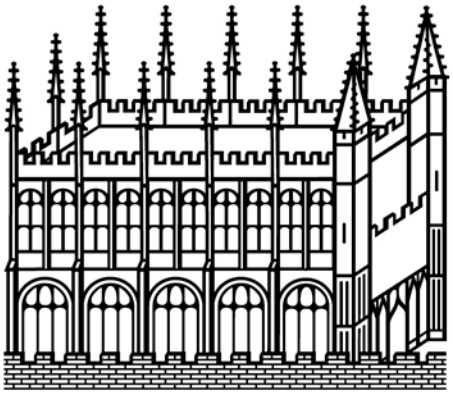

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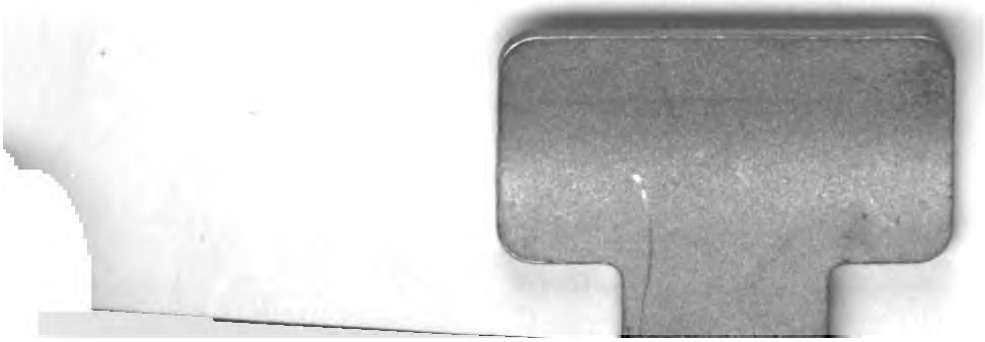

The Works of George Meredith
Micklebam Edition

Mickleham Edition

A READING OF EARTH

AND OTHER POEMS

BY GEORGE MEREDITH

CONSTABLE & COMPANY LIMITED

LONDON BOMBAY SYDNEY

Mickleham Edition first issued 1922

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TO J. M.

LET Fate or Insufficiency provide
Mean ends for men who what they are would be :
Penned in their narrow day no change they see
Save one which strikes the blow to brutes and pride.
Our faith is ours and comes not on a tide :
And whether Earth's great offspring, by decree,
Must rot if they abjure rapacity,
Not argument but effort shall decide.
They number many heads in that hard flock :
Trim swordsmen they push forth : yet try thy steel.
Thou, fighting for poor humankind, wilt feel
The strength of Roland in thy wrist to hew
A chasm sheer into the barrier rock,
And bring the army of the faithful through.

LINES TO A FRIEND VISITING AMERICA

I

Now farewell to you ! you are
One of my dearest, whom I trust :
Now follow you the Western star,
And cast the old world off as dust.

II

From many friends adieu ! adieu !
The quick heart of the word therein.
Much that we hope for hangs with you :
We lose you, but we lose to win.

III

The beggar-king, November, frets :
His tatters rich with Indian dyes
Goes hugging : we our season's debts
Pay calmly, of the Spring forewise.

IV

We send our worthiest ; can no less,
If we would now be read aright,—
To that great people who may bless
Or curse mankind : they have the might.

V

The proudest seasons find their graves,
And we, who would not be wooed, must court.
We have let the blunderers and the waves
Divide us, and the devil had sport.

VI

The blunderers and the waves no more
Shall sever kindred sending forth
Their worthiest from shore to shore
For welcome, bent to prove their worth.

VII

Go you and such as you afloat,
Our lost kinsfellowship to revive.
The battle of the antidote
Is tough, though silent : may you thrive !

VIII

I, when in this North wind I see
The straining red woods blown awry,
Feel shuddering like the winter tree,
All vein and artery on cold sky.

IX

The leaf that clothed me is torn away ;
My friend is as a flying seed.
Ay, true ; to bring replenished day
Light ebbs, but I am bare, and bleed.

X

What husky habitations seem
These comfortable sayings ! they fell,
In some rich year become a dream :—
So cries my heart, the infidel ! . . .

XI

Oh ! for the strenuous mind in quest,
Arabian visions could not vie
With those broad wonders of the West,
And would I bid you stay ? Not I !

XII

The strange experimental land
Where men continually dare take
Niagara leaps ;—unshattered stand
'Twixt fall and fall ;—for conscience' sake,

XIII

Drive onward like a flood's increase ;—
Fresh rapids and abysms engage ;—
(We live—we die) scorn fireside peace,
And, as a garment, put on rage,

XIV

Rather than bear God's reprimand,
By rearing on a full fat soil
Concrete of sin and sloth ;—this land,
You will observe it coil in coil.

XV

The land has been discover'd long,
The people we have yet to know ;
Themselves they know not, save that strong
For good and evil still they grow.

XVI

Nor know they us. Yea, well enough
In that inveterate machine
Through which we speak the printed stuff
Daily, with voice most hugeous, mien

XVII

Tremendous :—as a lion's show
The grand menagerie paintings hide :
Hear the drum beat, the trombones blow !
The poor old Lion lies inside ! . . .

XVIII

It is not England that they hear,
But mighty Mammon's pipers, trained
To trumpet out his moods, and stir
His sluggish soul : *her* voice is chained :

XIX

Almost her spirit seems moribund !
O teach them, 'tis not she displays
The panic of a purse rotund,
Eternal dread of evil days,—

XX

That haunting spectre of success
Which shows a heart sunk low in the girths :
Not England answers nobleness,—
' Live for thyself : thou art not earth's.'

XXI

Not she, when struggling manhood tries
For freedom, air, a hopefuller fate,
Points out the planet, Compromise,
And shakes a mild reproving pate :

XXII

Says never : ' I am well at ease,
My sneers upon the weak I shed :
The strong have my cajoleries :
And those beneath my feet I tread.'

XXIII

Nay, but 'tis said for her, great Lord !
The misery 's there ! The shameless one
Adjures mankind to sheathe the sword,
Herself not yielding what it won :—

XXIV

Her sermon at cock-crow doth preach,
On sweet Prosperity—or greed.
' Lo ! as the beasts feed, each for each,
God's blessings let us take, and feed ! '

XXV

Ungrateful creatures crave a part—
She tells them firmly she is full ;
Lest sheared sheep hurt her tender heart
With bleating, stops her ears with wool :—

XXVI

Seized sometimes by prodigious qualms
(Nightmares of bankruptcy and death),—
Showers down in lumps a load of alms,
Then pants as one who has lost a breath ;

XXVII

Believes high heaven, whence favours flow,
Too kind to ask a sacrifice
For what it specially doth bestow :—
Gives *she*, 'tis generous, cheese to mice.

XXVIII

She saw the young Dominion strip
For battle with a grievous wrong,
And curled a noble Norman lip,
And looked with half an eye sidelong ;

XXIX

And in stout Saxon wrote her sneers,
Denounced the waste of blood and coin,
Implored the combatants, with tears,
Never to think they could rejoin.

XXX

Oh ! was it England that, alas !
Turned sharp the victor to cajole ?
Behold her features in the glass :
A monstrous semblance mocks her soul !

XXXI

A false majority, by stealth,
Have got her fast, and sway the rod :
A headless tyrant built of wealth,
The hypocrite, the belly-God.

XXXII

To him the daily hymns they raise :
His tastes are sought : his will is done :
He sniffs the putrid steam of praise,
Place for true England here is none !

XXXIII

But can a distant race discern
The difference 'twixt her and him ?
My friend, that will you bid them learn.
He shames and binds her, head and limb.

XXXIV

Old wood has blossoms of this sort.
Though sound at core, she is old wood.
If freemen hate her, one retort
She has ; but one !—' You are my blood.

XXXV

A poet, half a prophet, rose
In recent days, and called for power.
I love him ; but his mountain prose—
His Alp and valley and wild flower—

XXXVI

Proclaimed our weakness, not its source.
What medicine for disease had he ?
Whom summoned for a show of force ?
Our titular aristocracy !

XXXVII

Why, these are great at City feasts ;
From City riches mainly rise :
'Tis well to hear them, when the beasts
That die for us they eulogize !

XXXVIII

But these, of all the liveried crew
Obeisant in Mammon's walk,
Most deferent ply the facial screw,
The spinal bend, submissive talk.

XXXIX

Small fear that they will run to books
(At least the better form of seed) !
I, too, have hoped from their good looks,
And fables of their Northman breed ;—

XL

Have hoped that they the land would head
In acts magnanimous ; but, lo,
When fainting heroes beg for bread
They frown : where they are driven they go.

XLI

Good health, my friend ! and may your lot
Be cheerful o'er the Western rounds.
This butter-woman's market-trot
Of verse is passing market-bounds.

XLII

Adieu ! the sun sets ; he is gone.
On banks of fog faint lines extend :
Adieu ! bring back a braver dawn
To England, and to me my friend.

November 15th, 1867.

TIME AND SENTIMENT

I SEE a fair young couple in a wood,
And as they go, one bends to take a flower,
That so may be embalmed their happy hour,
And in another day, a kindred mood,
Haply together, or in solitude,
Recovered what the teeth of Time devour,
The joy, the bloom, and the illusive power,
Wherewith by their young blood they are endued
To move all enviable, framed in May,
And of an aspect sisterly with Truth :
Yet seek they with Time's laughing things to wed :
Who will be prompted on some pallid day
To lift the hueless flower and show that dead,
Even such, and by this token, is their youth.

LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

THE STAR SIRIUS

Bright Sirius ! that when Orion pales
To dotlings under moonlight still art keen
With cheerful fervour of a warrior's mien
Who holds in his great heart the battle-scales :
Unquenched of flame though swift the flood assails,
Reducing many lustrous to the lean :
Be thou my star, and thou in me be seen
To show what source divine is, and prevails.
Long watches through, at one with godly night,
I mark thee planting joy in constant fire ;
And thy quick beams, whose jets of life inspire
Life to the spirit, passion for the light,
Dark Earth since first she lost her lord from sight
Has viewed and felt them sweep her as a lyre.

SENSE AND SPIRIT

THE senses loving Earth or well or ill
Ravel yet more the riddle of our lot.
The mind is in their trammels, and lights not
By trimming fear-bred tales ; nor does the will
To find in nature things which less may chill
An ardour that desires, unknowing what.
Till we conceive her living we go distraught,
At best but circle-windsails of a mill.
Seeing she lives, and of her joy of life
Creatively has given us blood and breath
For endless war and never wound unhealed,
The gloomy Wherefore of our battle-field
Solves in the Spirit, wrought of her through strife
To read her own and trust her down to death.

EARTH'S SECRET

NOT solitarily in fields we find
Earth's secret open, though one page is there ;
Her plainest, such as children spell, and share
With bird and beast ; raised letters for the blind.
Not where the troubled passions toss the mind,
In turbid cities, can the key be bare.
It hangs for those who hither thither fare,
Close interthreading nature with our kind.
They, hearing History speak, of what men were,
And have become, are wise. The gain is great
In vision and solidity ; it lives.
Yet at a thought of life apart from her,
Solidity and vision lose their state,
For Earth, that gives the milk, the spirit gives.

INTERNAL HARMONY

Assured of worthiness we do not dread
Competitors ; we rather give them hail
And greeting in the lists where we may fail :
Must, if we bear an aim beyond the head !
My betters are my masters : purely fed
By their sustainment I likewise shall scale
Some rocky steps between the mount and vale ;
Meanwhile the mark I have and I will wed.
So that I draw the breath of finer air,
Station is nought, nor footways laurel-strewn,
Nor rivals tightly belted for the race.
Good speed to them ! My place is here or there ;
My pride is that among them I have place :
And thus I keep this instrument in tune.

GRACE AND LOVE

Two flower-enfolding crystal vases she
I love fills daily, mindful but of one :
And close behind pale morn she, like the sun
Priming our world with light, pours, sweet to see,
Clear water in the cup, and into me
The image of herself : and that being done,
Choice of what blooms round her fair garden run
In climbers or in creepers or the tree
She ranges with unerring fingers fine,
To harmony so vivid that through sight
I hear, I have her heavenliness to fold
Beyond the senses, where such love as mine,
Such grace as hers, should the strange Fates withhold
Their starry more from her and me, unite.

APPRECIATION

EARTH was not Earth before her sons appeared,
Nor Beauty Beauty ere young Love was born :
And thou when I lay hidden wast as morn
At city-windows, touching eyelids bleared ;
To none by her fresh wingedness endeared ;
Unwelcome unto revellers outworn.
I the last echoes of Diana's horn
In woodland heard, and saw thee come, and cheered.
No longer wast thou then mere light, fair soul !
And more than simple duty moved thy feet.
New colours rose in thee, from fear, from shame,
From hope, effused : though not less pure a scroll
May men read on the heart I taught to beat :
That change in thee, if not thyself, I claim.

THE DISCIPLINE OF WISDOM

RICH labour is the struggle to be wise,
While we make sure the struggle cannot cease.
Else better were it in some bower of peace
Slothful to swing, contending with the flies.
You point at Wisdom fixed on lofty skies,
As mid barbarian hordes a sculptured Greece :
She falls. To live and shine, she grows her fleece,
Is shorn, and rubs with follies and with lies.
So following her, your hewing may attain
The right to speak unto the mute, and shun
That sly temptation of the illumined brain,
Deliveries oracular, self-spun.
Who sweats not with the flock will seek in vain
To shed the words which are ripe fruit of sun.

THE STATE OF AGE

Rub thou thy battered lamp : nor claim nor beg
Honours from aught about thee. Light the young.
Thy frame is as a dusty mantle hung,
O grey one ! pendant on a loosened peg.
Thou art for this our life an ancient egg,
Or a tough bird : thou hast a rudderless tongue,
Turning dead trifles, like the cock of dung,
Which runs, Time's contrast to thy halting leg.
Nature, it is most sure, not thee admires.
But hast thou in thy season set her fires
To burn from Self to Spirit through the lash,
Honoured the sons of Earth shall hold thee high :
Yea, to spread light when thy proud letter I
Drops prone and void as any thoughtless dash.

PROGRESS

In Progress you have little faith, say you :
Men will maintain dear interests, wreak base hates,
By force, and gentle women choose their mates
Most amorously from the gilded fighting crew :
The human heart Bellona's mad halloo
Will ever fire to dicing with the Fates.
'Now at this time,' says History, 'those two States
'Stood ready their past wrestling to renew.
'They sharpened arms and showed them, like the brutes
'Whose haunches quiver. But a yellow blight
'Fell on their waxing harvests. They deferred
'The bloody settlement of their disputes
'Till God should bless them better.' They did right.
And naming Progress, both shall have the word.

THE WORLD'S ADVANCE

JUDGE mildly the tasked world ; and disincline
To brand it, for it bears a heavy pack.
You have perchance observed the inebriate's track
At night when he has quitted the inn-sign :
He plays diversions on the homeward line,
Still that way bent albeit his legs are slack :
A hedge may take him, but he turns not back,
Nor turns this burdened world, of curving spine.
' Spiral,' the memorable Lady terms
Our mind's ascent : our world's advance presents
That figure on a flat ; the way of worms.
Cherish the promise of its good intents,
And warn it, not one instinct to efface
Ere Reason ripens for the vacant place.

A CERTAIN PEOPLE

As Puritans they prominently wax,
And none more kindly gives and takes hard knocks.
Strong psalmic chanting, like to nasal cocks,
They join to thunderings of their hearty thwacks.
But naughtiness, with hoggery, not lacks
When Peace another door in them unlocks,
Where conscience shows the eyeing of an ox
Grown dully apprehensive of an Axe.
Graceless they are when gone to frivolousness,
Fearing the God they flout, the God they glut.
They need their pious exercises less
Than schooling in the Pleasures : fair belief
That these are devilish only to their thief,
Charged with an Axe nigh on the occiput.

THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS

THAT Garden of sedate Philosophy
Once flourished, fenced from passion and mishap,
A shining spot upon a shaggy map ;
Where mind and body, in fair junction free,
Luted their joyful concord ; like the tree
From root to flowering twigs a flowing sap.
Clear Wisdom found in tended Nature's lap
Of gentlemen the happy nursery.
That Garden would on light supremest verge,
Were the long drawing of an equal breath
Healthful for Wisdom's head, her heart, her aims.
Our world which for its Babels wants a scourge,
And for its wilds a husbandman, acclaims
The crucifix that came of Nazareth.

A LATER ALEXANDRIAN

AN inspiration caught from dubious hues
Filled him, and mystic wrynesses he chased ;
For they lead farther than the single-faced,
Wave subtler promise when desire pursues.
The moon of cloud discoloured was his Muse,
His pipe the reed of the old moaning waste.
Love was to him with anguish fast enlaced,
And Beauty where she walked blood-shot the dews.
Men railed at such a singer ; women thrilled
Responsively : he sang not Nature's own
Divinest, but his lyric had a tone,
As 'twere a forest-echo of her voice :
What barrenly they yearn for seemed distilled
From what they dread, who do through tears rejoice.

AN ORSON OF THE MUSE

HER son, albeit the Muse's livery
And measured courtly paces rouse his taunts,
Naked and hairy in his savage haunts,
To Nature only will he bend the knee ;
Spouting the founts of her distillery
Like rough rock-sources ; and his woes and wants
Being Nature's, civil limitation daunts
His utterance never ; the nymphs blush, not he.
Him, when he blows of Earth, and Man, and Fate,
The Muse will hearken to with graver ear
Than many of her train can waken : him
Would fain have taught what fruitful things and dear
Must sink beneath the tidewaves, of their weight,
If in no vessel built for sea they swim.

THE POINT OF TASTE

UNHAPPY poets of a sunken prime !
You to reviewers are as ball to bat.
They shadow you with Homer, knock you flat
With Shakespeare : bludgeons brainingly sublime
On you the excommunicates of Rhyme,
Because you sing not in the living Fat.
The wiry whizz of an intrusive gnat
Is verse that shuns their self-producing time.
Sound them their clocks, with loud alarum trump,
Or watches ticking temporal at their fobs,
You win their pleased attention. But, bright God
O' the lyre, what bully-drawlers they applaud !
Rather for us a tavern-catch, and bump
Chorus where Lumpkin with his Giles hobnobs.

CAMELUS SALTAT

WHAT say you, critic, now you have become
An author and maternal ?—in this trap
(To quote you) of poor hollow folk who rap
On instruments as like as drum to drum.
You snarled tut-tut for welcome to tum-tum,
So like the nose fly-teased in its noon's nap.
You scratched an insect-slaughtering thunder-clap
With that between the fingers and the thumb.
It seemeth mad to quit the Olympian couch,
Which bade our public gobble or reject.
O spectacle of Peter, shrewdly pecked,
Piper, by his own pepper from his pouch !
What of the sneer, the jeer, the voice austere,
You dealt ?—the voice austere, the jeer, the sneer.

CONTINUED

ORACLE of the market ! thence you drew
The taste which stamped you guide of the inept.—
A North-sea pilot, Hildebrand yclept,
A sturdy and a briny, once men knew.
He loved small beer, and for that copious brew,
To roll ingurgitation till he slept,
Rations exchanged with flavour for the adept :
And merrily plied him captain, mate and crew.
At last this dancer to the Polar star
Sank, washed out within, and overboard was pitched,
To drink the sea and pilot him to land.
O captain-critic ! printed, neatly stitched,
Know, while the pillory-eggs fly fast, they are
Not eggs, but the drowned soul of Hildebrand.

MY THEME

Of me and of my theme think what thou wilt :
The song of gladness one straight bolt can check.
But I have never stood at Fortune's beck :
Were she and her light crew to run atilt
At my poor holding little would be spilt ;
Small were the praise for singing o'er that wreck.
Who courts her dooms to strife his bended neck ;
He grasps a blade, not always by the hilt.
Nathless she strikes at random, can be fell
With other than those votaries she deals
The black or brilliant from her thunder-rift.
I say but that this love of Earth reveals
A soul beside our own to quicken, quell,
Irradiate, and through ruinous floods uplift.

CONTINUED

'Tis true the wisdom that my mind exacts
Through contemplation from a heart unbent
By many tempests may be stained and rent :
The summer flies it mightily attracts.
Yet they seem choicer than your sons of facts,
Which scarce give breathing of the sty's content
For their diurnal carnal nourishment :
Which treat with Nature in official pacts.
The deader body Nature could proclaim.
Much life have neither. Let the heavens of wrath
Rattle, then both scud scattering to froth.
But during calms the flies of idle aim
Less put the spirit out, less baffle thirst
For light than swinish grunters, blest or curst.

ON THE DANGER OF WAR

AVERT, High Wisdom, never vainly wooed,
This threat of War, that shows a land brain-sick.
When nations gain the pitch where rhetoric
Seems reason they are ripe for cannon's food.
Dark looms the issue though the cause be good,
But with the doubt 'tis our old devil's trick.
O now the down-slope of the lunatic
Illumine lest we redden of that brood.
For not since man in his first view of thee
Ascended to the heavens giving sign
Within him of deep sky and sounded sea,
Did he unforfeiting thy laws transgress ;
In peril of his blood his ears incline
To drums whose loudness is their emptiness.

TO CARDINAL MANNING

I, WAKEFUL for the skylark voice in men,
Or straining for the angel of the light,
Rebuked am I by hungry ear and sight,
When I behold one lamp that through our fen
Goes hourly where most noisome ; hear again
A tongue that loathsomeness will not affright
From speaking to the soul of us forthright
What things our craven senses keep from ken.
This is the doing of the Christ ; the way
He went on earth ; the service above guile
To prop a tyrant creed : it sings, it shines ;
Cries to the Mammonites : Allay, allay
Such misery as by these present signs
Brings vengeance down ; nor them who rouse revile.

TO COLONEL CHARLES

(DYING GENERAL C.B.B.)

I

An English heart, my commandant,
A soldier's eye you have, awake
To right and left ; with looks askant
On bulwarks not of adamant,
Where white our Channel waters break.

II

Where Grisnez winks at Dungeness
Across the ruffled strip of salt,
You look, and like the prospect less.
On men and guns would you lay stress,
To bid the Island's foemen halt.

III

While loud the Year is raising cry
At birth to know if it must bear
In history the bloody dye,
An English heart, a soldier's eye,
For the old country first will care.

IV

And how stands she, artillerist,
Among the vapours waxing dense,
With cannon charged ? 'Tis hist ! and hist !
And now she screws a gouty fist,
And now she counts to clutch her pence.

V

With shudders chill as aconite,
The couchant chewer of the cud
Will start at times in pussy fright
Before the dogs, when reads her sprite
The streaks predicting streams of blood.

VI

She thinks they may mean something ; thinks
They may mean nothing : haply both.
Where darkness all her daylight drinks,
She fain would find a leader lynx,
Not too much taxing mental sloth.

VII

Cleft like the fated house in twain,
One half is, Arm ! and one, Retrench !
Gambetta's word on dull MacMahon :
' The cow that sees a passing train ' :
So spies she Russian, German, French.

VIII

She ? no, her weakness : she unbraced
Among those athletes fronting storms !
The muscles less of steel than paste,
Why, they of nature feel distaste
For flash, much more for push, of arms.

IX

The poet sings, and well know we,
That ' iron draws men after it.'
But towering wealth may seem the tree
Which bears the fruit *Indemnity*,
And draw as fast as battle 's fit,

X

If feeble be the hand on guard,
Alas, alas ! And nations are
Still the mad forces, though the scarred.
Should they once deem our emblem Pard
Wagger of tail for all save war ;—

XI

Mechanically screwed to flail
His flanks by Presses conjuring fear ;—
A money-bag with head and tail ;—
Too late may valour then avail !
As you beheld, my cannonier,

XII

When with the staff of Benedek,
On the plateau of Königgrätz,
You saw below that wedgeing speck ;
Foresaw proud Austria rammed to wreck,
Where Chlum drove deep in smoky jets.

February 1887.

TO CHILDREN : FOR TYRANTS

I

STRIKE not thy dog with a stick !
I did it yesterday :
Not to undo though I gained
The Paradise : heavy it rained
On Kobold's flanks, and he lay.

II

Little Bruno, our long-ear pup,
From his hunt had come back to my heel.
I heard a sharp worrying sound,
And Bruno foamed on the ground,
With Koby as making a meal.

III

I did what I could not undo
Were the gates of the Paradise shut
Behind me : I deemed it was just.
I left Koby crouched in the dust,
Some yards from the woodman's hut.

IV

He bewhimpered his welting, and I
Scarce thought it enough for him : so,
By degrees, through the upper box-grove,
Within me an old story hove,
Of a man and a dog : you shall know.

V

The dog was of novel breed,
The Shannon retriever, untried :
His master, an old Irish lord,
In an oaken armchair snored
At midnight, whisky beside.

VI

Perched up a desolate tower,
Where the black storm-wind was a whip
To set it nigh spinning, these two
Were alone, like the last of a crew,
Outworn in a wave-beaten ship.

VII

The dog lifted muzzle, and sniffed ;
He quitted his couch on the rug,
Nose to floor, nose aloft ; whined, barked ;
And, finding the signals unmarked,
Caught a hand in a death-grapple tug.

VIII

He pulled till his master jumped
For fury of wrath, and laid on
With the length of a tough knotted staff,
Fit to drive the life flying like chaff,
And leave a sheer carcase anon.

IX

That done, he sat, panted, and cursed
The vile cross of this brute : nevermore
Would he house it to rear such a cur !
The dog dragged his legs, pained to stir,
Eyed his master, dropped, barked at the door.

X

Then his master raised head too, and sniffed :
It struck him the dog had a sense
That honoured both dam and sire.
You have guessed how the tower was afire.
The Shannon retriever dates thence.

XI

I mused : saw the pup ease his heart
Of his instinct for chasing, and sink
Overwrought by excitement so new :
A scene that for Koby to view
Was the seizure of nerves in a link.

XII

And part sympathetic, and part
Imitatively, raged my poor brute ;
And I, not thinking of ill,
Doing eviller : nerves are still
Our savage too quick at the root.

XIII

They spring us : I proved it, albeit
I played executioner then
For discipline, justice, the like.
Yon stick I had handy to strike
Should have warned of the tyrant in men.

XIV

You read in your History books,
How the Prince in his youth had a mind
For governing gently his land.
Ah, the use of that weapon at hand,
When the temper is other than kind !

XV

At home all was well ; Koby's ribs
Not so sore as my thoughts : if, beguiled,
He forgives me, his criminal air
Throws a shade of Llewellyn's despair
For the hound slain for saving his child.

POEMS AND LYRICS OF THE JOY OF EARTH

THE WOODS OF WESTERMAIN

I

ENTER these enchanted woods,
You who dare.
Nothing harms beneath the leaves
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.
Toss your heart up with the lark,
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,
Fair you fare.
Only at a dread of dark
Quaver, and they quit their form:
Thousand eyeballs under hoods
Have you by the hair.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

II

Here the snake across your path
Stretches in his golden bath:
Mossy-footed squirrels leap
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep;
Yaffles on a chuckle skim
Low to laugh from branches dim:
Up the pine, where sits the star,
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.
Each has business of his own;
But should you distrust a tone,
Then beware.

Shudder all the haunted roods,
All the eyeballs under hoods
    Shroud you in their glare.
Enter these enchanted woods,
    You who dare.

