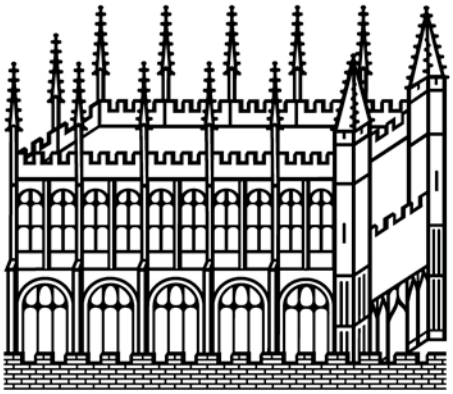

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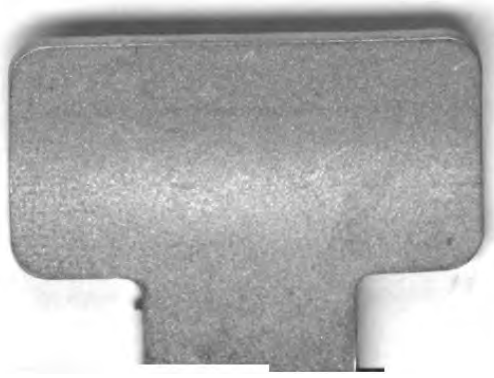

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VOL. I

FINE-PAPER EDITION

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CHATTO & WINDUS
1911

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WITHIN AND WITHOUT:

A Dramatic Poem.

What life it is, and how that all these lives do gather—
With outward maker's force, or like an inward father.
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S *Arcadia.*

Written December and January, 1850–51.

TO L. P. M. D.

RECEIVE thine own; for I and it are thine.
Thou know'st its story; how for forty days—
Weary with sickness and with social haze,
(After thy hands and lips with love divine
Had somewhat soothed me, made the glory shine,
Though with a watery lustre,) more delays
Of blessedness forbid—I took my ways
Into a solitude, Invention's mine;
There thought and wrote, afar, and yet with thee.
Those days gone past, I came, and brought a book;
My child, developed since in limb and look.
It came in shining vapours from the sea,
And in thy stead sung low sweet songs to me,
When the red life-blood labour would not brook.

May, 1855.

WITHIN AND WITHOUT.

PART I.

Go thou into thy closet; shut thy door;
And pray to Him in secret: He will hear.
But think not thou, by one wild bound, to clear
The numberless ascensions, more and more,
Of starry stairs that must be climbed, before
Thou comest to the Father's likeness near,
And bendest down to kiss the feet so dear
That, step by step, their mounting flights passed o'er.
Be thou content if on thy weary need
There falls a sense of showers and of the spring;
A hope that makes it possible to fling
Sickness aside, and go and do the deed;
For highest aspiration will not lead
Unto the calm beyond all questioning.

SCENE I.—*A cell in a convent.* JULIAN *alone.*

Julian. Evening again slow creeping like a death!
And the red sunbeams fading from the wall,
On which they flung a sky, with streaks and bars
Of the poor window-pane that let them in,
For clouds and shadings of the mimic heaven!
Soul of my cell, they part, no more to come.
But what is light to me, while I am dark!
And yet they strangely draw me, those faint hues,
Reflected flushes from the Evening's face,
Which as a bride, with glowing arms outstretched,
Takes to her blushing heaven him who has left
His chamber in the dim deserted east.
Through walls and hills I see it! The rosy sea!

The radiant head half-sunk! A pool of light,
As the blue globe had by a blow been broken,
And the insphered glory bubbled forth!
Or the sun were a splendid water-bird,
That flying furrowed with its golden feet
A flashing wake over the waves, and home!
Lo there!—Alas, the dull blank wall!—High up,
The window-pane a dead gray eye! and night
Come on me like a thief!——Ah, well! the sun
Has always made me sad! I'll go and pray:
The terror of the night begins with prayer.
(*Vesper bell.*) Call them that need thee; I need not thy summons;
My knees would not so pain me when I kneel,
If only at thy voice my prayer awoke.
I will not to the chapel. When I find Him,
Then will I praise him from the heights of peace;
But now my soul is as a speck of life
Cast on the deserts of eternity;
A hungering and a thirsting, nothing more.
I am as a child new-born, its mother dead,
Its father far away beyond the seas.
Blindly I stretch my arms and seek for him:
He goeth by me, and I see him not.
I cry to him: as if I sprinkled ashes,
My prayers fall back in dust upon my soul.
(*Choir and organ-music.*) I bless you, sweet sounds, for your visiting.
What friends I have! Prismatic harmonies
Have just departed in the sun's bright coach,
And fair, convolved sounds troop in to me,
Stealing my soul with faint deliciousness.
Would they took shapes! What levees I should hold!
How should my cell be filled with wavering forms!
Louder they grow, each swelling higher, higher;
Trembling and hesitating to float off,

As bright air-bubbles linger, that a boy
Blows, with their interchanging, wood-dove-hues,
Just throbbing to their flight, like them to die.
—Gone now! Gone to the Hades of dead loves!
Is it for this that I have left the world?—
Left what, poor fool? Is this, then, all that comes
Of that night when the closing door fell dumb
On music and on voices, and I went
Forth from the ordered tumult of the dance,
Under the clear cope of the moonless night,
Wandering away without the city-walls,
Between the silent meadows and the stars,
Till something woke in me, and moved my spirit,
And of themselves my thoughts turned toward God;
When straight within my soul I felt as if
An eye was opened; but I knew not whether
'Twas I that saw, or God that looked on me?
It closed again, and darkness fell; but not
To hide the memory; that, in many failings
Of spirit and of purpose, still returned;
And I came here at last to search for God.
Would I could find him! Oh, what quiet content
Would then absorb my heart, yet leave it free!

A knock at the door. Enter Brother ROBERT *with a light.*

Robert. Head in your hands as usual! You will fret
Your life out, sitting moping in the dark.
Come, it is supper-time.
Julian. I will not sup to-night.
Robert. Not sup? You'll never live to be a saint.
Julian. A saint! The devil has me by the heel.
Robert. So has he all saints; as a boy his kite,
Which ever struggles higher for his hold.
It is a silly devil to gripe so hard;—
He should let go his hold, and then he has you.

If you'll not come, I'll leave the light with you. Hark to the chorus! Brother Stephen sings.

Chorus. *Always merry, and never drunk,*
That's the life of the jolly monk.

SONG.

They say the first monks were lonely men,
Praying each in his lonely den,
Rising up to kneel again,
Each a skinny male Magdalen,
Peeping scared from out his hole
Like a burrowing rabbit or a mole;
But years ring changes as they roll—

Cho. *Now always merry, &c.*

When the moon gets up with her big round face,
Like Mistress Poll's in the market-place,
Down to the village below we pace;—
We know a supper that wants a grace:
Past the curtsying women we go,
Past the smithy, all a glow,
To the snug little houses at top of the row—

Cho. *For always merry, &c.*

And there we find, among the ale,
The fragments of a floating tale:
To piece them together we never fail;
And we fit them rightly, I'll go bail.
And so we have them all in hand,
The lads and lasses throughout the land,
And we are the masters,—you understand?

Cho. *So always merry, &c.*

Last night we had such a game of play
With the nephews and nieces over the way,
All for the gold that belonged to the clay
That lies in lead till the judgment-day!
The old man's soul they'd leave in the lurch,
But we saved her share for old Mamma Church.
How they eyed the bag as they stood in the porch!

Cho. *Oh! always merry, and never drunk,*
That's the life of the jolly monk!

Robert. The song is hardly to your taste, I see! Where shall I set the light?

Julian. I do not need it.

Robert. Come, come! The dark is a hot-bed for fancies.
I wish you were at table, were it only
To stop the talking of the men about you.
You in the dark are talked of in the light.

Julian. Well, brother, let them talk; it hurts not me.

Robert. No; but it hurts your friend to hear them say,
You would be thought a saint without the trouble;
You do no penance that they can discover.
You keep shut up, say some, eating your heart,
Possessed with a bad conscience, the worst demon.
You are a prince, say others, hiding here,
Till circumstance that bound you, set you free.
To-night, there are some whispers of a lady
That would refuse your love.

Julian. Ay! What of her?

Robert. I heard no more than so; and that you came
To seek the next best service you could find:
Turned from the lady's door, and knocked at God's.

Julian. One part at least is true: I knock at God's;
He has not yet been pleased to let me in.
As for the lady—that is—so far true,
But matters little. Had I less to think,
This talking might annoy me; as it is,
Why, let the wind set there, if it pleases it;
I keep in-doors.

Robert. Gloomy as usual, brother!
Brooding on fancy's eggs. God did not send
The light that all day long gladdened the earth,
Flashed from the snowy peak, and on the spire
Transformed the weathercock into a star,
That you should gloom within stone walls all day.
At dawn to-morrow, take your staff, and come:

We will salute the breezes, as they rise
And leave their lofty beds, laden with odours
Of melting snow, and fresh damp earth, and moss—
Imprisoned spirits, which life-waking Spring
Lets forth in vapour through the genial air.
Come, we will see the sunrise; watch the light
Leap from his chariot on the loftiest peak,
And thence descend triumphant, step by step,
The stairway of the hills. Free air and action
Will soon dispel these vapours of the brain.

Julian. My friend, if one should tell a homeless boy,
"There is your father's house: go in and rest;"
Through every open room the child would pass,
Timidly looking for the friendly eye;
Fearing to touch, scarce daring even to wonder
At what he saw, until he found his sire;
But gathered to his bosom, straight he is
The heir of all; he knows it 'mid his tears.
And so with me: not having seen Him yet,
The light rests on me with a heaviness;
All beauty wears to me a doubtful look;
A voice is in the wind I do not know;
A meaning on the face of the high hills
Whose utterance I cannot comprehend.
A something is behind them: that is God.
These are his words, I doubt not, language strange;
These are the expressions of his shining thoughts;
And he is present, but I find him not.
I have not yet been held close to his heart.
Once in his inner room, and by his eyes
Acknowledged, I shall find my home in these,
'Mid sights familiar as a mother's smiles,
And sounds that never lose love's mystery.
Then they will comfort me. Lead me to Him.

Robert (*pointing to the Crucifix in a recess*). See, there is God revealed in human form!

Julian (*kneeling and crossing*). Alas, my friend!—
revealed—but as in nature:
I see the man; I cannot find the God.
I know his voice is in the wind, his presence
Is in the Christ. The wind blows where it listeth;
And there stands Manhood: and the God is there,
Not here, not here! (*Pointing to his bosom.*)
[*Seeing Robert's bewildered look, and changing his tone—*
You do not understand me.
Without my need, you cannot know my want.
You will all night be puzzling to determine
With which of the old heretics to class me.
But you are honest; will not rouse the cry
Against me. I am honest. For the proof,
Such as will satisfy a monk, look here!
Is this a smooth belt, brother? And look here!
Did one week's scourging seam my side like that?
I am ashamed to speak thus, and to show
Things rightly hidden; but in my heart I love you,
And cannot bear but you should think me true.
Let it excuse my foolishness. They talk
Of penance! Let them talk when they have tried,
And found it has not even unbarred heaven's gate,
Let out one stray beam of its living light,
Or humbled that proud *I* that knows not God!
You are my friend:—if you should find this cell
Empty some morning, do not be afraid
That any ill has happened.

Robert. Well, perhaps
'Twere better you should go. I cannot help you,
But I can keep your secret. God be with you. [*Goes.*

Julian. Amen.—A good man; but he has not
waked,
And seen the Sphinx's stony eyes fixed on him.
God veils it. He believes in Christ, he thinks;
And so he does, as possible for him.
How he will wonder when he looks for heaven!

He thinks me an enthusiast, because
I seek to know God, and to hear his voice
Talk to my heart in silence; as of old
The Hebrew king, when, still, upon his bed,
He lay communing with his heart; and God
With strength in his soul did strengthen him, until
In his light he saw light. God speaks to men.
My soul leans toward him; stretches forth its arms,
And waits expectant. Speak to me, my God;
And let me know the living Father cares
For me, even me; for this one of his children.—
Hast thou no word for me? I am thy thought.
God, let thy mighty heart beat into mine,
And let mine answer as a pulse to thine.
See, I am low; yea, very low; but thou
Art high, and thou canst lift me up to thee.
I am a child, a fool before thee, God;
But thou hast made my weakness as my strength.
I am an emptiness for thee to fill;
My soul, a cavern for thy sea. I lie
Diffused, abandoning myself to thee. . . . .
———I will look up, if life should fail in looking.
Ah me! A stream cut from my parent-spring!
Ah me! A life lost from its father-life!

SCENE II.—*The refectory. The monks at table. A buzz of conversation.* ROBERT *enters, wiping his forehead, as if he had just come in.*

Stephen (*speaking across the table*). You see, my friend,
it will not stand to logic;
Or, if you like it better, stand to reason;
For in this doctrine is involved a *cause*
Which for its very being doth depend
Upon its own *effect*. For, don't you see,
He tells me to have faith and I shall live!

Have faith for what? Why, plainly that I shall
Be saved from hell by him, and ta'en to heaven;
What is salvation else? If I believe,
Then he will save me! But, so, this his *will*
Has no existence till that I believe;
And there is nothing for my faith to rest on,
No object for belief. How can I trust
In that which is not? Send the salad, Cosmo.
Besides, 'twould be a plenary indulgence;
To all intents save one, most plenary—
And that the Church's coffer. 'Tis absurd.

Monk. 'Tis most absurd, as you have clearly shown.
And yet I fear some of us have been nibbling
At this same heresy. 'Twere well that one
Should find it poison. I have no pique at him—
But there's that Julian!—

Stephen. Hush! speak lower, friend.

Two Monks *farther down the table—in a low tone.*

1st Monk. Where did you find her?

2nd Monk. She was taken ill
At the Star-in-the-East. I chanced to pass that way,
And so they called me in. I found her dying.
But ere she would confess and make her peace,
She begged to know if I had ever seen,
About this neighbourhood, a tall dark man,
Moody and silent, with a little stoop
As if his eyes were heavy for his shoulders,
And a strange look of mingled youth and age,—

1st Monk. Julian, by——

2nd Monk. 'St—no names! I had not seen him.
I saw the death-mist gathering in her eyes,
And urged her to proceed; and she began;
But went not far before delirium came,
With endless repetitions, hurryings forward,
Recoverings like a hound at fault. The past
Was running riot in her conquered brain;

And there, with doors thrown wide, a motley group
Held carnival; went freely out and in,
Meeting and jostling. But withal it seemed
As some confused tragedy went on;
Till suddenly the light sank, and the pageant
Was lost in darkness; the chambers of her brain
Lay desolate and silent. I can gather
So much, and little more:—This Julian
Is one of some distinction; probably rich,
And titled *Count*. He had a love-affair,
In good-boy, layman fashion, seemingly.—
Give me the woman; love is troublesome!—
She loved him too, but falsehood came between,
And used this woman for her minister;
Who never would have peached, but for a witness
Hidden behind some curtain in her heart—
An unsuspected witness called Sir Conscience,
Who has appeared and blabbed—but must conclude
His story to some double-ghostly father,
For she is ghostly penitent by this.
Our consciences will play us no such tricks;
They are the Church's, not our own. We must
Keep this small matter secret. If it should
Come to his ears, he'll soon bid us good-bye—
A lady's love before ten heavenly crowns!
And so the world will have the benefit
Of the said wealth of his, if such there be.
I have told you, old Godfrey; I tell none else
Until our Abbot comes.

1st Monk. That is to-morrow.

Another group near the bottom of the table, in which is ROBERT.

1st Monk. 'Tis very clear there's something wrong with him.
Have you not marked that look, half scorn, half pity,
Which passes like a thought across his face,

When he has listened, seeming scarce to listen,
A while to our discourse?—he never joins.
2nd Monk. I know quite well. I stood beside him once,
Some of the brethren near; Stephen was talking:
He chanced to say the words, *Our Holy Faith.*
"Their faith indeed, poor fools!" fell from his lips,
Half-muttered, and half-whispered, as the words
Had wandered forth unbidden. I am sure
He is an atheist at the least.
3rd Monk (*pale-faced and large-eyed*). And I
Fear he is something worse. I had a trance
In which the devil tempted me: the shape
Was Julian's to the very finger-nails.
Non nobis, Domine! I overcame.
I am sure of one thing—music tortures him:
I saw him once, amid the *Gloria Patri,*
When the whole chapel trembled in the sound,
Rise slowly as in ecstasy of pain,
And stretch his arms abroad, and clasp his hands,
Then slowly, faintingly, sink on his knees.
2nd Monk. He does not know his rubric; stands when others
Are kneeling round him. I have seen him twice
With his missal upside down.
4th Monk (*plethoric and husky*). He blew his nose
Quite loud on last Annunciation-day,
And choked our Lady's name in the Abbot's throat.
Robert. When he returns, we must complain; and beg
He'll take such measures as the case requires.

SCENE III.—*Julian's cell. An open chest. The lantern on a stool, its candle nearly burnt out.* JULIAN *lying on his bed, looking at the light.*

Julian. And so all growth that is not toward God
Is growing to decay. All increase gained

Is but an ugly, earthy, fungous growth.
'Tis aspiration as that wick aspires,
Towering above the light it overcomes,
But ever sinking with the dying flame.
O let me *live*, if but a daisy's life!
No toadstool life-in-death, no efflorescence!
Wherefore wilt thou not hear me, Lord of me?
Have I no claim on thee? True, I have none
That springs from me, but much that springs from thee.
Hast thou not made me? Liv'st thou not in me?
I have done nought for thee, am but a want;
But thou who art rich in giving, canst give claims;
And this same need of thee which thou hast given,
Is a strong claim on thee to give thyself,
And makes me bold to rise and come to thee.
Through all my sinning thou hast not recalled
This witness of thy fatherhood, to plead
For thee with me, and for thy child with thee.
Last night, as now, I seemed to speak with him;
Or was it but my heart that spoke for him?
"Thou mak'st me long," I said, "therefore wilt give;
My longing is thy promise, O my God!
If, having sinned, I thus have lost the claim,
Why doth the longing yet remain with me,
And make me bold thus to besiege thy doors?"
Methought I heard for answer: "Question on.
Hold fast thy need; it is the bond that holds
Thy being yet to mine. I give it thee,
A hungering and a fainting and a pain,
Yet a God-blessing. Thou art not quite dead
While this pain lives in thee. I bless thee with it.
Better to live in pain than die that death."
So I will live, and nourish this my pain;
For oft it giveth birth unto a hope
That makes me strong in prayer. He knows it too.
Softly I'll walk the earth; for it is his,

Not mine to revel in. Content I wait.
A still small voice I cannot but believe,
Says on within: God *will* reveal himself.
I must go from this place. I cannot rest.
It boots not staying. A desire like thirst
Awakes within me, or a new child-heart,
To be abroad on the mysterious earth,
Out with the moon in all the blowing winds.
'Tis strange that dreams of her should come again.
For many months I had not seen her form,
Save phantom-like on dim hills of the past,
Until I laid me down an hour ago;
When twice through the dark chamber full of eyes,
The memory passed, reclothed in verity:
Once more I now behold it; the inward blaze
Of the glad windows half quenched in the moon;
The trees that, drooping, murmured to the wind,
"Ah! wake me not," which left them to their sleep,
All save the poplar: it was full of joy,
So that it could not sleep, but trembled on.
Sudden as Aphrodite from the sea,
She issued radiant from the pearly night.
It took me half with fear—the glimmer and gleam
Of her white festal garments, haloed round
With denser moonbeams. On she came—and there
I am bewildered. Something I remember
Of thoughts that choked the passages of sound,
Hurrying forth without their pilot-words;
Of agony, as when a spirit seeks
In vain to hold communion with a man;
A hand that would and would not stay in mine;
A gleaming of white garments far away;
And then I know not what. The moon was low,
When from the earth I rose; my hair was wet,
Dripping with dew—

Enter ROBERT *cautiously.*

Why, how now, Robert?

[*Rising on his elbow.*

Robert (*glancing at the chest*). I see; that's well. Are you nearly ready?

Julian. Why? What's the matter?

Robert. You must go this night,
If you would go at all.

Julian. Why must I go? [*Rises.*

Robert (*turning over the things in the chest*). Here, put this coat on. Ah! take that thing too.
No more such head-gear! Have you not a hat,

[*Going to the chest again.*

Or something for your head? There's such a hubbub
Got up about you! The Abbot comes to-morrow.

Julian. Ah, well! I need not ask. I know it all.

Robert. No, you do not. Nor is there time to tell you.
Ten minutes more, they will be round to bar
The outer doors; and then—good-bye, poor Julian!

[JULIAN *has been rapidly changing his clothes.*

Julian. Now I am ready, Robert. Thank you, friend.
Farewell! God bless you! We shall meet again.

Robert. Farewell, dear friend! Keep far away from this. [*Goes.*

[JULIAN *follows him out of the cell, steps along a narrow passage to a door, which he opens slowly. He goes out, and closes the door behind him.*

SCENE IV.—*Night. The court of a country-inn. The* Abbot, *while his horse is brought out.*

Abbot. Now for a shrine to house this rich Madonna,
Within the holiest of the holy place!
I'll have it made in fashion as a stable,
With porphyry pillars to a marble stall;

And odorous woods, shaved fine like shaken hay,
Shall fill the silver manger for a bed,
Whereon shall lie the ivory Infant carved
By shepherd hands on plains of Bethlehem.
And over him shall bend the Mother mild,
In silken white and coroneted gems.
Glorious! But wherewithal I see not now—
The Mammon of unrighteousness is scant;
Nor know I any nests of money-bees
That could yield half-contentment to my need.
Yet will I trust and hope; for never yet
In journeying through this vale of tears have I
Projected pomp that did not blaze anon.

SCENE V.—*After midnight.* JULIAN *seated under a tree by the roadside.*

Julian. So lies my journey—on into the dark!
Without my will I find myself alive,
And must go forward. Is it God that draws
Magnetic all the souls unto their home,
Travelling, they know not how, but unto God?
It matters little what may come to me
Of outward circumstance, as hunger, thirst,
Social condition, yea, or love or hate;
But what shall *I* be, fifty summers hence?
My life, my being, all that meaneth *me*,
Goes darkling forward into something—what?
O God, thou knowest. It is not my care.
If thou wert less than truth, or less than love,
It were a fearful thing to be and grow
We know not what. My God, take care of me;
Pardon and swathe me in an infinite love,
Pervading and inspiring me, thy child.
And let thy own design in me work on,
Unfolding the ideal man in me;

Which being greater far than I have grown,
I cannot comprehend. I am thine, not mine.
One day, completed unto thine intent,
I shall be able to discourse with thee;
For thy Idea, gifted with a self,
Must be of one with the mind where it sprang,
And fit to talk with thee about thy thoughts.
Lead me, O Father, holding by thy hand;
I ask not whither, for it must be on.
This road will lead me to the hills, I think;
And there I am in safety and at home.

SCENE VI.—*The Abbot's room. The* Abbot *and one of the* Monks.

Abbot. Did she say *Julian?* Did she say the name?
Monk. She did.
Abbot. What did she call the lady? What?
Monk. I could not hear.
Abbot. Nor where she lived?
Monk. Nor that.
She was too wild for leading where I would.
Abbot. So! Send Julian. One thing I need not ask:
You have kept this matter secret?
Monk. Yes, my lord.
Abbot. Well, go and send him hither. [Monk *goes.*
Said I well,
That prayer would burgeon into pomp for me?
That God would hear his own elect who cried?
Now for a shrine, so glowing in the means
That it shall draw the eyes by power of light!
So tender in conceit, that it shall draw
The heart by very strength of delicateness,
And move proud thought to worship!
I must act
With caution now; must win his confidence;

Question him of the secret enemies
That fight against his soul; and lead him thus
To tell me, by degrees, his history.
So shall I find the truth, and lay foundation
For future acts, as circumstance requires.
For if the tale be true that he is rich,
And if——

Re-enter Monk *in haste and terror.*

Monk. He's gone, my lord! His cell is empty.
Abbot (*starting up*). What! You are crazy! Gone? His cell is empty?
Monk. 'Tis true as death, my lord. Witness, these eyes!
Abbot. Heaven and hell! It shall not be, I swear!
There is a plot in this! You, sir, have lied!
Some one is in his confidence!—who is it?
Go rouse the convent. [Monk *goes.*
He must be followed, found.
Hunt's up, friend Julian! First your heels, old stag!
But by and by your horns, and then your side!
'Tis venison much too good for the world's eating.
I'll go and sift this business to the bran.
Robert and him I have sometimes seen together!—
God's curse! it shall fare ill with any man
That has connived at this, if I detect him.

SCENE VII.—*Afternoon. The mountains.* JULIAN.

Julian. Once more I tread thy courts, O God of heaven!
I lay my hand upon a rock, whose peak
Is miles away, and high amid the clouds.
Perchance I touch the mountain whose blue summit,
With the fantastic rock upon its side,
Stops the eye's flight from that high chamber-window
Where, when a boy, I used to sit and gaze
With wondering awe upon the mighty thing,

Terribly calm, alone, self-satisfied,
The *hitherto* of my child-thoughts. Beyond,
A sea might roar around its base. Beyond,
Might be the depths of the unfathomed space,
This the earth's bulwark over the abyss.
Upon its very point I have watched a star
For a few moments crown it with a fire,
As of an incense-offering that blazed
Upon this mighty altar high uplift,
And then float up the pathless waste of heaven.
From the next window I could look abroad
Over a plain unrolled, which God had painted
With trees, and meadow-grass, and a large river,
Where boats went to and fro like water-flies,
In white and green; but still I turned to look
At that one mount, aspiring o'er its fellows:
All here I saw—I knew not what was there.
O love of knowledge and of mystery,
Striving together in the heart of man!
"Tell me, and let me know; explain the thing."—
Then when the courier-thoughts have circled round:
"Alas! I know it all; its charm is gone!"
But I must hasten; else the sun will set
Before I reach the smoother valley-road.
I wonder if my old nurse lives; or has
Eyes left to know me with. Surely, I think,
Four years of wandering since I left my home,
In sunshine and in snow, in ship and cell,
Must have worn changes in this face of mine
Sufficient to conceal me, if I will.

SCENE VIII.—*A dungeon in the monastery. A ray of the moon on the floor.* ROBERT.

Robert. One comfort is, he's far away by this.
Perhaps this comfort is my deepest sin.
Where shall I find a daysman in this strife

Between my heart and holy Church's words?
Is not the law of kindness from God's finger,
Yea, from his heart, on mine? But then we must
Deny ourselves; and impulses must yield,
Be subject to the written law of words;
Impulses made, made strong, that we might have
Within the temple's court live things to bring
And slay upon his altar; that we may,
By this hard penance of the heart and soul,
Become the slaves of Christ.—I have done wrong;
I ought not to have let poor Julian go.
And yet that light upon the floor says, yes—
Christ would have let him go. It seemed a good,
Yes, self-denying deed, to risk my life
That he might be in peace. Still up and down
The balance goes, a good in either scale;
Two angels giving each to each the lie,
And none to part them or decide the question.
But still the *words* come down the heaviest
Upon my conscience as that scale descends;
But that may be because they hurt me more,
Being rough strangers in the feelings' home.
Would God forbid us to do what is right,
Even for his sake? But then Julian's life
Belonged to God, to do with as he pleases!
I am bewildered. 'Tis as God and God
Commanded different things in different tones.
Ah! then, the tones are different: which is likest
God's voice? The one is gentle, loving, kind,
Like Mary singing to her mangered child;
The other like a self-restrained tempest;
Like—ah, alas!—the trumpet on Mount Sinai,
Louder and louder, and the voice of *words*.
O for some light! Would they would kill me! then
I would go up, close up, to God's own throne,
And ask, and beg, and pray to know the truth;
And he would slay this ghastly contradiction.

I should not fear, for he would comfort me,
Because I am perplexed, and long to know.
But this perplexity may be my sin,
And come of pride that will not yield to him!
O for one word from God! his own, and fresh
From him to me! Alas, what shall I do!

PART II.

HARK, hark, a voice amid the quiet intense!
It is thy Duty waiting thee without.
Rise from thy knees in hope, the half of doubt;
A hand doth pull thee—it is Providence;
Open thy door straightway, and get thee hence;
Go forth into the tumult and the shout;
Work, love, with workers, lovers, all about:
Of noise alone is born the inward sense
Of silence; and from action springs alone
The inward knowledge of true love and faith.
Then, weary, go thou back with failing breath,
And in thy chamber make thy prayer and moan:
One day upon *His* bosom, all thine own,
Thou shalt lie still, embraced in holy death.

SCENE I.—*A room in Julian's castle.* JULIAN *and the old* Nurse.

Julian. Nembroni? Count Nembroni?—I remember:
A man about my height, but stronger built?
I have seen him at her father's. There was something
I did not like about him:—ah! I know:
He had a way of darting looks at you,
As if he wished to know you, but by stealth.
Nurse. The same, my lord. He is the creditor.
The common story is, he sought the daughter,
But sought in vain: the lady would not wed.
'Twas rumoured soon they were in grievous trouble,
Which caused much wonder, for the family

Was always reckoned wealthy. Count Nembroni
Contrived to be the only creditor,
And so imprisoned him.
Julian. Where is the lady?
Nurse. Down in the town.
Julian. But where?
Nurse. If you turn left,
When you go through the gate, 'tis the last house
Upon this side the way. An honest couple,
Who once were almost pensioners of hers,
Have given her shelter: still she hopes a home
With distant friends. Alas, poor lady! 'tis
A wretched change for her.
Julian. Hm! ah! I see.
What kind of man is this Nembroni, nurse?
Nurse. Here he is little known. His title comes
From an estate, they say, beyond the hills.
He looks ungracious: I have seen the children
Run to the doors when he came up the street.
Julian. Thank you, nurse; you may go. Stay—one thing more:
Have any of my people seen me?
Nurse. None
But me, my lord.
Julian. And can you keep it secret?—
I know you will for my sake. I will trust you.
Bring me some supper; I am tired and faint. [Nurse *goes.*
Poor and alone! Such a man has not laid
His plans for nothing further! I will watch him.
Heaven may have brought me hither for her sake.
Poor child! I would protect thee as thy father,
Who cannot help thee. Thou wast not to blame;
My love had no claim on like love from thee.—
How the old tide comes rushing to my heart!
I know not what I can do yet but watch.
I have no hold on him. I cannot go,
Say, *I suspect;* and, *Is it so or not?*

I should but injure them by doing so.
True, I might pay her father's debts; and will,
If Joseph, my old friend, has managed well
During my absence. *I* have not spent much.
But still she'd be in danger from this man,
If not permitted to betray himself;
And I, discovered, could no more protect.
Or if, unseen by her, I yet could haunt
Her footsteps like an angel, not for long
Should I remain unseen of other eyes,
That peer from under cowls—not angel-eyes—
Hunting me out, over the stormy earth.
No; I must watch. I can do nothing better.

SCENE II.—*A poor cottage. An old* Man *and* Woman *sitting together.*

Man. How's the poor lady now?
Woman. She's poorly still.
I fancy every day she's growing thinner.
I am sure she's wasting steadily.
Man. Has the count
Been here again to-day?
Woman. No. And I think
He will not come again. She was so proud
The last time he was here, you would have thought
She was a queen at least.
Man. Remember, wife,
What she has been. Trouble like that throws down
The common folk like us all of a heap:
With folks like her, that are high bred and blood,
It sets the mettle up.
Woman. All very right;
But take her as she was, she might do worse
Than wed the Count Nembroni.
Man. Possible.

But are you sure there is no other man
Stands in his way?
Woman. How can I tell? So be,
He should be here to help her. What she'll do
I am sure I do not know. We cannot keep her.
And for her work, she does it far too well
To earn a living by it. Her times are changed—
She should not give herself such prideful airs.
Man. Come, come, old wife! you women are so hard
On one another! You speak fair for men,
And make allowances; but when a woman
Crosses your way, you speak the worst of her.
But where is this you're going then to-night?
Do they want me to go as well as you?
Woman. Yes, you must go, or else it is no use.
They cannot give the money to me, except
My husband go with me. He told me so.
Man. Well, wife, it's worth the going—but to see:
I don't expect a groat to come of it.

SCENE III.—*Kitchen of a small inn.* Host *and* Hostess.

Host. That's a queer customer you've got upstairs!
What the deuce is he?
Hostess. What is that to us?
He always pays his way, and handsomely.
I wish there were more like him.
Host. Has he been
At home all day?
Hostess. He has not stirred a foot
Across the threshold. That's his only fault—
He's always in the way.
Host. What does he do?
Hostess. Paces about the room, or sits at the window.
I sometimes make an errand to the cupboard,
To see what he's about: he looks annoyed,
But does not speak a word.

Host. He must be crazed,
Or else in hiding for some scrape or other.
Hostess. He has a wild look in his eye sometimes;
But sure he would not sit so much in the dark,
If he were mad, or anything on his conscience;
And though he does not say much, when he speaks
A civiller man ne'er came in woman's way.
Host. Oh! he's all right, I warrant. Is the wine come?

SCENE IV.—*The inn; a room upstairs.* JULIAN *at the window, half hidden by the curtain.*

Julian. With what profusion her white fingers spend
Delicate motions on the insensate cloth!
It was so late this morning ere she came!
I fear she has been ill. She looks so pale!
Her beauty is much less, but she more lovely.
Do I not love her more than when that beauty
Beamed out like starlight, radiating beyond
The confines of her wondrous face and form,
And animated with a present power
Her garment's folds, even to the very hem!
Ha! there is something now: the old woman drest
In her Sunday clothes, and waiting at the door,
As for her husband. Something will follow this.
And here he comes, all in his best like her.
They will be gone a while. Slowly they walk,
With short steps down the street. Now I must wake
The sleeping hunter-eagle in my eyes!

SCENE V.—*A back street. Two* Servants *with a carriage and pair.*

1*st Serv.* Heavens, what a cloud! as big as Ætna! There!
That gust blew stormy. Take Juno by the head,
I'll stand by Neptune. Take her head, I say;
We'll have enough to do, if it should lighten.

2nd Serv. Such drops! That's the first of it. I declare
She spreads her nostrils and looks wild already,
As if she smelt it coming. I wish we were
Under some roof or other. I fear this business
Is not of the right sort.
1st Serv. He looked as black
As if he too had lightning in his bosom.
There! Down, you brute! Mind the pole, Beppo!

SCENE VI.—*Julian's room.* JULIAN *standing at the window, his face pressed against a pane. Storm and gathering darkness without.*

Julian. Plague on the lamp! 'tis gone—no, there it flares!
I wish the wind would leave or blow it out.
Heavens! how it thunders! This terrific storm
Will either cow or harden him. I'm blind!
That lightning! Oh, let me see again, lest he
Should enter in the dark! I cannot bear
This glimmering longer. Now that gush of rain
Has blotted all my view with crossing lights.
'Tis no use waiting here. I must cross over,
And take my stand in the corner by the door.
But if he comes while I go down the stairs,
And I not see? To make sure, I'll go gently
Up the stair to the landing by her door.
[*He goes quickly toward the door.*
Hostess (*opening the door and looking in*). If you please, sir— [*He hurries past.*
The devil's in the man!

SCENE VII.—*The landing.*

Voice within. If you scream, I must muffle you.
Julian (*rushing up the stair*). He *is* there!

His hand is on her mouth! She tries to scream!

[*Flinging the door open, as* NEMBRONI *springs forward on the other side.*

Back!

Nembroni. What the devil!—Beggar!

[*Drawing his sword, and making a thrust at* JULIAN, *which he parries with his left arm, as, drawing his dagger, he springs within* NEMBRONI'S *guard.*

Julian (*taking him by the throat*). I have faced worse storms than you. [*They struggle.*

Heart point and hilt strung on the line of force,

[*He stabs him.*

Your ribs will not mail your heart!

[NEMBRONI *falls dead.* JULIAN *wipes his dagger on the dead man's coat.*

If men *will* be devils,
They are better in hell than here.

[*Lightning flashes on the blade.*

What a night
For a soul to go out of doors! God in heaven!

[*Approaches the lady within.*

Ah! she has fainted. That is well. I hope
It will not pass too soon. It is not far
To the half-hidden door in my own fence,
And that is well. If I step carefully,
Such rain will soon wash out the tell-tale footprints.
What! blood? *He* does not bleed much, I should think!
Oh, I see! it is mine—he has wounded me.
That's awkward now.

[*Takes a handkerchief from the floor by the window.*

Pardon me, dear lady;

[*Ties the handkerchief with hand and teeth round his arm.*

'Tis not to save my blood I would defile
Even your handkerchief.

[*Coming towards the door, carrying her.*

I am pleased to think
Ten monkish months have not ta'en all my strength.

[*Looking out of the window on the landing.*

For once, thank darkness! 'Twas sent for us, not him.

[*He goes down the stair.*

SCENE VIII.—*A room in the castle.* JULIAN *and the* Nurse.

Julian. Ask me no questions now, my dear old nurse.
You have put your charge to bed?
Nurse. Yes, my dear lord.
Julian. And has she spoken yet?
Nurse. After you left,
Her eyelids half unclosed; she murmured once:
Where am I, mother?—then she looked at me,
And her eyes wandered over all my face,
Till half in comfort, half in weariness,
They closed again. Bless her, dear soul! she is
As feeble as a child.
Julian. Under your care
She'll soon be well again. Let no one know
She is in the house:—blood has been shed for her.
Nurse. Alas! I feared it; blood is on her dress.
Julian. That's mine, not his. But put it in the fire.
Get her another. I'll leave a purse with you.
Nurse. Leave?
Julian. Yes. I am off to-night, wandering again
Over the earth and sea. She must not know
I have been here. You must contrive to keep
My share a secret. Once she moved and spoke
When a branch caught me, but she could not see me.
She thought, no doubt, it was Nembroni had her;
Nor would she have known me. You must hide her, nurse.
Let her on no pretence guess where she is,
Nor utter word that might suggest the fact.
When she is well and wishes to be gone,
Then write to this address—but under cover [*Writing.*
To the Prince Calboli at Florence. I
Will see to all the rest. But let her know
Her father is set free; assuredly,
Ere you can say it is, it will be so.

Nurse. How shall I best conceal her, my good lord?
Julian. I have thought of that. There's a deserted room
In the old west wing, at the further end
Of the oak gallery.
Nurse. Not deserted quite.
I ventured, when you left, to make it mine,
Because you loved it when a boy, my lord.
Julian. You do not know, nurse, why I loved it though:
I found a sliding panel, and a door
Into a room behind. I'll show it you.
You'll find some musty traces of me yet,
When you go in. Now take her to your room,
But get the other ready. Light a fire,
And keep it burning well for several days.
Then, one by one, out of the other rooms,
Take everything to make it comfortable;
Quietly, you know. If you must have your daughter,
Bind her to be as secret as yourself.
Then put her there. I'll let her father know
She is in safety.—I must change attire,
And be far off or ever morning break. [Nurse *goes.*
My treasure-room! how little then I thought,
Glad in my secret, one day it would hold
A treasure unto which I dared not come.
Perhaps she'd love me now—a very little!—
But not with even a heavenly gift would I
Go begging love; that should be free as light,
Cleaving unto myself even for myself.
I have enough to brood on, joy to turn
Over and over in my secret heart:—
She lives, and is the better that I live!

Re-enter Nurse.

Nurse. My lord, her mind is wandering; she is raving;
She's in a dreadful fever. We must send

To Arli for the doctor, else her life
Will be in danger.

Julian (*rising disturbed*). Go and fetch your daughter.
Between you, take her to my room, yours now.
I'll see her there. I think you can together!

Nurse. O yes, my lord; she is so thin, poor child!

[Nurse *goes.*

Julian. I ought to know the way to treat a fever,
If it be one of twenty. Hers has come
Of low food, wasting, and anxiety.
I've seen enough of that in Prague and Smyrna!

SCENE IX.—*The Abbot's room in the monastery.*
The Abbot.

Abbot. 'Tis useless all. No trace of him found yet.
One hope remains: that fellow has a head!

Enter STEPHEN.

Stephen, I have sent for you, because I am told
You said to-day, if I commissioned you,
You'd scent him out, if skulking in his grave.

Stephen. I did, my lord.

Abbot. How would you do it, Stephen?

Stephen. Try one plan till it failed; then try another;
Try half-a-dozen plans at once; keep eyes
And ears wide open, and mouth shut, my lord:
Your bull-dog sometimes makes the best retriever.
I have no plan; but, give me time and money,
I'll find him out.

Abbot. Stephen, you're just the man
I have been longing for. Get yourself ready.

SCENE X.—*Towards morning. The Nurse's room.*
LILIA *in bed.* JULIAN *watching.*

Julian. I think she sleeps. Would God it be so; then

She will do well. What strange things she has spoken!
My heart is beating as if it would spend
Its life in this one night, and beat it out.
And well it may, for there is more of life
In one such moment than in many years!
Pure life is measured by intensity,
Not by the how much of the crawling clock.
Is that a bar of moonlight stretched across
The window-blind? or is it but a band
Of whiter cloth my thrifty dame has sewed
Upon the other?—'Tis the moon herself,
Low in the west. 'Twas such a moon as this—
Lilia (*half-asleep, wildly*). If Julian had been here,
you dared not do it!—
Julian! Julian! [*Half-rising.*
Julian (*forgetting his caution, and going up to her*). I am
here, my Lilia.
Put your head down, my love. 'Twas all a dream,
A terrible dream. Gone now—is it not?

[*She looks at him with wide restless eyes; then sinks back on the pillow. He leaves her.*

How her dear eyes bewildered looked at me!
But her soul's eyes are closed. If this last long
She'll die before my sight, and Joy will lead
In by the hand her sister, Grief, pale-faced,
And leave her to console my solitude.
Ah, what a joy! I dare not think of it!
And what a grief! I will not think of that!
Love? and from her? my beautiful, my own!
O God, I did not know thou wast so rich
In making and in giving; did not know
The gathered glory of this earth of thine.
What! wilt thou crush me with an infinite joy?
Make me a god by giving? Wilt thou take
Thy centre-thought of living beauty, born
In thee, and send it home to dwell with me?

[*He leans on the wall.*

Lilia (*softly*). Am I in heaven? There's something
makes me glad,
As if I were in heaven! Yes, yes, I am.
I see the flashing of ten thousand glories;
I hear the trembling of a thousand wings,
That vibrate music on the murmuring air!
Each tiny feather-blade crushes its pool
Of circling air to sound, and quivers music!—
What is it, though, that makes me glad like this?
I knew, but cannot find it—I forget.
It must be here—what was it?—Hark! the fall,
The endless going of the stream of life!—
Ah me! I thirst, I thirst,—I am so thirsty! [*Querulously.*

[JULIAN *gives her drink, supporting her. She looks at him again, with large wondering eyes.*

Ah! now I know—I was so very thirsty!

[*He lays her down. She is comforted, and falls asleep. He extinguishes the light, and looks out of the window.*

Julian. The gray earth dawning up, cold, comfortless;
With its obtrusive *I am* written large
Upon its face!

[*Approaches the bed, and gazes on* LILIA *silently with clasped hands; then returns to the window.*

She sleeps so peacefully!
O God, I thank thee: thou hast sent her sleep.
Lord, let it sink into her heart and brain.

Enter Nurse.

Oh, nurse, I'm glad you're come! She is asleep.
You must be near her when she wakes again.
I think she'll be herself. But do be careful—
Right cautious how you tell her I am here.
Sweet woman-child, may God be in your sleep!

[JULIAN *goes.*

Nurse. Bless her white face, she looks just like my
daughter,
That's now a saint in heaven! Just those thin cheeks,
And eyelids hardly closed over her eyes!—

Dream on, poor darling! you are drinking life
From the breast of sleep. And yet I fain would see
Your shutters open, for I then should know
Whether the soul had drawn her curtains back,
To peep at morning from her own bright windows.
Ah! what a joy is ready, waiting her,
To break her fast upon, if her wild dreams
Have but betrayed her secrets honestly!
Will he not give thee love as dear as thine!

SCENE XI.—*A hilly road.* STEPHEN, *trudging alone pauses to look around him.*

Stephen. Not a footprint! not a trace that a blood-hound would nose at! But Stephen shall be acknowledged good dog and true. If I had him within stick-length—mind thy head, brother Julian! Thou hast not hair enough to protect it, and thy tonsure shall not. Neither shalt thou tarry at Jericho.—It is a poor man that leaves no trail; and if thou wert poor, I would not follow thee. [*Sings.*

Oh, many a hound is stretching out
  His two legs or his four,
And the saddled horses stand about
  The court and the castle door,
Till out come the baron, jolly and stout,
  To hunt the bristly boar!

The emperor, he doth keep a pack
  In his antechambers standing,
And up and down the stairs, good lack!
  And eke upon the landing:
A straining leash, and a quivering back,
  And nostrils and chest expanding!

The devil a hunter long hath been,
  Though Doctor Luther said it:
Of his canon-pack he was the dean,
  And merrily he led it:
The old one kept them swift and lean
  On faith—that's devil's credit!

Each man is a hunter to his trade,
And they follow one another;
But such a hunter never was made
As the monk that hunted his brother!
And the runaway pig, ere its game be played,
Shall be eaten by its mother!

Better hunt a flea in a woolly blanket, than a leg-bail monk in this wilderness of mountains, forests, and precipices! But the flea *may* be caught, and so *shall* the monk. I have said it. He is well spotted, with his silver crown and his uncropped ears. The rascally heretic! But his vows shall keep him, though he won't keep his vows. The whining, blubbering idiot! Gave his plaything, and wants it back!—I wonder whereabouts I am.

SCENE XII.—*The Nurse's room.* LILIA *sitting up in bed.* JULIAN *seated by her; an open note in his hand.*

Lilia. Tear it up, Julian.
Julian. No; I'll treasure it
As the remembrance of a by-gone grief:
I love it well, because it is *not* yours.
Lilia. Where have you been these long, long years away?
You look much older. You have suffered, Julian!
Julian. Since that day, Lilia, I have seen much, thought much,
Suffered a little. When you are quite yourself,
I'll tell you all you want to know about me.
Lilia. Do tell me something now. I feel quite strong;
It will not hurt me.
Julian. Wait a day or two.
Indeed 'twould weary you to tell you all.
Lilia. And I have much to tell you, Julian.
Have suffered too—not all for my own sake.
[*Recalling something.*

Oh, what a dream I had! Oh, Julian!—
I don't know when it was. It must have been
Before you brought me here! I am sure it was.
Julian. Don't speak about it. Tell me afterwards.
You must keep quiet now. Indeed you must.
Lilia. I will obey you, will not speak a word.

Enter Nurse.

Nurse. Blessings upon her! she's near well already.
Who would have thought, three days ago, to see
You look so bright! My lord, you have done wonders.
Julian. My art has helped a little, I thank God.—
To please me, Lilia, go to sleep a while. [JULIAN *goes.*
Lilia. Why does he always wear that curious cap?
Nurse. I don't know. You must sleep.
Lilia. Yes. I forgot.

SCENE XIII.—*The Steward's room.* JULIAN *and the* Steward. *Papers on the table, which* JULIAN *has just finished examining.*

Julian. Thank you much, Joseph; you have done well for me.
You sent that note privately to my friend?
Steward. I did, my lord; and have conveyed the money,
Putting all things in train for his release,
Without appearing in it personally,
Or giving any clue to other hands.
He sent this message by my messenger:
His hearty thanks, and God will bless you for it
He will be secret. For his daughter, she
Is safe with you as with himself; and so
God bless you both! He will expect to hear
From both of you from England.

Julian. Well, again.
What money is remaining in your hands?
Steward. Two bags, three hundred each; that's all. I fear
To wake suspicion, if I call in more.
Julian. One thing, and I have done: lest a mischance
Befall us, though I do not fear it much—
I have been very secret—is that boat
I had before I left, in sailing trim?
Steward. I knew it was a favourite with my lord;
I've taken care of it. A month ago,
With my own hands I painted it all fresh,
Fitting new oars and rowlocks. The old sail
I'll have replaced immediately; and then
'Twill be as good as new.
Julian. That's excellent.
Well, launch it in the evening. Make it fast
To the stone steps behind my garden study.
Stow in the lockers some sea-stores, and put
The money in the old desk in the study.
Steward. I will, my lord. It will be safe enough.

SCENE XIV.—*A road near the town. A* Waggoner. STEPHEN, *in lay dress, coming up to him.*

Stephen. Whose castle's that upon the hill, good fellow?
Waggoner. Its present owner's of the Uglii;
They call him Lorenzino.
Stephen. Whose is that
Down in the valley?
Waggoner. That is Count Lamballa's.
Stephen. What is his Christian name?
Waggoner. Omfredo. No,
That was his father's; his is Julian.

Stephen. Is he at home?
Waggoner. No, not for many a day.
His steward, honest man, I know is doubtful
Whether he be alive; and yet his land
Is better farmed than any in the country.
Stephen. He is not married, then?
Waggoner. No. There's a gossip
Amongst the women — but who would heed their talk!—
That love half-crazed, then drove him out of doors,
To wander here and there, like a bad ghost,
Because a silly wench refused him:—fudge!
Stephen. Most probably. I quite agree with you.
Where do you stop?
Waggoner. At the first inn we come to;
You'll see it from the bottom of the hill.
There is a better at the other end,
But here the stabling is by far the best.
Stephen. I must push on. Four legs can never go
Down-hill so fast as two. Good morning, friend.
Waggoner. Good morning, sir.
Stephen (*aside*). I take the further house.

SCENE XV.—*The Nurse's room.* JULIAN *and* LILIA *standing near the window.*

Julian. But do you really love me, Lilia?
Lilia. Why do you make me say it so often, Julian?
You make me say *I love you*, oftener far
Than you say you love me.
Julian. To love you seems
So much a thing of mere necessity!
I can refrain from loving you no more
Than keep from waking when the sun shines full
Upon my face.

Lilia. And yet I love to say
How, how I love you, Julian!

[*Leans her head on his arm.* JULIAN *winces a little. She raises her head and looks at him.*

Did I hurt you?
Would you not have me lean my head on you?

Julian. Come on this side, my love; 'tis a slight hurt
Not yet quite healed.

Lilia. Ah, my poor Julian! How—
I am so sorry!—Oh, I *do* remember!
I saw it all quite plain! It was no dream!
I saw you fighting!—Surely you did not kill him?

Julian (*calmly, but drawing himself up*). I killed him as I would a dog that bit you.

Lilia (*turning pale, and covering her face with her hands*). Oh, that was dreadful! there is blood on you!

Julian. Shall I go, Lilia?

Lilia. Oh no, no, no, do not.—
I shall be better presently.

Julian. You shrink
As from a murderer!

Lilia. Oh no, I love you—
Will never leave you. Pardon me, my Julian;
But blood is terrible.

Julian (*drawing her close to him*). My own sweet Lilia,
'Twas justly shed, for your defence and mine,
As it had been a tiger that I killed.
He had no right to live. Be at peace, darling;
His blood lies not on me, but on himself;
I do not feel its stain upon my conscience.

[*A tap at the door.*

Enter Nurse.

Nurse. My lord, the steward waits on you below.

[JULIAN *goes.*

You have been standing till you're faint, my lady!
Lie down a little. There!—I'll fetch you something.

SCENE XVI.— *The Steward's room.* JULIAN. *The* Steward.

Julian. Well, Joseph, that will do. I shall expect
To hear from you soon after my arrival.
Is the boat ready?
Steward. Yes, my lord; afloat
Where you directed.
Julian. A strange feeling haunts me,
As of some danger near. Unlock it, and cast
The chain around the post. Muffle the oars.
Steward. I will, directly. [*Goes.*
Julian. How shall I manage it?
I have her father's leave, but have not dared
To tell her all; and she must know it first!
She fears me half, even now: what will she think
To see my shaven head? My heart is free—
I know that God absolves mistaken vows.
I looked for help in the high search from those
Who knew the secret place of the Most High.
If I had known, would I have bound myself
Brother to men from whose low, marshy minds
Never a lark springs to salute the day?
The loftiest of them dreamers, and the best
Content with goodness growing like moss on stones!
It cannot be God's will I should be such.
But there was more: they virtually condemned
Me in my quest; would have had me content
To kneel with them around a wayside post,
Nor heed the pointing finger at its top?
It was the dull abode of foolishness:
Not such the house where God would train his children!
My very birth into a world of men
Shows me the school where he would have me learn;
Shows me the place of penance; shows the field
Where I must fight and die victorious,
Or yield and perish. True, I know not how

This will fall out: he must direct my way!
But then for her—she cannot see all this;
Words will not make it plain; and if they would,
The time is shorter than the words would need:
This overshadowing bodes nearing ill.—
It *may* be only vapour, of the heat
Of too much joy engendered; sudden fear
That the fair gladness is too good to live:
The wider prospect from the steep hill's crest,
The deeper to the vale the cliff goes down;
But how will she receive it? Will she think
I have been mocking her? How could I help it?
Her illness and my danger! But, indeed,
So strong was I in truth, I never thought
Her doubts might prove a hindrance in the way.
My love did make her so a part of me,
I never dreamed she might judge otherwise,
Until our talk of yesterday. And now
Her horror at Nembroni's death confirms me:
To wed a monk will seem to her the worst
Of crimes which in a fever one might dream.
I cannot take the truth, and, bodily,
Hold it before her eyes. She is not strong.
She loves me—not as I love her. But always
—There's Robert for an instance—I have loved
A life for what it might become, far more
Than for its present: there's a germ in her
Of something noble, much beyond her now:
Chance gleams betray it, though she knows it not.
This evening must decide it, come what will.

SCENE XVII.—*The inn; the room which had been* JULIAN'S. STEPHEN, Host, *and* Hostess. *Wine on the table.*

Stephen. Here, my good lady, let me fill your glass;
Then send the bottle on, please, to your husband.

Hostess. I thank you, sir; I hope you like the wine;
My husband's choice is praised. I cannot say
I am a judge myself.
Host. I'm confident
It needs but to be tasted.
Stephen (*tasting critically, then nodding*). That is wine!
Let me congratulate you, my good sir,
Upon your exquisite judgment!
Host. Thank you, sir.
Stephen (*to the* Hostess). And so this man, you say, was here until
The night the count was murdered: did he leave
Before or after that?
Hostess. I cannot tell;
He left, I know, before it was discovered.
In the middle of the storm, like one possessed,
He rushed into the street, half tumbling me
Headlong down stairs, and never came again.
He had paid his bill that morning, luckily;
So joy go with him! Well, he was an odd one!
Stephen. What was he like, fair Hostess?
Hostess. Tall and dark,
And with a lowering look about his brows.
He seldom spoke, but, when he did, was civil.
One queer thing was, he always wore his hat,
Indoors as well as out. I dare not say
He murdered Count Nembroni; but it was strange
He always sat at that same window there,
And looked into the street. 'Tis not as if
There were much traffic in the village now;
These are changed times; but I have seen the day—
Stephen. Excuse me; you were saying that the man
Sat at the window—
Hostess. Yes; even after dark
He would sit on, and never call for lights.
The first night, I brought candles, as of course;

He let me set them on the table, true;
But soon's my back was turned, he put them out.

Stephen. Where is the lady?

Hostess. That's the strangest thing
Of all the story: she has disappeared,
As well as he. There lay the count, stone-dead,
White as my apron. The whole house was empty,
Just as I told you.

Stephen. Has no search been made?

Host. The closest search; a thousand pieces offered
For any information that should lead
To the murderer's capture. I believe his brother,
Who is his heir, they say, is still in town,
Seeking in vain for some intelligence.

Stephen. 'Tis very odd; the oddest thing I've heard
For a long time. Send me a pen and ink;
I have to write some letters.

Hostess (*rising*). Thank you, sir,
For your kind entertainment.

[*Exeunt* Host *and* Hostess.

Stephen. We've found the badger's hole; we'll draw him next. He couldn't have gone far with her and not be seen. My life on it, there are plenty of holes and corners in the old house over the way. Run off with a wench! Holy brother Julian! Contemptuous brother Julian! Stand-by-thyself brother Julian! Run away with a wench at last! Well, there's a downfall! He'll be for marrying her on the sly, and away!—I know the old fox!—for her conscience-sake, probably not for his! Well, one comfort is, it's damnation and no reprieve. The ungrateful, atheistical heretic! As if the good old mother wasn't indulgent enough to the foibles of her children! The worthy lady has winked so hard at her dutiful sons, that she's nearly blind with winking. There's nothing in a little affair with a girl now and then; but to marry, and knock one's vows on the head! Therein is displayed a little ancestral fact as to a certain respectable

progenitor, commonly portrayed as the knight of the cloven foot. *Keep back thy servant*, &c.—Purgatory couldn't cleanse that; and more, 'twill never have the chance. Heaven be about us from harm! Amen. I'll go find the new count. The Church shall have the castle and estate; Revenge, in the person of the new count, the body of Julian; and Stephen may as well have the thousand pieces as not.

SCENE XVIII.—*Night. The Nurse's room.* LILIA; *to her* JULIAN.

Lilia. How changed he is! Yet he looks very noble.

Enter JULIAN.

Julian. My Lilia, will you go to England with me?
Lilia. Julian, my father!
Julian. Not without his leave.
He says, God bless us both.
Lilia. Leave him in prison?
Julian. No, Lilia; he's at liberty and safe,
And far from this ere now.
Lilia. You have done this,
My noble Julian! I will go with you
To sunset, if you will. My father gone!
Julian, there's none to love me now but you.
You *will* love me, Julian?—always?
Julian. I but fear
That your heart, Lilia, is not big enough
To hold the love wherewith my heart would fill it.
Lilia. I know why you think that; and I deserve it.
But try me, Julian. I was very silly.
I could not help it. I was ill, you know;
Or weak at least. May I ask you, Julian,
How your arm is to-day?
Julian. Almost well, child.
'Twill leave an ugly scar, though, I'm afraid.

Lilia. Never mind that, if it be well again.
Julian. I do not mind it; but when I remember
That I am all yours, then I grudge that scratch
Or stain should be upon me—soul, body, yours.
And there are more scars on me now than I
Should like to make you own, without confession.
Lilia. My poor, poor Julian! never think of it;
[*Putting her arms round him.*
I will but love you more. I thought you had
Already told me suffering enough;
But not the half, it seems, of your adventures.
You have been a soldier!
Julian. I have fought, my Lilia.
I have been down among the horses' feet;
But strange to tell, and harder to believe,
Arose all sound, unmarked with bruise, or blood
Save what I lifted from the gory ground. [*Sighing.*
My wounds are not of such.

