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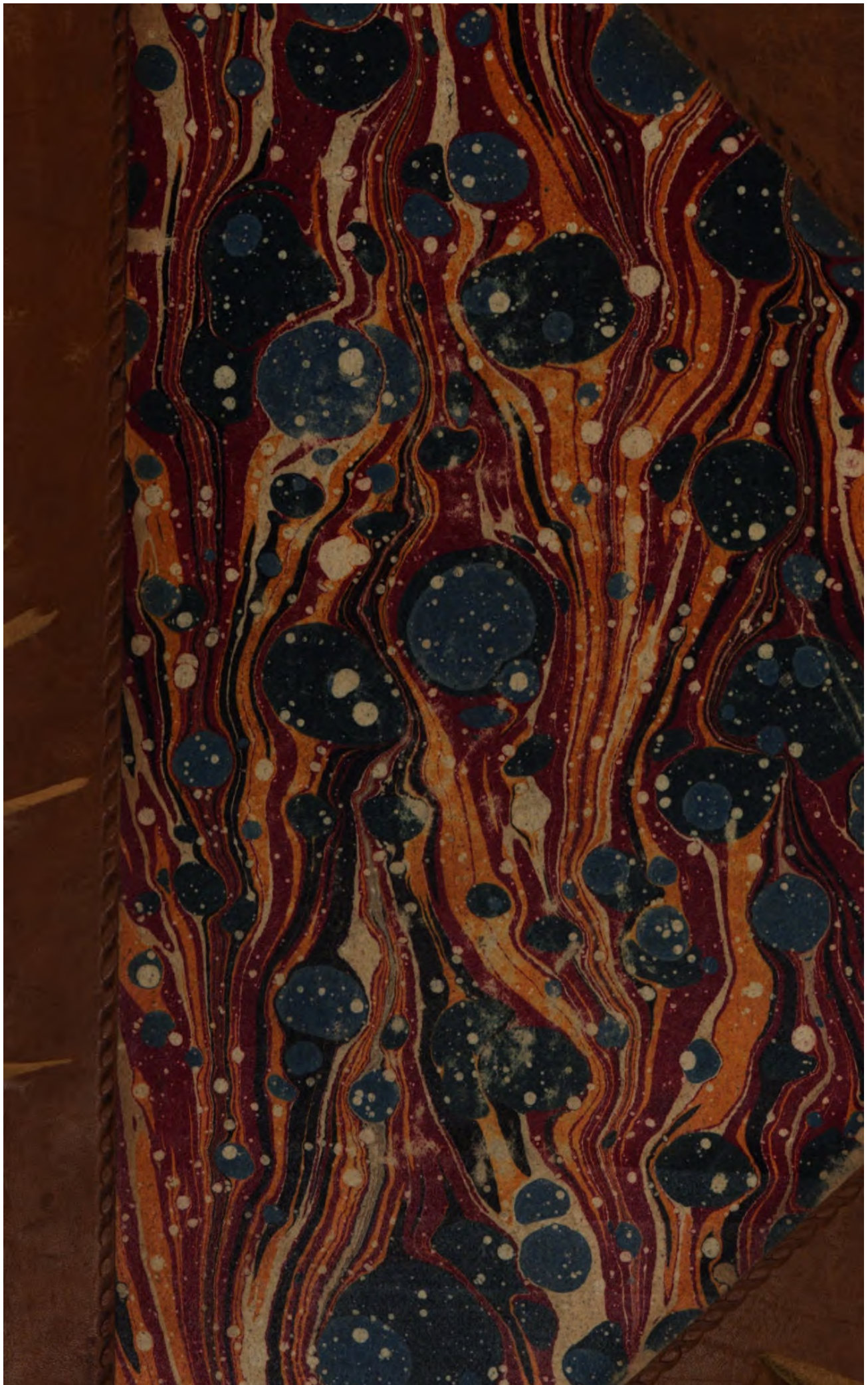
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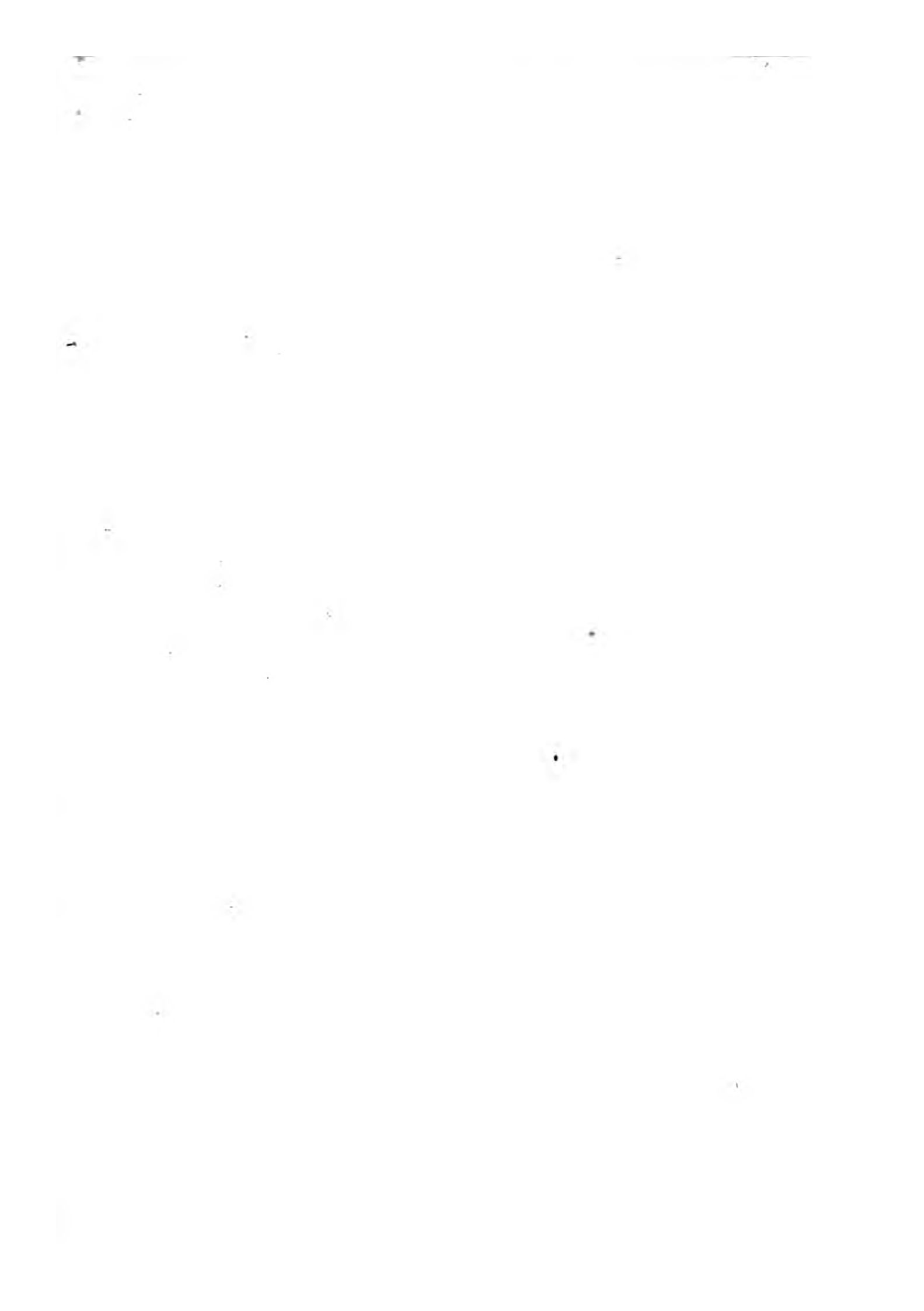
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POEMS OF MANY YEARS.

POEMS OF MANY YEARS.

BY

RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES.

A NEW EDITION.



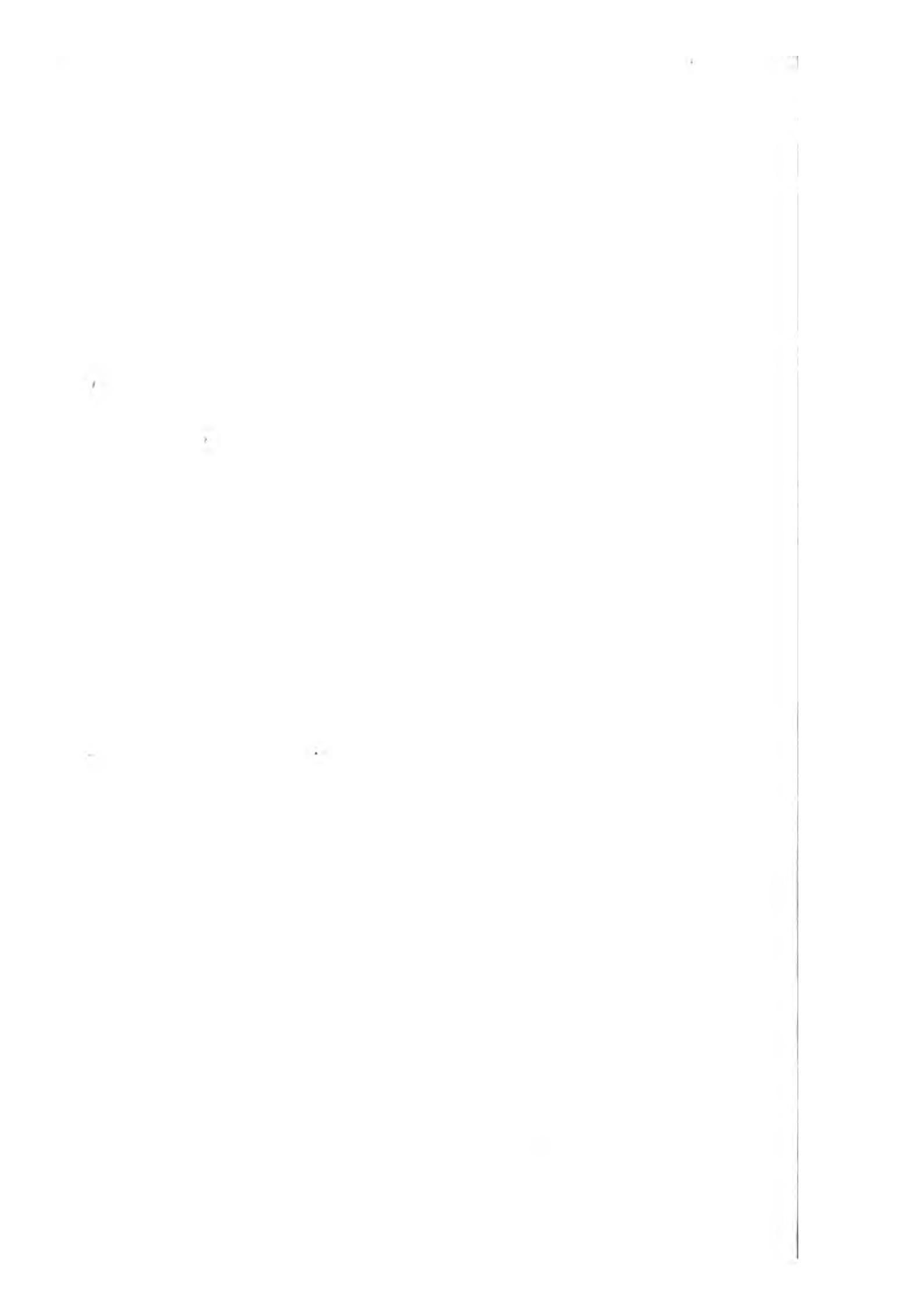
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TO THE MEMBERS OF
" THE CONVERSAZIONE SOCIETY,"
ESTABLISHED AND STILL CONTINUED IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,
THIS EDITION OF
" POEMS OF MANY YEARS "
IS DEDICATED
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF KNOWLEDGE COMMUNICATED,
AFFECTION INTERCHANGED,
AND INTELLIGENCE EXPANDED.