III

Open hither, open hence,
Scarce a bramble weaves a fence,
Where the strawberry runs red,
With white star-flower overhead;
Cumbered by dry twig and cone,
Shredded husks of seedlings flown,
Mine of mole and spotted flint:
Of dire wizardry no hint,
Save mayhap the print that shows
Hasty outward-tripping toes,
Heels to terror, on the mould.
These, the woods of Westermain,
Are as others to behold,
Rich of wreathing sun and rain;
Foliage lustreful around
Shadowed leagues of slumbering sound.
Wavy tree-tops, yellow whins,
Shelter eager minikins,
Myriads, free to peck and pipe:
Would you better? would you worse?
You with them may gather ripe
Pleasures flowing not from purse.
Quick and far as Colour flies
Taking the delighted eyes,
You of any well that springs
May unfold the heaven of things;
Have it homely and within,
And thereof its likeness win,

Will you so in soul's desire :
This do sages grant t' the lyre.
This is being bird and more,
More than glad musician this ;
Granaries you will have a store
Past the world of woe and bliss ;
Sharing still its bliss and woe ;
Harnessed to its hungers, no.
On the throne Success usurps
You shall seat the joy you feel
Where a race of water chirps,
Twisting hues of flourished steel :
Or where light is caught in hoop
Up a clearing's leafy rise,
Where the crossing deerherds troop
Classic splendours, knightly dyes.
Or, where old-eyed oxen chew
Speculation with the cud,
Read their pool of vision through,
Back to hours when mind was mud ;
Nigh the knot, which did untwine
Timelessly to drowsy suns ;
Seeing Earth a slimy spine,
Heaven a space for winging tons.
Farther, deeper, may you read,
Have you sight for things afield,
Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,
Cloaked, but in the peep revealed ;
Showing a kind face and sweet :
Look you with the soul you see 't.
Glory narrowing to grace,
Grace to glory magnified,
Following that will you embrace
Close in arms or aëry wide.
Banished is the white Foam-born

Not from here, nor under ban
Phoebus lyrist, Phoebe's horn,
Pipings of the reedy Pan.
Loved of Earth of old they were,
Loving did interpret her ;
And the sterner worship bars
None whom Song has made her stars.
You have seen the huntress moon
Radiantly facing dawn,
Dusky meads between them strewn
Glimmering like downy awn :
Argent Westward glows the hunt,
East the blush about to climb ;
One another fair they front,
Transient, yet outshine the time ;
Even as dewlight off the rose
In the mind a jewel sows.
Thus opposing grandeurs live
Here if Beauty be their dower :
Doth she of her spirit give,
Fleetingness will spare her flower.
This is in the tune we play,
Which no spring of strength would quell ;
In subduing does not slay ;
Guides the channel, guards the well :
Tempered holds the young blood-heat,
Yet through measured grave accord
Hears the heart of wildness beat
Like a centaur's hoof on sward.
Drink the sense the notes infuse,
You a larger self will find :
Sweetest fellowship ensues
With the creatures of your kind.
Ay, and Love, if Love it be
Flaming over *I* and *ME*,

Love meet they who do not shove
Cravings in the van of Love.
Courtly dames are here to woo,
Knowing love if it be true.
Reverence the blossom-shoot
Fervently, they are the fruit.
Mark them stepping, hear them talk,
Goddess, is no myth inane,
You will say of those who walk
In the woods of Westermain.
Waters that from throat and thigh
Dart the sun his arrows back ;
Leaves that on a woodland sigh
Chat of secret things no lack ;
Shadowy branch-leaves, waters clear,
Bare or veiled they move sincere ;
Not by slavish terrors tripped ;
Being anew in nature dipped,
Growths of what they step on, these ;
With the roots the grace of trees.
Casket-breasts they give, nor hide,
For a tyrant's flattered pride,
Mind, which nourished not by light,
Lurks the shuffling trickster sprite :
Whereof are strange tales to tell ;
Some in blood writ, tombed in hell.
Here the ancient battle ends,
Joining two astonished friends,
Who the kiss can give and take
With more warmth than in that world
Where the tiger claws the snake,
Snake her tiger clasps unfurled,
And the issue of their fight
Peoples lands in snarling plight.
Here her splendid beast she leads

Silken-leashed and decked with weeds
Wild as he, but breathing faint
Sweetness of unfelt constraint.
Love, the great volcano, flings
Fires of lower Earth to sky ;
Love, the sole permitted, sings
Sovereignly of *ME* and *I*.
Bowers he has of sacred shade,
Spaces of superb parade,
Voiceful . . . But bring you a note
Wrangling, howsoe'er remote,
Discords out of discord spin
Round and round derisive din :
Sudden will a pallor pant
Chill at screeches miscreant ;
Owls or spectres, thick they flee ;
Nightmare upon horror broods ;
Hooded laughter, monkish glee,
Gaps the vital air.
Enter these enchanted woods
You who dare.

IV

You must love the light so well
That no darkness will seem fell.
Love it so you could accost
Fellowly a livid ghost.
Whish ! the phantom wisps away,
Owns him smoke to cocks of day.
In your breast the light must burn
Fed of you, like corn in quern
Ever plumping while the wheel
Speeds the mill and drains the meal.

Light to light sees little strange,
Only features heavenly new ;
Then you touch the nerve of Change,
Then of Earth you have the clue ;
Then her two-sexed meanings melt
Through you, wed the thought and felt.
Sameness locks no scurfy pond
Here for Custom, crazy-fond :
Change is on the wing to bud
Rose in brain from rose in blood.
Wisdom throbbing shall you see
Central in complexity ;
From her pasture 'mid the beasts
Rise to her ethereal feasts,
Not, though lightnings track your wit
Starward, scorning them you quit :
For be sure the bravest wing
Preens it in our common spring,
Thence along the vault to soar,
You with others, gathering more,
Glad of more, till you reject
Your proud title of elect,
Perilous even here while few
Roam the arched greenwood with you.
Heed that snare.
Muffled by his cavern-cowl
Squats the scaly Dragon-fowl,
Who was lord ere light you drank,
And lest blood of knightly rank
Stream, let not your fair princess
Stray : he holds the leagues in stress
Watches keenly there.
Oft has he been riven ; slain
Is no force in Westermain.
Wait, and we shall forge him curbs,

Put his fangs to uses, tame,
Teach him, quick as cunning herbs,
How to cure him sick and lame.
Much restricted, much enringed,
Much he frets, the hooked and winged,
Never known to spare.
'Tis enough : the name of Sage
Hits no thing in nature, nought ;
Man the least, save when grave Age
From yon Dragon guards his thought.
Eye him when you hearken dumb
To what words from Wisdom come.
When she says how few are by
Listening to her, eye his eye.
Self, his name declare.
Him shall Change, transforming late,
Wonderously renovate.
Hug himself the creature may :
What he hugs is loathed decay.
Crying, slip thy scales, and slough !
Change will strip his armour off ;
Make of him who was all maw,
Inly only thrilling-shrewd,
Such a servant as none saw
Through his days of dragonhood :
Days when growling o'er his bone,
Sharpened he for mine and thine :
Sensitive within alone ;
Scaly as in clefts of pine.
Change, the strongest son of Life,
Has the Spirit here to wife.
Lo, their young of vivid breed
Bear the lights that onward speed,
Threading thickets, mounting glades,
Up the verdurous colonnades,

Round the fluttered curves, and down,
Out of sight of Earth's blue crown,
Whither, in her central space,
Spouts the Fount and Lure o' the chase.
Fount unresting, Lure divine!
There meet all: too late look most.
Fire in water hued as wine
Springs amid a shadowy host;
Circled: one close-headed mob,
Breathless, scanning divers heaps
Where a Heart begins to throb,
Where it ceases, slow, with leaps:
And 'tis very strange, 'tis said,
How you spy in each of them
Semblance of that Dragon red,
As the oak in bracken-stem.
And, 'tis said, how each and each:
Which commences, which subsides:
First my Dragon! doth beseech
Her who food for all provides.
And she answers with no sign;
Utters neither yea nor nay;
Fires the water hued as wine;
Kneads another spark in clay.
Terror is about her hid;
Silence of the thunders locked;
Lightnings lining the shut lid;
Fixity on quaking rocked.
Lo, you look at Flow and Drought
Interflashed and interwrought:
Ended is begun, begun
Ended, quick as torrents run.
Young Impulsion spouts to sink;
Luridness and lustre link;
'Tis your come and go of breath;

Mirrored pants the Life, the Death ;
Each of either reaped and sown :
Rosiest rosy wanes to crone.
See you so ? your senses drift ;
'Tis a shuttle weaving swift.
Look with spirit past the sense,
Spirit shines in permanence.
That is She, the view of whom
Is the dust within the tomb,
Is the inner blush above,
Look to loathe, or look to love ;
Think her Lump, or know her Flame ;
Dread her scourge, or read her aim ;
Shoot your hungers from their nerve ;
Or, in her example, serve.
Some have found her sitting grave ;
Laughing, some ; or, browed with sweat,
Hurling dust of fool and knave
In a hissing smithy's jet.
More it were not well to speak ;
Burn to see, you need but seek.
Once beheld she gives the key
Airing every doorway, she ;
Little can you stop or steer
Ere of her you are the seër,
On the surface she will witch,
Rendering Beauty yours, but gaze
Under, and the soul is rich
Past computing, past amaze.
Then is courage that endures
Even her awful tremble yours.
Then, the reflex of that Fount
Spied below, will Reason mount
Lordly and a quenchless force,
Lighting Pain to its mad source,

Scaring Fear till Fear escapes,
Shot through all its phantom shapes.
Then your spirit will perceive
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins ;
Where the passions interweave,
How the serpent tangle spins
Of the sense of Earth misprised,
Brainlessly unrecognized ;
She being Spirit in her clods,
Footway to the God of Gods.
Then for you are pleasures pure,
Sureties as the stars are sure :
Not the wanton beckoning flags
Which, of flattery and delight,
Wax to the grim Habit-Hags
Riding souls of men to night :
Pleasures that through blood run sane,
Quickening spirit from the brain.
Each of each in sequent birth,
Blood and brain and spirit, three
(Say the deepest gnomes of Earth),
Join for true felicity.
Are they parted, then expect
Some one sailing will be wrecked :
Separate hunting are they sped,
Scan the morsel coveted.
Earth that Triad is : she hides
Joy from him who that divides ;
Showers it when the three are one
Glassing her in union.
Earth your haven, Earth your helm,
You command a double realm ;
Labouring here to pay your debt,
Till your little sun shall set ;
Leaving her the future task :

Loving her too well to ask.
Eglantine that climbs the yew,
She her darkest wreathes for those
Knowing her the Ever-new,
And themselves the kin o' the rose.
Life, the chisel, axe and sword,
Wield who have her depths explored:
Life, the dream, shall be their robe,
Large as air about the globe;
Life, the question, hear its cry
Echoed with concordant Why;
Life, the small self-dragon ramped,
Thrill for service to be stamped.
Ay, and over every height
Life for them shall wave a wand:
That, the last, where sits affright,
Homely shows the stream beyond.
Love the light and be its lynx,
You will track her and attain;
Read her as no cruel Sphinx
In the woods of Westermain.
Daily fresh the woods are ranged;
Glooms which otherwhere appal,
Sounded: here, their worths exchanged,
Urban joins with pastoral:
Little lost, save what may drop
Husk-like, and the mind preserves.
Natural overgrowths they lop,
Yet from nature neither swerves,
Trained or savage: for this cause:
Of our Earth they ply the laws,
Have in Earth their feeding root,
Mind of man and bent of brute.
Hear that song; both wild and ruled
Hear it: is it wail or mirth?

Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled ?
None, and all : it springs of Earth.
O but hear it ! 'tis the mind ;
Mind that with deep Earth unites,
Round the solid trunk to wind
Rings of clasping parasites.
Music have you there to feed
Simplest and most soaring need.
Free to wind, and in desire
Winding, they to her attached
Feel the trunk a spring of fire,
And ascend to heights unmatched,
Whence the tidal world is viewed
As a sea of windy wheat,
Momently black, barren, rude ;
Golden-brown, for harvest meet ;
Dragon-reaped from folly-sown ;
Bride-like to the sickle-blade :
Quick it varies, while the moan,
Moan of a sad creature strayed,
Chiefly is its voice. So flesh
Conjures tempest-flails to thresh
Good from worthless. Some clear lamps
Light it ; more of dead marsh-damps.
Monster is it still, and blind,
Fit but to be led by Pain.
Glance we at the paths behind,
Fruitful sight has Westermain.
There we laboured, and in turn
Forward our blown lamps discern,
As you see on the dark deep
Far the loftier billows leap,
    Foam for beacon bear.
Hither, hither, if you will,
Drink instruction, or instil,

Run the woods like vernal sap,
Crying, hail to luminousness!
But have care.
In yourself may lurk the trap:
On conditions they caress.
Here you meet the light invoked:
Here is never secret cloaked.
Doubt you with the monster's fry
All his orbit may exclude;
Are you of the stiff, the dry,
Cursing the not understood;
Grasp you with the monster's claws;
Govern with his truncheon-saws;
Hate, the shadow of a grain;
You are lost in Westermain:
Earthward swoops a vulture sun,
Nighted upon carrion:
Straightway venom winecups shout
Toasts to One whose eyes are out:
Flowers along the reeling floor
Drip henbane and hellebore:
Beauty, of her tresses shorn,
Shrieks as nature's maniac:
Hideousness on hoof and horn
Tumbles, yapping in her track:
Haggard Wisdom, stately once,
Leers fantastical and trips:
Allegory drums the sconce,
Impiousness nibblenips.
Imp that dances, imp that flits,
Imp o' the demon-growing girl,
Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits
Round you, and with them you whirl
Fast where pours the fountain-rout
Out of Him whose eyes are out:

Multitudes on multitudes,
Drenched in wallowing devilry :
And you ask where you may be,
In what reek of a lair
Given to bones and ogre-broods :
And they yell you Where.
Enter these enchanted woods,
You who dare.

A BALLAD OF PAST MERIDIAN

I

LAST night returning from my twilight walk
I met the grey mist Death, whose eyeless brow
Was bent on me, and from his hand of chalk
He reached me flowers as from a withered bough :
O Death, what bitter nosegays givest thou !

II

Death said, I gather, and pursued his way.
Another stood by me, a shape in stone,
Sword-hacked and iron-stained, with breasts of clay,
And metal veins that sometimes fiery shone :
O Life, how naked and how hard when known !

III

Life said, As thou hast carved me, such am I.
Then memory, like the nightjar on the pine,
And sightless hope, a woodlark in night sky,
Joined notes of Death and Life till night's decline :
Of Death, of Life, those inwound notes are mine.

THE DAY OF THE DAUGHTER OF HADES

I

He who has looked upon Earth
Deeper than flower and fruit,
Losing some hue of his mirth,
As the tree striking rock at the root,
Unto him shall the marvellous tale
Of Callistes more humanly come
With the touch on his breast than a hail
From the markets that hum.

II

Now the youth footed swift to the dawn.
'Twas the season when wintertide,
In the higher rock-hollows updrawn,
Leaves meadows to bud, and he spied,
By light throwing shallow shade,
Between the beam and the gloom,
Sicilian Enna, whose Maid
Such aspect wears in her bloom
Underneath since the Charioteer
Of Darkness whirled her away,
On a reaped afternoon of the year,
Nigh the poppy-droop of Day.
O and naked of her, all dust,
The majestic Mother and Nurse,
Ringing cries to the God, the Just,
Curled the land with the blight of her curse:
Recollected of this glad isle

Still quaking. But now more fair,
And momently fraying the while
The veil of the shadows there,
Soft Enna that prostrate grief
Sang through, and revealed round the vines,
Bronze-orange, the crisp young leaf,
The wheat-blades tripping in lines,
A hue unillumined by sun
Of the flowers flooding grass as from founts :
All the penetrable dun
Of the morn as she mounts.

III

Nor had saffron and sapphire and red
Waved aloft to their sisters below,
When gaped by the rock-channel head
Of the lake, black, a cave at one blow,
Reverberant over the plain :
A sound oft fearfully swung
For the coming of wrathful rain :
And forth, like the dragon-tongue
Of a fire beaten flat by the gale,
But more as the smoke to behold,
A chariot burst. Then a wail
Quivered high of the love that would fold
Bliss immeasurable, bigger than heart,
Though a God's : and the wheels were stayed,
And the team of the chariot swart
Reared in marble, the six, dismayed,
Like hoofs that by night plashing sea
Curve and ramp from the vast swan-wave :
For, lo, the Great Mother, She !
And Callistes gazed, he gave
His eyeballs up to the sight :
The embrace of the Twain, of whom

To men are their day, their night,
Mellow fruits and the shearing tomb :
Our Lady of the Sheaves
And the Lily of Hades, the Sweet
Of Enna : he saw through leaves
The Mother and Daughter meet.
They stood by the chariot-wheel,
Embraced, very tall, most like
Fellow poplars, wind-taken, that reel
Down their shivering columns and strike
Head to head, crossing throats : and apart,
For the feast of the look, they drew,
Which Darkness no longer could thwart ;
And they broke together anew,
Exulting to tears, flower and bud.
But the mate of the Rayless was grave :
She smiled like Sleep on its flood,
That washes of all we crave :
Like the trance of eyes awake
And the spirit enshrouded, she cast
The wan underworld on the lake.
They were so, and they passed.

IV

He tells it, who knew the law
Upon mortals : he stood alive
Declaring that this he saw :
He could see, and survive.

V

Now the youth was not ware of the beams
With the grasses intertwined,
For each thing seen, as in dreams,
Came stepping to rear through his mind,
Till it struck his remembered prayer

To be witness of this which had flown
Like a smoke melted thinner than air,
That the vacancy doth disown.
And viewing a maiden, he thought
It might now be morn, and afar
Within him the memory wrought
Of a something that slipped from the car
When those, the august, moved by :
Perchance a scarf, and perchance
This maiden. She did not fly,
Nor started at his advance :
She looked, as when infinite thirst
Pants pausing to bless the springs,
Refreshed, unsated. Then first
He trembled with awe of the things
He had seen ; and he did transfer,
Divining and doubting in turn,
His reverence unto her ;
Nor asked what he crouched to learn :
The whence of her, whither, and why
Her presence there, and her name,
Her parentage : under which sky
Her birth, and how hither she came,
So young, a virgin, alone,
Unfriended, having no fear,
As Oreads have ; no moan,
Like the lost upon earth ; no tear ;
Not a sign of the torch in the blood,
Though her stature had reached the height
When mantles a tender rud
In maids that of youths have sight,
If maids of our seed they be :
For he said : A glad vision art thou !
And she answered him : Thou to me !
As men utter a vow.

VI

Then said she, quick as the cries
Of the rainy cranes : Light ! light !
And Helios rose in her eyes,
That were full as the dew-balls bright,
Relucent to him as dews
Unshaded. Breathing, she sent
Her voice to the God of the Muse,
And along the vale it went,
Strange to hear : not thin, not shrill :
Sweet, but no young maid's throat :
The echo beyond the hill
Ran falling on half the note :
And under the shaken ground
Where the Hundred-headed groans
By the roots of great Aetna bound,
As of him were hollow tones
Of wondering roared : a tale
Repeated to sunless halls.
But now off the face of the vale
Shadows fled in a breath, and the walls
Of the lake's rock-head were gold,
And the breast of the lake, that swell
Of the crestless long wave rolled
To shore-bubble, pebble and shell.
A morning of radiant lids
O'er the dance of the earth opened wide :
The bees chose their flowers, the snub kids
Upon hindlegs went sportive, or plied,
Nosing, hard at the dugs to be filled :
There was milk, honey, music to make :
Up their branches the little birds billed :
Chirrup, drone, bleat and buzz ringed the lake.
O shining in sunlight, chief
After water and water's caress,

Was the young bronze-orange leaf,
That clung to the tree as a tress,
Shooting lucid tendrils to wed
With the vine-hook tree or pole,
Like Arachne launched out on her thread.
Then the maiden her dusky stole
In the span of the black-starred zone
Gathered up for her footing fleet.
As one that had toil of her own
She followed the lines of wheat
Tripping straight through the field, green blades,
To the groves of olive grey,
Downy-grey, golden-tinged : and to glades
Where the pear-blossom thickens the spray
In a night, like the snow-packed storm :
Pear, apple, almond, plum :
Not wintry now : pushing, warm !
And she touched them with finger and thumb,
As the vine-hook closes : she smiled,
Recounting again and again,
Corn, wine, fruit, oil ! like a child,
With the meaning known to men.
For hours in the track of the plough
And the pruning-knife she stepped,
And of how the seed works, and of how
Yields the soil, she seemed adept.
Then she murmured that name of the dearth,
The Beneficent, Hers, who bade
Our husbandmen sow for the birth
Of the grain making earth full glad.
She murmured that Other's : the dirge
Of life-light : for whose dark lap
Our locks are clipped on the verge
Of the realm where runs no sap.
She said : We have looked on both !

And her eyes had a wavering beam
Of various lights, like the froth
Of the storm-swollen ravine stream
In flame of the bolt. What links
Were these which had made him her friend?
He eyed her, as one who drinks,
And would drink to the end.

VII

Now the meadows with crocus besprent,
And the asphodel woodsides she left,
And the lake-slopes, the ravishing scent
Of narcissus, dark-sweet, for the cleft
That tutors the torrent-brook,
Delaying its forceful spleen
With many a wind and crook
Through rock to the broad ravine.
By the hyacinth-bells in the brakes,
And the shade-loved white windflower, half hid,
And the sun-loving lizards and snakes
On the cleft's barren ledges, that slid
Out of sight, smooth as waterdrops, all,
At a snap of twig or bark
In the track of the foreign foot-fall,
She climbed to the pineforest dark,
Overbrowing an emerald chine
Of the glass-billows. Thence, as a wreath,
Running poplar and cypress to pine,
The lake-banks are seen, and beneath,
Vineyard, village, groves, rivers, towers, farms,
The citadel watching the bay,
The bay with the town in its arms,
The town shining white as the spray
Of the sapphire sea-wave on the rock,
Where the rock stars the girdle of sea,

White-ringed, as the midday flock,
Clipped by heat, rings the round of the tree.
That hour of the piercing shaft
Transfixes bough-shadows, confused
In veins of fire, and she laughed,
With her quiet mouth amused,
To see the whole flock, adroop,
Asleep, hug the tree-stem as one,
Imperceptibly filling the loop
Of its shade at a slant of sun.
The pipes under pent of the crag,
Where the goatherds in piping recline,
Have whimsical stops, burst and flag
Uncorrected as outstretched swine :
For the fingers are slack and unsure,
And the wind issues querulous :—thorns
And snakes !—but she listened demure,
Comparing day's music with morn's.
Of the gentle spirit that slips
From the bark of the tree she discoursed,
And of her of the wells, whose lips
Are coolness enchanting, rock-sourced.
And much of the sacred loon,
The frolic, the Goatfoot God,
For stories of indolent noon
In the pineforest's odorous nod,
She questioned, not knowing : he can
Be waspish, irascible, rude,
He is oftener friendly to man,
And ever to beasts and their brood.
For the which did she love him well,
She said, and his pipes of the reed,
His twitched lips puffing to tell
In music his tears and his need,
Against the sharp catch of his hurt.

Not as shepherds of Pan did she speak,
Nor spake as the schools, to divert,
But fondly, perceiving him weak
Before Gods, and to shepherds a fear,
A holiness, horn and heel.
All this she had learnt in her ear
From Callistes, and taught him to feel.
Yea, the solemn divinity flushed
Through the shaggy brown skin of the beast,
And the steeps where the cataract rushed,
And the wilds where the forest is priest,
Were his temple to clothe him in awe,
While she spake : 'twas a wonder : she read
The haunts of the beak and the claw
As plain as the land of bread,
But Cities and martial States,
Whither soon the youth veered his theme,
Were impervious barrier-gates
To her : and that ship, a trireme,
Nearing harbour, scarce wakened her glance,
Though he dwelt on the message it bore
Of sceptre and sword and lance
To the bee-swarms black on the shore,
Which were audible almost,
So black they were. It befell
That he called up the warrior host
Of the Song pouring hydromel
In thunder, the wide-winged Song.
And he named with his boyish pride
The heroes, the noble throng
Past Acheron now, foul tide !
With his joy of the godlike band
And the verse divine, he named
The chiefs pressing hot on the strand,
Seen of Gods, of Gods aided, and maimed.

The fleetfoot and ireful; the King;
Him, the prompter in stratagem,
Many-shifted and masterful: Sing,
O Muse! But she cried: Not of them!
She breathed as if breath had failed,
And her eyes, while she bade him desist,
Held the lost-to-light ghosts grey-mailed,
As you see the grey river-mist
Holds shapes on the yonder bank.
A moment her body waned,
The light of her sprang and sank:
Then she looked at the sun, she regained
Clear feature, and she breathed deep.
She wore the wan smile he had seen,
As the flow of the river of Sleep,
On the mouth of the Shadow-Queen.
In sunlight she craved to bask,
Saying: Life! And who was she? who?
Of what issue? He dared not ask,
For that partly he knew.

VIII

A noise of the hollow ground
Turned the eye to the ear in debate:
Not the soft overflowing of sound
Of the pines, ranked, lofty, straight,
Barely swayed to some whispers remote,
Some swarming whispers above:
Not the pines with the faint airs afloat,
Hush-hushing the nested dove:
It was not the pines, or the rout
Oft heard from mid-forest in chase,
But the long muffled roar of a shout
Subterranean. Sharp grew her face.
She rose, yet not moved by affright;

'Twas rather good haste to use
Her holiday of delight
In the beams of the God of the Muse.
And the steeps of the forest she crossed,
On its dry red sheddings and cones
Up the paths by roots green-mossed,
Spotted amber, and old mossed stones.
Then out where the brook-torrent starts
To her leap, and from bend to curve
A hurrying elbow darts
For the instant-glancing swerve,
Decisive, with violent will
In the action formed, like hers,
The maiden's, ascending ; and still
Ascending, the bud of the furze,
The broom, and all blue-berried shoots
Of stubborn and prickly kind,
The juniper flat on its roots,
The dwarf rhododaphne, behind
She left, and the mountain sheep
Far behind, goat, herbage and flower.
The island was hers, and the deep,
All heaven, a golden hour.
Then with wonderful voice that rang
Through air as the swan's nigh death,
Of the glory of Light she sang,
She sang of the rapture of Breath.
Nor ever, says he who heard,
Heard Earth in her boundaries broad,
From bosom of singer or bird
A sweetness thus rich of the God
Whose harmonies always are sane.
She sang of furrow and seed,
The burial, birth of the grain,
The growth, and the showers that feed,

And the green blades waxing mature
For the husbandman's armful brown.
O, the song in its burden ran pure,
And burden to song was a crown.
Callistes, a singer, skilled
In the gift he could measure and praise,
By a rival's art was thrilled,
Though she sang but a Song of Days,
Where the husbandman's toil and strife
Little varies to strife and toil:
But the milky kernel of life,
With her numbered: corn, wine, fruit, oil!
The song did give him to eat:
Gave the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh young sense of Sweet:
The grace of the battle for food,
With the issue Earth cannot refuse
When men to their labour are sworn.
'Twas a song of the God of the Muse
To the forehead of Morn.

IX

Him loved she. Lo, now was he veiled:
Over sea stood a swelled cloud-rack:
The fishing-boat havenward sailed,
Bent abeam with a whitened track,
Surprised, fast hauling the net,
As it flew: sea dashed, earth shook.
She said: Is it night? O not yet!
With a travail of thoughts in her look.
The mountain heaved up to its peak:
Sea darkened: earth gathered her fowl:
Of bird or of branch rose the shriek.
Night? but never so fell a scowl
Wore night, nor the sky since then

When ocean ran swallowing shore,
And the Gods looked down for men.
Broke tempest with that stern roar
Never yet, save when black on the whirl
Rode wrath of a sovereign Power.
Then the youth and the shuddering girl,
Dim as shades in the angry shower,
Joined hands and descended a maze
Of the paths that were racing alive
Round boulder and bush, cleaving ways,
Incessant, with sound of a hive.
The height was a fountain-urn
Pouring streams, and the whole solid height
Leaped, chasing at every turn
The pair in one spirit of flight
To the folding pineforest. Yet here,
Like the pause to things hunted, in doubt,
The stillness bred spectral fear
Of the awfulness ranging without,
And imminent. Downward they fled,
From under the haunted roof,
To the valley aquake with the tread
Of an iron-resounding hoof,
As of legions of thunderful horse
Broken loose and in line tramping hard.
For the rage of a hungry force
Roamed blind of its mark over sward :
They saw it rush dense in the cloak
Of its travelling swathe of steam,
All the vale through a thin thread-smoke
Was thrown back to distance extreme :
And dull the full breast of it blinked,
Like a buckler of steel breathed o'er,
Diminished, in strangeness distinct,
Glowing cold, unearthly, hoar :

An Enna of fields beyond sun,
Out of light, in a lurid web,
And the traversing fury spun
Up and down with a wave's flow and ebb ;
As the wave breaks to grasp and to spurn,
Retire, and in ravenous greed,
Inveterate, swell its return.
Up and down, as if wringing from speed
Sights that made the unsighted appear,
Delude and dissolve, on it scoured.
Lo, a sea upon land held career
Through the plain of the vale half-devoured.
Callistes of home and escape
Muttered swiftly, unwitting of speech.
She gazed at the Void of shape,
She put her white hand to his reach,
Saying : Now have we looked on the Three.
And divided from day, from night,
From air that is breath, stood she,
Like the vale, out of light.

