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BERMANN GEORG FIEDLER.



MER LICHTE.



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SELECTIONS  
FROM THE  
POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
HEINRICH HEINE.

*Translated into English.*

LONDON :  
MACMILLAN AND CO.  
1878.



CHARLES DICKENS AND EVANS,  
CRYSTAL PALACE PRESS.

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE first duty of any translator of Heine's verse is to admit the impossibility of doing justice to the incomparable grace and charm of his style. Of all poets he is perhaps the most untranslatable, and yet, by a strange perversity of fate, which he himself would have been the first to appreciate, the experiment is found to have a peculiar fascination not easy to resist. With such a full confession, it will be understood that the following translations are put forward under no exaggerated sense of their value. They have been made out of love for the original, and they are published in the hope that they may be found not altogether unacceptable to those to whom the



original is unknown. Others, again, who are familiar with the works from which these different pieces have been selected, will be ready to acknowledge that the translator has not wilfully courted failure. Some care has been taken to choose the least impossible of the shorter poems, and at the same time to give the reader an impression of the variety of the poet's style.

*July, 1878.*

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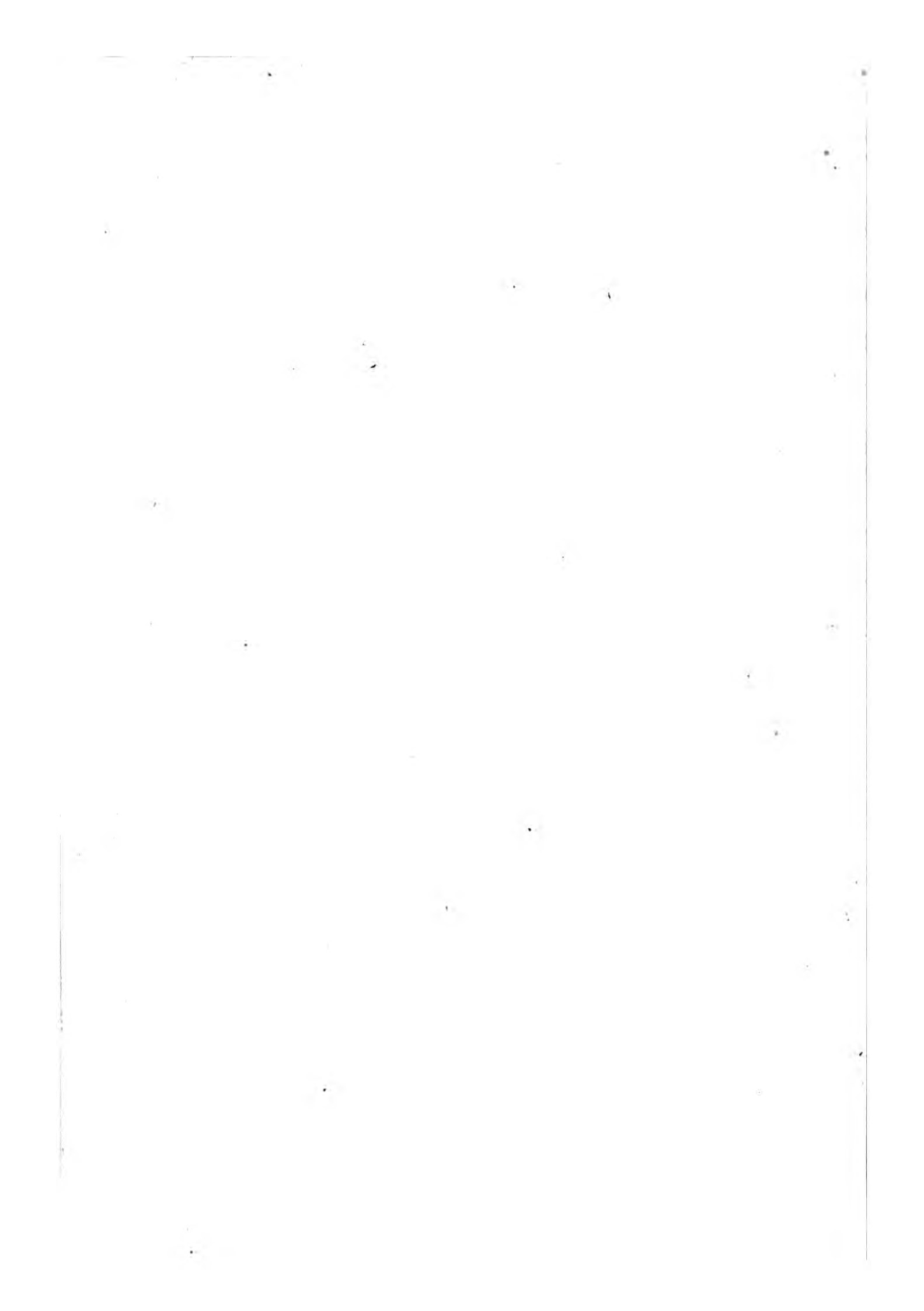
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FROM

THE "BOOK OF SONGS."



FROM THE "TRAUMBILDER."

I.

I SAW a vision strange one night ;  
So fair, yet horrible a sight,  
It haunts me still—and all in vain  
My throbbing heart seeks rest again.

A garden first before me lay ;  
I wandered down a grassy way,  
All strewn with flowers so fresh and fair  
That I rejoiced to see them there.

The birds among the trees above  
Chirped merrily their songs of love ;  
The sun shone red, and in its light  
Each blossom glowed with hues more bright.

4     *THE WORKS OF HEINRICH HEINE.*

Sweet perfume rose from every flower,  
Soft breezes stirred the sleeping bower,  
All nature, in that smiling place,  
Showed me the splendour of her face.

Set in the midst of this bright land,  
I saw a marble fountain stand ;  
And by its brink, a maiden fair  
Stood, washing a white garment there.

With tender eyes and locks of gold,  
She seemed some pictured saint of old.  
I gazed—and fancied I could trace  
A well-known look in that strange face.

How fast she worked ! and all the time  
Hummed to herself a mystic rhyme :  
“ Flow on, flow on, thou water bright,  
Wash me the linen pure and white.”

Then I drew near and softly said :  
" Oh strangely fair and gentle maid,  
I pray thee, speak and answer me ;  
For whom may that white garment be ? "

" Make ready," she replied aloud,  
" It is for thee I wash this shroud."  
And, as she spoke, that fairy-land  
Vanished, like foam upon the sand.

Now, by some magic power I stood  
Deep in a wild and gloomy wood.  
The tall trees tossed their heads on high ;—  
Alone, and sore amazed stood I.

Yet hark ! a sound the echoes woke,  
As of an axe's distant stroke ;  
I pressed through bush and brake apace,  
And reached at last an open space.



6 *THE WORKS OF HEINRICH HEINE.*

Here, where the moss had greenest grown,  
A noble oak-tree stood alone.  
And here I saw the maiden stand,  
Felling the tree with axe in hand.

Stroke upon stroke, the axe she swings,  
And all the while a rhyme she sings :  
“ On, shining steel ! thou mayst not rest  
Till thou hast hewn the oaken chest.”

