.
And from their beds the Heroes rose, and donn'd
Their arms, and led their horses from the stall,
And mounted them, and in Valhalla's court
Were rang'd ; and then the daily fray began.

And all day long they there are hack'd and hewn
'Mid dust, and groans, and limbs lopp'd off, and blood ;
But all at night return to Odin's hall
Woundless and fresh : such lot is theirs in Heaven.
And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth
Toward Earth and fights of men ; and at their side
Skulda, the youngest of the Nornies, rode :
And over Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
Past Midgard Fortress, down to Earth they came :
There through some battle-field, where men fall fast,
Their horses fetlock-deep in blood, they ride,
And pick the bravest warriors out for death,
Whom they bring back with them at night to Heaven,
To glad the Gods, and feast in Odin's hall.

But the Gods went not now, as otherwhile,
Into the Tilt-Yard, where the Heroes fought,
To feast their eyes with looking on the fray :
Nor did they to their Judgment-Place repair
By the ash Igdrasil, in Ida's plain,

Where they hold council, and give laws for men :
But they went, Odin first, the rest behind,
To the hall Gladheim, which is built of gold ;
Where are in circle rang'd twelve golden chairs,
And in the midst one higher, Odin's throne :
There all the Gods in silence sate them down ;
And thus the Father of the Ages spake : —

“ Go quickly, Gods, bring wood to the seashore,
With all, which it beseems the dead to have,
And make a funeral pile on Balder's ship.
On the twelfth day the Gods shall burn his corpse.
But Hermod, thou, take Sleipner, and ride down
To Hela's kingdom, to ask Balder back.”

So said he ; and the Gods arose, and took
Axes and ropes, and at their head came Thor,
Shouldering his Hammer, which the Giants know :
Forth wended they, and drove their steeds before :
And up the dewy mountain tracks they far'd

To the dark forests, in the early dawn;
And up and down and side and slant they roam'd :
And from the glens all day an echo came
Of crashing falls ; for with his hammer Thor
Smote 'mid the rocks the lichen-bearded pines
And burst their roots ; while to their tops the Gods
Made fast the woven ropes, and hal'd them down,
And lopp'd their boughs, and clove them on the
 sword,
And bound the logs behind their steeds to draw,
And drove them homeward ; and the snorting steeds
Went straining through the crackling brushwood
 down,
And by the darkling forest paths the Gods
Follow'd, and on their shoulders carried boughs.
And they came out upon the plain, and pass'd
Asgard, and led their horses to the beach,
And loos'd them of their loads on the seashore,
And rang'd the wood in stacks by Balder's ship ;
And every God went home to his own house.

But when the Gods were to the forest gone
Hermod led Sleipner from Valhalla forth
And saddled him ; before that, Sleipner brook'd
No meaner hand than Odin's on his mane,
On his broad back no lesser rider bore :
Yet docile now he stood at Hermod's side,
Arching his neck, and glad to be bestrode,
Knowing the God they went to seek, how dear.
But Hermod mounted him, and sadly far'd,
In silence, up the dark untravell'd road
Which branches from the north of Heaven, and went
All day ; and Daylight wan'd, and Night came on.
And all that night he rode, and journey'd so,
Nine days, nine nights, towards the northern ice,
Through valleys deep engulph'd, by roaring streams :
And on the tenth morn he beheld the bridge
Which spans with golden arches Giall's stream,
And on the bridge a Damsel watching arm'd,
In the strait passage, at the further end,
Where the road issues between walling rocks.

Scant space that Warder left for passers by ;
But, as when cowherds in October drive
Their kine across a snowy mountain pass
To winter pasture on the southern side,
And on the ridge a waggon chokes the way
Wedg'd in the snow ; then painfully the hinds
With goad and shouting urge their cattle past,
Plunging through deep untrodden banks of snow
To right and left, and warm steam fills the air —
So on the bridge that Damsel block'd the way,
And question'd Hermod as he came, and said : —

“ Who art thou on thy black and fiery horse
Under whose hoofs the bridge o'er Giall's stream
Rumbles and shakes ? Tell me thy race and home.
But yestermorn five troops of dead pass'd by
Bound on their way below to Hela's realm,
Nor shook the bridge so much as thou alone.
And thou hast flesh and colour on thy cheeks
Like men who live and draw the vital air ;

Nor look'st thou pale and wan, like men deceas'd,
Souls bound below, my daily passers here."

And the fleet-footed Hermod answer'd her : —
" O Damsel, Hermod am I call'd, the son
Of Odin ; and my high-roof'd house is built
Far hence, in Asgard, in the City of Gods :
And Sleipner, Odin's horse, is this I ride.
And I come, sent this road on Balder's track :
Say then, if he hath cross'd thy bridge or no ? "

He spake ; the Warder of the bridge replied : —
" O Hermod, rarely do the feet of Gods
Or of the horses of the Gods resound
Upon my bridge ; and, when they cross, I know.
Balder hath gone this way, and ta'en the road
Below there, to the north, toward Hela's realm.
From here the cold white mist can be discern'd,
Not lit with sun, but through the darksome air
By the dim vapour-blotted light of stars,

Which hangs over the ice where lies the road.
For in that ice are lost those northern streams
Freezing and ridging in their onward flow,
Which from the fountain of Vergelmer run,
The spring that bubbles up by Hela's throne.
There are the joyless seats, the haunt of ghosts,
Hela's pale swarms ; and there was Balder bound.
Ride on ; pass free : but he by this is there."

She spake, and stepp'd aside, and left him room.
And Hermod greeted her, and gallop'd by
Across the bridge ; then she took post again.
But northward Hermod rode, the way below :
And o'er a darksome tract, which knows no sun,
But by the blotted light of stars, he far'd ;
And he came down to Ocean's northern strand
At the drear ice, beyond the Giants' home :
Thence on he journey'd o'er the fields of ice
Still north, until he met a stretching wall
Barring his way, and in the wall a grate.

Then he dismounted, and drew tight the girths,
On the smooth ice, of Sleipner, Odin's horse,
And made him leap the grate, and came within.
And he beheld spread round him Hela's realm,
The plains of Niflheim, where dwell the dead,
And heard the thunder of the streams of Hell.
For near the wall the river of Roaring flows,
Outmost: the others near the centre run —
The Storm, the Abyss, the Howling, and the Pain :
These flow by Hela's throne, and near their spring.
And from the dark flock'd up the shadowy tribes :
And as the swallows crowd the bulrush-beds
Of some clear river, issuing from a lake,
On autumn days, before they cross the sea ;
And to each bulrush-crest a swallow hangs
Swinging, and others skim the river streams,
And their quick twittering fills the banks and shores—
So around Hermod swarm'd the twittering ghosts.
Women, and infants, and young men who died
Too soon for fame, with white ungraven shields ;

And old men, known to Glory, but their star
Betray'd them, and of wasting age they died,
Not wounds : yet, dying, they their armour wore,
And now have chief regard in Hela's realm.
Behind flock'd wrangling up a piteous crew,
Greeted of none, disfeatur'd and forlorn —
Cowards, who were in sloughs interr'd alive :
And round them still the wattled hurdles hung
Wherewith they stamp'd them down, and trod them
 deep,

To hide their shameful memory from men.
But all he pass'd unhail'd, and reach'd the throne
Of Hela, and saw, near it, Balder crown'd,
And Hela set thereon, with countenance stern ;
And thus bespake him first the solemn Queen : —

“ Unhappy, how hast thou endur'd to leave
The light, and journey to the cheerless land
Where idly flit about the feeble shades ?
How didst thou cross the bridge o'er Giall's stream,

Being alive, and come to Ocean's shore?
Or how o'erleap the grate that bars the wall?"

She spake: but down off Sleipner Hermod sprang,
And fell before her feet, and clasp'd her knees;
And spake, and mild entreated her, and said:—

“O Hela, wherefore should the Gods declare
Their errands to each other, or the ways
They go? the errand and the way is known.
Thou know'st, thou know'st, what grief we have in
Heaven

For Balder, whom thou hold'st by right below:
Restore him, for what part fulfils he here?
Shall he shed cheer over the cheerless seats,
And touch the apathetic ghosts with joy?
Not for such end, O Queen, thou hold'st thy realm.
For Heaven was Balder born, the City of Gods
And Heroes, where they live in light and joy:
Thither restore him, for his place is there.”

He spoke ; and grave replied the solemn Queen:—
“ Hermod, for he thou art, thou Son of Heaven !
A strange unlikely errand, sure, is thine.
Do the Gods send to me to make them blest ?
Small bliss my race hath of the Gods obtain'd.
Three mighty children to my Father Lok
Did Angerbode, the Giantess, bring forth —
Fenris the Wolf, the Serpent huge, and Me :
Of these the Serpent in the sea ye cast,
Who since in your despite hath wax'd amain,
And now with gleaming ring enfolds the world :
Me on this cheerless nether world ye threw
And gave me nine unlighted realms to rule :
While on his island in the lake, afar,
Made fast to the bor'd crag, by wile not strength
Subdu'd, with limber chains lives Fenris bound.
Lok still subsists in Heaven, our Father wise,
Your mate, though loath'd, and feasts in Odin's hall ;
But him too foes await, and netted snares,
And in a cave a bed of needle rocks,

And o'er his visage serpents dropping gall.
Yet he shall one day rise, and burst his bonds,
And with himself set us his offspring free,
When he guides Muspel's children to their bourne.
Till then in peril or in pain we live,
Wrought by the Gods: and ask the Gods our aid?
Howbeit we abide our day: till then,
We do not as some feebler haters do,
Seek to afflict our foes with petty pangs,
Helpless to better us, or ruin them.
Come then; if Balder was so dear belov'd,
And this is true, and such a loss is Heaven's —
Hear, how to Heaven may Balder be restor'd.
Shew me though all the world the signs of grief:
Fails but one thing to grieve, here Balder stops:
Let all that lives and moves upon the earth
Weep him, and all that is without life weep:
Let Gods, men, brutes, bewEEP him; plants and stones.
So shall I know the lost was dear indeed,
And bend my heart, and give him back to Heaven."

She spake ; and Hermod answer'd her, and
said :—

“ Hela, such as thou say'st, the terms shall be.
But come, declare me this, and truly tell :
May I, ere I depart, bid Balder hail ?
Or is it here withheld to greet the dead ? ”

He spake ; and straightway Hela answer'd him:—
“ Hermod, greet Balder if thou wilt, and hold
Converse : his speech remains, though he be dead.”

And straight to Balder Hermod turn'd, and
spake :—

“ Even in the abode of Death, O Balder, hail !
Thou hear'st, if hearing, like as speech, is thine,
The terms of thy releasement hence to Heaven :
Fear nothing but that all shall be fulfill'd.
For not unmindful of thee are the Gods
Who see the light, and blest in Asgard dwell ;
Even here they seek thee out, in Hela's realm.

And sure of all the happiest far art thou
Who ever have been known in Earth or Heaven :
Alive, thou wert of Gods the most belov'd :
And now thou sittest crown'd by Hela's side,
Here, and hast honour among all the dead."

' He spake ; and Balder utter'd him reply,
But feebly, as a voice far off ; he said : —

“ Hermod the nimble, gild me not my death.
Better to live a slave, a captur'd man,
Who scatters rushes in a master's hall,
Than be a crown'd king here, and rule the dead.
And now I count not of these terms as safe
To be fulfill'd, nor my return as sure,
Though I be lov'd, and many mourn my death :
For double-minded ever was the seed
Of Lok, and double are the gifts they give.
Howbeit, report thy message ; and therewith,
To Odin, to my Father, take this ring,

Memorial of me, whether sav'd or no :
And tell the Heaven-born Gods how thou hast seen
Me sitting here below by Hela's side,
Crown'd, having honour among all the dead. ”

He spake, and rais'd his hand, and gave the ring.
And with inscrutable regard the Queen
Of Hell beheld them, and the ghosts stood dumb.
But Hermod took the ring, and yet once more
Kneel'd and did homage to the solemn Queen ;
Then mounted Sleipner, and set forth to ride
Back, through the astonish'd tribes of dead, to Heaven.
And to the wall he came, and found the grate
Lifted, and issued on the fields of ice ;
And o'er the ice he far'd to Ocean's strand,
And up from thence, a wet and misty road,
To the arm'd Damsel's bridge, and Giall's stream.
Worse was that way to go than to return,
For him : for others all return is barr'd.
Nine days he took to go, two to return ;

And on the twelfth morn saw the light of Heaven.
And as a traveller in the early dawn
To the steep edge of some great valley comes
Through which a river flows, and sees beneath
Clouds of white rolling vapours fill the vale,
But o'er them, on the farther slope, descries
Vineyards, and crofts, and pastures, bright with sun —
So Hermod, o'er the fog between, saw Heaven.
And Sleipner snorted, for he smelt the air
Of Heaven : and mightily, as wing'd, he flew.
And Hermod saw the towers of Asgard rise :
And he drew near, and heard no living voice
In Asgard ; but the golden halls were dumb.
Then Hermod knew what labour held the Gods :
And through the empty streets he rode, and pass'd
Under the gate-house to the sands, and found
The Gods on the seashore by Balder's ship.