X

Then again in disorderly words
He muttered of home, and was mute,
With the heart of the cowering birds
Ere they burst off the fowler's foot.
He gave her some redness that streamed
Through her limbs in a flitting glow.
The sigh of our life she seemed,
The bliss of it clothing in woe.
Frailer than flower when the round
Of the sickle encircles it : strong
To tell of the things profound,
Our inmost uttering song,
Unspoken. So stood she awhile

In the gloom of the terror afield,
And the silence about her smile
Said more than of tongue is revealed.
I have breathed : I have gazed : I have been :
It said : and not joylessly shone
The remembrance of light through the screen
Of a face that seemed shadow and stone.
She led the youth trembling, appalled,
To the lake-banks he saw sink and rise
Like a panic-struck breast. Then she called,
And the hurricane blackness had eyes.
It launched like the Thunderer's bolt.
Pale she drooped, and the youth by her side
Would have clasped her and dared a revolt
Sacrilegious as ever defied
High Olympus, but vainly for strength
His compassionate heart shook a frame
Stricken rigid to ice all its length.
On amain the black traveller came.
Lo, a chariot, cleaving the storm,
Clove the fountaining lake with a plough,
And the lord of the steeds was in form
He, the God of implacable brow,
Darkness : he : he in person : he raged
Through the wave like a boar of the wilds
From the hunters and hounds disengaged,
And a name shouted hoarsely : his child's.
Horror melted in anguish to hear.
Lo, the wave hissed apart for the path
Of the terrible Charioteer,
With the foam and torn features of wrath,
Hurled aloft on each arm in a sheet ;
And the steeds clove it, rushing at land
Like the teeth of the famished at meat.
Then he swept out his hand.

XI

This, no more, doth Callistes recall :
He saw, ere he dropped in swoon,
On the maiden the chariot fall,
As a thundercloud swings on the moon.
Forth, free of the deluge, one cry
From the vanishing gallop rose clear :
And : Skiágeneia ! the sky
Rang : Skiágeneia ! the sphere.
And she left him therewith, to rejoice,
Repine, yearn, and know not his aim,
The life of their day in her voice,
Left her life in her name.

XII

Now the valley in ruin of fields
And fair meadowland, showing at eve
Like the spear-pitted warrior's shields
After battle, bade men believe
That no other than wrathfullest God
Had been loose on her beautiful breast,
Where the flowery grass was clod,
Wheat and vine as a trailing nest.
The valley, discreet in grief,
Disclosed but the open truth,
And Enna had hope of the sheaf :
There was none for the desolate youth
Devoted to mourn and to crave.
Of the secret he had divined
Of his friend of a day would he rave :
How for light of our earth she pined :
For the olive, the vine and the wheat
Burning through with inherited fire :
And when Mother went Mother to meet,
She was prompted by simple desire

In the day-destined car to have place
At the skirts of the Goddess, unseen,
And be drawn to the dear earth's face.
She was fire for the blue and the green
Of our earth, dark fire ; athirst
As a seed of her bosom for dawn,
White air that had robed and nursed
Her mother. Now was she gone
With the Silent, the God without tear,
Like a bud peeping out of its sheath
To be sundered and stamped with the sere.
And Callistes to her beneath,
As she to our beams, extinct,
Strained arms : he was shade of her shade.
In division so were they linked.
But the song which had betrayed
Her flight to the cavernous ear
For its own keenly wakeful : that song
Of the sowing and reaping, and cheer
Of the husbandman's heart made strong
Through droughts and deluging rains
With his faith in the Great Mother's love :
O the joy of the breath she sustains,
And the lyre of the light above,
And the first rapt vision of Good,
And the fresh young sense of Sweet :
That song the youth ever pursued
In the track of her footing fleet.
For men to be profited much
By her day upon earth did he sing :
Of her voice, and her steps, and her touch
On the blossoms of tender Spring,
Immortal : and how in her soul
She is with them, and tearless abides.
Folding grain of a love for one goal

In patience, past flowing of tides.
And if unto him she was tears,
He wept not : he wasted within :
Seeming sane in the song, to his peers,
Only crazed where the cravings begin.
Our Lady of Gifts prized he less
Than her issue in darkness : the dim
Lost Skiágeneia's caress
Of our earth made it richest for him.
And for that was a curse on him raised,
And he withered rathe, dry to his prime,
Though the bounteous Giver he praised
Through the island with rites of old time
Exceedingly fervent, and reaped
Veneration for teachings devout,
Pious hymns when the corn-sheaves are heaped,
And the wine-presses ruddily spout,
And the olive and apple are juice
At a touch light as hers lost below.
Whatsoever to men is of use
Sprang his worship of them who bestow,
In a measure of songs unexcelled :
But that soul loving earth and the sun
From her home of the shadows he held
For his beacon where beam there is none :
And to join her, or have her brought back,
In his frenzy the singer would call,
Till he followed where never was track,
On the path trod of all.

THE LARK ASCENDING

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain ot sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls ;
A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changeingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardour, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstasy to music turned,
Impelled by what his happy bill
Disperses ; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live
Renewed in endless notes of glee,

So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow,
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight,
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord
Like myriad dews of sunny sward
That trembling into fulness shine,
And sparkle dropping argentine ;
Such wooing as the ear receives
From zephyr caught in choric leaves
Of aspens when their chattering net
Is flushed to white with shivers wet ;
And such the water-spirit's chime
On mountain heights in morning's prime,
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,
Too animate to need a stress ;
But wider over many heads
The starry voice ascending spreads,
Awakening, as it waxes thin,
The best in us to him akin ;
And every face to watch him raised
Puts on the light of children praised,
So rich our human pleasure ripes
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,
Though nought be promised from the seas,
But only a soft-ruffling breeze
Sweep glittering on a still content,
Serenity in ravishment.

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes :
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine,
He is, the hills, the human line,
The meadows green, the fallows brown,
The dreams of labour in the town ;
He sings the sap, the quickened veins ;
The wedding song of sun and rains
He is, the dance of children, thanks
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
And eye of violets while they breathe ;
All these the circling song will wreathe,
And you shall hear the herb and tree,
The better heart of men shall see,
Shall feel celestially, as long
As you crave nothing save the song.

Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality,
So pure that it salutes the suns,
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,
Now names, and men still housing here,
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
For song our highest heaven to greet :
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
From firmest base to farthest leap,
Because their love of Earth is deep,
And they are warriors in accord
With life to serve, and pass reward,
So touching purest and so heard
In the brain's reflex of yon bird :
Wherefore their soul in me, or mine
Through self-forgetfulness divine,
In them, that song aloft maintains,
To fill the sky and thrill the plains
With showerings drawn from human stores,
As he to silence nearer soars,
Extends the world at wings and dome,
More spacious making more our home,
Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

PHOEBUS WITH ADMETUS

I

When by Zeus relenting the mandate was revoked,
Sentencing to exile the bright Sun-God,
Mindful were the ploughmen of who the steer had yoked,
Who: and what a track showed the upturned sod!
Mindful were the shepherds as now the noon severe
Bent a burning eyebrow to brown evetide,
How the rustic flute drew the silver to the sphere,
Sister of his own, till her rays fell wide.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

II

Chirping none the scarlet cicalas crouched in ranks:
Slack the thistle-head piled its down-silk grey:
Scarce the stony lizard sucked hollows in his flanks:
Thick on spots of umbrage our drowsed flocks lay.
Sudden bowed the chestnuts beneath a wind unheard,
Lengthened ran the grasses, the sky grew slate:
Then amid a swift flight of winged seed white as curd,
Clear of limb a Youth smote the master's gate.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

III

Water, first of singers, o'er rocky mount and mead,
First of earthly singers, the sun-loved rill,
Sang of him, and flooded the ripples on the reed,
Seeking whom to waken and what ear fill.
Water, sweetest soother to kiss a wound and cool,
Sweetest and divinest, the sky-born brook,
Chuckled, with a whimper, and made a mirror-pool
Round the guest we welcomed, the strange hand shook.
God ! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

IV

Many swarms of wild bees descended on our fields :
Stately stood the wheatstalk with head bent high :
Big of heart we laboured at storing mighty yields,
Wool and corn, and clusters to make men cry !
Hand-like rushed the vintage ; we strung the bellied skins
Plump, and at the sealing the Youth's voice rose :
Maidens clung in circle, on little fists their chins ;
Gentle beasties through pushed a cold long nose.
God ! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

V

Foot to fire in snowtime we trimmed the slender shaft :
Often down the pit spied the lean wolf's teeth
Grin against his will, trapped by masterstrokes of craft ;
Helpless in his froth-wrath as green logs seethe !

Safe the tender lambs tugged the teats, and winter sped
Whirled before the crocus, the year's new gold.
Hung the hooky beak up aloft the arrowhead
Reddened through his feathers for our dear fold.
God ! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VI

Tales we drank of giants at war with Gods above :
Rocks were they to look on, and earth climbed air !
Tales of search for simples, and those who sought of love
Ease because the creature was all too fair.
Pleasant ran our thinking that while our work was good,
Sure as fruits for sweat would the praise come fast.
He that wrestled stoutest and tamed the billow-brood
Danced in rings with girls, like a sail-flapped mast.
God ! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VII

Lo, the herb of healing, when once the herb is known,
Shines in shady woods bright as new-sprung flame.
Ere the string was tightened we heard the mellow tone,
After he had taught how the sweet sounds came.

Stretched about his feet, labour done, 'twas as you see
Red pomegranates tumble and burst hard rind.
So began contention to give delight and be
Excellent in things aimed to make life kind.
God ! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VIII

You with shelly horns, rams ! and promontory goats,
You whose browsing beards dip in coldest dew !
Bulls, that walk the pastures in kingly-flashing coats !
Laurel, ivy, vine, wreathed for feasts not few !
You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,
You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent :
He has been our fellow, the morning of our days ;
Us he chose for housemates, and this way went.
God ! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

MELAMPUS

I

With love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck ;
Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings
From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck ;
Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball ;
Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook :
The good physician Melampus, loving them all,
Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

II

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key
Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.
The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we
To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours :
And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined
Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows
In them, in us, from the source by man unattained
Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

III

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast
Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,
The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best
Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape :
For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,
As babes they learn where her motherly help is great :
They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,
And need they medical antidotes find them straight.

IV

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,
Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain
Like swimmers varying billows : never in woods
Runs white insanity fleeing itself : all sane
The woods revolve : as the tree its shadowing limns
To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life
Restrains disorder : you hear the primitive hymns
Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.

V

Now sleeping once on a day of marvellous fire,
A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret
That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,
Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set
Their tongues to lick him : the swift affectionate tongue
Of each ran licking the slumberer : then his ears
A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly : sudden upsprung,
He heard a voice piping : Ay, for he has no fears !

VI

A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech
Of men, it seemed : and another renewed : He moves
To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach ;
He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.
No fears have I of a man who goes with his head
To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand :
I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed ;
I pipe him much for his good could he understand.

VII

Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist :
He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.
Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,
He spied the bird and the bill of the speaking bird.
His cushion mosses in shades of various green,
The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake
Slipped under : draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,
It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

VIII

Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,
As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,
Ere yet they dart in a brook, are one bubble-pool
To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.
The soul of light vivid shone, a stream within stream ;
The soul of sound from a musical shell outflew ;
Where others hear but a hum and see but a beam,
The tongue and eye of the fountain of life he knew.

IX

He knew the Hours : they were round him, laden with seed
Of hours bestrewn upon vapour, and one by one
They winged as ripened in fruit the burden decreed
For each to scatter ; they flushed like the buds in sun,
Bequeathing seed to successive similar rings,
Their sisters, bearers to men of what men have earned :
He knew them, talked with the yet unreddened ; the stings,
The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms divined, discerned.

X

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,
By riddling fingers expanded, oft watched in growth
With brooding deep as the noon-ray's quickening wheat,
Ere touch'd, the pendulous flower of the plants of sloth,
The plants of rigidness, answered question and squeeze,
Revealing wherefore it bloomed uninviting, bent,
Yet making harmony breathe of life and disease,
The deeper chord of a wonderful instrument.

XI

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and the fates
We arm to bruise or caress us : his ears were charged
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble hates,
With music wrought of distraction his heart enlarged.
Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer, though mute,
He drew the Master of harmonies, voiced or stilled,
To seek him ; heard at the silent medicine-root
A song, beheld in fulfilment the unfulfilled.

XII

Him Phoebus, lending to darkness colour and form
Of light's excess, many lessons and counsels gave ;
Showed Wisdom lord of the human intricate swarm,
And whence prophetic it looks on the hives that rave ;
And how acquired, of the zeal of love to acquire,
And where it stands, in the centre of life a sphere ;
And Measure, mood of the lyre, the rapturous lyre,
He said was Wisdom, and struck him the notes to hear.

XIII

Sweet, sweet : 'twas glory of vision, honey, the breeze
In heat, the run of the river on root and stone,
All senses joined, as the sister Pierides
Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine, his own.
In stately order, evolved of sound into sight,
From sight to sound intershifting, the man descried
The growths of earth, his adored, like day out of night,
Ascend in song, seeing nature and song allied.

XIV

And there vitality, there, there solely in song,
Resides, where earth and her uses to men, their needs,
Their forceful cravings, the theme are : there is it strong,
The Master said : and the studious eye that reads
(Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods on the mount)
In links divine with the lyrical tongue is bound.
Pursue thy craft : it is music drawn of a fount
To spring perennial ; well-spring is common ground.

XV

Melampus dwelt among men : physician and sage,
He served them, loving them, healing them ; sick or maimed
Or them that frenzied in some delirious rage
Outran the measure, his juice of the woods reclaimed.
He played on men, as his master, Phoebus, on strings
Melodious : as the God did he drive and check,
Through love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck.

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

UNDER yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,
  Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
  Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,
  Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:
  Then would she hold me and never let me go?

* * *

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
  Swift as the swallow along the river's light
Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,
  Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
  Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
  Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

* * *

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
  Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
  More love should I have, and much less care.
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,
  Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
  I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder :
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.
Deals she an unkindness, 'tis but her rapid measure,
Even as in a dance ; and her smile can heal no less :
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

* * *

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown eve-jar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting :
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

* * *

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,
Arm in arm, all against the raying West,
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,
Brave in her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.
Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
Whispered the world was ; morning light is she.
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless ;
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

* * *

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
Threading it with colour, like yewberries the yew.

Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.
Maiden still the morn is ; and strange she is, and secret ;
Strange her eyes ; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

* * *

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

* * *

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window
Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

* * *

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose ;
  Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.
My sweet leads : she knows not why, but now she loiters,
  Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,
  Coming the rose : and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odours and for colour,
  Covert and the nightingale ; she knows not why.

* * *

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,
  Streaming like a willow grey in arrowy rain :
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel
  She will be ; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway :
  She is forth to cheer a neighbour lacking mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder
  Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

* * *

Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
  Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.
I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones :
  O my wild ones ! they tell me more than these.
You, my wild one, you tell of honied field-rose,
  Violet, blushing eglantine in life ; and even as they,
They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,
  You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.

* * *

Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,
  Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.
Parted is the window ; she sleeps ; the starry jasmine
  Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.

Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest ?
Not while she sleeps : while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,
Luring her to love ; she sleeps ; the starry jasmine
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.

* * *

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades ;
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey leaf ;
Yellow with stonecrop ; the moss-mounds are yellow ;
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle ;
Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine :
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,
Thinking of the harvest : I look and think of mine.

* * *

This I may know : her dressing and undressing
Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport
Shift from cloud to moonlight ; or edging over thunder
Slips a ray of sun ; or sweeping into port
White sails furl ; or on the ocean borders
While sails lean along the waves leaping green.
Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight
Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

* * *

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse
Open with the morn, and in a breezy link
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,
Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer
Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes
Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge :
Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats !

Cool was the woodside ; cool as her white dairy
Keeping sweet the cream-pan ; and there the boys from school,
Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine ;
O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool !
Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher
Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tiptoe,
Said, 'I will kiss you' : she laughed and leaned her cheek.

* * *

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch ; loose droops the blue.
Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen ; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

* * *

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful !
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced !
O the treasure-tresses one another over
Nodding ! O the girdle slack about the waist !
Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet
Quick amid the wheatears : wound about the waist,
Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripeness !
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced !

* * *

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,
Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow :
Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,
Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.

Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree
Gazes in this whiteness : nightlong could I.
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.
Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die !

* * *

Gossips count her faults ; they scour a narrow chamber
Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.
' When she was a tiny,' one aged woman quavers,
Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.
Faults she had once as she learnt to run and tumbled :
Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.
Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy
Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

* * *

Hither she comes ; she comes to me ; she lingers,
Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise
High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger ;
Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.
Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,
Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames.—
Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,
Arms up, she dropped : our souls were in our names.

* * *

Soon will she lie like a white-frost sunrise.
Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale as rye,
Long since your sheaves have yielded to the thresher,
Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses fly.
Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.
Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged Spring !
Sing from the South-West, bring her back the truants,
Nightingale and swallow, song and dipping wing.

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
  Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain, you,
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the skyfields,
  Youngest green transfused in silver shining through :
Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry :
  Fair as in image my seraph love appears
Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids :
  Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears.

* * *

Could I find a place to be alone with heaven,
  I would speak my heart out : heaven is my need.
Every woodland tree is flushing like the dogwood,
  Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like the reed.
Flushing like the dogwood crimson in October ;
  Streaming like the flag-reed South-West blown ;
Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted whitebeam :
  All seem to know what is for heaven alone.

THE THREE SINGERS TO YOUNG BLOOD

Carols nature, counsel men.
Different notes as rook from wren
Hear we when our steps begin,
And the choice is cast within,
Where a robber raven's tale
Urges passion's nightingale.

Hark to the three. Chimed they in one,
Life were music of the sun.
Liquid first, and then the caw,
Then the cry that knows not law.

I

As the birds do, so do we,
Bill our mate, and choose our tree.
Swift to building work addressed,
Any straw will help a nest.
Mates are warm, and this is truth,
Glad the young that come of youth.
They have bloom i' the blood and sap
Chilling at no thunder-clap.
Man and woman on the thorn
Trust not Earth, and have her scorn.
They who in her lead confide,
Wither me if they spread not wide!
Look for aid to little things,
You will get them quick as wings,
Thick as feathers; would you feed,
Take the leap that springs the need.

II

Contemplate the rutted road:
Life is both a lure and goad.
Each to hold in measure just,
Trample appetite to dust.
Mark the fool and wanton spin:
Keep to harness as a skin.
Ere you follow nature's lead,
Of her powers in you have heed:
Else a shiverer you will find
You have challenged humankind.
Mates are chosen marketwise:
Coolest bargainer best buys.
Leap not, nor let leap the heart:
Trot your track, and drag your cart.
So your end may be in wool,
Honoured, and with manger full.

III

O the rosy light! it fleets,
Dearer dying than all sweets.
That is life: it waves and goes;
Solely in that cherished Rose
Palpitates, or else 'tis death.
Call it love with all thy breath.
Love! it lingers: Love! it nears:
Love! O Love! the Rose appears,
Blushful, magic, reddening air.
Now the choice is on thee: dare!
Mortal seems the touch, but makes
Immortal the hand that takes.
Feel what sea within thee shames
Of its force all other claims,
Drowns them. Clasp! the world will be
Heavenly Rose to swelling sea.

THE ORCHARD AND THE HEATH

I CHANCED upon an early walk to spy
A troop of children through an orchard gate :
The boughs hung low, the grass was high :
They had but to lift hands or wait
For fruits to fill them ; fruits were all their sky.

They shouted, running on from tree to tree,
And played the game the wind plays, on and round.
'Twas visible invisible glee
Pursuing ; and a fountain's sound
Of laughter spouted, pattering fresh on me.

I could have watched them till the daylight fled,
Their pretty bower made such a light of day.
A small one tumbling sang, ' Oh ! head ! '
The rest to comfort her straightway
Seized on a branch and thumped down apples red.

The tiny creature flashing through green grass,
And laughing with her feet and eyes among
Fresh apples, while a little lass
Over as o'er breeze-ripples hung :
That sight I saw, and passed as aliens pass.

My footpath left the pleasant farms and lanes,
Soft cottage-smoke, straight cocks a-crow, gay flowers;
Beyond the wheel-ruts of the wains,
Across a heath I walked for hours,
And met its rival tenants, rays and rains.

Still in my view mile-distant firs appeared,
When, under a patched channel-bank enriched
With foxglove whose late bells drooped seared,
Behold, a family had pitched
Their camp, and labouring the low tent upreared.

Here, too, were many children, quick to scan
A new thing coming ; swarthy cheeks, white teeth ;
In many-coloured rags they ran,
Like iron runlets of the heath.
Dispersed lay broth-pot, sticks, and drinking-can.

Three girls, with shoulders like a boat at sea
Tipped sideways by the wave (their clothing slid
From either ridge unequally),
Lean, swift and voluble, bestrid
A starting-point, unfrocked to the bent knee.

They raced ; their brothers yelled them on, and broke
In act to follow, but as one they snuffed
Wood-fumes, and by the fire that spoke
Of provender its pale flame puffed,
And rolled athwart dwarf furzes grey-blue smoke.

Soon on the dark edge of a ruddier gleam,
The mother-pot perusing, all, stretched flat,
Paused for its bubbling-up supreme :
A dog upright in circle sat,
And oft his nose went with the flying steam.

I turned and looked on heaven awhile, where now
The moor-faced sunset broaden'd with red light ;
Threw high aloft a golden bough,
And seemed the desert of the night
Far down with mellow orchards to endow.

EARTH AND MAN

I

On her great venture, Man,
Earth gazes while her fingers dint the breast
Which is his well of strength, his home of rest,
And fair to scan.

II

More aid than that embrace,
That nourishment, she cannot give : his heart
Involves his fate ; and she who urged the start
Abides the race.

III

For he is in the lists
Contentious with the elements, whose dower
First sprang him ; for swift vultures to devour
If he desists.

IV

His breath of instant thirst
Is warning of a creature matched with strife,
To meet it as a bride, or let fall life
On life's accursed.

V

No longer forth he bounds
The lusty animal, afield to roam,
But peering in Earth's entrails, where the gnome
Strange themes propounds.

VI

By hunger sharply sped
To grasp at weapons ere he learns their use,
In each new ring he bears a giant's thews,
An infant's head.

VII

And ever that old task
Of reading what he is and whence he came,
Whither to go, finds wilder letters flame
Across her mask.

VIII

She hears his wailful prayer,
When now to the Invisible he raves
To rend him from her, now of his mother craves
Her calm, her care.

IX

The thing that shudders most
Within him is the burden of his cry.
Seen of his dread, she is to his blank eye
The eyeless Ghost.

X

Or sometimes she will seem
Heavenly, but her blush, soon wearing white,
Veils like a gorsebush in a web of blight,
With gold-buds dim.

XI

Once worshipped Prime of Powers,
She still was the Implacable : as a beast,
She struck him down and dragged him from the feast
She crowned with flowers.

XII

Her pomp of glorious hues,
Her revelries of ripeness, her kind smile,
Her songs, her peeping faces, lure awhile
With symbol-clues.

XIII

The mystery she holds
For him, inveterately he strains to see,
And sight of his obtuseness is the key
Among those folds.

XIV

He may entreat, aspire,
He may despair, and she has never heed.
She drinking his warm sweat will soothe his need,
Not his desire.

XV

She prompts him to rejoice,
Yet scares him on the threshold with the shroud.
He deems her cherishing of her best-endowed
A wanton's choice.

XVI

Albeit thereof he has found
Firm roadway between lustfulness and pain;
Has half transferred the battle to his brain,
From bloody ground;

XVII

He will not read her good,
Or wise, but with the passion Self obscures;
Through that old devil of the thousand lures,
Through that dense hood:

XVIII

Through terror, through distrust ;
The greed to touch, to view, to have, to live :
Through all that makes of him a sensitive
Abhorring dust.

XIX

Behold his wormy home !
And he the wind-whipped, anywhither wave
Crazily tumbled on a shingle-grave
To waste in foam.

XX

Therefore the wretch inclines
Afresh to the Invisible, who, he saith,
Can raise him high : with vows of living faith
For little signs.

XXI

Some signs he must demand,
Some proofs of slaughtered nature; some prized few,
To satisfy the senses it is true,
And in his hand,

XXII

This miracle which saves
Himself, himself doth from extinction clutch,
By virtue of his worth, contrasting much
With brutes and knaves.

XXIII

From dust, of him abhorred,
He would be snatched by Grace discovering worth.
' Sever me from the hollowness of Earth !
Me take, dear Lord ! '

XXIV

She hears him. Him she owes
For half her loveliness a love well won
By work that lights the shapeless and the dun,
Their common foes.

XXV

He builds the soaring spires,
That sing his soul in stone : of her he draws,
Though blind to her, by spelling at her laws,
Her purest fires.

XXVI

Through him hath she exchanged,
For the gold harvest-robes, the mural crown,
Her haggard quarry-features and thick frown
Where monsters ranged.

XXVII

And order, high discourse,
And decency, than which is life less dear,
She has of him : the lyre of language clear,
Love's tongue and source.

XXVIII

She hears him, and can hear
With glory in his gains by work achieved :
With grief for grief that is the unperceived
In her so near.

XXIX

If he aloft for aid
Imploring storms, her essence is the spur.
His cry to heaven is a cry to her
He would evade.

XXX

Not elsewhere can he tend.
Those are her rules which bid him wash foul sins ;
Those her revulsions from the skull that grins
To ape his end.

XXXI

And her desires are those
For happiness, for lastingness, for light.
'Tis she who kindles in his haunting night
The hoped dawn-rose.

XXXII

Fair fountains of the dark
Daily she waves him, that his inner dream
May clasp amid the glooms a springing beam,
A quivering lark :

XXXIII

This life and her to know
For Spirit : with awakenedness of glee
To feel stern joy her origin : not he
The child of woe.

XXXIV

But that the senses still
Usurp the station of their issue mind,
He would have burst the chrysalis of the blind :
As yet he will ;

XXXV

As yet he will, she prays,
Yet will when his distempered devil of Self :—
The glutton for her fruits, the wily elf
In shifting rays ;—

XXXVI

That captain of the scorned ;
The coveter of life in soul and shell,
The fratricide, the thief, the infidel,
The hoofed and horned ;—

XXXVII

He singularly doomed
To what he execrates and writhes to shun ;—
When fire has passed him vapour to the sun,
And sun relumed,

XXXVIII

Then shall the horrid pall
Be lifted, and a spirit nigh divine,
'Live in thy offspring as I live in mine,'
Will hear her call.

XXXIX

Whence looks he on a land
Whereon his labour is a carven page ;
And forth from heritage to heritage
Nought writ on sand.

XL

His fables of the Above,
And his gapped readings of the crown and sword,
The hell detested and the heaven adored,
The hate, the love,

XLI

The bright wing, the black hoof,
He shall peruse, from Reason not disjoined,
And never unfaith clamouring to be coined
To faith by proof.

XLII

She her just Lord may view,
Not he, her creature, till his soul has yearned
With all her gifts to reach the light discerned
Her spirit through.

XLIII

Then in him time shall run
As in the hour that to young sunlight crows ;
And—' If thou hast good faith it can repose,'
She tells her son.

XLIV

Meanwhile on him, her chief
Expression, her great word of life, looks she ;
Twi-minded of him, as the waxing tree,
Or dated leaf.

A BALLAD OF FAIR LADIES IN REVOLT

I

SEE the sweet women, friend, that lean beneath
The ever-falling fountain of green leaves
Round the white bending stem, and like a wreath
Of our most blushful flower shine trembling through,
To teach philosophers the thirst of thieves :
Is one for me ? is one for you ?

II

—Fair sirs, we give you welcome, yield you place,
And you shall choose among us which you will,
Without the idle pastime of the chase,
If to this treaty you can well agree :
To wed our cause, and its high task fulfil.
He who 's for us, for him are we !

III

—Most gracious ladies, nigh when light has birth,
A troop of maids, brown as burnt heather-bells,
And rich with life as moss-roots breathe of earth
In the first plucking of them, past us flew
To labour, singing rustic ritornells :
Had they a cause ? are they of you ?