Then I drew near, and softly said :  
“ Oh strangely fair and gentle maid,  
I pray thee, speak and answer me,  
For whom the oaken chest may be ? ”

Straightway she said : “ The time draws near,  
Thy coffin I am making here.”  
And as she spoke, the scene once more  
Vanished, like foam upon the shore.

And now, for miles around me lay  
A wild heath desolate and gray.  
How had I reached that lonely spot?  
I shuddered, for I knew it not.

But, as I rambled o'er the waste,  
I spied a streak of white—in haste  
I pressed toward the place, and there  
Once more I found the maiden fair.

Upon the barren heath the maid  
Stood digging, in her hand a spade.  
But she, though lovely as before,  
A look of nameless horror wore.

How fast she worked ! and all the time  
Hummed to herself a mystic rhyme :  
"Thou shalt not ever rest, sharp spade,  
Till thou the deep, wide grave hast made.'

Then I drew near, and softly said :  
“ Oh strangely fair and gentle maid,  
I pray thee, speak and answer me,  
For whom the gloomy grave may be ? ”

“ Be still—for thee,” the maid replied,  
“ I dug the grave, so deep and wide.”  
And surely, at her words, I saw  
The open grave yawn close before.

I looked—and fear upon me came,  
Cold, dreadful shudders thrilled my frame—  
Then headlong, even while she spoke,  
Down through the dark I fell—and woke.

II.

I FELL asleep, and dreamed, at eventide.  
I dreamed I saw myself, arrayed with care,  
In silk and frills—as though some feast were near.  
And then I saw my love stand by my side.  
I bowed to her and asked : “ Are you a bride ?  
Then let me wish you happiness, my dear.”  
But the cold speech struck strangely on my ear,  
And in my throat the words had almost died.  
Then bitter tears began to flow apace  
From my love’s eyes, and in a mist of tears  
Was hidden from my sight her gentle face  
—Oh tender eyes ! though you have lied to me,  
Both waking and in dreams these many years,  
Yet I believe you all too readily.

III.

I DREAMED—and in my dream I saw a thin  
Small man, who walked on stilts and proudly too;  
White was his linen and his coat was new,  
Yet all within was common and unclean.  
Wretched and useless was the soul within,  
But outwardly he made so much ado,  
He talked of courage and so daring grew,  
You scarce had guessed he was a thing so mean.  
“And know'st thou who this is? come here and see.”  
Thus spoke the god of dreams, and stealthily  
A picture in his mirror showed to me.  
The little man stood by my own love's side  
Before an altar ;—“Yes !” they both replied. . . .  
And loud “Amen !” a thousand devils cried.

## “SONGS.”

### IV.

EVERY morning I arise and say :  
“Will she come, my pretty one, to-day?”  
Every evening, sad and desolate,  
Weeping I complain : “She tarries yet.”

With my restless sorrow, broad awake  
Every night I lie, for her dear sake.  
And by day, like one asleep, I go  
Dreaming, sadly dreaming—to and fro.

v.

GIVE me thy hand and lay it near  
Against my heart—now dost thou hear  
How loud the noisy hammers beat  
Within the narrow chamber, sweet ?

There dwells a carpenter within,  
Who works amid this ceaseless din.  
A cruel man is he—I trow  
My coffin he is making now.

This weary knocking, night and day,  
Long since has driven sleep away.  
Good carpenter, now work thy best  
And let me soon lie still and rest.

VI.

POOR PETER.

I.

GRETE and Hans come dancing by,  
They shout for very glee ;  
Poor Peter stands all silently,  
And pale as death is he.

Grete and Hans were wed this morn,  
And shine in bright array ;  
But ah ! poor Peter stands forlorn,  
Dressed for a working-day.

He mutters, as with wistful eyes  
He gazes at them still :  
“ ’Twere easy—were I not too wise—  
To do myself some ill. . . .”



II.

“ An aching sorrow fills my breast,  
My heart is like to break ;  
It leaves me neither peace nor rest,  
And all for Grete’s sake.

“ It drives me to her side, as though  
She still could comfort me ;  
But in her eyes there’s something now  
That makes me turn and flee.

“ I climb the top of yonder hill,  
For there I am alone ;  
And there, where all is calm and still,  
I weep and make my moan.”

III.

Poor Peter wanders slowly by ;  
So pale his cheek, so dull his eye,  
The very neighbours in the street,  
Turn round to gaze, when him they meet.

The maidens say : “ He looks, I ween,  
As though the grave his bed had been.”  
Ah no ! good maids, ye should have said :  
“ The grave will soon become his bed.”

He lost his sweetheart—so maybe  
The grave is best for such as he ;  
There he may sleep the years away,  
And rest until the Judgment Day.

VII.

A VOYAGE.

I LEAN against the mast and count  
The waves, as on we fly ;  
My ship is sailing fast, and now,  
Fair Fatherland, good-bye !

We pass my darling's house—the light  
Shines on her window-pane ;  
I strain my longing eyes to catch  
Some sign, but all in vain.

O foolish tears, keep back awhile  
Lest ye should blind my sight.  
O wounded heart, and sick with pain,  
Break not, poor heart, outright.

FROM THE "SONNETS."

VIII.

BEWARE, my friend, of fiends and their grimaces ;  
Of little angels' wiles yet more beware thee ;  
Just such an one to kiss her did ensnare me,  
But coming, I got wounds and not embraces.

Beware of black old cats, with evil faces ;  
Yet more, of kittens white and soft be wary ;  
My sweetheart was just such a little fairy,  
And yet she well-nigh scratched my heart to pieces.  
Oh child ! oh sweet love, dear beyond all measure,  
How could those eyes, so bright and clear, deceive me ?  
That little paw so sore a heart-wound give me ?—  
My kitten's tender paw, thou soft, small treasure,  
Oh ! could I to my burning lips but press thee,  
My heart the while might bleed to death and bless  
thee.

FROM THE "LYRISCHES  
INTERMEZZO."

IX.

DEAR, when I look into thine eyes,  
My deepest sorrow straightway flies ;  
But when I kiss thy mouth, ah then  
No thought remains of bygone pain.

And when I lean upon thy breast,  
No dream of heaven could be more blest ;  
But, when thou say'st thou lovest me,  
I fall to weeping bitterly.

x.

THY face, that fair, sweet face I know,  
I dreamed of it awhile ago ;  
It is an angel's face, so mild—  
And yet, so sadly pale, poor child.

Only the lips are rosy bright,  
But soon cold Death will kiss them white ;  
And quench the light of Paradise  
That shines from out those earnest eyes.

XI.

You do not love me, sweet one? Why  
That is a trifling thing ;  
Let me but see your face, and I  
Am happy as a king.

“I hate you, hate you !” even this  
The little mouth has said ;  
Yet give me but that mouth to kiss,  
Child—and I’m comforted.

XII.

CHILD, art thou a summer's dream,  
Just some passing fancy's gleam,  
Such as on a sultry day,  
Crosses poet's brains, they say?

Ah, but stay! What have I said?  
See the small mouth, rosy red,  
And the clear eyes, all aglow  
With a magic light;—no, no!  
Such a winsome picture, yet  
Poet's brain did ne'er beget.

Basilisks and dragons dire,  
Giants, breathing smoke and fire—  
These, or some such evil thing  
From a poet's brain may spring.