3. *Funeral.*

THE Gods held talk together, group'd in knots,
Round Balder's corpse, which they had thither borne ;
And Hermod came down towards them from the gate.
And Lok, the Father of the Serpent, first
Beheld him come, and to his neighbour spake : —

“ See, here is Hermod, who comes single back
From Hell ; and shall I tell thee how he seems ?
Like as a farmer, who hath lost his dog,
One morn, at market, in a crowded town —
Through many streets the poor beast runs in vain,
And follows this man after that, for hours ;
And, late at evening, spent and panting, falls
Before a stranger's threshold, not his home,
With flanks a-tremble, and his slender tongue

Hangs quivering out between his dust-smear'd jaws,
And piteously he eyes the passers by :
But home his master comes to his own farm,
Far in the country, wondering where he is —
So Hermod comes today unfollow'd home."

And straight his neighbour, mov'd with wrath,
replied : —

"Deceiver, fair in form, but false in heart,
Enemy, Mocker, whom, though Gods, we hate —
Peace, lest our Father Odin hear thee gibe.
Would I might see him snatch thee in his hand,
And bind thy carcase, like a bale, with cords,
And hurl thee in a lake, to sink or swim.
If clear from plotting Balder's death, to swim ;
But deep, if thou devisedst it, to drown,
And perish, against fate, before thy day !"

So they two soft to one another spake.
But Odin look'd toward the land, and saw

His messenger ; and he stood forth, and cried :
And Hermod came, and leapt from Sleipner down,
And in his Father's hand put Sleipner's rein,
And greeted Odin and the Gods, and said : —

“ Odin, my Father, and ye, Gods of Heaven !
Lo, home, having perform'd your will, I come.
Into the joyless kingdom have I been,
Below, and look'd upon the shadowy tribes
Of ghosts, and commun'd with their solemn Queen ;
And to your prayer she sends you this reply : —
Shew her through all the world the signs of grief :
Fails but one thing to grieve, there Balder stops.
Let Gods, men, brutes, bewep him, plants and
stones.
So shall she know your loss was dear indeed,
And bend her heart, and give you Balder back.”

He spoke ; and all the Gods to Odin look'd :
And straight the Father of the Ages said : —

“Ye Gods, these terms may keep another day.
But now, put on your arms, and mount your steeds,
And in procession all come near, and weep
Balder ; for that is what the dead desire.
When ye enough have wept, then build a pile
Of the heap'd wood, and burn his corpse with fire
Out of our sight ; that we may turn from grief,
And lead, as erst, our daily life in Heaven.”

He spoke ; and the Gods arm'd : and Odin
donn'd

His dazzling corslet and his helm of gold,
And led the way on Sleipner : and the rest
Follow'd, in tears, their Father and their King.
And thrice in arms around the dead they rode,
Weeping ; the sands were wetted, and their arms,
With their thick-falling tears : so good a friend
They mourn'd that day, so bright, so lov'd a God.
And Odin came, and laid his kingly hands
On Balder's breast, and thus began the wail : —

“Farewell, O Balder, bright and lov’d, my Son !
In that great day, the Twilight of the Gods,
When Muspel’s children shall beleaguer Heaven,
Then we shall miss thy counsel and thy arm.”

Thou camest near the next, O Warrior Thor !
Shouldering thy Hammer, in thy chariot drawn,
Swaying the long-hair’d Goats with silver’d rein ;
And over Balder’s corpse these words didst say : —

“Brother, thou dwellest in the darksome land,
And talkest with the feeble tribes of ghosts,
Now, and I know not how they prize thee there,
But here, I know, thou wilt be miss’d and mourn’d.
For haughty spirits and high wraths are rife
Among the Gods and Heroes here in Heaven,
As among those, whose joy and work is war :
And daily strifes arise, and angry words :
But from thy lips, O Balder, night or day,
Heard no one ever an injurious word

To God or Hero, but thou keptest back
The others, labouring to compose their brawls.
Be ye then kind, as Balder too was kind:
For we lose him, who smooth'd all strife in Heaven."

He spake : and all the Gods assenting wail'd.
And Freya next came nigh, with golden tears :
The loveliest Goddess she in Heaven, by all
Most honour'd after Frea, Odin's wife :
Her long ago the wandering Oder took
To mate, but left her to roam distant lands ;
Since then she seeks him, and weeps tears of gold :
Names hath she many ; Vanadis on earth
They call her ; Freya is her name in Heaven :
She in her hands took Balder's head, and spake : —

“ Balder, my brother, thou art gone a road
Unknown and long, and haply on that way
My long-lost wandering Oder thou hast met,
For in the paths of Heaven he is not found.

Oh, if it be so, tell him what thou wert
To his neglected wife, and what he is,
And wring his heart with shame, to hear thy word.
For he, my husband, left me here to pine,
Not long a wife, when his unquiet heart
First drove him from me into distant lands.
Since then I vainly seek him through the world,
And weep from shore to shore my golden tears,
But neither god nor mortal heeds my pain.
Thou only, Balder, wert for ever kind,
To take my hand, and wipe my tears, and say : —
Weep not, O Freya, weep no golden tears !
One day the wandering Oder will return,
Or thou wilt find him in thy faithful search
On some great road, or resting in an inn,
Or at a ford, or sleeping by a tree. —
So Balder said ; but Oder, well I know,
My truant Oder I shall see no more
To the world's end ; and Balder now is gone ;
And I am left uncomforted in Heaven.”

She spake ; and all the Goddesses bewail'd.
Last, from among the Heroes one came near,
No God, but of the Hero-troop the chief —
Regner, who swept the northern sea with fleets,
And rul'd o'er Denmark and the heathy isles,
Living ; but Ella captur'd him and slew :
A king, whose fame then fill'd the vast of Heaven,
Now time obscures it, and men's later deeds :
He last approach'd the corpse, and spake, and said :—

“ Balder, there yet are many Scalds in Heaven
Still left, and that chief Scald, thy brother Brage,
Whom we may bid to sing, though thou art gone :
And all these gladly, while we drink, we hear,
After the feast is done, in Odin's hall :
But they harp ever on one string, and wake
Remembrance in our soul of wars alone,
Such as on earth we valiantly have wag'd,
And blood, and ringing blows, and violent death :
But when thou sangest, Balder, thou didst strike

Another note, and, like a bird in spring,
Thy voice of joyance minded us, and youth,
And wife, and children, and our ancient home.
Yes, and I too remember'd then no more
My dungeon, where the serpents stung me dead,
Nor Ella's victory on the English coast;
But I heard Thora laugh in Gothland Isle;
And saw my shepherdess, Aslauga, tend
Her flock along the white Norwegian beach:
Tears started to mine eyes with yearning joy:
Therefore with grateful heart I mourn thee dead."

So Regner spake, and all the Heroes groan'd,
But now the sun had pass'd the height of Heaven,
And soon had all that day been spent in wail;
But then the Father of the Ages said: —

"Ye Gods, there well may be too much of wail.
Bring now the gather'd wood to Balder's ship;
Heap on the deck the logs, and build the pyre."

But when the Gods and Heroes heard, they
brought
The wood to Balder's ship, and built a pile,
Full the deck's breadth, and lofty ; then the corpse
Of Balder on the highest top they laid,
With Nanna on his right, and on his left
Hoder, his brother, whom his own hand slew.
And they set jars of wine and oil to lean
Against the bodies, and stuck torches near,
Splinters of pine-wood, soak'd with turpentine ;
And brought his arms and gold, and all his stuff,
And slew the dogs which at his table fed,
And his horse, Balder's horse, whom most he lov'd,
And threw them on the pyre, and Odin threw
A last choice gift thereon, his golden ring.
They fixt the mast, and hoisted up the sails,
Then they put fire to the wood ; and Thor
Set his stout shoulder hard against the stern
To push the ship through the thick sand : sparks flew
From the deep trench she plough'd — so strong a God

Furrow'd it — and the water gurgled in.
And the Ship floated on the waves, and rock'd :
But in the hills a strong East-Wind arose,
And came down moaning to the sea ; first squalls
Ran black o'er the sea's face, then steady rush'd
The breeze, and fill'd the sails, and blew the fire.
And, wreath'd in smoke, the Ship stood out to sea.
Soon with a roaring rose the mighty fire,
And the pile crackled ; and between the logs
Sharp quivering tongues of flame shot out, and leapt,
Curling and darting, higher, until they lick'd
The summit of the pile, the dead, the mast,
And ate the shrivelling sails ; but still the Ship
Drove on, ablaze, above her hull, with fire.
And the Gods stood upon the beach, and gaz'd :
And, while they gaz'd, the Sun went lurid down
Into the smoke-wrapt sea, and Night came on.
Then the wind fell, with night, and there was calm.
But through the dark they watch'd the burning Ship
Still carried o'er the distant waters on

Farther and farther, like an Eye of Fire.
And as in the dark night a travelling man
Who bivouacs in a forest 'mid the hills,
Sees suddenly a spire of flame shoot up
Out of the black waste forest, far below,
Which woodcutters have lighted near their lodge
Against the wolves ; and all night long it flares :—
So flar'd, in the far darkness, Balder's pyre.
But fainter, as the stars rose high, it burn'd ;
The bodies were consum'd, ash chok'd the pile :
And as in a decaying winter fire
A charr'd log, falling, makes a shower of sparks —
So, with a shower of sparks, the pile fell in,
Reddening the sea around ; and all was dark.

But the Gods went by starlight up the
shore

To Asgard, and sate down in Odin's hall
At table, and the funeral feast began.
All night they ate the boar Serimner's flesh,

And from their horns, with silver rimm'd, drank mead,
Silent, and waited for the sacred Morn.

And Morning over all the world was spread.
Then from their loathed feast the Gods arose,
And took their horses, and set forth to ride
O'er the bridge Bifrost, where is Heimdall's watch,
To the ash Igdrasil, and Ida's plain :
Thor came on foot ; the rest on horseback rode.
And they found Mimir sitting by his Fount
Of Wisdom, which beneath the ashtree springs ;
And saw the Nornies watering the roots
Of that world-shadowing tree with Honey-dew :
There came the Gods, and sate them down on stones :
And thus the Father of the Ages said : —

“ Ye Gods, the terms ye know, which Hermod
brought.
Accept them or reject them ; both have grounds.
Accept them, and they bind us, unfulfill'd,

To leave for ever Balder in the grave,
An unrecover'd prisoner, shade with shades.
But how, ye say, should the fulfilment fail?—
Smooth sound the terms, and light to be fulfill'd;
For dear-belov'd was Balder while he liv'd
In Heaven and Earth, and who would grudge him
tears?

But from the traitorous seed of Lok they come,
These terms, and I suspect some hidden fraud.
Bethink ye, Gods, is there no other way?—
Speak, were not this a way, the way for Gods?
If I, if Odin, clad in radiant arms,
Mounted on Sleipner, with the Warrior Thor
Drawn in his car beside me, and my sons,
All the strong brood of Heaven, to swell my train,
Should make irruption into Hela's realm,
And set the fields of gloom ablaze with light,
And bring in triumph Balder back to Heaven?"

He spake; and his fierce sons applauded loud.

But Frea, Mother of the Gods, arose,
Daughter and wife of Odin : thus she said : —

“Odin, thou Whirlwind, what a threat is this !
Thou threatenest what transcends thy might, even
thine.

For of all Powers the mightiest far art thou,
Lord over men on Earth, and Gods in Heaven ;
Yet even from thee thyself hath been withheld
One thing ; to undo what thou thyself hast rul'd.
For all which hath been fixt, was fixt by thee :
In the beginning, ere the Gods were born,
Before the Heavens were builded, thou didst slay
The Giant Ymir, whom the Abyss brought forth,
Thou and thy brethren fierce, the Sons of Bor,
And threw his trunk to choke the abysmal void :
But of his flesh and members thou didst build
The Earth and Ocean, and above them Heaven :
And from the flaming world, where Muspel reigns,
Thou sent'st and fetched'st fire, and madest lights,

Sun Moon and Stars, which thou hast hung in Heaven,
Dividing clear the paths of night and day :
And Asgard thou didst build, and Midgard Fort :
Then me thou mad'st ; of us the Gods were born :
Then, walking by the sea, thou foundest spars
Of wood, and framed'st men, who till the earth,
Or on the sea, the field of pirates, sail :
And all the race of Ymir thou didst drown,
Save one, Bergelmer ; he on shipboard fled
Thy deluge, and from him the Giants sprang ;
But all that brood thou hast remov'd far off,
And set by Ocean's utmost marge to dwell :
But Hela into Niflheim thou threw'st,
And gav'st her nine unlighted worlds to rule,
A Queen, and empire over all the dead.
That empire wilt thou now invade, light up
Her darkness, from her grasp a subject tear ?—
Try it ; but I, for one, will not applaud.
Nor do I merit, Odin, thou should'st slight
Me and my words, though thou be first in Heaven :

For I too am a Goddess, born of thee,
Thine eldest, and of me the Gods are sprung ;
And all that is to come I know, but lock
In my own breast, and have to none reveal'd.
Come then ; since Hela holds by right her prey,
But offers terms for his release to Heaven,
Accept the chance ; — thou canst no more obtain.
Send through the world thy messengers : entreat
All living and unliving things to weep
For Balder ; if thou haply thus may'st melt
Hela, and win the lov'd one back to Heaven."