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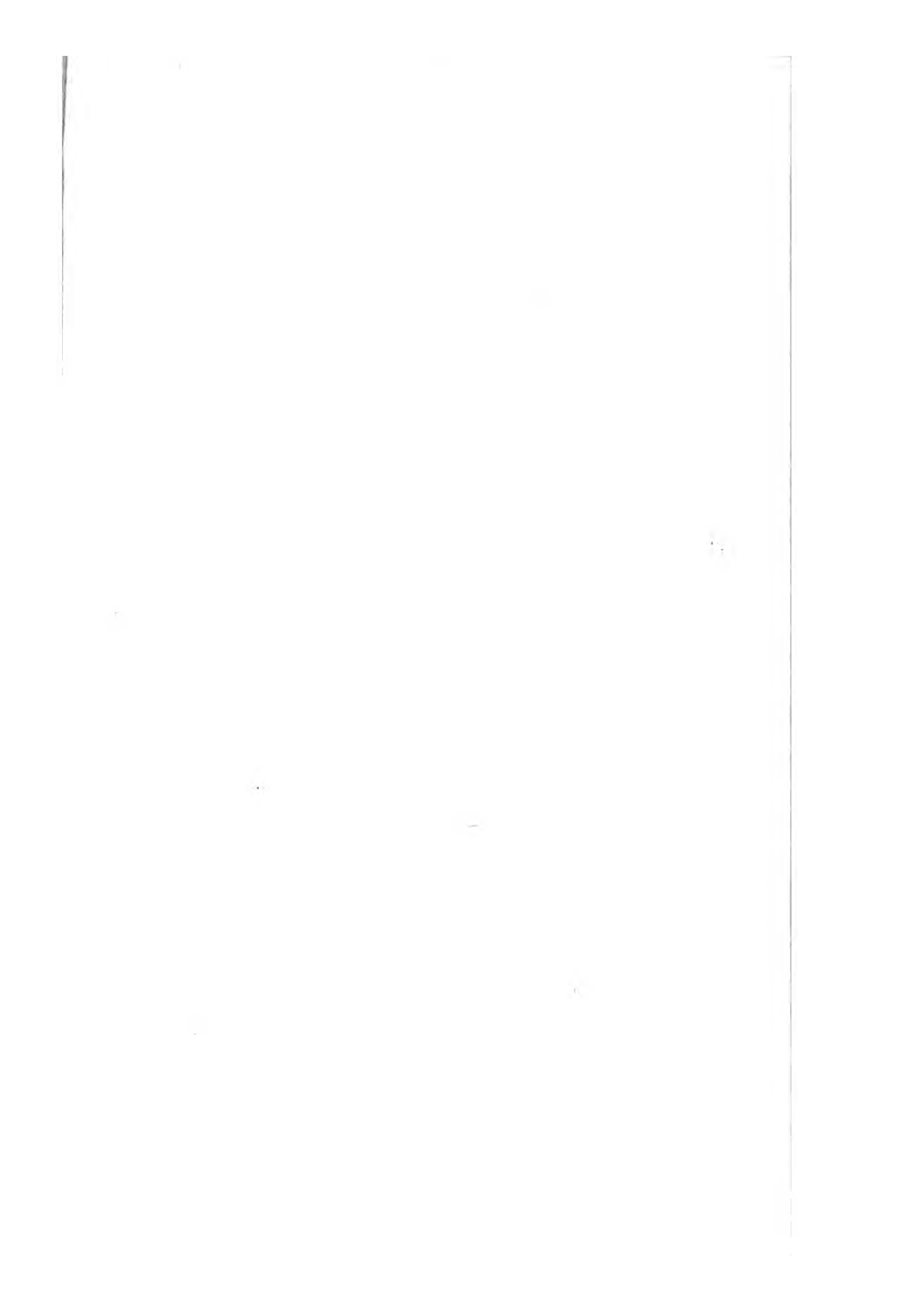
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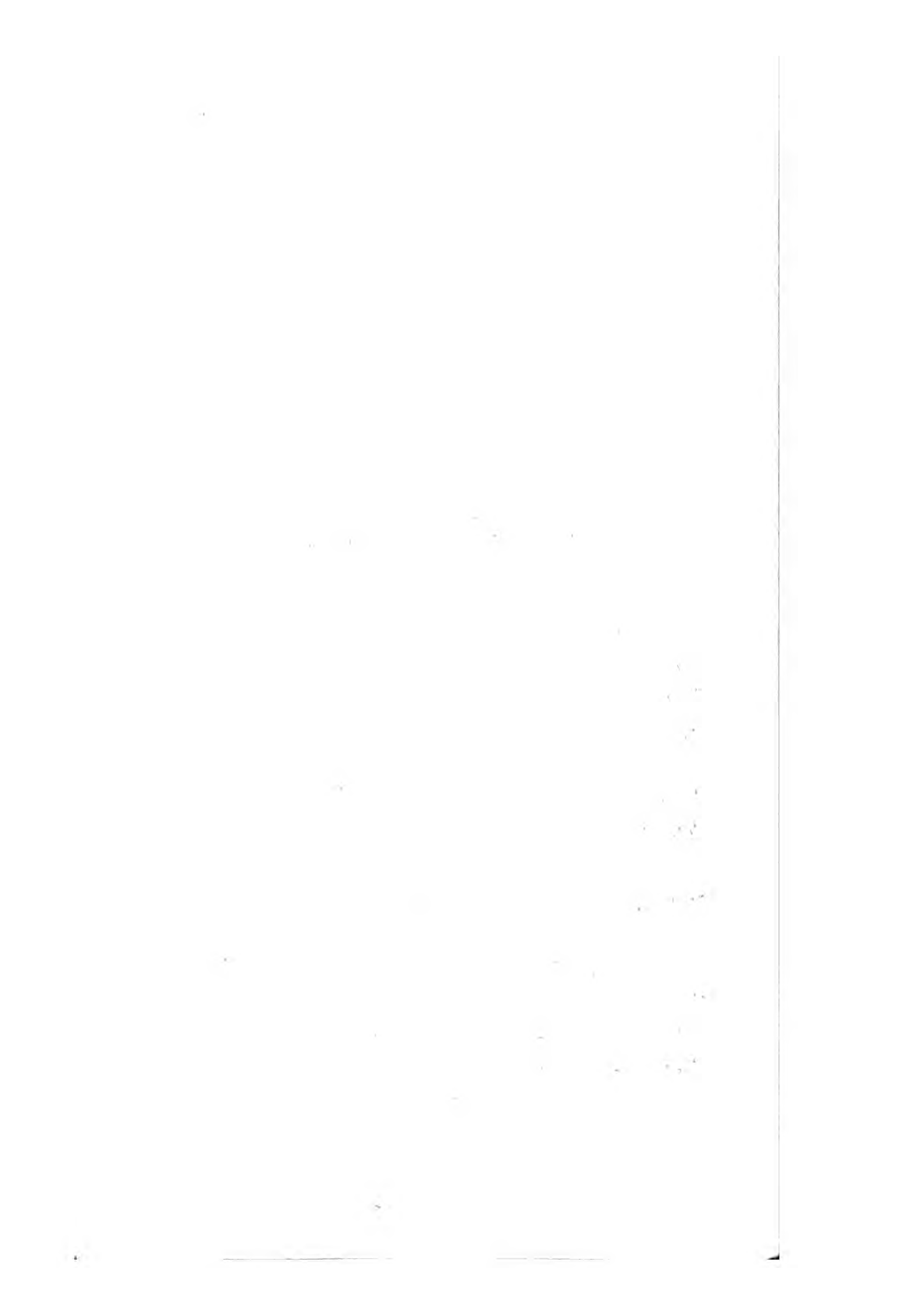
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THE
BOOK OF YOUTH.



TO —,

FIVE YEARS OLD.

DELIGHTED soul ! that in thy new abode
Dwellest contentedly and knowest not
What men can mean who faint beneath the load
Of mortal life and mourn an earthly lot ;

Who would believe thou wert so far from home ?
Who could suppose thee exiled or astray ?
This world of twilight whither thou art come
Seems just as welcome as thy native day.

That comely form, wherein thy thoughts are pent,
Hiding its rebel nature, serves thee still,
A pliable and pleasant instrument,
Harmonious to thy impulses and will.

Thou hast not spent as yet thy little store
Of happy instincts :—Thou canst still beguile
Painful reflection and ungrateful lore
With many a placid dream and causeless smile.

And when the awful stranger Evil bends
His eye upon thee, Thou wilt first essay
To turn him from his dark pursuits and ends
By gracious dalliance and familiar play :

As well might kindly words arrest the roll
Of billows raging o'er a wintry sea,—
O Providence ! remit to this one soul
Its destined years, and take it back to Thee.

TO A CHILD

WITH BLACK EYES AND GOLDEN HAIR.

WHEN first, on that fair morn of May,
Thou cam'st across my pilgrim way,
My joy was shaded by much fear ;
Thy hair, all made of very light,
Seemed almost too supremely bright
For Earth,—I asked Why wert Thou here ?

But when I watched those eyes below,
So clear, yet darkling like the flow
Of waters in a silent cave ;
I felt they were of human birth,
Of Earth, though of the best of Earth ;
Quietly lucid, sweetly grave.

Dear child, by Nature double-dowered,
Thee I would surely deem empowered
A great ensample-work to do ;
To show that Man, however crowned
With rays of Heavenly Love, is bound
To Earth's serene Affections too.

YOUTH, that pursuest with such eager pace
Thy even way,
Thou pantest on to win a mournful race :
Then stay ! oh, stay !

Pause and luxuriate in thy sunny plain ;
Loiter,—enjoy :
Once past, Thou never wilt come back again,
A second Boy.

The hills of Manhood wear a noble face,
When seen from far ;
The mist of light from which they take their grace
Hides what they are.

The dark and weary path those cliffs between
Thou canst not know,
And how it leads to regions never-green,
Dead fields of snow.

Pause, while thou mayst, nor deem that fate thy gain,
Which, all too fast,
Will drive thee forth from this delicious plain,
A Man at last.

THE FLIGHT OF YOUTH.

—◆—

No, though all the winds that lie
 In the circle of the sky
 Trace him out, and pray and moan,
 Each in its most plaintive tone,—
 No, though Earth be split with sighs,
 And all the Kings that reign
 Over Nature's mysteries
 Be our faithfulest allies,—
 All—all is vain :
 They may follow on his track,
 But He never will come back—
 Never again !

Youth is gone away,
 Cruel, cruel youth,
 Full of gentleness and ruth
 Did we think him all his stay ;
 How had he the heart to wreak
 Such a woe on us so weak,
 He that was so tender-meek ?

How could he be made to learn
To find pleasure in our pain ?
Could he leave us, to return
Never again !

Bow your heads very low,
Solemn-measured be your paces,
Gathered up in grief your faces,
Sing sad music as ye go ;
In disordered handfuls strew
Strips of cypress, sprigs of rue ;
In your hands be borne the bloom,
Whose long petals once and only
Look from their pale-leavèd tomb
In the midnight lonely ;
Let the nightshade's beaded coral
Fall in melancholy moral
Your wan brows around,
While in very scorn ye fling
The amaranth upon the ground
As an unbelievèd thing ;
What care we for its fair tale
Of beauties that can never fail,
Glories that can never wane ?
No such blooms are on the track
He has past, who will come back
Never again !

Alas ! we know not how he went,
We knew not he was going,
For had our tears once found a vent,
We' had stayed him with their flowing.
It was as an earthquake, when
We awoke and found him gone,
We were miserable men,
We were hopeless, every one !
Yes, he must have gone away
In his guise of every day,
In his common dress, the same
Perfect face and perfect frame ;
For in feature, for in limb,
Who could be compared to him ?
Firm his step, as one who knows
He is free, where'er he goes,
And withal as light of spring
As the arrow from the string ;
His impassioned eye had got
Fire which the sun has not ;
Silk to feel, and gold to see,
Fell his tresses full and free,
Like the morning mists that glide
Soft adown the mountain's side ;
Most delicious 'twas to hear
When his voice was trilling clear
As a silver-hearted bell,

Or to follow its low swell,
When, as dreamy winds that stray
Fainting 'mid Æolian chords,
Inner music seemed to play,
Symphony to all his words ;
In his hand was poised a spear,
Deftly poised, as to appear
Resting of its proper will,—
Thus a merry hunter still,
And engarlanded with bay,
Must our Youth have gone away,
Though we half remember now,
He had borne some little while
Something mournful in his smile—
Something serious on his brow :
Gentle Heart, perhaps he knew
The cruel deed he was about to do !

Now, between us all and Him
There are rising mountains dim,
Forests of uncounted trees,
Spaces of unmeasured seas :
Think with Him how gay of yore
We made sunshine out of shade,—
Think with Him how light we bore
All the burden sorrow laid ;
All went happily about Him,—

How shall we toil on without Him ?
How without his cheering eye
Constant strength embreathing ever ?
How without Him standing by
Aiding every hard endeavour ?
For when faintness or disease
Had usurped upon our knees,
If he deigned our lips to kiss
With those living lips of his,
We were lightened of our pain,
We were up and hale again :—
Now, without one blessing glance
From his rose-lit countenance,
We shall die, deserted men,—
And not see him, even then !

We are cold, very cold,—
All our blood is drying old,
And a terrible heart-dearth
Reigns for us in heaven and earth :
Forth we stretch our chilly fingers
In poor effort to attain
Tepid embers, where still lingers
Some preserving warmth, in vain.
Oh ! if Love, the Sister dear,
Of Youth that we have lost,
Come not in swift pity here,

Come not, with a host
 Of Affections, strong and kind,
 To hold up our sinking mind,
 If She will not, of her grace,
 Take her Brother's holy place,
 And be to us, at least, a part
 Of what He was, in Life and Heart,
 The faintness that is on our breath
 Can have no other end but Death.

Oh ! that I were, as I was, in the days of my youth, when the
 secret of God was upon my Tabernacle ! JOB XXIX. 4.

SIX years, six cycles of dead hours,
 Six falls of leaves, six births of flowers !
 It is not *that*, you know full well,
 That makes my labouring bosom swell,
 'Tis not the memory of lost Time,
 Since last I heard that matin chime,
 That brings to sense the sleeping sorrow,
 To bid this long-left scene good-morrow,—
 It is the curse to feel as Men,
 And be not now as we were then.

The snowy down on yonder hill
 Through thousand summers glistens still,—
 Yon stream will ne'er to time surrender
 Its rapid path of diamond splendour,—
 Yon orb, but now who swept the East,
 With train of ruby' and amethyst,
 Rides on, unweariedly as ever,
 O'er frowning rock, and glittering river ;
 Those trees, I own, are somewhat higher,—
 The ivy round the village spire
 In fuller-clustering leaf has grown,—
 We cannot call that cot our own,—
 But what has changed in this sweet glen
 As we from what our hearts were then ?

Say you, the glow of Hope is bright,
 Or, if it be a meteor light,
 That hurtles through the thickening sky,
 'Tis wise to catch it ere it die ?
 Tell you me, 'tis a joy to feel
 Our toil increase a fellow's weal ?
 That, 'mid these fainting, fading, bowers,
 There linger still some amaranth flowers,
 And honest will, and honest prayer,
 Will find them lurking everywhere ?—
 Say on, I can but add, Amen,—
 We are not now as we were then.

Oh, Brother ! when I gaze upon
 These tombs of little blisses gone,—
 When, through the dense and steamy air,
 Which we with men are wont to share,
 A breeze of distant Youth has stole
 In freshness on my fever'd soul,—
 I feel like one who long has lain
 With madness gathering in his brain,
 And, bursting from the strong distress,
 Wakes to a terrible consciousness.
 Then blame you that my pulse beat now ?
 Blame you the agony on my brow ?
 Time *was*, when fear was all a stranger,
 Ere knowledge showed the way to danger—
 When love was firm,—when faith was sure,
 And head and heart alike secure ;—
 But now, . . . Remember you a flower,
 Which we with care, from sun and shower,—
 It was our mother's,—loved to guard,
 And how we joyed in our reward,
 When first we watched its bloom appear,
 When it was old so many a year ;
 And how we heard, with tearful eye,
 The good old gardener's prophecy,—
 For he was deep in nature's lore,—
 That that bright plant would bloom no more ?
 The flowers fell off,—the stalk was gathered,—
 The root grew dry,—the lank leaves withered,—

And, sad to lose its only pride,
 The poor Agave sunk and died :
Our one, our only bloom is gone,
 But, Brother, still we linger on.

Between the cradle and the shroud,
 If chance, amid the pilgrim croud,
 Though strange the time and strange the place,
 We light on some familiar face,
 Once loved and known, as friend knows friend,
 In whom a thousand memories blend,
 Which whilom slumbered dull and dim,
 But rise in light and cling to him ;
 Though not a line of old as wont,
 Though care has knit the ample front,
 And vice unstrung the well-toned frame,
 Still something,—*something* is the same.
 But if we ever hope to find
 Some traces in that life-worn mind
 Of its pure self, its simple being,
 Such as it was, when, unforeseeing,
 We thought that Nature's laws would fail,
 Ere Sin could make its boldness quail ;
 Such as it was, ere sensuous things
 Had clipped the bird of Eden's wings,
 Ere stifled groan and secret sigh
 Replaced the tear so soon brushed by,—

'Tis vain,—alas, for human shame !
There nothing, *nothing* is the same.

Oh ! that the painter's favourite scheme
Were not alone a painter's dream !
Oh ! that the Paradise he feigns,
Where Innocence with Childhood reigns,
And cherub forms and infant guise
Inclose the heart divinely wise,
Were not alone a Poet's creed,—
No symbol,—but a truth indeed !
That all this circling life might close
Its wearied course where first it rose,
And that our second life might be
A new, eternal, infancy,
Keeping the bliss we lose as men,
And being aye as we were then !

ON LEAVING A PLACE WHERE ONE HAD
DWELT MANY YEARS.

