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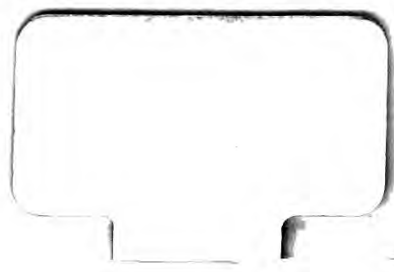


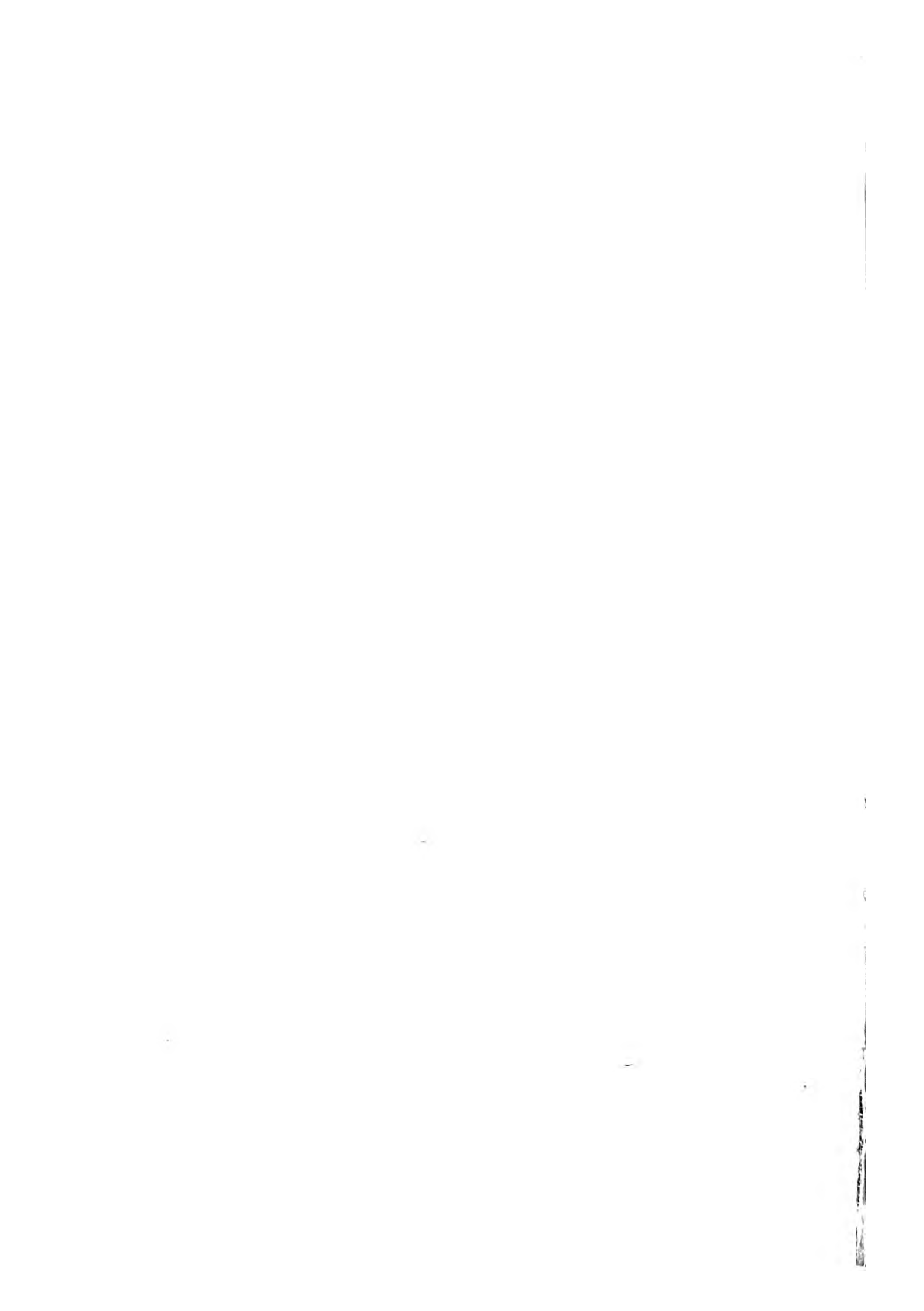
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Selected Poems
§
SIR WILLIAM WATSON



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SELECTED POEMS OF
SIR WILLIAM WATSON

By the same author

The Prince's Quest, and other Poems
Epigrams of Art, Life and Nature
Wordsworth's Grave, and Other Poems
Poems
Lacrimæ Musarum, and Other Poems
The Eloping Angels
Excursions in Criticism
Odes, and Other Poems
The Father of the Forest, and Other Poems
The Purple East
The Year of Shame
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The Heralds of the Dawn
Retrogression, and other Poems
Pencraft
The Man Who Saw, and Other Poems
The Superhuman Antagonists, and Other
Poems
A Hundred Poems
Poems Brief and New

*.*Most of these volumes have long been
out of print, but the main contents of
nearly all are incorporated in the present
volume.



From a painting by
R. G. Eves

Reginald G. Eves, March, 1928.

William Watson

SELECTED POEMS
OF
SIR WILLIAM WATSON

Selected, with notes, by the author



THORNTON BUTTERWORTH LTD
15 BEDFORD STREET, LONDON

First published 1928



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MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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PRELUDE

I

SONG, from thy wealth, far passing richest
guess,
Give us the things we are poor in, not the things
Life spawns for ever with a rank excess.
Thou that canst fiercely bless,
Take us to founts of power, the unchoked springs
Of the world's wondrousness.
We need thy boons. We are shaken with storms
of fate.
And now, while we await
The all-calm sky To-morrow never brings,
The tempest and long thunder of Yesterday
Have not quite trailed away
The last fringe of the midnight of their wings.
War smote us hard, and the hard blows of peace
Buffet our laden shoulders without cease.
And busy is hate, whose wanton sickle cuts
Our ripening hopes untimely evermore:
And diligent is the furtive hand that shuts
On Truth an iron door.
Nor rest they oft, being troublously awake
Throughout the Earth, who, in a blear light, stir
The Cauldrons of Confusion, whence are borne
Hither and thither the sick fumes that make

PRELUDE

Void minds their dwelling, and blur
The countenance of the morn.
And from that region whose slow waters roam
To land-locked seas, or wed the Arctic foam—
From that huge cradle and grave of Czars, where
 rose
The towers of tyranny o'er a people's woes—
Comes a hoarse sound upon the east wind
 flung,
The voice of that strange child whom Havoc
 bore,
But who from old Despairs is likewise sprung :
Their baleful daughter, joyless, yet how young !—
Sitting as one becrowned
On a vast burial mound,
That hides the undirged, mown in the whirl-
 wind's roar,
When, with blind Hates hemmed round,
Pity no longer dared to have a tongue.

II

Therefore, O Song, beholding all the ill
That scatters wide its plague-seed to pollute
This faltering morrow of the battle-gloom,
We in whose ears the sound of tumult shrill
Was idle at times as a remote dispute
That seems the clash of shadows ; we to whom
Ages whose last words were of feuds and spoils
Bequeathed a monstrous ravelment unblest,
Which we must needs hand on (O dire bequest)
Curst with new knots and coils ;
We that from War now earn such acrid fruit,

PRELUDE

And from bleak triumph the wan flower whose
doom
Is to lack nought but scent and colour and
bloom ;
We whom the wrangle we call peace embroils
With dissonance never mute ;
We ask that thou, whose torch the gross murk
foils
But for a season—we ask that thou fulfil,
In this hurt day, that still
Bears on its bosom fewer flowers than scars,
One errand, amid such gods as wax or wane,
One service, thy least vain,
To us fond flutterers 'twixt delight and pain.
While Chance with crude touch mars
The yet brave shape of Life,—nay, till Life's
toils,
And the sweet fraudulence of its dreams, be
o'er ;
Till all the base or noble dreamers must
Accept without disdain
The equality and fraternity of the dust,
Where in like quiet are lulled the note that jars
And the pure music faultless to its core,—
Till then, great Mother, as oft-times heretofore,
Through all our clamour and blare and greed
and lust,
Remind us of the stars.

September, 1926

ODE IN MAY

LET me go forth, and share
The overflowing Sun
With one wise friend, or one
Better than wise, being fair,
Where the pewit wheels and dips
On heights of bracken and ling,
And Earth, unto her leaflet tips,
Tingles with the Spring.

What is so sweet and dear
As a prosperous morn in May,
The valiant prime of the day,
And the dauntless youth of the year,
When nothing that asks for bliss,
Asking aright, is denied,
And half of the world a bridegroom is,
And half of the world a bride?

The Song of Mingling flows,
Grave, ceremonial, pure,
As once, from lips that endure,
The cosmic descant rose,

ODE IN MAY

When the temporal lord of life,
Going his golden way,
Had taken a wondrous maid to wife
That long had said him nay.

For of old the Sun, our sire,
Came wooing the mother of men,
Earth, that was virginal then,
Vestal fire to his fire.
Silent her bosom and coy,
But the strong god sued and pressed ;
And born of their starry nuptial joy
Are all that drink of her breast.

And the triumph of him that begot,
And the travail of her that bore,
Behold, they are evermore
As warp and weft in our lot.
We are children of splendour and flame,
Of shuddering, also, and tears.
Magnificent out of the dust we came,
And abject from the Spheres.

O bright irresistible lord,
We are fruit of Earth's womb, each one,
And fruit of thy love, O Sun,
For this thy spouse, thy adored.
To thee as our Father we bow,
Forbidden thy Father to see,
Who is older and greater than thou, as thou
Art greater and older than we.

ODE IN MAY

Thou art but as a word of his speech,
Thou art but as a wave of his hand ;
Thou art brief as a glitter of sand
'Twixt tide and tide on his beach ;
Thou art less than a spark of his fire,
Or a moment's mood of his soul :
Thou art lost in the notes on the lips of his choir
That chant the chant of the Whole.

1897

THE ETERNAL SEARCH

MY little maiden two years old, just able
To tower full half a head above the
table,
With inquisition keen must needs explore
Whatever in my dwelling hath a door,
Whatever is behind a curtain hid,
Or lurks, a rich enigma, 'neath a lid.
So soon is the supreme desire confessed,
To probe the unknown! So soon begins the
quest,
That never ends until asunder fall
The locks and bolts of the Last Door of All.

1915

SUMMER'S OVERTHROW

SUMMER is fallen, is conquered, her greatness
ravished away.

We saw her broken with tempest on cliffs of the
Irish shore ;

We saw her flee like the wraith of a monstrous
rose, before

The airy invisible hunters that hunted her night
and day.

And once we believed them frustrate, believed
them reft of their prey,

For she suddenly flashed anew into violent
splendour, defied

The yelling pack of the storm, and turned, and
held them at bay.

In superb despair she faced them, she towered
like June once more,—

Then, sinking, shook on the world her golden
ruins, and died.

1911

NATURE'S WAY

“**F**AULTILY faultless” may be ill—
“Carefully careless” is worse still.
I bought of late a book of rhyme—
One long, fierce flout at tune and time ;
Ragged and jagged by intent,
As if each line were earthquake-rent ;
Leagues on seismic leagues of it,
Not unheroically writ,
By one of whom I had been told
That he, in scorn of canons old,
Pedantic laws effete and dead,
Went fearless to the pure well-head
Of song’s most ancient legislature—
Art’s uncorrupted mother, Nature.

Nature ! whose lapidary seas
Labour a pebble without ease,
Till they unto perfection bring
That miracle of polishing ;
Who never negligently yet
Fashioned an April violet,
Nor would forgive, did June disclose
Unceremoniously the rose ;
Who makes the toadstool in the grass
The carven ivory surpass,

NATURE'S WAY

So guiltless of a fault or slip
Is its victorious workmanship ;
Who suffers us pure Form to see
In a dead leaf's anatomy ;
And pondering long where greenly sleep
The unravished secrets of the deep,
Bids the all-courted pearl express
Her final thoughts on flawlessness ;
But visibly aches when doomed to bring
Some inchoate amorphous thing
Into a world her curious wit
Would fain have shaped all-exquisite
As the acorn cup's simplicity,
Or the Moon's patience with the sea,
Or the superb, the golden grief
Of each October for each leaf,
Phrased in a rhetoric that excels
Isaiah's and Ezekiel's.

1914

THOMAS HOOD

NO courtier this, and nought to courts he
 owed,
 Fawned not on thrones, hymned not the
 great and callous,
Yet, in one strain, that few remember, showed
 He had the password to King Oberon's palace.

And seeing a London seamstress's grey fate,
 He of a human heartstring made a thread,
And stitched him such a royal robe of state
 That Eastern Kings are poorer habited.

He saw wan Woman toil with famished eyes ;
 He saw her bound, and strove to sing her
 free.
He saw her fall'n ; and wrote " The Bridge of
 Sighs " ;
And on it crossed to immortality.

1915

THE THREE GIVERS

ENGLAND gave me sun and storm,
The food whereon my spirit throve ;
America gave me hand-grasps warm,
And Ireland gave me her I love.

Heirs of unequal wealth they are,
These lands of fame, these givers three ;
And it was the poorest one by far,
That gave the richest gift to me.

1912

BAFFLED DEITY

GOD hath His failures, nowise few. Behind
His mighty dreams the oft-foiled Dreamer
lurks,
The aroma of perfection round His mind
Reaching not half His works ;
And thus doth the Idealist of the Spheres,
The Great Arch-Visionary, at moments wear
Delight that seems first cousin to despair
On His lone countenance void of mirth and
tears !
For He is everywhere
The Eternal Master planning without cease
The Eternal Masterpiece—
Alas, impossibly fair.

1923

HATE

[To certain foreign traducers of England]

SIRS, if the truth must needs be told,
We love not you that rail and scold ;
And yet, my masters, you may wait
Till the Greek Calends for our hate.

No spendthrifts of our hate are we ;
Our hate is used with husbandry.
We hold our hate too choice a thing
For light and careless lavishing.

We cannot, dare not, make it cheap !
For holy uses will we keep
A thing so pure, a thing so great
As Heaven's benignant gift of hate.

Is there no ancient, sceptred Wrong ?
No torturing Power, endured too long ?
Yea ; and for these our hatred shall
Be cloistered and kept virginal.

1909

THE HUSBANDMAN OF HEAVEN

[Lines written near the burial-place of Burns]

POET, whose very dust, here shed,
Is as the quick among the dead,
Where revels thy carousing soul?
What Hebe fills what mighty bowl,
Mantling with what immortal drink?

* * * * *

Nay, great and blissful one! I think
That, taught by Time himself to flee
The taverns of Eternity,
Amid yon constellations thou
Drivest all night the heavenly Plough,
Wooing with song some sky-nymph fair
Who sits in Cassiopeia's Chair,
Or half unravels on her knees
That tangled net, the Pleiades,
Or, at thy over amorous strain
Bridling with wrath she needs must feign,
Flits to a region pale and gray,
Shimmers through nebula away,
But wandering back, with starlike tears
Yields to the Ploughman of the Spheres.

1914

TO A GOVERNMENT

YES, we are mighty : yet such things have been,
As the imperceptible exit of proud Power,
When in a Nation whose watch hath seen
Lax guardship of her dower.

Lords of Unthrift, it is of little use
To caulk and solder tiny leaks to-day,
If, in vast torrent, through your open sluice,
Treasure be drained away.

War, with her secret burrow in ocean's breast,
And hellish ambush in the heavenly air—
War found you wise : and is fell Peace the test
Your wisdom least can bear ?

Look,—the sweet truant, beloved Prosperity,
To happier lands returning, shuns these shores,
Where, daily engulfed as in some hungry sea,
Million on million pours.

Lock, lock the floodgates. Lag not now ; for when
The leaders halt and hover, Fate makes haste !
And loftiest, noblest wasters may be then
Cast rudely forth as waste.

AN IDEAL PASSION

NOT she, the England I behold,
My mistress is ; nor yet
The England beautiful of old,
Whom Englishmen forget.

The England of my heart is she,
Long hoped and long deferred,
That ever promises to be,
And ever breaks her word.

1903

ODE ON
THE DAY OF THE CORONATION
OF KING EDWARD VII

I

SIRE, we have looked on many and mighty
things

In these eight hundred summers of renown
Since the Gold Dragon of the Wessex Kings
On Hastings field went down ;
And slowly in the ambience of this crown
Have many crowns been gathered, till, to-day,
How many peoples crown thee, who shall say ?
Time, and the ocean, and some fostering star,
In high cabal have made us what we are,
Who stretch one hand to Huron's bearded pines,
And one on Kashmir's snowy shoulder lay,
And round the streaming of whose raiment
shines

The iris of the Australasian spray.
For waters have connived at our designs,
And winds have plotted with us—and behold,
Kingdom in kingdom, sway in oversight,
Dominion fold in fold :
Like to that immemorial regal stone
Thy namesake from the northland reft away,
Symbol of sovereignty and spoil of fray,

ODE ON CORONATION OF EDWARD VII

And closed in England's throne.
So wide of girth this little cirque of gold,
So great we are, and old.
Proud from the ages are we come, O King ;
Proudly, as fits a nation that hath now
So many dawns and sunsets on her brow,
This duteous heart we bring.

II

The kings thy far forerunners ; he that came
And smote us into greatness ; he whose fame,
In dark armipotence and ivied pride,
Towers above Conway's tide,
And where Carnarvon ponders on the sea ;
He, that adventurous name,
Who left at Agincourt the knightly head
Of France and all its charging plumes o'erthrown,
But hath with royal-hearted chivalry
In Shakespeare's conquests merged at last his
own ;
And she, a queen, yet fashioned king-like, she
Before whose prows, before whose tempests,
fled
Spain on the ruining night precipitately ;
And that worn face, in camps and councils
bred,
The guest who brought us law and liberty
Raised well-nigh from the dead ;
Yea, she herself, in whose immediate stead
Thou standest, in the shadow of her soul ;
All these, O King, from their seclusion dread,
And guarded palace of eternity,

ODE ON CORONATION OF EDWARD VII

Mix in thy pageant with phantasmal tread,
Hear the long waves of acclamation roll,
And with yet mightier silence marshal thee
To the awful throne thou hast inherited.

III

Lo, at the Earth's high feast, ere Autumn bring
His afterthoughts on greatness to her ear,
And with monitions of mortality
Perturb the revelling year,
Thou goest forth and art anointed King.
Nature disdains not braveries : why should we
The sombre foil to all her splendours be ?
Let London rustle with rich apparelling,
And all the ways, with festal faces lined,
Casement and coign and fluttering balcony,
Wave welcome on the wind.
Now the loud land flames with imperial gear,
And life itself, so late in hues austere
And the cold reign of iron custom bound,
Puts off its gray subjection, and is here
One moment throned and crowned.
Now the long glories prance and triumph by :
And now the pomps have passed, and we
depart
Each to the peace or strife of his own heart :
And now the day whose bosom was so high
Sinks billowing down : and twilight sorceries
change
Into remote and strange
What is most known and nigh :
And changelessly the river sends his sigh

ODE ON CORONATION OF EDWARD VII

Down leagues of hope and fear, and pride and
shame,
And life and death ; dim-journeying passionless
To where broad estuary and beaconing ness
Look toward the outlands whence our fathers
came.

And high on Druid mountains hath the sun
Flamed valediction, as the last lights died
Beyond that fatal wave, that from our side
Sunders the lovely and the lonely Bride
Whom we have wedded but have never won.

IV

And night falls on an isle whose vassal seas
Remember not her prone regalities,
So withered from belief, so far and faint,
In such abjection before Time they lie,
Kingdoms and thrones forgotten of the sky.
Deira with her sea-face to the morn,
And Cumbria sunset-gazing ; moist Dyvnaint,
A realm of coombs and tors ; old greatnesses
From Dee to Severn, where the bards were
born

Whose songs are in the wind by Idris' chair,
Whose lips won battles ; and seats of puissance
where,

With long grope of his desultory hand,
The ocean, prying deep into the land,
By Morven and the legends of wild Lorn,
Repents him, lost about Lochiel : all these
Have been, and 'stablished on their dust we stand ;
Thy England ; with the northern sister fair,

ODE ON CORONATION OF EDWARD VII

That hath the heath-bells in her blowing hair ;
And the dark mountain maid
That dreams for ever in the wizard shade,
Hymning her heroes there.

v

O doom of overlordships ! to decay
First at the heart, the eye scarce dimmed at all ;
Or perish of much cumber and array,
The burdening robe of empire, and its pall ;
Or, of voluptuous hours the wanton prey,
Die of the poisons that most sweetly slay ;
Or, from insensate height,
With prodigies, with light
Of trailing angers on the monstrous night,
Magnificently fall.
Far off from her that bore us be such fate,
And vain against her gate
Its knocking. But by chinks and crannies,
Death,
Forbid the doorways, oft-times entereth.
Let her drink deep of discontent, and sow
Abroad the troubling knowledge. Let her show
Whence glories come, and wherefore glories go,
And what indeed are glories, unto these
'Twixt labour and the rest that is not ease
Made blank and darksome ; who have hardly
heard
Sound of her loftiest names, or any word
Of all that hath in gold been said and sung,
Since him of April heart and morning tongue,
Her ageless singing-bird.

ODE ON CORONATION OF EDWARD VII

For now the day is unto them that know,
And not henceforth she stumbles on the prize ;
And yonder march the nations full of eyes.
Already is doom a-spinning, if unstirred
In leisure of ancient pathways she lose touch
Of the hour, and overmuch
Recline upon achievement, and be slow
To take the world arriving, and forget
How perilous are the stature and port that so
Invite the arrows, how unslumbering all
The hates that watch and crawl.
Nor must she, like the others, yield up yet
The generous dreams ! but rather live to be
Saluted in the hearts of men as she
Of high and singular election, set
Benignant on the sea ;
That greatly loving freedom loved to free,
And was herself the bridal and embrace
Of strength and conquering grace.

1902

OUR EASTERN TREASURE

SOMEWHERE in cobwebb'd corners I can
hear

A thin voice pipingly revived of late,
Which saith our India is a cumbrous weight,
An idle decoration bought too dear.
The wiser world contemns not gorgeous gear,
And knows that by a just and happy fate
The sense of greatness keeps a nation great,
Telling her when to fear not—when to fear!
It may be that if hands of greed could steal
From England's grasp the envied orient prize,
This tide of gold would flood her still, as now;
But were she the same England, made to feel
A brightness gone from those far-watching eyes,
A splendour blotted from that far-watched
brow?

April, 1885

HOME-ROOTEDNESS

I CANNOT boast myself cosmopolite ;
I own to "insularity," although
'Tis fall'n from fashion, as full well I know.
For somehow, being a plain and simple wight,
I am skin-deep a child of the new light,
But chiefly am mere Englishman below,
Of island-fostering ; and can hate a foe,
And trust my kin before the Muscovite.
Whom shall I trust if not my kin ? And whom
Account so near in natural bonds as these
Born of my mother England's mighty womb,
Nursed on my mother England's mighty knees,
And lull'd as I was lull'd in glory and gloom
With cradle-song of her protecting seas ?

April, 1885

GLADSTONE, 1885

[During the Soudanese War]

A SKILFUL leech, so long as we were whole :
Who scann'd the nation's every outward
part
But ah ! misheard the beating of its heart.
Sire of huge sorrows, yet erect of soul.
Swift rider with calamity for goal,
Who, overtaking his equestrian art,
Unstall'd a steed full willing for the start,
But wondrous hard to curb or to control.
Sometimes we thought he led the people forth :
Anon he seemed to follow where they flew :
Lord of the golden tongue and smiting eyes ;
Great out of season and untimely wise :
A man whose virtue, genius, grandeur, worth,
Wrought deadlier ill than ages can undo.

1885

GLADSTONE, 1896

[During the Armenian Massacres]

SPEAK once again, with that great note of
thine,
Hero withdrawn from Senates and their sound
Unto thy home by Cambria's northern bound,—
Speak once again, and wake a world supine.
Not always, not in all things, was it mine
To follow where thou led'st: but who hath
found
Another man so shod with fire, so crowned
With thunder, and so armed with wrath divine?
Lift up thy voice once more! The nation's
heart
Is cold as Anatolia's mountain snows.
O, from these alien paths of dire repose
Call back thy England, ere thou too depart—
Ere, on some secret mission, thou too start
With silent footsteps, whither no man knows.

1896

THE ENGLISH DEAD

[In the Soudanese campaign]

GIVE honour to our heroes fall'n, how ill
Soe'er the cause, that under a baleful sky
Bade them go forth. Honour to him, whom high
In place, more high in hope, 'twas fate's harsh
will

With tedious pain unsplendidly to kill.
Honour to him, doom'd splendidly to die,
Child of the city whose foster-child am I,
Who hotly leading up the ensanguin'd hill
His charging thousand, fell without a word;
Fell, but shall fall not from our memory.
Also for them let honour's voice be heard
Who nameless sleep, while dull Time covereth
With no illustrious shade of laurel tree,
But with the poppy alone, their deeds and death.

1885

RESTORED ALLEGIANCE

I ALSO, though with hauntings of remorse,
Railed at our England, bidding her give heed
To better counsellors than the guides who lead
Power unbeloved, on yonder cold, proud course !
Yet . . . when I look abroad, and track the
 source,
More selfish far, of other nations' deed,
And mark their tortuous craft, their jealous greed,
Their serpent-wisdom or mere soulless force,
Homeward returns my vagrant fealty,
Crying, " O England, shouldst thou one day fall,
Shatter'd in ruins by some Titan foe,
Justice were thenceforth weaker throughout all
The earth, and Truth less passionately free,
And God the poorer for thine overthrow."

1885

O LIKE A QUEEN

O LIKE a queen's her happy tread,
And like a queen's her golden head!
But O, at last, when all is said,
Her woman's heart for me!

We wandered where the river gleamed
'Neath oaks that mused and pines that dreamed.
A wild thing of the woods she seemed,
So proud, and pure, and free!

All heaven drew nigh to hear her sing,
When from her lips her soul took wing;
The oaks forgot their pondering,
The pines their reverie.

And O, her happy queenly tread,
And O, her queenly golden head!
But O, her heart, when all is said,
Her woman's heart for me!

1894

STORM IN MID-ATLANTIC

MANY have sung of the terrors of Storm:
I will make me a song of its beauty,
its graces of hue and form :
A song of the loveliness gotten of Power,
Born of Rage in her blackest hour,
When never a wave repeats another,
But each is unlike his own twin brother,
Each is himself from base to crown,
Himself alone as he clammers up,
Himself alone as he crashes down ;—
When the whole sky drinks of the sea's mad cup,
And the ship is thrilled to her quivering core,
But amidst her pitching, amidst her rolling,
Amidst the clangour and boom and roar,
Is a Spirit of Beauty all-controlling !
For here in the thick of the blinding weather
The great waves gather themselves together,
Shake out their creases, compose their folds,
As if each one knew that an eye beholds.
And look ! there rises a shape of wonder,
A moving menace, a mount of gloom,
But the moment ere he breaks asunder
His forehead flames into sudden bloom,
A burning rapture of nameless green,
That never on earth or in heaven was seen,

STORM IN MID-ATLANTIC

Never but where the midmost ocean
Greets and embraces the tempest in primal
divine emotion.

And down in a vale of the sea, between
Two roaring hills, is a wide smooth space,
Where the foam that blanches the ocean's face
Is woven in likeness of filmiest lace,
Delicate, intricate, fairy-fine,
Wrought by the master of pure design,
Storm, the matchless artist, lord of colour and
line.

1910

DAWN ON THE HEADLAND

DAWN—and a magical stillness : on earth,
quiescence profound ;
On the waters a vast Content, as of hunger
appeased and stayed ;
In the heavens a silence that seems not mere
privation of sound,
But a thing with form and body, a thing to
be touched and weighed !

Yet I know that I dwell in the midst of the roar
of the cosmic wheel,
In the hot collision of Forces, and clangour
of boundless Strife,
Mid the sound of the speed of the worlds,—
the rushing worlds,—and the peal
Of the thunder of Life.

1910

THE STORMS AND THE HAVENS

YOUR eyes were pining southward, and you
said, "The lands are yonder
That can woo me with sweet fierceness o'er
the interloping sea."

But I answered, "Oh, I care not whether south
or north we wander,
For the world is lovely everywhere if roam'd
through with thee."