She spake, and on her face let fall her veil,
And bow'd her head, and sate with folded hands.
Nor did the all-ruling Odin slight her word ;
Straightway he spake, and thus address'd the Gods :

"Go quickly forth through all the world, and pray
All living and unliving things to weep
Balder, if haply he may thus be won."

When the Gods heard, they straight arose, and
took
Their horses, and rode forth through all the world.
North south east west they struck, and roam'd the
world,
Entreating all things to weep Balder's death :
And all that liv'd, and all without life, wept.
And as in winter, when the frost breaks up,
At winter's end, before the spring begins,
And a warm west wind blows, and thaw sets in —
After an hour a dripping sound is heard
In all the forests, and the soft-strewn snow
Under the trees is dibbled thick with holes,
And from the boughs the snowloads shuffle down ;
And in fields sloping to the south dark plots
Of grass peep out amid surrounding snow,
And widen, and the peasant's heart is glad —
So through the world was heard a dripping noise
Of all things weeping to bring Balder back :
And there fell joy upon the Gods to hear.

But Hermod rode with Niord, whom he took
To shew him spits and beaches of the sea
Far off, where some unwarn'd might fail to weep —
Niord, the God of storms, whom fishers know :
Not born in Heaven ; he was in Vanheim rear'd,
With men, but lives a hostage with the Gods :
He knows each frith, and every rocky creek
Fring'd with dark pines, and sands where seafowl
scream : —

They two scour'd every coast, and all things wept.
And they rode home together, through the wood
Of Jarnvid, which to east of Midgard lies
Bordering the Giants, where the trees are iron ;
There in the wood before a cave they came
Where sate, in the cave's mouth, a skinny Hag,
Toothless and old ; she gibes the passers by :
Thok is she call'd ; but now Lok wore her shape :
She greeted them the first, and laugh'd, and said : —

“ Ye Gods, good lack, is it so dull in Heaven,

That ye come pleasuring to Thok's Iron Wood?
Lovers of change ye are, fastidious sprites.
Look, as in some boor's yard a sweet-breath'd cow
Whose manger is stuff'd full of good fresh hay
Snuffs at it daintily, and stoops her head
To chew the straw, her litter, at her feet —
So ye grow squeamish, Gods, and sniff at Heaven."

She spake ; but Hermod answer'd her and
said:—

"Thok, not for gibes we come, we come for tears.
Balder is dead, and Hela holds her prey,
But will restore, if all things give him tears.
Begrudge not thine ; to all was Balder dear."

But, with a louder laugh, the Hag replied :—
" Is Balder dead ? and do ye come for tears ?
Thok with dry eyes will weep o'er Balder's pyre.
Weep him all other things, if weep they will —
I weep him not : let Hela keep her prey ! "

She spake ; and to the cavern's depth she
fled,

Mocking : and Hermod knew their toil was vain.

And as seafaring men, who long have wrought

In the great deep for gain, at last come home,

And towards evening see the headlands rise

Of their own country, and can clear descry

A fire of wither'd furze which boys have lit

Upon the cliffs, or smoke of burning weeds

Out of a till'd field inland : — then the wind

Catches them, and drives out again to sea :

And they go long days tossing up and down

Over the grey sea ridges ; and the glimpse

Of port they had makes bitterer far their toil —

So the Gods' cross was bitterer for their joy.

Then, sad at heart, to Niord Hermod spake : —

“ It is the Accuser Lok, who flouts us all.

Ride back, and tell in Heaven this heavy news.

I must again below, to Hela's realm.”

He spoke ; and Niord set forth back to Heaven.
But northward Hermod rode, the way below ;
The way he knew : and travers'd Giall's stream,
And down to Ocean grop'd, and cross'd the ice,
And came beneath the wall, and found the grate
Still lifted ; well was his return foreknown.
And once more Hermod saw around him spread
The joyless plains, and heard the streams of Hell.
But as he enter'd, on the extremest bound
Of Niflheim, he saw one Ghost come near,
Hovering, and stopping oft, as if afraid ;
Hoder, the unhappy, whom his own hand slew :
And Hermod look'd, and knew his brother's ghost,
And call'd him by his name, and sternly said : —

“Hoder, ill-fated, blind in heart and eyes !
Why tarriest thou to plunge thee in the gulph
Of the deep inner gloom, but flittest here,
In twilight, on the lonely verge of Hell,
Far from the other ghosts, and Hela's throne ?

Doubtless thou fearest to meet Balder's voice,
Thy brother, whom through folly thou didst slay."

He spoke ; but Hoder answer'd him and said :—
“ Hermod the nimble, dost thou still pursue
The unhappy with reproach, even in the grave ?
For this I died, and fled beneath the gloom,
Not daily to endure abhorring Gods,
Nor with a hateful presence cumber Heaven —
And canst thou not, even here, pass pitying by ?
No less than Balder have I lost the light
Of Heaven, and communion with my kin :
I too had once a wife, and once a child,
And substance, and a golden house in Heaven :
But all I left of my own act, and fled
Below, and dost thou hate me even here ?
Balder upbraids me not, nor hates at all,
Though he has cause, have any cause ; but he,
When that with downcast looks I hither came,
Stretch'd forth his hand, and, with benignant voice,

*Welcome, he said, if there be welcome here,
Brother and fellow-sport of Lok with me*
And not to offend thee, Hermod, nor to force
My hated converse on thee, came I up
From the deep gloom, where I will now return ;
But earnestly I long'd to hover near,
Not too far off, when that thou camest by,
To feel the presence of a brother God,
And hear the passage of a horse of Heaven,
For the last time : for here thou com'st no more."

He spake, and turn'd to go to the inner gloom.
But Hermod stay'd him with mild words, and said :—

“Thou doest well to chide me, Hoder blind.
Truly thou say'st, the planning guilty mind
Was Lok's ; the unwitting hand alone was thine.
But Gods are like the sons of men in this —
When they have woe, they blame the nearest cause.
Howbeit stay, and be appeas'd ; and tell —

Sits Balder still in pomp by Hela's side,
Or is he mingled with the unnumber'd dead ? ”

And the blind Hoder answer'd him and
spake : —

“ His place of state remains by Hela's side,
But empty : for his wife, for Nanna came
Lately below, and join'd him ; and the Pair
Frequent the still recesses of the realm
Of Hela, and hold converse undisturb'd.
But they too doubtless, will have breath'd the balm
Which floats before a visitant from Heaven,
And have drawn upwards to this verge of Hell.”

He spake ; and, as he ceas'd, a puff of wind
Roll'd heavily the leaden mist aside
Round where they stood, and they beheld Two Forms
Make towards them o'er the stretching cloudy plain.
And Hermod straight perceiv'd them, who they were,
Balder and Nanna ; and to Balder said : —

“Balder, too truly thou foresaw’st a snare.
 Lok triumphs still, and Hela keeps her prey.
 No more to Asgard shalt thou come, nor lodge
 In thy own house, Breidablik, nor enjoy
 The love all bear towards thee, nor train up
 Forset, thy son, to be belov’d like thee.
 Here must thou lie, and wait an endless age.
 Therefore for the last time, O Balder, hail !”

He spake; and Balder answer’d him and said :—
 “Hail and farewell, for here thou com’st no more.
 Yet mourn not for me, Hermod, when thou sitt’st
 In Heaven, nor let the other Gods lament,
 As wholly to be pitied, quite forlorn :
 For Nanna hath rejoin’d me, who, of old,
 In Heaven, was seldom parted from my side ;
 And still the acceptance follows me, which crown’d
 My former life, and cheers me even here.
 The iron frown of Hela is relax’d
 When I draw nigh, and the wan tribes of dead

Trust me, and gladly bring for my award
Their ineffectual feuds and feeble hates,
Shadows of hates, but they distress them still.”

And the fleet-footed Hermod made reply :—
“Thou hast then all the solace death allows,
Esteem and function : and so far is well.
Yet here thou liest, Balder, underground,
Rusting for ever : and the years roll on,
The generations pass, the ages grow,
And bring us nearer to the final day
When from the south shall march the Fiery Band
And cross the Bridge of Heaven, with Lok for
guide,
And Fenris at his heel with broken chain :
While from the east the Giant Rymer steers
His ship, and the great Serpent makes to land ;
And all are marshall'd in one flaming square
Against the Gods, upon the plains of Heaven.
I mourn thee, that thou canst not help us then.”

He spake ; but Balder answer'd him and said :—
“ Mourn not for me : Mourn, Hermod, for the Gods :
Mourn for the men on Earth, the Gods in Heaven,
Who live, and with their eyes shall see that day.
The day will come, when Asgard's towers shall fall,
And Odin, and his Sons, the seed of Heaven :
But what were I, to save them in that hour ?
If strength could save them, could not Odin save,
My Father, and his pride, the Warrior Thor,
Vidar the Silent, the Impetuous Tyr ?
I, what were I, when these can nought avail ?
Yet, doubtless, when the day of battle comes,
And the two Hosts are marshall'd, and in Heaven
The golden-crested Cock shall sound alarm,
And his black Brother-Bird from hence reply,
And bucklers clash, and spears begin to pour —
Longing will stir within my breast, though vain.
But not to me so grievous, as, I know,
To other Gods it were, is my enforc'd
Absence from fields where I could nothing aid :

For I am long since weary of your storm
Of carnage, and find, Hermod, in your life
Something too much of war and broils, which make
Life one perpetual fight, a bath of blood.
Mine eyes are dizzy with the arrowy hail ;
Mine ears are stunn'd with blows, and sick for calm.
Inactive therefore let me lie, in gloom,
Unarm'd, inglorious : I attend the course
Of ages, and my late return to light,
In times less alien to a spirit mild,
In new-recover'd seats, the happier day."

He spake ; and the fleet Hermod thus replied : —
"Brother, what seats are these, what happier day?
Tell me, that I may ponder it when gone."

And the ray-crowned Balder answer'd him : —
"Far to the south, beyond The Blue, there spreads
Another Heaven, The Boundless : no one yet
Hath reach'd it : there hereafter shall arise

The second Asgard, with another name.
Thither, when o'er this present Earth and Heavens
The tempest of the latter days hath swept,
And they from sight have disappear'd, and sunk,
Shall a small remnant of the Gods repair :
Hoder and I shall join them from the grave.
There reassembling we shall see emerge
From the bright Ocean at our feet an Earth
More fresh, more verdant than the last, with fruits
Self-springing, and a seed of man preserv'd,
Who then shall live in peace, as now in war.
But we in Heaven shall find again with joy
The ruin'd palaces of Odin, seats
Familiar, halls where we have supp'd of old ;
Reenter them with wonder, never fill
Our eyes with gazing, and rebuild with tears.
And we shall tread once more the well-known plain
Of Ida, and among the grass shall find
The golden dice with which we play'd of yore ;
And that will bring to mind the former life

And pastime of the Gods, the wise discourse
Of Odin, the delights of other days.
O Hermod, pray that thou mayst join us then !
Such for the future is my hope : meanwhile,
I rest the thrall of Hela, and endure
Death, and the gloom which round me even now
Thickens, and to its inner gulph recalls.
Farewell, for longer speech is not allow'd."

He spoke, and wav'd farewell, and gave his hand
To Nanna ; and she gave their brother blind
Her hand, in turn, for guidance ; and The Three
Departed o'er the cloudy plain, and soon
Faded from sight into the interior gloom.
But Hermod stood beside his drooping horse,
Mute, gazing after them in tears : and fain,
Fain had he follow'd their receding steps,
Though they to Death were bound, and he to Heaven,
Then ; but a Power he could not break withheld.
And as a stork which idle boys have trapp'd,

And tied him in a yard, at autumn sees
Flocks of his kind pass flying o'er his head
To warmer lands, and coasts that keep the sun ;
He strains to join their flight, and, from his shed,
Follows them with a long complaining cry —
So Hermod gaz'd, and yearn'd to join his kin.

At last he sigh'd, and set forth back to Heaven.

THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA.



THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA.



HUSSEIN.

O most just Vizier, send away
The cloth-merchants, and let them be,
Them and their dues, this day: the King
Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

THE VIZIER.

O merchants, tarry yet a day
Here in Bokhara: but at noon
To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay
Each fortieth web of cloth to me,
As the law is, and go your way.

O Hussein, lead me to the King.
Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,



Ferdousi's, and the others', lead.
How is it with my lord ?

HUSSEIN.