[LILIA, *loosening her arms, and drawing back a little with a kind of shrinking, looks a frightened interrogation.*

No. Penance, Lilia;
Such penance as the saints of old inflicted
Upon their quivering flesh. Folly, I know;
As a lord would exalt himself, by making
His willing servants into trembling slaves!
Yet I have borne it.
Lilia (*laying her hand on his arm*). Ah, alas, my Julian,
You have been guilty!
Julian. Not what men call guilty,
Save it be now; now you will think I sin.
Alas, I have sinned! but not in this I sin.—
Lilia, I have been a monk.
Lilia. A monk? [*Turning pale.*
I thought— [*Faltering.*
Julian,—I thought you said . . . . . did you not say . . . ? [*Very pale, brokenly.*

I thought you said . . . [*With an effort.*
I was to be your wife!
[*Covering her face with her hands, and bursting into tears.*
Julian (*speaking low and in pain*). And so I did.
Lilia (*hopefully, and looking up*). Then you've had dispensation?
Julian. God has absolved me, though the Church will not.
He knows it was in ignorance I did it.
Rather would he have men to do his will,
Than keep a weight of words upon their souls,
Which they laid there, not graven by his finger.
The vow was made to him—to him I break it.
Lilia (*weeping bitterly*). I would . . . your words were true . . . but I do know . . .
It never can . . . be right to break a vow;
If so, men might be liars every day;
You'd do the same by me, if we were married.
Julian (*in anguish*). 'Tis ever so. Words are the living things!
There is no spirit—save what's born of words!
Words are the bonds that of two souls make one!
Words the security of heart to heart!
God, make me patient! God, I pray thee, God!
Lilia (*not heeding him*). Besides, we dare not; you would find the dungeon
Gave late repentance; I should weep away
My life within a convent.
Julian. Come to England,
To England, Lilia.
Lilia. Men would point, and say:
There go the monk and his wife; if they, in truth,
Called me not by a harder name than that.
Julian. There are no monks in England.
Lilia. But will that
Make right what's wrong?
Julian. Did I say so, my Lilia?

I answered but your last objections thus;
I had a different answer for the first.

Lilia. No, no; I cannot, cannot, dare not do it.

Julian. Lilia, you will not doubt my love; you cannot.
—I would have told you all before, but thought,
Foolishly, you would feel the same as I;—
I have lived longer, thought more, seen much more;
I would not hurt your body, less your soul,
For all the blessedness your love can give:
For love's sake weigh the weight of what I say.
Think not that *must* be right which you have heard
From infancy—it *may*——

Enter the Steward *in haste, pale, breathless, and bleeding.*

Steward. My lord, there's such an uproar in the town!
They call you murderer and heretic.
The officers of justice, with a monk,
And the new Count Nembroni, accompanied
By a fierce mob with torches, howling out
For justice on you, madly cursing you!
They caught a glimpse of me as I returned,
And stones and sticks flew round me like a storm;
But I escaped them, old man as I am,
And was in time to bar the castle-gates.—
Would heaven we had not cast those mounds, and shut
The river from the moat! [*Distant yells and cries.*
Escape, my lord!

Julian (*calmly*). Will the gates hold them out awhile, my Joseph?

Steward. A little while, my lord; but those damned torches!
Oh, for twelve feet of water round the walls!

Julian. Leave us, good Joseph; watch them from a window,
And tell us of their progress.

[JOSEPH *goes.* *Sounds approach.*
Farewell, Lilia!

[*Putting his arm round her.* *She stands like stone.*

Fear of a coward's name shall not detain me.
My presence would but bring down evil on you,
My heart's beloved; yes, all the ill you fear,
The terrible things that you have imaged out
If you fled with me. They will not hurt you,
If you be not polluted by my presence.

[*Light from without flares on the wall.*

They've fired the gate. [*An outburst of mingled cries.*

Steward (*entering*). They've fired the gate, my lord!

Julian. Well, put yourself in safety, my dear Joseph.
You and old Agata tell all the truth,
And they'll forgive you. It will not hurt me;
I shall be safe—you know me—never fear.

Steward. God grant it may be so. Farewell, dear lord! [*Is going.*

Julian. But add, it was in vain; the signorina
Would not consent; therefore I fled alone.

[LILIA *stands as before.*

Steward. Can it be so? Good-bye, good-bye, my master! [*Goes.*

Julian. Put your arms round me once, my Lilia.
Not once?—not once at parting?

[*Rushing feet up the stairs, and along the galleries.*

O God! farewell!

[*He clasps her to his heart; leaves her; pushes back the panel, flings open a door, enters, and closes both behind him.* LILIA *starts suddenly from her fixed bewilderment, and flies after him, but forgets to close the panel.*

Lilia. Julian! Julian!

[*The trampling of feet and clamour of voices. The door of the room is flung open. Enter the foremost of the mob.*

1*st.* I was sure I saw light here! There it is, burning still!

2*nd.* Nobody here? Praise the devil! he minds his own. Look under the bed, Gian.

3*rd.* Nothing there.

4th. Another door! another door! He's in a trap now, and will soon be in hell! (*Opening the door with difficulty.*) The devil had better leave him, and make up the fire at home—he'll be cold by and by. (*Rushes into the inner room.*) Follow me, boys! [*The rest follow.*

Voices from within. I have him! I have him! Curse your claws! Why do you fix them on me, you crab? You won't pick up the fiend-spawn so easily, I can tell you. Bring the light there, will you? (*One runs out for the light.*) A trap! a trap! and a stair, down in the wall! The hell-faggot's gone! After him, after him, noodles!

[*Sound of descending footsteps. Others rush in with torches and follow.*

SCENE XIX.—*The river-side.* LILIA *seated in the boat;* JULIAN *handing her the bags.*

Julian. There! One at a time!—Take care, love; it is heavy.—
Put them right in the middle of the boat:
Gold makes good ballast.

[*A loud shout. He steps in and casts the chain loose, then pushes gently off.*

Look how the torches gleam
Among the trees. Thank God, we have escaped!

[*He rows swiftly off. The torches come nearer, with cries of search.*

(*In a low tone.*) Slip down, my Lilia; lie at full length
In the bottom of the boat; your dress is white,
And would return the torches' glare. I fear
The damp night-air will hurt you, dressed like this.

[*Pulling off his coat, and laying it over her.*

Now for a strong pull with my muffled oars!
The water mutters Spanish in its sleep.
My beautiful! my bride! my spirit's wife!
God-given, and God-restored! My heart exults,
Hovering about thee, beautiful! my soul!—
Once round the headland, I will set the sail;

The fair wind bloweth right adown the stream.
Dear wind, dear stream, dear stars, dear heart of all,
White angel lying in my little boat!
Strange that my boyhood's skill with sail and helm,
Oft steering safely 'twixt the winding banks,
Should make me rich with womanhood and life!

[*The boat rounds the headland*, JULIAN *singing.*

SONG.

Thou hast been blowing leaves, O wind of strife,
Wan, curled, boat-like leaves, that ran and fled;
Unresting yet, though folded up from life;
Sleepless, though cast among the unwaking dead!
Out to the ocean fleet and float;
Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

O wind of strife, to us a wedding wind,
O cover me with kisses of her mouth;
Blow thou our souls together, heart and mind;
To narrowing northern lines, blow from the south!
Out to the ocean fleet and float;
Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

Thou hast been blowing many a drifting thing
From circling cove down to the unsheltered sea;
Thou blowest to the sea my blue sail's wing,
Us to a new love-lit futurity:
Out to the ocean fleet and float;
Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

PART III.

AND weep not, though the Beautiful decay
Within thy heart, as daily in thine eyes;
Thy heart must have its autumn, its pale skies,
Leading, mayhap, to winter's dim dismay.
Yet doubt not. Beauty doth not pass away;
Her form departs not, though her body dies.
Secure beneath the earth the snowdrop lies,
Waiting the spring's young resurrection-day,
Through the kind nurture of the winter cold.

Nor seek thou by vain effort to revive
The summer-time, when roses were alive;
Do thou thy work—be willing to be old:
Thy sorrow is the husk that doth infold
A gorgeous June, for which thou need'st not strive.

Time: *Five years later.*

SCENE I.—*Night. London. A large meanly furnished room; a single candle on the table; a child asleep in a little crib.* JULIAN *sits by the table, reading in a low voice out of a book. He looks older, and his hair is lined with grey; his eyes look clearer.*

Julian. What is this? let me see; 'tis called *The Singer:*

"Melchah stood looking on the corpse of his son, and spoke not. At length he broke the silence and said: 'He hath told his tale to the Immortals.' Abdiel, the friend of him that was dead, asked him what he meant by the words. The old man, still regarding the dead body, spake as follows:—

"Three years ago, I fell asleep on the summit of the hill Yarib; and there I dreamed a dream. I thought I lay at the foot of a cliff, near the top of a great mountain; for beneath me were the clouds, and above me, the heavens deep and dark. And I heard voices sweet and strong; and I lifted up my eyes, and, lo! over against me, on a rocky slope, some seated, each on his own crag, some reclining between the fragments, I saw a hundred majestic forms, as of men who had striven and conquered. Then I heard one say: 'What wouldst thou sing unto us, young man?' A youthful voice replied, tremblingly: 'A song which I have made for my singing.' 'Come, then, and I will lead thee to the hole in the rock: enter and sing.' From the assembly came forth one whose countenance was calm unto awfulness; but whose eyes looked in love, mingled with doubt, on the face of a youth whom he led by the hand toward the spot where I lay. The features of the youth I could not discern: either it was the indistinctness of a dream, or I was not permitted to behold them. And, lo! behind me was a great hole in the rock, narrow at the entrance, but deep and wide within; and when I looked into it, I shuddered; for I thought I saw, far down, the glimmer of a star. The youth entered and vanished. His guide strode back to his seat; and I lay in terror near the mouth of the vast cavern. When I looked up once more, I saw all the men leaning forward, with head aside, as if listening intently to a far-off sound. I likewise listened; but, though much nearer than they, I heard nothing. But I could see their faces change like waters in a windy and half-cloudy day. Sometimes, though I heard nought, it seemed to me as if one sighed and

prayed beside me; and once I heard a clang of music triumphant in hope; but I looked up, and, lo! it was the listeners who stood on their feet and sang. They ceased, sat down, and listened as before. At last one approached me, and I ventured to question him. 'Sir,' I said, 'wilt thou tell me what it means?' And he answered me thus: 'The youth desired to sing to the Immortals. It is a law with us that no one shall sing a song who cannot be the hero of his tale—who cannot live the song that he sings; for what right hath he else to devise great things, and to take holy deeds in his mouth? Therefore he enters the cavern where God weaves the garments of souls; and there he lives in the forms of his own tale; for God gives them being that he may be tried. The sighs which thou didst hear were his longings after his own Ideal; and thou didst hear him praying for the Truth he beheld, but could not reach. We sang, because, in his first great battle, he strove well and overcame. We await the next.' A deep sleep seemed to fall upon me; and when I awoke, I saw the Immortals standing with their eyes fixed on the mouth of the cavern. I arose and turned toward it likewise. The youth came forth. His face was worn and pale, as that of the dead man before me; but his eyes were open, and tears trembled within them. Yet not the less was it the same face, the face of my son, I tell thee; and in joy and fear I gazed upon him. With a weary step he approached the Immortals. But he who had led him to the cave hastened to meet him, spread forth his arms and embraced him, and said unto him: 'Thou hast told a noble tale; sing to us now what songs thou wilt.' Therefore said I, as I gazed on my son: 'He hath told his tale to the Immortals.'"

[*He puts the book down; meditates awhile; then rises and walks up and down the room.*

And so five years have poured their silent streams,
Flowing from fountains in eternity,
Into my soul, which, as an infinite gulf,
Hath swallowed them; whose living caves they feed;
And time to spirit grows, transformed and kept.
And now the day draws nigh when Christ was born;
The day that showed how like to God himself
Man had been made, since God could be revealed
By one that was a man with men, and still
Was one with God the Father; that men might
By drawing nigh to him draw nigh to God,
Who had come near to them in tenderness.
O God! I thank thee for the friendly eye
That oft hath opened on me these five years;
Thank thee for those enlightenings of my spirit

That let me know thy thought was toward me;
Those moments fore-enjoyed from future years,
Telling what converse I should hold with God.
I thank thee for the sorrow and the care,
Through which they gleamed, bright phosphorescent sparks
Crushed from the troubled waters, borne on which
Through mist and dark my soul draws nigh to thee.
Five years ago, I prayed in agony
That thou wouldst speak to me. Thou wouldst not then,
With that close speech I craved so hungrily.
Thy inmost speech is heart embracing heart;
And thou wast all the time instructing me
To know the language of thy inmost speech.
I thought thou didst refuse, when every hour
Thou spakest every word my heart could hear,
Though oft I did not know it was thy voice.
My prayer arose from lonely wastes of soul;
As if a world far-off in depths of space,
Chaotic, had implored that it might shine
Straightway in sunlight as the morning star.
My soul must be more pure ere it could hold
With thee communion 'Tis the pure in heart
That shall see God. As if a well that lay
Unvisited, till water-weeds had grown
Up from its depths, and woven a thick mass
Over its surface, could give back the sun!
Or, dug from ancient battle-plain, a shield
Could be a mirror to the stars of heaven!
And though I am not yet come near to him,
I know I am more nigh; and am content
To walk a long and weary road to find
My father's house once more. Well may it be
A long and weary—I had wandered far.
My God, I thank thee, thou dost care for me.
I am content, rejoicing to go on,
Even when my home seems very far away;

For over grief, and aching emptiness,
And fading hopes, a higher joy arises.
In cloudiest nights, one lonely spot is bright,
High overhead, through folds and folds of space;
It is the earnest-star of all my heavens;
And tremulous in the deep well of my being
Its image answers, gazing eagerly.
Alas, my Lilia!—But I'll think of Jesus,
Not of thee now; him who hath led my soul
Thus far upon its journey home to God.
By poor attempts to do the things he said,
Faith has been born; free will become a fact;
And love grown strong to enter into his,
And know the spirit that inhabits there.
One day his truth will spring to life in me,
And make me free, as God says "I am free."
When I am like him, then my soul will dawn
With the full glory of the God revealed—
Full as to me, though but one beam from him;
The light will shine, for I shall comprehend it:
In his light I shall see light. God can speak,
Yea, *will* speak to me then, and I shall hear.
Not yet like him, how can I hear his words?

[*Stopping by the crib, and bending over the child.*

My darling child! God's little daughter, drest
In human clothes, that light may thus be clad
In shining, so to reach my human eyes!
Come as a little Christ from heaven to earth,
To call me *father*, that my heart may know
What *father* means, and turn its eyes to God!
Sometimes I feel, when thou art clinging to me,
How all unfit this heart of mine to have
The guardianship of a bright thing like thee,
Come to entice, allure me back to God
By flitting round me, gleaming of thy home,
And radiating of thy purity
Into my stained heart; which unto thee

Shall ever show the father, answering
The divine childhood dwelling in thine eyes.
O how thou teachest me with thy sweet ways,
All ignorant of wherefore thou art come,
And what thou art to me, my heavenly ward,
Whose eyes have drunk that secret place's light
And pour it forth on me! God bless his own!

[*He resumes his walk, singing in a low voice.*

My child woke crying from her sleep;
I bended o'er her bed,
And soothed her, till in slumber deep
She from the darkness fled.

And as beside my child I stood,
A still voice said in me—
"Even thus thy Father, strong and good,
Is bending over thee."

SCENE II.—*Rooms in Lord Seaford's house. A large company; dancers; gentlemen looking on.*

1*st Gentleman.* Henry, what dark-haired queen is that? She moves
As if her body were instinct with thought,
Moulded to motion by the music's waves,
As floats the swan upon the swelling lake;
Or as in dreams one sees an angel move,
Sweeping on slow wings through the buoyant air,
Then folding them, and turning on his track.

2*nd.* You seem inspired; nor can I wonder at it;
She is a glorious woman; and such eyes!
Think—to be loved by such a woman now!

1*st.* You have seen her, then, before: what is her name?

2*nd.* I saw her once; but could not learn her name.

3*rd.* She is the wife of an Italian count,
Who for some cause, political I think,
Took refuge in this country. His estates

The Church has eaten up, as I have heard:
Mephisto says the Church has a good stomach.
2nd. How do they live?
3rd. Poorly, I should suppose;
For she gives Lady Gertrude music-lessons:
That's how they know her.—Ah, you should hear her sing!
2nd. If she sings as she looks or as she dances,
It were as well for me I did not hear.
3rd. If Count Lamballa followed Lady Seaford
To heaven, I know who'd follow her on earth.

SCENE III.—*Julian's room.* LILY *asleep.*

Julian. I wish she would come home. When the child wakes,
I cannot bear to see her eyes first rest
On me, then wander searching through the room,
And then return and rest. And yet, poor Lilia!
'Tis nothing strange thou shouldst be glad to go
From this dull place, and for a few short hours
Have thy lost girlhood given back to thee;
For thou art very young for such hard things
As poor men's wives in cities must endure.
I am afraid the thought is not at rest,
But rises still, that she is not my wife—
Not truly, lawfully. I hoped the child
Would kill that fancy; but I fear instead,
She thinks I have begun to think the same—
Thinks that it lies a heavy weight of sin
Upon my heart. Alas, my Lilia!
When every time I pray, I pray that God
Would look and see that thou and I be one!
Lily (*starting up in her crib*). Oh, take me! take me!
Julian (*going up to her with a smile*). What is the matter with my little child?
Lily. I don't know, father; I was very frightened.

Julian. 'Twas nothing but a dream. Look—I am with you.

Lily. I am wake now; I know you're there; but then I did not know it. [*Smiling.*

Julian. Lie down now, darling. Go to sleep again.

Lily (*beseechingly*). Not yet. Don't tell me go to sleep again;
It makes me so, so frightened! Take me up,
And let me sit upon your knee.—Where's mother?
I cannot see her.

Julian. She's not at home, my child;
But soon she will be back.

Lily. But if she walk
Out in the dark streets—so dark, it will catch her.

Julian. She will not walk—but what would catch her, sweet?

Lily. I don't know. Tell me a story till she comes.

Julian (*taking her, and sitting with her on his knees by the fire*). Come then, my little Lily, I will tell you
A story I have read this very night. [*She looks in his face.*
There was a man who had a little boy,
And when the boy grew big, he went and asked
His father to give him a purse of money.
His father gave him such a large purse full!
And then he went away and left his home.
You see he did not love his father much.

Lily. Oh! didn't he?—If he had, he wouldn't have gone!

Julian. Away he went, far far away he went,
Until he could not even spy the top
Of the great mountain by his father's house.
And still he went away, away, as if
He tried how far his feet could go away;
Until he came to a city huge and wide,
Like London here.

Lily. Perhaps it was London.

Julian. Perhaps it was, my child. And there he spent
All, all his father's money, buying things
That he had always told him were not worth,
And not to buy them; but he would and did.
Lily. How very naughty of him!
Julian. Yes, my child.
And so when he had spent his last few pence,
He grew quite hungry. But he had none left
To buy a piece of bread. And bread was scarce;
Nobody gave him any. He had been
Always so idle, that he could not work.
But at last some one sent him to feed swine.
Lily. Swine! Oh!
Julian. Yes, swine: 'twas all that he could do;
And he was glad to eat some of their food.
[*She stares at him.*
But at the last, hunger and waking love
Made him remember his old happy home.
"How many servants in my father's house
Have plenty, and to spare!" he said. "I'll go
And say, 'I have done very wrong, my father;
I am not worthy to be called your son;
Put me among your servants, father, please.'"
Then he rose up and went; but thought the road
So much, much farther to walk back again,
When he was tired and hungry. But at last
He saw the blue top of the great big hill
That stood beside his father's house; and then
He walked much faster. But a great way off,
His father saw him coming, lame and weary
With his long walk; and very different
From what he had been. All his clothes were hanging
In tatters, and his toes stuck through his shoes—
[*She bursts into tears.*
Lily (*sobbing*). Like that poor beggar I saw yesterday?
Julian. Yes, my dear child.

Lily. And was he dirty too?
Julian. Yes, very dirty; he had been so long
Among the swine.
Lily. Is it all true though, father?
Julian. Yes, my darling; all true, and truer far
Than you can think.
Lily. What was his father like?
Julian. A tall, grand, stately man.
Lily. Like you, dear father?
Julian. Like me, only much grander.
Lily. I love you
The best though. [*Kissing him.*
Julian. Well, all dirty as he was,
And thin, and pale, and torn, with staring eyes,
His father knew him, the first look, far off,
And ran so fast to meet him! put his arms
Around his neck and kissed him.
Lily. Oh, how dear!
I love him too;—but not so well as you.
[*Sound of a carriage drawing up.*
Julian. There is your mother.
Lily. I am glad, so glad!

Enter LILIA, *looking pale.*

Lilia. You naughty child, why are you not in bed?
Lily (*pouting*). I am not naughty. I am afraid to go,
Because you don't go with me into sleep;
And when I see things, and you are not there,
Nor father, I am so frightened, I cry out,
And stretch my hands, and so I come awake.
Come with me into sleep, dear mother; come.
Lilia. What a strange child it is! There! (*kissing her*)
go to bed. [*Lays her down.*
Julian (*gazing on the child*). As thou art in thy dreams
without thy mother,
So are we lost in life without our God.

SCENE IV.—LILIA *in bed. The room lighted from a gas-lamp in the street; the bright shadow of the window on the wall and ceiling.*

Lilia. Oh, it is dreary, dreary! All the time
My thoughts would wander to my dreary home.
Through every dance, my soul walked evermore
In a most dreary dance through this same room.
I saw these walls, this carpet; and I heard,
As now, his measured step in the next chamber,
Go pacing up and down, and I shut out!
He is too good for me, I weak for him.
Yet if he put his arms around me once,
And held me fast as then, kissed me as then,
My soul, I think, would come again to me,
And pass from me in trembling love to him.
But he repels me now. He loves me, true,—
Because I am his wife: he ought to love me!
Me, the cold statue, thus he drapes with duty.
Sometimes he waits upon me like a maid,
Silent with watchful eyes. Oh, would to Heaven,
He used me like a slave bought in the market!
Yes, used me roughly! So, I were his own;
And words of tenderness would falter in,
Relenting from the sternness of command.
But I am not enough for him: he needs
Some high-entranced maiden, ever pure,
And thronged with burning thoughts of God and him.
So, as he loves me not, his deeds for me
Lie on me like a sepulchre of stones.
Italian lovers love not so; but he
Has German blood in those great veins of his.
He never brings me now a little flower.
He sings low wandering sweet songs to the child;
But never sings to me what the voice-bird
Sings to the silent, sitting on the nest.

I would I were his child, and not his wife!
How I should love him then! Yet I have thoughts
Fit to be women to his mighty men;
And he would love them, if he saw them once.
Ah! there they come, the visions of my land!
The long sweep of a bay, white sands, and cliffs
Purple above the blue waves at their feet!
Down the full river comes a light-blue sail;
And down the near hill-side come country girls,
Brown, rosy, laden light with glowing fruits;
Down to the sands come ladies, young, and clad
For holiday; in whose hearts wonderment
At manhood is the upmost, deepest thought;
And to their side come stately, youthful forms,
Italy's youth, with burning eyes and hearts:—
Triumphant Love is lord of the bright day.
Yet one heart, under that blue sail, would look
With pity on their poor contentedness;
For he sits at the helm, I at his feet.
He sung a song, and I replied to him.
His song was of the wind that blew us down
From sheltered hills to the unsheltered sea.
Ah, little thought my heart that the wide sea,
Where I should cry for comforting in vain,
Was the expanse of his wide awful soul,
To which that wind was helpless drifting me!
I would he were less great, and loved me more
I sung to him a song, broken with sighs,
For even then I feared the time to come:
"O will thine eyes shine always, love, as now?
And will thy lips for aye be sweetly curved?"
Said my song, flowing unrimed from my heart.
"And will thy forehead ever, sunlike bend,
And suck my soul in vapours up to thee?
Ah love! I need love, beauty, and sweet odours.
Thou livest on the hoary mountains; I
In the warm valley, with the lily pale,

Shadowed with mountains and its own great leaves;
Where odours are the sole invisible clouds,
Making the heart weep for deliciousness.
Will thy eternal mountain always bear
Blue flowers upspringing at the glacier's foot?
Alas! I fear the storms, the blinding snow,
The vapours which thou gatherest round thy head,
Wherewith thou shuttest up thy chamber-door,
And goest from me into loneliness."
Ah me, my song! it is a song no more!
He is alone amid his windy rocks;
I wandering on a low and dreary plain!

[*She weeps herself asleep.*

SCENE V.—LORD SEAFORD, *alternately writing at a table and composing at his pianoforte.*

SONG.

Eyes of beauty, eyes of light,
Sweetly, softly, sadly bright!
Draw not, ever, o'er my eye,
Radiant mists of ecstasy.

Be not proud, O glorious orbs!
Not your mystery absorbs;
But the starry soul that lies
Looking through your night of eyes.

One moment, be less perfect, sweet;
Sin once in something small;
One fault to lift me on my feet
From love's too perfect thrall!

For now I have no soul; a sea
Fills up my caverned brain,
Heaving in silent waves to thee,
The mistress of that main.

O angel! take my hand in thine;
Unfold thy shining silver wings;
Spread them around thy face and mine,
Close curtained in their murmurings.

But I should faint with too much bliss
To be alone in space with thee;
Except, O dread! one angel-kiss
In sweetest death should set me free.

O beauteous devil, tempt me, tempt me on,
Till thou hast won my soul in sighs;
I'll smile with thee upon thy flaming throne,
If thou wilt keep those eyes.

And if the moanings of untold desires
Should charm thy pain of one faint sting,
I will arise amid the scorching fires,
I will arise and sing.

O what is God to me? He sits apart
Amid the clear stars, passionless and cold.
Divine! thou art enough to fill my heart;
O fold me in thy heaven, sweet love, infold.

With too much life, I fall before thee dead.
With holding thee, my sense consumes in storm.
Thou art too keen a flame, too hallowed
For any temple but thy holy form.

SCENE VI.—*Julian's room next morning; no fire.* JULIAN *stands at the window, looking into a London fog.*

Julian. And there are mountains on the earth, far-off;
Steep precipices laved at morn in wind
From the blue glaciers fresh; and falls that leap,
Springing from rock to pool abandonedly;
And all the spirit of the earth breathed out,
Bearing the soul, as on an altar-flame,
Aloft to God! And there is woman-love—
Far off, ah me! [*Sitting down wearily.*
—the heart of earth's delight
Withered from mine! O for a desert sea,
The cold sun flashing on the sailing icebergs!
Where I might cry aloud on God, until
My soul burst forth upon the wings of pain,
And fled to him. A numbness as of death
Infolds me. As in sleep I walk. I live,

But my dull soul can hardly keep awake.
Yet God is here as on the mountain-top,
Or on the desert sea, or lonely isle;
And I should know him here, if Lilia loved me,
As once I thought she did. But can I blame her?
The change has been too much for her to bear.
Can poverty make one or two hearts cold,
And warm the other with the love of God?
But then I have been silent, often moody,
Drowned in much questioning; and she has thought
That I was tired of her, while more than all
I pondered how to wake her living soul.
She cannot think why I should haunt my chamber,
Except a goaded conscience were my grief;
Thinks not of aught to gain, but all to shun.
Deeming, poor child, that I repent me thus
Of that which makes her mine for evermore,
It is no wonder if her love grow less.
Then I am older much than she; and this
Fever, I think, has made me old indeed
Before my fortieth year; although, within,
I seem as young as ever to myself.
O my poor Lilia! thou art not to blame;
I'll love thee more than ever; I will be
So gentle to thy heart where love lies dead!
For carefully men ope the door, and walk
With silent footfall through the room where lies,
Exhausted, sleeping, with its travail sore,
The body that erewhile hath borne a spirit.
Alas, my Lilia! where is dead Love's child?
I must go forth and do my daily work.
I thank thee, God, that it is hard sometimes
To do my daily labour; for, of old,
When men were poor, and could not bring thee much,
A turtle-dove was all that thou didst ask;
And so in poverty, and with a heart
Oppressed with heaviness, I try to do

My day's work well to thee,—my offering:
That he has taught me, who one day sat weary
At Sychar's well. Then home when I return,
I come without upbraiding thoughts to thee.
Ah! well I see man need not seek for penance—
Thou wilt provide the lamb for sacrifice;
Thou only wise enough to teach the soul,
Measuring out the labour and the grief,
Which it must bear for thy sake, not its own.
He neither chose his glory, nor devised
The burden he should bear; left all to God;
And of them both God gave to him enough.
And see the sun looks faintly through the mist;
It cometh as a messenger to me.
My soul is heavy, but I will go forth;
My days seem perishing, but God yet lives
And loves. I cannot feel, but will believe.

[*He rises and is going.* LILIA *enters, looking weary.*

Look, my dear Lilia, how the sun shines out!

Lilia. Shines out indeed! Yet 'tis not bad for England.
I would I were in Italy, my own! [*Weeps.*

Julian. 'Tis the same sun that shines in Italy.

Lilia. But never more will shine upon us there!
It is too late; all wishing is in vain;
But would that we had not so ill deserved
As to be banished from fair Italy!

Julian. Ah! my dear Lilia, do not, do not think
That God is angry when we suffer ill.
'Twere terrible indeed, if 'twere in anger.

Lilia. Julian, I cannot feel as you. I wish
I felt as you feel.

Julian. God will hear you, child,
If you will speak to him. But I must go.
Kiss me, my Lilia.

[*She kisses him mechanically. He goes with a sigh.*

Lilia. It is plain to see
He tries to love me, but is weary of me [*She weeps.*

Enter LILY.

Lily. Mother, have you been naughty? Mother, dear!
[*Pulling her hand from her face.*

SCENE VII.—*Julian's room. Noon.* LILIA *at work;* LILY *playing in a closet.*

Lily (*running up to her mother*). Sing me a little song; please, mother dear.

[LILIA, *looking off her work, and thinking with fixed eyes for a few moments, sings.*

SONG.

Once I was a child,
Oimè!
Full of frolic wild;
Oimè!
All the stars for glancing,
All the earth for dancing;
Oimè! Oimè!

When I ran about,
Oimè!
All the flowers came out,
Oimè!
Here and there like stray things,
Just to be my playthings.
Oimè! Oimè!

Mother's eyes were deep,
Oimè!
Never needing sleep.
Oimè!
Morning—they're above me
Eventide—they love me!
Oimè! Oimè!

Father was so tall!
Oimè!
Stronger he than all!
Oimè!
On his arm he bore me,
Queen of all before me.
Oimè! Oimè!

Mother is asleep;
Oimè!
For her eyes so deep,
Oimè!
Grew so tired and aching,
They could not keep waking.
Oimè! Oimè!

Father, though so strong,
Oimè!
Laid him down along—
Oimè!
By my mother sleeping;
And they left me weeping,
Oimè! Oimè!

Now nor bird, nor bee,
Oimè!
Ever sings to me!
Oimè!
Since they left me crying,
All things have been dying.
Oimè! Oimè!

[LILY *looks long in her mother's face, as if wondering what the song could be about; then turns away to the closet. After a little she comes running with a box in her hand.*

Lily. O mother, mother! there's the old box I had
So long ago, and all my cups and saucers,
And the farm-house and cows.—Oh! some are broken.
Father will mend them for me, I am sure.
I'll ask him when he comes to-night—I will:
He can do everything, you know, dear mother.

SCENE VIII.—*A merchant's counting-house.* JULIAN *preparing to go home.*

Julian. I would not give these days of common toil,
This murky atmosphere that creeps and sinks
Into the very soul, and mars its hue—
Not for the evenings when with gliding keel
I cut a pale green track across the west—
Pale-green, and dashed with snowy white, and spotted

With sunset crimson; when the wind breathed low,
So low it hardly swelled my xebec's sails,
That pointed to the south, and wavered not,
Erect upon the waters.—Jesus said
His followers should have a hundred fold
Of earth's most precious things, with suffering.—
In all the labourings of a weary spirit,
I have been bless'd with gleams of glorious things.
The sights and sounds of nature touch my soul,
No more look in from far.—I never see
Such radiant, filmy clouds, gathered about
A gently opening eye into the blue,
But swells my heart, and bends my sinking knee,
Bowing in prayer. The setting sun, before,
Signed only that the hour for prayer was come,
But now it moves my inmost soul to pray.
  On this same earth He walked; even thus he looked
Upon its thousand glories; read them all;
In splendour let them pass on through his soul,
And triumph in their new beatitude,
Finding a heaven of truth to take them in;
But walked on steadily through pain to death.
  Better to have the poet's heart than brain,
Feeling than song; but better far than both,
To be a song, a music of God's making;
A tablet, say, on which God's finger of flame,
In words harmonious, of triumphant verse,
That mingles joy and sorrow, sets down clear,
That out of darkness he hath called the light.
It may be voice to such is after given,
To tell the mighty tale to other worlds.
  Oh! I am blest in sorrows with a hope
That steeps them all in glory; as gray clouds
Are bathed in light of roses; yea, I were
Most blest of men, if I were now returning
To Lilia's heart as presence. O my God,
I can but look to thee. And then the child!—

Why should my love to her break out in tears?
Why should she be only a consolation,
And not an added joy, to fill my soul
With gladness overflowing in many voices
Of song, and prayer—and weeping only when
Words fainted 'neath the weight of utterance?

SCENE IX.—LILIA *preparing to go out.* LILY.

Lily. Don't go to-night again.
Lilia. Why, child, your father
Will soon be home; and then you will not miss me.
Lily. Oh, but I shall though! and he looks so sad
When you're not here!
Lilia (*aside*). He cannot look much sadder
Than when I am. I am sure 'tis a relief
To find his child alone when he returns.
Lily. Will you go, mother? Then I'll go and cry
Till father comes. He'll take me on his knee,
And tell such lovely tales: you never do—
Nor sing me songs made all for my own self.
He does not kiss me half so many times
As you do, mother; but he loves me more.
Do you love father, too? I love him *so!*
Lilia (*ready*). There's such a pretty book! Sit on the stool,
And look at the pictures till your father comes. [*Goes.*
Lily (*putting the book down, and going to the window*). I wish he would come home. I wish he would.

Enter JULIAN.

Oh, there he is! [*Running up to him.*
Oh, now I am so happy! [*Laughing.*
I had not time to watch before you came.
Julian (*taking her in his arms*). I am very glad to have my little girl;
I walked quite fast to come to her again.

Lily. I do, *do* love you. Shall I tell you something?
Think I should like to tell you. 'Tis a dream
That I went into, somewhere in last night.
I was alone—quite;—you were not with me,
So I must tell you. 'Twas a garden, like
That one you took me to, long, long ago,
When the sun was so hot. It was not winter,
But some of the poor leaves were growing tired
With hanging there so long. And some of them
Gave it up quite, and so dropped down and lay
Quiet on the ground. And I was watching them.
I saw one falling—down, down—tumbling down—
Just at the earth—when suddenly it spread
Great wings and flew.—It was a butterfly,
So beautiful with wings, black, red, and white—

[*Laughing heartily.*

I thought it was a crackly, withered leaf.
Away it flew! I don't know where it went.
And so I thought, I have a story now
To tell dear father when he comes to Lily.

Julian. Thank you, my child; a very pretty dream.
But I am tired—will you go find another—
Another dream somewhere in sleep for me?

Lily. O yes, I will.—Perhaps I cannot find one.

[*He lays her down to sleep; then sits musing.*

Julian. What shall I do to give it life again?
To make it spread its wings before it fall,
And lie among the dead things of the earth?

Lily. I cannot go to sleep. Please, father, sing
The song about the little thirsty lily. [JULIAN *sings.*

SONG.

Little white Lily
Sat by a stone,
Drooping and waiting
Till the sun shone.
Little white Lily
Sunshine has fed;

Little white Lily
Is lifting her head.

Little white Lily
Said, "It is good:
Little white Lily's
Clothing and food!
Little white Lily
Drest like a bride!
Shining with whiteness,
And crowned beside!"

Little white Lily
Droopeth in pain,
Waiting and waiting
For the wet rain.
Little white Lily
Holdeth her cup;
Rain is fast falling,
And filling it up.

Little white Lily
Said, "Good again,
When I am thirsty
To have nice rain!
Now I am stronger,
Now I am cool;
Heat cannot burn me,
My veins are so full!"

Little white Lily
Smells very sweet:
On her head sunshine,
Rain at her feet.
Thanks to the sunshine!
Thanks to the rain!
Little white Lily
Is happy again!"

[*He is silent for a moment; then goes and looks at her.*

Julian. She is asleep, the darling! Easily
Is Sleep enticed to brood on childhood's heart.
Gone home unto thy Father for the night!

[*He returns to his seat.*

I have grown common to her. It is strange—
This commonness—that, as a blight, eats up
All the heart's springing corn and promised fruit.

[*Looking round.*

This room is very common: everything
Has such a well-known look of nothing in it;
And yet when first I called it hers and mine,
There was a mystery inexhaustible
About each trifle on the chimney-shelf:
The gilding now is nearly all worn off.
Even she, the goddess of the wonder-world,
Seems less mysterious and worshipful:
No wonder I am common in her eyes.
Alas! what must I think? Is this the true?
Was that the false that was so beautiful?
Was it a rosy mist that wrapped it round?
Or was love to the eyes as opium,
Making all things more beauteous than they were?
And can that opium do more than God
To waken beauty in a human brain?
Is this the real, the cold, undraperied truth—
A skeleton admitted as a guest
At life's loud feast, wearing a life-like mask?
No, no; my heart would die if I believed it.
A blighting fog uprises with the days,
False, cold, dull, leaden, gray. It clings about
The present, far dragging like a robe; but ever
Forsakes the past, and lets its hues shine out:
On past and future pours the light of heaven.
The Commonplace is of the present mind.
The Lovely is the True. The Beautiful
Is what God made. Men from whose narrow bosoms
The great child-heart has withered, backward look
To their first-love, and laugh, and call it folly,
A mere delusion to which youth is subject,
As childhood to diseases. They know better!
And proud of their denying, tell the youth,
On whom the wonder of his being shines,
That will be over with him by and by:
"I was so when a boy—look at me now!"
Youth, be not one of them, but love thy love.

So with all worship of the high and good,
And pure and beautiful. These men are wiser!
Their god, Experience, but their own decay;
Their wisdom but the gray hairs gathered on them.
Yea, some will mourn and sing about their loss,
And for the sake of sweet sounds cherish it,
Nor yet believe that it was more than seeming.
But he in whom the child's heart hath not died,
But grown a man's heart, loveth yet the Past;
Believes in all its beauty; knows the hours
Will melt the mist; and that, although this day
Cast but a dull stone on Time's heaped-up cairn,
A morning light will break one morn and draw
The hidden glories of a thousand hues
Out from its diamond-depths and ruby-spots
And sapphire-veins, unseen, unknown, before.
Far in the future lies his refuge. Time
Is God's, and all its miracles are his;
And in the Future he overtakes the Past,
Which was a prophecy of times to come:
There lie great flashing stars, the same that shone
In childhood's laughing heaven; there lies the wonder
In which the sun went down and moon arose;
The joy with which the meadows opened out
Their daisies to the warming sun of spring;
Yea, all the inward glory, ere cold fear
Froze, or doubt shook the mirror of his soul:
To reach it, he must climb the present slope
Of this day's duty—here he would not rest.
But all the time the glory is at hand,
Urging and guiding—only o'er its face
Hangs ever, pledge and screen, the bridal veil:
He knows the beauty radiant underneath;
He knows that God who is the living God,
The God of living things, not of the dying,
Would never give his child, for God-born love,
A cloud-made phantom, fading in the sun.

Faith vanishes in sight; the cloudy veil
Will melt away, destroyed of inward light.
If thy young heart yet lived, my Lilia, thou
And I might, as two children, hand in hand,
Go home unto our Father.—I believe
It only sleeps, and may be wakened yet.

SCENE X.—*Julian's room. Christmas Day; early morn.* JULIAN.

Julian. The light comes feebly, slowly, to the world
On this one day that blesses all the year,
Just as it comes on any other day:
A feeble child he came, yet not the less
Brought godlike childhood to the aged earth,
Where nothing now is common any more.
All things had hitherto proclaimed God:
The wide spread air; the luminous mist that hid
The far horizon of the fading sea;
The low persistent music evermore
Flung down upon the sands, and at the base
Of the great rocks that hold it as a cup;
All things most common; the furze, now golden, now
Opening dark pods in music to the heat
Of the high summer-sun at afternoon;
The lone black tarn upon the round hill-top,
O'er which the gray clouds brood like rising smoke,
Sending its many rills, o'erarched and hid,
Singing like children down the rocky sides;—
Where shall I find the most unnoticed thing,
For that sang God with all its voice of song?
But men heard not, they knew not God in these;
To their strange speech unlistening ears were strange;
For with a stammering tongue and broken words,
With mingled falsehoods and denials loud,
Man witnessed God unto his fellow man:
How then himself the voice of Nature hear?

Or how himself he heeded, when, the leader,
He in the chorus sang a discord vile?
When prophet lies, how shall the people preach?
But when He came in poverty, and low,
A real man to half-unreal men,
A man whose human thoughts were all divine,
The head and upturned face of human kind—
Then God shone forth from all the lowly earth,
And men began to read their maker there.
Now the Divine descends, pervading all.
Earth is no more a banishment from heaven;
But a lone field among the distant hills,
Well ploughed and sown, whence corn is gathered home.
Now, now we feel the holy mystery
That permeates all being: all is God's;
And my poor life is terribly sublime.
Where'er I look, I am alone in God,
As this round world is wrapt in folding space;
Behind, before, begin and end in him:
So all beginnings and all ends are hid;
And he is hid in me, and I in him.
  Oh, what a unity, to mean them all!—
The peach-dyed morn; cold stars in colder blue
Gazing across upon the sun-dyed west,
While the dank wind is running o'er the graves;
Green buds, red flowers, brown leaves, and ghostly snow;
The grassy hills, breeze-haunted on the brow;
And sandy deserts hung with stinging stars!
Half-vanished hangs the moon, with daylight sick,
Wan-faced and lost and lonely: daylight fades—
Blooms out the pale eternal flower of space,
The opal night, whose odours are gray dreams—
Core of its petal-cup, the radiant moon!
All, all the unnumbered meanings of the earth,
Changing with every cloud that passes o'er;
All, all, from rocks slow-crumbling in the frost
Of Alpine deserts, isled in stormy air,

To where the pool in warm brown shadow sleeps,
The stream, sun-ransomed, dances in the sun;
All, all, from polar seas of jewelled ice,
To where she dreams out gorgeous flowers—all, all
The unlike children of her single womb!
Oh, my heart labours with infinitude!
All, all the messages that these have borne
To eyes and ears, and watching, listening souls;
And all the kindling cheeks and swelling hearts,
That since the first-born, young, attempting day,
Have gazed and worshipped!—What a unity,
To mean each one, yet fuse each in the all!
O centre of all forms! O concord's home!
O world alive in one condensed world!
O face of Him, in whose heart lay concealed
The fountain-thought of all this kingdom of heaven!
Lord, thou art infinite, and I am thine!
  I sought my God; I pressed importunate;
I spoke to him, I cried, and in my heart
It seemed he answered me. I said—"Oh! take
Me nigh to thee, thou mighty life of life!
I faint, I die; I am a child alone
'Mid the wild storm, the brooding desert-night."
  "Go thou, poor child, to him who once, like thee,
Trod the highways and deserts of the world."
  "Thou sendest me then, wretched, from thy sight!
Thou wilt not have me—I am not worth thy care!"
  "I send thee not away; child, think not so;
From the cloud resting on the mountain-peak,
I call to guide thee in the path by which
Thou mayst come soonest home unto my heart.
I, I am leading thee. Think not of him
As he were one and I were one; in him
Thou wilt find me, for he and I are one.
Learn thou to worship at his lowly shrine,
And see that God dwelleth in lowliness."
  I came to Him; I gazed upon his face;

And lo! from out his eyes God looked on me!—
Yea, let them laugh! I *will* sit at his feet,
As a child sits upon the ground, and looks
Up in his mother's face. One smile from him,
One look from those sad eyes, is more to me
Than to be lord myself of hearts and thoughts.
O perfect made through the reacting pain
In which thy making force recoiled on thee!
Whom no less glory could make visible
Than the utter giving of thyself away;
Brooding no thought of grandeur in the deed,
More than a child embracing from full heart!
Lord of thyself and me through the sore grief
Which thou didst bear to bring us back to God,
Or rather, bear in being unto us
Thy own pure shining self of love and truth!
When I have learned to think thy radiant thoughts,
To love the truth beyond the power to know it,
To bear my light as thou thy heavy cross,
Nor ever feel a martyr for thy sake,
But an unprofitable servant still,—
My highest sacrifice my simplest duty
Imperative and unavoidable,
Less than which *All*, were nothingness and waste;
When I have lost myself in other men,
And found myself in thee—the Father then
Will come with thee, and will abide with me.

SCENE XI.—LILIA *teaching* LADY GERTRUDE. *Enter* LORD SEAFORD. LILIA *rises. He places her a chair, and seats himself at the instrument; plays a low, half-melancholy, half-defiant prelude, and sings.*

SONG.

"Look on the magic mirror;
A glory thou wilt spy;

Be with thine heart a sharer,
  But go not thou too nigh;
Else thou wilt rue thine error,
  With a tear-filled, sleepless eye."

The youth looked on the mirror,
  And he went not too nigh;
And yet he rued his error,
  With a tear-filled, sleepless eye;
For he could not be a sharer
  In what he there did spy.

He went to the magician
  Upon the morrow morn.
"Mighty," was his petition,
  "Look not on me in scorn;
But one last gaze elysian,
  Lest I should die forlorn!"

He saw her in her glory,
  Floating upon the main.
Ah me! the same sad story!
  The darkness and the rain!
If I live till I am hoary,
  I shall never laugh again.

She held the youth enchanted,
  Till his trembling lips were pale,
And his full heart heaved and panted
  To utter all its tale:
Forward he rushed, undaunted—
  And the shattered mirror fell.

[*He rises and leaves the room.* LILIA *weeping.*

PART IV.

AND should the twilight darken into night,
And sorrow grow to anguish, be thou strong;
Thou art in God, and nothing can go wrong
Which a fresh life-pulse cannot set aright.
That thou dost know the darkness, proves the light.
Weep if thou wilt, but weep not all too long;
Or weep and work, for work will lead to song.
But search thy heart, if, hid from all thy sight,
There lie no cause for beauty's slow decay;
If for completeness and diviner youth,

And not for very love, thou seek'st the truth;
If thou hast learned to give thyself away
For love's own self, not for thyself, I say:
Were God's love less, the world were lost, in sooth!

SCENE I.—*Summer. Julian's room.* JULIAN *is reading out of a book of poems.*

Love me, beloved; the thick clouds lower;
A sleepiness filleth the earth and air;
The rain has been falling for many an hour;
A weary look the summer doth wear:
Beautiful things that cannot be so;
Loveliness clad in the garments of woe.

Love me, beloved; I hear the birds;
The clouds are lighter; I see the blue;
The wind in the leaves is like gentle words
Quietly passing 'twixt me and you;
The evening air will bathe the buds
With the soothing coolness of summer floods.

Love me, beloved; for, many a day,
Will the mist of the morning pass away;
Many a day will the brightness of noon
Lead to a night that hath lost her moon;
And in joy or in sadness, in autumn or spring,
Thy love to my soul is a needful thing.

Love me, beloved; for thou mayest lie
Dead in my sight, 'neath the same blue sky;
Love me, O love me, and let me know
The love that within thee moves to and fro;
That many a form of thy love may be
Gathered around thy memory.

Love me, beloved; for I may lie
Dead in thy sight, 'neath the same blue sky;
The more thou hast loved me, the less thy pain,
The stronger thy hope till we meet again;
And forth on the pathway we do not know,
With a load of love, my soul would go.

Love me, beloved; for one must lie
Motionless, lifeless, beneath the sky;
The pale stiff lips return no kiss
To the lips that never brought love amiss;
And the dark brown earth be heaped above
The head that lay on the bosom of love.

Love me, beloved; for both must lie
Under the earth and beneath the sky;
The world be the same when we are gone;
The leaves and the waters all sound on;
The spring come forth, and the wild flowers live,
Gifts for the poor man's love to give;
The sea, the lordly, the gentle sea,
Tell the same tales to others than thee;
And joys, that flush with an inward morn,
Irradiate hearts that are yet unborn;
A youthful race call our earth their own,
And gaze on its wonders from thought's high throne;
Embraced by fair Nature, the youth will embrace
The maid beside him, his queen of the race;
When thou and I shall have passed away
Like the foam-flake thou lookedst on yesterday.

Love me, beloved; for both must tread
On the threshold of Hades, the house of the dead;
Where now but in thinkings strange we roam,
We shall live and think, and shall be at home;
The sights and the sounds of the spirit land
No stranger to us than the white sea-sand,
Than the voice of the waves, and the eye of the moon,
Than the crowded street in the sunlit noon.
I pray thee to love me, belov'd of my heart;
If we love not truly, at death we part;
And how would it be with our souls to find
That love, like a body, was left behind!

Love me, beloved; Hades and Death
Shall vanish away like a frosty breath;
These hands, that now are at home in thine,
Shall clasp thee again, if thou still art mine;
And thou shalt be mine, my spirit's bride,
In the ceaseless flow of eternity's tide,
If the truest love that thy heart can know
Meet the truest love that from mine can flow.
Pray God, beloved, for thee and me,
That our souls may be wedded eternally.

[*He closes the book, and is silent for some moments.*

Ah me, O Poet! did *thy* love last out
The common life together every hour?
The slumber side by side with wondrousness
Each night after a day of fog and rain?
Did thy love glory o'er the empty purse,

And the poor meal sometimes the poet's lot?
Is she dead, Poet? Is thy love awake?
Alas! and is it come to this with me?
I might have written that! where am I now?
Yet let me think: I love less passionately,
But not less truly; I would die for her—
A little thing, but all a man can do.
O my beloved, where the answering love?
Love me, beloved. Whither art thou gone?

SCENE II.—*Lilia's room.* LILIA.

Lilia. He grows more moody still, more self-withdrawn.
Were it not better that I went away,
And left him with the child; for she alone
Can bring the sunshine on his cloudy face?
Alas, he used to say to me, *my child!*
Some convent would receive me in my land,
Where I might weep unseen, unquestioned;
And pray that God in whom he seems to dwell,
To take me likewise in, beside him there.
Had I not better make one trial first
To win again his love to compass me?
Might I not kneel, lie down before his feet,
And beg and pray for love as for my life?
Clasping his knees, look up to that stern heaven,
That broods above his eyes, and pray for smiles?
What if endurance were my only meed?
He would not turn away, but speak forced words,
Soothing with kindness me who thirst for love,
And giving service where I wanted smiles;
Till by degrees all had gone back again
To where it was, a slow dull misery.
No. 'Tis the best thing I can do for him—
And that I will do—free him from my sight.

In love I gave myself away to him;
And now in love I take myself again.
He will not miss me; I am nothing now.

SCENE III.—*Lord Seaford's garden.* LILIA; LORD SEAFORD.

Lord S. How the white roses cluster on the trellis!
They look in the dim light as if they floated
Within the fluid dusk that bathes them round.
One could believe that those far distant tones
Of scarce-heard music, rose with the faint scent,
Breathed odorous from the heart of the pale flowers,
As the low rushing from a river-bed,
Or the continuous bubbling of a spring
In deep woods, turning over its own joy
In its own heart luxuriously, alone.
'Twas on such nights, after such sunny days,
The poets of old Greece saw beauteous shapes
Sighed forth from out the rooted, earth-fast trees,
With likeness undefinable retained
In higher human form to their tree-homes,
Which fainting let them forth into the air,
And lived a life in death till they returned.
The large-limbed, sweepy-curved, smooth-rinded beech
Gave forth the perfect woman to the night;
From the pale birch, breeze-bent and waving, stole
The graceful, slight-curved maiden, scarcely grown.
The hidden well gave forth its hidden charm,
The Naiad with the hair that flowed like streams,
And arms that gleamed like moonshine on wet sands.
The broad-browed oak, the stately elm, gave forth
Their inner life in shapes of ecstasy.
All varied, loveliest forms of womanhood
Dawned out in twilight, and athwart the grass
Half danced with cool and naked feet, half floated

Borne on winds dense enough for them to swim.
O what a life they lived! in poet's brain—
Not on this earth, alas!—But you are sad;
You do not speak, dear lady.
Lilia. Pardon me.
If such words make me sad, I am to blame.
Lord S. Ah, no! I spoke of lovely, beauteous things:
Beauty and sadness always go together.
Nature thought Beauty too golden to go forth
Upon the earth without a meet alloy.
If Beauty had been born the twin of Gladness,
Poets had never needed this dream-life;
Each blessed man had but to look beside him,
And be more blest. How easily could God
Have made our life one consciousness of joy!
It is denied us. Beauty flung around
Most lavishly, to teach our longing hearts
To worship her; then when the soul is full
Of lovely shapes, and all sweet sounds that breathe,
And colours that bring tears into the eyes—
Steeped until saturated with her essence;
And, faint with longing, gasps for some one thing
More beautiful than all, containing all,
Essential Beauty's self, that it may say:
"Thou art my Queen—I dare not think to crown thee,
For thou art crowned already, every part,
With thy perfection; but I kneel to thee,
The utterance of the beauty of the earth,
As of the trees the Hamadryades;
I worship thee, intense of loveliness!
Not sea-born only; sprung from Earth, Air, Ocean,
Star-Fire; all elements and forms commingling
To give thee birth, to utter each its thought
Of beauty held in many forms diverse,
In one form, holding all, a living Love,
Their far-surpassing child, their chosen queen
By virtue of thy dignities combined!"—

And when in some great hour of wild surprise,
She floats into his sight; and, rapt, entranced,
At last he gazes, as I gaze on thee,
And, breathless, his full heart stands still for joy,
And his soul thinks not, having lost itself
In her, pervaded with her being; strayed
Out from his eyes, and gathered round her form,
Clothing her with the only beauty yet
That could be added, ownness unto him;—
Then falls the stern, cold *No* with thunder-tone.
Think, lady,—the poor unresisting soul
Clear-burnished to a crystalline abyss
To house in central deep the ideal form;
Led then to Beauty, and one glance allowed,
From heart of hungry, vacant, waiting shrine,
To set it on the Pisgah of desire;—
Then the black rain! low-slanting, sweeping rain!
Stormy confusions! far gray distances!
And the dim rush of countless years behind!

[*He sinks at her feet.*

Yet for this moment, let me worship thee!

Lilia (*agitated*). Rise, rise, my lord; this cannot be, indeed.
I pray you, cease; I will not listen to you.
Indeed it must not, cannot, must not be!

[*Moving as to go.*

Lord S. (*rising*). Forgive me, madam. Let me cast myself
On your good thoughts. I had been thinking thus,
All the bright morning, as I walked alone;
And when you came, my thoughts flowed forth in words.
It is a weakness with me from my boyhood,
That if I act a part in any play,
Or follow, merely intellectually,
A passion or a motive—ere I know,
My being is absorbed, my brain on fire;
I am possessed with something not myself,

And live and move and speak in foreign forms.
Pity my weakness, madam; and forgive
My rudeness with your gentleness and truth.
That you are beautiful is simple fact;
And when I once began to speak my thoughts,
The wheels of speech ran on, till they took fire,
And in your face flung foolish sparks and dust.
I am ashamed; and but for dread of shame,
I should be kneeling now to beg forgiveness.

Lilia. Think nothing more of it, my lord, I pray.
—What is this purple flower with the black spot
In its deep heart? I never saw it before.

SCENE IV.—*Julian's room. The dusk of evening.* JULIAN *standing with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the floor.*

Julian. I see her as I saw her then. She sat
On a low chair, the child upon her knees,
Not six months old. Radiant with motherhood,
Her full face beamed upon the face below,
Bent over it, as with love to ripen love;
Till its intensity, like summer heat,
Gathered a mist across her heaven of eyes,
Which grew until it dropt in large slow tears,
The earthly outcome of the heavenly thing!

[*He walks toward the window, seats himself at a little table, and writes.*

THE FATHER'S HYMN FOR THE MOTHER TO SING.

My child is lying on my knees;
The signs of heaven she reads:
My face is all the heaven she sees,
Is all the heaven she needs.

And she is well, yea, bathed in bliss,
If heaven is in my face—
Behind it, all is tenderness,
And truthfulness and grace.

I mean her well so earnestly,
  Unchanged in changing mood;
My life would go without a sigh
  To bring her something good.

I also am a child, and I
  Am ignorant and weak;
I gaze upon the starry sky,
  And then I must not speak;

For all behind the starry sky,
  Behind the world so broad,
Behind men's hearts and souls doth lie
  The Infinite of God.

If true to her, though troubled sore,
  I cannot choose but be;
Thou, who art peace for evermore,
  Art very true to me.

If I am low and sinful, bring
  More love where need is rife;
Thou knowest what an awful thing
  It is to be a life.

Hast thou not wisdom to enwrap
  My waywardness about,
In doubting safety on the lap
  Of Love that knows no doubt?

Lo! Lord, I sit in thy wide space,
  My child upon my knee;
She looketh up unto my face,
  And I look up to thee.

SCENE V.—*Lord Seaford's house; Lady Gertrude's room.* LADY GERTRUDE *lying on a couch;* LILIA *seated beside her, with the girl's hand in both hers.*

Lady Gertrude. How kind of you to come! And you will stay
And be my beautiful nurse till I grow well?
I am better since you came. You look so sweet,
It brings all summer back into my heart.

Lilia. I am very glad to come. Indeed, I felt
No one could nurse you quite so well as I.

Lady Gertrude. How kind of you! Do call me sweet
names now;
And put your white cool hands upon my head;
And let me lie and look in your great eyes:
'Twill do me good; your very eyes are healing.
Lilia. I must not let you talk too much, dear child.
Lady Gertrude. Well, as I cannot have my music-
lesson,
And must not speak much, will you sing to me?
Sing that strange ballad you sang once before;
'Twill keep me quiet.
Lilia. What was it, child?
Lady Gertrude. It was
Something about a race—Death and a lady—
Lilia. Oh! I remember. I would rather sing
Some other, though.
Lady Gertrude. No, no, I want that one.
Its ghost walks up and down inside my head,
But won't stand long enough to show itself.
You must talk Latin to it—sing it away,
Or when I'm ill, 'twill haunt me.
Lilia. Well, I'll sing it.

SONG.

Death and a lady rode in the wind,
In a starry midnight pale;
Death on a bony horse behind,
With no footfall upon the gale.

The lady sat a wild-eyed steed;
Eastward he tore to the morn.
But ever the sense of a noiseless speed,
And the sound of reaping corn!

All the night through, the headlong race
Sped to the morning gray;
The dew gleamed cold on her cold white face—
From Death or the morning? say.

Her steed's wide knees began to shake,
As he flung the road behind;
The lady sat still, but her heart did quak
And a cold breath came down the wind.

When, lo! a fleet bay horse beside,
With a silver mane and tail;
A knight, bareheaded, the horse did ride,
With never a coat of mail.

He never lifted his hand to Death,
And he never couched a spear;
But the lady felt another breath,
And a voice was in her ear.

He looked her weary eyes through and through,
With his eyes so strong in faith:
Her bridle-hand the lady drew,
And she turned and laughed at Death.

And away through the mist of the morning gray,
The spectre and horse rode wide;
The dawn came up the old bright way,
And the lady never died.

