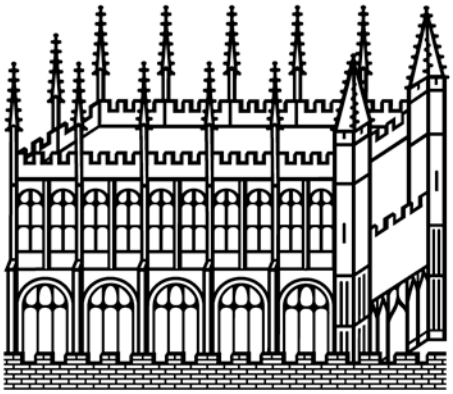

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CAROL AND CADENCE

NEW POEMS

MDCCCCII-MDCCCCVII

JOHN PAYNE

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CAROL AND CADENCE.

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CAROL AND CADENCE: NEW POEMS: MDCCCCII —MDCCCCVII: BY JOHN PAYNE.

Ἐγὼ δὲ τί βούλομαι; καταμαθεῖν
τὴν φύσιν καὶ ταύτῃ ἕπεσθαι.
Epict. Enchir. LXXIII.

J'ai fait ce que j'ai pu; j'ai servi, j'ai veillé,
Et j'ai vu bien souvent qu'on riait de ma peine.
Je me suis étonné d'être un objet de haine,
Ayant beaucoup souffert et beaucoup travaillé.
VICTOR HUGO.

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SONGBIRDS.

My songs, you are fledged now for flying:
Your wings on the bars
You beat, all impatient for trying
The flight to the stars.
Nay, go, since your soul-prison straits you,
The peace of your cage.
You know not, Heaven help you! what waits you
Without, in this sojourn of sighing,
This world-waste of dreaming and dying,
This weariful age.

Behold, you are free, may God greet you!
I have given you the keys of the air.
Will any one mark you and meet you
With love, for indeed you are fair?
I wonder, will any one know you
For gifts from on high?
Scant mercy, I fear, will most show you.
Belike they will evil entreat you,
Will strive in your flight to defeat you
And do you to die.

Yet where of grudge, lower 'gainst higher,
Except among men, was it heard?
In Nature no crawler hates flyer,
The toad, the snail, scorn not the bird.
Men only delight in waylaying
The birds of the soul;
Men only find pleasure in staying
The flight of their God-given pinions
And hindering Song's heaven-seeking minions
From gaining their goal.

This world is a turbulent tangle,
A jungle of sorrow and strife,
Where tiger and crocodile wrangle
With jackal and ape for dear life.
There's never a quarter of quiet
For songbirds like you;
And hard, hard it is from the riot
Of foes to escape that await you
And open, above these that hate you,
Your wings in the blue.

Yet be not disheartened, my ditties;
Yet hearts here and there are there found,
Where Love for an amulet writ is,
A charm 'gainst the ills that abound.
There, there shall you shelter and nest you,
As 'twere in a grove,
A harbour of refuge, and rest you,
In peace, till Hate's tempest be over
And Time, in his season, discover
The summer of Love.

Then, then, when the contest of living
And striving is over, at last,
When Heaven shall have healed with forgiving
The wounds of the weariful Past
And the flowers of the soul in Love's Springtime
Their fragrance distil,
Then come, shall you know, is your wingtime,
Shall peep from their bosoms that love you,
Shall soar in the sunshine above you
And sing there your fill.

THE BOOK OF DAYS AND NIGHTS.

THE BOOK OF DAYS AND NIGHTS.

I.

Over the glimmering plain,
Lowly and full of unfathomable mystery
As the faint far surge of the summer sea,
Wayward and soft
As the wave-song's whispering wane,
Murmur, o voice of the Western Wind, to me!
Now that on field and croft,
River and house and tree,
Creeping as a tide, the flooding shadows fill
Earth's sun-awearied ways and from aloft
The darkness, sinking, swallows heath and hill,
The blesséd silence bringing and with it
Balsam of healing for Day's every ill,
Come through the twilight still,
Come, as some cushat, on the limes alit,
All-nightly, murmuring, in the leaves doth sit,
Before my garden door,
And soothe the soul in me
With medicine of mystic melody
And phantasies of fair and long-forgotten lore!

Breath of the bygone days,
Thou, that in hand the key
Hast of the dreamland's and the wishland's ways,
Blow from thy home beyond the Western beams
And bring with thee
All the mild magic of the sunset-haze,

All the fair fancies, all the darling dreams,
As in Thought's treasury,
That dwell, eternal, midst the setting rays!
Speak from the thither shore
Of Time's untracked, innavigable sea
And on my spirit, wounded passing sore,
Mild ministering, pour,
Pour, as an oil, the tale of Memory,
Rehearsing o'er and o'er,
For me, that of the Present's piteous war
And the waste Now am wearied utterly
And sick with seeking for the obscure To-be,
The ditties of the days that are no more!

2.

Old Janus' gates
Stand open, one upon the year forsped
And one upon the new, without that waits
To take upon its back the burden of the dead.

Sign, not of peace,
His yawning temple-portals are, but war;
And for a further token, with their fleece
Funereal, see, the snows have lapped the landscape o'er.

Still in the air
The wild winds brawl and battle without stay;
The armies of the hail drive here and there,
Hurtling, and clouds from view blot out the darkling day.

Unto my breast,
New year, wilt thou, belike, bring peace again?
Or will the old sad thoughts, the old unrest,
Still of my bosom make their wonted battle-plain?

3.

The fields of ice spread, straitening, Eastward, Westward;
The dull sky darkles, threatening, earth above;
The air of birds is empty, winging questward
To Light and Love.

Forgotten have the forests life and leaving;
Beneath the frosts of February dumb,
The world-all cow'rs, unhoping, unbelieving
In Spring to come.

Love in your eyes died down with Autumn ending;
It fled, like birds, afar with Winter time.
Will it, as they, return, when Spring, descending,
Brings back the Prime?

I know not, I; but this I know, that, ever,
When Winter slackens from the woods and fields,
Each year my straitened breast to Spring's endeavour
Uneather yields;

And soon, meseems, like some old beggar, chosen,
When hope is past the healing, to be king,
My overweathered heart will be too frozen
To welcome Spring.

4.

The snows are melted; but a waste of waters
Lies o'er the landscape, 'neath the skies unlit;
The heavy hearts of Adam's sons and daughters
Still in the ark of expectation sit.

Hidden are the heavens by the mists upsteaming
From earth's o'erflooded visage far and nigh;
The season 'tis of sad and darkling dreaming,
Of speechless yearning for the unclouded sky.

Our winter-straitened souls, like Noah's raven,
Forth through the brume their idle wishes send,
In quest of Hope's well-nigh despaired-of haven
To roam the wayless world from end to end.

No sign to see is for the heart that yearneth
Of Winter ebbing from the waking earth;
Faith's dove for evermore to us returneth,
No footing finding in the watery dearth.

But forth again and yet again we send it,
In quest of Spring's prophetic olive-leaf,
Hoping it back to us at last shall wend it,
With the green token of determined grief,

The token of the term of Winter-waiting,
Of Spring, consoler of our doubts and fears,
The token of the long-desired abating
Of all the troubled waters of our tears.

Who knows? The tale of Time alone can show it.
Nay, by the writ of things bygone, some day
Spring will not come again, as now we know it,
And Winter will the world for ever sway.

Yet, long ere this betideth, shall we, sleeping,
Have passed away unto the Land of Peace,
Where there is neither Winter neither weeping,
Laughter nor Spring, but silence there and peace.

5.

The hunt is up in heaven; the winds go whirling,
Spent February spurning, far and nigh;
March as a conqueror comes, his cloud-hosts hurling
Across the sky.

The citadels of Heaven he cleaves in sunder;
The deep woods heave and tremble, as he goes;
And the great trees rain boughs and branches under
His swashing blows.

Was ever such a pother, such commotion?
For Winter's passage why keep such a coil?
The earth shakes like a jelly and the ocean
Is all a-boil.

Have we not had enough of Winter scurvy,
But thou must ape him with thy blustering
And seek to turn the whole world topsy-turvy
With wanton wing?

Nay, learn a lesson from the buds that cluster
Deep in the grass, the white anemones:
They bloom and take no notice of thy bluster,
Beneath the trees;

Ay, and the primroses, whose pallid faces,
Upturned to heaven, in April skies foresay
The speedy end of all thine airs and graces
And coming May.

So, in my soul, though Passion's wind Life's vessels
Drive hither, thither, o'er the ocean's scope,
A flower there is, from them that sheltered nestles
And buds in hope.

There, in the leaf-soil left of perished passions,
In the tree-shadow of the Past-time's gloom,
It sleeps, unhindered of the waste world's fashions,
And waits to bloom.

Nor May nor August is a second comer
In the heart's seasons, but too well it knows.
It waits, to flower, for Peace's Indian Summer,
Before the snows.

6.

March on the way
And the snowtime over and gone, thank heaven, for many
Yet a ring [a day!
Of the Past
And a voice from the land of Long Ago
There stirs in the breath of the bitter blast,
As it sweeps the budded boughs with its icy wing,
That sighs, "Heigho!
"Is there youth enough in thee,
"Old heart, to be glad, to be glad again in Spring
"And in Summer yet to be?"

Buds on the thorn
And crocuses purple and white and golden with each new
Each tree [morn!
Beseen,
Each hedge of the wrack of the Winter's dole
New-soothed and fostered with leaves to be,
Each sward new-quickened with promise of swift-springing
But thou, sad soul, [green!
Hast thou any germ of flowers,
To burgeon and blossom again in May's soft sheen,
After the April showers?

7.

Earth had no thought of snow,
For March was near its end and Spring was in the air;
But with the night it came, down-fluttering soft and slow,
Like orange-blossoms, fallen from out some sun-bride's hair.

On every bush and tree,
No Winter's burden laid upon the labouring earth,
Light as a dream it lay, as 'twere in mockery
Of the bright blossom-suits of Springtime's tardy birth.

The bridal of the year
With woven wreaths it seemed to celebrate of rime,
Foretelling of the feast of Springtide drawing near
And wistful Earth new-wed to the returning Prime.

But with the morrow's sun
The snow had disappeared and all was green once more:
'Twas but a passing whim of Winter well-nigh done,
To fright the infant Spring with this his flowerage frore.

8.

Oh, the glamour and the gladness of the time
When the Winter's on the wing
And the pleasance day by day long of the Prime
Wakes and waxes, with the sweetness of the Spring,
Life all grown one great celestial lover-clime!

Was there ever any grief could hold the field,
When the lilacs are in bud?
Was there ever any ail but must be healed,
When the primroses the banks and hedges flood
And the fountains of the flowertime are unsealed?

Hark, the throstle tells the tale of coming May!
See, the ash is budding red!
Put the pity of the Past from thee away:
Come, let age and Winter bury their own dead
And be young and glad with Spring again to-day!

9.

The sun is on high
In the bluebell-hued sky;
Clouds flit, like a stain,
O'er his gold:

The tale of the hours
With the shimmer of showers
And the ripple of rain
Is told.

Ah, April, lieve lady,
The sunny, the shady,
First fruits of the flowery
Prime,
What glory of June
Can compare with thy tune,
With thy showery, thy bowery
Time?

The lark is aloft
Over meadow and croft;
New life he foresaith
In his psalm;
The lark on the wing
Is the spirit of Spring,
As the violet its breath
And its balm.

Ah Springtime, year's morning,
What booteth forewarning
Of Winter and eld, when thou'rt here?
A dotard's the mortal
Who looks through thy portal
Of blue to the end of the year.

10.

God, how lovesome life is,
Now that Spring loose-strife is
Here again,
Now that, Winter past and over

And the wind-time on the wane,
April cometh, like a lover,
Clad in gold and blue,
All the naked earth to cover
With its robe of blossom-rain,
Trinketed with sun and dew,
Winter-wounded hill and plain
Comforting with leafage new!

Now, in singing-season,
All but Love is treason
To the Spring.
Love me, love, for April this is,
Venus' month, when everything
Couples. In the month of blisses,
Midst the blossom-snow,
Marry, what indeed but kisses
(Was it Hafiz that did sing?)
Should two tulip-lips bestow?
Love me now, for swift of wing
April is and soon must go.

II.

I never yet might see the primrose-faces
But needs must dream
Of things which *are* beyond the spheral spaces
And here but *seem*.

They are so pure, so pale, so wan, so wistful,
Here in earth's mire
To see them makes mine eyes perforce wax mistful
With wandesire.

To mark them, patient eyes to heaven upturning
From their green plot,
I feel my world-worn heart brim up with yearning
Nor know for what.

But this I know; they, too, are exiles, banished
From heaven, like me,
And lift vain eyes to where their loveland vanished
They think to see.

12.

Ah, Winter, stern king,
What ails thee at Spring?
Why mak'st thou the Prime
Thus drear?
Who willed thee o'ercast,
With thy snows and thy blast,
The blossoming-time
Of the year?

The limes are in leaf;
But thine East wind, the thief,
The tassels hath torn
From the ash:
And now, in the night,
Is a frost come, to blight
The buds of the thorn
Over-rash.

Sure, all is not right
With the day and the night,
With the way that the world goes
Entire,
When Spring must in May
Turn from Winter away,
To warm its cold nose
At the fire!

13.

Between the tides of night and day
There came to me the olden dream;
My feet went back the wonted way,

The borderland 'twixt Be and Seem.
It was a rapturous night in May;
The moonlight slept along the stream.

The brown bird's ditty was the same
As that it sang in days long spent;
The cowslips' fairy fragrance came
Still from the pastures, as I went;
The meadows in the silver flame
Were mad with moon and song and scent.

The lindens broidered all the blue
With the same patterns o'er my head;
The hawthorn-tangle, drenched with dew,
The same ecstatic perfume shed;
There was nought changed, save me and you:
But I am old and you are dead.

14.

Clover, nothing everywhere but clover,
In the flush of May,
Carpeting the flowering fields all over,
As it were the breaking of the day,
From the shadowy interstellar spaces,
Where it shelters from the swarthy night,
With the darkness gone,
Coming sudden on them, they
Had, awaking to the wildering light,
Dipped and bathed their dimpled blooming faces
In the rosy, pearly flush of dawn.

Green and gold and red and blue the shore is,
Like an Indian dove;
Glittering with the spreading sunset-glories

Is the sea below, the heaven above;
In the rainbow splendours sleeping, steeping,
Of the many-coloured death of Day,
Lies the emerald corn.
Natheless, true to their first love,
Rosy yet the meadows spread away,
Faithful ever the remembrance keeping
And the colour of the crimson morn.

As the clover-meadows thou, old soul, art
Faithful to the end;
Constant thou through Life's delight and dole art;
Though the clouds soar upward or descend,
Whether Summer, in the skies unfolding,
Flood the world-all with the whelming sun
Or, with iron glove,
Winter's snows all life suspend,
Faithful art thou to the things fordone,
To Life's morn in thought forever holding
And the rosy memory of first love.

15.

Daylight dies;
Shadows rise
From the moors, the meadows and the sea:
In the twilight dim
Fades the thrush's hymn
And the merle is mute upon the tree.

Evening comes;
Darkness dumbs
All the voices of the earth and sky:
Only hill and hill
Each with other still
Speak in fading flashes far and nigh.

Silence grows,
As night flows,
In its tide engulphing East and West:
See, what is it rays
In the heavenly ways?
'Tis the moon-bird rising from her nest.

All, that late
Dumb was, straight
Quickens, at her coming, into speech;
In the silvered trees
Stirs the songful breeze
And the waves make music on the beach.

Nightingales,
In the vales,
Tell their tale of passion never old,
As the new May moon
For the shadows' shoon
Paves the glades and glens with paly gold.

What is this
That, in a kiss,
Earth's lips presses unto Heaven's above?
From the moon-stirred shades,
From the dells and glades,
Rises, many-voiced, a hymn of love.

Young or old,
Who so cold
Is of heart but must in middle May,
When the moon's at height,
Child-wise, for a night,
Put Life's painful lore from him away?

Who but must
Hopes, long dust
In the grave, feel stir in him with youth?
Who but what the Past
Taught him must off-cast
And Love's leasing take again for truth?

Through the land,
Hand in hand,
Let us fare beneath the silver skies.
In this world of hate,
When the ringdoves mate,
Who as they do are the only wise.

Who but fools
Of the schools
With Life's bitter learning fain would leaven
Ignorance the blest?
When the turtles nest,
Love the only law is under heaven.

16.

In the mid-Spring,
When heaven and earth,
When land and sea
And all that are within them stir and sing,
For rapture of new birth,
There fell on me
Inexorciseable calamity:
The love that lit my life from me took wing.

For many a day,
The sky was blue
For me in vain;
'Twixt Spring and Winter, January and May,

Scant difference I knew:
A trance of pain
Life was, o'er which the years' funereal train
Lapsed, like a stream, unnoted, on its way.

Five lustres past;
And still, unsung,
The Spring went by:
Insensible to sunshine, rain and blast,
Tearless and mute, among
Life's tides went I.
Though Summer reigned or Winter in the sky,
The songbirds mute were in my soul aghast.

But nothing here,
Not even grief,
Endureth still:
My soul once more, after so many a year,
Begins to put forth leaf;
Once more, at will,
Life flowereth, fruiteth for me good and ill
And on the boughs the birds once more sing clear.

17.

Wet ways and sullen skies!
The faint airs fall and rise;
The breeze brings up a breath of saltness from the sea.
Why is our summer day
Thus overceiled with grey?
What world-woe can it be
That thus to saddened autumn turns our latter end of May?

The faint airs rise and fall;
Still sadness broods o'er all;
No sun is out in heaven; no bird is on the wing:
And yet with flush of green

The trees are all beseen;
The birds but wait to sing
For heaven to draw the veil that spreads itself and earth
[between.

O birds, like me, meseems,
Ye cannot tell your dreams,
What while heaven's eye is closed and all is blank above:
Ye cannot sing aright,
Except Life's sky be bright
With sun and hope and love:
Even as the flowers and I, the God you worship is the light.

Nay, how should we be glad,
When all the world is sad,
That but the voices are of Nature's joy and pain?
Since she to May denies
Its due of sunny skies
And veils her face with rain,
We can but wait till she withdraws the cloud-veil from her
[eyes.

But let the blessed sun,
The cloud-cliffs overwon,
Shine out and tell the world the tale of joy and June,
And flower and bird and me
Straight shall you hear and see
For the reconquered boon,
Each, in his various voice, give thanks, of love and light
[and glee.

18.

Misted roses of rathe-red Morn,
Blowing o'er peak and plain,
Cold is your comfort for folk forlorn;
Bright are your beams; but your fingers frorne
Are and your vantage vain.

Golden glory of noiseless Noon,
Dreaming of harvest done,
Harsh is thy hope as the corn-crake's tune
To him whose harvest, sprung too soon,
Was lost for lack of sun.

Splendid sadness of dying Day,
Wide-weltering in the West,
How many a heart hast thou led astray,
How many have trod thy fair false way
And wrecked been in thy quest!

Silver silence of newborn Night,
Thou, too, art false, God wot!
How long wilt thou speak with thy lying light
Of solaced pain to the pining spright
And peace, that cometh not?

19.

The lightning comes and goes across the skies of June,
Sundering the sable clouds beneath its steely shoon;
And lo! from out the rift the newly-blossomed moon,
Soaring the wrack above,
High on the hills of heaven hangs like a silver dove.
'Tis as the fable old, that tells how Death and Life,
Conjoining, in accord, for solving of their strife,
Made Love.

Sudden the thunder rolls and volleys o'er the plain;
Forth of the darkening lift the levins dart again
And from the clouds compact the hurtling, hurrying rain
Falls, at the tempest's breath.
The moon into the dark, abashed, reëntereth.
'Tis as in this our world, when, born of Life and Love,
Accoupling, each with each, like sparrow-hawk and dove,
Is Death.

Yet from the distant woods the cushat's voice I hear,
Voice melancholy still unto the happy ear
But now to me it bears a message as of cheer
And minds me how in strife,
In suff'rance and despair, the seeds of hope are rife.
'Tis as a tale from spheres of other-worldly breath,
Where from the accouplement in night of Love and Death
Comes Life.

20.

Ah, Summer, too late
Thou com'st with thy state
Of meadow and plain
In bloom!
The winter o'erlong
My soul with its wrong
Hath poisoned, my brain
With its gloom.

Thou, also, o Love,
Too late from above
Thou comest, sweet bird,
To mate.
My world-wasted heart
In thee hath no part;
"Too late!" is the word,
"Too late!"

21.

Roses, roses, nothing everywhere but roses,
Pink and crimson, damask, red and white and yellow
Running riot in the gladsome garden-closes,
Each one brighter, sweeter, fresher than its fellow!
And the jessamine, the Persians' "Hand of Moses,"
Each star thrusting up to heaven above the next,
With its silver comment-scripture how it gloses
On the flower-queen's royal text!

I could never bear the smell of roses, never
Since you died;
There's a sharpness in their scent that seems to sever
All the chords of life within my sorry side;
And the jessamine, o'er all you loved and cherished,
Hath a bitter in its breath,
As of herbs upon the pall of pleasance perished
Or of drugs upon the livery laid of death.

You in June were born, in middle flower- and sun-time,
When the revel of the roses is most high,
I at August-ending, hard on Summer-done time,
When the world is growing grave for Autumn nigh.

You were born to bask in sun and summer weather,
I the shadow-ways of lonely thought to fare:
There was nothing, dear, to link our lives together,
And they parted, ere the roses faded were.

You a butterfly were born, a flowerbed rover,
I a dreamer in the shadow of the sun;
Yet you died before the summer days were over,
And I live on yet, though Winter is begun.

22.

The sunshine comes, the sunshine goes;
The land is lightened with the rose:
Yet not a bird I hear that sings.
Why, with all Summer's gracious things,
Should life in middle June
Lack tune?

What is the cause, when heaven and earth
Their bridal feast with sun and mirth,
That in the brake no singing-bird,

No minstrel in the meads is heard?
Nay, says the turtle-dove,
'Tis Love.

Love is the cause why music fails,
That hath no need of nightingales,
Its mysteries to celebrate:
Too full at heart it is to prate
Or with uplifted voice
Rejoice.

Love is the soul of summertime:
The careless courtship of the Prime
May eke with song its easy suit;
But love fulfilled was ever mute:
No need, where each loves each,
For speech.

It can but measure with a kiss
Th'assurance of its proper bliss;
It can but murmur o'er and o'er
Its word of magic, "Evermore!"
Nor fain would have that word
O'erheard.

23.

By the wandering waters,
Where there cometh none,
Save the twilight's daughters,
Those the light that shun,
Ferns and mosses, shelter
Seeking from the swelter
Of the shameless sun,
Still the Dryads greet me,
Still the dream-sprites meet me,
When the day is done.

In the forest-crannies
Labyrinthian,
Where no trace of man is,
Since the world began,
Hide the Gods of Hellas,
That (old fables tell us)
Fled the face of man,
When the new Gods' coming,
Delphian voices dumbing,
Tolled the death of Pan.

Thither comes Apollo,
With his silver lyre,
And the Muses follow
In his trace of fire:
Dian there and Venus
Harbour and Silenus
Pipes, the Satyrs' sire;
Bacchus there abideth;
Ay, and Eros hideth
There the world's desire.

There the glad Immortals
Dwell in dale and glen,
From Olympus portals
Chased by foolish men.
Since too high their brightness
Was for mortal lightness,
Since the folk erewhen
Chose to live in sadness,
There they dwell till gladness
Come to earth again.

Save some crackbrain poet,
Wandering with his dream,
Few there be who know it,
Few there be who deem

That the faint shapes, flitting
Through the intermitting
Shade, by brake and stream,
Are the old Gods, biding
For the Future's 'tiding,
For the new days' gleam.

But, bytimes, at setting,
When the sun is dim,
Folk, the way forgetting
By the forest's rim,
From the woodways swelling,
From the waters welling,
Hear an unknown hymn.
'Tis the old Gods crying,
For deliverance sighing
From the Present grim.

24.

The day is sped
And with the day desire in me is dead.
What matter for the morning and the sun?
What part in life hath he whose hope is none?

June's moon is spent
And July triumphs in the firmament.
What matter whether? Hope it is, not June,
That lights the waxing and the waning moon.

Spent is the rose;
The lily reigns in every garden-close.
Love's crimson one, the other wears Death's white.
Both one are to the dweller in the night.

Life lingers still;
The summer laughs serene on lawn and hill.
Scant difference he between December's breath
And August's feels who knows not life from death.

25.

How is the morning perished from its pride!
In the green freshness of the growing day,
Before the undaunted thought the world spread wide
And sea with sky blent in one golden tide,
Billowing toward the dream-realms far away,
Whereas the adventurous soul upon the quest
Might launch of all the lovelands of the West
And look to sight the Islands of the Blest.

This morning how Life gloried, when, to fend
The demons of the dark from earth away,
It felt the angel of the dawn descend
And the faint breeze foresaid the shadows' end,
When of a sudden dusk gave place to day
And morning flowered on the front of night,
As glad and glorious and blue and bright
As when, at God's command, there first was light.

But now desire is dead with morning gone.
Beneath the burden of the noontide star,
Narcotic, overlapping hill and lawn,
Earth hath forgot the freshness of the dawn;
Thought yearns no longer for the fair and far
And Life, in dreams lethargic buried deep,
No care hath, saving in the sun to steep,
No will, no wish, except it be for sleep.

Now out upon the oaf who longed to find
A land where it is always afternoon,
Who would the forenoon-freshness ban and bind
In midday's sullen chains the flowerful wind
Of waking day! Were't mine to buy the boon,
A land where it is morning still for me,
Where ever new there is to do and be,
New birds, new blooms, new light on land and sea.

26.

Among the yellow blades,
Red in the ripening corn, the poppy flames and fades,
Strange flower, that stains the world with gouts of gore
and deep
In whose dead ashes lies concealed the soul of Sleep.

Bitter as Birth its scent
And bitter is its taste as Death the Omnipotent;
For Life that double draught of bitterness must drink,
Ere in Sleep's surgeless sea of solace it may sink.

Red is it even as blood
And like a bannered host the fields doth overflood.
Peace, as with war, it brings, like Him who thought, the Lord,
Peace unto men to bring and brought withal a sword.

27.

Noon on the plain
Weighs like the cloth of gold that a king must wear.
Heavy and hot, benumbing body and brain,
It holds the air.

Cattle and sheep
Dream in the drowsing trance of the tyrant star;
Bound, save the corn, in the soul-compelling sleep
All creatures are.

Heedless of the heat,
Lifting their fearless fronts to the sun their sire,
The serried strait-ranked hosts of the waxing wheat
Ripen in the fire.

Yet Summer's law,
To which all else in the world must bow, can nought
Hope's ruined harvest in me to raise or thaw
My wintry thought.

To my sad soul
Like are the breaths from South and North that come,
As, at all seasons, Earth at either pole
With ice is dumb.

Yet, as with her,
Still in my breast, 'spite age, youth's fire's aglow
And (as at pole and pole), volcanoes stir
Beneath the snow.

28.

Here on the broad sea-beach the shadow lingers,
Though August burns and blazes over land
And sea,
And in the footsteps of the sun ensuing,
This now effacing and that now renewing,
On the white sand
Draws, in black pigment, with fantastic fingers,
Strange disembodied shapes of rock and stone and tree.

So, in some far phantasmal world, unlighted
By any least consolatory star,
Might one
Imagine phantoms of a past Creation,
Void wrecks of many a vast and nameless nation,
By the faint far
Remembered radiance of some moon benighted
Grave-marked or traced by some long dead and darkened sun.

Here, in the forefront of the summer splendour,
Their sombre ensigns of the underworld
They flaunt,
Memorials of forgot funereal manors,
And to King August, with his blazing banners,
In heaven unfurled,
Homage refusing with the rest to render,
Shake in his face their fists sinister, sable, gaunt.

So in man's soul the sudden resurrection,
In mid-contentment, of the sorry Past,
Above
The shrouding soil by wayward thought projected,
The shadows of old sorrows recollected
On joy doth cast
And blackens present bliss with past dejection,
Recalcitrant to all the rays of Life and Love.

Blacker they stand against the sun, the higher
His radiance blazes in the heaven of bliss:
Their shade
Upon Life's sands obscurer shows, austerer,
The fuller is its summer and the clearer
Its heaven is:
Nay, for their spells, it seems, the clouds draw nigher
And from their aspect oft Life's sun and summer fade.

29.

Alow and aloft,
On crest and in croft,
The end of the summer burns, ember by ember:
The rose-time is gone
And at nightfall and dawn
The mist-curtain drops for the change of September.

The meadows are bare;
Where the corn-sheaves once were,
The earth through the stubble shows shamefast and dreary;
Its year-struggle o'er
And its harvest in store,
It waits for the sleep in the shade of the weary.

The year is a-stand:
'Twixt the Past yet at hand
And the Future, that is not yet present, it falters;
The smoke of the fields
Is as incense that yields
Its sacrifice yet to two Gods and two altars.

What wilt thou, my soul?
'Twixt pole thus and pole
Why stand'st thou, to Past now, to Future now pointing?
Nay, past is the Past,
Nor the Present will last
And the Future will, certes, be still disappointing.

30.

September holds the scene,
Month of the Once-hath-been,
Pale pause of thought between
The rosetide and the rime:
The fields are blank and bare;
The woods in the soft air
Stand silent everywhere;
It is the Autumn-time.

In all the leaf-strewn ways
There floats a filmy haze,
As of the bygone days
Memorial, dim and dear:

Afar, on field and row
The light slopes long and low,
A peaceful, pensive glow,
  The sunset of the year.

  The leaves are like to fall:
Upon the treetops tall
They waver, dying, all,
  Stirred by an unseen breeze:
The scent of their decay,
In the still air astray,
Ghost-hands on me doth lay,
  That hold the dreamworld's keys.

  The air is full of dreams;
Beneath the level beams
I go; my dull heart teems
  With thoughts of days bygone;
The past is strong in me;
I have no care to see
The things which are to be,
  The days which yet shall dawn.

  Head bowed beneath Time's law,
Can this be I that saw
The rose-red morning daw
  In Youth's enchanted clime,
That heard the bluebird sing
In that sweet time of Spring,
That once had voice and wing,
  To profit by the Prime?

  The heart in me is mute;
There lies my broken lute;
Even the robin's flute
  Is dumb in me to-day;

Rememorance's store
I reckon o'er and o'er
Nor look to see once more
  The miracle of May.

  Alack, for Time hath taught
This lesson to my thought,
That all which shall be wrought
  Already hath been done;
That pleasantness and pain
But pass to come again,
Even as the sun the rain
  Ensues, the rain the sun;

  That all things here below,
Unchanging, come and go,
One law of ebb and flow
  Ensuing, first and last,
What we the Present name
As what before it came,
And what shall come the same,
  The Future as the Past.

  Wherefore the wise from earth
Will look for no God-birth,
No wonder-working stirth
  Of vantage or increase,
Content, with sorrow healed,
To garner from Time's field
The best that Life can yield,
  Soft Autumn's saddened peace.

31.

  Moorland and meadowland, see,
Darkle and dream in the net of the fast-falling night;
Land lies and strand lies asleep in the low-lapsing light.
  Over the glimmering lea,

Come, let us fare, me and you.
'Tis the mysterious moment when, Death meeting Birth,
Light tells and Night tells the secrets of Heaven to Earth,
Old in one blending with new.

See, through the shadows afar,
Where the fields slope to the shore through the sand-spaces wide,
Sparkles and darkles, alternate, the incoming tide,
Falling in foam on the bar.

All with October is mute;
Not a leaf lispeth its message of morning to come.
Bird pipes nor herd pipes: the robin is silent and dumb
Ditty in field is and flute.

What is it all things await?
Listen and look! Sure some mighty adventure's at hand.
Sea sleeps and lea sleeps; the waves slide, unheard, o'er the sand;
Light is there none in Heaven's gate.

What in the Silence's womb,
What in Fate's vat is abrew that the earth and the sky
Dumb are and numb are, expecting some sign from on high,
Whether for gladness or gloom?

* * *
* *
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See, on the skyline of grey
Surges a circlet of silver and hill-top and tree
White shine and bright shine and sudden the slumbering sea
Wakes into wavelets and spray.

Forth of the brake comes the call
Of the ringdove aroused and the leaves are astir on the bough.
Hill speaks and rill speaks, acclaiming the Then become Now;
One, the heart pulses in all.

Earth, sky and sea in the tune
Join of the welcoming hymn to the wonder new-come;
Plain sings and main sings. What, what with such mystery dumb
Waited they? Was it the moon?

32.

The winds are abroad in the hail-beaten hills;
The waters are loose in the land.
Hark, hark, to the sound of the rain-swollen rills!
November is here with its fogs and its chills;
The frost-giants wait on the storm-battered sills;
The winter, the winter's at hand.

The cold is upon us; the snows will soon fall.
See, buried already's the mole!
The woes of the Winter are over us all,
And who hath not youth and hot blood at his call
Were best roll himself, like the bear, in a ball
And suck his dry paws in his hole.

The sun reigns no more in the mist-darkened dome;
His rays are half-lost in the fog.
Thrice happy is he who no need hath to roam
Or hunt for bare life on the sands and the foam,
And blest who hath lover or comrade at home,
Be it only a cat or a dog!

33.

November's in the air:
The chill breeze seems to say,

With bated breath, Prepare,
Prepare ye the Lord's way!
His step is on the stair;
His breath is everywhere;
He cometh without stay,
The Lord of Heaven and Earth,
The only worship-worth
Great God of Death and Birth,
Of Night and Day.

The weary world awaits
The coming of the Lord
Whose spell her stress abates.
All things, save man, toward
His presence, who Sleep's gates
Unbars and flouts the Fates,
Lift hands of one accord:
For whom He loveth He
To all eternity
From second birth can free
And Life abhorred.

Man only cannot brook
The nearing of the night;
Man only fears to look
His last upon the light.
Though black be all Life's book
And earth afford no nook
Of easance or delight,
Foiled by his foolish pride,
He turns from peace aside
And will alone abide
In the sun's sight.

But to all else, beast, bird,
Fish, blossom, tree, His breath

Is welcome and His word,
That peace from pine foresaith.
As, like a careful herd,
Within his fold unstirred
His flock he gathereth,
All yield them, tame and wild,
Even as a sleepy child,
Submissive, to the mild
Deliverer Death.

34.

The melancholy month is come,
The month of dark and dule,
When the dull days and nights, for Winter dumb,
Drag on toward the Yule.
Th'infrequent sun his tarnished copper shield
Trails through the sullen sky;
The morning rises but in mists to die;
December holds the field.

The shortening days become our nights,
The lengthening nights our days,
Wherein the finger of remembrance writes
Sad scriptures on the haze.
Through all the darkling hours, from dusk to dawn,
Whose gloom no moonlight cleaves,
Into the tapestry of thought it weaves
The threads of things bygone.

In this sad season, when their deep
Is chequered with no star,
The endless nights to those who cannot sleep
As purging-places are:
All-nightly now the purgatorial hill
Of memory they climb,
To the faint rhythm of forgotten rhyme,
For light upstraining still.

35.

I wake and watch by night;
I wend and watch by day;
But never a sail in sight
And never a wight in way.
How is the fashion of this world, with all its work and play,
Perished and passed away!

Winter on hill and plain,
And Winter in my soul!
In vain have I wrought, in vain,
And nothing won but dole.
How hath the labour of my life, for all its high-set goal,
Been wasted, part and whole!

Empty below, above,
And empty is my heart.
What have I had of love,
Except its pain and smart?
How hath all turned for which thou strov'st, poor lack-luck that thou art,
To ashes, all and part!

Yet hard's the growing old
For Fortune's favoured one.
Patient's the land of cold
That never knew the sun.
How had it been with thee, if thou thy heart's desire hadst [won
And lost, when all was done?

36.

The snow is come; upon the higher places,
Among the hills,
To Heaven's blue window-frame, meseems, it traces
White marble sills.

I hear without the tall trees crack and splinter,
With snow opprest,
Bewailing them of heavy-handed Winter,
That stirs their rest.

Yet to the plains the fallen snow brings quiet,
If not increase,
The labouring earth consoling for Life's riot
With palls of peace.

Each year, meseems, snow lingers longer, later,
Upon the peaks;
Each year the Winter's hold grows stronger, straiter,
On days and weeks,

The time foreboding when the world, o'ertaken
With the last sleep,
Shall 'neath the snow-shroud lie nor ever waken
From slumber deep.

As the soul solved is of the stress of passion
By growing old,
So Life seeks shelter from the waste world's fashion
In snow and cold.

As Winter's silver shroud the germs protecteth
Of the new Prime,
So, 'neath the snows of age, the soul expecteth
Its seeding-time.

37.

Ah, Summer, sorry Summer,
How many an age bygone
It seems since thou, loath comer,
Year's noontide after dawn,
Slow following on the feet
Of Spring, thy youngling sweet,

With birds' and breezes' clamour,
Late wakening, soon withdrawn,
Hast flowered field and street,
Hast gladdened lane and lawn
With glory and with glamour!