Alone,
Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,
O Vizier, without lying down,
In the great window of the gate,
Looking into the Registràn ;
Where through the sellers' booths the slaves
Are this way bringing the dead man.
O Vizier, here is the King's door.

THE KING.

O Vizier, I may bury him ?

THE VIZIER.

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick
These many days, and heard no thing,

(For Allah shut my ears and mind)
Not even what thou dost, O King.
Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,
Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste
To speak in order what hath chanc'd.

THE KING.

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st.

HUSSEIN.

Three days since, at the time of prayer,
A certain Moollah, with his robe
All rent, and dust upon his hair,
Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd
The golden mace-bearers aside,
And fell at the King's feet, and cried ;

“Justice, O King, and on myself!
On this great sinner, who hath broke

The law, and by the law must die!
Vengeance, O King!"

But the King spoke :

"What fool is this, that hurts our ears
With folly? or what drunken slave?
My guards, what, prick him with your spears!
Prick me the fellow from the path!"
As the King said, so was it done,
And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King
Went forth again, the holy book
Carried before him, as is right,
And through the square his path he took ;

My man comes running, fleck'd with blood
From yesterday, and falling down
Cries out most earnestly ; " O King,
My lord, O King, do right, I pray !

“ How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern
If I speak folly? but a king,
Whether a thing be great or small,
Like Allah, hears and judges all.

“ Wherefore hear thou! Thou know'st, how fierce
In these last days the sun hath burn'd :
That the green water in the tanks
Is to a putrid puddle turn'd :
And the canal, that from the stream
Of Samarcand is brought this way,
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

“ Now I at nightfall had gone forth
Alone, and in a darksome place
Under some mulberry trees I found
A little pool ; and in brief space
With all the water that was there
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home
Unseen : and having drink to spare,

I hid the can behind the door,
And went up on the roof to sleep.

“But in the night, which was with wind
And burning dust, again I creep
Down, having fever, for a drink.

“Now meanwhile had my brethren found
The water-pitcher, where it stood
Behind the door upon the ground,
And call'd my mother: and they all,
As they were thirsty, and the night
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there ;
That they sate with it, in my sight,
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

“Now mark ! I, being fever'd, sick,
(Most unblest also) at that sight
Brake forth, and curs'd them — dost thou hear ? —
One was my mother — Now, do right !”

But my lord mus'd a space, and said
"Send him away, Sirs, and make on.
It is some madman," the King said :
As the King said, so was it done.

The morrow at the self-same hour
In the King's path, behold, the man,
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd : he stood
Right opposite, and thus began,
Frowning grim down :—"Thou wicked King,
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give ear !
What, must I howl in the next world,
Because thou wilt not listen here ?

"What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,
And all grace shall to me be grudg'd ?
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path
I will not stir till I be judg'd."

Then they who stood about the King
Drew close together and conferr'd :

Till that the King stood forth and said,
“ Before the priests thou shalt be heard.”

But when the Ulemas were met
And the thing heard, they doubted not ;
But sentenc'd him, as the law is,
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charg'd us secretly :
“ Ston'd must he be, the law stands so :
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way :
Forbid him not, but let him go.”

So saying, the King took a stone,
And cast it softly : but the man,
With a great joy upon his face,
Kneel'd down, and cried not, neither ran.

So they, whose lot it was, cast stones ;
That they flew thick and bruis'd him sore :

But he prais'd Allah with loud voice,
And remain'd kneeling as before.

My lord had cover'd up his face :
But when one told him, "He is dead,"
Turning him quickly to go in,
"Bring thou to me his corpse," he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,
I hear the bearers on the stair.
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in ?
— Ho ! enter ye who tarry there !

THE VIZIER.

O King, in this I praise thee not.
Now must I call thy grief not wise.
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,
To find such favour in thine eyes ?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,
Still, thou art king, and the Law stands.

It were not meet the balance swerv'd,
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,
Why for no cause make sad thy face?
Lo, I am old : three kings, ere thee,
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,
Could bear the burden of his years,
If he for strangers pain'd his heart
Not less than those who merit tears?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child ;
And grievous is the grief for these :
This pain alone, which *must* be borne,
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own
One man is not well made to bear.

Besides, to each are his own friends,
To mourn with him, and shew him care.

Look, this is but one single place,
Though it be great: all the earth round,
If a man bear to have it so,
Things which might vex him shall be found.

Upon the Russian frontier, where
The watchers of two armies stand
Near one another, many a man,
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave:
They snatch also, towards Mervè,
The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,
And up from thence to Orgunjè.

And these all, labouring for a lord,
Eat not the fruit of their own hands:

Which is the heaviest of all plagues,
To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse!)
Vex one another, night and day:
There are the lepers, and all sick:
There are the poor, who faint away.

All these have sorrow, and keep still,
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.
Wilt thou have pity on all these?
No, nor on this dead dog, O King!

THE KING.

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.
Clear in these things I cannot see.
My head is burning; and a heat
Is in my skin which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men!
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,

Unto a rule more strong than theirs
Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes
Gazing up hither, the poor man,
Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,
Below there, in the Registàn,

Says, " Happy he, who lodges there !
With silken raiment, store of rice,
And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,
Grape syrup, squares of colour'd ice,

" With cherries serv'd in drifts of snow."
In vain hath a king power to build
Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques ;
And to make orchard closes, fill'd

With curious fruit trees, bought from far ;
With cisterns for the winter rain ;

And in the desert, spacious inns
In divers places ; — if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,
If his will be not satisfied :
And that it be not, from all time
The Law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man !
Thou wert athirst ; and didst not see,
That, though we snatch what we desire,
We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,
And rooms of treasures, not a few.
But I am sick, nor heed I these :
And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honour which I have,
When I am dead, will soon grow still.

So have I neither joy, nor fame.
But what I can do, that I will.

I have a fretted brick-work tomb
Upon a hill on the right hand,
Hard by a close of apricots,
Upon the road of Samarcand :

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear
This man my pity could not save ;
And, plucking up the marble flags,
There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.
Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb.
Then say ; “ He was not wholly vile,
Because a king shall bury him.”

THE HARP-PLAYER ON ETNA.

THE HARP-PLAYER ON ETNA.



I.

THE LAST GLEN.



THE track winds down to the clear stream,
To cross the sparkling shallows: there
The cattle love to gather, on their way
To the high mountain pastures, and to stay,
Till the rough cow-herds drive them past,
Knee-deep in the cool ford: for 'tis the last
Of all the woody, high, well-water'd dells
On Etna; and the beam
Of noon is broken there by chesnut boughs
Down its steep verdant sides: the air
Is freshen'd by the leaping stream, which throws

Eternal showers of spray on the moss'd roots
Of trees, and veins of turf, and long dark shoots
Of ivy-plants, and fragrant hanging bells
Of hyacinths, and on late anemones,
That muffle its wet banks : but glade,
And stream, and sward, and chesnut trees,
End here : Etna beyond, in the broad glare
Of the hot noon, without a shade,
Slope behind slope, up to the peak, lies bare ;
 The peak, round which the white clouds play.

 In such a glen, on such a day,
On Pelion, on the grassy ground,
Chiron, the aged Centaur, lay ;
The young Achilles standing by.
The Centaur taught him to explore
The mountains : where the glens are dry,
And the tir'd Centaurs come to rest,
And where the soaking springs abound,
And the straight ashes grow for spears,

And where the hill-goats come to feed,
And the sea-eagles build their nest.
He show'd him Phthia far away,
And said — *O Boy, I taught this lore
To Peleus, in long-distant years.* —
He told him of the Gods, the stars,
The tides: — and then of mortal wars,
And of the life that Heroes lead
Before they reach the Elysian place
And rest in the immortal mead:
 And all the wisdom of his race.

II.

TYPHO.
—

The lyre's voice is lovely everywhere.
In the court of Gods, in the city of men,
And in the lonely rock-strewn mountain glen,
In the still mountain air.

Only to Typho it sounds hatefully,
Only to Typho, the rebel o'erthrown,
Through whose heart Etna drives her roots of stone,
To imbed them in the sea.

Wherefore dost thou groan so loud?
Wherefore do thy nostrils flash,
Through the dark night, suddenly,
Typho, such red jets of flame?
Is thy tortur'd heart still proud?
Is thy fire-scath'd arm still rash?
Still alert thy stone-crush'd frame?

Does thy fierce soul still deplore
Thy ancient rout in the Cilician hills,
And that curst treachery on the Mount of Gore?
Do thy bloodshot eyes still see
The fight that crown'd thy ills,
Thy last defeat in this Sicilian sea?
Hast thou sworn, in thy sad lair,
Where erst the strong sea-currents suck'd thee
down
Never to cease to writhe, and try to sleep,
Letting the sea-stream wander through thy hair?
That thy groans, like thunder deep,
Begin to roll, and almost drown
The sweet notes, whose lulling spell
Gods and the race of mortals love so well,
When through thy caves thou hearest music
swell?

But an awful pleasure bland
Spreading o'er the Thunderer's face,

When the sound climbs near his seat,
The Olympian Council sees ;
As he lets his lax right hand,
Which the lightnings doth embrace,
Sink upon his mighty knees.

And the Eagle, at the beck
Of the appeasing gracious harmony,
Droops all his sheeny, brown, deep-feather'd neck,
Nestling nearer to Jove's feet ;
While o'er his sovereign eye
The curtains of the blue films slowly meet.

And the white Olympus peaks
Rosily brighten, and the sooth'd Gods smile
At one another from their golden chairs ;
And no one round the charmed circle speaks.

Only the lov'd Hebe bears
The cup about, whose draughts beguile
Pain and care, with a dark store
Of fresh-pull'd violets wreath'd and nodding o'er ;
And her flush'd feet glow on the marble floor.

III.

MARSYAS.

As the sky-brightening South-wind clears the
day,
And makes the mass'd clouds roll,
The music of the lyre blows away
The clouds that wrap the soul.

Oh that Fate had let me see
That triumph of the sweet persuasive lyre,
That famous, final victory,
When jealous Pan with Marsyas did conspire ;

When, from far Parnassus' side,
Young Apollo, all the pride
Of the Phrygian flutes to tame,
To the Phrygian highlands came :

Where the long green reed-beds sway
In the rippled waters grey
Of that solitary lake
Where Mæander's springs are born :
Whence the ridg'd pine-muffled roots
Of Messogis westward break.

Mounting westward, high and higher :

 There was held the famous strife ;
There the Phrygian brought his flutes,
And Apollo brought his lyre,
And, when now the westering sun
Touch'd the hills, the strife was done,
And the attentive Muses said,
Marsyas ! thou art vanquished.

 Then Apollo's minister
Hang'd upon a branching fir
Marsyas, that unhappy faun,
And began to whet his knife.
But the Mænads, who were there,
Left their friend, and with robes flowing

In the wind, and loose dark hair
O'er their polish'd bosoms blowing,
Each her ribbon'd tambourine
Flinging on the mountain sod,
With a lovely frighten'd mien
Came about the youthful God.
But he turn'd his beauteous face
Haughtily another way,
From the grassy sun-warm'd place,
Where in proud repose he lay,
With one arm over his head,
Watching how the whetting sped.

But aloof, on the lake strand,
Did the young Olympus stand,
Weeping at his master's end ;
For the Faun had been his friend.

For he taught him how to sing,
And he taught him flute-playing.
Many a morning had they gone

To the glimmering mountain lakes,
And had torn up by the roots
The tall crested water reeds
With long plumes and soft brown seeds,
And had carv'd them into flutes,
Sitting on a tabled stone
Where the shoreward ripple breaks.

And he taught him how to please
The red-snooded Phrygian girls,
Whom the summer evening sees
Flashing in the dance's whirls
Underneath the starlit trees
In the mountain villages.

Therefore now Olympus stands,
At his master's piteous cries,
Pressing fast with both his hands
His white garment to his eyes,
Not to see Apollo's scorn.

Ah, poor Faun, poor Faun ah, poor
Faun!

IV.

APOLLO.

Through the black, rushing smoke-bursts,
Quick breaks the red flame ;
All Etna heaves fiercely
Her forest-cloth'd frame :

Not here, O Apollo !
Are haunts meet for thee.
But, where Helicon breaks down
In cliff to the sea,

Where the moon-silver'd inlets
Send far their light voice
Up the still vale of Thisbe,
O speed, and rejoice !

On the sward, at the cliff-top,
Lie strewn the white flocks ;

On the cliff-side the pigeons
Roost deep in the rocks.

In the moonlight the shepherds,
Soft-lull'd by the rills,
Lie wrapt in their blankets,
Asleep on the hills.

—*What Forms are these coming*
So white through the gloom?
What garments out-glistening
The gold-flower'd broom?

What sweet-breathing Presence
Out-perfumes the thyme?
What voices enrapture
The night's balmy prime?—

'Tis Apollo comes leading
His choir, The Nine.

— *The Leader is fairest,*
But all are divine.