THERE are some moments in each life
With strange and wayward feelings rife,
When certain words and certain things
Strike on the heart unwonted strings,
And waken forth some solemn tone
Their nature yet has never known :
And it is thus—when from some place,
As from a long familiar face,
Though you may wish the chain to sever,
Still are you sad to part for ever.

Perchance 'twas an unlovely spot,
Perchance too that you loved it not,—
Perchance that in that place had been
Dramas of many a cloudy scene,—
That there the first fresh tear was wept,
Or youth's impatient vigil kept,
That not a day you there had spent
Held its unchequered merriment

Marked by the free heart's earliest throes,
And chronicled by childhood's woes,—
Though soulless men may wonder why
You heaved the involuntary sigh,
And how the loss your soul oppress'd
Of that ill-cherish'd when possess'd,—
Yet when the twinkling eye has cast
One look, and knows it is the last,
And while that look is fixed behind,
In every melancholy wind
A myriad sorrowing voices come,
The sighs of a remembered home,
A long and terrible farewell
Pronounced by lips invisible :
When many an eye with rapture gleaming,
And many a smile with joyance teeming,
That may have saved you from despair,
Or lightened up your sojourn there,
By after-misery sorely tried,
In death embalmed and sanctified,
Have a new life within your brain,
And seem to gaze and beat again.—
Then thoughts of pain are all forgot,
But pleasure's memory passes not :
Yet this by some distortion strange
Its very being fain must change
Using a stern reflective power,
To dim with gloom that parting hour,

As the low trembling spirit strays
Amid the smiles of other days.

These are the eras of Existence,
The seasons these when all resistance
To time and fate must ever seem
A futile unconsoling dream.
So much of life, we feel, is past,
Whene'er we murmur forth "the last,"—
So nearer are we to the shore,
Where time and things of time are o'er,
Where all is Present, and the Past
Of aught can never be the Last.

YOUTH'S FAIR RESOLVE.

DEAR friend, I would that our free life should be
 Like the red blood that bounding from the heart
 Speeds onward through each ministering artery,
 Bearing fresh force to each remotest part,
 And stagnates never,
 Till Death's uncouth and wintry mastery
 Dams up the river.

Is it because our fellows are depraved
 That we should leave our work and be like them ?
 No,—if the laws of love and truth are braved,
 From peasant's cap to jewelled diadem,—
 The more 's the pity ;
 " Ten righteous men," the Patriarch says, " had saved
 The heaven-cursed city."

The hermit sage and ancient anchorite,
 Who went to wilds and made the wolves their friends,
 Even they perchance had fought a better fight,
 And served more righteously their being's ends,

Had they remained
In the world's pale, and kept, with perilous might,
Their faith unstained :

Had they abandoned ev'n the commune high
Which oft in solitude they held with God,—
The lonely prayer, the speechless ecstasy
In which the angel-paths of Heaven they trod,
And sacrificed
Upon that altar which saw Jesus die,
What best they prized.

And I—oh ! think you not I too have known
'Tis sweet to muse beneath the old elm tree,
While night lets loose her drapery's spangled zone,
Or watch the sun-god woo the western sea,
With rich parade,
And send my thoughts, to brave adventure prone,
On strange crusade ?

Or else with you a' strolling hand in hand
Break lances in a tournament of rhyme,—
Dispute about the tints of faery-land,—
Or, by some heritage which olden Time
Has left the wise,
Bid wondrous pageants, as by sorcerer's wand,
Before us rise.

If life were all like this to you and me,
How would it matter to be young or old ?
Where is the privilege of youth's buoyancy,
Could we thus turn Time's iron scythe to gold ?
The pleasures given
To man were all too great, and there would be
No want of heaven.

Let us go forth, and resolutely dare,
With sweat of brow, to toil our little day,—
And if a tear fall on the task of care,
In memory of those spring-hours past away,
Brush it not by !
Our hearts to God ! to brother-men
Aid, labour, blessing, prayer, and then
To these a sigh !

THE LAY OF THE HUMBLE.

Le bon Dieu me dit—" Chante,
Chante, pauvre petit." BERANGER.

I HAVE no comeliness of frame,
No pleasant range of feature ;
I 'm feeble, as when first I came
To earth, a weeping creature ;
My voice is low whene'er I speak,
And singing faint my song ;
But though thus cast among the weak,
I envy not the strong.

The trivial part in life I play
Can have so light a bearing
On other men, who, night or day,
For me are never caring ;
That, though I find not much to bless,
Nor food for exaltation,
I know that I am tempted less,—
And that is consolation.

The beautiful ! the noble blood !
I shrink as they pass by,—
Such power for evil or for good
Is flashing from each eye ;
They are indeed the stewards of Heaven,
High-headed and strong-handed :
From those, to whom so much is given,
How much may be demanded !

'Tis true, I am hard buffeted,
Though few can be my foes,
Harsh words fall heavy on my head,
And unresisted blows ;
But then I think, " had I been born,—
Hot spirit—sturdy frame—
And passion prompt to follow scorn,—
I might have done the same."

To me men are for what they are,
They wear no masks with me ;
I never sicken'd at the jar
Of ill-tuned flattery ;
I never mourned affections lent
In folly or in blindness ;—
The kindness that on me is spent
Is pure, unasking, kindness.

And most of all, I never felt
The agonizing sense
Of seeing love from passion melt
Into indifference ;
The fearful shame, that day by day
Burns onward, still to burn,
To' have thrown your precious heart away,
And met this black return.

I almost fancy that the more
I am cast out from men,
Nature has made me of her store
A worthier denizen ;
As if it pleased her to caress
A plant grown up so wild,
As if the being parentless
Made me the more *her* child.

Athwart my face when blushes pass
To be so poor and weak,
I fall into the dewy grass,
And cool my fevered cheek ;
And hear a music strangely made,
That you have never heard,
A sprite in every rustling blade,
That sings like any bird.

My dreams are dreams of pleasantness,—
But yet I always run,
As to a father's morning kiss,
When rises the round sun ;
I see the flowers on stalk and stem,
Light shrubs, and poplars tall,
Enjoy the breeze,—I rock with them,—
We 're merry brothers all.

I do remember well, when first
I saw the great blue sea,—
It was no stranger-face, that burst
In terror upon me ;
My heart began, from the first glance,
His solemn pulse to follow,
I danced with every billow's dance,
And shouted to their hollo.

The Lamb that at its mother's side
Reclines, a tremulous thing,
The Robin in cold winter-tide,
The Linnet in the spring,
All seem to be of kin to me,
And love my slender hand,—
For we are bound, by God's decree,
In one defensive band.

And children, who the worldly mind
And ways have not put on,
Are ever glad in me to find
A blithe companion :
And when for play they leave their homes,
Left to their own sweet glee,
They hear my step, and cry, " He comes,
" Our little friend,—'tis he."

Have you been out some starry night,
And found it joy to bend
Your eyes to one particular light,
Till it became a friend ?
And then, so loved that glistening spot,
That, whether it were far
Or more or less, it mattered not,—
It still was your own star.

Thus, and thus only, can you know,
How I, even scornèd I,
Can live in love, tho' set so low,
And' my ladie-love so high ;
Thus learn, that on this varied ball,
Whate'er can breathe and move,
The meanest, lornest, thing of all—
Still owns its right to love.

With no fair round of household cares
Will my lone hearth be blest,
Never the snow of my old hairs
Will touch a loving breast ;
No darling pledge of spousal faith
Shall I be found possessing,
To whom a blessing with my breath
Would be a double blessing :

But yet my love with sweets is rife,
With happiness it teems,
It beautifies my waking life,
And waits upon my dreams ;
A shape that floats upon the night,
Like foam upon the sea,—
A voice of seraphim,—a light
Of present Deity !

I hide me in the dark arcade,
When she walks forth alone,—
I feast upon her hair's rich braid,—
Her half-unclaspèd zone :
I watch the fittings of her dress,
The bending boughs between,—
I trace her footsteps' faery press
On' the scarcely ruffled green.

Oh deep delight ! the frail guitar
Trembles beneath her hand,
She sings a song she brought from far,
I cannot understand ;
Her voice is *always* as from heaven,
But yet I seem to hear
Its music best, when thus 'tis given
All music to my ear.

She' has turned her tender eyes around,
And seen me crouching there,
And smiles, just as that last full sound
Is fainting on the air ;
And now, I can go forth so proud,
And raise my head so tall.—
My heart within me beats so loud,
And musical withal :—

And there is summer all the while,
Mid-winter tho' it be,—
How should the universe not smile,
When she has smiled on me ?
For tho' that smile can nothing more
Than merest pity prove,
Yet pity, it was sung of yore,
Is not *so* far from love.

From what a crowd of lovers' woes
My weakness is exempt !
How far more fortunate than those
Who mark me for contempt !
No fear of rival happiness
My fervent glory smothers,
The zephyr fans me none the less
That it is bland to others.

Thus without share in coin or land,
But well content to hold
The wealth of Nature in my hand,
One flail of virgin gold,—
My Love above me like a sun,—
My own bright thoughts my wings,—
Thro' life I trust to flutter on,
As gay as aught that sings.

One hour I own I dread,—to die
Alone and unbefriended,—
No soothing voice, no tearful eye,—
But that must soon be ended ;
And then I shall receive my part
Of everlasting treasure,
In that just world where each man's heart
Will be his only measure.

THE VIOLET-GIRL.

WHEN Fancy will continually rehearse
Some painful scene once present to the eye,
'Tis well to mould it into gentle verse,
That it may lighter on the spirit lie.

Home yester-eve I wearily returned,
Though bright my morning mood and short my way,
But sad experience in one moment earned
Can crush the heaped enjoyments of the day.

Passing the corner of a populous street,
I marked a girl whose wont it was to stand,
With pallid cheek, torn gown, and naked feet,
And bunches of fresh Violets in each hand.

There her small commerce in the chill March weather
She plied with accents miserably mild ;
It was a frightful thought to set together
Those healthy blossoms and that fading child :—

—Those luxuries and largess of the earth,
Beauty and pleasure to the sense of man,
And this poor sorry weed cast loosely forth
On Life's wild waste to struggle as it can !

To *me* that odorous purple ministers
Hope-bearing memories and inspiring glee,
While meanest images alone are hers,
The sordid wants of base humanity.

Think after all this lapse of hungry hours,
In the disfurnished chamber of dim cold,
How she must loathe the very scented flowers
That on the squalid table lie unsold !

Rest on your woodland banks and wither there,
Sweet preluders of Spring ! far better so,
Than live misused to fill the grasp of care,
And serve the piteous purposes of woe.

Ye are no longer Nature's gracious gift,
Yourselves so much and harbingers of more,
But a most bitter irony to lift
The veil that hides our vilest mortal sore.

MUTABILITY.

I SAW two children intertwine
Their arms about each other,
Like the lithe tendrils of a vine
Around its nearest brother :
And ever and anon,
As gaily they ran on,
Each looked into the other's face,
Anticipating an embrace.—
I marked those two, when they were men,
I watched them meet one day,
They touched each other's hands, and then
Each went on his own way ;
There did not seem a tie
Of love, the lightest chain,
To make them turn a lingering eye,
Or press the hand again.

This is a page in our life's book,
We all of us turn over ;

The web is rent,
The hour-glass spent,
And oh ! the path we once forsook
How seldom we recover !

Our days are broken into parts,
And every fragment has a tale
Of the abandonment of hearts,
May make our freshest hopes turn pale ;
Even in the plighting of our troth,
Even in the passion of our oath,
A cold hard voice may seem to mutter,
“ We know not what it is we utter.”

ON MY YOUTHFUL LETTERS.

Look at the leaves I gather up in trembling,—
 Little to see, and sere, and time-bewasted,
 But they are other than the tree can bear now,
 For they are mine !

Deep as the tumult in an archèd sea-cave,
 Out of the Past these antiquated voices
 Fall on my heart's ear ; I must listen to them,
 For they are mine !

Whose is this hand that wheresoe'er it wanders,
 Traces in light words thoughts that come as lightly ?
 Who was the king of all this soul-dominion ?
 I ? Was it mine ?

With what a healthful appetite of spirit,
 Sits he at Life's inevitable banquet,
 Tasting delight in every thing before him !
 Could this be mine ?

See ! how he twists his coronals of fancy,
Out of all blossoms, knowing not the poison,—
How his young eye is meshed in the enchantment !
And it was mine !

What, is this I ?—this miserable complex,
Losing and gaining, only knit together
By the ever-bursting fibres of remembrance,—
What is this *mine* ?

Surely we *are* by feeling as by knowing,—
Changing our hearts our being changes with them ;
Take them away,—these spectres of my boyhood,
They are not mine.

By eating the fruit that grows on the banks of the river of Delight, in the Anostum, in the country of the Meropes, men gain a blessed course of life, without one moment of sadness;—when they are in years, by little and little they wax young again, recovering their former vigour and force, and thence they turn still backward, even to their first infancy, becoming little babes again, and then they die.

ANTONIO DE TORQUEMADA.

BACK again, back again !
 We are passing back again ;
 We are ceasing to be men !
 Without the strife
 Of waning life,
 Or weary fears
 Of loveless years,—
 Without the darkened eye,
 Without the paling brow,
 Without a pulse of pain,
 Out of our maturity,
 We are passing now
 Back again !