We lingered by the waters as they rose and
subsided ;

We watched the plummy children of the foam
and the spray ;

We saw the massing clouds that in a moody
silence glided ;

We heard the tempest peal, amid the ruins
of the day.

And the Ocean to this land of ours a wild kiss
was throwing,

From the lips that ever babble of the Far
and Unknown ;

And the dream-tides were lapping, and the
dream-winds blowing,

In the harbours that we voyage to with
dream-sails alone.

A HUMBLE ENTREATY

I DO not ask to have my fill
Of wine, or love, or fame.
I do not, for a little ill,
Against the gods exclaim.

One boon, of Fortune I implore,
With one petition kneel :
*At least caress me not, before
Thou break me on thy wheel.*

1894

THE CATHEDRAL MUSIC

I ENTERED a dim minster, where
Aisles of praise and towers of prayer
Fenced me round from all the strife
Of this illegible, blurred life ;
And I put from me, one by one,
Riddles that bemuse the Sun,
And deep into oblivion hurled
The undecipherable world.

And through the rich and jewelled gloom
That rubied some crusader's tomb,
There rose and rolled a golden wave :
Surged reverberant down the nave :
Ravishingly, with violence sweet,
Stormed the earth from 'neath my feet :
Swept me as a leaf abroad
In great tides of billowing laud :
And left me, amid regions far,
Desolate—cast upon a star.

1915

THE CHURCHYARD IN THE WOLD

I WANDERED far in the wold,
And after the heat and glare
I came at eve to a churchyard old :
The yew-trees seemed at prayer.

And around me was dust in dust ;
And the fleeting light ; and Repose ;
And the infinite pathos of human trust
In a God whom no man knows.

1906

THE FIRST SKYLARK OF SPRING

TWO worlds hast thou to dwell in, Sweet,—
The virginal untroubled sky,
And this vext region at my feet.—
Alas, but one have I!

To all my songs there clings the shade,
The dulling shade, of mundane care.
They amid mortal mists are made—
Thine in immortal air.

My heart is dashed with griefs and fears ;
My song comes fluttering, and is gone.
O high above the home of tears,
Eternal Joy, sing on!

Not loftiest bard, of mightiest mind,
Shall ever chant a note so pure,
Till he can cast this earth behind
And breathe in heaven secure.

We sing of Life, with stormy breath
That shakes the lute's distempered string :
We sing of Love, and loveless Death
Takes up the song we sing.

THE FIRST SKYLARK OF SPRING

And born in toils of Fate's control,
Insurgent from the womb, we strive
With proud unmanumitted soul
To burst the golden gyve.

Thy spirit knows nor bounds nor bars ;
On thee no shreds of thraldom hang :
Not more enlarged, the morning stars
Their great Te Deum sang.

But I am fettered to the sod,
And but forget my bonds an hour ;
In amplitude of dreams a god,
A slave in dearth of power.

And fruitless knowledge clouds my soul,
And fretful ignorance irks it more.
Thou sing'st as if thou knew'st the whole,
And lightly held'st thy lore !

Somewhat as thou, Man once could sing,
In porches of the lucent morn,
Ere he had felt his lack of wing,
Or cursed his iron bourn.

The springtime bubbled in his throat,
The sweet sky seemed not far above,
And young and lovesome came the note ;—
Ah, thine is Youth and Love !

Thou sing'st of what he knew of old,
And dreamlike from afar recalls ;
In flashes of forgotten gold
An orient glory falls.

THE FIRST SKYLARK OF SPRING

And as he listens, one by one
Life's utmost splendours blaze more nigh ;
Less inaccessible the sun,
Less alien grows the sky.

For thou art native to the spheres,
And of the courts of heaven art free,
And carriest to his temporal ears
News from eternity ;

And lead'st him to the dizzy verge,
And lur'st him o'er the dazzling line,
Where mortal and immortal merge,
And human dies divine.

1894

THE EARTH'S DESIRE

WHEN a sigh as of abdication is wrung
from lordly things
By the rumour of crumbling pride that the
eve of autumn brings ;

When the troubled splendours come, and the
green perfections go,
Amid flitting of vagabond tempest irresolute
to and fro ;

“Ask, ask thou a boon,” say the Heavens to
the wistful Earth ; but in vain
She asks for the bliss of the Rose, and the pomp
of the Nightingale's pain.

1917.

IN DREAMS

IN dreams the exile cometh home ;
In dreams the lost is found ;
In dreams the fettered slave may roam
The world around.

In dreams thou may'st a monarch be,
And sit upon a throne.
Give thanks, that this befalleth thee
In dreams alone.

1906

THE BALLAD OF SEMMERWATER

[North-Country Legend]

DEEP asleep, deep asleep,
Deep asleep it lies,
The still lake of Semmerwater
Under the still skies.

And many a fathom, many a fathom,
Many a fathom below,
In a king's tower and a queen's bower
The fishes come and go.

Once there stood by Semmerwater
A mickle town and tall;
King's tower and queen's bower,
And the wakeman on the wall.

Came a beggar halt and sore:
"I faint for lack of bread."
King's tower and queen's bower
Cast him forth unfed.

He knocked at the door of the herdman's cot,
The herdman's cot in the dale.
They gave him of their oatcake,
They gave him of their ale.

THE BALLAD OF SEMMERWATER

He has cursed aloud that city proud,
He has cursed it in its pride ;
He has cursed it into Semmerwater
Down the brant hillside ;
He has cursed it into Semmerwater,
There to bide.

King's tower and queen's bower,
And a mickle town and tall ;
By glimmer of scale and gleam of fin,
Folk have seen them all.
King's tower and queen's bower,
And weed and reed in the gloom ;
And a lost city in Semmerwater,
Deep asleep till Doom.

1903

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY

WITHIN a narrow span of time,
Three princes of the realm of rhyme,
At height of youth or manhood's prime
From earth took wing,
To join the fellowship sublime
Who, dead, yet sing.

He, first, his earliest wreath who wove
Of laurel grown in Latmian grove,
Conquered by pain and hapless love
Found calmer home,
Roofed by the heaven that glows above
Eternal Rome.

A fierier soul, its own fierce prey,
And cumbered more with mortal clay,
At Missolonghi flamed away,
And left the air
Reverberating to this day
Its loud despair.

Alike remote from Byron's scorn
And Keats's magic as of morn
Bursting for ever newly-born
On forests old,
To wake a hoary world forlorn
With touch of gold,

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY

Shelley, the cloud-begot, who grew
Nourished on starbeams, air, and dew,
Into that Essence whence he drew
 His life and lyre
Was fittingly resolved anew
 Through wave and fire.

And it was strangely, wildly meet,
That he, who brooked not Time's slow feet,
With passage thus abrupt and fleet
 Should hurry hence,
Eager the Great Perhaps to greet
 With Why? and Whence?

Impatient of the world's fixed way,
He ne'er could suffer God's delay,
But all the future in a day
 Would build divine,
And the whole past in ruins lay,
 An emptied shrine.

Vain vision! but the glow, the fire,
The passion of benign desire,
These peradventure lift him higher
 Than many a soul
That mounts a million paces nigher
 Its meaner goal.

And power is his, if naught besides,
In that thin ether where he rides,
Above the roar of human tides
 To ascend afar,
Lost in a storm of light that hides
 His dizzy ear.

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY

Below, the unhasting world toils on,
And here and there are victories won,
Some dragon slain, some justice done,
 While, 'mid the skies,
A meteor rushing on the sun,
 He flares and dies.

But, as he cleaves yon ether clear,
Notes from the unattempted sphere
He scatters to the far-off ear
 Of Earth's dim throng.
Nay, from the zenith he flings sheer
 His torrent of song.

In other shapes than he forecast,
Fate moulds the Morrow. His fierce blast,—
His wild assault upon the Past,—
 These things are vain.
Brief is Revolt, but born to last
 Was the arrowy strain,

That seems the wandering voices blent
Of every virgin element ;
A sound from azure spaces sent ;
 An airy call
From the Uranian firmament
 O'erdoming all.

And in this world of worldlings, where
Souls rust in apathy, and ne'er
A great emotion skakes the air,
 And life flags tame,
And rare is noble impulse, rare
 The impassioned aim,

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY

'Tis no mean fortune to have heard
A singer who, if errors blurred
His sight, had yet a spirit stirred
 By vast desire,
And ardour fledging the swift word
 With plumes of fire.

A creature of impetuous breath,
Our torpor deadlier than death
He knew not; whatsoe'er he saith
 Flashes with life:
He spurreth men, he quickeneth
 To splendid strife.

And in his gusts of song he brings
Wild odours shaken from strange wings,
And carries secret whisperings
 From far lips blown,
While all the rapturous heart of things
 Throbs through his own,—

His own that from the burning pyre
One who had loved his wind-swept lyre
Out of the sharp teeth of the fire
 Unmolten drew,
Beside the sea that in her ire
 Smote him and slew.

1892

THE GLIMPSE

JUST for an hour you crossed my life's dull track,
Put my ignobler dreams to sudden shame,
Went your bright way, and left me to fall back
On my own world of poorer deed and aim ;

To fall back on my meaner world, and feel
Like one who, dwelling 'mid some smoke-
dimmed town,—
In a brief pause of labour's sullen wheel,—
'Scaped from the street's dead dust and
factory's frown,—

In stainless daylight saw the pure seas roll,
Saw mountains pillaring the perfect sky :
Then journeyed home, to carry in his soul
The torment of the difference till he die.

1888

THE RAVEN'S SHADOW

SEABIRD, elemental sprite,
Moulded of the sun and spray—
Raven, dreary flake of night
Drifting in the eye of day—
Over crag and moor and mead,
Whither, whither would ye speed?

“Me to eastward mine affairs—
Things of weight and moment—call.”
“Me to westward many cares
Summon—mighty matters all.”
I, where land and sea contest,
Watch you eastward, watch you west,

Till, in snares of fancy caught,
Mystically changed ye seem,
And the bird becomes a thought,
And the thought becomes a dream,
And the dream, outspread on high,
Lords it o'er the abject sky.

Surely I have known before
Phantoms of the shapes ye be—
Haunters of another shore
'Leaguered by another sea.
There my wanderings night and morn
Reconcile me to the bourn.

THE RAVEN'S SHADOW

There the bird of happy wings
 Wafts the ocean-news I crave ;
Rumours of an isle he brings,
 Gemlike on the golden wave.
But the baleful beak and plume
Scatter immelodious gloom.

Though the flowers be faultless made,
 Perfectly to live and die—
Though the cloudlets bloom and fade
 Flow'rlike in a meadowy sky—
Where this raven roams forlorn,
Veins of midnight flaw the morn.

He not less will croak and croak—
 He that yonder caws and caws—
Till the starry dance be broke,
 Till the sphery pæan pause,
And the universal chime
Falter out of tune and time.

Coils the labyrinthine sea,
 Duteous to the lunar will,
But some discord stealthily
 Vexes the world-ditty still,
And the bird that caws and caws
Clasps creation with his claws.

1884

TELL ME NOT NOW

TELL me not now, if love for love
Thou canst return,—
Now while around us and above
Day's flambeaux burn.
Not in clear noon, with speech as clear,
Thy heart avow,
For every gossip wind to hear;
Tell me not now!

Tell me not now the tidings sweet,
The news divine;
A little longer at thy feet
Leave me to pine.
I would not have the gadding bird
Hear from his bough;
Nay, though I famish for a word,
Tell me not now!

But when deep trances of delight
All Nature seal,
When round the world the arms of Night
Caressing steal,
When rose to dreaming rose says, "*Dear,*
Dearest,"—and when
Heaven sighs her secret in Earth's ear,
Ah, tell me then!

ENGLAND AND HER COLONIES

SHE stands a thousand-wintered tree,
By countless morns impearled ;
Her broad roots coil beneath the sea,
Her branches sweep the world ;
Her seeds, by careless winds conveyed,
Clothe the remotest strand
With forests from her scatterings made,
New nations fostered in her shade,
And linking land with land.

O ye by wandering tempest sown
'Neath every alien star,
Forget not whence the breath was blown
That wafted you afar !
For ye are still her ancient seed
On younger soil let fall—
Children of Britain's island-breed,
To whom the Mother in her need
Perchance may one day call.

1890

ELUSION

WHERE shall I find thee, Joy? by what
great marge
With the strong seas exulting? on what peaks
Rapt? or astray within what forest bourn,
Among the tangled and dim silences,
Thy light hands parting the resilient boughs?

Hast thou no answer? . . . Nay, except thou
spring
In mine own heart uncalled, though I go forth
And tease the waves for news of thee, and make
Importunate inquisition of the woods
If thou didst pass that way, I shall but find
The brief print of thy footfall on sere leaves
Or the salt brink, and woo thy touch in vain.

1897

THE FOILED PURSUERS

O CURST with wide desires and spacious
dreams,
Too cunningly do ye accumulate
Appliances and means of Happiness
E'er to be happy! Lavish hosts, ye make
Elaborate preparation to receive
A shy and simple guest, who, warned of all
The ceremony and circumstance with which
Ye mean to entertain her, will not come.

1889

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

I

ENGLAND my mother,
Wardress of waters,
Builder of peoples,
Maker of men,—

Hast thou yet leisure
Left for the muses?
Heed'st thou the songsmith
Forging the rhyme?

Deafened with tumults,
How canst thou harken?
Strident is faction,
Demos is loud.

Lazarus, hungry,
Menaces Dives;
Labour the giant
Chafes in his hold.

Yet do the songsmiths
Quit not their forges;
Still on life's anvil
Forge they the rhyme.

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

Still the rapt faces
Glow from the furnace :
Breath of the smithy
 Scorches their brows.

Yea, and thou hear'st them ?
So shall the hammers
Fashion not vainly
 Verses of gold.

II

Lo, with the ancient
Roots of man's nature,
Twines the eternal
 Passion of song.

Ever Love fans it,
Ever Life feeds it ;
Time cannot age it,
 Death cannot slay.

Deep in the world-heart
Stand its foundations,
Tangled with all things,
 Twin-made with all.

Nay, what is Nature's
Self, but an endless
Strife toward music,
 Euphony, rhyme ?

Trees in their blooming,
Tides in their flowing,
Stars in their circling,
 Tremble with song.

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

God on His throne is
Eldest of poets :
Unto His measures
 Moveth the Whole.

III

Therefore deride not
Speech of the muses,
England my mother,
 Maker of men.

Nations are mortal,
Fragile is greatness ;
Fortune may fly thee,
 Song shall not fly.

Song the all-girdling,
Song cannot perish :
Men shall make music,
 Man shall give ear.

Not while the choric
Chant of creation
Floweth from all things,
 Poured without pause,

Cease we to echo
Faintly the descant
Whereto for ever
 Dances the world.

ENGLAND MY MOTHER

IV

So let the songsmith
Proffer his rhyme-gift,
England my mother,
Maker of men.

Grey grows thy count'nance,
Full of the ages ;
Time on thy forehead
Sits like a dream :

Song is the potion
All things renewing,
Youth's one elixir,
Fountain of morn.

Thou, at the world-loom
Weaving thy future,
Fitly may'st temper
Toil with delight.

Deemest thou, only
Labour is earnest ?
Grave is all beauty,
Sacred all joy.

Song is no bauble—
Slight not the songsmith,
England my mother,
Maker of men.

APRIL

APRIL, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter ;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears !
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears,
April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter,
But, the moment after,
Weep thy golden tears !

1896

AUTUMN

THOU burden of all songs the earth hath
 sung,
 Thou retrospect in Time's reverted eyes,
 Thou metaphor of everything that dies,
That dies ill-starred, or dies beloved and young
 And therefore blest and wise,—
O be less beautiful, or be less brief,
 Thou tragic splendour, strange, and full of
 fear!
In vain her pageant shall the Summer rear?
At thy mute signal, leaf by golden leaf,
 Crumbles the gorgeous year.

Ah, ghostly as remembered mirth, the tale
 Of Summer's bloom, the legend of the Spring!
 And thou, too, flutterest an impatient wing,
Thou presence yet more fugitive and frail,
 Thou most unbodied thing,
Whose very being is thy going hence,
 And passage and departure all thy theme;
 Whose life doth still a splendid dying seem,
And thou at height of thy magnificence
 A figment and a dream.

AUTUMN

Stilled is the virgin rapture that was June,
And cold is August's panting heart of fire ;
And in the storm-dismantled forest-choir
For thine own elegy thy winds attune
 Their wild and wizard lyre :
And poignant grows the charm of thy decay,
 The pathos of thy beauty, and the sting,
 Thou parable of greatness vanishing !
For me, thy woods of gold and skies of grey
 With speech fantastic ring.

For me, to dreams resigned, there come and go,
 'Twixt mountains draped and hooded night
 and morn,
 Elusive notes in wandering wafture borne,
From undiscoverable lips that blow
 An immaterial horn ;
And spectral seem thy winter-boding trees,
 Thy ruinous bowers and drifted foliage wet—
 O Past and Future in sad bridal met,
O voice of everything that perishes,
 And soul of all regret !

1890

A RIDDLE OF THE THAMES

AT windows that from Westminster
Look southward to the Lollard's Tower,
She sat, my lovely friend. A blur
Of gilded mist,—('twas morn's first hour,)—
Made vague the world: and in the gleam
Shivered the half-awakened stream.

Through tinted vapour looming large,
Ambiguous shapes obscurely rode.
She gazed where many a laden barge
Like some dim-moving saurian showed.
And 'midst them, lo! two swans appeared,
And o'er the waters proudly steered.

Two stately swans! What did they there?
Whence came they? Whither would they go?
Think of them,—things so faultless fair,—
'Mid the black shipping down below!
On, through the rose and gold, they passed,
And melted in the morn at last.

Ah, can it be, that they had come,
Where Thames in sullied glory flows,
Fugitive rebels, tired of some
Secluded lake's ornate repose,
Eager to taste the life that pours
Its muddier wave 'twixt mightier shores?

A RIDDLE OF THE THAMES

We ne'er shall know : our wonderment
No barren certitude shall mar.
They left behind them, as they went,
A dream than knowledge ampler far ;
And from our world they sailed away
Into some visionary day.

1894

SONG IN AN ARCHAIC MANNER

SWEETEST sweets that Time hath rifled,
Live anew on lyric tongue—
Tresses with which Paris trifled,
Lips to Antony's that clung.
These surrender not their rose,
Nor their golden puissance those.

Vain the envious loam that covers
Her of Egypt, her of Troy :
Helen's, Cleopatra's lovers
Still desire them, still enjoy.
Fate but stole what Song restored :
Vain the aspic, vain the cord.

Idly clanged the sullen portal,
Idly the sepulchral door :
Fame the mighty, Love the immortal,
These than foolish dust are more :
Nor may captive Death refuse
Homage to the conquering Muse.

1894

A GOLDEN HOUR

A BECKONING spirit of gladness seemed
afloat,

That lightly danced in laughing air before us :
The earth was all in tune, and you a note
Of Nature's happy chorus.

'Twas like a vernal morn, yet overhead
The leafless boughs across the lane were
knitting :
The ghost of some forgotten Spring, we said,
O'er Winter's world comes flitting.

Or was it Spring herself, that, gone astray,
Across the unsentried frontier chose to tarry ?
Or just a bold outrider of the May,
Or April-emissary ?

The apparition faded on the air,
Capricious and incalculable comer.—
Wilt thou too pass, and leave my chill days bare,
And fall'n my phantom Summer ?

1892

LINES WRITTEN IN RICHMOND
PARK

FAIR one, were you but here !
The Autumn flames away,
And pensive in the antlered shade I stray.
The Autumn flames away, his end is near.
I linger where deposed and fall'n he lies,
Prankt in his last poor tattered braveries,
And think what brightness would enhance the
Day,
Were *you*—were you but here !
Though hushed the woodlands, though sedate
the skies,
Though dank the leaves and sere,
The storèd sunlight in your hair and eyes
Would vernalise
November, and renew the agèd year,
Fair one ! were you but here.

1894

ON A TOO PROLIFIC ESSAYIST

THE cruellest torture that a man can know,
Passing all Torquemada's racks, is said
To be the ceaseless, measured, leisured, slow
Drip-drop of water on the victim's head.

Surely it were a torment like in kind,
If in degree less maddening, to sit still
Under the leakage of this good man's mind,
The eternal trickle of this blameless quill.

1915

TO LICINIUS

[Horace paraphrased]

L ICINIUS, wouldst thou wisely steer
That barque which is thy soul,
Not always trust her without fear
Where deep-sea billows roll ;
Nor, to the sheltered beach too near,
Risk shipwreck on the shoal.

Who sees in fortune's golden mean
All his desires comprised,
Midway the cot and court between
Hath well his life devised ;
For riches, hath not envied been,
Nor, for their lack, despised.

Most rocks the pine that soars afar,
When leaves are tempest-whirled.
Direst the crash when turrets are
In dusty ruin hurled.
The thunder loveth best to scar
The white brows of the world.

The steadfast mind, that to the end
Is fortune's victor still,
Hath yet a fear, though Fate befriend,
A hope, though all seem ill.
Jove can at will the winter send,
Or call the spring at will.

TO LICINIUS

Full oft the darkest day may be
Of morrows bright the sire.
His bow not everlastingly
Apollo bends in ire.
At times the silent Muses he
Wakes with his dulcet lyre.

When stormy narrows round thee roar,
Be bold; naught else avails.
But when thy canvas swells before
Too proudly prospering gales,
For once be wise with coward's lore,
And timely reef thy sails.

1894

THE SOVEREIGN POET

HE sits above the clang and dust of Time,
With the world's secret trembling on his
lip.
He asks not converse or companionship
In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb.

The undelivered tidings in his breast
Suffer him not to rest.
He sees afar the immemorable throng,
And binds the scattered ages with a song.

The glorious riddle of his rhythmic breath,
His might, his spell, we know not what they be :
We only feel, whate'er he uttereth,
This savours not of death,
This hath a relish of eternity.

1894

LEAVETAKING

PASS, thou wild light,
Wild light on peaks that so
Grieve to let go
The day.
Lovely thy tarrying, lovely too is night :
Pass thou away.

Pass, thou wild heart,
Wild heart of youth that still
Hast half a will
To stay.
I grow too old a comrade, let us part.
Pass thou away.

1905

THE COUNSEL OF PAN

[Untraced Legend]

VENUS, cast from heaven forlorn,
Came to Pan for counsel wise.
In her hair was all the Morn :
All the Sea was in her eyes.

Brief his word was : “ Let us twain
Earth’s dominion ’twixt us part ;
I, on her cool breast to reign—
Thou, within her burning heart.”

So her secret court she holds,
Far ’neath roots of rock and tree ;
He, in vales and woods and wolds,
Piping to eternity.

1905

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

I

OLD emperor Yew, fantastic sire,
Girt with thy guard of dotard kings,—
What ages hast thou seen retire
Into the dusk of alien things?
What mighty news hath stormed thy shade,
Of armies perished, realms unmade?

Already wast thou great and wise,
And solemn with exceeding eld,
On that proud morn when England's eyes,
Wet with tempestuous joy, beheld
Round her rough coasts the thundering main
Strewn with the ruined dream of Spain.

Hardly thou count'st them long ago,
The warring faiths, the wavering land,
The reddened sky's delirious glow,
And Cranmer's scorched, uplifted hand.
Wailed not the woods their task of shame,
Doomed to provide the insensate flame?

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

Mourned not the rumouring winds, when she,
The sweet queen of a tragic hour,
Crowned with her snow-white memory
The crimson legend of the Tower?
Or when a thousand witcheries lay
Felled without ruth, at Fotheringay?

Ah, thou hast heard the iron tread
And clang of many an armoured age,
And well recall'st the famous dead,
Captains or counsellors brave or sage,
Kings that on kings their myriads hurled,
Ladies whose smile embroiled the world.

Rememberest thou the perfect knight,
The soldier, courtier, bard in one,
Sidney, that pensive Hesper-light
O'er Chivalry's departed sun?
Knew'st thou the virtue, sweetness, lore,
Whose nobly hapless name was More?

The roustering prince, that afterward
Belied his madcap youth, and proved
A greatly simple warrior lord
Such as our warrior fathers loved—
Lives he not still? for Shakespeare sings
The last of our adventurer kings.

His battles o'er, he takes his ease,
Glory put by, and sceptred toil.
Round him the carven centuries
Like forest branches arch and coil.
In that dim fane, he is not sure
Who lost or won at Azincour!

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

Roofed by the mother minster vast
That guards Augustine's rugged throne,
The darling of a knightly Past
Sleeps in his bed of sculptured stone,
And throws, o'er many a warlike tale,
The shadow of his sable mail.

The monarch who, albeit his crown
Graced an august and sapient head,
Rode roughshod to a stained renown
O'er Wallace and Llewellyn dead,
And eased at last by Solway strand
His restless heart and ruthless hand ;

Or that disastrous king on whom
Fate, like a tempest, early fell,
And the dark secret of whose doom
The Keep of Pomfret kept full well ;
Or him whose lightly leaping words
On Becket drew the dastard swords ;

Or Eleanor's undaunted son,
That, starred with idle glory, came
Bearing from 'leaguer'd Ascalon
The barren splendour of his fame,
And, vanquished by a stripling's bow,
Lies vainly great at Fontevraud ;

Or him, the footprints of whose power
Made mightier whom he overthrew ;
A man built like a mountain-tower,
A fortress of heroic thew ;
The Conqueror, in our soil who set
This stem of Kinghood flowering yet ;—

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

These, or the living fame of these,
Perhaps thou minglest—who shall say?—
With ev'n remoter memories,
And phantoms of the mistier day,
Long ere the tanner's daughter's son
From Harold's hands this realm had won.

What years are thine, not mine to guess!
The stars look youthful, thou being by;
Youthful the sun's glad-heartedness;
Witless of time the unageing sky!
And these dim-groping roots around
So deep a human Past are wound,

That, musing in thy shade, for me
The tidings scarce would strangely fall
Of pagan despots of the sea
Scaling fierce-eyed our ocean wall,
From their dark ships of norland pine,
Their surf-steeds, ridden o'er wilds of brine.

Nay, hid by thee from Summer's gaze
That seeks in vain this couch of loam,
I should behold, without amaze,
Camped on yon down the hosts of Rome,
Nor start though these lulled woodlands heard
The self-same mandatory word

As by the Cataracts of the Nile
Marshalled the legions long ago,
Or where the lakes are one blue smile
'Neath pageants of Helvetian snow,
Or 'mid the Syrian sands that lie
Sick of the day's great tearless eye,

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

Or on barbaric plains afar,
Where, under Asia's fevering ray,
The long lines of imperial war
O'er Tigris passed, and with dismay
In fanged and iron deserts found
Embattled Persia closing round,
And 'mid their eagles watched on high
The vultures gathering for a feast,
Till, from the quivers of the sky,
The gorgeous star-flight of the East
Flamed, and the bow of darkness bent
O'er Julian dying in his tent.

II

Was it the wind befooling me
With ancient echoes, as I lay?
Was it the antic fantasy
Whose elvish mockeries cheat the day?
Surely a hollow murmur stole
From wizard bough and ghostly bole:
"Who prates to me of arms and kings,
Here in these courts of old repose?
Thy babble is of transient things,
Broils, and the dust of foolish blows.
Thy sounding annals are at best
The witness of a world's unrest.
"Goodly the loud ostents to thee,
And pomps of time: to me more sweet
The vigils of Eternity,
And Silence patient at my feet;
And dreams beyond the deadening range
And dull monotonies of Change.

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

“ Often an air comes idling by
With news of cities and of men.
I hear a multitudinous sigh,
And lapse into my soul again.
Shall her great noons and sunsets be
Blurred with thine infelicity ?

“ Now from these sinews, year by year,
Strength and the lust of life depart ;
Full of mortality is here
The cavern that was once my heart !
Me, with blind arm, in season due,
Let the aerial woodman hew.

“ For not though mightiest mortals fall,
The starry chariot hangs delayed.
His axle is uncooled, nor shall
The thunder of His wheels be stayed.
A changeless pace His coursers keep,
And halt not at the wells of sleep.

“ The South shall bless, the East shall blight,
The red rose of the Dawn shall blow ;
The million-lilied stream of Night
Wide in ethereal meadows flow ;
And Autumn mourn ; and everything
Dance to the wild pipe of the Spring.