They are lost in the hollows.
They stream up again.
What seeks on this mountain
The glorified train? —

They bathe on this mountain,
In the spring by their road.
Then on to Olympus,
Their endless abode.

— *Whose praise do they mention?*
Of what is it told? —
What will be for ever.
What was from of old.

First hymn they the Father
Of all things : and then

The rest of Immortals,
The action of men.

The Day in its hotness,
The strife with the palm ;
The Night in its silence,
The Stars in their calm.

FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE."

FRAGMENT OF AN "ANTIGONE."



THE CHORUS.

WELL hath he done who hath seiz'd happiness.
For little do the all-containing Hours,
 Though opulent, freely give.
 Who, weighing that life well
 Fortune presents unpray'd,
Declines her ministry, and carves his own :
 And, justice not infring'd,
Makes his own welfare his unswerv'd-from law.

He does well too, who keeps that clue the mild
Birth-Goddess and the austere Fates first gave.

 For from the day when these
Bring him, a weeping child,

First to the light, and mark
A country for him, kinsfolk, and a home,
Unguided he remains,
Till the Fates come again, alone, with death.

In little companies,
And, our own place once left,
Ignorant where to stand, or whom to avoid,
By city and household group'd, we live : and many
shocks
Our order heaven-ordain'd
Must every day endure.
Voyages, exiles, hates, dissensions, wars.
Besides what waste He makes,
The all-hated, order-breaking,
Without friend, city, or home,
Death, who dissevers all.

Him then I praise, who dares
To self-selected good

Prefer obedience to the primal law,
Which consecrates the ties of blood : for these, indeed,
Are to the Gods a care :
That touches but himself.
For every day man may be link'd and loos'd
With strangers : but the bond
Original, deep-inwound,
Of blood, can he not bind :
Nor, if Fate binds, not bear.

But hush ! Hæmon, whom Antigone,
Robbing herself of life in burying,
Against Creon's law, Polynices,
Robs of a lov'd bride ; pale, imploring,
Waiting her passage,
Forth from the palace hitherward comes.

HÆMON.

No, no, old men, Creon I curse not.

I weep, Thebans,

One than Creon crueller far.
For he, he, at least, by slaying her,
August laws doth mightily vindicate :
But thou, too-bold, headstrong, pitiless,
Ah me!—honourest more than thy lover,
 O Antigone,
A dead, ignorant, thankless corpse.

THE CHORUS.

Nor was the love untrue
Which the Dawn-Goddess bore
To that fair youth she erst
Leaving the salt sea-beds
And coming flush'd over the stormy frith
Of loud Euripus, saw :
Saw and snatch'd, wild with love,
From the pine-dotted spurs
Of Parnes, where thy waves,
Asopus, gleam rock-hemm'd ;
The Hunter of the Tanagræan Field.

But him, in his sweet prime,
By severance immature,
By Artemis' soft shafts,
She, though a Goddess born,
Saw in the rocky isle of Delos die.
Such end o'ertook that love.
For she desir'd to make
Immortal mortal man,
And blend his happy life,
Far from the Gods, with hers :
To him postponing an eternal law.

HÆMON.

But, like me, she, wroth, complaining,
Succumb'd to the envy of unkind Gods :
And, her beautiful arms unclasping,
Her fair Youth unwillingly gave.

THE CHORUS.

Nor, though enthron'd too high
To fear assault of envious Gods,

His belov'd Argive Seer would Zeus retain
From his appointed end
In this our Thebes : but when

His flying steeds came near
To cross the steep Ismenian glen,
The broad Earth open'd and whelm'd them and him.
And through the void air sang
At large his enemy's spear.

And fain would Zeus have sav'd his tired son
Beholding him where the Two Pillars stand
O'er the sun-redden'd Western Straits :
Or at his work in that dim lower world.

Fain would he have recall'd
The fraudulent oath which bound
To a much feebler wight the heroic man :

But he preferr'd Fate to his strong desire.
Nor did there need less than the burning pile

Under the towering Trachis crags,
And the Spercheius' vale, shaken with groans,
And the rous'd Maliac gulph,
And scar'd Cætæan snows,
To achieve his son's deliverance, O my child.

POEMS.



MEMORIAL VERSES.

APRIL, 1850.



GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come.
The last poetic voice is dumb.
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little: but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.

With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of Passion with Eternal Law ;
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which serv'd for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said —
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the Iron Age
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear —
And struck his finger on the place
And said — *Thou ailest here, and here.* —
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power ;
His eye plung'd down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life ;
He said — *The end is everywhere :*
Art still has truth, take refuge there.

And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth! — Ah, pale Ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us — and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen — on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears.

He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth ;
Smiles broke from us and we had ease.
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again :
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd: for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely-furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

 Ah, since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force :
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel :

Others will strengthen us to bear —
But who, ah who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly —
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha! with thy living wave.
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

REVOLUTIONS.

BEFORE Man parted for this earthly strand,
While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,
God put a heap of letters in his hand,
And bade him make with them what word he could.

And Man has turn'd them many times : made
Greece,
Rome, England, France :—yes, nor in vain essay'd
Way after way, changes that never cease.
The letters have combin'd : something was made.

But ah, an inextinguishable sense
Haunts him that he has not made what he should.
That he has still, though old, to recommence,
Since he has not yet found the word God would.

And Empire after Empire, at their height
Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on.
Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,
And droop'd, and slowly died upon their throne.

One day, thou say'st, there will at last appear
The word, the order, which God meant should be. —
Ah, we shall know *that* well when it comes near :
The band will quit Man's heart :—he will breathe free.

THE WORLD AND THE QUIETIST.

TO CRITIAS.



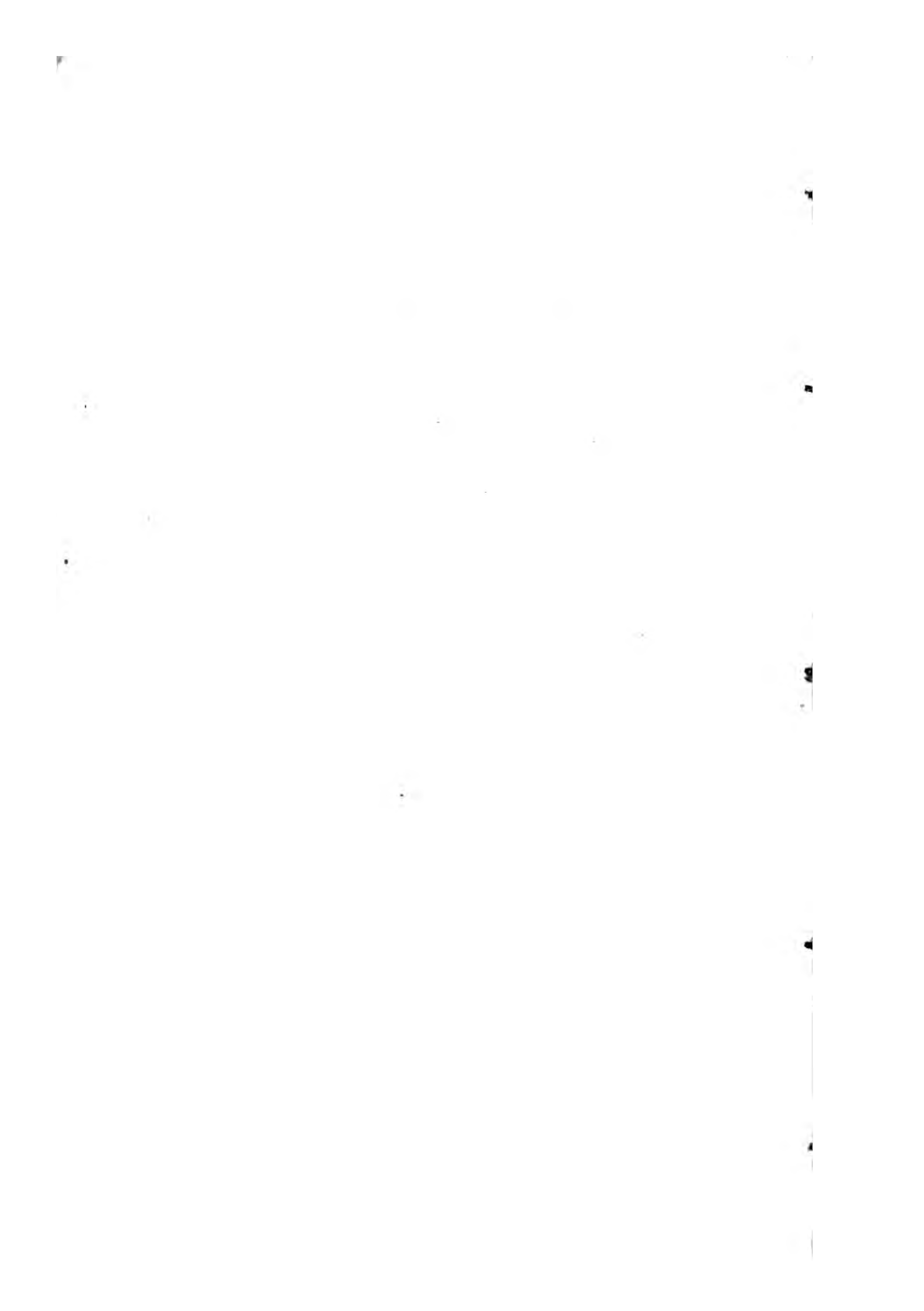
*WHY, when the World's great mind
 Hath finally inclin'd,
 Why, you say, Critias, be debating still?
 Why, with these mournful rhymes
 Learn'd in more languid climes,
 Blame our activity,
 Who, with such passionate will,
 Are, what we mean to be?*

Critias, long since, I know,
 (For Fate decreed it so)
 Long since the World hath set its heart to live.
 Long since with credulous zeal
 It turns Life's mighty wheel.
 Still doth for labourers send,

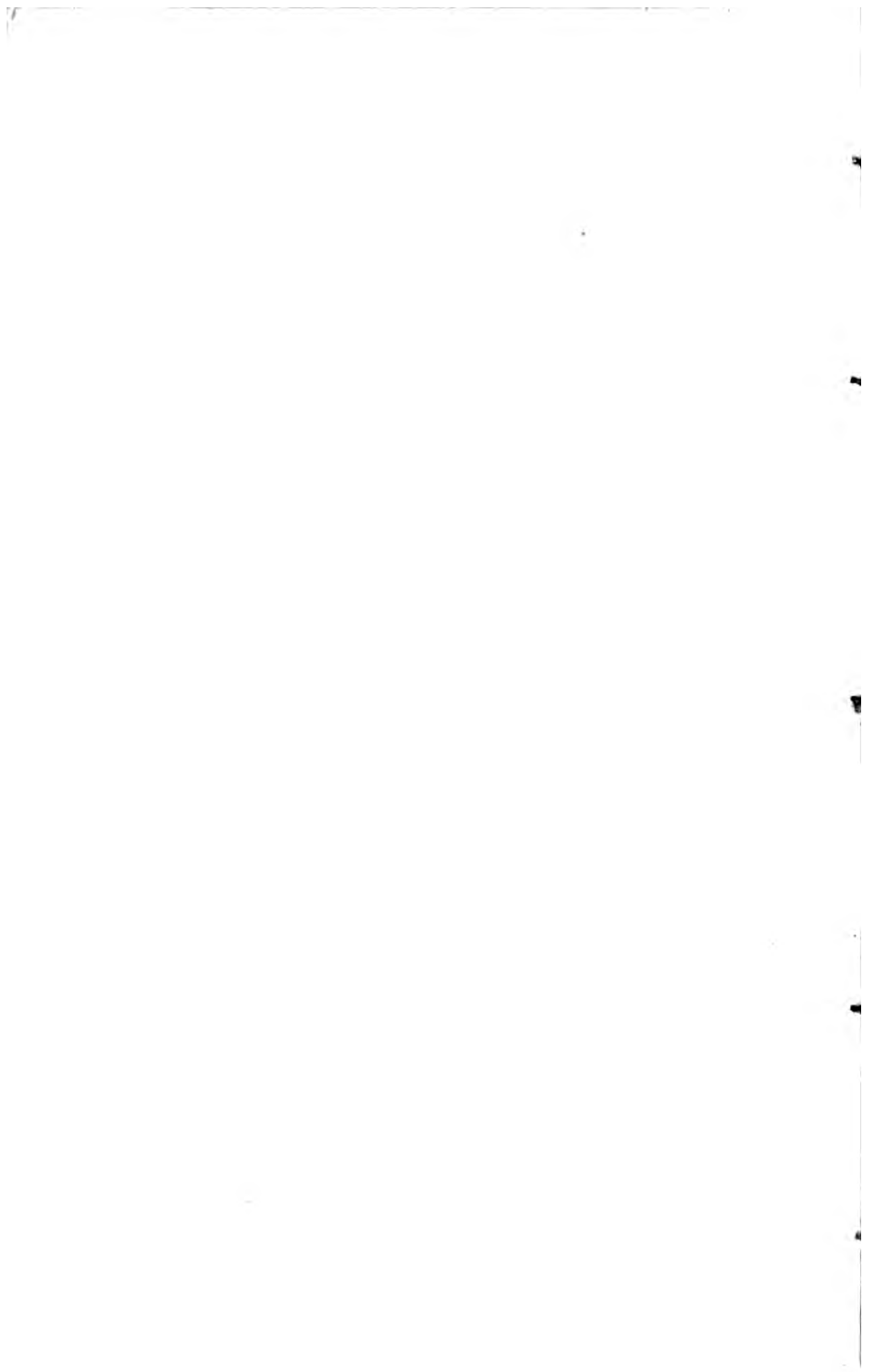
Who still their labour give ;
And still expects an end.