Clap your hands ! clap your hands !
 Now are broken all the bands
 Of dull forms and phantom power,
 That could prevent us doing
 What joy would wish to do,—
 For out of manhood's ruin,
 We are growing, hour by hour,
 Happy children too !—

From out the din
 And storm of sin,
 From out the fight
 Of wrong and right,
 Where the wrong
 Is all too strong,

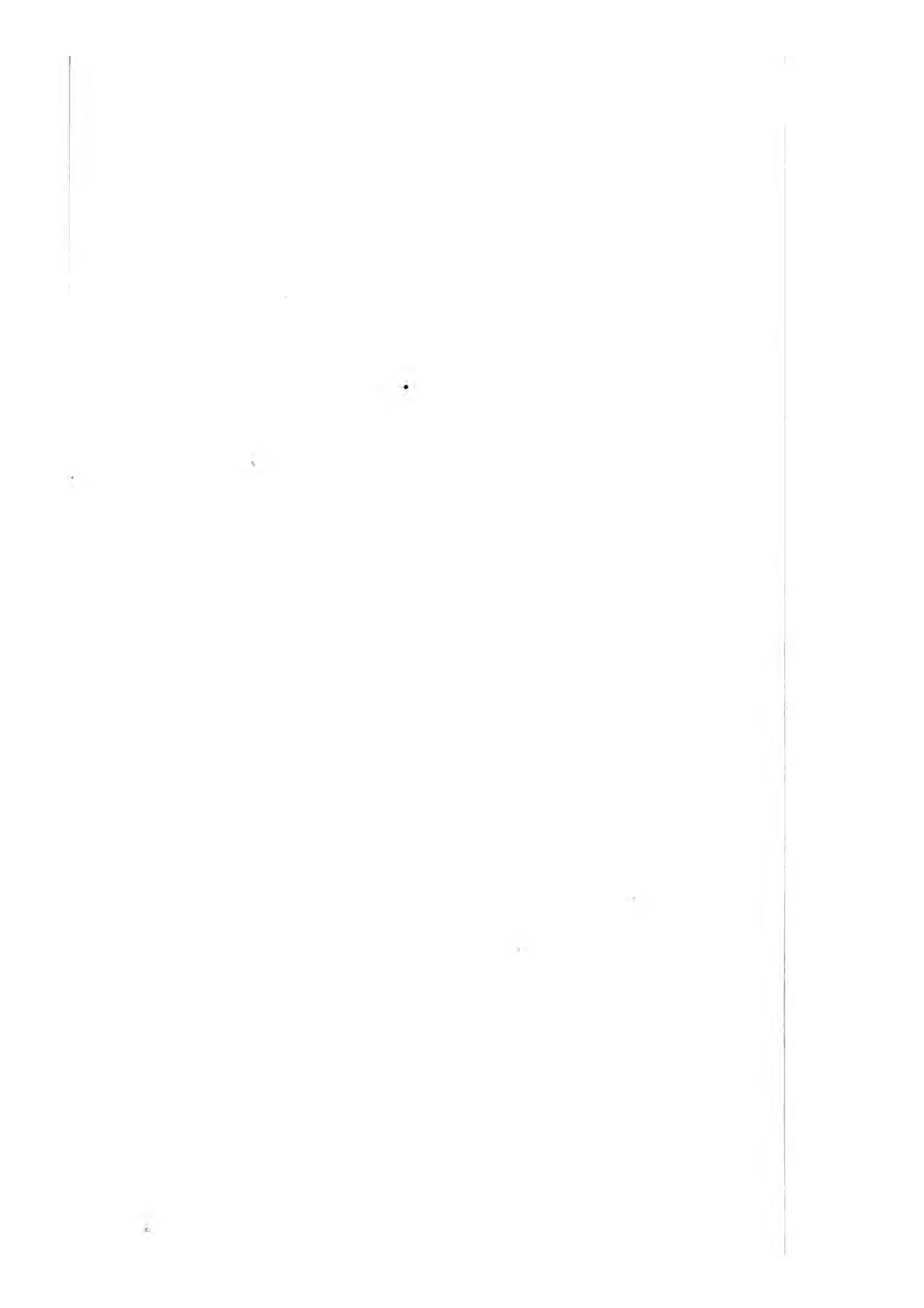
We glide our backward course along :
 From out the chilly weather,
 In which we laid, of old,
 Our hearts so close together,
 To keep them from the cold :—
 From the folly of the wise,
 From the petty war of gain,
 From Pleasure's painèd votaries,
 We are hasting back again,
 Into other, healthier, lands,—
 Clap your hands,—
 Back again !

Faery fruit ! faery fruit !
 Can our charmèd hearts be mute,
 When they feel at work within
 Thine almighty medicine ?
 Joy through all our hearts is tingling,—
 Joy with our life-blood is mingling,—
 Before us rise
 The dancing eyes,
 That cannot speak
 Of aught but light,
 Unknowing gloom,—
 The rounded cheek,
 For ever bright
 With cool, red, bloom ;—
 Our faded leaves are closing,
 Our petals are reposing
 Within their undeveloped stem ;—
 It is beautiful to see
 Archetypes of infancy,
 For we are growing like to them.
 The wisdom of the common earth,
 And reason's servile royalty,
 Dust to dust,—the nothing-worth,—
 Tread it down triumphantly,
 To a just oblivion,—
 Freely-springing hearts and pure,

Who are putting on
Consecrated vestiture
Of a new, old, communion!—

Our home! our home!
Our native air,—our brothers' song,
That we have lost so long!
We are worthy *now* to come,
Where dwelleth the Divine;—
Through the narrow door of Death
Pass;—we breathe eternal breath,—
Father! father! we are thine!

THE
BOOK OF FRIENDSHIP.



FROM ITALY.

It is a happy thought, I ween,
That, with my heart and fancy free,
Though seas and nations lie between,
I still am side by side with Thee.

Though strange in this illustrious land,
Distraught by many a pleasant care,
One simple trace of thy dear hand
Begets me wings and takes me there.

I sit within thy small still room,
I feel thy low-embreathèd tone
Come towards me, in the evening gloom,—
I live for thee and thee alone.

And, where yon lime's colossal bower
Draws out its long impleachèd aisle,
I walk with thee the noontide hour,
Listen thy laugh and watch thy smile.

Thou too, from out the planet croud,
Of which thou art the life and sun,
When answered jest and frolic loud
Goad the light moments as they run,—

Wilt send thy heart a silent way
On embassy of love to me,—
And, trust me, be it night or day,
I shall receive it royally.

Thus, though in outward space apart,
I see thee, hear thee, know thee true ;
For, versed in Friendship's sacred art,
The Spirit has its senses too.

FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE.
—•—

IF I could coldly sum the love
That we each other bear,
My heart would to itself disprove
The truth of what was there ;—
Its willing utterance should express
Nothing but joy and thankfulness.

Yet Friendship is so blurred a name,
A good so ill-discerned,
That if the nature of the flame
That in our bosoms burned
Were treasured in becoming rhymes,
It might have worth in after-times.

The Lover is a God,—the ground
He treads on is not ours ;
His soul by other laws is bound,
Sustained by other powers ;
We, children of a lowlier lot,
Listen and understand him not.

Liver of a diviner life,
He turns a vacant gaze
Toward the theatre of strife,
Where we consume our days ;
His own and that one other heart
Form for himself a world apart :

A sphere, whose sympathies are wings,
On which he rests sublime,
Above the shifts of casual things,
Above the flow of time ;
How should he feel, how can he know
The sense of what goes on below ?

Reprove him not,—no selfish aim
Here leads to selfish ends ;
You might as well the infant blame
That smiles to grieving friends :
Could all thus love, and love endure,
Our world would want no other cure.

But few are the elect, for whom
This fruit is on the stem,—
And for that few an early tomb
Is open,—not for them,
But for their love ; for they live on,
Sorrow and shame ! when Love is gone :

They who have dwelt at Heaven's own gate,
And felt the light within,
Come down to our poor mortal state,
Indifference, care, and sin ;
And their dimmed spirits hardly bear
A trace to tell what once they were.

Fever and Health their thirst may slake
At one and the same stream ;
The dreamer knows not till he wake
The falsehood of his dream :
How, *while* I love thee, can I prove
The surer nature of our love ?

It is, that while our choicest hours
Are closed from vulgar ken,
We daily use our active powers,—
Are men to brother men,—
It is, that, with our hands in one,
We do the work that should be done.

Our hands in one, we will not shrink
From life's severest due,—
Our hands in one, we will not blink
The terrible and true ;
What each would feel a heavy blow
Falls on us both as autumn snow.

The simple unpretentious sway,
By which our hearts are ruled,
Contains no seed of self-decay ;
Too temperate to be cooled,
Our Passion fears no blast of ill,
No winter, till the one last chill.

And even then no frantic grief
Shall shake the mourner's mind,—
He will reject no small relief
Kind Heaven may leave behind,
Nor set at nought his bliss enjoyed,
When now by human fate alloyed.

WHEN first the Friendship-flower is planted
Within the garden of your soul,
Little of care or thought is wanted
To guard its beauty fresh and whole ;
But when the full empasioned age
Has well revealed the magic bloom,
A wise and holy tutelage
Alone avoids the open tomb.

It is not Absence you should dread,—
For Absence is the very air
In which, if sound at root, the head
Shall wave most wonderful and fair :
With sympathies of joy and sorrow
Fed, as with morn and even dews,
Ideal colouring it may borrow
Richer than ever earthly hues.

But oft the plant, whose leaves unsere
Refresh the desert, hardly brooks
The common-peopled atmosphere
Of daily thoughts and words and looks ;

It trembles at the brushing wings
Of many' a careless fashion-fly,
And strange suspicions aim their stings
To taint it as they wanton by.

Rare is the heart to bear a flower,
That must not wholly fall and fade,
Where alien feelings, hour by hour,
Spring up, beset, and overshadow ;
Better, a child of care and toil,
To glorify some needy spot,
Than in a glad redundant soil
To pine neglected and forgot.

Yet when, at last, by human slight,
Or close of their permitted day,
From the bright world of life and light
Such fine creations lapse away,—
Bury the relics that retain
Sick odours of departed pride,—
Hoard, as ye will, your memory's gain,
But leave the blossoms where they died.

FAIR-WEATHER FRIEND.

BECAUSE I mourned to see thee fall
From where I mounted thee,
Because I did not find thee all
I feigned a friend should be ;
Because things are not what they seem,
And this our world is full of dream,—
Because thou lovest sunny weather,
Am I to lose thee altogether ?

I know harsh words have found their way,
Which I would fain recall ;
And angry passions had their day,
But now—forget them all ;
Now that I only ask to share
Thy presence, like some pleasant air,
Now that my gravest thoughts will bend
To thy light mind, fair-weather friend !

See ! I am careful to atone
My spirit's voice to thine ;
My talk shall be of mirth alone,
Of music, flowers, and wine !
I will not breathe an earnest breath,
I will not think of life or death,
I will not dream of any end,
While thou art here, fair-weather friend !

Delusion brought me only woe,
I take thee as thou art ;
Let thy gay verdure overgrow
My deep and serious heart !
Let me enjoy thy laugh, and sit
Within the radiance of thy wit,
And lean where'er thy humours tend,
Taking fair weather from my friend.

Or, if I see my doom is traced
By fortune's sterner pen,
And pain and sorrow must be faced,—
Well, thou can'st leave me then ;
And fear not lest some faint reproach
Should on thy happy hours encroach ;
Nay, blessings on thy steps attend,
Where'er they turn, fair-weather friend !

LONELY MATURITY.

WHEN from the key-stone of the arch of life
 Man his ascent with earnest eyes surveys,
 Sums and divides the steps of peace and strife,
 And numbers o'er his good and evil days,—

If then, as well may be, he stand alone,
 How will his heart recall the youthful throng,
 Who leapt with helping hands from stone to stone,
 And cheered the progress with their choral song!

How will sad memory point where, here and there,
 Friend after friend, by falsehood or by fate,
 From him or from each other parted were,
 And love sometimes become the nurse of hate!

Yet at this hour no feelings dark or fierce,
 No harsh desire to punish or condemn,
 Through the grave silence of the past can pierce,—
 Reproach, if such there be, is not for them.

Rather, he thinks, he held not duly dear
 Love, the best gift that man on man bestows,
 While round his downward path, recluse and drear,
 He feels the chill indifferent shadows close.

Old limbs, once broken, hardly knit together,—
Seldom old hearts with other hearts combine ;
Suspicion coarsely weighs the fancy's feather,
Experience tests and mars the sense divine ;

Thus now, though ever loth to underprize
Youth's sacred passions and delicious tears,
Still worthier seems to his reflective eyes
The Friendship that sustains maturer years.

“ Why did I not,” his spirit murmurs deep,
“ At every cost of momentary pride
Preserve the love for which in vain I weep ;
Why had I wish, or hope, or sense beside ?

“ O cruel issue of some selfish thought !
O long, long, echo of some angry tone !
O fruitless lesson, mercilessly taught,
Alone to linger and to die alone !

“ No one again upon my breast to fall,
To name me by my common Christian name,—
No one in mutual banter to recall
Some youthful folly or some boyish game ;

“ No one with whom to reckon and compare
The good we won or missed ; no one to draw
Excuses from past circumstance or care,
And mitigate the world's unreasoning law !

“ Were I one moment with that presence blest,
I would o’erwhelm him with my humble pain,
I would invade the soul I once possest,
And once for all my ancient love regain ! ”

PAST FRIENDSHIP.

WE that were friends, yet are not now,
We that must daily meet
With ready words and courteous bow,
Acquaintance of the street ;
We must not scorn the holy past,
We must remember still
To honour feelings that outlast
The reason and the will.

I might reprove thy broken faith,
I might recall the time
When thou wert chartered mine till death,
Through every fate and clime ;
When every letter was a vow,
And fancy was not free
To dream of ended love ; and thou
Wouldst say the same of me.

No, no, 'tis not for us to trim
The balance of our wrongs,
Enough to leave remorse to him
To whom remorse belongs !
Let our dead friendship be to us
A desecrated name,
Unutterable, mysterious,
A sorrow and a shame.

A sorrow that two souls which grew
Encased in mutual bliss,
Should wander, callous strangers, through
So cold a world as this !
A shame that we, whose hearts had earned
For life an early heaven,
Should be like angels self-turned
To Death, when once forgiven !

Let us remain as living signs,
Where they that run may read
Pain and disgrace in many lines,
As of a loss indeed ;
That of our fellows any who
The prize of love have won
May tremble at the thought to do
The thing that we have done !

THE
BOOK OF LOVE.

THE MEMORY OF LOVE.

RELIGIOUS LOVE ! it is most sure and true,
 That Man, before he felt the dank night-air
 Of this our nether birth, thy kingdom knew,
 And bathed his Spirit in the day-spring there.

Else could world-withered age and flippant youth,
 Minds of unloving and unlovely mould,
 Who hold the "ancient lie" for solid truth,
 And prize its wretched life-dross all as gold,—

Could these, the minions of the dust,—even these,
 Descant of thee as a familiar name,—
 Detect thy signs, revere thy mysteries,
 And, godless else, adore thy altar-flame ?

And Poets too have been, who boldly own
 They never felt thy influence o'er them shine,
 But whose high Art has built thee many a throne,
 Where thou canst fitly sit, confessed divine.

Remember then, oh Pilgrim ! and beware,—
 Thou, with that Memory for a master-key,
 Wilt open Heaven, and be no alien there,—
 For as thou honourest Love,—so will Love honour thee.

LOVE AND NATURE.

I.

“ THOU, that wert wont at Nature’s shrine
 To worship all the year,
 Say are her features less divine,
 Her attitudes less dear ?
 Or if her beauty’s still the same,
 Then thou art dull and slow :
 She must be sooth a gentle dame
 To let thee woo her so.”

“ ’Tis not, sweet friend ! that I forget
 The charms of vale and hill :
 Sunset and dawn are lovely yet,—
 But Thou art lovelier still :
 I prize the talk of summer brooks,
 The mountain’s graver tone ;
 But can I give them thoughts and looks
 That are of right thine own ?”

II.

The Sun came through the frosty mist
Most like a dead-white moon ;
Thy soothing tones I seemed to list,
As voices in a swoon.

Still as an island stood our ship,
The waters gave no sound,
But when I touched thy quivering lip,
I felt the world go round.

We seemed the only sentient things
Upon that silent sea :
Our hearts the only living springs
Of all that yet could be !

III.

Till death the tide of thought may stem,
There 's little chance of our forgetting
The highland tarn, the water-gem,
With all its rugged mountain-setting.