“ With oceans heedless round her feet,
And the indifferent heavens above,
Earth shall the ancient tale repeat
Of wars and tears, and death and love ;
And, wise from all the foolish Past,
Shall peradventure hail at last

THE FATHER OF THE FOREST

“ The advent of that morn divine
When nations may as forests grow,
Wherein the oaks hate not the pine,
Nor does the elm wish cedars woe,
But all, in their unlikeness, blend
Confederate to one golden end—

“ Beauty : the Vision whereunto,
In joy, with pantings, from afar,
Through sound and odour, form and hue,
And mind and clay, and worm and star—
Now touching goal, now backward hurled—
Toils the indomitable world.”

1895

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

I

BY cliff and chine, and hollow-nestling wood
Thrilled with the poignant savour of the
sea,

All in the crisp light of a wintry morn,
We walked, my friend and I, preceded still
By one whose silken and voluminous suit,
His courtly ruff, snow-pure 'mid golden tan,
His grandly feathered legs slenderly strong,
The broad and flowing billow of his breast,
His delicate ears and superfine long nose,
With that last triumph, his distinguished tail,
In their collective glory spoke his race
The flower of Collie aristocracy.
Yet, from his traits, how absent that reserve,
That stillness on a base of power, which marks,
In men and mastiffs, the selectly sprung !
For after all, his high-life attributes,
His trick of doing nothing with an air,
His *salon* manners and society smile,
Were but skin-deep, factitious, and you saw
The bustling despot of the mountain flock,
And pastoral dog-of-all-work, underlie
The fashionable modern lady's pet,—
Industrial impulses bereft of scope,

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

Duty and discipline denied an aim,
Ancestral energy and strenuousness
In graceful trifling frittered all away.
Witness the depth of his concern and zeal
About minutest issues : shall we take
This path or that?—it matters not a straw—
But just a moment unresolved we stand,
And all his personality, from ears
To tip of tail, is interrogative ;
And when from pure indifference we decide,
How he vociferates ! how he bounds ahead !
With what enthusiasm he ratifies,
Applauds, acclaims our choice 'twixt right and left,
As though some hoary problem over which
The world had puckered immemorial brows,
Were solved at last, and all life launched anew !

These and a thousand tricks and ways and
traits

I noted as of Demos at their root,
And foreign to the staid, conservative,
Came-over-with-the-Conqueror type of mind.
And then, his nature, how impressionable,
How quickly moved to Collie mirth or woe,
Elated or dejected at a word !
And how unlike your genuine Vere de Vere's
Frigid, indifferent, half-ignoring glance
At everything outside the sacred pale
Of things De Veres have sanctioned from the
Flood,
The unwearable curiosity
And universal open-mindedness
Of that all-testing, all-inquisitive nose !

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

II

So, to my friend's house, back we strolled ;
and there—
We loitering in the garden—from her post
Of purview at a window, languidly
A great Angora watched his Collieship,
And throned in monumental calm, surveyed
His effervescence, volatility,
Clamour on slight occasion, fussiness,
Herself immobile, imperturbable,
Like one whose vision seeks the Immanent
Behind these symbols and appearances,
The face within this transitory mask.
And as her eyes with indolent regard
Viewed his upbubbings of ebullient life,
She seemed the Orient Spirit incarnate, lost
In contemplation of the Western Soul !
Ev'n so, methought, the genius of the East,
Reposeful, patient, undemonstrative,
Luxurious, enigmatically sage,
Dispassionately cruel, might look down
On all the fever of the Occident ;—
The brooding mother of the unfilial world,
Recumbent on her own antiquity,
Aloof from our mutations and unrest,
Alien to our achievements and desires,
Too proud alike for protest or assent
When new thoughts thunder at her massy
door ;—
Another brain dreaming another dream,
Another heart recalling other loves ;

A STUDY IN CONTRASTS

Too grey and grave for our adventurous hopes,
For our precipitate pleasures too august,
And in still majesty, with silent tongue,
Refraining her illimitable scorn.

1893

HER THIRD BIRTHDAY

MY tiny lady, can it
Be true that you and I,
On something called a planet,
Are somewhere in the sky?

Yes—and at such a tearing
And madcap speed we've spun,
That you, with dreadful daring,
Have thrice been round the sun.

Nay, it yet more amazes,
That my far-venturing girl
Can be as fresh as daisies
After so wild a whirl!

And now 'neath western billow
The sun is put to bed,
And you, too, on your pillow
Must lay a golden head.

Ah, tears—they come so quickly,
For grief so quickly gone!
Yet joys have rained as thickly,
For you to dream upon.

THE ADJECTIVE

LOOK not too coldly or too proudly down
On this poor bondslave to a haughty
Noun!
Oft in his wallet hath he carried all
His master's wealth. Oft hath this captive
thrall,
Marching before his lord with herald's blast,
Won him salaams who else had noteless passed.

1915

THE WIZARD'S CRUX

IF I, by wondrous fate, possessed
The all-transmuting Alkahest,
Famed to resolve the World's Contents
Into their mother elements,
I then might change thee by its powers
Back to the ingredients of the flowers!
But ah, what sovereign sorcery could
Witch them again to Womanhood?

1924

THE MOSSGROWN PORCHES

WHEN, as of old in Rome's imperial
world,
Fair, conquered gods are from their temples
hurled,
And some rude, vehement Peter puts to flight
Some serene Phœbus, lord of lore and light ;
In wastes and wilds, by fount and caverned hill,
Secretly, furtively, are worshipped still,
With the sad zeal of vainly pious knees,
The ancient, the deposed divinities,
Heaven's outcasts, the great exiles of the sky,
Once mighty to do all things, save to die.

So, though in Kingdoms of the Lyre to-day
I see the new faiths push the old away—
See the hot hierophants of each strange shrine
Offer oblation to all gods but mine—
Yet, mid a revel of change, unchanged I turn
To the lorn haunts where older altars burn,
And seek, companioned by the lessening few
Whose faith is as mine own, the gods I knew ;
Nor ever doubt, that among wondering men
These deathless will in triumph come again,
As sure as the droop'd year's remounting curve,
And reign anew, when I no more shall serve.

REJUVENESCENCE

THE Day is young, the Day is sweet,
And light is her heart as the tread of her
feet.

The Day is weary, the Day is old:
She has sunk into sleep through a tempest of
gold.

Sleep, tired Day! Thou shalt rise made new,
All splendour and wonder and odour and dew.

1923

NO SURRENDER!

[Verses written at a time of Industrial Crisis]

STAND fast at last, O weary Nation,
'Gainst inward foes that plot thy fall!
Stand firm—for that way lies salvation,
And no way else at all.

Or yield—and be yet harder smitten!
Yield—and then find 'twas worse than vain!
Yield—and still yield; and in fair Britain
Let some foul Lenin reign.

Nay, yield no more, O weary Nation,
Weary, but proud and mighty still!
In thine own hands is thy salvation,
Thy Fate in thine own will.

1919



THE ENAMOURED LUTE

A SWEET lute pined in a palace,
And heard the slow years roll,
And it dreamed of the mighty musician,
Who alone drew forth its soul.

It abode mid splendour and glory,
Mid stately and gracious things,
But afar were the magic fingers,
Beloved of the magic strings.

And the great sun looked on its pining,
And the calm moon gazed on its pain,
And they left it to dream of its hero
And be wooed by the world in vain.

1923

THE VISITOR ABHORRED

UNKNOWABLE Power is o'er me—
The might of unknowable Mind;
And fathomless Time is before me,
And fathomless Time is behind.

And I sit at the Feast of Illusion
In the Palace of Baffled Quest,
Awaiting the loathed intrusion
Of the silent Unbidden Guest,

Who passes the sleeping sentry,
And leaves him to slumber on—
And makes his triumphal entry,
And casts his dart, and is gone.

1924

THE UNKNOWN GOD

WHEN, overarched by gorgeous night,
I wave my trivial self away ;
When all I was to all men's sight
Shares the erasure of the day ;
Then do I cast my cumbering load,
Then do I gain a sense of God.

Not him that with fantastic boasts
A sombre people dreamed they knew ;
The mere barbaric God of Hosts
That edged their sword and braced their thew :
A God they pitted 'gainst a swarm
Of neighbour Gods less vast of arm ;

A God like some imperious king,
Wroth, were his realm not duly awed ;
A God for ever harkening
Unto his self-commanded laud ;
A God for ever jealous grown
Of carven wood and graven stone ;

A God whose ghost, in arch and aisle,
Yet haunts his temple—and his tomb ;
But follows in a little while
Odin and Zeus to equal doom ;
A God of kindred seed and line ;
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

O streaming worlds, O crowded sky,
O Life, and mine own soul's abyss,
Myself am scarce so small that I
Should bow to Deity like this!
This my Begetter? This was what
Man in his violent youth begot.

The God I know of, I shall ne'er
Know, though he dwells exceeding nigh.
*Raise thou the stone and find me there,
Cleave thou the wood and there am I.*
Yea, in my flesh his spirit doth flow,
Too near, too far, for me to know.

Whate'er my deeds, I am not sure
That I can pleasure him or vex:
I that must use a speech so poor
It narrows the Supreme with sex.
Notes he the good or ill in man?
To hope he cares is all I can.

I hope—with fear. For did I trust
This vision granted me at birth,
The sire of heaven would seem less just
Than many a faulty son of earth.
And so he seems indeed! But then,
I trust it not, this bounded ken.

And dreaming much, I never dare
To dream that in my prisoned soul
The flutter of a trembling prayer
Can move the Mind that is the Whole.
Though kneeling nations watch and yearn,
Does the primordial purpose turn?

THE UNKNOWN GOD

Best by remembering God, say some,
We keep our high imperial lot.
Fortune, I fear, hath oftenest come
When we forgot—when we forgot!
A lovelier faith their happier crown,
But history laughs and weeps it down!

Know they not well, how seven times seven,
Wronging our mighty arms with rust,
We dared not do the work of heaven
Lest heaven should hurl us in the dust?
The work of heaven! 'Tis waiting still
The sanction of the heavenly will.

Unmeet to be profaned by praise
Is he whose coils the world enfold;
The God on whom I ever gaze,
The God I never once behold:
Above the cloud, beneath the clod:
The Unknown God, the Unknown God.

1897

THE MOTHER OF DOOM

STRONG Tower of State, that unto rich and
poor,
In war and in scarce lovelier peace, hast been
Shelter and home: thou stood'st impregnable,
When willing toil and never-drowsing watch
Could guard thee from all access of decay.
But if dread Sloth, the mother of Doom, steal in,
And reign where Labour served, then is the hour
Hitherward posting, when men's eyes shall see
The thistle with the nettle strive for place
Within thy doorway, and men's ears shall hear
The owl hoot from a remnant of thy walls.

1920

SHAKESPEARE

O LET me leave the plains behind,
And let me leave the vales below
Into the highlands of the mind,
Into the mountains let me go.

My Keats, my Spenser, loved I well;
Gardens and statued lawns were these;
But not for ever would I dwell
In arbours and in pleasances.

Here are the heights, crest beyond crest,
Loftiest of all things cloud-encurled:
And I will watch from Everest
The long heave of the surging world.

1915

THE SLAIN

[In the Boer War]

PARTNERS in silence, mates in noteless
doom,
Peers in oblivion's commonalty merged ;
Unto like deeds by differing mandates urged,
And equalled in the unrespective tomb ;
Leal or perfidious, cruel or ruthless, whom
Precipitate fate hath of your frailties purged ;
Whom duly the impartial winds have dirged,
In autumn or the glorying vernal bloom :
Already is your strife become as nought ;
Idle the bullet's flight, the bayonet's thrust,
The senseless cannon's dull, unmeaning word ;
Idle your feud ; and all for which ye fought
To this arbitrament of loam referred,
And cold adjudication of the dust.

1903

THE REAL REFORMER

NOT he, the statesman, whatsoe'er his name,
Who would strip Life of all adventurousness,
Of all but arrow-proof and storm-proof dress,
Making it more and more ignobly tame,
Poorer in perils which they that overcame
Were braced and manned by,—making it less
and less
The school of heroes armed for struggle and
stress,—
Not he shall win hereafter radiant fame.
But when some dauntless teller of truth unsweet
Shall shake the slumberous People, with rude
power,
To a vast New Birth of all the soul and mind,
Him, and none other, at the destined hour,
Him, quick or dead, the thunderous thanks shall
greet,
Not of his country alone, but of his kind.

1911

ON A CERTAIN EUROPEAN ALLIANCE

THE Hercules of nations, narrow-browed,
Enormous-limbed, supreme on Steppe
and plain

Dwelt without consort, in that unwise brain
Dreaming wide dreams he durst not dream
aloud :

Till the world-witching western Venus vowed
He was her bosom's captor, and these twain
Were wedded,—Neptune, with his nereid train,
Gracing the pageant of their nuptials proud.

Perfect in amorous arts, through eyes and ears
She fans her loved one's not too fierce desire.

“How long, O Venus? What impassioned
years,

What ages of such rapture, ere thou tire?”

Thus the lewd gods: thus Mars and all his
peers,

Gazing profane, at fault 'twixt mirth and ire.

1897

A DIZZYING SURMISE

WHAT if that fieriest Substance—found so
late—

That cousin to the uranium of the sun—
Were proved a cause of all that we have done
And dreamed and been? A source of love and
hate,

Vileness and valour, and beauty nobly great!
What if all this, ere Nature had begun
Man's fashioning, lay closed and hidden in one
Miraculous God-sown seed of Life and Fate?

Thus was the Genie of the Arabian tale
Sealed in a vial for a thousand years
Under the ocean, till a fisher's net
Drew forth the vial, and the fisher set
The captive free,—but shrank amazed and pale,
When the loosed Afreet towered against the
Spheres.

1909

MELANCHOLIA

IN the cold starlight, on the barren beach,
Where to the stones the rent sea-tresses
 clave,
I heard the long hiss of the backward wave
Down the steep shingle, and the hollow speech
Of murmurous cavern-lips, nor other breach
Of ancient silence. None was with me, save
Thoughts that were neither glad nor sweet nor
 brave,
But restless comrades, each the foe of each.
And I beheld the waters in their might
Writhe as a dragon by some great spell curbed
And foiled; and one lone sail; and over me
The everlasting taciturnity;
The august, inhospitable, inhuman night,
Glittering magnificently unperturbed.

1901

WRITTEN IN SIR SIDNEY LEE'S
LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE

LEE, who in niggard soil hast delved, to
find

What things soever may be known or guessed
Of him that to the ages gives no rest,
The world-scanned secret peak of human mind ;
Thy choice was well, who leav'st to fools and
blind

All vague, unprofitable, fantastic quest,
Nor with a spy's dark diligence wrong'st that
breast,

Where the still-curtained heart still balks man-
kind.

'Tis said of certain poets, that writ large
Their sombre names on tragic stage and tome,
They are gulfs or estuaries of Shakespeare's sea.
Lofty the praise ; but honour enough, to be
As children playing by his mighty marge,
Glorious with casual sprinklings of the foam.

1904

THE FRONTIER

AT the hushed brink of twilight,—when, as
though
Some solemn journeying phantom paused to lay
An ominous finger on the awestruck day,
Earth holds her breath till that great presence
go,—

A moment comes of visionary glow,
Pendulous 'twixt the gold hour and the grey,
Lovelier than these, more eloquent than they
Of memory, foresight, and life's ebb and flow.

So have I known, in some fair woman's face,
While viewless yet was Time's more gross
imprint,
The first, faint, hesitant, elusive hint
Of that invasion of the vandal years
Seem deeper beauty than youth's cloudless grace,
Wake subtler dreams, and touch me nigh to
tears.

1903

IN CITY PENT

O, SWEET at this sweet hour to wander free,
Or follow some invisible-beckoning hand,
Among the moody mountains, where they stand
Awed with the thought of their own majesty !
Sweet, at the folding-up of day, to be
Where, on the tattered fringes of the land,
The uncourted flowers of the penurious sand
Are pale against the pale lips of the sea.
Sweetest to dream, on easeful earth reclined,
Far in some forest's ancient idleness,
Under the shadow of its bossy boles ;
Beyond the world's pursuit and Care's access ;
And hear the wild feet of the elfin wind
Dancing and prancing in mad caprioles.

1901

VOICE AND VISION

IF I had never known your face at all,
Had only heard you speak, beyond thick
screen

Of leaves, in an old garden, when the sheen
Of morning dwelt on dial and ivied wall,
I think your voice had been enough to call
Yourself before me, in living vision seen,
So pregnant with your Essence had it been,
So charged with You, in each soft rise and fall.

At least I know, that when upon the night
With chanted word your voice lets loose your
soul,

I am stricken and pierced and cloven with
Delight

That hath all Pain within it, and the whole
World's tears; all ecstasy of inward sight;
And the blind cry of all the seas that roll.

1909

BARREN LEVITY

I THINK the immortal servants of mankind,
If still they are watching by how slow
degrees
The World-Soul greatens with the centuries,
Mourn most Man's barren levity of mind,
The ear to no large harmonies inclined,
The witless thirst for false wit's worthless lees,
The laugh mistimed in tragic presences,
The eye to all majestic meanings blind.

O prophets, martyrs, saviours, *ye* were great,
All truth being great to you : *ye* deemed Man
more
Than a dull jest, God's ennui to amuse :
The world, for you, held purport : Life *ye* wore
Proudly, as Kings their solemn robes of state ;
And humbly, as the mightiest monarchs use.

1903

HIS SPLENDID DEFECT

'TWAS said the gods, when they Porphyryon
slew,
And vast Enceladus under Etna laid,
Could conquer only with a mortal's aid
These mortal giants and their snakish crew.
Poet who didst with radiant valour hew
At monsters old,—thou fought'st them with a
blade
Too wholly of celestial metal made,
And lacking help of mere gross human thew.
Therefore thou didst prevail not! For to quell
Earth's mightiest evil things 'tis not enough
To array against them things of heavenly birth.
Earthly auxiliaries thou need'st as well:
Earth-founded powers, and earth-forged weapons
tough,
And breastplate hard as the iron breast of the
earth.

1904

THE INEXORABLE LAW

WE, too, shall pass ; we, too, shall disappear,
Ev'n as the mighty nations that have
waned
And perished. Not more surely are ordained
The crescence and the cadence of the year,
High-hearted June, October drooped and sere,
Than this gray consummation. We have reigned
Augustly ; let our part be so sustained
That in far morns, whose voice we shall not hear,
It may be said : " This Mistress of the sword
And conquering prow, this Empire swoln with
spoils,
Yet served the Human Cause, yet strove for Man ;
Hers was the purest greatness we record ;
We whose ingathered sheaves her tilth foreran :
Whose Peace comes of her tempests, and her
toils."

1902

TO AUBREY DE VERE

POET, whose grave and strenuous lyre is still
For Truth and Duty strung; whose art
eschews
The lighter graces of the softer Muse,
Disdainful of mere craftsman's glittering skill:
Yours is a soul from visionary hill
Watching and harkening for ethereal news,
Looking beyond life's storms and death's cold
dews
To habitations of the eternal will.

Not mine your mystic creed; not mine, in prayer
And worship, at the ensanguined Cross to kneel!
But when I mark your faith how pure and fair,
How based on love, on passion for man's weal,
My mind, half envying what it cannot share,
Reveres the reverence which it cannot feel.

1892

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

I

THE old rude church, with bare, bald tower,
is here ;
Beneath its shadow high-born Rotha flows ;
Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near,
And with cool murmur lulling his repose.

Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near.
His hills, his lakes, his streams are with him
yet.
Surely the heart that read her own heart clear
Nature forgets not soon : 'tis we forget.

We that with vagrant soul his fixity
Have slighted ; faithless, done his deep faith
wrong ;
Left him for poorer loves, and bowed the knee
To misbegotten strange new gods of song.

Yet, led by hollow ghost or beckoning elf
Far from her homestead to the desert bourn,
The vagrant soul returning to herself
Wearily wise, must needs to him return.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

To him and to the powers that with him dwell :—
Inflowings that divulged not whence they
came ;
And that secluded Spirit unknowable,
The mystery we make darker with a name ;

The Somewhat which we name but cannot know,
Ev'n as we name a star and only see
His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
And ever hide him, and which are not he.

II

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave !
When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst
thou then ?
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals
gave,
The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men ?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine ;
Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human
view ;
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine ;
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large
amends
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends ?—
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and
blaze,
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on
earth.

Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white languors to decline and cease ;
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight, and love : for these are parts of
peace.

III

I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still ;—
If less divinely frenzied than of yore,
In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill
To simulate emotion felt no more.

Not such the authentic Presence pure, that made
This valley vocal in the great days gone !—
In *his* great days, while yet the spring-time played
About him, and the mighty morning shone.

No word-mosaic artificer, he sang
A lofty song of lowly weal and dole.
Right from the heart, right to the heart it sprang,
Or from the soul leapt instant to the soul.

He felt the charm of childhood, grace of youth,
Grandeur of age, insisting to be sung.
The impassioned argument was simple truth
Half-wondering at its own melodious tongue.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

Impassioned? ay, to the song's ecstatic core!
But far removed were clangour, storm, and
feud;
For plenteous health was his, exceeding store
Of joy, and an impassioned quietude.

IV

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered
down,
Put off her robe of sunlight, dew, and flame,
And donned a modish dress to charm the
Town.

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of
things;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few
strings;
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardour and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled,
She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

The human masque she watched, with dreamless
eyes
In whose clear shallows lurked no trembling
shade:
The stars, unkennered by her, might set and rise,
Unmarked by her, the daisies bloom and fade.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

The age grew sated with her sterile wit.
Herself waxed weary on her loveless throne.
Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

For none the less, though song was but half
true,
The world lay common, one abounding theme.
May joyed and wept, and fate was ever new,
And love was sweet, life real, death no dream.

In sad, stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day.
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

It fluttered here and there, nor swept in vain
The dusty haunts where futile echoes dwell,—
Then, in a cadence soft as summer rain,
And sad from Auburn voiceless, drooped and
fell.

It drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's
field,
Found Poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick Nature's hem and go forth
healed.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering
share

Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew,
And o'er the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

Bright was his going forth, but clouds ere long
Whelmed him ; in gloom his radiance set, and
those

Twin morning stars of the new century's song,
Those morning stars that sang together, rose.

In elvish speech the *Dreamer* told his tale
Of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings.—
The *Seër* strayed not from earth's human pale,
But the mysterious face of common things

He mirrored as the moon in Rydal Mere
Is mirrored, when the breathless night hangs
blue :

Strangely remote she seems and wondrous near,
And by some nameless difference born anew.

v

Peace—peace—and rest! Ah, how the lyre is loth,
Or powerless now, to give what all men seek !
Either it deadens with ignoble sloth
Or deafens with shrill tumult, loudly weak.

Where is the singer whose large notes and clear
Can heal, and arm, and plenish, and sustain ?
Lo, one with empty music floods the ear,
And one, the heart refreshing, tires the brain.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

And idly tuneful, the loquacious throng
Flutter and twitter, prodigal of time,
And little masters make a toy of song
Till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme.

And some go pranked in faded antique dress,
Abhorring to be hale and glad and free;
And some parade a conscious naturalness,
The scholar's not the child's simplicity.

Enough;—and wisest who from words forbear.
The gentle river rails not as it glides;
And suave and charitable, the winsome air
Chides not at all, or only him who chides.

VI

Nature! we storm thine ear with choric notes.
Thou answerest through the calm great nights
and days,
“Laud me who will: not tuneless are your
throats;
Yet if ye paused I should not miss the praise.”

We falter, half-rebuked, and sing again.
We chant thy desertness and haggard gloom,
Or with thy splendid wrath inflate the strain,
Or touch it with thy colour and perfume.

One, his melodious blood aflame for thee,
Wooed with fierce lust, his hot heart world-
defiled.

One, with the upward eye of infancy,
Looked in thy face, and felt himself thy child.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

Thee he approached without distrust or dread—
Beheld thee throned, an awful queen, above—
Climbed to thy lap and merely laid his head
Against thy warm wild heart of mother-love.

He heard that vast heart beating—thou didst press
Thy child so close, and lov'dst him unaware.
Thy beauty gladdened him; yet he scarce less
Had loved thee, had he never found thee fair!

For thou wast not as legendary lands
To which with curious eyes and ears we roam.
Nor wast thou as a fane 'mid solemn sands,
Where palmers halt at evening. Thou wast
home.

And here, at home, still bides he; but he sleeps;
Not to be wakened even at thy word;
Though we, vague dreamers, dream he some-
where keeps
An ear still open to thy voice still heard,—

Thy voice, as heretofore, about him blown,
For ever blown about his silence now;
Thy voice, though deeper, yet so like his own
That almost, when he sang, we deemed 'twas
thou!

VII

Behind Helm Crag and Silver Howe the sheen
Of the retreating day is less and less.
Soon will the lordlier summits, here unseen,
Gather the night about their nakedness.

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

The half-heard bleat of sheep comes from the hill.
Faint sounds of childish play are in the air.
The river murmurs past. All else is still.
The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,
And life with toil and ancient pain depressed,
Here one may scarce believe the whole wide world
Is not at peace, and all man's heart at rest.

Rest! 'twas the gift *he* gave; and peace! the
shade
He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun.
To him his bounties are come back—here laid
In rest, in peace, his labour nobly done.
1884-87

THE STONES OF STANTON DREW

BLAND was the Morn, no fault or flaw
Sullyng her sheen and hue,
When, mid the April fields, I saw
The Stones of Stanton Drew.

Clear-hearted in the golden air
The eternal lyrist flew ;
But dark and full of silence were
The Stones of Stanton Drew.

Isled and estranged from every mood
Of all that lived and grew,
Deep in forgotten Time they stood—
The Stones of Stanton Drew.

How many ages have gone by
Since last a mortal knew
Who set you there, and when, and why,
O Stones of Stanton Drew ?

All sunlit was the Earth I trod,
The Heaven was frankest blue ;
But secret as the dreams of God
The Stones of Stanton Drew.

1907

I CARE NOT

I CARE not though the Spring forget
Her golden promise made
To all the hearts that trust her yet,
However oft betrayed.
I care not though the Moon above
Forget the vassal Sea,
If thou, my love—if thou, my love—
If thou forget not me.

I care not though in shadowy bower,
With richest ruin strewn,
The Rose forget the impassioned hour
Of her sweet tryst with June.
I care not though yon prideful grove
Forget the stricken tree,
If thou, my love—if thou, my love—
If thou forget not me.

The stars forget their ancient birth ;
The Sun forgets that time
When he espoused the youthful Earth
In his commanding prime.
But far from where we mortals move,
There shall some record be,
That I, my love—that I, my love—
That I forgot not thee.

LINES READ BY THE AUTHOR AT THE
DICKENS CENTENARY CELEBRATION
IN NEW YORK

WHERE, where was born the man
Whom here we are met to praise?
Was it among the multitudinous ways
Where his loved London lifts her fevered brow
For cooling Night to fan?
Nay, nay,—but yonder by the embattled tides,
Where ships of war stept out with lofty prow
And heaved their stormy sides,
And where, far heard across the gaunt sea wall,
Rises through silence the long bugle-call,—
There was he born amid the forts and guns,
One of Earth's fighting sons;
There, in that place of arms and battle-gear,
Where all the proud sea babbled Nelson's
name,
Into the world this later hero came,
He, too, a man that knew all moods but fear,
He, too, a Warrior.

Yet not his the strife
That leaves dark scars on the fair face of Life!
He fought to tie, fought not to hold apart,
The strings of the world's heart;

DICKENS CENTENARY CELEBRATION

And built a broad and noble bridge to span
The icy chasm that sunders man from man.
Wherever Wrong had fixed its bastions deep,
There did his fierce yet gay assault surprise
Some fortress propped with lucre or with lies ;
There his light volley abased some arrogant keep ;
There charged he up the steep—
A knight on whom no palsying torpor fell,
Keen to the last to break a lance with Hell.
And still undimmed his gallant weapons shine ;
On his bright sword no spot of rust appears ;
And still, across the years,
His soul goes forth to battle, and in the face
Of whatso'er is false, or cruel, or base,
He hurls his gage, and leaps among the spears,
Being armed with pity and love, and scorn divine,
Immortal laughter, and immortal tears.

1911

WORLD-STRANGENESS

STRANGE the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my Host can ne'er espy,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

So, betwixt the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease.

1889

ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD VII

HONOUR the happy dead with sober praise,
Who living would have scorned the
fulsome phrase,
Meet for the languorous Orient's jewelled ear ;—
This was the *English* King, that loved the English
ways !