Yet, as the wheel flies round,
With no ungrateful sound
Do adverse voices fall on the World's ear.
Deafen'd by his own stir
The rugged Labourer
Caught not till then a sense
So glowing and so near
Of his omnipotence.

So, when the feast grew loud
In Susa's palace proud,
A white-rob'd slave stole to the Monarch's side.
He spoke : the Monarch heard :
Felt the slow-rolling word
Swell his attentive soul.
Breath'd deeply as it died,
And drain'd his mighty bowl.



FADED LEAVES.



FADED LEAVES.



I.

THE RIVER.



STILL glides the stream, slow drops the boat
Under the rustling poplars' shade ;
Silent the swans beside us float :
None speaks, none heeds — ah, turn thy head.

Let those arch eyes now softly shine,
That mocking mouth grow sweetly bland :
Ah, let them rest, those eyes, on mine ;
On mine let rest that lovely hand.

My pent-up tears oppress my brain,
My heart is swoln with love unsaid :
Ah, let me weep, and tell my pain,
And on thy shoulder rest my head.

Before I die, before the soul,
Which now is mine, must re-attain
Immunity from my controul,
And wander round the world again :

Before this teas'd o'erlabour'd heart
For ever leaves its vain employ,
Dead to its deep habitual smart,
And dead to hopes of future joy.

II.

TOO LATE.

EACH on his own strict line we move,
And some find death ere they find love.
So far apart their lives are thrown
From the twin soul that halves their own.

And sometimes, by still harder fate,
The lovers meet, but meet too late.
—Thy heart is mine! — *True, true! ah true!*
—Then, love, thy hand! — *Ah no! adieu!*

III.

SEPARATION.

STOP — Not to me, at this bitter departing,
Speak of the sure consolations of Time.
Fresh be the wound, still-renew'd be its smarting,
So but thy image endure in its prime.

But, if the stedfast commandment of Nature
Wills that remembrance should always decay ;
If the lov'd form and the deep-cherish'd feature
Must, when unseen, from the soul fade away —

Me let no half-effac'd memories cumber !
Fled, fled at once, be all vestige of thee —
Deep be the darkness, and still be the slumber —
Dead be the Past and its phantoms to me !

Then, when we meet, and thy look strays towards me,
Scanning my face and the changes wrought there,—
Who, let me say, is this Stranger regards me,
With the grey eyes, and the lovely brown hair ?

IV.

ON THE RHINE.

VAIN is the effort to forget.
Some day I shall be cold, I know,
As is the eternal moon-lit snow
Of the high Alps, to which I go :
But ah, not yet ! not yet !

Vain is the agony of grief.
'Tis true, indeed, an iron knot
Ties straitly up from mine thy lot,
And were it snapt — thou lov'st me not !
But is despair relief ?

Awhile let me with thought have done ;
And as this brimm'd unwrinkled Rhine

And that far purple mountain line
Lie sweetly in the look divine
Of the slow-sinking sun ;

So let me lie, and calm as they
Let beam upon my inward view
Those eyes of deep, soft, lucent hue —
Eyes too expressive to be blue,
Too lovely to be grey.

Ah Quiet, all things feel thy balm !
Those blue hills too, this river's flow,
Were restless once, but long ago.
Tam'd is their turbulent youthful glow :
Their joy is in their calm.

V.

LONGING.

COME to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again.
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,
A messenger from radiant climes,
And smile on thy new world, and be
As kind to others as to me.

Or, as thou never cam'st in sooth,
Come now, and let me dream it truth.
And part my hair, and kiss my brow,
And say — *My love ! why sufferest thou ?*

Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again.
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of the day.

SELF-DECEPTION.



SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory
Of possessing powers not our share? —
Since man woke on earth, he knows his story,
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasuries of God:
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit;
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager Being
Strain'd, and long'd, and grasp'd each gift it saw.
Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing
Stav'd us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through heaven
guided
Man's blank spirit, since it was not we?
Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who decided
What our gifts, and what our wants should be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining
Shreds of gifts which he refus'd in full.
Still these waste us with their hopeless straining —
Still the attempt to use them proves them null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,
Fail'd to place our master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers.
Ends we seek we never shall attain.
Ah, *some* power exists there, which is ours?
Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

EXCUSE.



I too have suffer'd : yet I know
She is not cold, though she seems so :
She is not cold, she is not light ;
But our ignoble souls lack might.

She smiles and smiles, and will not sigh,
While we for hopeless passion die ;
Yet she could love, those eyes declare,
Were but men nobler than they are.

Eagerly once her gracious ken
Was turn'd upon the sons of men.
But light the serious visage grew —
She look'd, and smiled, and saw them through.

Our petty souls, our strutting wits,
Our labour'd puny passion-fits —
Ah, may she scorn them still, till we
Scorn them as bitterly as she !

Yet oh, that Fate would let her see
One of some worthier race than we ;
One for whose sake she once might prove
How deeply she who scorns can love.

His eyes be like the starry lights —
His voice like sounds of summer nights —
In all his lovely mien let pierce
The magic of the universe.

And she to him will reach her hand,
And gazing in his eyes will stand,
And know her friend, and weep for glee,
And cry — *Long, long I've look'd for thee.*—

Then will she weep — with smiles, till then,
Coldly she mocks the sons of men.
Till then her lovely eyes maintain
Their gay, unwavering, deep disdain.

INDIFFERENCE.



I MUST not say that thou wert true,
Yet let me say that thou wert fair.
And they that lovely face who view,
They will not ask if truth be there.

Truth — what is truth? Two bleeding hearts
Wounded by men, by Fortune tried,
Outwearied with their lonely parts,
Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear ;
Their lot was but to weep and moan.
Ah, let them keep their faith sincere,
For neither could subsist alone !

But souls whom some benignant breath
Has charm'd at birth from gloom and care,
These ask no love — these plight no faith,
For they are happy as they are.

The world to them may homage make,
And garlands for their forehead weave.
And what the world can give, they take:
But they bring more than they receive.

They smile upon the world : their ears
To one demand alone are coy.
They will not give us love and tears —
They bring us light, and warmth, and joy.

It was not love that heav'd thy breast,
Fair child ! it was the bliss within.
Adieu ! and say that one, at least,
Was just to what he did not win.

RESIGNATION.

TO FAUSTA.



To die be given us, or attain !
Fierce work it were, to do again.
So pilgrims, bound for Mecca, pray'd
At burning noon : so warriors said,
Scarf'd with the cross, who watch'd the miles
Of dust that wreath'd their struggling files
Down Lydian mountains : so, when snows
Round Alpine summits eddying rose,
The Goth, bound Rome-wards : so the Hun,
Crouch'd on his saddle, when the sun
Went lurid down o'er flooded plains
Through which the groaning Danube strains

To the drear Euxine: so pray all,
Whom labours, self-ordain'd, enthrall ;
Because they to themselves propose
On this side the all-common close
A goal which, gain'd, may give repose.
So pray they : and to stand again
Where they stood once, to them were pain ;
Pain to thread back and to renew
Past straits, and currents long steer'd through.

But milder natures, and more free ;
Whom an unblam'd serenity
Hath freed from passions, and the state
Of struggle these necessitate ;
Whom schooling of the stubborn mind
Hath made, or birth hath found, resign'd ;
These mourn not, that their goings pay
Obedience to the passing day :
These claim not every laughing Hour
For handmaid to their striding power ;

Each in her turn, with torch uprear'd,
To await their march ; and when appear'd,
Through the cold gloom, with measur'd race,
To usher for a destin'd space,
(Her own sweet errands all foregone)
The too imperious Traveller on.
These, Fausta, ask not this : nor thou,
Time's chafing prisoner, ask it now.

We left, just ten years since, you say,
That wayside inn we left to-day :
Our jovial host, as forth we fare,
Shouts greeting from his easy chair ;
High on a bank our leader stands,
Reviews and ranks his motley bands ;
Makes clear our goal to every eye,
The valley's western boundary.
A gate swings to : our tide hath flow'd
Already from the silent road.

The valley pastures, one by one,
Are threaded, quiet in the sun :
And now beyond the rude stone bridge
Slopes gracious up the western ridge.
Its woody border, and the last
Of its dark upland farms is past ;
Cool farms, with open-lying stores,
Under their burnish'd sycamores :
All past : and through the trees we glide
Emerging on the green hill-side.
There climbing hangs, a far-seen sign,
Our wavering, many-colour'd line ;
There winds, upstreaming slowly still
Over the summit of the hill.
And now, in front, behold outspread
Those upper regions we must tread ;
Mild hollows, and clear heathy swells,
The cheerful silence of the fells.
Some two hours' march, with serious air,
Through the deep noontide heats we fare :

The red-grouse, springing at our sound,
Skims, now and then, the shining ground ;
No life, save his and ours, intrudes
Upon these breathless solitudes.
O joy ! again the farms appear ;
Cool shade is there, and rustic cheer :
There springs the brook will guide us down,
Bright comrade, to the noisy town.
Lingering, we follow down : we gain
The town, the highway, and the plain,
And many a mile of dusty way,
Parch'd and road-worn, we made that day ;
But, Fausta, I remember well
That, as the balmy darkness fell,
We bath'd our hands, with speechless glee,
That night, in the wide-glimmering Sea.

Once more we tread this self-same road,
Fausta, which ten years since we trod :

Alone we tread it, you and I ;
Ghosts of that boisterous company.
Here, where the brook shines, near its head,
In its clear, shallow, turf-fring'd bed ;
Here, whence the eye first sees, far down,
Capp'd with faint smoke, the noisy town ;
Here sit we, and again unroll,
Though slowly, the familiar whole.
The solemn wastes of heathy hill
Sleep in the July sunshine still :
The self-same shadows now, as then,
Play through this grassy upland glen :
The loose dark stones on the green way
Lie strewn, it seems, where then they lay :
On this mild bank above the stream,
(You crush them) the blue gentians gleam.
Still this wild brook, the rushes cool,
The sailing foam, the shining pool.—
These are not chang'd : and we, you say,
Are scarce more chang'd, in truth, than they.

The Gipsies, whom we met below,
They too have long roam'd to and fro.
They ramble, leaving, where they pass,
Their fragments on the cumber'd grass.
And often to some kindly place
Chance guides the migratory race
Where, though long wanderings intervene,
They recognise a former scene.
The dingy tents are pitch'd : the fires
Give to the wind their wavering spires ;
In dark knots crouch round the wild flame
Their children, as when first they came ;
They see their shackled beasts again
Move, browsing, up the grey-wall'd lane.
Signs are not wanting, which might raise
The ghosts in them of former days :
Signs are not wanting, if they would ;
Suggestions to disquietude.
For them, for all, Time's busy touch,
While it mends little, troubles much :

Their joints grow stiffer ; but the year
Runs his old round of dubious cheer :
Chilly they grow ; yet winds in March,
Still, sharp as ever, freeze and parch :
They must live still ; and yet, God knows,
Crowded and keen the country grows :
It seems as if, in their decay,
The Law grew stronger every day.
So might they reason ; so compare,
Fausta, times past with times that are.
But no : —they rubb'd through yesterday
In their hereditary way ;
And they will rub through, if they can,
To-morrow on the self-same plan ;
Till death arrives to supersede,
For them, vicissitude and need.

The Poet, to whose mighty heart
Heaven doth a quicker pulse impart,

Subdues that energy to scan
Not his own course, but that of Man.
Though he move mountains ; though his day
Be pass'd on the proud heights of sway ;
Though he hath loos'd a thousand chains ;
Though he hath borne immortal pains ;
Action and suffering though he know ;
— He hath not liv'd, if he lives so.
He sees, in some great-historied land,
A ruler of the people stand ;
Sees his strong thought in fiery flood
Roll through the heaving multitude ;
Exults : yet for no moment's space
Envies the all-regarded place.
Beautiful eyes meet his ; and he
Bears to admire uncravingly :
They pass ; he, mingled with the crowd,
Is in their far-off triumphs proud.
From some high station he looks down,
At sunset, on a populous town ;

Surveys each happy group that fleets,
Toil ended, through the shining streets,
Each with some errand of its own ; —
And does not say, *I am alone.* ▪
He sees the gentle stir of birth
When Morning purifies the earth ;
He leans upon a gate, and sees
The pastures, and the quiet trees.
Low woody hill, with gracious bound,
Folds the still valley almost round ;
The cuckoo, loud on some high lawn,
Is answer'd from the depth of dawn ;
In the hedge straggling to the stream,
Pale, dew-drench'd, half-shut roses gleam :
But where the further side slopes down
He sees the drowsy new-wak'd clown
In his white quaint-embroider'd frock
Make, whistling, towards his mist-wreath'd flock ;
Slowly, behind the heavy tread,
The wet flower'd grass heaves up its head.—

Lean'd on his gate, he gazes : tears
Are in his eyes, and in his ears
The murmur of a thousand years :
Before him he sees Life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole ;
That general Life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace ;
That Life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
If birth proceeds, if things subsist :
The Life of plants, and stones, and rain :
The Life he craves ; if not in vain
Fate gave, what Chance shall not controul,
His sad lucidity of soul.