Lord Seaford (*who has entered during the song*).
Delightful! Why, my little pining Gertrude,
With such charm-music you will soon be well.
Madam, I know not how to speak the thanks
I owe you for your kindness to my daughter:
She looks as different from yesterday
As sunrise from a fog.
Lilia. I am but too happy
To be of use to one I love so much.

SCENE VI.—*A rainy day.* LORD SEAFORD *walking up and down his room, murmuring to himself.*

Oh, my love is like a wind of death,
That turns me to a stone!
Oh, my love is like a desert breath,
That burns me to the bone!

Oh, my love is a flower with a purple glow,
And a purple scent all day!
But a black spot lies at the heart below,
And smells all night of clay.

Oh, my love is like the poison sweet
That lurks in the hooded cell!
One flash in the eyes, one bounding beat,
And then the passing bell!

Oh, my love she's like a white, white rose!
And I am the canker-worm:
Never the bud to a blossom blows;
It falls in the rainy storm.

SCENE VII.—JULIAN *reading in his room.*

"And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

[*He closes the book and kneels.*

SCENE VIII.—*Lord Seaford's room.* LILIA *and* LORD SEAFORD. *Her hand lies in his.*

Lilia. It may be true. I am bewildered, though.
I know not what to answer.
Lord S. Let me answer:—
You would it were so—you would love me then?

[*A sudden crash of music from a brass band in the street, melting away in a low cadence.*

Lilia (*starting up*). Let me go, my lord!

Lord S. (*retaining her hand*). Why, sweetest! what is this?

Lilia (*vehemently, and disengaging her hand*). Let me go. My husband! Oh, my white child!

[*She hurries to the door, but falls.*

Lord S. (*raising her*). I thought you trusted me, yes, loved me, Lilia!

Lilia. Peace! that name is his! Speak it again—I rave.
He thought I loved him—and I did—I do.
Open the door, my lord!

[*He hesitates. She draws herself up erect, with flashing eyes.*

Once more, my lord—
Open the door, I say.

[*He still hesitates. She walks swiftly to the window, flings it wide, and is throwing herself out.*

Lord S. Stop, madam! I will.

[*He opens the door. She leaves the window, and walks slowly out. He hears the house-door open and shut, flings himself on the couch, and hides his face.*

Enter LADY GERTRUDE.

Lady Gertrude. Dear father, are you ill? I knocked three times;
You did not speak.
Lord S. I did not hear you, child.
My head aches rather; else I am quite well.
Lady Gertrude. Where is the countess?
Lord S. She is gone. She had
An urgent message to go home at once.
But, Gertrude, now you seem so well, why not
Set out to-morrow? You can travel now;
And for your sake the sooner that we breathe
Italian air the better.
Lady Gertrude. This is sudden!
I scarcely can be ready by to-morrow.
Lord S. It will oblige me, child. Do what you can.
Just go and order everything you want.
I will go with you. Ring the bell, my love;
I have a reason for my haste. We'll have
The horses to at once. Come, Gertrude, dear.

SCENE IX.—*Evening. Hampstead Heath.* LILIA *seated.*

Lilia. The first pale star! braving the rear of Day!
And all heaven waiting till the sun has drawn
His long train after him! then half creation
Will follow its queen-leader from the depths.
O harbinger of hope! O star of love!
Thou hast gone down in me, gone down for ever
And left my soul in such a starless night,
It has not love enough to weep thy loss.
O fool! to know thee once, and, after years,

To take a gleaming marsh-light for thy lamp!
How could I for one moment hear him speak!
O Julian! for my last love-gift I thought
To bring that love itself, bound and resigned,
And offering it a sacrifice to thee,
Lead it away into the wilderness;
But one vile spot hath tainted this my lamb;
Unoffered it must go, footsore and weary,
Not flattering itself to die for thee.
And yet, thank God, it was one moment only,
That, lapt in darkness and the loss of thee,
Sun of my soul, and half my senses dead
Through very weariness and lack of love,
My heart throbbed once responsive to a ray
That glimmered through its gloom from other eyes,
And seemed to promise rest and hope again.
My presence shall not grieve thee any more,
My Julian, my husband. I will find
A quiet place where I will seek thy God.
And—in my heart it wakens like a voice
From him—the Saviour—there are other worlds
Where all gone wrong in this may be set right;
Where I, made pure, may find thee, purer still,
And thou wilt love the love that kneels to thee.
I'll write and tell him I have gone, and why.
But what to say about my late offence,
That he may understand just what it was?
For I must tell him, if I write at all.
I fear he would discover where I was;
Pitiful duty would not let him rest
Until he found me; and I fain would free
From all the weight of mine, that heart of his.

[*Sound of a coach-horn.*

It calls me to rise up and go to him,
Leading me further from him and away.
The earth is round; God's thoughts return again;
And I will go in hope. Help me, my God!

SCENE X.—*Julian's room.* JULIAN *reading. A letter is brought in. He reads it, turns deadly pale, and leans his arms and head on the table, almost fainting. This lasts some time; then starting up, he paces through the room, his shoulders slightly shrugged, his arms rigid by his sides, and his hands clenched hard, as if a net of pain were drawn tight around his frame. At length he breathes deep, draws himself up, and walks erect, his chest swelling, but his teeth set.*

Julian. Me! My wife! Insect, didst thou say *my* wife?

[*Hurriedly turning the letter on the table to see the address.*

Why, if she love him more than me, why then
Let her go with him!—Gone to Italy!
Pursue, says he? *Revenge?*—Let the corpse crush
The slimy maggot with its pulpy fingers!—
What if I stabbed— [*Taking his dagger, and feeling its point.*
Whom? Her—what then?—Or him—
What yet? Would that give back the life to me?
There is one more—myself! Oh, peace! to feel
The earthworms crawling through my mouldering brain!—
But to be driven along the windy wastes—
To hear the tempests, raving as they turn,
Howl *Lilia, Lilia*—to be tossed about
Beneath the stars that range themselves for ever
Into the burning letters of her name—
'Twere better creep the earth down here than that,
For pain's excess here sometimes deadens pain.

[*He throws the dagger on the floor.*

Have I deserved this? Have I earned it? I?
A pride of innocence darts through my veins.
I stand erect. Shame cannot touch me. Ha!
I laugh at insult. *I?* I am myself—

Why starest thou at me? Well, stare thy fill;
When devils mock, the angels lend their wings:—
But what their wings? I have nowhere to fly.
Lilia! my worship of thy purity!
Hast thou forgotten—ah! thou didst not know
How, watching by thee in thy fever-pain,
When thy white neck and bosom were laid bare,
I turned my eyes away, and turning drew
With trembling hand white darkness over thee,
Because I knew not thou didst love me then.
Love me! O God in heaven! Is love a thing
That can die thus? Love me! Would, for thy penance,
Thou saw'st but once the heart which thou hast torn—
Shaped all about thy image set within!
But that were fearful! What rage would not, love
Must then do for thee—in mercy I would kill thee,
To save thee from the hell-fire of remorse.
If blood would make thee clean, then blood should flow;
Eager, unwilling, this hand should make thee bleed,
Till, drop by drop, the taint should drop away.
Clean! said I? fit to lie by me in sleep,
My hand upon thy heart!—not fit to lie,
For all thy bleeding, by me in the grave!

[*His eye falls on that likeness of Jesus said to be copied from an emerald engraved for Tiberius. He gazes, drops on his knees, and covers his face; remains motionless a long time; then rises very pale, his lips compressed, his eyes filled with tears.*

O my poor Lilia! my bewildered child!
How shall I win thee, save thee, make thee mine?
Where art thou wandering? What words in thine ears?
God, can she never more be clean? no more,
Through all the terrible years? Hast thou no well
In all thy heaven, in all thyself, that can
Wash her soul clean? Her body will go down
Into the friendly earth—would it were lying
There in my arms! for there thy rains will come,
Fresh from the sky, slow sinking through the sod,

Summer and winter; and we two should lie
Mouldering away together, gently washed
Into the heart of earth; and part would float
Forth on the sunny breezes that bear clouds
Through the thin air. But her stained soul, my God!
Canst thou not cleanse it? Then should we, when death
Was gone, creep into heaven at last, and sit
In some still place together, glory-shadowed.
None would ask questions there. And I should be
Content to sorrow a little, so I might
But see her with the darling on her knees,
And know that must be pure that dwelt within
The circle of thy glory. Lilia! Lilia!
I scorn the shame rushing from head to foot;
I would endure it endlessly, to save
One thought of thine from his polluting touch;
Saying ever to myself: this is a part
Of my own Lilia; and the world to me
Is nothing since I lost the smiles of her:
Somehow, I know not how, she faded from me,
And this is all that's left of her. My wife!
Soul of my soul! my oneness with myself!
Come back to me; I will be all to thee:
Back to my heart; and we will weep together,
And pray to God together every hour,
That he would show how strong he is to save.
The one that made is able to renew—
I know not how.—I'll hold thy heart to mine,
So close that the defilement needs must go.
My love shall ray thee round, and, strong as fire,
Dart through and through thy soul, till it be cleansed.—
But if she love him? Oh my heart—beat! beat!
Grow not so sick with misery and life,
For fainting will not save thee.—Oh no! no!
She cannot love him as she must love me.
Then if she love him not—oh horrible!—oh God!

[He stands in a stupor for some minutes.

What devil whispered that vile word, *unclean?*
I care not—loving more than that can touch.
Let me be shamed, ay, perish in my shame,
As men call perishing, so she be saved.
Saved! my beloved! my Lilia!—Alas,
Would she were here! oh, I would make her weep,
Till her soul wept itself to purity!
Far, far away! where my love cannot reach.
No, no; she is not gone!
[*Starting and pacing wildly through the room.*
It is a lie—
Deluding blind revenge, not keen-eyed love.
I must do something.— [*Enter* LILY.
Ah! there's the precious thing
That shall entice her back.
[*Kneeling and clasping the child to his heart.*
My little Lily,
I have lost your mother.
Lily. Oh! [*Beginning to weep.*
She was so pretty,
Somebody has stolen her.
Julian. Will you go with me,
And help me look for her?
Lily. O yes, I will.
[*Clasping him round the neck.*
But my head aches so! Will you carry me?

Julian. Yes, my own darling. Come, we'll get your bonnet.

Lily. Oh! you've been crying, father. You're so white!
[*Putting her finger to his cheek.*

SCENE XI.—*A table in a club-room. Several* Gentlemen *seated round it. To them enter another.*

1st Gentleman. Why, Bernard, you look heated! what's the matter?

Bernard. Hot work, as looked at; cool enough, as done.

2nd G. A good antithesis, as usual, Bernard,

But a shell too hard for the vulgar teeth
Of our impatient curiosity.

Bernard. Most unexpectedly I found myself
Spectator of a scene in a home-drama
Worth all stage-tragedies I ever saw.

All. What was it? Tell us then. Here, take this seat.

[*He sits at the table, and pours out a glass of wine.*

Bernard. I went to call on Seaford, and was told
He had gone to town. So I, as privileged,
Went to his cabinet to write a note;
Which finished, I came down, and called his valet.
Just as I crossed the hall I heard a voice —
"The Countess Lamballa—is she here to-day?"
And looking toward the door, I caught a glimpse
Of a tall figure, gaunt and stooping, drest
In a blue shabby frock down to his knees,
And on his left arm sat a little child.
The porter gave short answer, with the door
For period to the same; when, like a flash,
It flew wide open, and the serving man
Went reeling, staggering backward to the stairs,
'Gainst which he fell, and, rolling down, lay stunned.
In walked the visitor; but in the moment
Just measured by the closing of the door,
Heavens, what a change! He walked erect, as if
Heading a column, with an eye and face
As if a fountain-shaft of blood had shot
Up suddenly within his wasted frame.
The child sat on his arm quite still and pale,
But with a look of triumph in her eyes.
He glanced in each room opening from the hall,
Set his face for the stair, and came right on—
In every motion calm as glacier's flow,
Save, now and then, a movement, sudden, quick,
Of his right hand across to his left side:
'Twas plain he had been used to carry arms.

3rd G. Did no one stop him?

Bernard. Stop him? I'd as soon
Have faced a tiger with bare hands. 'Tis easy
In passion to meet passion; but it is
A daunting thing to look on, when the blood
Is going its wonted pace through your own veins.
Besides, this man had something in his face,
With its live eyes, close lips, nostrils distended,
A self-reliance, and a self-command,
That would go right up to its goal, in spite
Of any *no* from any man. I would
As soon have stopped a cannon-ball as him.
Over the porter, lying where he fell,
He strode, and up the stairs. I heard him go—
I listened as it were a ghost that walked
With pallid spectre-child upon its arm—
Along the corridors, from door to door,
Opening and shutting. But at last a sting
Of sudden fear lest he should find the lady,
And mischief follow, shot me up the stairs.
I met him at the top, quiet as at first;
The fire had faded from his eyes; the child
Held in her tiny hand a lady's glove
Of delicate primrose. When he reached the hall,
He turned him to the porter, who had scarce
Recovered what poor wits he had, and saying,
"The count Lamballa waited on lord Seaford,"
Turned him again, and strode into the street.

1st G. Have you learned anything of what it meant?

Bernard. Of course he had suspicions of his wife:
For all the gifts a woman has to give,
I would not rouse such blood. And yet to see
The gentle fairy child fall kissing him,
And, with her little arms grasping his neck,
Peep anxious round into his shaggy face,
As they went down the street!—it almost made
A fool of me.—I'd marry for such a child!

SCENE XII.—*A by-street.* JULIAN *walking home very weary. The child in his arms, her head lying on his shoulder. An* Organ-boy *with a monkey, sitting on a door-step. He sings in a low voice.*

Julian. Look at the monkey, Lily.
Lily. No, dear father;
I do not like monkeys.
Julian. Hear the poor boy sing.
[*They listen. He sings.*

SONG.

Wenn ich höre dich mir nah',
Stimmen in den Blättern da;
Wenn ich fühl' dich weit und breit,
Vater, das ist Seligkeit.

Nun die Sonne liebend scheint,
Mich mit dir und All vereint;
Biene zu den Blumen fliegt,
Seel' an Lieb' sich liebend schmiegt.

So mich völlig lieb du hast,
Daseyn ist nicht eine Last;
Wenn ich seh' und höre dich,
Das genügt mir inniglich.

Lily. It sounds so curious. What is he saying, father?
Julian. My boy, you are not German?
Boy. No; my mother
Came from those parts. She used to sing the song.
I do not understand it well myself,
For I was born in Genoa.—Ah! my mother! [*Weeps.*
Julian. My mother was a German, my poor boy;
My father was Italian: I am like you. [*Giving him money.*
You sing of leaves and sunshine, flowers and bees,
Poor child, upon a stone in the dark street!
Boy. My mother sings it in her grave; and I
Will sing it everywhere, until I die.

SCENE XIII.—LILIA'S *room.* JULIAN *enters with the child; undresses her, and puts her to bed.*

Lily. Father does *all* things for his little Lily.
Julian. My own dear Lily! Go to sleep, my pet.
[*Sitting by her.*

"Wenn ich seh' und höre dich,
Das genügt mir inniglich."

[*Falling on his knees*

I come to thee, and, lying on thy breast,
Father of me, I tell thee in thine ear,
Half-shrinking from the sound, yet speaking free,
That thou art not enough for me, my God.
Oh, dearly do I love thee! Look: no fear
Lest thou shouldst be offended, touches me.
Herein I know thy love: mine casts out fear.
O give me back my wife; thou without her
Canst never make me blessed to the full. [*Silence.*
O yes; thou art enough for me, my God;
Part of thyself she is, else never mine.
My need of her is but thy thought of me;
She is the offspring of thy beauty, God;
Yea of the womanhood that dwells in thee:
Thou wilt restore her to my very soul. [*Rising.*
It may be all a lie. Some needful cause
Keeps her away. Wretch that I am, to think
One moment that my wife could sin against me!
She will come back to-night. I know she will.
I never can forgive my jealousy!
Or that fool-visit to lord Seaford's house!

[*His eyes fall on the glove which the child still holds in her sleeping hand. He takes it gently away, and hides it in his bosom.*

It will be all explained. To think I should,
Without one word from her, condemn her so!

What can I say to her when she returns?
I shall be utterly ashamed before her.
She will come back to-night. I know she will.

[*He throws himself wearily on the bed.*

SCENE XIV.—*Crowd about the Italian Opera-House.*
JULIAN. LILY *in his arms.* *Three* Students.

1*st Student.* Edward, you see that long, lank, threadbare man?
There is a character for that same novel
You talk of thunder-striking London with,
One of these days.
2*nd St.* I scarcely noticed him;
I was so taken with the lovely child.
She is angelic.
3*rd St.* You see angels always,
Where others, less dim-sighted, see but mortals.
She *is* a pretty child. Her eyes are splendid.
I wonder what the old fellow is about.
Some crazed enthusiast, music-distract,
That lingers at the door he cannot enter!
Give him an obol, Frank, to pay old Charon,
And cross to the Elysium of sweet sounds.
Here's mine.
1*st St.* And mine.
2*nd St.* And mine.

[3*rd Student offers the money to* JULIAN.

Julian (*very quietly*). No, thank you, sir.
Lily. Oh! there is mother!

[*Stretching her hands toward a lady stepping out of a carriage.*

Julian. No, no; hush, my child!

[*The lady looks round, and* LILY *clings to her father.*
Women *talking.*

1*st W.* I'm sure he's stolen the child. She can't be his.

2nd W. There's a suspicious look about him.
3rd W. True;
But the child clings to him as if she loved him.

[JULIAN *moves on slowly.*

SCENE XV.—JULIAN *seated in his room, his eyes fixed on the floor.* LILY *playing in a corner.*

Julian. Though I am lonely, yet this little child—
She understands me better than the Twelve
Knew the great heart of him they called their Lord.
Ten times last night I woke in agony,
I knew not why. There was no comforter.
I stretched my arm to find her, and her place
Was empty as my heart. Sometimes my pain
Forgets its cause, benumbed by its own being;
Then would I lay my aching, weary head
Upon her bosom, promise of relief:
I lift my eyes, and lo, the vacant world!

[*He looks up and sees the child playing with his dagger.*

You'll hurt yourself, my child; it is too sharp.
Give it to me, my darling. Thank you, dear.

[*He breaks the hilt from the blade and gives it her.*

Here, take the pretty part. It's not so pretty
As it was once! [*Thinking aloud.*
I picked the jewels out
To buy your mother the last dress I gave her.
There's just one left, I see, for you, my Lily.
Why did I kill Nembroni? Poor saviour I,
Saving thee only for a greater ill!
If thou wert dead, the child would comfort me;—
Is she not part of thee, and all my own?
But now——

Lily (*throwing down the dagger-hilt and running up to him*). Father, what is a poetry?

Julian. A beautiful thing,—of the most beautiful
That God has made.

Lily. As beautiful as mother?
Julian. No, my dear child; but very beautiful.
Lily. Do let me see a poetry.
Julian (*opening a book*). There, love!
Lily (*disappointedly*). I don't think that's so very pretty, father.
One side is very well—smooth; but the other
[*Rubbing her finger up and down the ends of the lines.*
Is rough, rough; just like my hair in the morning,
[*Smoothing her hair down with both hands.*
Before it's brushed. I don't care much about it.
Julian (*putting the book down, and taking her on his knee*). You do not understand it yet, my child.
You cannot know where it is beautiful.
But though you do not *see* it very pretty,
Perhaps your little ears could hear it pretty. [*He reads.*
Lily (*looking pleased*). Oh! that's much prettier, father. Very pretty.
It sounds so nice!—not half so pretty as mother.
Julian. There's something in it very beautiful,
If I could let you see it. When you're older
You'll find it for yourself, and love it well.
Do you believe me, Lily?
Lily. Yes, dear father.
[*Kissing him, then looking at the book.*
I wonder where its prettiness is, though;
I cannot see it anywhere at all.
[*He sets her down. She goes to her corner.*
Julian (*musing*). True, there's not much in me to love, and yet
I feel worth loving. I am very poor,
But that I could not help; and I grow old,
But there are saints in heaven older than I.
I have a world within me; there I thought
I had a store of lovely, precious things
Laid up for thinking; shady woods, and grass;
Clear streams rejoicing down their sloping channels;

And glimmering daylight in the cloven east;
There morning sunbeams stand, a vapoury column,
'Twixt the dark boles of solemn forest trees;
There, spokes of the sun-wheel, that cross their bridge,
Break through the arch of the clouds, fall on the earth,
And travel round, as the wind blows the clouds:
The distant meadows and the gloomy river
Shine out as over them the ray-pencil sweeps.—
Alas! where am I? Beauty now is torture:
Of this fair world I would have made her queen;—
Then led her through the shadowy gates beyond
Into that farther world of things unspoken,
Of which these glories are the outer stars,
The clouds that float within its atmosphere.
Under the holy might of teaching love,
I thought her eyes would open—see how, far
And near, Truth spreads her empire, widening out,
And brooding, a still spirit, everywhere;
Thought she would turn into her spirit's chamber,
Open the little window, and look forth
On the wide silent ocean, silent winds,
And see what she must see, I could not tell.
By sounding mighty chords I strove to wake
The sleeping music of her poet-soul:
We read together many magic words;
Gazed on the forms and hues of ancient art;
Sent forth our souls on the same tide of sound;
Worshipped beneath the same high temple-roofs;
And evermore I talked. I was too proud,
Too confident of power to waken life,
Believing in my might upon her heart,
Not trusting in the strength of living truth.
Unhappy saviour, who by force of self
Would save from selfishness and narrow needs!
I have not been a saviour. She grew weary.
I began wrong. The infinitely High,
Made manifest in lowliness, had been

The first, one lesson. Had I brought her there,
And set her down by humble Mary's side,
He would have taught her all I could not teach.
Yet, O my God! why hast thou made me thus
Terribly wretched, and beyond relief?

[*He looks up and sees that the child has taken the book to her corner. She peeps into it; then holds it to her ear; then rubs her hand over it; then puts her tongue on it.*

Julian (*bursting into tears*). Father, I am thy *child.*
Forgive me this:
Thy poetry is very hard to read.

SCENE XVI.—JULIAN *walking with* LILY *through one of the squares.*

Lily. Wish we could find her somewhere. 'Tis so sad
Not to have any mother! Shall I ask
This gentleman if he knows where she is?
Julian. No, no, my love; we'll find her by and by.

BERNARD *and another* Gentleman *talking together.*

Bernard. Have you seen Seaford lately?
Gentleman. No. In fact,
He vanished somewhat oddly, days ago.
Sam saw him with a lady in his cab;
And if I hear aright, one more is missing—
Just the companion for his lordship's taste.
You've not forgot that fine Italian woman
You met there once, some months ago?
Bern. Forgot her!
I have to try though, sometimes—hard enough:
Her husband is alive!
Lily. Mother was Italy, father,—was she not?
Julian. Hush, hush, my child! you must not say a word.
Gentleman. Oh, yes; no doubt!
But what of that?—a poor half-crazy creature!

Bern. Something quite different, I assure you, Harry.
Last week I saw him—never to forget him—
Ranging through Seaford's house, like the questing beast.
Gentleman. Better please two than one, he thought—
and wisely.
'Tis not for me to blame him : she is a prize
Worth sinning for a little more than little.
Lily (*whispering*). Why don't you ask them whether it
was mother?
I am sure it was. I am quite sure of it.
Gentleman. Look what a lovely child!
Bern. Harry! Good heavens!
It is the Count Lamballa. Come along.

SCENE XVII.—*Julian's room.* JULIAN. LILY *asleep.*

Julian. I thank thee. Thou hast comforted me, thou,
To whom I never lift my soul, in hope
To reach thee with my thinking, but the tears
Swell up and fill my eyes from the full heart
That cannot hold the thought of thee, the thought
Of him in whom I live, who lives in me,
And makes me live in him; by whose one thought,
Alone, unreachable, the making thought,
Infinite and self-bounded, I am here,
A living, thinking will, that cannot know
The power whereby I am—so blest the more
In being thus in thee—Father, thy child.
I cannot, cannot speak the thoughts in me.
My being shares thy glory : lay on me
What thou wouldst have me bear. Do thou with me
Whate'er thou wilt. Tell me thy will, that I
May do it as my best, my highest joy;
For thou dost work in me, I dwell in thee.
Wilt thou not save my wife? I cannot know
The power in thee to purify from sin.
But Life *can* cleanse the life it lived alive.

Thou knowest all that lesseneth her fault.
She loves me not, I know—ah, my sick heart!—
I will love her the more, to fill the cup;
One bond is snapped, the other shall be doubled;
For if I love her not, how desolate
The poor child will be left! *he* loves her not.
I have but one prayer more to pray to thee:—
Give me my wife again, that I may watch
And weep with her, and pray with her, and tell
What loving-kindness I have found in thee;
And she will come to thee to make her clean.
Her soul must wake as from a dream of bliss,
To know a dead one lieth in the house:
Let me be near her in that agony,
To tend her in the fever of the soul,
Bring her cool waters from the wells of hope,
Look forth and tell her that the morn is nigh;
And when I cannot comfort, help her weep.
God, I would give her love like thine to me,
Because I love her, and her need is great.
Lord, I need her far more than thou need'st me,
And thou art Love down to the deeps of hell:
Help me to love her with a love like thine.
How shall I find her? It were horrible
If the dread hour should come, and I not near.
Yet pray I not she should be spared one pang,
One writhing of self-loathing and remorse,
For she must hate the evil she has done;
Only take not away hope utterly.

Lily (*in her sleep*). Lily means me—don't throw it over the wall.

Julian (*going to her*). She is so flushed! I fear the child is ill.

I have fatigued her too much, wandering restless.
To-morrow I will take her to the sea. [*Returning.*
If I knew where, I would write to her, and write
So tenderly, she could not choose but come.

I will write now; I'll tell her that strange dream
I dreamed last night: 'twill comfort her as well.

[*He sits down and writes.*

My heart was crushed that I could hardly breathe.
I was alone upon a desolate moor;
And the wind blew by fits and died away—
I know not if it was the wind or me.
How long I wandered there, I cannot tell;
But some one came and took me by the hand.
I gazed, but could not see the form that led me,
And went unquestioning, I cared not whither.
We came into a street I seemed to know,
Came to a house that I had seen before.
The shutters were all closed; the house was dead.
The door went open soundless. We went in,
And entered yet again an inner room.
The darkness was so dense, I shrank as if
From striking on it. The door closed behind.
And then I saw that there was something black,
Dark in the blackness of the night, heaved up
In the middle of the room. And then I saw
That there were shapes of woe all round the room,
Like women in long mantles, bent in grief,
With long veils hanging low down from their heads,
All blacker in the darkness. Not a sound
Broke the death-stillness. Then the shapeless thing
Began to move. Four horrid muffled figures
Had lifted, bore it from the room. We followed,
The bending woman-shapes, and I. We left
The house in long procession. I was walking
Alone beside the coffin—such it was—
Now in the glimmering light I saw the thing.
And now I saw and knew the woman-shapes:
Undine clothed in spray, and heaving up
White arms of lamentation; Desdemona
In her night-robe, crimson on the left side;
Thekla in black, with resolute white face;

And Margaret in fetters, gliding slow—
That last look, when she shrieked on Henry, frozen
Upon her face. And many more I knew—
Long-suffering women, true in heart and life;
Women that make man proud for very love
Of their humility, and of his pride
Ashamed. And in the coffin lay my wife.
On, on, we went. The scene changed, and low hills
Began to rise on each side of the path
Until at last we came into a glen,
From which the mountains soared abrupt to heaven,
Shot cones and pinnacles into the skies.
Upon the eastern side one mighty summit
Shone with its snow faint through the dusky air;
And on its sides the glaciers gave a tint,
A dull metallic gleam, to the slow night.
From base to top, on climbing peak and crag,
Ay, on the glaciers' breast, were human shapes,
Motionless, waiting; men that trod the earth
Like gods; or forms ideal that inspired
Great men of old—up, even to the apex
Of the snow-spear-point. *Morning* had arisen
From Giulian's tomb in Florence, where the chisel
Of Michelagnolo laid him reclining,
And stood upon the crest.
A cry awoke
Amid the watchers at the lowest base,
And swelling rose, and sprang from mouth to mouth,
Up the vast mountain, to its aerial top;
And "*Is God coming?*" was the cry; which died
Away in silence; for no voice said *No.*
The bearers stood and set the coffin down;
The mourners gathered round it in a group;
Somewhat apart I stood, I know not why.
So minutes passed. Again that cry awoke,
And clomb the mountain-side, and died away
In the thin air, far-lost. No answer came.

How long we waited thus, I cannot tell—
How oft the cry arose and died again.
At last, from far, faint summit to the base,
Filling the mountain with a throng of echoes,
A mighty voice descended: "*God is coming!*"
Oh! what a music clothed the mountain-side,
From all that multitude's melodious throats,
Of joy and lamentation and strong prayer!
It ceased, for hope was too intense for song.
A pause.—The figure on the crest flashed out,
Bordered with light. The sun was rising—rose
Higher and higher still. One ray fell keen
Upon the coffin 'mid the circling group.
What God did for the rest, I know not; it
Was easy to help them.—I saw them not.—
I saw thee at my feet, my wife, my own!
Thy lovely face angelic now with grief;
But that I saw not first: thy head was bent,
Thou on thy knees, thy dear hands clasped between.
I sought to raise thee, but thou wouldst not rise,
Once only lifting that sweet face to mine,
Then turning it to earth. Would God the dream
Had lasted ever!—No; 'twas but a dream;
Thou art not rescued yet.
Earth's morning came,
And my soul's morning died in tearful gray.
The last I saw was thy white shroud yet steeped
In that sun-glory, all-transfiguring;
The last I heard, a chant break suddenly
Into an anthem. Silence took me like sound:
I had not listened in the excess of joy.

SCENE XVIII.—*Portsmouth. A bedroom.* LORD SEAFORD. LADY GERTRUDE.

Lord S. 'Tis for your sake, my Gertrude, I am sorry.
If you could go alone, I'd have you go.

Lady Gertrude. And leave you ill? No, you are not so cruel.
Believe me, father, I am happier
In your sick room, than on a glowing island
In the blue Bay of Naples.
Lord S. It was so sudden!
'Tis plain it will not go again as quickly.
But have your walk before the sun be hot.
Put the ice near me, child. There, that will do.
Lady Gertrude. Good-bye then, father, for a little while. [*Goes.*
Lord S. I never knew what illness was before.
O life! to think a man should stand so little
On his own will and choice, as to be thus
Cast from his high throne suddenly, and sent
To grovel beast-like. All the glow is gone
From the rich world! No sense is left me more
To touch with beauty. Even she has faded
Into the far horizon, a spent dream
Of love and loss and passionate despair!
Is there no beauty? Is it all a show
Flung outward from the healthy blood and nerves,
A reflex of well-ordered organism?
Is earth a desert? Is a woman's heart
No more mysterious, no more beautiful,
Than I am to myself this ghastly moment?
It must be so—it *must*, except God is,
And means the meaning that we think we see,
Sends forth the beauty we are taking in.
O Soul of nature, if thou art not, if
There dwelt not in thy thought the primrose-flower
Before it blew on any bank of spring,
Then all is untruth, unreality,
And we are wretched things; our highest needs
Are less than we, the offspring of ourselves;
And when we are sick, they *are* not; and our hearts
Die with the voidness of the universe.

But if thou art, O God, then all is true;
Nor are thy thoughts less radiant that our eyes
Are filmy, and the weary, troubled brain
Throbs in an endless round of its own dreams.
And she *is* beautiful——and I have lost her!
O God! thou art, thou art; and I have sinned
Against thy beauty and thy graciousness!
That woman-splendour was not mine, but thine.
Thy thought passed into form, that glory passed
Before my eyes, a bright particular star:
Like foolish child, I reached out for the star,
Nor kneeled, nor worshipped. I will be content
That she, the Beautiful, dwells on in thee,
Mine to revere, though not to call my own.
Forgive me, God! Forgive me, Lilia!
My love has taken vengeance on my love.
I writhe and moan. Yet I will be content.
Yea, gladly will I yield thee, so to find
That thou art not a phantom, but God's child;
That Beauty is, though it is not for me.
When I would hold it, then I disbelieved.
That I may yet believe, I will not touch it.
I have sinned against the Soul of love and beauty,
Denying him in grasping at his work.

SCENE XIX.—*A country churchyard.* JULIAN *seated on a tombstone.* LILY *gathering flowers and grass among the grass.*

Julian. O soft place of the earth! down-pillowed couch,
Made ready for the weary! Everywhere,
O Earth, thou hast one gift for thy poor children—
Room to lie down, leave to cease standing up,
Leave to return to thee, and in thy bosom
Lie in the luxury of primeval peace,
Fearless of any morn; as a new babe
Lies nestling in his mother's arms in bed:

That home of blessedness is all there is;
He never feels the silent rushing tide,
Strong setting for the sea, which bears him on,
Unconscious, helpless, to wide consciousness.
But thou, thank God, hast this warm bed at last
Ready for him when weary: well the green
Close-matted coverlid shuts out the dawn.
O Lilia, would it were our wedding bed
To which I bore thee with a nobler joy!
—Alas! there's no such rest: I only dream
Poor pagan dreams with a tired Christian brain.
How couldst thou leave me, my poor child? my heart
Was all so tender to thee! But I fear
My face was not. Alas! I was perplexed
With questions to be solved, before my face
Could turn to thee in peace: thy part in me
Fared ill in troubled workings of the brain.
Ah, now I know I did not well for thee
In making thee my wife! I should have gone
Alone into eternity. I was
Too rough for thee, for any tender woman—
Other I had not loved—so full of fancies!
Too given to meditation. A deed of love
Is stronger than a metaphysic truth;
Smiles better teachers are than mightiest words.
Thou, who wast life, not thought, how couldst thou help it?
How love me on, withdrawn from all thy sight—
For life must ever need the shows of life?
How fail to love a man so like thyself,
Whose manhood sought thy fainting womanhood?
I brought thee pine-boughs, rich in hanging cones,
But never white flowers, rubied at the heart.
O God, forgive me; it is all my fault.
Would I have had dead Love, pain-galvanized,
Led fettered after me by gaoler Duty?
Thou gavest me a woman rich in heart,

And I have kept her like a caged seamew
Starved by a boy, who weeps when it is dead.
O God, my eyes are opening—fearfully:
I know it now—'twas pride, yes, very pride,
That kept me back from speaking all my soul.
I was self-haunted, self-possessed—the worst
Of all possessions. Wherefore did I never
Cast all my being, life and all, on hers,
In burning words of openness and truth?
Why never fling my doubts, my hopes, my love,
Prone at her feet abandonedly? Why not
Have been content to minister and wait;
And if she answered not to my desires,
Have smiled and waited patient? God, they say,
Gives to his aloe years to breed its flower:
I gave not five years to a woman's soul!
Had I not drunk at last old wine of love?
I shut her love back on her lovely heart;
I did not shield her in the wintry day;
And she has withered up and died and gone.
God, let me perish, so thy beautiful
Be brought with gladness and with singing home.
If thou wilt give her back to me, I vow
To be her slave, and serve her with my soul
I in my hand will take my heart, and burn
Sweet perfumes on it to relieve her pain.
I, I have ruined her—O God, save thou!

[*He bends his head upon his knees.* LILY *comes running up to him, stumbling over the graves.*

Lily. Why do they make so many hillocks, father?
The flowers would grow without them.

Julian. So they would.

Lily. What are they for, then?

Julian (*aside*). I wish I had not
brought her;
She *will* ask questions. I must tell her all.
(*Aloud*). 'Tis where they lay them when the story's done

Lily. What! lay the boys and girls?
Julian. Yes, my own child—
To keep them warm till it begin again.
Lily. Is it dark down there?
[*Clinging to* JULIAN, *and pointing down.*
Julian. Yes, it is dark; but pleasant—oh, so sweet!
For out of there come all the pretty flowers.
Lily. Did the church grow out of there, with the long stalk
That tries to touch the little frightened clouds?
Julian. It did, my darling.—There's a door down there
That leads away to where the church is pointing.
[*She is silent for some time, and keeps looking first down and then up.* JULIAN *carries her away.*

SCENE XX.—*Portsmouth.* LORD SEAFORD, *partially recovered. Enter* LADY GERTRUDE *and* BERNARD.

Lady Gertrude. I have found an old friend, father. Here he is!
Lord S. Bernard! Who would have thought to see you here!
Bern. I came on Lady Gertrude in the street.
I know not which of us was more surprised.
[LADY GERTRUDE *goes.*
Bern. Where is the countess?
Lord S. Countess! What do you mean?
I do not know.
Bern. The Italian lady.
Lord S. Countess
Lamballa, do you mean? You frighten me!
Bern. I am glad indeed to know your ignorance;
For since I saw the count, I would not have you
Wrong one gray hair upon his noble head.
[LORD SEAFORD *covers his eyes with his hands.*
You have not then heard the news about yourself?
Such interesting echoes reach the last

A man's own ear. The public has decreed
You and the countess run away together.
'Tis certain she has balked the London Argos,
And that she has been often to your house.
The count believes it—clearly from his face:
The man is dying slowly on his feet.

Lord S. (*starting up and ringing the bell*). O God! what am I? My love burns like hate,
Scorching and blasting with a fiery breath!

Bern. What the deuce ails you, Seaford? Are you raving?

Enter Waiter.

Lord S. Post-chaise for London—four horses—instantly

[*He sinks exhausted in his chair*

SCENE XXI.—LILY *in bed.* JULIAN *seated by her.*

Lily. O father, take me on your knee, and nurse me.
Another story is very nearly done.

[*He takes her on his knees.*

I am so tired! Think I should like to go
Down to the warm place that the flowers come from,
Where all the little boys and girls are lying
In little beds—white curtains, and white tassels.
—No, no, no—it is so dark down there!
Father will not come near me all the night.

Julian. You shall not go, my darling; I will keep you.

Lily. O will you keep me always, father dear?
And though I sleep ever so sound, still keep me?
Oh, I should be so happy, never to move!
'Tis such a dear well place, here in your arms!
Don't let it take me; do not let me go:
I cannot leave you, father—love hurts so.

Julian. Yes, darling; love does hurt. It is too good
Never to hurt. Shall I walk with you now
And try to make you sleep?

Lily. Yes—no; for I should leave you then. Oh, my head!
Mother, mother, dear mother!—Sing to me, father.

[*He tries to sing.*

Oh the hurt, the hurt, and the hurt of love!
Wherever the sun shines, the waters go.
It hurts the snowdrop, it hurts the dove,
God on his throne, and man below.

But sun would not shine, nor waters go,
Snowdrop tremble, nor fair dove moan,
God be on high, nor man below,
But for love—for the love with its hurt alone.

Thou knowest, O Saviour, its hurt and its sorrows;
Didst rescue its joy by the might of thy pain:
Lord of all yesterdays, days, and to-morrows,
Help us love on in the hope of thy gain;

Hurt as it may, love on, love for ever;
Love for love's sake, like the Father above,
But for whose brave-hearted Son we had never
Known the sweet hurt of the sorrowful love.

[*She sleeps at last. He sits as before, with the child leaning on his bosom, and falls into a kind of stupor, in which he talks.*

Julian. A voice comes from the vacant, wide sea-vault:
Man with the heart, praying for woman's love,
Receive thy prayer; be loved; and take thy choice:
Take this or this. O Heaven and Earth! I see—
What is it? Statue trembling into life
With the first rosy flush upon the skin?
Or woman-angel, richer by lack of wings?
I see her—where I know not; for I see
Nought else: she filleth space, and eyes, and brain—
God keep me!—in celestial nakedness.
She leaneth forward, looking down in space,
With large eyes full of longing, made intense
By mingled fear of something yet unknown;
Her arms thrown forward, circling half; her hands
Half lifted, and half circling, like her arms.

O heavenly artist! whither hast thou gone
To find my own ideal womanhood—
Glory grown grace, divine to human grown?
I hear the voice again: *Speak but the word:*
She will array herself and come to thee.
Lo, at her white foot lie her daylight clothes,
Her earthly dress for work and weary rest!
—I see a woman-form, laid as in sleep,
Close by the white foot of the wonderful.
It is the same shape, line for line, as she.
Long grass and daisies shadow round her limbs.
Why speak I not the word?——Clothe thee, and come,
O infinite woman! my life faints for thee.
Once more the voice: *Stay! look on this side first:*
I spake of choice. Look here, O son of man!
Choose then between them. Ah! ah! [*Silence.*
Her I knew
Some ages gone; the woman who did sail
Down a long river with me to the sea;
Who gave her lips up freely to my lips,
Her body willingly into my arms;
Came down from off her statue-pedestal,
And was a woman in a common house,
Not beautified by fancy every day,
And losing worship by her gifts to me.
She gave me that white child—what came of her?
I have forgot.—I opened her great heart,
And filled it half-way to the brim with love—
With love half wine, half vinegar and gall—
And so—and so—she—went away and died?
O God! what was it?—something terrible—
I will not stay to choose, or look again
Upon the beautiful. Give me my wife,
The woman of the old time on the earth.
O lovely spirit, fold not thy parted hands,
Nor let thy hair weep like a sunset-rain

From thy bent brows, shadowing thy snowy breasts!
If thou descend to earth, and find no man
To love thee purely, strongly, in his *will*,
Even as he loves the truth, because he will,
And when he cannot see it beautiful—
Then thou mayst weep, and I will help thee weep.
Voice, speak again, and tell my wife to come.
'Tis she, 'tis she, low-kneeling at my feet!
In the same dress, same flowing of the hair,
As long ago, on earth: is her face changed?
Sweet, my love rains on thee, like a warm shower;
My dove descending rests upon thy head;
I bless and sanctify thee for my own:
Lift up thy face, and let me look on thee.
Heavens, what a face! 'Tis hers! It is not hers!
She rises—turns it up from me to God,
With great rapt orbs, and such a brow!—the stars
Might find new orbits there, and be content.
O blessed lips, so sweetly closed that sure
Their opening must be prophecy or song!
A high-entranced maiden, ever pure,
And thronged with burning thoughts of God and Truth!
Vanish her garments; vanishes the silk
That the worm spun, the linen of the flax;—
O heavens! she standeth there, my statue-form,
With the rich golden torrent-hair, white feet,
And hands with rosy palms—my own ideal!
The woman of *my* world, with deeper eyes
Than I had power to think—and yet my Lilia,
My wife, with homely airs of earth about her,
And dearer to my heart as my lost wife,
Than to my soul as its new-found ideal!
Oh, Lilia! teach me; at thy knees I kneel;
Make me thy scholar; speak, and I will hear.
Yea, all eternity—— [*He is roused by a cry from the child.*

Lily. Oh, father! put your arms close round about me.

Kiss me. Kiss me harder, father dear.
Now! I am better now.

[*She looks long and passionately in his face. Her eyes close; her head drops backward. She is dead.*

SCENE XXII.—*A cottage-room.* LILIA *folding a letter.*

Lilia. Now I have told him all; no word kept back
To burn within me like an evil fire.
And where I am, I have told him; and I wait
To know his will. What though he love me not,
If I love him!—I will go back to him,
And wait on him submissive. 'Tis enough
For one life, to be servant to that man!
It was but pride—at best, love stained with pride,
That drove me from him. He and my sweet child
Must miss my hands, if not my eyes and heart.
How lonely is my Lily all the day,
Till he comes home and makes her paradise!
I go to be his servant. Every word
That comes from him softer than a command,
I'll count it gain, and lay it in my heart,
And serve him better for it.—He will receive me.

SCENE XXIII.—LILY *lying dead.* JULIAN *bending over her.*

Julian. The light of setting suns be on thee, child!
Nay, nay, my child, the light of rising suns
Is on thee! Joy is with thee—God is Joy;
Peace to himself, and unto us deep joy;
Joy to himself, in the reflex of our joy.
Love be with thee! yea God, for he is Love.
Thou wilt need love, even God's, to give thee joy.

Children, they say, are born into a world
Where grief is their first portion: thou, I think,
Never hadst much of grief—thy second birth
Into the spirit-world has taught thee grief,
If, orphaned now, thou know'st thy mother's story,
And know'st thy father's hardness. O my God,
Let not my Lily turn away from me.
Now I am free to follow and find *her*.
Thy truer Father took thee home to him,
That he might grant my prayer, and save my wife.
I thank him for his gift of thee; for all
That thou hast taught me, blessed little child.
I love thee, dear, with an eternal love.
And now farewell! [*Kissing her.*
—no, not farewell; I come.
Years hold not back, they lead me on to thee.
Yes, they will also lead me on to her.

Enter a Jew.

Jew. What is your pleasure with me? Here I am, sir.
Julian. Walk into the next room; then look at this,
And tell me what you'll give for everything. [Jew *goes.*
My darling's death has made me almost happy.
Now, now I follow, follow. I'm young again.
When I have laid my little one to rest
Among the flowers in that same sunny spot,
Straight from her grave I'll take my pilgrim-way;
And, calling up all old forgotten skill,
Lapsed social claims, and knowledge of mankind,
I'll be a man once more in the loud world.
Revived experience in its winding ways,
Senses and wits made sharp by sleepless love,
If all the world were sworn to secrecy,
Will guide me to her, sure as questing Death.
I'll follow my wife, follow until I die.
How shall I face the Shepherd of the sheep,

Without the one ewe-lamb he gave to me?
How find her in great Hades, if not here
In this poor little round O of a world?
I'll follow my wife, follow until I find.

Re-enter Jew.

Well, how much? Name your sum. Be liberal.
Jew. Let me see this room, too. The things are all
Old-fashioned and ill-kept. They're worth but little.
Julian. Say what you will—only make haste and go.
Jew. Say twenty pounds?
Julian. Well, fetch the money at once,
And take possession. But make haste, I pray.

SCENE XXIV.—*The country-churchyard.* JULIAN *standing by* LILY'S *new-filled grave. He looks very worn and ill.*

Julian. Now I can leave thee safely to thy sleep;
Thou wilt not wake and miss me, my fair child!
Nor will they, for she's fair, steal this ewe-lamb
Out of this fold, while I am gone to seek
And find the wandering mother of my lamb.
I cannot weep; I know thee with me still.
Thou dost not find it very dark down there?
Would I could go to thee; I long to go;
My limbs are tired; my eyes are sleepy too;
And fain my heart would cease this beat, beat, beat.
O gladly would I come to thee, my child,
And lay my head upon thy little heart,
And sleep in the divine munificence
Of thy great love! But my night has not come;
She is not rescued yet. Good-bye, little one.
[*He turns, but sinks on the grave. Recovering and rising.*
Now for the world—that's Italy, and her!

SCENE XXV.—*The empty room, formerly Lilia's.*

Enter JULIAN.

Julian. How am I here? Alas! I do not know.
I should have been at sea.—Ah, now I know!
I have come here to die. [*Lies down on the floor.*
Where's Lilia?
I cannot find her. She is here, I know.
But oh these endless passages and stairs,
And dreadful shafts of darkness! Lilia!
Lilia! wait for me, child; I'm coming fast,
But something holds me. Let me go, devil!
My Lilia, have faith; they cannot hurt you.
You are God's child—they dare not touch you, wife.
O pardon me, my beautiful, my own! [*Sings.*

Wind, wind, thou blowest many a drifting thing
From sheltering cove, down to the unsheltered sea;
Thou blowest to the sea my blue sail's wing—
Us to a new, love-lit futurity:
Out to the ocean fleet and float—
Blow, blow my little leaf-like boat.

[*While he sings, enter* LORD SEAFORD, *pale and haggard.* JULIAN *descries him suddenly.*

What are you, man? O brother, bury me—
There's money in my pocket—
[*Emptying the Jew's gold on the floor.*
by my child.
[*Staring at him.*
Oh! you are Death. Go, saddle the pale horse—
I will not walk—I'll ride. What, skeleton!
I cannot sit him! ha! ha! Hither, brute!
Here, Lilia, do the lady's task, my child,
And buckle on my spurs. I'll send him up
With a gleam through the blue, snorting white foam-flakes.
Ah me! I have not won my golden spurs,
Nor is there any maid to bind them on:

I will not ride the horse, I'll walk with thee.
Come, Death, give me thine arm, good slave!—we'll go.

Lord Seaford (*stooping over him*). I am Seaford, Count.

Julian. Seaford! What Seaford? [*Recollecting.*
—*Seaford!* [*Springing to his feet.*
Where is my wife?

[*He falls into* SEAFORD'S *arms. He lays him down.*

Lord S. Had I seen *him*, she had been safe for me.

[*Goes.*

[JULIAN *lies motionless. Insensibility passes into sleep. He wakes calm, in the sultry dusk of a summer evening.*

Julian. Still, still alive! I thought that I was dead.
I had a frightful dream. 'Tis gone, thank God!

[*He is quiet a little.*

So then thou didst not take the child away
That I might find my wife! Thy will be done.
Thou wilt not let me go. This last desire
I send away with grief, but willingly.
I have prayed to thee, and thou hast heard my prayer:
Take thou thine own way, only lead her home.
Cleanse her, O Lord. I cannot know thy might;
But thou art mighty, with a power unlike
All, all that we know by the name of power,
Transcending it as intellect transcends
The stone upon the ground—it may be more,
For these are both created—thou creator,
Lonely, supreme.
Now it is almost over,
My spirit's journey through this strange sad world;
This part is done, whatever cometh next.
Morning and evening have made out their day;
My sun is going down in stormy dark,
But I will face it fearless.
The first act
Is over of the drama.—Is it so?
What means this dim dawn of half-memories?

There's something I knew once and know not now!—
A something different from all this earth!
It matters little; I care not—only know
That God will keep the living thing he made.
How mighty must he be to have the right
Of swaying this great power I feel I am—
Moulding and forming it, as pleaseth him!
O God, I come to thee! thou art my life;
O God, thou art my home; I come to thee.
  Can this be death? Lo! I am lifted up
Large-eyed into the night. Nothing I see
But that which *is*, the living awful Truth—
All forms of which are but the sparks flung out
From the luminous ocean clothing round the sun,
Himself all dark. Ah, I remember me:
Christ said to Martha—"Whosoever liveth,
And doth believe in me, shall never die"!
I wait, I wait, wait wondering, till the door
Of God's wide theatre be open flung
To let me in. What marvels I shall see!
The expectation fills me, like new life
Dancing through all my veins.
                Once more I thank thee
For all that thou hast made me—most of all,
That thou didst make me wonder and seek thee.
I thank thee for my wife: to thee I trust her;
Forget her not, my God. If thou save her,
I shall be able then to thank thee so
As will content thee—with full-flowing song,
The very bubbles on whose dancing waves
Are daring thoughts flung faithful at thy feet.
  My heart sinks in me.—I grow faint. Oh! whence
This wind of love that fans me out of life?
One stoops to kiss me!—Ah, my lily child!
God hath not flung thee over his garden-wall.

[*Re-enter* LORD SEAFORD *with the doctor.* JULIAN *takes no heed of them. The doctor shakes his head.*

My little child, I'll never leave thee more;
We are both children now in God's big house.
Come, lead me; you are older here than I
By three whole days, my darling angel-child!

[*A letter is brought in.* LORD SEAFORD *holds it before* JULIAN'S *eyes. He looks vaguely at it.*

Lord S. It is a letter from your wife, I think.

Julian (*feebly*). A letter from my Lilia! Bury it with me—
I'll read it in my chamber, by and by:
Dear words should not be read with others nigh.
Lilia, my wife! I am going home to God.

Lord S. (*bending over him*). Your wife is innocent. I *know* she is.

[JULIAN *gazes at him blankly. A light begins to grow in his eyes. It grows till his face is transfigured. It vanishes. He dies.*

PART V.

AND do not fear to hope. Can poet's brain
More than the Father's heart rich good invent?
Each time we smell the autumn's dying scent,
We know the primrose time will come again;
Not more we hope, nor less would soothe our pain.
Be bounteous in thy faith, for not mis-spent
Is confidence unto the Father lent:
Thy need is sown and rooted for his rain.
His thoughts are as thine own; nor are his ways
Other than thine, but by pure opulence
Of beauty infinite and love immense.
Work on. One day, beyond all thoughts of praise,
A sunny joy will crown thee with its rays;
Nor other than thy need, thy recompense.

A DREAM.

SCENE I.—"*A world not realized.*" LILY. *To her* JULIAN.

Lily. O father, come with me! I have found her—mother!

SCENE II.—*A room in a cottage.* LILIA *on her knees before a crucifix. Her back only is seen, for the Poet dares not look on her face. On a chair beside her lies a book, open at* CHAPTER *VIII. Behind her stands an* Angel, *bending forward, as if to protect her with his wings partly expanded. Appear* JULIAN, *with* LILY *in his arms.* LILY *looks with love on the angel, and a kind of longing fear on her mother.*

Julian. Angel, thy part is done; leave her to me.
Angel. Sorrowful man, to thee I must give place;
Thy ministry is stronger far than mine;
Yet have I done my part.—She sat with him.
He gave her rich white flowers with crimson scent,
The tuberose and datura ever burning
Their incense to the dusky face of night.
He spoke to her pure words of lofty sense,
But tinged with poison for a tranced ear.
He bade low music sound of faint farewells,
Which fixed her eyes upon a leafy picture,
Wherein she wandered through an amber twilight
Toward a still grave in a sleepy nook.
And ever and anon she sipped pale wine,
Rose-tinged, rose-odoured, from a silver cup.
He sang a song, each pause of which closed up,
Like a day-wearied daisy for the night,
With these words falling like an echo low:
"Love, let us love and weep and faint and die."
With the last pause the tears flowed at their will,
Without a sob, down from their cloudy skies.
He took her hand in his, and it lay still.—
A blast of music from a wandering band
Billowed the air with sudden storm that moment.
The visible rampart of material things
Was rent—the vast eternal void looked in
Upon her awe-struck soul. She cried and fled.

It was the sealing of her destiny.
A wild convulsion shook her inner world;
Its lowest depths were heaved tumultuously;
Far unknown molten gulfs of being rushed
Up into mountain-peaks, rushed up and stood.
The soul that led a fairy life, athirst
For beauty only, passed into a woman's:
In pain and tears was born the child-like need
For God, for Truth, and for essential Love.
But first she woke to terror; was alone,
For God she saw not;—woke up in the night,
The great wide night alone. No mother's hand,
To soothe her pangs, no father's voice was near.
She would not come to thee; for love itself
Too keenly stung her sad, repentant heart,
Giving her bitter names to give herself;
But, calling back old words which thou hadst spoken,
In other days, by light winds borne afar,
And now returning on the storm of grief,
Hither she came to seek her Julian's God.
Farewell, strange friend! My care of her is over.

Julian. A heart that knows what thou canst never know,
Fair angel, blesseth thee, and saith, farewell.

[*The* Angel *goes.* JULIAN *and* LILY *take his place.* LILIA *is praying, and they hear parts of her prayer.*

Lilia. O Jesus, hear me! Let me speak to thee.
No fear oppresses me; for misery
Fills my heart up too full for any fear.
Is there no help, O Holy? Am I stained
Beyond release?

Julian. Lilia, thy purity
Maketh thy heart abuse thee. I, thy husband,
Sinned more against thee, in believing ill,
Than thou, by ten times what thou didst, poor child,
Hadst wronged thy husband.

Lilia. Pardon will not do:
I need much more, O Master. That word *go*

Surely thou didst not speak to send away
The sinful wife thou wouldst not yet condemn!
Or was that crime, though not too great for pardon,
Too great for loving-kindness afterward?
Might she not too have come behind thy feet,
And, weeping, wiped and kissed them, Mary's son,
Blessed for ever with a heavenly grief?
Ah! she nor I can claim with her who gave
Her tears, her hair, her lips, her precious oil,
To soothe feet worn with Galilean roads:—
She sinned against herself, not against—Julian.
My Lord, my God, find some excuse for me.
Find in thy heart something to say for me,
As for the crowd that cried against thee, then,
When heaven was dark because thy lamp burned low.

Julian. Not thou, but I am guilty, Lilia.
I made it possible to tempt thee, child.
Thou didst not fall, my love; only, one moment,
Beauty was queen, and Truth not lord of all.

Lilia. O Julian, my husband, is it strange,
That, when I think of Him, he looks like thee?
That, when he speaks to comfort me, the voice
Is like thy voice, my husband, my beloved?
Oh! if I could but lie down at thy feet,
And tell thee all—yea, every thought—I know
That thou wouldst think the best that could be thought,
And love and comfort me. O Julian,
I am more thine than ever.—Forgive me, husband,
For calling me, defiled and outcast, thine.
Yet may I not be thine as I am His?
Would I might be thy servant—yes, thy slave,
To wash thy feet, and dress thy lovely child,
And bring her at thy call—more wife than I.
But I shall never see thee, till the earth
Lies on us both—apart—oh, far apart!
How lonely shall I lie the long, long years!

Lily. O mother, there are blue skies here, and flowers,
And blowing winds, and kisses, mother dear!
And every time my father kisses me,
It is not father only, but another.
Make haste and come. My head never aches here.

Lilia. Can it be that they are dead? Is it possible?
I feel as if they were near me!—Speak again,
Beloved voices; comfort me; I need it.

Julian (*singing*).

Come to us: above the storm
Ever shines the blue.
Come to us: beyond its form
Ever lies the True.

Lily (*singing*).

Mother, darling, do not weep—
All I cannot tell:
By and by you'll go to sleep,
And you'll wake so well.

Julian (*singing*).

There is sunshine everywhere
For thy heart and mine:
God, for every sin and care,
Is the cure divine.

Lily (*singing*).

We're so happy all the day,
Waiting for another!
All the flowers and sunshine stay,
Watching for my mother.

Julian. My maiden! for true wife is always maiden
To the true husband: thou art mine for ever.

Lilia. What gentle hopes keep passing to and fro!
Thou shadowest me with thine own rest, my God;
A cloud from thee stoops down and covers me.

[*She falls asleep on her knees.*

SCENE III.—JULIAN *on the summit of a mountain-peak. The stars are brilliant around a crescent moon, hanging half-way between the mountain and the zenith. Below lies a sea of vapour. Beyond rises a loftier pinnacle, across which is stretched a bar of cloud.* LILY *lies on the cloud, looking earnestly into the mist below.*

Julian (*gazing upward*). And thou wast with me all the time, my God,
Even as now! I was not far from thee.
Thy spirit spoke in all my wants and fears,
And hopes and longings. Thou art all in all.
I am not mine, but thine. I cannot speak
The thoughts that work within me like a sea.
When on the earth I lay, crushed down beneath
A hopeless weight of empty desolation,
Thy loving face was lighted then, O Christ,
With expectation of my joy to come,
When all the realm of possible ill should lie
Under my feet, and I should stand as now
Heart-sure of thee, true-hearted, only One.
Was ever soul filled to such overflowing
With the pure wine of blessedness, my God!
Filled as the night with stars, am I with joys;
Filled as the heavens with thee, am I with peace;
For now I wait the end of all my prayers—
Of all that have to do with old-world things:
What new things come to wake new prayers, my God,
Thou know'st; I wait on thee in perfect peace.