Our spirits followed every cloud
That o'er it, and within it, floated ;
Our joy in all the scene was loud,
Yet one thing silently we noted :

That, though the glorious summer hue
That steep'd the heav'ns could scarce be brighter,
The blue below was still more blue,
The very light itself was lighter.

And each the other's fancy caught
By one instinctive glance directed :
How doubly glows the Poet's thought
In the belov'd one's breast reflected !

IV. 1

There is a beechen tree,
To whose thick crown a boy I clomb,
And made me there a birdlike home
To sing or ponder free.

There is a jasmine bower,
Whence you did see me trembling tear
One spray to mingle with your hair,
And loved me from that hour.

Nature has odours none
Like these to me : let some of each,
Of jasmine flowers and leaves of beech,
Adorn our house alone.

v.

Where'er about the world we roam,
With heart on heart, and hand in hand,
Each dwelling has the face of home,
Each country is my native land.—

With glad familiar looks I greet
Places and sights unseen before :
And wandering brook, and winding street,
I follow as if passed of yore.

But if some chance or duty calls
Thee from me ; then how great the change !
I hardly know my father's halls,
My mother's very smile is strange.

Dead words become the books I read
With most delight while thou art near ;
I seem thy present love to need,
My dearest friendships to endear.

VI.

When long upon the scales of fate
The issue of my passion hung,
And on your eyes I laid in wait,
And on your brow, and on your tongue,

High-frowning Nature pleased me most,
Strange pleasure was it to discern
Sharp rocks and mountains peaked with frost,
Through gorges thick with fir and fern.

The flowerless walk, the vapoury shrouds,
Could comfort me ; though best of all,
I loved the daughter of the clouds,—
The wild, capricious, waterfall.—

But now that you and I repose
On one affection's certain store,
Serener charms take place of those,—
Plenty and Peace, and little more.

The hill that tends its mother-breast,
To patient flocks and gentle kine,—
The vale that spreads its royal vest
Of golden corn and purple vine ;

The streams that bubble out their mirth
 In humble nooks, or calmly flow,
 The crystal life-blood of our earth,
 Are now the dearest sights I know.

LOVE-THOUGHTS.

I.

ALL down the linden-alley's morning shade
 Thy form with childly rapture I pursue ;
 No hazel-bowerèd brook can seek the glade,
 With steps more joyous and with course more true.

But when all haste and hope I reach my goal,
 And Thou at once thy full and earnest eyes
 Turnest upon me, my encumbered soul
 Bows down in shame and trembles with surprise.

I rise exalted on thy moving grace,
 Peace and good-will in all thy voice I hear ;
 Yet if the sudden wonders of thy face
 Fall on me, joy is weak and turns to fear.

II.

Think not because I walk in power,
While Thou art by my side,
That I could keep the path one hour
Without my guard and guide.

The keeper left me once alone
Within a madhouse hall,
With gibber, shriek, and fixèd smile
About me,—madmen all !

The horrid sense which then I felt
Is what my life would be,
If in this world of pain and guilt
I once lost sight of Thee.

III.

Oh ! let not words, the callous shell of Thought,
Intrude betwixt thy silent soul and mine ;—
Try not the choicest ever Poet wrought,
They all are discord in our life divine.

Smile not thine unbelief. But hear and say
 All that Thou will'st, and then upon my breast
 Thy gracious head in silent passion lay
 One little hour, and tell me which is best.

Now let us live our love ; in after-hours
 Words shall fit handmaids to sweet Memory be,
 But let them not disturb these holier bowers,
 The voiceless depths of perfect sympathy.

 IV.

Dream no more that grief and pain
 Could such hearts as ours enchain,
 Safe from loss and safe from gain,
 Free, as Love makes free.

When false friends pass coldly by,
 Sigh, in earnest pity, sigh,
 Turning thine unclouded eye
 Up from them to me.

Hear not danger's trampling feet,
 Feel not sorrow's wintry sleet,
 Trust that life is just and meet,
 With mine arm round Thee.

Lip on lip, and eye to eye,
Love to love, we live, we die ;
No more Thou, and no more I,
We, and only We !

v.

I would be calm,—I would be free
From thoughts and images of Thee ;
But Nature and thy will conspire
To bar me from my fair desire.

The trees are moving with thy grace,
The water *will* reflect thy face ;
The very flowers are plotting deep,
And in thy breath their odours steep.

The breezes, when mine eyes I close,
With sighs, just like mine own, impose ;
The nightingale then takes her part,
And plays thy voice against my heart.

If Thou then in one golden chain
Canst bind the world, I strive in vain ;
Perchance my wisest scheme would be
To join this great conspiracy.

VI.

I will not say my life was sad
Before it stood fulfilled in Thee ;
The happy need not scorn the glad,
Thy subjects need not mock the free :
Mine was the moment's natural boon
Lighting at will on these or those,
Pleasures as constant as the moon,
And Loves eternal as the rose.

I prize the humblest ancient hour,
When winged with light my spirit flew
For honey's sake from flower to flower,
Nor even asked where amaranth grew ;
Each creature's simple Providence
Sufficed me well, until one day
Thy presence roused in me the sense,
How sure wert Thou, how frail were They !

That instant Nature seemed a dream,—
Thou waking in the midst alone,—
And life her fast unpausing stream
Contrasted with thine island-throne.

Ah, why to me of all was given
That only step of conscious pain,
From joyous Earth to glorious Heaven,
Scarce dead before I rose again !

VII.

Because, from all that round Thee move,
Planets of Beauty, Strength, and Grace,
I am elected to Thy love,
And have my home in Thy embrace ;
I wonder all men do not see
The crown that Thou hast set on me.

Because, when prostrate at Thy feet,
Thou didst emparadise my pain,—
Because Thy heart on mine has beat,
Thy head within my hands has lain,
I am transfigured, by that sign,
Into a being like to Thine.

The mirror from its glossy plain
Receiving still returns the light,
And, being generous of its gain,
Augments the very solar might :
What unreflected light would be,
Is just Thy spirit without me.

Thou art the flame, whose rising spire
In the dark air sublimely sways,
And I the tempest that swift fire
Gathers at first and then obeys :
All that was Thine ere we were wed
Have I by right inherited.

Is life a stream ? Then from Thy hair
One rosebud on the current fell,
And straight it turned to crystal there,
As adamant immovable :
Its steadfast place shall know no more
The sense of after and before.

Is life a plant ? The King of years
To mine nor good nor ill can bring ;—
Mine grows no more ; no more it fears
Even the brushing of his wing :
With sheathèd scythe I see him go,—
I have no flowers that *he* can mow.

VIII.

All fair things have soft approaches,
Quiet steps are still the sure ;
It were hard to point aright
At what instant morning light,

Shy and solemn-paced, encroaches
 On the desolate obscure ;—
 Who can read the growth of flowers
 Syllable by syllable ?
 Who has sight or ear to tell,
 Or by moments or by hours,
 At what rate the sappy tree,
 Full of life, and life in spring,
 Every sleekest limb embosses
 With the buds its vigor glosses,—
 At what rate the buds with glee
 Burst, and show the tender wing
 Of the leaf that hardly dares
 Trust to inexperienced airs ?
 Who can measure out the pace
 Of the smiles on Nature's face ?

Thou loveliest of the thoughts of God,
 Creation's antitype and end !
 Thou treadest so the vernal sod
 That slimmest grasses hardly bend ;—
 I feel thy presence sensible
 On my ideal supervene,
 Yet just the moment cannot tell
 That lies those two bright states between :—
 No memory has an arm to reach
 The morning-twilight of our thought,—
 The infant's use of sight and speech

Is all unchallenged and unsought ;
And yet thou askest, winning one,
That I should now unriddler be,
To tell thee when I first begun
To love and honor Thee !

IX.

There' are gold-bright Suns in worlds above,
And blazing Gems in worlds below ;
Our world has Love and only Love,
For living warmth and jewel glow :
God's Love is sunlight to the good,
And Woman's pure as diamond sheen,
And Friendship's mystic brotherhood
In twilight beauty lies between.

X.

FROM THE PROVENÇALE.

Oh ! thanks to those that with a hand so light
Proffer the fair their sweet unmeaning lays ;
Else had I never praised my Love aright—
Singing " her loveliness bemocks all praise."

For had men deemed such flatteries true indeed,
 Nor fondly lavished on each favourite claimer,
 My Ladie must have missed her beauty's meed,—
 I am not insolent enough to name her.

WRITTEN AT THE BATHS OF LUCCA.

THE fireflies, pulsing forth their rapid gleams,
 Are the only light
 That breaks the night ;
 A stream, that has the voice of many streams,
 Is the only sound
 All around :
 And we have found our way to the rude stone,
 Where many a twilight we have sat alone,
 Though in this summer-darkness never yet :
 We have had happy, happy moments here,
 We have had thoughts we never can forget,
 Which will go on with us beyond the bier.

The very lineaments of thy dear face
 I do not see, but yet its influence
 I feel, even as my outward sense perceives
 The freshening presence of the chesnut leaves,

Whose vaguest forms my eye can only trace,
By following where the darkness seems most dense.
What light, what sight, what form, can be to us
Beautiful as this gloom ?
We have come down, alive and consciöus,
Into a blessèd tomb :
We have left the world behind us,
Her vexations cannot find us,
We are too far away ;
There is *something* to gainsay
In the life of every day ;
But in this delicious death
We let go our mortal breath,
Nought to feel and hear and see,
But our heart's felicity ;
Nought with which to be at war,
Nought to fret our shame or pride,
Knowing only that we are,
Caring not what is beside.

FAMILIAR LOVE.

—◆—

WE read together, reading the same book,
Our heads bent forward in a half embrace,
So that each shade that either spirit took
Was straight reflected in the other's face :
We read, not silent, nor aloud,—but each
Followed the eye that past the page along,
With a low murmuring sound that was not speech,
 Yet with so much monotony,
 In its half-slumbering harmony,
 You might not call it song ;
 More like a bee, that in the noon rejoices,
Than any customed mood of human voices.
Then if some wayward or disputed sense
Made cease awhile that music, and brought on
A strife of gracious-worded difference,
Too light to hurt our soul's dear unison,
We had experience of a blissful state,
In which our powers of thought stood separate,

Each in its own high freedom, set apart,
But both close folded in one loving heart ;
So that we seemed, without conceit, to be
Both one and two in our identity.

We prayed together, praying the same prayer,
But each that prayed did seem to be alone,
And saw the other, in a golden air
Poised far away, beneath a vacant throne,
Beckoning the kneeler to arise and sit
Within the glory which encompassed it :
And when obeyed, the Vision stood beside,
And led the way through the upper hyaline,
Smiling in beauty tenfold glorified,
Which, while on earth, had seemed enough divine,
The beauty of the Spirit-Bride,
Who guided the rapt Florentine.
The depth of human reason must become
As deep as is the holy human heart,
Ere aught in written phrases can impart
The might and meaning of that extasy
To those low souls, who hold the mystery
Of the unseen universe for dark and dumb.

But we were mortal still, and when again
We raised our bended knees, I do not say
That our descending spirits felt no pain
To meet the dimness of an earthly day ;

Yet not as those disheartened, and the more
 Debased, the higher that they rose before,
 But, from the exaltation of that hour,
 Out of God's choicest treasury, bringing down
 New virtue to sustain all ill,—new power
 To braid Life's thorns into a regal crown,
 We past into the outer world, to prove
 The strength miraculous of united Love.

POETRY AND THE POET.

WHEN, in a frame of liquid verse,
 I read you how pure Love's delight
 Is turned to Life's consummate curse,
 By woman's pride and hard despite,—
 Full many a sympathising chord
 Vibrated all your soul along ;
 You trembled at each poignant word,
 And wept ere I had closed the song.

But when, in rude and broken prose,
 I laid my heart before you bare,—
 Dared the deep misery to disclose,
 Which you had long awakened there ;

A trivial laugh, a pitying look
 (Yet half of scorn) was all you gave,—
 You bent before the lifeless Book,
 Though loth a living Heart to save.

My Art is not a vulgar craft
 To work some passing Pleasure-spell,—
 There is no virtue in the draught
 For those who desecrate the well :
 Proud Loveliness ! retain your sway,—
 Leave me to suffer as I can,
 But do not seem to love the Lay,
 And mock the Poet and the Man.

TO MYRRHA.

—•—
 I.

I KNOW not, whether such great power
 Is in despair,—it may be so,—
 But, Myrrha, ere this ebbing hour
 Is over, I will try to go :
 Once more the glory of your form
 Shall fall upon my path,—once more !
 And fear not lest the inner storm
 Should burst the bounds it kept before.

I have one last, light, boon to pray—
Do not be mercilessly kind ;
Hold back your hand, and turn away
Those splendours I must leave behind ;
Or arm your eyes with chilly glare,
(Though wont to be so burning-bright)
Like their far sisters of the air,
Which light, but cannot warm, the night.

But most of all, I could not bear
From you that mocking word, "Farewell!"—
How well my riven heart will fare,
I think I have not now to tell.
Be silent, passionless—the ghost
Of your own self—a solemn shade,
Whose form, to others wholly lost,
In my deep soul, as in a grave, is laid.

II.

My spirit staggered at the sight,
So painful and so strange,
I could not think that years had might
To work such fearful change ;
And ere I ceased from wondering,
My tears fell fast and free,
That wretched, stricken, hopeless thing,—
I dared not call it Thee.

If I had heard that thou wert dead,
I hastily had cried,
“She was so richly favoured,
God must forgive her pride ;
My heart lay withered, while the crown
Of life was fresh upon her,—
I linger still, she has gone down
In beauty and in honour.”

But now, to see thy living death,—
Power, glory, arts, all gone,—
Thy empire lost, and thy poor breath
Still vainly struggling on !
Alas ! a thought of saddest weight
Presses and will have vent :
“Had she not scorned my love,—her fate
Had been so different !

“Had her heart bent its haughty will
To take me for its lord,
She had been proudly happy still,
Still honoured, still adored ;
The weak love-ties of face and frame
Time easily may sever,
But *I* had thought her still the same,
As beautiful as ever.

“She had *then* felt no shame or sorrow,
At seeing fall away
The slaves who mock the god to-morrow,
They worshipped all to-day ;
While I preserved, with honest truth,
Through every varying stage,
Her image which adorned my youth,
To glorify my age.”

And do not treat this thought as light,
Nor ask with taunting sign,
“ Has then thy life-course been so bright
That thou canst scorn at mine ? ”
Myrrha,—the name of Misery
Is clear upon my brow,
Yet am I not, nor e'er can be,
So lorn a thing as Thou.

He, who for Love has undergone
The worst that can befall,
Is happier thousand-fold than one
Who never loved at all ;
A grace within his soul has reigned,
Which nothing else can bring—
Thank God for all that I have gained,
By that high suffering !

SHADOWS.

I

THEY owned their passion without shame or fear,
 And every household duty counted less
 Than that one spiritual bond, and men severe
 Said they should sorrow for their wilfulness.