A man not too remote, or too august,
For other mortal children of the dust
To know and to draw near.
Born with a nature that demanded joy,
He took full draughts of life, nor did the vintage
cloy ;
But when she passed from vision, who so long
Had sat aloft—alone—
On the steep heights of an Imperial throne,
Then rose he large and strong,
Then spake his voice with new and grander tone,
Then, called to rule the State
Which he had only served,
He saw clear Duty plain, nor from that highway
swerved,
And, unappalled by his majestic fate,
Pretended not to greatness, yet was great.

1910

THE PLAYMATES

THE Wye and the Severn are offspring
Of dark Plinlimmon's side ;
And there they were nursed as playmates,
And then—they were sundered wide.

In ways far parted they travel,
By city and castled shore ;
And at last, after great adventures,
They meet—very old—once more.

They have long grown rich in homage ;
They are full of renown and pride ;
But they babble of how they were playmates
On dark Plinlimmon's side.

1901

THE GREAT MISGIVING

“NOT ours,” say some, “the thought of
death to dread ;
Asking no heaven, we fear no fabled hell :
Life is a feast, and we have banqueted—
Shall not the worms as well ?

“The after-silence, when the feast is o’er,
And void the places where the minstrels stood,
Differs in nought from what hath been before,
And is nor ill nor good.”

Ah, but the Apparition—the dumb sign—
The beckoning finger bidding me forgo
The fellowship, the converse, and the wine,
The songs, the festal glow !

And ah, to know not, while with friends I sit,
And while the purple joy is passed about,
Whether ’tis ampler day divinelier lit
Or homeless night without ;

And whether, stepping forth, my soul shall see
New prospects, or fall sheer—a blinded thing !
There is, O grave, thy hourly victory,
And there, O death, thy sting.

1892

NIGHT ON CURBAR EDGE

NO echo of man's life pursues my ears ;
Nothing disputes this Desolation's reign ;
Change comes not, this dread temple to profane
Where time by æons reckons, not by years.
Its patient form one crag, sole stranded, rears,
Type of whate'er is destined to remain
While yon still host encamped on night's waste
plain
Keeps armèd watch, a million glittering spears.

Hushed are the wild and wing'd lives of the moor ;
The sleeping sheep nestle 'neath ruined wall,
Or unhewn stones in random concourse hurled :
Solitude, sleepless, listens at Fate's door ;
And there is built and 'stablisht over all,
Tremendous silence, older than the world.

1894

PEACE AND WAR

THE sleek sea, gorged and sated, basking
lies ;
The cruel creature fawns and blinks and purrs ;
And almost we forget what fangs are hers,
And trust for once her emerald-golden eyes ;
Though haply on the morrow she shall rise
And summon her infernal ministers,
And charge her everlasting barriers,
With wild white fingers snatching at the skies.

So, betwixt Peace and War, man's life is cast ;
Yet hath he dreamed of purest Peace at last
Shepherding all the nations ev'n as sheep.
The inconstant, moody ocean shall as soon,
At the cold dictates of the bloodless moon,
Swear an eternity of halcyon sleep.

1904

ESTRANGEMENT

SO, without overt breach, we fall apart,
Tacitly sunder—neither you nor I
Conscious of one intelligible Why,
And both, from severance, winning equal smart.
So, with resigned and acquiescent heart,
Whene'er your name on some chance lip may lie,
I seem to see an alien shade pass by,
A spirit wherein I have no lot or part.
Thus may a captive, in some fortress grim,
From casual speech betwixt his warders, learn
That June on her triumphal progress goes
Through arched and bannered woodlands ; while
for him
She is a legend emptied of concern,
And idle is the rumour of the rose.

1894

CHRISTMAS DAY

THE morn broke bright: the thronging
people wore
Their best; but in the general face I saw
No touch of veneration or of awe.
Christ's natal day? 'Twas merely one day more
On which the mart agreed to close its door;
A lounging-time by usage and by law
Sanctioned; nor recked they, beyond this, one
straw
Of any meaning which for man it bore!

Fated among Time's fallen leaves to stray,
We breathe an air that savours of the tomb,
Heavy with dissolution and decay;
Waiting till some new world-emotion rise,
And with the might of the unchained simoom
Sweep hence this dying Past that never dies.

1893

TO AN AMERICAN POET

TAKE, Poet, take these thanks too long
deferred—

You that have made me richer year by year,
Across the vast and desert waters drear
Wafting your marriage-chimes of thought and
word,

Your true-born, truthful songs. Not April bird
Utters abroad his wisdom morning-clear
From fuller heart. Still sing with note sincere,
And English pure as English air hath heard.
And so, though all the fops of style misuse
Our great brave language—tricking out with
beads

This noble vesture that no frippery needs—
Help still to save, while Time around him strews
Old shards of empire, and much dust of creeds,
The honour and the glory of the muse.

1907

THE MOCK SELF

FEW friends are mine, though many wights
there be
Who, meeting oft a phantasm that makes claim
To be myself, and hath my face and name,
And whose thin fraud I wink at privily,
Account this light impostor very me.
What boots it undeceive them, and proclaim
Myself myself, and whelm this cheat with shame?
I care not, so he leave my true self free,
Impose not on me also; but alas!
I too, at fault, bewildered, sometimes take
Him for myself, and far from mine own sight,
Torpid, indifferent, doth mine own self pass;
And yet anon leaps suddenly awake,
And spurns the gibbering mime into the night.

1888

FORCE AND FREEDOM

O, DOUBTLESS ye can trample and enchain,
Sow wrath and breathe out winter; but
can ye
Persuade the muttering bondsman he is free,
Or with a signal build the summer again?
O, ye can hold the rivulets of the plain
A little while from nuptials with the sea,
But the fierce mountain-stream of Liberty
Not edicts and not hosts may long restrain.
For this is of the heights and of the deeps,
Born of the heights and in the deeps conceived.
This, from the lofty places of the mind,
Gushes pellucid, vehemently upheaved;
And tears and heart's blood hallow it, as it sweeps
Invincibly on, with Might no Might can bind.

1902

TO A HIGHBORN BEAUTY

IF you had lived in that more stately time
When men remembered the great Tudor
queen,
To noblest verse your name had wedded been,
And you for ever crowned with golden rhyme.
If, mid Lorenzo's Florence, made sublime
By Art's Re-Birth, you had moved, a Muse serene,
The mightiest limners had revealed your mien
To all the ages and each wondering clime.

Fled are the singers that from language drew
Its virgin secrets, and in narrow space
The mightiest limners sleep: and only He,
The Eternal Artist, still creates anew
What shames all else on earth—the breathing
grace
That takes the world into captivity.

1909

THE WINTER SLEEP

A MAIDEN o'erwearied
With dance and song,
The Earth,
The Earth,
The Earth sleeps long.

And her dreams are all
Of one mad sweet thing—
The kisses,
The kisses,
The kisses of Spring.

Awake, O maiden,
For joy draws near.
Thy lover,
Thy lover,
Thy lover is here.

1912

TO A STRENUOUS CRITIC

YOU scorn as idle—you who praise
Each posturing hero of the herd—
The lofty bearing of a phrase,
The noble countenance of a word.

“This has no import for the age!”
And so your votive wreaths you heap
On him who brought unto our Stage
A mightier dulness o’er the deep.

Great Heaven! When these with clamour shrill
Drift out to Lethe’s harbour bar,
A verse of Lovelace shall be still
As vivid as a pulsing star.

1916

TO A FRIEND

[Chafing at Enforced Idleness from Interrupted Health]

SOON may the edict lapse, that on you lays
This dire compulsion of infertile days,
This hardest penal toil, reluctant rest!
Meanwhile I count you eminently blest,
Happy from labours heretofore well done,
Happy in tasks auspiciously begun.
For they are blest that have not much to rue—
That have not oft mis-heard the prompter's cue,
Stammered and stumbled and the wrong parts
played,
And life a Tragedy of Errors made.

1884

THE KNIGHTS AND THE KING

THE Knights rode up with gifts for the
King,
And one was a jewelled sword,
And one was a suit of golden mail,
And one was a golden Word.

He has buckled the shining armour on,
He has girt the sword at his side ;
He has flung at his feet the golden Word,
And trampled it in his pride.

The armour is pierced with many spears,
And the brand is breaking in twain ;
But the Word has risen in storm and fire,
To vanquish and to reign.

1906

THE HUMOUR OF OLYMPUS

THE Gods, being merry, and having for a
whim
Created Man to make a jest of him,
And taken counsel of their hearts how best
To crown with a pure perfectness the jest,
Set him fast-anchored shiplike mid the foam
Of the Infinite Seas he else had joyed to roam.

There doth he bear, while tempest round him
flits,
The laughter of the great, high, heavenly Wits ;
And there, though he persuades himself that he
Is well contented with captivity,
He dreams of the isles he never hath espied,
And the far oceans to his sails denied.

1922

THE FAITHLESS AND THE CONSTANT

THOU who at will canst fling
Thine insolent alms or bid me pine de-
frauded,—
Compared to Sorrow thou'rt a shallow thing,
Joy, the much lauded.

Ah, with pale promise, thou
Awhile perhaps mayst hoodwink and deceive me,
But it is Sorrow that hath kept her vow
Never to leave me.

1921

THE GEMS

HOW fair these stones, and with what deft-
ness graven !
Here Hermes binds Ixion to the wheel.
Here is the yet unfreed Andromeda.
Here Theseus slays the Minotaur, and there
A naked soul quails before Rhadamanthus,
The calm judge of the dead. On this is figured
The moon-cold Goddess of the bow and quiver.
On this, Medea drives her dragon team.
Lo, Psyche there, at last made one with Eros,
And all her sorrows over ! And on this sard
You may behold Achilles, not in wrath,
But with a brow of pity, as when he mourned
Penthesilea. Carven in green jasper,
Here stands Actæon, by his own hounds torn,
As men are torn by their own fierce desires,
Who hunt delight too madly. And upon
This amethyst, Arachne at her loom,
Daring to match the perfect woof of Pallas,
Weaves her own perfect woe. Fair gems
indeed !

1912

ART'S RIDDLE

COME, friend,—her skein I also would
unravel!

Art is not Nature lost in man's control,
But Nature's reminiscences of travel
Across the human soul.

Or 'tis a tidal river, that, each day,
Ebbing and flowing under cliff and tree,
With mutual and eternal interplay
Takes and gives back the sea.

1915

THE LOST EDEN

BUT yesterday was Man from Eden driven.
His dream, wherein he dreamed himself
the first
Of creatures, fashioned for eternity—
This was the Eden that he shared with Eve.

Eve, the adventurous soul within his soul!
The sleepless, the unslaked! She showed him
where
Amidst his pleasance hung the bough whose
fruit
Is disenchantment and the perishing
Of many glorious errors. And he saw
His paradise how narrow: and he saw,—
He, who had well-nigh deemed the world itself
Of less significance and majesty
Than his own part and business in it!—how
Little that part, and in how great a world.
And an imperative world-thirst drave him forth,
And the gold gates of Eden clanged behind.

Never shall he return: for he hath sent
His spirit abroad among the infinitudes,
And may no more to the ancient pales recall
The travelled feet. But oftentimes he feels

THE LOST EDEN

The intolerable vastness bow him down,
The awful homeless spaces daunt his soul ;
And half-regretful he remembers then
His Eden lost, as some grey mariner
May think of the far fields where he was bred,
And woody ways unbreathed-on by the sea,
Though more familiar now the ocean-paths
Gleam, and the stars his fathers never knew.

1896

REVELATION

WHEN all the choric peal shall end,
That through the fanes hath rung ;
When the long lauds no more ascend
From man's adoring tongue ;

When whelmed are altar, priest, and creed ;
When all the faiths have passed ;
Perhaps, from darkening incense freed,
God may emerge at last.

1908

THE UNVANQUISHED

MY heart's companion, let
Us two forget,
And so make vain, all rude
Vicissitude,
And Time's betrayals, and countermine them
yet!

Ah, Fortune's ebb we know,
More than her flow;
But not soon conquered, we
Hazard her sea,
And with much laughter through the gales we
go.

1921

TO MY MOTHER'S MEMORY

THIS is the summit, wild and lone.
Westward the Cumbrian mountains stand.
Let me look eastward on mine own
Ancestral land.

O sing me songs, O tell me tales,
Of yonder valleys at my feet!
She was a daughter of those dales,
A daughter sweet.

Oft did she speak of homesteads there,
And faces that her childhood knew.
She speaks no more; and scarce I dare
To deem it true,

That somehow she can still behold
Sunlight and moonlight, earth and sea,
Which were among the gifts untold
She gave to me.

1897

TO MY ELDEST CHILD

MY little firstborn daughter sweet—
My child, yet half of alien race—
England and Ireland surely meet,
Their feuds forgotten, in thy face.

To both these lands I'd have thee give
Thy maiden heart, surrendered free ;
For both alike I'd have thee live,
Since both alike do live in thee.

In thee they lay their strife aside,
That were so worn with dire unrest ;
These whom the waters parted wide,
But who commingle in thy breast.

These would I teach thee to revere,
To love, and serve, and understand ;
Nor would I have thee hold less dear
Thy mother's than thy father's land.

The English fields, in sun and rain,
Were round about thee at thy birth ;
But thou shalt ache with Ireland's pain,
And thou shalt laugh with Ireland's mirth.

TO MY ELDEST CHILD

Thou shalt be taught her noble songs,
And thou shalt grieve whene'er is told
The story of her ancient wrongs,
The story of her sorrows old.

And often, in thy English home,
Her voice will call, and thou obey.
Thy heart will cross the sundering foam,
Thy soul to Ireland sail away.

Ah, little flower! in Irish ground
Thy roots are deeper than the sea,
Though English woodlands murmured round
The house of thy nativity.

Of both these peoples thou wert born;
Of both these lands thou art the child;
Surely a symbol of the morn
That shall behold them reconciled.

1914

EDENHUNGER

○ THAT a nest, my mate ! were once more
ours,
Where we, by vain and barren change un-
tortured,
Could have grave friendships with wise trees
and flowers,
And live the great, green life of field and
orchard !

From the cold birthday of the daffodils,
Ev'n to that listening pause that is November,
○ to confide in woods, confer with hills,
And then—then, to that palmland you
remember,

Fly swift, where seas that brook not Winter's
rule
Are one vast violet breaking into lilies :
There where we spent our first strange wedded
Yule,
Far in the golden, fire-hearted Antilles.

1914

TO A PUBLICIST AND SAGE

YOU that have found all Being a blaze of
clearness :

You that with loves and hates in blest control,
On the sleek lawns of life ignore the nearness
Of the unextinct volcano of man's soul :

Pure, almost to eradicating gender :

Somewhere in vales of innocence nursed apart :
Tempering our Night with your large spirit's
splendour,
And full of fire as a tomato's heart :

Still be yourself ; still touch with tip of finger
The daunting themes Thought pales at, from
its birth ;
And never ev'n for one rash moment linger
Anywhere near the roots of aught on earth.

Go your chaste way, far though it be from *my*
way ;
Take your rewards, and have your heart's
desire ;
But richer is the beggar on the highway
Who once has sighted Truth, though from
the mire.

1918

DUSK

THE bats are busy in moonless eve
With the goblin web they seem to weave,
Here where the thrush, when morn was high,
Published his heart to the passer-by.

Twice, o'er the lane, like a guilty thing,
The shy owl flitted with noiseless wing,
Mid the silent breathing of frond and tree,
And of all that debauched the noontide bee.

Behind the fir-wood, red and large,
The sun went down like a warrior's targe ;
And full of news from a secret shore,
The wanderer, Night, comes to the door.

1920

WALES : A GREETING

IN that wild land beyond Sabrina's wave ;
In vales full of the voice of bards long mute,
From Gwent to far Demetia by the sea ;
Or northward unto cloud-roof'd Gwynedd,
where
The mountains sit together and talk with heaven,
While Mona pushing forth into the deep
Looks back for ever on their musing brows :
By silent mound and menhir, camp and cairn,
Leaf-hidden stream, and cataract's thunderous
plunge :
In summer calms, or when the storming North
Whitens Eryri's crest and Siabod's cone,—
Have I not roamed and lingered, from my
youth,
An alien and a stranger, but amidst
A people gravely kind as suavely proud?—
A people caring for old dreams and deeds,
Heroic story, and far-descended song ;
Honouring their poets, not in death alone,
But in life also, as is meet and well ;
An ancient folk, speaking an ancient speech,
And cherishing in their bosoms all their past,
Yet in whose fiery love of their own land
No hatred of another's finds a place.

WALES : A GREETING

Sons—daughters—of Wild Wales, whose kindred swayed
This island, ages ere an English word
Was breathed in Britain,—let an English voice
Hail and salute you here at England's heart.
On Europe, east and west, the dim clouds brood,
Disperse, and gather again ; and none can tell
What birth they hold within them. But we
know
That should they break in tempest on these
shores,
You, that with differing blood, with differing
spirit,
Yet link your life with ours, with ours your fate,
Will stand beside us in the hurricane,
Steadfast, whatever peril may befall :
Will feel no separate heartbeats from our own,
Nor aught but oneness with this mighty Power,
This Empire, that despite her faults and sins
Loves justice, and loves mercy, and loves truth,
When truly she beholds them ; and who thus
Helps to speed on, through dark and difficult
ways,
The ever-climbing footsteps of the world.

LONDON, *June* 15, 1909

THE WORLD IN ARMOUR

[Three Sonnets]

I

UNDER this shade of crimson wings
abhorred
That never wholly leaves the sky serene,—
While Vengeance sleeps a sleep so light, between
Dominions that acclaim Thee overlord,—
Sadly the blast of Thy tremendous word,
Whate'er its mystic purport may have been,
Echoes across the ages, Nazarene :
Not to bring peace Mine errand, but a sword.

For lo, Thy world uprises and lies down
In armour, and its Peace is War, in all
Save the great death that weaves War's dreadful
crown :
War unennobled by heroic pain :
War without triumph, without glorious fall ;
War that sits smiling, with the eyes of Cain.

THE WORLD IN ARMOUR

II

When London's Plague, that day by day enrolled
His thousands dead, nor deigned his rage to
abate

Till grass was green in silent Bishopsgate,
Had come and passed like thunder,—still, 'tis
told,

The monster, driven to earth, in hovels old
And haunts obscure, though dormant, lingered
late,

Till the dread Fire, one roaring wave of fate,
Rose, and swept clean his last retreat and hold.

In Europe live the dregs of Plague to-day,
Dregs of full many an ancient Plague and dire,—
Old wrongs, old lies of ages blind and cruel.
What if alone the world-war's world-wide fire
Can purge the ambushed pestilence away?
Yet woe to him that idly lights the fuel!

THE WORLD IN ARMOUR

III

A moment's fantasy, the vision came
Of Europe dipped in fiery death, and so
Mounting re-born, with vestal limbs aglow,
Splendid and fragrant from her bath of flame.
It fled; and a phantom without name,
Sightless, dismembered, terrible, said: "Lo,
I am that ravished Europe men shall know
After the morn of blood and night of shame."

The spectre passed, and I beheld alone
The Europe of the present, as she stands,
Powerless from terror of her own vast power,
'Neath novel stars, beside a brink unknown;
And round her the sad Kings, with sleepless
 hands,
Piling the fagots, hour by doomful hour.

July, 1894

HYMN TO THE SEA

I

GRANT, O regal in bounty, a subtle and
delicate largess ;
Grant an ethereal alms, out of the wealth of
thy soul :
Suffer a tarrying minstrel, who finds, not fashions
his numbers,—
Who, from the commune of air, cages the
volatile song,—
Lightly to capture and prison some fugitive
breath of thy descant,
Thine and his own as thy roar lisp'd on the
lips of a shell,
Now while the vernal impulsion makes lyrical
all that hath language,
While, through the veins of the Earth, riots
the ichor of spring,
While, amid throes, amid raptures, with loosing
of bonds, with unsealings,—
Arrowy pangs of delight, piercing the core
of the world,—
Tremors and coy unfoldings, reluctances, sweet
agitations,—
Youth, irrepressibly fair, wakes like a won-
dering rose.

HYMN TO THE SEA

II

Lover whose vehement kisses on lips irrespon-
sive are squandered,
 Lover that woorest in vain Earth's imperturb-
able heart ;
Athlete mightily frustrate, who pittest thy thews
against legions,
 Locked with fantastical hosts, bodiless arms
of the sky ;
Sea that breakest for ever, that breakest and
never art broken,
 Like unto thine, from of old, springeth the
spirit of man,—
Nature's wooer and fighter, whose years are a
suit and a wrestling,
 All their hours, from his birth, hot with
desire and with fray ;
Amorist agonist man, that, immortally pining
and striving,
 Snatches the glory of life only from love and
from war ;
Man that, rejoicing in conflict, like thee when
precipitate tempest,
 Charge after thundering charge, clangs on
thy resonant mail,
Seemeth so easy to shatter, and proveth so hard
to be cloven ;
 Man whom the gods, in his pain, curse with a
soul that endures ;
Man whose deeds, to the doer, come back as
thine own exhalations
 Into thy bosom return, weepings of mountain
and vale ;

HYMN TO THE SEA

Man with the cosmic fortunes and starry
vicissitudes tangled,
Chained to the wheel of the world, blind with
the dust of its speed,
Even as thou, O giant, whom trailed in the wake
of her conquests
Night's sweet despot draws, bound to her
ivory car ;
Man with inviolate caverns, impregnable holds
in his nature,
Depths no storm can pierce, pierced with a
shaft of the sun :
Man that is galled with his confines, and bur-
dened yet more with his vastness,
Born too great for his ends, never at peace
with his goal ;
Man whom Fate, his victor, magnanimous,
clement in triumph,
Holds as a captive king, mewed in a palace
divine :
Many its leagues of pleasance, and ample of
purview its windows ;
Airily falls, in its courts, laughter of fountains
at play ;
Nought, when the harpers are harping, untimely
reminds him of durance ;
None, as he sits at the feast, utters Captivity's
name ;
But, would he parley with Silence, withdraw for
a while unattended,
Forth to the beckoning world 'scape for an
hour and be free,

HYMN TO THE SEA

Lo, his adventurous fancy coercing at once and
provoking,
Rise the unscalable walls, built with a word at
the prime ;
Lo, in unslumbering watch, and with pitiless
faces of iron,
Armed at each obstinate gate, stand the im-
passable guards.

III

Miser whose coffer'd recesses the spoils of the
ages cumber,
Spendthrift foaming thy soul wildly in fury
away,—
We, self-amorous mortals, our own multitudi-
nous image
Seeking in all we behold, seek it and find it
in thee :
Seek it and find it when o'er us the exquisite
fabric of Silence
Perilous-turreted hangs, trembles and dulcetly
falls ;
When the aërial armies engage amid orgies of music,
Braying of arrogant brass, whimper of queru-
lous reeds ;
When, at his banquet, the Summer is languid
and drowsed with repletion ;
When, to his anchorite board, taciturn Winter
repairs ;
When by the tempest are scattered magnificent
ashes of Autumn ;
When, upon orchard and lane, breaks the
white foam of the Spring :

HYMN TO THE SEA

When, in extravagant revel, the Dawn, a bac-
chante up-leaping,
Spills, on the tresses of Night, vintages golden
and red ;
When, as a token at parting, munificent Day, for
remembrance,
Gives, unto men that forget, Ophirs of
fabulous ore ;
When, irresistibly rushing, in luminous palpitant
deluge,
Hot from the summits of Life, poured is the
lava of noon ;
When, as up yonder, thy mistress, at height of
her mutable glories,
Wise from the magical East, comes like a
sorceress pale.
Ah, she comes, she arises,—impassive, emotion-
less, bloodless,
Wasted and ashen of cheek, zoning her ruins
with pearl.
Once she was warm, she was joyous, desire in her
pulses abounding :
Surely thou lovedst her well, then, in her con-
quering youth !
Surely not all unimpassioned, at sound of thy
rough serenading,
She, from the balconied night, unto her
melodist leaned,—
Leaned unto thee, her bondsman, who keepest
to-day her commandments,
All for the sake of old love, dead at thy heart
though it lie.

HYMN TO THE SEA

IV

Yea, it is we, light perverts, that waver, and
shift our allegiance ;
We, whom insurgence of blood dooms to be
barren and waste.
Thou, with punctual service, fulfillest thy task,
being constant ;
Thine but to ponder the Law, labour and
greatly obey :
Wherefore, with leapings of spirit, thou chantest
the chant of the faithful ;
Led by the chime of the worlds, linked with
the league of the stars ;
Thou thyself but a billow, a ripple, a drop of
that Ocean,
Which, labyrinthine of arm, folding us meshed
in its coil,
Shall, as to-night, with elations, august exulta-
tions and ardours,
Pour, in unfaltering tide, all its unanimous
waves,
When, from this threshold of being, these steps
of the Presence, this precinct,
Into the matrix of Life darkly divinely resumed,
Man and his littleness perish, erased like an error
and cancelled,
Man and his greatness survive, lost in the
greatness of God.

1895

SONG

THE WARRIOR LOVER

WHEN War's red tempest shall depart,
That long hath sundered me
From those sweet precincts of thy heart
And all that heaven of thee ;
If I return from where they rest
Whom battle's scythe hath mown,
Then in the fragrance of thy breast
I'll live for love alone.

But if, where warstorms wildest roll,
My life for *her* I yield—
That other empress of my soul,
Who called me to the field—
Though 'twixt you twain, with dying breath,
My homage I'll divide,
My heart will turn to *thee* in death,
To claim and clasp its bride.

1917

MASTERY

GUARD me and save me, Muse, I pray,
From all who babble night and day
The doctrine that Intention high
Lifts Unachievement to the sky,
And that a mighty Will to sing
Makes the mere Power a needless thing!
Trench me around from such as prate
That only he who fails is great.

O, the brave tourneys of the Lyre
Are won by *prowess*, not desire,
And Art is *capture*, not pursuit—
Capture and conquest absolute,
Bliss of possession without bar.
And they the trophied hunters are,
Who from their cloudless brows efface
The last motes of the dust of chase,
Ev'n as great Victors let us see
Nought in their eyes save Victory.

The steeds of Helios will obey
None other than the lord of day.
They bear, delighted, the command
Of his inexorable hand;

MASTERY

But if a meddler take the reins,
They rear, they toss their flaming manes,
Crash backward, or ramp wild anon,
In boundless scorn of Phaëthon.
1916

THE TWO IFS

¶ If joy be thine, then guard the boon
From the gazing sun and the prying moon !
In a world that is lean with dearth of bliss,
'Twere cruel to flaunt a gift like this.

And if thine be woe, then do thy best
To immure it deep in thy cloistering breast !
'Twere callous to blazon abroad thy pain,
And harrow some happier heart in vain.

1920

VITA NUOVA

LONG hath she slept, forgetful of delight :
At last, at last, the enchanted princess,
Earth,
Claimed with a kiss by Spring the adventurer,
In slumber knows the destined lips, and thrilled
Through all the deeps of her unageing heart
With passionate necessity of joy,
Wakens, and yields her loveliness to love.

O ancient streams, O far-descended woods
Full of the fluttering of melodious souls ;
O hills and valleys that adorn yourselves
In solemn jubilation ; winds and clouds,
Ocean and land in stormy nuptials clasped,
And all exuberant creatures that acclaim
The Earth's divine renewal : lo, I too
With yours would mingle somewhat of glad
song.

I too have come through wintry terrors,—yea,
Through tempest and through cataclysm of soul
Have come, and am delivered. Me the Spring,
Me also, dimly with new life hath touched,
And with regenerate hope, the salt of life ;
And I would dedicate these thankful tears
To whatsoever Power beneficent,

VITA NUOVA

Veiled though his countenance, undivulged his
thought,
Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
Into the gracious air and vernal morn,
And suffers me to know my spirit a note
Of this great chorus, one with bird and stream
And voiceful mountain,—nay, a string, how
jarred
And all but broken! of that lyre of life
Whereon himself, the master harp-player,
Resolving all its mortal dissonance
To one immortal and most perfect strain,
Harps without pause, building with song the
world.

1893

THE HEART OF THE ROSE

THE Poet talked with the happy Rose,
And oft did the Rose repeat
How all her care was but to be fair,
And all her task to be sweet.

Ah, rash was the Rose—the tragic Rose!
She hath bared to the poet her heart!
And now he can take it, and crush and break it,
And rich in its attar depart.

1908

AN INSOLUBLE PROBLEM

RHONA, as yet a tiny mite
Not three years old, looked up to-night
At the resplendent heavens, and said:
“What are 'ose 'tars for?”