[*He turns his gaze downward.—From the fog-sea below half-rises a woman-form, which floats toward him.*

Lo, as the lily lifts its shining bosom
From the lone couch of waters where it slept,
When the fair morn toucheth and waketh it;

So riseth up my lily from the deep
Where human souls are vexed in awful dreams!

[LILY *spies her mother, darts down, and is caught in her arms. They land on* JULIAN'S *peak, and climb,* LILY *leading her mother.*

Lily. Come faster, mother dear; father is waiting.

Lilia. Have patience with me, darling. By and by, I think, I shall do better.—Oh my Julian!

Julian. I may not help her. She must climb and come.

[*He reaches his hand, and the three are clasped in an infinite embrace.*

O God, thy thoughts, thy ways, are not as ours:
They fill our longing hearts up to the brim.

[*The moon and the stars and the blue night close around them; and the poet awakes from his dream.*

A HIDDEN LIFE.

TO MY FATHER:

with my second volume of verse.

I.

Take of the first fruits, father, of thy care,
  Wrapped in the fresh leaves of my gratitude,
  Late waked for early gifts ill understood;
Claiming in all my harvests rightful share,
Whether with song that mounts the joyful air
  I praise my God, or, in yet deeper mood,
  Sit dumb because I know a speechless good,
Needing no voice, but all the soul for prayer.
  Thou hast been faithful to my highest need;
And I, thy debtor, ever, evermore,
Shall never feel the grateful burden sore.
  Yet most I thank thee, not for any deed,
  But for the sense thy living self did breed
Of fatherhood still at the great world's core.

II.

All childhood, reverence clothed thee, undefined,
  As for some being of another race;
  Ah, not with it, departing—growing apace
As years did bring me manhood's loftier mind,
Able to see thy human life behind—
  The same hid heart, the same revealing face—
  My own dim contest settling into grace,
Of sorrow, strife, and victory combined!
  So I beheld my God, in childhood's morn,
A mist, a darkness, great, and far apart,
Moveless and dim—I scarce could say *Thou art:*
  My manhood came, of joy and sadness born;—
  Full soon the misty dark, asunder torn,
Revealed man's glory, God's great human heart.

G. M. D. jr.

ALGIERS, *April*, 1857.

A HIDDEN LIFE.

PROUDLY the youth, sudden with manhood crowned,
Went walking by his horses, the first time,
That morning, to the plough. No soldier gay
Feels at his side the throb of the gold hilt
(Knowing the blue blade hides within its sheath,
As lightning in the cloud) with more delight,
When first he belts it on, than he that day
Heard still the clank of the plough-chains against
His horses' harnessed sides, as to the field
They went to make it fruitful. O'er the hill
The sun looked down, baptizing him for toil.
A farmer's son, a farmer's grandson he;
Yea, his great-grandsire had possessed those fields.
Tradition said they had been tilled by men
Who bore the name long centuries ago,
And married wives, and reared a stalwart race,
And died, and went where all had followed them,
Save one old man, his daughter, and the youth
Who ploughs in pride, nor ever doubts his toil;
And death is far from him this sunny morn.
Why should we think of death when life is high?
The earth laughs all the day, and sleeps all night.
The daylight's labour and the night's repose
Are very good, each better in its time.
The boy knew little; but he read old tales
Of Scotland's warriors, till his blood ran swift
As charging knights upon their death-career.
He chanted ancient tunes, till the wild blood
Was charmed back into its fountain-well,

And tears arose instead. That poet's songs,
Whose music evermore recalls his name,
His name of waters babbling as they run,
Rose from him in the fields among the kine,
And met the skylark's, raining from the clouds.
But only as the poet-birds he sang—
From rooted impulse of essential song;
The earth was fair—he knew not it was fair;
His heart was glad—he knew not it was glad;
He walked as in a twilight of the sense—
Which this one day shall turn to tender morn.
Long ere the sun had cleared the feathery tops
Of the fir-thicket on the eastward hill,
His horses leaned and laboured. Each great hand
Held rein and plough-stilt in one guiding grasp—
No ploughman there would brook a helper. Proud
With a true ploughman's pride—nobler, I think,
Than statesman's, ay, or poet's, or painter's pride,
For little praise will come that he ploughs well—
He did plough well, proud of his work itself,
And not of what would follow. With sure eye,
He saw his horses keep the arrow-track;
He saw the swift share cut the measured sod;
He saw the furrow folding to the right,
Ready with nimble foot to aid at need:—
Turning its secrets upward to the sun,
And hiding in the dark the sun-born grass,
And daisies dipped in carmine, lay the tilth—
A million graves to nurse the buried seed,
And send a golden harvest up the air.
When the steep sun had clomb to his decline,
And pausing seemed, at edge of slow descent,
Upon the keystone of his airy bridge,
They rested likewise, half-tired man and horse,
And homeward went for food and courage new.
Therewith refreshed, they turned again to toil,
And lived in labour all the afternoon;

Till, in the gloaming, once again the plough
Lay like a stranded bark upon the lea,
And home with hanging neck the horses went,
Walking beside their master, force by will:
Then through the lengthening shades a vision came.
It was a lady mounted on a horse,
A slender girl upon a mighty steed,
That bore her with the pride horses must feel
When they submit to women. Home she went,
Alone, or else her groom lagged far behind.
Scarce had she bent simple acknowledgment
Of the hand in silent salutation lifted
To the bowed head, when something faithless yielded
The saddle slipped, the horse stopped, and the girl
Stood on her feet, still holding fast the reins.
Three paces bore him bounding to her side;
Her radiant beauty almost fixed him there;
But with main force, as one that grapples fear,
He threw the fascination off, and saw
The work before him. Soon his hand and knife
Had set the saddle firmer than before
Upon the gentle horse; and then he turned
To mount the maiden. But bewilderment
A moment lasted; for he knew not how,
With stirrup-hand and steady arm, to throne,
Elastic, on her steed, the ascending maid:
A moment only; for while yet she thanked,
Nor yet had time to teach her further will,
About her waist he put his brawny hands,
That all but zoned her round; and like a child
Lifting her high, he set her on the horse;
Whence like a risen moon she smiled on him,
Nor turned aside, although a radiant blush
Shone in her cheek, and shadowed in her eyes.
And he was never sure if from her heart
Or from the rosy sunset came the flush.
Again she thanked him, while again he stood

Bewildered in her beauty. Not a word
Answered her words that flowed, folded in tones
Round which dissolving lambent music played,
Like dropping water in a silver cup;
Till, round the shoulder of the neighbouring hill,
Sudden she disappeared. And he awoke,
And called himself hard names, and turned and went
After his horses, bending like them his head.
Ah God! when Beauty passes from the door,
Although she came not in, the house is bare:
Shut, shut the door; there's nothing in the house!
Why seems it always that she should be ours?
A secret lies behind which thou dost know,
And I can partly guess.
But think not then,
The holder of the plough sighed many sighs
Upon his bed that night; or other dreams
Than pleasant rose upon his view in sleep;
Nor think the airy castles of his brain
Had less foundation than the air admits.
But read my simple tale, scarce worth the name,
And answer, if he had not from the fair
Beauty's best gift; and proved her not, in sooth,
An angel vision from a higher world.
Not much of her I tell. Her glittering life,
Where part the waters on the mountain-ridge,
Ran down the southern side, away from his.
It was not over-blessed; for, I know,
Its tale wiled many sighs, one summer eve,
From her who told, and him who, in the pines
Walking, received it from her loving lips;
But now she was as God had made her, ere
The world had tried to spoil her; tried, I say,
And half succeeded, failing utterly.
Fair was she, frank, and innocent as a child
That looks in every eye; fearless of ill,
Because she knew it not; and brave withal,

Because she led a simple country life,
And loved the animals. Her father's house—
A Scottish laird was he, of ancient name—
Was distant but two miles among the hills;
Yet oft as she had passed his father's farm,
The youth had never seen her face before,
And should not twice. Yet was it not enough?
The vision tarried. She, as the harvest moon
That goeth on her way, and knoweth not
The fields of corn whose ripening grain she fills
With strength of life, and hope, and joy for men,
Went on her way, and knew not of the virtue
Gone out of her; yea, never thought of him,
Save at such times when, all at once, old scenes
Return uncalled, with wonder that they come.
Soon was she orphaned of her sheltering hills,
And rounded with dead glitter, not the shine
Of leaves and waters dancing in the sun;
While he abode in ever breaking dawns,
Breathed ever new-born winds into his soul;
And saw the aurora of the heavenly day
Still climb the hill-sides of the heapy world.
  Again I say, no fond romance of love,
No argument of possibilities,
If he were some one, and she sought his help,
Turned his clear brain into a nest of dreams.
As soon he had sat down and twisted cords
To snare, and carry home for household help,
Some woman-angel, wandering half-seen
On moonlight wings, o'er withered autumn fields.
But when he rose next morn, and went abroad,
(The exultation of his new-found rank
Already settling into dignity,)
Behold, the earth was beautiful! The sky
Shone with the expectation of the sun.
Only the daisies grieved him, for they fell
Caught in the furrow, with their innocent heads

Just out, imploring. A gray hedgehog ran,
With tangled mesh of rough-laid spikes, and face
Helplessly innocent, across the field:
He let it run, and blessed it as it ran.
Returned at noon-tide, something drew his feet
Into the barn: entering, he gazed and stood.
For, through the rent roof lighting, one sunbeam
Blazed on the yellow straw one golden spot,
Dulled all the amber heap, and sinking far,
Like flame inverted, through the loose-piled mound,
Crossed the keen splendour with dark shadow-straws,
In lines innumerable. 'Twas so bright,
His eye was cheated with a spectral smoke
That rose as from a fire. He had not known
How beautiful the sunlight was, not even
Upon the windy fields of morning grass,
Nor on the river, nor the ripening corn!
As if to catch a wild live thing, he crept
On tiptoe silent, laid him on the heap,
And gazing down into the glory-gulf,
Dreamed as a boy half sleeping by the fire—
Half dreaming rose, and got his horses out.
  God, and not woman, is the heart of all.
But she, as priestess of the visible earth,
Holding the key, herself most beautiful,
Had come to him, and flung the portals wide.
He entered: every beauty was a glass
That gleamed the woman back upon his view.
Shall I not rather say: each beauty gave
Its own soul up to him who worshipped her,
For that his eyes were opened now to see?
  Already in these hours his quickened soul
Put forth the white tip of a floral bud,
Ere long to be a crown-like, aureole flower.
His songs unbidden, his joy in ancient tales,
Had hitherto alone betrayed the seed
That lay in his heart, close hidden even from him,

Yet not the less mellowing all his spring:
Like summer sunshine came the maiden's face,
And in the youth's glad heart the seed awoke.
It grew and spread, and put forth many flowers,
Its every flower a living open eye,
Until his soul was full of eyes within.
Each morning now was a fresh boon to him;
Each wind a spiritual power upon his life;
Each individual animal did share
A common being with him; every kind
Of flower from every other was distinct,
Uttering that for which alone it was—
Its something human, wrapt in other veil.
And when the winter came, when thick the snow
Armed the sad fields from gnawing of the frost,
When the low sun but skirted his far realms,
And sank in early night, he drew his chair
Beside the fire; and by the feeble lamp
Read book on book; and wandered other climes,
And lived in other lives and other needs,
And grew a larger self by other selves.
Ere long, the love of knowledge had become
A hungry passion and a conscious power,
And craved for more than reading could supply.
Then, through the night (all dark, except the moon
Shone frosty o'er the heath, or the white snow
Gave back such motes of light as else had sunk
In the dark earth) he bent his plodding way
Over the moors to where the little town
Lay gathered in the hollow. There the student
Who taught from lingering dawn to early dark,
Had older scholars in the long fore-night;
For youths who in the shop, or in the barn,
Or at the loom, had done their needful work,
Came gathering there through starlight, fog, or snow,
And found the fire ablaze, the candles lit,
And him who knew waiting for who would know.

Here mathematics wiled him to their heights;
And strange consent of lines to form and law
Made Euclid a profound romance of truth.
The master saw with wonder how he seized,
How eagerly devoured the offered food,
And longed to give him further kinds. For Knowledge
Would multiply like Life; and two clear souls
That see a truth, and, turning, see at once
Each the other's face glow in that truth's delight,
Are drawn like lovers. So the master offered
To guide the ploughman through the narrow ways
To heights of Roman speech. The youth, alert,
Caught at the offer; and for years of nights,
The house asleep, he groped his twilight way
With lexicon and rule, through ancient story,
Or fable fine, embalmed in Latin old;
Wherein his knowledge of the English tongue,
Through reading many books, much aided him—
For best is like in all the hearts and tongues.
  At length his progress, through the master's pride
In such a pupil, reached the father's ears.
Great gladness woke within him, and he vowed,
If caring, sparing might accomplish it,
He should to college, and there have his fill
Of that same learning.
  To the plough no more,
All day to school he went; and ere a year,
He wore the scarlet gown with the closed sleeves.
  Awkward at first, but with a dignity
Soon finding fit embodiment in speech
And gesture and address, he made his way,
Unconscious all, to the full-orbed respect
Of students and professors; for whose praise
More than his worth, society, so called,
To its rooms in that great city of the North,
Invited him. He entered. Dazzled at first
By brilliance of the shining show, the lights,

The mirrors, gems, white necks, and radiant eyes,
He stole into a corner, and was quiet
Until the vision too had quieter grown.
Bewildered next by many a sparkling word,
Nor knowing the light-play of polished minds,
Which, like rose-diamonds cut in many facets,
Catch and reflect the wandering rays of truth
As if they were home-born and issuing new,
He held his peace, and silent soon began
To see how little fire it needs to shimmer.
Hence, in the midst of talk, his thoughts would wander
Back to the calm divine of homely toil;
While round him still and ever hung an air
Of breezy fields, and plough, and cart, and scythe—
A kind of clumsy grace, in which gay girls
Saw but the clumsiness—another sort
Saw the grace too, yea, sometimes, when he spoke,
Saw the grace only; and began at last,
For he sought none, to seek him in the crowd,
And find him unexpected, maiden-wise.
But oftener far they sought him than they found,
For seldom was he drawn away from toil;
Seldomer stinted time held due to toil;
For if one night his panes were dark, the next
They gleamed far into morning. And he won
Honours among the first, each session's close.
Nor think that new familiarity
With open forms of ill, not to be shunned
Where many youths are met, endangered much
A mind that had begun to will the pure.
Oft when the broad rich humour of a jest
With breezy force drew in its skirts a troop
Of pestilential vapours following—
Arose within his sudden silent mind
The maiden face that once blushed down on him—
That lady face, insphered beyond his earth,

Yet visible as bright, particular star.
A flush of tenderness then glowed across
His bosom—shone it clean from passing harm:
Should that sweet face be banished by rude words?
It could not stay what maidens might not hear!
He almost wept for shame, that face, such jest,
Should meet in *his* house. To his love he made
Love's only worthy offering—purity.
And if the homage that he sometimes met,
New to the country lad, conveyed in smiles,
Assents, and silent listenings when he spoke,
Threatened yet more his life's simplicity;
An antidote of nature ever came,
Even Nature's self. For, in the summer months,
His former haunts and boyhood's circumstance
Received him to the bosom of their grace.
And he, too noble to despise the past,
Too proud to be ashamed of manly toil,
Too wise to fancy that a gulf gaped wide
Betwixt the labouring hand and thinking brain,
Or that a workman was no gentleman
Because a workman, clothed himself again
In his old garments, took the hoe, the spade,
The sowing sheet, or covered in the grain,
Smoothing with harrows what the plough had ridged.
With ever fresher joy he hailed the fields,
Returning still with larger powers of sight:
Each time he knew them better than before,
And yet their sweetest aspect was the old.
His labour kept him true to life and fact,
Casting out worldly judgments, false desires,
And vain distinctions. Ever, at his toil,
New thoughts would rise, which, when God's night awoke,
He still would seek, like stars, with instruments—
By science, or by truth's philosophy,
Bridging the gulf betwixt the new and old.
Thus laboured he with hand and brain at once,

Nor missed due readiness when Scotland's sons
Met to reap wisdom, and the fields were white.
His sire was proud of him; and, most of all,
Because his learning did not make him proud:
He was too wise to build upon his lore.
The neighbours asked what he would make his son:
"I'll make a man of him," the old man said;
"And for the rest, just what he likes himself.
He is my only son—I think he'll keep
The old farm on; and I shall go content,
Leaving a man behind me, as I say."
So four years long his life swung to and fro,
Alternating the red gown and blue coat,
The garret study and the wide-floored barn,
The wintry city and the sunny fields:
In every change his mind was well content,
For in himself he was the growing same.
In no one channel flowed his seeking thoughts;
To no profession did he ardent turn:
He knew his father's wish—it was his own.
"Why should a man," he said, "when knowledge grows,
Leave therefore the old patriarchal life,
And seek distinction in the noise of men?"
He turned his asking face on every side;
Went reverent with the anatomist, and saw
The inner form of man laid skilful bare;
Went with the chymist, whose wise-questioning hand
Made Nature do in little, before his eyes,
And momently, what, huge, for centuries,
And in the veil of vastness and lone deeps,
She labours at; bent his inquiring eye
On every source whence knowledge flows for men:
At some he only sipped, at others drank.
At length, when he had gained the master's right—
By custom sacred from of old—to sit
With covered head before the awful rank
Of black-gowned senators; and each of those,

Proud of the scholar, was ready at a word
To speed him onward to what goal he would,
He took his books, his well-worn cap and gown,
And, leaving with a sigh the ancient walls,
Crowned with their crown of stone, unchanging gray
In all the blandishments of youthful spring,
Chose for his world the lone ancestral farm.
With simple gladness met him on the road
His gray-haired father—elder brother now.
Few words were spoken, little welcome said,
But, as they walked, the more was understood.
If with a less delight he brought him home
Than he who met the prodigal returned,
It was with more reliance, with more peace;
For with the leaning pride that old men feel
In young strong arms that draw their might from them,
He led him to the house. His sister there,
Whose kisses were not many, but whose eyes
Were full of watchfulness and hovering love,
Set him beside the fire in the old place,
And heaped the table with best country-fare.
When the swift night grew deep, the father rose,
And led him, wondering why and where they went,
Thorough the limpid dark, by tortuous path
Between the corn-ricks, to a loft above
The stable, where the same old horses slept
Which he had guided that eventful morn.
Entering, he saw a change-pursuing hand
Had been at work. The father, leading on
Across the floor, heaped high with store of grain
Opened a door. An unexpected light
Flashed on him cheerful from a fire and lamp,
That burned alone, as in a fairy-tale:
Behold! a little room, a curtained bed,
An easy chair, bookshelves, and writing-desk;
An old print of a deep Virgilian wood,
And one of choosing Hercules! The youth

Gazed and spoke not. The old paternal love
Had sought and found an incarnation new!
For, honouring in his son the simple needs
Which his own bounty had begot in him,
He gave him thus a lonely thinking space,
A silent refuge. With a quiet good night,
He left him dumb with love. Faintly beneath,
The horses stamped, and drew the lengthening chain.
Three sliding years, with slowly blended change,
Drew round their winter, summer, autumn, spring,
Fulfilled of work by hands, and brain, and heart.
He laboured as before; though when he would,
And Nature urged not, he, with privilege,
Would spare from hours of toil—read in his room,
Or wander through the moorland to the hills;
There on the apex of the world would stand,
As on an altar, burning, soul and heart—
Himself the sacrifice of faith and prayer
Gaze in the face of the inviting blue
That domed him round; ask why it should be blue;
Pray yet again; and with love-strengthened heart
Go down to lower things with lofty cares.
When Sundays came, the father, daughter, son
Walked to the church across their own loved fields.
It was an ugly church, with scarce a sign
Of what makes English churches venerable.
Likest a crowing cock upon a heap
It stood—but let us say—St. Peter's cock,
Lacking not many a holy, rousing charm
For one with whose known self it was coeval,
Dawning with it from darkness of the unseen!
And its low mounds of monumental grass
Were far more solemn than great marble tombs;
For flesh is grass, its goodliness the flower.
Oh, lovely is the face of green churchyard
On sunny afternoons! The light itself
Nestles amid the grass; and the sweet wind

Says, *I am here*,—no more. With sun and wind
And crowing cocks, who can believe in death?
He, on such days, when from the church they came,
And through God's ridges took their thoughtful way,
The last psalm lingering faintly in their hearts,
Would look, inquiring where his ridge would rise;
But when it gloomed or rained, he turned aside:
What mattered it to him?
And as they walked
Homeward, right well the father loved to hear
The fresh rills pouring from his son's clear well.
For the old man clung not to the old alone,
Nor leaned the young man only to the new;
They would the best, they sought, and followed it.
"The Pastor fills his office well," he said,
In homely jest; "—the Past alone he heeds!
Honours those Jewish times as he were a Jew,
And Christ were neither Jew nor northern man!
He has no ear for this poor Present Hour,
Which wanders up and down the centuries,
Like beggar-boy roaming the wintry streets,
With witless hand held out to passers-by;
And yet God made the voice of its many cries.
Mine be the work that comes first to my hand!
The lever set, I grasp and heave withal.
I love where I live, and let my labour flow
Into the hollows of the neighbour-needs.
Perhaps I like it best: I would not choose
Another than the ordered circumstance.
This farm is God's as much as yonder town;
These men and maidens, kine and horses, his;
For them his laws must be incarnated
In act and fact, and so their world redeemed."
Though thus he spoke at times, he spake not oft;
Ruled chief by action: what he said, he did.
No grief was suffered there of man or beast
More than was need; no creature fled in fear;

All slaying was with generous suddenness,
Like God's benignant lightning. "For," he said,
'God makes the beasts, and loves them dearly
well—
Better than any parent loves his child,
It may be," would he say; for still the *may be*
Was sacred with him no less than the *is*—
In such humility he lived and wrought—
"Hence are they sacred. Sprung from God as we,
They are our brethren in a lower kind,
And in their face we see the human look."
If any said: "Men look like animals;
Each has his type set in the lower kind;"
His answer was: "The animals are like men;
Each has his true type set in the higher kind,
Though even there only rough-hewn as yet.
The hell of cruelty will be the ghosts
Of the sad beasts: their crowding heads will come,
And with encircling, slow, pain-patient eyes,
Stare the ill man to madness."
When he spoke,
His word behind it had the force of deeds
Unborn within him, ready to be born;
But, like his race, he promised very slow.
His goodness ever went before his word,
Embodying itself unconsciously
In understanding of the need that prayed,
And cheerful help that would outrun the prayer.
When from great cities came the old sad news
Of crime and wretchedness, and children sore
With hunger, and neglect, and cruel blows,
He would walk sadly all the afternoon,
With head down-bent, and pondering footstep slow;
Arriving ever at the same result—
Concluding ever: "The best that I can do
For the great world, is the same best I can
For this my world. What truth may be therein

Will pass beyond my narrow circumstance,
In truth's own right." When a philanthropist
Said pompously: "It is not for your gifts
To spend themselves on common labours thus:
You owe the world far nobler things than such;"
He answered him: "The world is in God's hands,
This part of it in mine. My sacred past,
With all its loves inherited, has led
Hither, here left me: shall I judge, arrogant,
Primæval godlike work in earth and air,
Seed-time and harvest—offered fellowship
With God in nature—unworthy of my hands?
I know your argument—I know with grief!—
The crowds of men, in whom a starving soul
Cries through the windows of their hollow eyes
For bare humanity, nay, room to grow!—
Would I could help them! But all crowds are made
Of individuals; and their grief and pain,
Their thirst and hunger—all are of the one,
Not of the many: the true, the saving power
Enters the individual door, and thence
Issues again in thousand influences
Besieging other doors. I cannot throw
A mass of good into the general midst,
Whereof each man may seize his private share;
And if one could, it were of lowest kind,
Not reaching to that hunger of the soul.
Now here I labour whole in the same spot
Where they have known me from my childhood up
And I know them, each individual:
If there is power in me to help my own,
Even of itself it flows beyond my will,
Takes shape in commonest of common acts,
Meets every humble day's necessity:
—I would not always consciously do good,
Not always work from full intent of help,
Lest I forget the measure heaped and pressed

And running over which they pour for me,
And never reap the too-much of return
In smiling trust and beams from kindly eyes.
But in the city, with a few lame words,
And a few wretched coins, sore-coveted,
To mediate 'twixt my *cannot* and my *would*,
My best attempts would never strike a root;
My scattered corn would turn to wind-blown chaff;
I should grow weak, might weary of my kind,
Misunderstood the most where almost known,
Baffled and beaten by their unbelief:
Years could not place me where I stand this day
High on the vantage-ground of confidence:
I might for years toil on, and reach no man.
Besides, to leave the thing that nearest lies,
And choose the thing far off, more difficult—
The act, having no touch of God in it,
Who seeks the needy for the pure need's sake,
Must straightway die, choked in its selfishness."
Thus he. The world-wise schemer for the good
Held his poor peace, and went his trackless way.
What of the vision now? the vision fair
Sent forth to meet him, when at eve he went
Home from his first day's ploughing? Oft he dreamed
She passed him smiling on her stately horse;
But never band or buckle yielded more;
Never again his hands enthroned the maid;
He only worshipped with his eyes, and woke.
Nor woke he then with foolish vain regret;
But, saying, "I have seen the beautiful,"
Smiled with his eyes upon a flower or bird,
Or living form, whate'er, of gentleness,
That met him first; and all that morn, his face
Would oftener dawn into a blossomy smile.
And ever when he read a lofty tale,
Or when the storied leaf, or ballad old,
Or spake or sang of woman very fair,

Or wondrous good, he saw her face alone;
The tale was told, the song was sung of her.
He did not turn aside from other maids,
But loved their faces pure and faithful eyes.
He may have thought, "One day I wed a maid,
And make her mine;" but never came the maid,
Or never came the hour: he walked alone.
Meantime how fared the lady? She had wed
One of the common crowd: there must be ore
For the gold grains to lie in: virgin gold
Lies in the rock, enriching not the stone.
She was not one who of herself could *be;*
And she had found no heart which, tuned with hers,
Would beat in rhythm, growing into rime.
She read phantasmagoric tales, sans salt,
Sans hope, sans growth; or listlessly conversed
With phantom-visitors—ladies, not friends,
Mere spectral forms from fashion's concave glass.
She haunted gay assemblies, ill-content—
Witched woods to hide in from her better self,
And danced, and sang, and ached.
What had she felt,
If, called up by the ordered sounds and motions,
A vision had arisen—as once, of old,
The minstrel's art laid bare the seer's eye,
And showed him plenteous waters in the waste;—
If the gay dance had vanished from her sight,
And she beheld her ploughman-lover go
With his great stride across a lonely field,
Under the dark blue vault ablaze with stars,
Lifting his full eyes to the radiant roof,
Live with our future; or had she beheld
Him studious, with space-compelling mind
Bent on his slate, pursue some planet's course;
Or reading justify the poet's wrath,
Or sage's slow conclusion?—If a voice
Had whispered then: This man in many a dream,

And many a waking moment of keen joy,
Blesses you for the look that woke his heart,
That smiled him into life, and, still undimmed,
Lies lamping in the cabinet of his soul;—
Would her sad eyes have beamed with sudden light?
Would not her soul, half-dead with nothingness,
Have risen from the couch of its unrest,
And looked to heaven again, again believed
In God and life, courage, and duty, and love?
Would not her soul have sung to its lone self:
"I have a friend, a ploughman, who is wise.
He knows what God, and goodness, and fair faith
Mean in the words and books of mighty men.
He nothing heeds the show of worldly things,
But worships the unconquerable truth.
This man is humble and loves me: I will
Be proud and very humble. If he knew me,
Would he go on and love me till we meet!"?
In the third year, a heavy harvest fell,
Full filled, before the reaping-hook and scythe.
The heat was scorching, but the men and maids
Lightened their toil with merry jest and song;
Rested at mid-day, and from brimming bowl,
Drank the brown ale, and white abundant milk.
The last ear fell, and spiky stubble stood
Where waved the forests of dry-murmuring corn;
And sheaves rose piled in shocks, like ranged tents
Of an encamping army, tent by tent,
To stand there while the moon should have her will.
The grain was ripe. The harvest carts went out
Broad-platformed, bearing back the towering load,
With frequent passage 'twixt homeyard and field.
And half the oats already hid their tops,
Their ringing, rustling, wind-responsive sprays,
In the still darkness of the towering stack;
When in the north low billowy clouds appeared,
Blue-based, white-crested, in the afternoon;

And westward, darker masses, plashed with blue,
And outlined vague in misty steep and dell,
Clomb o'er the hill-tops: thunder was at hand.
The air was sultry. But the upper sky
Was clear and radiant.
Downward went the sun,
Below the sullen clouds that walled the west,
Below the hills, below the shadowed world.
The moon looked over the clear eastern wall,
And slanting rose, and looked, rose, looked again,
And searched for silence in her yellow fields,
But found it not. For there the staggering carts,
Like overladen beasts, crawled homeward still,
Sped fieldward light and low. The laugh broke yet,
That lightning of the soul's unclouded skies—
Though not so frequent, now that toil forgot
Its natural hour. Still on the labour went,
Straining to beat the welkin-climbing heave
Of the huge rain-clouds, heavy with their floods.
Sleep, old enchantress, sided with the clouds,
The hoisting clouds, and cast benumbing spells
On man and horse. One youth who walked beside
A ponderous load of sheaves, higher than wont,
Which dared the lurking levin overhead,
Woke with a start, falling against the wheel,
That circled slow after the slumbering horse.
Yet none would yield to soft-suggesting sleep,
And quit the last few shocks; for the wild storm
Would catch thereby the skirts of Harvest-home,
And hold her lingering half-way in the rain.
The scholar laboured with his men all night.
He did not favour such prone headlong race
With Nature. To himself he said: "The night
Is sent for sleep; we ought to sleep in the night,
And leave the clouds to God. Not every storm
That climbeth heavenward overwhelms the earth;
And when God wills, 'tis better he should will;

What he takes from us never can be lost."
But the father so had ordered, and the son
Went manful to his work, and held his peace.
When the dawn blotted pale the clouded east,
The first drops, overgrown and helpless, fell
On the last home-bound cart, oppressed with sheaves;
And by its side, the last in the retreat,
The scholar walked, slow bringing up the rear.
Half the still lengthening journey he had gone,
When, on opposing strength of upper winds
Tumultuous borne, at last the labouring racks
Met in the zenith, and the silence ceased:
The lightning brake, and flooded all the world,
Its roar of airy billows following it.
The darkness drank the lightning, and again
Lay more unslaked. But ere the darkness came,
In the full revelation of the flash,
Met by some stranger flash from cloudy brain,
He saw the lady, borne upon her horse,
Careless of thunder, as when, years agone,
He saw her once, to see for evermore.
"Ah, ha!" he said, "my dreams are come for me!
Now shall they have me!" For, all through the night,
There had been growing trouble in his frame,
An overshadowing of something dire.
Arrived at home, the weary man and horse
Forsook their load; the one went to his stall,
The other sought the haven of his bed—
There slept and moaned, cried out, and woke, and slept:
Through all the netted labyrinth of his brain
The fever shot its pent malignant fire.
'Twas evening when to passing consciousness
He woke and saw his father by his side:
His guardian form in every vision drear
That followed, watching shone; and the healing face
Of his true sister gleamed through all his pain,
Soothing and strengthening with cloudy hope;

Till, at the weary last of many days,
He woke to sweet quiescent consciousness,
Enfeebled much, but with a new-born life—
His soul a summer evening after rain.
Slow, with the passing weeks, he gathered strength,
And ere the winter came, seemed half restored;
And hope was busy. But a fire too keen
Burned in his larger eyes; and in his cheek
Too ready came the blood at faintest call,
Glowing a fair, quick-fading, sunset hue.
Before its hour, a biting frost set in.
It gnawed with icy fangs his shrinking life;
And that disease bemoaned throughout the land,
The smiling, hoping, wasting, radiant death,
Was born of outer cold and inner heat.
One morn his sister, entering while he slept,
Spied in his listless hand a handkerchief
Spotted with red. Cold with dismay, she stood,
Scared, motionless. But catching in the glass
The sudden glimpse of a white ghostly face,
She started at herself, and he awoke.
He understood, and said with smile unsure,
"Bright red was evermore my master-hue;
And see, I have it in me: that is why."
She shuddered; and he saw, nor jested more,
But smiled again, and looked Death in the face.
When first he saw the red blood outward leap,
As if it sought again the fountain-heart
Whence it had flowed to fill the golden bowl,
No terror seized—an exaltation swelled
His spirit: now the pondered mystery
Would fling its portals wide, and take him in,
One of the awful dead! Them, fools conceive
As ghosts that fleet and pine, bereft of weight,
And half their valued lives: he otherwise;—
Hoped now, and now expected; and, again,
Said only, "I await the thing to come."

So waits a child the lingering curtain's rise,
While yet the panting lamps restrained burn
At half-height, and the theatre is full.
  But as the days went by, they brought sad hours,
When he would sit, his hands upon his knees,
Drooping, and longing for the wine of life.
For when the ninefold crystal spheres, through which
The outer light sinks in, are cracked and broken,
Yet able to keep in the pining life,
Distressing shadows cross the chequered soul:
Poor Psyche trims her irresponsive lamp,
And anxious visits oft her store of oil,
And still the shadows fall: she must go pray!
And God, who speaks to man at door and lattice,
Glorious in stars, and winds, and flowers, and waves,
Not seldom shuts the door and dims the pane,
That, isled in calm, his still small voice may sound
The clearer, by the hearth, in the inner room—
Sound on until the soul, fulfilled of hope,
Look undismayed on that which cannot kill;
And saying in the dark, *I will the light*,
Glow in the gloom the present will of God:
Then melt the shadows of her shaken house.
  He, when his lamp shot up a spiring flame,
Would thus break forth and climb the heaven of prayer:
"Do with us what thou wilt, all-glorious heart!
Thou God of them that are not yet, but grow!
We trust thee for the thing we shall be yet;
We too are ill content with what we are."
And when the flame sank, and the darkness fell,
He lived by faith which is the soul of sight.
  Yet in the frequent pauses of the light,
When all was dreary as a drizzling thaw,
When sleep came not although he prayed for sleep,
And wakeful-weary on his bed he lay,
Like frozen lake that has no heaven within;
Then, then the sleeping horror woke and stirred,

And with the tooth of unsure thought began
To gnaw the roots of life :—What if there were
No truth in beauty ! What if loveliness
Were but the invention of a happier mood !
" For, if my mind can dim or slay the Fair,
Why should it not enhance or make the Fair ? "
" Nay," Psyche answered ; " for a tired man
May drop his eyelids on the visible world,
To whom no dreams, when fancy flieth free,
Will bring the sunny excellence of day.
'Tis easy to destroy ; God only makes.
Could my invention sweep the lucid waves
With purple shadows—next create the joy
With which my life beholds them ? Wherefore should
One meet the other without thought of mine,
If God did not mean beauty in them and me,
But dropped them, helpless shadows, from his sun ?
There were no God, his image not being mine,
And I should seek in vain for any bliss !
Oh, lack and doubt and fear can only come
Because of plenty, confidence, and love !
Those are the shadow-forms about the feet
Of these—because they are not crystal-clear
To the all-searching sun in which they live :
Dread of its loss is Beauty's certain seal ! "
Thus reasoned mourning Psyche. Suddenly
The sun would rise, and vanish Psyche's lamp,
Absorbed in light, not swallowed in the dark.
It was a wintry time with sunny days,
With visitings of April airs and scents,
That came with sudden presence, unforetold,
As brushed from off the outer spheres of spring
In the great world where all is old and new.
Strange longings he had never known till now,
Awoke within him, flowers of rooted hope.
For a whole silent hour he would sit and gaze
Upon the distant hills, whose dazzling snow

Starred the dim blue, or down their dark ravines
Crept vaporous; until the fancy rose
That on the other side those rampart walls,
A mighty woman sat, with waiting face,
Calm as that life whose rapt intensity
Borders on death, silent, waiting for him,
To make him grand for ever with a kiss,
And send him silent through the toning worlds.
The father saw him waning. The proud sire
Beheld his pride go drooping in the cold,
Like snowdrop on its grave; and sighed deep thanks
That he was old. But evermore the son
Looked up and smiled as he had heard strange news
Across the waste, of tree-buds and primroses.
Then all at once the other mood would come,
And, like a troubled child, he would seek his father
For father-comfort, which fathers all can give:
Sure there is one great Father in the world,
Since every word of good from fathers' lips
Falleth with such authority, although
They are but men as we! This trembling son,
Who saw the unknown death draw hourly nigher,
Sought solace in his father's tenderness,
And made him strong to die.
One shining day,
Shining with sun and snow, he came and said,
"What think you, father—is death very sore?"
"My boy," the father answered, "we will try
To make it easy with the present God.
But, as I judge, though more by hope than sight,
It seems much harder to the lookers on
Than to the man who dies. Each panting breath
We call a gasp, may be in him the cry
Of infant eagerness; or, at worst, the sob
With which the unclothed spirit, step by step,
Wades forth into the cool eternal sea.
I think, my boy, death has two sides to it—

One sunny, and one dark—as this round earth
Is every day half sunny and half dark.
We on the dark side call the mystery *death;*
They on the other, looking down in light,
Wait the glad *birth*, with other tears than ours."
"Be near me, father, when I die," he said.
"I will, my boy, until a better Father
Draws your hand out of mine. Be near in turn,
When my time comes—you in the light beyond,
And knowing well the country—I in the dark."
The days went by, until the tender green
Shone through the snow in patches. Then the hope
Of life, reviving faintly, stirred his heart;
For the spring drew him—warm, soft, budding spring,
With promises, and he went forth to meet her.
But he who once had strode a king on the fields,
Walked softly now; lay on the daisied grass;
And sighed sometimes in secret, that so soon
The earth, with all its suns and harvests fair,
Must lie far off, an old forsaken thing.
But though I lingering listen to the old,
Ere yet I strike new chords that seize the old
And lift their lost souls up the music-stair—
Think not he was too fearful-faint of heart
To look the blank unknown full in the void;
For he had hope in God—the growth of years,
Of ponderings, of childish aspirations,
Of prayers and readings and repentances;
For something in him had ever sought the peace
Of other something deeper in him still—
A faint sound sighing for a harmony
With other fainter sounds, that softly drew
Nearer and nearer from the unknown depths
Where the Individual goeth out in God:
The something in him heard, and, hearing, listened,
And sought the way by which the music came,
Hoping at last to find the face of him

To whom Saint John said *Lord* with holy awe,
And on his bosom fearless leaned the while.
As his slow spring came on, the swelling life,
The new creation inside of the old,
Pressed up in buds toward the invisible,
And burst the crumbling mould wherein it lay.
Not once he thought of that still churchyard now;
He looked away from earth, and loved the sky.
One earthly notion only clung to him:—
He thanked God that he died not in the cold;
"For," said he, "I would rather go abroad
When the sun shines, and birds are singing blithe.—
It may be that we know not aught of place,
Or any sense, and only live in thought;
But, knowing not, I cling to warmth and light.
I *may* pass forth into the sea of air
That swings its massy waves around the earth,
And I would rather go when it is full
Of light, and blue, and larks, than when gray fog
Dulls it with steams of old earth winter-sick.
Now in the dawn of summer I shall die—
Sinking asleep ere sunset, I will hope,
And going with the light. And when they say,
'He's dead; he rests at last; his face is changed;'
I shall be saying: 'Yet, yet, I live, I love!'"
The weary nights did much to humble him;
They made the good he knew seem all ill known:
He would go by and by to school again!
"Father," he said, "I am nothing; but Thou *art!*"
Like half-asleep, whole-dreaming child, he was,
Who, longing for his mother, has forgot
The arms about him, holding him to her heart:
Mother he murmuring moans; she wakes him up
That he may see her face, and sleep indeed.
Father! we need thy winter as thy spring;
We need thy earthquakes as thy summer showers;
But through them all thy strong arms carry us,

Thy strong heart bearing large share in our grief.
Because thou lovest goodness more than joy
In them thou lovest, thou dost let them grieve:
We must not vex thee with our peevish cries,
But look into thy face, and hold thee fast,
And say *O Father, Father!* when the pain
Seems overstrong. Remember our poor hearts:
We never grasp the zenith of the time!
We have no spring except in winter-prayers!
But we believe—alas, we only hope!—
That one day we shall thank thee perfectly
For every disappointment, pang, and shame,
That drove us to the bosom of thy love.
  One night, as oft, he lay and could not sleep.
His spirit was a chamber, empty, dark,
Through which bright pictures passed of the outer world:
The regnant Will gazed passive on the show;
The magic tube through which the shadows came,
Witch Memory turned and stayed. In ones and troops,
Glided across the field the things that were,
Silent and sorrowful, like all things old:
Even old rose-leaves have a mournful scent,
And old brown letters are more sad than graves.
  At length, as ever in such vision-hours,
Came the bright maiden, high upon her horse.
Will started all awake, passive no more,
And, necromantic sage, the apparition
That came unbid, commanded to abide.
  Gathered around her form his brooding thoughts:
How had she fared, spinning her history
Into a psyche-cradle? With what wings
Would she come forth to greet the æonian summer?
Glistening with feathery dust of silver? or
Dull red, and seared with spots of black ingrained?
"I know," he said, "some women fail of life!
The rose hath shed her leaves: is she a rose?"
  The fount of possibilities began

To gurgle, threatful, underneath the thought:
Anon the geyser-column raging rose;—
For purest souls sometimes have direst fears
In ghost-hours when the shadow of the earth
Is cast on half her children, and the sun
Is busy giving daylight to the rest.
"Oh, God!" he cried, "if she be such as those!—
Angels in the eyes of poet-boys, who still
Fancy the wavings of invisible wings,
But, in their own familiar, chamber-thoughts,
Common as clay, and of the trodden earth!—
It cannot, cannot be! She is of God!—
And yet things lovely perish! higher life
Gives deeper death! fair gifts make fouler faults!—
Women themselves—I dare not think the rest!"
Such thoughts went walking up and down his soul
But found at last a spot wherein to rest,
Building a resolution for the day.
  The next day, and the next, he was too worn
To clothe intent in body of a deed.
A cold dry wind blew from the unkindly east,
Making him feel as he had come to the earth
Before God's spirit moved on the water's face,
To make it ready for him.
                But the third
Morning rose radiant. A genial wind
Rippled the blue air 'neath the golden sun,
And brought glad summer-tidings from the south.
  He lay now in his father's room; for there
The southern sun poured all the warmth he had.
His rays fell on the fire, alive with flames,
And turned it ghostly pale, and would have slain—
Even as the sunshine of the higher life,
Quenching the glow of this, leaves but a coal.
He rose and sat him down 'twixt sun and fire;
Two lives fought in him for the mastery;
And half from each forth flowed the written stream

" Lady, I owe thee much. Stay not to look
Upon my name: I write it, but I date
From the churchyard, where it shall lie in peace,
Thou reading it. Thou know'st me not at all;
Nor dared I write, but death is crowning me
Thy equal. If my boldness yet offend,
Lo, pure in my intent, I am with the ghosts,
Where when thou comest, thou hast already known
God equal makes at first, and Death at last.
But pardon, lady. Ere I had begun,
My thoughts moved toward thee with a gentle flow
That bore a depth of waters: when I took
My pen to write, they rushed into a gulf,
Precipitate and foamy. Can it be.
That Death who humbles all hath made me proud?
Lady, thy loveliness hath walked my brain,
As if I were thy heritage bequeathed
From many sires; yet only from afar
I have worshipped thee—content to know the vision
Had lifted me above myself who saw,
And ta'en my angel nigh thee in thy heaven.
Thy beauty, lady, hath overflowed, and made
Another being beautiful, beside,
With virtue to aspire and be itself.
Afar as angels or the sainted dead,
Yet near as loveliness can haunt a man,
Thy form hath put on each revealing dress
Of circumstance and history, high or low,
In which, from any tale of selfless life,
Essential womanhood hath shone on me.
Ten years have passed away since the first time,
Which was the last, I saw thee. What have these
Made or unmade in thee?—I ask myself.
O lovely in my memory! art thou
As lovely in thyself? Thy glory then
Was what God made thee: art thou such indeed?

Forgive my boldness, lady—I am dead:
The dead may cry, their voices are so small.
I have a prayer to make thee—hear the dead.
Lady, for God's sake be as beautiful
As that white form that dwelleth in my heart;
Yea, better still, as that ideal Pure
That waketh in thee, when thou prayest God,
Or helpest thy poor neighbour. For myself
I pray. For if I die and find that she,
My woman-glory, lives in common air,
Is not so very radiant after all,
My sad face will afflict the calm-eyed ghosts,
Unused to see such rooted sorrow there.
With palm to palm my kneeling ghost implores
Thee, living lady—justify my faith
In womanhood's white-handed nobleness,
And thee, its revelation unto me.
But I bethink me:—If thou turn thy thoughts
Upon thyself, even for that great sake
Of purity and conscious whiteness' self,
Thou wilt but half succeed. The other half
Is to forget the former, yea, thyself,
Quenching thy moonlight in the blaze of day,
Turning thy being full unto thy God.
Be thou in him a pure, twice holy child,
Doing the right with sweet unconsciousness—
Having God in thee, thy completing soul.
Lady, I die; the Father holds me up.
It is not much to thee that I should die;
It may be much to know he holds me up.
I thank thee, lady, for the gentle look
Which crowned me from thine eyes ten years ago,
Ere, clothed in nimbus of the setting sun,
Thee from my dazzled eyes thy horse did bear,
Proud of his burden. My dull tongue was mute—
I was a fool before thee; but my silence
Was the sole homage possible to me then:

That now I speak, and fear not, is thy gift.
The same sweet look be possible to thee
For evermore! I bless thee with thine own,
And say farewell, and go into my grave—
No, to the sapphire heaven of all my hopes."
Followed his name in full, and then the name
Of the green churchyard where his form should lie.
Back to his couch he crept, weary, and said:
"O God, I am but an attempt at life!
Sleep falls again ere I am full awake.
Light goeth from me in the morning hour.
I have seen nothing clearly; felt no thrill
Of pure emotion, save in dreams, ah—dreams!
The high Truth has but flickered in my soul—
Even at such times, in wide blue midnight hours,
When, dawning sudden on my inner world,
New stars came forth, revealing unknown depths,
New heights of silence, quelling all my sea,
And for a moment I saw formless fact,
And knew myself a living lonely thought,
Isled in the hyaline of Truth alway!
I have not reaped earth's harvest, O my God;
Have gathered but a few poor wayside flowers,
Harebells, red poppies, daisies, eyebrights blue—
Gathered them by the way, for comforting!
Have I aimed proudly, therefore aimed too low,
Striving for something visible in my thought,
And not the unseen thing hid far in thine?
Make me content to be a primrose-flower
Among thy nations, so the fair truth, hid
In the sweet primrose, come awake in me,
And I rejoice, an individual soul,
Reflecting thee—as truly then divine
As if I towered the angel of the sun.
Once, in a southern eve, a glowing worm
Gave me a keener joy than the heaven of stars:
Thou camest in the worm nearer me then!

Nor do I think, were I that green delight,
I would change to be the shadowy evening star.
Ah, make me, Father, anything thou wilt,
So be thou will it! I am safe with thee.
I laugh exulting. Make me something, God—
Clear, sunny, veritable purity
Of mere existence, in thyself content,
And seeking no compare. Sure I *have* reaped
Earth's harvest if I find this holy death!—
Now I am ready; take me when thou wilt."
He laid the letter in his desk, with seal
And superscription. When his sister came,
He told her where to find it—afterwards.
As the slow eve, through paler, darker shades,
Insensibly declines, until at last
The lordly day is but a memory,
So died he. In the hush of noon he died.
The sun shone on—why should he not shine on?
Glad summer noises rose from all the land;
The love of God lay warm on hill and plain:
'Tis well to die in summer.
When the breath,
After a hopeless pause, returned no more,
The father fell upon his knees, and said:
"O God, I thank thee; it is over now!
Through the sore time thy hand has led him well.
Lord, let me follow soon, and be at rest."
Therewith he rose, and comforted the maid,
Who in her brother had lost the pride of life,
And wept as all her heaven were only rain.
Of the loved lady, little more I know.
I know not if, when she had read his words,
She rose in haste, and to her chamber went,
And shut the door; nor if, when she came forth,
A dawn of holier purpose gleamed across
The sadness of her brow. But this I know,
That, on a warm autumnal afternoon,

When headstone-shadows crossed three neighbour graves,
And, like an ended prayer, the empty church
Stood in the sunshine, or a cenotaph,
A little boy, who watched a cow near by
Gather her milk where alms of clover-fields
Lay scattered on the sides of silent roads,
All sudden saw, nor knew whence she had come,
A lady, veiled, alone, and very still,
Seated upon a grave. Long time she sat
And moved not, weeping sore, the watcher said—
Though how he knew she wept, were hard to tell.
At length, slow-leaning on her elbow down,
She hid her face a while in the short grass,
And pulled a something small from off the mound—
A blade of grass it must have been, he thought,
For nothing else was there, not even a daisy—
And put it in a letter. Then she rose,
And glided silent forth, over the wall,
Where the two steps on this side and on that
Shorten the path from westward to the church.—
The clang of hoofs and sound of light, swift wheels
Arose and died upon the listener's ear.

A STORY OF THE SEA-SHORE.

TO THEM THAT MOURN.

Let your tears flow; let your sad sighs have scope;
Only take heed they fan, they water Hope.

A STORY OF THE SEA-SHORE.

INTRODUCTION.

I SOUGHT the long clear twilights of my home,
Far in the pale-blue skies and slaty seas,
What time the sunset dies not utterly,
But withered to a ghost-like stealthy gleam,
Round the horizon creeps the short-lived night,
And changes into sunrise in a swoon.
I found my home in homeliness unchanged:
The love that made it home, unchangeable,
Received me as a child, and all was well.
My ancient summer-heaven, borne on the hills,
Once more embraced me; and once more the vale,
So often sighed for in the far-off nights,
Rose on my bodily vision, and, behold,
In nothing had the fancy mocked the fact!
The hasting streams went garrulous as of old;
The resting flowers in silence uttered more;
The blue hills rose and dwelt alone in heaven;
Householding Nature from her treasures brought
Things old and new, the same yet not the same,
For all was holier, lovelier than before;
And best of all, once more I paced the fields
With him whose love had made me long for God—
So good a father that, needs-must, I sought
A better still, Father of him and me.

Once on a day, my cousin Frank and I
Sat swiftly borne behind the dear white mare
That oft had carried me in bygone days
Along the lonely paths of moorland hills;
But now we sought the coast, where deep waves foam
'Gainst rocks that lift their dark fronts to the north.
And with us went a girl, on whose kind face
I had not looked for many a youthful year,
But the old friendship straightway blossomed new.
The heavens were sunny, and the earth was green;
The large harebells in families stood along
The grassy borders, of a tender blue
Transparent as the sky, haunted with wings
Of many butterflies, as blue as they.
And as we talked and talked without restraint,
Brought near by memories of days that were,
And therefore are for ever; by the joy
Of motion through a warm and shining air;
By the glad sense of freedom and like thoughts;
And by the bond of friendship with the dead,
She told the tale which here I tell again.

I had returned to childish olden time,
And asked her if she knew a castle worn,
Whose masonry, razed utterly above,
Yet faced the sea-cliff up, and met the waves:—
'Twas one of my child-marvels; for, each year,
We turned our backs upon the ripening corn,
And sought some village on the Moray shore;
And nigh this ruin, was that I loved the best.

For oh the riches of that little port!—
Down almost to the beach, where a high wall
Inclosed them, came the gardens of a lord,
Free to the visitor with foot restrained—
His shady walks, his ancient trees of state;
His river—that would not be shut within,

But came abroad, went dreaming o'er the sands,
And lost itself in finding out the sea;
Inside, it bore grave swans, white splendours—crept
Under the fairy leap of a wire bridge,
Vanished in leaves, and came again where lawns
Lay verdurous, and the peacock's plumy heaven
Bore azure suns with green and golden rays.
It was my childish Eden; for the skies
Were loftier in that garden, and the clouds
More summer-gracious, edged with broader white;
And when they rained, it was a golden rain
That sparkled as it fell—an odorous rain.
And then its wonder-heart!—a little room,
Half-hollowed in the side of a steep hill,
Which rose, with columned, windy temple crowned,
A landmark to far seas. The enchanted cell
Was clouded ever in the gentle night
Of a luxuriant foliage, and its door,
Half-filled with rainbow hues of coloured glass,
Opened into the bosom of the hill.
Never to sesame of mine that door
Gave up its sanctuary; but through the glass,
Gazing with reverent curiosity,
I saw a little chamber, round and high,
Which but to see was to escape the heat,
And bathe in coolness of the eye and brain;
For all was dusky greenness; on one side,
A window, half-blind with ivy manifold,
Whose leaves, like heads of gazers, climbed to the top,
Gave a joy-saddened light, for all that came
Through the thick veil was green, oh, kindest hue!
But the heart has a heart—this heart had one:
Still in the midst, the *ever more* of all,
On a low column stood, white, cold, dim-clear,
A marble woman. Who she was I know not—
A Psyche, or a Silence, or an Echo:
Pale, undefined, a silvery shadow, still,

In one lone chamber of my memory,
She is a power upon me as of old.

But, ah, to dream there through hot summer days,
In coolness shrouded and sea-murmurings,
Forgot by all till twilight shades grew dark!
To find half-hidden in the hollowed wall,
A nest of tales, old volumes such as dreams
Hoard up in bookshops dim in tortuous streets!
That wondrous marble woman evermore
Filling the gloom with calm delirium
Of radiated whiteness, as I read!—
The fancied joy, too plenteous for its cup,
O'erflowed, and turned to sadness as it fell.

But the gray ruin on the shattered shore,
Not the green refuge in the bowering hill,
Drew forth our talk that day. For, as I said,
I asked her if she knew it. She replied,
"I know it well. A woman used to live
In one of its low vaults, my mother says."
"I found a hole," I said, "and spiral stair,
Leading from level of the ground above
To a low-vaulted room within the rock,
Whence through a small square window I looked forth
Wide o'er the waters; the dim-sounding waves
Were many feet below, and shrunk in size
To a great ripple." "'Twas not there," she said,
"—Not in that room half up the cliff, but one
Low down, within the margin of spring tides:
When both the tide and northern wind are high,
'Tis more an ocean-cave than castle-vault."
And then she told me all she knew of her.

It was a simple tale, a monotone:
She climbed one sunny hill, gazed once abroad,
Then wandered down, to pace a dreary plain;

Alas! how many such are told by night,
In fisher-cottages along the shore!

Farewell, old summer-day! I turn aside
To tell her story, interwoven with thoughts
Born of its sorrow; for I dare not think
A woman at the mercy of a sea.

THE STORY.

Aye as it listeth blows the listless wind,
Swelling great sails, and bending lordly masts,
Or hurrying shadow-waves o'er fields of corn,
And hunting lazy clouds across the sky:
Now, like a white cloud o'er another sky,
It blows a tall brig from the harbour's mouth,
Away to high-tossed heads of wallowing waves,
'Mid hoverings of long-pinioned arrowy birds.
With clouds and birds and sails and broken crests,
All space is full of spots of fluttering white,
And yet the sailor knows that handkerchief
Waved wet with tears, and heavy in the wind.
Blow, wind! draw out the cord that binds the twain;
Draw, for thou canst not break the lengthening cord.
Blow, wind! yet gently; gently blow, fair wind!
And let love's vision slowly, gently die;
Let the bright sails all solemn-slowly pass,
And linger ghost-like o'er the vanished hull,
With a white farewell to her straining eyes;
For never more in morning's level beams,
Will those sea-shadowing sails, dark-stained and worn,
From the gray-billowed north come dancing in;
Oh, never, gliding home 'neath starry skies,
Over the dusk of the dim-glancing sea,
Will the great ship send forth a herald cry
Of home-come sailors, into sleeping streets!
Blow gently, wind! blow slowly, gentle wind!