You listen : — but that wandering smile,
Fausta, betrays you cold the while.
Your eyes pursue the bells of foam
Wash'd, eddying, from this bank, their home.
*Those Gipsies, so your thoughts I scan,
Are less, the Poet more, than man.*

*They feel not, though they move and see :
Deeply the Poet feels ; but he
Breathes, when he will, immortal air,
Where Orpheus and where Homer are.
In the day's life, whose iron round
Hems us all in, he is not bound.
He escapes thence, but we abide.
Not deep the Poet sees, but wide.*

The World in which we live and move
Outlasts aversion, outlasts love :
Outlasts each effort, interest, hope,
Remorse, grief, joy : — and were the scope
Of these affections wider made,
Man still would see, and see dismay'd,
Beyond his passion's widest range
Far regions of eternal change.
Nay, and since death, which wipes out man,
Finds him with many an unsolv'd plan,

With much unknown, and much untried,
Wonder not dead, and thirst not dried,
Still gazing on the ever full
Eternal mundane spectacle ;
This World in which we draw our breath,
In some sense, Fausta, outlasts death.

Blame thou not therefore him, who dares
Judge vain beforehand human cares.
Whose natural insight can discern
What through experience others learn.
Who needs not love and power, to know
Love transient, power an unreal show.
Who treads at ease life's uncheer'd ways :—
Him blame not, Fausta, rather praise.
Rather thyself for some aim pray
Nobler than this — to fill the day.
Rather, that heart, which burns in thee,
Ask, not to amuse, but to set free.

Be passionate hopes not ill resign'd
For quiet, and a fearless mind.
And though Fate grudge to thee and me
The Poet's rapt security,
Yet they, believe me, who await
No gifts from Chance, have conquer'd Fate.
They, winning room to see and hear,
And to men's business not too near,
Through clouds of individual strife
Draw homewards to the general Life.
Like leaves by suns not yet uncurl'd :
To the wise, foolish ; to the world,
Weak : yet not weak, I might reply,
Not foolish, Fausta, in His eye,
To whom each moment in its race,
Crowd as we will its neutral space,
Is but a quiet watershed
Whence, equally, the Seas of Life and Death are
fed.

Enough, we live : — and if a life,
With large results so little rife,
Though bearable, seem hardly worth
This pomp of worlds, this pain of birth ;
Yet, Fausta, the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
This stream that falls incessantly,
The strange-scrawl'd rocks, the lonely sky,
If I might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.
And even could the intemperate prayer
Man iterates, while these forbear,
For movement, for an ampler sphere,
Pierce Fate's impenetrable ear ;
Not milder is the general lot
Because our spirits have forgot,
In action's dizzying eddy whirl'd,
The something that infects the world.

DESPONDENCY.



THE thoughts that rain their steady glow
Like stars on life's cold sea,
Which others know, or say they know—
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,
But they will not remain.
They light me once, they hurry by,
And never come again.

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE STARS.



AND you, ye Stars !
Who slowly begin to marshal,
As of old, in the fields of heaven,
Your distant, melancholy lines—
 Have you, too, surviv'd yourselves?
Are you, too, what I fear to become?
 You too once liv'd—
You too mov'd joyfully
Among august companions
In an older world, peopled by Gods,
In a mightier order,
The radiant, rejoicing, intelligent Sons of Heaven !
 But now, you kindle
Your lonely, cold-shining lights,

Unwilling lingerers
In the heavenly wilderness,
For a younger, ignoble world.
And renew, by necessity,
Night after night your courses,
In echoing unhear'd silence,
Above a race you know not.
Uncaring and undelighted,
Without friend and without home.
Weary like us, though not
 Weary with our weariness.

DESIRE.



THOU, who dost dwell alone—
Thou, who dost know thine own—
Thou, to whom all are known
From the cradle to the grave—
Save, oh, save.
From the world's temptations,
From tribulations ;
From that fierce anguish
Wherein we languish ;
From that torpor deep
Wherein we lie asleep,
Heavy as death, cold as the grave ;
Save, oh, save.

When the Soul, growing clearer,
Sees God no nearer :
When the Soul, mounting higher,
To God comes no nigher :
But the arch-fiend Pride
Mounts at her side,
Foiling her high emprize,
Sealing her eagle eyes,
And, when she fain would soar,
Makes idols to adore ;
Changing the pure emotion
Of her high devotion
To a skin-deep sense
Of her own eloquence :
Strong to deceive, strong to enslave—
Save, oh, save.

From the ingrain'd fashion
Of this earthly nature
That mars thy creature.
From grief, that is but passion

From mirth, that is but feigning ;
From tears, that bring no healing ;
From wild and weak complaining ;
 Thine old strength revealing,
 Save, oh, save.

From doubt, where all is double :
Where wise men are not strong :
Where comfort turns to trouble :
Where just men suffer wrong.
Where sorrow treads on joy :
Where sweet things soonest cloy :
Where faiths are built on dust :
Where Love is half mistrust,
Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea ;
 Oh, set us free.

O let the false dream fly
Where our sick souls do lie
 Tossing continually.
O where thy voice doth come
 Let all doubts be dumb :

Let all words be mild :
All strifes be reconcil'd :
All pains beguil'd.
Light bring no blindness ;
Love no unkindness ;
Knowledge no ruin ;
Fear no undoing.
From the cradle to the grave,
Save, oh, save.

TO A GIPSY CHILD BY THE SEA-SHORE,

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN.



Who taught this pleading to unpractis'd eyes?
Who hid such import in an infant's gloom?
Who lent thee, child, this meditative guise?
What clouds thy forehead, and fore-dates thy doom?

Lo! sails that gleam a moment and are gone;
The swinging waters, and the cluster'd pier.
Not idly Earth and Ocean labour on,
Nor idly do these sea-birds hover near.

But thou, whom superfluity of joy
Wafts not from thine own thoughts, nor longings vain,
Nor weariness, the full-fed soul's annoy;
Remaining in thy hunger and thy pain:

Thou, drugging pain by patience ; half averse
From thine own mother's breast, that knows not
thee ;

With eyes that sought thine eyes thou didst converse,
And that soul-searching vision fell on me.

Glooms that go deep as thine I have not known :
Moods of fantastic sadness, nothing worth.
Thy sorrow and thy calmness are thine own :
Glooms that enhance and glorify this earth.

What mood wears like complexion to thy woe ?—
His, who in mountain glens, at noon of day,
Sits rapt, and hears the battle break below ?—
Ah ! thine was not the shelter, but the fray.

What exile's, changing bitter thoughts with glad ?
What seraph's, in some alien planet born ?—
No exile's dream was ever half so sad,
Nor any angel's sorrow so forlorn.

Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore:
But in disdainful silence turn away,
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more?

Or do I wait, to hear some grey-hair'd king
Unravel all his many-colour'd lore:
Whose mind hath known all arts of governing,
Mus'd much, lov'd life a little, loath'd it more?

Down the pale cheek long lines of shadow slope,
Which years, and curious thought, and suffering
give ——

Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope,
Foreseen thy harvest — yet proceed'st to live.

O meek anticipant of that sure pain
Whose sureness grey-hair'd scholars hardly learn!
What wonder shall time breed, to swell thy strain?
What heavens, what earth, what suns shalt thou
discern?

Ere the long night, whose stillness brooks no
star,
Match that funereal aspect with her pall,
I think, thou wilt have fathom'd life too far,
Have known too much — or else forgotten all.

The Guide of our dark steps a triple veil
Betwixt our senses and our sorrow keeps :
Hath sown with cloudless passages the tale
Of grief, and eas'd us with a thousand sleeps.

Ah ! not the nectarous poppy lovers use,
Not daily labour's dull, Lethæan spring,
Oblivion in lost angels can infuse
Of the soil'd glory, and the trailing wing ;

And though thou glean, what strenuous gleaners
may,
In the throng'd fields where winning comes by
strife ;

And though the just sun gild, as all men pray,
Some reaches of thy storm-vext stream of life ;

Though that blank sunshine blind thee : though the
cloud

That sever'd the world's march and thine, is gone :
Though ease dulls grace, and Wisdom be too proud
To halve a lodging that was all her own :

Once, ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
Oh once, ere night, in thy success, thy chain.
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
And wear this majesty of grief again.

OBERMANN.



In front the awful Alpine track
Crawls up its rocky stair ;
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandon'd baths
Mute in their meadows lone ;
The leaves are on the valley paths ;
The mists are on the Rhone —

The white mists rolling like a sea.
I hear the torrents roar.
— Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee !
I feel thee near once more.

I turn thy leaves : I feel their breath
Once more upon me roll ;
That air of languor, cold, and death,
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor Wretch, who'er thou art,
Condemn'd to cast about,
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,
For comfort from without :

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign ;
A wounded human spirit turns
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air
Fresh through these pages blows,
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their white snows,

Though here a mountain murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine —

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground tone
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain,
That, Obermann! the world around
So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways.
To tell too deep ones is not well;
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd
In this our troubled day,
I know but two, who have attain'd,
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in grey old age,
His quiet home one keeps ; *
And one, the strong much-toiling Sage,
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate ;
And Goethe's course few sons of men
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,
His eyes on Nature's plan ;
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

* Written in November, 1849.

Strong was he, with a spirit free
From mists, and sane, and clear ;
Clearer, how much ! than ours : yet we
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast
Of Europe's stormiest time,
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise —
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?

Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass'd, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder Sage!
To thee : we feel thy spell.
The hopeless tangle of our age—
Thou too hast scann'd it well.

Immoveable thou sittest ; still
As death ; compos'd to bear.
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,
One hears thee saying now —
Greater by far than thou are dead :
Strive not : die also thou. —

Ah! Two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.
One drives him to the world without,
And one to solitude.

The glow, he cries, the thrill of life —
Where, where do these abound? —
Not in the world, not in the strife
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shar'd, the strife,
Knows how the day hath gone ;
He only lives with the world's life
Who hath renounc'd his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are roll'd
Where thou, O Seer, art set ;
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold —
The world is colder yet !

And thou hast pleasures too to share
With those who come to thee :
Balms floating on thy mountain air,
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green
On Jaman, hast thou sate
By some high chalet door, and seen
The summer day grow late,

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass
With the pale crocus starr'd,
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Lemman's waters, far below :
And watch'd the rosy light
Fade from the distant peaks of snow :
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play :
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young ;
Listen'd, and wept——Away !

Away the dreams that but deceive !
And thou, sad Guide, adieu !
I go ; Fate drives me : but I leave
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line :
Can neither, when we will, enjoy ;
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live : — but thou,
Thou melancholy Shade !
Wilt not, if thou can'st see me now,
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,
And place with those dost claim,
The Children of the Second Birth
Whom the world could not tame ;

And with that small transfigur'd Band,
Whom many a different way
Conducted to their common land,
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,
Soldier and anchorite,
Distinctions we esteem so grave,
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pin'd unseen,
Who was on action hurl'd,
Whose one bond is that all have been
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see
Him who obeys thy spell
No more, so he but rest, like thee,
Unsoil'd : — and so, Farewell !

Farewell !—Whether thou now liest near
That much-lov'd inland sea
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,
Where with clear-rustling wave
The scented pines of Switzerland
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls
Issuing on that green place
The early peasant still recalls
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date
Ere he plods on again ;—
Or whether, by maligner Fate,
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces
The blue Seine rolls her wave,
The Capital of Pleasure sees
Thy hardly-heard-of grave —

Farewell ! Under the sky we part,
In this stern Alpine dell.
O unstrung will ! O broken heart !
A last, a last farewell !

THE BURIED LIFE.



LIGHT flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears my eyes are wet.

I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.

Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile;
But there's a something in this breast
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.

Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love, thy inmost soul.

Alas, is even Love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?

Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd :
I knew they liv'd and mov'd
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves — and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast.

But we, my love — does a like spell benumb
Our hearts — our voices? — must we too be dumb?

Ah, well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd :
For that which seals them hath been deep ordain'd.