Little maid,
I cannot tell, I ne'er have known—
Not being God upon His throne.

1915

RETROGRESSION

OUR daughters flower in vernal grace ;
In strength our striplings wax apace ;
Our cities teem ; our commerce rides
Sovereign upon the fawning tides.
But while, to this our stronghold—where
The North Wind's wandering children fair,
Like wild birds from the waters sprung,
Built their wild nest and reared their young—
The fleets of peace for ever pour
Fruitage and vintage, gems and ore ;
While here, within each ocean gate,
Long barricadoed against Fate,
We are served by all the alien seas,
And fed from the Antipodes,
Lo, everywhere the unplenished brain !
Everywhere, dire as bondman's chain,
Or laws that crush, or creeds that blind,
The leanness of the unnourished mind.

For few and fewer do they grow,
Who know, or ever cared to know,
The great things greatly said and sung
In this heroic English tongue,
This speech that is the rough-wrought key
To palaces of wizardry,

RETROGRESSION

And many a fabric hung in air,
Our fathers' glory and our despair,
That firmer stands than boastful stone ;
And many a tower of vigil lone,
Climbing whose stairway Wisdom viewed
The labyrinth of infinitude.

And shouldst thou have in thee to-day
Aught thou canst better sing than say,
Shun, if thou wouldst by men be heard,
The comely phrase, the wellborn word,
And use, as for their ears more meet,
The loose-lipped lingo of the street,
A language Milton's kin have long
Accounted good enough for song.
Or don that vesture doubly vile,
The beaded and bespangled style—
Diction o'erloaded and impure,
Thy thought lost in its garniture,
Thy Muse, ev'n to her raiment's hem,
Huddling uncostly gem on gem,
Striving her lax form to bestar
With all crude ornaments that are :
An empty and a dreary strife,
Vulgar in Letters as in Life.

Nor look for praise, save here and there
From a fast-dwindling remnant rare,
If thou beget with happy pain
The ordered and the governed strain
That peradventure had not shamed
Masters felicitously famed ;
Dryden, the athlete large and strong,

RETROGRESSION

Lord of the nerve and sinew of song ;
A hewer and shaper who could see,
In adamant, plasticity ;
Who tore from the entrails of the mine
The metal of his iron line,
And, born beside the haughty tomb
Of that rank time of overbloom
When poets vied in gathering each
Full-bosomed apple and buxom peach
That odorous in the orchard burned,
Had, from their purple surfeit, learned
The truth in Hellas seen so plain,
That the art of arts *is to refrain* ;—
Or Gray, who on worn thoughts conferred
That second youth, the perfect word,
The elected and predestined phrase
That had lain bound, long nights and days,
To wear at last, when once set free,
Immortal pellucidity ;
And who, in that most mighty Ode,
That like a pageant streamed and glowed,
Called up anew mid breathing things
The great ghosts of our tragic Kings,
With doom-dark brows to come and go,
Trailing the folds of gorgeous woe.

1915

DISCLOSURE

ON western shores we roamed, and there,
Watching a hill that watched the wave,
We called him dull in pose and air,
A bulk not grand but merely grave ;
So many mountains had we seen,
Lordly of countenance, build, and mien.

Then came a snowstorm in the night,
And all his ribs of rock, next morn—
All his anatomy—sprang to light,
With form and feature, carved and worn,
That rose out of the salt abyss
Magnificent in emphasis.

Imagine not that thou canst know
Mountains or men in very truth,
Until the tempest and the snow
Strike them at midnight without ruth,
Publishing clear, to morning's gaze,
The lineaments they strove to erase.

1914

TO EDWARD DOWDEN

[On receiving from him a Copy of "The Life of Shelley"]

FIRST, ere I slake my hunger, let me thank
The giver of the feast. For feast it is,
Though of ethereal, translunary fare—
His story who pre-eminently of men
Seemed nourished upon starbeams and the stuff
Of rainbows, and the tempest, and the foam ;
Who hardly brooked on his impatient soul
The fleshly trammels ; whom at last the sea
Gave to the fire, from whose wild arms the winds
Took him, and shook him broadcast to the world.

In my young days of fervid poesy
He drew me to him with his strange far light,—
He held me in a world all clouds and gleams
And vasty phantoms, where ev'n Man himself
Moved like a phantom 'mid the clouds and
gleams.

Anon the Earth recalled me, and a voice
Murmuring of dethroned divinities
And dead times deathless upon sculptured urn—
And Philomela's long-descended pain .
Flooding the night—and maidens of romance
To whom asleep St. Agnes' love-dreams come—
Awhile constrained me to a sweet duresse

TO EDWARD DOWDEN

And thralldom, lapping me in high content,
Soft as the bondage of white amorous arms.
And then a third voice, long unheeded—held
Claustral and cold, and dissonant and tame—
Found me at last with ears to hear. It sang
Of lowly sorrows and familiar joys,
Of simple manhood, artless womanhood,
And childhood fragrant as the limpid morn ;
And from the homely matter nigh at hand
Ascending and dilating, it disclosed
Spaces and avenues, calm heights and breadths
Of vision, whence I saw each blade of grass
With roots that groped about eternity,
And in each drop of dew upon each blade
The mirror of the inseparable All.
The first voice, then the second, in their turns
Had sung me captive. This voice sang me free.
Therefore, above all vocal sons of men,
Since him whose sightless eyes saw hell and
 heaven,
To Wordsworth be my homage, thanks, and
 love.
Yet dear is Keats, a rich-hued presence, great
With somewhat of a glorious soullessness.
And dear, and great with an excess of soul,
Shelley, the hectic flamelike rose of verse,
All colour, and all odour, and all bloom,
Steeped in the noonlight, glutted with the sun,
But somewhat lacking root in homely earth,
Lacking such human moisture as bedews
His not less starward stem of song, who, rapt
Not less in glowing vision, yet retained
His clasp of the prehensible, retained

TO EDWARD DOWDEN

The warm touch of the world that lies to hand,
Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day ;
Who trusted nature, trusted fate, nor found
An Ogre, sovereign on the throne of things ;
Who felt the incumbence of the unknown, yet
bore

Without resentment the Divine reserve ;
Who suffered not his spirit to dash itself
Against the crags and wavelike break in spray,
But 'midst the infinite tranquillities
Moved tranquil, and henceforth, by Rotha stream
And Rydal's mountain-mirror, and where flows
Yarrow thrice sung or Duddon to the sea,
And wheresoe'er man's heart is thrilled by
tones

Struck from man's lyric heartstrings, shall
survive.

1886

THE TOMB OF BURNS

WHAT woos the world to yonder shrine?
What sacred clay, what dust divine?
Was this some Master faultless-fine,
In whom we praise
The cunning of the jewelled line
And carven phrase?

A searcher of our source and goal,
A reader of God's secret scroll?
A Shakespeare, flashing o'er the whole
Of man's domain
The splendour of his cloudless soul
And perfect brain?

Some Keats, to Grecian gods allied,
Clasping all beauty as his bride?
Some Shelley, soaring dim-descried
Above Time's throng,
And heavenward hurling wild and wide
His spear of song?

A lonely Wordsworth, from the crowd
Half hid in light, half veiled in cloud?
A sphere-born Milton, cold and proud,
In hallowing dews
Dipt, and with gorgeous ritual vowed
Unto the Muse?

THE TOMB OF BURNS

Nay, none of these,—and little skilled
On heavenly heights to sing and build!
Thine, thine, O Earth, whose fields he tilled,
 And thine alone,
Was he whose fiery heart lies stilled
 'Neath yonder stone.

He came when poets had forgot
How rich and strange the human lot;
How warm the tints of Life; how hot
 Are Love and Hate;
And what makes Truth divine, and what
 Makes Manhood great.

A ghostly troop, in pale amaze
They melted 'neath that living gaze,—
His in whose spirit's gusty blaze
 We seem to hear
The crackling of their phantom bays
 Sapless and sere!

For, 'mid an age of dust and dearth,
Once more had bloomed immortal worth.
There, in the strong, splenetic North,
 The Spring began.
A mighty mother had brought forth
 A mighty man.

No mystic torch through Time he bore,
No virgin veil from Life he tore;
His soul no bright insignia wore
 Of starry birth;
He saw what all men see—no more—
 In heaven and earth:

THE TOMB OF BURNS

But as, when thunder crashes nigh,
All darkness opes one flaming eye,
And the world leaps against the sky,—
 So fiery-clear
Did the old truths that we pass by
 To him appear.

How could he 'scape the doom of such
As feel the airiest phantom-touch
Keenlier than others feel the clutch
 Of iron powers,—
Who die of having lived so much
 In their large hours ?

He erred, he sinned : and if there be
Who, from his hapless frailties free,
Rich in the poorer virtues, see
 His faults alone,—
To such, O Lord of Charity,
 Be mercy shown !

Singly he faced the bigot brood,
The meanly wise, the feebly good ;
He pelted them with pearl, with mud ;
 He fought them well,—
But ah, the stupid million stood,
 And he—he fell !

All bright and glorious at the start,
'Twas his ignobly to depart,
Slain by his own too affluent heart,
 Too generous blood ;
A voyager that lost Life's chart
 In midmost flood.

THE TOMB OF BURNS

So closes the fantastic fray,
The duel of the spirit and clay!
So come bewildering disarray
 And blurring gloom,
The irremediable day
 And final doom.

So passes, all confusedly
As lights that hurry, shapes that flee
About some brink we dimly see,
 The trivial, great,
Squalid, majestic tragedy
 Of human fate.

Not ours to gauge the more or less,
The will's defect, the blood's excess,
The earthy humours that oppress
 The radiant mind.
His greatness, not his littleness,
 Concerns mankind.

A dreamer of the common dreams,
Here, 'mid the world that round us streams,
He chased the transitory gleams
 That all pursue ;
But on his lips the eternal themes
 Again were new.

With shattering ire or withering mirth
He smote each worthless claim to worth.
The barren fig-tree cumbering Earth
 He would not spare.
Through ancient lies of proudest birth
 He drove his share.

THE TOMB OF BURNS

To him the Powers that formed him brave,
Yet weak to breast the fatal wave,
A mighty gift of Hatred gave,—
 A gift above
All other gifts benefic, save
 The gift of Love.

He saw 'tis meet that Man possess
The will to curse as well as bless,
To pity—and be pitiless,
 To make, and mar ;
The fierceness that from tenderness
 Is never far.

And so his fierce and tender strain
Lives, and his idlest words remain
To flout oblivion, that in vain
 Strives to destroy
One lightest record of his pain
 Or of his joy.

And though thrice statelier names decay,
His own can wither not away
While plighted lass and lad shall stray
 Among the broom,
Where evening touches glen and brae
 With rosy gloom ;

While Hope and Love with Youth abide ;
While Age sits at the ingleside ;
While yet there have not wholly died
 The heroic fires,
The patriot passion, and the pride
 In noble sires ;

THE TOMB OF BURNS

While, with the conquering Teuton breed
Whose fair estate of speech and deed
Heritors north and south of Tweed
 Alike may claim,
The dimly mingled Celtic seed
 Flowers like a flame ;

While nations see in holy trance
That vision of the world's advance
Which glorified his countenance
 When from afar
He hailed the Hope that shot o'er France
 Its crimson star ;

While, plumed for flight, the Soul deplures
The cage that foils the wing that soars ;
And while, through adamantine doors
 In dreams flung wide,
We hear, around these mortal shores,
 The immortal tide.

1895

TEMPEST

UNDER the dark and piny steep
We watched the storm crash by :
We saw the bright brand leap and leap
Out of the shattered sky.

The elements were minist'ring
To make one mortal blest ;
For, peal by peal, you did but cling
The closer to his breast.

1890

THE FISHER

THE Fisher is a warrior :
His camp is on the foam.
And he returns from victory,
Bringing his captives home.

Home he brings his captives,
Beauteous to behold,
Some in silver armour,
Some in mail of gold.



A brief truce, and to-morrow
Again the chanceful field!—
Where the burnished legions all night long
Have glimmered, and flashed, and wheeled.

1904

O TO SAIL

○ TO sail with thee, my dear,
Under headlands high and sheer,
At the mellow hour of daydroop when the lull
of eve is near!

O to sail away, and be
From the curse of care set free,
Far from heart-ache, far from heart-break, on the
great heart-healing sea.

1924

GIVE NOT TO ME

GIVE not to me, mid the thunder
And speed of the world's hot wheels,
Such love as perhaps the Marble
For the Alabaster feels.

But love me with love as fiery
As the furnace whence arose
Both Marble and Alabaster,
In the Earth's primeval throes.

1923

A TRIAL OF ORTHODOXY

[During the Massacres under Abd-ul-Hamid II]

THE clinging children at their mother's knee
Slain ; and the sire and kindred one by
one
Flayed or hewn piecemeal ; and things nameless
done,
Not to be told : while imperturbably
The nations gaze, where Rhine unto the sea,
Where Seine and Danube, Thames and Tiber
run,
And where great armies glitter in the sun,
And great kings rule, and man is boasted free !
What wonder if yon torn and naked throng
Should doubt a Heaven that seems to wink
and nod,
And having moaned at noontide, " Lord, how
long ? "
Should cry, " Where hidest Thou ? " at evenfall,
At midnight, " Is He deaf and blind, our God ? "
And ere day dawn, " Is He indeed at all ? "

1896

THE KNELL OF CHIVALRY

○ VANISHED morn of crimson and of
gold,
O youth and roselight and romance, wherein
I read of paynim and of paladin,
And Beauty snatched from ogre's dungeoned
hold!

Ever the recreant, then, in dust was rolled,
Ever the true knight in the joust did win,
Ever the scaly shape of monstrous Sin
At last lay vanquished, fold on writhing fold.
Was it all false, that world of princely deeds,
The splendid quest, the good fight ringing clear?
Yonder the Dragon ramps with fiery gorge,
Yonder the victim faints and gasps and bleeds;
But in his merry England our St. George
Sleeps a dull sleep, beside his idle spear.

1896

TO THE SULTAN ABD-UL-HAMID II

[During his Massacres]

CALIPH, I did thee wrong. I hailed thee
late
“Abdul the Damned,” and would recall my
word.

It merged thee with the unillustrious herd
Who crowd the approaches to the infernal gate—
Spirits gregarious, equal in their state
As is the innumerable ocean bird,
Gannet or gull, whose wandering plaint is heard
On Ailsa or Iona desolate.

For, in a world where cruel deeds abound,
The merely damned are legion : with such souls
Is not each hollow and cranny of Tophet
crammed ?

Thou with the brightest of Hell's aureoles
Dost shine supreme, incomparably crowned,
Immortally, beyond all mortals, damned.

1896

TO THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH,
IN ANSWER TO HIS SONNET
“ON READING ‘THE PURPLE EAST’”

||DLE the churlish leagues 'twixt you and me,
|| Singer most rich in charm, most rich in
 grace!

What though I cannot see you face to face?
Allow my boast, that one in blood are we!
One by that secret consanguinity
Which binds the children of melodious race,
And knows not the crude accident of place,
And cold interposition of the sea.
You are my noble kinsman in the lyre:
Forgive the kinsman's freedom that I use,
Adventuring these imperfect thanks, who late,
Singing a people's woe, in wonder and ire,—
Against me half the wise and all the great,—
Sang not alone, for with me was your muse.

1896

EUROPE AT THE PLAY

○ LANGUID audience, met to see
The last act of the tragedy
On that terrific stage afar,
Where burning towns the footlights are,—
O listless Europe, day by day
Callously sitting out the play!

So sat, with loveless count'nance cold,
Round the arena, Rome of old.
Pain, and the ebb of life's red tide,
So, with a calm regard, she eyed,
Her gorgeous vesture, million-pearled,
Splashed with the blood of half the world.
High was her glory's noon: as yet
She had not dreamed her sun could set!
As yet she had not dreamed how soon
Shadows should vex her glory's noon.
Another's pangs she counted nought;
Of human hearts she took no thought;
But in dread nightfall, vengeance vast
Whetted its hungry scythe at last.

Perchance in tempest and in blight,
On Europe, too, shall fall the night!
She sees the victim overborne,
By worse than ravening lions torn.

EUROPE AT THE PLAY

She sees, she hears, with soul unstirred,
And lifts no hand, and speaks no word,
But vaunts a brow like theirs who deem
Men's wrongs a phrase, men's rights a dream.
Yet haply she shall learn, too late,
In some blind hurricane of Fate,
How fiercely alive the things
She held as fool's imaginings,
And, though circuitous and obscure,
The feet of Nemesis how sure.

1897

INDIA'S GUEST

[H.R.H. The Prince of Wales]

YOUNG Heir to an old, old throne! Your
wandering prow,
'Neath many a wandering star,
Hath carried you erenow
Far westward, southward far;
And far into the hearts of men beside
Have been those voyagings wide.
At last, far eastward faring, you behold,
Under a heaven of vehement breath and hue,
Whose Day is fire of fire and gold of gold,
The home of all things ancient, all things new:
Great India, where, by mart and wharf and street,
By mosque or shrine, or mighty stream that
pours
Its sacred waters between sacred shores,
Europe's and Asia's dreams so strangely meet;
And where the never-mingling faiths, that make
In unlike temples an unchanged abode,
Tell by what differing cups do mortals slake
The same deep thirst for God.

Guest of this ocean-seated, mountain-crowned
Mother of half Earth's tongues: on plain and
hill,

INDIA'S GUEST

Within her vast sea-bound,
So many are the peoples that did found
Famed cities, and so many and renowned
The Princedoms, their inheritors seeming still
Garbed as in fable and as in song bepearled,
That while you tread this million-memoried
ground

'Tis not a land salutes you but a world!—
A world mysterious, bafflingly involved,
Multiplex, full of labyrinths obscure,
Full of enigmas not so wholly solved
As to be shorn of puissance to allure,
Yet from its cloistral bosom greeting now
You of the frank and the transparent brow,
You of the countenance like an open book,
Wherein, how curiously soe'er we look,
Nought may we read but things seemly and
pure :

Kindliness, courtesy, honour and truth: the
things
That, more than purple, adorn the sons of
Kings,
And, more than arms, empower a throne to
endure.

Ah, Heaven be thanked that suchlike things
as these
Are the unponderous, the unmassive keys
That ope great doors with a most golden ease!
And the great doors of India's soul, that are
Closed to mere Might as with a mystic bar,
If Charm draw nigh seem left at least ajar.
Within, what is't we see?

INDIA'S GUEST

Moods and emotions evermore apart
From all the way and wont o' the western heart !
And as we look on deeps we have never spanned,
There comes the thought—Perhaps 'twere well
if we

Loved less to overawe than to understand :
To have true sight and very touch at last
Of this that far in an unfathomed Past
Rose and had Dayspring for its ancestry,
This Soul of the East, majestic, grave, sedate,
Grandiose of mien : a Spirit from ours aloof,
Yet knitted and beravelled with the woof
Of all our wondrous fate.

1921

THE BATTLEFIELDS OF THE FUTURE

THOUGH gone the ancient gear of War—
 though men

 Fight not with axe, and mace, and clanging
 targe—

Still does the ancient war-rage goad them, when
 The bugles sound a charge.

To that primæval passion may we yet
 Give ampler range, in fields of vaster marge !
'Gainst War itself, when *this* war passes, let
 Our bugles sound a charge.

1918

THE VOICE FROM DREAMLAND

THY voice from inmost dreamland calls ;
The wastes of sleep thou makest fair ;
Bright o'er the ridge of darkness falls
The cataract of thy hair.

The morn renews its golden birth :
Thou with the vanquished night dost fade ;
And leav'st the ponderable earth
Less real than thy shade.

1889

THE PROTEST

BID me no more to other eyes
With wandering worship fare,
And weave my numbers garland-wise
To crown another's hair.
On me no more a mandate lay
Thou wouldst not have me to obey!

Bid me no more to leave unkissed
That rose-wreathed porch of pearl.
Shall I, where'er the winds may list,
Give them my life to whirl?
Perchance too late thou wilt be fain
Thy exile to recall—in vain.

Bid me no more from thee depart,
For in thy voice to-day
I hear the tremor of thy heart
Entreating me to stay;
I hear . . . nay, silence tells it best,
O yielded lips, O captive breast!

1891

THE FELLS

GUEST of this lone abode, before thee
rise

No frozen summits, that arrogantly aloof
Cannot forget their own magnificence
And greatness ; but withal a brotherhood
As Alp or Atlas noble, in port and mien.
Do homage to these suavely eminent ones.
But privy to their bosoms wouldst thou be,
There is a vale whose seaward-parted lips
Murmur eternally some half-divulged
Reluctant secret, where thou mayst o'erhear
The mountains interchange their confidences,
Peak with his kindred peak, that think aloud
Their broad and lucid thoughts in liberal day.
Thither repair alone : the mountain heart
Not two may enter. Thence returning, tell
What thou hast heard. And 'mid the laurelled
souls
Of poets divine, place shall be found for thee.

1897

THE MIGHTY DENIER

WELL he slumbers, greatly slain,
Who in splendid battle dies ;
Deep his sleep in midmost main
Pillowed upon pearl who lies.

Ease, of all good gifts the best,
War and wave at last decree ;
Love alone denies us rest,
Crueller than sword or sea.

1889

THE SAINT AND THE SATYR

[Mediæval Legend]

SAINT ANTHONY the eremite
He wandered in the wold,
And there he saw a hoofèd wight
That blew his hands for cold.

“What dost thou here in misery,
That better far wert dead?”
The eremite Saint Anthony
Unto the Satyr said.

“Lorn in the wold,” the thing replied,
“I sit and make my moan,
For all the gods I loved have died,
And I am left alone.

“Silent, in Paphos, Venus sleeps,
And Jove, on Ida, mute;
And every living creature weeps
Pan and his perished flute.

“The Faun, his laughing heart is broke;
The nymph, her fountain fails;
And driven from out the hollow oak
The Hamadryad wails.

THE SAINT AND THE SATYR

“ A God more beautiful than mine
Hath conquered mine, they say.—
Ah, to that fair young God of thine,
For me I pray thee pray ! ”

1893

THE EASIEST REVENGE

IF one who lacks no just applause, and who
Stands like a living simile of success,
Should yet have sought to pierce me through
and through
With his renowned pen-poniard, o'er and o'er,
Should I forgive him? Yes!
Nothing could cost me less,
Or gall *him* more.

1921

ROME AND ANOTHER

SHE asked for all things ; and dominion such
As never man had known,
The gods first gave ; then lightly, touch by
touch,
O'erthrew her seven-hilled throne.

Imperial Power, that hungerest for the globe,
Restrain thy conquering feet,
Lest the same Fates that spun thy purple robe
Should weave thy winding-sheet.

1903

THE MARBLE FOUNTAIN

IN calm and tempest, in shine and shade,
On a faultless emerald lawn,
A marble fountain for ever played,
From dawn unto magic dawn.

No rainbow'd bliss had the fountain lacked,
And its gaiety nought could mar,
Till it heard the Voice of the Cataract
In an Alpine gorge afar.

“With thunder of battle, in glory and gloom,
I have torn,” said the torrent, “my way.”
And the fountain murmured, “My cruel doom
Is to play—and play—and play.”

1925

A WORD WITH FORTUNE

II NEVER ask to live and bask
In sunlight splendid.
Give me my share of foul and fair
Till life be ended.

When knaves prevail I do not wail
And rend my raiment.
I bide the day when haply they
Shall reap due payment.

I nurse no spleen 'gainst Powers unseen,
Ev'n if they leave me
Torn to and fro 'twixt bliss and woe
Till Earth receive me.

1924

TO AMERICA, CONCERNING
ENGLAND

ART thou her child, born in the proud
midday
Of her large soul's abundance and excess,
Her daughter and her mightiest heritress,
Dowered with her thoughts, and lit on thy great
way
By her great lamps that shine and fail not?
Yea!
And at this thunderous hour of struggle and
stress,
Hither across the ocean wilderness
What word comes frozen on the frozen spray?
Neutrality! The tiger from his den
Springs at thy mother's throat, and canst thou
now
Watch with a stranger's gaze? So be it, then!
Thy loss is more than hers; for, bruised and
torn,
She shall yet live without thine aid, and thou
Without the crown divine thou might'st have
worn.

1915

TERMONDE

IN wrecked Termonde, that 'mid the tramp
and bellow
Of War's mad herd saw ruin on ruin piled,
The enemy had deflowered with havoc wild
A fair abode of Sculpture without fellow ;
And while the autumn sunlight rich and mellow
On Art's poor shattered glories sadly smiled,
There, still unmaimed, with her unwounded
child,
Leaned a serene Madonna of Donatello.
O'er a fledged Hermes, lord of speed and spoil—
O'er a bemired and fall'n Laocoön—
Near a prone Venus of the dust, she shone.
O'er winged Deceit, and Agony's serpent coil,
And Beauty born to inflame and to entoil,
Motherhood, scatheless, lived divinely on.

1915

TO A SCOTTISH FRIEND

AROUND your northern home, where never
cease

The ebb and flow of Nith, whose waters glide
Rich with their memories of the Muse ; whose
tide,

In haunts of moorfowl and the wandering fleece,
Down by Caerlaverock beyond old Dumfries,
To Solway brings its dowry, like a bride ;
There do the lowland mothers mourn with pride
The lowland sons, whom War hath lapped in
Peace.

But you—be nobly gladsome, seeing that what
Was great aforetime still disdains to fade :
The spirit perfervid of the heroic Scot,
Its fire unlulled, and hardly in earth allayed :
The ancient native prowess unforget,
Valour undrooped, and manhood undecayed.

1915

TO A SON OF WALES

SINCE first I saw your mountains long ago,
Dark behind Conway's or Carnarvon's
hold,
I have watched the Alps put on their evening
gold,
And morning kindle peaks of Afric snow ;
I have crossed Niagara's flood and Delaware's
flow,
And loitered 'midst Italian vinelands old,
And visited isles which the far deeps enfold,
Where Spain is ashes and a sunset-glow.
But lovely as in youth are yet to me
Mona's bleak fields and Glaslyn's torrent wave ;
And dearer now than ever their wild charm,
When hardy Wales pours forth her children free,
Hungering to aid her ancient Conqueror's arm
Lest Freedom's self reel to a blood-red grave.

1915

TRANQUIL LIBERTY

[“*Pax est tranquilla libertas.*”—CICERO]

PEACE is no peace when all its dream is war ;
Nor are repasts beneath the hair-swung
sword,
That awed in Syracuse the tyrant's board,
Such banquets as the peoples hunger for.
Not to Europa's bull need toreador
Wave scarlet provocation ; and Accord
Blooms ill from arsenals for ever stored
With mouths of death for ever in act to roar.
An areopagus of nations let
Men found hereafter, puissant to restrain
Flaunted armipotence, whether on earth or sea
Or the outraged air, and suchlike peace beget
As Tully envisioned ; peace itself being vain,
That is not also tranquil liberty.

1914

THE MAN WHO SAW

THE master weavers at the enchanted loom
Of Legend, weaving long ago those tales
Through which there wanders the grey thread
of truth,

Lost in the gorgeous arras of romance,
Tell how King Vortigern resolved to build
A Tower of Safety, 'mid the solitudes
That are the hem of the great druid robe
Of Snowdon, Mount of Eagles. So each day
The builders laboured, marrying stone to stone;
But ever in the night an adversary,
Invisible as malevolent, cancelled those
Cold nuptials, and with impish wanton rage
Shattered the walls. And thither, from beyond
That congress of grave mountains, met like seers
And bards august, though in a rivalry
Of silence rather than of song—from where
The vales are not so tranced with awe, nor yet
So far below the hilltops as to feel
Aching estrangement—fortune one day brought
A youth whose very brow was a command.
His name of Merlin had not clambered then
To fearsome greatness, like a dusky star;
Yet ev'n thus early his subduing eyes
Seemed to have known all things in life but tears;

THE MAN WHO SAW

And standing where wrecked hopes bestrewed
the ground,
He said to them whose toil was shards and dust :
“ Go search beneath your tower’s foundations ;
there
Are the Unbuilders, busy while you build ;
The Undoers are there.” And every man
obeyed.
And digging deep, they found a hollow abysm,
Where waters gnawed the ribs of the Earth, and
sapped
Her sinews, till her frame tottered infirm ;
Where also monsters heaved their tumid bulk
In ancient ambush, and with tremors vast
Palsied those ramparts as they yearned to rise :
Blind dragon shapes, of blindest darkness born,
That save in darkness could not live an hour,
And, touched by Light, made their dull moan,
and died.