But thyself—thy fairy grace,  
And thy mischievous, dear face,  
With those airs demure and wise,  
With those faithless, earnest eyes—  
Child, all this can never be  
Born of poet's fantasy.

XIII.

THOUGH my heart break, yet will I not complain ;  
Love, lost for evermore, I see thy pain,  
And know, for all thy diamonds' radiant light  
No ray can break upon thy heart's deep night.

I know it, for in dreams I saw it all—  
Thy empty heart, where night's dark shadows fall ;  
I saw the serpent gnawing at thy heart,  
O love, I saw how desolate thou art.

XIV.

YES, desolate—and I will not complain ;  
    Ah love, we two must both be desolate !  
Till Death shall ease our wounded hearts from pain,  
    We two, O love, must both be desolate.

About thy lips there plays a mocking smile,  
    Thine eyes can give defiant glances yet ;  
Thy bosom heaves with pride, yet all the while,  
    Thou too, as well as I, art desolate.

Beneath the smile there lurks an unseen pain,  
    The sparkling eyes with hidden tears are wet ;  
Secret the bosom keeps its wound—in vain !  
    Ah love, we two must both be desolate.

xv.

THE trumpet sounds, they beat the drums,  
The flutes and viols play ;  
To join the dance my heart's love comes  
On this her bridal day.

Now hark ! the fife rings shrill and high,  
And hark ! the bagpipes drone ;  
But guardian angels, standing by,  
They only weep and moan. . . .

XVI.

HAST thou forgotten, quite forgotten, dear,  
That I possessed thy heart for many a year?  
Thy little heart, so small, so false, so sweet,  
Sweetest and falsest heart that ever beat.

The love and pain hast thou forgotten, dear,  
That weighed upon my heart for many a year?  
I know not which was greater of the twain,  
Only that they were great, both love and pain.

XVII.

AND if the tender flowers could see  
My heart's sad load of grief,  
Then surely they would weep with me  
To bring my pain relief.

And if the nightingales could tell  
How sick I am and sad,  
Their merry songs would fill the vale,  
To make my heart more glad.

And if the golden stars on high  
My sorrow could but guess,  
They would come down from out the sky,  
To comfort my distress.

Yet none of these can ever know ;

One knöws, but only one.

Herself she pierced my heart—and so

She knows, and she alone.

XVIII.

WHY are the roses all so pale,

Tell me, my darling, why?

Why do the violets in the vale

Droop down so silently?

Why does the lark that yonder flies

Sing plaintively and low?

Why does a death-like scent arise

From where the balsams grow?

Why does the sun shine sadly down

Upon the meadow there?

And why does all the earth look brown

And dead and cold and bare?



Why aches my own heart wearily ?

Canst thou, my darling, tell ?

Ah, why hast thou forsaken me,

Love, that I loved so well ?

XIX.

WHEN the lime-trees bloomed and the sun shone  
    bright,  
And the young birds sang in the morning light,  
You kissed me, and clasped me so fast, so near,  
That your heart's quick beating I seemed to hear.

When the sun shone pale and the leaves were dead,  
And the raven croaked in the trees o'erhead,  
We wished one another a cold "Good-day,"  
You made me a curtsy—and went your way.

XX.

THERE stands a lonely pine-tree  
On a barren Northern height,  
Slumbering, while snows have made it  
A covering cold and white.

It is dreaming of a palm-tree,  
That, far in an Eastern land,  
Mourns desolate and silent  
On a parched and rocky strand.

XXI.

SINCE the dreary day that saw us part  
I've forgotten how to laugh, sweet Heart.  
Many a jest they make when I am by,  
But I cannot laugh, dear, no—not I.

Since the day I lost thee, little one,  
I can weep no more, my tears are gone ;  
Though my heart be breaking, I can die,  
But I cannot weep, dear, no—not I.

XXII.

A YOUTH once loved a maiden,  
But she must needs prefer  
One who, alas ! had chosen  
Another bride than her.

Straightway the maiden marries,  
Merely from spite, in truth—  
The first who comes to woo her ;  
And now, Heaven help the youth.

This is an old, old story,  
Yet new as it is old ;  
And those to whom it chances  
They break their hearts—I'm told.

XXIII.

WHEN I hear the little song again  
That my darling sung in days of old,  
Then my heart is like to break with pain ;  
With a pain too madd'ning to be told.

Driven onward by my restless grief  
To the wood I wander forth—and there  
I can weep the tears that bring relief  
For a sorrow grown too great to bear.

XXIV.

WARM summer dwells upon thy cheeks,  
And in thy dancing eyes ;  
But in thy little heart, my child,  
Cold, frosty winter lies.

Yet these, dear love, as years go on,  
Will play a different part ;  
Then, winter on thy cheeks shall be,  
And summer in thy heart.

XXV.

Two friends, when they are parting, say  
    " Farewell," with many a sigh ;  
They wring each other's hands and fall  
    To weeping bitterly.

But we, what time our parting was,  
    Shed not a single tear ;  
Our sobbing and our sighing came  
    In after days, my dear.



XXVI.

My songs are poisoned, every one,  
And so it needs must be ;  
Has not my life, once fair and bright,  
Been poisoned, love, by thee ?

My songs are poisoned, every one,  
And so it needs must be ;  
I harbour serpents in my heart,  
And thee, O love—and thee.

XXVII.

I DREAMED, and in my dream I wept ;  
I dreamed, O love, that thou wert dead.  
I woke—and wet my cheek was still  
With tears that I had shed.

I dreamed, and in my dream I wept,  
I dreamed that thou wert false to me.  
I woke—and afterwards for long  
I still wept bitterly.

I dreamed, and in my dream I wept ;  
Love, thou wert faithful in my dream—  
I woke—and even now the tears,  
The bitter tears yet stream.

XXVIII.

IN dreams I see thee every night ;  
    Thou smilest kindly when we meet,  
But I, 'mid tears that blind my sight,  
    I cast myself at thy dear feet.

Then thou dost shake thy golden head,  
    And sadly downward gaze on me,  
The while thine eyes begin to shed  
    The pearly tear-drops piteously.

Some gentle word I hear thee breathe,  
    Thou givest me a wreath of yew ;  
I wake—and cannot find the wreath,—  
    The word I have forgotten too.

FROM THE "HEIMKEHR."

XXIX.

THE sun in May shines brightly,  
Yet so sad, so sad am I;  
I lean against the lime-tree  
Far up on the ramparts high.

Below me the blue waters  
Sleep calm in the city moat ;  
And the while a boy is whistling  
As he fishes from his boat.

Along the bank bright pictures  
Are outstretched on yonder side—  
Meadows and cattle—houses,  
And gardens and woodlands wide.

The maids are bleaching linen,  
They trip down the grassy way ;—  
I can hear the mill-wheel humming  
As it showers its diamond spray.

A sentry-box is standing  
On the gray old tower below ;  
A scarlet-coated soldier  
Paces ever to and fro.

He turns and moves his musket,  
It shines in the sunlight red ;  
Now he presents and shoulders—  
I wish he would shoot me dead.

XXX.

How canst thou sleep so still, while yet  
I am alive—dost thou forget?  
When the old anger wakes again  
I shall arise and break my chain.