Weep not yet, maiden; 'tis not yet thy hour.
Why shouldst thou weep before thy time is come?
Go to thy work; break into song sometimes—
Song dying slow-forgotten, in the lapse
Of dreamy thought, ere natural pause ensue,
Or sudden dropt what time the eager heart
Hurries the ready eye to north and east.
Sing, maiden, while thou canst, ere yet the truth,
Slow darkening, choke the heart-caged singing bird!
The weeks went by. Oft leaving household work,
With bare arms and uncovered head she clomb
The landward slope of the prophetic hill;
From whose green head, as from the verge of time,
Far out on the eternity of blue,
Shading her hope-rapt eyes, seer-like she gazed,
If from the Hades of the nether world,
Slow climbing up the round side of the earth,
Haply her prayers were drawing his tardy sails
Over the threshold of the far sky-sea—
Drawing her sailor home to celebrate,
With holy rites of family and church,
The apotheosis of maidenhood.
Months passed; he came not; and a shadowy fear,
Long haunting the horizon of her soul,
In deeper gloom and sharper form drew nigh;
And growing in bulk, possessed her atmosphere,
And lost all shape, because it filled all space,
And reached beyond the bounds of consciousness—
In sudden incarnations darting swift
From out its infinite a gulfy stare
Of terror blank, of hideous emptiness,
Of widowhood ere ever wedding-day.
On granite ridge, and chalky cliff, and pier,
Far built into the waves along our shores,
Maidens have stood since ever ships went forth;
The same pain at the heart; the same slow mist
Clouding the eye; the same fixed longing look,

As if the soul had gone, and left the door
Wide open—gone to lean, hearken, and peer
Over the awful edge where voidness sinks
Sheer to oblivion—that horizon-line
Over whose edge he vanished—came no more.
O God, why are our souls, waste, helpless seas,
Tortured with such immitigable storm?
What is this love, that now on angel wing
Sweeps us amid the stars in passionate calm;
And now with demon arms fast cincturing,
Drops us, through all gyrations of keen pain,
Down the black vortex, till the giddy whirl
Gives fainting respite to the ghastly brain?
O happy they for whom the Possible
Opens its gates of madness, and becomes
The Real around them!—such to whom henceforth
There is but one to-morrow, the next morn,
Their wedding-day, ever one step removed,
The husband's foot ever upon the verge
Of the day's threshold, in a lasting dream!
Such madness may be but a formless faith—
A chaos which the breath of God will blow
Into an ordered world of seed and fruit.
Shall not the Possible become the Real?
God sleeps not when he makes his daughters dream.
Shall not the morrow dawn at last which leads
The maiden-ghost, confused and half awake,
Into the land whose shadows are our dreams?—
Thus questioning we stand upon the shore,
And gaze across into the Unrevealed.
  Upon its visible symbol gazed the girl,
Till earth behind her ceased, and sea was all,
Possessing eyes and brain and shrinking soul—
A universal mouth to swallow up,
And close eternally in one blue smile!
A still monotony of pauseless greed,

Its only voice an endless, dreary song
Of wailing, and of craving from the world!
A low dull dirge that ever rose and died,
Recurring without pause or change or close,
Like one verse chaunted ever in sleepless brain,
Still drew her to the shore. It drew her down,
Like witch's spell, that fearful endless moan;
Somewhere, she thought, in the green abyss below,
His body, at the centre of the moan,
Obeyed the motions whence the moaning grew;
Now, now, in circle slow revolved, and now
Swayed like a wind-swung bell, now swept along
Hither and thither, idly to and fro,
Heedlessly wandering through the heedless sea.
Its fascination drew her onward still—
On to the ridgy rocks that seaward ran,
And out along their furrows and jagged backs,
To the last lonely point where the green mass
Arose and sank, heaved slow and forceful. There
She shuddered and recoiled. Thus, for a time,
Sport-slave of power occult, she came and went,
Betwixt the shore and sea alternating,
Drawn ever to the greedy lapping lip,
Then, terror-stung, driven backward: there it lay,
The heartless, cruel, miserable deep,
Ambushed in horror, with its glittering eye
Still drawing her to its green gulfing maw!
But every ocean hath its isles, each woe
Its scattered comfortings; and this was one
That often came to her—that she, wave-caught,
Must, in the wash of ever-shifting waters,
In some good hour sure-fixed of pitiful fate,
All-conscious still of love, despite the sea,
Float over some stray bone, some particle,
Which far-diffused sense would know as his:
Heart-glad she would sit down, and watch the tide
Slow-growing—till it reached at length her feet,

When, at its first cold touch, up she would spring,
And, ghastful, flee, with white-rimmed sightless eye.
  But still, where'er she fled, the sea-voice followed;
Whisperings innumerable of water-drops
Would grow together to a giant cry;
Now hoarse, half-stifled, pleading, warning tones,
Now thunderous peals of billowy, wrathful shouts,
Called after her to come, and make no pause.
From the loose clouds that mingled with the spray,
And from the tossings of the lifted seas,
Where plunged and rose the raving wilderness,
Outreaching arms, pursuing, beckoning hands,
Came shoreward, lengthening, feeling after her.
Then would she fling her own wild arms on high,
Over her head, in tossings like the waves,
Or fix them, with clasped hands of prayer intense,
Forward, appealing to the bitter sea.
Sometimes she sudden from her shoulders tore
Her garments, one by one, and cast them out
Into the roarings of the heedless surge,
In vain oblation to the hungry waves.
As vain was Pity's will to cover her;
Best gifts but bribed the sea, and left her bare.
In her poor heart and brain burned such a fire
That all-unheeded cold winds lapped her round,
And sleet-like spray flashed on her tawny skin.
Her food she seldom ate; her naked arms
Flung it far out to feed the sea; her hair
Streamed after it, like rooted ocean-weed
In headlong current. But, alas, the sea
Took it, and came again—it would have *her!*
And as the wave importunate, so despair,
Back surging, on her heart rushed ever afresh:
Sickening she moaned—half muttered and half moaned—
"She winna be content; she'll hae mysel!"
  But when the night grew thick upon the sea,
Quenching it almost, save its quenchless voice,

Then, half-released until the light, she rose,
And step by step withdrew—as dreaming man,
With an eternity of slowness, drags
His earth-bound, lead-like, irresponsive feet
Back from a sleeping horror, she withdrew.
But when, upon the narrow beach at last,
She turned her back upon her hidden foe,
It blended with her phantom-breeding brain,
And, scared at very fear, she cried and fled—
Fled to the battered base of the old tower,
And round the rock, and through the arched gap
Into the yawning blackness of the vault—
There sank upon the sand, and gasped, and raved.
Close cowering in a nook, she sat all night,
Her face turned to the entrance of the vault,
Through which a pale light shimmered—from the eye
Of the great sleepless ocean—Argus more dread
Than he with hundred lidless watching orbs,
And slept, and dreamed, and dreaming saw the sea.
But in the stormy nights, when all was dark,
And the wild tempest swept with slanting wing
Against her refuge, and the heavy spray
Shot through the doorway serpentine cold arms
To seize the fore-doomed morsel of the sea,
She slept not, evermore stung to new life
By new sea-terrors. Now it was the gull:
His clanging pinions darted through the arch,
And flapped about her head; now 'twas a wave
Grown arrogant: it rushed into her house,
Clasped her waist-high, then out again and away
To swell the devilish laughter in the fog,
And leave her clinging to the rocky wall,
With white face watching. When it came no more,
And the tide ebbed, not yet she slept—sat down,
And sat unmoving, till the low gray dawn
Grew on the misty dance of spouting waves,
That made a picture in the rugged arch;

Then the old fascination woke and drew;
And, rising slowly, forth she went afresh,
To haunt the border of the dawning sea.
  Yet all the time there lay within her soul
An inner chamber, quietest place; but she
Turned from its door, and staid out in the storm
She, entering there, had found a refuge calm
As summer evening, as a mother's arms.
There had she found her lost love, only lost
In that he slept, and she was still awake.
There she had found, waiting for her to come,
The Love that waits and watches evermore.
  Thou too hast such a chamber, quietest place,
Where that Love waits for thee. What is it, say,
That will not let thee enter? Is it care
For the provision of the unborn day,
As if thou wert a God that must foresee?
Is it poor hunger for the praise of men?
Is it ambition to outstrip thy fellow
In this world's race? Or is it love of self—
That greed which still to have must still destroy?—
Go mad for some lost love; some voice of old,
Which first thou madest sing, and after sob;
Some heart thou foundest rich, and leftest bare,
Choking its well of faith with thy false deeds—
Unlike thy God, who keeps the better wine
Until the last, and, if he giveth grief,
Giveth it first, and ends the tale with joy:
Such madness clings about the feet of God,
Nor lets them go. Better a thousandfold
Be she than thou! for though thy brain be strong
And clear and workful, hers a withered flower
That never came to seed, her heart is full
Of that in whose live might God made the world;
She is a well, and thou an empty cup.
It was the invisible unbroken cord
Between the twain, her and her sailor-lad,

That drew her ever to the ocean marge.
Better to die for love, to rave for love,
Than not to love at all! but to have loved,
And, loved again, then to have turned away—
Better than that, never to have been born!
  But if thy heart be noble, say if thou
Canst ever all forget an hour of pain,
When, maddened with the thought that could not be,
Thou mightst have yielded to the demon wind
That swept in tempest through thy scorching brain,
And rushed into the night, and howled aloud,
And clamoured to the waves, and beat the rocks;
And never found thy way back to the seat
Of conscious self, and power to rule thy pain,
Had not God made thee strong to bear and live!
The tale is now in thee, not thou in it;
But the sad woman, in her wildest mood,
Thou knowest her thy sister! She is fair
No more; her eyes like fierce suns blaze and burn;
Her cheeks are parched and brown; her haggard form
Is wasted by wild storms of soul and sea;
Yet in her very self is that which still
Reminds thee of a story, old, not dead,
Which God has in his keeping—of thyself.
  Ah, not forgot are children when they sleep!
The darkness lasts all night, and clears the eyes;
Then comes the morning with the joy of light.
Oh, surely madness hideth not from Him!
Nor doth a soul cease to be beautiful
In his sight, that its beauty is withdrawn,
And hid by pale eclipse from human eyes.
As the chill snow is friendly to the earth,
And pain and loss are friendly to the soul,
Shielding it from the black heart-killing frost;
So madness is but one of God's pale winters;
And when the winter over is and gone,
Then smile the skies, then blooms the earth again,

And the fair time of singing birds is come:
Into the cold wind and the howling night,
God sent for her, and she was carried in
Where there was no more sea.
What messenger
Ran from the door of heaven to bring her home?
The sea, her terror.
In the rocks that stand
Below the cliff, there lies a rounded hollow,
Scooped like a basin, with jagged and pinnacled sides:
Low buried when the wind heaps up the surge,
It lifts in the respiration of the tide
Its broken edges, and, then, deep within
Lies resting water, radiantly clear:
There, on a morn of sunshine, while the wind
Yet blew, and heaved yet the billowy sea
With memories of a night of stormy dreams,
At rest they found her: in the sleep which is
And is not death, she, lying very still,
Absorbed the bliss that follows after pain.
O life of love, conquered at last by fate!
O life raised from the dead by saviour Death!
O love unconquered and invincible!
The enemy sea had cooled her burning brain;
Had laid to rest the heart that could not rest;
Had hid the horror of its own dread face!
'Twas but one desolate cry, and then her fear
Became a blessed fact, and straight she knew
What God knew all the time—that it was well.
O thou whose feet tread ever the wet sands
And howling rocks along the wearing shore,
Roaming the borders of the sea of death!
Strain not thine eyes, bedimmed with longing tears,
No sail comes climbing back across that line.
Turn thee, and to thy work; let God alone,
And wait for him: faint o'er the waves will come
Far-floating whispers from the other shore

To thine averted ears. Do thou thy work,
And thou shalt follow—follow, and find thine own.
And thou who fearest something that may come;
Around whose house the storm of terror breaks
All night; to whose love-sharpened ear, all day,
The Invisible is calling at the door,
To render up a life thou canst not keep,
Or love that will not stay,—open thy door,
And carry out thy dying to the marge
Of the great sea; yea, walk into the flood,
And lay thy dead upon the moaning waves.
Give them to God to bury; float them again,
With sighs and prayers to waft them through the gloom,
Back to the spring of life. Say—"If they die,
Thou, the one life of life, art still alive,
And thou canst make thy dead alive again!"
Ah God, the earth is full of cries and moans,
And dull despair, that neither moans nor cries;
Thousands of hearts are waiting helplessly;
The whole creation groaneth, travaileth
For what it knows not—with a formless hope
Of resurrection or of dreamless death!
Raise thou the dead; restore the Aprils withered
In hearts of maidens; give their manhood back
To old men feebly mournful o'er a life
That scarce hath memory but the mournfulness!
There is no past with thee: bring back once more
The summer eves of lovers, over which
The wintry wind that raveth through the world
Heaps wretched leaves in gusts of ghastly snow;
Bring back the mother-heaven of orphans lone,
The brother's and the sister's faithfulness;—
Bring in the kingdom of the Son of Man.
They troop around me, children wildly crying;
Women with faded eyes, all spent of tears;
Men who have lived for love, yet lived alone;
Yea, some consuming in cold fires of shame!

O God, thou hast a work for all thy strength
In saving these thy hearts with full content—
Except thou give them Lethe's stream to drink,
And that, my God, were all unworthy thee!
  Dome up, O heaven, yet higher o'er my head!
Back, back, horizon; widen out my world!
Rush in, O fathomless sea of the Unknown!
For, though he slay me, I will trust in God.

THE DISCIPLE.

DEDICATION.

To all who fain
Would keep the grain,
  And cast the husk away—
That it may feed
The living seed,
  And serve it with decay—
I offer this dim story
Whose clouds crack into glory.

THE DISCIPLE.

I.

THE times are changed, and gone the day
When the high heavenly land,
Though unbeheld, quite near them lay,
And men could understand.

The dead yet find it, who, when here,
Did love it more than this;
They enter in, are filled with cheer,
And pain expires in bliss.

All glorious gleams the blessed land!—
O God, forgive, I pray:
The heart thou holdest in thy hand
Loves more this sunny day!

I see the hundred thousand wait
Around the radiant throne:
Ah, what a dreary, gilded state!
What crowds of beings lone!

I do not care for singing psalms;
I tire of good men's talk;
To me there is no joy in palms,
Or white-robed, solemn walk.

I love to hear the wild winds meet,
The wild old winds at night;
To watch the cold stars flash and beat,
The feathery snow alight.

I love all tales of valiant men,
Of women good and fair:
If I were rich and strong, ah, then
I would do something rare!

But for thy temple in the sky,
Its pillars strong and white—
I cannot love it, though I try,
And long with all my might.

Sometimes a joy lays hold on me,
And I am speechless then;
Almost a martyr I could be,
To join the holy men.

Straightway my heart is like a clod,
My spirit wrapt in doubt:—
A pillar in the house of God,
And never more go out!

No more the sunny, breezy morn;
All gone the glowing noon;
No more the silent heath forlorn,
The wan-faced waning moon!

My God, this heart will never burn,
Must never taste thy joy!
Even Jesus' face is calm and stern:
I am a hapless boy!

* * * *

II.

I read good books. My heart despairs.
In vain I try to dress
My soul in feelings like to theirs—
These men of holiness.

My thoughts, like doves, abroad I fling
Into a country fair:
Wind-baffled, back, with tired wing,
They to my ark repair.

Or comes a sympathetic thrill
With long-departed saint,
A feeble dawn, without my will,
Of feelings old and quaint,

As of a church's holy night,
With low-browed chapels round,
Where common sunshine dares not light
On the too sacred ground,—

One glance at sunny fields of grain,
One shout of child at play—
A merry melody drives amain
The one-toned chant away!

My spirit will not enter here
To haunt the holy gloom;
I gaze into a mirror mere,
A mirror, not a room.

And as a bird against the pane
Will strike, deceived sore,
I think to enter, but remain
Outside the closed door.

Oh, it will call for many a sigh
  If it be what it claims—
This book, so unlike earth and sky,
  Unlike man's hopes and aims!—

To me a desert parched and bare—
  In which a spirit broods
Whose wisdom I would gladly share
  At cost of many goods!

* * * *

III.

O hear me, God! O give me joy
  Such as thy chosen feel;
Have pity on a wretched boy;
  My heart is hard as steel.

I have no care for what is good;
  Thyself I do not love;
I relish not this Bible-food;
  My heaven is not above.

Thou wilt not hear: I come no more;
  Thou heedest not my woe.
With sighs and tears my heart is sore.
  Thou comest not: I go.

* * * *

IV.

Once more I kneel. The earth is dark,
  And darker yet the air;
If light there be, 'tis but a spark
  Amid a world's despair—

One hopeless hope there yet may be
A God somewhere to hear;
The God to whom I bend my knee—
A God with open ear.

I know that men laugh still to scorn
The grief that is my lot;
Such wounds, they say, are hardly borne,
But easily forgot.

What matter that my sorrows rest
On ills which men despise!
More hopeless heaves my aching breast
Than when a prophet sighs.

Æons of griefs have come and gone—
My grief is yet my mark.
The sun sets every night, yet none
Sees therefore in the dark.

There's love enough upon the earth,
And beauty too, they say:
There may be plenty, may be dearth,
I care not any way.

The world hath melted from my sight;
No grace in life is left;
I cry to thee with all my might,
Because I am bereft.

In vain I cry. The earth is dark,
And darker yet the air;
Of light there trembles now no spark
In my lost soul's despair.

* * * *

V.

I sit and gaze from window high
Down on the noisy street:
No part in this great coil have I,
No fate to go and meet.

My books unopened long have lain;
In class I am all astray:
The questions growing in my brain,
Demand and have their way.

Knowledge is power, the people cry;
Grave men the lure repeat:
After some rarer thing I sigh,
That makes the pulses beat.

Old truths, new facts, they preach aloud—
Their tones like wisdom fall:
One sunbeam glancing on a cloud
Hints things beyond them all.

* * * *

VI.

But something is not right within;
High hopes are far gone by.
Was it a bootless aim—to win
Sight of a loftier sky?

They preach men should not faint, but pray,
And seek until they find;
But God is very far away,
Nor is his countenance kind.

Yet every night my father prayed,
Withdrawing from the throng!
Some answer must have come that made
His heart so high and strong!

Once more I'll seek the God of men,
  Redeeming childhood's vow.—
—I failed with bitter weeping then,
  And fail cold-hearted now!

VII.

Why search for God? A man I tread
  This old life-bearing earth;
High thoughts awake and lift my head—
  In me they have their birth.

The preacher says a Christian must
  Do all the good he can:—
I must be noble, true, and just,
  Because I am a man!

They say a man must watch, and keep
  Lamp burning, garments white,
Else he shall sit without and weep
  When Christ comes home at night:—

A man must hold his honour free,
  His conscience must not stain,
Or soil, I say, the dignity
  Of heart and blood and brain!

Yes, I say well—said words are cheap!
  For action man was born!
What praise will my one talent reap?
  What grapes are on my thorn?

Have high words kept me pure enough?
  In evil have I no part?
Hath not my bosom "perilous stuff
  That weighs upon the heart"?

I am not that which I do praise:
  I do not that I say;
I sit a talker in the ways,
  A dreamer in the day!

VIII.

The preacher's words are true, I know—
  That man may lose his life;
That every man must downward go
  Without the upward strife.

'Twere well my soul should cease to roam,
  Should seek and have and hold!
It may be there is yet a home
  In that religion old.

Again I kneel, again I pray:
  Wilt thou be God to me?
Wilt thou give ear to what I say,
  And lift me up to thee?

Lord, is it true? Oh, vision high!
  The clouds of heaven dispart;
An opening depth of loving sky
  Looks down into my heart!

There *is* a home wherein to dwell—
  The very heart of light!
Thyself my sun immutable,
  My moon and stars all night!

I thank thee, Lord. It must be so,
  Its beauty is so good.
Up in my heart thou mad'st it go,
  And I have understood.

The clouds return. The common day
  Falls on me like a *No;*
But I have seen what might be—may,
  And with a hope I go.

IX.

I am a stranger in the land;
  It gives no welcome dear;
Its lilies bloom not for my hand,
  Its roses for my cheer.

The sunshine used to make me glad,
  But now it knows me not;
This weight of brightness makes me sad—
  It isolates a blot.

I am forgotten by the hills,
  And by the river's play;
No look of recognition thrills
  The features of the day.

Then only am I moved to song,
  When down the darkening street,
While vanishes the scattered throng,
  The driving rain I meet.

The rain pours down. My thoughts awake,
  Like flowers that languished long;
From bare cold hills the night-winds break,
  From me the unwonted song.

X.

I read the Bible with my eyes,
  But hardly with my brain;
Should this the meaning recognize,
  My heart yet reads in vain.

These words of promise and of woe
  Seem but a tinkling sound;
As through an ancient tomb I go,
  With dust-filled urns around.

Or, as a sadly searching child,
  Afar from love and home,
Sits in an ancient chamber, piled
  With scroll and musty tome,

So I, in these epistles old
  From men of heavenly care,
Find all the thoughts of other mould
  Than I can love or share.

No sympathy with mine they show,
  Their world is not the same;
They move me not with joy or woe,
  They touch me not with blame.

I hear no word that calls my life,
  Or owns my struggling powers;
Those ancient ages had their strife,
  But not a strife like ours.

Oh, not like men they move and speak,
  Those pictures in old panes!
They alter not their aspect meek
  For all the winds and rains!

Their thoughts are full of figures strange,
  Of Jewish forms and rites:
A world of air and sea I range,
  Of mornings and of nights!

XI.

I turn me to the gospel-tale :—
  My hope is faint with fear
That hungriest search will not avail
  To find a refuge here.

A misty wind blows bare and rude
  From dead seas of the past;
And through the clouds that halt and brood,
  Dim dawns a shape at last:

A sad worn man who bows his face,
  And treads a frightful path,
To save an abject hopeless race
  From an eternal wrath.

Kind words he speaks—but all the time
  As from a formless height
To which no human foot can climb—
  Half-swathed in ancient night.

Nay, sometimes, and to gentle heart,
  Unkind words from him go!
Surely it is no saviour's part
  To speak to women so!

Much rather would I refuge take
  With Mary, dear to me,
To whom that rough hard speech he spake—
  What have I to do with thee?

Surely I know men tenderer,
  Women of larger soul,
Who need no prayer their hearts to stir,
  Who always would make whole!

Oftenest he looks a weary saint,
Embalmed in pallid gleam;
Listless and sad, without complaint,
Like dead man in a dream.

And, at the best, he is uplift
A spectacle, a show:—
The worth of such an outworn gift
I know too much to know!

How find the love to pay my debt?—
He leads me from the sun!—
Yet it is hard men should forget
A good deed ever done!—

Forget that he, to foil a curse,
Did, on that altar-hill,
Sun of a sunless universe,
Hang dying, patient, still!

But what is He, whose pardon slow
At so much blood is priced?—
If such thou art, O Jove, I go
To the Promethean Christ!

XII.

A word within says I am to blame,
And therefore must confess;
Must call my doing by its name,
And so make evil less.

"I could not his false triumph bear,
For he was first in wrong."
"Thy own ill-doings are thy care,
His to himself belong."

"To do it right, my heart should own
Some sorrow for the ill."
"Plain, honest words will half atone,
And they are in thy will."

The struggle comes. Evil or I
Must gain the victory now.
I am unmoved and yét would try:
O God, to thee I bow.

The skies are brass; there falls no aid;
No wind of help will blow.
But I bethink me:—I am made
A man: I rise and go.

XIII.

To Christ I needs must come, they say,
Who went to death for me:
I turn aside; I come, I pray,
My unknown God, to thee.

He is afar; the story old
Is blotted, worn, and dim;
With thee, O God, I can be bold—
I cannot pray to him.

Pray! At the word a cloudy grief
Around me folds its pall:
Nothing I have to call belief!
How can I pray at all?

I know not if a God be there
To heed my crying sore;
If in the great world anywhere
An ear keeps open door!

An unborn faith I will not nurse,
  Pursue an endless task;
Loud out into its universe
  My soul shall call and ask!

Is there no God—earth, sky, and sea
  Are but a chaos wild!
Is there a God—I know that he
  Must hear his calling child!

XIV.

I kneel. But all my soul is dumb
  With hopeless misery:
Is *he* a friend who will not come,
  Whose face I must not see?

I do not think of broken laws,
  Of judge's damning word;
My heart is all one ache, because
  I call and am not heard.

A cry where there is none to hear,
  Doubles the lonely pain;
Returns in silence on the ear,
  In torture on the brain.

No look of love a smile can bring,
  No kiss wile back the breath
To cold lips: I no answer wring
  From this great face of death.

XV.

Yet sometimes when the agony
  Dies of its own excess,
A dew-like calm descends on me,
  A shadow of tenderness

A sense of bounty and of grace,
  A cool air in my breast,
As if my soul were yet a place
  Where peace might one day rest.

God! God! I say, and cry no more,
  But rise, and think to stand
Unwearied at the closed door
  Till comes the opening hand.

XVI.

But is it God?—Once more the fear
  Of *No God* loads my breath:
Amid a sunless atmosphere
  I fight again with death.

Such rest may be like that which lulls
  The man who fainting lies:
His bloodless brain his spirit dulls,
  Draws darkness o'er his eyes.

But even such sleep, my heart responds,
  May be the ancient rest
Rising released from bodily bonds,
  And flowing unreprest.

The o'ertasked will falls down aghast
  In individual death;
God puts aside the severed past,
  Breathes-in a primal breath.

For how should torture breed a calm?
  Can death to life give birth?
No labour can create the balm
  That soothes the sleeping earth!

I yet will hope the very One
  Whose love is life in me,
Did, when my strength was overdone,
  Inspire serenity.

XVII.

When the hot sun's too urgent might
  Hath shrunk the tender leaf,
Water comes sliding down the night,
  And makes its sorrow brief.

When poet's heart is in eclipse,
  A glance from childhood's eye,
A smile from passing maiden's lips,
  Will clear a glowing sky.

Might not from God such influence come
  A dying hope to lift?
Might he not send to poor heart some
  Unmediated gift?

My child lies moaning, lost in dreams,
  Abandoned, sore dismayed;
Her fancy's world with horror teems,
  Her soul is much afraid:

I lay my hand upon her breast,
  Her moaning dies away;
She does not wake, but, lost in rest,
  Sleeps on into the day.

And when my heart with soft release
  Grows calm as summer-sea,
Shall I not hope the God of peace
  Hath laid his hand on me?

XVIII.

But why from thought should fresh doubt start—
An ever-lengthening cord?
Might he not make my troubled heart
Right sure it was the Lord?

God will not let a smaller boon
Hinder the coming best;
A granted sign might all too soon
Rejoice thee into rest.

Yet could not any sign, though grand
As hosts of fire about,
Though lovely as a sunset-land,
Secure thy soul from doubt.

A smile from one thou lovedst well
Gladdened thee all the day;
The doubt which all day far did dwell
Came home with twilight gray.

For doubt will come, will ever come,
Though signs be perfect good,
Till heart to heart strike doubting dumb,
And both are understood.

XIX.

I shall behold him, one day, nigh.
Assailed with glory keen,
My eyes will open wide, and I
Shall see as I am seen.

Of nothing can my heart be sure
Except the highest, best:
When God I see with vision pure,
That sight will be my rest.

Forward I look with longing eye,
And still my hope renew;
Backward, and think that from the sky
Did come that falling dew.

XX.

But if a vision should unfold
That I might banish fear;
That I, the chosen, might be bold,
And walk with upright cheer;

My heart would cry: But shares my race
In this great love of thine?
I pray, put me not in good case
Where others lack and pine.

Nor claim I thus a loving heart
That for itself is mute:
In such love I desire no part
As reaches not my root.

But if my brothers thou dost call
As children to thy knee,
Thou givest me my being's all,
Thou sayest *child* to me.

If thou to me alone shouldst give,
My heart were all beguiled:
It would not be *because* I live,
And am my Father's child!

XXI.

As little comfort would it bring,
Amid a throng to pass;
To stand with thousands worshipping
Upon the sea of glass;

To know that, of a sinful world,
I one was saved as well;
My roll of ill with theirs upfurled,
And cast in deepest hell;

That God looked bounteously on one,
Because on many men;
As shone Judea's earthly sun
On all the healed ten.

No; thou must be a God to me
As if but me were none;
I such a perfect child to thee
As if thou hadst but one.

XXII.

Oh, then, my Father, hast thou not
A blessing just for me?
Shall I be, barely, not forgot?—
Never come home to thee?

Hast thou no care for this one child,
This thinking, living need?
Or is thy countenance only mild,
Thy heart not love indeed?

For some eternal joy I pray,
To make me strong and free;
Yea, such a friend I need alway
As thou alone canst be.

Is not creative infinitude
Able, in every man,
To turn itself to every mood
Since God man's life began?

Art thou not each man's God—his own,
With secret words between,
As thou and he lived all alone,
Insphered in silence keen?

Ah, God, my heart is not the same
As any heart beside;
My pain is different, and my blame,
My pity and my pride!

My history thou know'st, my thoughts
Different from other men's;
Thou knowest all the sheep and goats
That mingle in my pens.

Thou knowest I a love might bring
By none beside me due;
One praiseful song at least might sing
Which could not but be new.

XXIII.

Nor seek I thus to stand apart,
In aught my kind above;
My neighbour, ah, my troubled heart
Must rest ere thee it love!

If God love not, I have no care,
No power to love, no hope.
What is life here or anywhere?
Or why with darkness cope?

I scorn my own love's every sign,
So feeble, selfish, low,
If his love give no pledge that mine
Shall one day perfect grow.

But if I knew Thy love even such,
As tender and intense
As, tested by its human touch,
Would satisfy my sense

Of what a father never was
But should be to his son,
My heart would leap for joy, because
My rescue was begun.

Oh then my love, by thine set free,
Would overflow thy men;
In every face my heart would see
God shining out again!

There are who hold high festival
And at the board crown Death:
I am too weak to live at all
Except I breathe thy breath.

Show me a love that nothing bates,
Absolute, self-severe—
Even at Gehenna's prayerless gates
I should not "taint with fear."

XXIV.

I cannot brook that men should say—
Nor this for gospel take—
That thou wilt hear me if I pray
Asking for Jesus' sake.

For love to him is not to me,
And cannot lift my fate;
The love is not that is not free,
Perfect, immediate.

Love is salvation: life without
No moment can endure.
Those sheep alone go in and out
Who know thy love is pure.

XXV.

But what if God requires indeed,
For cause yet unrevealed,
Assent to one fixed form of creed,
Such as I cannot yield?

Has God made *for Christ's sake* a test—
To take or leave the crust,
That only he may have the best
Who licks the serpent-dust?

No, no; the words I will not say
With the responding folk;
I at his feet a heart would lay,
Not shoulders for a yoke.

He were no lord of righteousness
Who subjects such would gain
As yield their birthright for a mess
Of liberty from pain!

"And wilt thou bargain then with Him?'
The priest makes answer high.
'Tis thou, priest, makest the sky dim:
My hope is in the sky.

XXVI.

But is my will alive, awake?
The one God will not heed
If in my lips or hands I take
A half-word or half-deed.

Hour after hour I sit and dream,
  Amazed in outwardness;
The powers of things that only seem
  The things that are oppress;

Till in my soul some discord sounds,
  Till sinks some yawning lack;
Then turn I from life's rippling rounds,
  And unto thee come back.

Thou seest how poor a thing am I,
  Yet hear, whate'er I be;
Despairing of my will, I cry,
  Be God enough to me.

My spirit, low, irresolute,
  I cast before thy feet;
And wait, while even prayer is mute,
  For what thou judgest meet.

XXVII.

My safety lies not, any hour,
  In what I generate,
But in the living, healing power
  Of that which doth create.

If he is God to the incomplete,
  Fulfilling lack and need,
Then I *may* cast before his feet
  A half-word or half-deed.

I bring, Lord, to thy altar-stair,
  To thee, love-glorious,
My very lack of will and prayer,
  And cry—Thou seest me thus!

From some old well of life they flow!
The words my being fill!—
"Of me that man the truth shall know
Who wills the Father's will."

XXVIII.

What is his will?—that I may go
And do it, in the hope
That light will rise and spread and grow,
As deed enlarges scope.

I need not search the sacred book
To find my duty clear;
Scarce in my bosom need I look,
It lies so very near.

Henceforward I must watch the door
Of word and action too;
There's one thing I must do no more,
Another I must do.

Alas, these are such little things!
No glory in their birth!
Doubt from their common aspect springs--
If God will count them worth.

But here I am not left to choose,
My duty is my lot;
And weighty things will glory lose
If small ones are forgot.

I am not worthy high things yet;
I'll humbly do my own;
Good care of sheep may so beget
A fitness for the throne.

Ah fool! why dost thou reason thus?
Ambition's very fool!
Through high and low, each glorious,
Shines God's all-perfect rule.

'Tis God I need, not rank in good;
'Tis Life, not honour's meed;
With him to fill my every mood,
I am content indeed.

XXIX.

Will do: shall know: I feel the force,
The fullness of the word;
His holy boldness held its course,
Claiming divine accord.

What if, as yet, I have never seen
The true face of the Man!
The named notion may have been
A likeness vague and wan;

A thing of such unblended hues
As, on his chamber wall,
The humble peasant gladly views,
And *Jesus Christ* doth call.

The story I did never scan
With vision calm and strong;
Have never tried to see the Man,
The many words among.

Pictures there are that do not please
With any sweet surprise,
But gain the heart by slow degrees
Until they feast the eyes;

And if I ponder what they call
The gospel of God's grace,
Through mists that slowly melt and fall
May dawn a human face.

What face? Oh, heart-uplifting thought,
That face may dawn on me
Which Moses on the mountain sought,
God would not let him see!

XXX.

All faint at first, as wrapt in veil
Of Sinai's cloudy dark,
But dawning as I read the tale,
I slow discern and mark

A gracious, simple, truthful man,
Who walks the earth erect,
Nor stoops his noble head to one
From fear or false respect;

Who seeks to climb no high estate,
No low consent secure,
With high and low serenely great,
Because his love is pure.

Oh not alone, high o'er our reach,
Our joys and griefs beyond!
To him 'tis joy divine to teach
Where human hearts respond;

And grief divine it was to him
To see the souls that slept:
"How often, O Jerusalem!"
He said, and gazed, and wept.

Love was his very being's root,
And healing was its flower;
Love, human love, its stem and fruit,
Its gladness and its power.

Life of high God, till then unseen!
Undreamt-of glorious show!
Glad, faithful, childlike, love-serene!—
How poor am I! how low!

XXXI.

As in a living well I gaze,
Kneeling upon its brink:
What are the very words he says?
What did the one man think?

I find his heart was all above;
Obedience his one thought;
Reposing in his father's love,
His father's will he sought.

* * * *

XXXII.

Years have passed o'er my broken plan
To picture out a strife,
Where ancient Death, in horror wan,
Faced young and fearing Life.

More of the tale I tell not so—
But for myself would say:
My heart is quiet with what I know,
With what I hope, is gay.

And where I cannot set my faith,
  Unknowing or unwise,
I say "If this be what *he* saith,
  Here hidden treasure lies."

Through years gone by since thus I strove,
  Thus shadowed out my strife,
While at my history I wove,
  Thou wovest in the life.

Through poverty that had no lack
  For friends divinely good;
Through pain that not too long did rack,
  Through love that understood;

Through light that taught me what to hold
  And what to cast away;
Through thy forgiveness manifold,
  And things I cannot say,

Here thou hast brought me—able now
  To kiss thy garment's hem,
Entirely to thy will to bow,
  And trust thee even for them

Who in the darkness and the mire
  Walk with rebellious feet,
Loose trailing, lo, their soiled attire
  For heavenly floor unmeet!

Lord Jesus Christ, I know not how—
  With this blue air, blue sea,
This yellow sand, that grassy brow,
  All isolating me—

Thy thoughts to mine themselves impart,
  My thoughts to thine draw near;
But thou canst fill who mad'st my heart,
  Who gav'st me words must hear.

Thou mad'st the hand with which I write,
The eye that watches slow
Through rosy gates that rosy light
Across thy threshold go;

Those waves that bend in golden spray,
As if thy foot they bore:
I think I know thee, Lord, to-day,
Shall know thee evermore.

I know thy father thine and mine:
Thou the great fact hast bared:
Master, the mighty words are thine—
Such I had never dared!

Lord, thou hast much to make me yet—
Thy father's infant still:
Thy mind, Son, in my bosom set,
That I may grow thy will.

My soul with truth clothe all about,
And I shall question free:
The man that feareth, Lord, to doubt,
In that fear doubteth thee.

THE GOSPEL WOMEN.

THE GOSPEL WOMEN.

I.

THE MOTHER MARY.

I.

MARY, to thee the heart was given
  For infant hand to hold,
And clasp thus, an eternal heaven,
  The great earth in its fold.

He seized the world with tender might
  By making thee his own;
Thee, lowly queen, whose heavenly height
  Was to thyself unknown.

He came, all helpless, to thy power,
  For warmth, and love, and birth;
In thy embraces, every hour,
  He grew into the earth.

Thine was the grief, O mother high,
  Which all thy sisters share
Who keep the gate betwixt the sky
  And this our lower air;

But unshared sorrows, gathering slow,
  Will rise within thy heart,
Strange thoughts which like a sword will go
  Thorough thy inward part.

For, if a woman bore a son
  That was of angel brood,
Who lifted wings ere day was done,
  And soared from where she stood,

Wild grief would rave on love's high throne;
  She, sitting in the door,
All day would cry: "He was my own,
  And now is mine no more!"

So thou, O Mary, years on years,
  From child-birth to the cross,
Wast filled with yearnings, filled with fears,
  Keen sense of love and loss.

His childish thoughts outsoared thy reach;
  His godlike tenderness
Would sometimes seem, in human speech,
  To thee than human less.

Strange pangs await thee, mother mild,
  A sorer travail-pain;
Then will the spirit of thy child
  Be born in thee again.

Till then thou wilt forebode and dread;
  Loss will be still thy fear—
Till he be gone, and, in his stead,
  His very self appear.

For, when thy son hath reached his goal,
  And vanished from the earth,
Soon wilt thou find him in thy soul,
  A second, holier birth.

II.

Ah, there he stands! With wondering face
Old men surround the boy;
The solemn looks, the awful place
Bestill the mother's joy.

In sweet reproach her gladness hid,
Her trembling voice says—low,
Less like the chiding than the chid—
"How couldst thou leave us so?"

But will her dear heart understand
The answer that he gives—
Childlike, eternal, simple, grand,
The law by which he lives?

"Why sought ye me?" Ah, mother dear,
The gulf already opes
That will in thee keep live the fear,
And part thee from thy hopes!

"My father's business—that ye know
I cannot choose but do."
Mother, if he that work forego,
Not long he cares for you.

Creation's harder, better part
Now occupies his hand:
I marvel not the mother's heart
Not yet could understand.

III.

The Lord of life among them rests;
They quaff the merry wine;
They do not know, those wedding guests,
The present power divine.

Believe, on such a group he smiled,
  Though he might sigh the while;
Believe not, sweet-souled Mary's child
  Was born without a smile.

He saw the pitchers, high upturned,
  Their last red drops outpour;
His mother's cheek with triumph burned,
  And expectation wore.

He knew the prayer her bosom housed,
  He read it in her eyes;
Her hopes in him sad thoughts have roused
  Ere yet her words arise.

"They have no wine!" she, halting, said,
  Her prayer but half begun;
Her eyes went on, "Lift up thy head,
  Show what thou art, my son!"

A vision rose before his eyes,
  The cross, the waiting tomb,
The people's rage, the darkened skies,
  His unavoided doom:

Ah woman dear, thou must not fret
  Thy heart's desire to see!
His hour of honour is not yet—
  'Twill come too soon for thee!

His word was dark; his tone was kind;
  His heart the mother knew;
His eyes in hers looked deep, and shined;
  They gave her heart the cue.

Another, on the word intent,
  Had read refusal there;
She heard in it a full consent,
  A sweetly answered prayer.

"Whate'er he saith unto you, do."
Out flowed his grapes divine;
Though then, as now, not many knew
Who makes the water wine.

IV.

"He is beside himself!" Dismayed,
His mother, brothers talked:
He from the well-known path had strayed
In which their fathers walked!

With troubled hearts they sought him. Loud
Some one the message bore:—
He stands within, amid a crowd,
They at the open door:—

"Thy mother and thy brothers would
Speak with thee. Lo, they stand
Without and wait thee!" Like a flood
Of sunrise on the land,

A new-born light his face o'erspread;
Out from his eyes it poured;
He lifted up that gracious head,
Looked round him, took the word:

"My mother—brothers—who are they?"
Hearest thou, Mary mild?
This is a sword that well may slay—
Disowned by thy child!

Ah, no! My brothers, sisters, hear—
They are our humble lord's!
O mother, did they wound *thy* ear?—
We thank him for the words.

"Who are my friends?" Oh, hear him say,
Stretching his hand abroad,
"My mother, sisters, brothers, are they
That do the will of God!"

My brother! Lord of life and me,
If life might grow to this!—
Would it not, brother, sister, be
Enough for all amiss?

Yea, mother, hear him and rejoice:
Thou art his mother still,
But may'st be more—of thy own choice
Doing his Father's will.

Ambition for thy son restrain,
Thy will to God's will bow:
Thy son he shall be yet again,
And twice his mother thou.

O humble man, O faithful son!
That woman most forlorn
Who yet thy father's will hath done,
Thee, son of man, hath born!

V.

Life's best things gather round its close
To light it from the door;
When woman's aid no further goes,
She weeps and loves the more.

She doubted oft, feared for his life,
Yea, feared his mission's loss;
But now she shares the losing strife,
And weeps beside the cross.

The dreaded hour is come at last,
The sword hath reached her soul;
The hour of tortured hope is past,
And gained the awful goal.

There hangs the son her body bore,
The limbs her arms had prest!
The hands, the feet the driven nails tore
Had lain upon her breast!

He speaks; the words how faintly brief,
And how divinely dear!
The mother's heart yearns through its grief
Her dying son to hear.

"Woman, behold thy son.—Behold
Thy mother." Blessed hest
That friend to her torn heart to fold
Who understood him best!

Another son—ah, not instead!—
He gave, lest grief should kill,
While he was down among the dead,
Doing his father's will.

No, not *instead!* the coming joy
Will make him hers anew;
More hers than when, a little boy,
His life from hers he drew.

II.

THE WOMAN THAT LIFTED UP HER VOICE.

FILLED with his words of truth and right,
Her heart will break or cry:
A woman's cry bursts forth in might
Of loving agony.

"Blessed the womb, thee, Lord, that bare!
The bosom that thee fed!"
A moment's silence filled the air,
All heard the words she said.

He turns his face: he knows the cry,
The fountain whence it springs—
A woman's heart that glad would die
For woman's best of things.

Good thoughts, though laggard in the rear,
He never quenched or chode:
"Yea, rather, blessed they that hear
And keep the word of God!"

He would uplift her, not rebuke.
The crowd began to stir.
We miss how she the answer took;
We hear no more of her.

III.

THE MOTHER OF ZEBEDEE'S CHILDREN.

SHE knelt, she bore a bold request,
Though shy to speak it out:
Ambition, even in mother's breast,
Before him stood in doubt.

"What is it?" "Grant thy promise now,
My sons on thy right hand
And on thy left shall sit when thou
Art king, Lord, in the land."

"Ye know not what ye ask." There lay
A baptism and a cup
She understood not, in the way
By which he must go up.

Her mother-love would lift them high
  Above their fellow-men;
Her woman-pride would, standing nigh,
  Share in their grandeur then!

Would she have joyed o'er prosperous quest,
  Counted her prayer well heard,
Had they, of three on Calvary's crest,
  Hung dying, first and third?

She knoweth neither way nor end:
  In dark despair, full soon,
She will not mock the gracious friend
  With prayer for any boon.

Higher than love could dream or dare
  To ask, he them will set;
They shall his cup and baptism share,
  And share his kingdom yet!

They, entering at his palace-door,
  Will shun the lofty seat;
Will gird themselves, and water pour,
  And wash each other's feet;

Then down beside their lowly Lord
  On the Father's throne shall sit:
For them who godlike help afford
  God hath prepared it.

IV.

THE SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN.

"GRANT, Lord, her prayer, and let her go;
  She crieth after us."
Nay, to the dogs ye cast it so;
  Serve not a woman thus.

Their pride, by condescension fed,
He shapes with teaching tongue:
"It is not meet the children's bread
To little dogs be flung."

The words, for tender heart so sore,
His voice did seem to rue;
The gentle wrath his countenance wore,
With her had not to do.

He makes her share the hurt of good,
Takes what she would have lent,
That those proud men their evil mood
May see, and so repent;

And that the hidden faith in her
May burst in soaring flame:
With childhood deeper, holier,
Is birthright not the same?

Ill names, of proud religion born—
She'll wear the worst that comes;
Will clothe her, patient, in their scorn,
To share the healing crumbs!

"Truth, Lord; and yet the puppies small
Under the table eat
The crumbs the little ones let fall—
That is not thought unmeet."

The prayer rebuff could not amate
Was not like water spilt:
"O woman, but thy faith is great!
Be it even as thou wilt."

Thrice happy she who yet will dare,
Who, baffled, prayeth still!
He, if he may, will grant her prayer
In fulness of *her* will!

V.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

FORTH from the city, with the load
That makes the trampling low,
They walk along the dreary road
That dust and ashes go.

The other way, toward the gate
Their trampling strong and loud,
With hope of liberty elate,
Comes on another crowd.

Nearer and nearer draw the twain—
One with a wailing cry!
How could the Life let such a train
Of death and tears go by!

"Weep not," he said, and touched the bier:
They stand, the dead who bear;
The mother knows nor hope nor fear—
He waits not for her prayer.

"Young man, I say to thee, arise."
Who hears, he must obey:
Up starts the body; wide the eyes
Flash wonder and dismay.

The lips would speak, as if they caught
Some converse sudden broke
When the great word the dead man sought,
And Hades' silence woke.

The lips would speak: the eyes' wild stare
Gives place to ordered sight;
The murmur dies upon the air;
The soul is dumb with light.

He brings no news; he has forgot,
Or saw with vision weak:
Thou seëst all our unseen lot,
And yet thou dost not speak.

Hold'st thou the news, as parent might
A too good gift, away,
Lest we should neither sleep at night,
Nor do our work by day?

The mother leaves us not a spark
Of her triumph over grief;
Her tears alone have left their mark
Upon the holy leaf:

Oft gratitude will thanks benumb,
Joy will our laughter quell:
May not Eternity be dumb
With things too good to tell?

Her straining arms her lost one hold;
Question she asketh none;
She trusts for all he leaves untold;
Enough, to clasp her son!

The ebb is checked, the flow begun,
Sent rushing to the gate:
Death turns him backward to the sun,
And life is yet our fate!

VI.

THE WOMAN WHOM SATAN HAD BOUND.

FOR years eighteen she, patient soul,
Her eyes had graveward sent;
Her earthly life was lapt in dole,
She was so bowed and bent.

What words! To her? Who can be near?
What tenderness of hands!
Oh! is it strength, or fancy mere?
New hope, or breaking bands?

The pent life rushes swift along
Channels it used to know;
Up, up, amid the wondering throng,
She rises firm and slow—

To bend again in grateful awe—
For will is power at length—
In homage to the living Law
Who gives her back her strength.

Uplifter of the down-bent head!
Unbinder of the bound!
Who seëst all the burdened
Who only see the ground!

Although they see thee not, nor cry,
Thou watchest for the hour
To lift the forward-beaming eye,
To wake the slumbering power!

Thy hand will wipe the stains of time
From off the withered face;
Upraise thy bowed old men, in prime
Of youthful manhood's grace!

Like summer days from winter's tomb,
Shall rise thy women fair;
Gray Death, a shadow, not a doom,
Lo, is not anywhere!

All ills of life shall melt away
As melts a cureless woe,
When, by the dawning of the day
Surprised, the dream must go.

I think thou, Lord, wilt heal me too,
  Whate'er the needful cure;
The great best only thou wilt do,
  And hoping I endure.

VII.

THE WOMAN WHO CAME BEHIND HIM IN THE CROWD.

NEAR him she stole, rank after rank;
  She feared approach too loud;
She touched his garment's hem, and shrank
  Back in the sheltering crowd.

A shame-faced gladness thrills her frame:
  Her twelve years' fainting prayer
Is heard at last! she is the same
  As other women there!

She hears his voice. He looks about.
  Ah! is it kind or good
To drag her secret sorrow out
  Before that multitude?

The eyes of men she dares not meet—
  On her they straight must fall!—
Forward she sped, and at his feet
  Fell down, and told him all.

To the one refuge she hath flown,
  The Godhead's burning flame!
Of all earth's women she alone
  Hears there the tenderest name:

"Daughter," he said, "be of good cheer;
  Thy faith hath made thee whole:"
With plenteous love, not healing mere,
  He comforteth her soul.

VIII.

THE WIDOW WITH THE TWO MITES.

HERE *much* and *little* shift and change,
With scale of need and time;
There *more* and *less* have meanings strange,
Which the world cannot rime.

Sickness may be more hale than health,
And service kingdom high;
Yea, poverty be bounty's wealth,
To give like God thereby.

Bring forth your riches; let them go,
Nor mourn the lost control;
For if ye hoard them, surely so
Their rust will reach your soul.

Cast in your coins, for God delights
When from wide hands they fall;
But here is one who brings two mites,
And thus gives more than all.

I think she did not hear the praise—
Went home content with need;
Walked in her old poor generous ways,
Nor knew her heavenly meed.

IX.

THE WOMEN WHO MINISTERED UNTO HIM.

ENOUGH he labours for his hire;
Yea, nought can pay his pain;
But powers that wear and waste and tire,
Need help to toil again.

They give him freely all they can,
  They give him clothes and food;
In this rejoicing, that the man
  Is not ashamed they should.

High love takes form in lowly thing;
  He knows the offering such;
To them 'tis little that they bring,
  To him 'tis very much.

X.

PILATE'S WIFE.

WHY came in dreams the low-born man
  Between thee and thy rest?
In vain thy whispered message ran,
  Though justice was its quest!

Did some young ignorant angel dare—
  Not knowing what must be,
Or blind with agony of care—
  To fly for help to thee?

I know not. Rather I believe,
  Thou, nobler than thy spouse,
His rumoured grandeur didst receive,
  And sit with pondering brows,

Until thy maidens' gathered tale
  With possible marvel teems:
Thou sleepest, and the prisoner pale
  Returneth in thy dreams.

Well mightst thou suffer things not few
  For his sake all the night!
In pale eclipse he suffers, who
  Is of the world the light.

Precious it were to know thy dream
Of such a one as he!
Perhaps of him we, waking, deem
As poor a verity.

XI.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

IN the hot sun, for water cool
She walked in listless mood:
When back she ran, her pitcher full
Forgot behind her stood.

Like one who followed straying sheep,
A weary man she saw,
Who sat upon the well so deep,
And nothing had to draw.

"Give me to drink," he said. Her hand
Was ready with reply;
From out the old well of the land
She drew him plenteously.

He spake as never man before;
She stands with open ears;
He spake of holy days in store,
Laid bare the vanished years.

She cannot still her throbbing heart,
She hurries to the town,
And cries aloud in street and mart.
"The Lord is here: come down."

Her life before was strange and sad,
A very dreary sound:
Ah, let it go—or good or bad:
She has the Master found!

XII.

MARY MAGDALENE.

WITH wandering eyes and aimless zeal,
She hither, thither, goes;
Her speech, her motions, all reveal
A mind without repose.

She climbs the hills, she haunts the sea,
By madness tortured, driven;
One hour's forgetfulness would be
A gift from very heaven!

She slumbers into new distress;
The night is worse than day:
Exulting in her helplessness,
Hell's dogs yet louder bay.

The demons blast her to and fro;
She has no quiet place,
Enough a woman still, to know
A haunting dim disgrace.

A human touch! a pang of death!
And in a low delight
Thou liest, waiting for new breath,
For morning out of night.

Thou risest up: the earth is fair,
The wind is cool; thou art free!
Is it a dream of hell's despair
Dissolves in ecstasy?

That man did touch thee! Eyes divine
Make sunrise in thy soul;
Thou seëst love in order shine:—
His health hath made thee whole!

Thou, sharing in the awful doom,
  Didst help thy Lord to die;
Then, weeping o'er his empty tomb,
  Didst hear him *Mary* cry.

He stands in haste; he cannot stop;
  Home to his God he fares:
"Go tell my brothers I go up
  To my Father, mine and theirs."

Run, Mary! lift thy heavenly voice;
  Cry, cry, and heed not how;
Make all the new-risen world rejoice—
  Its first apostle thou!

What if old tales of thee have lied,
  Or truth have told, thou art
All-safe with him, whate'er betide—
  Dwell'st with him in God's heart!

XIII.

THE WOMAN IN THE TEMPLE.

A STILL dark joy! A sudden face!
  Cold daylight, footsteps, cries!
The temple's naked, shining space,
  Aglare with judging eyes!

All in abandoned guilty hair,
  With terror-pallid lips,
To vulgar scorn her honour bare,
  To lewd remarks and quips,

Her eyes she fixes on the ground
  Her shrinking soul to hide,
Lest, at uncurtained windows found,
  Its shame be clear descried.

All idle hang her listless hands,
They tingle with her shame;
She sees not who beside her stands,
She is so bowed with blame.

He stoops, he writes upon the ground,
Regards nor priests nor wife;
An awful silence spreads around,
And wakes an inward strife.

Then comes a voice that speaks for thee,
Pale woman, sore aghast:
"Let him who from this sin is free
At her the first stone cast!"

Ah then her heart grew slowly sad!
Her eyes bewildered rose;
She saw the one true friend she had,
Who loves her though he knows.

He stoops. In every charnel breast
Dead conscience rises slow:
They, dumb before that awful guest,
Turn, one by one, and go.

Up in her deathlike, ashy face
Rises the living red;
No greater wonder sure had place
When Lazarus left the dead!

She is alone with him whose fear
Made silence all around;
False pride, false shame, they come not near,
She has her saviour found!

Jesus hath spoken on her side,
Those cruel men withstood!
From him her shame she will not hide!
For him she *will* be good!

He rose; he saw the temple bare
They two are left alone!
He said unto her, "Woman, where
Are thine accusers gone?

"Hath none condemned thee?" "Master, no,"
She answers, trembling sore.
"Neither do I condemn thee. Go,
And sin not any more."

She turned and went.—To hope and grieve?
Be what she had not been?
We are not told; but I believe
His kindness made her clean.

Our sins to thee us captive hale—
Ambitions, hatreds dire;
Cares, fears, and selfish loves that fail,
And sink us in the mire:

Our captive-cries with pardon meet;
Our passion cleanse with pain;
Lord, thou didst make these miry feet—
Oh, wash them clean again!

XIV.

MARTHA.

WITH joyful pride her heart is high:
Her humble house doth hold
The man her nation's prophecy
Long ages hath foretold!

Poor, is he? Yes, and lowly born:
Her woman-soul is proud
To know and hail the coming morn
Before the eyeless crowd.

At her poor table will he eat?
He shall be served there
With honour and devotion meet
For any king that were!

'Tis all she can; she does her part,
Profuse in sacrifice;
Nor dreams that in her unknown heart
A better offering lies.

But many crosses she must bear;
Her plans are turned and bent;
Do what she can, things will not wear
The form of her intent.

With idle hands and drooping lid,
See Mary sit at rest!
Shameful it was her sister did
No service for their guest!

Dear Martha, one day Mary's lot
Must rule thy hands and eyes;
Thou, all thy household cares forgot,
Must sit as idly wise!

But once more first she set her word
To bar her master's ways,
Crying, "By this he stinketh, Lord,
He hath been dead four days!"

Her housewife-soul her brother dear
Would fetter where he lies!
Ah, did her buried best then hear,
And with the dead man rise?

XV.

MARY.

I.

SHE sitteth at the Master's feet
  In motionless employ;
Her ears, her heart, her soul complete
  Drinks in the tide of joy.

Ah! who but she the glory knows
  Of life, pure, high, intense,
In whose eternal silence blows
  The wind beyond the sense!

In her still ear, God's perfect grace
  Incarnate is in voice;
Her thoughts, the people of the place,
  Receive it, and rejoice.

Her eyes, with heavenly reason bright,
  Are on the ground cast low;
His words of spirit, life, and light—
  They set them shining so.

But see! a face is at the door
  Whose eyes are not at rest;
A voice breaks on divinest lore
  With petulant request.

"Master," it said, "dost thou not care
  She lets me serve alone?
Tell her to come and take her share.
  But Mary's eyes shine on.

She lifts them with a questioning glance
Calmly to him who heard;
The merest sign, she'll rise at once,
Nor wait the uttered word.

His "Martha, Martha!" with it bore
A sense of coming *nay;*
He told her that her trouble sore
Was needless any day.

And he would not have Mary chid
For want of needless care;
The needful thing was what she did
At his feet sitting there.

Sure, joy awoke in her dear heart
Doing the thing it would,
When he, the holy, took her part,
And called her choice the good!

Oh needful thing, Oh Mary's choice,
Go not from us away!
Oh Jesus, with the living voice,
Talk to us every day!

II.

Not now the living words are poured
Into one listening ear;
For many guests are at the board,
And many speak and hear.

With sacred foot, refrained and slow
With daring, trembling tread,
She comes, in worship bending low
Behind the godlike head.

The costly chrism, in snowy stone,
A gracious odour sends;
Her little hoard, by sparing grown,
In one full act she spends.

She breaks the box, the honoured thing!
See how its riches pour!
Her priestly hands anoint him king
Whom peasant Mary bore.

* * * *

Not so does John the tale repeat:
He saw, for he was there,
Mary anoint the Master's feet,
And wipe them with her hair.

Perhaps she did his head anoint,
And then his feet as well;
And John this one forgotten point
Loved best of all to tell.

'Twas Judas called the splendour waste,
'Twas Jesus said—Not so;
Said that her love his burial graced:
"Ye have the poor; I go."

Her hands unwares outsped his fate,
The truth-king's felon-doom;
The other women were too late,
For he had left the tomb.

XVI.

THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER.

HIS face, his words, her heart awoke;
Awoke her slumbering truth;
She judged him well; her bonds she broke,
And fled to him for ruth.

With tears she washed his weary feet;
She wiped them with her hair;
Her kisses—call them not unmeet,
When they were welcome *there.*

What saint a richer crown could throw
At his love-royal feet!
Her tears, her lips, her hair, down go,
His reign begun to greet.

His holy manhood's perfect worth
Owns her a woman still;
It is impossible henceforth
For her to stoop to ill.

Her to herself his words restore,
The radiance to the day;
A horror to herself no more,
Not yet a cast-away!

Her hands and kisses, ointment, tears,
Her gathered wiping hair,
Her love, her shame, her hopes, her fears,
Mingle in worship rare.

Thou, Mary, too, thy hair didst spread
To wipe the anointed feet;
Nor didst thou only bless his head
With precious spikenard sweet.

But none say thou thy tears didst pour
To wash his parched feet first;
Of tears thou couldst not have such store
As from this woman burst!

If not in love she first be read,
Her queen of sorrow greet;
Mary, do thou anoint his head,
And let her crown his feet.

Simon, her kisses will not soil;
  Her tears are pure as rain;
The hair for him she did uncoil
  Had been baptized in pain.

Lo, God hath pardoned her so much,
  Love all her being stirs!
His love to his poor child is such
  That it hath wakened hers!

But oh, rejoice, ye sisters pure,
  Who scarce can know her case—
There is no sin but has its cure,
  Its all-consuming grace!

He did not leave her soul in hell,
  'Mong shards the silver dove;
But raised her pure that she might tell
  Her sisters how to love!

She gave him all your best love can!
  Despised, rejected, sad—
Sure, never yet had mighty man
  Such homage as he had!

Jesus, by whose forgiveness sweet,
  Her love grew so intense,
Earth's sinners all come round thy feet:
  Lord, make no difference!

A BOOK OF SONNETS.

A BOOK OF SONNETS.

THE BURNT-OFFERING.

THRICE-HAPPY he whose heart, each new-born night,
When old-worn day hath vanished o'er earth's brim,
And he hath laid him down in chamber dim,
Straightway begins to tremble and grow bright,
And loose faint flashes toward the vaulted height
Of the great peace that overshadoweth him:
Keen lambent flames of hope awake and swim
Throughout his soul, touching each point with light!
The great earth under him an altar is,
Upon whose top a sacrifice he lies,
Burning in love's response up to the skies
Whose fire descended first and kindled his:
When slow the flickering flames at length expire,
Sleep's ashes only hide a glowing fire.

THE UNSEEN FACE.

"I DO beseech thee, God, show me thy face."
"Come up to me in Sinai on the morn!
Thou shalt behold as much as may be borne."
And on a rock stood Moses, lone in space.
From Sinai's top, the vaporous, thunderous place,
God passed in cloud, an earthy garment worn
To hide, and thus reveal. In love, not scorn,
He put him in a clift of the rock's base,
Covered him with his hand, his eyes to screen—
Passed—lifted it: his back alone appears!

Ah, Moses, had he turned, and hadst thou seen
The pale face crowned with thorns, baptized with tears,
The eyes of the true man, by men belied,
Thou hadst beheld God's face, and straightway died!

CONCERNING JESUS.

I.

IF thou hadst been a sculptor, what a race
Of forms divine had thenceforth filled the land!
Methinks I see thee, glorious workman, stand,
Striking a marble window through blind space—
Thy face's reflex on the coming face,
As dawns the stone to statue 'neath thy hand—
Body obedient to its soul's command,
Which is thy thought, informing it with grace!
So had it been. But God, who quickeneth clay,
Nor turneth it to marble—maketh eyes,
Not shadowy hollows, where no sunbeams play—
Would mould his loftiest thought in human guise:
Thou didst appear, walking unknown abroad,
God's living sculpture, all-informed of God.

II.