Alack, the time is Winter!
The ways with snow are sealed
And dumb and fixed as flint are
The furrows of each field:
No birds are left to sing;
Snow-silenced pipe and wing,
Ice-prisoned wood and weald,
Frost-fettered hue and tint are.
What should the snowtide yield?
Done Summer out and Spring
By Winter's witless dint are.

Yet where's the call for sorrow?
Leave dead to bury dead!
For me the winter morrow
Is sweet with summer sped:
Beneath the frost-red moon,
The Yule-pale sun, this boon
God granteth me, to borrow
Spring's memoried goodlihead,
To tell the tale of June
And Summer's golden thread
To weave December thorow.

Forsooth, I do remember
Yet to have smelt the rose;
Yet, in my life's December,
Midmost the Winter's woes,
I mind me of the May,
I hear the throstle's lay:

Though stark in every member
The world is with the snows,
In me the summer day
I feel; for me June glows
Yet in the Yuletide ember.

Yea, Winter gladness bringeth
To this old heart of mine,
Far goodlier than springeth
Of April's flowering wine;
Beneath the frozen pole
Of Yuletide, in my soul
A rarer rapture ringeth
Than stirs in Summer's shine:
Through vernal woods there roll
No tides of tune divine
As this in me that singeth.

This is my singing season;
When mute are sky and sea,
When white with Winter's treason
Are field and lawn and lea
And all is sad, the strong
Sweet spirit of unreason,
That is the soul of song,
Springs up again in me
And carols loud and long,
Rejoicing, as one free
At last that is from prison.

38.

Faces in the fire
Form and fade before me as I look,
Tales of Life and Death from Memory's book,
Past and Present, wraiths of unfulfilled desire.

Hopes and fears bygone,
Castles in the air, long come to nought,
Fantasies of half-forgotten thought,
Dreams, of darkness bred, that died before the dawn.

In the glowing coals
How they live and breathe, the things that were
And that were not, eyes of women fair,
Eidola in vain of unembodied souls!

Through the midnight air,
O'er the snow the Christmas bells ring loud;
These the passing-bells and that the shroud
Of the phantom faiths that filled the world whilere.

In Time's furnace-flame
Melted, like my dreams, to nought are they;
All that lives and lasts of them to-day
As the pictures is the glowing embers frame.

THE BOOK OF BIRDS.

THE BOOK OF BIRDS.

Al parer mio, la natura degli uccelli avanza di perfezione quelle degli altri animali.
LEOPARDI.

Ye, that demi-spirits are,
Angels of our nether air,
From the far
Distance of the None-knows-where
Flying, faring here and there,
Dear o'er all you are to me
For your fashions fair and free
And for that you come, meseems,
From the country of my dreams,
From the worlds 'twixt star and star,
Where the souls of poets dwell,
Bow'red in beds of asphodel,
Till the wave of Birth resurgent bear them over Being's bar.

Birds, meseemeth, you the link
Are betwixten Heaven and man,
On the brink
Of the lands Elysian
Hovering, since the world began,
In the spheres crepuscular,
Hearkening, through the gates ajar,
To the angels' carol sweet
In the Golden City's street,
Till, your lesson learnt, you sink
Down to this our earth of sorrow
And with echoes, which you borrow,
Faint, yet fair, of Heaven's music give our ravished ears to drink.

Nay, whilst hearkening to your song,
As you pipe on tree and thatch,
Sweet and strong,
Now and then I think to catch,
From afar as 'twere, some snatch
Of the music that the spheres
Make for other-worldly ears;
And the endeavour what you teach
In our tedious earthly speech
Of Heaven's echoes to prolong,
Faint and failing though it be,
Cheers the sorry soul in me,
Heartens me to live and labour in this world of woe and wrong.

So forever blesséd be,
Singing spirits of our skies,
Birds, of me
And of all men enough wise
Who your pleasance are to prize,
That to this our world of night
Snatches bear of love and light,
With your flitting and your tune,
From the spheres beyond the moon!
Blest and honoured still be ye,
Who to our remembrance bring,
With your carol and your wing,
That which passing Life and Death is and which else forgot [had we!

THE THRUSH.

The thrush sings loud
In the rosy cloud
Of the blossoming apple-tree;
The tireless story
Of April's glory
He tells for you and me.

Was ever a song
So sweet and strong
To do away annoy?
My old eyes glisten,
As here I listen,
With tears of love and joy.

In April's time
Of love and rhyme,
There is no God but Spring;
And thou, o throstle,
Art His apostle.
Heav'n strengthen thee to sing!

THE CUCKOO.

I hear the cuckoo's chime,
That reckless double rhyme
Of his; he challenges the world to match it.
There's not another bird
To take him at his word;
No rhymer in the world, he knows, can catch it.

Hope once, in dreams inane,
Showed me a vision vain,
A heaven of love, there is no wealth might buy it;
And in this world of men
I've gone about since then,
Seeking a mortal maid to whom I might apply it.

Ah, cuckoo, thou and I,
For somewhat, sure, we sigh,
That is not in our world of shreds and patches;
And that is why we shun
Our fellows and the sun
And only tell our tale by scraps and snatches.

THE BLACKBIRD.

(A reminiscence of the New Forest.)

Whilst to the meadows and the river-reaches,
From Heaven's rim,
The setting sun his daily sermon preaches,
The blackbird warbles, on the leafing beeches,
His solemn evening hymn.

With trails of glory to his grave escorted,
The sun hath set;
The light fades fast: but from the boughs, unthwarted,
By his poetic rapture still transported,
The blackbird warbles yet.

No common jubilance it is that stirs him,
No mortal mirth:
None, with an understanding ear that hears him,
Can doubt that that which to such rapture spurs him
Is not of this our earth.

If any heaven for the soul's upwinging
To sense were known,
A heaven with harps angelic ever ringing,
Thou, blackbird, must have been a seraph singing
Before the Great White Throne.

THE NIGHTINGALE.

I hear thee, nightingale;
But thou and I one tale
Tell not, though like they seem as day and morrow;
Thou sing'st of love turned hate
And I for love I rate
Nought that to anything more bitter turns than sorrow.

Ah, nightingale, ma mie,
'Tis little wise of thee,
After five thousand years, to chew the cud of passion:
There's nothing upon earth,
Believe me, that is worth
Remembering for so long and after such a fashion.

Come, counsel from me take
And sigh for vengeance' sake
No more; no thing on earth is worth our rancour;
And when a love is dead,
'Tis better o'er its head
The roses of regret to sow than let it canker.

THE LARK.

A shrill voice cleaves the air:
Who is it doth the day unto the world declare,
Before the night is gone?
It is the lark,
That, through the dark,
Upmounting, sounds aloft the clarion-call of dawn.

A black speck in the sky,
Toward the unseen sun already mounting high,
Whilst yet the world in gloom
Is clad, he knows
Day's coming rose
And soars secure to where faith tells him it will bloom.

The cock, too, tells the day;
But none his voice from earth uplifted suffer may:
Head under wing, he calls.
Dear lark, but thee
All love, with glee
That wingest, singing, up unto the heavenly halls.

Ah singing, springing soul,
That soarest up secure toward thy heavenly goal,
Would we as thou were free!
Would by this mesh
Of fretting flesh
As little we for flight as thou might hindered be!

Would heaven thy faith, dear lark,
We had and might no less, beyond this world of dark,
Like thee, the light divine!
Alack, our eyes
Pierce not Life's skies
Of gloom nor may avail to find the sun, like thine!

THE HAWFINCH.

The hawfinch comes
And roosts in May upon my budding plums.
Hawfinch, thou art not beautiful, in fine;
Thou hast no song
And (right or wrong)
The songbirds seem to shun that Hebrew beak of thine.

Thy toucan bill,
I know not if it be for good or ill;
But this I know, that when, on plum or pear,
The blackbird cons
Thy conk of bronze,
He straight bethinks himself of business otherwhere.

Nay, when thy pitch
Thou mak'st with me, my garden air, that rich
With song is wont to be in blossom-time,
Straight silent sure
Becomes and poor
Is May for me in half the pleasance of the Prime.

So, without thought
Of lack of courtesy to thee in aught,
Might I suggest that thou belike too soon
Hast by mistake
Forsook the brake?
How if thou wentest back and cam'st again in June?

More welcome thou
(I mean no slight) to me wert then than now.
These singing birds are fanciful, God knows,
Like tenors all,
Both great and small,
And apt to take offence at anybody's nose.

THE FINCH.

(A reminiscence of the Black Forest.)

Finch, that the ways of the world and its business abhorrest,
Yet that before me flitt'st on without cease through the forest,
Still looking back,
Like to the wood-nymph that fled of old time from Apollo,
Over thy shoulder, to see and be sure that I follow
Fast in thy track,

Whither and what is the wood-nook whereto thou wouldst lead me?
What is the lesson that thou with thy fluting wouldst read me,
Bird of the brake?
'Tis as thou feltest that Nature hath me, who her features
Better than those of my mates know, with love for her creatures
Filled for her sake;

'Tis as thou knewest that I, too, the sun-ways, where riper
Cluster Life's grapes, shun, that I too, like thee, am a piper
Under the shade,
Haunter of dell-deeps, like thee, where a dream the air darkens,
Singer of songs in the silence, whereunto none hearkens,
When they are made.

Bird of the wilds and the woodlands, say, what is thy will
with me?
Why, thou shy shunner of humankind, lingerest thou still
with me,
Hovering near?
Haply some message thou bearest at heart, worth the telling,
Or peradventure some tale of delight soul-compelling
Hast for mine ear?

Say, art thou minded to bring me where, far from Life's Babel,
Wait their return to Olympus the Gods of old fable,
In the wood-deep,
Or to some wonderland lead me wouldst thou, where no
care is,
Where there is solace for sorrow, where wood nymphs and
Sing it to sleep? [fairies

Or wouldst thou show me where, hidden in solitudes shady,
Waits me, close shut in some castle of Faerie, the lady
Whom in my dreams
Still day and night have I looked on and loved and there only,
She for whose sake I have wandered lifelong by the lonely
Beaches and streams?

Vain, all in vain is my asking! Nought, nought thou repliest.
Still with thy questioning ditty before me thou fliest,
Answer unknown.
Sudden a sun-ray there falls on the bough where thou littest;
And on the wings of the light, like a sunbeam, thou flittest,
Leaving me lone.

THE SWALLOW.

The swallow's made her nest;
With blossom blithe from East is the laughing land
To West.
Love's old nest in my heart

Long, long hath fallen apart;
There's no bird in my breast
  To tell that the time
  Of the pleasant Prime
For me is near at hand.

The swallow's flying low;
There's rain a-coming, — at least, the weather-wise
  Say so.
The heart sinks low in me
And lower. Can it be
(Who's wise enough to know?)
  That storm and rain
  Are a-brew again
In my life's leaden skies?

The swallow's on the wing;
She's off to morrow to lands where Summer still
  Is King.
When will the time, old soul,
For thee come, tow'rd the goal
Of Life's adventuring
  To take thy flight,
  To lands of light,
Beyond this world of Will?

THE CUSHAT.

The cushat on my limes
Her station takes bytimes
And in the middle night,
Especially when light
The season is or if the moon shine pale,
Croons out, till nigh on dawn, her melancholy tale.

No song it is of sleep;
Nay, rather, it to keep
The drowsy eyes unclosed
Would seem disposed;
For still it tells, with cadence hoarse and slow,
Of old disconsolate days and dreams of long ago.

Nay, cushat, is't not time
That thou shouldst change thy chime
And tune thy sorry song
Of far forgotten wrong
To some more modern ditty, bright and new?
'Twas all so long agone, belike it is not true.

And when one comes to think,
For sparrow, starling, spink,
The fashion were absurd;
But for a lady bird
Of thy repute and age all night to croon!
Nay, do but take a thought. A bird and bay the moon!

Come, listen, then, to me
And let the matter be.
None ever died of love;
And thou, too, turtle-dove,
Wilt, whatsoe'er thou deemest, soon or late,
Think better of the case and take another mate.

THE SEDGE-WARBLER.

Sedge-warbler, what's to do?
Thy chatter pierces through
The flutter of the fields, the whisper of the wood;
And yet, meseems, their voice
Doth rather say, "Rejoice!"
Than "Grieve!" The world is well enough and life is good.

The world is all a-dream.
Why not, then, by the stream
Suffer thyself be rocked and cradled in thy nest?
To scold in Winter drear
Is time enough; but, here
When Summer is, to dream the hours away is best.

The year hath but one June;
It passeth oversoon
And Autumn comes apace, for Winter to prepare.
So for the Summer day
Behoveth all be gay
And give a longsome tryst to thought-taking and care.

THE LINNET.

Listen! 'Tis the linnet,
On the bramble glorying in the gladness of the minute,
Lilting out the lightsomeness, that Springtide wakens in it.

Pleasanter thy note is,
Holding all the homely joy that in th'air afloat is,
To mine ear than many a song from a stronger throat is.

Trill on trill ensuing,
How it tells of Winter past and the world's renewing,
All the winsome dear delights of the time of wooing,

All the cares of nesting,
All the happy hatching time, all the toils of questing!
Then, when flown the fledglings are, come the days of resting.

In the fields of stubble,
All the pleasant duties done, all the pretty trouble,
Gladsomer thine autumn is, sweeter because double.

Then, when Yule is nighing,
When the woods are sad with snow and the winds are sighing,
Happy is thy death and thou hast no pang in dying.

Would that I might borrow
This thy fashion, linnet mine, careless for the morrow,
Living without greed of gain, dying without sorrow.

WHAT THE WHITETHROAT SANG.

Love may have its root in folly,
As they say, the foolish wise:
Life without it melancholy
Is, the wiser fool replies.
Where's the text without the glose?
When was kissing out of fashion,
Pain because there is in passion
And a thorn to every rose?
Mistletoe still pairs with holly;
Clouds will come in summer skies:
Sager than the Sages Seven
Is the lover who his heaven
Findeth in his lady's eyes.

Love, and you will, for your wages,
Reap repentance soon or late;
So the rhyme runs through the ages,
Since with Adam Eve did mate.
Overhigh might be the price,
If this life should last for ever;
But to-morrow since we sever,
Why from present Paradise
Turn for what they say, the sages?
Kisses at the market-rate
Still I'll buy, whilst life is lent me.
Kiss me, sweet, till I repent me
Or till kissing's out of date.

THE LORIOT.

Thy golden flute,
Loriot, I hear, when else the meads are mute
For middle June.
Yonder, where down the hills together lean
And in their blossom-broidered lap of green
The cherry orchards hold,
I catch thy frank, contentful, frolic tune.
At thee the tomtits scold,
Jealous, belike, for that their time of song
Is past, whilst thou thy ditty dost prolong,
Though Summer's silence is on wood and wold:
But thou,
Unheeding, caroll'st on the bending bough,
Content to live and drive thy purple beak
Into the cherry's red and white and yellow cheek.

To France's fields
Thy homely strain its gentle glamour yields,
Where else, in time
Of cherries ripe and ruddy on the trees
And oxeye daisies in the luscious leas,
The sunny summer day
Might fare forlorn and sad for lack of rhyme.
None grudgeth thee, in pay
Of thy sweet song, the cherries thou dost eat
And all the world thy singing enough sweet
Holdeth, now songtide over is with May,
As one,
Whose blossom-time of Life is overrun,
Unto some lowly love for solacement
Turns of his empty heart and is with peace content.

THE WREN.

The wren
Pipes on the fence and mocks at foolish men,
Who waste their little lives in quests beyond their ken.

Small king, [1]
Thou'rt happier than we who cannot sing,
To sweeten life, who pine to fly and have no wing.

No breath
Thou wast'st, as we, on what the dullard saith;
And when thy life is done, thou hast no fear of death.

Too wise
Thou art, the things that pass away to prize
Or waste a thought on that which is beyond the skies.

Scant store,
Wise wren, thou settest by our loveless lore;
Content art thou thy life to live and ask no more.

How vain,
Compared with thine, our lives of stress and strain!
How void the quests in which we weary heart and brain!

Well might
We lesson take from thee and live, whilst light
Abides with us, content to pass away at night.

THE FIELDFARE.

The fieldfares flit before me, as I go,
Now flying low,
Now tripping o'er the furrows, row by row.

[1] *Lat.* Regulus, *Fr.* Roitelet, *Ger.* Zaunkönig.

Strange bird,
Whose voice, mute here
That is, in other lands, belike, is heard,
That comest, in the falling of the year,
From worlds beyond the seas,
And as we mark thee, seemest without rest,
Still running, flitting o'er the flowerless leas,
To strive towards the West,
Thou as the poet art, whose voice too oft
Is overhearkened in the fields of life,
Whose speech too soft,
Too subtle is to pierce the din of strife,
Whose songs for other ears than ours are sung,
Whose music speaks an other-worldly tongue
And who, for peace, when life and strife are done,
Still to the Westward looks and to the setting sun.

THE CROW.

The crow
Goes, calling, to and fro,
In that harsh voice
Of his, whose cadence sad
Is not, nor is it glad,
As if he neither knew to sorrow or rejoice.

Caw! Caw!
He voices Nature's law
Of unconcern
For what we mortals feel,
Joy, sorrow, woe or weal,
So but the mills of Life, as she will have them, turn.

What end,
I know not, crow my friend,
For Nature's sake
It serveth us to live,
Since she hath nought to give
But life and such scant pains to sweeten it doth take.

What worth
To us is death or birth,
There's none doth know.
Why not, then, leave the strife
To hold death off from life?
And as for Nature's ends, why let the hussy go

THE ROBIN.

Autumn from tree to tree
Its tapestries of brown and gold and crimson weaves.
Who is't in each wood-run
That sings so cheerily?
Who is it flits and fleets among the mottled leaves,
When all that hath a voice is mute for Summer done?

Dear robin, it is thou,
That biddest us for sun and Summer passed away
Take heart and sorrow not;
For, though 'tis Autumn now
And Winter's at the door, from out its frost-tombs grey
Sweet Spring will rise again and Summer yet wax hot.

Nay, with a graver note,
Thou mindest us that life is like the labouring year
And that, though Summer cease
And still each songbird's throat,
Yet, with the Autumn come, the end of toil is near,
When over-weathered earth beneath the snows hath peace.

And what can better be?
No matter what of load and labour life have known,
Of travail and of woes,
When once the soul is free
Of stress and strife and lies at last beneath the stone,
All is forgot and sweet for ever is repose.

THE WOODPECKER.

Tap! Tap! Tap!
The woodpecker hammers the beech and the lime,
To get at the worm
In the core:
And so, when the worm's at Life's heart
And its term
Is o'er,
Death comes with his chopper and drums at the door;
Rap! Rap!
"It is time,"
He says; "it is time to pack up and depart!"

Ho! Ho! Ho!
The woodpecker laughs. "Thou mayst hide, worm my friend;
But my beak over long
Is for thee."
And so, when Death calleth the close
Of the song,
"From me
"It nothing availeth to hide," quoth he.
"No! No!
"An end
"There cometh for everything, rush or rose."

BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

I.

Birds in flight,
In the last of the light,
To the Western seas and the sunset-strand,
What is't you seek
In the distance bleak?
What think ye to find in the unknown land?

The world is round;
There is nothing found
The skyline under, that here is not;
And life's the same,
Be it wild or tame,
In the Arctic cold and the Tropics hot.

What need to roam?
If not at home,
Peace is not, the wise say, far or nigh;
There's nothing to find,
The sun behind,
Save the same old earth and the same old sky.

II.

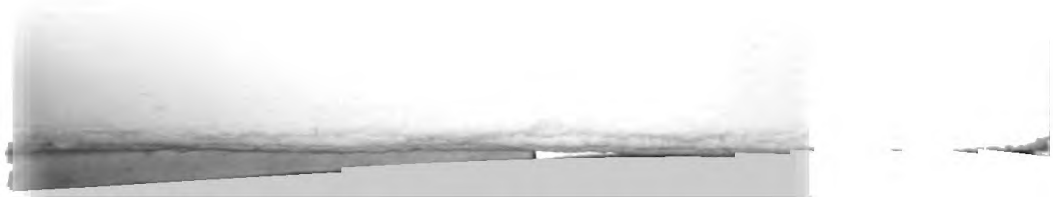
(The Birds' Answer.)

We reck not a straw
Of your sages' law;
The things that you seek are those we shun.
You live in the night
And we in the light;
You follow the darkness, we the sun.

Your weakling wit
You hug and fit
Your dullard lives to its darkling lore:
But we, to find
The light behind
The dark, make wing for the unknown shore.

You cannot see
The things that be,
So busy you are with those that seem:
There's nothing, heigho!
But death can show
Which true, your life, is, or this our dream.

THE BOOK OF BEASTS.



THE BOOK OF BEASTS.

THE GROCER'S DOG.

From the door's shadow, on the sunlight blazing
The sheepdog looks and on the passers-by:
A world of woe, as there he sits a-gazing,
Is in his mild and melancholy eye.

A mystery of meek and hopeless yearning
Darkens for him the daybeam and the light;
The shadow of some land of no-returning
Between the sunshine hovers and his sight.

His look bespeaks unutterable sorrow;
His brown eyes in a sea of sadness steep,
The sadness of a soul that knows no morrow,
Too woebegone its harrowed hopes to weep.

The roar of traffic fills the air with riot;
The earth beneath the motor-busses quakes:
But he no heed, in his despairful quiet,
Of Life's apocalyptic uproar takes.

I stop to pat his rugged head, in going,
For friends we are these many bygone days;
And for a friend's my hand and greeting knowing,
He lifts to me his sad and grateful gaze.

What in this easy life of thine, then, fails thee?
What sorrow irks thee, sheepdog, thus, my friend?
What is the secret malady that ails thee
And stirs in thee this yearning without end?

Art thou belike a son of moor and mountain
And longest for the land of hill and lake,
There, ere thou die, at some familiar fountain
The thirst of body and of soul to slake?

Dost thou, like me, thyself in dreams remember
Of antenatal lives of endless youth,
Where May foredarkened is by no December
And beauty fareth hand in hand with truth?

Or is it but the world-woe that possesses
Thy sombre heart and frets thy speechless soul;
The load of pain perpetual, that oppresses
Our globe of grief, still frustred of its goal?

He answers not, but still his eye, appealing
To some vague power beyond the earth and air,
Speaks of a sorrow past all hope of healing,
A pain too deep to tell, too sharp to share.

Well, fare thee well, poor friend, since nought to quicken
Thy thought obscure I may or ease thy pain;
And (sooth to say) my soul, like thine, death-stricken
Is by a grief, whereof to tell were vain.

THE FISHMONGER'S CAT.

Sleepy and sleek and fat,
On the sill of the shopwindow basks in the sunshine the
fishmonger's cat;
Her fur in the sun shines black.
As happy is she as the course of the midsummer day is long:
Her paunch well-filled and the sun on her back,
Her song
She sings and looks with the scorn of content on the throng:
There's nothing that she doth lack.

I stop to stroke her fur;
She answers my light caress with a low perfunctory purr,
Too much at her ease to budge:
There's nothing that's worth in the world her stirring from her place.
She blinks from her bed on the folk, that trudge
Apace
In the sun and the dust, with a careless, indifferent grace;
She beareth the world no grudge.

She knoweth the magic word,
That opens the Daedalus lock of the worlds unseen, unheard;
She holdeth the master-key,
The secret that sweeteneth life in weather foul and fair,
Things past unheeding and things to be,
Fore'er
In the golden Present to live and be and care
For nothing and nobody;

To bask in the blessed sun,
To sleep by the homely hearth, when shining Summer's done,
Peace, only peace to prize,
In payment of scot for board and lodging, now and then,
The chase of a mouse for exercise,
— We men
At peace might have lived, like her, had Eve erewhen
And Adam but been wise.

Alack, with lore came thought
And hunger for what might ne'er be gotten, however sought:
Wish came and with it woe
And want of wisdom in peace to rest and be content
And will a-questing fore'er to go,
Intent
On phantom heavens, when heaven to us was lent
On earth, did we but know.

Pussy, I envy thee:
Thou hast puzzled the problem out that is yet unsolved for me;
Thou art happier far than I,
Who have winnowed the world from East to West and
nothing of worth
Or solace have founden far or nigh,
Whose dearth
There's nothing short of new heavens, above new earth
New-built, might satisfy.

THE CARTHORSE.

Midsummer in the skies unclouded burns;
The sun of noontide falls, with all its Dog-day force,
Upon a horse,
That, patient, at the corner stands and turns
His melancholy eye, appealing, sad,
On me,
As recognizing one, to whom recourse
Beast, bird or child in vain yet never had.
What is it ails thee, friend? Ah, there, I see:
The strap,
Whereby the nosebag o'er thy head was passed,
By some mishap,
Hath broken loose and down upon the ground
Its burden dropped, whilst thou, poor beast, being fast
To the constraining shafts, in the fierce heat
Disconsolate standest, hungering, yet meek,
And look'st, with mild misgiving gaze, around,
As if to seek
Some charitable hand to help thee to thy meat.

Out knife, and in a trice the trick is done!
A new hole deftly bored, to hold the buckle-pin,
The strap within;
And lightly o'er thy head the bag is run,

Its mouth convenient offering to thine own.
So thou,
Unhampered, mayst anew to feed begin.
Then a step forward, where some shade is thrown
By the o'erhanging eaves, I lead thee. Now
At ease
From the brain-battering sun thou stand'st, at least,
Where some slight breeze
Freshens thy weary limbs and head down bowed,
And I may leave thee to thy frugal feast,
Obtempered having to thy silent suit,
Regardless of the idle passers-by,
Who gape and gather in an idiot crowd,
Dull wondering why
A man should service stay to render to a brute.

But still thy gaze on me, thy fodder o'er,
As if, "Nay, go not yet!" beseeching, thou dost bend.
What is it, friend?
What ails thee yet? What wilt thou with me more?
That which I might indeed for thee I've done,
God wot:
Thy food unto thy lips I did commend
Again and eased thee of the galling sun.
For thee what more than this, meknoweth not,
I can.
But with thy look thou answerest me, "Thou
That art a man,
(And Man forsooth's the beasts' Divinity,)
My body hast thou succoured. Succour now
My sad dumb soul, that cannot voice its needs.
Help it return unto its dreamland's home:
From this grim round of grief deliver me
And let me roam
Once more the pleasant plains, the fragrant, flowering meads!"

Alack, poor friend, I can no more for thee!
Man as I am, I share with thee in thy duresse;
Bondman, no less
Than thou, am I of blind fatality:
An exile, too, in this our world of woe
Am I
And know no balsam for the soul's distress.
Like thee, I walk its ways of strife and show,
Condemned in grief and gloom to live and die,
Nor hope
To see the enchanted meadows of my dreams,
Under Heaven's scope
Of gold and azure, flower beneath my feet.
Yet, if, beyond this place of shows and seems,
The lovelands of our hope, indeed, exist,
I doubt not, as with all on earth that fare
The exile's rugged road, with thee to meet,
Meek martyr, there;
And there, beyond Death's gate, poor friend, I give thee tryst.

THE ASS.

Whenever by the way I see an ass
Standing sedate,
With pendent head and meditative eye,
Though all the world cry scorn, I cannot pass
The philosophic beast unheeded by,
But must, perforce,
Whatever errand wait,
Whatever purpose animate my feet,
A moment stay my course,
To lay my hand upon his hairy pate
And greeting mute
With him to exchange, such as to those seems meet
Whose hearts may not ignore the soul within the brute.

Under his ragged hide, his tattered fur,
Whereon the signs
Of sufferance are writ and toil and blows,
The heart divines the true philosopher,
Who through Life's shadow-pageant unmoved goes
And unto pain
And joy himself resigns,
As void alike of true significance,
To this is not o'erfain
Nor overmuch for that, in turn, repines,
Who is not bond
To chance nor thrall to shifting circumstance,
But through Life's moment feels th'eternity beyond.

Like Chapman's hero-duke, the lore of life
And death knows he;
And who can tell what measureless contempt
For this dull round of vain and shiftless strife
Of ours he harbours in his head unkempt,
What dreams of lands
Phantasmagoric flee
Athwart the darkling chambers of his brain,
As, patient, there he stands
And waits, with head bowed wellnigh to his knee,
His master's will,
What visions pass, what Paradisal plain
His free thought roams and feeds therein its frolic fill?

What matter, brother, if men lightly thee,
If of thy name,
For unperceptive pride inapt or loath
To appraise thy stoic magnanimity,
A byword for unwit and stubborn sloth
They've idly made!
Be theirs, not thine, the shame!
As well on Epictetus' self they might

A like reproach have laid,
As well with Zeno's mighty memory frame
Or Socrates'
A title of contempt, as thus to slight
Thee, that, man insomuch as beast may, likenest these!

Certes, full measure unto them their scorn
Dost thou repay.
Brother, who knoweth but in asses' speech
The name of man in like contempt be borne
And with thy long-eared brethren, each with each
Fabling, it pass
For token and assay
Of brutish dulness and unreasoning pride,
Even as the name of ass
Unjustly among men is current? Nay,
I doubt it not;
For, underneath thy rough and hairy hide,
A spirit dwells that had deserved a loftier lot.

O'er proud to murmur at thy case thou art.
Unlike mankind,
Who still with idle plaints the welkin shake,
Unable to preserve a constant heart,
And rail at heaven, if a finger ache,
Thou meetest ill
And weal with equal mind
And shakest but thine ears beneath the rain
Of blows, opposing still
Thy stoic sheer endurance to each wind
And blast of Fate,
Nor of thy magnanimity dost deign
Thy tyrant aught but scorn to render, and not hate.

God wot, thy life for cheer hath little scope;
A dreary round

Of dull monotonous toil, without a break,
And Heaven knows what at end thereof to hope,
Except it be to sleep and not to wake.
Uneath return
There may for thee be found
Unto the Syrian deserts of thy sires,
Whereas the vast suns burn
Upon the tamarisks and the jérboas bound
Across the sands;
Thy thought uneath beyond the Western fires
May look for life renewed in better, brighter lands.

Who knows what fancies fill thy daylong dream,
That nought can stir,
And cuirass thee 'gainst curses, kicks and blows?
What mirages of peace before thee gleam,
What scapes of spheres beyond our world of woes,
There's none can tell.
But this aver we may;
Some secret solace fortifies thy soul,
Some anaesthetic spell
Deadens thy sense to all that doth o'erstray
Thy world unknown,
So that, impervious to joy and dole,
Walled in thy waking dream, thou liv'st and di'st alone.

Wherefore o'er all the beasts I honour thee,
Brother; for thou
Art even as the sage, that, in Life's night
Doomed, like an exile banished oversea,
To live in sorrow, far from love and light,
Fares with head bent
And meditative brow,
Upon his inward vision, mid Life's hum
Of vanities, intent;
Nor doubt to see the scorn, that brands thee now,
To honour turned,

In the time coming, if indeed it come,
When men the True and Fair to reverence shall have learned.

HOUSEHOLD GHOSTS.

My cats sit, gravely on the firelight gazing,
That flames and fades:
I see seven bask before the embers blazing;
But five are shades.
Top, Dandie, live; but Robin, Partie, Rover,
Shireen and Mick, their earthly ills are over,
Their bodies lie and rot beneath the mould.
Yet, in this ghost-evoking Yuletide weather,
All sit for me before the fire together;
Their kind cat-faces greet me, as of old.

The live ones trench not on the dead ones' places;
Each hath his own;
His viewless limit unto each one traces
A hand unknown.
News of the land, no doubt, with shadow-voices,
The land whereas one mourns not nor rejoices,
Unto the live their shadow-fellows tell,
News of the world beyond the night and morning,
The world where gladness is not neither mourning,
Where all desireless is and all is well.

Many are the friends with whom hath Time denied me
Till death to fare;
Many are the phantom-shapes that sit beside me,
Before the flare;
And oft for comrades, lovers, unforgetting,
Wrung is my heart with yearning and regretting.
Yet many an hour there is in which I'd fain,
Of all the dear dead, 'neath the clay that moulder,
Feel Rover's fondling head upon my shoulder
Or Partie's paws about my neck again.

What limboes they inhabit now, who knoweth,
What shadow-airs?
But this I know, in few men's bosoms gloweth
Such love as theirs.
And when folk say that Bismarck, Gladstone, Krüger,
Pro-Boer, Logroller, journalist, Landleaguer,
All souls possess and only these have none,
These for whom life was love, this, to my deeming,
Of all the lies that shame our world of seeming,
The idlest shows beneath the all-suffering sun.

THE PITY OF IT.

The patience of the brutes, it breaks my heart!
To see
The mule bowed down beneath the crushing load,
The sheep, the swine, the kine, through street and mart
To slaughter driven with dog and scourge and goad,
To mark it maddens me,
The horse's eye beneath the lash's smart,
The ass's martyr magnanimity.

The brutes, that know no joy,
That drudge from dawn to night,
Year in, year out,
Bearing the burden, in their dull employ,
From morn till evening bring the dark about,
Their labour ended scarce with ended light,
That know of no surcease,
No time of pleasant peace,
No hour of dreaming in the summer day,
No pause of play,
No frolic wandering in the fields of May,
Nor even, to recompense
Of all their sweat's expense,
May look, — save here and there,

And only on our sacred Saxon soil,
Our dear-belovéd land,
Our isle of manlihead and gentleness,
— For aught but careless harshness at his hand
Who tradeth on their toil,
Nor (save in England's earth, which Heaven bless!)
Assurance due may have of drink and meat,
To stay them in their stress,
Of the sheer couch of straw and shelter feat,
Of common ruth and justice in duresse!

Marry how oft have I,
In Spanish, German, French, Italian ways,
(In England seldom yet, to God the praise!)
Driven to despair well nigh,
Possessed with pity inexpressible,
That forced me put my English muteness by,
To see the cattle's hell,
The mule's, the ass's, horse's scars unhealed,
The hopeless misery, the anguish mute,
The untended wounds ableed
Of the starved, tortured beasts, essayed to plead
With their churl tyrants, hearts to pity sealed,
And had to answer, "Pooh! 'Tis but a brute!"

Man, so the adage runs,
The beasts' God is; say, rather, demon dire,
Such as that Moloch, who his servants' sons
And daughters erst devoured, their little ones,
Unpitying, clasping in his clutch of fire,
Or as the God of Sina's rugged hill,
With fire and thunder shod,
In blood and ravin wallowing His fill,
His friends scarce knowing from His enemies;
— Man such a demon-God to the beasts is.
And yet this barbarous God,
— As cruel as the God himself hath wrought

In his own likeness and in heaven on high
Set for his service, trembling at His nod
Whom he of his own thought
Hath fashioned for a fetish, in the sky
To stand between himself and formless Fate,
— This God, by whom the beasts are bought and sold,
This God, — ay, there's the rub! — they love, not hate.

Such love who ever knew,
So pure, so frank, so true,
Such simple, uncorrupted faith from man
Who ever had, as that which any may,
During their narrow span
Of life, alack! their all too little day,
For just a word or two
Of careless kindness, for some scant and few
Caresses, for sheer food and shelter due,
From cat or dog or horse himself procure?
Who of us all, that hath but eyes to see
And ears to hark,
But every day must mark
How simpler, purer are the beasts than we,
Who, with our keener ken,
Knowing the light, yet follow on the dark,
How faithfuller they are, how passion-free,
How wiser, truer, better far than men?

Nay, what boots preaching? Who are they that hear?
Who, in our darkling day
Of strife and stress and wild hysteric play,
Who is there to the message will give ear
Of him who crieth in the deserts grey?
Our current creeds are mute
Of duty to the brute:
To our exemplar, Christ, the beast was nought;
Man only had, in sum,
The franchise of the kingdom of His thought.

It booteth nothing till the new Gods come,
(Whose kingdom nigh at hand all signs foresay,
As dying Night foretells the nearing Day,)
Who, peradventure, by the lore of Ind,
Shall teach the heedless world that humankind
With its dumb brethren shares the Undifferenced Soul
And that one breath divine
For man and beast is and one common goal.

Till then, the beasts' repine
To endure and this their dole
To see and hopeless of amendment know,
Still, patient as themselves, ourselves resign
Must we. But, yet, the pity of it, oh,
The pity, pity of it, brothers mine!

LONDON VOICES.

THE TALE OF TIME.

The bell strikes one;
The small hours are begun;
Some slumber, others dream and others wake and weep:
The lagging minutes lapse, each following each like sheep.

The bell strikes two:
The hours the hours ensue:
Out of the sea of dreams, that surges round Life's shore,
The night evokes the loves, the hates of heretofore.

The bell strikes three;
The Past and the To-be
Their bitters only show to the retorted sight;
Their sweets are swallowed up in unremembering night.

The bell strikes four;
Shut, shut, thou dreamland's door!
No Future e'er can pay the sorry Past-time's debt.
Since joy may not be mine, at least let me forget.