Hast thou not heard the legend told,  
How a dead youth, one night of old,  
Rose, and his sweetheart bore away  
Down to the cold grave where he lay?

O child, so passing fair to see,  
O child, do thou take heed to me—  
I lie within no churchyard bed,  
And I am stronger than the dead.

XXXI.

UNHAPPY Atlas that I am ! a world  
A very world of sorrows must I bear.  
I bear things all unbearable and now  
I feel my heart will break.

Ah thou proud heart, didst thou not will it so ?  
Didst thou not ask unfathomable bliss,  
Or else unbounded misery ? proud heart—  
Thine now the misery.



XXXII.

YEARS roll on and men pass by,  
To the grave descending ;  
But my heart's love cannot die,  
That is still unending.

I would see you once again,  
Just to kneel before you ;—  
Dying, I would tell you then,  
"Madam, I adore you."



XXXIII.

THEY tell me I shall waste away  
Because I love in vain.  
And soon I shall believe it true  
As well as other men.

O little maid, with soft large eyes,  
Have I not said before,  
That thee I love with boundless love,  
For thee my heart is sore?

But only in my silent room  
I utter words like these ;  
And when I'm by thy side, alas !  
I always hold my peace.

Some wicked angel then draws nigh,  
To close my mouth, I trow ;  
And 'tis that wicked angel's fault  
That I am wretched now.

XXXIV.

THESE two, they loved each other well,  
But neither would the secret tell;  
They seemed like enemies, and yet  
Their hidden love was passionate.

At last they said farewell—and then  
They met not, save in dreams, again.  
They both were dead—dead long ago,  
Yet scarcely knew that it was so. . . .

XXXV.

My child, we two were children,  
Two children, small and gay ;  
We used to creep to the hen-house  
And hide beneath the hay.

We tried to chirp like chickens,  
And hoped the passers-by  
Would hear us there and fancy  
They heard a chicken cry.

We built a lordly castle  
With boxes, in the court,  
And set up house together,  
Quite grandly, as we thought.

The old cat paid us visits  
As often as she could ;  
We used to bow and curtsy,  
And “hoped her health was good.”

We made her pretty speeches,  
And spoke of this and that—  
Things we have since repeated  
To many a grave old cat.

We sat and talked as wisely  
As grown-up people may ;  
Complaining things had altered  
Most sadly since our day.

“ Love, faith, and truth no longer  
Existed anywhere ;  
But coffee had grown dearer,  
And money very rare !”

Those days are past, and all things  
Are passing by, in sooth ;—  
Money, the world, the ages,  
And love and faith and truth.

XXXVI.

AND did not my pale face betray  
My anguish and my passion ?  
Or didst thou think these lips would make  
The miserable confession ?

Ah no ! they are too proud for aught  
But kisses, smiles, and joking.  
They'd speak perchance a scornful word,  
The while my heart was breaking.

XXXVII.

I LONGED to linger, resting  
Beside you, free from care ;  
But you ran off, protesting  
You had no time to spare.

I vowed my soul should never  
Know other queen but you ;  
You only laughed, however,  
And dropped a curtsy too.

All day you sorely tried me,  
And not content with this,  
You cruelly denied me  
Even a farewell kiss.



But if you will not soften,  
I shall survive it still ;  
I've been through this so often,  
Sweet—and it does not kill.

XXXVIII.

Two sapphires those dear eyes of thine,  
Clear as the heaven above thee ;  
Thrice happy is the man to whom  
Those eyes shall say : "I love thee."

A diamond is thy heart, that shines  
With many a bright reflection,  
Thrice happy is the man for whom  
It glows with true affection.

Two rubies are those lips of thine,  
Unrivalled in fresh glory ;  
Thrice happy is the man to whom  
They whisper their love story.

Could I but find that lucky man,  
But meet that happy lover—  
Meet him alone in some dark wood,—  
His joy would soon be over. . . .

XXXIX.

To-NIGHT the house is lighted up,  
And full of company ;  
Across the shining window there  
A shadow-form moves by.

Thou canst not see me standing here  
In dreary gloom alone ;  
But thou canst see my dreary heart  
Still less, thou little one.

My dreary heart, it loves thee well,  
And breaks for love of thee ;  
It throbs and breaks and bleeds to death,  
Only, thou canst not see.

XL.

I LEFT you in the hottest of July,  
I come again and winter frosts are here ;  
When last I saw you, you were warm enough,  
Now you are cool and even cold I fear.

Once more I leave you, and when I return  
You will be neither warm, I think, nor cold ;  
But I shall walk across your graves and then  
My heart, too, will be growing poor and old.

XLI.

WHEN once you are my wife, I swear  
You shall be envied far and near ;  
For you shall pass your life away  
In merriment and pleasures gay.

Scold as you will—the storms you raise,  
I'll bear them all—but mind you praise  
My verses, for unless you do,  
I'll straightway be divorced from you.

XLII.

THE day the blue Hussars rode off,  
A-down the city street  
And through the gate, I brought thee, dear,  
A knot of roses sweet.

Oh, that was a wild company !  
The land had much to bear.  
Why—even in thy little heart—  
Some few had quarters there !

XLIII.

YOUR eyes, your voice, when first we met each other  
Told me we might be friends ; and I declare  
That, had we not been standing by your mother,  
We should have kissed each other then and there.

And yet to-morrow morning I must leave you,  
To hasten onward in the weary track ;  
And you, fair child, will watch for me to give you  
A kindly parting glance as I look back.



XLIV.

ABOVE the mountains peeps the sun,  
The goat-bells ring across the plain ;  
My love, my lamb, my pretty one,  
My heart's delight, my morning sun,  
I yearn to see thee once again.

I look towards the window-pane,  
Dear child, here's my farewell to thee.  
I gaze with anxious eyes—in vain !  
The curtain shades the window-pane,—  
She lies asleep—and dreams of me ?

XLV.

DEATH is the cool and silent night,—  
Life is the hot and noisy day ;  
The twilight falls and I would sleep,  
The day has wearied me outright.

A green tree grows above my bed ;  
And even in my dreams I hear  
The nightingale that sings of love,  
Amid the branches overhead.

## THE PILGRIMAGE TO KEVLAAR.

### I.

By the window stood the mother, looking down the  
crowded way,

But her son within the chamber on his couch all silent  
lay :

“ Will thou not arise and see  
The procession pass ? ” quoth she.

“ I am sick and weary, mother ; sick to death and  
blind with tears,

Deaf to all things save the echo of a lost voice in my  
ears.

When I think of Gretchen dead,  
Sorely aches my heart,” he said.

“ Yet arise,” she made him answer, “ take thy book  
and rosary,  
To the blessed shrine at Kevlaar, come and make thy  
prayer with me ;  
There before the Virgin kneel,  
She thy wounded heart will heal.”

Through Cologne, the ancient city, hard beside the  
Rhine’s broad stream,  
Now the great procession passes, and the sacred ban-  
ners gleam ;  
While a thousand voices raise  
Heavenward their hymn of praise.

With her son the mother follows, leading him amid the  
throng,  
And their voices swell the chorus, joining in the  
triumph-song ;  
Singing, Queen of Heaven, to Thee—  
“ Glory to Thy name, Marie.”

II.

Now the blessed Virgin Mother must be robed in  
bright array

For the sick folk throng to Kevlaar, to her sacred  
shrine to-day.