If one should say, "Lo, there thy statue! take
Possession, sculptor; now inherit it;
Go forth upon the earth in likeness fit;
As with a trumpet-cry at morning, wake
The sleeping nations; with light's terror, shake
The slumber from their hearts, that, where they sit,
They leap straight up, aghast, as at a pit
Gaping beneath;" I hear him answer make:
"Alas for me, I cannot nor would dare
Inform what I revered as I did trace!

Who would be fool that he like fool might fare,
With feeble spirit mocking the enorm
Strength on his forehead!" Thou, God's thought thy form,
Didst live the large significance of thy face.

III.

Men have I seen, and seen with wonderment,
Noble in form, "lift upward and divine,"
In whom I yet must search, as in a mine,
After that soul of theirs, by which they went
Alive upon the earth. And I have bent
Regard on many a woman, who gave sign
God willed her beautiful, when he drew the line
That shaped each float and fold of beauty's tent:
Her soul, alas, chambered in pigmy space,
Left the fair visage pitiful-inane—
Poor signal only of a coming face
When from the penetrale she filled the fane!—
Possessed of thee was every form of thine,
Thy very hair replete with the divine.

IV.

If thou hadst built a temple, how my eye
Had hungering fed thereon, from low-browed crypt
Up to the soaring pinnacles that, tipt
With stars, gave signal when the sun drew nigh!
Dark caverns in and under; vivid sky
Its home and aim! Say, from the glory slipt,
And down into the shadows dropt and dipt,
Or reared from darkness up so holy-high?—
Thou build'st the temple of thy holy ghost
From hid foundation to high-hidden fate—

Foot in the grave, head at the heavenly gate,
From grave and sky filled with a fighting host!
Man is thy temple; man thy work elect;
His glooms and glory thine, great architect!

V.

If thou hadst been a painter, what fresh looks,
What outbursts of pent glories, what new grace
Had shone upon us from the great world's face!
How had we read, as in eternal books,
The love of God in loneliest shiest nooks!
A lily, in merest lines thy hand did trace,
Had plainly been God's child of lower race!
And oh how strong the hills, songful the brooks!
To thee all nature's meanings lie light-bare,
Because thy heart is nature's inner side;
Clear as, to us, earth on the dawn's gold tide,
Her notion vast up in thy soul did rise;
Thine is the world, thine all its splendours rare,
Thou Man ideal, with the unsleeping eyes!

VI.

But I have seen pictures the work of man,
In which at first appeared but chaos wild:
So high the art transcended, they beguiled
The eye as formless, and without a plan.
Not soon, the spirit, brooding o'er, began
To see a purpose rise, like mountain isled,
When God said, Let the Dry appear! and, piled
Above the waves, it rose in twilight wan.
So might thy pictures then have been too strange
For us to pierce beyond their outmost look;
A vapour and a darkness; a sealed book;
An atmosphere too high for wings to range;
And so we could but, gazing, pale and change,
And tremble as at a void thought cannot brook.

VII.

But earth is now thy living picture, where
Thou shadowest truth, the simple and profound
By the same form in vital union bound:
Where one can see but the first step of thy stair,
Another sees it vanish far in air.
When thy king David viewed the starry round,
From heart and fingers broke the psaltery-sound:
Lord, what is man, that thou shouldst mind his prayer!
But when the child beholds the heavens on high,
He babbles childish noises—not less dear
Than what the king sang praying—to the ear
Of him who made the child and king and sky.
Earth is thy picture, painter great, whose eye
Sees with the child, sees with the kingly seer.

VIII.

If thou hadst built some mighty instrument,
And set thee down to utter ordered sound,
Whose faithful billows, from thy hands unbound,
Breaking in light, against our spirits went,
And caught, and bore above this earthly tent,
The far-strayed back to their prime natal ground,
Where all roots fast in harmony are found,
And God sits thinking out a pure consent;—
Nay, that thou couldst not; that was not for thee!
Our broken music thou must first restore—
A harder task than think thine own out free;
And till thou hast done it, no divinest score,
Though rendered by thine own angelic choir,
Can lift one human spirit from the mire.

IX.

If thou hadst been a poet! On my heart
The thought flashed sudden, burning through the weft

Of life, and with too much I sank bereft.
Up to my eyes the tears, with sudden start,
Thronged blinding: then the veil would rend and part!
The husk of vision would in twain be cleft!
Thy hidden soul in naked beauty left,
I should behold thee, Nature, as thou art!
O poet Jesus! at thy holy feet
I should have lien, sainted with listening;
My pulses answering ever, in rhythmic beat,
The stroke of each triumphant melody's wing,
Creating, as it moved, my being sweet;
My soul thy harp, thy word the quivering string.

X.

Thee had we followed through the twilight land
Where thought grows form, and matter is refined
Back into thought of the eternal mind,
Till, seeing them one, lo, in the morn we stand!—
Then started fresh and followed, hand in hand,
With sense divinely growing, till, combined,
We heard the music of the planets wind
In harmony with billows on the strand!—
Till, one with earth and all God's utterance,
We hardly knew whether the sun outspake,
Or a glad sunshine from our spirits brake—
Whether we think, or winds and blossoms dance!
Alas, O poet leader, for such good
Thou wast God's tragedy, writ in tears and blood!

XI.

Hadst thou been one of these, in many eyes,
Too near to be a glory for thy sheen,
Thou hadst been scorned; and to the best hadst been
A setter forth of strange divinities;
But to the few construct of harmonies,
A sudden sun, uplighting the serene

High heaven of love; and, through the cloudy screen
That 'twixt our souls and truth all wretched lies,
Dawning at length, hadst been a love and fear,
Worshipped on high from magian's mountain-crest,
And all night long symbolled by lamp-flames clear,
Thy sign, a star upon thy people's breast—
Where that strange arbitrary token lies
Which once did scare the sun in noontide skies.

XII.

But as thou camest forth to bring the poor,
Whose hearts are nearer faith and verity,
Spiritual childhood, thy philosophy—
So taught'st the A B C of heavenly lore;
Because thou sat'st not lonely evermore,
With mighty truths informing language high,
But, walking in thy poem continually,
Didst utter deeds, of all true forms the core—
Poet and poem one indivisible fact;
Because thou didst thine own ideal act,
And so, for parchment, on the human soul
Didst write thine aspirations—at thy goal
Thou didst arrive with curses for acclaim,
And cry to God up through a cloud of shame.

XIII.

For three and thirty years, a living seed,
A lonely germ, dropt on our waste world's side,
Thy death and rising thou didst calmly bide;
Sore companied by many a clinging weed
Sprung from the fallow soil of evil and need;
Hither and thither tossed, by friends denied;
Pitied of goodness dull, and scorned of pride;
Until at length was done the awful deed,
And thou didst lie outworn in stony bower
Three days asleep—oh, slumber godlike-brief

For man of sorrows and acquaint with grief!
Life-seed thou diedst, that Death might lose his power,
And thou, with rooted stem and shadowy leaf,
Rise, of humanity the crimson flower.

XIV.

Where dim the ethereal eye, no art, though clear
As golden star in morning's amber springs,
Can pierce the fogs of low imaginings:
Painting and sculpture are a mockery mere.
Where dull to deafness is the hearing ear,
Vain is the poet. Nought but earthly things
Have credence. When the soaring skylark sings
How shall the stony statue strain to hear?
Open the deaf ear, wake the sleeping eye,
And lo, musicians, painters, poets—all
Trooping instinctive, come without a call!
As winds that where they list blow evermore;
As waves from silent deserts roll to die
In mighty voices on the peopled shore.

XV.

Our ears thou openedst; mad'st our eyes to see.
All they who work in stone or colour fair,
Or build up temples of the quarried air,
Which we call music, scholars are of thee.
Henceforth in might of such, the earth shall be
Truth's temple-theatre, where she shall wear
All forms of revelation, all men bear
Tapers in acolyte humility.
O master-maker, thy exultant art
Goes forth in making makers! Pictures? No,
But painters, who in love and truth shall show
Glad secrets from thy God's rejoicing heart.
Sudden, green grass and waving corn up start
When through dead sands thy living waters go.

XVI.

From the beginning good and fair are one,
But men the beauty from the truth will part,
And, though the truth is ever beauty's heart,
After the beauty will, short-breathed, run,
And the indwelling truth deny and shun.
Therefore, in cottage, synagogue, and mart,
Thy thoughts came forth in common speech, not art;
With voice and eye, in Jewish Babylon,
Thou taughtest—not with pen or carved stone,
Nor in thy hand the trembling wires didst take:
Thou of the truth not less than all wouldst make;
For Truth's sake even her forms thou didst disown:
Ere, through the love of beauty, truth shall fail,
The light behind shall burn the broidered veil!

XVII.

Holy of holies, my bare feet draw nigh:
Jesus, thy body is the shining veil
By which I look on God, nor grow death-pale.
I know that in my verses poor may lie
Things low, for see, the thinker is not high!
But were my song as loud as saints' all-hail,
As pure as prophet's cry of warning wail,
As holy as thy mother's ecstasy—
He sings a better, who, for love or ruth,
Into his heart a little child doth take.
Nor thoughts nor feelings, art nor wisdom seal
The man who at thy table bread shall break.
Thy praise was not that thou didst know, or feel,
Or show, or love, but that thou didst the truth

XVIII.

Despised! Rejected by the priest-led roar
Of the multitude! The imperial purple flung

About the form the hissing scourge had stung,
Witnessing naked to the truth it bore!
True son of father true, I thee adore.
Even the mocking purple truthful hung
On thy true shoulders, bleeding its folds among,
For thou wast king, art king for evermore!
I know the Father: he knows me the truth.
Truth-witness, therefore the one essential king,
With thee I die, with thee live worshipping!
O human God, O brother, eldest born,
Never but thee was there a man in sooth,
Never a true crown but thy crown of thorn!

A MEMORIAL OF AFRICA.

I.

UPON a rock I sat—a mountain-side,
Far, far forsaken of the old sea's lip;
A rock where ancient waters' rise and dip,
Recoil and plunge, eddy, and oscillant tide,
Had worn and worn, while races lived and died,
Involved channels. Where the sea-weed's drip
Followed the ebb, now crumbling lichens sip
Sparse dews of heaven that down with sunset slide.
I sat long-gazing southward. A dry flow
Of withering wind sucked up my drooping strength,
Itself weak from the desert's burning length.
Behind me piled, away and up did go
Great sweeps of savage mountains—up, away,
Where snow gleams ever, panthers roam, they say.

II.

This infant world has taken long to make,
Nor hast Thou done with it, but mak'st it yet,
And wilt be working on when death has set
A new mound in some churchyard for my sake.

On flow the centuries without a break;
Uprise the mountains, ages without let;
The lichens suck; the hard rock's breast they fret;
Years more than past, the young earth yet will take.
But in the dumbness of the rolling time,
No veil of silence shall encompass me—
Thou wilt not once forget and let me be;
Rather wouldst thou some old chaotic prime
Invade, and, moved by tenderness sublime,
Unfold a world, that I, thy child, might see.

A. M. D.

METHINKS I see thee, lying straight and low,
Silent and darkling, in thy earthy bed,
The mighty strength in which I trusted, fled,
The long arms lying careless of kiss or blow;
On thy tall form I see the night-robe flow
Down from the pale, composed face—thy head
Crowned with its own dark curls: though thou wast dead,
They dressed thee as for sleep, and left thee so!
My heart, with cares and questionings oppressed,
Not oft since thou didst leave us turns to thee;
But wait, my brother, till I too am dead,
And thou shalt find that heart more true, more free,
More ready in thy love to take its rest,
Than when we lay together in one bed.

TO GARIBALDI—WITH A BOOK.

WHEN at Philippi, he who would have freed
Great Rome from tyrants, for the season brief
That lay 'twixt him and battle, sought relief
From painful thoughts, he in a book did read,

That so the death of Portia might not breed
Unmanful thoughts, and cloud his mind with grief:
Brother of Brutus, of high hearts the chief,
When thou at length receiv'st thy heavenly meed,
And I have found my hoping not in vain,
Tell me my book has wiled away one pang
That out of some lone sacred memory sprang,
Or wrought an hour's forgetfulness of pain,
And I shall rise, my heart brimful of gain,
And thank my God amid the golden clang.

TO S. F. S.

THEY say that lonely sorrows do not chance:
More gently, I think, sorrows together go;
A new one joins the funeral gliding slow
With less of jar than when it breaks the dance.
Grief swages grief, and joy doth joy enhance;
Nature is generous to her children so.
And were they quick to spy the flowers that blow,
As quick to feel the sharp-edged stones that lance
The foot that must walk naked in life's way,—
Blest by the roadside lily, free from fear,
Oftener than hurt by dash of flinty spear,
They would walk upright, bold, and earnest-gay;
And when the soft night closed the weary day,
Would sleep like those that far-off music hear.

RUSSELL GURNEY.

IN that high country whither thou art gone,
Right noble friend, thou walkest with thy peers,
The gathered great of many a hundred years!
Few are left like thee—few, I say, not none,

Else were thy England soon a Babylon,
A land of outcry, mockery, and tears!
Higher than law, a refuge from its fears,
Wast thou, in whom embodied Justice shone.
The smile that gracious broke on thy grand face
Was like the sunrise of a morn serene
Among the mountains, making sweet their awe.
Thou both the gentle and the strong didst draw;
Thee childhood loved, and on thy breast would lean,
As, whence thou cam'st, it knew the lofty place.

TO ONE THREATENED WITH BLINDNESS.

I.

LAWRENCE, what though the world be growing dark,
And twilight cool thy potent day inclose!
The sun, beneath the round earth sunk, still glows
All the night through, sleepless and young and stark.
Oh, be thy spirit faithful as the lark,
More daring: in the midnight of thy woes,
Dart through them, higher than earth's shadow goes,
Into the Light of which thou art a spark!
Be willing to be blind—that, in thy night,
The Lord may bring his Father to thy door,
And enter in, and feast thy soul with light.
Then shalt thou dream of darksome ways no more,
Forget the gloom that round thy windows lies,
And shine, God's house, all radiant in our eyes.

II.

Say thou, his will be done who is the good!
His will be borne who knoweth how to bear!
Who also in the night had need of prayer,
Both when awoke divinely longing mood,

And when the power of darkness him withstood.
For what is coming take no jot of care:
Behind, before, around thee as the air,
He o'er thee like thy mother's heart will brood.
And when thou hast wearied thy wings of prayer,
Then fold them, and drop gently to thy nest,
Which is thy faith; and make thy people blest
With what thou bring'st from that ethereal height,
Which whoso looks on thee will straightway share:
He needs no eyes who is a shining light!

TO AUBREY DE VERE.

RAY OF THE DAWN OF TRUTH, Aubrey de Vere,
Forgive my play fantastic with thy name,
Distilling its true essence by the flame
Which Love 'neath Fancy's limbeck lighteth clear.
I know not what thy semblance, what thy cheer;
If, as thy spirit, hale thy bodily frame,
Or furthering by failure each high aim;
If green thy leaf, or, like mine, growing sear;
But this I think, that thou wilt, by and by—
Two journeys stoutly, therefore safely trod—
We laying down the staff, and He the rod—
So look on me I shall not need to cry—
"We must be brothers, Aubrey, thou and I:
We mean the same thing—will the will of God!"

GENERAL GORDON.

I.

VICTORIOUS through failure! faithful Lord,
Who for twelve angel legions wouldst not pray
From thine own country of eternal day,
To shield thee from the lanterned traitor horde,
Making thy one rash servant sheathe his sword!—

Our long retarded legions, on their way,
Toiling through sands, and shouldering Nile's down-
sway,
To reach thy soldier, keeping at thy word,
Thou sawest foiled—but glorifiedst him,
Over ten cities giving him thy rule!
We will not mourn a star that grew not dim,
A soldier-child of God gone home from school!
A dregless cup, with life brimmed, he did quaff,
And quaffs it now with Christ's imperial staff!

II.

ANOTHER to the witnesses' roll-call
Hath answered, "Here I am!" and so stept out—
With willingness crowned everywhere about,
Not the head only, but the body all,
In one great nimbus of obedient fall,
His heart's blood dashing in the face of doubt—
Love's last victorious stand amid the rout!
—Silence is left, and the untasted gall.
No chariot with ramping steeds of fire
The Father sent to fetch his man-child home;
His brother only called, "My Gordon, come!"
And like a dove to heaven he did aspire,
His one wing Death, his other, Heart's-desire.
—Farewell a while! we climb where thou hast clomb!

THE CHRYSALIS.

METHOUGHT I floated sightless, nor did know
That I had ears until I heard the cry
As of a mighty man in agony:
"How long, Lord, shall I lie thus foul and slow?
The arrows of thy lightning through me go,
And sting and torture me—yet here I lie
A shapeless mass that scarce can mould a sigh!"

The darkness thinned; I saw a thing below
Like sheeted corpse, a knot at head and feet.
Slow clomb the sun the mountains of the dead,
And looked upon the world: the silence broke!
A blinding struggle! then the thunderous beat
Of great exulting pinions stroke on stroke!
And from that world a mighty angel fled.

THE SWEEPER OF THE FLOOR.

METHOUGHT that in a solemn church I stood.
Its marble acres, worn with knees and feet,
Lay spread from door to door, from street to street.
Midway the form hung high upon the rood
Of him who gave his life to be our good;
Beyond, priests flitted, bowed, and murmured meet,
Among the candles shining still and sweet.
Men came and went, and worshipped as they could—
And still their dust a woman with her broom,
Bowed to her work, kept sweeping to the door.
Then saw I, slow through all the pillared gloom,
Across the church a silent figure come:
"Daughter," it said, "thou sweepest well my floor!"
It is the Lord! I cried, and saw no more.

DEATH.

MOURN not, my friends, that we are growing old:
A fresher birth brings every new year in.
Years are Christ's napkins to wipe off the sin.
See now, I'll be to you an angel bold!
My plumes are ruffled, and they shake with cold,
Yet with a trumpet-blast I will begin.
—Ah, no; your listening ears not thus I win!
Yet hear, sweet sisters; brothers, be consoled:—

Behind me comes a shining one indeed;
Christ's friend, who from life's cross did take him down,
And set upon his day night's starry crown!
Death, say'st thou? Nay—thine be no caitiff creed!—
A woman-angel! see—in long white gown!
The mother of our youth!—she maketh speed.

ORGAN SONGS.

ORGAN SONGS.

TO A. J. SCOTT

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM.

I WALKED all night: the darkness did not yield.
Around me fell a mist, a weary rain,
Enduring long. At length the dawn revealed

A temple's front, high-lifted from the plain.
Closed were the lofty doors that led within;
But by a wicket one might entrance gain.

'Twas awe and silence when I entered in;
The night, the weariness, the rain were lost
In hopeful spaces. First I heard a thin

Sweet sound of voices low, together tossed,
As if they sought some harmony to find
Which they knew once, but none of all that host

Could wile the far-fled music back to mind.
Loud voices, distance-low, wandered along
The pillared paths, and up the arches twined

With sister arches, rising, throng on throng,
Up to the roof's dim height. At broken times
The voices gathered to a burst of song,

But parted sudden, and were but single rimes
By single bells through Sabbath morning sent,
That have no thought of harmony or chimes.

Hopeful confusion! Who could be content
Looking and hearkening from the distant door?
I entered further. Solemnly it went—

Thy voice, Truth's herald, walking the untuned roar,
Calm and distinct, powerful and sweet and fine:
I loved and listened, listened and loved more.

May not the faint harp, tremulous, combine
Its ghostlike sounds with organ's mighty tone?
Let my poor song be taken in to thine.

Will not thy heart, with tempests of its own,
Yet hear æolian sighs from thin chords blown?

LIGHT.

FIRST-BORN of the creating Voice!
Minister of God's Spirit, who wast sent
Waiting upon him first, what time he went
Moving about mid the tumultuous noise
Of each unpiloted element
Upon the face of the void formless deep!
Thou who didst come unbodied and alone
Ere yet the sun was set his rule to keep,
Or ever the moon shone,
Or e'er the wandering star-flocks forth were driven!
Thou garment of the Invisible, whose skirt
Sweeps, glory-giving, over earth and heaven!
Thou comforter, be with me as thou wert
When first I longed for words, to be
A radiant garment for my thought, like thee!

We lay us down in sorrow,
Wrapt in the old mantle of our mother Night;
In vexing dreams we strive until the morrow;
Grief lifts our eyelids up—and lo, the light!

The sunlight on the wall! And visions rise
Of shining leaves that make sweet melodies;
Of wind-borne waves with thee upon their crests;
Of rippled sands on which thou rainest down;
Of quiet lakes that smooth for thee their breasts;
Of clouds that show thy glory as their own;
O joy! O joy! the visions are gone by!
Light, gladness, motion, are reality!

Thou art the god of earth. The skylark springs
Far up to catch thy glory on his wings;
And thou dost bless him first that highest soars.
The bee comes forth to see thee; and the flowers
Worship thee all day long, and through the skies
Follow thy journey with their earnest eyes.
River of life, thou pourest on the woods,
And on thy waves float out the wakening buds;
The trees lean toward thee, and, in loving pain,
Keep turning still to see thee yet again;
South sides of pines, haunted all day by thee,
Bear violins that tremble humanly.
And nothing in thine eyes is mean or low:
Where'er thou art, on every side,
All things are glorified;
And where thou canst not come, there thou dost throw
Beautiful shadows, made out of the dark,
That else were shapeless; now it bears thy mark.

And men have worshipped thee.
The Persian, on his mountain-top,
Waits kneeling till thy sun go up,
God-like in his serenity.
All-giving, and none-gifted, he draws near,
And the wide earth waits till his face appear—
Longs patient. And the herald glory leaps
Along the ridges of the outlying clouds,
Climbing the heights of all their towering steeps.

Sudden, still multitudinous laughter crowds
The universal face: lo, silently,
Up cometh he, the never-closing eye!
Symbol of Deity, men could not be
Farthest from truth when they were kneeling unto thee!

Thou plaything of the child,
When from the water's surface thou dost spring,
Thyself upon his chamber ceiling fling,
And there, in mazy dance and motion wild,
Disport thyself—etherial, undefiled,
Capricious, like the thinkings of the child!
I am a child again, to think of thee
In thy consummate glee.
How I would play with thee, athirst to climb
On sloping ladders of thy moted beams,
When through the gray dust darting in long streams!
How marvel at the dusky glimmering red,
With which my closed fingers thou hadst made
Like rainy clouds that curtain the sun's bed!
And how I loved thee always in the moon!
But most about the harvest-time,
When corn and moonlight made a mellow tune,
And thou wast grave and tender as a cooing dove!
And then the stars that flashed cold, deathless love!
And the ghost-stars that shimmered in the tide!
And more mysterious earthly stars,
That shone from windows of the hill and glen—
Thee prisoned in with lattice-bars,
Mingling with household love and rest of weary men!
And still I am a child, thank God!—to spy
Thee starry stream from bit of broken glass
Upon the brown earth undescried,
Is a found thing to me, a gladness high,
A spark that lights joy's altar-fire within,
A thought of hope to prophecy akin,
That from my spirit fruitless will not pass.

Thou art the joy of age:
Thy sun is dear when long the shadow falls.
Forth to its friendliness the old man crawls,
And, like the bird hung out in his poor cage
To gather song from radiance, in his chair
Sits by the door; and sitteth there
His soul within him, like a child that lies
Half dreaming, with half-open eyes,
At close of a long afternoon in summer—
High ruins round him, ancient ruins, where
The raven is almost the only comer—
Half dreams, half broods, in wonderment
At thy celestial ascent
Through rifted loop to light upon the gold
That waves its bloom in some high airy rent:
So dreams the old man's soul, that is not old,
But sleepy mid the ruins that infold.

What soul-like changes, evanescent moods,
Upon the face of the still passive earth,
Its hills, and fields, and woods,
Thou with thy seasons and thy hours art ever calling forth!
Even like a lord of music bent
Over his instrument,
Giving to carol, now to tempest birth!
When, clear as holiness, the morning ray
Casts the rock's dewy darkness at its feet,
Mottling with shadows all the mountain gray;
When, at the hour of sovereign noon,
Infinite silent cataracts sheet
Shadowless through the air of thunder-breeding June;
When now a yellower glory slanting passes
'Twixt longer shadows o'er the meadow grasses;
And now the moon lifts up her shining shield,
High on the peak of a cloud-hill revealed;
Now crescent, low, wandering sun-dazed away,
Unconscious of her own star-mingled ray,

Her still face seeming more to think than see,
Makes the pale world lie dreaming dreams of thee!
No mood, eternal or ephemeral,
But wakes obedient at thy silent call!

Of operative single power,
And simple unity the one emblem,
Yet all the colours that our passionate eyes devour,
In rainbow, moonbow, or in opal gem,
Are the melodious descant of divided thee.
Lo thee in yellow sands! lo thee
In the blue air and sea!
In the green corn, with scarlet poppies lit,
Thy half-souls parted, patient thou dost sit.
Lo thee in dying triumphs of the west!
Lo thee in dew-drop's tiny breast!
Thee on the vast white cloud that floats away,
Bearing upon its skirt a brown moon-ray!
Gold-regent, thou dost spendthrift throw
Thy hoardless wealth of gleam and glow!
The thousand hues and shades upon the flowers
Are all the pastime of thy leisure hours;
The jewelled ores in mines that hidden be,
Are dead till touched by thee.

Everywhere,
Thou art lancing through the air!
Every atom from another
Takes thee, gives thee to his brother;
Continually,
Thou art wetting the wet sea,
Bathing its sluggish woods below,
Making the salt flowers bud and blow;
Silently,
Workest thou, and ardently,
Waking from the night of nought
Into being and to thought;

Influences
Every beam of thine dispenses,
Potent, subtle, reaching far,
Shooting different from each star.
Not an iron rod can lie
In circle of thy beamy eye,
But its look doth change it so
That it cannot choose but show
Thou, the worker, hast been there;
Yea, sometimes, on substance rare,
Thou dost leave thy ghostly mark
Even in what men call the dark.
Ever doing, ever showing,
Thou dost set our hearts a glowing—
Universal something sent
To shadow forth the Excellent!

When the firstborn affections—
Those winged seekers of the world within,
That search about in all directions,
Some bright thing for themselves to win—
Through pathless woods, through home-bred fogs,
Through stony plains, through treacherous bogs,
Long, long, have followed faces fair,
Fair soul-less faces, vanished into air,
And darkness is around them and above,
Desolate of aught to love,
And through the gloom on every side,
Strange dismal forms are dim descried,
And the air is as the breath
From the lips of void-eyed Death,
And the knees are bowed in prayer
To the Stronger than despair—
Then the ever-lifted cry,
Give us light, or we shall die,
Cometh to the Father's ears,
And he hearkens, and he hears:—

As some slow sun would glimmer forth
From sunless winter of the north,
We, hardly trusting hopeful eyes,
Discern and doubt the opening skies.
From a misty gray that lies on
Our dim future's far horizon,
It grows a fresh aurora, sent
Up the spirit's firmament,
Telling, through the vapours dun,
Of the coming, coming sun!
'Tis Truth awaking in the soul!
His Righteousness to make us whole!
And what shall we, this Truth receiving,
Though with but a faint believing,
Call it but eternal Light?
'Tis the morning, 'twas the night!

All things most excellent
Are likened unto thee, excellent thing!
Yea, he who from the Father forth was sent,
Came like a lamp, to bring,
Across the winds and wastes of night,
The everlasting light.
Hail, Word of God, the telling of his thought!
Hail, Light of God, the making-visible!
Hail, far-transcending glory brought
In human form with man to dwell—
Thy dazzling gone; thy power not less
To show, irradiate, and bless;
The gathering of the primal rays divine
Informing chaos, to a pure sunshine!

Dull horrid pools no motion making!
No bubble on the surface breaking!
The dead air lies, without a sound,
Heavy and moveless on the marshy ground.

Rushing winds and snow-like drift,
Forceful, formless, fierce, and swift!
Hair-like vapours madly riven!
Waters smitten into dust!
Lightning through the turmoil driven,
Aimless, useless, yet it must!

Gentle winds through forests calling!
Bright birds through the thick leaves glancing!
Solemn waves on sea-shores falling!
White sails on blue waters dancing!
Mountain streams glad music giving!
Children in the clear pool laving!
Yellow corn and green grass waving!
Long-haired, bright-eyed maidens living!
Light, O radiant, it is thou!
Light!—we know our Father now!

Forming ever without form;
Showing, but thyself unseen;
Pouring stillness on the storm;
Breathing life where death had been!
If thy light thou didst draw in,
Death and Chaos soon were out,
Weltering o'er the slimy sea,
Riding on the whirlwind's rout,
In wild unmaking energy!
God, be round us and within,
Fighting darkness, slaying sin.

Father of Lights, high-lost, unspeakable,
On whom no changing shadow ever fell!
Thy light we know not, are content to see;
Thee we know not, and are content to be!—
Nay, nay! until we know thee, not content are we!
But, when thy wisdom cannot be expressed,
Shall we imagine darkness in thy breast?

Our hearts awake and witness loud for thee!
The very shadows on our souls that lie,
Good witness to the light supernal bear;
The something 'twixt us and the sky
Could cast no shadow if light were not there!
If children tremble in the night,
It is because their God is light!
The shining of the common day
Is mystery still, howe'er it ebb and flow— .
Behind the seeing orb, the secret lies:
Thy living light's eternal play,
Its motions, whence or whither, who shall know?—
Behind the life itself, its fountains rise!
In thee, the Light, the darkness hath no place;
And we *have* seen thee in the Saviour's face.

Enlighten me, O Light!—why art thou such?
Why art thou awful to our eyes, and sweet?
Cherished as love, and slaying with a touch?
Why in thee do the known and unknown meet?
Why swift and tender, strong and delicate?
Simple as truth, yet manifold in might?
Why does one love thee, and another hate?
Why cleave my words to the portals of my speech
When I a goodly matter would indite?
Why mounts my thought of thee beyond my reach?
—In vain to follow thee, I thee beseech,
For God is light.

TO A. J. SCOTT.

WHEN, long ago, the daring of my youth
Drew nigh thy greatness with a little thing,
Thou didst receive me; and thy sky of truth

Has domed me since, a heaven of sheltering,
Made homely by the tenderness and grace
Which round thy absolute friendship ever fling

A radiant atmosphere. Turn not thy face
From that small part of earnest thanks, I pray,
Which, spoken, leaves much more in speechless case.

I see thee far before me on thy way
Up the great peaks, and striding stronger still;
Thy intellect unrivalled in its sway,

Upheld and ordered by a regnant will;
Thy wisdom, seer and priest of holy fate,
Searching all truths its prophecy to fill;

But this my joy: throned in thy heart so great,
High Love is queen, and sits without a mate.

May, 1857.

I WOULD I WERE A CHILD.

I WOULD I were a child,
That I might look, and laugh, and say, My Father!
And follow thee with running feet, or rather
Be led through dark and wild!

How I would hold thy hand,
My glad eyes often to thy glory lifting!
Should darkness 'twixt thy face and mine come drifting,
My heart would but expand.

If an ill thing came near,
I would but creep within thy mantle's folding,
Shut my eyes close, thy hand yet faster holding,
And soon forget my fear.

O soul, O soul, rejoice!
Thou art God's child indeed, for all thy sinning;
A poor weak child, yet his, and worth the winning
With saviour eyes and voice.

Who spake the words? Didst Thou?
They are too good, even for such a giver:
Such water drinking once, I should feel ever
As I had drunk but now.

Yet sure the Word said so,
Teaching our lips to cry with his, Our Father!
Telling the tale of him who once did gather
His goods to him, and go!

Ah, thou dost lead me, God!
But it is dark and starless, the way dreary;
Almost I sleep, I am so very weary
Upon this rough hill-road.

Almost! Nay, I *do* sleep;
There is no darkness save in this my dreaming;
Thy fatherhood above, around, is beaming;
Thy hand my hand doth keep.

With sighs my soul doth teem;
I have no knowledge but that I am sleeping;
Haunted with lies, my life will fail in weeping;
Wake me from this my dream.

How long shall heavy night
Deny the day? How long shall this dull sorrow
Say in my heart that never any morrow
Will bring the friendly light?

Lord, art thou in the room?
Come near my bed; oh, draw aside the curtain!
A child's heart would say *Father*, were it certain
That it would not presume.

But if this dreary sleep
May not be broken, help thy helpless sleeper
To rest in thee; so shall his sleep grow deeper—
For evil dreams too deep.

Father! I dare at length;
My childhood sure will hold me free from blaming:
Sinful yet hoping, I to thee come, claiming
Thy tenderness, my strength.

A PRAYER FOR THE PAST.

ALL sights and sounds of day and year,
All groups and forms, each leaf and gem,
Are thine, O God, nor will I fear
To talk to thee of them.

Too great thy heart is to despise,
Whose day girds centuries about;
From things which we name small, thine eyes
See great things looking out.

Therefore the prayerful song I sing
May come to thee in ordered words;
Though lowly born, it needs not cling
In terror to its chords.

I think that nothing made is lost;
That not a moon has ever shone,
That not a cloud my eyes hath crossed
But to my soul is gone.

That all the lost years garnered lie
In this thy casket, my dim soul;
And thou wilt, once, the key apply,
And show the shining whole.

But were they dead in me, they live
In thee, whose Parable is—Time,
And Worlds, and Forms—all things that give
Me thoughts, and this my rime.

And after what men call my death,
When I have crossed the unknown sea,
Some heavenly morn, on hopeful breath,
Shall rise this prayer to thee.

Oh let me be a child once more,
And dream fine glories in the gloom,
Of sun and moon and stars in store
To ceil my humble room.

Oh call again the moons that crossed
Blue gulfs, behind gray vapours crept;
Show me the solemn skies I lost
Because in thee I slept.

Once more let gathering glory swell,
And lift the world's dim eastern eye;
Once more let lengthening shadows tell
Its time is come to die.

But show me first—oh, blessed sight!
The lowly house where I was young;
There winter sent wild winds at night,
And up the snow-heaps flung;

Or soundless brought a chaos fair,
Full, formless, of fantastic forms,
White ghostly trees in sparkling air—
Chamber for slumbering storms.

There sudden dawned a dewy morn;
A man was turning up the mould;
And in our hearts the spring was born,
Crept thither through the cold.

And Spring, in after years of youth,
Became the form of every form
For hearts now bursting into truth,
Now sighing in the storm.

On with the glad year let me go,
With troops of daisies round my feet;
Flying my kite, or, in the glow
Of arching summer heat,

Outstretched in fear upon a bank,
Lest, gazing up on awful space,
I should fall down into the blank,
From off the round world's face.

And let my brothers come with me
To play our old games yet again,
Children on earth, more full of glee
That we in heaven are men.

If then should come the shadowy death,
Take one of us and go,
We left would say, under our breath,
"It is a dream, you know!

"And in the dream our brother's gone
Upstairs: he heard our father call;
For one by one we go alone,
Till he has gathered all."

Father, in joy our knees we bow:
This earth is not a place of tombs:
We are but in the nursery now;
They in the upper rooms.

For are we not at home in thee,
And all this world a visioned show;
That, knowing what Abroad is, we
What Home is too may know?

And at thy feet I sit, O Lord,
As once of old, in moonlight pale,
I at my father's sat, and heard
Him read a lofty tale.

On with my history let me go,
And reap again the gliding years,
Gather great noontide's joyous glow,
Eve's love-contented tears;

One afternoon sit pondering
In that old chair, in that old room,
Where passing pigeon's sudden wing
Flashed lightning through the gloom;

There try once more, with effort vain,
To mould in one perplexed things;
There find the solace yet again
Hope in the Father brings;

Or mount and ride in sun and wind,
Through desert moors, hills bleak and high,
Where wandering vapours fall, and find
In me another sky!

For so thy Visible grew mine,
Though half its power I could not know;
And in me wrought a work divine,
Which thou hadst ordered so;

Giving me cups that would not spill,
But water carry and yield again;
New bottles with new wine to fill
For comfort of thy men.

But if thou thus restore the past
One hour, for me to wander in,
I now bethink me at the last—
O Lord, leave out the sin.

And with the thought comes doubt, my God:
Shall I the whole desire to see,
And walk once more, of that hill-road
By which I went to thee?

Now far from my old northern land,
I live where gentle winters pass;
Where green seas lave a wealthy strand,
And unsown is the grass;

Where gorgeous sunsets claim the scope
Of gazing heaven to spread their show,
Hang scarlet clouds in the topmost cope,
With fringes flaming low;

With one beside me in whose eyes
Once more old Nature finds a home;
There treasures up her changeful skies,
Her phosphorescent foam.

O'er a new joy this day we bend,
Soft power from heaven our souls to lift;
A wondering wonder thou dost lend
With loan outpassing gift—

A little child. She sees the sun—
Once more incarnates thy old law:
One born of two, two born in one,
Shall into one three draw.

But is there no day creeping on
Which I should tremble to renew?
I thank thee, Lord, for what is gone—
Thine is the future too!

And are we not at home in thee,
And all this world a visioned show,
That, knowing what Abroad is, we
What Home is too may know?

LONGING.

My heart is full of inarticulate pain,
And beats laborious. Cold ungenial looks
Invade my sanctuary. Men of gain,
Wise in success, well-read in feeble books,
No nigher come, I pray: your air is drear;
'Tis winter and low skies when ye appear.

Beloved, who love beauty and fair truth,
Come nearer me; too near ye cannot come;
Make me an atmosphere with your sweet youth;
Give me your souls to breathe in, a large room;
Speak not a word, for, see, my spirit lies
Helpless and dumb; shine on me with your eyes.

O all wide places, far from feverous towns;
Great shining seas; pine forests; mountains wild;
Rock-bosomed shores; rough heaths, and sheep-cropt downs;
Vast pallid clouds; blue spaces undefiled—
Room! give me room! give loneliness and air—
Free things and plenteous in your regions fair!

White dove of David, flying overhead,
Golden with sunlight on thy snowy wings,
Outspeeding thee my longing thoughts are fled
To find a home afar from men of things;
Where in his temple, earth o'erarched with sky,
God's heart to mine may speak, my heart reply.

O God of mountains, stars, and boundless spaces,
O God of freedom and of joyous hearts,
When thy face looketh forth from all men's faces,
There will be room enough in crowded marts!
Brood thou around me, and the noise is o'er,
Thy universe my closet with shut door.

Heart, heart, awake! The love that loveth all
  Maketh a deeper calm than Horeb's cave.
God in thee, can his children's folly gall?
  Love may be hurt, but shall not love be brave?—
Thy holy silence sinks in dews of balm;
Thou art my solitude, my mountain-calm!

I KNOW WHAT BEAUTY IS.

I KNOW what beauty is, for thou
  Hast set the world within my heart;
  Of me thou madest it a part;
I never loved it more than now.

I know the Sabbath afternoons;
  The light asleep upon the graves:
  Against the sky the poplar waves;
The river murmurs organ tunes.

I know the spring with bud and bell;
  The hush in summer woods at night;
  Autumn, when trees let in more light;
Fantastic winter's lovely spell.

I know the rapture music gives,
  Its mystery of ordered tones:
  Dream-muffled soul, it loves and moans,
And, half-alive, comes in and lives.

And verse I know, whose concord high
  Of thought and music lifts the soul
  Where many a glimmering starry shoal
Glides through the Godhead's living sky.

Yea, Beauty's regnant All I know—
  The imperial head, the thoughtful eyes;
  The God-imprisoned harmonies
That out in gracious motions go.

But I leave all, O Son of man,
  Put off my shoes, and come to thee!
  Most lovely thou of all I see,
Most potent thou of all that can!

As child forsakes his favourite toy,
  His sisters' sport, his new-found nest,
  And, climbing to his mother's breast,
Enjoys yet more his late-left joy—

I lose to find. On fair-browed bride
  Fair pearls their fairest light afford;
  So, gathered round thy glory, Lord,
All glory else is glorified.

SYMPATHY.

GRIEF held me silent in my seat;
  I neither moved nor smiled:
Joy held her silent at my feet,
  My shining lily-child.

She raised her face and looked in mine;
  She deemed herself denied;
The door was shut, there was no shine;
  Poor she was left outside!

Once, twice, three times, with infant grace
  Her lips my name did mould;
Her face was pulling at my face—
  She was but ten months old.

I saw; the sight rebuked my sighs;
  It made me think—Does God
Need help from his poor children's eyes
  To ease him of his load?

Ah, if he did, how seldom then
The Father would be glad!
If comfort lay in the eyes of men,
He little comfort had!

We cry to him in evil case,
When comfort sore we lack;
And when we troubled seek his face,
Consoled he sends us back;

Nor waits for prayer to rise and climb—
He wakes the sleeping prayer;
He is our father all the time,
And servant everywhere.

I looked not up; foreboding hid
Kept down my heart the while;
'Twas he looked up; my Father did
Smile in my infant's smile.

THE THANK-OFFERING.

My Lily snatches not my gift;
Glad is she to be fed,
But to her mouth she will not lift
The piece of broken bread,
Till on my lips, unerring, swift,
The morsel she has laid.

This is her grace before her food,
This her libation poured;
Even thus his offering, Aaron good
Heaved up to thank the Lord,
When for the people all he stood,
And with a cake adored.

So, Father, every gift of thine
I offer at thy knee;
Else take I not the love divine
With which it comes to me;
Not else the offered grace is mine
Of sharing life with thee.

Yea, all my being I would bring,
Yielding it utterly,
Not yet a full-possessed thing
Till heaved again to thee:
Away, my self! away, and cling
To him that makes thee be!

PRAYER.

WE doubt the word that tells us: Ask,
And ye shall have your prayer;
We turn our thoughts as to a task,
With will constrained and rare.

And yet we have; these scanty prayers
Yield gold without alloy:
O God, but he that trusts and dares
Must have a boundless joy!

REST.

I.

WHEN round the earth the Father's hands
Have gently drawn the dark;
Sent off the sun to fresher lands,
And curtained in the lark;
'Tis sweet, all tired with glowing day,
To fade with fading light,
And lie once more, the old weary way,
Upfolded in the night.

If mothers o'er our slumbers bend,
And unripe kisses reap,
In soothing dreams with sleep they blend,
Till even in dreams we sleep.
And if we wake while night is dumb,
'Tis sweet to turn and say,
It is an hour ere dawning come,
And I will sleep till day.

II.

There is a dearer, warmer bed,
Where one all day may lie,
Earth's bosom pillowing the head,
And let the world go by.
There come no watching mother's eyes,
The stars instead look down;
Upon it breaks, and silent dies,
The murmur of the town.

The great world, shouting, forward fares:
This chamber, hid from none,
Hides safe from all, for no one cares
For him whose work is done.
Cheer thee, my friend; bethink thee how
A certain unknown place,
Or here or there, is waiting now,
To rest thee from thy race.

III.

Nay, nay, not there the rest from harms,
The still composed breath!
Not there the folding of the arms,
The cool, the blessed death!
That needs no curtained bed to hide
The world with all its wars,

No grassy cover to divide
From sun and moon and stars.

It is a rest that deeper grows
In midst of pain and strife;
A mighty, conscious, willed repose,
The death of deepest life.
To have and hold the precious prize
No need of jealous bars;
But windows open to the skies,
And skill to read the stars!

IV.

Who dwelleth in that secret place,
Where tumult enters not,
Is never cold with terror base,
Never with anger hot.
For if an evil host should dare
His very heart invest,
God is his deeper heart, and there
He enters in to rest.

When mighty sea-winds madly blow,
And tear the scattered waves,
Peaceful as summer woods, below
Lie darkling ocean caves:
The wind of words may toss my heart,
But what is that to me!
'Tis but a surface storm—thou art
My deep, still, resting sea.

O DO NOT LEAVE ME.

O DO not leave me, mother, lest I weep;
Till I forget, be near me in that chair.
The mother's presence leads her down to sleep—
Leaves her contented there.

O do not leave me, lover, brother, friends,
Till I am dead, and resting in my place.
Love-compassed thus, the girl in peace ascends,
And leaves a raptured face.

Leave me not, God, until—nay, until when?
Not till I have with thee one heart, one mind;
Not till the Life is Light in me, and then
Leaving is left behind.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.

A QUIET heart, submissive, meek,
Father, do thou bestow,
Which more than granted, will not seek
To have, or give, or know.

Each little hill then holds its gift
Forth to my joying eyes;
Each mighty mountain then doth lift
My spirit to the skies.

Lo, then the running water sounds
With gladsome, secret things!
The silent water more abounds,
And more the hidden springs.

Live murmurs then the trees will blend
With all the feathered song;
The waving grass low tribute lend
Earth's music to prolong.

The sun will cast great crowns of light
On waves that anthems roar;
The dusky billows break at night
In flashes on the shore.

Each harebell, each white lily's cup,
The hum of hidden bee,
Yea, every odour floating up,
The insect revelry—

Each hue, each harmony divine
The holy world about.
Its soul will send forth into mine,
My soul to widen out.

And thus the great earth I shall hold,
A perfect gift of thine;
Richer by these, a thousandfold,
Than if broad lands were mine.

HYMN FOR A SICK GIRL.

FATHER, in the dark I lay,
Thirsting for the light,
Helpless, but for hope alway
In thy father-might.

Out of darkness came the morn,
Out of death came life,
I, and faith, and hope, new-born,
Out of moaning strife!

So, one morning yet more fair,
I shall, joyous-brave,
Sudden breathing loftier air,
Triumph o'er the grave.

Though this feeble body lie
Underneath the ground,
Wide awake, not sleeping, I
Shall in him be found.

But a morn yet fairer must
  Quell this inner gloom—
Resurrection from the dust
  Of a deeper tomb!

Father, wake thy little child;
  Give me bread and wine
Till my spirit undefiled
  Rise and live in thine.

WRITTEN FOR ONE IN SORE PAIN.

SHEPHERD, on before thy sheep,
  Hear thy lamb that bleats behind!
Scarce the track I stumbling keep!
  Through my thin fleece blows the wind!

Turn and see me, Son of Man!
  Turn and lift thy Father's child;
Scarce I walk where once I ran:
  Carry me—the wind is wild!

Thou art strong—thy strength wilt share;
  My poor weight thou wilt not feel;
Weakness made thee strong to bear,
  Suffering made thee strong to heal!

I were still a wandering sheep
  But for thee, O Shepherd-man!
Following now, I faint, I weep,
  Yet I follow as I can!

Shepherd, if I fall and lie
  Moaning in the frosty wind,
Yet, I know, I shall not die—
  Thou wilt miss me—and wilt find!

A CHRISTMAS CAROL FOR 1862,

THE YEAR OF THE TROUBLE IN LANCASHIRE.

THE skies are pale, the trees are stiff,
The earth is dull and old;
The frost is glittering as if
The very sun were cold.
And hunger fell is joined with frost,
To make men thin and wan:
Come, babe, from heaven, or we are lost;
Be born, O child of man.

The children cry, the women shake,
The strong men stare about;
They sleep when they should be awake,
They wake ere night is out.
For they have lost their heritage—
No sweat is on their brow:
Come, babe, and bring them work and wage;
Be born, and save us now.

Across the sea, beyond our sight,
Roars on the fierce debate;
The men go down in bloody fight,
The women weep and hate;
And in the right be which that may,
Surely the strife is long!
Come, son of man, thy righteous way,
And right will have no wrong.

Good men speak lies against thine own—
Tongue quick, and hearing slow;
They will not let thee walk alone,
And think to serve thee so:
If they the children's freedom saw
In thee, the children's king,
They would be still with holy awe,
Or only speak to sing.

Some neither lie nor starve nor fight,
Nor yet the poor deny;
But in their hearts all is not right,—
They often sit and sigh.
We need thee every day and hour,
In sunshine and in snow:
Child-king, we pray with all our power—
Be born, and save us so.

We are but men and women, Lord;
Thou art a gracious child!
O fill our hearts, and heap our board,
Pray thee—the winter's wild!
The sky is sad, the trees are bare,
Hunger and hate about:
Come, child, and ill deeds and ill fare
Will soon be driven out.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BABE Jesus lay in Mary's lap,
The sun shone in his hair;
And this was how she saw, mayhap,
The crown already there.

For she sang: "Sleep on, my little king;
Bad Herod dares not come;
Before thee sleeping, holy thing,
The wild winds would be dumb.

"I kiss thy hands, I kiss thy feet,
My child, so long desired;
Thy hands will never be soiled, my sweet;
Thy feet will never be tired.

"For thou art the king of men, my son;
Thy crown I see it plain!
And men shall worship thee, every one,
And cry, Glory! Amen!"

Babe Jesus he opened his eyes wide—
  At Mary looked her lord.
Mother Mary stinted her song and sighed;
  Babe Jesus said never a word.

THE SLEEPLESS JESUS.

'Tis time to sleep, my little boy:
  Why gaze thy bright eyes so?
At night our children, for new joy
  Home to thy father go,
But thou art wakeful! Sleep, my child;
  The moon and stars are gone;
The wind is up and raving wild,
  But thou art smiling on!

My child, thou hast immortal eyes
  That see by their own light;
They see the children's blood—it lies
  Red-glowing through the night!
Thou hast an ever-open ear
  For sob or cry or moan:
Thou seemest not to see or hear,
  Thou only smilest on!

When first thou camest to the earth,
  All sounds of strife were still;
A silence lay about thy birth,
  And thou didst sleep thy fill:
Thou wakest now—why weep'st thou not?
  Thy earth is woe-begone;
Both babes and mothers wail their lot,
  But still thou smilest on!

I read thy face like holy book;
  No hurt is pictured there;
Deep in thine eyes I see the look
  Of one who answers prayer.

Beyond pale grief and wild uproars,
  Thou seest God's will well done;
Low prayers, through chambers' closed doors,
  Thou hear'st—and smilest on.

Men say: "I will arise and go;"
  God says: "I will go meet:"
Thou seest them gather, weeping low,
  About the Father's feet;
And each for each begin to bear,
  And standing lonely none:
Answered, O eyes, ye see all prayer!
  Smile, Son of God, smile on.

CHRISTMAS, 1873.

CHRISTMAS-DAYS are still in store:—
  Will they change—steal faded hither?
Or come fresh as heretofore,
  Summering all our winter weather?

Surely they will keep their bloom
  All the countless pacing ages:
In the country whence they come
  Children only are the sages!

Hither, every hour and year,
  Children come to cure our oldness—
Oft, alas, to gather sear
  Unbelief, and earthy boldness!

Men they grow and women cold,
  Selfish, passionate, and plaining!
Ever faster they grow old:—
  On the world, ah, eld is gaining!

Child, whose childhood ne'er departs!
  Jesus, with the perfect father!
Drive the age from parents' hearts;
  To thy heart the children gather.

Send thy birth into our souls,
  With its grand and tender story.
Hark! the gracious thunder rolls!—
  News to men! to God old glory!

CHRISTMAS, 1884.

THOUGH in my heart no Christmas glee,
  Though my song-bird be dumb,
Jesus, it is enough for me
  That thou art come.

What though the loved be scattered far,
  Few at the board appear,
In thee, O Lord, they gathered are,
  And thou art here.

And if our hearts be low with lack,
  They are not therefore numb;
Not always will thy day come back—
  Thyself will come!

AN OLD STORY.

I.

IN the ancient house of ages,
  See, they cannot rest!
With a hope, which awe assuages,
  Tremble all the blest.
For the son and heir eternal,
  To be son yet more,
Leaves his stately chair supernal
  For the earth's low floor;

Leaves the room so high and old,
  Leaves the all-world hearth,
Seeks the out-air, frosty-cold,
  Of the twilight earth—
To be throned in newer glory
  In a mother's lap,
Gather up our broken story,
  And right every hap.

II.

There Earth's foster-baby lies,
  Sleep-dimmed all his graces,
'Neath four stars of parents' eyes,
  And two heavens of faces!
See! the cow and ass, dumb-staring,
  Feel the skirts of good
Fold them in dull-blessed sharing
  Of infinitude.

Make a little room betwixt you,
  Pray you, Ass and Cow!
Sure we shall, if I kneel next you,
  Know each other now!
To the pit-fallen comes salvation—
  Love is never loath!
Here we are, thy whole creation,
  Waiting, Lord, thy growth!

III.

On the slopes of Bethlehem,
  Round their resting sheep,
Shepherds sat, and went and came,
  Guarding holy sleep;
But the silent, high dome-spaces,
  Airy galleries,
Thronged they were with watching faces,
  Thronged with open eyes.

Far across the desert floor,
  Come, slow-drawing nigher,
Sages deep in starry lore,
  Priests of burning Fire.
In the sky they read his story.
  And, through starlight cool,
They come riding to the Glory,
  To the Wonderful.

IV.

Babe and mother, coming mage,
  Shepherd, ass, and cow!
Angels watching the new age,
  Time's intensest Now!
Heaven down-brooding, Earth upstraining,
  Far ends closing in!
Sure the eternal tide is gaining
  On the strand of sin!

See! but see! Heaven's chapel-master
  Signs with lifted hand;
Winds divine blow fast and faster,
  Swelling bosoms grand.
Hark the torrent-joy let slip!
  Hark the great throats ring!
Glory! Peace! Good-fellowship!
  And a Child for king!

A SONG FOR CHRISTMAS.

HARK, in the steeple the dull bell swinging
  Over the furrows ill ploughed by Death!
Hark the bird-babble, the loud lark singing!
  Hark, from the sky, what the prophet saith!

Hark, in the pines, the free Wind, complaining—
  Moaning, and murmuring, "Life is bare!"
Hark, in the organ, the caught Wind, outstraining,
  Jubilant rise in a soaring prayer!

Toll for the burying, sexton tolling!
  Sing for the second birth, angel Lark!
Moan, ye poor Pines, with the Past condoling!
  Burst out, brave Organ, and kill the Dark!

II.

Sit on the ground, and immure thy sorrow;
  I will give freedom to mine in song!
Haunt thou the tomb, and deny the morrow;
  I will go watch in the dawning long!

For I shall see them, and know their faces—
  Tenderer, sweeter, and shining more;
Clasp the old self in the new embraces;
  Gaze through their eyes' wide open door.

Loved ones, I come to you: see my sadness;
  I am ashamed—but you pardon wrong!
Smile the old smile, and my soul's new gladness
  Straight will arise in sorrow and song!

TO MY AGING FRIENDS.

It is no winter night comes down
  Upon our hearts, dear friends of old;
But a May evening, softly brown,
  Whose wind is rather cold.

We are not, like yon sad-eyed West,
  Phantoms that brood o'er Time's dust-hoard,
We are like yon Moon—in mourning drest,
  But gazing on her lord.

Come nearer to the hearth, sweet friends,
  Draw nigher, closer, hand and chair;
Ours is a love that never ends,
  For God is dearest there!

We will not talk about the past,
  We will not ponder ancient pain;
Those are but deep foundations cast
  For peaks of soaring gain!

We, waiting Dead, will warm our bones
  At our poor smouldering earthly fire;
And talk of wide-eyed living ones
  Who have what we desire.

O Living, ye know what is death—
  We, by and by, shall know it too!
Humble, with bated, hoping breath,
  We are coming fast to you!

CHRISTMAS SONG OF THE OLD CHILDREN.

WELL for youth to seek the strong,
  Beautiful, and brave!
We, the old, who walk along
  Gently to the grave,
Only pay our court to thee,
Child of all Eternity!

We are old who once were young,
  And we grow more old;
Songs we are that have been sung,
  Tales that have been told;
Yellow leaves, wind-blown to thee,
Childhood of Eternity!

If we come too sudden near,
  Lo, Earth's infant cries,
For our faces wan and drear
  Have such withered eyes!
Thou, Heaven's child, turn'st not away
From the wrinkled ones who pray!

Smile upon us with thy mouth
  And thine eyes of grace;
On our cold north breathe thy south,
  Thaw the frozen face:
Childhood all from thee doth flow—
Melt to song our age's snow.

Gray-haired children come in crowds,
  Thee, their Hope, to greet:
Is it swaddling clothes or shrouds
  Hampering so our feet?
Eldest child, the shadows gloom
Take the aged children home.

We have had enough of play,
  And the wood grows drear;
Many who at break of day
  Companied us here—
They have vanished out of sight,
Gone and met the coming light!

Fair is this out-world of thine,
  But its nights are cold;
And the sun that makes it fine
  Makes us soon so old!
Long its shadows grow and dim—
Father, take us back with him!

1891.

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION.

He who by a mother's love
  Made the wandering world his own,
Every year comes from above,
  Comes the parted to atone,
  Binding Earth to the Father's throne.

Nay, thou comest every day!
  No, thou never didst depart!
Never hour hast been away!
  Always with us, Lord, thou art,
  Binding, binding heart to heart!

THE OLD CASTLE.

The brother knew well the castle old,
  Every closet, each outlook fair,
Every turret and bartizan bold,
  Every chamber, garnished or bare.
  The brother was out in the heavenly air;
Little ones lost the starry way,
  Wandered down the dungeon stair.
The brother missed them, and on the clay
  Of the dungeon-floor he found them all.
  Up they jumped when they heard him call!
He led the little ones into the day—
Out and up to the sunshine gay,
  Up to the father's own door-sill—
    In at the father's own room door,
There to be merry and work and play,
  There to come and go at their will,
    Good boys and girls to be lost no more!

CHRISTMAS PRAYER.

Cold my heart, and poor, and low,
  Like thy stable in the rock;

Do not let it orphan go,
  It is of thy parent stock!
Come thou in, and it will grow
  High and wide, a fane divine;
Like the ruby it will glow,
  Like the diamond shine!

SONG OF THE INNOCENTS.

MERRY, merry we well may be,
For Jesus Christ is come down to see!
Long before, at the top of the stair,
He set our angels a waiting there,
Waiting hither and thither to fly,
Tending the children of the sky,
Lest they dash little feet against big stones,
And tumble down and break little bones;
For the path is rough, and we must not roam;
We have learned to walk, and must follow him home!

CHRISTMAS DAY AND EVERY DAY.

STAR high,
Baby low:
'Twixt the two
Wise men go;
Find the baby,
Grasp the star—
Heirs of all things
Near and far!

THE CHILDREN'S HEAVEN.

THE infant lies in blessed ease
  Upon his mother's breast;
No storm, no dark, the baby sees
  Invade his heaven of rest.

He nothing knows of change or death—
  Her face his holy skies;
The air he breathes, his mother's breath;
  His stars, his mother's eyes!

Yet half the soft winds wandering there
  Are sighs that come of fears;
The dew slow falling through that air—
  It is the dew of tears;
And ah, my child, thy heavenly home
  Hath storms as well as dew;
Black clouds fill sometimes all its dome,
  And quench the starry blue!

"My smile would win no smile again,
  If baby saw the things
That ache across his mother's brain
  The while to him she sings!
Thy faith in me is faith in vain—
  I am not what I seem:
O dreary day, O cruel pain,
  That wakes thee from thy dream!"

Nay, pity not his dreams so fair,
  Fear thou no waking grief;
Oh, safer he than though thou were
  Good as his vague belief!
There is a heaven that heaven above
  Whereon he gazes now;
A truer love than in thy kiss;
  A better friend than thou!

The Father's arms fold like a nest
  Both thee and him about;
His face looks down, a heaven of rest,
  Where comes no dark, no doubt.