The bell strikes five;
The night is all alive
With phantoms of past hopes and shapes of sorrows dead:
I lie and watch them flit and flutter round my head.

The bell strikes six;
Fancy its tale of bricks,
Made without straw, still brings to build my house of dreams:
My thought's a bird that nests upon the torrent-streams.

The bell strikes seven;
The dawn begins to leaven
The dying night's black bread; the birds their matins say;
The roar of London tells the tale of coming day.

The bell strikes eight;
The morning's at the gate:
Unwilling, in the East it shows and rising up,
Bestirs itself to brew the new day's bitter cup.

The bell strikes nine;
Is that the sun ashine?
Like to a candle half-hidden by a giant's fist,
Its eye sleep-drunken blinks and battles with the mist.

The bell strikes ten;
'Tis time to mix with men;
'Tis time to run once more the still-returning round,
To beat and beat in vain against the viewless bound.

It strikes eleven;
The sun is high in heaven;
The full streets hum and roar and thunder like the sea;
"All life," they say, "is ours; there's nothing left for thee."

The bell strikes noon;
The morning's gone too soon:
Like all fair things, the best Day hath, the forenoon-tide,
Too late is born and doth too little long abide.

The bell strikes one;
Come out and see the sun.
A wintry blink, forsooth, he hath and yet he's good
To look upon; for light indeed's the spirit's food.

The bell strikes two;
Twain are we, I and you:
Each in the streets of Life his way must fare alone:
None shareth Life and Death; each must abide his own.

The bell strikes three;
What hath Day booted thee?
Since that which thou hast done to morrow will undo,
What skilleth thee to have looked upon the light anew?

The bell strikes four;
The winter day is o'er.
The beasts are wiser far than we are, you and I;
They eat and drink and sleep nor question How or Why.

The bell strikes five;
What profits thee to strive?
Even as the darkness blots the battle of thy day,
So will the tide of Time thy traces wash away.

The bell strikes six;
Life lapses, like the Styx,
And from its sluggish stream, pricked out with points of fire,
The smoke of London soars, as from a funeral pyre.

The bell strikes seven;
The darkling vault of heaven
The lurid lamplight casts back from the nether air;
The clouds are crimson-stained with London's furnace-flare.

The bell strikes eight;
The streets are all in spate;
All hither thither run and and seek to oversee
The Present and the Past and blot the black To-be.

The bell strikes nine;
For Pleasure's poison-wine
The blind folk battling fare along the surging streets;
A raging tide of men on every pavement beats.

The bell strikes ten;
When shall it peace again
Be for the heavy hearts, the sorrowing, suffering souls?
Still in the roaring streets the tidal torrent rolls.

It strikes eleven;
Yonder the Planets Seven
Look longed-for silence down from the dumb vault on high
And in the emptying ways Day's clamours wane and die.

The bell strikes twelve;
Sad world, in dreams go delve
For thy vain hopes, thy quests, thy treasures new and old.
What if, with breaking day, they prove but fairy gold?

KENSINGTON GARDENS.

Here, in the sun,
When Summer's radiant reign is new-begun,
For him who knows
To mark the things that bide behind Life's passing shows,
Under these colonnades of dreaming elms,
The halls of Elfland rise on every hand
And he who cannot here the fairy realms
Find hath no part in the Enchanted Land.

The linnet calls;
And for my sense the inexorable walls
That shut Life in
Dissolve; and with them fades away the worldly din.
The spaces of the streets transmuted are
To dreamland, sweet with sempiternal Spring,
And London shines, as if within the ring
Of splendour steeped of some invisible star.

Here nest the birds
Whose sweet song blossoms into sweeter words:
But he alone
To whom the dells and dales of Paradise are known
Marks them; for mute they are to other ears
Than his to whom the unseen Powers allow
The travel of the interstellar spheres,
The wonder-worlds beyond the Here and Now.

THE STREETS.

From street to street,
Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, cold and heat,
He fares, to whom
The Gods have given to make the flowers of fancy bloom
On the grey stones and from the smoke-stained walls.
Dreams cling about him like a moving cloud;
And in the aisles of Paradisal halls
He wanders, most alone amidst the crowd.

The folk that pass
He noteth but as darkly in a glass:
Their faces show
As phantoms but of folk forgotten long ago.
The things of thought for him alone are true;
The things of Life it is that do but seem:
The only Real lives in Heaven's blue
And in the winding woodways of his dream.

The dreamland's gate
Stands open still to its initiate.
Where'er he goes,
The wastes before him flower with many a mystic rose:
Fields in each road, woods in each lane are born;
And he in London streets who cannot see
The elves at play and hear the elf king's horn
Hath no inheritance in Faërie.

WINTER DAWN.

A pallid glimmer creeps across the house-peaks grey;
The Winter morning wakes, ungracious, chill, austere,
Night following in its track. As if to light its sphere
Unwilling yet to yield, the darkness stands at bay.

Still the unflinching light fares on its fated way,
Heedless, so but its span be filled, of hope or cheer,
Till, having, East to West, the shadows banished sheer,
The world-all in the lap it leaves of wan white Day;

Day sorrowfuller far than many a moonless night,
Lacking the loving shade and shelter of the dark,
Wherein dumb sorrow hides, as in a helpful ark
Of peace, its shamefast face, intolerant of the light,
Day, whose grey sullen glare, against the silver rime,
Casts up, in grim relief, the city's rust and grime.

SUMMER DAWN.

The purple star-pricked gloom of velvet-vestured night
Begins to pale and fade in the fast-chilling air;
Its jewels one by one drop out and leave it bare:
The trees, without wind, sway, as to some spirit's flight,

The thrill of Nature's pulse, prophetic of the light;
Old London's spires and peaks, fire-fretted by the fair
Young day, thrust up to plant their heaven-ascending stair
Against its waxing wall of rose and opal-white.

Yonder, on the Eastern hills, the horizon is a-flame,
Where the new sun unfurls his oriflamme of fire:
A moment more, and lo, the glad blue day is born!
A burst of song soars up to hail it from the choir
Of wakening birds and all, hills, plains, heaven, earth, acclaim
The immeasurable might and majesty of morn.

RAIN.

Rain falls;
It hides the earth, it hides Heaven's azure halls:
Within the dungeon of my darkling thought
It shuts me with its grating crystal-wrought.

Grey skies,
Grey streets, grey walls, sad prospect for sad eyes!
Beneath my windows, on their listless way,
The dull folk lapse, like phantoms of the day.

No hope!
No breach of blue in sullen Heaven's cloud-scope!
Chaos is come again: all born anew,
Methinks, must be ere Heaven once more wax blue.

More sage,
My cats Life's rain-obliterated page
Fill up with slumber, luckier than I,
Whom Dawn o'er-often finds with waking eye.

Thought fails;
The drip from the drenched roofs is as the nails
That Time into the coffin drives of Life,
Knelling the nothingness of stress and strife.

What skills
Past goods to balance against present ills?
Go couch thee, fool, with King Pandion dead
And all thy friends that now are lapped in lead!

LONDON BY NIGHT.

Twilight thickens o'er sea and land;
  Spent are the sun's last rays:
Ghostlike creeping, with feet of haze,
Already shadows the lowlands drown;
And I on the hill-top's crest I stand,
Where a silver line in the South foresays
The climbing feet of the coming moon;
And down on the valley below I gaze,

Where, 'neath Night's gathering frown,
As 'twere a sea, aswoon
Fallen and fixed in its wild wave-play,
Stricken to silence of ended day,
Eastward and Westward and up and down,
Gable on gable of black and grey,
Roof-tops on billowy roof-tops brown,
Sparkles and darkles, amorphous, the dim-seen town.

London, likeness on earth of hell,
There, in thy perilous pit,
Huddled together like souls in pine,
Herded of sorrow like hapless sheep,
Far from the fields and the free sun's shine,
Each to other in slavery knit,
Loveless linked by the conquering spell
Of fear and Fortune, in darkness deep
Of doubt there dwell
Millions of men who have no sleep
Nor know, for carefulness, night from morn.
There, in the bounds of Life's prison-bars,
Fierce and forlorn,
They range, wild-beast like, and wrangle and toil and weep,
Under the unbeholding sun and moon
Whether it be or stern unsympathizing stars.

Ocean of pine and pain,
Bottomless abysm of doubt and dole,
More of monsters than any main,
Fuller of fear than the dreariest deep,
Billowed beneath the Pole,
Where, 'neath the shimmering stars asleep,
It wakes, as the whales in the midnight whirl and leap,
Who shall thy fathomless waters sound?
Tide thou knowest nor ebb nor flow;
None may number thy wrecked and drowned.
Still, through the ages' resonant round,

Thy roaring surges clamouring go;
And none shall hearken the tale of their sullen song,
Till mortals all,
Both great and small,
From sleep aroused by the trumpet's sound,
Lift up the head,
Till high and low,
Till quick and dead,
At the last great summons, to judgment throng.

VOICES.

1.

The wind and the rain
Go shrilling past, like a soul in pain.
What is their message to humankind,
The rain and the wind?

Feckless forever,
So they tell us, is Life's endeavour,
Senseless sowing and reaping reckless,
Forever feckless.

2.

Low or loud
Murmurs or clamours the moving crowd.
What do they say, as they pass and go,
Loud or low?

Pain and need,
All adventured for gain and greed;
Nothing gotten, they say, but vain
Need and pain.

MAY INTRA MUROS.

Blithe to behold
Is the glittering blossoming rain of the rathe laburnum-gold
In May,
When the wakening world hath forgotten the frost-time grey
And the woes of the winter cold.
The lilacs are robed like princes in purple and red and white
And the wandering airs are drunk with the wine of delight
Of the new Spring day.

Old London shines;
The lindens lighten the ways with their shimmering sun-shot
Of green; [lines
The grey town basks in the bath of the sunlight sheen;
Hope hangs out the shining signs
Of Summer to come on every tree: — Rejoice, old soul!
There is nothing so sweet as the season when Summer's goal
Through Spring is seen.

Lush to the brim
With blossom, my little garden glows in the grip of the grim
Old walls,
Like a white thought mured in a dream of misery dim.
Without, Life blusters and brawls:
But here is a haven of pleasance and boscage and peace
[and balm,
Where the thrush and the blackbird flute in the mid-Spring
And the cuckoo calls. [calm

The soft hours pass;
They lapse, like a summer sea, o'er me, as I lie on the grass,
Not fast,
But slow as a happy dream that is sweet to the last.
A wine of peace in Life's glass
They pour, the wine of a wish that is sure, though unfulfilled,
In the brimming bowl of a Future yet unspilled
By a Now, half Past.

Sing, throstle, sing!
Thy song is the tale in tune of the peartree's blossoming;
And I,
As thy notes float up and blend with the lark's in the sky,
My soul on the tune takes wing
To the fields of Fable and Faith, where sorrow is not nor strife,
Where Death is a dream of the dark and given is life
To live, not die.

FOG.

The fog
Hangs like a shroud above the streets and houses:
Beneath its pall the dreaming city drowses
And snorts and wheezes like a sleeping dog.

Death-white,
The gas-lamps glimmer, ghosts of radiance only,
Like wild-fires flickering o'er some marish lonely,
To lure the traveller with their treacherous light.

As trees
Walking, sparse passers-by, successive looming
Forth of the haze, like ghosts that wander, glooming,
In limboes of the underworld, one sees.

Their way
Portentous urging through the rolling curtain,
Motors and tramcars thunder, vast, uncertain,
Peace-poisoning dragons of our restless day.

The gloom,
Even as I watch it, waxes grimmer, thicker;
The tongues of gas no longer through it flicker;
The day is drowned in Night Primaeval's womb.

Each street,
Each road is strangled with funeral fleeces;
Even the thunder of the traffic ceases;
The pavements echo to no passing feet.

All cowers,
Still-sepulchred in nothingness abysmal:
No light, no sound-ray breaks the silence dismal;
The world is voiceless; voiceless are the hours.

What strange
Vague portents harbour in this brumal ocean?
What monsters haunt its billows without motion,
What phantoms through its deeps Tartarian range,

Who knows?
Midst prehistoric wars and ancient slaughters
Thought strays. Beneath its dull diluvian waters
A tide of dreams delirious ebbs and flows.

Life lies,
Inert, beneath the sable pall, and stirless:
Its altars idle; frankincense and myrrhless,
They smoke no longer tow'rd the extinguished skies.

But lo!
Where on the horizon, in rhe Westward distance,
Like fires funereal for a past existence,
A dull red shimmer waxes, dim and slow.

The sun
It is, behind the shroud of darkness setting,
That to the world, the difference forgetting
'Twixt noon and night, gives token of day done.

In this
Unluminous glow the lurid city slumbers,
Like that grim fortress, that, in Dante's numbers,
Tremendous towers from the deeps of Dis.

The face
Of the far orb ere long grows overclouded
With hovering Night, and 'neath the horizon shrouded,
His last rays vanish from the fields of space.

Day's pyres
Outburned are; not a glimmer in their ashes
Bides; o'er the eye of heaven fall Night's lashes,
Obscurer for the late-extinguished fires.

Again
The swart Cimmerian ocean o'er the city
Its strangling billows closes, without pity,
And Night and Fog, twin anarchs, jointly reign.

Once more
Antaeval Chaos comes and Dark discordial:
Whelmed in their wave of Nothingness primordial,
The whirling looms of Time no longer roar.

Not dead
Alone it seems, but having ne'er existed,
Thought from remembrance blotted, over-misted,
Of all that may have been in days forsped,

In gloom,
For grave-clothes lapped, the world-all drowses, scorning
The hope of any Resurrection morning,
As in the grip of fore-appointed doom.

MUNDUS SENESCENS.

The hawthorn ought, of ancient use, to bloom in middle
May;
But now 'tis seldom full in flower until June's earliest day:
The April meadows wont whilom to glow with cowslip-gold;
But now their time is latter May. — The world is growing old.

To those, in this sad London doomed to dwell, it seems
Life's page
Is quicklier overwrit with all the charact'ry of age;
The Spring less early lights with leaf the lindens than of yore;
The Summer tarries every year and lingers more and more.

Even the Autumn seldom comes till Winter's on the wing,
And Winter, won to end, is loath to yield to infant Spring.
Less hot's the sun, less bright the day: Life's fires are
burning low:
Its sap each season vivifies Earth's veins with feebler flow.

The days draw near when Earth, its fires extinct in cold
and gloom,
Will, like the moon, in space become a vast and vagrant tomb,
When of this weary world of men an end fore'er shall be
And nothing more of Life abide, not even memory.

And how should this our sad soul hope for any happier
thing?
To have a world for tomb were worth a poet or a king.
In such a grave assured we were, at least, of Life's surcease,
Rid of rebirth and certified of everlasting peace.

FLOWERS OF NIGHT.

Grimy London in the gloaming fading lies:
Webs of Winter evening's weaving, falling from the sunless
skies,
Film by film, a gradual ocean, gathers over all the haze:
Darkling, in the toneless twilight, drowse the unenlightened
ways.

Dark and darker every moment grows the air:
As on touchpaper enkindled sparks run scattering here and
there,
Gas-lamps, one after another, prick the mantle of the dark,
Till their broid'ries all the highways out in lines of silver mark.

Firefly-like, they flit and flutter o'er Night's soil;
Then, upon its branches settling, with the darkness for a foil,
Counterfeit a fallen heaven, mocking, with its faded stars,
At the empty sphere above it, blank behind its lightless bars.

Flowers of darkness, in the garden of the gloom,
Like the world-all's woes, exhaling from the pit of pain, they bloom,
In lugubrious lines assembling on the outskirts of the night,
As it were corpse-candles, kindled for the funeral of the light.

Time was when their light-tracks, leading o'er Night's sea,
Like the moon upon the waters, hither, thither, endlessly,
Ways unto my youthful fancy to the worlds of Faerie seemed,
Where the Paradises waited, of whose splendours then I dreamed.

Flowers of Night, for what you are I know you now,
Wreckers' lights, that to perdition lure and lead the ship-man's prow;
And with sadness, not with gladness, now I view your wandering fires,
Emanations from the marshes of the world of waste desires.

THE TELEPHONE HARP.

The hand of the storm-wind sweeps the harp of the telephone wires;
It sounds the tempestuous tune to the world of the waste desires,
The story of life that's bond to a burden it may not cast,
The burden of Will and Woe, of Present, To-be and Past.

Black 'gainst the blank of the clouds, upreared o'er the housetops high,
A giant sextuple stave is graven on the page of the sky,

Lyre for the lapse of the blast and score whence the choirs
of the air
Their dreadful harmonies draw, the hymn of the world's
despair.

The levins play on the page and lighten the nameless notes
That the drums of the thunder sound and the tempest's
trumpet-throats;
And whenas the West wind joins in the stormy symphony,
It is as there boomed in the air the droning bass of the sea.

One hears in the storm of sound the plaint of the un-
known powers,
The concert of wail that comes from other worlds than ours,
The inarticulate cry of things that till now were mute
And speak out their need through the strings of this mon-
strous man-made lute.

Nay, cruel it is to hear the cry of the lives unknown,
That voice their ineffable woes in a speech that is not
their own,
A speech that is neither theirs nor ours, that can but wail
Nor give us to understand a word of their woeful tale.

Nay, doubtless, a like wail soars from this world of ours
on high,
As it toils on its tedious round through the spheres of the
empty sky;
And doubtless, as theirs o'er earth, o'er Venus our woe
doth brood
And Saturn; nor there, as theirs with us, is understood.

Will ever a speech be found, that is common to both, a
speech,
That will able our aching hearts those other hearts to reach?
Will ever our earthly pains with the other-worldly woes
Commingle and each consoled of other be? Who knows?

Sad sons of the Primal Curse, blind bondmen born of Will,
We follow the wandering fires, that Science lights; and still,
As we tread in the squirrel-round of the cage we "Progress" call,
Life reareth at either end the same unscaleable wall.

Drunk with conceit and drugged with the wine of the Will-to-be,
We think, though we know not yet our own world-history,
To have mastered the secret of Life, whilst still from the dark around
The sad mysterious spheres their mocking canticles sound;

And still, o'er the world-din, shrills the old inscrutable plaint,
The wail of the wandering worlds, that speak, now far and faint,
Now doomful and deep, now low and light, now shrill and sharp,
As the hand of the storm-wind sweeps the strings of the telephone-harp.

THE BEGGAR.

I dream by the fire
And the nightingales bred in my breast are all astir;
They carol in jubilance high to the tune of my heart's desire
And a thousand altars smoke in my soul to the True and the Fair and the Sweet.
Of frankincense full, such as never grew on earth, and heavenly myrrh,
The censer-fumes of my heart float up to heaven and ever up.
My soul with the music brims and boils, like a sacrificial cup,
And the Muses and Graces round me flit in clouds, with flying feet.

But, sudden, from utterward there in the mist, amidmost
the Winter's mirk,
There steals through the window the mewling whine of a
mendicant out in the street.
The whine of the cadger that can but cadge, that would
rather rot than work,
It fills the air with its shrilling sound; and straight, at the
blatant bleat,
The Graces flee and the birds fall mute and the fragrance
fades away;
There is nothing left but December's pall of mist and
mirkness grey.
The visions, that blew in my breast but now, to the limboes
get them back,
The limboes of dreams that fail of flower for the workday
din and wrack,
As the cadge-wife's canting doggrel drones and twangs in
my tortured ear;
And I curse her and curse myself, in turn, next moment,
for cursing her.

The dream is fled;
But still through the window shrills the thin persistent whine,
With its wail of the Winter wind through the boughs in
the forest dead;
And the old hysterical pity wells in me, like a poison-wine;
The old unreasoning doubt once more comes deluging all
my soul.
"O God, if this thing the one should be of the myriads
old and new,"
It cries in my tortured brain; "if this should be for once
the true,
"The one sole true of the million false, this oft-told tale of dole!
"If this should be true, my God, and I shut my heart to
its cry in the night!"
And as ever, reason to ruth must yield, and I give her an
alms; and she,

She looks with the fawning face and the smile of mingled
hate and spite,
The smile of the beggar born and bred, from age to age,
at me,
The smile of the sluggard, whose dream of heaven is squalor
and idleness,
That takes and curses the giver at heart and scorns him
for his largesse,
The smile and the glance of the slave ingrain, that might
nevermore be free
And that scouteth those who have struggled clear of the
chains of the Will-to-be,
The look and the smile of the rotting soul in the body yet
alive,
That hates all who do as it cannot, — nay, as it will not, —
work and thrive.

VER IN URBE.

The Springtime blossoms like a bride
And even on London's grimy tide
Some reflex casts of light and love.
The streets below, the skies above,
Each other, wondering, survey
As who "What have we twain," should say,
"With one another here to do?"
And I Spring's dream of gold and blue,
Life's dull phantasmagoric show
Athwart, ensuing, as I go,
Long for the walls and roofs to pass
And leave the highways to the grass,
For all the weary worldly hum
To cease and let the flowertide come,
To see, instead of stones, once more,
The verdure-vaulted forest-floor.
For the dear days before the crowd,
When in the lanes the thrush was loud,

The days ere love and light and song
Were crowded out from life, I long,
As by the January hearth,
When oversnowed are green and garth
And all without the raging East
Goes rending man and bird and beast,
One sits and waits for Winter done
And wearies for the summer sun.

Borne on the highway's boundless stream,
I wander with my waking dream,
Among an alien crowd, that knows
Nor whence it comes nor where it goes,
Of stranger folk, whose lightless eyes
Bytimes, with wondering surprise,
Not all unblent with pitying scorn,
Of lack of comprehension born,
Upon me rest and who awhile
Regard me with a puzzled smile,
Ne'er doubting, — these whose lives are vain,
— That I am mad and they are sane.
If sanity, indeed, be that
With vanity which rhymes so pat,
But by the sibilant differing,
Which doth the geese to memory bring,
God help the sane, who seem to know
No difference 'twixt joy and woe,
Who cannot sow and cannot reap,
Who know not how to smile or weep,
But, when the lark is in the sky
And blue and bright is Heaven's eye,
Leave lea and hill and shore and down,
To jostle in the joyless town!

And yet, what say I? I, like them,
The labouring tides of London stem
And (why uneath it were to tell),

In this tenth circle stray of Hell,
I, who to fare in field and wood
Was born, a son of solitude,
Whom Nature branded from his birth
To walk the lonely ways of earth
And in the footsteps of the Spring
Ensue forever, wandering,
Still seeking, from his kind afar,
The fellowship of flower and star,
Hearkening fore'er from breeze or bird
To catch the enchanted wonder-word,
That should to his attent appeal
The secret of the world reveal
And bid the portals of the land
Of dreams fly open to his hand.
Yet in the troublous town dwell I,
Against my will, I know not why;
I only know that all are bound
To follow Fate's relentless round
And that the Destinies, which make
Our lives, as little notice take
Or heed of that which I or you
Or any man were fain to do,
As we of oxen question how
They choose to labour at the plough
Or of draught-horses, whether they
Would liefer this or the other way
Their burdens drag along the streets,
In Winter's colds or Summer's heats.
The thralls of blind Necessity,
Even as the cattle are, are we;
And if our chains be steel or gold,
It matters not, when all is told.
No help for us there is, in fine,
But, unresisting, to resign
Ourselves unto the common lot,
Unwearying to alter what

For ineluctable we know,
And on Life's soil, wherefrom there blow
Few blossoms of delight or cheer,
By the pale rays of Thought to rear,
(Sole crop at our arbitrament
That is,) the field-flowers of Content.

ON THE OMNIBUS.

High-throned, I ride; to left and right,
The streets unroll before my sight:
Life lapses past me, as I look;
I read the roadways, like a book

Whose pages are the passers-by.
Each hath a story in his eye,
A writ of versicoloured hours,
Deep-charactered of sun and showers.

Sad only yesterday their tale
With memories was of rain and hail;
The faces of the streets were dark
And sinister with care and cark.

To-day how different of show
The farers are that come and go!
Another tale their faces tell
Of Summer come and all is well.

The very housefronts hail the dear
Sweet season of the flowered year:
The streets have shuffled off the grime
And grievousness of winter time.

The world hath cast away its care;
Old London steeps in summer air
And basks beneath the blessed sun,
That shines and smiles for every one.

Was ever such a thing as stress
And strain of Winter-weariness?
In green and gold of summertide
The town to-day is glorified.

Life's young, that yesterday was old;
Its dreams are clad in blue and gold;
In wonder-weeds of glee and glory
Transfigured is its sorry story.

Its discords all again in tune
Are fallen beneath the touch of June;
The wandering winds bring up the spice
And frankincense of Paradise.

The starlings' chatter fills the air
And pigeons, fluttering here and there,
With plumage dapple all the day
Of slaty blue and rosy grey.

Was ever such a town for trees?
In every nook and coign one sees
Tall stems, that stood, unmarked, unseen,
Till Summer suited them in green.

At each street-end the bloomy Park
Its domes of verdure raises, ark
Of refuge for the thirsting spright,
That pines for flowers and leaves and light.

Ah Summer, wizard of the world,
Thy banners, in the blue unfurled,
Have made this smoky stead of ours
A town of birds and trees and flowers!

Was ever miracle like thine,
That solvest us of care and pine
And even to London's steppes of stone
A glory grantest of thine own?

So ever blesséd be, sweet time
Of love and light, of rest and rhyme,
And when thou go'st, our thanks ensue
Thy memory, till thou com'st anew!

THE ALMOND TREE.

The almond flowers in March,
The month when most of all the weary East winds parch
And flay the labouring lands.
Above the general dearth,
Whilst Winter lingereth yet, it spreadeth rosy hands,
Spring's benison to assure unto the suffering earth.

Against the long grey lines
Of London's walls, still scarred with Winter's lingering signs,
With arms yet bare of leaves,
Upon its branches sere
Its bright and blushing veil of virgin bloom it weaves,
As if to anticipate the bridal of the year.

Such heat is in its heart,
It may not wait till rain and hail and fog depart:
To leaf it lingereth not,
But robes itself in rose,
Like to some poet young, in whom his youth is hot
And needs must flower in rhyme, or e'er it leaf in prose.

No need it hath of green
To tell its timeless tale of Summer's coming sheen:
Though all of Spring despair,
Beneath the frowning sky,
It feels the future stir of April in the air
And flowers its frolic dream of Maytide drawing nigh.

Live ever, lovesome tree!
A homily of hope and faith thou fablest me.
God grant that I as thou
May still at heart have Spring,
Still may the fair To-be feel through the niggard Now
And in the Winter-night the summer-day foresing!

Like thee in this I am,
That still my spirit flies the flower-tide's oriflamme
And still with Summer's sign
Defies the wintry clime,
That, though my head be grey and lack of leaves like thine,
My heart blooms lush and free with flowers of love and rhyme.

THE LABURNUM.

The time is here again of Heaven-appointed May:
Despite the pains and cares, that scar Life's sorry page,
The hawthorn everywhere once more is growing grey,
After its gracious wont, with youth and not with age:
The lilacs take the sense
With their ripe redolence,
And to the grim grey walls of London's wastes of stone
The lush laburnum lends a radiance of its own.

True to its pristine tryst with the returning Prime,
Each year, when at the gate of gladness Springtide knocks
And Life takes heart again for hue and scent and rhyme,
O'er every garden-wall it hangs its glittering locks
And for a week or two,
Beneath the mottled blue
Of May's uncertain sky and in its rathe sun-beam,
Unhindered of the smoke, it dreams its golden dream.

But little heart it hath to leaf; its soul in flowers
Well nigh it spends; and when the splendid summertime,

Declining, giveth place to Autumn's placid hours,
The winsome webs of green, its slender boughs that hide,
Are quick to fade and fall;
And bare it bideth all
Till Spring to it recall its Attic hills of old
And into flower translate its memories of gold.

Laburnum, exiled thou in London art as I,
Yet thy Greek gracious name rememberest, Cytisus;
Whilst I forgotten have, beneath this stranger sky,
The name I bore erewhen in worlds more luminous.
But I no less, sweet tree,
In this am like to thee,
That I, as thou, anon, despite Life's wintry clime,
Remember me of Spring and flower with golden rhyme.

THE HORSE-CHESTNUT.

Horse-chestnut, all along the ways
Thou lift'st thy dome of fan-leaved sprays,
Five-fingered, like a hand of green,
Thy gracious signal, that foresays
The festival of Summer sheen.

Moreover and from top to toe,
Thy leafy turrets, high and low,
Thou overdeck'st, at Summer's spell,
With blossoms white as driven snow
And rosy-tinted as a shell.

Their pinnacles of green alight
With blossom-lamps of pink and white,
By many a living leafy hand
Upholden in the sheer sun's sight,
Thy giant candelabra stand.

With thine illumining of flower,
Toward the radiant heavens a-tower,
Above Life's dull delirium,
Thou celebrat'st the shining hour,
The hallowtide of Summer come.

Of little worth, indeed, thou art
To men; for, poet-like, thy heart
Is over-soft for common needs;
Thy fruit, like his, is in the mart
Unvalued and thy flowers are weeds.

But thou, like him, withal art fair
And glorifi'st the general air
With bloom and beauty. Thrush and wren
Give thanks for thee, though thou no care
Hast for the narrow needs of men.

So, gracious, generous tree, all hail,
That art beyond Life's common pale,
Acquitted by the friendly Fates,
Like poet, rose and nightingale,
Of men's pretentious postulates!

THE HAWTHORN.

The hawthorn's out in bloom;
It is raimented all in webs of white and red from the fairies' loom:
The scent of its balmy breath
All over the grim grey walls soars up like a great sweet voice,
That biddeth the wretch rejoice
And heartens the suffering soul with the hope of eternal life,
In the midst of a world of strife
And death.

But yesternight 'twas green
And now there is nothing for blossom of leafage to-day to be seen.
What angel with Aaron's rod
Hath smitten its verdurous wells with the stroke and the word Divine
And bidden them brim with wine
Of glory and glamour and gladness and colour and sweetness and scent,
In the name omnipotent
Of God?

In its redolent robes of grey
And coral, it stands like the blossoming sign of the birth of a new world-day;
It biddeth all hearts have heed
Of its homily preached to the grey old world of grace and youth,
Its tale of the pearls of truth
And beauty that are for the diver, the seeker, to find and gain
In the heart of Life's seas of pain
And need.

In alley and street and square,
With the balm of its breath of benison sweet it heartens the heavy air:
No quarter there is so base
Where the blossoming hawthorn scorns to lighten the loveless day
With its bridal robes in May,
No nook, in its blossoming-tide, of the grim old town's to find
But the track of its scent on the wind
Can trace.

Hail to thee, hawthorn-tree!
Thy perfumes perish, thy flower-flames dwindle and drown

in Summer's sea;
But thy lesson of joy and cheer,
Of faith in beauty that dies not and sleeps but to wake again,
Shall still with us remain
For solace, when Life lies faint and flowerless in Winter's hold
And the hope at its heart grows cold
And sere.

SICK LIFE.

Day daws;
Life is so loud, night hardly calls a pause;
'Twixt day and day the dark alone division draws.

The streets
Through the small hours roar on and morning greets
The weary eyes o'eroft ere eyelid eyelid meets.

With streams
Of unrelenting noise the night-air teems;
And if one doze, the streets roar through his restless dreams.

Lost sleep
Who shall restore to him who needs must keep
The vigil of the dark by London's raging deep.

What hope?
Need hems our lives about with iron cope
And still our feet are fast in habit's hobbling-rope.

On man
Man over-straitly presses, clan on clan;
One scarce can breathe for crowds in this our Babel's span.

Sick Life
Drags drowsing on through hells of din and strife:
Yonder the Surgeon stands and holds the healing knife.

But Death
Succour and hope of solace proffereth.
Nay, is there 'scape from Life to find in 'scape of breath?

Who knows?
What we call Life, with all its cares and woes,
Belike is Death and Death the flower of Life that blows.

No need
For Hell to seek there is. If Hell indeed
There be, this mortal life it is of grief and greed.

And yet,
If sleep beyond the gate of Death be set,
How many an aeon sleep must we, ere we forget!

Enough
Is there in Lethe of narcotic stuff
To salve the soul storm-tossed in Life's tempestuous trough?

What seas
Of sleep were needed for their solace, these
Who by Life's turmoil robbed have lifelong been of ease?

Alas!
When 'tis their turn to lie beneath the grass,
Will they not be o'ertired the gates of rest to pass?

BALLADS AND ROMANCES.

THE RIME OF MELISANDE.

"O Melisande,
By Surrie strand,
Red Rose of Tripoli,
From Paris Town to Askalon,
In all the lands the sun shines on,
Was never maid like thee.

Blue are thine eyes
As summer skies,
Thy hair as ripening corn;
On good and vile
Thy sweet lips smile,
Sans ever trace of scorn.

All hearts rejoice
To hear thy voice,
Like linnet's on the wing:
E'en Rudel right,
That witsome wight,
Thy praise uneath might sing.

Unto this end
A man might spend
His life, to gain thy grace;
There's none may think
Of care or swink
That looks upon thy face."

* * * * * *

The palmer sang;
The ghittern's clang
Called all the folk to hear.
"All over the world," quoth he, "I've strayed;
"But never I saw so sweet a maid,
"So fair and frank and dear!"

* * * *

The fair one's fame,
Like wind-borne flame,
Went spreading, place to place:
Full was the land
Of Melisande,
Her goodness and her grace:
And those among,
To whom Fate flung
The tidings of the case,
The news of her
To Rudel's ear
Came in a little space.

In him for nought,
At first, it wrought;
He took thereof scant heed.
But, oh, what a parlous thing is Love,
That whiles but couples 'twixt dove and dove
And whiles, for a word
In the distance heard,
Men's hearts to death bids bleed!

Now by His law
The hearkened saw
In Rudel's heart so deep
Sank and so wrought
Within his thought,
On wake and eke in sleep,

That, before long,
None other song
There sang, none other strain,
Than her sweet name,
Whose far-flown fame
Had witched him, heart and brain.

The thought of her
In him did stir
At every time and place;
He spoke by light
And dreamed by night
Of nothing but her grace;
And like a fire
Was his desire
To look upon her face.

No more his rhymes,
As aforetimes,
Of divers ladies were:
One only praise
Was in his lays;
None other maid might share
His minstrelsy
With her whom he
Held only worth and fair.

All Europe rang
With what he sang
In praise of Melisande:
From hall to court
Flew his report
In every Chrisom land,
Till oversea
It won where she
Abode by Surrie strand.

And she, — for kind
And mild of mind
She was as sweet of show
And keen of wit,
— By word of writ,
Gave him full fain to know
That all above
She held his love
And service evenso.

* * * *

Now in those days
That prince of praise,
Who fell by Antioch wall,
Kaiser and Knight,
That Redbeard hight,
A new crusade let call
And Paynim-free
Christ's sanctuary
To make, bade Christians all.

His standard raised,
Whereon there blazed
The Cross, all thither ran:
Whoso delayed
From the crusade
Must bear the dastard's ban:
From France to Greece,
There was no peace
For any Chrisom man.

Now, to Rudel
When it befell
To hear his lady's word,
Joy in his spright
Was at its height

And longing in him stirred
Her face to see
And know if she
Were even as he heard.

So, by the sign
To Palestine
That every Christian bade,
Though from the Quest
He right of rest
Had earned by service made,
Occasion yet
His mind was set
To take by the Crusade

And oversea
To Tripoli,
Seeking his lady bright,
Fare, there, if well
She willed, to dwell,
Undistant from her sight,
So, of her grace,
He whiles her face
Might see and be her knight.

And if in her
His sight should stir
No love, no kindness wake,
He might, at least,
Yet faring East,
Arms for the Cross uptake
And at Christ's call,
By Zion wall,
Die fighting for her sake.

So for good gold
His land he sold

And for his lady dear
Gifts, with the price,
Of rare device,
He bought and travelling-gear.

His wede he shed
And donned instead
A palmer's hat and gown;
Then, taking horse,
Came, in due course
Of time, to Marseilles town.

There, for his need,
A ship of speed
He hired, a caravel,
With arms and crew
And all things due
For travel furnished well.

So, on the main
Launching, Sardaine
And Corsica between
He passed and through
Th'untroubled blue
Drove of the Sea Tyrrhene.

Then, faring free,
To Sicily
He came, with wind in poop,
And lest some thief
From out the Riff,
Some corsair on them swoop

And ship and crew
And him thereto
Bear off to slavery,

Ran through the gates
Of Reggio Straits
Into the Ionian Sea.

Thence breezes fleet
Bore them to Crete,
Where, for fresh meat and drink,
Some little tide
They did abide,
To ease them of their swink.

Then, in fair weather,
Loosing their tether,
After a resting-while,
They Eastward bent
Their course, intent
On making Cyprus Isle.

But scarce from sight
Sank Ida's height
When all the sky turned black
And thence there blew
A wind undue,
That turned them from their track.

So, many a day
And night, astray
They drove before the blast
Till, tempest-ragged,
The torn sails flagged
Upon the stricken mast.