And truth the world went ill with them : he knew
 That he had broken up her maiden life,
 Where only pleasures and affections grew,
 And sowed it thick with labour, pain, and strife.

What her unpractis'd weakness was to her
 The presence of her suffering was to him ;
 Thus at Love's feast did Misery minister,
 And fill their cups together to the brim.

They asked their kind for hope, but there was none,
 Till Death came by and gave them that and more ;
 Then men lamented,—but the earth rolls on,
 And lovers love and perish as before.

II.

They seemed to those who saw them meet
The worldly friends of every day,
Her smile was undisturbed and sweet,
His courtesy was free and gay.

But yet if one the other's name
In some unguarded moment heard,
The heart, you thought so calm and tame,
Would struggle like a captured bird :

And letters of mere formal phrase
Were blistered with repeated tears,—
And this was not the work of days,
But had gone on for years and years !

Alas, that Love was not too strong
For maiden shame and manly pride !
Alas, that they delayed so long
The goal of mutual bliss beside.

Yet what no chance could then reveal,
And neither would be first to own,
Let fate and courage now conceal,
When truth could bring remorse alone.

III.

Beneath an Indian palm a girl
Of other blood reposes,
Her cheek is clear and pale as pearl,
Amid that wild of roses.

Beside a northern pine a boy
Is leaning fancy-bound,
Nor listens where with noisy joy
Awaits the impatient hound.

Cool grows the sick and feverish calm,—
Relaxed the frosty twine,—
The pine-tree dreameth of the palm,
The palm-tree of the pine.

As soon shall nature interlace
Those dimly-visited boughs,
As these young lovers face to face
Renew their early vows!

IV.

She had left all on earth for him,
 Her home of wealth, her name of pride,
 And now his lamp of love was dim,
 And, sad to tell, she had not died.

She watched the crimson sun's decline,
 From some lone rock that fronts the sea,—
 "I would, O burning heart of mine,
 There were an ocean-rest for thee.

"The thoughtful moon awaits her turn,
 The stars compose their choral crown,
 But those soft lights can never burn,
 Till once the fiery sun is down."

*My friend Lord Lytton has permitted me to insert his
 Latin translation of these lines.*

Olim virgineum perdiderat decus
 Et laudem patriæ (jussit amor) domûs :
 Jam tædæ periit gratia mutuæ,
 Eheu ! nec poterat mori !

At solo in scopulo procubuit gemens,
 In fluctus roseum dum caderet jubar,
 Tunc " Ah ! si, tacito sub pelagi sinu,
 Cordis flamma quiesceret !

Sic lenis solitam Luna manet vicem,
 Innectuntque chorum sidera lucidum,
 Sed nox ut placidas instituat faces,
 Sol componitur igneus."

v.

The words that trembled on your lips
 Were uttered not—I know it well ;
 The tears that would your eyes eclipse
 Were checked and smothered, ere they fell :
 The looks and smiles I gained from you
 Were little more than others won,
 And yet you are not wholly true,
 Nor wholly just what you have done.

You know, at least you might have known,
 That every little grace you gave,—
 Your voice's somewhat lowered tone,—
 Your hand's faint shake or parting wave,—

Your every sympathetic look
At words that chanced your soul to touch,
While reading from some favourite book,
Were much to me—alas, how much !

You might have seen—perhaps you saw—
How all of these were steps of hope
On which I rose, in joy and awe,
Up to my passion's lofty scope ;
How after each, a firmer tread
I planted on the slippery ground,
And higher raised my venturous head,
And ever new assurance found.

May be, without a further thought,
It only pleased you thus to please,
And thus to kindly feelings wrought
You measured not the sweet degrees ;
Yet, though you hardly understood
Where I was following at your call,
You might—I dare to say you should—
Have thought how far I had to fall.

And thus when fallen, faint, and bruised,
I see another's glad success,
I may have wrongfully accused
Your heart of vulgar fickleness :

But even now, in calm review
Of all I lost and all I won,
I cannot deem you wholly true,
Nor wholly just what you have done.

VI.

When Love was stricken with disgust
At the cold world's unnatural sway,
He shook in scorn the golden dust
From his transparent feet away :

And sought, in pilgrim's weeds, a spot
For penance fit—lone, dark, and bare,
Where even Hope's wan bloom was not,
—He found my heart, and laid him there.

VII.

'Twould seem the world were large enough to hold
Both me and thee :
But now I find in space by thee controlled
No room for me.

We portioned all between us, as was fair ;
That time is past ;
And now I would recover my lost share,
Which still thou hast.

For that old love on which we both did live,—
Keep it who can !
Yet give me back the love I used to give
To God and man.

Give me my young ambition,—my fresh fire
Of high emprise ;
Give me the sweet indefinite desire
That lit mine eyes :—

Give me my sense of pleasure ;—give me all
My range of dreams ;
Give me my power at sunset to recall
The noontide's beams ;

If not my smiles, at least give back my tears,
And leave me free
To weep that all which man and nature cheers
Is lost with thee !

VIII.

They tell me I have won thy love,—
That if there be
One man most blest all men above,
Then I am he ;
I answer not, resolved no more
To linger here,
And they have bitter words in store
To taint thine ear.

Did they not mark me dread to speak
When thou wert by ?
Did they not watch my quivering cheek,
My streaming eye ?
And can they fable none the less
That I disdain
A gift, whose very preciousness
Is all my pain ?

'Tis true, that when that fatal hour
Did first disclose
The mystery of my willess power
O'er thy repose,

I felt it was the ordained one
 That tie to sever,
 That only then it could be done,
 For once and ever !

I shall not see thy motive grace
 Before me play,
 I shall not look upon thy face
 One other day !
 And yet I swear that I am free
 From bond or vow ;
 What stands betwixt my soul and thee ?
 Oh ! ask not Thou.

Time was, when I too had my part
 Of wealth divine,
 A simple, free, and plastic heart,
 Almost like thine,
 When lightened sorrow floated up
 And died in tears,
 And easy joy o'erflowed the cup
 Of eighteen years.

If fate had then let cross our ways,
 Thou wouldst have been
 The Una of my nights and days,—
 My spirit's Queen ;—

Thou wouldst have led me glad and pure
As thy white lamb ;
How dare I match this portraiture
With what I am ?

It seems to me, as if that time,
And I who wore
Its aspect of delight sublime,
Were nothing more
Than visions, which poetic sloth
So oft enjoys,—
As if the Scene and Man were both
Mere Fancy's toys.

It may be that some help may come
To my soul's need,
My pilgrim thoughts may find a home
In some new creed ;
But Thou, whose mind has never gone
One dream astray,—
Couldst thou be my companion,
That perilous way ?

But I must check my words that flow
Too fast and far ;
For worlds I would not thou shouldst know
How such things are !

Thou wilt not change, Thou wilt remain
Serene and sure,—
The touch of Time may well refrain
From thing so pure.

And now that I have closed the strife,
And view once more
My future of ungenial life
Spread out before,—
To have found favour in thy sight
Will still remain
A river of thought, that full of light
Divides the plain.

•

THE

BOOK OF REFLECTION.



THE VOICES OF HISTORY.

THE Poet in his vigil hears
 Time flowing through the night,—
 A mighty stream, absorbing tears,
 And bearing down delight :
 There resting on his bank of thought
 He listens, till his soul
 The Voices of the waves has caught,—
 The meaning of their roll.

First, wild and wildering as the strife
 Of earthly winds and seas,
 Resounds the long historic life
 Of warring dynasties :—
 Uncertain right and certain wrong
 In onward conflict driven,
 The threats and trappings of the strong
 Beneath a brazen heaven.

The cavernous unsounded East
Outpours an evil tide,
Drowning the hymn of patriarch priest,
The chant of shepherd bride :
How can we catch the angel-word,
How mark the prophet-sound,
'Mid thunders like Niagara's heard
An hundred miles around ?

From two small springs that rise and blend,
And leave their Latin home,
The waters East and West extend,—
The ocean-power of Rome :
Voices of Victories ever-won,
Of Pride that will not stay,
Billows that burst and perish on
The shores they wear away.

Till, in a race of fierce delight
Tumultuous battle forth,
The snows amassed on many a height,
The cataracts of the North :
What can we hear beside the roar,
What see beneath the foam,
What but the wrecks that strew the shore,
And cries of falling Rome ?

Nor, when a purer Faith had traced
Safe channels for the tide,
Did streams with Eden-lilies graced
In Eden-sweetness glide ;
While the deluded gaze admires
The smooth and shining flow,
Vile interests and insane desires
Gurgle and rage below.

If History has no other sounds,
Why should we listen more ?
Spirit ! despise terrestrial bounds,
And seek a happier shore ;
Yet pause ! for on thine inner ear
A mystic music grows,—
And mortal man shall never hear
That diapason's close.

Nature awakes ! a rapturous tone,
Still different, still the same,—
Eternal effluence from the throne
Of Him without a name ;
A symphony of worlds begun,
Ere sin the glory mars,
The cymbals of the new-born sun,
The trumpets of the stars.

Then Beauty all her subtlest chords
Dissolves and knits again,
And Law composes jarring words
In one harmonious chain :
And Loyalty's enchanting notes
Outswelling fade away,
While Knowledge, from ten thousand throats,
Proclaims a graver sway.—

Well, if, by senses unfooled,
Attentive souls may scan
These great Ideas that have ruled
The total mind of man ;
Yet is there music deeper still,
Of fine and holy woof,
Comfort and joy to all that will
Keep ruder noise aloof.

A music simple as the sky,
Monotonous as the sea,
Recurrent as the flowers that die
And rise again in glee :
A melody that childhood sings
Without a thought of art,
Drawn from a few familiar strings,
The fibres of the Heart.

Through tent and cot and proud saloon
This audible delight
Of nightingales that love the noon,
Of larks that court the night,—
We feel it all,—the hopes and fears
That language faintly tells,
The spreading smiles,—the passing tears,—
The meetings and farewells.

These harmonies that all can share,
When chronicled by one,
Enclose us like the living air,
Unending, unbegun ;—
Poet ! esteem thy noble part,
Still listen, still record,
Sacred Historian of the heart,
And moral nature's Lord !

THE BARREN HILL.

BEFORE my Home, a long straight Hill
Extends its barren bound,
And all who that way travel will
Must travel miles around ;
Yet not the loveliest face of earth
To living man can be
A treasury of more precious worth
Than that bare Hill to me.

That Hill-side rose a wall between
This world of ears and eyes
And every shining shifty scene
That fancy forms and dyes :
First Babyhood engaged its use,
To plant a good-child's land,
Where all the streams were orange-juice,
And sugar all the sand.

A playground of unending sward
There blest the growing Boy,
A dream of labourless reward,
Whole holidays of joy ;
A book of Nature, whose bright leaves
No other care should need
Than life that happily receives
What he that runs may read.

Nor lacked there skies for onward youth
With wayward will to tinge,
Sweet sunshine overcast by ruth,
And storms of golden fringe :
Nor vales that darkling might evoke
Mysterious fellowship
Of names that still to Fancy woke,
But slumbered on the lip.

The hour when first that hill I crost,
Can yet my memory sting,
The dear self-trust that moment lost
No lore again can bring :
It seemed a foully broken bond
Of Nature and my kind,
That I should find the world beyond
The world I left behind.

But not in vain that hill-side stood,
On many an after-day,
When with returning steps I wooed
Revival of its sway ;
It could not give me Truth where doubt
And sin had ample range,
But it was powerful to shut out
The ill it could not change.

And still performs a sacred part,
To my experienced eye,
This Pisgah which my virgin heart
Ascended but to die ;
What was Reality before
In symbol now may live,
Endowed with right to promise more
Than ever it could give.


THE CHRONICLE OF HOPES.

I WOULD not chronicle my life
By dynasties of joy or pain,
By reigns of peace or times of strife,
By accidents of loss or gain :
The Hopes that nurtured in my breast
Have been the very wings to me
On which existence floats or rests,—
These only shall my eras be.

Whether they rose to utmost height
And glistened in the noonday sun,
Descending with as full delight
When all was realised and won ;
Or whether mercilessly checked
By adverse airs and lowering skies,
They sunk to earth confused and wrecked
Almost before they dared to rise ;

With equal love I love them all
For their own special sakes, nor care
What sequence here or there might fall,
Each has its sweet memorial share :
Let but my Hopes, in coming years,
Preserve their long unbroken line,
And smiles will shine through any tears,
And grief itself be half-divine.

For not to man on earth is given
The ripe fulfilment of desire ;—
Desire of Heaven itself is Heaven,
Unless the passion faint and tire :
So upward still, from hope to hope,
From faith to faith, the soul ascends,
And who has scaled the ethereal cope,
Where that sublime succession ends ?

THE WORTH OF HOURS.


BELIEVE not that your inner eye
Can ever in just measure try
The worth of Hours as they go by :

For every man's weak self, alas !
Makes him to see them, while they pass,
As through a dim or tinted glass :

But if in earnest care you would
Metre out to each its part of good,
Trust rather to your after-mood.

Those surely are not fairly spent,
That leave your spirit bowed and bent
In sad unrest and ill-content :

And more,—though free from seeming harm,
You rest from toil of mind or arm,
Or slow retire from Pleasure's charm,—

If then a painful sense comes on
Of something wholly lost and gone,
Vainly enjoyed, or vainly done,—

Of something from your being's chain
Broke off, nor to be linked again
By all mere Memory can retain,—

Upon your heart this truth may rise,—
Nothing that altogether dies
Suffices man's just destinies :

So should we live, that every Hour
May die as dies the natural flower,—
A self-reviving thing of power ;

That every Thought and every Deed
May hold within itself the seed
Of future good and future meed ;

Esteeming Sorrow, whose employ
Is to develope not destroy,
Far better than a barren Joy.

THE FLOWER-GARDEN.

O PENSIVE Sister ! thy tear-darkened gaze
 I understand, whene'er thou look'st upon
 The Garden's gilded green and colour'd blaze,
 The gay society of flowers and sun.

Thou thinkest of the withering that must come,
 The quenching of this radiance all around,
 The hastening change in Nature's merriest home,
 The future blackness of the orphaned ground.

Thou thinkest too of those more precious blooms,
 The firstling honours of thy Life's fresh field,
 The childly feelings that have all their tombs,
 The hopes of youth that now no odours yield :

Still many a blessèd sense in living glee,
 Waves its bright form to glorify thy breast,
 But this fair scene's perverse morality
 Tells thee, they all will perish like the rest :

Yet pluck them, hurt them not ; whate'er betides,
Touch not with wilful force those flowers or thine,—
Let Death receive them his inviolate brides,
They are the destined vestals of his shrine.

And if those children of the insensate earth
Go down in peace to a prolific grave,—
If Nature raises in continuous birth
The plant whose present grace she will not save,—

So some deep-grounded root or visible seed,
When these Heart-blossoms fade, may still remain,
In a new season of thy Being, decreed
To rise to light and loveliness again.

THE LONG-AGO.