Halt and maimed, and deaf and dumb,

She will cure all those who come.

Everyone who prays for healing bears a waxen  
offering ;

He whose foot or hand is wounded, waxen foot or  
hand must bring,

Then his prayer is not in vain,

And the Virgin heals his pain.

Many a poor and helpless creature crept to Kevlaar  
halt and lame ;

Many a one with crippled fingers to that blessed altar  
came ;

But these very same, I trow,  
Dance and play the viol now.

So the mother brought a sacred taper and a wax heart  
made ;

“Take this gift, my son, and lay it at the Virgin’s feet,”  
she said,

“ And thy prayer shall not be vain,  
She will heal thee of thy pain.”

Then he took the gift, and sighing, to the holy shrine  
went he,

From his eyes the tears were streaming as he fell on  
bended knee,

And before the altar there  
All his heart streamed forth in prayer.

“ Holy Mother, Thou thrice blessed, chosen one of  
God on High,

O most mighty Queen of Heaven, perfect in Thy purity !

Kneeling at Thy throne I plead,  
Showing Thee my bitter need.

“ In Cologne, the city yonder, that hath many a church  
and dome,  
I am dwelling with my mother, and there close beside  
our home

Little Gretchen lived,” he said,  
“ Ah—but Gretchen now is dead !

“ Virgin Mother, I have offered, see, a wax heart at  
Thy shrine ;  
Take away my aching sorrow—heal this wounded  
heart of mine ;

Night and day my song shall be,  
Glory to Thy name, Marie.”

III.

In the narrow cottage chamber son and mother  
sleeping lay,  
When, behold ! the blessed Virgin glided in, and took  
her way  
With a light and noiseless tread  
To the sick boy's lowly bed.

Then she gently, leaning o'er him, laid her hand a little  
while  
On his heart—and turned and vanished, on her face a  
tender smile.  
But the mother, in a trance,  
Saw what passed—and more, perchance. . . .

Soon she started from her slumbers. “How the dogs  
bark loud !” she said,  
Then she turned, and there before her, lay her son—  
and he was dead.



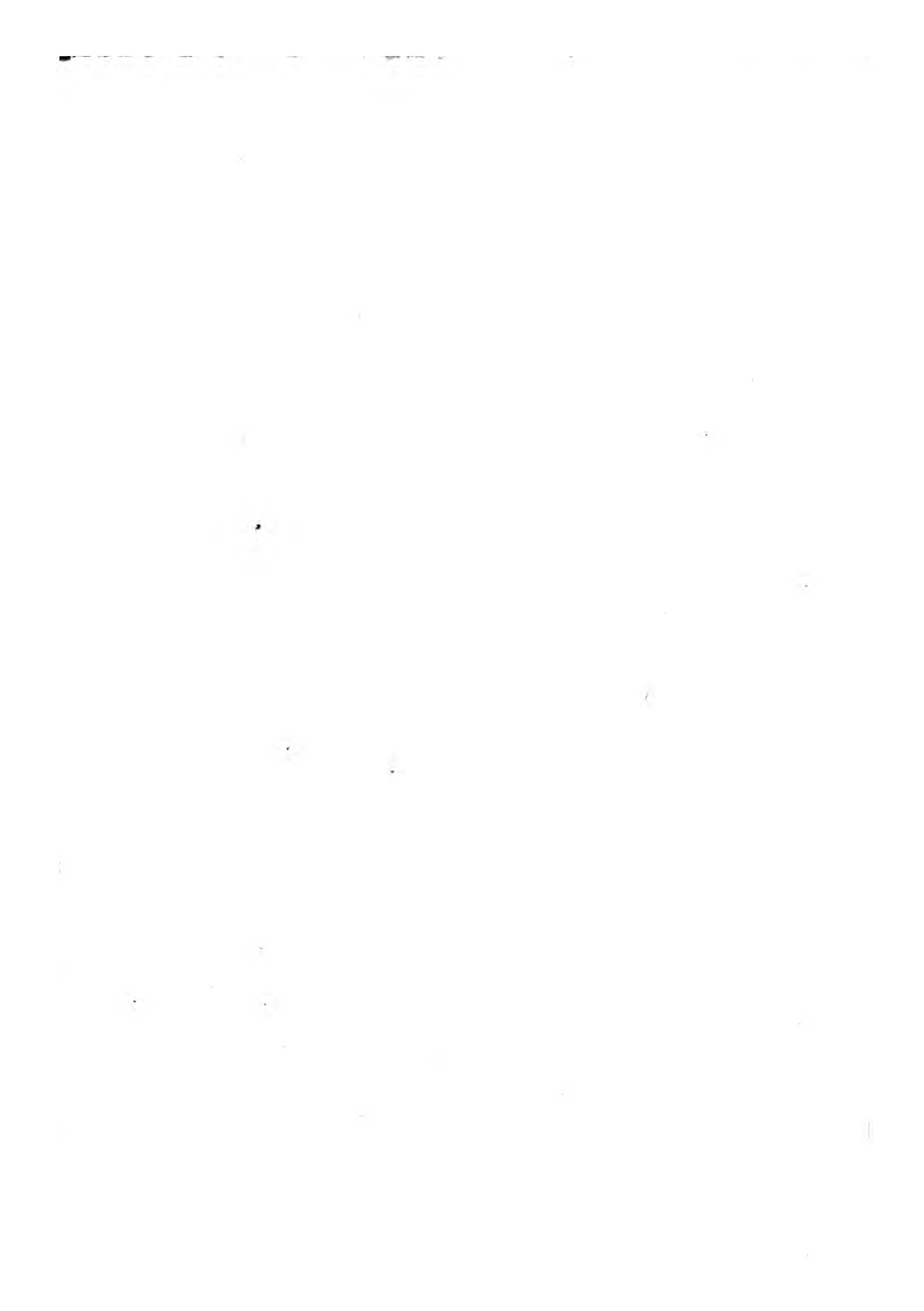
On his face, all still and white,  
Rays of morning sun shone bright.

How it was with her, poor mother, she herself might  
scarcely know ;

But she gazed awhile upon him, lying there—and  
murmured low,

Folding hands and bending knee,  
“Glory to Thy name, Marie.”

FROM THE "NORDSEE."



## SUNSET.

THE red sun, glowing, now begins to sink  
Below the broad and shimmering gray sea,  
The silver-dimpled, mighty, world-wide sea ;  
Cloud-phantoms, rosy-tinted, following ;—  
And opposite, from out her twilight veil  
Of gray autumnal clouds, the moon breaks forth,  
A pale and wan, a deadly-pale, sad face.  
While far behind, like sparks amid the mist  
The little stars shine out.

In heaven once  
Luna, the goddess, and great Sol, the god,  
Were joined in wedlock, and the little stars,  
Their pure young children, flocked around them  
then.

But sland'rous tongues, that whispered evil, made  
Mischief between them, and in anger sore  
They bade farewell, this bright and lofty pair.  
And now by day in solitary state,  
The sun-god stalks across the broad, high heaven;  
His splendour worshipped by proud men and praised  
By hearts grown hard through much prosperity.