The heavens scowled,
The tempest howled
Athwart the sails and ropes;

And never sight
Of bay or bight
There offered to their hopes.

Until, one morn,
With day new-born,
Down sudden dropped the storm;
The cloud-veil drew
From off heaven's blue
And forth the sun shone warm.

A dead calm held
The seas enspelled;
Of breezes breath was none;
They, whose need late
For cold was great,
Now sweltered in the sun;

And to and fro
They drifted slow
Till hope within them died,
And still their eyes
But seas and skies
On every hand espied.

Nor provend more
There was in store,
To stay the failing breath;
And eke Rudel
By fever fell
Was stricken unto death.

* * * * *

So drifted they
From day to day,
Whilst all of life despaired;

Till, as upon
The prow, anon,
The captain Eastward stared,

The man cried out,
'Twixt hope and doubt,
Misdeeming of his eyes;
For o'er the brine
He saw a line
Of shores and hills arise.

From the sea's face
It rose apace,
Like visions in a dream;
And on its marge,
Where light lay large,
He saw spires flash and gleam.

Roofs rose and towers
And domes, like flowers
Of gold, against the sky;
Upon that sight,
So glad and bright,
A man might look and die.

"The saints I thank!"
The captain sank,
Thus crying, on his knee;
"I know that land,
"That silver strand,
"Fringed with the date-palm tree.

"I know the port with the white-walled town
"And the creek where the golden sands slope down,
"To meet the mounting sea;
"I know the beach, with the babbling rill;

"The grey old castle upon the hill
"And the tower I know, with the standard still
"That beareth the lilies three;
"The spires and the pinnacled palaces
"I know and the domes. It is, it is
"The Land of Tripoli!"

Their hopes leapt up at the heartening word;
There was never a man so weak that heard
But sprang to the sheets again:
The sail rose up on the swaying mast:
It was land, it was blesséd land, at last:
Forgotten were all their fears and fain
They would have cheered; but their throats were dry
And the shout came out like a broken sigh
Or the wail of a soul in pain.

The town lay silent; beneath the skies
It slept in the dawning glow;
There was never a sign for the straining eyes.
But "Up with the flag!" the captain cries;
"'Twill waken the folk, I trow."
So up, with a shout and the halyards' creak,
The black ball ran to the topmost peak
And the banner of France at the main broke out
And hung in the calm, as if in doubt
Of welcoming, ay or no.

At the sight and the sound the town awoke:
Away on the ramparts the sackbuts spoke;
The drums beat a point of war;
The trumpets thundered over the sea
And forth of the battlements, sweet to see,
There broke and blossomed the Lilies Three,
Paled with the crosses four,
The crosses four and the triple star,

The flag of the Paynim feared afar,
The banner of Raymond, Lord of Bar
And Count of the Surrie shore.

Then heaven took pity and sent a breeze;
A light air wrinkled the crests of the seas
And made the taut ropes sing;
The canvas fluttered, the seas slid by;
The land drew nigher and ever nigh;
And wearily into the little port
The carvel crawled, like a hart amort
Or a bird with a broken wing.

The count's folk hailed as the ship drew nigh,
Loud calling from the quay;
"Ho, ye of the carvel!" was the cry:
"Why come ye hither to Tripoli?
"Whence, whence and whither, and what bear ye
Withal for lading, say!"

"From France," the captain, "we come," replied.
"Long, long have we tossed on the angry tide,
"Have toiled and travelled it far and wide,
"Driven of the winds astray.
"Nor stuffs nor jewels we bear for freight;
"Yet that, which is more of worth and rate
In wise men's eyes than they,
"We bring, nought else than a minstrel wight,
"Whose like is none in the sheer sun's sight,
"To wit, Sir Geoffrey, of Rudel hight,
"Baron and Prince of Blaye.

"The sweetest singer in all the land,
"For love of the Lady Melisande,
"His last hath he looked on the fair French strand
"And launched on the surging spray;

"He hath given himself to the salt sea's guile,
"Hath wended and wearied him many a mile,
"So but he might see her sweet eyes smile
"And kiss her dainty hand,
"So but he might hear her welcome say
"And louting low in her presence, pray
For favour on his suit.
"But sick, alas! is the bard to death:
"There's little left in his breast of breath;
"The death-swoon holds him mute.
"He'll never again the folk rejoice
"With ditties dearer than gems of choice;
"He'll never again uplift his voice
"Or sing to the laughing lute."

All rent, that heard
The captain's word,
With cries of grief the air;
For known was Rudel of every man
That numbered his name of the Chrisom clan;
And straight to the palace one there ran,
As if the news to bear.

Nor was it long
Ere, through the throng
That lined the harbour's marge,
Thrusting athwart
The inner port,
There showed a stately barge.

Hung were its sides, within, without,
With purple and cramoisie all about:
A dozen steersmen, tall and stout,
Six upon either side,
Swayed, as, with stalwart strokes and strong,
They drove the ponderous barge along
The slow resurgent tide.

But none on the barge or the crew might look;
For lo! at the stern, in the curtained nook,
Like a pictured saint in a pious book,
Under the awning's shade,
With eyes of azure and hair of flame
And forehead flushed with a rosy shame,
A lily of light in a golden frame,
There sat a shining maid.

Her hair was gold
As the corn-crowned wold,
Her eyes as summer sea;
Since God in heaven set day and night,
Was never a maid so sweet of sight,
So fair of face as she.
Men looked on her face and bent the knee;
They gazed in her melting eyes of blue;
They noted her princely port and knew
The flower of Christiantie,
The loveliest lady whom ever upon
The sunbeams burned and the moonlight shone,
A brighter of blee than any star
And whiter of wit than lilies are,
The Lady Melisande of Bar,
The Rose of Tripoli.

The bark lay low;
The barge slid slow;
And up on the deck stepped that lady light;
She took her way
Where Rudel lay
And kneeling, bent o'er the dying knight.

The death-swoon held
His sense enspelled:
But syne on his brow her lips she prest;

And with the bliss
Of that her kiss,
The breath came back to his bated breast.

He opened his eyes: by Our Lady's grace,
Life flickered up for a moment's space:
He opened his eyes on his lady's face
And met her look of love.
He felt him pillowed upon her breast
And thought him already at rest, at rest,
Encompanied round of the ransomed blest,
In Paradise above.

He gave God thanks for the gotten goal;
Nought more to wish for; Life made whole,
Love's blisses over the sated soul
Full-flowing, tide on tide!
He had lighted at last on the Golden Shore;
He had entered in at the Heavenly Door;
There was nothing on earth to live for more;
And so in Heaven he died.

* * * * *

Under a monument sweet to see,
In the Templars' chapel at Tripoli,
They laid him with mourning and melody,
As one of high estate;
To rest they laid him on royal wise,
Bewept of the tears of his lady's eyes:
And there, — till the day of the Great Assize,
When God all peoples, both small and great,
Shall call to reckoning up, — await,
Geoffrey of Rudel lies.

There sleeps he, freed
From all Life's need,
From all its cares and charms:

Solved is his soul
Of joy and dole,
Of gladnesses and harms.
Men hold him mad;
But his hope he had;
For he died in his lady's arms.

WANDERERS.

1.

Marineres, a-steering through the shadow of the peak,
Who are ye and whence are ye and what is it ye seek?

Lovers, lovers, laboured of the winds of Will are we;
And we seek the lands of love that shine beyond the Western sea.

Dip your oars in, marineres! Here harboureth but strife.
Here hate is but to find, not love. This is the Land of Life.

2.

Marineres, a-rocking on the white waves' wrinkled crest,
Who are ye and whence are ye and whither is your quest?

Seekers, seekers, sorrowing for what we may not find,
Our quest is for the plains of peace that lie beyond the wind.

Marineres, hoist up your sails! Here shall you find but leisure.
Here is no peace for such as you. This is the Land of Pleasure.

3.

Marineres, a-floating on the silence of the sea,
Who are ye and whence are ye and what is it seek ye?

Roamers, roamers, riding on the ocean's boundless breast;
And for the world, where stress is not nor sorrow, is our quest.

Turn your prows, then, marineres, and bend your oars above!
This, this the Land of Sorrow is. Men call it Land of Love.

4.

Marineres, slow-wending through the sprinkles of the foam,
Who are ye and what are ye and wherefore do ye roam?

Rovers, rovers, drifting on the troubled tides of life,
Seeking for the shores we go where silence is from strife.

Marineres, shake out your sails! This is the Land of Dreams.
Here strife for ever is 'twixt that which is and that which seems.

5.

Marineres, with wrinkled brows and tresses tossed and grey,
Who are ye and what are ye and whither is your way?

Dreamers, dreamers, shipwrecked of the storms of thought we are;
And we seek the Land of Silentness, behind the evening star.

Marineres, draw in your oars! Light down and spare your breath!
This, this the Land of Silence is. Men call it Land of Death.

NOVEMBER GHOSTS.

The day had been dreary with rain and mist:
But, when the dark came with the night to the tryst,
A wind blew out of the Orient sky
And swept the heavens clear and the world all dry.

I passed through the darkling, the desolate plain,
Alone with the night in the world inane:
No light was; but blank was the land and drear
With Autumn ended and Winter near.

The clouds lay lieger about the moon;
She showed not the tip of her shining shoon;
The wind went wailing without surcease;
'Twas silence and solitude, yet not peace.

Care followed close on my faring feet;
The stillness throbbed, like a pulse abeat:
My heart was heavy; and as I went,
My sad soul echoed the wind's lament.

The souls were abroad in the moonless night;
The echoes murmured of dead delight;
They spoke of women I loved and men
Who went with me hand in hand erewhen.

The wind in mine ear, as it passed in flight,
Shrilled, "Fool, what ails thee to fare by night,
"What time in November the leaves are shed
"And the air is alive with the restless dead?

"Go, shelter at home from the ghosts of the Past,
"From the rueful night and the raging blast!"
And back to the hearthside I turned to go
And sat me down by the fire aglow.

But the ghosts came in with me out of the cold;
The dead came up from under the mould,
From the desert-sands and the deeps of the sea,
And entered in at the door with me.

They sat by the hearth with me all night,
Till the path of the dawn in the East waxed white;
Then faded away without farewell;
And the crow of the cock was their passing-bell.

FLOUTED LOVE.

Love came luting,
When the crocuses were budding, shooting
Thin green spearheads through the garden-mould.
Get thee gone, Love! Thou art come too early.
Winter yet is king and Boreas burly
Yet abroad is;
Yet the world unthawed is.
Get thee gone and shelter from the cold!

Love came singing
Down the alleys, when the world was ringing
With the blackbirds' and the thrushes' rhyme.
Get thee gone, Love! Who hath time for wooing,
When the world is lush with Life's renewing,
When all gay is
And our monarch May is?
Get thee gone and come in summertime!

Love came glowing
Down the alleys, when the roses, blowing,
Filled the flowerbeds with their fragrant bloom.
Get thee gone, Love! Who hath care for kisses,
When the world-all with the summer blisses
Filled and fair is,
Fragrant when the air is?
Haply August will for thee have room.

Love came lagging,
When the lilies in the sun were flagging
And the August-flame was on the wheat.
Get thee gone, Love! Who hath coolth for courting,
When the corncrakes in the sun are sporting,

Ripe when corn is
And each meadow shorn is?
Get thee gone and shelter from the heat!

Love came crying,
When the woodlands in the wind were sighing
And the world the Autumn's liveries wore.
Get thee gone, Love! Who can think of wedding,
When the trees their summer suits are shedding,
When the sheaves are
Reaped and sere the leaves are?
Get thee gone till apple-time be o'er!

Love came calling,
Down the alleys, when the snows were falling
And the frostflakes silvered wood and wold.
Get thee gone, Love! Get thee gone, late comer!
Who hath heart for thee, when sped is Summer?
Where the rime is,
Room for love nor time is.
Nay, the year and I are over-old.

THE DEATH OF HAFIZ.

I.

News came in the night from the land of my love;
It was wafted me down on the wings of a dove.

In the visions of midnight a voice to me said,
"Dwell no more, o my heart, in the house of the dead!

To Paradise-Garden thee home They recall.
Why linger so long on this base-fostering ball?

What little of light and what scantling of sooth
It yields is the bud and the blossom of youth.

But bitter as fennel's the fruitage of age
And the bird breaks its wings on the wires of the cage.

Thy wings were to winnow the firmament framed;
Yet with beating the bars of this madhouse they're maimed.

From the ramparts of Heaven they warble to thee.
Hark, Gabriel hails from the Boundary-Tree!

They call thee to cast off the bondage of earth;
They bid thee return to the land of thy birth.

Too long hast thou sung for this world, where none hears:
Henceforth shalt thou sing with the seraphs, thy peers."

2.

All night on the garden there glittered the moon:
The land was as light as the Midsummer noon.

The roses breathed balm, on the sprays as they swung;
The nightingales sang, as they never had sung.

All night Hafiz sat by the murmuring stream,
His head on his hand and his eyes on his dream.

His brows were begirt with the moon's aureole
And with visions of Paradise filled was his soul.

For cupmates, he drank with the Archangels Seven;
They gave him to eat of the honey of Heaven.

All night thus he sat by the rivulet's head;
And when the morn morrowed, the poet was dead.

SIR ROSWAL.

1.

The night is dead; The East grows red; On holm and head
The larks sing free.
"Up, up, sir Knight; The world is white; The bark is dight,
"To sail the sea."

Sir Roswal woke; On elm and oak In glory broke
The morning sun.
He heard the bird; The voice he heard, The warning word,
But saw no one.

But, in the bay, Whereo'er, to play With newborn Day,
The ripples flocked,
Upon the tide, With sail set wide, But none to guide,
A shallop rocked.

The breeze blew straight From Dawn elate, From th'Eastern Gate
And day begun;
And nought in sight But the line of light, That led outright
To the westering sun.

He saw the line, The fresh sun's shine, That lay for sign
Upon the blue.
The lands of rest, Beyond the West, It showed; his quest
He saw and knew.

2.

The blithe breeze bellied the canvas wet;
He sprang to the rudder and sail he set,
To fare, in the wake of the westering beams,
Over the seas, to the Land of Dreams.

Over the seas in the wakening sun,
Over the seas in the heavy noon,
Over the seas, when the day is done,
Over the seas, in the flooding moon;

Over the seas to the world of the West,
Over the seas to the gates of gold!
The things which he bore for the wroughten quest
He hath forgotten. The tale is told.

HER GRAVE.

Quiet is the night
And the moon upon the graves is shining, shining:
And it's oh, my love, my love, I'm pining, pining
For your sight!

About me and above,
The summertide is merry making, making:
And it's oh, my heart, my heart is breaking, breaking
For my love!

Many is the day
Since the daisies o'er your head are blowing, blowing;
And they say that dead folk's hair keeps growing, growing
In the clay.

The shadows come and go
O'er your restplace and the moon is beaming, beaming:
And it's fain I'd know of what you're dreaming, dreaming,
There below.

You were never wholly mine,
But for something not of earth went yearning, yearning:
And the heart in me, the heart is burning, burning
For a sign.

Like waves upon the beach,
The grasses o'er your head are thronging, thronging:
And the soul in me, the soul is longing, longing
For your speech.

At your grave I bend the knee,
Where beneath the clay you sleep, your narrow cell in;
And with lips to earth, I whisper, "Helen! Helen!
"Speak to me!"

Nought you answer me, my dear;
Yet my name whiles in some windwaft ringing, ringing,
Or some bird, methinks, that passes, singing, singing,
Can I hear.

Was it you, dear, in the bird
And the breeze that whispered, "Love me!" sighing, sighing,
To my soul, that through the dark goes crying, crying
For your word?

The moon shines white and wide;
The shadows on your tomb go questing, questing;
And it's oh, I would that I were resting, resting
By your side!

On your bed the roses bloom:
If you've room for roses o'er you creeping, creeping,
You for me, who fain by you were sleeping, sleeping,
Might make room.

Here in Autumn with its hips
And its flowers in June the rose is dwelling, dwelling,
Of your cheek the tale alternate telling, telling,
And your lips.

There's a lily round the place
Where your head is, dear, its blossoms twining, twining,
With the whiteness and the sweetness shining, shining,
Of your face.

In the moon's unearthly light,
Through your covering-stone, pellucid seeming, seeming,
Methinks I see your forehead's dreaming, dreaming
Arch of white.

And in the pearl-grey skies,
Where the moon whiles veils her figure slender, slender,
Methinks I see the grey so tender, tender
Of your eyes.

You left me long agone
For the sleep that hath no earthly waking, waking:
And it's oh, my heart, my heart is aching, aching
For the dawn!

Will you know me, when we meet
And the Resurrection-trumpet's speaking, speaking,
Or must I through Time and Space go seeking, seeking
For my sweet?

You were young and I am old;
But, when age and youth in death are meeting, meeting,
Both from memory as a tale go fleeting, fleeting,
That is told.

I shall know you, when you rise,
With your seraph-garments round you streaming, streaming,
By your turn of head and by the beaming, beaming
Of your eyes.

What is Death and what is Birth?
Nay, if living living is and dying, dying,
There is none can tell till he is lying, lying
In the earth.

* * * * * * *

But the end of night is nigh
And the darkness in the East is greying, greying.
"Till to-morrow," so I leave you, saying, saying,
Not "Good bye!"

Till we meet again, my dear,
Hands in that Eternal Morning linking, linking,
Where no sorrow is nor longsome thinking, thinking,
Hope nor fear.

Till to-morrow, then, adieu!
For the fulness of the times is nighing, nighing,
When pain pain no more shall be nor sighing sighing
For us two.

THE DEATH OF PAN.

v. Plutarchi de defectu oraculorum Tractatum.

I.

In that old Treatise of the Cheronaean,
Of how the Oracles have ceased to be,
'Tis told of Epitherses the Nicæan
How he, from Lemnos Island in the Ægean
Faring to Brindisi in Italy,

Was of a calm, in the Ionian Ocean,
O'ertaken, hard by the Echinades.
The sails, as drenched with some narcotic potion,
Slept on the mast; and sudden, without motion,
The vessel stood upon the windless seas.

Thence, duck-like, on the slow sea-swell it drifted,
Still forging Northward, for a long day's while,
From wave to wave-crest by the surges shifted,
Until, no more by swell or current lifted,
It stopped, as if hand-stayed, by Paxos Isle.

There, the clouds gathering and the darkness nearing,
The prudent captain in the little bight,
Where the ship halted was, cast anchor, fearing
Lest by and by the wind should rise and veering,
The vessel cast upon the cliffs by night.

Now, when the heavens with night were overdarkened
And most folk slept, of those the bark aboard,
In the mid-mirkness, by the midnight starkened,
When but the helmsman and the sailors hearkened,
Who on the deck with him kept watch and ward,

Rending the silence and the night in sunder,
From out the secret places of the land
There of a sudden spoke a voice of thunder;
Whereat the awakened folk, for fear and wonder,
Arose and gathered in a trembling band.

Thrice upon Thamos' name, it thundered, crying,
The Egyptian pilot of the bark wind-bound,
Louder and louder still and nearer nighing;
What while the folk, affrighted of replying,
In silence hearkened to the horrent sound:

Till Thamos, taking on the prow his station,
Said, "Here am I! What wouldest thou with me?"
Whereto the voice, "Look thou, on thy salvation,
"That, to Palodes come, thou proclamation
"Make of the death there of the great God Pan!"

Therewith it stinted; nor the echo faded
Was of its speaking, when a mighty wind,
Blowing from the island, all the air invaded
And on the ship, that, by its anchors aided,
Rode at a standstill, falling from behind,

Smote with such fury that each hempen cable
Parted, as though a skein of silk it were,
And out to seaward, on the wild waves' babel,
The ship went driving through the midnight sable,
Across the clamours of the wind-vexed air.

So for a day and night it scudded, fleeing
Before the tempest, till, at set of sun,
What time Palodes headland rose in seeing,
The storm as sudden sank as it to being
Came and the wind dropped with the daylight done.

The ship stood still before the promontory,
Arrested by some power past that of man,
And Thamos, standing in the sunset-glory,
Unto the cliffs and to the forests hoary
Thundered the tidings of the death of Pan.

Whereat from all the plains and peaks came leaping
Such sounds of pine as pass the written word;
Hill answered headland, woe on woe upheaping;
The air was full of wailing and of weeping,
That rent the rueful hearts in all that heard.

Up from the meadows rose the lamentation
And sank in music from the mourning skies;
Heaven answered Earth; and still, without cessation,
Its song of grief and funeral salutation
The world-all chanted on melodious wise.

The death-dirge of a world it was that floated
From earth to heaven and from heaven to earth,
In monodies of music throstle-throated;
The passion of the Past-time, death-devoted
By the same breath that gave the Present birth.

2.

Thence, (quoth the teller) nowise understanding
These things, we on our voyage, thus delayed,
Fared in due course to Brindisi, where landing
And of the things which late had passed demanding,
It, amongst others, unto us was said

How in Jerusalem, the town Judæan,
What time the tidings of Pan's death heard we,
One for a new God hailed, a Galilean,
For victim fall'n unto the rage plebeian,
Had died the death upon the ignoble tree;

And how, as he his last breath rendered, dying,
Dead darkness curtained all the heavenly plain;
The Temple-veil was rent, whilst voices sighing
Shrilled through the silence, "Woe!" and "Havoc!" crying,
And earthquakes tore the shuddering earth in twain.

Now this the God, by whom the old Gods' races,
I doubt not, died, was, Phoebus, Zeus and Pan,
To whom Olympus' peoples, Muses, Graces,
Furies and Fates, their dim diminished faces
Must veil, the foreappointed Son of Man.

3.

Thus in one moment met th'opposing ages,
The Past-time mingled with the coming years,
The old frank world of heroes, singers, sages,
And the new time that on the Future's pages
Began to grave its writ of blood and tears.

As different was the manner of their parting
As was the fashion of their use with men.
The new world moaned and menaced in its starting,
Thundering, discordant; whilst the old, departing,
In dulcet tones bewailed itself and Pan.

Not with volcano-voice the lovesome fancies
Bygone the old age mourned nor thunder-clang;
The mountains for the mirthful old romances,
The forests for the nymphs' and Dryads' dances
Vociferous vented not their parting pang.

Across the star-thrilled air their chiming chorus
Threnodial to the rueful heavens rang;
The old world died, as it had lived, canorous;
In waves of wailing music, soft, sonorous,
The high Hellenian Gods their death-song sang.

The new age 'twas its "O ye world, rejoice!"s
That by the mouth of blast and tempest roared:
To the discordant choir of earthquake-voices,
It thundered forth its tidings of accord;
Uncertain, as it might be, of the choices
'Twixt grief and gladness, jubilance and sorrow,
Which, in the treasuries of the Future stored,
For the new world-all waited on the morrow,
With the New Covenant and the New Lord.

ANGELS' VISITS.

Day drops to night
And a voice in mine ear with the last of the light!
Who else might whisper so soft and clear?
Who else should it be but you, my dear?

A sound of wings,
A sense in my soul of heavenly things,
A waft from the thither side of death;
And the air is full of your balmy breath.

You come once more
To me, my sweet, from the wishless shore:
You have not forgotten, among the blest,
The lover that lay on your living breast.

What am I worth
That you still should think of me here on earth,
You that the asphodels pluck in the skies
And drink of the dews of Paradise?

Yet still, my dove,
You stoop to me from your spheres above;
You bring me the honey of highest Heaven
And sing me the songs of the Seraphs Seven.

Where have you been,
Since you leant to me last from the sky serene?
What ways have you wandered in Heaven afar
And what is the news from the latest star?

What worlds are new
In the starry spheres and the bounds of blue?
Is Heaven still deaf to the worldly hum?
Is't not yet time for the Gods to come?

When shall I free,
The heavens with you to wander, be?
When shall I looked on the sorry sun
My last have and you and I be one?

You answer nought;
For the dwellers in Heaven hark not men's thought;
Your speech I catch not; but, oh, your voice!
The sound of it makes my heart rejoice.

Nor what you say
In the tongue of the angels take I may;
I see but the halo your head above,
That thrills my heart with its light of love.

The night wears by;
Alack! The dawn-tide is drawing nigh,
The hour when the roll of the blest they call
And you must be back in the heavenly hall.

The East grows white;
A spirit-kiss on my lips falls light;
A flutter of wings in the dawning grey;
And nothing is left in the world but Day.

With morning come,
The seraph-voice in my ears is dumb;
The day o'erfloods me with dole and fret:
But all night have I talked with the angels yet.

THE WRATH OF VENUS.

Lady Venus on the land
Of Ætolia laid her malison erewhen,
Cast her curse upon its women and its men,
From the mountains on the skyline to the strand;
For that wroth she was with those who dwelt therein
And that, when uplifted 'twas to punish sin,
Hard and heavy, even as lovely, was her hand.

Now the sin, that had been done
'Gainst the glory of the Goddess and her praise
And the usance long established of old days
For the worship of her whiteness, was that one,
Hight Harpalycus, a native of the parts
Of Beth Shemesh, whence the sun at morning starts,
His accustomed course from East to West to run,

At Cyrene by the sea,
In his travel from the Mountains of the Moon,
Whence Selene walks the world with shining shoon,
Taking ship and faring thence to Sicily,
Wrecked and ruined was and with his fellows four,
In the desert parts of Dyme came ashore,
Where none other folk there were than they and he.

Waste the land was and the clime;
Not a house, a fold, a field there was to spy:
But a temple on the heights there stood hard by,
Whither folk in April gathered, at the time,
Called and sacred after Aphrodite's name,
When the fields with roses rathe are all aflame,
To do homage to the Lady of the Prime.

Now mid-March was not yet o'er
And the temple still of men deserted stood;
But the doves, that in the sacred olive-wood
Dwelt and nested, seeing folk upon the shore
And unfearful, never doubting they were some
Who to feed them for their Lady's love were come,
Thither flew and lighted down their feet before.

But the strangers, knowing nought
Of the puissance of the Lady of the Loves,
Nor the sacredness of those her darling doves,
And by hunger unto madness wellnigh wrought,
Slew the silly birds and roasting them with fire,
Ate them, doubting not of Aphrodite's ire
And the ruin on their heads that thus they brought.

Now from high Olympus hall
Cytherea spied the sacrilegious deed
And her turtledoves belovèd seeing bleed,
Cried so loudly that the heavens were like to fall;
Then, athirst for vengeance being on the churls,
Took the thunderbolts, which Jove her father hurls,
And with flaming arrows smote and slew them all.

There their bodies days and nights
Lay and withered in the wind, until the Prime
Of the year came and the customary time
When the people to the temple on the heights

Thronged for worship; who, unwotting what had past
And the dead for seamen taking, storm-upcast,
Burned and buried them with due funereal rites.

Now to Cypris, prone to ire,
As the jealous Gods were ever and are still,
This an outrage seemed against her sovereign will;
And she sent upon the land a plague of fire
And a pestilence, through hut and hall that flew
And the terror-stricken people smote and slew,
Youth and elder, mother, daughter, son and sire;

Neither slackened in her rage,
Till the folk, unknowing how they had misdone,
On the high Gods' temple-altars, all as one,
So their wrath they peradventure might assuage,
Offered sacrifice and supplication strait
Made for guidance how the plague they might abate
That with blood and fire went blotting out Life's page.

Long for answer nothing came,
Though with sacrifices still the altars smoked,
Till, at last, unto her priests, for aid invoked,
Venus showed herself, in raiment robed of flame,
And implored of them to help their innocence,
Gave them knowledge of the cause of the offence
And the outrage 'gainst the glory of her name.

Then, besought of them to tell
How her wrath might be assuaged, so from the pest
Yet delivered might they be, the living rest,
Nor ensue their stricken brethren down to hell,
She made answer that nought else might her appease
But that, even as the offence came by the seas,
Whence she rose to birth and beauty in the shell,

So each year upon the strand
They the fairest, featest maid, that was to find
In the whole Ætolian land, should bring and bind
And there, naked, fast and fettered foot and hand,
Leave her lonely at a certain day and hour,
For a monster from the sea-deeps to devour,
Which Poseidon should despatch, at her demand.

And the first, (the Goddess said,)
Whom to sacrifice it thus behoved them bring,
Was Hippolyta, the daughter of the King,
Who, of all the Ætolian damsels yet unwed,
Was the fairest. "Her, then, offer ye to me
"First," said Venus, "for the purging of the sea;
"And my wrath shall leave you living, in her stead."

When the folk this dire decree
Heard, they flocked to Cypris' altars, as one man,
And with tears and prayers and sacrifice began
To beseech her of her ruth on bended knee:
But the Goddess, in her anger and her pride,
To their prayers and supplications nought replied
But that so, as she had said it, must it be.

So Hippolyta the fair
They, with wailing and with weeping and lament,
To a spot on the seashore, where, being spent,
Dry the billows left the shingle, bore and there,
Loath and lingering, as of Venus it was said,
Left her lonely in her misery and her dread,
Vestured only in her glittering golden hair.

There she stood against the rock,
Bound and fettered, felon-fashion, hand and foot,
With her ivory breasts, like globes of ripening fruit,
Hewn and moulded from a milky marble block,

With her lovely piteous face to Heaven upturned
And her slender shape half-hidden, half-discerned,
Through her golden hair, down-streaming, lock on lock.

Now the sun had lost its heat
And the sea before her shimmered, fold on fold,
Like a swelling, smiling plain of gaufred gold;
Whilst the world-heart in its pulses seemed to beat
And the ripples in the forefront of the tide,
That began now for the ebbing to subside,
Lapped and lingered at her little silver feet.

The vesper-tide was nigh;
The drowsing world disposed itself to sleep;
The sunset-glory lay on height and deep;
All smiled before her, sea and shore and sky;
Nought in earth below there was or heaven above,
Nought but peace, and all things looked on her with love,
Wretched maid that on the morrow was to die.

The sun into the West
Sank down and as a blossom droops and dies,
The colour paled and faded from the skies;
No spray there was on ocean's slumbering breast,
No sound of song on earth or pipe of bird;
No windwaft o'er the wave the stillness stirred;
There was nothing in the weary world but rest.

Then came the waxing moon:
Like a bubble floating up from the sky-line,
Through the pearly heavens she rose and rose, divine,
Shedding silence with the silver of her shoon.
From the waters, in the footsteps of her beams,
Rose the road, whereby they seek the world of dreams
More than Life can give who ask of bliss and boon.

Then the maiden slept, outworn,
And in sleep, thrice-blessèd sleep, awhile forgot
All the terrors, past and present, of her lot,
All the horrors of her coming fate forlorn:
And the night, when she awoke, was nigh to death:
Chill the air was with its cold departing breath
And pallescent was Selene's silver horn.

But a narrow band of grey
Told the tale in the far East of coming dawn
And the curtains of the darkness half-withdrawn
Now began to be from earth and sea away.
Chill, the breeze, that tells of daybreak, on her blew;
And she shuddered, as she felt its breath and knew
That she looked upon the dawn of her last day.

Straying streaks of pearl and rose
In the Orient grew and gathered for the Morn,
And half-hesitating Day seemed to be born,
For that all things shun the birth and dying throes:
And as, mounting high, the first rays of the sun
O'er the ocean slid and lit the darkness done,
A sight she saw, the blood in her that froze.

Black and buoyant as a cork,
Something floated on the waves far out to sea.
As a dragon's head high-horned it seemed to be
And about its neck a lizard's lambelled torque.
But anon, above the waters, scale on scale,
In the sun she saw upheaved a bifid tail
And the tiger of the sea-deeps knew, — the Orc.

As the sunlight on it smote,
All the terrors of its aspect came to view.
Full five fathoms long and glistering black of hue
As the seaweed was its body broad and bloat:

As a crocodile's its snout was and its teeth:
Mailed and armoured it above was and beneath
And with horns its head was horrent, like a goat.

Ever greater grew the light,
Till the monster, as it seemed, from sleep awoke.
As the sun on him, insistent, stroke by stroke,
Laid its load of radiance new, the lazy might
Of his fins he stirred and woke the affrighted air
With a bellow, as he slowly made for where
On the shore she stood, a flame of gold and white.

Wellnigh palsied, in her fear,
Was Hippolyta the fair, as, in the dawn,
O'er the pathway on the waters new sun-drawn,
Came the horror ever nearer and more near:
Nothing lived within her brain but deathly dread;
Life and thought and sense, it seemed, in her were dead;
Dumb her tongue was, blind her eye and deaf her ear.

Then a ray of hope divine
Through her being thrilled and casting off the spell,
On her knees upon the silver sand she fell
And her piteous arms uprearing to the shine,
With her heart and soul for succour, ere she died,
To the Lord of Light and Life in Heaven she cried,
To the tutelary God of all her line.

And sudden, as she prayed,
The air shone round about her with a sheen
That was nowise of the sun; for of the screen
Of the mists his rising radiance yet was stayed;
And looking up in wonder, at her side
One of bright and shining countenance she spied,
All, from top to toe, in golden mail arrayed.

A helm of gold be wore,
As red of sheen and radiant as the Day,
With wings thereto of no less glorious ray,
And in his hand a silver lyre he bore.
A sword upon his hip sinister gleamed
And bright as any diamond it beamed;
And a silver bow there showed his shoulders o'er.

Bright his weapons were and bright
Was the glittering golden mail his limbs that clad;
But brighter far his face was and more glad;
And the radiance of the dawn was not more white
Than his forehead fair and broad; nor morning-red
On the waking earth, from dark delivered, shed
Greater gladness than his presence nor more light.

Immortal radiant youth
In his aspect was, and from his starry eyes,
That the sapphires put to shame of summer skies,
The unsleeping splendour shone of stainless truth:
And as down upon that lovesome maid he smiled,
The glory of his countenance all mild
And softened was with sweet celestial ruth.

As the damsel on him gazed,
Fear and horror of a sudden her forsook;
For that that was in his mien and in his look
From her thought which all foresuffered things erased:
All that had till then befallen her was not;
Nay, the plague, the curse, the doom, were all forgot,
And in her heart the pitying Gods she praised.

Meanwhile that hateful beast,
Slow-steering through the waters to the shore,
The spaces of the seas left not to oar,
Nor e'er with sluggish fins from travel ceased

Till, come at last to land, along the beach
His loathly length he dragged, intent to reach
The maid, that stood with face toward the East.

Nor noted he the knight,
With drawn and shining sword for him that stayed,
But ran with gaping jaws upon the maid;
For whom swift intervening, that fair wight
In the beast's accursed vitals plunged his sword;
Whereat, though not death-stricken, loud he roared
And ocean-ward betook himself in flight.

But, before he had o'erwon
The shallows and to his accustomed caves
For shelter plunged beneath the whelming waves,
His silver bow unslung, that shining one
A shaft into his brain drove through the eye;
And bellowing, on his back he turned to die
And floated, belly upward, in the sun.

Then, returning to the maid,
The stranger with his sword the galling bands
And chains smote off that bound her feet and hands
And looking on her, smiling, thus he said;
"Now, sweet one, is thy danger done away
"And I, my task fulfilled, farewell may say
"And leave thee to thy kinsfolk, unafraid."

His speech, as 'twere a knell,
Smote shattering on her hopes; her hands upraised
Appealing-wise, without word said, she gazed
With eyes on him, wherein the tears did swell.
Looks looks encountering, Love, that unto none
Belovéd pardoneth loving, in each one
Love lit; and in each other's arms they fell.

All through the summer day,
Through the morning and the sultry noontide hours,
On the wild sea-beach, transformed to Paphian bowers,
In loveliking close-linked, those lovers lay,
Till, what time the westering sun began to sink,
From about his neck her arms he did unlink
And arising, said, "Fair maid, I must away.

"Nay, I may not tarry here;
"For that Phoebus of the Sun I am," he said,
"And must back unto my sphere, ere day be dead.
"But, my sweetest, for the future have no fear,
"For that I will with my sister Venus plead,
"So the doom she for the sacrilegious deed
"Shall remit and all be joy again and cheer.

"And now, belovéd one,"
And he kissed her, whilst she wept upon his breast,
"Hence must I; for the sun is in the West.
"Sweet maid," he said, "my time on earth is done.
"Farewell!" And as he spoke these words, there came
All about him as the flowering of a flame
And the God soared back in glory to the sun.

* * * * *

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On the morrow, with the day,
Came Hippolyta her kin, unhoping more
Than to find her dead and mangled on the shore
And with rites funereal bear her bones away.
But what words can tell their joy, when safe and sound,
Freed of fetters and of bonds, the maid they found
And the monster on the billows dead that lay.

So, with rapture and acclaim,
Her, whom thither, for the stricken folk's relief,

They had brought with lamentation and with grief,
To her father back they carried; and Love's Dame,
Being sated of her wrath, her vengeful hand
Stayed and lifted, so the plague from out the land
And the people stinted sudden as it came.

From the loves of God and maid
Sprang a son, the shining face and eyes of fire
Who inherited for birthright of his sire.
Phoebogenitus they named him, as she bade,
Fair Hippolyta; and he th' Ætolian land
Many happy years, with right and royal hand,
To his grandsire dead in due succession swayed.