EYES which can but ill define
Shapes that rise about and near,
Through the far horizon's line
Stretch a vision free and clear :
Memories feeble to retrace
Yesterday's immediate flow,
Find a dear familiar face
In each hour of Long-ago.

Follow yon majestic train
Down the slopes of old renown,
Knightly forms without disdain,
Sainted heads without a frown ;
Emperors of thought and hand
Congregate, a glorious show,
Met from every age and land
In the plains of Long-ago.

As the heart of childhood brings
Something of eternal joy,
From its own unsounded springs,
Such as life can scarce destroy :
So, remindful of the prime
Spirits, wand'ring to and fro,
Rest upon the resting time
In the peace of Long-ago.

Youthful Hope's religious fire,
When it burns no longer, leaves
Ashes of impure Desire
On the altars it bereaves ;
But the light that fills the Past
Sheds a still diviner glow,
Ever farther it is cast
O'er the scenes of Long-ago.

Many a growth of pain and care,
Cumbering all the present hour,
Yields, when once transplanted there,
Healthy fruit or pleasant flower ;
Thoughts that hardly flourish here,
Feelings long have ceased to blow,
Breathe a native atmosphere
In the world of Long-ago.

On that deep-retiring shore
Frequent pearls of beauty lie,
Where the passion-waves of yore
Fiercely beat and mounted high :
Sorrows that are sorrows still
Lose the bitter taste of woe ;
Nothing's altogether ill
In the griefs of Long-ago.

Tombs where lonely love repines,
Ghastly tenements of tears,
Wear the look of happy shrines
Through the golden mist of years :
Death, to those who trust in good,
Vindicates his hardest blow ;
Oh ! we would not, if we could,
Wake the sleep of Long-ago !

Though the doom of swift decay
Shocks the soul where life is strong,
Though for frailer hearts the day
Lingers sad and overlong,—
Still the weight will find a leaven,
Still the spoiler's hand is slow,
While the Future has its Heaven,
And the Past its Long-ago.

SIMPLE SOUNDS.

O POWER! whose organ is the tremulous air,
 Thou that not only to the accordant sense
 Unfoldest all a world of harsh and fair,
 But hast a far diviner influence,
 Submitting to inscrutable controul
 The finest elements of human soul ;

O mystic Sound! what heart can keep aloof,
 If summoned to acknowledge thy bland sway,
 As thou approachest in the golden woof
 Of luscious harmonies serene or gay?
 But thou hast moods I would not honour less,
 Thy simplest forms of moral kingliness.

How did my childish ecstasy burst out,
 When first I found thy Echoes at my call!
 What blithe caprice of whisper, song, and shout,
 Woke the steep hill and challenged the long wall!
 How we *did* laugh! I needed from that day
 Nor other playfellows nor other play.

Further in life, when thoughts and feelings slept
In my heart's tomb, some one particular tone
Of common bells has stung me till I wept,
And rushed away, oppressed by things foregone ;
For though the hours recalled be bright and glad,
Still earnest memory ever will be sad.

When late I changed the still unpeopled air
Of the clear South for this my mother clime,
I quivered with delight, as every where
Sweet birds in happy snatches hailed the prime ;
A throstle's twitter made old walks arise,
With lilac-bunches dancing in my eyes.

What love we, about those we love the best,
Better than their dear voices ? At what cost
Would one not gather to an aching breast
Each little word of some whom we have lost ?
And oh ! how blank to hear, in some far place,
A voice we know, and see a stranger's face.

I never hold my truth to God more leal
Than when it thunders ; that monotonous roll
Has after-lightning potent to reveal
Many dark words on Faith's sin-shaded scroll :
Talk with a stormy sky, man ! prone to deem
That nothing *is*, because of thine own Dream.

And now within the hush of evening waves,
 Cast by light force upon a shingly shore,
 My Spirit rests ; the ruins and fresh graves
 That strewed its earthly path here vex no more :
 Rocked on the soothing surge, its life is all
 One soft attraction and one mellow fall.

A PRAYER.

EVIL, every living hour,
 Holds us in its wilful hand,
 Save as thou, essential Power,
 May'st be gracious to withstand :
 Pain within the subtle flesh,
 Heavy lids that cannot close,
 Hearts that Hope will not refresh,—
 Hand of healing ! interpose.

Tyranny's strong breath is tainting
 Nature's sweet and vivid air,
 Nations silently are fainting
 Or up-gather in despair :

Not to those distracted wills
Trust the judgment of their woes ;
While the cup of anguish fills,
Arm of Justice ! interpose.

Pleasures night and day are hovering
Round their prey of weary hours,
Weakness and unrest discovering
In the best of human powers :
Ere the fond delusions tire,
Ere envenomed passion grows
From the root of vain desire,—
Mind of Wisdom ! interpose.

Now no more in tuneful motion
Life with love and duty glides ;
Reason's meteor-lighted ocean
Bears us down its mazy tides ;
Head is clear and hand is strong,
But our heart no haven knows ;
Sun of Truth ! the night is long,—
Let thy radiance interpose !

THE PAST.
—•—

THE Past—the Past !—it has a tolling sound,
That solemn syllable, which calls to mind
The prison of the Present rising round,
And all the bonds that Time has power to bind.

Sounds, sights,—all else the means of sense impart,—
Seem to arouse to grief or joy in vain,
While still it clanks upon the captive heart,
That ever-moving, never lengthening, chain.

Is there no art that can an echo make,
To mock the splendid harmonies gone by ?
No charm that can the long-dead hours awake,
In ghost-like silence and solemnity ?

Alas ! though Memory, with her wilful wand,
Can shadow forth a faint and vapid show,
What boots the colourless unmeaning band ?
'Tis but a dream,—we know it to be so.

Of all our spiritual elements—of all
Those powers by which we feel ourselves to be—
Is there not *one* that can elude the thrall,
True to itself, and as its Author free ?

Have we no heritage of Father-land ?
No ray immortal as the Parent Sun ?
No heaven-armed force, that can undaunted stand
Guarding its own eternal garrison ?

Yes, we have that which lives a deathless life,
No meagre phantom, spawned by human will,
But strong to meet the Tyrant in the strife ;
Time has no rule o'er what he cannot kill.

The feelings which the Heart has raised to birth,
That holy mother never will disclaim ;
She is no hireling minister of earth ;
They are no bastard forgers of her name.

Memorial flashes, transient as intense,
A spirit darting through material night,
Like lightning felt within the vivid sense,
Yet seeming all too rapid for the sight.

How we have joyed, when all our mind was joy,
How we have loved, when love was all our law,
Looked with half envy on the rising boy,
And thought of manhood with religious awe.

How we delighted in a thrice-sung song,
A wilding's blossom, or a speckled stone,
And how we numbered o'er the starry throng,
And chose the brightest to be called our own.

Or, when young Passion to excess had ranged,
How conscience met it with her sacred string,
And how we marvelled, what to frowns had changed
The red-rose smiles that tinted every thing.

How, when at first upon the fatal shore,
Listening the murmurings of the waves of sin,
A shivering chill came over us, before
We bared our tender limbs and glided in.

And when perchance some random bird obscene
Flew screaming by, and warned us where we stood,
With palsied feet, we turned us back to lean
Resisting those who urged us to the flood.

—Such thoughts can never die ; the fire once kindled
Lies smouldering in the ashes' dusty cove ;
Though one by one the tremulous sparks have dwindled,
A flame will burst in times we wot not of.

MOMENTS.

I LIE in a heavy trance,
 With' a world of dream without me,
 Shapes of shadow dance,
 In wavering bands about me ;
 But, at times, some mystic things
 Appear in this phantom lair,
 That almost seem to me visitings
 Of Truth known elsewhere :
 The world is wide,—these things are small,
 They may be nothing, but they are All.

A prayer in an hour of pain,
 Begun in an undertone,
 Then lowered, as it would fain
 Be heard by the heart alone ;
 A throb, when the soul is entered
 By a light that is lit above,
 Where the God of Nature has centered
 The Beauty of Love.—
 The world is wide,—these things are small,
 They may be nothing, but they are All.

A look that is telling a tale,
 Which looks alone dare tell,—
 When' a cheek is no longer pale,
 That has caught the glance, as it fell ;
 A touch, which seems to unlock
 Treasures unknown as yet,
 And the bitter-sweet first shock,
 One can never forget ;—
 The world is wide,—these things are small,
 They may be nothing, but they are All.

A sense of an earnest Will
 To help the lowly-living,—
 And a terrible heart-thrill,
 If you' have no power of giving ;
 An arm of aid to the weak, .
 A friendly hand to the friendless,
 Kind words, so short to speak,
 But whose echo is endless :
 The world is wide,—these things are small,
 They may be nothing, but they are All.

The moment we think we have learnt
 The lore of the all-wise One,
 By which we could stand unburnt,
 On the ridge of the seething sun :
 The moment we grasp at the clue,
 Long-lost and strangely riven,

Which guides our soul to the True,
 And the Poet to Heaven.
 The world is wide,—these things are small,—
 If they be nothing, what is there at all ?

THE MEN OF OLD.

I KNOW not that the men of old
 Were better than men now,
 Of heart more kind, of hand more bold,
 Of more ingenuous brow :
 I heed not those who pine for force
 A ghost of Time to raise,
 As if they thus could check the course
 Of these appointed days.

Still it is true, and over true,
 That I delight to close
 This book of life self-wise and new,
 And let my thoughts repose
 On all that humble happiness,
 The world has since foregone,—
 The daylight of contentedness
 That on those faces shone !

With rights, tho' not too closely scanned,
Enjoyed, as far as known,—
With will by no reverse unmanned,—
With pulse of even tone,—
They from to-day and from to-night
Expected nothing more,
Than yesterday and yesternight
Had proffered them before.

To them was life a simple art
Of duties to be done,
A game where each man took his part,
A race where all must run ;
A battle whose great scheme and scope
They little cared to know,
Content, as men at arms, to cope
Each with his fronting foe.

Man *now* his Virtue's diadem
Puts on and proudly wears,
Great thoughts, great feelings, came to them,
Like instincts, unawares :
Blending their souls' sublimest needs
With tasks of every day,
They went about their gravest deeds,
As noble boys at play.—

And what if Nature's fearful wound
They did not probe and bare,
For that their spirits never swooned
To watch the misery there,—
For that their love but flowed more fast,
Their charities more free,
Not conscious what mere drops they cast
Into the evil sea.

A man's best things are nearest him,
Lie close about his feet,
It is the distant and the dim
That we are sick to greet :
For flowers that grow our hands beneath
We struggle and aspire,—
Our hearts must die, except they breathe
The air of fresh Desire.

Yet, Brothers, who up Reason's hill
Advance with hopeful cheer,—
O ! loiter not, those heights are chill,
As chill as they are clear ;
And still restrain your haughty gaze,
The loftier that ye go,
Remembering distance leaves a haze
On all that lies below.

THE COMBAT OF LIFE.

Ce n'est pas la victoire qui fait le bonheur des nobles cœurs,—c'est le combat.

MONTALEMBERT.

WE have come out upon the field of Life,
 To war with Evil ; by some mightier power
 Than Memory can embrace, or Reason know,
 We were enlisted into this great strife,
 And led to meet that unknown Enemy :
 Yet not like men brought blinded to a wood,
 Who, looking round them, where a hundred paths
 All undistinguished lead a hundred ways,
 Tormented by that blank indifference,
 Rather sit down and die than wander on,—
 Not thus, but with a tablet clear and sure,
 (Obscure in this alone, that it is graven
 On mortal hearts by an eternal hand),
 An ever-present Law, within our Being,
 Which we must read whether we will or no,
 We are placed here and told the way to go.

The Boy, who feels his foot upon the plain,
 And his young fingers clinging to the sword,
 For the first time—how loudly he proclaims
 The faith of his ingenuous chivalry !

“ What is to me that proudly-fronting force ?
 Am I not brave and strong ? Am I not here
 To fight and conquer ? Have I not around
 A world of comrades, bound to the same cause,
 All brave as I—all led by the same chief,
 All pledged to Victory ? Who dares to fear ?
 Who dares to doubt ? Is not the very pulse,
 That drives my spirit onward, as a Voice
 Hailing my glory ?—Yes, the Power of Ill
 Shall quail before the virtue of my arm,
 And hostile darts fall pointless from my shield.”

Poor youthful Heart ! poor noble Self-deceit !
 Weak-winged Aspirant !—Step with me aside,
 'Tis for a moment, mount this little hill,—
 Tell me and tell thyself what see'st Thou now.
 Look East and West, and mark how far extends
 This vainly mocked, this haughtily defied,
 This Might so easily to be laid low !
 There is no eminence on this wide space,
 So high that thou from it canst e'er behold
 A clear horizon : dark is all the space,
 Black with the masses of that Enemy ;

There is no point where Light can penetrate
Those densely-banded Legions,—the green plain
Shines through no interval. Brave though thou art,
My Boy, where is thy trust in Victory now !

Then gaze below, gaze on that waving crowd,
The marshalled army of Humanity,
From which thou art come out.—Loyal thou art,
My Boy ! but what avails thy feeble Truth,
When, as thou see'st, of that huge multitude,
Those still succeeding myriads there arrayed
For fight, how few, how miserably few,
Not only do not fervently work out
Their Soldier-duty, but whose craven souls
Do not pass over to the very Foe,
And, mingling with his numbers numberless,
Against their brethren turn unnatural arms,—
Or else of honest wills, at first, like thine,
After the faint resistance of an hour,
Yield themselves up half-willing prisoners,
Soon to be won by golden-guileful tongues,
To do blithe service in the cause of Sin ?
Surely amid this general faithlessness,
This common treason, where Desertion takes
So sure a method, so distinct a form,
That it may rather seem itself a Law
Than the infraction, where the wonder is

That those are loyal, not that these rebel,—
Surely if *we*, who have our hearts awake
To this most dreadful Truth, we who have learnt
That Evil is a force, which when we meet
In open battle, we are as a rush
Before the whirlwind, cautiously retire
To some deep-hidden cleft where'er we deem
We are best sheltered from his poisoned touch,
And there in calm but tearful hopelessness,
Mourning the cureless Agony of our world,
Crouch in the dust and wait until the end,
It were a bitter judgment and untrue,
To brand us cowards, and our deeds a crime.

But though the weakness of our human heart
May thus be made most safe and innocent,
Yet there are some to whom a strength is given,
A Will, a self-constraining Energy,
A Faith which feeds upon no earthly hope,
Which never thinks of Victory, but content
In its own consummation, combating
Because it ought to combat (even as Love
Is its own cause and cannot have another),
And conscious that to find in martyrdom
The stamp and signet of most perfect life
Is all the science that mankind can reach,
Rejoicing fights, and still rejoicing falls.

It may be that to Spirits high-toned as these
A revelation of the end of Time
Is also granted ; that they feel a sense
Giving them firm assurance that the foe
By which they must be crushed (in Death well-won
Alone to find their freedom) in his turn
Will be subdued, though not by such as They.
Evil, which is the King of Time, in Time
Cannot be overcome, but who has said
That Time shall be for ever ? Who can lay
The limits of Creation ? Who can know
That Realm and Monarch shall not sink together
Into the deep of blest Eternity,
And Love and Peace be all the Universe ?