But in the night the goddess Luna strays  
Across the sky ; poor mother, followed yet  
By all the stars, her orphaned little ones.  
She sheds a calm and melancholy light ;  
And love-lorn girls and gentle poets come  
To consecrate their tears and songs to her—  
Soft-hearted Luna ! Like a woman true  
She loves him yet, her great and glorious spouse.  
Trembling and pale, when evening closes in,  
She sadly peers from out her fleecy clouds  
To catch a glimpse of the departing one

And fain would send a bitter cry to him :  
“Come back, come back ! the children long for  
thee.”

But the proud sun-god—at the sight, he glows  
With deeper purple, betwixt rage and pain ;  
And unappeased, he sinks below the flood  
Down to his cold and solitary couch.

Thus sland'rous, evil tongues have even brought  
Anguish and ruin on th' eternal gods ;  
And in the heavens, disconsolate and sad,  
They wander on with endless journeying,  
Dragging about for ever their sad load  
Of glitt'ring sorrow—since they may not die.

But I, a mortal, dwelling lowly here  
On earth, and happy with a hope of death,  
I will complain no longer. . . .

## A NIGHT AT SEA.

AGAINST the vault of heaven, deeply blue,  
Where fair and golden stars so brightly shine,  
I fain would press my lips—I fain would press  
Them close, so close—and wildly would I weep.

For are not those bright stars my darling's eyes?  
Her dazzling eyes, that glow a thousandfold,  
And smile on me a welcome from above,  
From out that vault of heaven, deeply blue?

Toward that vault of heaven, deeply blue,  
Toward my darling's starry, shining eyes,  
I raise devoutly prayerful hands, and send  
Upwards a heartfelt and imploring cry.

“ O purest eyes, O shining rays of grace,  
Shine on my soul to lighten and to bless,  
And let me die, that I at once may gain  
You, and the whole bright heaven, where ye dwell.”

\* \* \* \* \*

From the heavenly eyes above me  
Golden sparks fell through the night ;  
And more full of love and stronger  
Grew my soul.

O ye heavenly eyes above me,  
Weep into my soul, weep on !  
And with starry tear-drops golden  
Fill my soul !

\* \* \* \* \*

Around the vessel and the fragile planks  
Whereon my head was lying, the wild waves,  
The restless waves began to rage and foam ;



And low they murmured in mine ear : “ Thou fool !  
Thine arm is short and heaven is far away ;  
Above thee there the stars are firmly nailed  
With little golden nails—thus all thy sighs,  
And all thy longings fruitless are and vain—  
'Twere wiser far, poor fool, to fall asleep. . . .”

\* \* \* \* \*

I had a dream—there was a barren heath  
All covered with a smooth and snowy shroud ;  
And I lay buried far beneath the snow,  
Sleeping the cold and lonely sleep of death.

And yet—from out the dark blue heaven above,  
Gazed down upon my grave those starry eyes,  
Dear eyes ! and shone with a victorious light,  
A joy serene—that still was full of love.

## SHIPWRECKED.

HOPE—hope and love, alike all shattered now  
And I myself too, like a corpse cast up,  
Rejected even by the murmuring sea,  
I lie upon the strand,  
The bald and barren strand.  
Before me there the waste of water lies,  
Behind me only grief and misery ;  
And high above my head the clouds move on,  
Those gray and formless daughters of the air  
Who, with their pitchers shaped of mist and fog  
Draw water from the sea,  
And ever drag it slowly to and fro  
Only to pour it back upon the sea ;  
A sadly wearisome and endless task,  
And useless too, as useless as my life.

The waters murmur and the sea-gulls scream,  
A breath of old remembrances sweeps by,  
Forgotten dreams and pictures vanished long,  
Cruelly fair, before me rise again.

Far in the north there dwells  
A woman, a fair woman, queenly fair.  
About her tall and slender cypress-form  
A garment, white and soft, clings tenderly.  
A haze of dusky locks,  
Escaping from a braided crown of hair,  
Hovers, a tender cloud,  
About the pale, sweet face :  
While from the pale, sweet face  
Shine mighty eyes, that gleam,  
Like a black sun.

How often, O black sun,  
And with what rapture, have I drawn from thee

The wild, consuming, soul-inspiring flame,  
And stood before thee, reeling, drunk with fire.—  
Then on thy proud and noble lips there dawned  
A gentle smile, while from those noble lips  
Breathed forth some word, as soft as moonlight is  
And tender as the perfume of the rose.  
Then would my soul arise,  
And like an eagle, take its flight to heaven.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sea-gulls and waves, be still !  
Is not all over now—all joy and hope,  
All hope and love? Behold, upon the ground  
Alone, a desolate and shipwrecked man,  
I lie, and downward to the cold, damp sand  
I press my burning brow.

## QUESTIONS.

BESIDE the sea, the desolate, dark sea,  
Amid the gloom of night, a youth there stands ;  
His head is full of doubts, of grief his heart ;  
With sullen lips he questions the wild waves.

“ Oh solve for me the riddle of this life,  
The old, tormenting riddle of all time,  
Whereon so many heads have thought and dreamed.  
Yes, heads with hieroglyphic signs adorned,  
Heads clothed in turbans, and in students' caps,  
Heads wearing wigs and thousand other such  
Poor, weary, puzzled, hardworked human heads—  
Oh tell me, what man is and whence he comes—

Whither he goes—and who they be that dwell  
So far above us on the golden stars.”

The wild waves murmur their eternal song,  
And clouds fly fast before the whispering wind—  
The stars shine on, indifferent and cold ;—  
And for an answer 'tis a fool that waits. . . .



FROM

THE "NEUER FRÜHLING."



\_\_\_\_\_

FROM THE "NEUER FRÜHLING

I.

THE butterfly is lover to the rose  
And flutters round her all the summer's day;  
But round the butterfly, with loving touch,  
The warm and golden summer sunbeams play.

With whom, I wonder, is the rose in love?  
I fain would know for whom her kisses are.  
Can they be for the singing nightingale,  
Or rather, for the silent evening star?

Ah well! I know not whom the rose may love;  
But as for me, I love them every one;  
The rose, the butterfly, the nightingale,  
The evening star, and golden summer sun.

II.

BLUEST eyes of spring peep out  
From the grasses tall :  
Ah sweet violets—I choose  
Them the first of all.

Plucking them, I think of things  
More than I can tell ;  
But my every thought, aloud  
Sings the nightingale.

And her song, that tells my thoughts,  
Loudly echoing flows ;  
So my tender secret now  
All the forest knows.

III.

YOUR letter does not grieve me !  
For wherefore write—to say  
That you no longer love me—  
So long a letter, pray ?

Six close-packed sheets, precisely !  
I'm not afraid, not I ;  
They write far more concisely  
Who mean to say " Good-bye ! "

IV.

GOLDEN stars across the heavens  
With their small feet softly creep,  
Fearing lest they should awaken  
Mother Earth, who lies asleep.

Listening stand the silent forests,  
Every leaf a little ear,  
And, as in a dream, the mountain  
Shadow-arms outstretches near.

But who called?—I heard an echo ;  
Through my listening heart it fell.  
Could it be her voice—or was it  
Nothing but the nightingale?

VIII.

A TRAGEDY.

I.

COME, fly with me, and be my wife ;  
My heart thy resting-place shall be ;  
Far in strange lands my faithful heart,  
Shall be both house and home to thee.