Back contentment, as of old,
To the land came and to those therein that dwelt,
And the Gods Etern, by Phoebus' favour, dealt
Ever kindlier with the folk. The age of gold
Come again seemed and the soft Saturnian reign
Of the older milder Gods. — But dreams, you'll say?
Nay, what are we all but dreams? The tale is told.

WIND VOICES.

I.

The casements rattle; the wind screams past;
The souls are abroad on the breath of the blast;
Their voices shriek in the shrilling rains;
Their fingers paddle the window-panes.

My cats from the hearthrug raise the head;
They listen awhile to the lilt of the dead:
Their heads, then, shaking, as if "In vain!"
To motion, they fall to sleep again.

But the souls of the dead are stirring still;
The air is full of their voices shrill.
Ghost-hands go sweeping the strings of wire;
Ghost-fingers clutch at the climbing fire.

What is it, o dead, ye would with me?
I hear your voices, though nought I see,
Nor aught of your speaking I understand;
For your speech is the speech of the spirit-land.

My dog and my cat your speech comprize;
I read it writ in their gleaming eyes:
The message they catch of your passing-bell;
But they keep their secret and will not tell.

Yet that which ye will with me I guess
And the meaning of this your shrilling stress:
Your crying clamour upon me calls
Come dance with the dead in the shadow-halls.

You will me follow and fare with you
To the land where there's neither old nor new,
The world that is quit of Space and Time,
Where Rest is the word of Life's lacking rhyme.

Nay, ready I were with you to go:
But bond to the body's the soul, heigho!
Till *that* is weary of stress and strife,
This still must hive in the house of Life.

Yet work (who knows how much?) to do's for the twain;
And till it be ended, ye call in vain.
Who knows when the body (and 'faith, 'tis tough!)
Will lay down its arms and cry "Enough?"

What matter to you if I keep the tryst,
(Whose flesh is dust and whose souls are mist,)
In an hour or a day or an hundred years,
The tryst with you and your shadow-peers?

To you are an hour and a year alike:
No clocks in your limboes the centuries strike:
An age is to you of the spirit-land
As a grain of its grains to the desert-sand.

What matter to you for more or less?
Like me, in patience your souls possess!
Go, get you back to the shadow-shore
Nor trouble the live untimely more.

II.

In vain my speech is. My cats lift up
Their heads from the hearth. In a shadow-cup
A shadow-hand pours a shadow-wine
And proffers the bowl to these lips of mine.

Ah would I might drain it, your draught of sleep!
My soul's athirst for your poppied deep
And the juice of the grapes whence your hands express
The drowsy drink of forgetfulness.

Enough have I quaffed of the wine of dreams,
The draught that sunders 'twixt "Is" and "Seems;"
For nought but seeming is Life; and thirst
For that which we know not of all's the worst.

And yet must a sentinel keep his room,
'Spite hunger and thirst, till the crack of doom.
There's none can license him thence go free
Save him who set him, whoever he be.

Though broken he be on Fortune's wheel,
Still true to his troth is the sentry leal:
And Life to the living the soldier's post's,
As well ye know it, ye grieving ghosts.

And so to your limboes get you back,
Sad souls! I follow upon your track, —
And seek no more with your clamorous breath
To hasten the flight of the wings of Death.

For he in his own time comes, the churl!
Though old worlds and new worlds about him whirl:
And nought can quicken or clog the pace
Of the Lord of the spheres of Time and Space.

WRECK AND PORT.

In the middle passion of light and life,
When the surge of the rose-red years began
To broaden and brighten out to the span
That beareth the ultimate life of man
Through the fair free fields, where the corn burns rife
And the distance heaves with the gold
Of the mountains, shining and sweet to behold,
Wherein hope harbours for young and old,
At the time when I girt myself for the strife,
With the radiant joy of a man's desire,
Who hath learnt to what aim his thoughts aspire,
What work to his hand is right,
There fell on my soul a scathing fire,
A lightning of barren and waste desire;
And sudden my day was night
And my Summer blight.

I had said to myself for many a year,
Lo, many there be and to spare that strain
For wealth and worship, for grace and gain
And splendid safety from toil and pain.
They are many and bold and strong, and clear
Their voices and bright their eyes:
Yea, surely, for nothing beneath the skies,

Not even for winning of Paradise,
Their strength and their skill might flinch or fear.
They have girt them with valour and faith and mirth
For gaining the guerdons of Heaven and Earth,
The prizes of land and sea,
So valiant they are and so worship-worth.
These are the chosen of Life's first birth.
Is there any thing left for me,
Where such men be?

The beautiful youths with the flowering hair
And the eyes that lighten with lovely flame,
The rose-red mouths and the lips that claim
The love of all women in Beauty's name,
When these, that are many and fierce and fair,
All over the love-lands go
And set maids' hearts and their cheeks aglow
With the languorous words from their lips that flow,
Whilst the conquering charm of their beauty rare
Brims women's souls with a wildering bliss,
So their mouths lift up of themselves for their kiss
And they clasp breast to breast,
I said to myself, "Is there room to miss
For a man like me in a world like this?
Am I not, mid the rest,
An unbid guest?

Is there room for me in the midst of these,
Hawkeyed and splendid with strong desire,
Of these that are fashioned of iron and fire,
That know no sadness nor ever tire,
Till their hand have won them their bodies' ease,
Power and the praise of men,
Whose strength for desire is the strength of ten,
Bearing them onward o'er waste and fen,
Through maze of mountain and surge of seas,
Till had their hope and their wish is won

And into the sunset reddens their sun?
Is there any place for me
To press with their feet through the darkness dun?
I shall surely weary, hardly begun;
I shall faint by the way maybe
Or sink in the sea.

For, lo, full stern is the battle's stress
And the field is full of the men of war,
Horsemen and footmen, and passing sore
The blows they barter. The battle's roar
Rises like thunder right pitiless
And only the strong win through.
Men's life-blood rains, like a ruddy dew,
And many a heart, that is weak and true,
Sinks down to death for the day's duresse.
Art thou strong to buckle on helmet and mail
And conquer, alas! when so many fail
And fall in the front of faith?
And I said to myself, "I am weak and pale;
My voice is the voice of the winds that wail:
I am strong for nothing but death;
I am scant of breath."

"Are they worth the winning, indeed?" I said,
"The prizes of Life that men pursue
And weary after, the loves they woo,
The fames they conquer with derring-do?
The laurels that light on the heavy head,
When life is failing fast,
Is it worth the struggle to clutch them at last,
When youth and passion and faith are past
And the hope of the heart is with the dead,
To lie alone in a living tomb
And watch the phantoms of youth and bloom
That over the gravestones stray?
Surely, to sit in the uttermost room,

Unheeded, were better than such a doom.
Shall I venture on such a way?"
And I answered, "Nay."

So I bound up the yearnings of youth in my soul,
As those that prune off the budded rose,
Or e'er at the flowertide its beauty blows,
And lo, in the heart of the shrouding snows,
The blooms, that blew not when the land was whole,
Under the summer sun,
Burst out at the Yule and the flowerets' queen
Shines ruddy and sweet in her robe of green,
Sweeter for hoarding her scented soul.
I heartened myself to be dumb and wait,
Contest with the calm of a low estate,
Careless of aught but rest:
And "Haply," I said, "if it pleases Fate,
Some rose in my life shall ripen late.
Meanwhile I will bear in my breast
Peace, that is best."

So I made for myself a nest of calm,
A harbour of quiet and fair content,
And dwelt there and watched, whilst the wild years went
To the goal of their flight in the far extent
Of the Future, singing their wailing psalm
Of passion and toil and woe.
I looked from my coign on their whirling flow
And hoped with each hope that the noble know
And joyed in each vision of peace and balm:
I was one with all faiths and all loves that strain
From the mire of the world to the azure plain
And the rifts where the sun shines through:
I was one with the flowers and the stars and the rain;
For my soul was unperjured and pure from stain
And the phantoms that men pursue
I never knew.

My thought was a desert under the sky
Of a lonely land in the wastes of air,
And never the foot of the fiend came there
Nor the shapes of magic, that bring despair,
When the mirage they conjure is flitted by
And the world lies bare and cold.
The voice of its birds was the songs of old
And its winds, in the flight of their wings of gold,
Were filled with the harmonies fair and high,
That spring, for the balm of the weary ways,
From the lips of the bard and his hand that plays
With the strings of the harp of life.
The dews that fell there were love and praise;
Content was its sun and its moon of days;
Love-lys in its paths was rife
And red loose-strife.

And so, as the days and the years grew long,
The dew and the rain and the sun and the wind
And all things gracious and fair and kind,
That had gathered and harboured with me, combined
To stir in my heart the seeds of song:
And lo, in the lonely land
It blossomed and burgeoned on every hand:
The flowers flamed up in a glorious band
And forth of my heart, in a tuneful throng,
The thrushes startled, the linnets flew,
Singing their hearts out in ditties new.
The grey of the sky grew bright:
At the sound and the scent, the sun thrust through,
The air rained gold and the day broke blue.
I had won from the womb of Night
Its soul of light.

Oh, how the hope and the love flowered out
In blossom of ballad and carol and lay,
That had hidden in silentness many a day!

There is never a wood in the middle May,
When the Springtide wakens the warbling rout
Of linnet and lark and wren,
That thrills with sweet sound as my heart thrilled then.
I sang for myself and not for men,
As a happy child in the sun will shout.
Though my heart with the music wept and bled,
They were tears of delight, the tears I shed,
Joy from the dusk unbound.
Song fed me not yet with bitter bread;
I cared not who listened to what I said.
The love in my life had found
Its gate of sound.

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So life lay lovesome with song and Spring,
Until one morn, at the dawning hour,
The height of the heavens was all a-flower
With flakes of crimson, as if a shower
Of roses before the coming king
The skies in the sun's way cast;
And scarce was the moment of daybreak past
When up in the East, as a curtain vast,
The portals of Paradise opening,
From over the face of the heavens there drew;
And forth of the deeps of the radiant blue,
Down-fluttering from above,
Through the golden webs of the morning-dew,
An angel for me there came to view,
A seraph, half maid, half dove,
Whose name was Love.

She sank through the shimmering sunshot air,
All robed and rounded with flowering fires.
The silver sound of the seraph-choirs
With hymning voices and smitten lyres,

That hailed their sister from Heaven's stair,
Sang round her, as she came.
Like a sweet saint stepped from a missal-frame,
Unhastening, light as a flower of flame,
She floated down, through the dawning fair,
To where I waited in rapt amaze,
My whole soul whelmed in my ravished gaze,
And lit at my feet to rest;
Then, fluttering up, like a rosy haze,
That wanders at dawn in the meadow-ways,
She fled to my longing breast,
As a bird to its nest.

The Springtides over were all, in sum;
There was nothing left of the pleasant Prime:
The season of lilac and leafing lime
Was all fordone by the new sweet time;
The glory of golden Summer come,
The magic of middle June,
In cloth of gold of the radiant noon
And silver clad of the flooding moon,
Had ousted the flowertide frolicsome:
The cowslip-clusters their bloom had shed;
The windflowers, the violets all were dead,
The day of the primrose done.
With roses yellow and white and red
And gold-heart lilies the land was spread:
The world-all was overrun
With flooding sun.

Spring's birds had followed her banished feet;
No nightingales sang in the hawthorn brake;
No merles made music for April's sake;
No throstles warbled by hill and lake;
No cuckoos fluted; no finches fleet
Fled, trilling, from tree to tree.
But a myriad songsters from oversea,

Kingbird and cardinal, colibri,
Tanager, piped in the heart of the heat.
With living jewels the woods did blaze:
The rose-red doves of the fairy days,
The golden loriots trolled;
The bluebirds of Paradise sang on the sprays;
The lyre-birds flashed through the forest-ways
And the martlets of pearl and gold
Of the fables old.

High summer harboured in holt and shaw;
The days were woven of gold and rose;
The land was lush with the ripe repose,
The state serene of the summer shows;
And life was the life without a flaw
Of the noontide of the year.
But woe unto him for whom o'er dear
Is life, who knows not of doubt or fear!
E'en Love must hearken to Nature's law
That all things end, as they have begun.
One day, at the hour when light is done
And dusk the dark foresaith,
My angel fled back to her home in the sun;
And down in her place came another one,
Black-vestured and cold of breath,
Whose name was Death.

He blew on the world with his breath of ice;
And the sun and the Summer straight were gone;
The grasses faded from lea and lawn
And sad as the dusk was the tearful dawn.
He breathed on the landscape once and twice,
And sudden the sky grew grey:
The flowers all shrivelled; from bough and spray
The dead leaves dropped and the birds away
Fled back oversea. He breathed on it thrice
And over the meadows the mists stooped low,

The land with the pall of the shrouding snow
Lay silent on every hand;
The frost-chains fettered the waters' flow;
And whereas mine eyes turned to and fro,
They saw but, for Summer bland,
A winter land.

My life died down with the dying light;
No tears were left in mine eyes to weep;
My thought was drowned in that frozen deep,
My spirit sunken in seas of sleep.
The sun from the moon and the day from the night
I knew not nor toad from bird.
I rose not, when morning broke, nor stirred,
When the voice of the rain in mine ears I heard:
My sense was darkened and dimmed my sight.
Of nothing I thought and nothing deemed
When the thunder roared and the lightning gleamed
And the wind fared to and fro.
For countless centuries, so it seemed,
In the numbing ice-sleep I lay and dreamed,
Under the shroud of the snow,
A dream of woe.

But Death and Winter themselves must list
To Nature's fiat that all must die,
To live again, as the years go by:
And so, one morning, unknowing why,
I woke and found that the dank frost-mist
Had vanished from vale and lea;
The fields from the pall of the snow were free;
The rills unhindered ran to the sea;
And as 'twere a webwork of amethyst,
A soft haze hovered o'er wood and wold.
The air was clear of the cruel cold;
A breeze blew out of the West,
With warmth from a sun of paly gold,

That drowsed in the heavens, dim and old,
As one that hath found, in Life's quest,
A port of rest.

The robin fluted upon the bough:
The leaves, but yesterday sere and shed,
Now dappled the brake with gold and red.
The world had arisen again from the dead:
It was as if Spring on the old year's brow
Had set once more its sign,
Its token of freedom from winter-pine,
That makes the world-all arise and shine
And the field-furrows germ beneath the plough.
But it was not the season of bird and flower:
'Twas Autumn's Springtide, the quiet hour,
October's placid cease
From strife and passion, ere Life must cower
Once more, like a slave, to Winter's power;
Nor Summer nor Spring's increase,
But Autumn-peace.

SONNETS.

SONNETS.

MARTYRS OF HISTORY.

(Second Series.)[1]

VII.

ESAU.

Esau, wild huntsman, rough and frank and free,
By crafty Jacob, God's accepted one,
Of birthright spoiled and place beneath the sun,
That, when the waves of Time's resurgent sea
Brought vengeance to thy hand and wrath to be,
Yet, for old Isaac's sake, the victory won
Forewent'st and spar'dst thy treacherous father's son,
My heart is heavy, when I read of thee.
Still, though Jehovah on the traitor smile
And the world's laughter in thy steps ensue,
For us, who honour more of worth than wile
Hold, through the darkness of four thousand years,
Echoes thy cry despairing, "Bless me too,
"Me also, o my father!" in our ears.

VIII.

HECTOR.

Of all that by their deaths at Ilium came,
There's none the chord of sympathy in me

[1] For First Series, I—VI, see my "Vigil and Vision," Villon Society, 1903.

With more insistence strikes than Hector, he
Who to the boor Achilles life and fame
Not only lost, but, by Fate's spite, whose name,
Miswritten on the page of history,
(Though modest he as brave,) is grown to be
A byword for a braggart and a shame.
What bard hath e'er bethought himself of thee,
To justify thy memory in his lays?
One only, mightiest of the sons of men,
Hath set thee somedele in thy place of praise,
In that his song of Trojan times, where he
Of Troïlus and Cressid told erewhen.

IX.

JULIAN.

"Vicisti, Galilaee!" In these days,
When, on the mouldering cross, his discrowned head
The Galilean hangs, a last time dead,
His brow dishaloed, reft of power and praise,
Forsaken of the folk his temples' ways,
Thought turns to him who for the old faith led
The fight and dying, by his fall foresaid
His, unto whom he left the conqueror's bays.
Thou fellest, Julian, and thy Gods with thee;
Yet ever honoured shall thy memory be
That to relight the extinguished altar-fires
Strov'st and forbaddest, in the face of Fate,
The sons of Shem barbarian desecrate
The tombs and temple-places of thy sires.

X.

CLIVE.

England, to whom he gave the gorgeous East
Of Ind from Ganges to the Waters Five,

How wentest thou about to honour Clive?
How dealt'st thou with the founder of thy feast?
Alack! Thou sufferedst the blatant beast
Of calumny thy hero hound and drive
To a dishonoured sepulchre, alive,
And dead, well nigh to think of him hast ceased.
Such, such is heroes' fortune, so ill-starred
Their horoscope and such the abiding curse
That stains the shields of nations! In repine
They live and at their epicedial shrine
None kneels but some expiatory bard,
Who sets their names in his enbalming verse.

XI.

EDWARD JOHN EYRE. [1]

Thy given trust pluck out from treason's fire;
'Gainst rebel rogues uphold the sacred tree
Of English rule for law and liberty;
And thou by fools and knaves shalt through the mire
Be dragged and die in misery, like Eyre,
Whose memory, England, honour, for that he
As true a martyr lived and died for thee
As any saint e'er perished on the pyre.
Would but his fate (yet History's sorry tale
Forbiddeth hope) to teach us might avail
How wantonly unwise it is to entrust
The arbitrament of states to the fool folk,
Who by the shell the egg judge, not the yolk,
Nor gold distinguish can from glittering dust!

[1] Edward John Eyre, the saviour of Jamaica, (1865,) died in obscurity in 1906.

XII.

TOMAS ZUMALACARREGUI. [1]

Though the Gods favoured the victorious cause,
That which pleased Cato was the vanquished one.
Few viler causes ever shamed the sun
Than that, which, founded in contempt of laws
And uses immemorial, on this clause
Established of descendance, sire to son,
But for the ball uneath might have been won
Which at Bilbáo gate gave victory pause.
Few now remember him who, for the right,
Pure, grave and gracious, battling, a true knight,
Plucked victory well nigh from the jaws of doom.
But he who looks beyond our idle day
Will at this page of history pause, to lay
A wreath on Zumalacarregui's tomb.

XIII.

QUI CARENT VATE SACRO.

How many lives there be, misfortune-marred,
Whereto the Fates such little pity show
That they through grief to death not only go,
But for remembrance lack the sacred bard!
Such England's Charles, the noble, the ill-starred;
Such Maximilian of Mexico;
Such France's Third Napoleon, evenso,
The kind, the sad, of fortune followed hard;
Such Pedro of Brazil, the modern Lear,
Such Laud, such Strafford, to the fated goal
Their lord foregoing, whom they loved so dear:
To whom and many a Fate-forsaken soul,
Martyred and mortified of traitor Time,
Too late I consecrate this tribute rhyme.

[1] The great Carlist general, whose triumphant career was ended by a gunshot-wound received at the siege of Bilbáo. Ob. 24th June, 1835.

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS.

FRANZ LISZT.

Small wonder is it that thou dwellest, Liszt,
Yet in Olympus of the Gods alone
And that few worship at thy shrine of stone!
Who were there, in our world of sciolist
And huckster, worth with thee Art's Eucharist
To share or to thy wild heroic tone
Thrill with nostalgia for the worlds unknown,
Beyond our sorry sphere of mire and mist?
Nay, noble soul, our age is not the first
That hath the prophets, crying in its gate
Their message from the heavens, stoned and cursed.
In every age have mindless men disdained
Their highest, neither noted, till too late,
That angels unawares they entertained.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Arnold, no trumpets thunder in thy song;
The shrill-voiced fife too harsh was for thy need.
The Dorian flute, wherewith thou sought'st to lead
Men's footsteps, piping low, the meads along
Of plaintive thought, unnoted of the throng
Passed in our troublous times, when men scant heed
Yield to what serveth not their lust and greed;
Nor was thy voice for many enough strong.
Yet, for those spirits, few and far to find,
In whom the Delicate outvies the Loud,

The subtle part above the coarser whole
Who prize, 'tis well, thy guiding feet behind,
To wander, careless of the unthinking crowd,
Among the quiet byways of the soul.

BERKELEY.

"Few think; yet all will have opinions." So
A sage declared, in saner days than these.
How, Berkeley, of our time of tense unease
How hadst thou deemed, if Time's resurgent flow
Had stranded thee amidst our idle show
Of shrill pretence that might a Socrates
Drive aforethought to drain the cup that frees
The imprisoned spirit from this world of woe?
Sure, thou hadst veiled thy visage, not to see
The lost folk, whirling on their wild career,
And this our life, a ship with none to steer,
Hither and thither on Will's shoreless sea
Hurried, where none to counsel lendeth ear
And every fool's his own divinity.

CHARLES ALLSTON COLLINS.

Collins, the credit which thou mightest claim,
Hadst thou on honour's bederoll stood alone,
Was shadowed by a brother [1] better known,
Though less deserving than thyself of name,
And more yet by the world-involving fame
Of one, [2] to whom thou stood'st, though not his own,
In son's stead: he who dwelleth near the throne
Must needs be cast in shadow by its flame.

[1] The novelist Wilkie Collins.
[2] Charles Dickens, whose daughter C. A. Collins married.

But I, that am "a borrower of the night"
And more to those who shun the garish light
Incline than those who in the full noon-sheen
Of public favour bask, too oft by chance,
With thee "on wheels" to wander love and e'en
A-horseback, through the wilder ways of France. [1]

RICHARD FRANCIS BURTON.

Burton, old fighter, frankest foe and friend,
The glamour of the East it was that drew
Our lives together, mine, that only knew
The Orient glories by the dreams that lend
Enchantment to the far, and yours, whose trend
Your steps through lands untravelled, old and new,
Still led; and this sufficed, for me and you,
To hold our hearts unsundered to the end.
Through stormy seas your vessel drove of life;
Your feet were foremost in the front of strife:
My travel in the trackless ways of thought,
My battles in the bounds of fancy fought
Still were. Yet oft in dreams I clasp your hand,
Athwart the shadows of the Silent Land.

ST. AMBROSE'S PRAYER.

Mortem repentinam inopinatamque.

Ambrose, "a servant of the Most High God,"
His voice to Heaven for celestial aid
And succour, in his need, uplifting, prayed
That, when of him, obedient to Fate's nod,

[1] See his forgotten, but delightful, books, "A Cruise upon Wheels," "The Bar Sinister" and "A New Sentimental Journey." Collins died in 1873, at the early age of 45.

No more this earthly highway should be trod,
Death, sudden, unexpected, unforesaid,
Swift as the lightning, might his sense invade
And leave his body lifeless as a clod.
Thy God I know not, Ambrose; but thy prayer
I'd pray, if Gods to answer it there were;
For none of those am I to life who cling,
When for deliverance sues the imprisoned soul,
And liefer would, a lark, die on the wing
Than rot, a rat, by inches in a hole.

THE DAY'S END.

Si quis, totâ die currens, pervenit ad vesperam, satis est.
Petrarca de Verâ Sapientiâ.

"If any, having run the livelong day,
"Win, in the end, to evening, 'tis enough."
Thus Laura's lover said. — To Age's bluff
Come, — where, with all its multiform array,
Its versicoloured hours of gold and grey,
Life's lingering road into Death's tumbling trough
Slopes and is lost, reviewing smooth and rough,
Enough for him the overtravelled way.
Singer of loves long-drawn, their golden thread
Thin-broidered glancing through Life's hodden woof,
Laden with laurels, pampered with approof,
Of lore and passion weary, blame and praise,
Nought dwelt with him of all Life's golden days
But the way wended and the evening-red.

THE INSULTS OF THE VULGAR.

Foremost of all the ills, that here beset
Those at the goal of soaring thought who aim,
The insults of the vulgar fain I'd name,

Which on their heads, in whom the Gods beget
Ambitions higher than the needs which fret
Their duller fellows in Life's fitful game,
Raining, too often with their darts of flame
Drive them untimely on Death's open net.
Where, among those exalted o'er their kind,
The kings of thought, by Nature's sacring spell
From Heaven banished to this earthly hell,
Were't possible a soul unscarred to find
By "insults" (such as Wordsworth erst to mind
Called) "unavenged and unavengeable?"

SCORN AND SYMPATHY.

Unendliche Verachtung, unendliches Mitleid.
(SCHOPENHAUER's formula of the philosopher's attitude toward mankind.)

Nothing with men it profiteth the sage
To mell or seek their dull delirium
With words to allay. The time must cast its scum,
Like wine that 'gainst the enclosing cask doth rage,
And the fool commons, children in each age,
Deaf to all music but the huckster's drum,
Through own experience must to wisdom come
Nor heed the scripture on the Past-Time's page.
So will the wise upon Life's labouring main
Gaze, unpartaking in men's pride and greed,
As one who, in a madhouse only sane,
His frantic fellows watches, moved indeed
To limitless contempt by their unwit,
But full of pity no less infinite.

IN THE CRUCIBLE.

Oncoming eld the web of devious dreams unweaves,
Which youth about the cheeks and limbs of Life had cast,

And to the view unveils its structure, as, at last,
The greenwood's giant scheme in Winter one perceives,
Which he, at Summer's height, might not discern for leaves.
The Present blurs no more the Future and the Past;
Their outlines bare combine to build the vision vast
Of Truth that ne'er forsakes its lover nor deceives.
Then to our clearer sight the I and Thou are one;
Death is a form of Life, as Night a phase of Morn,
Sorrow of gladsomeness and shadow is of sun;
And in Thought's limbeck all seethes till at bottom we
Descry the ultimate sheer simpleness that's born
In the fierce furnace-heart of cold complexity.

THE LATTER DAYS.

Might I but see one day of the new days
And die, content to have looked upon my dream
Indubitable, the days which, if I deem
Aright, shall yet from out the Future's haze
Awake to lighten these our loveless ways,
When Truth shall free the folk with its sun-beam
From tbe oppression of the things which seem
And Life flower full beneath Love's fostering rays,
Quit of the baffling toils of our base time,
Which, to all faults of former ages known
And other such misfeasance of its own
As might have made Tiberius shrink to see,
For culmination adds the crowning crime,
The sin that feeds Hell-fire, Hypocrisy!

ULTIMA RATIO.

For this I thank the Fates, that else have been
Stepmothers frowning-faced to me and stern,
That they have granted me my bread to earn

On freeman-fashion, hands and spirit clean
Vouchsafing me from sordid strife and mean
To hold and base compliances to spurn,
That stain the soul, and fellowships that burn
Their brand indelible on mind and mien.
So, back on life, now drawing to its goal,
'Spite darksome days and sorrow-stricken nights,
Content I look, that never have forsaid
My faith, but for the flowerage of my soul
Have forced the unwilling world to yield me bread,
If scanty, sweet, being gotten on the heights.

TIME AND TIDE.

TIME AND TIDE.

A NEW YEAR'S CHIME.

Bells of the newborn year,
Shattering the silence, sudden to mine ear
Your clamours come in the midnight mirk and drear.

Vehement, vagabond voice,
Thou that our sleep usurpest without our choice,
Willing the weary waken, the wretch rejoice,

What dost thou bring us, say?
What from the Future's desolate, darkling way?
What is thy tale of the cloud-cloaked coming day?

We, that are dead to hope,
We, that, like cattle fast in the clogging rope,
Fare, on our fruitless round, Life's lessening scope,

We, that nor feel nor think,
But, without cease, for our sorry meat and drink
Grope on Eternity's ever-narrowing brink,

Why do ye rouse us thus,
Bells, with your midnight chorus clamorous?
What can ye have of hope and cheer for us?

All that ye have to tell,
Voices of vaunt and void, we know too well.
How shall one speak of Heaven to souls in Hell?

Year after idle year,
Songs have ye sung of solace in our ear,
Chanted of bliss to be and coming cheer.

Still was your promise vain;
Still on your rainbow followed faster rain;
Still were our lives the selfsame stress and strain.

Hence with your lying tale!
Better to know and face Fate's utmost bale,
Better than hope deceived, that doubles ail.

Gibbet and cross and stake
Those, whom they claim for prey at morning-break,
Grant until then to sleep, unstirred of wake.

We, too, are doomed to die;
Every fresh flush of sunlight in the sky
Leaves our day darker, brings our night more nigh.

One only boon we crave;
Trouble ye not for us Time's weary wave;
Call not for us the dead up from the grave.

Grant us the last poor grace
Still the fierce Fates vouchsafe the basest base,
When to the wall to die they turn the face.

Lone with Dark's mimic death
Leave us till dawn the phantom day foresaith;
Jar not our joyless calm with brazen breath.

Stir not Night's silent deep:
We that too soon must wake to work and weep,
Ban not our solace sole, our blesséd sleep!

GARDEN DAYS.

Ah, how lightsome Life and Love erewhile were,
Yours and mine, beneath the summer moon,
When the world was glad and all a-smile were
Gardens in the starry nights of June,
When the jasmine stars were breaking,
Making
Mimic heavens of the trellised ways,
And the nightingales were waking,
Shaking
All the echoes with the rose's praise.
Nought but Summer in our life was;
Shadow none of care or strife was
On its stream.
Summer, Summer only I remember:
Autumn was a fable and December
Nothing but a peevish prater's dream.

Dear, have you forgotten how the roses
Ran and revelled in the frolic green,
Broidering the blooming garden-closes
With their white and red and yellow sheen?
Never have I see them blowing,
Glowing
With such glory as possessed them then;
Never since such fragrance growing,
Flowing
From a flower-cup have I known again.
Sure our love it was that thrilled them;
'Twas our happiness that filled them
With Heav'n's wine:
For our love-lit eyes it was they glistened;
And they whispered perfume, as they listened
To our talk and kisses, yours and mine.

Now, though June again, at its completest,
In the garden-alleys breathes and glows,
Though the nightingales again their sweetest
Ditties trill in honour of the rose,
Though the moon at full is rilling,
Stilling
All to silence with its silver rays,
Yet the flower-scents no more filling,
Thrilling
Are with rapture all the rose-hung ways.
Dear, what is it, then, that ails them?
What is it to-day that fails them?
'Tis our love!
'Twas our love, grown cold since then, our kisses,
Caused them erstwhile in the flooding blisses
Bloom and flourish of the moon above.

THE POETS OF THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE.

(See my "Flowers of France," Third Series, The Renaissance Period.)

Dead brothers, whom the world forgets,
— This crackbrain world of ours, that sets
The veriest vanities above
The eternal things of light and love,
From yours into our English tongue,
The songs, in days forgotten sung
Of you in your fair France of old,
I render, knowing that right gold
And true, through whatsoever mint
It pass, whatever stamp or print
It take, can be to otherwhat
Than very gold transmuted not.

You were of France, of England I:
Yet, under whatsoever sky

They harbour who their hearts to song
Have given for ever to belong,
Born were they under one same star
And citizens of one land are,
The land of love and lutany.
Nay, song no country hath, but free
Of all is, as the nightingale
In every language tells her tale;
The rose in every garden grows;
Yet everywhere it is the rose.[1]

So, in your honour, brothers dear,
This sheaf of flowers, transplanted here
From where in sunny France they grew,
In English soil I set anew
And to your memory dedicate,
So, an it please fantastic Fate,
They may by this our sun and rain,
As erst in Anjou and Touraine,
As freely profit, all and some,
And thus, for many a year to come,
As fairly flourish in our air
As in the fields of France whilere.

COWPER.[2]

Cowper, methinks, thy gentle name
Will longer yet than many shine
That fairlier on the roll of Fame
Are writ than thine:
Thy modest measures kiss the ear
Kindlier than many more sublime,
As, in the woods of winter-time,

[1] Rommany Proverb. STEPHEN GRAIL.
[2] Written for the Cowper-Newton Centenary, 1907.

The robin's flute
More dear
Is oft and in the memory still
Lingers, when many a song more shrill
Is mute.

Another name with thine shall dure,
Thine, Newton, whose capacious heart
Fair friendship's use, Life's ills to cure,
Raised to an art:
The memory of thy gracious gift,
The spirit's wounds to salve and half
Fordo, in Cowper's cenotaph
Shall Time enbalm
And lift
To Heaven friend's and poet's name,
Two voices joining in one same
Clear psalm.

One thing, beside thy winsome word,
Cowper, my heart to thee doth draw,
Whereto the love of beast and bird
Is as Heav'n's law;
My creed, for which all things that be
One same soul quickens, beast and man,
Still for Creation's humbler clan
Thy kindness shares;
Like thee,
I scorn the "sport" that baits the brute;
And through the years my cats salute
Thy hares.

Thy life was covered with a cloud,
Whose shadow, well-nigh from thy birth,
Oppressed thee and too often bowed
Thy head to earth;
Thy peace was poisoned with a doubt

Lest thou in Heaven shouldst have no place
And sole of all be from God's grace,
Beneath the sun,
Cast out,
A fear lest hope for thee, poor wight,
Of finding favour in His sight
Were none.

Nay, tremble not, sad soul. Who here
Hath led, whilst yet the earth he trod,
So innocent a life need fear
No jealous God;
And to believe, indeed, 'twere hard
That in Our Father's house, in which
So many mansions are, no niche
To find for thee,
Sweet bard,
Kind chronicler of common things,
Whose homely verse to memory clings,
Might be.

ADAM AND EVE.

In the Springtide of Creation,
When the stars in heaven were new
And the sun and moon their station
Took in the astonished blue,
When new flowers, each morning springing,
Crowded on the ravished sight
And the blossomed hours fled, singing,
Through the blissful day and night,

When the haggard earth rejoiced yet
In the flush of love and ruth
And with virgin lips Life voiced yet
All the ecstasies of youth,

Ere the thought of Time that passes
Filled and saddened all the air,
Ere the flowers and trees and grasses
Shrivelled from the smoke of care,

When our greybeard world yet young was,
When, no Future to affray,
On the blissful Present strung was
Happy day to happy day,
When the year had no December
And no canker marred the rose,
I was Adam, I remember;
But who Eve was, Heaven knows.

I was Adam; yes, I feel it,
Whether you were Eve or not.
Nay, my dreams anights reveal it
And by day each garden-plot
Brings me back the airs of Eden,
With its flowers and birds' descant.
What says Heine? "Krieg und Frieden,
"Hab' ich alles schon gekannt."

All I've felt of pain and pleasure,
All Life's sweet and bitter things:
As from some forgotten treasure,
Forth remembrance to me brings
Glimpses of the garden closes
Where in endless May I dwelt,
Fragrance of their faded roses,
All I thought and all I felt;

All the bliss and all the longing
For Elysium known and lost
On my soul come flooding, thronging,
All the sin and all the cost.

Ay, the angel at the portal
I remember and the lot,
That from deathless made me mortal.
Only Eve have I forgot.

Were you Eve, I wonder, darling?
Ah, you smile and will not say.
Yet what was it piped the starling,
Perching yonder on the spray?
"Show her apples, ('Tis September)
"Red against the green aglow.
"Haply, yet she will remember
"Whether she was Eve or no."

By the Snake's eternal stigma,
On your curling lip that plays,
Through your silent smile's enigma,
Now I see it, as you gaze
On the fruits, the leaves that dapple
With their gold and crimson sheen;
You it was that plucked the apple,
Woman-like, and plucked it green.

Yes, my Eve you were for certain;
'Twas your vain and curious hand
After me the flaming curtain
Drew, that barred the Promised Land;
You it was that had the guerdon;
I had nothing but the fret:
Yet, in fine, I bear the burden;
I remember. You forget.

FATUI AMBO.

I.

In the morning mirkness, before the dark is done,
The lark is winging, singing, toward the coming sun.

In the foredawn dreamtide, before the Maying-time,
My heart is welling, swelling with presage of the Prime.

2.

Nay, know'st thou not that never thy straitest stress, o lark,
The sun's first flicker quicker might conjure from the dark?

Hast thou not learned Life's lesson, old heart, nor knowest yet
That May oft flouteth, routeth our hopes with wind and wet?

SEX AND SEX.

Grief and gladness
Grow together,
As the rose grows with the thorn;
Hope and sadness
In heart's weather
As the night are and the morn.

Love and lightness
Are in ladies
As the shadow and the sun;
As his brightness
To his shade is,
So is this to the other one.

Lightness show I
Not, my fairest,
Nor injustice in the saw.
Man, well know I,
Service sharest
Thou with woman to this law.

One half dozen,
Six the other,
Each will each for ever vex,
Plague and cozen,
Sister, brother,
Man and maiden, sex and sex.

DISEASE AND REMEDY.

Life the disease of the soul,
(I'faith,
Novalis it is, not I, that saith,)
And Death is the drug that maketh whole.
But, if the remedy harsh thou rate
And fain
A cheaper solace wouldst have for pain,
A pipe of tobacco's an opiate.