IV

—Sirs, they are as unthinking armies are
To thoughtful leaders, and our cause is theirs.
When they know men they know the state of war:
But now they dream like sunlight on a sea,
And deem you hold the half of happy pairs.
He who 's for us, for him are we!

V

—Ladies, I listened to a ring of dames;
Judicial in the robe and wig; secure
As venerated portraits in their frames;
And they denounced some insurrection new
Against sound laws which keep you good and pure.
Are you of them? are they of you?

VI

—Sirs, they are of us, as their dress denotes,
And by as much: let them together chime:
It is an ancient bell within their throats,
Pulled by an aged ringer; with what glee
Befits the yellow yesterdays of time.
He who 's for us, for him are we!

VII

—Sweet ladies, you with beauty, you with wit;
Dowered of all favours and all blessed things
Whereat the ruddy torch of Love is lit;
Wherefore this vain and outworn strife renew,
Which stays the tide no more than eddy-rings?
Who is for love must be for you.

VIII

—The manners of the market, honest sirs,
'Tis hard to quit when you behold the wares.
You flatter us, or perchance our milliners
You flatter ; so this vain and outworn She
May still be the charmed snake to your soft airs !
A higher lord than Love claim we.

IX

—One day, dear lady, missing the broad track,
I came on a wood's border, by a mead,
Where golden May ran up to moted black :
And there I saw Queen Beauty hold review,
With Love before her throne in act to plead.
Take him for me, take her for you.

X

—Ingenious gentleman, the tale is known.
Love pleaded sweetly : Beauty would not melt :
She would not melt : he turned in wrath : her throne
The shadow of his back froze witheringly,
And sobbing at his feet Queen Beauty knelt
O not such slaves of Love are we !

XI

—Love, lady, like the star above that lance
Of radiance flung by sunset on ridged cloud,
Sad as the last line of a brave romance !—
Young Love hung dim, yet quivering round him threw
Beams of fresh fire while Beauty waned and bowed.
Scorn Love, and dread the doom for you.

XII

—Called she not for her mirror, sir ? Forth ran
Her women : I am lost, she cried, when lo,
Love in the form of an admiring man
Once more in adoration bent the knee
And brought the faded Pagan to full blow :
For which her throne she gave : not we !

XIII

—My version, madam, runs not to that end.
A certain madness of an hour half past
Caught her like fever : her just lord no friend
She fancied ; aimed beyond beauty, and thence grew
The prim acerbity, sweet Love's outcast.
Great heaven ward off that stroke from you !

XIV

—Your prayer to heaven, good sir, is generous :
How generous likewise that you do not name
Offended nature ! She from all of us
Couched idle underneath our showering tree
May quite withhold her most destructive flame ;
And then what woeful women we !

XV

—Quite, could not be, fair lady ; yet your youth
May run to drought in visionary schemes :
And a late waking to perceive the truth,
When day falls shrouding her supreme adieu,
Shows darker wastes than unaccomplished dreams :
And that may be in store for you.

XVI

—O sir, the truth, the truth ! is 't in the skies,
Or in the grass, or in this heart of ours ?
But O the truth, the truth ! the many eyes
That look on it ! the diverse things they see,
According to their thirst for fruit or flowers !
Pass on : it is the truth seek we.

XVII

—Lady, there is a truth of settled laws
That down the past burns like a great watch-fire.
Let youth hail changeful mornings ; but your cause,
Whetting its edge to cut the race in two,
Is felony : you forfeit the bright lyre,
Much honour and much glory you !

XVIII

—Sir, was it glory, was it honour, pride,
And not as cat and serpent and poor slave,
Wherewith we walked in union by your side ?
Spare to false womanliness her delicacy,
Or bid true manliness give ear, we crave :
In our defence thus chained are we.

XIX

—Yours, madam, were the privileges of life
Proper to man's ideal ; you were the mark
Of action, and the banner in the strife :
Yea, of your very weakness once you drew
The strength that sounds the wells, outflies the lark :
Wrapped in a robe of flame were you !

XX

—Your friend looks thoughtful. Sir, when we were chill,
You clothed us warmly ; all in honour ! when
We starved you fed us ; all in honour still :
Oh, all in honour, ultra-honourably !
Deep is the gratitude we owe to men,
For privileged indeed were we !

XXI

—You cite exceptions, madam, that are sad,
But come in the red struggle of our growth.
Alas, that I should have to say it ! bad
Is two-sexed upon earth : this which you do
Shows animal impatience, mental sloth :
Man monstrous, pining seraphs you !

XXII

—I fain would ask your friend . . . but I will ask
You, sir, how if in place of numbers vague,
Your sad exceptions were to break that mask
They wear for your cool mind historically,
And blaze like black lists of a *present* plague ?
But in that light behold them we.

XXIII

—Your spirit breathes a mist upon our world,
Lady, and like a rain to pierce the roof
And drench the bed where toil-tossed man lies curled
In his hard-earned oblivion ! You are few,
Scattered, ill-counselled, blinded : for a proof,
I have lived, and have known none like you.

XXIV

—We may be blind to men, sir : we embrace
A future now beyond the fowler's nets.
Though few, we hold a promise for the race
That was not at our rising : you are free
To win brave mates ; you lose but marionnettes.
He who 's for us, for him are we.

XXV

—Ah ! madam, were they puppets who withstood
Youth's cravings for adventure, to preserve
The dedicated ways of womanhood ?
The light which leads us from the paths of rue,
That light above us, never seen to swerve,
Should be the home-lamp trimmed by you.

XXVI

—Ah ! sir, our worshipped posture we perchance
Shall not abandon, though we see not how,
Being to that lamp-post fixed, we may advance
Beside our lords in any real degree,
Unless we move : and to advance is now
A sovereign need, think more than we.

XXVII

—So push you out of harbour in small craft,
With little seamanship ; and comes a gale,
The world will laugh, the world has often laughed,
Lady, to see how bold when skies are blue,
When black winds churn the deeps how panic-pale,
How swift to the old nest fly you !

XXVIII

—What thinks your friend, kind sir ? We have escaped
But partly that old half-tamed wild beast's paw
Whereunder woman, the weak thing, was shaped :
Men too have known the cramping enemy
In grim brute force, whom force of brain shall awe :
Him our deliverer await we !

XXIX

—Delusions are with eloquence endowed,
And yours might pluck an angel from the spheres
To play in this revolt whereto you are vowed,
Deliverer, lady ! but like summer dew
O'er fields that crack for rain your friends drop tears,
Who see the awakening for you.

XXX

—Is he our friend, there silent ? he weeps not.
O sir, delusion mounting like a sun
On a mind blank as the white wife of Lot,
Giving it warmth and movement ! if this be
Delusion, think of what thereby was won
For men, and dream of what win we.

XXXI

—Lady, the destiny of minor powers,
Who would recast us, is but to convulse :
You enter on a strife that frets and sours ;
You can but win sick disappointment's hue ;
And simply an accelerated pulse ;
Some tonic you have drunk moves you.

XXXII

—Thinks your friend so ? Good sir, your wit is bright;
But wit that strives to speak the popular voice
Puts on its nightcap and puts out its light ;
Curfew, would seem your conqueror's decree
To women likewise : and we have no choice
Save darkness or rebellion, we !

XXXIII

—A plain safe intermediate way is cleft
By reason foiling passion : you that rave
Of mad alternatives to right and left
Echo the tempter, madam : and 'tis due
Unto your sex to shun it as the grave,
This later apple offered you.

XXXIV

—This apple is not ripe, it is not sweet ,
Nor rosy, sir, nor golden : eye and mouth
Are little wooed by it ; yet we would eat.
We are somewhat tired of Eden, is our plea.
We have thirsted long ; this apple suits our drouth :
'Tis good for men to halve, think we.

XXXV

—But say, what seek you, madam ? 'Tis enough
That you should have dominion o'er the springs
Domestic and man's heart : those ways, how rough,
How vile, outside the stately avenue
Where you walk sheltered by your angel's wings,
Are happily unknown to you.

XXXVI

-We hear women's shrieks on them. We like your
phrase,
Dominion domestic ! And that roar,
' What seek you ? ' is of tyrants in all days.
Sir, get you something of our purity,
And we will of your strength : we ask no more
That is the sum of what seek we.

XXXVII

-O for an image, madam, in one word,
To show you, as the lightning night reveals,
Your error and your perils : you have erred
In mind only, and the perils that ensue
Swift heels may soften ; wherefore to swift heels
Address your hopes of safety you !

XXXVIII

-To err in mind, sir . . . your friend smiles : he may !
To err in mind, if err in mind we can,
Is grievous error you do well to stay.
But O how different from reality
Men's fiction is ! how like you in the plan
Is woman, knew you her as we !

XXXIX

-Look, lady, where yon river winds its line
Toward sunset, and receives on breast and face
The splendour of fair life : to be divine,
'Tis nature bids you be to nature true,
Flowing with beauty, lending earth your grace,
Reflecting heaven in clearness you.

XL

—Sir, you speak well : your friend no word vouchsafes.
To flow with beauty, breeding fools and worse,
Cowards and worse : at such fair life she chafes
Who is not wholly of the nursery,
Nor of your schools : we share the primal curse ;
Together shake it off, say we !

XLI

—Here, then, my friend, madam ! Tongue-restrained he stands
Till words are thoughts, and thoughts, like swords enriched
With traceries of the artificer's hands,
Are fire-proved steel to cut, fair flowers to view.—
Do I hear him ? Oh, he is bewitched, bewitched !
Heed him not ! Traitress beauties you !

XLII

—We have won a champion, sisters, and a sage !
—Ladies, you win a guest to a good feast !
—Sir spokesman, sneers are weakness veiling rage.
—Of weakness, and wise men, you have the key.
—Then are there fresher mornings mounting East
Than ever yet have dawned, sing we !

XLIII

—False ends as false began, madam, be sure !
—What lure there is the pure cause purifies !
—Who purifies the victim of the lure ?
—That soul which bids us our high light pursue.
—Some heights are measured down : the wary wise
Shun Reason in the masque with you !

XLIV

—Sir, for the friend you bring us, take our thanks.
Yes, Beauty was of old this barren goal ;
A thing with claws ; and brute-like in her pranks !
But could she give more loyal guarantee
Than wooing wisdom, that in her a soul
Has risen ? Adieu : content are we !

XLV

Those ladies led their captive to the flood's
Green edge. He floating with them seemed the most
Fool-flushed old noddy ever crowned with buds.
Happier than I ! Then, why not wiser too ?
For he that lives with Beauty, he may boast
His comrade over me and you.

XLVI

Have women nursed some dream since Helen sailed,
Over the sea of blood the blushing star,
That beauty, whom frail man as Goddess hailed,
When not possessing her (for such is he !),
Might in a wondering season seen afar
Be tamed to say not ' I,' but ' we ' ?

XLVII

And shall they make of Beauty their estate,
The fortress and the weapon of their sex ?
Shall she in her frost-brilliancy dictate,
More queenly than of old, how we must woo,
Ere she will melt ? The halter 's on our necks,
Kick as it likes us, I and you.

XLVIII

Certain it is, if Beauty has disdained
Her ancient conquests, with an aim thus high :
If this, if that, if more, the fight is gained.
But can she keep her followers without fee ?
Yet ah ! to hear anew those ladies cry,
He who 's for us, for him are we !

BALLADS AND POEMS OF TRAGIC LIFE

THE TWO MASKS

I

MELPOMENE among her livid people,
Ere stroke of lyre, upon Thaleia looks,
Warned by old contests that one museful ripple
Along those lips of rose with tendril hooks
Forebodes disturbance in the springs of pathos,
Perchance may change of masks midway demand,
Albeit the man rise mountainous as Athos,
The woman wild as Cape Leucadia stand.

II

For this the Comic Muse exacts of creatures
Appealing to the fount of tears : that they
Strive never to outleap our human features,
And do Right Reason's ordinance obey,
In peril of the hum to laughter nighest.
But prove they under stress of action's fire
Nobleness, to that test of Reason highest,
She bows : she waves them for the loftier lyre.

ARCHDUCHESS ANNE

I

I

In middle age an evil thing
Befell Archduchess Anne:
She looked outside her wedding-ring
Upon a princely man.

II

Count Louis was for horse and arms;
And if its beacon waved,
For love; but ladies had not charms
To match a danger braved.

III

On battlefields he was the bow
Bestrung to fly the shaft:
In idle hours his heart would flow
As winds on currents waft.

IV

His blood was of those warrior tribes
That streamed from morning's fire,
Whom now with traps and now with bribes
The wily Council wire.

V

Archduchess Anne the Council ruled,
Count Louis his great dame;
And woe to both when one had cooled!
Little was she to blame.

VI

Among her chiefs who spun their plots,
Old Kraken stood the sword :
As sharp his wits for cutting knots
Of babble he abhorred.

VII

He reverenced her name and line,
Nor other merit had
Save soldierwise to wait her sign,
And do the deed she bade.

VIII

He saw her hand jump at her side
Ere royally she smiled
On Louis and his fair young bride
Where courtly ranks defiled.

IX

That was a moment when a shock
Through the procession ran,
And thrilled the plumes, and stayed the clock,
Yet smiled Archduchess Anne.

X

No touch gave she to hound in leash,
No wink to sword in sheath :
She seemed a woman scarce of flesh ;
Above it, or beneath.

XI

Old Kraken spied with kennelled snarl,
His Lady deemed disgraced.
He footed as on burning marl,
When out of Hall he paced.

XII

'Twas seen he hammered striding legs,
And stopped, and strode again.
Now Vengeance has a brood of eggs,
But Patience must be hen.

XIII

Too slow are they for wrath to hatch,
Too hot for time to rear.
Old Kraken kept unwinking watch ;
He marked his day appear.

XIV

He neighed a laugh, though moods were rough
With standards in revolt :
His nostrils took the news for snuff,
His smacking lips for salt.

XV

Count Louis' wavy cock's plumes led
His troops of black-haired manes,
A rebel ; and old Kraken sped
To front him on the plains.

XVI

Then camp opposed to camp did they
  Fret earth with panther claws
For signal of a bloody day,
  Each reading from the Laws.

XVII

'Forefend it, heaven!' Count Louis cried,
  'And let the righteous plead:
My country is a willing bride,
  Was never slave decreed.

XVIII

'Not we for thirst of blood appeal
  To sword and slaughter curst;
We have God's blessing on our steel,
  Do we our pleading first.'

XIX

Count Louis, soul of chivalry,
  Put trust in plighted word;
By starlight on the broad brown lea,
  To bar the strife he spurred.

XX

Across his breast a crimson spot,
  That in a quiver glowed,
The ruddy crested camp-fires shot,
  As he to darkness rode.

XXI

He rode while omens called, beware
Old Kraken's pledge of faith !
A smile and waving hand in air,
And outward flew the wraith.

XXII

Before pale morn had mixed with gold,
His army roared, and chilled,
As men who have a woe foretold,
And see it red fulfilled.

XXIII

Away and to his young wife speed,
And say that Honour 's dead !
Another word she will not need
To bow a widow's head.

XXIV

Old Kraken roped his white moustache
Right, left, for savage glee :
—To swing him in his soldier's sash
Were kind for such as he !

XXV

Old Kraken's look hard Winter wears
When sweeps the wild snow-blast :
He had the hug of Arctic bears
For captives he held fast.

II

I

Archduchess Anne sat carved in frost,
Shut off from priest and spouse.
Her lips were locked, her arms were crossed,
Her eyes were in her brows.

II

One hand enclosed a paper scroll,
Held as a strangled asp.
So may we see the woman's soul
In her dire tempter's grasp.

III

Along that scroll Count Louis' doon
Throbbed till the letters flamed.
She saw him in his scornful bloom,
She saw him chained and shamed.

IV

Around that scroll Count Louis' fate
Was acted to her stare,
And hate in love and love in hate
Fought fell to smite or spare.

V

Between the day that struck her old,
And this black star of days,
Her heart swung like a storm-bell tolled
Above a town ablaze.

VI

His beauty pressed to intercede,
His beauty served him ill.
—Not Vengeance, 'tis his rebel's deed,
'Tis Justice, not our will!

VII

Yet who had sprung to life's full force
A breast that loveless dried?
But who had sapped it at the source,
With scarlet to her pride!

VIII

He brought her waning heart as 'twere
New message from the skies.
And he betrayed, and left on her
The burden of their sighs.

IX

In floods her tender memories poured;
They foamed with waves of spite:
She crushed them, high her heart outsoared,
To keep her mind alight.

X

—The crawling creature, called in scorn
A woman!—with this pen
We sign a paper that may warn
His crowing fellowmen.

XI

—We read them lesson of a power
They slight who do us wrong.
That bitter hour this bitter hour
Provokes; by turns the strong!

XII

—That we were woman once is known:
That we are Justice now,
Above our sex, above the throne,
Men quaking shall avow.

XIII

Archduchess Anne ascending flew,
Her heart outsoared, but felt
The demon of her sex pursue,
Incensing or to melt.

XIV

Those counterfloods below at leap
Still in her breast blew storm,
And farther up the heavenly steep
Wrestled in angels' form.

XV

To disentangle one clear wish
Not of her sex, she sought ;
And womanish to womanish
Discerned in lighted thought.

XVI

With Louis' chance it went not well
When at herself she raged ;
A woman, of whom men might tell
She doted, crazed and aged.

XVII

Or else enamoured of a sweet
Withdrawn, a vengeful crone !
And say, what figure at her feet
Is this that utters moan ?

XVIII

The Countess Louis from her head
Drew veil : ' Great Lady, hear !
My husband deems you Justice dread,
I know you Mercy dear.

XIX

' His error upon him may fall ;
He will not breathe a nay.
I am his helpless mate in all,
Except for grace to pray.

XX

'Perchance on me his choice inclined,
To give his House an heir:
I had not marriage with his mind,
His counsel could not share.

XXI

'I brought no portion for his weal
But this one instinct true,
Which bids me in my weakness kneel,
Archduchess Anne, to you.'

XXII

The frowning Lady uttered, 'Forth!'
Her look forbade delay:
'It is not mine to weigh your worth;
Your husband's others weigh.

XXIII

'Hence with the woman in your speech,
For nothing it avails
In woman's fashion to beseech
Where Justice holds the scales.'

XXIV

Then bent and went the lady wan,
Whose girlishness made grey
The thoughts that through Archduchess Anne
Shattered like stormy spray.

XXV

Long sat she there, as flame that strives
To hold on beating wind :
—His wife must be the fool of wives,
Or cunningly designed !

XXVI

She sat until the tempest-pitch
In her torn bosom fell ;
—His wife must be a subtle witch
Or else God loves her well !

III

I

Old Kraken read a missive penned
By his great Lady's hand.
Her condescension called him friend,
To raise the crest she fanned.

II

Swiftly to where he lay encamped
It flew, yet breathed aloof
From woman's feeling, and he stamped
A heel more like a hoof.

III

She wrote of Mercy : 'She was loth
Too hard to goad a foe.'
He stamped, as when men drive an oath
Devils transcribe below.

IV

She wrote : 'We have him half by theft.'
His wrinkles glistened keen :
And see the Winter storm-cloud cleft
To lurid skies between !

V

When read old Kraken : ' Christ our Guide,'
  His eyes were spikes of spar :
And see the white snow-storm divide
  About an icy star !

VI

' She trusted him to understand,'
  She wrote, and further prayed
That policy might rule the land.
  Old Kraken's laughter neighed.

VII

Her words he took ; her nods and winks
  Treated as woman's fog.
The man-dog for his mistress thinks,
  Not less her faithful dog.

VIII

She hugged a cloak old Kraken ripped
  Disguise to him he loathed.
—Your mercy, madam, shows you stripped,
  While mine will keep you clothed.

IX

A rough ill-soldered scar in haste
  He rubbed on his cheek-bone.
—Our policy the man shall taste ;
  Our mercy shall be shown.

X

Count Louis, honour to your race
Decrees the Council-hall :
You 'scape the rope by special grace,
And like a soldier fall.'

XI

—I am a man of many sins,
Who for one virtue die,
Count Louis said.—They play at shins,
Who kick, was the reply.

XII

Uprose the day of crimson sight,
The day without a God.
At morn the hero said Good-night :
See there that stain on sod !

XIII

At morn the Countess Louis heard
Young light sing in the lark.
Ere eve it was that other bird,
Which brings the starless dark.

XIV

To heaven she vowed herself, and yearned
Beside her lord to lie.
Archduchess Anne on Kraken turned,
All white as a dead eye.

XV

If I could kill thee ! shrieked her look :
  If lightning sprang from Will !
An oaken head old Kraken shook,
  And she might thank or kill.

XVI

The pride that fenced her heart in mail
  By mortal pain was torn.
Forth from her bosom leaped a wail,
  As of a babe new-born.

XVII

She clad herself in courtly use,
  And one who heard them prate
Had said they differed upon views
  Where statecraft raised debate.

XVIII

The wretch detested must she trust,
  The servant master own :
Confide to godless cause so just,
  And for God's blessing moan.

XIX

Austerely she her heart kept down,
  Her woman's tongue was mute
When voice of People, voice of Crown,
  In cannon held dispute.

XX

The Crown on seas of blood, like swine,
Swam forefoot at the throat :
It drank of its dear veins for wine,
Enough if it might float !

XXI

It sank with piteous yelp, resurged
Electrical with fear.
O had she on old Kraken urged
Her word of mercy clear !

XXII

O had they with Count Louis been
Accordant in his plea !
Cursed are the women vowed to screen
A heart that all can see !

XXIII

The godless drove unto a goal
Was worse than vile defeat.
Did vengeance prick Count Louis' soul
They dressed him luscious meat.

XXIV

Worms will the faithless find their lies
In the close treasure-chest.
Without a God no day can rise,
Though it should slay our best.

XXV

The Crown it furled a draggled flag,
It sheathed a broken blade.
Behold its triumph in the hag
That lives with looks decayed!

XXVI

And lo, the man of oaken head,
Of soldier's honour bare,
He fled his land, but most he fled
His Lady's frigid stare.

XXVII

Judged by the issue we discern
God's blessing, and the bane.
Count Louis' dust would fill an urn,
His deeds are waving grain.

XXVIII

And she that helped to slay, yet bade
To spare the fated man,
Great were her errors, but she had
Great heart, Archduchess Anne.

THE SONG OF THEODOLINDA

I

QUEEN THEODOLIND has built
In the earth a furnace-bed :
There the Traitor Nail that spilt
Blood of the anointed Head,
Red of heat, resolves in shame :
White of heat, awakes to flame.
Beat, beat ! white of heat,
Red of heat, beat, beat !

II

Mark the skeleton of fire
Lightening from its thunder-roof :
So comes this that saw expire
Him we love, for our behoof !
Red of heat, O white of heat,
This from off the Cross we greet.

III

Brown-cowled hammermen around
Nerve their naked arms to strike
Death with Resurrection crowned,
Each upon that cruel spike.
Red of heat the furnace leaps,
White of heat transfigured sleeps.

IV

Hard against the furnace core
Holds the Queen her streaming eyes :
Lo ! that thing of piteous gore
In the lap of radiance lies,
Red of heat, as when He takes,
White of heat, whom earth forsakes.

V

Forth with it, and crushing ring
Iron hymns, for men to hear
Echoes of the deeds that sting
Earth into its graves, and fear !
Red of heat, He maketh thus,
White of heat, a crown of us.

VI

This, that killed Thee, kissed Thee, Lord !
Touched Thee, and we touch it : dear,
Dark it is ; adored, abhorred :
Vilest, yet most sainted here.
Red of heat, O white of heat,
In it hell and heaven meet.

VII

I behold our morning day
When they chased Him out with rods
Up to where this traitor lay
Thirsting ; and the blood was God's !
Red of heat, it shall be pressed,
White of heat, once on my breast !

VIII

Quick ! the reptile in me shrieks,
Not the soul. Again ; the Cross
Burn there. Oh ! this pain it wreaks
Rapture is : pain is not loss.
Red of heat, the tooth of Death,
White of heat, has caught my breath.

IX

Brand me, bite me, bitter thing !
Thus He felt, and thus I am
One with Him in suffering,
One with Him in bliss, the Lamb.
Red of heat, O white of heat,
Thus is bitterness made sweet.

X

Now am I, who bear that stamp
Scorched in me, the living sign
Sole on earth—the lighted lamp
Of the dreadful day divine.
White of heat, beat on it fast !
Red of heat, its shape has passed.

XI

Out in angry sparks they fly,
They that sentenced Him to bleed :
Pontius and his troop : they die,
Damned for ever for the deed !
White of heat in vain they soar :
Red of heat they strew the floor.

XII

Fury on it ! have its debt !
Thunder on the Hill accurst,
Golgotha, be ye ! and sweat
Blood, and thirst the Passion's thirst.
Red of heat and white of heat,
Champ it like fierce teeth that eat.

XIII

Strike it as the ages crush
Towers ! for while a shape is seen
I am rivalled. Quench its blush,
Devil ! But it crowns me Queen,
Red of heat, as none before,
White of heat, the circlet wore.

XIV

Lowly I will be, and quail,
Crawling, with a beggar's hand :
On my breast the branded Nail,
On my head the iron band.
Red of heat, are none so base !
White of heat, none know such grace !

XV

In their heaven the sainted hosts,
Robed in violet unflecked,
Gaze on humankind as ghosts :
I draw down a ray direct.
Red of heat, across my brow,
White of heat, I touch Him now.

XVI

Robed in violet, robed in gold,
Robed in pearl, they make our dawn.
What am I to them ? Behold
What ye are to me, and fawn.
Red of heat, be humble, ye !
White of heat, O teach it me !

XVII

Martyrs ! hungry peaks in air,
Rent with lightnings, clad with snow,
Crowned with stars ! you strip me bare,
Pierce me, shame me, stretch me low,
Red of heat, but it may be,
White of heat, some envy me !

XVIII

O poor enviers ! God's own gifts
Have a devil for the weak.
Yea, the very force that lifts
Finds the vessel's secret leak.
Red of heat, I rise o'er all :
White of heat, I faint, I fall.

XIX

Those old Martyrs sloughed their pride,
Taking humbleness like mirth.
I am to His Glory tied,
I that witness Him on earth !
Red of heat, my pride of dust,
White of heat, feeds fire in trust.

XX

Kindle me to constant fire,
Lest the nail be but a nail!
Give me wings of great desire,
Lest I look within, and fail!
Red of heat, the furnace light
White of heat, fix on my sight.

XXI

Never for the Chosen peace!
Know, by me tormented know,
Never shall the wrestling cease
Till with our outlasting Foe,
Red of heat to white of heat,
Roll we to the Godhead's feet!
Beat, beat! white of heat,
Red of heat, beat, beat!

A PREACHING FROM A SPANISH BALLAD

I

LADIES who in chains of wedlock
Chafe at an unequal yoke,
Not to nightingales give hearing ;
Better this, the raven's croak.

II

Down the Prado strolled my seigneur,
Arm at lordly bow on hip,
Fingers trimming his moustachios,
Eyes for pirate fellowship.

III

Home sat she that owned him master ;
Like the flower bent to ground
Rain-surcharged and sun-forsaken ;
Heedless of her hair unbound.

IV

Sudden at her feet a lover
Palpitating knelt and wooed ;
Seemed a very gift from heaven
To the starved of common food.

V

Love me ? she his vows repeated :
Fiery vows oft sung and thrummed ;
Wondered, as on earth a stranger ;
Thirsted, trusted, and succumbed.

VI

O beloved youth ! my lover !
Mine ! my lover ! take my life
Wholly : thine in soul and body,
By this oath of more than wife !

VII

Know me for no helpless woman ;
Nay, nor coward, though I sink
Awed beside thee, like an infant
Learning shame ere it can think.

VIII

Swing me hence to do thee service,
Be thy succour, prove thy shield ;
Heaven will hear !—in house thy handmaid,
Squire upon the battlefield.

IX

At my breasts I cool thy footsoles ;
Wine I pour, I dress thy meats ;
Humbly, when my lord it pleaseth,
Lie with him on perfumed sheets :

X

Pray for him, my blood's dear fountain
While he sleeps, and watch his yawn
In that wakening babelike moment,
Sweeter to my thought than dawn !—

XI

Thundered then her lord of thunders ;
Burst the door, and, flashing sword,
Loud disgorged the woman's title :
Condemnation in one word.