Such is the tale, which one, who chronicled
Old shadowy wars in sanctuaries of peace,
Found amid crumbled pomps, the hushed
domain
Of mildew, and the empire of the moth,
Nigh on eight hundred years ago. And now,
Out of that land where Snowdon night by night
Receives the confidences of lonesome stars,
And where Carnarvon’s ruthless battlements
Magnificently oppress the daunted tide,
There comes—no fabled Merlin, son of mist,
And brother to the twilight, but a man
Who in a time terrifically real

THE MAN WHO SAW

Is real as the time ; formed for the time ;
Not much beholden to the munificent Past,
In mind or spirit, but frankly of this hour ;
No faggot of perfections, angel or saint,
Created faultless and intolerable ;
No meeting-place of all the heavenlinesses ;
But eminently a man to stir and spur
Men, to afflict them with benign alarm,
Harass their sluggish and uneager blood,
Till, like himself, they are hungry for the goal ;
A man with something of the cragginess
Of his own mountains, something of the force
That goads to their loud leap the mountain
streams.

And he too comes to bid the builders probe
Deep underneath the Tower of Safety, lest
A pit lie cavernous and covert there,
A long baulked, ravening emptiness, a grave
That famishes for its expected food.
Nay, in his hands he takes the delver's spade,
Lays bare the hollow, o'er which to build at all
Were to build woe and ruin, and 'stablishes
A mightier tower, bastioned so broad and firm,
In life, in manhood, and in womanhood,
Founded upon so massy a human rock,
And with such living bulwarks against them
Who first poured death from where the lark
strews bliss,
That when, at last, ours shall be Triumph, though
Triumph perhaps too weary to rejoice,
Save with a mournful jubilation—when
Hate shall reel back from these embattled walls,

THE MAN WHO SAW

And having spent so long its hurtling bolts
With such poor thrift, shall stand before the stars
Bankrupt of thunder—then indeed shall Time
Add yet another name to those the world
Salutes with an obeisance of the soul :
The name of him, the man of Celtic blood,
Whom Powers Unknown, in a divine caprice,
Chose and did make their instrument, wherewith
To save the Saxon : the man all eye and hand,
The man who saw, and grasped, and gripped,
and held.

Then shall each morrow with its yesterday
Vie, in the honour of nobly honouring him,
Who found us lulled and blindfold by the verge
Of fathomless perdition and haled us back.
And poets shall dawn in pearl and gold of
speech,

Crowning his deed with not less homage, here
On English ground, than yonder whence he
rose :

Yonder where crash the cataracts through the
chasms,

And unto the dark tempests the dark hills
Offer their stubborn sides all gored, but keep
A heart invincible and impregnable ;
While with long arm and piercing spear the sea
Thrusts far into the valleys, that of old
Heard the twin raptures of the harp and sword,
The heroic strife, and the heroic strings,
Amid the battling torrents, and beneath
The happier peaks, that without strife, prevail.

1917

THE BATTLE OF THE BIGHT

[The naval action in the Bight of Heligoland,
Aug. 28, 1914]

AS rose the misty sun,
Our men the North Sea scanned,
And each rejoicing gun
Welcomed a foe at hand,
And longed, from thunderous throat,
To sound for all afloat
The world-awakening note
The world can understand.

For ev'n as birds of night,
Hoary and tawny owl,
Do sometimes brave the light,
Like bolder, nobler fowl,
So did the foe that day
Come venturing forth for prey,—
Yonder, in goodly array,
On ocean foam to prowl.

But brief and plain, 'mid men
Not born to yield or flee,
Our cannon spoke out then
The speech that keeps us free,

THE BATTLE OF THE BIGHT

And battered, with hoarse boom,
Four warships to their doom,
While one, to a lonelier tomb,
Fled blazing down the sea.

Sleep on, O Drake, sleep well,
In days not wholly dire!
Grenville, whom nought could quell,
Unquenched is still thy fire.
And thou that hadst no peer,
Nelson, thou need'st not fear!
Thy sons and heirs are here,
Nor have they shamed their sire.

1914

DOMINE, QUO VADIS ?

[A Legend]

AGAINST the azure roof of Nero's world,
From smouldering Rome the smoke of
ruin curled ;
And the fierce populace went clamouring—
“ These Christian dogs, 'tis they have done
this thing ! ”
So to the wild wolf Hate were sacrificed
The panting, huddled flock whose crime was
Christ.

Now Peter lodged in Rome, and rose each
morn
Looking to be ere night in sunder torn,
Or haled to crucifixion, or by fire
Slain at the altar of a people's ire.
And unto him, their towering rocky hold,
Repaired those sheep of his great Master's fold
Upon whose fleece as yet no blood or foam
Bare witness to the ravening fangs of Rome.
“ Lighter than chaff,” they cried, “ we hold
our lives,
And rate them cheap as dust the whirlwind
drives :

DOMINE, QUO VADIS?

As chaff they are winnowed and as dust they are
blown ;

Nay, they are nought ; but priceless is thine
own.

Not in yon streaming shambles must thou die ;
We counsel, we entreat, we charge thee, fly ! ”
And Peter answered brief : “ My place is here ;
Through the dread storm, this ship of Christ
I steer.”

Then one stood forth, the flashing of whose
soul

Enraged his presence like an aureole.

“ Let us,” he cried, “ be in the wine-press trod,
And poured a beverage for the lips of God.

Behold, the Church hath other use for thee ;

Thy safety is her safety, thou must flee.

Ours be the glory at her call to die,

But quick and whole God needs His great
ally.”

And Peter said : “ Do lords of spear and shield

Thus leave their hosts uncaptured in the field,

And from some mount of prospect watch afar

The havoc of the hurricane of war ?

Yet, if He wills it. . . . Nay, my task is plain,—

To serve, and to endure, and to remain.

But frail of spirit I stand before you all.

Ah, prop me Thou, lest at a breath I fall.”

There knelt a noble youth at Peter’s feet :

Ev’n as a viol’s voice, his voice was sweet.

He said : “ My sire and brethren yesterday

The heathen did with ghastly torments slay.

DOMINE, QUO VADIS?

An offering richer yet, can Heaven require?
O live, and be my brethren and my sire."
And Peter answered: "Son, there is small need
That thou exhort me to the easier deed.
Rather I would that thou and these had lent
Strength to uphold, not shatter, my intent.
Already my resolve is shaken sore.
I pray thee, if thou love me, say no more."

And even as he spake, he went apart,
Somewhat to hide the brimming of his heart,
Wherein a voice came flitting to and fro,
That now said "Tarry!" and anon said "Go!"
And louder every moment, "Go!" it cried,
And "Tarry!" to a whisper sank, and died.
And as a leaf when summer is o'erpast
Hangs trembling ere it fall in some chance
blast,
So hung his trembling purpose and fell dead;
And he arose, and hurried forth, and fled
To the Campania glimmering wide and still,
And strove to think he did his Master's will.

And darkness fell, and mocking Shapes
pursued,
And with blind hands he fought a phantom
brood.
Doubts, like a swarm of gnats, o'erhung his
flight,
And "Lord," he prayed, "have I not done
aright?
Can I not, living, more avail for Thee
Than whelmed in yon red storm of agony?"

DOMINE, QUO VADIS ?

The tempest, it shall pass, and I remain,
Not from its fiery sickle saved in vain.
Are there no seeds to sow, no desert lands
Waiting the tillage of these eager hands,
That I should beastlike 'neath the butcher fall,
And fruitlessly as oxen from the stall?
Is earth so easeful, is men's hate so sweet,
Are thorns so welcome unto sleepless feet,
Have death and heaven so feeble lures, that I,
Choosing to live, should win rebuke thereby?
Not mine the dread of pain, the lust of bliss!
Master who judgest, have I done amiss?"

Lo, on the darkness brake a wandering ray:
A vision flashed along the Appian Way.
Divinely in the pagan night it shone—
A mournful Face—a Figure hurrying on—
Though haggard and dishevelled, frail and worn,
A King, of David's lineage, crowned with thorn.
"Lord, whither farest?" Peter, wondering,
cried.
"To Rome," said Christ, "to be re-crucified."

Into the night the vision ebb'd like breath;
And Peter turned, and rushed on Rome and death.

1894

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

I

HIGHER than heaven they sit,
Life and her consort Law ;
And One whose countenance lit
In mine more perfect awe,
Fain had I deemed their peer,
Beside them throned above :
Ev'n him who casts out fear,
Unconquerable Love.
Ah, 'twas on earth alone that I his beauty saw.

II

On earth, in homes of men,
In hearts that crave and die.
Dwells he not also, then,
With Godhead, throned on high ?
This and but this I know :
His face I see not there :
Here find I him below,
Nor find him elsewhere ;
Born of an aching world, Pain's bridegroom,
Death's ally.

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

III

Did Heaven vouchsafe some sign
That through all Nature's frame
Boundless ascent benign
Is everywhere her aim,
Such as man hopes it here,
Where he from beasts hath risen,—
Then might I read full clear,
Ev'n in my sensual prison,
That Life and Law and Love are one symphonious
name.

IV

Such sign hath Heaven yet lent?
Nay, on this earth, are we
So sure 'tis real ascent
And very gain we see?
'Gainst Evil striving still,
Some spoils of war we wrest:
Not to discover Ill
Were haply state as blest.
We vaunt, o'er doubtful foes, a dubious victory.

V

In cave and bosky dene
Of old there crept and ran
The gibbering form obscene
That was and was not man.
The desert beasts went by
In fairer covering clad;
More speculative eye
The couchant lion had,
And goodlier speech the birds, than we when we
began.

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

VI

Was it some random throw
Of heedless Nature's die,
That from estate so low
Uplifted man so high?
Through untold æons vast
She let him lurk and cower:
'Twould seem he climbed at last
In mere fortuitous hour,
Child of a thousand chances 'neath the indifferent
sky.

VII

A soul so long deferred
In his blind brain he bore,
It might have slept unstirred
Ten million noontides more.
Yea, round him Darkness might
Till now her folds have drawn,
O'er that enormous night
So casual came the dawn,
Such hues of hap and hazard Man's Emergence
wore!

VIII

If, then, our rise from gloom
Hath this capricious air,
What ground is mine to assume
An upward process *there*,
In yonder worlds that shine
From alien tracts of sky?
Nor ground to assume is mine
Nor warrant to deny.
Equal, my source of hope, my reason for despair.

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

IX

And though within me here
Hope lingers unsubdued,
'Tis because airiest cheer
Suffices for her food!
As some adventurous flower,
On savage crag-side grown,
Seems nourished hour by hour
From its wild self alone,
So lives inveterate Hope, on her own hardihood.

X

She tells me, whispering low:
"Wherefore and whence thou wast,
Thou shalt behold and know
When the Great Bridge is crossed.
For not in mockery He
Thy gift of wondering gave,
Nor bade thine answer be
The blank stare of the grave.
Thou shalt behold and know; and find again
thy lost."

XI

With rapt eyes fixed afar,
She tells me: "Throughout Space,
Godward each peopled star
Runs with thy Earth a race.
Wouldst have the goal so nigh,
The course so smooth a field,
That Triumph should thereby
One half its glory yield?
And can Life's pyramid soar all apex and no
base?"

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

XII

She saith : " Old dragons lie
In bowers of pleasance curled ;
And dost thou ask me why ?
It is a Wizard's world !
Enchanted princes these,
Who yet their scales shall cast,
And through his sorceries
Die into kings at last.
Ambushed in Winter's heart the rose of June is
furled."

XIII

Such are the tales she tells :
Who trusts, the happier he :
But nought of *virtue* dwells
In that felicity !
I think the harder feat
Were his who should *withstand*
A voice so passing sweet,
And so profuse a hand.—
Hope, I forgo the wealth thou fling'st abroad
so free !

XIV

Carry thy largess hence,
Light Giver ! Let me learn
To abjure the opulence
I have done nought to earn ;
And on this world no more
To cast ignoble slight,
Counting it but the door
Of other worlds more bright.
Here, where I fail or conquer, here is my
concern :

THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

XV

Here, where perhaps alone
I conquer or I fail.
Here, o'er the dark Deep blown,
I ask no perfumed gale ;
I ask the unpampering breath
That fits me to endure
Chance, and victorious Death,
Life, and my doom obscure,
Who know not whence I am sped, nor to what
port I sail.

1897

THY PASSIONATE BREAST

THY passionate breast, thy ruthful brow,
Thine eyes, the sisters of the sea—
Thy form and countenance—are they thou?
Nay, but the fair, fit home of thee.

O head and neck like flower and stem,
O sweeter voice than any bird's—
Lovely the bezel of the gem,
Lovelier the jewel it engirds.

1922

THE TEST OF THE BARDS

FRIEND, wouldst thou put thy poets to the
proof,
Read them where rolls the moorland, or the
main!

Not light will be their ordeal, thus to stand
Pitted against the huge things of the earth,
And tested hard, by the all-searching sky.
Then, if indeed they bear their trial unshamed,
Grudge not the glory, the often bitter glory,
The coveted uncovetable crown,
Which they with toil and battle and wounds
did earn.

1924

THE ELOPING ANGELS

[A Caprice]

To my old friend and ever chivalrous champion, Coulson Kernahan, I here dedicate this poem, written (in its original form) when I was his neighbour on the Essex coast in 1892, and published somewhat prematurely with a hundred necessary corrections and castigations unmade. That omission has recently been in great measure repaired, after an interval long enough to have allowed me virtually to forget the "Caprice" itself. Indeed "repaired" is an understatement, this new version, almost throughout, being really new verse. Had not such been the case I could hardly have had the temerity to make so keen-eyed yet generous-minded a critic this little offering.

W. W.

FAUST and his Mephistopheles, until
Night had long passed its prime, sat grave
of brow.
"All fruitage have we plucked," said Faust,
"at will—
The unhallowed sorts most often; and
ere now,
In the ennobling study of all things ill,
Little less diligent have I been than thou."
He paused, and then, to him of demon-kind,
In forthright speech, unmuffled thus his mind:

THE ELOPING ANGELS

“ Ne’er shall I grudge thee thy just praise !
Thou art
A devil of exceeding rich resource ;
A veteran player of many a darksome part !
A nimble dodger of all hostile Force !
Thou carriest folded in thy brain a chart
Of Worlds and Systems and each planet’s
course.
Canst not procure us, by thy wit’s rare power,
Admission into Heaven for half an hour ? ”

Reply came leisurely. “ You underrate
The impediments—and the hardships ! They’re
no jest.
Saint Peter wallows in routine. A weight
Of merciless etiquette whelms the unpractised
guest.
You can’t sneeze but as precedents dictate,
And red tape seems the ruin of all the Blest.
Still, as your thoughts now take a heavenward way,
We’ll follow—ere the first young leer of Day.”

So, by demonic Power upborne, these twain
Mounted through desert Space and the steep
night.
They saw the world that half resents man’s reign
Shrink to a spark. They soared from height
to height,
Till, in far reaches of the unmapped Inane,
Such domed and towered magnificence met
their sight
As leaves all fancies pale, all fables cold,
Beggaring Dreamland and its courts of gold.

THE ELOPING ANGELS

To a breach and orifice in the Heavenly Wall—
An outlook on infinity—they came,
Mephisto saying: “Between ourselves, I call
This escapade a frolic rather tame.
My own concern with Paradise is small,
And yours—forgive my plainness—much the
same.

In fact, exploratory zeal so free
From all self-interest I scarce ever see.

But,” he went on, “we will without debate
Pass through this entrance narrow and
shadowy-hued,
Reaching, as soon as by the accustomed gate,
The bowers and palaces of beatitude.
Our Merits, here, none questions: here we wait
No janitor’s whim: and best of all, we elude
That white light of publicity, whose glow
I never yet have courted, as you know.”

“Soft!” answered Faust. “I hear a voice
within,
And if it be not some enamoured youth,
Breathing rich heartwords to his heart’s sweet
kin
While prisoning her white bosom—then,
forsooth,
Thou’rt not the adroit Ambassador of Sin,
Nor I a hunter of the fleet deer, Truth.
Nay, sure enough. . . . What an entrancing
pair! . . .
Such grace! . . . And the dark wonders of
her hair!”

THE ELOPING ANGELS

He erred not far. These angels were indeed
Two human lovers, who, by an uncalm fate,
Full early from the yoke of life being freed,
Renewed their vows in that celestial state.
Now Faust was of a gentlemanly breed,
Whate'er his sins ; and murmuring, " I should
hate
To be a spy at tender scenes like this,"
He broke, with a kind suddenness, on their
bliss.

" Fair, spotless Beings ! Perfections nigh divine !
Behold," he said, " two wanderers from a star
I think ye know,—a world whose glories shine
Lost beyond vision, so remote they are !
If ye will affably an ear incline,
Nor scorn discourse with travellers from afar,
Fain would we learn such news as may be given
Of aught that now is agitating Heaven."

" Friend, for such tidings you in vain apply
To me," the radiant Youth Angelic said.
" We live a life withdrawn, this Maid and I,
Nor love the life by other angels led—
All idle hymns of praise to the Most High.
Our one supreme desire is to be wed,
And we were even now concerting schemes
How to escape, and turn to truth our dreams.

For here, in Heaven, no marrying is, nor yet
Giving in marriage, and we dwell debarred
From that full tie whereon our hearts are set :
An interdict assuredly most hard.

THE ELOPING ANGELS

Earthward we long to hasten, but we fret
At one thing that may all our plans retard,
To wit, this garb angelic, which on earth
May cause rude comment, if not ruder mirth."

"Tut!" said Faust's pilot, to these lovers
fond;

"Exchange apparel with my friend and me!
When your pure forms our raiment shall have
donned—

'Tis of a simple grace, as you may see—
Then, through the blank untenanted deeps,
beyond

This slightly crude Elysium, earthward flee!
My benison shall accompany you. And now
We will effect the exchange, if you'll allow."

When Power Infernal would with Innocence
deal,

Can Innocence bargain? By satanic aid,
Faust, ere he knows, appears from head to heel
Clad in the habit of the Angel Maid,
She in his own. Mephisto seems to feel
Deep peace, being suddenly like the Saints
arrayed.

And as to the Angel Lover, he stands dressed
In garments from a wardrobe most unblest.

So Faust and his dark minister and ally
Entered—incognito—where seraphs dwell.
"Time gallops," said Mephistopheles, "and I
Have anxious duties that must soon compel

THE ELOPING ANGELS

My abrupt departure from a tranquil sky
Perhaps to the more strenuous air of Hell.
Meanwhile, I doubt if Heaven has changed one
whit
Since its great crisis, the historic Split."

But leave we yonder, high o'er earthly care,
Faust and that ripe though sulphurous sage,
his guide,
And follow Love's bright fugitives, in their
Ethereal passionate journey side by side.
They, through Immensity's Saharas bare,
Sped without halt, and soon this orb espied,
Hung like a goblin lamp, with impish gleam,
'Mid the wild strangeness of the Cosmic Scheme.

She, on the earth, a village girl, and he
A prince had been. 'Twas pure romance of
love,
Idyllic and ideal as could be,
Cold prudence and expedience far above.
And when he fell by a hireling dagger, she
Could not survive him, poor disconsolate
dove!
And now on earth they stepped once more, and
met
The ghosts of old dead kisses deathless yet.

Night had evanished, morn possessed the
sky ;
The ploughman was already at his plough.
"Unto my father's palace let us hie,"
Said the returning prince. "Another, now,

THE ELOPING ANGELS

Reigns in his stead, but cheerfully will I
Serve him, and loyally to his sceptre bow ;
And us, I doubt not, he will entertain,—
Strayed earthlings, welcomed home to Earth
again.”

So to that palace—a dark scowl of stone—
They with their thoughts repaired ; and having
failed
In no observance meet, they approached the throne.
But the poor haunted King in terror quailed,
Shrieking, “ More spectres ! Out, ye wraiths,
begone !
Has none of all my exorcists availed
To rid me of these phantom plagues, that make
Life a dread dream, whether I sleep or wake ? ”

Then, with strange questions in their eyes, the
twain
Went musing from that presence, little loth
The presence of the guiltless fields to gain.
And she, sweet queen of his rich love and
troth,
Said, very softly : “ Dearest, wilt thou deign
To seek my father’s cottage, where for both
Shall room and welcome be ? For he doth own
A heart more royal than aught on yonder throne.”

Unto her father’s cot they took their way.
They found him leaning on his gate, white-
haired,
Full of the memory of a former day.
Calmly he greeted them, like one prepared

THE ELOPING ANGELS

For loftiest visitants, as who should say :
 “My son and daughter, that so far have
 fared,
I have expected you this many a year.
Enter and rest, my son and daughter dear.”

And entering in, they veiled their heavenly
 sheen

 In homely vesture, and themselves resigned
To homely tasks. A milkmaid or a queen,
 Her had you deemed : an emperor him, or
 hind.

Noble of carriage and yet meek of mien—
 Immortals, thrilled with touch of mortal kind—
To notes of Earth they gave such tones as came
From some Tenth Sphere that puts the nine
 to shame.

And on Earth's breast, as angels, they remained,
 Yet more than angels, being lovers too ;
All their celestial loveliness retained,
 And hour by hour in earthly sweetness grew.
Thus lost they nothing of angelic, and gained
 Everything human save what men must rue,
Uniting all below with all above,
Linking the flowers and stars in secret love.

Yet theirs were many griefs, for evermore
 They made the pangs of other hearts their
 own,
Feeling all pain they saw ; and thus they bore
 The burden of the universal moan,

THE ELOPING ANGELS

Wept with all tears, and with all wounds were
sore.

But likewise all the joy by others known
Became their joy; and in the worldwide scale,
Pleasure, they found, o'er pain did still prevail.

But being deathless, ever 'twas their doom,
Loving their fellows, to lament them dead.
Age after age, they saw the opening tomb,
And saw it closed on a true comrade's head.
Yet what the grave took from them the world's
womb

Gave back: "For death is but a form," they
said,
"Birth a convention. Nought is less or more.
And Nature does but borrow to restore."

* * * * *

"I think," said Faust—alighting here below
From his adventurous translunary jaunt—
"This earth is still the goodliest place I know.
Tedious were any world whose habitants
flaunt
Always a vapid bliss where'er they go,
As do the *average* dwellers in that haunt
Where we have just been privileged to see
The abodes of unrelieved felicity."

"True," said his Fiendship, "if a trifle stale.
Well, on those foibles of the Saints who
spend
Their hours in amaranthine meadow and vale,
Let us look gently. Though they may offend

THE ELOPING ANGELS

Taste like our own, soon they'll be memories
pale!

Heaven has its charms—for some. But in
the end

'Twill be to a realm far differently devised
That thou'lt have need to grow—acclimatized.”

1892-1927

IN A LIBRARY

THE bard of Power,—the bard of Grace,—
Which shall be chief? Nay, why inquire?
Here they have proud but equal place
In the great peerage of the lyre.

To him who sumptuous wine adores,
No sovereign vintage comes amiss:
With the same reverence, he outpours
The ruddy or the golden bliss.

1924

CEASE, FOOLISH ROSEBUD

CEASE, foolish rosebud, cease unfolding
So fast thy bosom's guarded sweetness !
Thy charm was a most rich withholding ;
Thy beauty, a perfect incompleteness.

Ah, by thy youth to-day enchanted,
I must endure a honied sorrow,
Finding thy lovely self supplanted
By thy yet lovelier self to-morrow.

1924

FEUD

I

IN a crease of the forehead of Antrim, where
Time has written on stone
The tale of the endless debate of the obstinate
land and sea—
Those heirs of magnificent discord, that just
for a season agree
To compose their thunderous quarrel, but ever
at heart are prone
To harp on it night and day in a moody under-
tone,
And presently mutter a word that is dark with
wrath and bale,
And rouse from counterfeit sleep their fell
vendetta, and so
Return to the naked hate they were born in long
ago,
Reopen the wrangle of ages, resume the dear
dispute,
The controversy eternal that bears but death
for fruit,
As well from of old these haughty, implacable
brawlers know ;—
In a crease of the forehead of Antrim, where
Time has written that tale,

FEUD

I have found me a place that surely is musing
on ancient woe,
And remembers in dreams the tread of the
midnight foot of Doom :
A place where even the candours of noon seem
sinister things :
And there I have heard the ocean recitative roll
and boom,
The monotonous ocean soliloquy rumble morose
and low ;
The obscure beginning of storm, like a rustle
of huddled wings ;
The stroke of the great sea-hammer, awaking
with blow on blow
In the cavernous land such outcry as iron from
iron wrings ;
The clang of the shock of the waters that butted
with taurine roar
Against fallen Dunseveric, once the abode of
vengeful Kings ;
And the blind, mad panic in heaven when east-
ward the hurricane tore
By the marge where lorn Templastra dejected
ponders, and o'er
That fantasy, wild Ballintoy, on the steeps in
the lee of Bengore.

II

The Earth is watching and brooding ; the skies
are empty of speech.
I will learn, of whatever is wordless, whatever
it has to teach.

FEUD

The spent tide flags and recoils. Like gifts
unused and waste
Is the many-tinted seaweed that strews the
Atlantic beach.
I will climb the track to westward, where bards
of old have paced,
Whose songs are asleep by cromlech and menhir
and haunted mound.
I will follow the path that leads to the Way of
the Giants, around
By the Amphitheatre vast, with its tiers of cliff,
where rise
The column'd shafts of basalt like organ-pipes
to the skies,
Outrolling a fugal silence, involved, impassioned,
profound.
'Tis the path that gropes and crawls on the lean
rock's wasted side,
Where nightly the Giant's Loom by invisible
hands is plied.
And east and west are the caverns, their dark
roofs arched and groined,
The chambers and vaulted dungeons and mon-
strous crypts of the sea :
And pillars, fallen and prostrate, from ^{the} mighty
façades disjoined—
Released, but in utter abjection, unbound, but
vainly free ;
And desolate ruined holds of many a chief and
King ;
And the mastersong of disunion that earth and
ocean sing ;

FEUD

And large and bold on the headlands the manu-
script of Time ;
And coiled with the roots of the world, where
Life thrusts up like a tree,
The Powers that rive and sunder, unmoved by
appeal or plea ;
The Powers that shatter with discord what
else were a golden chime ;
The Estrangeing Ones, the dividers, the hewers
in twain from the prime ;
The Unmakers and Destroyers, whatever their
names may be.

1917

IN LALEHAM CHURCHYARD

[The burial-place of Matthew Arnold]

'T WAS at this season, year by year,
The singer who lies songless here
Was wont to woo a less austere,
Less deep repose,
Where Rotha to Winandermere
Unresting flows,—

Flows through a land where torrents call
To far-off torrents as they fall,
And mountains in their cloudy pall
Keep ghostly state,
And Nature makes majestic
Man's lowliest fate.

There, 'mid the August glow, still came
He of the twice-illustrious name,
The loud impertinence of fame
Not loth to flee—
Not loth with brooks and fells to claim
Fraternity.

Linked with his happy youthful lot,
Is Loughrigg, then, at last forgot?
Nor silent peak nor dalesman's cot
Looks on his grave.
Lulled by the Thames he sleeps, and not
By Rotha's wave.

IN LALEHAM CHURCHYARD

'Tis fittest thus! for though with skill
He sang of beck and tarn and ghyll,
The deep, authentic mountain-thrill
 Ne'er shook his page!
Somewhat of worldling mingled still
 With bard and sage.

And 'twere less meet for him to lie
Guarded by summits lone and high
That traffic with the eternal sky
 And hear, unawed,
The everlasting fingers ply
 The loom of God,

Than, in this hamlet of the plain,
A less sublime repose to gain,
Where Nature, genial and urbane,
 To man defers,
Yielding to us the right to reign,
 Which yet is hers.

And nigh to where his bones abide,
The Thames with its unruffled tide
Seems like his genius typified,—
 Its strength, its grace,
Its lucid gleam, its sober pride,
 Its tranquil pace.

But ah! not his the eventual fate
Which doth the journeying wave await—
Doomed to resign its limpid state
 And quickly grow
Turbid as passion, dark as hate,
 And wide as woe.

IN LALEHAM CHURCHYARD

Rather, it may be, overmuch
He shunned the common stain and smutch,
From soilure of ignoble touch
 Too grandly free,
Too loftily secure in such
 Cold purity.