Love the disease is of Life,
(Not I,
But every lover, forsooth, doth cry.)
The cure is to make thy love thy wife.
But if the cure for the aching nerve
Of love
Severe to thee seem, its worth above,
A hair of the dog that bit will serve.

THIS AND THAT.

Light and Life,
Heavenly husband, earthly wife,
One to other
More than brother
Is to sister, Day to Night.

In Death's ocean,
World of wonder,
Light that setst the spheres in motion,
Shorn and orphaned of thy sight,
Life goes under.
Who shall sunder
Life and Light?

White and Black,
Bloom of Being, Being's lack,
That to this is
Even as bliss is
Unto sorrow, wrong to right.
To its noneness
Back for ever,
Of thy brightness, hue of oneness,
Unenlightened, Black forthright
Passes. Never
May they sever,
Black and White.

Dark and Death,
Lack of brightness, lack of breath,
Each to each is
That which speech is
Unto thought and fire to spark.
Dark unending,
Underiving,
Life, except thy veils descending
Wove for Death a fostering ark,
Still were striving:
There's no riving
Death and Dark.

Pain and Love,
Each with each, as glove and glove,
Paired and twinned is,

As the wind is
With the cloud-rack and the rain.
Pain undying,
Ever-smarting,
Fanning Passion's fire with sighing,
Soon without thee Love would wane
And sweethearting:
There's no parting
Love and Pain.

THE MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN.

They lapse and look not back,
Our hours of gold and grey;
Thought ceases from their track:
But that which might one day
Have been for us, alack!
We cannot cast away.

Pain, passion, fear and fret
Flit from us on Time's wings;
We owe the Past no debt
Of glad rememberings:
But thought may not forget
The unaccomplished things.

The occasions cast aside,
The chances met and missed,
Hopes slain of sloth or pride,
The tale of Had-we-wist,
These all with us abide
And fret us at their list.

The loves we might have had,
If eyes had not been blind,
The dark hours, that might glad

Have been, had sense inclined,
How sad it is, how sad
To call these all to mind!

There wanted but a word
Between my love and me,
There wanted but a bird
On yonder leafless tree,
And Life might yet have stirred
With hope and ecstasy.

A windwaft in the air,
A touch of hand and hand,
Of Winter's desert bare
Had made a summer land;
Foul might have turned to Fair
And Life been bright and bland.

A glint of summer-sheen
Upon Thought's frozen rill,
And Life with flower and green
Had blossomed at Love's will.
Ah me, the Might-have-been,
How hard it is to kill!

WHO KNOWS?

The world said, "Sever!"
Our hearts said, "Never!"
My hair was brown, then; your lips were red.
Life's roses drooped for the long endeavour;
Your lips grew pale, dear, and grey my head.

We knew not whether
To be together
Our lot in happiness was. Who knows?
The stars sing only in Heaven's weather;
There only blossoms Love's deathless rose.

The new years borrow
The old years' sorrow;
The Winter cometh: the sun grows cold.
Shall Life reblossom in Heaven's morrow?
Who knows? You're dead, dear, and I am old.

ON THE BERNINA.

I turned at the turn of the way;
No breeze was abroad in the vale;
The mists over meadow and dale
Spread wan as a water and grey
And lone as a sea without sail.

The gentians were blue in the grass
As dreams fallen down from on high:
The heavens o'er the head of the pass
Hung clear as a mirror of glass;
No cloud was afloat in the sky.

The larks in the azure were loud;
The air was alive with their trills:
Like them, far away from the crowd,
I stood, with my feet on the cloud,
Alone with the heavens and the hills.

AT SILVAPLANA.

Here, where, murmuring low, the infant Inn
Sings its ditty scrannel,
Slow meandering on through shoal and linn,
Of the sunlight drinking
And to Campfer Silvaplana linking,
Mother as to daughter,

With the network of its double channel,
Here, where now it open to the sight is
And the sunshine, light is fluid water,
Water liquid light is.

Here, where slantwise 'tis with sunlight shot,
All is topaz-yellow,
Olive there or green as peridot,
Purple there as mallow,
There moss-agate brown, as deep or shallow
Runs the river shining,
Every thread of water than its fellow
Brighter, as it of the glitterance dual's
Pierced, a still entwining, unentwining
Woven work of jewels.

Like some elfin web of light and colour,
Changing and renewing,
With the sunshine growing brighter, duller,
Some phantasmagoric
Painted window in some prehistoric
Sorcerer's castle-eyry,
Picture upon picture still ensuing,
Shines it. I could stand and gaze for ever:
But Life calls me from this dream of Faerie
Back to dull endeavour.

WILLOW-SONG.

Night and Day,
Get you gone from me away!
Of Life's smooth and of its rough
Tired am I. Enough, enough
Have I had of dark and light,
Day and Night.

Light and Love,
Get you back to Heaven above!
Weary am I of you both:
In the one there is no troth,
In the other no delight;
Love and Light.

Life and Death,
Leave your battle for my breath!
Both I hold you nothing worth:
This a slave to second birth,
That is sad with thought and strife,
Death and Life.

Nought and Sleep,
Come and gulph me in your deep!
You, to you alone I'm fain.
Come and cover me from pain;
Shelter me from sorry thought,
Sleep and Nought!

COUNTERPARTS.

I.

When the Spring is in the bud
And the sap is in the spray,
When the young year's flowering blood
Runs in rapture night and day
And a-carol's every wood
With the promise of the Prime,
I know not whence it cometh, in the middle-sweets of May,
But my soul is sick bytime
With a sickness of dismay.

It may be that they mind me,
With their bird-song and their bloom,
Of the Springs that are behind me,
In the silence of the tomb,
Of the years that have consigned me
To the close of Sad Content:
It may be, nay, it must be, that the sadnesses which bind me,
In the time of song and scent,
Are from memory's treasure-room.

II.

When the brakes are brown
And the underwood is sere,
When the leaves drop down,
When the fields are blank and drear
And the heavens are all a-frown
For the waning of the year,
I know not what the portent is for pleasance or for fear,
But my soul is oft astir
With a strange and subtle cheer.

It may be that it cometh
Of the thought of life in death,
Of the tune the ruddock hummeth,
Of the word the spicy breath
Of the dying leaves that summeth,
"Life must die to live again."
It may be, nay, it must be, that the heart in me becometh
Stirred to solace out of pain,
Out of death that life foresaith.

FIN D'AMOUR.

NOUS allions dans les bois assombris par le soir:
Les feux du jour mourant doraient le taillis noir:
Des étoiles en haut déjà se laissaient voir.

Nous suivions, sans causer, le sombre carrefour,
À nous dire plus rien n'ayant; car notre amour
Était, hélas! à fin venu, comme le jour.

La nuit planait sur nous, comme un vautour qui suit
Sa proie; mais, avant qu'elle au ciel ne se fît,
Dans nos âmes en peine il faisait noire nuit.

NOUS sortimes de bois, pour marcher dans la plaine.
Sur les blés murissants, comme une antique reine,
La lumière mourait, languissante et sereine.

Une caille clamait sa plainte continue.
Puis, soudain, comme un flot deversé de la nue,
L'obscurité tomba; la nuit était venue.

La caille interrompit sa monotone gamme;
L'ombre avait du couchant oblitéré la flamme;
Vide partout et vide éternel dans mon âme.

PAR les grands prés, semés de chênes séculaires,
Nous suivions mornement les sentiers solitaires,
Tout embaumés de foin, jusqu'à ce que les terres,

S'abaissant, laissaient voir, à travers le ruisseau,
Le beffroi féodal, qui se mirait dans l'eau,
Sentinelle veillant sur l'endormi hameau.

Silence et nuit partout. Rien que le couler lent
S'entendait de la vague. Éclose à l'occident,
Une étoile tremblait mélancoliquement.

NOUS arrêtant au point où les prés à la route
Cédent du bourg, parmi le blanc bêtail en broute,
Qui nous considérait de son doux air de doute,

Les yeux rivés aux yeux, nous nous envisageames,
En ce suprême instant, le sécret de nos âmes
Comme pour pénétrer; puis nous nous séparames

En silence. A quoi bon parler? C'était la fin.
Sans baiser, sans adieu, sans serrement de main,
Nous allames chacun son lugubre chemin.

PUIS, "Pourquoi," me dis-je, "parler d'éternité
"Et dire que la mort n'est rien qu'une cité
"D'attente d'où le corps renâit ressuscité?

"A cette renaissance où trouver qui se fie,
"Puisque l'amour, principe et base de la vie,
"De toute chose humaine, est la plus tôt finie?

"Si nous devons survivre à la tombe inhumaine,
"Pourquoi du saint amour, qui toute vie amène,
"Ne reste-t-il, hélas! rien, si ce n'est la haine?"

LOVE'S END.

(The foregoing poem rendered into English.)

IN the deep woods we went, dim with the nearing night:
The dying sunset gilt the tree-stems with its light:
A star or two on high already was in sight.

We followed, without speech, the sombre forest-way:
Each unto each, indeed, no more we had to say;
For to an end, alas! our love was come, like Day.

Night hovered o'er our heads, as 'twere a vulture, fain
To swoop upon its prey; but, ere in Heaven inane
It grew, dead night it was within our souls in pain.

FORTH to the plain we passed from out that heart of green:
Upon the yellowing wheat, like some primaeval queen,
The dying sunlight lay, impassive and serene.

A quail afar kept up its shrill continuous cry.
Then, sudden as a flood down-loosened from on high,
The darkness fell and night enveloped earth and sky.

The quail had ceased to chant its monotone of dole;
The shadows swallowed up the sunset, pole to pole;
Void everywhere and void eternal in my soul.

THROUGH the wide meadows, set with oaks a century old,
The lone hay-scented ways, in silence stern and cold,
We followed, till the ground, slow-sloping, fold on fold,

Left open to our sight, across the narrow stream,
The belfry's feudal tower, that, blank of cresset-beam,
Stood sentinel above the drowsing hamlet's dream.

Silence o'er all and night: nought but the ripples' flow
To hearken. In the West, upon the horizon low,
A trembling star diffused its melancholy glow.

OUR wandering steps we stayed, whereas the meadow-ways
Bent to the burgh, amidst the fleecy herds a-graze,
That with their mild slow air of doubt on us did gaze.

Eyes fixed on other's eyes, long looked we, each on each,
As if, in that supreme sad moment, fain to reach
The secret of our souls; then parted, without speech,

In silence. What availed discourse? It was the end.
Without handclasp or kiss, farewell of friend to friend,
We each of us our way disconsolate did wend.

THEN, "Of Eternity," quoth I unto the case,
"Why speak and say that death is but a halting-place,
"Wherefrom the soul shall rise, reclad with a new grace?

"Who shall be found to deem such doctrine credit-worth,
"Since Love, the source of life and principle of birth,
"Comes quicklier to an end than anything on earth?

"If we must rise again from underneath the grass,
"Why, then, of holiest Love, that brings all life to pass,
"Should nought (excepting hate it be) abide, alas?"

WELTSCHMERZ.

I.

Birds in the night
Thrilled my heart with their warning
Of woe;
Birds in the morning
Clamoured in choir, till the sun was in sight,
High and low,
Saddened my soul with a presage of sorrows,
Bade me bemoan me for weariful morrows.
In the noon-glow
Still went they wailing their message of warning,
Till the sun sank in the seas of forgetting:
Then, as the night
Followed, wide-winged, in the steps of the setting
And the day gathered its garments to go,
Took up the tale with the last of the light,
Whispered, "Heigho!"

II.

What was their meaning?
Nay, as I hearkened and hearkened, at first, it a warning

Given to me,
A presage of evil to come, to my weening,
Seemed it must be.
Yet, as I listened, came daybreak, and morning on morning,
Night upon night;
Dawn after dawn through the deeps of the darkness
Its way to the light; [outhollowed
Sun after sun rose and set; moons waxed red and waxed white:
Yet, in despite
All that I feared, there came nought of the stress I awaited;
None of the buffets I looked for from Fortune's unright
Fell on my head from the cloud-rack above me; nought followed
Other than that of the courses of night and of day,
Other than that by world's wont and life's usance forefated.
Brighter my day than of wont was, indeed, not nor duller;
Still went the stream of my life its monotonous way;
Nothing there happened to hasten it: yet was its colour
Still the same grey.

III.

Then to myself, Why perturb thee, I said, with the seeking
Ill, where there's none?
Why in the bird-voices hear, with their dole thine own eking,
Up from their graves sorrows calling long dead and fordone,
Auguries evil of days and of nights unbegun?
Knowest thou not, by the Past, how the theme of their
Nowise *thou* art? [speaking
Nay, but the canker incurable, still that lies eating
At the world's heart,
All the wild pulses of pain passing words that are beating
Still in its veins,
All the despair that dumb Nature is ever repeating,
Still in her speech inarticulate for the outspelling
Striving, with thunders and lightnings and tempests and rains,
This, this it is that the birds in their fashion are telling,
Not of *thy* dole

Chanting nor yet at *thy* fortune for fair or foul guessing.
Nay, still in song, they, the sorrows of Nature expressing,
Tell the ineffable tale of the pain that is pressing
On the world's soul.

ALAS!

I saw a woman with your eyes to-day,
My love, long-lost unto my sorry sight;
Your graceful, tender, birdlike turn of head,
Your very same half-hesitating play
Of humour round the lips, your delicate
Rose-campion mouth and forehead wildflower-white,
Your dainty trick of speech, my love long dead,
Your very voice she had and kind child-air.
The same half-fluttering, half-lingering gait,
As of a linnet on the point of flight,
The same soft-scrolled volute of shimmering hair,
The same ineffable mysterious flame
In the shy glance, the same caressing light
In the faint smile, half frolicsome, half sad,
That none might see but needs withal must name
The April dawning's flush of rosy shame,
Your every fashion, every trait she had,
Nothing there lacked of all your grace. My dear,
It was yourself of many a bygone year.

I deemed you dead and buried long ago,
Nought left of you except two words on stone
And in my heart a charact'ry of woe
And rapture for remembrance misery grown.
But there, before my waking sight, again,
In the sheer sunshine, — no mere phantom vain
From out the sorry storehouse of the Past,
On the blank night by mocking Memory cast,
To waken sorrow with its wavering show, —
In flesh and blood you stood and shone. Heigho!

I deemed you dead, my dear, and there you were,
Grown live and warm again and young and fair.

But, when I moved to greet you and to ask
For tidings of the world from which you came, —
The world beyond the darkness and the day,
Of which this world is but the fleeting mask, —
When my lips parted with the lovely name
I knew you by, before you passed away,
You looked upon me with a blank dismay,
As one, accosted by a stranger, starts,
Amazed, affrighted at she knows not what
In one whose voice she doth not recognize.
In the far dream of death you had forgot
My face and all that was between our hearts
Of love; and from your dear-beloved eyes
A stranger soul looked out that knew me not.

Five times five years, lapsed over my dismay,
Had softened down my sufferance to regret.
Still for the piteous Past I grieved and yet
I would not have the sad sweet days that were
Unlived, their sorrow was so far more fair
Than all Life's joys; nor would I fain forget
One single pain of all their sacred pains.
Grief, with the early and the latter rains,
Had mellowed down to somewhat far more rare
And sweet than joy, as, in the April lanes,
Rarer than roses is the violet.
In dreams, indeed, you have come back to me;
And sadder still you left me with the day:
Yet were you still yourself, to touch and see,
Not only such as you were wont to be
In flesh and blood; but in your eyes Love lay
Still lieger and in all your lips might say,
The old sweet harmony betwixt us two
Still stirred and showed in all that you might do.

Alack! What cruel hand this web of ours
Is it that weaves? What spirit of despite
Can it have been that stirred the cynic powers,
Who cast the courses of the day and night,
To raise you up again in the sun's sight
And the full face of stars and moon and flowers,
In the old semblance, but on inner wise
How different, alas! — my sorry eyes
To mock, to blow the embers of my grief,
Time-tempered, up into the old despair
And rob my sorrow of its sole relief,
The thought that, still, unchanged, however Death
May mangle this our life of mortal breath,
Your soul mine own awaiteth otherwhere?
Less woe it were to know you in the tomb,
With the old halo yet about your head,
Than see you walk the world in all your bloom
Of youth and sweetness, Time-untouched and whole,
Yet other than you were! For, you being dead,
I had not lost in you, as now, all part.
Your body lives, but by a stranger soul,
Whose heart no memory bindeth to my heart,
Alien to all our loves, inhabited.
Ah, sadder far than any death could be,
You live, but not, but not, alas! for me.

POLARITIES.

If life were love
And joy came down with men from Heaven above
To dwell and ease them of the eternal stress,
Think you that humankind
Were better, lovesomer
Than now it is, in this our purblind press
Of loveless striving, driven before the wind
Of need to all excess

Of hate and greed by Fate's relentless spur?
Not so. Were life all love and gladness, we,
As hate now, love would flee
And venture all, despair, as pleasance now, to find.

If fear to hope
Transmuted were and men no more to grope
Were in the darkling galleries doomed of doubt,
Think you, the world would be
A happier then than now,
When for bare life, against the rabble rout
Of pains and cares, from which we may not flee,
We needs, year in, year out,
Must battle with strained sense and bursting brow?
Not so. If such a case might happen, men
Would die for gladness then,
As now, in this old world, they live for misery.

Even as of shade
The counterpart to be hath light been made,
So joy of sorrow, pleasance of annoy
And justice of unright
Are natural complements
And mates inseparable. Repose would cloy,
Were labour not, to teach us its delight:
There comes no spark of joy
But from the cease of pain unto our sense.
Love's self is but the counterpart of hate,
As peace is of debate;
And nothing here exists but by its opposite.

As without night
Day might not be nor darkness without light,
As Summer Autumn makes and Winter Spring,
As, without snow-time, May
No seeds would have for bloom,

So joy with us, except for sorrowing,
Might not abide nor love our cares allay,
Except hate were, to bring
Its radiance out with keen-contrasting gloom.
Faith, save by unfaith shaded, none might see;
And still in Life must be
Unto the Eternal Yes opposed the Eternal Nay.

THE MINSTREL'S BOOK.

SOLUS IN GREGE.

A dreamer, with my dream,
But as a bubble on Life's troubled stream,
I fare among the folk who play at toil,
Who toil at play,
In labour vain the light, the midnight oil
Who waste nor dark from day
Know in pursuance of the things that seem.

No word to me they speak:
If, once-a-while, among the toys they seek
So eagerly, their eyes upon me light,
With dull amaze
They overlook me and unseeing sight
And their indifferent gaze
Turn to the wishward of their goal unique.

Rain, wind, moon, sun, sky, star,
All witness for me that my dream by far
More real is than their unreal strife;
My visions sooth
And splendid truer than their things of life,
Whose days and nights, age, youth,
After a dull delusion wasted are.

So let them go their way!
What matter how they waste Life's little day?
But I withal unto my dream I hold;
For that, at least,
My thought yet young, when all around is old,
Keeps, with plant, bird and beast,
And holds my heart green, if my head be grey.

EGOMET.

I have been young and now am old,
Yet never garnered other gold
Than that of song, the sweet, the never-dying,
Nor sought for other silver still
Than that which pipe and string distil,
To set, at music's hest, the magic echoes flying.

I now am old, that have been young,
Yet ne'er of otherwhat have sung
Than that I loved, though all the world might scoff it:
I never sought the praise of slaves
Nor spared to blame the cheating knaves
Who fool, in Freedom's name, the people for their profit.

I have been young and now am old,
Yet never let my heart grow cold
To that which fair and true and good I wotted,
Still strove in silence to ensue
The highest things whereof I knew
And from this woeful world to hold myself unspotted.

I now am old, that have been young,
Yet never sought by hand or tongue
To pleasure fools or cringe for fame and riches.
Else had I eath been one of those
Who take the public taste and pose
As temporary Gods in temporary niches.

My cap (a cap of darkness dead
To most) I kept upon my head
Nor would, for vantage' sake, to dulness doff it
Nor mingle with the huckst'ring throng,
That drive their trade in art and song,
And made me many a foe of knave and lying prophet.

The thrushes and the nightingales
My tutors were and told me tales
Of their own heaven, its music to me bringing,
That deafened me to meaner notes:
And so, when many other throats,
That once were full of song, are mute, I still am singing.

SONG-STRESS.

High-water time
And the world all aflood with the flush of the incoming rhyme!
What matter for Winter and fogtime and frost-time and snow,
When the floodgates are up and the river of rhyme is aflow?

Trouble and toil
And the world with the surges of sorrow and strife all aboil!
What matter for sorrow and morrow and doubting and dole,
When the songbirds of Heaven are abroad in the spheres of the soul?

Long is it, long
Since thou heark'nedst and camest to comfort me, Spirit of Song!
Now that thou here art, I care not: the world is forgot:
Love, Love lord once more in my life is. The rest matters not.

SONG-TIDE.

When the sweetheart Spring
Comes its pleasantness to bring
And its broideries for the bridal of the year,
When the season is of singing
And the woods and wolds are ringing
With the carols loud and clear

Of the many-coloured flying feathered choir,
When the world upon the wing
Brings its homage to the king
And the earth and sea and heavens are grown a living lyre,
I am silent, only I:
From the concert of the songsters far and nigh,
Forth their soaring souls for joy to heaven that fling,
Only absent is my note;
For the throstle in my throat
Fallen dumb is, why I know not, and I have no song to sing.

Nay, the case the same
Is when Summer's skies aflame
For the festival of June are and July,
When the riot of the roses
In the radiant garden-closes
And the jessamines runs high,
When the daisies fill the fields up to the brink,
When the tall white lilies rise,
Like archangels in flower-guise,
And the hollyhocks stand sentinel o'er pæony and pink.
In the hot midsummer hush,
I am silent with the blackbird and the thrush,
As when all the world in slumber steeping lies
Under August's heaven of brass
And the cricket in the grass
To the land-rail and the wheatear in the corn alone replies.

Nor, when autumn weaves
Webs of gold and crimson leaves
For the faded woods' funereal wede of state,
When the wandering winds go sighing
For the year that lies a-dying
And the Winter's at the gate,
When, like herbs and spices strewn upon a bier,
The sense from the dead sheaves,
That strew the ways, perceives

A bitter breath of incense for the funeral of the year,
When the robin flutes alone,
For the other birds are either mute or flown,
And the swallows hold high council in the eaves
For departure to the South,
Disenchanted is my mouth;
And still the same mysterious spell of silence to me cleaves.

But, when Winter's hand,
Laid and heavy on the land,
All the life in field and flood with frost benumbs,
When the snows, like a dead lover,
Earth with shrouds of ermine cover
And the starving robin comes
To the window for the food he cannot find,
When the trees like spectres stand,
By some strong enchanter's hand
Struck and starkened into ~~silence~~, and the ways with snow
Then at last my heart awakes [are blind,
From its slumber and the seal of silence breaks;
And like tides that roll and riot o'er the strand,
From my loosened lips once more,
With the wave-rush and the roar
Of the orchestra, the songs flock forth, a multisonous band.

SONGS' END.

These forty days,
Alone have I with thee, dear Spirit of Delight,
That lov'st the Wintertide, gone wandering, noon and night,
Song's solitary ways.

On wonted wise,
Stooping from heaven sudden, upon thy wings of rhyme,
Thou bor'st me off from snows and sorrows to the clime
Of sun and summer skies.

No desert lands
Are those whereto thou me, too little oft, alas!
Bear'st, no Sahara-waste, ceiled with a sky of brass,
Fire raining on red sands.

A mild sun there
Tendeth eternal Spring and 'neath the plumy palms,
With roses red and white mimics the radiant calms
Of Paradise's air.

By its field-paths
Not asphodels alone and amaranths etern
Glitter, but cornflowers there and crimson poppies burn
In the lush meadow-swaths.

There land and sea
Are rounded with a rhyme. The breezes, as they go,
Vie in a verse and songs for wayside blossoms blow
On every hedge and tree.

There, Soul of Song,
In that fair land with thee have I gone wandering
Once more and filled my sheaf with the bright flowers that
Its sunny ways along. [spring

And now, alack!
My six weeks' harvesting in hand, (Ah, how much more
Fain had I gathered in from off that flowerful shore!)
Perforce thou bring'st me back

And without word
Of promise or farewell, sudden, as thou didst alight
With me, fleest back again to where in Heaven's height
Thou dwell'st, celestial bird;

Whilst, from my dream,
With vision-dazzled eyes, awakening, I, anon,
Through workday windows, frost-bedizened, stare upon
This world of things that seem.

THE POET'S LOT.

He who from Heaven, by grace
Of the Supernal Powers, his ancestry doth trace,
Who in Life's Babel speaks the language of the Gods
And in our woeful world of cant and commonplace,
Treads, with uplifted front, with thought-transfigured face
And eyes withinward turned, Earth's fallow fruitless clods,
His breast with triple brass
Must mail, if he would pass,
Unshaken in his faith, athwart this battle-space
Of greed and dullness, one against unnumbered odds.

Unsparing is the scorn
Wherewith the rogue, the fool regard the heaven-born.
In this our sorry scheme of dull humanity,
Our madhouse of mankind, of love and faith forlorn,
The darkness hates the day, the night reviles the morn,
The weed disdains the rose, the bramble flouts the tree;
And they, by light Divine
Their fellows who outshine,
No crown can hope but one that's tressed with many a thorn
And persecuted still of men must look to be.

"Do as thy fellows do,"
The voice of humankind proclaims; "or thou shalt rue:"
And he who sets his face toward another goal,
Following the beacon-light shed by the Fair, the True,
Than that which all folk else, like silly sheep, pursue,
Shall find himself outcast from fellowship and sole.
No friend's, no lover's smile
His travail shall beguile,
No comrade clasp his hand: but he, till death ensue,
Shall walk the world alone, a solitary soul.

Nor solitude alone
Enough shall holden be his trespass to atone.
No common vengeance may the raging rancour sate,
The spite of the mean soul, to whom perforce his own
Dark by the shining beams of other's light is shown.
Needs th'unconfessed despair in his own breast to abate,
To appease the gnawing smart
Of envy in his heart,
Seek must he him who shames his dulness to dethrone
And crucify his name upon the cross of hate.

Yet, though to mortal pain
The poet, mortal born, to bow the head must deign,
Nay, by the gift his soul that opens to the Fair,
The True, far deeplier feels the Foul than the profane,
One solace still he hath, that never was in vain.
Nature is on his side; her things his secret share:
The flowers with him are one,
The shadows and the sun;
He communes with the rills, the sunlight and the rain,
And his heart's language hears in all the winds of air.

So, with unbended head,
As one a desert fares, that's peopled by the dead,
With his own heaven's clear air encompassed, passeth he.
If to his songs the folk, by lies and hate misled,
List not, he knows that these will live, when those are sped,
Being with the voices one of earth and sky and sea;
And ended when Life's night,
He goes back to the Light,
As who returneth home to his ancestral stead,
One with the One Great Soul content again to be.

NOT ALL IN VAIN.

Not all in vain
The lightning and the thunder and the rain!
Without the Winter's sufferance and the snows,
The earth uneath might bear the lily and the rose.

Not all in vain,
Poet, for thee the stress of heart and brain!
'Tis from the opposing shock of Right and Wrong
The electric flash proceeds that stirs the seeds of song.

Not all in vain
Life's seeding-stage of unenlightened pain!
Without its chastening stress, unfit, sad soul,
Wert thou to be made one with the Undifferenced Whole.

POPULO.

Ne'er have I stooped to pipe, o public of the day,
For thine indifference,
Nor ever was of those the mountebank who play,
To stir thy dullard sense.

Well wist I of the price which he must pay perforce,
Who dares to hold aloof
From thy dull marts and feasts, who scorns thy vain discourse,
Thy blame and thine approof.

I knew thou holdst the keys of earthly good and ill,
That those who flatter not
Thy foolishness nor fawn on thine unreasoning will
Have here a lonely lot;

That they must look to pass their lives in gloom and cold,
From all that they have sown
But Sad Content, at best, to reap and to grow old,
Unfriended and alone.

The unspeakablest of sins, the unpardonable crime,
Lése-majesté in chief,
It is one's way to go nor halloo with the time's
Base joy and senseless grief.

Rob, murder, slander, forge, lie, wanton; yet no stroke
Of blame on you shall fall,
So but you bend your neck beneath the general yoke
And do as others all.

All else may pardoned be; but he his life who lives,
Who breathes with his own breath,
The sin unspeakable commits, which none forgives,
And hated is to death.

This all I knew and made my choice to be of those
Who will not wear thy chain:
The ways of thy mislike, not of thy praise, I chose
And yet would choose again.

For those whom thou hast banned in every age and clime
Are hallowed of thy hate;
The cause o'er thee they've won in the High Court of Time
And left those desolate

Whom thou with thine approof exaltedst to the skies
And who, to judgment brought,
Must shrink, without appeal, back from that stern assize
Into their native nought.

The same art thou as those, Ben Jonson heretofore
To Shakspeare who preferred,
Who hailed Béranger king, in triumph Musset bore
And Gautier left unheard,

Who suffered Schubert starve and passing Berlioz by,
The feet of Auber kissed,
Tchaikowsky, Dvorak, Brahms, applauded to the sky
And scorned tbe name of Liszt.

So look thou not for me to be of those who pipe
For thee to dance unto:
None am I of the base lickspittle gutter-snipe,
The vulgar, venal crew,

That kiss thy foolish feet and please thine idiot pride,
So on thy meat and wine
They may feed full and in thy praise's chariots ride
And fatten with thy swine.

Far rather the dry bread of poverty I'd eat
Than batten on thy love;
The cup of water cold of freedom I hold sweet,
Thy richest wines above.

Far rather would I see thee spit upon my name
Than be of thine elect;
Far fainer be of those who're belted with thy blame
And crowned with thy neglect.

QUIA AMORE LANGUEO.

That which of the pleasant Prime,
Of the splendid summer hours,
Of the sad enchanted time
Of the mists and snows and showers,
Of the Winter and the Spring,
Clouds and sunshine, flowers and trees,
Skies and butterflies and bees,

Willy nilly, makes me sing,
That which of the beasts and birds
Makes me carol with winged words,
Like the lark-notes on the breeze,
Neither lore nor art nor skill
Is nor stress of straining thought,
Into measured music wrought
By the labour of the will:
Nay, a higher 'tis than these,
Otherwhat, beyond, above;
'Tis the power by which they are,
That which moveth sun and star,
'Tis the world-creator, Love.

Love for plant and bird and beast
Hath in me the major part;
Love for Nature's most and least
Thrones it in my heart of heart:
Not that men withal I hate;
But the things which fly and fare
On the earth and in the air
More at one with me I rate;
Better, purer, to my mind,
Kinder are they than my kind.
Birds, beasts, flowers and breezes share
Not alone my hours of ease,
But my sadder sorrier case
Cheer and solace; wherefore these
All of Nature's humbler race,
All the beasts that burdens bear,
All the birds upon the wing,
All the things of sea and shore,
Wood and meadow, more and more,
Year by year, I love and sing.

IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN OF GOLD, THEY THOUGHT.

"It should have been of gold, they thought:
"but Jupiter was poor; this was the best the
"God could give them."

RUSKIN. Preface to "The Crown of Wild Olive."

I.

What matter for the stuff?
So but the crown,
The symbol of renown,
Be on thy head set by the Gods, enough
Is't not, of iron black, although, or copper brown
The coronal be wrought.
Although of silver scrolls and golden horns
It lack, it skilleth nought.
The highest soul, from Heaven that e'er came down
To earth, for prophet-gown
A cere-cloth had, for crown a wreath of thorns.
Though rough thy crown to see,
What matter if it be?
When all is done,
The metal's value oft the jewel mars:
What gold can give the semblance of the sun,
What silver ape the splendour of the stars?

What matter for the kind?
Whether beneath
The massive mural wreath
The temples ache, whether soft parsley bind
The brows or olive-leaves, for chaplet cool and eath,
Circle the heavy head,
Whether sweet violets crown thee or the cirque
Of iron furnace-red,
That tears the martyr's flesh with flaming teeth,
Thy front in fire ensheath,

The glory 'tis that's reckoned, not the irk.
If gold it be or not,
The form's the thing, God wot,
The form that is the symbol of the spheres;
The pearls that sort with it are happy tears,
The sobs from song-delivered hearts that well,
The sapphires solaced griefs, the rubies fears,
To hopes transmuted by the poet's spell.

II.

What matter for the cost?
To the true soul,
So but it gain its goal,
The world and all its treasures were well lost.
It maketh no account of suffered stress or dole
Endured in honour's quest.
The glory gotten and the worship won,
If fate permit, to rest
Were sweet. If not, having drained its wish's bowl,
It taketh leave, heart-whole,
Nor sighs to have looked its last upon the sun.
Though sore have been the stress
Of winning, none the less
Worth is the prize
That through Hell's furnace one should fare, unshod.
Alcides but on flames ascends the skies;
It is the crucifixion crowns the God.

What matter how or when?
The crown's the thing.
King calleth unto king,
Above the heads of miserable men,
Who for the thunder take their speech's echoing
Athwart the ages dim,
Their looks for lightnings and their tears for rain,
Falling from Heaven's blue rim,

Their voices for the Gods', the spheres', that ring
An instant, volleying,
And then for many a day are mute again.
Though long the waiting years
And dark with doubts and fears
The days when all upon their heads heaped scorn,
The dearer is the diadem, when torn
From the dull folk and the despiteful Fates,
As in the heavens brightlier beams the morn,
When the new sun hath stormed the tempest's gates.

III.

The poet's crown is thorns;
Its broidery keen,
Its web of wreathing sheen,
Are woven of weary nights and woeful morns,
For scrolls with strange delights, beyond men's wit, beseen,
For jewelry with joys,
Such to the meaner vision of his mates
As seem but idle toys,
The spirit-gladnesses, whereof few ween,
In this our world terrene,
But which his soul transport to Eden's gates.
His life is lived in these;
This that he hears and sees
Insensible
Makes him to earthly joys, to pleasures cold,
And causes him regard as pains of hell
Much that his fellow-men for sweet and solace hold.

His joys wealth cannot buy:
Upon the breeze
There comes, to give him ease,
Some waft of scent celestial from on high,
Some robin's lilt, that flutes upon the leafless trees,
Some stirring in the air,

Some tone of tender colour in the cloud,
Some strain unearthly fair,
Some song of waves in other-worldly seas,
Some glimpse of far-off leas,
Some fair face shining from the senseless crowd,
Some wind-voice in the elms,
With message from the realms
Full-fraught, whereof this world of woe and wail
Is but the sense-spun, eye-deluding veil,
— Things over-subtle for our sphere of cease,
That soothe his spirit, sick of Life's long ail,
With passing breaths of balm and strange celestial peace.

IV.

None other recompense
Than this hath he.
The things, that sweet to see
Are in men's eyes, to his diviner sense
Are meaningless and vain as shadows on the lea;
Excepting only Love:
But this, whereby his fellows glorified
And raised themselves above
Whiles are, of him alone forsworn must be.
(To Him of Galilee,
Prometheus, Buddha, was not Love denied?)
Here must he walk alone;
No queen may share his throne,
No friend the way fare with him, hand in hand.
His kingship, being of an unknown land,
Of men accounted is to him for blame
And from this world, based on Time's shifting sand,
But when he is by death delivered, works for fame.

V.

Yet, poet, wear thou this
Thy crown, content.

What though thy brows intent
Its thorn-embroidery o'er-roughly kiss?
It solveth thee from need of earthly solacement.
Since first the world grew green,
Fools only earthly happy, now as then,
Have in Life's dustheap been.
Sorrow with those who've known Heaven's ravishment
And smelt its roses' scent
Still dwells and Gods are sad and kings of men.
Yet better far a king
To be, through suffering,
Than, swine-like glad,
In ignorant slavery to grovel here;
Better the highest to have known and sad
For lack thereof to live than drowse in dullard cheer.

FORSITAN.

In the clay
Lie and rot thou must some day.
'Twixt thy pleasures and thy woes
Death his hand shall interpose,
Making even these as those.

In that hour
One Life's sweet shall and its sour
Be unto thy lips, and one
Shall things done be and undone,
Day and darkness, shade and sun.

Then of thee
Nothing shall remembered be:
Other men shall by thy thought
Profit and to honour brought
Be by that which thou hast wrought.

On thy dust
Other men shall upward thrust
From thine ashes, like a flame,
Burying thy forgotten name
Underneath their borrowed fame.

Worth and wit,
Goodness, genius, learned writ,
Toilful hand and careful mind,
Skill to seek and faith to find,
All shall pass as idle wind.

Only this
Shall thy memory from the abyss
Save, belike, that thou some rhyme
Mayst begotten have, whose chime
In the measure falls of Time;

Which, its beat
To the rhythm of his feet
Answering, — he may not deny
Far to fare with him and nigh,
Still with him to live and die;

Such as he,
Fast unto his company
Finding cleave, as flesh to bone,
And withal accustomed grown,
Takes and keeps it for his own.