But if thou come not, surely then  
I die, and leave thee here alone ;  
Even thy father's house will seem  
But a strange place when I am gone.

II.

THERE fell a frost in the spring one night,  
It fell on the tender blossoms bright,  
They withered and died beneath the blight.

A youth once loved a maiden true ;  
Father and mother never knew ;  
They stole from home one night, these two.

They strayed abroad for many a day,  
But ne'er an hour of luck had they ;  
At last they drooped and pined away—.

III.

OVER her grave a lime-tree grows,  
Birds sing there, and the night-wind blows ;  
Below, along the dewy grass  
The miller and his sweetheart pass.

How weirdly soft the night-wind shivers ;  
How sadly sweet the bird's note quivers ;  
The lovers hush their talk, hard by,  
They fall to weeping—and know not why.



IX.

LORD OLAF.

I.

By the church two men are standing  
Both arrayed in red apparel :  
One of them the king—the other,  
See, the other is the headsman.

And to him the king is speaking :  
“ By the singing I can tell thee  
That the wedding soon is over,  
Therefore let thine axe be ready.”

Bells and organ now are pealing,  
From the church the crowd is streaming ;  
In the midst of the procession,  
All adorned, come bride and bridegroom.

Pale as death, and sad and anxious,  
Is the fair princess—yet by her  
Walks Lord Olaf, bold and merry,  
Proudly his red mouth is smiling.

And he speaks, still proudly smiling,  
To the stern and wrathful monarch :  
“ Father of my bride, I greet thee ;  
Though to-day my life thou takest.

“ I must die to-day—but let me,  
Only let me live till midnight.  
Give me time to keep my wedding,  
With the marriage feast and dances.

“ Let me live, oh king, I pray thee,  
Till the last cup I have emptied,  
Till the last dance shall be ended,  
Only let me live till midnight.”

To the headsman then the monarch  
Turns and speaks : “ His prayer be granted,  
Let his life be spared till midnight,  
Then let thy good axe be ready.”

II.

The wedding feast is well-nigh o'er,  
Lord Olaf drains the cup once more ;  
The while, upon his breast,  
Moaning his wife doth rest—  
    And the headsman waits below.

Lord Olaf with his bride to-night  
Leads off the dance, 'mid torches bright ;  
Wildly they dance and fast,  
The dance that is their last—  
    And the headsman waits below.

The viols echo merrily,  
The flutes send forth a wailing sigh ;  
But—as these two draw near,  
All men shrink back in fear—  
    And the headsman waits below.

As through the reeling halls they move,  
Lord Olaf whispers to his love :  
“ I love thee, dear, so well,  
Better than words can tell ;  
Cold is the grave—farewell !”

And the headsman waits below.

III.

Lord Olaf, it is midnight now,  
Thy latest hour draws nigh,  
For thou the daughter of a king  
Hast loved unlawfully.

The monks intone a funeral psalm,  
And see the headsman stand,  
Red-coated, by the grim dark block,  
With glitt'ring axe in hand !

Now in the court, where gleaming swords  
And torches flash, his place  
Lord Olaf takes ; his red lips smile,  
He speaks with smiling face :

“I bless the sun, I bless the moon,  
And stars, the heavens that throng ;  
The merry birds, I bless them too,  
That fill the air with song.

“I bless the sea, I bless the land,  
Of all the flowers I bless  
The violets most—my wife’s dear eyes  
They match for tenderness.

“Love, though they cost me now my life  
Those violet-eyes of thine,  
I bless the elder-tree that grows  
Where first I made thee mine.”

## FRAU METTE.

HERR PETER and Bender sat over their wine ;  
Quoth Bender : “ That magical singing of thine,  
Although it bewitch the whole world, by my life  
It will never bewitch good Frau Mette, my wife ! ”

• “ I wager my courser, ” Herr Peter replied,  
“ Against the brave dogs that crouch down by thy side,  
That to-night to my castle Frau Mette I ’ll bring ;  
I ’ll bewitch her this very same night when I sing. ”

When midnight was nigh, then his magical song  
Herr Peter upraised, and it floated along,  
O ’er the river, the forest, the meadows around,  
Till afar it re-echoed—that searching sweet sound.



The pine-trees all stood in grim silence to hear,  
The broad river hushed its low murmuring near ;  
While the silver moon trembled far up in the sky,  
And the bright little stars listened gravely on high.

From slumber Frau Mette now suddenly woke,  
“ Who is it that sings at my window ? ” she spoke.  
Then she girt up her gown and sped out at the gate ;  
Woe is her ! for she went to a sorrowful fate !

She waded the river, the forest she passed,  
Nor stopped till she came to the castle at last  
Where Herr Peter had drawn her with magical power,  
By his song that bewitched her that dark midnight hour.

But when she came home, at the break of the day,  
Herr Bender he stood at the door in her way :  
“ Frau Mette, and where hast thou been through the  
night ?

Thy garments are dripping, thy face is so white.”

“ I went to the river where water-nymphs dwell,  
To listen and hear the strange things that they tell ;  
When the nixes grew merry and danced in their play,  
Oh, they splashed me and covered me over with spray.”

“ The sand by the water-nymphs’ river is fine,  
Not there wert thou walking, thou fair wife of mine ;  
For thy feet are all wounded and bleeding, I see,  
And thy cheeks, too, are bleeding—say, what may  
    this be ? ”

“ I went to the forest to try if perchance  
The elves I could see at their magical dance ;  
But the thorns were so sharp in the thickets around,  
It was thus that my feet and my cheeks I did wound.”

“ The elves only dance in the warm month of May,  
When meadows are soft and when blossoms are gay ;  
But now autumn is cold and the blossoms are dead,  
And the bitter wind howls in the trees overhead.”

“ It was to Herr Peter I went through the night,  
He sang and bewitched me with magical might ;  
And I waded the river, the forest I passed,  
Till I stood at the door of his castle at last.