XII

Grand by righteous wrath transfigured,
Towers the husband who provides
In his person judge and witness,
Death's black doorkeeper besides !

XIII

Round his head the ancient terrors,
Conjured of the stronger's law,
Circle, to abash the creature
Daring twist beneath his paw.

XIV

How though he hath squandered Honour
High of Honour let him scold :
Gilding of the man's possession,
'Tis the woman's coin of gold.

XV

She inheriting from many
Bleeding mothers bleeding sense
Feels 'twixt her and sharp-fanged nature
Honour first did plant the fence.

XVI

Nature, that so shrieks for justice ;
Honour's thirst, that blood will slake ;
These are women's riddles, roughly
Mixed to write them saint or snake.

XVII

Never nature cherished woman :
She throughout the sexes' war
Serves as temptress and betrayer,
Favouring man, the muscular.

XVIII

Lureful is she, bent for folly ;
Doating on the child which crows :
Yours to teach him grace in fealty,
What the bloom is, what the rose.

XIX

Hard the task : your prison-chamber
Widens not for lifted latch
Till the giant thews and sinews
Meet their Godlike overmatch.

XX

Read that riddle, scorning pity's
Tears, of cockatrices shed :
When the heart is vowed for freedom,
Captaincy it yields to head.

XXI

Meanwhile you, freaked nature's martyrs.
Honour's army, flower and weed,
Gentle ladies, wedded ladies,
See for you this fair one bleed.

XXII

Sole stood her offence, she faltered ;
Prayed her lord the youth to spare ;
Prayed that in the orange garden
She might lie, and ceased her prayer.

XXIII

Then commending to all women
Chastity, her breasts she laid
Bare unto the self-avenger.
Man in metal was the blade.

THE YOUNG PRINCESS

A BALLAD OF OLD LAWS OF LOVE

I

I

When the South sang like a nightingale
Above a bower in May,
The training of Love's vine of flame
Was writ in laws, for lord and dame
To say their yea and nay.

II

When the South sang like a nightingale
Across the flowering night,
And lord and dame held gentle sport,
There came a young princess to Court,
A frost of beauty white.

III

The South sang like a nightingale
To thaw her glittering dream :
No vine of Love her bosom gave,
She drank no wine of Love, but grave
She held them to Love's theme.

IV

The South grew all a nightingale
Beneath a moon unmoved :
Like the banner of war she led them on ;
She left them to lie, like the light that has gone
From wine-cups overproved.

V

When the South was a fervent nightingale,
And she a chilling moon,
'Twas pity to see on the garden swards,
Against Love's laws, those rival lords
As willow-wands lie strewn.

VI

The South had throat of a nightingale
For her, the young princess :
She gave no vine of Love to rear,
Love's wine drank not, yet bent her ear
To themes of Love no less.

II

I

The lords of the Court they sighed heart-sick,
Heart-free Lord Dusiote laughed :
I prize her no more than a fling o' the dice,
But, or shame to my manhood, a lady of ice,
We master her by craft !

II

Heart-sick the lords of joyance yawned,
Lord Dusiote laughed heart-free :
I count her as much as a crack o' my thumb,
But, or shame of my manhood, to me she shall come
Like the bird to roost in the tree !

III

At dead of night when the palace-guard
Had passed the measured rounds,
The young princess awoke to feel
A shudder of blood at the crackle of steel
Within the garden-bounds.

IV

It ceased, and she thought of whom was need,
The friar or the leech ;
When lo, stood her tirewoman breathless by :
Lord Dusiote, madam, to death is nigh,
Of you he would have speech.

V

He prays you, of your gentleness,
To light him to his dark end.
The princess rose, and forth she went,
For charity was her intent,
Devoutly to befriend.

VI

Lord Dusiote hung on his good squire's arm,
The priest beside him knelt :
A weeping handkerchief was pressed
To stay the red flood at his breast,
And bid cold ladies melt.

VII

O lady, though you are ice to men,
All pure to heaven as light
Within the dew within the flower,
Of you 'tis whispered that love has power
When secret is the night.

VIII

I have silenced the slanderers, peace to their souls !
Save one was too cunning for me.
I die, whose love is late avowed,
He lives, who boasts the lily has bowed
To the oath of a bended knee.

IX

Lord Dusiote drew breath with pain,
And she with pain drew breath :
On him she looked, on his like above ;
She flew in the folds of a marvel of love,
Revealed to pass to death.

X

You are dying, O great-hearted lord,
You are dying for me, she cried ;
O take my hand, O take my kiss,
And take of your right, for love like this,
The vow that plights me bride.

XI

She bade the priest recite his words
While hand in hand were they,
Lord Dusiote's soul to waft to bliss ;
He had her hand, her vow, her kiss,
And his body was borne away.

III

I

Lord Dusiote sprang from priest and squire ;
He gazed at her lighted room :
The laughter in his heart grew slack ;
He knew not the force that pushed him back
From her and the morn in bloom.

II

Like a drowned man's length on the strong flood-tide,
Like the shade of a bird in the sun,
He fled from his lady whom he might claim
As ghost, and who made the daybeams flame
To scare what he had done.

III

There was grief at Court for one so gay,
Though he was a lord less keen
For training the vine than at vintage-press ;
But in her soul the young princess
Believed that love had been.

IV

Lord Dusiote fled the Court and land,
He crossed the woeful seas,
Till his traitorous doing seemed clearer to burn,
And the lady beloved drew his heart for return,
Like the banner of war in the breeze.

V

He neared the palace, he spied the Court,
And music he heard, and they told
Of foreign lords arrived to bring
The nuptial gifts of a bridegroom king
To the princess grave and cold.

VI

The masque and the dance were cloud on wave,
And down the masque and the dance
Lord Dusiote stepped from dame to dame,
And to the young princess he came,
With a bow and a burning glance.

VII

Do you take a new husband to-morrow, lady ?
She shrank as at prick of steel.
Must the first yield place to the second, he sighed.
Her eyes were like the grave that is wide
For the corpse from head to heel.

VIII

My lady, my love, that little hand
Has mine ringed fast in plight :
I bear for your lips a lawful thirst,
And as justly the second should follow the first,
I come to your door this night.

IX

If a ghost should come a ghost will go :
No more the lady said,
Save that ever when he in wrath began
To swear by the faith of a living man,
She answered him, You are dead.

IV

I

The soft night-wind went laden to death
With smell of the orange in flower;
The light leaves prattled to neighbour ears;
The bird of the passion sang over his tears;
The night named hour by hour.

II

Sang loud, sang low the rapturous bird
Till the yellow hour was nigh,
Behind the folds of a darker cloud:
He chuckled, he sobbed, alow, aloud;
The voice between earth and sky.

III

O will you, will you, women are weak;
The proudest are yielding mates
For a forward foot and a tongue of fire:
So thought Lord Dusiote's trusty squire,
At watch by the palace-gates.

IV

The song of the bird was wine in his blood,
And woman the odorous bloom:
His master's great adventure stirred
Within him to mingle the bloom and bird,
And morn ere its coming illume.

V

Beside him strangely a piece of the dark
Had moved, and the undertones
Of a priest in prayer, like a cavernous wave,
He heard, as were there a soul to save
For urgency now in the groans.

VI

No priest was hired for the play this night:
And the squire tossed head like a deer
At sniff of the tainted wind; he gazed
Where cresset-lamps in a door were raised,
Belike on a passing bier.

VII

All cloaked and masked, with naked blades,
That flashed of a judgement done,
The lords of the Court, from the palace-door,
Came issuing silently, bearers four,
And flat on their shoulders one.

VIII

They marched the body to squire and priest,
They lowered it sad to earth:
The priest they gave the burial dole
Bade wrestle hourly for his soul,
Who was a lord of worth.

IX

One said, farewell to a gallant knight!
And one, but a restless ghost!
'Tis a year and a day since in this place
He died, sped high by a lady of grace,
To join the blissful host.

X

Not vainly on us she charged her cause,
The lady whom we revere
For faith in the mask of a love untrue
To the Love we honour, the Love her due,
The Love we have vowed to rear.

XI

A trap for the sweet tooth, lures for the light,
For the fortress defiant a mine :
Right well ! But not in the South, princess,
Shall the lady snared of her nobleness
Ever shamed or a captive pine.

XII

When the South had voice of a nightingale
Above a Maying bower,
On the heights of Love walked radiant peers ;
The bird of the passion sang over his tears
To the breeze and the orange-flower.

KING HARALD'S TRANCE

I

Sword in length a reaping-hook amain
Harald sheared his field, blood up to shank:
'Mid the swathes of slain,
First at moonrise drank.

II

Thereof hunger, as for meats the knife,
Pricked his ribs, in one sharp spur to reach
Home and his young wife,
Nigh the sea-ford beach.

III

After battle keen to feed was he:
Smoking flesh the thresher washed down fast,
Like an angry sea
Ships from keel to mast.

IV

Name us glory, singer, name us pride
Matching Harald's in his deeds of strength;
Chiefs, wife, sword by side,
Foemen stretched their length!

V

Half a winter night the toasts hurrahed,
Crowned him, clothed him, trumpeted him high,
Till awink he bade
Wife to chamber fly.

VI

Twice the sun had mounted, twice had sunk,
Ere his ears took sound ; he lay for dead ;
Mountain on his trunk,
Ocean on his head.

VII

Clamped to couch, his fiery hearing sucked
Whispers that at heart made iron-clang :
Here fool-women clucked,
There men held harangue.

VIII

Burial to fit their lord of war
They decreed him : hailed the kingling : ha !
Hateful ! but this Thor
Failed a weak lamb's baa.

IX

King they hailed a branchlet, shaped to fare,
Weighted so, like quaking shingle spume,
When his blood's own heir
Ripened in the womb !

X

Still he heard, and doglike, hoglike, ran
Nose of hearing till his blind sight saw :
Woman stood with man
Mouthing low, at paw.

XI

Woman, man, they mouthed ; they spake a thing
Armed to split a mountain, sunder seas :
Still the frozen king
Lay and felt him freeze.

XII

Doglike, hoglike, horselike now he raced,
Riderless, in ghost across a ground
Flint of breast, blank-faced,
Past the fleshly bound.

XIII

Smell of brine his nostrils filled with might :
Nostrils quickened eyelids, eyelids hand :
Hand for sword at right
Groped, the great haft spanned.

XIV

Wonder struck to ice his people's eyes :
Him they saw, the prone upon the bier,
Sheer from backbone rise,
Sword uplifting peer.

XV

Sitting did he breathe against the blade,
Standing kiss it for that proof of life :
Strode, as netters wade,
Straightway to his wife.

XVI

Her he eyed : his judgement was one word,
Foulbed ! and she fell : the blow clove two.
Fearful for the third,
All their breath indrew.

XVII

Morning danced along the waves to beach ;
Dumb his chiefs fetched breath for what might hap :
Glassily on each
Stared the iron cap.

XVIII

Sudden, as it were a monster oak
Split to yield a limb by stress of heat,
Strained he, staggered, broke
Doubled at their feet.

WHIMPER OF SYMPATHY

HAWK or shrike has done this deed
Of downy feathers : rueful sight !
Sweet sentimentalist, invite
Your bosom's Power to intercede.

So hard it seems that one must bleed
Because another needs will bite !
All round we find cold Nature slight
The feelings of the totter-knee'd.

O it were pleasant with you
To fly from this tussle of foes,
The shambles, the charnel, the wrinkle !
To dwell in yon dribble of dew
On the cheek of your sovereign rose,
And live the young life of a twinkle.

YOUNG REYNARD

I

GRACEFULLEST leaper, the dappled fox-cub
Curves over brambles with berries and buds,
Light as a bubble that flies from the tub,
Whisked by the laundry-wife out of her suds.
Wavy he comes, woolly, all at his ease,
Elegant, fashioned to foot with the deuce ;
Nature's own prince of the dance : then he sees
Me, and retires as if making excuse.

II

Never closed minuet courtlier ! Soon
Cub-hunting troops were abroad, and a yelp
Told of sure scent : ere the stroke upon noon
Reynard the younger lay far beyond help.
Wild, my poor friend, has the fate to be chased ;
Civil will conquer : were 't other 'twere worse ;
Fair, by the flushed early morning embraced,
Haply you live a day longer in verse.

MANFRED

I

PROJECTED from the bilious Childe,
This clatterjaw his foot could set
On Alps, without a breast beguiled
To glow in shedding rascal sweat.
Somewhere about his grinder teeth,
He mouthed of thoughts that grilled beneath,
And summoned Nature to her feud
With bile and buskin Attitude.

II

Considerably was the world
Of spinsterdom and clergy racked
While he his hinted horrors hurled,
And she pictorially attacked.
A duel hugeous. Tragic ? Ho !
The cities, not the mountains, blow
Such bladders ; in their shapes confessed
An after-dinner's indigest.

HERNANI

CISTERCIANS might crack their sides
With laughter, and exemption get,
At sight of heroes clasping brides,
And hearing—O the horn ! the horn !
The horn of their obstructive debt !

But quit the stage, that note applies
For sermons cosmopolitan,
Hernani. Have we filched our prize,
Forgetting . . .? O the horn ! the horn !
The horn of the Old Gentleman !

THE NUPTIALS OF ATTILA

I

Flat as to an eagle's eye,
Earth hung under Attila.
Sign for carnage gave he none.
In the peace of his disdain,
Sun and rain, and rain and sun,
Cherished men to wax again,
Crawl, and in their manner die.
On his people stood a frost.
Like the charger cut in stone,
Rearing stiff, the warrior host,
Which had life from him alone,
Craved the trumpet's eager note,
As the bridled earth the Spring.
Rusty was the trumpet's throat.
He let chief and prophet rave ;
Venturous earth around him string
Threads of grass and slender rye,
Wave them, and untrampled wave.
O for the time when God did cry,
Eye and have, my Attila !

II

Scorn of conquest filled like sleep
Him that drank of havoc deep
When the Green Cat pawed the globe :
When the horsemen from his bow

Shot in sheaves and made the foe
Crimson fringes of a robe,
Trailed o'er towns and fields in woe ;
When they streaked the rivers red,
When the saddle was the bed.
Attila, my Attila !

III

He breathed peace and pulled a flower.
Eye and have, my Attila !
This was the damsel Ildico,
Rich in bloom until that hour :
Shyer than the forest doe
Twinkling slim through branches green.
Yet the shyest shall be seen.
Make the bed for Attila

IV

Seen of Attila, desired,
She was led to him straightway :
Radiantly was she attired ;
Rifled lands were her array,
Jewels bled from weeping crowns,
Gold of woeful fields and towns.
She stood pallid in the light.
How she walked, how withered white,
From the blessing to the board,
She who should have proudly blushed,
Women whispered, asking why,
Hinting of a youth, and hushed.
Was it terror of her lord ?
Was she childish ? was she sly ?

Was it the bright mantle's dye
Drained her blood to hues of grief
Like the ash that shoots the spark ?
See the green tree all in leaf :
See the green tree stripped of bark !—
Make the bed for Attila !

V

Round the banquet-table's load
Scores of iron horsemen rode ;
Chosen warriors, keen and hard ;
Grain of threshing battle-dints ;
Attila's fierce body-guard,
Smelling war like fire in flints.
Grant them peace be fugitive !
Iron-capped and iron-heeled,
Each against his fellow's shield
Smote the spear-head, shouting, Live,
Attila ! my Attila !
Eagle, eagle of our breed,
Eagle, beak the lamb, and feed !
Have her, and unleash us ! live,
Attila ! my Attila !

VI

He was of the blood to shine
Bronze in joy, like skies that scorch.
Beaming with the goblet wine
In the wavering of the torch,
Looked he backward on his bride.
Eye and have, my Attila !
Fair in her wide robe was she :
Where the robe and vest divide,

Fair she seemed surpassingly :
Soft, yet vivid as the stream
Danube rolls in the moonbeam
Through rock-barriers : but she smiled
Never, she sat cold as salt :
Open-mouthed as a young child
Wondering with a mind at fault.
Make the bed for Attila !

VII

Under the thin hoop of gold
Whence in waves her hair outrolled
'Twixt her brows the women saw
Shadows of a vulture's claw
Gript in flight : strange knots that sped
Closing and dissolving aye :
Such as wicked dreams betray
When pale dawn creeps o'er the bed.
They might show the common pang
Known to virgins, in whom dread
Hunts their bliss like famished hounds ;
While the chiefs with roaring rounds
Tossed her to her lord, and sang
Praise of him whose hand was large,
Cheers for beauty brought to yield,
Chirrups of the trot afield,
Hurrahs of the battle-charge.

VIII

Those rock-faces hung with weed
Reddened : their great days of speed,
Slaughter, triumph, flood and flame,
Like a jealous frenzy wrought,

Scoffed at them and did them shame,
Quaffing idle, conquering naught.
O for the time when God decreed
Earth the prey of Attila!
God called on thee in his wrath,
Trample it to mire! 'Twas done.
Swift as Danube clove our path
Down from East to Western sun.
Huns! behold your pasture, gaze,
Take, our king said: heel to flank
(Whisper it, the warhorse neighs!)
Forth we drove, and blood we drank
Fresh as dawn-dew: earth was ours:
Men were flocks we lashed and spurned:
Fast as windy flame devours,
Flame along the wind, we burned.
Arrow, javelin, spear, and sword!
Here the snows and there the plains;
On! our signal: onward poured
Torrents of the tightened reins,
Foaming over vine and corn
Hot against the city-wall.
Whisper it, you sound a horn
To the grey beast in the stall!
Yea, he whinnies at a nod.
O for sound of the trumpet-notes!
O for the time when, thunder-shod,
He that scarce can munch his oats
Hung on the peaks, brooded aloof,
Champed the grain of the wrath of God,
Pressed a cloud on the cowering roof,
Snorted out of the blackness fire!
Scarlet broke the sky, and down,
Hammering West with print of his hoof,
He burst out of the bosom of ire

Sharp as eyelight under thy frown,
Attila, my Attila !

IX

Ravaged cities rolling smoke
Thick on cornfields dry and black
Wave his banners, bear his yoke.
Track the lightning, and you track
Attila. They moan : 'tis he !
Bleed : 'tis he ! Beneath his foot
Leagues are deserts charred and mute ;
Where he passed, there passed a sea.
Attila, my Attila !

X

—Who breathed on the king cold breath ?
Said a voice amid the host,
He is Death that weds a ghost,
Else a ghost that weds with Death ?
Ildico's chill little hand
Shuddering he beheld : austere
Stared, as one who would command
Sight of what has filled his ear :
Plucked his thin beard, laughed disdain.
Feast, ye Huns ! His arm he raised,
Like the warrior, battle-dazed,
Joining to the fight amain.
Make the bed for Attila !

XI

Silent Ildico stood up.
King and chief to pledge her well
Shocked sword sword and cup on cup,
Clamouring like a brazen bell.

Silent stepped the queenly slave.
Fair, by heaven ! she was to meet
On a midnight, near a grave,
Flapping wide the winding-sheet.

XII

Death and she walked through the crowd,
Out beyond the flush of light.
Ceremonious women bowed
Following her : 'twas middle night.
Then the warriors each on each
Spied, nor overloudly laughed ;
Like the victims of the leech,
Who have drunk of a strange draught.

XIII

Attila remained. Even so
Frowned he when he struck the blow,
Brained his horse that stumbled twice,
On a bloody day in Gaul,
Bellowing, Perish omens ! All
Marvelled at the sacrifice,
But the battle, swinging dim,
Rang off that axe-blow for him.
Attila, my Attila !

XIV

Brightening over Danube wheeled
Star by star ; and she, most fair,
Sweet as victory half-revealed,
Seized to make him glad and young ;
She, O sweet as the dark sign

Given him oft in battles gone,
When the voice within said, Dare !
And the trumpet-notes were sprung
Rapturous for the charge in line :
She lay waiting : fair as dawn
Wrapped in folds of night she lay ;
Secret, lustrous : flaglike there,
Waiting him to stream and ray,
With one loosening blush outflung,
Colours of his hordes of horse
Ranked for combat : still he hung
Like the fever-dreading air,
Cursed of heat ; and as a corse
Gathers vultures, in his brain
Images of her eyes and kiss
Plucked at the limbs that could remain
Loitering nigh the doors of bliss.
Make the bed for Attila !

XV

Passion on one hand, on one
Destiny led forth the Hun.
Heard ye outcries of affright,
Voices that through many a fray,
In the press of flag and spear,
Warned the king of peril near ?
Men were dumb, they gave him way,
Eager heads to left and right,
Like the bearded standard, thrust,
As in battle, for a nod
From their lord of battle-dust.
Attila, my Attila !
Slow between the lines he trod.
Saw ye not the sun drop slow

On this nuptial day, ere eve
Pierced him on the couch aglow ?
Attila, my Attila !
Here and there his heart would cleave
Clotted memory for a space :
Some stout chief's familiar face,
Choicest of his fighting brood,
Touched him, as 'twere one to know
Ere he met his bride's embrace.
Attila, my Attila !
Twisting fingers in a beard
Scant as winter underwood,
With a narrowed eye he peered ;
Like the sunset's graver red
Up old pine-stems. Grave he stood
Eyeing them on whom was shed
Burning light from him alone.
Attila, my Attila !
Red were they whose mouths recalled
Where the slaughter mounted high,
High on it, o'er earth appalled,
He ; heaven's finger in their sight
Raising him on waves of dead :
Up to heaven his trumpets blown.
O for the time when God's delight
Crowned the head of Attila !
Hungry river of the crag
Stretching hands for earth he came :
Force and Speed astride his name
Pointed back to spear and flag.
He came out of miracle cloud,
Lightning-swift and spectre-lean.
Now those days are in a shroud :
Have him to his ghostly queen.
Make the bed for Attila !

XVI

One, with winecups overstrung,
Cried him farewell in Rome's tongue.
Who ? for the great king turned as though
Wrath to the shaft's head strained the bow.
Nay, not wrath the king possessed,
But a radiance of the breast.
In that sound he had the key
Of his cunning malady.
Lo, where gleamed the sapphire lake,
Leo, with his Rome at stake,
Drew blank air to hues and forms ;
Whereof Two that shone distinct,
Linked as orbed stars are linked,
Clear among the myriad swarms,
In a constellation, dashed
Full on horse and rider's eyes
Sunless light, but light it was—
Light that blinded and abashed,
Froze his members, bade him pause,
Caught him mid-gallop, blazed him home.
Attila, my Attila !
What are streams that cease to flow ?
What was Attila, rolled thence,
Cheated by a juggler's show ?
Like that lake of blue intense,
Under tempest lashed to foam,
Lurid radiance, as he passed,
Filled him, and around was glassed,
When deep-voiced he uttered, Rome !

XVII

Rome ! the word was : and like meat
Flung to dogs the word was torn.

Soon Rome's magic priests shall bleat
Round their magic Pope forlorn !
Loud they swore the king had sworn
Vengeance on the Roman cheat,
Ere he passed as, grave and still,
Danube through the shouting hill :
Sworn it by his naked life !
Eagle, snakes these women are :
Take them on the wing ! but war,
Smoking war 's the warrior's wife !
Then for plunder ! then for brides
Won without a winking priest !—
Danube whirled his train of tides
Black toward the yellow East.
Make the bed for Attila !

XVIII

Chirrups of the trot afield,
Hurrahs of the battle-charge,
How they answered, how they pealed,
When the morning rose and drew
Bow and javelin, lance and targe,
In the nuptial casement's view !
Attila, my Attila !
Down the hillspurs, out of tents
Glimmering in mid-forest, through
Mists of the cool morning scents,
Forth from city-alley, court,
Arch, the bounding horsemen flew,
Joined along the plains of dew,
Raced and gave the rein to sport,
Closed and streamed like curtain-rents
Fluttered by a wind, and flowed
Into squadrons : trumpets blew.

Chargers neighed, and trappings glowed
Brave as the bright Orient's.
Look on the seas that run to greet
Sunrise : look on the leagues of wheat :
Look on the lines and squares that fret
Leaping to level the lance blood-wet.
Tens of thousands, man and steed,
Tossing like field-flowers in Spring ;
Ready to be hurled at need
Whither their great lord may sling.
Finger Romeward, Romeward, King !
Attila, my Attila !
Still the woman holds him fast
As a night-flag round the mast.

XIX

Nigh upon the fiery noon,
Out of ranks a roaring burst.
'Ware white women like the moon !
They are poison : they have thirst
First for love, and next for rule.
Jealous of the army, she ?
Ho, the little wanton fool !
We were his before she squealed
Blind for mother's milk, and heeled
Kicking on her mother's knee.
His in life and death are we :
She but one flower of a field.
We have given him bliss tenfold
In an hour to match her night :
Attila, my Attila !
Still her arms the master hold,
As on wounds the scarf winds tight.

XX

Over Danube day no more,
Like the warrior's planted spear,
Stood to hail the King : in fear
Western day knocked at his door.
Attila, my Attila !
Sudden in the army's eyes
Rolled a blast of lights and cries :
Flashing through them : Dead are ye !
Dead, ye Huns, and torn piecemeal !
See the ordered army reel
Stricken through the ribs : and see,
Wild for speed to cheat despair,
Horsemen, clutching knee to chin,
Crouch and dart they know not where.
Attila, my Attila !
Faces covered, faces bare,
Light the palace-front like jets
Of a dreadful fire within.
Beating hands and driving hair
Start on roof and parapets.
Dust rolls up ; the slaughter din.
—Death to them who call him dead !
Death to them who doubt the tale !
Choking in his dusty veil,
Sank the sun on his death-bed.
Make the bed for Attila !

XXI

'Tis the room where thunder sleeps.
Frenzy, as a wave to shore
Surging, burst the silent door,
And drew back to awful deeps,

Breath beaten out, foam-white. Anew
Howled and pressed the ghastly crew,
Like storm-waters over rocks.
Attila, my Attila!
One long shaft of sunset red
Laid a finger on the bed.
Horror, with the snaky locks,
Shocked the surge to stiffened heaps,
Hoary as the glacier's head
Faced to the moon. Insane they look.
God it is in heaven who weeps
Fallen from his hand the Scourge he shook.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXII

Square along the couch, and stark,
Like the sea-rejected thing
Sea-sucked white, behold their King.
Attila, my Attila!
Beams that panted black and bright,
Scornful lightnings danced their sight:
Him they see an oak in bud,
Him an oaklog stripped of bark:
Him, their lord of day and night,
White, and lifting up his blood
Dumb for vengeance. Name us that,
Huddled in the corner dark,
Humped and grinning like a cat,
Teeth for lips!—'tis she! she stares,
Glittering through her bristled hairs.
Rend her! Pierce her to the hilt!
She is Murder: have her out!
What! this little fist, as big
As the southern summer fig!

She is Madness, none may doubt.
Death, who dares deny her guilt!
Death, who says his blood she spilt!
Make the bed for Attila!

XXIII

Torch and lamp and sunset-red
Fell three-fingered on the bed.
In the torch the beard-hair scant
With the great breast seemed to pant:
In the yellow lamp the limbs
Wavered, as the lake-flower swims:
In the sunset red the dead
Dead avowed him, dry blood-red.

XXIV

Hatred of that abject slave,
Earth, was in each chieftain's heart.
Earth has got him, whom God gave,
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!
Attila, my Attila!

XXV

Thus their prayer was raved and ceased.
Then had Vengeance of her feast
Scent in their quick pang to smite
Which they knew not, but huge pain
Urged them for some victim slain
Swift, and blotted from the sight.
Each at each, a crouching beast,
Glared, and quivered for the word.
Each at each, and all on that,
Humped and grinning like a cat,

Head-bound with its bridal-wreath.
Then the bitter chamber heard
Vengeance in a cauldron seethe.
Hurried counsel rage and craft
Yelped to hungry men, whose teeth
Hard the grey lip-ringlet gnawed,
Gleaming till their fury laughed.
With the steel-hilt in the clutch,
Eyes were shot on her that froze
In their blood-thirst overawed ;
Burned to rend, yet feared to touch.
She that was his nuptial rose,
She was of his heart's blood clad ;
Oh ! the last of him she had !—
Could a little fist as big
As the southern summer fig
Push a dagger's point to pierce
Ribs like those ? Who else ! They glared
Each at each. Suspicion fierce
Many a black remembrance bared.
Attila, my Attila !
Death, who dares deny her guilt !
Death, who says his blood she spilt !
Traitor he, who stands between !
Swift to hell, who harms the Queen !
She, the wild contention's cause,
Combed her hair with quiet paws.
Make the bed for Attila !