For that strong,
Over all things, is true song,
Song, that, soughten not with art,
Surges, as the wellsprings start,
From the sources of the heart.

Hew and build;
Statues in thy memory gild;
Grave thy name on steel and brass;
Make the world thy looking-glass:
All shall fade and all shall pass.

Song alone
Overdureth steel and stone,
Overweigheth toil and treasure,
Still with its harmonious measure
Modulating pain and pleasure.

CROSS-PURPOSES.

The wind, where it listeth, still bloweth
Nor recketh of you or of me;
The tide, when its season is, floweth;
Its voice is the voice of the sea.

The bird, in its nesting-time, singeth,
For song is the voice of its soul;
The thought, where it willeth, still wingeth,
Uncareful of aught but its goal.

The earth bears its fruits in their season,
For all that the critics may say,
Nor ever will "listen to reason"
Nor barter December for May.

Each tree, its own kind after, fruiteth,
Some acid and sweet other some.
To say to the apple what booteth,
"A peach shouldst thou be or a plum?"

Each bird hath its song-singing minute,
Night, morning, noon, even, light, dark.
What skilleth it blackbird as linnet
Or nightingale bid be as lark?

Each flower hath its bloom, willy nilly:
  The fool's part to bid 'twere, God knows,
The wallflower be white as the lily,
  The violet red as the rose.

The thought that is born in the poet
  He renders anew in his song
Nor asks if the dunce for good know it
  Or evil, for right or for wrong.

The things that are given him he giveth,
  Unknowing of good or of bad;
The life that is lent him he liveth
  Nor recketh of sorry or glad.

One biddeth him *this* and another
  Be *that*; but the poet, trust me,
Himself is, my critical brother,
  And may not be other than he.

THE LIGHTS OF HEAVEN.

Flowers of daybreak, growing, glowing, in the East,
  For the feast
On the blue horizon blossomed of the birth of merry morn,
Sure your influences you showered on my head, when I was born;
  It was you that salved me then
With the spells that drew my dreams up, through the bars
Of this gaol of pride and passion, to the spheres beyond the stars;
  And you gave me for a dower
  Then to love the morning hour
And its peace yet unpolluted by the stress of striving men.

Gold of noontide, spreading, shedding on the earth
  Light and mirth,

For the banquet of the bridal of the world-all and the sun,
I have cherished you from childhood till my days are well nigh done;
And to-day, when I am old,
More than ever, with new knowledge, now I prize
Your effulgences of glory in the summer-smalted skies;
And of this my wiser eld
Less and less of value held
Are the things of earthly treasure by your Heaven-minted gold.

Sunset-standards, gleaming, streaming in the West,
O'er the breast
Of old Ocean far-outfluttered for the funeral of the Day,
Still my thought was fain to follow on your feet the Westward way;
Still you lured and led me far
In your train and ever farther, o'er the wave,
Tow'rd the mirages upmounting from the dying sun's sea-grave;
And with youth long past, alack!
Still I follow in your track
To the spirit's Eldorados underneath the evening star.

Mild moon-silver, steeping sleeping earth and skies,
Hallow-wise,
In the sacrament of silence and the benison of night,
Dulcet influences of Nature, candid creatures of the light,
I have loved you all my life
With a love that passeth passion; and I trust,
When my spirit soars, delivered from this dungeon of the dust,
To be one again with you,
With the flowers, the rain, the dew,
At the term of Fate foreordered for the solving of my strife.

MARCH-MUSIC.

We, that were born
Erst for the travel of the spheres of the sun and the lands of the sky-light,
Sons of the morn,

Yet that must dwell
In the gloom and the grey
Still of Life's cell,
Here with the folk of the fens and the tribes of the low-
Fenced and forlorn [lying twilight,
In the shadow of Hell,
Far from the lilt of the lark and the dream of the day,

How should we do
Here, if we had not the hope and the lore of the lands of
Yonder in the blue, [our birthright,
Ever at heart?
How should we live,
If, for our part,
Fancy, foretelling the morning to us and the end of our
Dawning nigh due, [earth-night,
Yet, of its art,
Solace and succour to constancy came not to give?

Many is the sign
Cometh to us from the cliffs and the plains of the place of
From the Divine [our rearing,
Valleys of our birth:
Here, where we grope
In the gloom of the earth,
Many a token of tenderness send they in season for cheering
Us, in our pine,
Easing our dearth,
Lightening our hearts in Life's darkness with daybeams of
[hope.

Now an acclaim
'Tis of some angel that hails us and calls, from the far
Us by the name [empyrean,
Borne of us, ere
To this den of the dark
Banished we were:

Now 'tis the song of some bird in the blue, as, with pealing
Flowering of flame, [of pæan,
Over Heaven's air,
Daybreak comes broad'ning and brightening, arc upon arc.

Now 'tis some flower,
That, with its innocent face from the hedge-rows itself
Hallows the hour, [half-revealing,
Or, though unseen,
Yet with its breath
Solves us of spleen;
Now 'tis some light-streak, some cloud-waft of colour or
Soft over our [fragrance, that, stealing
Sense, doth it wean
Back unto life everlasting from darkness and death.

Now 'tis some wave,
That with its light-lymph Life's sea-sands and pebbles to
Cometh to save [jewels transmuting,
Us from the gloom
And the poison of thought
In the shadow of doom:
Now 'tis some nightingale, under the blossoming hawthorn-
Calls from the grave [boughs fluting,
Of the Past-time to bloom
And to beauty the dreams and the days that have passed
[into nought.

Mountains and seas,
Meadows, streams, moorlands, woods, fountains, lakes, all
Solace and ease [with their voices come bringing
Unto his spright
That is born of the climes
Where day is not nor night.
These the themes give us, the substance, the texture and
Yea, 'tis of these [tune of our singing:
Love we and light,
Music and mystery take to transfigure our rhymes.

Thus, here below,
Exiles, we solace our souls with the lore and the balms of
Borne to us so: [our birthlands,
Thus, through the haze
Of this prison of ours,
Chanting the praise
Of the goods and the glories unprized and unknown of the
Singing we go, [tribes of the earthlands,
Heartened the days
So to endure, as they limp through the doubt-darkened hours.

HORAE.

Break of day! The white light enters,
On the bed
Falling, flashing news of morning to the centres
Of the thought within my head.

Morning-tide! The sun-rays glisten
On my chair:
On the hearth-rug sit the waiting cats and listen
For my step upon the stair.

Noon! The brimming streets before me
Pass and go,
Like phantasmagoric pictures: their uproar me
Heaves and carries to and fro.

Afternoon! The raging roaring
Streets again;
And the rhymes rise, making music, passing, pouring
Through my heartstrings and my brain.

Vespertide! My fingers, straying
O'er the keys,
Make faint music, like the airs of Summer playing
In the orange-laden trees.

Evenglome! The lamplight falling
On my board;
Busy thought what Day to birth hath brought recalling,
As the pen doth it record.

Middle night! The room lamp-litten:
By the glow
Sit I musing. On my shoulder purrs the kitten
And the cat my feet below.

Sleepingtide! The moon-rays, shining
Through the glass,
Light the dreams, that, still entwining, unentwining,
Through the slumbering fancy pass.

ANIMA CUM ANIMO.

I.

SOUL, (to my soul said I,) what of my stress shall the ending be?
Still shall life lapse for me thus without love, without light?
Shall there no ease for me, shall there no cease from contending be,
Till day go down with me into the graves of the night?

Still from my youth for the things of the spirit I've striven;
All in their stead that Life proffered me scorned have I still:
Still to the quest of the highest myself have I given,
Turned a deaf ear to the whispers of Wish and of Will.

Set was my face, from the first of my course, to the living
The life as in death that they lead who would better than life:
Love and its sweets, for my dream's sake, I grudged not th'upgiving,
Life's flowerpaths forsook for the sandwastes whose flowerage is strife.

Pleasantness present, Life's Spring, in the lush and the sweet of it,
Erst in my bloomtide I banished and exiled from me;
Youth and the harvest of joyance it yields, in the heat of it,
Gave up and girt me for battle and travail to be.

Drunk was my soul with a dream of desire for the gaining
That which no man in the world 'neath the moon ever won;
Fevered with phantasms of hope was my heart of attaining
Countries uncompassed by courses of star or of sun,

Realms such as redden in regions beyond the sun's setting,
Homes such as harbour for fancy in dimness of dreams,
Kingdoms of cloudland, that lapse and are gone in the getting,
Blisses that waxen and wane with the westering beams.

My hopes and my dreams to the heedless I pledged for derisions,
Men's praises forswore and the gauds that they follow for goal,
Content on Life's bitters to batten, so only the visions
Might flower in my verse for the folk, that were sown in my soul.

I flung off the bondage of folly, opinion's fetter,
Disdaining to deal with the brethren of barter and sale,
And went mine own desolate way, never doubting but better,
Far better than basely to win it were nobly to fail.

The trader in honours cried out upon me to the schemer;
Against me the rancours arose of the huckstering crew;
And all cast their gibes and their jeers at the dunce and the dreamer,
Who scorned to compound with the slave and the cheat for his due.

The world, with its wont-blunted vision, its senses that ween not
Of aught that departs from the feet-furrowed highways of will,
The world my achievement passed over, as if it had been not,
And left it unguerdoned, unnoted for good or for ill.

Yet still have I followed, unfrustred, the quest, never quailing,
Life's lures still disdaining, its pleasures and passions put by,
Still wrought with my might, feet unfaltering and faith never failing,
Still duty my polestar, my landmark to live for and die.

Well wist I who seeketh the crown of the soul's consecration
Must pay down the price, give the gold of the goal at the start,
That the Gods hearken not unto any, except for oblation
He bring them his blood, for waive-offering the wish of his heart.

Well wist I strong dulness still brandeth the dreamers who brave it,
Still doometh them dwell without pleasance and perish alone;
I knew that my kind might not measure the gifts which I gave it,
Yet thought not to fare all unfriended, no hand in mine own.

Some faces, methought, I shall find, that will glow, when they greet me,
Some hearts that will throb, at the sound of my songs, with delight,
Some hands that will stretch over mountain and seascape to meet me,
Some eyes at the sight of my name that will sudden wax bright.

Alas, without Death and the Fates that forerule him I
reckoned,
The Fates that first bring to the harvest the highest and best,
The fiat the first still that taketh and leaveth the second;
For whom the Gods love unto sleep they call early and rest.

And now all my lovers have left me; no light is that
cheereth;
The world is a waste and but phantoms its folk to me seem:
My labour achieved, but its guerdon ungotten, night neareth,
Life lost in the quicksands, and still is my hope but a dream.

II.

SOUL, (my soul answered and said to me,) wherefore
complainest thou?
Was not the bargain thine own which thou mad'st with
the Fates?
Why for the lack thus lament thee of what thou disdainest,
thou
That for thy thought's sake hast sundered thyself from thy
mates?

Stands not in story the record of prophet and poet?
Burns not in chronicle still the unchangeable word?
Writ is it not that they reap not Truth's harvest who sow it?
When of the giver who throve by his gift was it heard?

Solace of love and world's ease and approof of the many,
When did these fall to his portion who strove for the light?
One is the choice; for the twain the Gods grant not to any:
Peace never mortal knew, wrong who would sunder from right.

Nay, hunger and thirst must he hail who would fill at
Truth's fountains,
Would win to the cliffs in the clouds, where deep calleth
to deep;

For pleasance and peace are the guests of the glens, not the mountains:
Void, void are the heights; 'tis the valleys where huddle the sheep.

Rail not at the stepmother age, at the world-dam that bore thee,
The she-wolf on bitters and briars that willed thee subsist.
No better entreated of her were Life's great ones before thee:
What guerdon had Gautier? what bay-leaves had Berlioz and Liszt?

Who, think you, of yore, in the cripple, the slave Epictetus,
In Socrates' self the soul's lawgivers noted and knew?
Who, think you, was ware of the Sun-God, when he for Admetus,
Heav'n-banished, went herding his kine with the earth-gotten crew?

What comrade in Shakspeare the glory conjectured, that graven
For highest (save one) should once be on the Tables of Praise?
Who guessed, in the law-biding burgess of Stratford-on-Avon,
The bard, who, approof overvaulting, should beggar the bays?

Nay, how did He fare in Whose name we invoke benediction,
The Man above men Whom we know by the name of the Christ?
The wage He deserved of His worldmates they deemed crucifixion;
His Godhead at thirty poor pieces of silver they priced.

For seldom in life due appraisement the saint or the sage hath;
For seldom the bays are bestowed but by chance or by fraud:
It is well if the true man bare bread for his hire and his wage hath:
Too oft for the trickster reserved are the meed and the laud.

But seldom the sheaves doth he share whose back beareth the burden;
The huckster still reaps and is rich by the husbandman's sweat;
But high labour and holy endeavour are still their own guerdon
And duty accomplished its own compensation is yet.

Nay, rest thee contented, my soul; for accomplished thy labour,
Achieved for thy task is, 'spite envy and hatred and ail,
And Life draweth near to the realms of its rest-bringing neighbour,
Friend Death not far distant; and Death is the end of the tale.

Bethink thee that life, at the least, thine intendment full measure
To fill hath been lent thee; and more, in the Future, thy dearth,
Thy stress to thine end and thy pain, than world's wealth and world's pleasure,
Thy loss than its gain, to the world-weighing wit will show worth.

The work thou hast wrought to an end, with the life that was lent thee,
Shall stand as a cliff, in Time's clamorous tides unadread,
Shall live, when their names are forgotten that hate thee, (Content thee!)
Shall hold thy name green, when the grasses are over thy head.

And now, if Death take thee to-day or to-morrow, what matters it?
Fulfilled is thy labour and forth of its leaf is thy flower:
What recketh the rose, to the waste when the wind of scaith scatters it?
Hath it not bloomed out its holy, its high-blossomed hour?

So rest thou content in thy deed. If thy fellows have spurned it,
Content thee to think that unfoiled thou hast finished the fight.
If guerdon's ungranted, content thee to know thou hast earned it,
That peace is thy portion, the peace of the doer of right.

For the day draweth near when Life's night shall for ever be ended;
The hour is at hand when a term shall be set to thy strife:
Work wrought, duty done, honour safe, heart unfeared, head unbended,
What comes, unadread, thou canst wait it, be't sleep, be it life.

And if rest be the term of our striving, what better than rest is?
Where rest is for ever, no question of right is or wrong.
If sleep be eternal, content thee with sleep, for sleep best is:
What æons of sleep for thy wake-wearied brain were too long?

But if, in new worlds, past the ultimate darkness, unsought-for,
Unwaited, new earths and new heavens for thy harbour abide,
Rejoice, for the just Gods shall grant thee the wreath thou hast wrought for,
The crown thou hast conquered, the wage which the world hath denied.

SONGS OF THE MORROW.

SONGS OF THE MORROW.

INVOCATION.

Hither, thy nets bring hither, Memory!
From Time's obscure, illimitable sea
Draw thou the days that are no more for me!

Call up the loves, the hates of heretofore,
The hopes, the fears, the smiles, the tears of yore,
The thoughts, the things that were and are no more!

Forth from the floods of darkness, where they drown,
Raise up the roofs and towers of Dreamland's town,
The storied walls that Time hath smitten down!

And Fancy, thou, upon the ruins, stilled,
In death and haunted of the goblin guild,
The new days' castle and cathedral build!

With all the sweetness of the piteous Past
And all the bitter Present's lore, forecast
For fitter faith upon the Future vast,

In the sheer bed of Time's resurgent sea,
Buttressed 'gainst Him with all whereunto He
Hath lessoned us, by dint of misery,
Build up the City of the Yet-to-be!

VOX CLAMANTIS.

A voice from out Thought's deserts, like a cloud
That compass Life's horizon-line of grey,
In the mirk midnight, in the morrowing day,
Blue noon, red eve, insistent, if unloud,
Still crying goes, "Prepare ye the Lord's way!"

Too loud the world with traffic is and strife
To mark that message of the Eternal Will,
Which, through the clamour of the conflict shrill,
O'erfaint to pierce the battle-din of Life,
Goes murmuring like the ripple of a rill.

Yet, still, persistent through the ages' hum,
A knell of Fate it beats upon Life's door:
Beside the pipes of peace, the drums of war,
Beneath Life's organ-music never dumb,
Its dull ground-bass goes droning evermore.

Thus hath it murmured through the centuries past
Nor thus shall cease to murmur, year by year,
For ever waxing for the hearkening ear,
Though the doomed folk o'erhear it, till, at last,
Whenas the fulness of the times is come,

That voice, when faded from the worldly air
Are din of strife and clash of spear and sword,
When hushed are sound of song and clang of chord,
Shall thunder, with the judgment-trumpet's blare,
"The way prepare, prepare ye of the Lord!"

THE SETTING SUN.

The sun into the graves
Of the dead Past sinks down below the waves.
Thou, too, o sun,
As we or any other of Fate's slaves,
Thy fixed and foreappointed course must run
Nor hope for rest until thy Titan task be done.

One day, triumphant star,
Thou yet shalt cease to fill thy flaming car;
Thy fiery face
Grown pale and old, in fragments burst, afar
Strewn shalt thou be upon the fields of Space,
And some new sun arise belike to fill thy place.

Yet shalt thou have, at least,
Sleep following due on the funereal feast
And (Time's behest
Grown void for thee,) no longer shalt from East
Thy daily round of drudgery run to West,
But sleep, in darkness drowned and unremembering rest.

But we, alas! but we,
Whose brain it was that bore the world and thee,
For us, no sleep,
No cease from being is. The Will-To-be
Still drives us on from life to life, like sheep;
Still, though worlds wane, our thought the weapon-watch
must keep.

Still, though suns wax and wane,
Of the creator in our restless brain
Born and reborn,
Done by our thought to death and raised again,
We 'neath the burden of the worlds forlorn
Must toil nor ever sleep the sleep that knows no morn.

IN VAIN.

I call unto the night for thee, my dear,
  And it for thee replies;
Thy voice upon its wandering winds I hear;
  Its soft stars are thine eyes.

I call unto the dawn for thee; and dawn
  Me with the tender glow
Answers, that flushed thy cheek in days bygone,
  When we met, long ago.

I call unto the noon for thee, and it
  Stoops o'er me with thy smile,
The smile of softened splendour infinite,
  That greeted me erewhile.

What profits all? If I were moon or sun,
  Thy kiss might quicken me;
If I were dawn or breeze, belovéd one,
  I might clasp hands with thee.

But since thou art returned to Nature back
  And body hast put by,
I know not how to win to thee, alack!
  Excepting if I die.

ELDORADO.

Field on field,
Glittering in the sunset, like a golden shield,
  'Gainst its levelled lances
In defence upheaving,
  Spreads the sea.
As the low light glances,

Webs of purple weaving
O'er the liquid lea,
Islands in the setting,
Of the sun's begetting,
From the Western distance slowly rise to be.

Isle on isle,
Glamorous in the glory of the sunset's smile,
Where the billows shimmer,
'Gainst the skyline showing,
In the West,
There fore'er they glimmer,
Worlds past mortal knowing,
Islands of the Blest,
Where, since Adam chased was
Forth of Eden, placed was
Of man's thought the portal of the Lands of Rest.

Line on line,
Black against the blazon of the sunset-shine,
Birds each other, flying,
Follow, like beads threaded
On a string,
To the Westward hieing,
Whence the darkness dreaded
Rises, hovering;
Tow'rd the distance golden,
Where the night is holden,
Year in, year out, seeking none knows what, they wing.

Year by year,
When, with Spring returning, once again they're here,
Many a mate behind them
In the darkling distance
Left have they.
Did these others find them,
In some new existence,

Fair and far away,
What they sought or lonely,
Dropped and died they only,
As in this our weary world of night and day?

Hour by hour,
Friends and comrades leave us, by some viewless power
From the daylight driven,
Tow'rd the unknown regions
By some breath
Blown of Hell or Heaven;
Whence, of all their legions,
None, returning, saith
If their Eldorado,
In that world of shadow,
They their land of promise found or only death.

?

What of the Night?
The sky still darkens; the stars are white:
No sign in heaven of coming light.

What of the Day?
Alas, who knoweth? The lift is grey;
The wisest can only watch and pray.

What of the Past?
No reckoning sure can the seeker cast,
But as the First was will be the Last.

What of the Now?
The Present passes with knitted brow
And lips that babble of Why and How.

What of To-be?
This only scripture our eyes can see;
No note Time taketh of you and me.

DE PROFUNDIS.

Out of the deeps have we sighed to Thee,
Cried to Thee,
God, o our God!
Conjured Thee, bidden Thee bend to us,
Lend to us
Help with Thy nod;
As of old time to Thy haltest, Thy maimest,
O'er the wild waters, Thou heark'nedst and camest,
Walking dry-shod,
Called Thee to come to us;
Yet wast Thou dumb to us,
Cold as a clod;
Silence wherever we sought and supineness!
Token was none for our sense of Divineness,
None but Thy rod.

Nought but Thy wrath hath been known to us,
Shown to us,
Nought but the blaze
Born of Thine anger the depths of our darkness hath sundered;
Still with reproachment through-lightened Thou hast and [through-thundered
Our nights and our days:
Still the fierce floods of Thy malisons hast Thou unchained [on us:
Never the soft-falling showers of Thy favour have rained
Watered our ways. [on us,
Where is Thy grace, of whose glories our fathers have told us?
Where is Thy righteousness' sun, that should wrap us and [hold us

Warm with its rays?
Where is Thy tender compassion, Thy pitiful dealing?
Where are Thy kindnesses loving, Thy waters of healing,
God of our praise?

See our sad souls, how they turn to Thee,
Burn to Thee,
Flamelike, in prayer!
Wilt Thou not look through Life's night on us,
Light on us
Making our care?
Why hast Thou hidden Thy face from Thy creatures?
Long 'tis, through cloud-curtains showing Thy features,
Fearful and fair,
Since Thou hast been of us
Hearkened or seen of us,
As of whilere.
Why hast Thou turned a deaf ear to our weeping?
Why hast Thou suffered the darkness come creeping
Over our air?

Art Thou, then, wroth with us, for that reliance
Setting on Science
Born but to die,
Seeking the world-all to know, so for us we might win it,
Earth in our hand have we taken, with all that is in it,
Distant and nigh,
Furrowed the scapes of the sea by the pole-pointing needle,
Meted the mountains and eke with the cloud-winger Daedal
Measured the sky,
Made of the lightning our messenger, darkness and distance,
Giants that frown from the gloom on the fields of existence,
Shouldering by,
Bounden in bondage the spirits of fire and of water,
Gutted the ground in the service of greed and of slaughter,
Scarce knowing why?

Nay, all these things have we done but in quest of Thee,
Lest of Thee,
Lord, we should be
More and yet more with the gathering ages forsaken,
Lest, of the fast-falling darkness, our eyes, overtaken,
Night but should see.
Nay, all the ways of the world-jungle have we but furrowed,
All through the earth and its gloom-guarded bowels have [burrowed,
Mastered the sea,
Tracked all the deserts and drunk at their far-flowing [fountains,
Ploughed through the snow-wastes and measured the Heaven-
But on this plea; [scaling mountains,
But of desire for Thy face the star-secrets unravelled,
Yea and the sky-spheres and spaces of Heaven have we [travelled,
Seeking for Thee.

Can it be, Lord, that Thou art after all but a miser,
Better nor wiser
Than those of old date?
Set is Thy soul, as was theirs, all Life's harvest on reaping?
All that is fruitful and fair art Thou bent on upheaping
Still in Thy gate?
Art Thou, as Jove of old time, but a God of denying,
Letting thy creatures, in vain, with their craving and crying,
Beat at Heaven's grate?
Hast Thou no soul for their striving, no heart for their [yearning,
Still a deaf ear to the sound of their sufferance turning,
Early and late?
Art Thou but careful to hinder Thy handiwork's striving,
Hold back men's outstretching arms at Thy throne from [arriving,
Wouldst but with Fate
Fetter the child, hand that lifteth to lay hold on Heaven,
Looking to grapple and get him the lamps of the Seven
Archangels great?

Nay, I believe it not! Not on this guise art Thou.
Holy and wise art Thou,
Gracious and pure.
Hadst Thou a God of such sort been as those of old story,
Brute Will incarnate, Thy power had long passed and Thy
Might not endure. [glory
Nay, not in rancour nor jealousy hid'st Thou Thy features,
Though, with Thy wrath-clouds, 'twould seem, Thou the
[world to Thy creatures
Makest obscure;
Nor, like Zeus, liest await in Olympian defences,
Men from their Heaven-seeking flight with the snare of
Looking to lure. [the senses
Thou from our striving aloof hast but held, as a father
Letteth his children vain hopes by experience rather
Learn to abjure.
Like him, Thy care to Time trusts, not coercion, for showing
How idle lore is, how futile ambition, as knowing
Better, for sure,
Were it to suffer Thy child for himself, by endeavour,
Prove how inapt are the toys, which he cherishes, ever
Peace to procure,
Leave him alone to discover how vain is thought-taking
And from his heaven-scaling dreams to reality waking,
Work his own cure.

So, when Time humbleness taught hath us,
Brought hath us
Wisdom and grace,
When, in our hearts, what he teacheth us,
Preacheth us,
Pride shall efface,
When, our void hopes and our visions fantastic forswearing,
Us at Thy feet shall we, Lord, of Life's frenzy despairing,
Cast and abase,
All that we sought have and followed for folly confessing,
Looking for nought but to find us at last, in Thy blessing,

Shelter and place,
Then shalt Thou shine on us,
Mild and Divine, on us
Bending Thy face;
Then shall Thine arms everlasting enfold us, enwinding,
Then shall we nestle again in Thy bosom, rest finding
In Thine embrace;
Then shall Thy mercies o'erflood us, within and without us,
Shedding, — or e'er we go back to the darkness, — about us
Peace for a space.

THE TWO GATES.

Happy, belike, is he
Who, having, end to end, explored Thought's trackless sea,
Returneth back again to Ignorance's shore
And settling 'midst his kin, the folk that never think,
The endless quest gives o'er
And leaves the sounding of the obscure To-Be
To those who have not stood on Time's abysmal brink.

At Being's either pole
A bare blank wall there is, that bars the exploring soul.
Here is the Gate of Birth; the Gate of Death is there;
Though whether Birth is Death or Death is Birth, who knows?
No sign there is of stair
By which our feet may reach the eternal goal;
And still 'twixt gate and gate Life's sea resurgent flows.

Yet, none by other's fate
Admonished, still men fare, seeking, from gate to gate,
The secret of the things that are beyond the abyss,
The keys of Life and Death expecting still to find,
Though whether that or this
They know not nor the terms can calculate
Of spheres that lie beyond the orbit of the mind.

This being so, God wot,
Were it not well, — if not contented with our lot
To sit, — to cease, at least, against the eternal rocks
Our brows fore'er to bruise and spend our strength in quest
Of keys to unknown locks,
To ask no more of what for us is not
And take what here alone on earth is certain, — rest?

Nay, that, indeed, might be,
If moulded of mere flesh and blood alone were we.
Alack, within our veins an unknown ichor runs;
An other-worldly stress there stirreth in our brain;
Our dreams by other suns
Are lit; our thoughts, upon another sea
Than those of this our earth, to other spheres outstrain.

So, though the endeavour all
In vain we know, the stern, the inevitable call
Of those invisible powers, to which akin we are,
Still biddeth us go beat against the cliff-line sheer,
Till, when the fatal star
Ordains, a passage gape in either wall
(We know not which) and we pass in and disappear.

THE FASHION OF THIS WORLD.

Life hath lost its savour;
Soul is grown a slave.
Who from Wont the Slaver,
Who is there shall save?

When shall Time's impress on
Thought to harvest turn?
When shall men the lesson
Of the ages learn?

When, from out the pages
Of the kings of thought,
Practise that which sages,
Prophets, poets taught?

When shall they, the vainness
Knowing of the quest,
Leave Life's long insaneness,
Turn their eyes to rest?

Free from fruitless striving
Set the hands and feet,
Cease from heaping, hiving
Honey none shall eat?

Leave the long endeavour
After Gods without?
(Idle hoping ever
Brought despair and doubt.)

Cast the toys of Science
To their native wind,
Call the old affiance
Back, the quiet mind?

Truce to pride and passion,
Strife and sorrow, say,
For the waste world's fashion,
Let it pass away?

Leave the loveless asking
Of the How and Why,
In the sunbeams basking,
Live before they die?

* * *
* *

Shall I see it? Never!
Worlds must wax and wane
Ere the world's endeavour
Turn to truth again;

Ere, from Darkness' grudges
'Gainst the Light, men, free,
Cease to be the drudges
Of the Will-to-be;

Ere the stress of seeking,
Still with vain conceit
Out their void lives eking,
Loose their labouring feet;

Ere desire forsake them
After vain increase,
Ere from greed they cease,
Seeking but to make them,
Ere the darkness take them,
Just a pause of peace.

NATURE AND HER LOVER.

Friendly and faithful is Nature, the one thing, indeed, that deceiveth not.
Him with a whole heart who loveth her still without solace she leaveth not:
Whoso hath faith in her favour, whatever befall him, he grieveth not.

Though the whole orb of existence turn all his days its dark side to him;
Though all men value, wealth, worship, friendship, love, peace, be denied to him,
Though, like a waste without water, desert and lonely Life bide to him,

Yet hath he Nature to lead him and lighten his path purgatorious;
Yet with her changes and chances she cheers him, the Mother Laborious;
Yet with sweet Summer she renders his days and his nights glad and glorious;

Yet her weird wonder of Winter in peacefulness snow-calm enwinds him;
Yet her soft sadness of Autumn of Death the Deliverer minds him;
Yet, with its annual atonement, her Spring from thought's fetters unbinds him;

Yet, to enlighten his loneness, the webs of her sunsets are weft for him;
Yet, his sad spirit to quicken, her quiet of midnight is left for him;
Yet, with her marvel of morning, the dream of the darkness is cleft for him;

Yet, for his pleasance, her cloud-rack, her skies, with their changes, created are;
Yet, of her grace, his crude fancies in flower-speech and bird-song translated are;
Yet her grass springs for his solace, her trees with new leaf for him freighted are.

Love, ay, and care for her servant wide-writ to his eye on her features are;
Friendly and fain to who loves her, the Mother of Life, all her creatures are;
Blossoms, trees, meadows, skies, mountains, beasts, birds, all his tenders and teachers are.

These, that are coy unto others and cold, to him trustful and tender are,

Him for the ádept foreknowing, whose love they birth-
bounden to render are:
But for the lover of Nature her secrets, her sweets and
her splendour are.

Holy and helpful is Nature! Who loves her in her an
acquitter finds
From the world's needs and its wishes: who trusts in her
troth Life less bitter finds
And when the hour of deliverance come is, Death fairer
and fitter finds.

KING OF DREAMS.

"Seems, Madam? Nay, it is. I know not seems."
Hamlet the Dane,
(So named, but very Englishman ingrain,)
Prince of the principality of dreams,
Lord of the line of those who walk the world in vain,
In action little swift, for wealth of thought,
Still following, through the windings of the brain,
The fancies many-hued,
That spring, at every turn, as 'twere from nought,
And by the sense through all the ways pursued
Of wit, are lost at last in Doubt's immense Inane,

Sad spirit, born to love and to be loved,
To walk the ways
Of grace and gladness in the sun's full blaze,
Yet by the tyranny of thought removed
Forth of this outdoor world of common nights and days
And doomed forever, far from Love and Light,
To travel lands unblest of brightening rays,
Life's echoes but to hark
Across the immeasurable seas of Night
And in the soleness of the spirit's dark,
To chase conceit and doubt through Fancy's tangling maze,

Thy dreaming word it was, us first that taught,
— Us, who, like thee,
Without delight, content are to be free,
— The inexorable tyranny of Thought:
Thou 'twas that lessonedst us first in that to see,
— Which to the common sense doth only seem,
Seems and is not, — the one reality
And Life, its joy and dole,
Light holding as the fabric of a dream,
The things that pass and happen in the soul
Alone to reckon worth th'account of such as we.

One only through the world of consciousness,
From pole to pole,
Led us as thou and so Creation's whole
Begotten showed of Thought's omnipotent stress.
Yet thou 'twas pointedst him the path unto his goal,
Three hundred years ere Schopenhauer came,
The joys and pains that mingle in Life's bowl
Approving void and naught:
Wherefore still highest, Hamlet, stands thy name,
As king for ever of the realms of thought,
Lord of the Land of Dreams and Sovran of the Soul.

NOX GRAVIDA.

اللّيل حبلى لست تدري ما تلد

(The night is pregnant: thou knowest not what it will bring forth.)

Arab Proverb.

The night's with child,
The Arabs say;
What will the issue be of coming day?
What will the night bring forth?
Soul mine,

The winds are wild,
The Orient heaven grows for nearing morning grey.
East, West, I turn; I scan the horizon South and North;
Hill, sea, heaven, earth,
In fine,
With strained and weary eyne,
I search for presage of forthcoming birth;
In all their dull sad scape of dark and dearth
I seek and see no sign.

And this our Life,
A darker night
Than ever fell for lack of the sun's sight,
What bears it in its womb?
Who knows
If of its strife
Parturient aught shall come for the unbodied spright
But some amorphous birth of unenlightened gloom?
If, beyond Death,
There blows
The poppy of repose,
Whose scent extinguisheth our mortal breath,
Or that strange flower which Dante's song foresaith,
His Paradisal Rose?

RISUS SOLAMEN.

Laughter the lodge is in the wilderness,
Whereto the hermit soul
Withdraws for shelter from Life's labouring stress,
The island-refuge, midmost seas of dole
Standing, wherefrom, poor seaman in distress,
Saved from the wrack, it marks the surges roar and roll.

It is the wicket in the wall of doubt,
The open dungeon-grate,

Wherethrough the imprisoned soul the worlds without
Surveys and by its providential gate,
Lets Heaven's air in upon Life's rabble-rout,
Content to laugh to scorn what else it needs must hate.

It is the buckler that the sage employs
Against the fiery shower
Of ills and pains that mar the thinker's joys,
The mail, wherein encased, as in a tower,
He fares, unscathed, through Life's abhorrent noise,
Wroughten of unspiteful scorn and humour's tragic power.

It is the sword wherewith the wise are fain
To encounter and repel
The insults of the vulgar, the profane,
That else would make the thinker's way a hell,
Might he with scorn not fend Life's ceaseless rain
Of "insults unavenged and unavengeable." [1]

The Ithuriel-spear it is, wherewith he slays
The noisome things which creep,
Toad-like, among Life's blossom-broidered ways,
The spell wherewith he charms his cares to sleep;
Since the high soul, Life's tragic farce that plays,
Must laugh perforce, if tears of blood it will not weep.

YOU AND I.

Far away, far away,
In the sun-setting sky,
Past the darkening day,
Past the westering beams,
Far from labour and life,
Far from smile and from sigh,

[1] Wordsworth, The Excursion, III.

Far from struggle and strife,
In the bottomless blue,
Where the stars rise and set,
Where the Old is the New,
Where men sleep and forget,
On the shores of the streams,
Where oblivions lie,
We were born, you and I,
In the Island of Dreams.

We are exiles, we two,
In this world of the night,
Where the sun is a ghost
And a semblance the light:
We have nothing to do
With its ban and its boast,
With its Gods, though long dead,
That yet darken Heaven's height,
Blot the stars from our sight.
Our least is its most
And our poison its bread:
We are strangers outright
To the wildering wraiths
Of its hope and its dread,
To its phantoms of faiths.

Is our exile etern?
Shall we never again
Leave this dungeon of earth,
Where we languish, we twain?
Shall we never return
To the land of our birth?
Will not Death set us free,
Through his portal, the stern,
To the palm-studded plain
And the mere with its girth
Of gold-blossoming lea,

Where the appletrees rain,
In the memoried track,
By the murmuring sea,
You and me, to go back?

Nay, I fear me, too long
Have we dwelt here below.
Night neareth; 'tis late
And Day's taper burns low.
We are weak; Life is strong
And no light in Death's gate
Is to guide us aright,
Nor a bird with its song
Bids us whither to go.
Can our visions elate
Have been blotted outright
By Life's perishing show?
Can it be, we, in truth,
Have forever lost sight
Of the dreams of our youth?

Alas, our heart's gold
Have we squandered in vain!
We have bartered away
For false pleasure true pain:
Our hopes are grown cold
And our heads fallen grey.
Nay, however we yearn
For our pleasaunce of old,
How our eyes though we strain,
Yet no longer we may
The way thither discern.
Since What Is we were fain
To exchange for What Seems,
We shall never return
To the Island of Dreams.

PACEM APPELLANT.