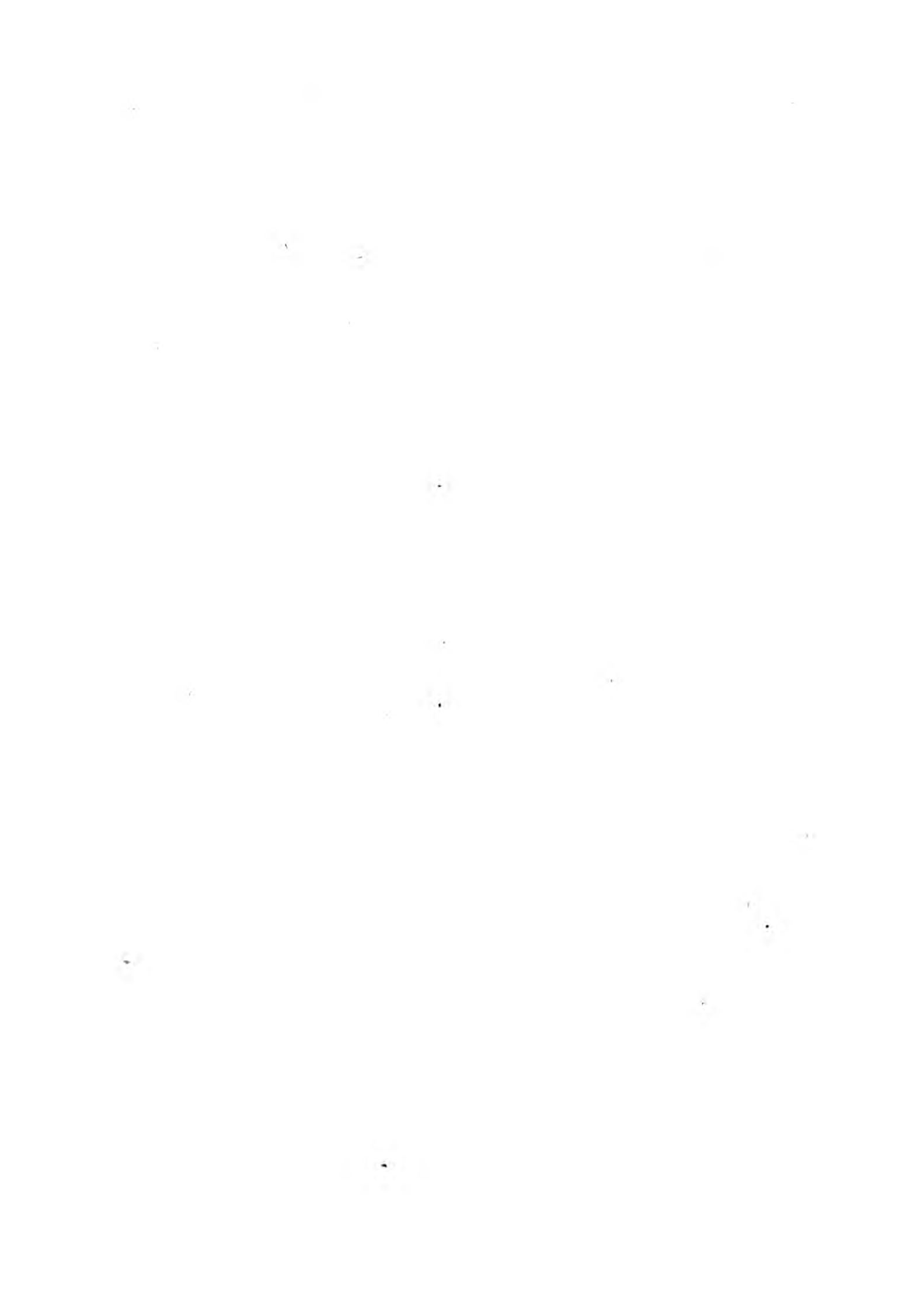
“ His magic is mighty as death, and his song  
To lure men to sorrow and darkness is strong ;  
And the fire of his music yet rages so high  
In my heart, that full surely I know I must die.”

With funeral sables the church is hung round,  
The muffled bell tolls with a sorrowful sound,  
And thus the sad death of Frau Mette is told,  
Who sleeps her last slumber, all silent and cold.

Herr Bender stood watching the funeral bier,  
The while down his cheek there rolled sadly a tear ;  
“ I have lost my fair wife, since Frau Mette is dead,  
And my brave dogs as well—for a wager,” he said.

FROM

THE "LETZTE GEDICHTE."



## BY THE FIRESIDE.

### I.

OUT of doors to-night there is a storm,  
Earth is shrouded in a snowy dress ;  
But within, this little room is warm—  
And a place of peaceful loneliness.

Here I sit and dream of many things  
By the brightly blazing hearth, and low  
At my side the boiling kettle sings  
As I used to hear it long ago.

And the kitten crouches by the fire,  
Warms its little paws and purrs aloud ;  
While the flames dance gaily, leaping higher,  
Through my mind the strangest fancies crowd.

Dim and misty shapes before my eyes,  
Pictures of forgotten days and dead,  
Like some pale and faded pageant rise,  
Or some quaint, old-fashioned masquerade.

Lovely women first, with earnest face,  
Beckon, with a sweet mysterious air ;  
Then, among them, harlequins grimace,  
Laugh, and cut their capers here and there.

Marble gods, with features still and grave,  
Greet me from afar ; and round them grow  
In the moonlight, fairy flowers that wave  
Dreamily their petals to and fro.

Presently a castle old and gray,  
With a heavy tread, appears in sight ;  
After it come riding fast, a gay  
Company of knights, in armour bright.

One by one the pictures fade and grow

Misty, and I bid them all farewell. . . .

Ah ! the kettle's boiling over now,

And the scalded kitten gives a yell !



## AUTO-DA-FÉ.

### II.

VIOLETS dead, a faded ribbon,  
And a dusty curl or so ;  
Half-torn notes, forgotten tokens  
Of some heartache, long ago.

Kneeling by the hearthstone sadly,  
See, I throw them in the grate ;  
Crackling now they burn, these ruins  
Of my joys and luckless fate.

Lovers' vows, oaths false and flighty,  
Up the chimney fast they fly ;  
And the little god, I fancy,  
All unseen, stands chuckling by !

*AUTO-DA-FÉ.*

III

Still I sit beside the hearthstone,  
    Dream—of what I cannot tell ;  
Watch the sparks amid the ashes  
    Dying out. Good-night ! Farewell.

## AN OLD SONG.

### III.

DEAD thou art and know'st not thou art dead,  
Pale thy little mouth, once rosy red ;  
From thine eyes the light of life is gone,  
Dead thou art, my own dead little one.

One weird summer night, when none might see,  
To thy grave myself I carried thee ;  
Nightingales made plaint, and stars withal  
Followed sadly in thy funeral.

Through the wood we passed, and 'mid the trees  
Came the echo of our litanies ;  
Lofty pines, in sable veils arrayed,  
Muttered hoarsely, praying for the dead.

By the lake, where weeping willows grow,  
Little elves were dancing to and fro ;  
But they stopped their sport as we passed by,  
Gazing on us with a pitying eye.

When we reached thy grave, from out the sky  
Came the moon, and made thine elegy ;  
Sobs and wailings echoed through the dell,  
And afar there tolled a muffled bell.

## IV.

O LITTLE lamb, I was assigned  
To be thy shepherd true and kind ;  
And 'mid this barren world and rude  
To shelter thee as best I could.  
I gave thee of my bread thy fill,  
I brought thee water from the rill ;  
And through the raging winter storm  
Safe in my bosom kept thee warm.  
I held thee close in that embrace ;  
And when the cold rain fell apace,  
When through the gorge the torrents poured,  
And wolves and floods in concert roared,  
Thou did'st not tremble then nor fear.  
E'en when the lightning's mighty spear  
Cleft the tall pine—upon my breast  
Still thou did'st sleep and calmly rest.

My arm grows weak, and faint my heart,  
Pale Death creeps near. The shepherd's part  
Is now played out, the game is o'er.  
O God, then in Thy hands once more  
I lay the crook, and do Thou keep  
My little lamb, when I to sleep  
Am laid. Oh, guard her day by day  
From every harm ; and shield, I pray,  
Her fleece from thorns that may bring pain  
And from the miry swamps that stain.  
Beneath her feet, in field and wood,  
Let greenest pastures spring for food ;  
And let her calmly sleep and rest,  
As once she slept upon my breast.

THE END.