Its mists are clouds of stars that move
On, on, with progress rife;
Its winds, the goings of his love;
Its dew, the dew of life.

We for our children seek thy heart,
For them we lift our eyes:
Lord, should their faith in us depart,
Let faith in thee arise.
When childhood's visions them forsake,
To women grown and men,
Back to thy heart their hearts oh take,
And bid them dream again.

REJOICE.

"REJOICE," said the Sun; "I will make thee gay
With glory and gladness and holiday;
I am dumb, O man, and I need thy voice!"
But man would not rejoice.

"Rejoice in thyself," said he, "O Sun,
For thy daily course is a lordly one;
In thy lofty place rejoice if thou can:
For me, I am only a man."

"Rejoice," said the Wind; "I am free and strong,
And will wake in thy heart an ancient song;
Hear the roaring woods, my organ noise!"
But man would not rejoice.

"Rejoice, O Wind, in thy strength," said he,
"For thou fulfillest thy destiny;
Shake the forest, the faint flowers fan:
For me, I am only a man."

"Rejoice," said the Night, "with moon and star
For the Sun and the Wind are gone afar;
I am here with rest and dreaming choice!"
But man would not rejoice;

For he said—"What is rest to me, I pray,
Whose labour leads to no gladsome day?
He only can dream who has hope behind:
Alas for me and my kind!"

Then a voice that came not from moon or star,
From the sun, or the wind that roved afar,
Said, "Man, I am with thee—hear my voice!"
And man said, "I rejoice."

THE GRACE OF GRACE.

HAD I the grace to win the grace
  Of some old man in lore complete,
My face would worship at his face,
  And I sit lowly at his feet.

Had I the grace to win the grace
  Of childhood, loving shy, apart,
The child should find a nearer place,
  And teach me resting on my heart.

Had I the grace to win the grace
  Of maiden living all above,
My soul would trample down the base,
  That she might have a man to love.

A grace I had no grace to win
  Knocks now at my half open door:
Ah, Lord of glory, come thou in!—
  Thy grace divine is all, and more.

ANTIPHON.

DAYLIGHT fades away.
  Is the Lord at hand
In the shadows gray
  Stealing on the land?

Gently from the east
  Come the shadows gray;
But our lowly priest
  Nearer is than they.

It is darkness quite.
  Is the Lord at hand,
In the cloak of night
  Stolen upon the land?

But I see no night,
  For my Lord is here
With him dark is light,
  With him far is near.

List! the cock's awake.
  Is the Lord at hand?
Cometh he to make
  Light in all the land?

Long ago he made
  Morning in my heart;
Long ago he bade
    Shadowy things depart.

Lo, the dawning hill!
  Is the Lord at hand,
Come to scatter ill,
  Ruling in the land?

He hath scattered ill,
Ruling in my mind;
Growing to his will,
Freedom comes, I find.

We will watch all day,
Lest the Lord should come;
All night waking stay
In the darkness dumb.

I will work all day,
For the Lord hath come;
Down my head will lay
All night, glad and dumb.

For we know not when
Christ may be at hand;
But we know that then
Joy is in the land.

For I know that where
Christ hath come again,
Quietness without care
Dwelleth in his men.

DORCAS.

If I might guess, then guess I would
That, mid the gathered folk,
This gentle Dorcas one day stood,
And heard when Jesus spoke.

She saw the woven seamless coat—
Half envious, for his sake:
"Oh, happy hands," she said, "that wrought
The honoured thing to make!"

Her eyes with longing tears grow dim:
She never can come nigh
To work one service poor for him
For whom she glad would die!

But, hark, he speaks! Oh, precious word!
And she has heard indeed!
"When did we see thee naked, Lord,
And clothed thee in thy need?

"The King shall answer, Inasmuch
As to my brethren ye
Did it—even to the least of such—
Ye did it unto me."

Home, home she went, and plied the loom,
And Jesus' poor arrayed.
She died—they wept about the room,
And showed the coats she made.

MARRIAGE SONG.

"THEY have no more wine!" she said.
But they had enough of bread;
And the vessels by the door
Held for thirst a plenteous store:
Yes, *enough;* but Love divine
Turned the water into wine!

When should wine like water flow,
But when home two glad hearts go!
When, in sacred bondage bound,
Soul in soul hath freedom found!
Such the time when, holy sign,
Jesus turned the water wine.

Good is all the feasting then;
Good the merry words of men;
Good the laughter and the smiles;
Good the wine that grief beguiles;—
Crowning good, the Word divine
Turning water into wine!

Friends, the Master with you dwell!
Daily work this miracle!
When fair things too common grow,
Bring again their heavenly show!
Ever at your table dine,
Turning water into wine!

So at last you shall descry
All the patterns of the sky:
Earth a heaven of short abode;
Houses temples unto God;
Water-pots, to vision fine,
Brimming full of heavenly wine.

BLIND BARTIMEUS.

As Jesus went into Jericho town,
'Twas darkness all, from toe to crown,
About blind Bartimeus.
He said, "My eyes are more than dim,
They are no use for seeing him:
No matter—he can see us!"

"Cry out, cry out, blind brother—cry;
Let not salvation dear go by.—
Have mercy, Son of David."
Though they were blind, they both could hear—
They heard, and cried, and he drew near;
And so the blind were saved.

O Jesus Christ, I am very blind;
Nothing comes through into my mind;
'Tis well I am not dumb:
Although I see thee not, nor hear,
I cry because thou may'st be near:
O son of Mary, come!

I hear it through the all things blind:
Is it thy voice, so gentle and kind—
"Poor eyes, no more be dim"?
A hand is laid upon mine eyes;
I hear, and hearken, see, and rise;—
'Tis He! I follow him!

COME UNTO ME.

COME unto me, the Master says:—
But how? I am not good;
No thankful song my heart will raise,
Nor even wish it could.

I am not sorry for the past,
Nor able not to sin;
The weary strife would ever last
If once I should begin!

Hast thou no burden then to bear?
No action to repent?
Is all around so very fair?
Is thy heart quite content?

Hast thou no sickness in thy soul?
No labour to endure?
Then go in peace, for thou art whole;
Thou needest not his cure.

Ah, mock me not! I often sigh;
I have a nameless grief,
A faint sad pain—but such that I
Can look for no relief.

Come, come to him who made thy heart;
Come weary and oppressed;
To come to Jesus is thy part,
His part to give thee rest.

New grief, new hope he will bestow,
Thy grief and pain to quell;
Into thy heart himself will go,
And that will make thee well.

MORNING HYMN.

O LORD of life, thy quickening voice
Awakes my morning song!
In gladsome words I would rejoice
That I to thee belong.

I see thy light, I feel thy wind;
The world, it is thy word;
Whatever wakes my heart and mind,
Thy presence is, my Lord.

The living soul which I call me
Doth love, and long to know;
It is a thought of living thee,
Nor forth of thee can go.

Therefore I choose my highest part,
And turn my face to thee;
Therefore I stir my inmost heart
To worship fervently.

Lord, let me live and will this day—
  Keep rising from the dead;
Lord, make my spirit good and gay—
  Give me my daily bread.

Within my heart, speak, Lord, speak on,
  My heart alive to keep,
Till comes the night, and, labour done,
  In thee I fall asleep.

NOONTIDE HYMN.

I LOVE thy skies, thy sunny mists,
  Thy fields, thy mountains hoar,
Thy wind that bloweth where it lists—
  Thy will, I love it more.

I love thy hidden truth to seek
  All round, in sea, on shore;
The arts whereby like gods we speak—
  Thy will to me is more.

I love thy men and women, Lord,
  The children round thy door;
Calm thoughts that inward strength afford—
  Thy will than these is more.

But when thy will my life doth hold
  Thine to the very core,
The world, which that same will doth mould,
  I love, then, ten times more!

EVENING HYMN.

O GOD, whose daylight leadeth down
  Into the sunless way,
Who with restoring sleep dost crown
  The labour of the day!

What I have done, Lord, make it clean
With thy forgiveness dear;
That so to-day what might have been,
To-morrow may appear.

And when my thought is all astray,
Yet think thou on in me;
That with the new-born innocent day
My soul rise fresh and free.

Nor let me wander all in vain
Through dreams that mock and flee;
But even in visions of the brain,
Go wandering toward thee.

THE HOLY MIDNIGHT.

AH, holy midnight of the soul,
When stars alone are high;
When winds are resting at their goal,
And sea-waves only sigh!

Ambition faints from out the will;
Asleep sad longing lies;
All hope of good, all fear of ill,
All need of action dies;

Because God is, and claims the life
He kindled in thy brain;
And thou in him, rapt far from strife,
Diest and liv'st again.

RONDEL.

I FOLLOW, tottering, in the funeral train
That bears my body to the welcoming grave.
As those I mourn not, that entomb the brave,
But smile as those that lay aside the vain;

To me it is a thing of poor disdain,
A clod I would not give a sigh to save!
I follow, careless, in the funeral train,
My outworn raiment to the cleansing grave.

I follow to the grave with growing pain—
Then sudden cry: Let Earth take what she gave!
And turn in gladness from the yawning cave—
Glad even for those whose tears yet flow amain:
They also follow, in their funeral train,
Outworn necessities to the welcoming grave!

A PRAYER.

WHEN I look back upon my life nigh spent,
Nigh spent, although the stream as yet flows on,
I more of follies than of sins repent,
Less for offence than Love's shortcomings moan.
With self, O Father, leave me not alone—
Leave not with the beguiler the beguiled;
Besmirched and ragged, Lord, take back thine own:
A fool I bring thee to be made a child.

HOME FROM THE WARS.

A TATTERED soldier, gone the glow and gloss,
With wounds half healed, and sorely trembling knee,
Homeward I come, to claim no victory-cross:
I only faced the foe, and did not flee.

GOD; NOT GIFT.

GRAY clouds my heaven have covered o'er;
My sea ebbs fast, no more to flow;
Ghastly and dry, my desert shore
Parched, bare, unsightly things doth show.

'Tis thou, Lord, cloudest up my sky;
  Stillest the heart-throb of my sea;
Tellest the sad wind not to sigh,
  Yea, life itself to wait for thee!

Lord, here I am, empty enough!
  My music but a soundless moan!
Blind hope, of all my household stuff,
  Leaves me, blind hope, not quite alone!

Shall hope too go, that I may trust
  Purely in thee, and spite of all?
Then turn my very heart to dust—
  On thee, on thee, I yet will call.

List! list! his wind among the pines!
  Hark! hark! that rushing is his sea's!
O Father, these are but thy signs!—
  For thee I hunger, not for these!

Not joy itself, though pure and high—
  No gift will do instead of thee!
Let but my spirit know thee nigh,
  And all the world may sleep for me!

TO ANY FRIEND.

IF I did seem to you no more
  Than to myself I seem,
Not thus you would fling wide the door,
  And on the beggar beam!

You would not don your radiant best,
  Or dole me more than half!
Poor palmer I, no angel guest;
  A shaking reed my staff!

At home, no rich fruit, hanging low,
  Have I for Love to pull;
Only unripe things that must grow
  Till Autumn's maund be full!

But I forsake my niggard leas,
  My orchard, too late hoar,
And wander over lands and seas
  To find the Father's door.

When I have reached the ancestral farm,
  Have clomb the steepy hill,
And round me rests the Father's arm,
  Then think me what you will.

VIOLIN SONGS.

VIOLIN SONGS.

HOPE DEFERRED.

SUMMER is come again. The sun is bright,
And the soft wind is breathing. Airy joy
Is sparkling in thine eyes, and in their light
My soul is shining. Come; our day's employ
Shall be to revel in unlikely things,
In gayest hopes, fondest imaginings,
And make-believes of bliss. Come, we will talk
Of waning moons, low winds, and a dim sea;
Till this fair summer, deepening as we walk,
Has grown a paradise for you and me.
  But ah, those leaves!—it was not summer's mouth
Breathed such a gold upon them. And look there—
That beech how red! See, through its boughs, half-
    bare,
How low the sun lies in the mid-day south!—
The sweetness is but one pined memory flown
Back from our summer, wandering alone!
See, see the dead leaves falling! Hear thy heart,
Which, with the year's pulse beating swift or slow,
Takes in the changing world its changing part,
Return a sigh, an echo sad and low,
To the faint, scarcely audible sound
With which the leaf goes whispering to the ground!
O love, sad winter lieth at the door—
Behind sad winter, age—we know no more.

Come round me, dear hearts. All of us will hold
Each of us compassed : we are growing old ;
And if we be not as a ring enchanted,
Hearts around heart, with love to keep it gay,
The young, who claim the joy that haunted
Our visions once, will push us far away
Into the desolate regions, dim and gray,
Where the sea moans, and hath no other cry,
The clouds hang low, and have no tears,
Old dreams lie mouldering in a pit of years,
And hopes and songs all careless pass us by.
But if all each do keep,
The rising tide of youth will sweep
Around us with its laughter-joyous waves,
As ocean fair some palmy island laves,
To loneliness heaved slow from out the deep ;
And our youth hover round us like the breath
Of one that sleeps, and sleepeth not to death.
Thus ringed eternally, to parted graves,
The sundered doors into one palace home,
Stumbling through age's thickets, we will go,
Faltering but faithful—willing to lie low,
Willing to part, not willing to deny
The lovely past, where all the futures lie.
Oh ! if thou be, who of the live art lord,
Not of the dead—lo, by that self-same word,
Thou art not lord of age, but lord of youth—
Because there is no age, in sooth,
Beyond its passing shows !
A mist o'er life's dimmed lantern grows ;
Thou break'st the glass, out streams the light
That knows not youth nor age,
That fears no darkness nor the rage
Of windy tempests—burning still more bright
Than when glad youth was all about,
And summer winds were out !

1845.

DEATH.

WHEN in the bosom of the eldest night
This body lies, cold as a sculptured rest;
When through its shaded windows comes no light,
And its pale hands are folded on its breast—

How shall I fare, who had to wander out,
And of the unknown land the frontier cross,
Peering vague-eyed, uncertain, all about,
Unclothed, mayhap unwelcomed, bathed in loss?

Shall I depart slow-floating like a mist,
Over the city murmuring beneath;
Over the trees and fields, where'er I list,
Seeking the mountain and the lonely heath?

Or will a darkness, o'er material shows
Descending, hide them from the spirit's sight;
As from the sun a blotting radiance flows
Athwart the stars all glorious through the night;

And the still spirit hang entranced, alone,
Like one in an exalted opium-dream—
Soft-flowing time, insisting space, o'erblown,
With form and colour, tone and touch and gleam,

Thought only waking—thought that may not own
The lapse of ages, or the change of spot;
Its doubt all cast on what it counted known,
Its faith all fixed on what appeareth not?

Or, worn with weariness, shall we sleep until,
Our life restored by long and dreamless rest,
Of God's oblivion we have drunk our fill,
And wake his little ones, peaceful and blest?

I nothing know, and nothing need to know.
God is; I shall be ever in his sight!
Give thou me strength to labour well, and so
Do my day's work ere fall my coming night.

HARD TIMES.

I AM weary, and very lonely,
And can but think—think.
If there were some water only
That a spirit might drink—drink,
And arise,
With light in the eyes
And a crown of hope on the brow,
To walk abroad in the strength of gladness,
Not sit in the house, benumbed with sadness—
As now!

But, Lord, thy child will be sad—
As sad as it pleases thee;
Will sit, not seeking to be glad,
Till thou bid sadness flee,
And, drawing near,
With thy good cheer
Awake thy life in me.

IF I WERE A MONK, AND THOU WERT A NUN.

IF I were a monk, and thou wert a nun,
Pacing it wearily, wearily,
Twixt chapel and cell till day were done—
Wearily, wearily—
How would it fare with these hearts of ours
That need the sunshine, and smiles, and flowers?

To prayer, to prayer, at the matins' call,
Morning foul or fair !—
Such prayer as from weary lips might fall—
Words, but hardly prayer—
The chapel's roof, like the law in stone,
Caging the lark that up had flown !

Thou, in the glory of cloudless noon,
The God-revealing,
Turning thy face from the boundless boon—
Painfully kneeling ;
Or, in brown-shadowy solitude,
Bending thy head o'er the legend rude !

I, in a bare and lonely nook,
Gloomily, gloomily,
Poring over some musty book,
Thoughtfully, thoughtfully ;
Or painting pictures of things of old
On parchment-margin in purple and gold !

Perchance in slow procession to meet,
Wearily, wearily,
In antique, narrow, high-gabled street,
Wearily, wearily ;
Thine eyes dark-lifted to mine, and then
Heavily sinking to earth again !

Sunshine and air ! bird-music and spring !
Merrily, merrily !—
Back to its cell each weary thing,
Wearily, wearily !
Our poor hearts, withered and dry and old,
Most at home in the cloister cold !

Thou slow rising at vespers' call,
Wearily, wearily;
I looking up on the darkening wall,
Wearily, wearily;
The chime so sweet to the boat at sea,
Listless and dead to thee and me!

At length for sleep a weary assay,
On the lone couch wearily!
Rising at midnight again to pray,
Wearily, wearily!
And if through the dark dear eyes looked in,
Sending them far as a thought of sin!

And at last, thy tired soul passing away,
Dreamily, dreamily—
Its worn tent fluttering in slow decay,
Sleepily, sleepily—
Over thee held the crucified Best,
But no warm cheek to thy cold cheek pressed!

And then my passing from cell to clay,
Dreamily, dreamily!
My gray head lying on ashes gray,
Sleepily, sleepily!
But no woman-angel hovering above,
Ready to clasp me in deathless love!

Now, now, ah, now! thy hand in mine,
Peacefully, peacefully;
My arm round thee, and my lips on thine,
Lovingly, lovingly—
Oh! is not a better thing to us given
Than wearily going alone to heaven?

MY HEART.

I.

NIGHT, with her power to silence day,
Filled up my lonely room,
Quenching all sounds but one that lay
Beyond her passing doom,
Where in his shed a workman gay
Went on despite the gloom.

I listened, and I knew the sound,
And the trade that he was plying;
For backwards, forwards, bound on bound,
A shuttle was flying, flying—
Weaving ever—till, all unwound,
The weft go out a sighing.

II.

As hidden in thy chamber lowest
As in the sky the lark,
Thou, mystic thing, on working goest
Without the poorest spark,
And yet light's garment round me throwest,
Who else, as thou, were dark.

With body ever clothing me,
Thou mak'st me child of light;
I look, and, lo, the earth and sea,
The sky's rejoicing height,
A woven glory, globed by thee,
Unknowing of thy might!

And when thy darkling labours fail,
And thy shuttle moveless lies,
My world will drop, like untied veil
From before a lady's eyes;
Or, all night read, a finished tale
That in the morning dies.

III.

Yet not in vain dost thou unroll
  The stars, the world, the seas—
A mighty, wonder-painted scroll
  Of Patmos mysteries,
Thou mediator 'twixt my soul
  And higher things than these!

Thy holy ephod bound on me,
  I pass into a seer;
For still in things thou mak'st me see,
  The unseen grows more clear;
Still their indwelling Deity
  Speaks plainer in mine ear.

Divinely taught the craftsman is
  Who waketh wonderings;
Whose web, the nursing chrysalis
  Round Psyche's folded wings,
To them transfers the loveliness
  Of its inwoven things.

Yet joy when thou shalt cease to beat!—
  For a greater heart beats on,
Whose better texture follows fleet
  On thy last thread outrun,
With a seamless-woven garment, meet
  To clothe a death-born son.

THE FLOWER-ANGELS.

OF old, with goodwill from the skies—
  God's message to them given—
The angels came, a glad surprise,
  And went again to heaven.

But now the angels are grown rare,
  Needed no more as then;
Far lowlier messengers can bear
  God's goodwill unto men.

Each year, the snowdrops' pallid dawn
  Breaks from the earth below;
Light spreads, till, from the dark updrawn,
  The noontide roses glow.

The snowdrops first—the dawning gray;
  Then out the roses burn!
They speak their word, grow dim—away
  To holy dust return.

Of oracles were little dearth,
  Should heaven continue dumb;
From lowliest corners of the earth
  God's messages will come.

In thy face his we see, O Lord,
  And are no longer blind;
Need not so much his rarer word,
  In flowers even read his mind.

TO MY SISTER,

ON HER TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY.

I.

OLD fables are not all a lie
  That tell of wondrous birth,
Of Titan children, father Sky,
  And mighty mother Earth.

Yea, now are walking on the ground
  Sons of the mingled brood;
Yea, now upon the earth are found
  Such daughters of the Good.

Earth-born, my sister, thou art still
  A daughter of the sky;
Oh, climb for ever up the hill
  Of thy divinity!

To thee thy mother Earth is sweet,
  Her face to thee is fair;
But thou, a goddess incomplete,
  Must climb the starry stair.

II.

Wouldst thou the holy hill ascend,
  Wouldst see the Father's face?
To all his other children bend,
  And take the lowest place.

Be like a cottage on a moor,
  A covert from the wind,
With burning fire and open door,
  And welcome free and kind.

Thus humbly doing on the earth
  The things the earthly scorn,
Thou shalt declare the lofty birth
  Of all the lowly born.

III.

Be then thy sacred womanhood
  A sign upon thee set,
A second baptism—understood—
  For what thou must be yet.

For, cause and end of all thy strife,
And unrest as thou art,
Still stings thee to a higher life
The Father at thy heart.

OH THOU OF LITTLE FAITH!

SAD-HEARTED, be at peace: the snowdrop lies
Buried in sepulchre of ghastly snow;
But spring is floating up the southern skies,
And darkling the pale snowdrop waits below.

Let me persuade: in dull December's day
We scarce believe there is a month of June;
But up the stairs of April and of May
The hot sun climbeth to the summer's noon.

Yet hear me: I love God, and half I rest.
O better! God loves thee, so all rest thou.
He is our summer, our dim-visioned Best;—
And in his heart thy prayer is resting now.

WILD FLOWERS.

CONTENT Primroses,
With hearts at rest in your thick leaves' soft care,
Peeping as from his mother's lap the child
Who courts shy shelter from his own open air!—
Hanging Harebell,
Whose blue heaven to no wanderer ever closes,
Though thou still lookest earthward from thy domed
cell!—
Fluttering-wild
Anemone, so well
Named of the Wind, to whom thou, fettered-free
Yieldest thee, helpless-wilfully,

With *Take me or leave me,*
Sweet Wind, I am thine own Anemone!—
Thirsty Arum, ever dreaming
Of lakes in wildernesses gleaming!—
Fire-winged Pimpernel,
Communing with some hidden well,
And secrets with the sun-god holding,
At fixed hour folding and unfolding!—
How is it with you, children all,
When human children on you fall,
Gather you in eager haste,
Spoil your plenty with their waste—
Fill and fill their dropping hands?
Feel you hurtfully disgraced
By their injurious demands?
Do you know them from afar,
Shuddering at their merry hum,
Growing faint as near they come?
Blind and deaf they think you are—
Is it only ye are dumb?
You alive at least, I think,
Trembling almost on the brink
Of our lonely consciousness:
If it be so,
Take this comfort for your woe,
For the breaking of your rest
For the tearing in your breast,
For the blotting of the sun,
For the death too soon begun,
For all else beyond redress—
Or what seemeth so to be—
That the children's wonder-springs
Bubble high at sight of you,
Lovely, lowly, common things:
In you more than you they see!
Take this too—that, walking out,
Looking fearlessly about,

Ye rebuke our manhood's doubt,
And our childhood's faith renew ;
So that we, with old age nigh,
Seeing you alive and well
Out of winter's crucible,
Hearing you, from graveyard crept,
Tell us that ye only slept—
Think we die not, though we die.
  Thus ye die not, though ye die—
Only yield your being up,
Like a nectar-holding cup :
Deaf, ye give to them that hear,
With a greatness lovely-dear ;
Blind, ye give to them that see—
Poor, but bounteous royally.
Lowly servants to the higher,
Burning upwards in the fire
Of Nature's endless sacrifice,
In great Life's ascent ye rise,
Leave the lowly earth behind,
Pass into the human mind,
Pass with it up into God,
Whence ye came though through the clod—
Pass, and find yourselves at home
Where but life can go and come ;
Where all life is in its nest,
At loving one with holy Best ;—
Who knows ?—with shadowy, dawning sense
Of a past, age-long somnolence !

SPRING SONG.

  DAYS of old,
Ye are not dead, though gone from me ;
  Ye are not cold,
But like the summer-birds fled o'er some sea.

The sun brings back the swallows fast
O'er the sea ;
When he cometh at the last,
The days of old come back to me

SUMMER SONG.

"MURMURING, 'twixt a murmur and moan,
Many a tune in a single tone,
For every ear with a secret true—
The sea-shell wants to whisper to you."

"Yes—I hear it—far and faint,
Like thin-drawn prayer of drowsy saint ;
Like the muffled sounds of a summer rain ;
Like the wash of dreams in a weary brain."

"By smiling lip and fixed eye,
You are hearing a song within the sigh :
The murmurer has many a lovely phrase—
Tell me, darling, the words it says."

"I hear a wind on a boatless main
Sigh like the last of a vanishing pain ;
On the dreaming waters dreams the moon—
But I hear no words in the doubtful tune."

"If it tell thee not that I love thee well,
'Tis a senseless, wrinkled, ill-curved shell :
If it be not of love, why sigh or sing ?
'Tis a common, mechanical, stupid thing ! "

"It murmurs, it whispers, with prophet voice
Of a peace that comes, of a sealed choice ;
It says not a word of your love to me,
But it tells me I love you eternally."

AUTUMN SONG.

AUTUMN clouds are flying, flying
O'er the waste of blue ;
Summer flowers are dying, dying,
Late so lovely new.
Labouring wains are slowly rolling
Home with winter grain ;
Holy bells are slowly tolling
Over buried men.

Goldener light sets noon a sleeping
Like an afternoon ;
Colder airs come stealing, creeping
From the misty moon ;
And the leaves, of old age dying,
Earthy hues put on ;
Out on every lone wind sighing
That their day is gone.

Autumn's sun is sinking, sinking
Down to winter low ;
And our hearts are thinking, thinking
Of the sleet and snow ;
For our sun is slowly sliding
Down the hill of might ;
And no moon is softly gliding
Up the slope of night.

See the bare fields' pillaged prizes
Heaped in golden glooms !
See, the earth's outworn sunrises
Dream in cloudy tombs !
Darkling flowers but wait the blowing
Of a quickening wind ;
And the man, through Death's door going,
Leaves old Death behind.

Mourn not, then, clear tones that alter;
  Let the gold turn gray;
Feet, though feeble, still may falter
  Toward the better day!
Brother, let not weak faith linger
  O'er a withered thing;
Mark how Autumn's prophet finger
  Burns to hues of Spring.

WINTER SONG.

THEY were parted then at last?
  Was it duty, or force, or fate?
Or did a worldly blast
  Blow-to the meeting-gate?

An old, short story is this!
  A glance, a trembling, a sigh,
A gaze in the eyes, a kiss—
  Why will it not go by!

PICTURE SONGS.

I.

A PALE green sky is gleaming;
  The steely stars are few;
The moorland pond is steaming
  A mist of gray and blue.

Along the pathway lonely
  My horse is walking slow;
Three living creatures only,
  He, I, and a home-bound crow!

The moon is hardly shaping
  Her circle in the fog;
A dumb stream is escaping
  Its prison in the bog.

But in my heart are ringing
  Tones of a lofty song;
A voice that I know, is singing,
  And my heart all night must long.

II.

OVER a shining land—
  Once such a land I knew—
Over its sea, by a soft wind fanned,
  The sky is all white and blue.

The waves are kissing the shores,
  Murmuring love and for ever;
A boat gleams green, and its timeful oars
  Flash out of the level river.

Oh to be there with thee
  And the sun, on wet sands, my love!
With the shining river, the sparkling sea,
  And the radiant sky above!

III.

THE autumn winds are sighing
  Over land and sea;
The autumn woods are dying
  Over hill and lea;
And my heart is sighing, dying,
  Maiden, for thee.

The autumn clouds are flying
  Homeless over me;
The nestless birds are crying
  In the naked tree;
And my heart is flying, crying,
  Maiden, to thee.

The autumn sea is crawling
  Up the chilly shore;
The thin-voiced firs are calling
  Ghostily evermore:
Maiden, maiden! I am falling
  Dead at thy door.

IV.

THE waters are rising and flowing
  Over the weedy stone—
Over it, over it going:
  It is never gone.

Waves upon waves of weeping
  Went over the ancient pain;
Glad waves go over it leaping—
  Still it rises again!

A DREAM SONG.

I DREAMED of a song—I heard it sung;
In the ear of my soul its strange notes rung.
What were its words I could not tell,
Only the voice I heard right well,
For its tones unearthly my spirit bound
In a calm delirium of mystic sound—
Held me floating, alone and high,
Placeless and silent, drinking my fill

Of dews that from cloudless skies distil
On desert places that thirst and sigh.
'Twas a woman's voice, deep calling to deep,
Rousing old echoes that all day sleep
In cavern and solitude, each apart,
Here and there in the waiting heart;—
A voice with a wild melodious cry
Reaching and longing afar and high.
Sorrowful triumph, and hopeful strife,
Gainful death, and new-born life,
Thrilled in each note of the prophet-song.
In my heart it said: O Lord, how long
Shall we groan and travail and faint and pray,
Ere thy lovely kingdom bring the day!

1842.

AT MY WINDOW AFTER SUNSET.

HEAVEN and the sea attend the dying day,
And in their sadness overflow and blend—
Faint gold, and windy blue, and green and gray:
Far out amid them my pale soul I send.

For, as they mingle, so mix life and death;
An hour draws near when my day too will die;
Already I forecast unheaving breath,
Eviction on the moorland of yon sky.

Coldly and sadly lone, unhoused, alone,
Twixt wind-broke wave and heaven's uncaring space!
At board and hearth from this time forth unknown!
Refuge no more in wife or daughter's face!

Cold, cold and sad, lone as that desert sea!
Sad, lonely, as that hopeless, patient sky!
Forward I cannot go, nor backward flee!
I am not dead; I live, and cannot die!

Where are ye, loved ones, hither come before?
Did you fare thus when first ye came this way?
Somewhere there must be yet another door!—
A door in somewhere from this dreary gray!

Come walking over watery hill and glen,
Or stoop your faces through yon cloud perplext;
Come, any one of dearest, sacred ten,
And bring me patient hoping for the next.

Maker of heaven and earth, father of me,
My words are but a weak, fantastic moan!
Were I a land-leaf drifting on the sea,
Thou still wert with me; I were not alone!

I am in thee, O father, lord of sky,
And lord of waves, and lord of human souls!
In thee all precious ones to me more nigh
Than if they rushing came in radiant shoals!

I shall not be alone although I die,
And loved ones should delay their coming long;
Though I saw round me nought but sea and sky,
Bare sea and sky would wake a holy song.

They are thy garments; thou art near within,
Father of fathers, friend-creating friend!
Thou art for ever, therefore I begin;
Thou lov'st, therefore my love shall never end!

Let loose thy giving, father, on thy child;
I pray thee, father, give me everything;
Give me the joy that makes the children wild;
Give throat and heart an old new song to sing.

Ye are my joy, great father, perfect Christ,
And humble men of heart, oh, everywhere!
With all the true I keep a hoping tryst;
Eternal love is my eternal prayer.

1890.

A FATHER TO A MOTHER.

WHEN God's own child came down to earth,
High heaven was very glad;
The angels sang for holy mirth;
Not God himself was sad!

Shall we, when ours goes homeward, fret?
Come, Hope, and wait on Sorrow!
The little one will not forget;
It's only till to-morrow!

THE TEMPLE OF GOD.

IN the desert by the bush,
Moses to his heart said *Hush.*

David on his bed did pray;
God all night went not away.

From his heap of ashes foul
Job to God did lift his soul,

God came down to see him there,
And to answer all his prayer.

On a dark hill, in the wind,
Jesus did his father find,

But while he on earth did fare,
Every spot was place of prayer;

And where man is any day,
God can not be far away.

But the place he loveth best,
Place where he himself can rest,

Where alone he prayer doth seek,
Is the spirit of the meek.

To the humble God doth come;
In his heart he makes his home.

GOING TO SLEEP.

LITTLE one, you must not fret
That I take your clothes away;
Better sleep you so will get,
And at morning wake more gay—
Saith the children's mother.

You I must unclothe again,
For you need a better dress;
Too much worn are body and brain;
You need everlastingness—
Saith the heavenly father.

I went down death's lonely stair;
Laid my garments in the tomb;
Dressed again one morning fair;
Hastened up, and hied me home—
Saith the elder brother.

Then I will not be afraid
Any ill can come to me;
When 'tis time to go to bed,
I will rise and go with thee—
Saith the little brother.

TO-MORROW.

MY TO-MORROW is but a flitting
Fancy of the brain;
God's TO-MORROW an angel sitting,
Ready for joy or pain.

My TO-MORROW has no soul,
  Dead as yesterdays;
God's—a brimming silver bowl
  Of life that gleams and plays.

My TO-MORROW, I mock you away!
  Shadowless nothing, thou!
God's TO-MORROW, come, dear day,
  For God is in thee now.

FOOLISH CHILDREN.

WAKING in the night to pray,
  Sleeping when the answer comes,
Foolish are we even at play—
  Tearfully we beat our drums!
Cast the good dry bread away,
  Weep, and gather up the crumbs!

"Evermore," while shines the day,
  "Lord," we cry, "thy will be done!"
Soon as evening groweth gray,
  Thy fair will we fain would shun!
"Take, oh, take thy hand away!
  See the horrid dark begun!"

"Thou hast conquered Death," we say,
  "Christ, whom Hades could not keep!"
Then, "Ah, see the pallid clay!
  Death it is," we cry, "not sleep!
Grave, take all. Shut out the Day.
  Sit we on the ground and weep!"

Gathering potsherds all the day,
  Truant children, Lord, we roam;
Fret, and longer want to play,
  When at cool thy voice doth come!—
Elder Brother, lead the way;
  Make us good as we go home.

LOVE IS HOME.

LOVE is the part, and love is the whole;
  Love is the robe, and love is the pall;
Ruler of heart and brain and soul,
  Love is the lord and the slave of all!
I thank thee, Love, that thou lov'st me;
I thank thee more that I love thee.

Love is the rain, and love is the air,
  Love is the earth that holdeth fast
Love is the root that is buried there,
  Love is the open flower at last!
I thank thee, Love all round about,
That the eyes of my love are looking out.

Love is the sun, and love is the sea;
  Love is the tide that comes and goes;
Flowing and flowing it comes to me;
  Ebbing and ebbing to thee it flows!
Oh my sun, and my wind, and tide!
My sea, and my shore, and all beside!

Light, oh light that art by showing;
  Wind, oh wind that liv'st by motion;
Thought, oh thought that art by knowing;
  Will, that art born in self-devotion!
Love is you, though not all of you know it;
Ye are not love, yet ye always show it!

Faithful creator, heart-longed-for father,
  Home of our heart-infolded brother,
Home to thee all thy glories gather—
  All are thy love, and there is no other!
O Love-at-rest, we loves that roam—
Home unto thee, we are coming home!

FAITH.

"EARTH, if aught should check thy race,
Rushing through unfended space,
Headlong, stayless, thou wilt fall
Into yonder glowing ball!"

"Beggar of the universe,
Faithless as an empty purse!
Sent abroad to cool and tame,
Think'st I fear my native flame?

"If thou never on thy track
Turn thee round and hie thee back,
Thou wilt wander evermore,
Outcast, cold—a comet hoar!

"While I sweep my ring along
In an air of joyous song,
Thou art drifting, heart awry,
From the sun of liberty!"

WAITING.

I WAITED for the Master
In the darkness dumb;
Light came fast and faster—
My light did not come!

I waited all the daylight,
All through noon's hot flame:
In the evening's gray light,
Lo, the Master came!

OUR SHIP.

HAD I a great ship coming home,
With big plunge o'er the sea,
What bright things, hid from star and foam,
Lay in her heart for thee!

The stormy billows heave and dip,
The wild winds veer and play;
But, regnant all, God's stately ship
Is steering home this way!

MY HEART THY LARK.

WHY dost thou want to sing
When thou hast no song, my heart?
If there be in thee a hidden spring,
Wherefore will no word start?

On its way thou hearest no song,
Yet flutters thy unborn joy!
The years of thy life are growing long—
Art still the heart of a boy?—

Father, I am thy child!
My heart is in thy hand!
Let it hear some echo, with gladness wild,
Of a song in thy high land.

It will answer—but how, my God,
Thou knowest; I cannot say:
It will spring, I know, thy lark, from thy sod—
Thy lark to meet thy day!

TWO IN ONE.

WERE thou and I the white pinions
  On some eager, heaven-born dove,
Swift would we mount to the old dominions,
  To our rest of old, my love!

Were thou and I trembling strands
  In music's enchanted line,
We would wait and wait for magic hands
  To untwist the magic twine.

Were we two sky-tints, thou and I,
  Thou the golden, I the red;
We would quiver and glow and darken and die,
  And love until we were dead!

Nearer than wings of one dove,
  Than tones or colours in chord,
We are one—and safe, and for ever, my love,
  Two thoughts in the heart of one Lord.

BEDTIME.

"COME, children, put away your toys;
  Roll up that kite's long line;
The day is done for girls and boys—
  Look, it is almost nine!
Come, weary foot, and sleepy head,
Get up, and come along to bed."

The children, loath, must yet obey;
  Up the long stair they creep;
Lie down, and something sing or say
  Until they fall asleep,
To steal through caverns of the night
Into the morning's golden light.

We, elder ones, sit up more late,
And tasks unfinished ply,
But, gently busy, watch and wait—
Dear sister, you and I,
To hear the Father, with soft tread,
Coming to carry us to bed.

A PRAYER.

THOU who mad'st the mighty clock
Of the great world go;
Mad'st its pendulum swing and rock,
Ceaseless to and fro;
Thou whose will doth push and draw
Every orb in heaven,
Help me move by higher law
In my spirit graven.

Like a planet let me swing—
With intention strong;
In my orbit rushing sing
Jubilant along;
Help me answer in my course
To my seasons due;
Lord of every stayless force,
Make my Willing true.

A SONG PRAYER.

LORD Jesus,
Oh, ease us
Of Self that oppresses,
Annoys and distresses
Body and brain
With dull pain!

Thou never,
Since ever,
Save one moment only,
Wast left, or wast lonely:
We are alone,
And make moan.

Far parted,
Dull-hearted,
We wander, sleep-walking,
Mere shadows, dim-stalking:
Orphans we roam,
Far from home.

Oh new man,
Sole human,
God's son, and our brother,
Give each to the other—
No one left out
In cold doubt!

High Father,
Oh gather
Thy sons and thy daughters,
Through fires and through waters,
Home to the nest
Of thy breast!

There under
The wonder
Of great wings of healing,
Of love and revealing,
Teach us anew
To sing true.

SONGS OF THE DAYS AND NIGHTS.

SONGS OF THE DAYS AND NIGHTS.

SONGS OF THE SUMMER DAYS.

I.

A GLORY on the chamber wall!
  A glory in the brain!
Triumphant floods of glory fall
  On heath, and wold, and plain.

Earth lieth still in hopeless bliss;
  She has, and seeks no more;
Forgets that days come after this,
  Forgets the days before.

Each ripple waves a flickering fire
  Of gladness, as it runs;
They laugh and flash, and leap and spire,
  And toss ten thousand suns.

But hark! low, in the world within,
  One sad æolian tone:
"Ah! shall we ever, ever win
  A summer of our own?"

II.

A MORN of winds and swaying trees—
  Earth's jubilance rushing out!
The birds are fighting with the breeze;
  The waters heave about

White clouds are swept across the sky,
  Their shadows o'er the graves;
Purpling the green, they float and fly
  Athwart the sunny waves.

The long grass—an earth-rooted sea—
  Mimics the watery strife.
To boat or horse? Wild motion we
  Shall find harmonious life.

But whither? Roll and sweep and bend
  Suffice for Nature's part;
But motion to an endless end
  Is needful for our heart.

III.

THE morn awakes like brooding dove,
  With outspread wings of gray;
Her feathery clouds close in above,
  And roof a sober day.

No motion in the deeps of air!
  No trembling in the leaves!
A still contentment everywhere,
  That neither laughs nor grieves!

A film of sheeted silver gray
  Shuts in the ocean's hue;
White-winged feluccas cleave their way
  In paths of gorgeous blue.

Dream on, dream on, O dreamy day,
  Thy very clouds are dreams!
Yon child is dreaming far away—
  He is not where he seems.

IV.

THE lark is up, his faith is strong,
He mounts the morning air;
Lone voice of all the creature throng,
He sings the morning prayer.

Slow clouds from north and south appear,
Black-based, with shining slope;
In sullen forms their might they rear,
And climb the vaulted cope.

A lightning flash, a thunder boom!—
Nor sun nor clouds are there;
A single, all-pervading gloom
Hangs in the heavy air.

A weeping, wasting afternoon
Weighs down the aspiring corn;
Amber and red, the sunset soon
Leads back to golden morn.

SONGS OF THE SUMMER NIGHTS.

I.

THE dreary wind of night is out,
Homeless and wandering slow;
O'er pale seas moaning like a doubt,
It breathes, but will not blow.

It sighs from out the helpless past,
Where doleful things abide;
Gray ghosts of dead thought sail aghast
Across its ebbing tide.

O'er marshy pools it faints and flows,
All deaf and dumb and blind;
O'er moor and mountain aimless goes—
The listless woesome wind!

Nay, nay!—breathe on, sweet wind of night!
The sigh is all in me;
Flow, fan, and blow, with gentle might,
Until I wake and see.

II.

THE west is broken into bars
Of orange, gold, and gray;
Gone is the sun, fast come the stars,
And night infolds the day.

My boat glides with the gliding stream,
Following adown its breast
One flowing mirrored amber gleam,
The death-smile of the west.

The river moves; the sky is still,
No ceaseless quest it knows:
Thy bosom swells, thy fair eyes fill
At sight of its repose.

The ripples run; all patient sit
The stars above the night.
In shade and gleam the waters flit:
The heavens are changeless bright!

III.

ALONE I lie, buried amid
The long luxurious grass;
The bats flit round me, born and hid
In twilight's wavering mass.

The fir-top floats, an airy isle,
  High o'er the mossy ground;
Harmonious silence breathes the while
  In scent instead of sound.

The flaming rose glooms swarthy red;
  The borage gleams more blue;
Dim-starred with white, a flowery bed
  Glimmers the rich dusk through.

Hid in the summer grass I lie,
  Lost in the great blue cave;
My body gazes at the sky,
  And measures out its grave.

IV.

WHAT art thou, gathering dusky cool,
  In slow gradation fine?
Death's lovely shadow, flickering full
  Of eyes about to shine.

When weary Day goes down below,
  Thou leanest o'er his grave,
Revolving all the vanished show
  The gracious splendour gave.

Or art thou not she rather—say—
  Dark-browed, with luminous eyes,
Of whom is born the mighty Day,
  That fights and saves and dies?

For action sleeps with sleeping light;
  Calm thought awakes with thee:
The soul is then a summer night,
  With stars that shine and see.

SONGS OF THE AUTUMN DAYS.

I.

We bore him through the golden land,
One early harvest morn;
The corn stood ripe on either hand—
He knew all about the corn.

How shall the harvest gathered be
Without him standing by?
Without him walking on the lea,
The sky is scarce a sky.

The year's glad work is almost done;
The land is rich in fruit;
Yellow it floats in air and sun—
Earth holds it by the root.

Why should earth hold it for a day
When harvest-time is come?
Death is triumphant o'er decay,
And leads the ripened home.

II.

And though the sun be not so warm,
His shining is not lost;
Both corn and hope, of heart and farm,
Lie hid from coming frost.

The sombre woods are richly sad,
Their leaves are red and gold:
Are thoughts in solemn splendour clad
Signs that we men grow old?

Strange odours haunt the doubtful brain
From fields and days gone by;
And mournful memories again
Are born, are loved, and die.

The mornings clear, the evenings cool
Foretell no wintry wars;
The day of dying leaves is full,
The night of glowing stars.

III.

'Tis late before the sun will rise,
And early he will go;
Gray fringes hang from the gray skies,
And wet the ground below.

Red fruit has followed golden corn;
The leaves are few and sere;
My thoughts are old as soon as born,
And chill with coming fear.

The winds lie sick; no softest breath
Floats through the branches bare;
A silence as of coming death
Is growing in the air.

But what must fade can bear to fade—
Was born to meet the ill:
Creep on, old Winter, deathly shade!
We sorrow, and are still.

IV.

There is no longer any heaven
To glorify our clouds;
The rising vapours downward driven
Come home in palls and shrouds.

The sun himself is ill bested
A heavenly sign to show;
His radiance, dimmed to glowing red,
Can hardly further go.

An earthy damp, a churchyard gloom,
Pervade the moveless air;
The year is sinking to its tomb,
And death is everywhere.

But while sad thoughts together creep,
Like bees too cold to sting,
God's children, in their beds asleep,
Are dreaming of the spring.

SONGS OF THE AUTUMN NIGHTS.

I.

O NIGHT, send up the harvest moon
To walk about the fields,
And make of midnight magic noon
On lonely tarns and wealds.

In golden ranks, with golden crowns,
All in the yellow land,
Old solemn kings in rustling gowns,
The shocks moon-charmed stand.

Sky-mirror she, afloat in space,
Beholds our coming morn:
Her heavenly joy hath such a grace,
It ripens earthly corn;

Like some lone saint with upward eyes,
Lost in the deeps of prayer:
The people still their prayers and sighs,
And gazing ripen there.

II.

So, like the corn moon-ripened last,
  Would I, weary and gray,
On golden memories ripen fast,
  And ripening pass away.

In an old night so let me die;
  A slow wind out of doors;
A waning moon low in the sky;
  A vapour on the moors;

A fire just dying in the gloom;
  Earth haunted all with dreams;
A sound of waters in the room;
  A mirror's moony gleams;

And near me, in the sinking night,
  More thoughts than move in me—
Forgiving wrong, and loving right,
  And waiting till I see.

III.

ACROSS the stubble glooms the wind;
  High sails the lated crow;
The west with pallid green is lined;
  Fog tracks the river's flow.

My heart is cold and sad; I moan,
  Yet care not for my grief;
The summer fervours all are gone;
  The roses are but leaf.

Old age is coming, frosty, hoar;
  The snows of time will fall;
My jubilance, dream-like, no more
  Returns for any call!

O lapsing heart! thy feeble strain
Sends up the blood so spare,
That my poor withering autumn brain
Sees autumn everywhere!

IV.

LORD of my life! if I am blind,
I reck not—thou canst see;
I well may wait my summer mind,
When I am sure of thee!

I made no brave bright suns arise,
Veiled up no sweet gray eves;
I hung no rose-lamps, lit no eyes,
Sent out no windy leaves!

I said not "I will cast a charm
These gracious forms around;"
My heart with unwilled love grew warm;
I took but what I found!

When cold winds range my winter-night,
Be thou my summer-door;
Keep for me all my young delight,
Till I am old no more.

SONGS OF THE WINTER DAYS.

I.

THE sky has turned its heart away,
The earth its sorrow found;
The daisies turn from childhood's play,
And creep into the ground.

The earth is black and cold and hard;
Thin films of dry white ice,
Across the rugged wheel-tracks barred,
The children's feet entice.

Dark flows the stream, as if it mourned
The winter in the land;
With idle icicles adorned,
That mill-wheel soon will stand.

But, friends, to say 'tis cold, and part,
Is to let in the cold;
We'll make a summer of the heart,
And laugh at winter old.

II.

WITH vague dead gleam the morning white
Comes through the window-panes;
The clouds have fallen all the night,
Without the noise of rains.

As of departing, unseen ghost,
Footprints go from the door;
The man himself must long be lost
Who left those footprints hoar!

Yet follow thou; tread down the snow;
Leave all the road behind;
Heed not the winds that steely blow,
Heed not the sky unkind;

For though the glittering air grow dark,
The snow will shine till morn;
And long ere then one dear home-spark
Will winter laugh to scorn.

III.

OH wildly wild the roaring blast
  Torments the fallen snow!
The wintry storms are up at last,
  And care not how they go!

In foam-like wreaths the water hoar,
  Rapt whistling in the air,
Gleams through the dismal twilight frore;
  A region in despair,

A spectral ocean lies outside,
  Torn by a tempest dark;
Its ghostly billows, dim descried,
  Leap on my stranded bark.

Death-sheeted figures, long and white,
  Rave driving through the spray;
Or, bosomed in the ghastly night,
  Shriek doom-cries far away.

IV.

A MORNING clear, with frosty light
  From sunbeams late and low;
They shine upon the snow so white,
  And shine back from the snow.

Down tusks of ice one drop will go,
  Nor fall: at sunny noon
'Twill hang a diamond—fade, and grow
  An opal for the moon.

And when the bright sad sun is low
  Behind the mountain-dome,
A twilight wind will come and blow
  Around the children's home,

And puff and waft the powdery snow,
As feet unseen did pass;
While, waiting in its bed below,
Green lies the summer grass.

SONGS OF THE WINTER NIGHTS.

I.

BACK shining from the pane, the fire
Seems outside in the snow:
So love set free from love's desire
Lights grief of long ago.

The dark is thinned with snow-sheen fine,
The earth bedecked with moon;
Out on the worlds we surely shine
More radiant than in June!

In the white garden lies a heap
As brown as deep-dug mould:
A hundred partridges that keep
Each other from the cold.

My father gives them sheaves of corn,
For shelter both and food:
High hope in me was early born,
My father was so good.

II.

THE frost weaves ferns and sultry palms
Across my clouded pane;
Weaves melodies of ancient psalms
All through my passive brain.

Quiet ecstasy fills heart and head:
  My father is in the room;
The very curtains of my bed
  Are from Love's sheltering loom!

The lovely vision melts away;
  I am a child no more;
Work rises from the floor of play;
  Duty is at the door.

But if I face with courage stout
  The labour and the din,
Thou, Lord, wilt let my mind go out
  My heart with thee stay in.

III.

Up to my ear my soul doth run—
  Her other door is dark;
There she can see without the sun,
  And there she sits to mark.

I hear the dull unheeding wind
  Mumble o'er heath and wold;
My fancy leaves my brain behind,
  And floats into the cold.

Like a forgotten face that lies
  One of the speechless crowd,
The earth lies spent, with frozen eyes,
  White-folded in her shroud.

O'er leafless woods and cornless farms,
  Dead rivers, fireless thorps,
I brood, the heart still throbbing warm
  In Nature's wintred corpse.

IV.

To all the world mine eyes are blind;
  Their drop serene is—night,
With stores of snow piled up the wind
  An awful airy height.

And yet 'tis but a mote in the eye:
  The simple faithful stars
Beyond are shining, careless high,
  Nor heed our storms and jars.

And when o'er storm and jar I climb—
  Beyond life's atmosphere,
I shall behold the lord of time
  And space—of world and year.

Oh vain, far quest!—not thus my heart
  Shall ever find its goal!
I turn me home—and there thou art,
  My Father, in my soul!

SONGS OF THE SPRING DAYS.

I.

A GENTLE wind, of western birth
  On some far summer sea,
Wakes daisies in the wintry earth,
  Wakes hopes in wintry me.

The sun is low; the paths are wet,
  And dance with frolic hail;
The trees—their spring-time is not yet—
  Swing sighing in the gale.

Young gleams of sunshine peep and play;
Clouds shoulder in between;
I scarce believe one coming day
The earth will all be green.

The north wind blows, and blasts, and raves,
And flaps his snowy wing:
Back! toss thy bergs on arctic waves;
Thou canst not bar our spring.

II.

UP comes the primrose, wondering;
The snowdrop droopeth by;
The holy spirit of the spring
Is working silently.

Soft-breathing breezes woo and wile
The later children out;
O'er woods and farms a sunny smile
Is flickering about.

The earth was cold, hard-hearted, dull;
To death almost she slept:
Over her, heaven grew beautiful,
And forth her beauty crept.

Showers yet must fall, and waters grow
Dark-wan with furrowing blast;
But suns will shine, and soft winds blow,
Till the year flowers at last.

III.

THE sky is smiling over me,
Hath smiled away the frost;
White daisies star the sky-like lea,
With buds the wood's embossed.

Troops of wild flowers gaze at the sky
  Up through the latticed boughs;
Till comes the green cloud by and by,
  It is not time to house.

Yours is the day, sweet bird—sing on;
  The winter is forgot;
Like an ill dream 'tis over and gone:
  Pain that is past, is not.

Joy that was past is yet the same:
  If care the summer brings,
'Twill only be another name
  For love that broods, not sings.

IV.

BLOW on me, wind, from west and south;
  Sweet summer-spirit, blow!
Come like a kiss from dear child's mouth,
  Who knows not what I know.

The earth's perfection dawneth soon;
  Ours lingereth alway;
We have a morning, not a noon;
  Spring, but no summer gay.

Rose-blotted eve, gold-branded morn
  Crown soon the swift year's life:
In us a higher hope is born,
  And claims a longer strife.

Will heaven be an eternal spring
  With summer at the door?
Or shall we one day tell its king
  That we desire no more?

SONGS OF THE SPRING NIGHTS.

I.

THE flush of green that dyed the day
Hath vanished in the moon :
Flower-scents float stronger out, and play
An unborn, coming tune.

One southern eve like this, the dew
Had cooled and left the ground ;
The moon hung half-way from the blue,
No disc, but conglobed round ;

Light-leaved acacias, by the door,
Bathed in the balmy air,
Clusters of blossomed moonlight bore,
And breathed a perfume rare ;

Great gold-flakes from the starry sky
Fell flashing on the deep :—
One scent of moist earth floating by,
Almost it made me weep.

II.

THOSE gorgeous stars were not my own,
They made me alien go :
The mother o'er her head had thrown
A veil I did not know !

The moon-blanched fields that seaward went,
The palm-flung, dusky shades,
Bore flowering grasses, knotted, bent,
No slender, spear-like blades.

I longed to see the starry host
  Afar in fainter blue;
But plenteous grass I missed the most,
  With daisies glimmering through.

The common things were not the same!
  I longed across the foam:
From dew-damp earth that odour came—
  I knew the world my home.

III.

THE stars are glad in gulfy space—
  Friendly the dark to them!
From day's deep mine, their hiding-place,
  Night wooeth every gem.

A thing for faith 'mid labour's jar,
  When up the day is furled,
Shines in the sky a light afar,
  Mayhap a home-filled world.

Sometimes upon the inner sky
  We catch a doubtful shine:
A mote or star? A flash in the eye
  Or jewel of God's mine?

A star to us, all glimmer and glance,
  May teem with seraphim:
A fancy to our ignorance
  May be a truth to Him.

IV.

THE night is damp and warm and still,
  And soft with summer dreams;
The buds are bursting at their will,
  And shy the half moon gleams.

My soul is cool, as bathed within
  By dews that silent weep—
Like child that has confessed his sin,
  And now will go to sleep.

My body ages, form and hue;
  But when the spring winds blow,
My spirit stirs and buds anew,
  Younger than long ago.

Lord, make me more a child, and more,
  Till Time his own end bring,
And out of every winter sore
  I pass into thy spring.

A BOOK OF DREAMS.

A BOOK OF DREAMS.

PART I.

I.

I LAY and dreamed. The Master came,
In seamless garment drest;
I stood in bonds 'twixt love and shame,
Not ready to be blest.

He stretched his arms, and gently sought
To clasp me to his heart;
I shrank, for I, unthinking, thought
He knew me but in part.

I did not love him as I would!
Embraces were not meet!
I dared not ev'n stand where he stood—
I fell and kissed his feet.

Years, years have passed away since then
Oft hast thou come to me;
The question scarce will rise again
Whether I care for thee.

In thee lies hid my unknown heart,
In thee my perfect mind;
In all my joys, my Lord, thou art
The deeper joy behind.

But when fresh light and visions bold
My heart and hope expand,
Up comes the vanity of old
That now I understand:

Away, away from thee I drift,
Forgetting, not forgot;
Till sudden yawns a downward rift—
I start—and see thee not.

Ah, then come sad, unhopeful hours!
All in the dark I stray,
Until my spirit fainting cowers
On the threshold of the day.

Hence not even yet I child-like dare
Nestle unto thy breast,
Though well I know that only there
Lies hid the secret rest.

But now I shrink not from thy will,
Nor, guilty, judge my guilt;
Thy good shall meet and slay my ill—
Do with me as thou wilt.

If I should dream that dream once more,
Me in my dreaming meet;
Embrace me, Master, I implore,
And let me kiss thy feet.

II.

I STOOD before my childhood's home,
Outside its belt of trees;
All round my glances flit and roam
O'er well-known hills and leas;

When sudden rushed across the plain
A host of hurrying waves,
Loosed by some witchery of the brain
From far, dream-hidden caves.

And up the hill they clomb and came,
A wild, fast-flowing sea:
Careless I looked as on a game;
No terror woke in me.

For, just the belting trees within,
I saw my father wait;
And should the waves the summit win,
There was the open gate!

With him beside, all doubt was dumb;
There let the waters foam!
No mightiest flood would dare to come
And drown his holy home!

Two days passed by. With restless toss,
The red flood brake its doors;
Prostrate I lay, and looked across
To the eternal shores.

The world was fair, and hope was high;
My friends had all been true;
Life burned in me, and Death and I
Would have a hard ado.

Sudden came back the dream so good,
My trouble to abate:
At his own door my Father stood—
I just without the gate!

"Thou know'st what is, and what appears,"
I said; "mine eyes to thine
Are windows: thou hear'st with thine ears,
But also hear'st with mine:

"Thou knowest my weak soul's dismay,
How trembles my life's node;
Thou art the potter, I am the clay—
'Tis thine to bear the load."

III.

A PIECE of gold had left my purse,
Which I had guarded ill;
I feared a lack, but feared yet worse
Regret returning still.

I lifted up my feeble prayer
To him who maketh strong,
That thence no haunting thoughts of care
Might do my spirit wrong

And even before my body slept,
Such visions fair I had,
That seldom soul with chamber swept
Was more serenely glad.

No white-robed angel floated by
On slow, reposing wings;
I only saw, with inward eye,
Some very common things.

First rose the scarlet pimpernel
With burning purple heart;
I saw within it, and could spell
The lesson of its art.

Then came the primrose, child-like flower,
And looked me in the face;
It bore a message full of power,
And confidence, and grace.

And breezes rose on pastures trim
  And bathed me all about;
Wool-muffled sheep-bells babbled dim,
  Or only half spoke out.

Sudden it closed, some door of heaven,
  But what came out remained:
The poorest man my loss had given
  For that which I had gained!

Thou gav'st me, Lord, a brimming cup
  Where I bemoaned a sip;
How easily thou didst make up
  For that my fault let slip!

What said the flowers? what message new
  Embalmed my soul with rest?
I scarce can tell—only they grew
  Right out of God's own breast.

They said, to every flower he made
  God's thought was root and stem—
Perhaps said what the lilies said
  When Jesus looked at them.

IV.