The peace of God that passeth understanding!
Ah, mocking dream of Paul, that knew no peace,
Still without cease
Hither and thither blown of hope and doubt,
Driven of all winds of doctrine East and West
Upon Thought's troubled ocean, never landing
On any dreamy isle of palms upstanding
Against the sunset, for an hour of rest,
Still of the rabble rout
Of vain surmises tossed the world about!
Alack, what knewest thou
Of peace, sad soul, thyself that never knew'st,
Thou, on whose thought and doubt-bewrinkled brow
That bird of Heaven's sublimest, farthest blue,
That feedeth but on Paradisal dew,
Might never find a place wherein to roost?
Of peace, indeed,
Thou pratedst but as some forwandred wretch,
Dying in the desert, far from human heed,
Under the passion of the pitiless sun,
Where the hot sand-wastes to the horizon stretch,
Wave after wave, and water is there none,
His thirst to stay,
Prates of the purling wellspring 'neath the palms,
All over-rounded with the radiant calms,
The sunset-silences of dying day,
Hidden in some oasis of far away.
What preachest thou to us of peace, o Paul,
Whose strenuous life,
Forever wrecked upon the rocks of strife,
Had for its music but the battle-blare,
The shrilling stridors of the clarion's call,
For whom, enamoured of the storm-thrilled air,

The mellay hot,
The frenzy of the fight was all in all?

Thou canst not speak for peace, that knewst it not.

The peace of God! What God had ever peace?
Shall any hold
In his one hand the Past and the To-be,
End and beginning, germ and growth and cease,
Earth, sky and sea,
Evil and good, moon-silver and sun-gold,
The Present and the Future, New and Old,
Dearth and increase,
The springs of life and death and heat and cold,
Summer and Spring and Winter, foul and fair,
The keys of flood and thunder, Day and Night,
The fountains of the darkness and the light,
And yet know peace, that is the lack of care?
Nay, of all Gods that were
Throned of our thought upon the heights of blue,
Since first the world with morn and eve was new
And the high lights of heaven were in the air,
Certes, none farther was from peace than He
Who died for men upon the accurséd tree,
Died in despair,
Forsaken of His high unhearkening Sire,
Fate-foiled and baulked of His divine desire,
In His death-agony
Attesting, in the face of earth and sea
And sky, that quaked for pity of His pain,
Having more ruth upon Him than the Lord
To whom He cried in vain,
That He, the would-be Saviour, came to bring,
Being overmastered of Necessity,
— That power of powers beyond the Gods, — a sword
Upon the sorry suffering sons of men,
A sword, and not that balm

Of peace celestial, everywhere and when,
Through every case ensued of churl and king,
So therewithal their sorrows they may calm
And hush to harmony Life's dissonant psalm.

Nay, Thou, the Anointed Son
Of Israel's God, Jehovah's Chosen One,
Thou sweetest soul this earth that ever trod,
Jesus, Thou knewest not the peace of God.

The peace of God! Even the Gods of Greece,
Who, as one saith, to whom these songs of mine
Glad homage yield, "were only men and wine,"
Even these, who took Life lightly, had no peace.
Their own ambrosia held
No spell secure against the birds of care
That winged their way up through the Olympian air,
Earth's murmurings, that knelled
Still in their ears, like passing-bells of doom,
Mingling their menace with the hum of prayer
And sacrifice, and stormed the heavenly stair
With auguries of gloom,
Forebodings dull of thunders drawing nigh
And tones prophetic of the times to be,
When Saturn's sons to a new dynasty
Of Gods must yield the empery of the sky.
Light as their yoke and eath
Lay on the earth, amidst the folk beneath,
In town and country, hamlet, hill and holt,
What was there but revolt
And murmur without end and clamouring
Of the dull, thankless human race, the dolt
Blind populace, that Stork to Log for king,
Still as the usance is of foolish man,
Unthinking, have preferred, since Time began?
Nay, in Heaven's self, within
Jove's very sacred courts Olympian,

Variance ran riot and the air august
Was dizzy with the din
Of strife and overshadowed with the dust
Of discord still among the Thunderer's kin.
Or, if the Gods might for a moment drown
The cares of kingship in the ambrosial cup
And laying down
The sceptre, give themselves to revelling up,
The nobler ones whom they begat than they,
The heroes gendered of the Gods whilere,
The burden of the world for them to bear,
In weariness, in sorrow and affray,
The price of their misrule for them must pay.
For that Prometheus to the folk supine,
When the Gods left the world in darkness dire
To cower and pine,
In gloom and cold, brought down the boon of fire,
Needs he, in Caucasus, his sin divine
Must on his mountain-crucifix of stone,
Saviour Primaeval, to all time atone:
And for that Zeus the earth in toil and wrong,
In turmoil aud in woe,
Let of his lightness wallow, Hercules
His hero-soul in travail and unease
By land and sky and sea must fretting go,
The things life-long,
That, being in wrong forefashioned, to the end
In wrongness must persever, still in vain
Endeavouring to amend,
Must wear his life in weariness and pain
And die, at last, despairing, on the pyre,
What while his heavenly sire
Still drowsed and revelled in Olympus hall,
Yet, for all feasting, might not from his ears
Shut out the accusing cries,
That, from earth surging to the sleeping skies,
Shore through his slumbers like a trumpet's call;

Whilst, floating, Fate-borne, from the Future's ways,
The mounting menace of the coming years
Darkened his dream, phantasmal, with dismays.

Nay, in Olympus was no peace at all.

Peace, yet they say, in slumber is. — Alack,
Sleep is a boon
Given and withholden of the Gods at will;
Whereof, beneath the lapses of the moon,
How many sorry souls there be that lack
Nor of its flower-dew flood may drink their fill!
Year in, year out,
How many eyes there be that watch the night,
Enrounded of the shifting shadow-rout,
Crawl through the channels of the dark to day,
Nor close until the phantom dawn, crept back
Along the horizon grey,
Lay on their lids its hand of ghostly white!
How many minions of the moon there be
Who, when she rides, must wake perforce to see
Her pearl-car climbing through the pale cloud-pack!
Nay, if sleep come for calling, now and then,
In answer to our plea,
How many of us miserable men, —
How many? Nay, far rather say, how few
There be, who, falling from its heavenly place,
As it were honeydew,
Feel on their longing lids the granted grace
Of consummated slumber, sweet and true,
Of sleep unstirred, consolatory, deep!
How many, stretched on the tormenting rack
Of tortuous dreams, must, hour-long, night-long, lie
And watch the waste years creep,
Phantasmagoric, o'er the background black,
And all the piteous Past troop trembling by,
To Memory reluctant mirroring

Each fain-forgotten thing,
Each noble purpose, only born to die,
Each golden harvest that Time failed to reap,
Each heaven-high hope of youth by age unwon,
Each bygone deed of shame,
That rends the soul, each righteousness undone,
Against the dazzling dark, in traits of flame,
Painting each dear-belovéd face, each form
Once cherished, now from sight of moon and sun,
From sense of good and evil, cold and warm,
Shut in the grave,
Bidding our loves, that lie beneath the grass,
Before us, one by one,
Resurgent on rememorance's wave,
In pale procession, by the corpse-light, pass,
Till the tired eyes have no more tears to weep
And the racked soul cries out for one to save!

Alas!
Alas! Thou bringest us scant peace, o Sleep.

In coelo quies! Peace in Heaven, they say,
Is.
Since to any heaven there is no way
Save by the port of death, still open set
To all who draw Life's breath,
Peace, rather might we say, is but in death.
Surely, in death there should be peace! — And yet,
And yet! Shall then this passionate heart forbear
In death itself to follow on Life's fret,
This boiling teeming brain of ours forswear
Its long accustomed ways of thought and care?
Shall memory cease of pleasure and of pain?
Shall Death benumb,
With its sheer thunderstroke of "Be-no-more!"
The passionate pulses of the heart and brain,
So that the life therein, the senses' store,

The throbbing thought, shall all at once fall dumb
Nor memory at the core
Of the slain Self awaken e'er again?
Alack! We scarce can credit that this strife
Of ours is but a dream,
A vision of the night, to end with death,
As those which vanish with the morning's breath
And are forblotted of the auroral beam.
Uneath it is to deem
That this our many-mingling, strenuous life,
Our great and goodly life, that holds the keys
Of lands and skies and seas,
Our life, that seemed immortal as the light
And as invulnerable in its might
To any power and process of decay
As is the golden glory of the day
Or as the silver splendour of the night,
Should ever own Death's sway
And with the passing body pass away.
Impossible, indeed, to us it seems,
Though, dust, to dust
This flesh return and frittered of Time's rust,
Blood, bones, nerves, sinews mingle with the clay,
That through the brain the old imperious dreams
Should cease to roam, that, in the accustomed track,
From earth to Heaven and down to Hell again,
Memory and phantasy no more should strain
Nor forth and back
Fare through the skies and past the starry plain.
We cannot deem that man that sleep of death,
Wherein remembrance no more entereth,
Should ever sleep or know the blesséd cease
Of torturing thought, that seldom left him here
An hour of calm.

We know not and we fear.

Yet, peradventure, room there were for hope;

Since to the darkling sphere
Of Death's all-puissance who a bound shall set?
Who with His all-permuting might shall cope,
Saying, "Thou shalt fare no farther?"

Nay, He yet,
Belike, of His omnipotence, some spell
May hold in store,
Such as can even thought to cease compel
And charm the sense in slumber evermore;
So, in the ultimate darkness, past the scope
Of Time and Space, deliverance and release
From all Life's travail seeking, when we grope,
God willing, we may yet at last find peace.

THE BREAD OF LIFE.

Nothing under Heaven,
In this world-all watered by the planets seven,
Is unblent with pain.
Even as hail and thunder, snow and frost and rain
Ear the earth and fit it flowers to bear and grain,
So the fierce Fates mould us in the mills of strife;
So the barm of Sorrow, with its bitter leaven,
Bears the bread of Life.

Truth its best bloom, beauty,
Seldom shows for seeking: "Allah's," says Siyouti, [1]
"Is a rugged road."
Deep the plough of patience, ere the seed be strowed,

[1] Hafiz es Siyouti, a famous Egyptian theologian and traditionist of the fifteenth century. If we may trust to contemporary report, he seems to have himself troubled the "rugged road" in question but little, having, rightly or wrongly, borne the reputation of being a reveller.

Long must labour's harrow score the earth, when sowed,
Winter, Spring and Summer o'er it come and go,
Long the sheaves must ripen in the sun of duty,
Ere the harvest show.

Winds of woe must sunder
From the chaff the corn out; stress's mill-stones under,
Ground must be the grain,
Bolted by experience from the husk unsane,
With the yeast of yearning and the salt of pain
Blended and by Fortune kneaded, ill and good,
Ere from out Life's ovens come the bread of wonder,
For the spirit's food.

TENEBRÆ.

In the dark, my soul, thou goest groping,
Helpless hands forthstretching, fearing, hoping,
Eyes unseeing, ears unhearing oping.

What are these that waver round about me,
These of whom I fain am, yet misdoubt me?
Is the darkness in me or without me?

Shadow-hands out-holden are to greet me;
Shadow-eyes from out the shadow meet me;
Shadow-pinions pass and overfleet me.

Nay, I know you. You my youthful years are,
Years of manhood, years of hopes and fears are,
You my memories of smiles and tears are.

You, that now are but a phosphorescence
Of the darkness, once a real presence
Had and walked with me in pain and pleasance.

Once your radiance all my road enlightened;
Once your presence all my pleasures heightened;
Once your faces all my fancies brightened.

Kinsfolk once to me from fair and far lands
Seemed you, from the high celestial star-lands
Coming to me, hands fulfilled of garlands,

Gladdening me with many mystic stories
Of the lands beyond the sunset-glories,
Of the realms whereunto Death the door is,

Strains of spirit-music to me bringing,
Snatches of the stars' and seraphs' singing,
Echoes of the bells of Heaven's ringing,

Paradisal plains to me portraying,
From the angels' stores my spirit straying
'Gainst Earth's weakness with Heaven's honey staying.

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Now myself in you I see and hearken;
Now your voices but the silence starken
Round me and your eyes the darkness darken.

Now I see that you no visitations
From high Heav'n were, only emanations
From my self, in all its incarnations.

As mine eyes grow dim, the spent fires smoulder
Out in yours; and as my blood grows colder,
Cold you grow, and old, as I grow older.

Now I see that you with dreams but plied me,
Youth and manhood past, to age to guide me,
Blind and deaf to all that might betide me;

That, mine eyes when you with visions blinded,
When your elfhorns in mine ears you winded,
Deaf to Life them making, you but minded

Were to hinder me Life's void from knowing
And its burden off untimely throwing,
Ere the season come was for my going.

Tools therein you were of Nature, caring
Only lest her creature should, despairing,
Cease, before his term, her chains from wearing.

Now, your aim attained, you cease from seeming,
Care no more to colour this my dreaming
With your radiant hues, your glories gleaming.

Now the gathering years in gloom have drowned me,
In your shadow-shapes you hover round me,
At the chains, wherewith of old you bound me,

Straining ever, signing me to follow
Where, within his vasty caverns hollow
Hid, the Sovran Shadow waits to swallow

All the tale of Tíme and all Life's reaping,
Shadow up on shadow ever heaping,
Till all Life is in his shadow-keeping.

* * * * *

Nay, I know the way. No need to show it!
Lead, I follow. It is time, I know it:
Needs Death's debit must they pay that owe it.

DREAM AND DAWN.

A voice, in a dream,
At the noon of the winter night I heard,
When the world was agleam
With the wildering white
Of the moon
And never a bird
On the wing
Or a thing
There was to be seen
In the night,
But the sheen
Of the pale phantasmal light
On the shimmering snow.
A silence there was as of death,
And nothing, no voice and no breath,
There stirred,
Save the crack of the frost-taken trees
And the ebb and the flow
Of the fluttering breeze,
As it eddied and erred
To and fro
On the face of the wold,
In the track of the conquering cold.
No sign and no sound
On the glimmering ground,
No stir in the wide-woven haze
Of the moon-mist, the world-all that wound
In the weft of its argent rays,
No pipe of a passer-by,
No fall of a foot on the ways,
No song of a bird in the sky.

It spoke of the things which were
And the things which are to be;

It told of the thickening air
And the mists of sorrow and care,
That gathered o'er land and sea;
It spoke of the world's despair
And the gloom that, day by day,
The face of the heavens o'ergrew,
Straitening the steadfast blue;
It murmured of life grown grey
And darkened with doubt and strife,
Of thought fear-fettered and song that goes,
Fighting its way through a host of foes,
Seeking a sunnier clime:
And shrill as the wail of the wind it rose,
As it told
Of the fast-coming time,
The time when the world shall have fallen old
And the peoples, cumbered with care and gold,
No heaven left them tow'rd which to climb,
Shall wallow, unholpen, in night and cold
And find no foster, no hand to hold,
No saviour to further them forth of the slime.

"Yet, yet is it time," it said:
"Yet, yet may the curse be awried;
Yet, yet may the folk, if they turn aside
From the track that tends to the pit of hell
And the path of the place of dread,
Yet, yet may they see the morning tide
And the world awake from the dead.
Yet, yet, if they wend from the wildering quest
Of shame successful and gain undue,
Base strife forswearing and greed unblest,
Unfruitful vantage and vain increase,
And turn them again to the Fair and the True,
Content hereafter with love and peace,
Reborn shall Life be and bloom anew:
The world shall be quit of curst unrest,

Of riches and poverty:
No more shall the folk from East to West,
The rich and the poor, the strong and the weak,
For void and vanity still contest
And strive by land and sea.
No need thenceforward for Heaven to seek
Past the towering clouds and the mountain-peak;
For Heaven on earth will be."

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The things that it spoke I cried aloud
To the easeful few and the toiling crowd,
To all men, far and near;
In the night and the noon and the morning-tide,
The tale in season and out I cried,
For all the world to hear.
I sang my loudest; but no one hearkened;
None heeded, low or high:
Not a word, not a sigh,
Not a sign, made reply
To the stress of my song-straitened soul.
But dayward and nightward, from pole to pole,
The silence deepened, the shadows darkened,
Till sad as the winter night was the summer day,
And Life went staggering still on its lightless way.

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The days and the weeks and the years went by,
In gloom and silence, and nothing came,
No voice of thunder, no hand of flame,
To lighten the lowering sky:
But still Hate ruled in the world and Greed
And still men battled for more than need
Nor reckoned of aught but their aimless aim

To win and so to die.
The ages came and the ages went;
And still no sign for the eyes attent
There showed of coming change.
Till sudden it seemed as if Life listened
And far in the East, through the cloud-rack rent,
A glimmer of morning grew and glistened.
The darkness flowered o'er the Orient range
With a blossom of daybreak sweet and strange;
And deep in the heart of the distance grey,
There spoke from the mountains the trumpets of morrow-
The black cloud-canopy burst in sunder; [ing Day.
The blue awoke with a blaze of wonder;
And lo, of the echoes volleyed and hurled
From pole to zenith in peals of thunder,
The voice of my dream was the voice of the wakening world.

ETERNAL QUESTION.

Since you are dead,
My queen,
And dead with you
Are all the gracious things
You used to do,
The lovesome sweetnesses you looked and said,
The tender thoughts that harboured in your head,
Dead as the Summers past, the bygone Springs,
Dead as the blossomtides of heretofore,
As that which once hath been
And is to all eternity no more,
How comes it that the throstle yonder sings,
That in the woods the primroses are new,
The cowslips in the green
Pale golden glitter even as of yore
And are yet trinketed with diamond dew,
That, in their primal sheen,

Unmindful of your life, my love forsped,
The seasons wear the livery erst they wore,
That roses yet are red,
That jessamines are white and Heaven is blue?

With eyes unsure for tears,
I look upon the linden's golden cloud,
She loved so, when in May
It leafed and laughed and blossomed, myriad-boughed.
This year forlorn, as in the happy years,
It buds and blows and brims the blissful day
With breath of Faërie,
Telling in scent its tale of things bygone
And things that yet shall be
In elfin realms, where mortal hopes and fears
Are not and thought is free
From Time, nor Life by mortal night and dawn
Strait-measured goes beneath the blossomed bough.

Back from Spring's golden Now
Unto the golden Then, when life was love,
I look, from earth a-bloom to Heaven above
A-flower with sun and song:
Idly I look and marvel idly how
These all, that owe their life to thought, can be,
Can thus that life prolong,
Resurgent still anew,
Can sleep and wake again and have new birth,
Once Winter's death is o'er and fields are free,
Beneath the unclouded blue,
When she, who thought them into life for me,
Death's gate unto the Silent Land passed through,
Forever lifeless lies
And sleeps beneath the all-engrossing earth,
Thoughtless and senseless, knowing dark nor light,
In unawakening night,
Where nothing is but nothing, nothing sure,

To all eternity,
But Death the pale and pure,
God of the deafened ears and darkened eyes,
And we,
Who lived but in her life, must needs endure
Blank earth without her presence and blank skies.

Ah, piteous problem! Since Death first began
With the voracious earth
All that is precious in the eyes of man,
All that is most of worth,
All that is fair, for evermore to cover,
Nor might, for any questioning, discover
That which he would withal nor how his ban
Had root in cause, how many and many a lover,
His ripening harvest smitten of death with dearth,
Hath with his sorry thought
Wrestled and striven in vain and vainly sought
To solve the sad enigma of his woe,
His hopes first nursed by Nature into flower,
As 'twere in very wantonness, one hour,
And in the next, as idly, evenso
To nothingness inexorable brought!
How many have the answer striven to know
And found it but in blank unanswering Nought!

Yet in their unreturning track I go,
Down-trodden of the many-mingling feet
Of myriad generations, fool and sage,
And to the irresponsive heavens repeat
The idle question of so many an age.
Nay, silence, trifler! Hide thy foolish head.
Best were it mute
To be, when speech in nothing profiteth
And thought-taking still barren is of fruit.
The Summer passeth; see, the vines are red
And Autumn's mist the coming frosts foresaith.

Nay, lesson take
By Nature and that grief,
For which no mortal ever found relief,
For very decency and manhood's sake,
Cover, as doth she, with green and golden leaf.
What booteth it complain, when all is said,
Or seek to awake
The unexistent Gods with prayerful breath?
Peace! 'Tis in vain to question of the dead;
And peace in presence meetest is of death.

SAT ME LUSISTIS.

I.

Oft, in the wailing weather.
Before the dawning grey,
I hear a dream-voice calling
From regions far away:
"Yonder," I hear it say,
"The sapphire seas are falling,
"All through the golden day,
"Upon the silver shore.
"Let us go thither, thither.
"There will we dwell together
"And sunder nevermore.

"Far, far beyond the setting,
"A land of love there lies,
"Where there shall no more weeping
"Be for the weary eyes;
"Where, under bluebell skies,
"Frail blooms of Faith's begetting,
"Thy dreams, not dead, but sleeping,
"Transfigured shall arise,

"To greet thee on the strand;
"There Love and Life, forgetting
"This world of fruitless fretting,
"Go ever hand in hand."

2.

Go, tell your cheating story
To those who know you not.
Your wiles no more delude me,
That never have forgot
The deserts cold and hot,
The sandwastes red and gory,
Wherethrough my life you wooed me
To waste in quest of what
You knew might never be.
Now that my head is hoary,
Your seas, your shores of glory
Are nought in nought to me.

Your golden islands, glowing
Out yonder in the West,
Long, long have ceased to lure me
Upon their fruitless quest.
If Hope within my breast
Once flamed for Fancy's blowing,
Time hath availed to cure me
Of all but wish for rest;
And by the extinguished fire
I dwell, delight forgoing,
My one desire the knowing
The vainness of desire.

DIIS VENTURIS.

Les temps sont venus
Pour les dieux inconnus.
THÉODORE DE BANVILLE.

I.

Gods of the days to be,
Swift be the faring of your shining feet!
Why tarry ye?
The world is weary of the Gods effete,
Whose shadows linger on Olympus seat.
O'er lands and skies and seas
No spirit hovers, such as heretofore
Spoke in each wave-beat on the moaning shore,
Each shadow on the meadows and the wheat,
Each murmurous rill, each windwaft in the trees.

Christs of the coming times,
Where do ye linger in the distance dim?
Long but a memory,
A rose of old romance, in fable-climes
Flowered out and faded into fading rhymes,
Remembrance is of Him,
The shadow-God of stony Galilee,
Whose shadow-life upon the shadow-tree,
Faint through the ages 'gainst the horizon's rim,
A shadow-death to deity sublimes.

Long of the olden Gods
Men's minds are empty, as the heavens are bare.
Yonder, in the blank of blue,
Jove hath long ceased to wield the thunder's rods:
From the void heavens no more Jehovah nods
Nor Allah from the air
Reluctant smiles on those to Him that sue:

No Thunderer volleys at the recreant crew
Nor with the lightnings smites them to the clods:
No incense climbs the high coerulean stair;
No altars smoke with sacrifice and prayer.

All tarries, low and high,
For that which is to come. The air is great
With presages of fast-approaching Fate.
Surely the times are nigh,
The foreappointed times for which we wait,
With eyes uplifted to the lowering sky.
The sun in Heaven's gate
Grows pale and cold for lack of deity:
Men's hearts are sick of hope; the hour is late;
With age light saddens over land and sea
And still there come no Gods to gladden me.

II.

I know not what ye are,
Who tarry yet beyond the topmost star,
The Future in your hands to make or mar.

What Joves for us you hold,
What Phoebus with the bow and lyre of gold,
What Dians diademed with moonbeams cold,

What Cytherea waits
To light our lives behind the Morning's gates,
What Loves to laugh to scorn the frowning Fates,

I know not, nor your heaven,
Whether you number by the Baalim Seven,
The Æsir Twelve or by the Brahms Eleven.

This only, this I know,
You shall be no mere Gods of wail and woe,
No cross-bound weaklings, such as oversow

The labouring fields of Life
With harvest-centuries of hate and strife
And strew behind them sorrow ever-rife

And hope that faileth still,
That all the ways of thought with fear fulfil
And leave Life fenceless 'gainst the usurping Will.

Nor shall you be of those
Who give folk helpless to a host of foes
And future pleasance pledge for present woes,

Who promise men a mock
Of Heaven to come with Hell on earth to unlock;
No apers of Prometheus on his rock,

Without the saving fire
Th'immortal Titan stole from Jove his sire,
To light the darkling world for Life's desire.

You shall be none of these.
Where they have wrought us sorrow, you shall ease,
Strengthening the bent backs and the feeble knees.

Gods shall you be of joy,
Led by some radiant Dionysiac boy
To solve the world of sorrow and annoy.

Where those that went before
Of sin and sufferance and atonement sore
Told and of soul and body still at war,

You shall of life and light,
Of grace and gladness speak in the sun's sight,
Shall lead the morning through the halls of Night.

Your presage life foresaith,
No making ready for swift-coming death,
But joy new-drawn with each recurrent breath.

Forth of the Past-time's gloom
Your world, delivered from the shadow of doom,
Its head shall like a lily lift and bloom.

Love over all shall reign,
New earth, new heavens, new-purged of sorrow's stain,
And Peace return to dwell with men again.

Yea, yours shall be the time
Of Life new-blossomed in a golden clime,
Washed and made white of all the ages' slime,
Soul's hunger quenched and body grown sublime!

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Would I might see it, I!
Would Heaven I might its coming but aby,
But live to look upon its face and die!

Ah, would to God! But, nay;
I share the old world's curse and must away
With it to night, before the coming day.

SOUL'S TWILIGHT.

The hour 'twixt sleep and wake,
The twilight of the soul it is, when all things take
Fashions and shapes
Other than those in this our world that are,

When Thought itself in webs of mystery drapes
And clothes itself in colours from some star
Borrowed, that in the Inane ethereal shines afar.

An other-worldly haze
Then to the spirit cleaves and all the sense arrays
In webs of gold
Woven on the Dreamland's looms, of richer hue
Than was that tapestry of fable old,
Wherein each man his own desire might view
And through the fairy fields his heart's delight ensue.

Then every common thing
Transfigured is; the thoughts are butterflies that wing
To other skies
Than those which canopy our earthly sphere
And soaring, fearless, on their far emprise,
Explore the worlds beyond the azure sheer,
In quest of heavenly gems and flowers that blow not here.

Then is it that each word,
Each note, voice, windwaft, sound, by chance, awaking, heard,
A bird of Heaven
Becomes and from the Paradisal throng,
That choir in concert with the Planets Seven,
Borrowing the immortal cadence of their song,
With mirth and music fills our air of woe and wrong.

These tarry with us not;
Most, when from the dream-hour we waken, are forgot:
But such mere scraps
And snatches still as linger in the brain,
When their bright tide no more the sense enwraps,
Suffice to glorify Life's air inane,
As shreds of coloured glass the hues of Heaven retain.

AN OLD REFRAIN.

My share I've suffered of dole and dearth,
With labour plenty and little play:
My bread I've boughten at double worth;
I've given the best of myself in pay:
Scant share of pleasance I've had or mirth;
And now all that loved me are under the clay.
My world is a waste and my song is a sigh;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

I've delved in the Autumn, I've sown in the Spring;
I've holpen in harvest to garner the fruit;
I've lilted in Summer with life on the wing
And carolled in Winter, when all was mute.
But now I have heart no more to sing:
The music's dead in my broken lute,
The bird soared back to its native sky;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

The things that I loved have had their day;
They're all consumed of Time's wasting fire.
The sun hath waned from the world away;
The sad folk grovel in gloom and mire.
My life is lightless; my head is grey;
My soul is weary for wandesire;
I'm sick with regret for the days gone by;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

I'm sick of the riot of spite and strife
That darkens the old all-suffering sun;
I'm weary of hearing the name of Right
Perverted to wrong and rapine done;
I'm weary of hearing the dark called light
By those whose fashions the daylight shun;
I'm weary of warring with lust and lie;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

The blossoming world of the days of my youth
The cheat and the huckster have brought to need:
They've broken the blazon of honour and truth
And crippled Faith's wings with their hate and their greed.
The sweetness of song they have marred sans ruth:
For a flower that they found they have left us a weed:
In the green leaf they've sown; they will reap in the dry;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

They've made of our world, that was well content,
A desert of hatred and doubt and gloom.
Dissembling their aim 'neath a smug ostent,
Our life for their profit they've robbed of bloom.
The teeth of the dragon, wherever they went,
They've sown for harvest: they've left no room
In life for the things that are fair and high;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

Our feet they've fettered with rules of wrong
And bounden our souls in a sordid thrall:
Life blossoms no longer with love and song;
The heel of the spoiler is over it all.
Our souls have hung on the cross too long;
They have drunken too deep of the sponge of gall.
There's none to hearken our bitter cry;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

What worth is life in this time of ours,
That is but a tangle of strife and spleen,
A haggard riot of restless hours?
A quiet grave, where the grass is green
With the sacrament of the sun and showers,
Were better than life so mad and mean.
Aweary for rest and peace am I;
And werena my heart licht, I wad die.

ON THE BEACH.

The sea
Slides up along the sands and spits its spray at me.
A note, methinks, of mockery I feel
In the hoarse cadence of its strident stave,
A hand of steel,
Under the fretwork of the foam, divine,
That clutches at my heart
And carries off a part
Of this sad soul and martyred sense of mine,
Upon the resonant surge of the subsiding wave,
Unto its darkling lair in some abysmal cave.

The foe
Of earth thou art and all thereon that come and go,
Indifferent, inexorable deep!
Tame tigress, still and smiling art thou now
And li'st asleep,
Like a cat basking in the summer sun,
As if thou ne'er hadst known
A dying seaman's groan,
As if thy coiling weeds had never spun
A net wherein to take the labouring vessel's prow,
As if none other thing than smile and sleep didst thou.

And yet
But yesterday thy face with fury was afret,
That smiles upturned now to the sunshine bland;
Thy grinning jaws were white with whirling foam
And on the land
Gaped, as they would devour it, men and all:
Thine angry onset tore
Great gobbets from the shore
And thy brute billows, like a moving wall,
With their embattled hosts the buttressed cliff-line clomb,
Uprearing monstrous arms toward the blue sky-dome.

My heart
Yet fain unto thee is, fair traitress that thou art:
For that unfathomable and infinite,
Still constant, in inconstance, to unrest,
Thou art as it:
As it, from day to day thou art unsame;
And like this soul of mine,
Though earth and sky combine
To master thee, none ever might thee tame.
Thou, like myself, art sad, even at thy gladsomest,
And doubt and darkness dwell beneath thy sunshot breast.

E'enso
I love to haunt thy marge and mark thy fickle flow,
To hearken to thy hoarse persistent song
And fill my fancy with the mystic lore
Of ages long
Bygone, whereof thou tell'st, and worlds forsped.
There, when Life's straitening skies
Close over me, mine eyes
Should look their last on earth; and when I'm dead,
I'd have them bury me, old ocean, on thy shore,
Where I might slumber, rocked of thy monotonous roar.

A LAST TOAST.

Morituri salutamus.

I LIFT my glass To the days that pass And the weeks that wax to years:
A bitter wine Is this draught of mine, A mirth that is mixed with tears;

For the world, that was young With my songs first sung,
Is old with the last of my tune;
The air's grown cold And the silver and gold Are pale of the sun and the moon:

The women and men, That I loved erewhen, Are dead, as my youth is dead;
All, all are gone And I stand alone, With the snows of age on my head.

I look on the face Of the coming race: My faith I find in none;
No eye is bright With the spirit-light, That is not of moon or sun,

The light of the soul, That its deathless goal, Uncounting care or cost,
Still seeking goes, In a waste of woes, For Love and the world well lost.

The eyes, that I see, Look back on me With a mute unmoved amaze;
There's nothing to find Of heart or mind In their dull distrustful gaze.

No noble heat In men's looks I meet, No thought of heavenly things,
No hint of the hope, From earth's dull scope That, us upbearing, wings.

The horse and the ass, As they, toiling, pass, More light have, meseems, in their eyes,
More sense of the spell Of the things that dwell In the spheres beyond the skies.

That sun of glory, Our island-story, That lightens the book of fame,
Unbeaconing burneth; The dull folk spurneth The splendour of England's name.

In heart and brain, In nerve and vein, There flows no generous tide;
Long years of blending Have marred, past mending, The pith of our English pride.

The jackal's scions Have swamped the lion's; The puddle of Celt and Jew
Has poisoned the flood Of the noblest blood That ever a world-race knew.

Men look up never; Their whole endeavour For gain is and sensual ease;
Beyond earth's sphere There is never an ear That hearkens, an eye that sees.

Dull-straining still Through the mists of Will, That wall their lives like a fog,
Brute-like they fare, Unknowing where, Their souls in the power of the dog.

On soulless Science Is their reliance, To spare them the stress of strife:
Earth's conquest dreaming, Their baubles deeming The keys of the House of Life,

They think, sans labour, To win Fate's favour And know not the quest in vain;
Since nought can win us True peace within us Save travail of heart and brain.

Like swine in the ditch, In haste to be rich, They wallow in Life unsweet,
Still "Progress" hailing, Though all is failing, Is falling beneath their feet.

* * * * *

VAIN, vain all showeth To him who knoweth Life's process in the past,
A squirrel-round Of shadows, drowned In darkness first and last;

No whit remaining Of what for gaining Have heroes and sages died,
All swept by Time, With the ages' slime, Away on his shadow-tide;

Each age beginning Anew nor winning By that which its fathers won:
The Sage said true, There is nothing new Nor stable under the sun.

Man born is of dust And return to it must, To be lost in th'abyss of decay:
What progress can be For the waif on Time's sea, That for ever is passing away?

As man is, so race is; All, noble and base, is, Or sooner or later, the grave's:
Each, each hath its hour And is lost, like the shower, That maketh no mark on the waves.

In the tombs of the Past, Toys outworn and offcast, Are the things to have found that we ween:
All, under the sun, That can said be or done, Said, done and forgotten hath been.

* * * * *

O FOOLISH men, Since the suns, erewhen That were, have lost their light
And all our lore is In vain their glories To render again to sight,

Since myriad races Their faded faces Have hidden beneath the soil
And lost to Fame Is their very name And the trace of their termless toil,

How shall you hope To span Time's scope With the pulse
of your puny thought,
When these, that were great, Have bowed to Fate And
died with the deeds they wrought?

How shall you stay, Who are less than they, As the worm
is less than the star?
How shall you think Fame's draught to drink, When these
forgotten are?

Nay, bow your necks, Time's thriftless wrecks, Sad slaves
of senseless Will,
Of Will that drives Your lightless lives From dark to
darkness still.

Bow, bow the head To the forces dread That rule the
Furies' rods!
Bend, bend the knee To the Needs-must-be, The power
behind the Gods!

Nor harsh nor kind, But deaf and blind And dumb it is,
alack!
No stress of yours, No wit enures To turn it from its track.

One only charm Against its harm, Against its idiot ire,
One only spell Shall stead you well, Surrender of desire.

This, an you will, Shall serve you still: By this alone you can
Away from you The ills fordo, That mar the life of man.

Yet by this sign May you repine Offcast, and lust put by,
Wring from Fate's claws Some little pause Of peace, before
you die;

Some little leisure From pain and pleasure, Some space of
thought contrite,
Some hour of balm, In the sunset-calm, Before the coming
night,

Austere and tender, More fit to render, With purificative breath,
The world-worn soul For the making whole With the sacrament of death.

* * * * *

THIS, this my hope is; Though waste Life's scope is And Heaven is blank and blind,
I strain my eyes Through the lightless skies, For signs of the light behind.

Though all in my ken Is void and men Are faithless, my faith is strong;
The time to be, That I shall not see, I hail with the last of my song.

My cup I raise To the coming days; I hail them with hallowing rhyme;
Across the ages, The bards and sages I pledge of the purging-time,

The time that shall come, When my voice long dumb And my dust is cold in the clay,
The era of peace, When strife shall cease, At the close of the world's long day;

When battle and pest, When toil and unrest Their worst shall have wrought for men
And the one shall be free In the frank To-be, Where now there are lazars ten;

When all, high and low, Shall have learned to know That the kindly fruits of the earth,
With love and peace, In their due increase, Are all that is winning-worth;

When men shall the town For the field and the down
Forsake, for the ream and the rill,
The roar and the reek For the peace of the peak And the
silence divine of the hill;

When all shall go back To the mow and the stack, The
sod and the sward and the vine,
Content to forswear The curse and the care Of wealth and
the lust of the eyne;

To put off the greed, On the beast in the mead That preys
and the bird on the bough,
And wool but to reap, And not life, from the sheep And
but milk from the goat and the cow;

When Love shall be lord In the world outwarred And
weary of toil and lust,
When men with forgetting Shall soothe Life's setting And
pass in peace to the dust.

IN the name of the days When Love the ways Shall rule
of the ransomed earth,
When poor shall be none Nor rich 'neath the sun, The
days of the world's rebirth,

With the wine of my soul I brim up the bowl, With love
and laughter and scorn;
And I drink this last toast, In the teeth of a host Of ills,
to the Coming Morn.

ERRATA.

Page	line				
8.	24.	For	"peace"	Read	"cease."
158.	16.	„	"aud"	„	"and."
159.	14.	„	"contest"	„	"content."
217.	17.	„	"silence"	„	"stillness."

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