XXVI

Night was on the host in arms.
Night, as never night before,
Hearkened to an army's roar
Breaking up in snaky swarms :

Torch and steel and snorting steed,
Hunted by the cry of blood,
Cursed with blindness, mad for day.
Where the torches ran a flood,
Tales of him and of the deed
Showered like a torrent spray.
Fear of silence made them strive
Loud in warrior-hymns that grew
Hoarse for slaughter yet unwreaked.
Ghostly Night across the hive
With a crimson finger drew
Letters on her breast and shrieked.
Night was on them like the mould
On the buried half alive.
Night, their bloody Queen, her fold
Wound on them and struck them through.
Make the bed for Attila!

XXVII

Earth has got him whom God gave,
Earth may sing, and earth shall smart!
None of earth shall know his grave.
They that dig with Death depart.
Attila, my Attila!

XXVIII

Thus their prayer was raved and passed:
Passed in peace their red sunset:
Hewn and earthed those men of sweat
Who had housed him in the vast,
Where no mortal might declare,
There lies he—his end was there!
Attila, my Attila!

XXIX

Kingless was the army left
Of its head the race bereft.
Every fury of the pit
Tortured and dismembered it.
Lo, upon a silent hour,
When the pitch of frost subsides,
Danube with a shout of power
Loosens his imprisoned tides :
Wide around the frighted plains
Shake to hear his riven chains,
Dreadfuller than heaven in wrath,
As he makes himself a path :
High leap the ice-cracks, towering pile
Floes to bergs, and giant peers
Wrestle on a drifted isle ;
Island on ice-island rears ;
Dissolution battles fast :
Big the senseless Titans loom,
Through a mist of common doom
Striving which shall die the last :
Till a gentle-breathing morn
Frees the stream from bank to bank.
So the Empire built of scorn
Agonized, dissolved and sank.
Of the Queen no more was told
Than of leaf on Danube rolled.
Make the bed for Attila !

ANEURIN'S HARP

I

PRINCE of Bards was old Aneurin;
He the grand Gododin sang;
All his numbers threw such fire in,
Struck his harp so wild a twang;—
Still the wakeful Briton borrows
Wisdom from its ancient heat:
Still it haunts our source of sorrows,
Deep excess of liquor sweet!

II

Here the Briton, there the Saxon,
Face to face, three fields apart,
Thirst for light to lay their thwacks on
Each the other with good heart.
Dry the Saxon sits, 'mid dinful
Noise of iron knits his steel:
Fresh and roaring with a skinful,
Britons round the hirlas reel.

III

Yellow flamed the meady sunset;
Red runs up the flag of morn.
Signal for the British onset
Hiccups through the British horn.

Down these hillmen pour like cattle
Sniffing pasture : grim below,
Showing eager teeth of battle,
In his spear-heads lies the foe.

IV

—Monster of the sea ! we drive him
Back into his hungry brine.
—You shall lodge him, feed him, wive him.
Look on us ; we stand in line.
—Pale sea-monster ! foul the waters
Cast him ; foul he leaves our land.
—You shall yield us land and daughters :
Stay the tongue, and try the hand.

V

Swift as torrent-streams our warriors,
Tossing torrent lights, find way ;
Burst the ridges, crowd the barriers,
Pierce them where the spear-heads play ;
Turn them as the clods in furrow,
Top them like the leaping foam ;
Sorrow to the mother, sorrow,
Sorrow to the wife at home !

VI

Stags, they butted ; bulls, they bellowed ;
Hounds, we baited them ; oh, brave !
Every second man, unfellowed,
Took the strokes of two, and gave.
Bare as hop-stakes in November's
Mists they met our battle-flood :
Hoary-red as Winter's embers
Lay their dead lines done in blood.

VII

Thou, my Bard, didst hang thy lyre in
Oak-leaves, and with crimson brand
Rhythmic fury spent, Aneurin ;
Songs the churls could understand ;
Thrumming on their Saxon sconces
Straight, the invariable blow,
Till they snorted true responses.
Ever thus the Bard they know !

VIII

But ere nightfall, harper lusty !
When the sun was like a ball
Dropping on the battle dusty,
What was yon discordant call ?
Cambria's old metheglin demon
Breathed against our rushing tide ;
Clove us midst the threshing seamen :—
Gashed, we saw our ranks divide !

IX

Britain then with valedictory
Shriek veiled off her face and knelt.
Full of liquor, full of victory,
Chief on chief old vengeance dealt.
Backward swung their hurly-burly ;
None but dead men kept the fight.
They that drink their cup too early,
Darkness they shall see ere night.

X

Loud we heard the yellow rover
Laugh to sleep, while we raged thick,
Thick as ants the ant-hill over,
Asking who has thrust the stick.

Lo, as frogs that Winter cumbers
Meet the Spring with stiffen'd yawn,
We from our hard night of slumbers
Marched into the bloody dawn.

XI

Day on day we fought, though shattered ;
Pushed and met repulses sharp,
Till our Raven's plumes were scattered :
All, save old Aneurin's harp.
Hear it wailing like a mother
O'er the strings of children slain !
He in one tongue, in another,
Alien, I ; one blood, yet twain.

XII

Old Aneurin ! droop no longer.
That squat ocean-scum, we own,
Had fine stoutness, made us stronger,
Brought us much-required backbone :
Claimed of Power their dues, and granted
Dues to Power in turn, when rose
Mightier rovers ; they that planted
Sovereign here the Norman nose.

XIII

Glorious men, with heads of eagles,
Chopping arms, and cupboard lips ;
Warriors, hunters, keen as beagles,
Mounted aye on horse or ships.
Active, being hungry creatures ;
Silent, having nought to say :
High they raised the lord of features,
Saxon-worshipped to this day.

XIV

Hear its deeds, the great recital!
Stout as bergs of Arctic ice
Once it led, and lived ; a title
Now it is, and names its price.
This our Saxon brothers cherish :
This, when by the worth of wits
Lands are reared aloft, or perish,
Sole illumes their lucre-pits.

XV

Know we not our wrongs, unwritten
Though they be, Aneurin ? Sword,
Song, and subtle mind, the Briton
Brings to market, all ignored.
'Gainst the Saxon's bone impinging,
Still is our Gododin played ;
Shamed we see him humbly cringing
In a shadowy nose's shade.

XVI

Bitter is the weight that crushes
Low, my Bard, thy race of fire.
Here no fair young future blushes
Bridal to a man's desire.
Neither chief, nor aim, nor splendour
Dressing distance, we perceive.
Neither honour, nor the tender
Bloom of promise, morn or eve.

XVII

Joined we are ; a tide of races
Rolled to meet a common fate ;
England clasps in her embraces
Many : what is England's state ?

England her distended middle
Thumps with pride as Mammon's wife ;
Says that thus she reads thy riddle,
Heaven ! 'tis heaven to plump her life.

XVIII

O my Bard ! a yellow liquor,
Like to that we drank of old—
Gold is her metheglin beaker,
She destruction drinks in gold.
Warn her, Bard, that Power is pressing
Hotly for his dues this hour ;
Tell her that no drunken blessing
Stops the onward march of Power.

XIX

Has she ears to take forewarnings
She will cleanse her of her stains,
Feed and speed for braver mornings
Valorously the growth of brains.
Power, the hard man knit for action,
Reads each nation on the brow.
Cripple, fool, and petrifaction
Fall to him—are falling now !

MEN AND MAN

I

Men the Angels eyed ;
And here they were wild waves,
And there as marsh descried ;
Men the Angels eyed,
And liked the picture best
Where they were greenly dressed
In brotherhood of graves.

II

Man the Angels marked :
He led a host through murk,
On fearful seas embarked ;
Man the Angels marked ;
To think without a nay,
That he was good as they,
And help him at his work.

III

Man and Angels, ye
A sluggish fen shall drain,
Shall quell a warring sea.
Man and Angels, ye,
Whom stain of strife befouls,
A light to kindle souls
Bear radiant in the stain.

THE LAST CONTENTION

I

YOUNG captain of a crazy bark !
O tameless heart in battered frame !
Thy sailing orders have a mark,
And hers is not the name.

II

For action all thine iron clanks
In cravings for a splendid prize ;
Again to race or bump thy planks
With any flag that flies.

III

Consult them ; they are eloquent
For senses not inebriate.
They trust thee on the star intent,
That leads to land their freight.

IV

And they have known thee high peruse
The heavens, and deep the earth, till thou
Didst into the flushed circle cruise
Where reason quits the brow.

V

Thou animatest ancient tales,
To prove our world of linear seed :
Thy very virtue now assails,
A tempter to mislead.

VI

But thou hast answer : I am I :
My passion hallows, bids command :
And she is gracious, she is nigh :
One motion of the hand !

VII

It will suffice ; a whirly tune
These winds will pipe, and thou perform
The nodded part of pantaloon
In thy created storm.

VIII

Admires thee Nature with much pride ;
She clasps thee for a gift of morn,
Till thou art set against the tide,
And then beware her scorn.

IX

Sad issue, should that strife befall
Between thy mortal ship and thee !
It writes the melancholy scrawl
Of wreckage over sea.

X

This lady of the luting tongue,
The flash in darkness, billow's grace,
For thee the worship ; for the young
In muscle the embrace.

XI

Soar on thy manhood clear from those
Whose toothless Winter claws at May,
And take her as the vein of rose
Athwart an evening grey.

PERIANDER

I

How died Melissa none dares shape in words.
A woman who is wife despotic lords
Count faggot at the question, Shall she live !
Her son, because his brows were black of her,
Runs barking for his bread, a fugitive,
And Corinth frowns on them that feed the cur.

II

There is no Corinth save the whip and curb
Of Corinth, high Periander ; the superb
In magnanimity, in rule severe.
Up on his marble fortress-tower he sits,
The city under him : a white yoked steer,
That bears his heart for pulse, his head for wits.

III

Bloom of the generous fires of his fair Spring
Still coloured him when men forbore to sting ;
Admiring meekly where the ordered seeds
Of his good sovereignty showed gardens trim ;
And owning that the hoe he struck at weeds
Was author of the flowers raised face to him.

IV

His Corinth, to each mood subservient
In homage, made he as an instrument
To yield him music with scarce touch of stops.
He breathed, it piped ; he moved, it rose to fly :
At whiles a bloodhorse racing till it drops ;
At whiles a crouching dog, on him all eye.

V

His wisdom men acknowledged ; only one,
The creature, issue of him, Lycophron,
That rebel with his mother in his brows,
Contested : such an infamous would foul
Pirene ! Little heed where he might house
The prince gave, hearing : so the fox, the owl !

VI

To prove the Gods benignant to his rule,
The years, which fasten rigid whom they cool,
Reviewing, saw him hold the seat of power.
A grey one asked : Who next ? nor answer had :
One greyer pointed on the pallid hour
To come : a river dried of waters glad.

VII

For which of his male issue promised grip
To stride yon people, with the curb and whip ?
This Lycophron ! he sole, the father like,
Fired prospect of a line in one strong tide,
By right of mastery ; stern will to strike ;
Pride to support the stroke : yea, Godlike pride !

VIII

Himself the prince beheld a failing fount.
His line stretched back unto its holy mount :
The thirsty onward waved for him no sign.
Then stood before his vision that hard son.
The seizure of a passion for his line
Impelled him to the path of Lycophron.

IX

The youth was tossing pebbles in the sea ;
A figure shunned along the busy quay,
Perforce of the harsh edict for who dared
Address him outcast. Naming it, he crossed
His father's look with look that proved them paired
For stiffness, and another pebble tossed.

X

An exile to the Island ere nightfall
He passed from sight, from the hushed mouths of all.
It had resemblance to a death : and on,
Against a coast where sapphire shattered white,
The seasons rolled like troops of billows blown
To spraymist. The prince gazed on capping night.

XI

Deaf Age spake in his ear with shouts : Thy son !
Deep from his heart Life raved of work not done.
He heard historic echoes moan his name,
As of the prince in whom the race had pause ;
Till Tyranny paternity became,
And him he hated loved he for the cause.

XII

Not Lycophron the exile now appeared,
But young Periander, from the shadow cleared,
That haunted his rebellious brows. The prince
Grew bright for him ; saw youth, if seeming loth,
Return : and of pure pardon to convince,
Despatched the messenger most dear with both.

XIII

His daughter, from the exile's Island home,
Wrote, as a flight of halcyons o'er the foam,
Sweet words : her brother to his father bowed ;
Accepted his peace-offering, and rejoiced.
To bring him back a prince the father vowed,
Commanded man the oars, the white sails hoist.

XIV

He waved the fleet to strain its westward way
On to the sea-hued hills that crown the bay :
Soil of those hospitable islanders
Whom now his heart, for honour to his blood,
Thanked. They should learn what boons a prince confers
When happiness enjoins him gratitude !

XV

In watch upon the offing, worn with haste
To see his youth revived, and, close embraced,
Pardon who had subdued him, who had gained
Surely the stoutest battle between two
Since Titan pierced by young Apollo stained
Earth's breast, the prince looked forth, himself looked through.

XVI

Errors aforetime unperceived were bared,
To be by his young masterful repaired :
Renewed his great ideas gone to smoke ;
His policy confirmed amid the surge
Of States and people fretting at his yoke.
And lo, the fleet brown-flocked on the sea-verge !

XVII

Oars pulled : they streamed in harbour ; without cheer
For welcome shadowed round the heaving bier.
They, whose approach in such rare pomp and stress
Of numbers the free islanders dismayed
At Tyranny come masking to oppress,
Found Lycophron this breathless; this lone-laid.

XVIII

Who smote the man thrown open to young joy ?
The image of the mother of his boy
Came forth from his unwary breast in wreaths,
With eyes. And shall a woman, that extinct,
Smite out of dust the Powerful who breathes ?
Her loved the son ; her served ; they lay close-linked !

XIX

Dead was he, and demanding earth. Demand
Sharper for vengeance of an instant hand,
The Tyrant in the father heard him cry,
And raged a plague ; to prove on free Hellenes
How prompt the Tyrant for the Persian dye ;
How black his Gods behind their marble screens.

SOLON

I

THE Tyrant passed, and friendlier was his eye
On the great man of Athens, whom for foe
He knew, than on the sycophantic fry
That broke as waters round a galley's flow,
Bubbles at prow and foam along the wake.
Solidity the Thunderer could not shake,
Beneath an adverse wind still stripping bare,
His kinsman, of the light-in-cavern look,
From thought drew, and a countenance could wear
Not less at peace than fields in Attic air
Shorn, and shown fruitful by the reaper's hook.

II

Most enviable so ; yet much insane
To deem of minds of men they grow ! these sheep,
By fits wild horses, need the crook and rein ;
Hot bulls by fits, pure wisdom hold they cheap,
My Lawgiver, when fiery is the mood.
For ones and twos and threes thy words are good ;
For thine own government are pillars : mine
Stand acts to fit the herd ; which has quick thirst,
Rejecting elegiacs, though they shine
On polished brass, and, worthy of the Nine,
In showering columns from their fountain burst.

III

Thus museful rode the Tyrant, princely plumed,
To his high seat upon the sacred rock :

And Solon, blank beside his rule, resumed
The meditation which that passing mock
Had buffeted awhile to sallowness.
He little loved the man, his office less,
Yet owned him for a flower of his kind.
Therefore the heavier curse on Athens he !
The people grew not in themselves, but, blind,
Accepted sight from him, to him resigned
Their hopes of stature, rootless as at sea.

IV

As under sea lay Solon's work, or seemed
By turbid shore-waves beaten day by day ;
Defaced, half formless, like an image dreamed,
Or child that fashioned in another clay
Appears, by strangers' hands to home returned.
But shall the Present tyrannize us ? earned
It was in some way, justly says the sage.
One sees not how, while husbanding regrets ;
While tossing scorn abroad from righteous rage,
High vision is obscured ; for this is age
When robbed—more infant than the babe it frets !

V

Yet see Athenians treading the black path
Laid by a prince's shadow ! well content
To wait his pleasure, shivering at his wrath :
They bow to their accepted Orient
With offer of the all that renders bright :
Forgetful of the growth of men to light,
As creatures reared on Persian milk they bow.
Unripe ! unripe ! The times are overcast.
But still may they who sowed behind the plough
True seed fix in the mind an unborn Now
To make the plagues afflicting us things past.

BELLEROPHON

I

Maimed, beggared, grey ; seeking an alms ; with nod
Of palsy doing task of thanks for bread ;
Upon the stature of a God,
He whom the Gods have struck bends low his head.

II

Weak words he has, that slip the nerveless tongue
Deformed, like his great frame : a broken arc :
Once radiant as the javelin flung
Right at the centre breastplate of his mark.

III

Oft pausing on his white-eyed inward look,
Some undermountain narrative he tells,
As gapped by Lykian heat the brook
Cut from the source that in the upland swells.

IV

The cottagers who dole him fruit and crust
With patient inattention hear him prate :
And comes the snow, and comes the dust,
Comes the old wanderer, more bent of late.

V

A crazy beggar grateful for a meal
Has ever of himself a world to say.
For them he is an ancient wheel
Spinning a knotted thread the livelong day.

VI

He cannot, nor do they, the tale connect;
For never singer in the land had been
Who him for theme did not reject:
Spurned of the hoof that sprang the Hippocrene.

VII

Albeit a theme of flame to bring them straight
The snorting white-winged brother of the wave,
They hear him as a thing by fate
Cursed in unholy babble to his grave.

VIII

As men that spied the wings, that heard the snort,
Their sires have told; and of a martial prince
Bestriding him; and old report
Speaks of a monster slain by one long since.

IX

There is that story of the golden bit
By Goddess given to tame the lightning steed:
A mortal who could mount, and sit
Flying, and up Olympus midway speed.

X

He rose like the loosed fountain's utmost leap ;
He played the star at span of heaven right o'er
Men's heads : they saw the snowy steep,
Saw the winged shoulders : him they saw not more.

XI

He fell : and says the shattered man, I fell :
And sweeps an arm the height an eagle wins ;
And in his breast a mouthless well
Heaves the worn patches of his coat of skins.

XII

Lo, this is he in whom the surgent springs
Of recollections richer than our skies
To feed the flow of tuneful strings,
Show but a pool of scum for shooting flies.

PHAÉTHÔN

ATTEMPTED IN THE GALLIAMBIC MEASURE

At the coming up of Phoebus the all-luminous charioteer,
Double-visaged stand the mountains in imperial multitudes,
And with shadows dappled men sing to him, Hail, O Beneficent!
For they shudder chill, the earth-vales, at his clouding shudder to black;
In the light of him there is music thro' the poplar and river-sedge,
Renovation, chirp of brooks, hum of the forest—an ocean-song.
Never pearl from ocean-hollows by the diver exultingly,
In his breathlessness, above thrust, is as earth to Helios.
Who usurps his place there, rashest? Aphrodite's loved one it is!
To his son the flaming Sun-God, to the tender youth, Phaethon,
Rule of day this day surrenders as a thing nereditary,
Having sworn by Styx tremendous, for the proof of his parentage,
He would grant his son's petition, whatsoever the sign thereof.
Then, rejoiced, the stripling answered: 'Rule of day give me; give it me,
'Give me place that men may see me how I blaze, and transcendingly
'I, divine, proclaim my birthright.' Darkened Helios, and his utterance

Choked prophetic: 'O half mortal!' he exclaimed in an agony,
'O lost son of mine! lost son! No! put a prayer for another thing:
'Not for this: insane to wish it, and to crave the gift impious!
'Cannot other gifts my godhead shed upon thee? miraculous
'Mighty gifts to prove a blessing, that to earth thou shalt be a joy?
'Gifts of healing, wherewith men walk as the Gods beneficently;
As a God to sway to concord hearts of men, reconciling them;
'Gifts of verse, the lyre, the laurel, therewithal that thine origin
'Shall be known even as when *I* strike on the string'd shell with melody,
'And the golden notes, like medicine, darting straight to the cavities,
'Fill them up, till hearts of men bound as the billows, the ships thereon.'
Thus intently urged the Sun-God; but the force of his eloquence
Was the pressing on of sea-waves scattered broad from the rocks away.
What shall move a soul from madness? Lost, lost in delirium,
Rock-fast, the adolescent to his father, irreverent,
'By the oath! the oath! thine oath!' cried. The effulgent foreseër then,
Quivering in his loins parental, on the boy's beaming countenance
Looked and moaned, and urged him for love's sake, for sweet life's sake, to yield the claim,

To abandon his mad hunger, and avert the calamity.
But he, vehement, passionate, called out: 'Let me show
I am what I say,
'That the taunts I hear be silenced: I am stung with
their whispering.
'Only, Thou, my Father, Thou tell how aloft the revolving
wheels,
'How aloft the cleaving horse-crests I may guide per-
emptorily,
'Till I drink the shadows, fire-hot, like a flower celestial,
'And my fellows see me curbing the fierce steeds, the
dear dew-drinkers:
'Yea, for this I gaze on life's light; throw for this any
sacrifice.'

All the end foreseeing, Phoebus to his oath irrevocable
Bowed obedient, deploring the insanity pitiless.
Then the flame-outsnorting horses were led forth: it
was so decreed.
They were yoked before the glad youth by his sister-
ancillaries.
Swift the ripple ripples follow'd, as of aureate Helicon,
Down their flanks, while they impatient pawed desire
of the distances,
And the bit with fury champed. Oh! unimaginable
delight!
Unimagined speed and splendour in the circle of upper air!
Glory grander than the armed host upon earth singing
victory!
Chafed the youth with their spirit súrcharged, as when
blossom is shaken by winds,
Marked that labour by his sister Phaethontiades finished,
quick
On the slope of the car his forefoot set assured: and
the morning rose:

Seeing whom, and what a day dawned, stood the God, as in harvest fields,
When the reaper grasps the full sheaf and the sickle that severs it :
Hugged the withered head with one hand, with the other, to indicate
(If this woe might be averted, this immeasurable evil),
Laid the kindling course in view, told how the reins to manipulate :
Named the horses fondly, fearful, caution'd urgently betweenwhiles :
Their diverging tempers dwelt on, and their wantonness, wickedness,
That the voice of Gods alone held in restraint ; but the voice of Gods ;
None but Gods can curb. He spake : vain were the words : scarcely listening,
Mounted Phaethon, swinging reins loose, and, 'Behold me, companions,
'It is I here, I!' he shouted, glancing down with supremacy ;
'Not to any of you was this gift granted ever in annals of men ;
'I alone what only Gods can, I alone am governing day!'
Short the triumph, brief his rapture : see a hurricane suddenly
Beat the lifting billow crestless, roll it broken this way and that ;—
At the leap on yielding ether, in despite of his reprimand,
Swayed tumultuous the fire-steeds, plunging reckless hither and yon ;
Unto men a great amazement, all agaze at the Troubled East :—
Pitifully for mastery striving in ascension, the charioteer,

Reminiscent, drifts of counsel caught confused in his arid wits ;
The reins stiff ahind his shoulder madly pulled for the mastery,
Till a thunder off the tense chords thro' his ears dinnèd horrible.
Panic seized him : fled his vision of inviolability ;
Fled the dream that he of mortals rode mischances predominant ;
And he cried, ' Had I petitioned for a cup of chill aconite,
' My descent to awful Hades had been soft, for now must I go
' With the curse by father Zeus cast on ambition immoderate.
' Oh, my sisters ! Thou, my Goddess, in whose love I was enviable,
' From whose arms I rushed befrenzied, what a wreck will this body be,
' That admired of thee stood rose-warm in the courts where thy mysteries
' Celebration had from me, me the most splendidly privileged !
' Never more shall I thy temple fill with incenses bewildering ;
' Not again hear thy half-murmurs—I am lost !—never, never more.
' I am wrecked on seas of air, hurled to my death in a vessel of flame !
' Hither, sisters ! Father, save me ! Hither, succour me, Cypria ! '

Now a wail of men to Zeus rang : from Olympus the Thunderer
Saw the rage of the havoc wide-mouthed, the bright car superimpending

Over Asia, Africa, low down; ruin flaming over the vales;
Light disastrous rising savage out of smoke inveterately;
Beast-black, conflagration like a menacing shadow move
With voracious roaring southward, where aslant, insufferable,
The bright steeds careered their parched way down an arc of the firmament.
For the day grew like to thick night, and the orb was its beacon-fire,
And from hill to hill of darkness burst the day's apparition forth.
Lo, a wrestler, not a God, stood in the chariot ever lowering:
Lo, the shape of one who raced there to outstrip the legitimate hours:
Lo, the ravish'd beams of Phoebus dragged in shame at the chariot-wheels:
Light of days of happy pipings by the mead-singing rivulets!
Lo, lo, increasing lustre, torrid breath to the nostrils; lo,
Torrid brilliancies thro' the vapours lighten swifter, penetrate them,
Fasten merciless, ruminant, hueless, on earth's frame crackling busily.
He aloft, the frenzied driver, in the glow of the universe,
Like the paling of the dawn-star withers visibly, he aloft:
Bitter fury in his aspect, bitter death in the heart of him.
Crouch the herds, contract the reptiles, crouch the lions under their paws.
White as metal in the furnace are the faces of humankind:
Inarticulate creatures of earth dumb all await the ultimate shock.

To the bolt he launched, 'Strike dead, thou,' uttered Zeus, very terrible;
'Perish folly, else 'tis man's fate'; and the bolt flew unerringly.
Then the kindler stooped; from the torch-car down the measureless altitudes
Leaned his rayless head, relinquished rein and footing, raised not a cry.
Like the flower on the river's surface when expanding it vanishes,
Gave his limbs to right and left, quenched: and so fell he precipitate,
Seen of men as a glad rain-fall, sending coolness yet ere it comes:
So he showered above them, shadowed o'er the blue archipelagoes,
O'er the silken-shining pastures of the continents and the isles;
So descending brought revival to the greenery of our earth.

Lither, noisy in the breezes now his sisters shivering weep,
By the river flowing smooth out to the vexed sea of Adria,
Where he fell, and where they suffered sudden change to the tremulous
Ever-wailful trees bemoaning him, a bruised purple cyclamen.

A READING OF EARTH

SEED-TIME

I

FLOWERS of the willow-herb are wool ;
Flowers of the briar berries red ;
Speeding their seed as the breeze may rule,
Flowers of the thistle loosen the thread.
Flowers of the clematis drip in beard,
Slack from the fir-tree youngly climbed ;
Chaplets in air, flies foliage seared ;
Heeled upon earth, lie clusters rimed.

II

Where were skies of the mantle stained
Orange and scarlet, a coat of frieze
Travels from North till day has waned,
Tattered, soaked in the ditch's dyes ;
Tumbles the rook under grey or slate ;
Else, enfolding us, damps to the bone ;
Narrows the world to my neighbour's gate ;
Paints me Life as a wheezy crone.

III

Now seems none but the spider lord ;
Star in circle his web waits prey,
Silvering bush-mounds, blue brushing sward ;
Slow runs the hour, swift flits the ray.
Now to his thread-shroud is he nigh,
Nigh to the tangle where wings are sealed,
He who frolicked the jewelled fly ;
All is adroop on the down and the weald.

IV

Mists more lone for the sheep-bell enwrap
Nights that tardily let slip a morn
Paler than moons, and on noontide's lap
Flame dies cold, like the rose late born.
Rose born late, born withered in bud !—
I, even I, for a zenith of sun
Cry, to fulfil me, nourish my blood :
O for a day of the long light, one !

V

Master the blood, nor read by chills,
Earth admonishes : Hast thou ploughed,
Sown, reaped, harvested grain for the mills,
Thou hast the light over shadow of cloud.
Steadily eyeing, before that wail,
Animal-infant, thy mind began,
Momently nearer me : should sight fail,
Plod in the track of the husbandman.

VI

Verily now is our season of seed,
Now in our Autumn ; and Earth discerns
Them that have served her in them that can read,
Glassing, where under the surface she burns,
Quick at her wheel, while the fuel, decay,
Brightens the fire of renewal : and we ?
Death is the word of a bovine day,
Know you the breast of the springing To-be.