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be,

By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity ;
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey,
Even in his own despite, his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded River of our Life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way ;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life,
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course ;

A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us, to know
Whence our thoughts come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines :
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown on each talent and power,
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves ;
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well — but 'tis not true :
 And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupifying power ;

Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call :
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.

Only — but this is rare —
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a lov'd voice caress'd, —
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again :
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we
know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,

And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.

And then he thinks he knows
The Hills where his life rose,
And the Sea where it goes.

THE YOUTH OF NATURE.



RAIS'D are the dripping oars —
Silent the boat : the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there ;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for aye.

Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely : a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,
For he lent a new life to these hills.

The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
Which border Ennerdale Lake,
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
The gleam of The Evening Star
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
But ruin'd and solemn and grey
The sheepfold of Michael survives,
And far to the south, the heath
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,
 By the favourite waters of Ruth.
These survive: yet not without pain,
Pain and dejection to-night,
Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

 He grew old in an age he condemn'd.
He look'd on the rushing decay
Of the times which had shelter'd his youth.
Felt the dissolving throes
Of a social order he lov'd.
Outliv'd his brethren, his peers.

And, like the Theban seer,
Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa,
Copais lay bright in the moon ;
Helicon glass'd in the lake
Its firs, and afar, rose the peaks
Of Parnassus, snowily clear :
Thebes was behind him in flames,
And the clang of arms in his ear,
When his awe-struck captors led
The Theban seer to the spring.

Tiresias drank and died.
Nor did reviving Thebes
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head
Of a sacred poet lies low
In an age which can rear them no more.
The complaining millions of men

Darken in labour and pain ;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad.

He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day
Of his race is past on the earth ;
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For oh, is it you, is it you,
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,
And mountains, that fill us with joy,
Or the Poet who sings you so well ?
Is it you, O Beauty, O Grace,
O Charm, O Romance, that we feel,
Or the voice which reveals what you are ?
Are ye, like daylight and sun,
Shar'd and rejoic'd in by all ?
Or are ye immers'd in the mass
Of matter, and hard to extract,
Or sunk at the core of the world

Too deep for the most to discern ?

Like stars in the deep of the sky,
Which arise on the glass of the sage,
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

“ They are here ” — I heard, as men
heard

In Mysian Ida the voice
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,
The murmur of Nature reply —
“ Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,
They are here — they are set in the world —
They abide — and the finest of souls
Has not been thrill'd by them all,
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.
The poet who sings them may die,
But they are immortal, and live,
For they are the life of the world.

Will ye not learn it, and know,
When ye mourn that a poet is dead.

That the singer was less than his themes,
Life, and Emotion, and I?

“ More than the singer are these.
Weak is the tremor of pain
That thrills in his mournfullest chord
To that which once ran through his soul.
Cold the elation of joy
In his gladdest, airest song,
To that which of old in his youth
Fill'd him and made him divine.
Hardly his voice at its best
Gives us a sense of the awe,
The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom
Of the unlit gulph of himself.

“ Ye know not yourselves — and your bards,
The clearest, the best, who have read
Most in themselves, have beheld
Less than they left unreveal'd.

Ye express not yourselves — can ye make
With marble, with colour, with word,
What charm'd you in others re-live?
Can thy pencil, O Artist, restore
The figure, the bloom of thy love,
As she was in her morning of spring?
Canst thou paint the ineffable smile
Of her eyes as they rested on thine?
Can the image of life have the glow,
The motion of life itself?

“Yourselves and your fellows ye know not —
and me

The Mateless, the One, will ye know?
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,
My longing, my sadness, my joy?
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift
To have render'd the gleam of my skies,
To have echoed the moan of my seas,

Utter'd the voice of my hills?

When your great ones depart, will ye say —

All things have suffer'd a loss —

Nature is hid in their grave?

“ Race after race, man after man,
Have dream'd that my secret was theirs,
Have thought that I liv'd but for them,
That they were my glory and joy.—
They are dust, they are chang'd, they are gone.—
I remain.”

THE YOUTH OF MAN.



WE, O Nature, depart :
Thou survivest us : this,
This, I know, is the law.
Yes, but more than this,
Thou who seest us die
Seest us change while we live ;
Seest our dreams one by one,
Seest our errors depart :
 Watchest us, Nature, throughout,
Mild and inscrutably calm.

 Well for us that we change !
Well for us that the Power

Which in our morning prime
Saw the mistakes of our youth,
Sweet, and forgiving, and good,
Sees the contrition of age!

Behold, O Nature, this pair!
See them to-night where they stand,
Not with the halo of youth
Crowning their brows with its light,
Not with the sunshine of hope,
Not with the rapture of spring,
Which they had of old, when they stood
Years ago at my side
In this self-same garden, and said; —
“ We are young, and the world is ours,
For man is the king of the world.
Fools that these mystics are
Who prate of Nature! but she
Has neither beauty, nor warmth,
Nor life, nor emotion, nor power.

But Man has a thousand gifts,
And the generous dreamer invests
The senseless world with them all.

Nature is nothing! her charm
Lives in our eyes which can paint,
Lives in our hearts which can feel!"

Thou, O Nature, wert mute,
Mute as of old: days flew,
Days and years; and Time
With the ceaseless stroke of his wings
Brush'd off the bloom from their soul.
Clouded and dim grew their eye;
Languid their heart; for Youth
Quicken'd its pulses no more.
Slowly within the walls
Of an ever-narrowing world
They droop'd, they grew blind, they grew old.
Thee and their Youth in thee,
Nature, they saw no more.

Murmur of living !
Stir of existence !
Soul of the world !
Make, oh make yourselves felt
To the dying spirit of Youth.
Come, like the breath of the spring.
Leave not a human soul
To grow old in darkness and pain.
Only the living can feel you :
But leave us not while we live.

Here they stand to-night —
Here, where this grey balustrade
Crowns the still valley : behind
Is the castled house with its woods
Which shelter'd their childhood, the sun
On its ivied windows : a scent
From the grey-wall'd gardens, a breath
Of the fragrant stock and the pink,
Perfumes the evening air.

Their children play on the lawns.
They stand and listen : they hear
The children's shouts, and, at times,
Faintly, the bark of a dog
From a distant farm in the hills : —
Nothing besides : in front
The wide, wide valley outspreads
To the dim horizon, repos'd
In the twilight, and bath'd in dew,
 Corn-field and hamlet and copse
Darkening fast ; but a light,
Far off, a glory of day,
Still plays on the city spires :
And there in the dusk by the walls,
With the grey mist marking its course
Through the silent flowery land,
 On, to the plains, to the sea,
Floats the Imperial Stream.

Well I know what they feel.
They gaze, and the evening wind

Plays on their faces : they gaze ;
Airs from the Eden of Youth
Awake and stir in their soul :
The Past returns ; they feel
What they are, alas ! what they were.
They, not Nature, are chang'd.
Well I know what they feel.

Hush ! for tears
Begin to steal to their eyes.
Hush ! for fruit
Grows from such sorrow as theirs.

And they remember
With piercing untold anguish
The proud boasting of their youth.
And they feel how Nature was fair.
And the mists of delusion,
And the scales of habit,
Fall away from their eyes.
And they see, for a moment,

Stretching out, like the Desert
In its weary, unprofitable length,
Their faded, ignoble lives.

While the locks are yet brown on thy head,
While the soul still looks through thine eyes,
While the heart still pours
The mantling blood to thy cheek,
Sink, O Youth, in thy soul!
Yearn to the greatness of Nature!
Rally the good in the depths of thyself!

A SUMMER NIGHT.



IN the deserted moon-blanch'd street
How lonely rings the echo of my feet !
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world : —but see !
A break between the housetops shows
The moon, and, lost behind her, fading dim
Into the dewy dark obscurity
Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.

And to my mind the thought
Is on a sudden brought

Of a past night, and a far different scene.
Headlands stood out into the moon-lit deep
As clearly as at noon ;
The spring-tide's brimming flow
Heav'd dazzlingly between ;
Houses with long white sweep
Girdled the glistening bay :
Behind, through the soft air,
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread
 away.

That night was far more fair ;
But the same restless pacings to and fro,
And the same vainly-throbbing heart was there,
And the same bright calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say—
*Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast
That neither deadens into rest
Nor ever feels the fiery glow
That whirls the spirit from itself away,*

But fluctuates to and fro
Never by passion quite possess'd
And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway? —
And I, I know not if to pray
Still to be what I am, or yield, and be
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labour fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast.
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are
 prest,

Death in their prison reaches them
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,
Escape their prison, and depart
On the wide Ocean of Life anew.
There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart
Listeth, will sail ;
Nor does he know how there prevail,
Despotic on life's sea,
Trade-winds that cross it from eternity.

Awhile he holds some false way, undebarr'd
By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind and blackening waves.
And then the tempest strikes him, and between
The lightning bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale Master on his spar-strewn deck
With anguish'd face and flying hair
Grasping the rudder hard,

Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false impossible shore.

And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?
Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain!
Clearness divine!
Ye Heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign
Of languor, though so calm, and though so great
Are yet untroubled and unpassionate:
Who though so noble share in the world's toil,
And though so task'd keep free from dust and soil:
I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain

Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain ;
But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency.
How it were good to sink there, and breathe free.
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still.

THE END.

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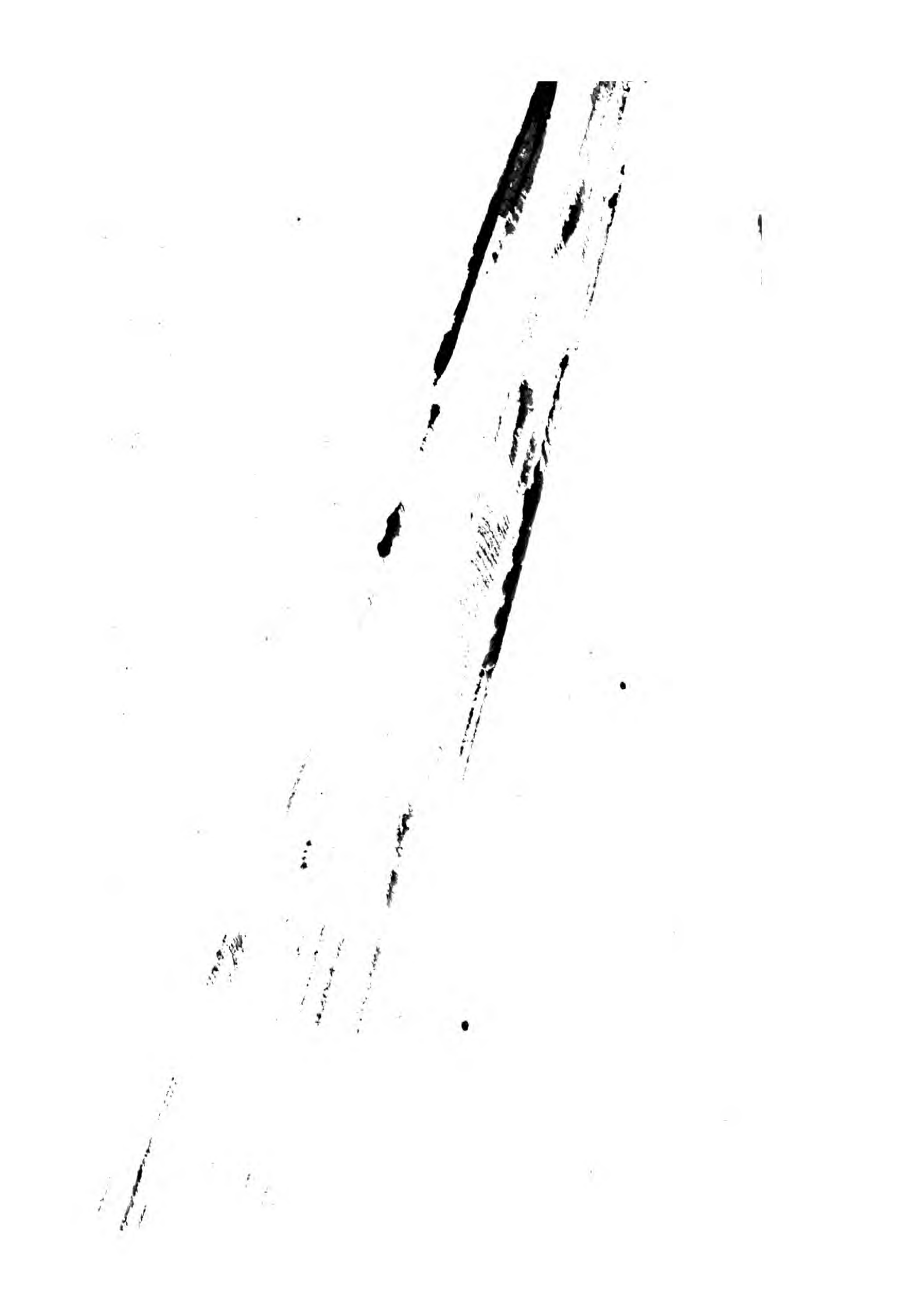
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