But he preserved from chance control
The fortress of his 'stabilisht soul ;
In all things sought to see the Whole ;
 Brooked no disguise ;
And set his heart upon the goal,
 Not on the prize ;

And with those few he shall survive
Who seem not to compete or strive,
Yet with the foremost still arrive,
 Prevailing still :
The Elect with whom the stars connive
 To work their will.

1890

VERSES TO THE DUCHESS OF
HAMILTON

[After the Death of Admiral Lord Fisher]

AT your Dungavel, solitary and high,
That looks o'er vales of tilth to mountains
barren,
And faintly sees against the western sky
The dark, far brows of Arran,—

There first I heard his voice, 'mid moorsides lone,
And last in haunts of the soft southland
weather,
Where daily your fair children and my own
Played on your lawns together.

His ageless eyes burned with unsquandered
power ;
His countenance, when that magic smile came
o'er it,
Was like a sea-crag breaking into flower
Though all the tempests gore it.

Famed, feared, and loved : with no proud riches,
save
A purer wealth than heaped and warded
treasure :
The rare and noble friendship that you gave
In most abounding measure ;—

VERSES TO THE DUCHESS OF HAMILTON

Such did I see him, such did he stand forth,
Catching the light of your own gentler
presence,
On those grave uplands of the stormy North,
Or 'mid your southern pleasance.

And I behold him still—though but in dream :
Fighting the thunderous battle his fate denied
him :
Fighting for England her dread fight supreme,
With her great soul beside him.

1920

THE DEATHLESS BLACKSMITH

'TIS the Tamer of Iron,
The wrestler whose thews
Were made for subduing
The Thing That Subdues.
In a splendour of darkness
Encaverned he stands,
Amid Pow'rs, amid Terrors,
The slaves of his hands.

Is he human and mortal,
With frailties like mine,
Or a demigod rather,
Of lineage divine?
For the fierce things and stubborn
Grow meek in his gaze.
The Fire loves to serve him;
The Iron obeys.

He is child of the daybreak,—
His furnaces roared
Ere yet the first ploughshare
Beheld the first sword;
And over far war-shout,
And over far pain,
The voice of his hammer
Comes pealing amain.

THE DEATHLESS BLACKSMITH

He labours where round him
The demonlight flares ;
He is patience that conquers
When fury despairs.
“ Whatsoever is mighty,”
He sings in his glee,
“ Twixt hammer and anvil
Was fashioned by me.”

And he smites with the sureness,
And moulds with the joy,
Of the gods that for pastime
Create and destroy ;—
The gods at whose bidding
The fuel was hurled
On the fires of the forges
Where shaped is the world.

1909

THE LUTE-PLAYER

SHE was a lady great and splendid,
I was a minstrel in her halls.
A warrior like a prince attended
Stayed his steed by the castle walls.

Far had he fared to gaze upon her.
"O rest thee now, Sir Knight," she said.
The warrior wooed, the warrior won her;
In time of snowdrops they were wed.
I made sweet music in his honour,
And longed to strike him dead.

I passed at midnight from her portal,
Throughout the world till death I rove:
Ah, let me make this lute immortal
With rapture of my hate and love!

1881

ON A CERTAIN GREAT POET

POET, thy strain, an Alpine cataract, leaps
From so remote and superhuman steeps,
It never finds the valley, but midway
Hangs beautifully lost upon the day ;
In iridescence lost, in vapour spent,
Yet made immortal in evanishment.

1901

CROSS BROW, AMBLESIDE

MY smallest daughter had wondered how
Her dear home came by its name, Cross
Brow :¹

Her home 'mid the meres, that loveliest seem,
In their autumn trance and their winter dream :
Her home at the feet of the mountains high,
That have entanglements with the sky.

So I told her how, in a time half known
And half forgotten, a Cross of Stone,
'Twixt field and fellside, here had stood—
More frail than a certain Cross of Wood ;
And how sweet souls that fared this way
May have halted before it to kneel and pray.

It is seen no longer, from dale or hill :
'Tis the Cross of Wood that is lasting still !
But here, in a world of pain and loss,
Where each must carry his destined cross,
A frolicsome child remembers now
Why the house she romps in is called Cross
Brow,
Though little indeed Life's gleeful morn
Can know of the Brow that was crowned with
thorn.

1921

¹ The author's dwelling at the time referred to.

THE EXILES

LOOK,—the New Rose is rich and fair.
She puts imperial raiment on.
She hath the large imperial air ;
But whither is the perfume gone ?

Banished afar, it fled on wings
That bore it hence in haste unmeet,
With all the other cast-out things
That kept life sweet.

1923

SCIENCE AND NESCIENCE

II THINK that notwithstanding all he knows,
The wonder of the sweetness of a rose,
The wonder of the wild heart of a song,
Shall shame man's foolish wisdom to the close.

The secrets of the gods are from of old
Guarded for ever and for ever told,—
Blabbed in all ears, but published in a tongue
Whose meaning the gods only can unfold.

1894

UTOPIA

A LIFE too great for folly,
In a world too wise for wine,
Is a life the saint or sage may love,
But I cannot boast it mine.

If all by law were sober,
And all by statute good,
I could not breathe the impeccable air—
And I would not if I could.

Nay, if denied for ever
All juice of grape or grain,
I'd leave this world to be destroyed
By water once again.

1924

THE SONGSTERS

SING, Nightingale ! There still be those who
take
Thy music to be sweet.
Chant thine old chant—till the new fashions make
All melody obsolete.

I cannot doubt that soon the corncrake's note
Shall be to thine preferred !
What then ? Sing on,—with thy still golden
throat,
Still tolerated bird !

1920

BEAUTEOUS FURY

GREAT and far Star, built yonder in gloom,
Art thou as tranquil as men might
conceive thee,
Mortals accurst with immortal desire?
Nay, in thy bosom no peace may bloom;
Passions convulse thee, rages upheave thee,
Thy birth was fury, thy life is fire,
Thou art oceans of violence, abysses of ire,
And dreadfulest Calm shall but signal thy doom,
When the wealth of thy fierceness for ever shall
leave thee,
And all that is Thou shall in ashes expire.

1919

LACRIMÆ MUSARUM

[The Death of Tennyson]

LOW, like another's, lies the laurelled head :
The life that seemed a perfect song is o'er :
Carry the last great bard to his last bed.
Land that he loved, thy noblest voice is mute.
Land that he loved, that loved him ! nevermore
Meadow of thine, smooth lawn or wild sea-shore,
Gardens of odorous bloom and tremulous fruit,
Or woodlands old, like Druid couches spread,
The master's feet shall tread.
Death's little rift hath rent the faultless lute :
The singer of undying songs is dead.

Lo, in this season pensive-hued and grave,
While fades and falls the doomed, reluctant leaf
From withered Earth's fantastic coronal,
With wandering sighs of forest and of wave
Mingles the murmur of a people's grief
For him whose leaf shall fade not, neither fall.
He hath fared forth, beyond these suns and
showers.

For us, the autumn glow, the autumn flame,
And soon the winter silence shall be ours :
Him the eternal spring of fadeless fame
Crowns with no mortal flowers.

LACRIMÆ MUSARUM

What needs his laurel our ephemeral tears,
To save from visitation of decay?
Not in this temporal light alone, that bay
Blooms, nor to perishable mundane ears
Sings he with lips of transitory clay.
Rapt though he be from us,
Virgil salutes him, and Theocritus;
Catullus, mightiest-brained Lucretius, each
Greets him, their brother, on the Stygian beach;
Proudly a gaunt right hand doth Dante reach;
Milton and Wordsworth bid him welcome
home;
Keats, on his lips the eternal rose of youth,
Doth in the name of Beauty that is Truth
A kinsman's love beseech;
Coleridge, his locks aspersed with fairy foam,
Calm Spenser, Chaucer suave,
His equal friendship crave:
And godlike spirits hail him guest, in speech
Of Athens, Florence, Weimar, Stratford, Rome.

Nay, he returns to regions whence he came.
Him doth the spirit divine
Of universal loveliness reclaim.
All nature is his shrine.
Seek him henceforward in the wind and sea,
In earth's and air's emotion or repose,
In every star's august serenity,
And in the rapture of the flaming rose.
There seek him if ye would not seek in vain,
There, in the rhythm and music of the Whole;
Yea, and for ever in the human soul
Made stronger and more beauteous by his strain.

LACRIMÆ MUSARUM

For lo ! creation's self is one great choir,
And what is nature's order but the rhyme
Whereto, in holiest chime,
All things have moved with all things from their
prime ?

Who shall expound the mystery of the lyre ?
In far retreats of elemental mind
Obscurely comes and goes
The imperative breath of song, that as the wind
Is trackless, and oblivious whence it blows.
Demand of lilies wherefore they are white,
Extort her crimson secret from the rose,
But ask not of the Muse that she disclose
The meaning of the riddle of her might :
Somewhat of all things sealed and recondite,
Save the enigma of herself, she knows.
The master could not tell, with all his lore,
Wherefore he sang, or whence the mandate
sped :

Ev'n as the linnets sing, so I, he said :
Ah, rather as the imperial nightingale,
That held in trance the ancient Attic shore,
And charms the ages with the notes that o'er
All woodland chants immortally prevail !
And now, from our vain plaudits greatly fled,
He with diviner silence dwells instead,
And on no earthly sea with transient roar,
Unto no earthly airs, he sets his sail,
But far beyond our vision and our hail
Is heard for ever and is seen no more.

No more, O never now,
Lord of the lofty and the tranquil brow,

LACRIMÆ MUSARUM

Shall men behold those wizard locks where
Time
Let fall no wintry rime.
Once, in his youth obscure,
The weaver of this verse, that shall endure
By splendour of its theme which cannot die,
Beheld thee eye to eye,
And touched through thee the hand
Of every hero of thy race divine,
Ev'n to the sire of all the laurelled line,
The sightless wanderer on the Ionian strand.
Yea, I beheld thee, and behold thee yet :
Thou hast forgotten, but can I forget ?
Are not thy words all goldenly impressed
On memory's palimpsest ?
I hear the utterance of thy sovereign tongue,
I tread the floor thy hallowing feet have trod ;
I see the hands a nation's lyre that strung,
The eyes that looked through life and gazed on
God.

The seasons change, the winds they shift and
veer ;
The grass of yesteryear
Is dead ; the birds depart, the groves decay :
Empires dissolve and peoples disappear :
Song passes not away.
Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign ;
The swords of Cæsars, they are less than rust :
The poet doth remain.
Dead is Augustus, Maro is alive ;
And thou, the Mantuan of this age and soil,

LACRIMÆ MUSARUM

With Virgil shalt survive,
Enriching Time with no less honeyed spoil,
The yielded sweet of every Muse's hive;
Heeding no more the sound of idle praise
In that great calm our tumults cannot reach,—
Master who crown'st our immelodious days
With flower of perfect speech.

1892

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

SCULPTURE AND SONG

THE statue—Buonarroti said—doth wait,
Thrall'd in the block, for me to emanci-
pate.

The poem—saith the poet—wanders free
Till I ensnare it to captivity.

1882

SHELLEY AND HARRIET

A STAR looked down from heaven and loved a
flower

Grown in Earth's garden—loved it for an hour.
Let eyes that trace his orbit in the Spheres
Refuse not, to a ruin'd rosebud—tears.

1880

THE WINGS OF EROS

LOVE, like a bird, hath perch'd upon a spray
For thee and me to harken what he sings.
Contented, he forgets to fly away ;
But hush ! . . . remind not Eros of his wings.

1882

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

TO ———

FORGET not, brother singer ! that though Prose
Can never be too truthful or too wise,
Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.
1892

ONCE ONLY

MOMENTOUS to himself as I to me
Hath each man been that ever woman bore ;
Once, in a lightning-flash of sympathy,
I *felt* this truth, an instant, and no more.
1883

THE FATAL SCRUTINY

THE beasts in field are glad, and have not wit
To know why leapt their hearts when spring-
time shone.
Man looks at his own bliss, considers it,
Weighs, tests it ; and 'tis gone.
1882

BETROTHAL AND WEDLOCK

IN youth the artist voweth lover's vows
To Art, in manhood maketh her his spouse.
Well if her charms yet hold for him such joy
As when he craved some boon and she was coy !
1881

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

TO CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Two songstresses have sung beneath the sun
As goldenly as thou dost—but not three !
Of those sweet twain the grass is green o'er one :
And blue above the other is the sea.

1881

FROM THE SPANISH

THE Stage is the World's mirror : here
Reflected, all men come and pass !
Who flies it hath perhaps a fear
To meet his image in the glass.

1881

THE UNSPOTTED ONES

THINK you, demoiselle demure,
That to be cold is to be pure ?
Pure is the snow—till mixed with mire !
Ah, but not half so pure as fire.

1908

THE GAMESTERS

MUSIC and Poesy, like Gods at play,
Diced for the domination of my soul.
Poesy won,—yet oft hath waived her sway,
And let her heavenly sister snatch control.

1924

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

AFTER READING "TAMBURLAINE THE
GREAT"

YON page being closed, my Shakespeare's let me
ope.

How welcome—after gong and cymbal's din—
The continuity, the long slow slope
And vast curves of the gradual violin!

1882

THE ROBE OF THEMIS

How Justice in her courts may best be clothed
Moves me not much or hotly;
But there's one garb that I have ever loathed—
Ermine set off with motley.

1923

ON A CERTAIN FAMOUS FRENCHMAN

SAGE Duke, thy creed who runs may read—
Men feign in every word and deed.
Therewith thy practice well agreed,
For surely thou didst feign thy creed.

1883

A WISE PRECAUTION

WHEN So-and-so gave us his "Songs Without
Flaws,"
It was What's-his-name managed the burst of
applause.

The strings of the lyre are supposed to be
"struck,"
But, bless you, it's *pulling them* seems to bring
luck.

1925

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

THE METROPOLITAN UNDERGROUND
RAILWAY

HERE were a goodly place wherein to die;—
Grown latterly to sudden change averse,
All violent contrasts fain avoid would I
On passing from this world into a worse.

1879

AN EPITAPH

HIS friends he loved. His direst earthly foes—
Cats—I believe he did but feign to hate.
My hand will miss the insinuated nose,
Mine eyes the tail that wagg'd contempt at
Fate.

1881

IMAGINARY INSCRIPTION

[On a rock resembling colossal human features]
THE seafowl build in wrinkles of my face.
Ages ere man was, man was mocked by me.
Kings fall, gods die, worlds crash. At my
throne's base,
In showers of bright white thunder, breaks
the sea.

1882

ACTS

WE shape our deeds and then are shapen by them :
We are children of the things ourselves begot.
Were they born foul, Heaven cannot purify
them ;
Were they born fair, Hell can defile them not.

1912

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

BLESSEDNESS

'Tis human fortune's happiest height, to be
A spirit melodious, lucid, poised, and whole ;
Second in order of felicity,
To dwell with such a soul.

1885

JUST A POSSIBILITY

I'LL take Life's hazards, rue not hours well
wasted,
Hide my heart's wounds, ask no miraculous
balm ;
And ere I die, perhaps I shall have tasted
At last a little calm.

1925

ON THE CONCLUSION OF PEACE
BETWEEN RUSSIA AND JAPAN

THE lyre,—'tis written,—in ages long ago,
Grew from the tense string of the warrior's bow.
If Music thus was born of hate and pain,
So be she born again !

1905

TO A BERKELEYAN IDEALIST

IF Nature be a phastasm, as thou say'st,
A splendid figment and prodigious dream,
To reach the Real and True I'll make no haste,
More than content with worlds that only
Seem.

1883

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

FAIRY DIET

I LOVE not wildly—as a rule—
The Poets of the Moony School.
But how heroic—to subsist
Exclusively on moon and mist!

1920

LENINGRAD

FAMED City,—hearing how thy stately grace
The imagination seizes,
I feel that thou art eminently a place
Where every prospect pleases . . .

1923

TO A PRODIGY OF SAPIENCE

THE world's an orange—thou hast drained its
juice.
But wherefore all this pomp and pride and
puffing?
Somehow a goose is none the less a goose
Though moon and stars be minced to yield
it stuffing.

1881

ANTONY AT ACTIUM

HE holds a dubious balance : yet *that* scale,
Whose freight the world is, surely shall prevail?
No ; Cleopatra droppeth into *this*
One counterpoising kiss.

1884

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

A DOUBTFUL NECESSITY

WHAT use have I for verse as rough
As yon north-easter's rude rebuff?
Even *without* such crabbed stuff,
Life would be dissonant enough!

1924

EPITAPH ON AN OBSCURE PERSON

STRANGER, these ashes were a Man
Crushed with a grievous weight.
He had acquired more ignorance than
He could assimilate.

1924

BYRON THE VOLUPTUARY

Too avid of earth's bliss, he was of those
Whom Delight flies because they give her
chase.

Only the odour of her wild hair blows
Back in their faces hungering for her face.

1883

AN IMPOSSIBLE NOVELTY

THERE are, in Painting, Sculpture, Song,
A few new ways of being wrong;
But it is plain to most men's sight
There's no new way of being right.

1921

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

THE CHURCH TO-DAY

OUTWARDLY splendid as of old—
Inwardly sparkless, void and cold—
Her force and fire all spent and gone—
Like the dead moon, she still shines on.

1908

THE NOBLE ANGUISH

To keep in sight Perfection, and adore
Her beauty, is the artist's best delight ;
His bitterest torture, that he can no more
Than keep her long'd-for loveliness in sight.

1882

YOUTH AND THE MUSE

No poet of golden name do I remember,
Who, when his youth was past, *began* to sing.
The blackbird cannot wait until September !
Come peace, come war, his songs *will* out in
Spring.

1924

THE TOMB OF THE MIGHTY

DISTURB not—thou wilt find him unforgiving—
The great and famed, in his sepulchral bed
Thou mayst out-tire the malice of the living,
But not the vengeance of the implacable dead.

1925

P.W.W.

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EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

FROM THE FRENCH

SAYS Marmontel, The secret's mine
Of Racine's art-of-verse divine.
To do thee justice, Marmontel,
Never was secret kept so well.

1880

THREE KINDS OF SONG

SONG have I known that fed the soul,
And Song that was liker a foaming bowl;
But the Song that I account divine
Is at once rare food and noble wine.

1924

TO A LADY RECOVERED FROM A DANGEROUS
SICKNESS

LIFE plucks thee back as by the golden hair—
Life, who had feigned to let thee go but now.
Ah, wealthy is Death already, and can spare
Ev'n such a prey as thou!

1892

ON A PEOPLE'S POET

YES, threadbare seem his songs, to lettered ken.
They were worn threadbare next the hearts of
men.

1920

EPIGRAMS AND KINDRED PIECES

ON A CERTAIN STATUE OF LIBERTY

PROUD thing of fame, how strange at last thy
doom !
Liberty's image, left to guard her tomb.

1924

ON A COLLAPSE OF MASONRY IN LONDON
STILL does broad Day see houses nod and fall :
But Night hears crackings ev'n in the church
wall.

1927

THE INTRUSION

HIS life had all been leisured and slow-paced :
But Death was rude, and burst on him in haste.

1926

TO MILTON, ON HIS *LYCIDAS*

POOR didst thou die, who hadst in lovelier years
Given—unto Death—these richest of all tears.

1927

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

A Cosmic Romance

ORMAZD, the Spirit of Light, the Spirit of
Good,
Their father, glorying in his fatherhood—
Maker of Joy, and of all blissful things—
Once, in mid pomp of his world-journeyings
Across the invisible viaducts of Space
That lead from star to star, came face to face
With him from whom all Guilt, all Error known,
All that is misbegotten or misgrown,
Pain without ease, toil without wage or end,
And sin without delight, darkly descend :
Him in whom falsehood and curst greed began :
Evil's great founder, loveless Ahriman.

For he too had roamed forth that day, the sire
Of the world's tears ; and bringing spectres
dire
To attend him, Hates and Lusts of every hue,
He, as it chanced, with all his retinue,
Far roving from his cavernous abode,
Travelled that selfsame interstellar road,
That crosses the calm vasts, and runs unseen
Through the hushed voids, and spans the deeps
serene.

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

A secret highway, it was made of old,
Long ere the passions of the moon were
cold,
Though in no chart of heaven 'tis figured yet :
And on that road the mighty rivals met.

Then did they pause : then did all Good and
Ill

Seem for a moment to stand mute and still.
And as a thundercloud, a wandering gloom,
Full of the whirlwind, full of sudden doom,
Might hover, holding back its bolts unflung,
So hovered Ahriman. But apt of tongue,
Quickly he scabbarded fierce hate in guile,
And hailed bright Ormazd : " Thou benignant
Smile,

Mellowing the countenance of Eternity !
Oft on thy works I gazed : on very thee
I gaze at last. O falsely famed to dwell
Withdrawn into thy towering citadel
In most remote austerity of brow !
Ev'n thus did I, too, image thee ere now—
A clifflike, steep Perfection. At this hour,
Seeing thee as thou art, in blandest power
Accessible as Spring and Morning are,
I will unlatch my breast, I will unbar
This heart of mine, I will let leap unpent
The Thought that hungered for enfranchise-
ment,
Prisoned while many an age hath ebb'd and
gone !
Have I thine ear ? " And Ormazd said : " Say
on."

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

So Ahriman, as one that halts no more,
But with large gesture opes a captive's door,
Thus from his bosom set the bound thought
free :

“ Ormazd the Radiant ! betwixt thee and me
Shared is the world : in its august design
Everything everywhere is thine or mine :
And throned o'er all that can rejoice or mourn,
We are the lords of Life from bourn to bourn.
But so enclasped,—nay, through their farthest
range

Knotted together in a knot so strange
Are our dominions, each with each entailed
Even from the prime ; so twined, so intercoiled—
Locked in a tanglement so hard to undo—
So wholly intermingled through and through—
Are these our realms ; that nowhere within all
Their vastness is one point, however small,
One meanest spot, where thou or I can say :

*Here have I absolute and plenary sway,
Complete, unparcelled lordship, kingdom whole ;
Here do I reign, sovereign, supreme, and sole.*

Rather have mutual thwartings long made sour
Each cup we drank of ! And is this, then,
Power—

Can this be rule and governance—to bear
Frustration with a meek brow everywhere,
And unto bafflings without end resign
A patient breast ? For such thy wont, and mine.
Ever, O Ormazd, thou art foiled by me ;
Ever, O Ormazd, I am baulked by thee ;
And everywhere in our domains immense
Is balanced Might but grandiose impotence.

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Behold, then, this my Scheme, in silence
nursed,
In secrecy long pondered, and now first,
Under the calm, grave inquest of thine eye,
Bid to stand naked : the one Scheme whereby
Huge discords shall be goldenly resolved,
And fair and foul cease to be interolved,
While from a heaven uncobwebbed thou shalt
see

These ravelled worlds blaze with simplicity,
The accurst embroilments and rank disarray
Wholly thenceforward swept from life away.
For now my Scheme, my slow-nurtured Design,
Shall forthwith to that cloudless gaze of thine
Be bared. But though it proffers wondrous
things,

They are no more than rich imaginings
Till thy command shall make them truth, and give
The charter that empowers a dream to live.
Behold my Project, then ! Let thee and me
On a world-boundary now at last agree :
A barrier, so devised as to extend,
With neither a beginning nor an end,
Along a line throughout Creation drawn,
Straight as if Nature's self must then be sawn
In bleeding halves ; and let this barrier reach—
Being of impalpable fabric—without breach,
Mid worlds long weary of our clamorous feud,
Upward and downward through infinitude,
Mystically, and therefore, as were meet,
Invisibly ; and when 'tis built complete,
All that is on the one side thou shalt make
Thine own for evermore, and I will take

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

All that is on the other : and thus shall we
Divide with a Divine equality
Betwixt us twain from that time forth the whole
Of Being, and equitably allot its soul
And substance, past contention. Then must
these

Rangers of heaven, that with proud scorn of
ease

In many a wheeling orbit wander wide,
Quit their old paths for ways as yet untried,
If in their courses they would else transgress
That Confine's subtle ethereal fixedness,
And with disorder beyond remedy mar
Our Scheme. For so must even planet and star
Yield them to change, and to a new-framed sky
Conform, or perish. Meanwhile thou and I
Have but to ordain it, and with lesser sound
Than of the grass breaking from out the ground
There shall be fashioned as by secret hands
That bodiless mystic barrier, till it stands
Ungross as air and unbeheld as thought,
Cleaving a universe thenceforth distraught
No more with our hoarse conflicts, no more
shamed

By our crude strifes ; and it shall be proclaimed
The everlasting bound, that must alone
Part thy dominions, Ormazd, from mine own.
On *that* side of the guarded frontier, thine
Shall be the only law ; on *this* side, mine.
And *there* let all Good dwell, thy consort, *here*
All Evil live, my spouse. Then without peer
On that side rule thou changeless, I on this :
And if to wield pure sovereignty be bliss,

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Bliss shalt thou have and hold, there reigning !

Yea,
There for the first time shalt thou truly sway
Thy principdoms, and with hate be hemmed not
round,
And with no harassed and mock crown be
crowned.

There for the first time since the birth of
things,

Or since the blind and thunderous labourings
Of the unborn world to be brought forth at all,
Shalt thou whose lips have tasted but the
gall

Of doubtful empire, slake thee with delight
Of perfect puissance, never-threatened Might,—
None to dispute thy throne, nothing to gnaw
At its deep bulwarks,—greatness without flaw,—
None to make vain thine acts and pluck away
With midnight hand what thou didst plant by
day,—

None to oppose thee, nothing to impede,
And thou at last for ever lord indeed.”

He ceased, and looked to Ormazd for some
sign,
Legible haply in that brow benign,
Or those calm eyes. But nothing there he
read ;

And the pure lips of Ormazd simply said,
With suchlike thrift in words as let no trace
Of aught that was more inward haunt his face :
“ What thou proposeth I will duly weigh,
And duly shalt thou have my Yea or Nay.”

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

“ And who shall bear thy word unto mine
ear ? ”

Said Ahriman ; “ and by what token clear
Am I to know him sent indeed from thee,
Right across desolate immensity ?
Where in the world-sweep of thy boundless
ken

Shall I await his coming ? And O when
Shall I behold him verily at hand,
With thy great message ? ” Then did Ormazd
stand

Silent, the monstrous silence of the sky
Dwarfed by his own. Fathomless was his eye,
His face the cloister of his thoughts, his head
A still, lone summit. But at length he said :
“ No messenger shall bear to thee my word ;
Only from mine own mouth shall it be heard.
Where, dost thou ask ? Here, where we parley
now,
My tongue shall speak it. When, demandest
thou ?
A hundred thousand years hence, from this
hour.”

To Spirits of heavenly or infernal power,
Such as in ancientness are Time's own peers,
Not longer seem a hundred thousand years,
With their dim-moving pomps of life and death,
Than is to us a moment or a breath.
And the dark ancestor of all things vile
Being well content to wait so brief a while,
The rivals parted, pledged to meet once more,
Soon as those few swift ages should be o'er.

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

To Night's blind heart returned the Spirit of
Ill,

Where gloomed his fastness, whence he roams
at will

To mar that Good he may not quite destroy.
And he who fashioned Morn and founded Joy
Betook him to a region of the skies

That from the gaze of men is hidden, and lies
Outside the lore that can bewitch our ears
With the proud epic of the stars' careers.

There did the heavenly traveller halt; and
there,

Seeming to rest upbuilt on golden air,
Were vast walls, whiter than in storm the foam
Round fear-struck ships; and many a lustrous
dome

Rose as the curving bosom of the swan
Above a still lake rises. There, too, shone
Turrets that, mounting firelike, seemed to be
Ravished and lost in a pure ecstasy,
So high they flamed; while near them, luminous
mist,

Its hues the marriage of the amethyst
And opal, floated as amid the play
Of plashing fountains floats the rain-bowed
spray.

And splendour beyond splendour towered, yet
all

The glories bounded by that circling wall
Were one miraculous palace that appeared
As if a wizard of the heavens had reared
Its ageless pomps. Never therein had been
Death, or his shadow; and with dazzling sheen,

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Gateways through which no evil thing might fare
Blazed around Ormazd as he entered there.
For this was his far dwelling, which decay
Touched not, and tarnish visited not ; and they
Who had kept solemn watch and sleepless ward,
Flung wide its portals to receive their lord.

Gorgeous the web of wonder that is spun
Out of the spilth and offcast of the sun ;
Glorious the tropic noon's unbridled light ;
Glorious the pageant of the arctic night,
That for an hour perchance may half console
The ice-barred voyager hopeless of the Pole.
But nought are all the splendours Earth hath
known,
To that which shook, from round the blinding
throne
Where Ormazd seated him again on high,
Tempests of radiance to the acclaiming sky.