HARD WEATHER

Bursts from a rending East in flaws
The young green leaflet's harrier, sworn
To strew the garden, strip the shaws,
And show our Spring with banner torn.
Was ever such virago morn ?
The wind has teeth, the wind has claws.
All the wind's wolves through woods are loose,
The wild wind's falconry aloft.
Shrill underfoot the grassblade shrews,
At gallop, clumped, and down the croft
Bestrid by shadows, beaten, tossed ;
It seems a scythe, it seems a rod.
The howl is up at the howl's accost ;
The shivers greet and the shivers nod.

Is the land ship ? we are rolled, we drive
Tritonly, cleaving hiss and hum ;
Whirl with the dead, or mount or dive,
Or down in dregs, or on in scum.
And drums the distant, pipes the near,
And vale and hill are grey in grey,
As when the surge is crumbling sheer,
And sea-mews wing the haze of spray.
Clouds—are they bony witches ?—swarms,
Darting swift on the robber's flight,
Hurry an infant sky in arms :
It peeps, it becks ; 'tis day, 'tis night.

Black while over the loop of blue
The swathe is closed, like shroud on corse.
Lo, as if swift the Furies flew,
The Fates at heel at a cry to horse !

Interpret me the savage whirr :
And is it Nature scourged, or she,
Her offspring's executioner,
Reducing land to barren sea ?
But is there meaning in a day
When this fierce angel of the air,
Intent to throw, and haply slay,
Can for what breath of life we bear
Exact the wrestle ? Call to mind
The many meanings glistening up
When Nature, to her nurslings kind,
Hands them the fruitage and the cup !
And seek we rich significance
Not otherwhere than with those tides
Of pleasure on the sunned expanse,
Whose flow deludes, whose ebb derides ?

Look in the face of men who fare
Lock-mouthed, a match in lungs and thews
For this fierce angel of the air,
To twist with him and take his bruise.
That is the face beloved of old
Of Earth, young mother of her brood :
Nor broken for us shows the mould
When muscle is in mind renewed :
Though farther from her nature rude,
Yet nearer to her spirit's hold :
And though of gentler mood serene,
Still forceful of her fountain-jet.
So shall her blows be shrewdly met,

Be luminously read the scene
Where Life is at her grindstone set,
That she may give us edgeing keen,
String us for battle, till as play
The common strokes of fortune shower.
Such meaning in a dagger-day
Our wits may clasp to wax in power.
Yea, feel us warmer at her breast,
By spin of blood in lusty drill,
Than when her honeyed hands caressed,
And Pleasure, sapping, seemed to fill.

Behold the life at ease ; it drifts.
The sharpened life commands its course.
She winnows, winnows roughly ; sifts,
To dip her chosen in her source :
Contention is the vital force,
Whence pluck they brain, her prize of gifts,
Sky of the senses ! on which height,
Not disconnected, yet released,
They see how spirit comes to light,
Through conquest of the inner beast,
Which Measure tames to movement sane,
In harmony with what is fair.
Never is Earth misread by brain :
That is the welling of her, there
The mirror : with one step beyond,
For likewise is it voice ; and more,
Benignest kinship bids respond,
When wail the weak, and them restore
Whom days as fell as this may rive,
While Earth sits ebon in her gloom,
Us atomies of life alive
Unheeding, bent on life to come.
Her children of the labouring brain,

These are the champions of the race,
True parents, and the sole humane,
With understanding for their base.
Earth yields the milk, but all her mind
Is vowed to thresh for stouter stock.
Her passion for old giantkind,
That scaled the mount, uphurled the rock,
Devolves on them who read aright
Her meaning and devoutly serve ;
Nor in her starlessness of night
Peruse her with the craven nerve :
But even as she from grass to corn,
To eagle high from grubbing mole,
Prove in strong brain her noblest born,
The station for the flight of soul.

THE SOUTH-WESTER

DAY of the cloud in fleets ! O day
Of wedded white and blue, that sail
Immingled, with a footing ray
In shadow-sandals down our vale !—
And swift to ravish golden meads,
Swift up the run of turf it speeds,
Thy bright of head and dark of heel,
To where the hilltop flings on sky,
As hawk from wrist or dust from wheel,
The tiptoe scalers tossed to fly :—
Thee the last thunder's caverned peal
Delivered from a wailful night :
All dusky round thy cradled light,
Those brine-born issues, now in bloom
Transfigured, wreathed as raven's plume
And briony-leaf to watch thee lie :
Dark eyebrows o'er a dreamful eye
Nigh opening : till in the braid
Of purpled vapours thou wert rosed :
Till that new babe a Goddess maid
Appeared and vividly disclosed
Her beat of life : then crimson played
On edges of the plume and leaf :
Shape had they and fair feature brief,
The wings, the smiles : they flew the breast,

Earth's milk. But what imperial march
Their standards led for earth, none guessed
Ere, upward of a coloured arch,
An arrow straining eager head
Lightened, and high for zenith sped.
Fierier followed ; followed Fire.
Name the young lord of Earth's desire,
Whose look her wine is, and whose mouth
Her music ! Beauteous was she seen
Beneath her midway West of South ;
And sister was her quivered green
To sapphire of the Nereid eyes
On sea when sun is breeze ; she winked
As they, and waved, heaved waterwise
Her flood of leaves and grasses linked :
A myriad lustrous butterflies
A moment in the fluttering sheen ;
Becapped with the slate air that throws
The reindeer's antlers black between
Low-frowning and wide-fallen snows,
A minute after ; hooded, stoled
To suit a graveside Season's dirge.
Lo, but the breaking of a surge,
And she is in her lover's fold,
Illumined o'er a boundless range
Anew : and through quick morning hours
The Tropic-Arctic counterchange
Did seem to pant in beams and showers.

But noon beheld a larger heaven ;
Beheld on our reflecting field
The Sower to the Bearer given,
And both their inner sweetest yield,
Fresh as when dews were grey or first
Received the flush of hues athirst.

Heard we the woodland, eyeing sun,
As harp and harper were they one.
A murky cloud a fair pursued,
Assailed, and felt the limbs elude :
He sat him down to pipe his woe,
And some strange beast of sky became :
A giant's club withheld the blow ;
A milky cloud went all to flame.
And there were groups where silvery springs
The ethereal forest showed begirt
By companies in choric rings,
Whom but to see made ear alert.
For music did each movement rouse,
And motion was a minstrel's rage
To have our spirits out of house,
And bathe them on the open page.

This was a day that knew not age.
Since flew the vapoury twos and threes
From western pile to eastern rack ;
As on from peaks of Pyrenees
To Graians ; youngness ruled the track.
When songful beams were shut in caves,
And rainy drapery swept across ;
When the ranked clouds were downy waves,
Breast of swan, eagle, albatross,
In ordered lines to screen the blue,
Youngest of light was nigh, we knew.
The silver finger of it laughed
Along the narrow rift : it shot,
Slew the huge gloom with golden shaft,
Then haled on high the volumed blot,
To build the hurling palace, cleave
The dazzling chasm ; the flying nests,
The many glory-garlands weave,

Whose presence not our sight attests
Till wonder with the splendour blent,
And passion for the beauty flown,
Make evanescence permanent,
The thing at heart our endless own.

Only at gathered eve knew we
The marvels of the day : for then
Mount upon mountain out of sea
Arose, and to our spacious ken
Trebled sublime Olympus round
In towering amphitheatre.
Colossal on enormous mound,
Majestic gods we saw confer.
They wafted the Dream-messenger
From off the loftiest, the crowned :
That Lady of the hues of foam
In sun-rays : who, close under dome,
A figure on the foot's descent,
Irradiate to vapour went,
As one whose mission was resigned ;
Dispieced, undraped, dissolved to threads
Melting she passed into the mind,
Where immortal with mortal weds.

Whereby was known that we had viewed
The union of our earth and skies
Renewed : nor less alive renewed
Than when old bards, in nature wise,
Conceived pure beauty given to eyes,
And with undyingness imbued.
Pageant of man's poetic brain,
His grand procession of the song,
It was ; the Muses and their train ;

Their God to lead the glittering throng ;
At whiles a beat of forest gong ;
At whiles a glimpse of Python slain.
Mostly divinest harmony,
The lyre, the dance. We could believe
A life in orb and brook and tree
And cloud : and still holds Memory
A morning in the eyes of eve.

THE THRUSH IN FEBRUARY

I KNOW him, February's thrush,
And loud at eve he valentines
On sprays that paw the naked bush
Where soon will sprout the thorns and bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,
A herald of the million bills ;
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,
Perched over yew and juniper,
He neighbours, piping to his world :—

The wooded pathways dank on brown,
The branches on grey cloud a web,
The long green roller of the down,
An image of the deluge-ebb :—

And farther, they may hear along
The stream beneath the poplar row.
By fits, like welling rocks, the song
Spouts of a blushful Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale
When waves of warm South-western rains
Have left our heavens clear in pale,
With faintest beck of moist red veins :

Vermilion wings, by distance held
To pause aflight while fleeting swift :
And high aloft the pearl inshelled
Her lucid glow in glow will lift ;

A little south of coloured sky ;
Directing, gravely amorous,
The human of a tender eye
Through pure celestial on us :

Remote, not alien ; still, not cold ;
Unraying yet, more pearl than star ;
She seems a while the vale to hold
In trance, and homelier makes the far.

Then Earth her sweet unscented breathes ;
An orb of lustre quits the height ;
And like broad iris-flags, in wreaths
The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,
Nor ever after separate
From such a twilight of the year
Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of Winter's throat,
The young time with the life ahead ;
And my young time his leaping note
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

Imbedded in a land of greed,
Of mammon-quakings dire as Earth's,
My care was but to soothe my need ;
At peace among the littleworths.

To light and song my yearning aimed;
To that deep breast of song and light
Which men have barrenest proclaimed;
As 'tis to senses pricked with fright.

So mine are these new fruitings rich
The simple to the common brings;
I keep the youth of souls who pitch
Their joy in this old heart of things:

Who feel the Coming young as aye,
Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;
Alive for life, awake to die;
One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer, passes: lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.
They are the vessel of the Thought.
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave,
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.
Glimpse of its livingness will wave
A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death,
Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird
Of promise! bird of happy breath!
I hear, I would the City heard.

The City of the smoky fray ;
A prodded ox, it drags and moans :
Its Morrow no man's child ; its Day
A vulture's morsel beaked to bones.

It strives without a mark for strife ;
It feasts beside a famished host :
The loose restraint of wanton life,
That threatened penance in the ghost

Yet there our battle urges ; there
Spring heroes many : issuing thence,
Names that should leave no vacant air
For fresh delight in confidence.

Life was to them the bag of grain,
And Death the weedy harrow's tooth.
Those warriors of the sighting brain
Give worn Humanity new youth.

Our song and star are they to lead
The tidal multitude and blind
From bestial to the higher breed
By fighting souls of love divined.

They scorned the ventral dream of peace,
Unknown in nature. This they knew :
That life begets with fair increase
Beyond the flesh, if life be true.

Just reason based on valiant blood
The instinct bred afield would match
To pipe thereof a swelling flood,
Were men of Earth made wise in watch.

Though now the numbers count as drops
An urn might bear, they father Time.
She shapes anew her dusty crops ;
Her quick in their own likeness climb.

Of their own force do they create ;
They climb to light, in her their root.
Your brutish cry at muffled fate
She smites with pangs of worse than brute.

She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears
A Mother whom no cry can melt ;
But read her past desires and fears,
The letters on her breast are spelt.

A slayer, yea, as when she pressed
Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,
To sacrifice she prompts her best :
She reaps them as the sower reaps.

But read her thought to speed the race,
And stars rush forth of blackest night :
You chill not at a cold embrace
To come, nor dread a dubious might.

Her double visage, double voice,
In oneness rise to quench the doubt.
This breath, her gift, has only choice
Of service, breathe we in or out.

Since Pain and Pleasure on each hand
Led our wild steps from slimy rock
To yonder sweeps of gardenland,
We breathe but to be sword or block

The sighting brain her good decree
Accepts ; obeys those guides, in faith,
By reason hourly fed, that she,
To some the clod, to some the wraith,

Is more, no mask ; a flame, a stream.
Flame, stream, are we, in mid career
From torrent source, delirious dream,
To heaven-reflecting currents clear.

And why the sons of Strength have been
Her cherished offspring ever ; how
The Spirit served by her is seen
Through Law ; perusing love will show.

Love born of knowledge, love that gains
Vitality as Earth it mates,
The meaning of the Pleasures, Pains,
The Life, the Death, illuminates.

For love we Earth, then serve we all ;
Her mystic secret then is ours :
We fall, or view our treasures fall,
Unclouded, as beholds her flowers

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,
When lowly, with a broken neck,
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

THE APPEASEMENT OF DEMETER

I

DEMETER devastated our good land,
In blackness for her daughter snatched below.
Smoke-pillar or loose hillock was the sand,
Where soil had been to clasp warm seed and throw
The wheat, vine, olive, ripe to Summer's ray.
Now whether night advancing, whether day,
Scarce did the baldness show :
The hand of man was a defeated hand.

II

Necessity, the primal goad to growth,
Stood shrunken ; Youth and Age appeared as one ;
Like Winter Summer ; good as labour sloth ;
Nor was there answer wherefore beamed the sun,
Or why men drew the breath to carry pain.
High reared the ploughshare, broken lay the wain,
Idly the flax-wheel spun
Unridered : starving lords were wasp and moth.

III

Lean grassblades losing green on their bent flags,
Sang chilly to themselves ; lone honey-bees
Pursued the flowers that were not with dry bags ;
Sole sound aloud the snap of sapless trees,

[ore sharp than slingstones on hard breastplates hurled.
ack to first chaos tumbled the stopped world,
Careless to lure or please.
. nature of gaunt ribs, an Earth of crags.

IV

'o smile Demeter cast : the gloom she saw
Vell draped her direful musing ; for in gloom,
ı thicker gloom, deep down the cavern-maw,
[er sweet had vanished ; liker unto whom,
ınd whose pale place of habitation mute,
he and all seemed where seasons, pledged for fruit
Anciently, gaped for bloom :
Vhere hand of man was as a plucked fowl's claw.

V

'he wrathful Queen descended on a vale,
'hat ere the ravished hour for richness heaved.
ambe, maiden of the merry tale,
Beside her eyed the once red-cheeked, green-leaved.
t looked as if the Deluge had withdrawn.
'ity caught at her throat ; her jests were gone.
More than for her who grieved,
he could for this waste home have piped the wail.

VI

ambe, her dear mountain-rivulet
'o waken laughter from cold stones, beheld
\ riven wheatfield cracking for the wet,
\nd seed like infant's teeth, that never swelled,
\peep up flinty ridges, milkless round.
'eeth of the giants marked she where thin ground
Rocky in spikes rebelled
\gainst the hand here slack as rotted net.

VII

The valley people up the ashen scoop
She beckoned, aiming hopelessly to win
Her Mistress in compassion of yon group
So pinched and wizened ; with their aged grin,
For lack of warmth to smile, on mouths of woe,
White as in chalk outlining little O
Dumb, from a falling chin ;
Young, old, alike half-bent to make the hoop.

VIII

Their tongues of birds they wagged, weak-voiced as when
Dark underwaters the recesses choke ;
With cluck and upper quiver of a hen
In grasp, past pecking : cry before the croak.
Relentlessly their gold-haired Heaven, their fount
Bountiful of old days, heard them recount
This and that cruel stroke :
Nor eye nor ear had she for piteous men.

IX

A figure of black rock by sunbeams crowned
Through stormclouds, where the volumed shades enfold
An earth in awe before the claps resound
And woods and dwellings are as billows rolled,
The barren Nourisher unmelted shed
Death from the looks that wandered with the dead
Out of the realms of gold,
In famine for her lost, her lost unfound.

X

Iambe from her Mistress tripped ; she raised
The cattle-call above the moan of prayer ;
And slowly out of fields their fancy grazed,
Among the droves, defiled a horse and mare :

The wrecks of horse and mare : such ribs as view
Seas that have struck brave ships ashore, while through
Shoots the swift foamspit : bare
They nodded, and Demeter on them gazed.

XI

Howbeit the season of the dancing blood,
Forgot was horse of mare, yea, mare of horse :
Reversed, each head at either's flank, they stood.
Whereat the Goddess, in a dim remorse,
Laid hand on them, and smacked ; and her touch
pricked.
Neighing within, at either's flank they licked ;
Played on a moment's force
At courtship, withering to the crazy nod.

XII

The nod was that we gather for consent ;
And mournfully amid the group a dame,
Interpreting the thing in nature meant,
Her hands held out like bearers of the flame,
And nodded for the negative sideways.
Keen at her Mistress glanced Iambe : rays
From the Great Mother came :
Her lips were opened wide ; the curse was rent.

XIII

She laughed : since our first harvesting heard none
Like thunder of the song of heart : her face,
The dreadful darkness, shook to mounted sun,
And peal on peal across the hills held chase.
She laughed herself to water ; laughed to fire ;
Laughed the torrential laugh of dam and sire
Full of the marrowy race.
Her laughter, Gods ! was flesh on skeleton.

XIV

The valley people huddled, broke, afraid,
Assured, and taking lightning in the veins
They puffed, they leaped, linked hands, together swayed,
Unwitting happiness till golden rains
Of tears in laughter, laughter weeping, smote
Knowledge of milky mercy from that throat
Pouring to heal their pains :
And one bold youth set mouth at a shy maid.

XV

Iambe clapped to see the kindly lusts
Inspire the valley people, still on seas,
Like poplar-tops relieved from stress of gusts,
With rapture in their wonderment ; but these,
Low homage being rendered, ran to plough,
Fed by the laugh, as by the mother cow
Calves at the teats they tease :
Soon drove they through the yielding furrow-crusts.

XVI

Uprose the blade in green, the leaf in red,
The tree of water and the tree of wood :
And soon among the branches overhead
Gave beauty juicy issue sweet for food.
O Laughter ! beauty plumped and love had birth.
Laughter ! O thou reviver of sick Earth !
Good for the spirit, good
For body, thou ! to both art wine and bread !

EARTH AND A WEDDED WOMAN

I

THE shepherd, with his eye on hazy South,
Has told of rain upon the fall of day.
But promise is there none for Susan's drouth,
That he will come, who keeps in dry delay.
The freshest of the village three years gone,
She hangs as the white field-rose hangs short-lived ;
And she and Earth are one
In withering unrevived.
Rain ! O the glad refresher of the grain !
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain !

II

Ah, what is Marriage, says each pouting maid,
When she who wedded with the soldier hides
At home as good as widowed in the shade,
A lighthouse to the girls that would be brides :
Nor dares to give a lad an ogle, nor
To dream of dancing, but must hang and moan,
Her husband in the war,
And she to lie alone.
Rain ! O the glad refresher of the grain !
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain !

III

They have not known ; they are not in the stream ;
Light as the flying seed-ball is their play,

The silly maids ! and happy souls they seem ;
Yet Grief would not change fates with such as they.
They have not struck the roots which meet the fires
Beneath, and bind us fast with Earth, to know
The strength of her desires,
The sternness of her woe.
Rain ! O the glad refresher of the grain !
And welcome waterspouts, had we sweet rain !

IV

Now, shepherd, see thy word, where without shower
A borderless low blotting Westward spreads.
The hall-clock holds the valley on the hour ;
Across an inner chamber thunder treads :
The dead leaf trips, the tree-top swings, the floor
Of dust whirls, dropping lumped : near thunder speaks,
And drives the dames to door,
Their kerchiefs flapped at cheeks.
Rain ! O the glad refresher of the grain !
And welcome waterspouts of blessed rain !

V

Through night, with bedroom window wide for air,
Lay Susan tranced to hear all heaven descend :
And gurgling voices came of Earth, and rare,
Past flowerful, breathings, deeper than life's end,
From her heaved breast of sacred common mould ;
Whereby this lone-laid wife was moved to feel
Unworded things and old
To her pained heart appeal.
Rain ! O the glad refresher of the grain !
And down in deluges of blessed rain !

VI

At morn she stood to live for ear and sight,
Love sky or cloud, or rose or grasses drenched.
A lureful devil, that in glow-worm light
Set languor writhing all its folds, she quenched.
But she would muse when neighbours praised her face,
Her services, and staunchness to her mate :
Knowing by some dim trace,
The change might bear a date.
Rain ! O the glad refresher of the grain !
Thrice beauteous is our sunshine after rain !

MOTHER TO BABE

I

Fleck of sky you are,
Dropped through branches dark,
  O my little one, mine!
Promise of the star,
Outpour of the lark;
  Beam and song divine.

II

See this precious gift,
Steeping in new birth
  All my being, for sign
Earth to heaven can lift,
Heaven descend on earth,
  Both in one be mine!

III

Life in light you glass
When you peep and coo,
  You, my little one, mine!
Brooklet chirps to grass,
Daisy looks in dew
  Up to dear sunshine.

WOODLAND PEACE

SWEET as Eden is the air,
  And Eden-sweet the ray.
No Paradise is lost for them
Who foot by branching root and stem,
And lightly with the woodland share
  The change of night and day.

Here all say,
We serve her, even as I:
We brood, we strive to sky,
We gaze upon decay,
We wot of life through death,
How each feeds each we spy;
And is a tangle round,
Are patient; what is dumb
We question not, nor ask
The silent to give sound,
The hidden to unmask,
The distant to draw near.

And this the woodland saith:
I know not hope or fear;
I take whate'er may come;
I raise my head to aspects fair,
From foul I turn away.

Sweet as Eden is the air,
  And Eden-sweet the ray.

THE QUESTION WHITHER

I

When we have thrown off this old suit,
So much in need of mending,
To sink among the naked mute,
Is that, think you, our ending ?
We follow many, more we lead,
And you who sadly turf us,
Believe not that all living seed
Must flower above the surface.

II

Sensation is a gracious gift,
But were it cramped to station,
The prayer to have it cast adrift
Would spout from all sensation.
Enough if we have winked to sun,
Have sped the plough a season ;
There is a soul for labour done,
Endureth fixed as reason.

III

Then let our trust be firm in Good,
Though we be of the fasting ;
Our questions are a mortal brood,
Our work is everlasting.
We children of Beneficence
Are in its being sharers ;
And Whither vainer sounds than Whence,
For word with such wayfarers.

OUTER AND INNER

I

FROM twig to twig the spider weaves
  At noon his webbing fine.
So near to mute the zephyrs flute
  That only leaflets dance.
The sun draws out of hazel leaves
  A smell of woodland wine.
I wake a swarm to sudden storm
  At any step's advance.

II

Along my path is bugloss blue,
  The star with fruit in moss ;
The foxgloves drop from throat to top
  A daily lesser bell.
The blackest shadow, nurse of dew,
  Has orange skeins across ;
And keenly red is one thin thread
  That flashing seems to swell.

III

My world I note ere fancy comes,
  Minutest hushed observe :
What busy bits of motioned wits
  Through antlered mosswork strive.
But now so low the stillness hums,
  My springs of seeing swerve,
For half a wink to thrill and think
  The woods with nymphs alive.

IV

I neighbour the invisible
So close that my consent
Is only asked for spirits masked
To leap from trees and flowers.
And this because with them I dwell
In thought, while calmly bent
To read the lines dear Earth designs
Shall speak her life on ours.

V

Accept, she says ; it is not hard
In woods ; but she in towns
Repeats, accept ; and have we wept,
And have we quailed with fears,
Or shrunk with horrors, sure reward
We have whom knowledge crowns ;
Who see in mould the rose unfold,
The soul through blood and tears.

NATURE AND LIFE

I

LEAVE the uproar : at a leap
Thou shalt strike a woodland path,
Enter silence, not of sleep,
Under shadows, not of wrath ;
Breath which is the spirit's bath
In the old Beginnings find,
And endow them with a mind,
Seed for seedling, swathe for swathe.
That gives Nature to us, this
Give we her, and so we kiss.

II

Fruitful is it so : but hear
How within the shell thou art,
Music sounds ; nor other near
Can to such a tremor start.
Of the waves our life is part ;
They our running harvests bear :
Back to them for manful air,
Laden with the woodland's heart !
That gives Battle to us, this
Give we it, and good the kiss.

DIRGE IN WOODS

A WIND sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there.
The pine-tree drops its dead;
They are quiet, as under the sea.
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase;
And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.

A FAITH ON TRIAL

On the morning of May,
Ere the children had entered my gate
With their wreaths and mechanical lay,
A metal ding-dong of the date!
I mounted our hill, bearing heart
That had little of life save its weight:
The crowned Shadow poising dart
Hung over her: she, my own,
My good companion, mate,
Pulse of me: she who had shown
Fortitude quiet as Earth's
At the shedding of leaves. And around
The sky was in garlands of cloud,
Winning scents from unnumbered new births,
Pointed buds, where the woods were browned
By a mouldered beechen shroud;
Or over our meads of the vale,
Such an answer to sun as he,
Brave in his gold; to a sound,
None sweeter, of woods flapping sail,
With the first full flood of our year,
For their voyage on lustreful sea:
Unto what curtained haven in chief,
Will be writ in the book of the sere.
But surely the crew are we,
Eager or stamped or bowed;
Counted thinner at fall of the leaf.
Grief heard them, and passed like a bier.
Due Summerward, lo, they were set,
In volumes of foliage proud,

On the heave of their favouring tides,
And their song broadened out to the cheer
When a neck of the ramping surf
Rattles thunder a boat overrides.
All smiles ran the highways wet ;
The worm drew its links from the turf ;
The bird of felicity loud
Spun high, and a South wind blew.
Weak out of sheath downy leaves
Of the beech quivered lucid as dew,
Their radiance asking, who grieves ;
For nought of a sorrow they knew :
No space to the dread wrestle vowed,
No chamber in shadow of night.
At times as the steadier breeze
Flutter-huddled their twigs to a crowd,
The beam of them wafted my sight
To league-long sun upon seas :
The golden path we had crossed
Many years, till her birthland swung
Recovered to vision from lost,
A light in her filial glance.
And sweet was her voice with the tongue,
The speechful tongue of her France,
Soon at ripple about us, like rills
Ever busy with little : away
Through her Normandy, down where the mills
Dot at lengths a rivercourse, grey
As its bordering poplars bent
To gusts off the plains above.
Old stone château and farms,
Home of her birth and her love !
On the thread of the pasture you trace,
By the river, their milk, for miles,
Spotted once with the English tent,

In days of the tocsin's alarms,
To tower of the tallest of piles,
The country's surveyor breast-high.
Home of her birth and her love!
Home of a diligent race;
Thrifty, deft-handed to ply
Shuttle or needle, and woo
Sun to the roots of the pear
Frogging each mud-walled cot.
The elders had known her in arms.
There plucked we the bluet, her hue
Of the deeper forget-me-not;
Well wedding her ripe-wheat hair.

I saw, unsighting: her heart
I saw, and the home of her love
There printed, mournfully rent:
Her ebbing adieu, her adieu,
And the stride of the Shadow athwart.
For one of our Autumns there! . . .
Straight as the flight of a dove
We went, swift winging we went.
We trod solid ground, we breathed air,
The heavens were unbroken. Break they,
The word of the world is adieu:
Her word: and the torrents are round,
The jawed wolf-waters of prey.
We stand upon isles, who stand:
A Shadow before us, and back,
A phantom the habited land.
We may cry to the Sunderer, spare
That dearest! he loosens his pack.
Arrows we breathe, not air.
The memories tenderly bound
To us are a drifting crew,

Amid grey-gapped waters for ground.
Alone do we stand, each one,
Till rootless as they we strew
Those deeps of the corse-like stare
At a foreign and stony sun.

Eyes had I but for the scene
Of my circle, what neighbourly grew.
If haply no finger lay out
To the figures of days that had been,
I gathered my herb, and endured ;
My old cloak wrapped me about.
Unfooted was ground-ivy blue,
Whose rustic shrewd odour allured
In Spring's fresh of morning : unseen
Her favourite wood-sorrel bell
As yet, though the leaves' green floor
Awaited their flower, that would tell
Of a red-veined moist yestreen,
With its droop and the hues it wore,
When we two stood overnight
One, in the dark van-glow
On our hill-top, seeing beneath
Our household's twinkle of light
Through spruce-boughs, gem of a wreath.