SOMETIMES, in daylight hours, awake,
  Our souls with visions teem
Which to the slumbering brain would take
  The form of wondrous dream.

Once, with my thought-sight, I descried
  A plain with hills around;
A lordly company on each side
  Leaves bare the middle ground.

Great terrace-steps at one end rise
To something like a throne,
And thither all the radiant eyes,
As to a centre, shone.

A snow-white glory, dim-defined,
Those seeking eyes beseech—
Him who was not in fire or wind,
But in the gentle speech.

They see his eyes far-fixed wait:
Adown the widening vale
They, turning, look; their breath they bate,
With dread-filled wonder pale.

In raiment worn and blood-bedewed,
With faltering step and numb,
Toward the shining multitude
A weary man did come.

His face was white, and still-composed,
As of a man nigh dead;
The eyes, through eyelids half unclosed,
A faint, wan splendour shed.

Drops on his hair disordered hung
Like rubies dull of hue;
His hands were pitifully wrung,
And stricken through and through.

Silent they stood with tender awe:
Between their ranks he came;
Their tearful eyes looked down, and saw
What made his feet so lame.

He reached the steps below the throne,
There sank upon his knees;
Clasped his torn hands with stifled groan,
And spake in words like these:—

"Father, I am come back. Thy will
Is sometimes hard to do."
From all that multitude so still
A sound of weeping grew.

Then mournful-glad came down the One;
He kneeled and clasped his child;
Lay on his breast the outworn man,
And wept until he smiled.

The people, who, in bitter woe
And love, had sobbed and cried,
Raised aweful eyes at length—and, lo,
The two sat side by side!

V.

DREAMING I slept. Three crosses stood
High in the gloomy air;
One bore a thief, and one the Good;
The other waited bare.

A soldier came up to the place,
And took me for the third;
My eyes they sought the Master's face,
My will the Master's word.

He bent his head; I took the sign,
And gave the error way;
Gesture nor look nor word of mine
The secret should betray.

The soldier from the cross's foot
Turned. I stood waiting there:
That grim, expectant tree, for fruit
My dying form must bear.

Up rose the steaming mists of doubt
And chilled both heart and brain;
They shut the world of vision out,
And fear saw only pain.

"Ah me, my hands! the hammer's blow!
The nails that rend and pierce!
The shock may stun, but, slow and slow,
The torture will grow fierce.

"Alas, the awful fight with death!
The hours to hang and die!
The thirsting gasp for common breath!
The weakness that would cry!"

My soul returned: "A faintness soon
Will shroud thee in its fold;
The hours will bring the fearful noon;
'Twill pass—and thou art cold.

"'Tis his to care that thou endure,
To curb or loose the pain;
With bleeding hands hang on thy cure—
It shall not be in vain."

But, ah, the will, which thus could quail,
Might yield—oh, horror drear!
Then, more than love, the fear to fail
Kept down the other fear.

I stood, nor moved. But inward strife
The bonds of slumber broke:
Oh! had I fled, and lost the life
Of which the Master spoke?

VI.

METHINKS I hear, as o'er this life's dim dial
The last shades darken, friends say, "*He was good;*"
I struggling fail to speak my faint denial—
They whisper, "*His humility withstood.*"

I, knowing better, part with love unspoken;
And find the unknown world not all unknown:
The bonds that held me from my centre broken,
I seek my home, the Saviour's homely throne.

How he will greet me, walking on, I wonder;
I think I know what I will say to him;
I fear no sapphire floor of cloudless thunder,
I fear no passing vision great and dim.

But he knows all my weary sinful story:
How will he judge me, pure, and strong, and fair?
I come to him in all his conquered glory,
Won from the life that I went dreaming there!

I come; I fall before him, faintly saying:
"Ah, Lord, shall I thy loving pardon win?
Earth tempted me; my walk was but a straying;
I have no honour—but may I come in?"

I hear him say: "Strong prayer did keep me stable;
To me the earth was very lovely too:
Thou shouldst have prayed; I would have made thee able
To love it greatly!—but thou hast got through."

PART II.

I.

A GLOOMY and a windy day!
No sunny spot is bare;
Dull vapours, in uncomely play,
Go weltering through the air:
If through the windows of my mind
I let them come and go,
My thoughts will also in the wind
Sweep restless to and fro.

I drop my curtains for a dream.—
What comes? A mighty swan,
With plumage like a sunny gleam,
And folded airy van!
She comes, from sea-plains dreaming, sent
By sea-maids to my shore,
With stately head proud-humbly bent,
And slackening swarthy oar.

Lone in a vaulted rock I lie,
A water-hollowed cell,
Where echoes of old storms go by,
Like murmurs in a shell.
The waters half the gloomy way
Beneath its arches come;
Throbbing to outside billowy play,
The green gulfs waver dumb.

Undawning twilights through the cave
In moony glimmers go,
Half from the swan above the wave,
Half from the swan below,

As to my feet she gently drifts
  Through dim, wet-shiny things,
And, with neck low-curved backward, lifts
  The shoulders of her wings.

Old earth is rich with many a nest
  Of softness ever new,
Deep, delicate, and full of rest—
  But loveliest there are two:
I may not tell them save to minds
  That are as white as they;
But none will hear, of other kinds—
  They all are turned away.

On foamy mounds between the wings
  Of a white sailing swan,
A flaky bed of shelterings,
  There you will find the one.
The other—well, it will not out,
  Nor need I tell it you;
I've told you one, and can you doubt,
  When there are only two?

Fill full my dream, O splendid bird!
  Me o'er the waters bear:
Never was tranquil ocean stirred
  By ship so shapely fair!
Nor ever whiteness found a dress
  In which on earth to go,
So true, profound, and rich, unless
  It was the falling snow!

Her wings, with flutter half-aloft,
  Impatient fan her crown;
I cannot choose but nestle soft
  Into the depth of down.

With oary-pulsing webs unseen,
  Out the white frigate sweeps;
In middle space we hang, between
  The air- and ocean-deeps.

Up the wave's mounting, flowing side,
  With stroke on stroke we rack;
As down the sinking slope we slide,
  She cleaves a talking track—
Like heather-bells on lonely steep,
  Like soft rain on the glass,
Like children murmuring in their sleep,
  Like winds in reedy grass.

Her white breast heaving like a wave,
  She beats the solemn time;
With slow strong sweep, intent and grave,
  Hearkens the ripples rime.
All round, from flat gloom upward drawn,
  I catch the gleam, vague, wide,
With which the waves, from dark to dawn,
  Heave up the polished side.

The night is blue; the stars aglow
  Crowd the still, vaulted steep,
Sad o'er the hopeless, restless flow
  Of the self-murmurous deep—
A thicker night, with gathered moan!
  A dull dethroned sky!
The shadows of its stars alone
  Left in to know it by!

What faints across yon lifted loop
  Where the west gleams its last?
With sea-veiled limbs, a sleeping group
  Of Nereids dreaming past.

Row on, fair swan;—who knows but I,
  Ere night hath sought her cave,
May see in splendour pale float by
  The Venus of the wave!

II.

A RAINBOW-WAVE o'erflowed her,
  A glory that deepened and grew,
A song of colour and odour
  That thrilled her through and through:
'Twas a dream of too much gladness
  Ever to see the light;
They are only dreams of sadness
  That weary out the night.

Slow darkness began to rifle
  The nest of the sunset fair;
Dank vapour began to stifle
  The scents that enriched the air;
The flowers paled fast and faster,
  They crumbled, leaf and crown,
Till they looked like the stained plaster
  Of a cornice fallen down.

And the change crept nigh and nigher,
  Inward and closer stole;
Till the flameless, blasting fire
  Entered and withered her soul.—
But the fiends had only flouted
  Her vision of the night;
Up came the morn and routed
  The darksome things with light.

Wide awake I have often been in it—
  The dream that all is none;
It will come in the gladdest minute
  And wither the very sun.

Two moments of sad commotion,
  One more of doubt's palsied rule—
And the great wave-pulsing ocean
  Is only a gathered pool;

A flower is a spot of painting,
  A lifeless, loveless hue;
Though your heart be sick to fainting
  It says not a word to you;
A bird knows nothing of gladness,
  Is only a song-machine;
A man is a reasoning madness,
  A woman a pictured queen!

Then fiercely we dig the fountain:
  Oh! whence do the waters rise?
Then panting we climb the mountain:
  Oh! are there indeed blue skies?
We dig till the soul is weary,
  Nor find the water-nest out;
We climb to the stone-crest dreary,
  And still the sky is a doubt!

Let alone the roots of the fountain;
  Drink of the water bright;
Leave the sky at rest on the mountain,
  Walk in its torrent of light;
Although thou seest no beauty,
  Though widowed thy heart yet cries,
With thy hands go and do thy duty,
  And thy work will clear thine eyes.

III.

A GREAT church in an empty square,
  A haunt of echoing tones!
Feet pass not oft enough to wear
  The grass between the stones.

The jarring hinges of its gates
  A stifled thunder boom ;
The boding heart slow-listening waits,
  As for a coming doom.

The door stands wide. With hideous grin,
  Like dumb laugh, evil, frore,
A gulf of death, all dark within,
  Hath swallowed half the floor.

Its uncouth sides of earth and clay
  O'erhang the void below ;
Ah, some one force my feet away,
  Or down I needs must go !

See, see the horrid, crumbling slope !
  It breathes up damp and fust !
What man would for his lost loves grope
  Amid the charnel dust !

Down, down ! The coffined mould glooms high !
  Methinks, with anguish dull,
I enter by the empty eye
  Into a monstrous skull !

Stumbling on what I dare not guess,
  Blind-wading through the gloom,
Still down, still on, I sink, I press,
  To meet some awful doom.

My searching hands have caught a door
  With iron clenched and barred :
Here, the gaunt spider's castle-core,
  Grim Death keeps watch and ward !

Its two leaves shake, its bars are bowed,
  As if a ghastly wind,
That never bore a leaf or cloud,
  Were pressing hard behind.

They shake, they groan, they outward strain:
  What thing of dire dismay
Will freeze its form upon my brain,
  And fright my soul away?

They groan, they shake, they bend, they crack;
  The bars, the doors divide;
A flood of glory at their back
  Hath burst the portals wide!

In flows a summer afternoon;
  I know the very breeze!
It used to blow the silvery moon
  About the summer trees.

The gulf is filled with flashing tides;
  Blue sky through boughs looks in;
Mosses and ferns o'er floor and sides
  A mazy arras spin.

The empty church, the yawning cleft,
  The earthy, dead despair
Are gone, and I alive am left
  In sunshine and in air!

IV.

SOME dreams, in slumber's twilight, sly
  Through the ivory wicket creep;
Then suddenly the inward eye
  Sees them outside the sleep.

Once, wandering in the border gray,
  I spied one past me swim;
I caught it on its truant way
  To nowhere in the dim.

All o'er a steep of grassy ground,
Lay ruined statues old,
Such forms as never more are found
Save deep in ancient mould,

A host of marble Anakim
Shattered in deadly fight!
Oh, what a wealth one broken limb
Had been to waking sight!

But sudden, the weak mind to mock
That could not keep its own,
Without a shiver or a shock,
Behold, the dream was gone!

For each dim form of marble rare
Stood broken rush or reed;
So bends on autumn field, long bare,
Some tall rain-battered weed.

The shapeless night hung empty, drear,
O'er my scarce slumbering head;
There is no good in staying here,
My spirit moaned, and fled.

V.

THE simplest joys that daily pass
Grow ecstasies in sleep;
A wind on heights of waving grass
In a dream has made me weep.

No wonder then my heart one night
Was joy-full to the brim:
I was with one whose love and might
Had drawn me close to him!

But from a church into the street
Came pouring, crowding on,
A troubled throng with hurrying feet,
And lo, my friend was gone!

Alone upon a miry road
I walked a wretched plain;
Onward without a goal I strode
Through mist and drizzling rain.

Low mounds of ruin, ugly pits,
And brick-fields scarred the globe;
Those wastes where desolation sits
Without her ancient robe.

The dreariness, the nothingness
Grew worse almost than fear;
If ever hope was needful bliss,
Hope sure was needful here!

Did potent wish work joyous change
Like wizard's glamour-spell?
Wishes not always fruitless range,
And sometimes it is well!

I know not. Sudden sank the way,
Burst in the ocean-waves;
Behold a bright, blue-billowed bay,
Red rocks and sounding caves!

Dreaming, I wept. Awake, I ask—
Shall earthly dreams, forsooth,
Set the old Heavens too hard a task
To match them with the truth?

VI.

ONCE more I build a dream, awake,
Which sleeping I would dream;
Once more an unborn fancy take
And try to make it seem!
Some strange delight shall fill my breast,
Enticed from sleep's abyss,
With sense of motion, yet of rest,
Of sleep, yet waking bliss!

It comes!—I lie on something warm
That lifts me from below;
It rounds me like a mighty arm
Though soft as drifted snow.
A dream, indeed!—Oh, happy me
Whom Titan woman bears
Afloat upon a gentle sea
Of wandering midnight airs!

A breeze, just cool enough to lave
With sense each conscious limb,
Glides round and under, like a wave
Of twilight growing dim!
She bears me over sleeping towns,
O'er murmuring ears of corn;
O'er tops of trees, o'er billowy downs,
O'er moorland wastes forlorn.

The harebells in the mountain-pass
Flutter their blue about;
The myriad blades of meadow grass
Float scarce-heard music out.
Over the lake!—ah! nearer float,
Nearer the water's breast;
Let me look deeper—let me doat
Upon that lily-nest.

Old homes we brush—in wood, on road;
  Their windows do not shine;
Their dwellers must be all abroad
  In lovely dreams like mine!
Hark—drifting syllables that break
  Like foam-bells on fleet ships!
The little airs are all awake
  With softly kissing lips.

Light laughter ripples down the wind,
  Sweet sighs float everywhere;
But when I look I nothing find,
  For every star is there.
O lady lovely, lady strong,
  Ungiven thy best gift lies!
Thou bear'st me in thine arms along,
  Dost not reveal thine eyes!

Pale doubt lifts up a snaky crest,
  In darts a pang of loss:
My outstretched hand, for hills of rest,
  Finds only mounds of moss!
Faint and far off the stars appear;
  The wind begins to weep;
'Tis night indeed, chilly and drear,
  And all but me asleep!

ROADSIDE POEMS.

ROADSIDE POEMS.

BETTER THINGS.

BETTER to smell the violet
Than sip the glowing wine;
Better to hearken to a brook
Than watch a diamond shine.

Better to have a loving friend
Than ten admiring foes;
Better a daisy's earthy root
Than a gorgeous, dying rose.

Better to love in loneliness
Than bask in love all day;
Better the fountain in the heart
Than the fountain by the way.

Better be fed by mother's hand
Than eat alone at will;
Better to trust in God, than say,
My goods my storehouse fill.

Better to be a little wise
Than in knowledge to abound;
Better to teach a child than toil
To fill perfection's round.

Better to sit at some man's feet
Than thrill a listening state;
Better suspect that thou art proud
Than be sure that thou art great.

Better to walk the realm unseen
Than watch the hour's event;
Better the *Well done, faithful slave!*
Than the air with shoutings rent.

Better to have a quiet grief
Than many turbulent joys;
Better to miss thy manhood's aim
Than sacrifice the boy's.

Better a death when work is done
Than earth's most favoured birth;
Better a child in God's great house
Than the king of all the earth.

AN OLD SERMON WITH A NEW TEXT.

My wife contrived a fleecy thing
Her husband to infold,
For 'tis the pride of woman still
To cover from the cold:
My daughter made it a new text
For a sermon very old.

The child came trotting to her side,
Ready with bootless aid:
"Lily make veckit for papa,"
The tiny woman said:
Her mother gave the means and ways,
And a knot upon her thread.

"Mamma, mamma!—it won't come through!"
In meek dismay she cried.
Her mother cut away the knot,
And she was satisfied,
Pulling the long thread through and through,
In fabricating pride.

Her mother told me this : I caught
A glimpse of something more :
Great meanings often hide behind
The little word before !
And I brooded over my new text
Till the seed a sermon bore.

Nannie, to you I preach it now—
A little sermon, low :
Is it not thus a thousand times,
As through the world we go ?
Do we not tug, and fret, and cry—
Instead of *Yes, Lord—No ?*

While all the rough things that we meet
Which will not move a jot,
The hindrances to heart and feet,
The Crook in every Lot,
Mean plainly but that children's threads
Have at the end a knot.

This world of life God weaves for us,
Nor spares he pains or cost,
But we must turn the web to clothes
And shield our hearts from frost :
Shall we, because the thread holds fast,
Count labour vain and lost ?

If he should cut away the knot,
And yield each fancy wild,
The hidden life within our hearts—
His life, the undefiled—
Would fare as ill as I should fare
From the needle of my child.

As tack and sheet unto the sail,
As to my verse the rime,

As mountains to the low green earth—
  So hard for feet to climb,
As call of striking clock amid
  The quiet flow of time,

As sculptor's mallet to the birth
  Of the slow-dawning face,
As knot upon my Lily's thread
  When she would work apace,
God's *Nay* is such, and worketh so
  For his children's coming grace.

Who, knowing God's intent with him,
  His birthright would refuse?
What makes us what we have to be
  Is the only thing to choose:
We understand nor end nor means,
  And yet his ways accuse!

This is my sermon. It is preached
  Against all fretful strife.
Chafe not with anything that is,
  Nor cut it with thy knife.
Ah! be not angry with the knot
  That holdeth fast thy life.

LITTLE ELFIE.

I HAVE a puppet-jointed child,
  She's but three half-years old;
Through lawless hair her eyes gleam wild
  With looks both shy and bold.

Like little imps, her tiny hands
  Dart out and push and take;
Chide her—a trembling thing she stands,
  And like two leaves they shake.

But to her mind a minute gone
Is like a year ago;
And when you lift your eyes anon,
Anon you must say *No!*

Sometimes, though not oppressed with care,
She has her sleepless fits;
Then, blanket-swathed, in that round chair
The elfish mortal sits;—

Where, if by chance in mood more grave,
A hermit she appears
Propped in the opening of his cave,
Mummied almost with years;

Or like an idol set upright
With folded legs for stem,
Ready to hear prayers all the night
And never answer them.

But where's the idol-hermit thrust?
Her knees like flail-joints go!
Alternate kiss, her mother must,
Now that, now this big toe!

I turn away from her, and write
For minutes three or four:
A tiny spectre, tall and white,
She's standing by the door!

Then something comes into my head
That makes me stop and think:
She's on the table, the quadruped,
And dabbling in my ink!

O Elfie, make no haste to lose
Thy ignorance of offence!
Thou hast the best gift I could choose,
A heavenly confidence.

'Tis time, long-white-gowned Mrs. Ham,
To put you in the ark!
Sleep, Elfie, God-infolded lamb,
Sleep shining through the dark.

RECIPROCITY.

HER mother, Elfie older grown,
One evening, for adieu,
Said, "You'll not mind being left alone,
For God takes care of you!"

In child-way her heart's eye did see
The correlation's node:
"Yes," she said, "God takes care o' me,
An' I take care o' God."

The child and woman were the same,
She changed not, only grew;
'Twixt God and her no shadow came:
The true is always true!

As daughter, sister, promised wife,
Her heart with love did brim:
Now, sure, it brims as full of life,
Hid fourteen years in him!

1892.

THE SHADOWS.

MY little boy, with smooth, fair cheeks,
And dreamy, large, brown eyes,
Not often, little wisehead, speaks,
But hearing, weighs and tries.

"God is not only in the sky,"
His sister said one day—
Not older much, but she would cry
Like Wisdom in the way—

"He's in this room." His dreamy, clear,
Large eyes look round for God:
In vain they search, in vain they peer;
His wits are all abroad!

"He is not here, mamma? No, no;
I do not see him at all!
He's not the shadows, is he?" So
His doubtful accents fall—

Fall on my heart, no babble mere!
They rouse both love and shame:
But for earth's loneliness and fear,
I might be saying the same!

Nay, sometimes, ere the morning break
And home the shadows flee,
In my dim room even yet I take
Those shadows, Lord, for thee!

THE CHILD-MOTHER.

HEAVILY slumbered noonday bright
Upon the lone field, glory-dight,
A burnished grassy sea:
The child, in gorgeous golden hours,
Through heaven-descended starry flowers,
Went walking on the lea.

Velvety bees make busy hum;
Green flies and striped wasps go and come;
The butterflies gleam white;
Blue-burning, vaporous, to and fro
The dragon-flies like arrows go,
Or hang in moveless flight:—

Not one she followed; like a rill
She wandered on with quiet will;
  Received, but did not miss;
Her step was neither quick nor long;
Nought but a snatch of murmured song
  Ever revealed her bliss.

An almost solemn woman-child,
Not fashioned frolicsome and wild,
  She had more love than glee;
And now, though nine and nothing more,
Another little child she bore,
  Almost as big as she.

No silken cloud from solar harms
Had she to spread; with shifting arms
  She dodged him from the sun;
Mother and sister both in heart,
She did a gracious woman's part,
  Life's task even now begun!

They came upon a stagnant ditch,
The slippery sloping banks of which
  More varied blossoms line;
Some ragged-robins baby spies,
Stretches his hands, and crows and cries,
  Plain saying, "They are mine!"

What baby wants, that baby has—
A law unalterable as
  The poor shall serve the rich:
They are beyond her reach—almost!
She kneels, she strains, and, too engrossed,
  Topples into the ditch.

Adown the side she slanting rolled,
But her two arms convulsive hold
  The precious baby tight;

She lets herself sublimely go,
And in the ditch's muddy flow
  Stands up, in evil plight.

'Tis nothing that her feet are wet,
But her new shoes she can't forget—
  They cost five shillings bright!
Her petticoat, her tippet blue,
Her frock, they're smeared with slime like glue!
  But baby is all right!

And baby laughs, and baby crows;
And baby being right, she knows
  That nothing can be wrong;
So, with a troubled heart yet stout,
She plans how *ever* to get out
  With meditation long.

The high bank's edge is far away,
The slope is steep, and made of clay;
  And what to do with baby?
For even a monkey, up to run,
Would need his four hands, every one:—
  She is perplexed as may be.

And all her puzzling is no good!
Blank-staring up the side she stood,
  Which, settling she, grew higher.
At last, seized with a fresh dismay
Lest baby's patience should give way,
  She plucked her feet from the mire,

And up and down the ditch, not glad,
But patient, very, did promenade—
  Splash, splash, went her small feet!
And baby thought it rare good fun,
Sucking his bit of pulpy bun,
  And smelling meadow-sweet.

But, oh, the world that she had left—
The meads from her so lately reft—
  Poor infant Proserpine!
A fabled land they lay above,
A paradise of sunny love,
  In breezy space divine!

Frequent from neighbouring village-green
Came sounds of laughter, faintly keen,
  And barks of well-known dogs,
While she, the hot sun overhead,
Her lonely watery way must tread
  In mud and weeds and frogs!

Sudden, the ditch about her shakes;
Her little heart, responsive, quakes
  With fear of uncouth woes;
She lifts her boding eyes perforce—
To see the huge head of a horse
  Go past upon its nose.

Then, hark, what sounds of tearing grass
And puffing breath!—With knobs of brass
  On horns of frightful size,
A cow's head through the broken hedge
Looks awful from the other edge,
  Though mild her pondering eyes.

The horse, the cow are passed and gone;
The sun keeps going on and on,
  And still no help comes near.—
At misery's last—oh joy, the sound
Of human footsteps on the ground!
  She cried aloud, "*I*'m here!"

It was a man—oh, heavenly joy!
He looked amazed at girl and boy,
  And reached his hand so strong:

"Give me the child," he said; but no!
Care would not let the burden go
  Which Love had borne so long.

Smiling he kneels with outstretched hands,
And them unparted safely lands
  In the upper world again.
Her low thanks feebly murmured, she
Drags her legs homeward painfully—
  Poor, wet, one-chickened hen!

Arrived at length—lo, scarce a speck
Was on the child from heel to neck,
  Though she was sorely mired!
No tear confessed the long-drawn rack,
Till her mother took the baby back,
  And then she cried, "I'm tired!"

And, intermixed with sobbing wail,
She told her mother all the tale,
  Her wet cheeks in a glow:
"But, mother, mother, though I fell,
I kept the baby pretty well—
  I did not let him go!"

HE HEEDED NOT.

OF whispering trees the tongues to hear,
  And sermons of the silent stone;
To read in brooks the print so clear
  Of motion, shadowy light, and tone—
That man hath neither eye nor ear
  Who careth not for human moan.

Yea, he who draws, in shrinking haste,
  From sin that passeth helpless by;

The weak antennæ of whose taste
From touch of alien grossness fly—
Shall, banished to the outer waste,
Never in Nature's bosom lie.

But he whose heart is full of grace
To his own kindred all about,
Shall find in lowest human face,
Blasted with wrong and dull with doubt,
More than in Nature's holiest place
Where mountains dwell and streams run out.

Coarse cries of strife assailed my ear,
In suburb-ways, one summer morn;
A wretched alley I drew near
Whence on the air the sounds were borne—
Growls breaking into curses clear,
And shrill retorts of keener scorn.

Slow from its narrow entrance came,
His senses drowned with revels dire,
Scarce fit to answer to his name,
A man unconscious save of ire;
Fierce flashes of dull, fitful flame
Broke from the embers of his fire.

He cast a glance of stupid hate
Behind him, every step he took,
Where followed him, like following fate,
An aged crone, with bloated look:
A something checked his listless gait;
She neared him, rating till she shook.

Why stood he still to be disgraced?
What hindered? Lost in his employ,
His eager head high as his waist,
Half-buttressed him a tiny boy,
An earnest child, ill-clothed, pale-faced,
Whose eyes held neither hope nor joy.

Perhaps you think he pushed, and pled
For one poor coin to keep the peace
With hunger! or home would have led
And given him up to sleep's release:
Well he might know the good of bed
To make the drunken fever cease!

Not so; like unfledged, hungry bird
He stood on tiptoe, reaching higher,
But no expostulating word
Did in his anxious soul aspire;
With humbler care his heart was stirred,
With humbler service to his sire.

He, sleepless-pale and wrathful red,
Though forward leaning, held his foot
Lest on the darling he should tread:
A misty sense had taken root
Somewhere in his bewildered head
That round him kindness hovered mute.

The words his simmering rage did spill
Passed o'er the child like breeze o'er corn;
Safer than bee whose dodging skill
And myriad eyes the hail-shower scorn,
The boy, absorbed in loving will,
Buttoned his father's waistcoat worn.

Over his calm, unconscious face
No motion passed, no change of mood;
Still as a pool in its own place,
Unsunned within a thick-leaved wood,
It kept its quiet shadowy grace,
As round it all things had been good.

Was the boy deaf—the tender palm
Of him that made him folded round

The little head to keep it calm
With a *hitherto* to every sound—
And so nor curse nor shout nor psalm
Could thrill the globe thus grandly bound?

Or came in force the happy law
That customed things themselves erase?
Or was he too intent for awe?
Did love take all the thinking place?
I cannot tell; I only saw
An earnest, fearless, hopeless face.

THE SHEEP AND THE GOAT.

THE thousand streets of London gray
Repel all country sights;
But bar not winds upon their way,
Nor quench the scent of new-mown hay
In depth of summer nights.

And here and there an open spot,
Still bare to light and dark,
With grass receives the wanderer hot;
There trees are growing, houses not—
They call the place a park.

Soft creatures, with ungentle guides,
God's sheep from hill and plain,
Flow thitherward in fitful tides,
There weary lie on woolly sides,
Or crop the grass amain.

And from dark alley, yard, and den,
In ragged skirts and coats,
Come thither children of poor men,
Wild things, untaught of word or pen—
The little human goats.

In Regent's Park, one cloudless day,
An overdriven sheep,
Come a hard, long, and dusty way,
Throbbing with thirst and hotness lay,
A panting woollen heap.

But help is nearer than we know
For ills of every name :
Ragged enough to scare the crow,
But with a heart to pity woe,
A quick-eyed urchin came.

Little he knew of field or fold,
Yet knew what ailed ; his cap
Was ready cup for water cold ;
Though creased, and stained, and very old,
'Twas not much torn, good hap !

Shaping the rim and crown he went,
Till crown from rim was deep ;
The water gushed from pore and rent,
Before he came one half was spent—
The other saved the sheep.

O little goat, born, bred in ill,
Unwashed, half-fed, unshorn,
Thou to the sheep from breezy hill
Wast bishop, pastor, what you will,
In London dry and lorn !

And let priests say the thing they please,
My faith, though poor and dim,
Thinks he will say who always sees,
In doing it to one of these
Thou didst it unto him.

THE WAKEFUL SLEEPER.

WHEN things are holding wonted pace
In wonted paths, without a trace
  Or hint of neighbouring wonder,
Sometimes, from other realms, a tone,
A scent, a vision, swift, alone,
  Breaks common life asunder.

Howe'er it comes, whate'er its door,
It makes you ponder something more—
  Unseen with seen things linking:
To neighbours met one festive night,
Was given a quaint and lovely sight,
  That set some of them thinking.

They stand, in music's fetters bound
By a clear brook of warbled sound,
  A canzonet of Haydn,
When the door slowly comes ajar—
A little further—just as far
  As shows a tiny maiden.

Softly she enters, her pink toes
Daintily peeping, as she goes,
  Her long nightgown from under.
The varied mien, the questioning look
Were worth a picture; but she took
  No notice of their wonder.

They made a path, and she went through;
She had her little chair in view
  Close by the chimney-corner;
She turned, sat down before them all,
Stately as princess at a ball,
  And silent as a mourner.

Then looking closer yet, they spy
What mazedness hid from every eye
As ghost-like she came creeping:
They see that though sweet little Rose
Her settled way unerring goes,
Plainly the child is sleeping.

"Play on, sing on," the mother said;
"Oft music draws her from her bed."—
Dumb Echo, she sat listening;
Over her face the sweet concent
Like winds o'er placid waters went,
Her cheeks like eyes were glistening.

Her hands tight-clasped her bent knees hold
Like long grass drooping on the wold
Her sightless head is bending;
She sits all ears, and drinks her fill,
Then rising goes, sedate and still,
On silent white feet wending.

Surely, while she was listening so,
Glad thoughts in her went to and fro
Preparing her 'gainst sorrow,
And ripening faith for that sure day
When earnest first looks out of play,
And thought out of to-morrow.

She will not know from what fair skies
Troop hopes to front anxieties—
In what far fields they gather,
Until she knows that even in sleep,
Yea, in the dark of trouble deep,
The child is with the Father.

A DREAM OF WAKING.

A CHILD was born in sin and shame,
  Wronged by his very birth,
Without a home, without a name,
  One over in the earth.

No wifely triumph he inspired,
  Allayed no husband's fear;
Intruder bare, whom none desired,
  He had a welcome drear.

Heaven's beggar, all but turned adrift
  For knocking at earth's gate,
His mother, like an evil gift,
  Shunned him with sickly hate.

And now the mistress on her knee
  The unloved baby bore,
The while the servant sullenly
  Prepared to leave her door.

Her eggs are dear to mother-dove,
  Her chickens to the hen;
All young ones bring with them their love,
  Of sheep, or goats, or men!

This one lone child shall not have come
  In vain for love to seek:
Let mother's hardened heart be dumb,
  A sister-babe will speak!

"Mother, keep baby—keep him *so*;
  Don't let him go away."
"But, darling, if his mother go,
  Poor baby cannot stay."

"He's crying, mother: don't you see
He wants to stay with you?"
"No, child; he does not care for me."
"Do keep him, mother—*do*."

"For his own mother he would cry;
He's hungry now, I think."
"Give him to me, and let *me* try
If I can make him drink.

"Susan would hurt him! Mother *will*
Let the poor baby stay?"
Her mother's heart grew sore, but still
Baby must go away!

The red lip trembled; the slow tears
Came darkening in her eyes;
Pressed on her heart a weight of fears
That sought not ease in cries.

'Twas torture—must not be endured!—
A too outrageous grief!
Was there an ill could *not* be cured?
She *would* find some relief!

All round her universe she pried:
No dawn began to break:
In prophet-agony she cried—
"Mother! when *shall* we wake?"

O insight born of torture's might!—
Such grief *can* only seem.
Rise o'er the hills, eternal light,
And melt the earthly dream.

A MANCHESTER POEM.

'Tis a poor drizzly morning, dark and sad.
The cloud has fallen, and filled with fold on fold
The chimneyed city; and the smoke is caught,
And spreads diluted in the cloud, and sinks,
A black precipitate, on miry streets.
And faces gray glide through the darkened fog.

Slave engines utter again their ugly growl,
And soon the iron bands and blocks of stone
That prison them to their task, will strain and quiver
Until the city tremble. The clamour of bells,
Importunate, keeps calling pale-faced forms
To gather and feed those Samsons' groaning strength
With labour; and among the many come
A man and woman—the woman with her gown
Drawn over her head, the man with bended neck
Submissive to the rain. Amid the jar,
And clash, and shudder of the awful force,
They enter and part—each to a different task,
But each a soul of knowledge to brute force,
Working a will through the organized whole
Of cranks and belts and levers, pinions and screws
Wherewith small man has eked his body out,
And made himself a mighty, weary giant.
In labour close they pass the murky day,
'Mid floating dust of swift-revolving wheels,
And filmy spoil of quick contorted threads,
Which weave a sultry chaos all about;
Until, at length, old darkness, swelling slow
Up from the caves of night to make an end,
Chokes in its tide the clanking of the looms,
The monster-engines, and the flying gear.
'Tis Earth that draws her curtains, and calls home
Her little ones, and sets her down to nurse

Her tired children—like a mother-ghost
With her neglected darlings in the dark.
So out they walk, with sense of glad release,
And home—to a dreary place! Unfinished walls,
Earth-heaps, and broken bricks, and muddy pools
Lie round it like a rampart against the spring,
The summer, and all sieges of the year.

But, lo, the dark has opened an eye of fire!
The room reveals a temple, witnessed by signs
Seen in the ancient place! Lo, here is light,
Yea, burning fire, with darkness on its skirts;
Pure water, ready to baptize; and bread;
And in the twilight edges of the light,
A book; and, for the cunning-woven veil,
Their faces—hiding God's own holiest place!
Even their bed figures the would-be grave
Where One arose triumphant, slept no more!
So at their altar-table they sit down
To eat their Eucharist; for, to the heart
That reads the live will in the dead command,
He is the bread, yea, all of every meal.
But as, in weary rest, they silent sit,
They gradually grow aware of light
That overcomes their lamp, and, through the blind,
Casts from the window-frame two shadow-glooms
That make a cross of darkness on the white.
The woman rises, eagerly looks out:
Lo, some fair wind has mown the earth-sprung fog,
And, far aloft, the white exultant moon,
From her blue window, curtained all with white,
Looks greeting them—God's creatures they and she!
Smiling she turns; he understands the smile:
To-morrow will be fair—as holy, fair!
And lying down, in sleep they die till morn,
While through their night throb low aurora-gleams
Of resurrection and the coming dawn.

They wake: 'tis Sunday. Still the moon is there,
But thin and ghostly—clothed upon with light,
As if, while they were sleeping, she had died.
They dress themselves, like priests, in clean attire,
And, through their lowly door, enter God's room.
The sun is up, the emblem on his shield.
One side the street, the windows all are moons
To light the other side that lies in shade.
See, down the sun-side, an old woman come
In a red cloak that makes the whole street glad!
A long-belated autumn-flower she seems,
Dazed by the rushing of the new-born life
Up hidden stairs to see the calling sun,
But in her cloak and smile they know the spring,
And haste to meet her through slow dissolving streets
Widening to larger glimmers of growing green.
Oh, far away the streets repel the spring!
Yet every stone in the dull pavement shares
The life that thrills anew the outworn earth,
A right Bethesda angel—for all, not some!

A street unfinished leads them forth at length
Where green fields bask, and hedgerow trees, apart,
Stand waiting in the air as for some good,
And the sky is broad and blue—and there is all!
No peaceful river meditates along
The weary flat to the less level sea!
No forest brown, on pillared stems, its boughs
Meeting in gothic arches, bears aloft
A groined vault, fretted with tremulous leaves!
No mountains lift their snows, and send their brooks
Down babbling with the news of silent things!
But love itself is commonest of all,
And loveliest of all, in all the worlds!
And he that hath not forest, brook, or hill,
Must learn to read aright what commoner books
Unfold before him. If ocean solitudes—

Then darkness dashed with glory, infinite shades,
And misty minglings of the sea and sky.
If only fields—the humble man of heart
Will revel in the grass beneath his foot,
And from the lea lift his glad eye to heaven,
God's palette, where his careless painter-hand
Sweeps comet-clouds that net the gazing soul;
Streaks endless stairs, and blots half-sculptured blocks;
Curves filmy pallors; heaps huge mountain-crags;
Nor touches where it leaves not beauty's mark.
To them the sun and air are feast enough,
As through field-paths and lanes they slowly walk;
But sometimes, on the far horizon dim
A veil is lifted, and they spy the hills,
Cloudlike and faint, yet sharp against the sky;
Then wakes an unknown want, which asks and looks
As for some thing forgot—loved long ago,
But on the hither verge of childhood dropt:
'Tis but home-sickness roused in the soul by Spring!
Fresh birth and eager growth, reviving life,
Which *is* because it *would be*, fill the world;
The very light is new-born with the grass;
The stones themselves are warm; the brown earth swells,
Filled, sponge-like, with dark beams, which nestle close
And brood unseen and shy, and potent warm
In every little corner, nest, and crack
Where buried lurks a blind and sleepy seed
Waiting the touch of the finger of the sun.
The mossy stems and boughs, where yet no life
Oozes exuberant in brown and green,
Are clad in golden splendours, crossed and lined
With shuttle-shadows weaving lovely change.
Through the tree-tops the west wind rushing goes,
Calling and rousing the dull sap within:
The fine jar down the stem sinks tremulous,
From airy root thrilling to earthy branch.
And though as yet no buddy baby dots

Sparkle the darkness of the hedgerow twigs,
The smoke-dried bark appears to spread and swell
In the soft nurture of the warm light-bath.
The sun had left behind him the keystone
Of his low arch half-way when they turned home,
Filled with pure air, and light, and operant spring ·
Back, like the bees, they went to their dark house
To store their innocent spoil in honeyed thought.

But on their way, crossing a field, they chanced
Upon a spot where once had been a home,
And roots of walls still peered out, grown with moss.
'Twas a dead cottage, mouldered quite, where yet
Lay the old shadow of a vanished care ;
The little garden's blunt, half-blotted map
Was yet discernible by thinner grass
Upon the walks. There, in the midst of dry
Bushes, dead flowers, rampant, uncomely weeds,
A single snowdrop drooped its snowy drop,
The lonely remnant of a family
That in the garden dwelt about the home—
Reviving with the spring when home was gone :
They see ; its spiritual counterpart
Wakes up and blossoms white in their meek souls—
A longing, patient, waiting hopefulness,
The snowdrop of the heart ; a heavenly child,
That, pale with the earthly cold, hangs its fair head
As it had nought to say 'gainst any world ;
While they in whom it dwells, nor knows itself,
Inherit in their meekness all the worlds.

I love thee, flower, as a slow lingerer
Upon the verge of my humanity.
Lo, on thine inner leaves and in thy heart
The loveliest green, acknowledging the grass—
White-minded memory of lowly friends !
But almost more I love thee for the earth

Which clings to thy transfigured radiancy,
Uplifted with thee from thine abandoned grave;
Say rather the soiling of thy garments pure
Upon thy road into the light and air,
The heaven of thy new birth. Some gentle rain
Will one day wash thee white, and send the earth
Back to the earth; but, sweet friend, while it clings,
I love the cognizance of our family.

With careful hands uprooting it, they bore
The little plant a willing captive home—
Fearless of dark abode, because secure
In its own tale of light. As once of old
The angel of the annunciation shone,
Bearing all heaven into a common house,
It brings in with it field and sky and air.
A pot of mould its one poor tie to earth,
Its heaven an ell of blue 'twixt chimney-tops,
Its world the priests of that small temple-room,
It takes its prophet-place with fire and book,
Type of primeval spring, whose mighty arc
Hath not yet drawn the summer up the sky.
At night, when the dark shadow of the cross
Will enter, clothed in moonlight, still and wan
Like a pale mourner at its foot the flower
Will, drooping, wait the dawn. Then the dark bird
Which holds breast-caged the secret of the sun,
And therefore hangs himself a prisoner caged,
Will break into its song—Lo, God is light!

Weary and hopeful, to their sleep they go;
And all night long the snowdrop glimmers white
Thinning the dark, unknowing it, and unseen.

Out of my verse I woke, and saw my room,
My precious books, the cherub-forms above,

And rose, and walked abroad, and sought the woods;
And roving odours met me on my way.
I entered Nature's church, a shimmering vault
Of boughs, and clouded leaves—filmy and pale
Betwixt me and the sun, while at my feet
Their shadows, dark and seeming solid, lay
Like tombstones o'er the vanished flowers of Spring.
The place was silent, save for the broken song
Of some Memnonian, glory-stricken bird
That burst into a carol and was still;
It was not lonely: golden beetles crept,
Green goblins, in the roots; and squirrel things
Ran, wild as cherubs, through the tracery;
And here and yonder a flaky butterfly
Was doubting in the air, scarlet and blue.
But 'twixt my heart and summer's perfect grace,
Drove a dividing wedge, and far away
It seemed, like voice heard loud yet far away
By one who, waking half, soon sleeps outright:—
Where was the snowdrop? where the flower of hope?
In me the spring was throbbing; round me lay
Resting fulfilled, the odour-breathing summer!
My heart heaved swelling like a prisoned bud,
And summer crushed it with its weight of light!

Winter is full of stings and sharp reproofs,
Healthsome, not hurtful, but yet hurting sore;
Summer is too complete for growing hearts—
Too idle its noons, its morns too triumphing,
Too full of slumberous dreams its dusky eves;
Autumn is full of ripeness and the grave;
We need a broken season, where the cloud
Is ruffled into glory, and the dark
Falls rainful o'er the sunset; need a world
Whose shadows ever point away from it;
A scheme of cones abrupt, and flattened spheres,
And circles cut, and perfect laws the while

That marvellous imperfection ever points
To higher perfectness than heart can think;
Therefore to us, a flower of harassed Spring,
Crocus, or primrose, or anemone,
Is lovely as was never rosiest rose;
A heath-bell on a waste, lonely and dry,
Says more than lily, stately in breathing white;
A window through a vaulted roof of rain
Lets in a light that comes from farther away,
And, sinking deeper, spreads a finer joy
Than cloudless noon-tide splendorous o'er the world:
Man seeks a better home than Paradise;
Therefore high hope is more than deepest joy,
A disappointment better than a feast,
And the first daisy on a wind-swept lea
Dearer than Eden-groves with rivers four.

WHAT THE LORD SAITH.

TRUST my father, saith the eldest-born;
I did trust him ere the earth began;
Not to know him is to be forlorn;
Not to love him is—not to be man.

He that knows him loves him altogether;
With my father I am so content
That through all this dreary human weather
I am working, waiting, confident.

He is with me; I am not alone;
Life is bliss, because I am his child;
Down in Hades will I lay the stone
Whence shall rise to Heaven his city piled.

Hearken, brothers, pray you, to my story!
Hear me, sister; hearken, child, to me:
Our one father is a perfect glory;
He is light, and there is none but he.

Come then with me; I will lead the way;
All of you, sore-hearted, heavy-shod,
Come to father, yours and mine, I pray;
Little ones, I pray you, come to God!

HOW SHALL HE SING WHO HATH NO SONG?

How shall he sing who hath no song?
He laugh who hath no mirth?
Will cannot wake the sleeping song!
Yea, Love itself in vain may long
To sing with them that have a song,
Or, mirthless, laugh with Mirth!
He who would sing but hath no song
Must speak the right, denounce the wrong,
Must humbly front the indignant throng,
Must yield his back to Satire's thong,
Nor shield his face from liar's prong,
Must say and do and be the truth,
And fearless wait for what ensueth,
Wait, wait, with patience sweet and strong,
Until God's glory fill the earth;
Then shall he sing who had no song,
He laugh who had no mirth!

Yea, if in land of stony dearth
Like barren rock thou sit,
Round which the phantom-waters flit
Of heart- and brain-mirage
That can no thirst assuage,
Yet be thou still, and wait, wait long;
A right sea comes to drown the wrong;
God's glory comes to fill the earth,
And thou, no more a scathed rock,

Shalt start alive with gladsome shock,
Shalt a hand-clapping billow be,
And shout with the eternal sea!

To righteousness and love belong
The dance, the jubilance, the song,
When the great Right hath quelled the wrong,
And Truth hath stilled the lying tongue!
Then men must sing because of song,
And laugh because of mirth!
And this shall be their anthem strong—
Hallow! the glad God fills the earth,
And Love sits down by every hearth!

THIS WORLD.

THY world is made to fit thine own,
A nursery for thy children small,
The playground-footstool of thy throne,
Thy solemn school-room, Father of all!
When day is done, in twilight's gloom,
We pass into thy presence-room.

Because from selfishness and wrath,
Our cold and hot extremes of ill,
We grope and stagger on the path—
Thou tell'st us from thy holy hill,
With icy storms and sunshine rude,
That we are all unripe in good.

Because of snaky things that creep
Through our soul's sea, dim-undulant,
Thou fill'st the mystery of thy deep
With faces heartless, grim, and gaunt;
That we may know how ugly seem
The things our spirit-oceans teem.

Because of half-way things that hold
Good names, and have a poisonous breath—

Prudence that is but trust in gold,
  And faith that is but fear of death—
Amongst thy flowers, the lovely brood,
Thou sendest some that are not good.

Thou stay'st thy hand from finishing things
  To make thy child love the complete;
Full many a flower comes up thy springs
  Unshamed in imperfection sweet;
That through good all, and good in part,
Thy work be perfect in the heart.

Because, in careless confidence,
  So oft we leave the narrow way,
Its borders thorny hedges fence,
  Beyond them marshy deeps affray;
But farther on, the heavenly road
Lies through the gardens of our God.

Because thy sheep so often will
  Forsake the meadow cool and damp
To climb the stony, grassless hill,
  Or wallow in the slimy swamp,
Thy sicknesses, where'er they roam,
Go after them to bring them home.

One day, all fear, all ugliness,
  All pain, all discord, dumb or loud,
All selfishness, and all distress,
  Will melt like low-spread morning cloud,
And heart and brain be free from thrall,
Because thou, God, art all in all!

SAINT PETER.

O PETER, wherefore didst thou doubt?
Indeed the spray flew fast about,
But he was there whose walking foot
Could make the wandering hills take root;
And he had said, "Come down to me,"
Else hadst thou not set foot on sea!
Christ did not call thee to thy grave!
Was it the boat that made thee brave?

"Easy for thee who wast not there
To think thou more than I couldst dare!
It hardly fits thee though to mock
Scared as thou wast that railway shock!
Who saidst this morn, 'Wife, we must go—
The plague will soon be here, I know!'
Who, when thy child slept—not to death—
Saidst, 'Life is now not worth a breath!'"

Saint Peter, thou rebukest well!
It needs no tempest me to quell,
Not even a spent lash of its spray!
Things far too little to affray
Will wake the doubt that's worst of all—
Is there a God to hear me call?
But if he be, I never think
That he will hear and let me sink!

Lord of my little faith, my Lord,
Help me to fear nor fire nor sword;
Let not the cross itself appall
Which bore thee, Life and Lord of all;
Let reeling brain nor fainting heart
Wipe out the sureness that thou art;
Dwell farther in than doubt can go,
And make *I hope* become *I know*.

Then, sure, if thou should please to say,
"Come to my side," some stormy way,
My feet, atoning to thy will,
Shall, heaved and tossed, walk toward thee still;
No heart of lead shall sink me where
Prudence lies crowned with cold despair,
But I shall reach and clasp thy hand,
And on the sea forget the land!

ZACCHÆUS.

To whom the heavy burden clings,
It yet may serve him like a staff;
One day the cross will break in wings,
The sinner laugh a holy laugh.

The dwarfed Zacchæus climbed a tree,
His humble stature set him high;
The Lord the little man did see
Who sought the great man passing by.

Up to the tree he came, and stopped:
"To-day," he said, "with thee I bide."
A spirit-shaken fruit he dropped,
Ripe for the Master, at his side.

Sure never host with gladder look
A welcome guest home with him bore!
Then rose the Satan of rebuke
And loudly spake beside the door:

"This is no place for holy feet;
Sinners should house and eat alone!
This man sits in the stranger's seat
And grinds the faces of his own!"

Outspoke the man, in Truth's own might:
"Lord, half my goods I give the poor;
If one I've taken more than right
With four I make atonement sure!"

"Salvation here is entered in;
This man indeed is Abraham's son!"
Said he who came the lost to win—
And saved the lost whom he had won.

AFTER THOMAS KEMPIS.

I.

WHO follows Jesus shall not walk
In darksome road with danger rife;
But in his heart the Truth will talk,
And on his way will shine the Life.

So, on the story we must pore
Of him who lives for us, and died,
That we may see him walk before,
And know the Father in the guide.

II.

In words of truth Christ all excels,
Leaves all his holy ones behind;
And he in whom his spirit dwells
Their hidden manna sure shall find.

Gather wouldst thou the perfect grains,
And Jesus fully understand?
Thou must obey him with huge pains,
And to God's will be as Christ's hand.

III.

What profits it to reason high
  And in hard questions court dispute,
When thou dost lack humility,
  Displeasing God at very root!

Profoundest words man ever spake
  Not once of blame washed any clear;
A simple life alone could make
  Nathanael to his master dear.

IV.

The eye with seeing is not filled,
  The ear with hearing not at rest;
Desire with having is not stilled;
  With human praise no heart is blest.

Vanity, then, of vanities
  All things for which men grasp and grope!
The precious things in heavenly eyes
  Are love, and truth, and trust, and hope.

V.

Better the clown who God doth love
  Than he that high can go
And name each little star above
  But sees not God below!

What if all things on earth I knew,
  Yea, love were all my creed,
It serveth nothing with the True;
  He goes by heart and deed.

VI.

If thou dost think thy knowledge good,
  Thy intellect not slow,
Bethink thee of the multitude
  Of things thou dost not know.

Why look on any from on high
  Because thou knowest more?
Thou need'st but look abroad, to spy
  Ten thousand thee before.

Wouldst thou in knowledge true advance
  And gather learning's fruit,
In love confess thy ignorance,
  And thy Self-love confute.

VII.

This is the highest learning,
  The hardest and the best—
From self to keep still turning,
  And honour all the rest.

If one should break the letter,
  Yea, spirit of command,
Think not that thou art better,
  Thou may'st not always stand!

We all are weak—but weaker
  Hold no one than thou art;
Then, as thou growest meeker,
  Higher will go thy heart.

VIII.

Sense and judgment oft indeed
Spy but little and mislead,
  Ground us on a shelf!

Happy he whom Truth doth teach,
Not by forms of passing speech,
  But her very self!

Why of hidden things dispute,
Mind unwise, howe'er astute,
  Making that thy task
Where the Judge will, at the last,
When disputing all is past,
  Not a question ask?

Folly great it is to brood
Over neither bad nor good,
  Eyes and ears unheedful!
Ears and eyes, ah, open wide
For what may be heard or spied
  Of the one thing needful!

TO AND OF FRIENDS.

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TO LADY NOEL BYRON.

MEN sought, ambition's thirst to slake,
The lost elixir old
Whose magic touch should instant make
The meaner metals gold.

A nobler alchymy is thine
Which love from pain doth press:
Gold in thy hand becomes divine,
Grows truth and tenderness.

TO THE SAME.

DEAD, why defend thee, who in life
For thy worst foe hadst died;
Who, thy own name a word of strife,
Didst silent stand aside?

Grand in forgiveness, what to thee
The big world's puny prate!
Or thy great heart hath ceased to be
Or loveth still its mate!

TO AURELIO SAFFI.

To God and man be simply true;
Do as thou hast been wont to do;
Bring out thy treasures, old and new—
Mean all the same when said to you.

I love thee: thou art calm and strong;
Firm in the right, mild to the wrong;
Thy heart, in every raging throng,
A chamber shut for prayer and song.

Defeat thou know'st not, canst not know,
Although thy aims so lofty go
They need as long to root and grow
As infant hills to reach the snow.

Press on and prosper, holy friend!
I, weak and ignorant, would lend
A voice, thee, strong and wise, to send
Prospering onward without end.

A THANKSGIVING FOR F. D. MAURICE.

THE veil hath lifted and hath fallen; and him
Who next it stood before us, first so long,
We see not; but between the cherubim
The light burns clearer: come—a thankful song!

Lord, for thy prophet's calm commanding voice,
For his majestic innocence and truth,
For his unswerving purity of choice,
For all his tender wrath and plenteous ruth;

For his obedient, wise, clear-listening care
To hear for us what word The Word would say,
For all the trembling fervency of prayer
With which he led our souls the prayerful way;

For all the heavenly glory of his face
That caught the white Transfiguration's shine
And cast on us the reflex of thy grace—
Of all thy men late left, the most divine;

For all his learning, and the thought of power
That seized thy one Idea everywhere,
Brought the eternal down into the hour,
And taught the dead thy life to claim and share;

For his humility, dove-clear of guile;—
The sin denouncing, he, like thy great Paul,
Still claimed in it the greatest share, the while
Our eyes, love-sharpened, saw him best of all!

For his high victories over sin and fear,
The captive hope his words of truth set free;
For his abiding memory, holy, dear;
Last, for his death and hiding now in thee,

We praise, we magnify thee, Lord of him:
Thou hast him still; he ever was thine own;
Nor shall our tears prevail the path to dim
That leads where, lowly still, he haunts thy throne.

When thou, O Lord, ascendedst up on high
Good gifts thou sentest down to cheer thy men:
Lo, he ascends!—we follow with the cry,
His spirit send thou back in thine again.

GEORGE ROLLESTON.

DEAD art thou? No more dead than was the maid
Over whose couch the saving God did stand—
"She is not dead but sleepeth," said,
And took her by the hand!

Thee knowledge never from Life's pathway wiled,
But following still where life's great father led,
He turned, and taking up his child,
Raised thee too from the dead.

O living, thou hast passed thy second birth,
  Found all things new, and some things lovely strange;
But thou wilt not forget the earth,
  Or in thy loving change!

TO GORDON, LEAVING KHARTOUM.

THE silence of traitorous feet!
  The silence of close-pent rage!
The roar, and the sudden heart-beat!
    And the shot through the true heart going,
  The truest heart of the age!
    And the Nile serenely flowing!

Carnage and curses and cries!
  He utters never a word;
Still as a child he lies;
    The wind of the desert is blowing
  Across the dead man of the Lord;
    And the Nile is softly flowing.

But the song is stilled in heaven
  To welcome one more king:
For the truth he hath witnessed and striven,
    And let the world go crowing,
  And Mammon's church-bell go ring,
    And the Nile blood-red go flowing!

Man who hated the sword
  Yet wielded the sword and axe—
Farewell, O arm of the Lord,
    The Lord's own harvest mowing—
  With a wind in the smoking flax
    Where our foul rivers are flowing!

In war thou didst cherish peace,
  Thou slewest for love of life:
Hail, hail thy stormy release
    Go home and await thy sowing,

The patient flower of thy strife,
Thy bread on the Nile cast flowing.

Not thy earth to our earth alone,
Thy spirit is left with us!
Thy body is victory's throne,
And our hearts around it are glowing:
Would that we others died thus
Where the Thames and the Clyde are flowing!

SONG OF THE SAINTS AND ANGELS,

JANUARY 26, 1885.

GORDON, the self-refusing,
Gordon, the lover of God,
Gordon, the good part choosing,
Welcome along the road!

Thou knowest the man, O Father!
To do thy will he ran;
Men's praises he did not gather:
There is scarce such another man!

Thy black sheep's faithful shepherd
Who knew not how to flee,
Is torn by the desert leopard,
And comes wounded home to thee!

Home he is coming the faster
That the way he could not miss:
In thy arms, oh take him, Master,
And heal him with a kiss!

Then give him a thousand cities
To rule till their evils cease,
And their wailing minor ditties
Die in a psalm of peace.

FAILURE.

FAREWELL, O Arm of the Lord!
Man who hated the sword,
Yet struck and spared not the thing abhorred!
Farewell, O word of the Word!
Man who knew no failure
But the failure of the Lord!

TO E. G., DEDICATING A BOOK.

A BROKEN tale of endless things,
Take, lady: thou art not of those
Who in what vale a fountain springs
Would have its journey close.

Countless beginnings, fair first parts,
Leap to the light, and shining flow;
All broken things, or toys or hearts,
Are mended where they go.

Then down thy stream, with hope-filled sail,
Float faithful fearless on, loved friend;
'Tis God that has begun the tale
And does not mean to end.

TO G. M. T.

THE sun is sinking in the west,
Long grow the shadows dim;
Have patience, sister, to be blest,
Wait patiently for Him.

Thou knowest love, much love hast had,
Great things of love mayst tell,
Ought'st never to be very sad
For thou too hast lov'd well.

His house thou know'st, who on the brink
  Of death loved more than thou,
Loved more than thy great heart can think,
  And just as then loves now—

In that great house is one who waits
  For thy slow-coming foot;
Glad is he with his angel-mates
  Yet often listens mute,

For he of all men loves thee best:
  He haunts the heavenly clock;
Ah, he has long been up and drest
  To open to thy knock!

Fear not, doubt not because of those
  On whom earth's keen winds blow;
God's love shames all our pitying woes,
  Be ready thou to go.

Forsaken dream not hearts which here
  Bask in no sunny shine;
Each shall one coming day be dear
  To love as good as thine.

IN MEMORIAM
LADY CAROLINE CHARTERIS.

THE mountain-stream may humbly boast
  For her the loud waves call;
The hamlet feeds the nation's host,
  The home-farm feeds the hall;

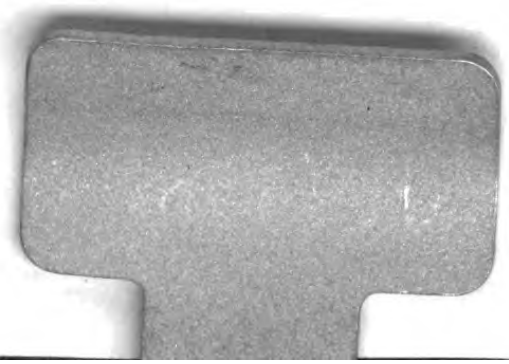
And unto earth heaven's Lord doth lend
  The right, of high import,
The gladsome privilege to send
  New courtiers to Love's court.

Not strange to thee, O lady dear,
  Life in that palace fair,
For thou while waiting with us here
  Didst just as they do there!

Thy heart still open to receive,
  Open thy hand to give,
God had thee graced with more than leave
  In heavenly state to live!

And though thou art gone up so high
  Thou art not gone so far
But that thy love to us comes nigh,
  As starlight from a star.

And ours must reach where'er thou art,
  In far or near abode,
For God is of all love the heart,
  And we are all in God.

END OF VOL. I.

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