And now unto his presence did he call
Three lordly minds, illustrious among all
That compassed him as with strong ramparts :
three
Not far below himself in majesty,
Rashnu and Vayu and great Mithra, sons
Of light and might, his seeing and judging ones,
Also his warlike captains from of old :
To whom he failed not straightway to unfold
Ahriman's Scheme, by which that Prince of Pain
Would carve the labyrinthine world in twain,
Parting, as with a barrier none might climb,
All Evil from all Good throughout all time ;

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

And Ahriman's whole plea did he rehearse
For such a halving of the universe.
They harkened, on each word and tone intent,
Standing before him proudly reverent,
In silence, till their counsel was besought,
When Vayu was the first to unseal his thought.

“ Let me not with a niggard tongue refuse ”
(’Twas thus he spake) “ its just, its rightful dues
To this world-spacious world-remoulding Plan,
Born of the cloud-girt mind of Ahriman.
Under this Scheme, no more might fairest
Good,

From the infecting touch and neighbourhood
Of Evil, suffer transformation strange,
Take Evil's hues and into Evil change ;
For strict impassable confines being set
'Twixt these that oft in a fell freedom met,
Such woes would cease for ever. And per-
chance

Evil itself, lacking the sustenance
It sucks from Good,—denied its banquetings
Mid the lorn ruins of once blissful things,—
Would sicken and fail, pining with countenance
wan

For that rich fare it had long feasted on.
But whether Good, shorn of the strength it
draws

From hourly battle with Evil's fangs and claws,
And from uncounted clashings, hard to endure,
With the huge monster's dragon armature,
Would flourish or fade, richer or poorer grow,
Rise with new fire, or smoulder lulled and low



ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

And in a barren peace at last abide,—
Of *that*, O Ormazd, thou that stood'st beside
Time at his cradling must forejudge, not we :
Thou who didst know from their nativity
Both Good and Evil, seeing their wars begun,
And ever won and lost, and lost and won."

Reverberant, vibrant, nor less broad and
deep
Than the sea's utterance round the cloven steep,
Was his rich-billowing voice, each cadence
grave
Being like the lapse of a sonorous wave
When it withdraws down a resounding shore.
And after his last word, there hovered o'er
That council a brief silence, tremulous
As with expectancy, till Rashnu thus
Put it to flight : " One only thing is plain.
Not *our* advantage, not *our* weal or gain,
O Ormazd, doth thy foe of foes intend !
What, then, can be his goal, his secret end ?
What lurked behind his specious words, when he,
As if by veriest chance encountering thee
Amid the heavens, poured forth the Scheme
which thou
Bid'st us consider ? Is it that he now
Foresees his empire slowly dwindling, thine
Greatening, and seeks to avert by this design
That gradual droop of power, that piecemeal
fall,
And long, inglorious fading, which of all
Dreary vicissitude is the dreariest known,
To one that sits upon a haughty throne ? "

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

So asked the noon-bright Spirit, and when he
ceased
To speak, although no tongue replied, at least
Faces made answer; and in speech to the eye
His fellow counsellors there standing nigh
Uttered what seemed not an uncertain Yea.
Then spake outright the lordliest child of day;
He in whom met, and nobly did agree,
Resplendent strength and mastering suavity;
He at whose footfall, when he roamed abroad,
The heavens themselves were stilled and hushed
and awed,
Hearing the golden thunder of his tread;
Great Mithra. "First, let me declare," he said,
"How full, how perfect is mine own assent
To all that hath from lips more eloquent
Most justly flowed. Like Vayu, loth am I
With a mean stint to grudge and half deny
Fit and due praise to a Project, to a Scheme,
Which, were it proved but a vain-built dream,
Would none the less reveal, if nought beside,
A dauntless Dreamer: being a vision wide
As the mind's farthest outstretch: wanting not
Its lures, its beckon, its promises of what
Ev'n the all-coveting hand of Hope might well
Have lacked the greed to crave. But truth to
tell,
I also must like Rashnu cry Beware!
For it is warrior's wisdom, whensoever
A foe seems friendliest, to set double guard,
And at an enemy's gift look long and hard.
Now 'tis exceeding sure, that till we know
Whether thyself, O Ormazd, or thy foe

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Already wield o'er life the ampler power,
And in these clangorous worlds at each loud
hour

Already govern the more vast domain,
We know not whether 'twere thy loss or gain
To embrace a Project, fix and ratify
Beyond revokement a Design, whereby
The Dark One would in breadth of empire be
Thy changeless Equal everlastingly,
And thine own puissance an arrested tide,
Standing magnificently petrified.

Send therefore to each haunt and dwelling-
place

Of Mind—each tenanted orb that rides in Space—
Each populous busy star that sails upbuoyed,
Eager and ardent on the torpid Void—
Send to all seats of life, and through the whole
Compass and circuit of that world of soul
That in a fast enmeshment without end
Deep amidst worlds of clay is woven—send
Unseen and noiseless watchers, searchers, spies,
A myriad listening ears and probing eyes,
And bid them bring thee word from Every-
where

Of how thine enemy's strength and thine
compare ;

In what sphere *thou* prevailest ; in what zone
And tract of Being *his* might o'ertops thine
own ;

What wavering region of vext ebb and flow
Now hails *thee* paramount and anon thy foe.
In brief, from wheresoever living thing
Abides, let thine intelligencers bring

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Knowledge that, summed into one boundless
ray,
Shall show forth clear how thou dost stand
to-day,
Measured against thine adversary ; and so,
In that enormous torchflare, we shall know
Whether 'twill profit *thee* or him alone,
Who at the heart of darkness hath his throne,
If thou, unto his Scheme consenting, cast
Off and make null and quite tread out the
Past,
Bartering this variable and fluctuant sway—
Surge and subsidence, crescence and decay—
For an unchanging Realm, within whose pale
Nowhere shalt thou have reason to bewail
Evil triumphant, and its arms made proud
With trophy and spoil ; or to rejoice aloud
At its abjection, and its flight in fear
Before the gleaming of a dawn-tipt spear.”

Such were his words ; and now, in speech
that fell
From where no shadow of untruth might dwell,
Ormazd's elect and faithful had outpoured
Freely their thought, which in their breasts to
hoard
Had been ignoblest service ; and the three,
For their oft-proved and spotless fealty,
Received the thanks of that enthroned and
crowned
Benignance. Then, from where the glory around
His presence like the soul of dayspring burned,
They to a thousand radiant tasks returned.

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

And Ormazd did as Mithra counselled. First
Recalling hosts that had been long dispersed
On divers errands, diligent spirits and true,
He formed them into bands and squadrons
new,
And with new mandate sent them everywhere
Among the speedful, spurring worlds; and
there,
Wherever the dim lifeseed had been sown
In quickened soil, or on waste foam or
stone;
Wherever aught had breath, and did beget
Offspring, and wither and die; and chiefiest
yet,
Wherever creatures born, not quite in vain,
To a broad estate of pleasure and of pain,
Large hereditaments of bliss and woe—
Wherever such a race, emerging slow,
Had risen in honour and shame and love and
lust
Out of the pregnant and parturient dust,
There did those secret emissaries engage
In a profound, a solemn espionage.
None saw them; yet among the quick and
dead
Daily they moved, with a reposeless tread,
And they became a presence interwreathed
With all that was; by everything that breathed
Felt like a vague commotion, like a breeze
Furtive in underwoods where forest trees
Stand pensive. And with questing eyes and
ears
They, traversing the divers peopled spheres,

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Passed to and fro ; the mortals dwelling there
Being oft obscurely on a sudden aware
Of something which had opened not their doors,
And had no step that sounded on their floors,
But fainter than a rustle or a sigh
Had glided in, and like a waft gone by.

And ages came and went, with pauseless pace
And trampling on sweep, till the very face
Of heaven was here and there by slow degrees
Being changed ! Young planets, the shy novices
Of Night, appeared beside old palsied ones,
Their joyless kin ; while certain fervid suns
Grew senile, and with no more force to spend
Doted decrepit, nearing their lone end :
And sometimes, as from fires that blanch and
char,
There fell the ashes of a ruined star.
And still did the unslumbering searchers ply
Their task ; and not till they had heard pass by,
Mid voices as of cloud-clad charioteers,
The thunderous wheels of ninety thousand
years,
Did they return, and unto Ormazd bring
The heaped fruit of their mighty harvesting.

Then came the lesser, lighter labour—though
This, too, was a prodigious toil—of so
Ordering and setting forth in due array
The piled and boundless-seeming knowledge
they
Had reaped, that Ormazd at a glance might see
The range and scope of his own sovereignty,

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Measured against the empire of his foe.
And many an age had yet to come and go,
That as it fled found that toil's last stage
Still distant : many a shadowy-trailing age,
When Man may in his long slow dawn have
 been,
And round him forms that mid this haunt
 terrene
Succeeded stranger shapes, once monstrously
Got of the dalliance of the Earth and Sea.
But the huge labours were at length complete ;
The garnered knowledge was in order meet
Ranged and disposed ; the task was perfected ;
And Ormazd, seeing as in a chart outspread
His own and his fell rival's power, could view
These with exactness, and now verily knew
Which was the greater : whereupon he cast
Falterings behind him, and stood founded fast
In a resolve that might not change or fade,
Touching the answer that must soon be made,
At the appointed place and destined day,
To Ahriman—the doomful Yea or Nay.

For now that day drew near, and peaklike rose
Out of the plains of time—the day when those
First mighty forefathers of Good and Ill
Must indeed meet once more, and so fulfil
Their mutual pledge, or both for ever stand
Alike forsworn. And ere it loomed at hand,
Ormazd together called, besides the Three
Nighest himself in splendour and majesty,
Thrice three of less renown ; and on each one
Bestowing words of cheer and benison,

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

He to the twelve made known his whole intent.
And at a sign they left him, and he went
From out his lofty-towered abiding-place,
And he looked down o'er the abysm of Space,
He whom its deeps were powerless to appal.
O'er Nothingness, most awsome thing of all,
There looked he down; and halted on its
 verge,
Somewhat as on a rock above the surge
A fearless swimmer a moment halts, ere he
With headlong leap commits him to the sea.
Then from the towers and courts and domes
 that glowed
Around his innermost divine abode—
The outskirts of that Light which was his
 throne—
Ormazd upon the skies went forth alone,
There, for the second time, and for the last,
To meet the Saddener of the World. He
 passed
By many a massy star, matched with whose
 girth
Puny indeed were this our boastful Earth,
And onward without tarrying or delay,
Right across many a planet's ancient way,
His own being no such curving course, he
 fared.
The ever fevered comet as it flared
With violent inroad through the heavens, and
 raced
Athwart Creation, he that knew not haste
Serenely in its hot flight overtook
And far outsped. As one that fords a brook

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

In a mere journey o'er vale and wold, he crossed
The madding meteor torrent, that seemed lost
And aimless, where it chased in dizzy sky
Its own self round the sun. At times his eye
Saw War beside his pathway, cosmic strife
As of a new world crashing into life
Through welter and rage and the loud splinter-
ing
Of old worlds' bones. But oft, where breathing
thing
Or living voice had never sought to intrude
On the cold, blank, tremendous quietude,
He swept through utter Calms that well might
be
Likened to the immense serenity
And infinite composure of the dead :
Kingdoms that Silence hath inherited
From Silence ; and mid these he came to where
His adversary awaited him, for there—
With eyes that seemed to ray forth only gloom—
Ahriman tower'd, true to that tryst of doom.

And Ormazd with a soaring voice cried :
“Lo,
I am come to pay thee that which I do owe—
Gratitude, gratitude !” A joyful gleam
Lit the drear face of Evil. “Then my Scheme
Hath in thine eyes found favour ?” But full
soon
The gleam departed, Ormazd saying : “The
boon
For which I thank thee and could almost bless
The giver of a gift so measureless,

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Is the new knowledge, full and sure, of how
Thy power and mine compare, and whether thou
Or I be mightier. Unto thee my debt
Is boundless : without *thee*, not even yet
That knowledge had been mine, and thou hast
well

Earned richest thanks." Ahriman's counten-
ance fell.

"I knew that thou hadst sent forth everywhere
Thy searchers, gatherers, scouts, and spies, and
ne'er

Sought I to foil their quest, nor once have laid
Across their path a hindrance." Ormazd paid
No heed, but unregardful thus spake on :

"O oft did I in yonder ages gone
Toil with misgiving and with doubt, nor knew
Whether 'twas mine own realm or thine that
grew

In lasting spaciousness, or whether both
Stood without movement, without change or
growth,

Or rise or fall. And ever labouring still,
I was as one that climbs an endless hill,
And oft I bore a heavy, a secret load,
And lacked the joy that I myself bestowed.
But now I know that when thou met'st me first,
Thinking to snare me with thy guile accurst,
Already had thy feet begun to slide
Ev'n then from power. Already had the tide
Against thee turned : thenceforth the flow was
mine,

Thine the loathed ebb. And though thy sure
decline

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Was hardly as yet a thing to itself confessed,
Already somewhat below peak and crest
Thou stood'st, and wert each morrow fall'n away
A little—a little—from height of yesterday."

"Thy words are false," cried Ahriman, "and
thou
Erelong shalt learn that never even now
Have I put forth the full might of mine arm
Against thee; and with tremors of alarm
Shalt thou look on, hereafter, while I sow
With dreadful largesse the long-hoarded woe.
For whatsoever thou dost most abhor—
Famine and pestilence and hate and war,
And new-minted diseases worse than death—
These in thrice ampler bounty with my breath
Will I strew wide, wherever mortals live
Their life fantastical and fugitive."

"And from all this," said Ormazd, "shall
pure fruit
Upprow, and odorously will I transmute
To loveliest bloom thy gifts of deadliest bane.
For now henceforth I wax and thou dost wane,
I broaden and thou shrinkest; and at length,
With ever leaping heart and freshening strength,
Joyous I toil, knowing that day by day
Somewhat art thou for ever feebler; yea,
Knowing as happiest truth that ev'n were I
Not indestructible, but born to die
Like old Gods whom the youthful Gods
succeed,—
That ev'n if it should be my fate indeed

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

Thus to the will of conquering Death to bow,
And my chief tasks yet unperformed, and thou
Neither destroyed nor vanquished,—none the
less
Stablisht secure in everlastingness
Where this my kingdom, my fair realm of
Good ;
But thine own realm of Evil, that withstood
So long my assault, and seemed in glory and
state
Built above dread of fall, shall soon or late
With pangs of ebbing power, with shudderings
vast,
Be o'ertaken and amazed ; and haply at last
It shall be broken asunder in ruin extreme,
Scattered as shards and the ashes of a dream,
And thou, or some like heritor of thy throne,
Under its mountainous dust lie hurled and
prone.”

So Ormazd spake. But his terrific foe
In boundless rage was silent, and as though
Somewhat abashed by that pure strength and
grace,
Did turn away the tempest of his face.
Out of him rose a twilight dim and dire,
The clouds and column'd vapours of his ire
Spreading their dusk afar. Half hid with these
He stood, while, swirled as in mad vortices
Above him, an innumerable swarm
Of horrors without lineament or form
Circled aloft and blindly eddying spun,
Black as a flight of crows against the sun.

ORMAZD AND AHRIMAN

And he, by that foul brood attended, passed
Downward through skies that his mere frown
 o'ercast,
Betaking him in fury and in shame
Back to those holds of midnight whence he
 came.

1918-19

NOTES

Our Eastern Treasure (page 36)

One of a series of sonnets published in the *National Review* for June, 1885. Their patriotism, being that of youth, was perhaps more vehement than chastened, but I feel warranted in reprinting this sonnet as it does not appear to be without pertinence and relevance at the present day.

Home-rootedness (page 37)

First published at the same date, and in the same periodical, as the preceding sonnet. This is reproduced here for reasons which seem partly identical in both cases.

Gladstone, 1885 (page 38)

This sonnet and the one immediately following it are likely to surprise some readers as being strangely at variance with each other in their language regarding a famous statesman. The reader is, however, requested to bear in mind that the two poems are separated by eleven years and much history.

On a Certain European Alliance (page 112)

The lapse of more than three decades since this too audacious sonnet was written has left my memory a little less than perfectly clear as to some points involved, but in using the words "Neptune's nereid train" I can hardly have forgotten that the Franco-Russian naval fervours at Toulon in October, 1893, *preceded* by some two years the public and formal avowals, or attestations, of the Alliance referred to.

NOTES

Wordsworth's Grave (page 123)

I take the opportunity of repeating here in substance what I have said elsewhere not long ago concerning this poem. As the date of its first appearance is often misstated as 1890, it may be worth while to record that *Wordsworth's Grave* was begun at Rydal in May, 1884, finished rather more than three years later, and first published in the *National Review* for September, 1887. In other words, it was written during a period when certain tendencies savouring rather of a school or an epoch than of the main course and flow of English Poetry were somewhat dominant, and notwithstanding its outwardly quiet tone and air, it was really a militant manifesto against these tendencies. Largely by accident it has received what anyone acquainted with its author's whole work would, I think, agree with me in considering an altogether disproportionate amount of attention relatively to the rest, and it has certainly been the main, if not the sole cause, of the rather ridiculous application to me of the epithet *Wordsworthian* by some of the undiscerning, who are still far from being an extinct race. Facile and thick-witted judgments of the kind alluded to are mostly, one is willing to believe, due to nothing worse than mere inborn and ineradicable dullness of perception, and have no doubt been common, ever since the great god Stupidity has had his dim-lit temples, where mumble the iterating priests.

Wordsworth's greatness—which I rejoice to have summed up with such reverence as befitted a very young man saluting a departed veteran—was indeed beautifully real. But the unbeautifully real faults that accompanied it are, if I may say so, of precisely the kind towards which, by temperament, I am perhaps least congenially or sympathetically disposed.

Wales: a Greeting (page 166)

First published (in *The Times*) in June, 1909, during the holding of the National Eisteddfod in London. The apprehensive tone of the closing lines of this poem, with

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their reference to the ominous clouds then gathering on the international horizon, and to the possibly tremendous significance of these portents in our own case, was, alas ! only too well justified five years afterwards.

The World in Armour (page 168)

By an unaccountable slip, in the footnote to a page of my volume *A Hundred Poems*, I stated that these three sonnets appeared in print ten years before the outbreak of the War which they seem to have prefigured. I now find that they were first published (in the *Spectator*) on July 13, 1894, not ten but twenty years and a few days before that world-catastrophe, whose first sequel the last of these sonnets may, I think, be said to have foreshadowed not altogether obscurely.

Hymn to the Sea (page 171)

In this poem the elegiac metre is obviously and of necessity accentual, not quantitative. Tried by classical rules that are altogether inapplicable to our poetry and to our language it would of course sink ignominiously under the ordeal.

To Thomas Bailey Aldrich in answer to his sonnet "On Reading 'The Purple East'" (page 205), Note I

Some of my younger friends may need to have it explained to them that "The Purple East" was a series of poems in sonnet form in which I pleaded for stronger action on the part of British Governments with a view to preventing the unarmed non-Mohammedan population of the Ottoman Empire from being systematically persecuted, pillaged, mutilated, violated, tortured, burned, and massacred for the pleasure and at the caprice of their sovereign.

The veto of Russia on any attempt of ours to save these miserables is now well known. That of another "Christian" power is also on record. But History has perhaps not even yet said its last word on the statesmanship, however honest and well-intentioned, which sat

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down under these coldly brutal interdicts in hopeless paralysis.

To Thomas Bailey Aldrich, etc. (page 205), Note II

It is now fifteen years since I was last in America, and as literary taste seems liable, across the Atlantic, to at least as rapid and agile somersaults as in England, I cannot even guess what may be America's present opinion of her once beloved and admired poet, Thomas Bailey Aldrich; but it is of interest to note that in the closing lines of his poem here mentioned—"On Reading William Watson's Sonnets entitled *The Purple East*," to give it its full title—he addresses England directly, and says to her, "Thy blood makes quick *her* pulses" (that is, America's pulses)

"—and some day,
Not now, yet some day, at thy soft behest,
She by thy side shall hold the world at bay."

This was in 1896, and the italics are my own—if anything is a man's own nowadays. Certainly it was a bold prophecy, to whatever precise interpretation it may lend itself.

To America, Concerning England (page 222)

I may be exposing myself (not that it greatly troubles me) to unfriendly if also well-meant criticism in reprinting this sonnet, in which America, during the period of her non-intervention in the late European War, was reproached for the neutral attitude which we must now suppose her to have afterwards believed it either her duty or her interest to abandon. But as my appeal to her is said, with every appearance of authority, to have influenced many serious minds in the United States, where it was undoubtedly read by countless multitudes, and where it called forth in many quarters such bitter retort as sufficiently proved it to have been a letter which reached its address, there can be no reason other than a merely capricious one, on my part, for seeking to efface

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all memory of it now. It may be permissible for me to add that if anyone regards this poem as convicting me of anti-American bias, I think I can bring forward more than enough printed evidence to justify my acquittal on that charge.

Tranquil Liberty (page 226)

First published October 23, 1914. I let it stand but commit myself to no opinion as to its wisdom or folly.

The Man Who Saw (page 227)

This poem appeared first in a provincial newspaper on February 3, 1917, and re-appeared as part of a volume a few months afterwards. No word in it has been altered since its first publication, and I feel that it does justice, and not a jot or tittle more than justice, to the statesman who, whatever degree of wisdom he may or may not have shown in other matters,—a question which I feel no special obligation to discuss,—did at all events, in the supreme crisis of Britain's fate, render her the not inconsiderable service of saving her from destruction.

Domine, Quo Vadis? (page 233)

This poem first appeared in the *Spectator* in 1894, some two years or more before the publication of the novel, *Quo Vadis*, founded on the same theme.

The Hope of the World (page 237)

In connection with this poem there is one thing for which I feel that I ought to express regret; and that thing is my own want of foresight in not realizing from the first that many would misunderstand its title, taking "the hope of the world"—the human world—to mean the hope of continued spiritual existence after bodily dissolution. I now perceive how natural it was for some persons thus to misapprehend the title before reading the poem, though why they should have persevered in such an error *after* reading it—or professing to have read it—is still rather incomprehensible.

The poem is, as I think any intelligent and moderately

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attentive reader will have recognized, an attempt to examine, within the doubtless too brief limits imposed upon himself by the author, the grounds of that largest and noblest hope of all—the quite disinterested and unselfish hope that the whole universe, and all existence whatsoever, are ultimately not only a progression but an ascension. The degree of confidence with which that hope can be maintained will naturally continue to vary with individual temperament; but there is surely something akin to cowardice, something unworthy of the adventurous human intellect, in blankly refusing to face whatever evidence it may be possible to adduce in the court of reason, whether it tend to fortify the hope here spoken of or to deject and weaken it.

The Deathless Blacksmith (page 266)

Published as "The Blacksmith," 1909; recast and published under its present title, 1921; again and finally recast, with additions and omissions, in these pages.

On a Certain Great Poet (page 269)

Rather to the author's surprise, these lines have been taken to refer to a sometime contemporary of his own, which they do not.

Lacrimæ Musarum (page 276)

A friend who was present kindly supplies me with the following report of certain remarks which I made as a guest of the *Poetry Society*, at its summer meeting on the lawns of Aldworth in 1925:

"The President of the Poetry Society has paid me the graceful courtesy of asking me to read to you my poem, *Lacrimæ Musarum*, written at the time of Tennyson's death thirty-three years ago. It is a very real pleasure to comply with your President's request, but before doing so I must be allowed to say a few words about the circumstances in which the poem was written. When Tennyson died I was a young man of thirty-four, and during the formative years of youth and early manhood

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I had not been precisely among the very fervid admirers of his genius. I was extremely sensitive to his almost invariable charm, as well as to his frequent power, but my own special leanings were towards a more compressed and pregnant style than was habitual with him. When, however, he came to die—when he came to die that magnificent, and, if I may so phrase it, spectacular death, as of some mighty bard of old, passing from ken in a blaze of honour and glory—when that happened, the voice of criticism was for the moment hushed, and even we who had carped and cavilled a little during his lifetime, were carried out of ourselves by a great surging wave of emotion. Under the stress of that emotion (of which I am not ashamed) this poem was written—and written, I take leave to say, with profound sincerity. For a *threnody* is not a criticism, not an occasion for scrupulously balanced judgment. One might almost say that an attitude of cool appraisement would be out of place in it. And more especially in an elegy on a great and renowned poet, who, after all, had for many years been a part, and no mean part, of our lives, the most fitting things are not criticism, not a careful measuring of comparative values, but simply reverence and homage and love. I will say no more but will read you this elegy without further preamble.”

After Reading “Tamburlaine the Great” (page 284)

No want of reverence for the superb and epoch-making genius of Marlowe is intended in this comment on what is acknowledged to be his crudest production—“this huffing tragedy,” as Leigh Hunt, a perfervid Marlovian, very properly called it.

For the information of those whom it may possibly interest I may mention that the greater number of the four-line pieces here called epigrams are from my little volume, *Epigrams of Art, Life and Nature*, published provincially in 1884. The common sort of epigram—the epigram which, as Boileau says, “n’est souvent qu’un bon-mot”—was seldom the kind of plant I culti-

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vated, my affections being set on a rarer variety. The little volume, like my still earlier book *The Prince's Quest*,—which Kegan Paul issued at the beginning of 1880, its author being then twenty-one,—was published at my father's cost and found literally no buyers till several years later, except a few personal friends of the epigrammatist. It is pleasant, however, to recall the fact that it received one very kind and cordial though almost solitary piece of recognition, in the shape of an article contributed to the *Oxford Magazine* by Mr. J. W. Mackail, whose many and eminent distinctions were still, for the most part, things yet to be. As I have not the good fortune of his acquaintance, I take this belated opportunity of begging him to believe that a scandalous silence of forty-four years on my part does not, by any means, in this case, betoken black ingratitude.

Looking back over those years I cannot remember to have scattered very lavishly among my early friends the little book of which I am speaking. But I recall that in one copy—before bestowing it upon a young lady—I inscribed on the fly-leaf some words from the Prince of Poets himself :

“*Hamlet*. Is this a prologue or the posy of a ring?
Ophelia. 'Tis brief, my lord.
Hamlet. As woman's love.”

On a Collapse of Masonry in London (page 291)

An incident perhaps more usual in the days of Samuel Johnson, who wrote—

“Here falling houses totter on your head,
And here a female atheist talks you dead.”

Ormazd and Abriman (page 292), *Note I*

With reference to the name *Ormazd*, it seems proper to say here that in choosing this form of the word rather than any of its perhaps more familiar variants, my choice (sanctioned, I believe, by the most modern scholarship,

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at any rate in France) has been dictated mainly by considerations of sound.

Ormazd and Abriman (page 292), Note II

When this poem was first published, under the title of "The Superhuman Antagonists," in 1919, several critics paid it the perhaps flattering but certainly undeserved compliment of supposing that the story it tells was an actual Persian myth, despite what I imagined to be my very explicit statement to the contrary in the original preface. My obligations to ancient Persian mythology are simply these, that I have used as the machinery of my brief epic the Zoroastrian dualism on which that mythology rests, and have taken as the personages of my narrative some of the gods who in the Zend Avesta are pictured as ruling the world. The story itself which I have woven around these personages owes nothing whatever to any recorded fount of legend or fable, but is solely my own invention, the child of my own brain.

It will be fairly obvious that a melioristic conception of the enigmas of life and nature forms the moral background of my poem, and plays the chief part in bringing about its climax ; but I take leave to caution my readers against assuming that the meliorist doctrine necessarily represents the author's personal creed. It is a doctrine, I venture to say, which no human mind is truly competent either to accept or deny, the available evidence providing a much too uncertain foundation for either belief or disbelief. It is, however, the most beautiful of man's vain attempts to account for the unaccountable, and I have here adopted it for its æsthetic value and because it was essential to my story. That story is not a tractate or a treatise, but is just what its sub-title proclaims it—a piece of pure fantasy or romance, with the personified forces of Good and Evil as its chief characters, and the infinite universe for its scene of action.

Nevertheless, though I am far from avowing meliorism as my own faith, I cannot conceive how *any* faith can be of lasting service and support to the human spirit except

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with this as its keystone or foundation. Indeed I am almost tempted to exclaim—borrowing words in which the voice of the early Milton sounds to my ear curiously like Shakespeare's—

“ If *this* fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble.”

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Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London