Budding, the service-tree, white
Almost as whitebeam, threw,
From the under of leaf upright,
Flecks like a showering snow
On the flame-shaped junipers green
On the sombre mounds of the yew.
Like silvery tapers bright
By a solemn cathedral screen,
They glistened to closer view.

Turf for a rooks' revel striped
Pleased those devourers astute.
Chorister blackbird and thrush
Together or alternate piped ;
A free-hearted harmony large,
With meaning for man, for brute,
When the primitive forces are brimmed.
Like featherings hither and yon
Of aëry tree-twigs over marge,
To the comb of the winds, untrimmed,
Their measure is found in the vast.
Grief heard them, and stepped her way on.
She has but a narrow embrace.
Distrustful of hearing she passed.
They piped her young Earth's Bacchic rout
The race, and the prize of the race ;
Earth's lustihead pressing to sprout.

But sight holds a soberer space.
Colourless dogwood low
Curled up a twisted root,
Nigh yellow-green mosses, to flush
Redder than sun upon rocks,
When the creeper clematis-shoot
Shall climb, cap his branches, and show,
Beside veteran green of the box,
At close of the year's maple blush,
A bleeding greybeard is he,
Now hale in the leafage lush.
Our parasites paint us. Hard by,
A wet yew-trunk flashed the peel
Of our naked forefathers in fight ;
With stains of the fray sweating free
And him came no parasite nigh :
Firm on the hard knotted knee.

He stood in the crown of his dun ;
Earth's toughest to stay her wheel :
Under whom the full day is night ;
Whom the century-tempests call son,
Having striven to rend him in vain.

I walked to observe, not to feel,
Not to fancy, if simple of eye
One may be among images reaped
For a shift of the glance, as grain :
Profitless froth you espy
Ashore after billows have leaped.
I fled nothing, nothing pursued :
The changeful visible face
Of our Mother I sought for my food ;
Crumbs by the way to sustain.
Her sentence I knew past grace.
Myself I had lost of us twain,
Once bound in mirroring thought.
She had flung me to dust in her wake ;
And I, as your convict drags
His chain, by the scourge untaught,
Bore life for a goad, without aim.
I champed the sensations that make
Of a ruffled philosophy rags.
For them was no meaning too blunt,
Nor aspect too cutting of steel.
This Earth of the beautiful breasts,
Shining up in all colours aflame,
To them had visage of hags :
A Mother of aches and jests :
Soulless, heading a hunt
Aimless except for the meal.
Hope, with the star on her front ;
Fear, with an eye in the heel ;

Our links to a Mother of grace ;
They were dead on the nerve, and dead
For the nature divided in three ;
Gone out of heart, out of brain,
Out of soul : I had in their place
The calm of an empty room.
We were joined but by that thin thread,
My disciplined habit to see.
And those conjure images, those,
The puppets of loss or gain ;
Not he who is bare to his doom ;
For whom never semblance plays
To bewitch, overcloud, illume.
The dusty mote-images rose ;
Sheer film of the surface awag :
They sank as they rose ; their pain
Declaring them mine of old days.

Now gazed I where, sole upon gloom,
As flower-bush in sun-specked crag,
Up the spine of the double combe
With yew-boughs heavily cloaked,
A young apparition shone :
Known, yet wonderful, white
Surpassingly ; doubtfully known,
For it struck as the birth of Light :
Even Day from the dark unyoked.
It waved like a pilgrim flag
O'er processional penitents flown
When of old they broke rounding yon spine :
O the pure wild-cherry in bloom !

For their Eastward march to the shrine
Of the footsore far-eyed Faith,
Was banner so brave, so fair,
So quick with celestial sign

Of victorious rays over death ?
For a conquest of coward despair ;—
Division of soul from wits,
And these made rulers ;—full sure,
More starlike never did shine
To illumine the sinister field
Where our life's old night-bird flits.
I knew it : with her, my own,
Had hailed it pure of the pure ;
Our beacon yearly : but strange
When it strikes to within is the known ;
Richer than newness revealed.
There was needed darkness like mine.
Its beauty to vividness blown
Drew the life in me forward, chased,
From aloft on a pinnacle's range,
That hindward spidery line,
The length of the ways I had paced,
A footfarer out of the dawn,
To Youth's wild forest, where sprang,
For the morning of May long gone,
The forest's white virgin ; she
Seen yonder ; and sheltered me, sang ;
She in me, I in her ; what songs
The fawn-eared wood-hollows revive
To pour forth their tune-footed throngs ;
Inspire to the dreaming of good
Illimitable to come :
She, the white wild cherry, a tree,
Earth-rooted, tangibly wood,
Yet a presence throbbing alive ;
Nor she in our language dumb :
A spirit born of a tree ;
Because earth-rooted alive :
Huntress of things worth pursuit

Of souls ; in our naming, dreams.
And each unto other was lute,
By fits quick as breezy gleams.
My quiver of aims and desires
Had colour that she would have owned ;
And if by humaner fires
Hued later, these held her enthroned :
My crescent of Earth ; my blood
At the silvery early stir ;
Hour of the thrill of the bud
About to burst, and by her
Directed, attuned, englobed :
My Goddess, the chaste, not chill ;
Choir over choir white-robed ;
White-bosomed fold within fold :
For so could I dream, breast-bare,
In my time of blooming ; dream still
Through the maze, the mesh, and the wreck,
Despite, since manhood was bold,
The yoke of the flesh on my neck.
She beckoned, I gazed, unaware
How a shaft of the blossoming tree
Was shot from the yew-wood's core.
I stood to the touch of a key
Turned in a fast-shut door.

They rounded my garden, content,
The small fry, clutching their fee,
Their fruit of the wreath and the pole ;
And, chatter, hop, skip, they were sent,
In a buzz of young company glee,
Their natural music, swift shoal
To the next easy shedders of pence.
Why not ? for they had me in tune
With the hungers of my kind.

Do readings of earth draw thence,
Then a concord deeper than cries
Of the Whither whose echo is Whence,
To jar unanswered, shall rise
As a fountain-jet in the mind
Bowed dark o'er the falling and strewn.

* * *

Unwitting where it might lead,
How it came, for the anguish to cease,
And the Questions that sow not nor spin,
This wisdom, rough-written, and black,
As of veins that from venom bleed,
I had with the peace within ;
Or patience, mortal of peace,
Compressing the surgent strife
In a heart laid open, not mailed,
To the last blank hour of the rack,
When struck the dividing knife :
When the hand that never had failed
In its pressure to mine hung slack.

But this in myself did I know,
Not needing a studious brow,
Or trust in a governing star,
While my ears held the jangled shout
The children were lifting afar :
That natures at interflow
With all of their past and the now,
Are chords to the Nature without,
Orbs to the greater whole :
First then, nor utterly then
Till our lord of sensations at war,
The rebel, the heart, yields place
To brain, each prompting the soul.

Thus our dear Earth we embrace
For the milk, her strength to men.

And crave we her medical herb,
We have but to see and hear,
Though pierced by the cruel acerb,
The troops of the memories armed
Hostile to strike at the nest
That nourished and flew them warmed.
Not she gives the tear for the tear.
Weep, bleed, rave, writhe, be distraught,
She is moveless. Not of her breast
Are the symbols we conjure when Fear
Takes leaven of Hope. I caught,
With Death in me shrinking from Death,
As cold from cold, for a sign
Of the life beyond ashes : I cast,
Believing the vision divine,
Wings of that dream of my Youth
To the spirit beloved : 'twas unglassed
On her breast, in her depths austere :
A flash through the mist, mere breath,
Breath on a buckler of steel.
For the flesh in revolt at her laws,
Neither song nor smile in ruth,
Nor promise of things to reveal,
Has she, nor a word she saith :
We are asking her wheels to pause.
Well knows she the cry of unfaith.
If we strain to the farther shore,
We are catching at comfort near.
Assurances, symbols, saws,
Revelations in legends, light
To eyes rolling darkness, these
Desired of the flesh in affright,

For the which it will swear to adore,
She yields not for prayers at her knees
The woolly beast bleating will shear.
These are our sensual dreams ;
Of the yearning to touch, to feel
The dark Impalpable sure,
And have the Unveiled appear ;
Whereon ever black she beams,
Doth of her terrible deal,
She who dotes over ripeness at play,
Rosiness fondles and feeds,
Guides it with shepherding crook,
To her sports and her pastures alway.
Not she gives the tear for the tear :
Harsh wisdom gives Earth, no more ;
In one the spur and the curb :
An answer to thoughts or deeds ;
To the Legends an alien look ;
To the Questions a figure of clay.
Yet we have but to see and hear,
Crave we her medical herb.
For the road to her soul is the Real :
The root of the growth of man :
And the senses must traverse it fresh
With a love that no scourge shall abate,
To reach the lone heights where we scan
In the mind's rarer vision this flesh ;
In the charge of the Mother our fate ;
Her law as the one common weal.

We, whom the view benumbs,
We, quivering upward, each hour
Know battle in air and in ground
For the breath that goes as it comes,
For the choice between sweet and sour

For the smallest grain of our worth :
And he who the reckoning sums
Finds nought in his hand save Earth.
Of Earth are we stripped or crowned.
The fleeting Present we crave,
Barter our best to wed,
In hope of a cushioned bower,
What is it but Future and Past
Like wind and tide at a wave !
Idea of the senses, bred
For the senses to snap and devour :
Thin as the shell of a sound
In delivery, withered in light.
Cry we for permanence fast,
Permanence hangs by the grave ;
Sits on the grave green-grassed,
On the roll of the heaved grave-mound.
By Death, as by Life, are we fed :
The two are one spring ; our bond
With the numbers ; with whom to unite
Here feathers wings for beyond :
Only they can waft us in flight.
For they are Reality's flower.
Of them, and the contact with them,
Issues Earth's dearest daughter, the firm
In footing, the stately of stem ;
Unshaken though elements lour ;
A warrior heart unquelled ;
Mirror of Earth, and guide
To the Holies from sense withheld
Reason, man's germinant fruit.
She wrestles with our old worm
Self in the narrow and wide :
Relentless quencher of lies,
With laughter she pierces the brute ;

And hear we her laughter peal,
'Tis Light in us dancing to scour
The loathed recess of his dens ;
Scatter his monstrous bed,
And hound him to harrow and plough.
She is the world's one prize ;
Our champion, rightfully head ;
The vessel whose piloted prow,
Though Folly froth round, hiss and hoot,
Leaves legible print at the keel.
Nor least is the service she does,
That service to her may cleanse
The well of the Sorrows in us ;
For a common delight will drain
The rank individual fens
Of a wound refusing to heal
While the old worm slavers its root.

I bowed as a leaf in rain ;
As a tree when the leaf is shed
To winds in the season at wane :
And when from my soul I said,
May the worm be trampled : smite,
Sacred Reality ! power
Filled me to front it aright.
I had come of my faith's ordeal.

It is not to stand on a tower
And see the flat universe reel ;
Our mortal sublimities drop
Like raiment by glisterlings worn,
At a sweep of the scythe for the crop.
Wisdom is won of its fight,
The combat incessant ; and dries
To mummywrap perching a height.

It chews the contemplative cud
In peril of isolate scorn,
Unfed of the onward flood.
Nor view we a different morn
If we gaze with the deeper sight,
With the deeper thought forewise :
The world is the same, seen through ;
The features of men are the same.
But let their historian new
In the language of nakedness write,
Rejoice we to know not shame,
Not a dread, not a doubt : to have done
With the tortures of thought in the throes,
Our animal tangle, and grasp
Very sap of the vital in this :
That from flesh unto spirit man grows
Even here on the sod under sun :
That she of the wanton's kiss,
Broken through with the bite of an asp,
Is Mother of simple truth,
Relentless quencher of lies ;
Eternal in thought ; discerned
In thought mid-ferry between
The Life and the Death, which are one,
As our breath in and out, joy or teen.
She gives the rich vision to youth,
If we will, of her prompting wise ;
Or men by the lash made lean,
Who in harness the mind subserve,
Their title to read her have earned ;
Having mastered sensation—insane
At a stroke of the terrified nerve ;
And out of the sensual hive
Grown to the flower of brain ;
To know her a thing alive,

Whose aspects mutably swerve,
Whose laws immutably reign.
Our sentencer, clother in mist,
Her morn bends breast to her noon,
Noon to the hour dark-dyed,
If we will, of her promptings wise :
Her light is our own if we list.
The legends that sweep her aside,
Crying loud for an opiate boon,
To comfort the human want,
From the bosom of magical skies,
She smiles on, marking their source :
They read her with infant eyes.
Good ships of morality they,
For our crude developing force ;
Granite the thought to stay,
That she is a thing alive
To the living, the falling and strewn.
But the Questions, the broods that haunt
Sensation insurgent, may drive,
The way of the channelling mole,
Head in a ground-vault gaunt
As your telescope's skeleton moon.
Barren comfort to these will she dole ;
Dead is her face to their cries.
Intelligence pushing to taste
A lesson from beasts might heed.
They scatter a voice in the waste,
Where any dry swish of a reed
By grey-glassy water replies.

' They see not above or below ;
' Farthest are they from my soul,'
Earth whispers : ' they scarce have the thirst,
' Except to unriddle a rune ;

'And I spin none ; only show,
'Would humanity soar from its worst,
'Winged above darkness and dole,
'How flesh unto spirit must grow.
'Spirit raves not for a goal.
'Shapes in man's likeness hewn
'Desires not ; neither desires
'The sleep or the glory : it trusts ;
'Uses my gifts, yet aspires ;
'Dreams of a higher than it.
'The dream is an atmosphere ;
'A scale still ascending to knit
'The clear to the loftier Clear.
''Tis Reason herself, tiptoe
'At the ultimate bound of her wit,
'On the verges of Night and Day.
'But is it a dream of the lusts,
'To my dustiest 'tis decreed ;
'And them that so shuffle astray
'I touch with no key of gold
'For the wealth of the secret nook ;
'Though I dote over ripeness at play,
'Rosiness fondle and feed,
'Guide it with shepherding crook
'To my sports and my pastures alway.
'The key will shriek in the lock,
'The door will rustily hinge,
'Will open on features of mould,
'To vanish corrupt at a glimpse,
'And mock as the wild echoes mock,
'Soulless in mimic, doth Greed
'Or the passion for fruitage tinge
'That dream, for your parricide imps
'To wing through the body of Time,
'Yourselves in slaying him slay.

'Much are you shots of your prime,
'You men of the act and the dream :
'And please you to fatten a weed
'That perishes, pledged to decay,
''Tis dearth in your season of need,
'Down the slopes of the shoreward way ;—
'Nigh on the misty stream,
'Where Ferryman under his hood,
'With a call to be ready to pay
'The small coin, whitens red blood.
'But the young ethereal seed
'Shall bring you the bread no buyer
'Can have for his craving supreme ;
'To my quenchless quick shall speed
'The soul at her wrestle rude
'With devil, with angel more dire ;
'With the flesh, with the Fates, enringed.
'The dream of the blossom of Good
'Is your banner of battle unrolled
'In its waver and current and curve
'(Choir over choir white-winged,
'White-bosomed fold within fold) :
'Hopeful of victory most
'When hard is the task to sustain
'Assaults of the fearful sense
'At a mind in desolate mood
'With the Whither, whose echo is Whence ;
'And humanity's clamour, lost, lost ;
'And its clasp of the staves that snap ;
'And evil abroad, as a main
'Uproarious, bursting its dyke.
'For back do you look, and lo,
'Forward the harvest of grain !—
'Numbers in council, awake
'To love more than things of my lap,

'Love me ; and to let the types break,
'Men be grass, rocks rivers, all flow ;
'All save the dream sink alike
'To the source of my vital in sap :
'Their battle, their loss, their ache,
'For my pledge of vitality know.
'The dream is the thought in the ghost ;
'The thought sent flying for food ;
'Eyeless, but sprung of an aim
'Supernal of Reason, to find
'The great Over-Reason we name
'Beneficence : mind seeking Mind.
'Dream of the blossom of Good,
'In its waver and current and curve,
'With the hopes of my offspring enscrolled !
'Soon to be seen of a host
'The flag of the Master I serve !
'And life in them doubled on Life,
'As flame upon flame, to behold,
'High over Time-tumbled sea,
'The bliss of his headship of strife,
'Him through handmaiden me.'

CHANGE IN RECURRENCE

I

I STOOD at the gate of the cot
Where my darling, with side-glance demure,
Would spy, on her trim garden-plot,
The busy wild things chase and lure.
For these with their ways were her feast ;
They had surety no enemy lurked.
Their deftest of tricks to their least
She gathered in watch as she worked.

II

When berries were red on her ash,
The blackbird would rifle them rough,
Till the ground underneath looked a gash,
And her rogue grew the round of a chough.
The squirrel cocked ear o'er his hoop,
Up the spruce, quick as eye, trailing brush.
She knew any tit of the troop
All as well as the snail-tapping thrush.

III

I gazed : 'twas the scene of the frame,
With the face, the dear life for me, fled.
No window a lute to my name,
No watcher there plying the thread.
But the blackbird hung pecking at will ;
The squirrel from cone hopped to cone ;
The thrush had a snail in his bill,
And tap-tapped the shell hard on a stone.

HYMN TO COLOUR

I

With Life and Death I walked when Love appeared,
And made them on each side a shadow seem.
Through wooded vales the land of dawn we neared,
Where down smooth rapids whirls the helmless dream
To fall on daylight; and night puts away
Her darker veil for grey.

II

In that grey veil green grassblades brushed we by;
We came where woods breathed sharp, and overhead
Rocks raised clear horns on a transforming sky:
Around, save for those shapes, with him who led
And linked them, desert varied by no sign
Of other life than mine.

III

By this the dark-winged planet, raying wide,
From the mild pearl-glow to the rose upborne,
Drew in his fires, less faint than far descried,
Pure-fronted on a stronger wave of morn:
And those two shapes the splendour interweaved
Hung web-like, sank and heaved.

IV

Love took my hand when hidden stood the sun
To fling his robe on shoulder-heights of snow.
Then said : There lie they, Life and Death in one.
Whichever is, the other is : but know,
It is thy craving self that thou dost see,
Not in them seeing me.

V

Shall man into the mystery of breath
From his quick beating pulse a pathway spy ?
Or learn the secret of the shrouded death,
By lifting up the lid of a white eye ?
Cleave thou thy way with fathering desire
Of fire to reach to fire.

VI

Look now where Colour, the soul's bridegroom, makes
The house of heaven splendid for the bride.
To him as leaps a fountain she awakes,
In knotting arms, yet boundless : him beside,
She holds the flower to heaven, and by his power
Brings heaven to the flower.

VII

He gives her homeliness in desert air,
And sovereignty in spaciousness ; he leads
Through widening chambers of surprise to where
Throbs rapture near an end that aye recedes,
Because his touch is infinite and lends
A yonder to all ends.

VIII

Death begs of Life his blush ; Life Death persuades
To keep long day with his caresses graced.
He is the heart of light, the wing of shades,
The crown of beauty : never soul embraced
Of him can harbour unfaith ; soul of him
Possessed walks never dim.

IX

Love eyed his rosy memories : he sang :
O bloom of dawn, breathed up from the gold sheaf
Held springing beneath Orient ! that dost hang
The space of dewdrops running over leaf ;
Thy fleetingness is bigger in the ghost
Than Time with all his host !

X

Of thee to say behold, has said adieu :
But love remembers how the sky was green,
And how the grasses glimmered lightest blue ;
How saint-like grey took fervour : how the screen
Of cloud grew violet ; how thy moment came
Between a blush and flame.

XI

Love saw the emissary eglantine
Break wave round thy white feet above the gloom ;
Lay finger on thy star ; thy raiment line
With cherub wing and limb ; wed thy soft bloom,
Gold-quivering like sunrays in thistle-down,
Earth under rolling brown.

XII

They do not look through love to look on thee,
Grave heavenliness ! nor know they joy of sight,
Who deem the wave of rapt desire must be
Its wrecking and last issue of delight.
Dead seasons quicken in one petal-spot
Of colour unforgot.

XIII

This way have men come out of brutishness
To spell the letters of the sky and read
A reflex upon earth else meaningless.
With thee, O fount of the Untimed ! to lead ;
Drink they of thee, thee eyeing, they unaged
Shall on through brave wars waged.

XIV

More gardens will they win than any lost ;
The vile plucked out of them, the unlovely slain.
Not forfeiting the beast with which they are crossed,
To stature of the Gods will they attain.
They shall uplift their Earth to meet her Lord,
Themselves the attuning chord !

XV

The song had ceased ; my vision with the song.
Then of those Shadows, which one made descent
Beside me I knew not : but Life ere long
Came on me in the public ways and bent
Eyes deeper than of old : Death met I too,
And saw the dawn glow through.

MEDITATION UNDER STARS

WHAT links are ours with orbs that are
So resolutely far :
The solitary asks, and they
Give radiance as from a shield :
Still at the death of day,
The seen, the unrevealed.
Implacable they shine
To us who would of Life obtain
An answer for the life we strain
To nourish with one sign.
Nor can imagination throw
The penetrative shaft : we pass
The breath of thought, who would divine
If haply they may grow
As Earth ; have our desire to know ;
If life comes there to grain from grass,
And flowers like ours of toil and pain ;
Has passion to beat bar,
Win space from cleaving brain ;
The mystic link attain,
Whereby star holds on star.

Those visible immortals beam
Allurement to the dream :
Ireful at human hungers brook
No question in the look.
For ever virgin to our sense,
Remote they wane to gaze intense :

Prolong it, and in ruthlessness they smite
The beating heart behind the ball of sight :
  Till we conceive their heavens hoar,
  Those lights they raise but sparkles frore,
And Earth, our blood-warm Earth, a shuddering prey
To that frigidity of brainless ray.

  Yet space is given for breath of thought
  Beyond our bounds when musing : more
  When to that musing love is brought,
  And love is asked of love's wherefore.
  'Tis Earth's, her gift ; else have we nought :
  Her gift, her secret, here our tie.
  And not with her and yonder sky ?
  Bethink you : were it Earth alone
  Breeds love, would not her region be
    The sole delight and throne
    Of generous Deity ?

  To deeper than this ball of sight
Appeal the lustrous people of the night.
Fronting yon shoreless, sown with fiery sails,
  It is our ravenous that quails,
Flesh by its craven thirsts and fears distraught.
            The spirit leaps alight,
            Doubts not in them is he,
The binder of his sheaves, the sane, the right :
Of magnitude to magnitude is wrought,
To feel it large of the great life they hold :
In them to come, or vaster intervolved,
The issues known in us, our unsolved solved :
That there with toil Life climbs the self-same Tree,
Whose roots enrichment have from ripeness dropped.
So may we read and little find them cold :
Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide

Our eyes ; no branch of Reason's growing lopped ;
Nor dreaming on a dream ; but fortified
By day to penetrate black midnight ; see,
Hear, feel, outside the senses ; even that we,
The specks of dust upon a mound of mould,
We who reflect those rays, though low our place,
To them are lastingly allied.

So may we read, and little find them cold :
Not frosty lamps illumining dead space,
Not distant aliens, not senseless Powers.
The fire is in them whereof we are born ;
The music of their motion may be ours.
Spirit shall deem them beckoning Earth and voiced
Sisterly to her, in her beams rejoiced.
Of love, the grand impulsion, we behold
The love that lends her grace
Among the starry fold.
Then at new flood of customary morn,
Look at her through her showers,
Her mists, her streaming gold,
A wonder edges the familiar face :
She wears no more that robe of printed hours ;
Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than her flowers.

WOODMAN AND ECHO

CLOSE Echo hears the woodman's axe,
To double on it, as in glee,
With clap of hands, and little lacks
Of meaning in her repartee.
For all shall fall,
As one has done,
The tree of me,
Of thee the tree
And unto all
The fate we wait
Reveals the wheels
Whereon we run :
We tower to flower,
We spread the shade,
We drop for crop,
At length are laid ;
Are rolled in mould,
From chop and lop :
And are we thick in woodland tracks,
Or tempting of our stature we,
The end is one, we do but wax
For service over land and sea.
So, strike ! the like
Shall thus of us,
My brawny woodman, claim the tax.
Nor foe thy blow,
Though wood be good,

And shriekingly the timber cracks :
The ground we crowned
Shall speed the seed
Of younger into swelling sacks.

For use he hews,
To make awake
The spirit of what stuff we be :
Our earth of mirth
And tears he clears
For braver, let our minds agree ;
And then will men
Within them win
An Echo clapping harmony.

THE WISDOM OF ELD

We spend our lives in learning pilotage,
And grow good steersmen when the vessel 's crank !
Gap-toothed he spake, and with a tottering shank
Sidled to gain the sunny bench of Age.
It is the sentence which completes that stage ;
A testament of wisdom reading blank.
The seniors of the race, on their last plank,
Pass mumbling it as nature's final page.
These, bent by such experience, are the band
Who captain young enthusiasts to maintain
What things we view, and Earth's decree withstand,
Lest dreaded Change, long dammed by dull decay,
Should bring the world a vessel steered by brain,
And ancients musical at close of day.

EARTH'S PREFERENCE

Earth loves her young : a preference manifest :
She prompts them to her fruits and flower-beds ;
Their beauty with her choicest interthreads,
And makes her revel of their merry zest ;
As in our East much were it in our West,
If men had risen to do the work of heads.
Her gabbling grey she eyes askant, nor treads
The ways they walk ; by what they speak oppressed.
How wrought they in their zenith ? 'Tis not writ ;
Not all ; yet she by one sure sign can read :
Have they but held her laws and nature dear,
They mouth no sentence of inverted wit.
More prizes she her beasts than this high breed
Wry in the shape she wastes her milk to rear.

SOCIETY

HISTORIC be the survey of our kind,
And how their brave Society took shape.
Lion, wolf, vulture, fox, jackal and ape,
The strong of limb, the keen of nose, we find,
Who, with some jars in harmony, combined,
Their primal instincts taming, to escape
The brawl indecent, and hot passions drape.
Convenience pricked conscience, that the mind.
Thus entered they the field of milder beasts,
Which in some sort of civil order graze,
And do half-homage to the God of Laws.
But are they still for their old ravenous feasts,
Earth gives the edifice they build no base :
They spring another flood of fangs and claws.

WINTER HEAVENS

SHARP is the night, but stars with frost alive
Leap off the rim of earth across the dome.
It is a night to make the heavens our home
More than the nest whereto apace we strive.
Lengths down our road each fir-tree seems a hive,
In swarms outrushing from the golden comb.
They waken waves of thoughts that burst to foam :
The living throb in me, the dead revive.
Yon mantle clothes us : there, past mortal breath,
Life glistens on the river of the death.
It folds us, flesh and dust ; and have we knelt,
Or never knelt, or eyed as kine the springs
Of radiance, the radiance enrings :
And this is the soul's haven to have felt.

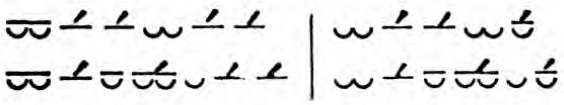
NOTES

PHAETHON

The Galliambic Measure

Hermann (*Elementa Doctrinae Metricae*), after citing lines from the Tragic poet Phrynichus and from the Comic, observes :

Dixi supra, Phrynichorum versus videri puros Ionicos esse. Id si verum est, Galliambi non alia re ab his differunt, quam quod anaclasin, contractionesque et solutiones recipiunt. Itaque versus Galliambicus ex duobus versibus Anacreonteis constat, quorum secundus catalecticus est, hac forma :



The wonderful *Attis* of Catullus is the one classic example. A few lines have been gathered elsewhere. Lord Tennyson's *Boadicea* rides over many difficulties and is a noble poem. Catullus makes general use of the variant second of the above metrical forms :

Mihi januae frequentes, mihi limina tepida :

With stress on the emotion ;

Jam, jam dolet quod egi, jam jamque poenitet.

A perfect conquest of the measure is not possible in our tongue. For the sake of an occasional success in the velocity, sweep, volume of the line, it seems worth an effort ; and, if to some degree serviceable for narrative verse, it is one of the exercises of a writer which readers may be invited to share.

THEODOLINDA

The legend of the Iron Crown of Lombardy, formed of a nail of the true Cross by order of the devout Queen Theodolinda, is well known. In this dramatic song she is seen passing through one of the higher temptations of the believing Christian.

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Edinburgh : Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE LTD.