RETURNING DREAMS.

IN the lone silence of my later nights,
The dreams I dreamt in youth come back to me ;
Not a returning presence that affrights,—
Nor a mere play of hard-forced memory,—
But there is no reality which seems
To me so real as those repeated dreams.

I find, in such revivals of old joys,
An earnest of the unity that reigns
In this our inner life, an equipoise
To all our vacillating outward pains ;
A constant well, from which our souls updraw
Continuous Truth and undisturbèd Law.

If few to us, and far between, appear
The favoured hours at which reverberate
These spiritual echoes, that from sphere
To sphere are sped by Power compassionate,
In Life's short pass, how rarely are we found
Just at the point where strikes the heavenly sound !

But unlike echoes among natural things,
That live in faintness and are breathed away,—
To ends most distant their reflection brings
Glories and bliss impervious to decay,
Fresh and refreshing as when first they come
From the Eternal Thought, which is their home.

As in that World of Dream, whose mystic shades
Are cast by still more mystic substances,
We ofttimes have an unreflecting sense,
A silent consciousness, of some things past,

So clear, that we can wholly comprehend
 Others of which they are a part, and even
 Continue them in action, though no stretch
 Of after-memory can recognise
 That we have had experience of those things,
 Or sleeping or awake ;—

Thus in the dream,

Our Universal Dream, of Mortal Life,
 The incidents of an anterior Dream,
 Or, it may be, Existence (for the Sun
 Of Being, seen thro' the deep dreamy mist,
 Itself is dream-like), noiselessly intrude
 Into the daily flow of earthly things ;
 Instincts of Good,—immediate sympathies,
 Places come at by chance, that claim at once
 An old acquaintance,—single, random, looks,
 That bare a stranger's bosom to our eyes ;
 We *know* these things are so, we ask not why,
 But act and follow as the Dream goes on.

Happy the many to whom Life displays
 Only the flaunting of its Tulip-flower,
 Whose minds have never bent to scrutinize
 Into the maddening riddle of the Root,—
 Shell within shell,—dream folded over dream,—
 No heart, no kernel of essential Being,
 For us to find, and feel that Truth is there !

THE MARVEL OF LIFE.
—•—

O LIFE ! how like the common-breathèd air,
Which is thy outward instrument, thou liest
Ever about us, with sustaining force,
In the calm current of our usual days
Unfelt, unthought of ; nay, how dense a crowd
Float on upborne by thy prolific stream,
Even to the ridges of the eternal sea,
Spending profuse the passion of their mind
On every flower that gleams on either bank,
On every rock that bends its rugged brow,
Conscious of all things, only not of thee.

Yet some there are, who in their greenest youth,
At some rare hours, have known the dazzling light
Intolerable, that glares upon the soul,
In the mere sense of Being, and grown faint
With awe, and striven to press their folded hands
Upon their inner eyes, and bowed their heads,

As in the presence of a mighty Ghost,
Which they must feel, but cannot dare to see.

It is before me now, that fearful truth,
That single solitary truth, which hangs
In the dark heaven of our uncertainties,
Seen by no other light than its own fire,
Self-balanced, like the Arab Magian's tomb,
Between the inner and the outer World ;—
How utterly the wretched shred of Time,
Which in our blindness we call Human Life,
Is lost with all its train of circumstance,
And appanage of after and before,
In this eternal present ; that we Are !
No When,—no Where,—no How,—but that we Are,—
And nought besides.

Nor when our dazed sight,
Weaned from its first keen wonder, learns to fix
The surer and more reasonable gaze
Of calm concentrated philosophy
On this intense idea, have we gained
One instant's raising of the sacred veil,
One briefest glimpse into the sanctuary.—
We grasp at words, and find them meaningless,
Bind thoughts together that will not be bound,
But burst asunder at the very time

We hold them closest,—find we are awake
 The while we seem to dream, and find we dream
 The while we seem to be the most awake ;
 And thus we are thrown on from sea to sea.
 Can we take up the sparkles of choice light,
 That dance upon the ruffled summer waters,
 And make them up to one coherent sun ?
 Can we transform the charred and molten dust
 Into its elemental diamond ?
 And, tho' thus impotent, we yet dare hope,
 From this embasèd form, half earth, half heaven,
 Of most imperfect fragmentary nature,
 These scant materials of dethronèd power,
 This tarnished Beauty, marred Divinity,
 To fabricate a comprehensive scheme
 Of absolute Existence—to lay open
 The knowledge of a clear concordant Whole,
 And penetrate, with foully-scalèd eyes,
 The total scope, and utmost distances,
 Of the Creations of the Living God.

* * * *
 * * * *

He was a bitter Mocker, that old Man
 Who bade us “ know ourselves,” yet not unwise ;
 For though the science of our Life and Being
 Be unattained and unattainable
 By these weak organs, though the athlete mind,
 Hardened by practice of unpausing toil,

And fed to manhood with robustest meats,
Never can train its sinews strong enough
To raise itself from off the solid ground,
To which the mandate of creating Will
Has bound it ; though we all must patient stand,
Like statues on appointed pedestals,
Yet we may choose (since choice is given) to shun
Servile contentment or ignoble fear,
In the expression of our attitude ;
And with far-straining eyes, and hands upcast,
And feet half raised, declare our painful state,
Yearning for wings to reach the fields of Truth,
Mourning for wisdom, panting to be free.

THE EXHAUSTION OF LIFE.

THE Life of man is made of many lives,
His heart and mind of many minds and hearts,
And he in inward growth most surely thrives
Who lets wise Nature order all the parts :

To each disposing what befits their scope,
To boyhood pleasures without care or plan,
To youth affections bright and light as hope,
Deep-seated passions to the ripened man.

Oh ! well to say, and well if done as said :
But who himself can keep each separate stage ?
Stand 'twixt the living feelings and the dead,
And give its special life to every age ?

Who can forbid the present to encroach
On what should rest the future's free domain,
Holding the past undimmed by self-reproach,
Nor borrow joy at usury of pain ?

Boyhood invades the phantasies of youth,
Rocked in imagination's golden arms,
And leaves its own delights of healthy truth
For premature and visionary charms.

Youth, to whom Poesy by right belongs
And every creature of the fairy race,
Turns a deaf ear to those enchanting songs,
And sees no beauty in that dreamy face,

But will, though by experience uninured,
Plunge into deepest gulfs of mental fire,
Trying what angels have in vain endured—
The toils of Thought—the struggles of Desire :

So that when Manhood in its place at last
Comes and demands its labours and its powers,
The Spirit's energies are worn and past,
And Life remains a lapse of feeble hours.

THE SOLITUDE OF LIFE.

WHEN Fancy's exhalations rise
 From youth's delicious morn,
 Our eyes seem made for others' eyes,
 Spirit for spirit born :
 But time the simple faith controuls,—
 We learn too soon, alas !
 How wide the gulf between two souls,
 How difficult to pass !

In twilight and in fearfulness
 We feel our path along
 From heart to heart, yet none the less
 Our way is often wrong.
 And then new dangers must be faced,
 New doubts must be dispelled,—
 For not one step can be retraced
 That once the Past has held.

To some 'tis given to walk awhile
 In Love's unshaded noon,
 But clouds are gathering while they smile,
 And night is coming soon !

Most happy he whose journey lies
Beneath the starlight sheen
Of unregretful memories
Of glory that has been.

We live together years and years,
And leave unsounded still
Each other's springs of hopes and fears,
Each other's depths of will :
We live together day by day,
And some chance look or tone
Lights up with instantaneous ray
An inner world unknown.

Then wonder not that they who love
The longest and the best,
Are parted by some sudden move
Of passion or unrest :
Nor marvel that the wise and good
Should oft apart remain,
Nor dare, when once misunderstood,
To sympathise again.

Come, Death ! and match thy quiet gloom
With being's darkling strife,
Come set beside the lonely Tomb
The Solitude of Life ;

And henceforth none who see can fear
Thy hour, which some will crave,
Who feel their hearts, though beating here,
Already in the grave.

THE WEARY SOUL.

My soul is wasted with trouble and toil,
The evening of Life is damp and chill,—
She would go back and rest awhile,
She can go back whene'er she will,—
For' the Poet holds the Past in fee,
That shadowy land is all his own,
And He, not led by Memory,
But as a man that walks alone
In gardens long familiar, knows
What spots afford the best repose.

Surely she will not wander far,—
Twilight is coming with never a star ;
Why may she not return where stands,
Broadly towards the westering sun,
That proud building of hearts and hands,
Castle and Palace all in one,

Over the portal named at length,
“ Successful Manhood’s place of strength ? ”
There she may traverse court and hall,
Up to her favourite turret tall ;
She may recline her aching head
On her ancestral purple bed,
There, where at eve so oft she lay,
I’ the deep-embrasured window-bay,
Giving her vision open reign
Over the chequered world of plain—
Of hues that rest and hues that pass,
Sunset and autumn and tinted glass ;
While the buck’s clear bell and the cattle’s low,
And every sound that is heard below,
Were melted into one murmur soft
Ere they could reach that couch aloft.

Witness of that triumphant scene !
Little you know what doom has been :—
How at a blow the heavens were split,
Words on the wall spontaneous writ,
As with a pen of burning brass,
“ Vanitas, omnia Vanitas : ”—
How disappointment bared her hand,
Vivid and red as the levin brand,
Struck on the tower’s sublimest crown,
Shattered the sturdiest buttress down,—

Till the poor Soul would fain have died
'Mid her annihilated pride.
Speed her along, tho' night be drear,—
Night be her cover, for none is here ;
Seek her a rest where'er you may,
Not in this shelterless decay !

There is a bower, a way-side bower,
Rich with brede of berry' and flower,—
Fair to dwell in and behold
How the green is turning gold,
Till the leafy screen repeat
All the life without the heat :
Music comes not here and there,
Does not fill, but is, the air :
Perfumes delicate and fine,
Flower of orange, flower of vine,
Take their place, without pretence,
In the harmony of sense ;
Where the floating spirit dreams,
Fed by odours, sounds, and gleams,
Of this royal region hight,
“ Youth's dominion of delight.”
Why then farther ? why not here ?
Soul of sorrow, Mind of fear !
Rest, as thou wert wont to rest,
On the swell of Nature's breast.

Hear that voice in angel's frame,
Singing, " Youth is still the same ;
Cheery faces glimpsing round,—
Limber feet on mossy ground ;
Circumstance, the God of clay,
We have fairly laughed away,
And a power of other face,
Hope, is seated in his place.
Enter, all that come from far,
Poor and naked as ye are ;
Very breath is here divine,—
Bacchus has no need of wine !"

" Friends ! " the tearful soul replies,
" Keep, oh ! keep your Paradise !
Once I gained your happy place,
Ardent in the healthy race,
One of many braced together,
Comrades of the way and weather ;
Now alone I falter by,—
Youth's the same,—but what am I ?
Just as sweet, as free from cares,
Are your smiles,—but are not *theirs* :
When the lips I pressed of old
Lie beneath the sullen mould :
When the voices I have known
In hosannas like your own
Answer to my yearning call,

Thin and feeble, if at all ;
When the golden locks are grey,
That made sunshine all my day ;
When my fibres fall together
In your genial summer-weather ;—
How can I repose an hour
In the graces of your bower ?
How should I take up my rest,
As a strange unnatural guest,
In this home of truth, in this
My retreat of ancient bliss ?
Blasts of death-impregnate air
Would, with all the flowers, be there,—
Storms thro' all the blue be spread
In thick battalia o'er my head ;
Pallid looks of friendships broken,
Phantom words unwisely spoken,
Thoughts of love and self-reproof
Mingled in a fearful woof,—
Wishes, when not wished in vain,
Only realised for pain,—
Things ye could not hear or see
Would be all my company !”

Disheartened spirit ! thou art then
In vain distinct from common men,
If all thy weary quest of mind
No true abiding-place can find,

Whose charms the busy life subdue,
And lure it from the outer view !
No region of thy mortal lot
Where Peace is native to the spot,
Ready to greet, when care-begone,
Imagination's pilgrim son.

Yet onward ;—it is well to stray
Along this bleak and homeless way,
Till thou canst raise thy conscious eyes
Where Childhood's Atalantis lies,
And recognise that idyl scene,
Where all mild creatures, void of awe,
Amid field-flowers and mountains green,
Fulfil their being's gentle law.

They will not fear thee ; safe they dwell
Within this armless citadel,
Embastioned in the self-defence
Of self-regardless innocence :
On Sin or Sorrow's bosom lingers
Each infant head in slumbers bland,—
Secure the tender tiny fingers
Enclasp the dark and withered hand.

Abysms of thought and sense must be
Between those simple souls and thee ;

But as the parent is beguiled
Into the nature of the child,
So mayst thou, tho' an alien here,
By careful duty take thy part
In all the feelings that endear
The kingdom of the virgin heart.

And thou wilt taste once more the rills
Fresh gushing from the eternal hills,
And feel delight in living air
Without research of when and where ;
And hear the birds their song dispense
With free descant, on branch and wing,
Careless of other audience
Than God who made and bade them sing.

Till haply pausing some noon-day
Amid the fairy-people's play,
Along thy limbs the stony sleep
That rounds our life shall calmly creep,
And thou from Present and from Past,
And things to come at once be freed,
To rest for aye, or wake at last
In God's own arms, a child indeed.

THE
BOOK OF SORROW.

SISTER Sorrow ! sit beside me,
Or, if I must wander, guide me ;
Let me take thy hand in mine,
Cold alike are mine and thine.

Think not, Sorrow, that I hate thee,—
Think not I am frightened at thee,—
Thou art come for some good end,
I will treat thee as a friend.

I will say that thou art bound
My unshielded soul to wound
By some force without thy will
And art tender-minded still.

I will say thou givest scope
To the breath and light of hope ;
That thy gentle tears have weight
Hardest hearts to penetrate :

That thy shadow brings together
Friends long lost in sunny weather,
With an hundred offices
Beautiful and blest as these.

Softly takest Thou the crown
From my haughty temples down ;
Place it on thine own pale brow,
Pleasure wears one,—why not Thou ?

Let the blossoms glisten there
On thy long unbanded hair,
And when I have borne my pain,
Thou wilt give them me again.

If Thou goest, sister Sorrow !
I shall look for Thee to-morrow,—
I shall often see Thee drest
As a masquerading guest :

And howe'er Thou hid'st the name,
I shall know Thee still the same
As Thou sitt'st beside me now,
With my garland on thy brow.

SORROWS:

L

O! MOURNFUL sequence of self-drunken days,
When jovial youth had range of Nature's store !
With fever-thirst for pleasure and for praise,
I nauseate every draught, and ask for more.

Look on me well, and early steep thy soul
In one pure Love, and it will last thee long ;
Fresh airs shall breathe while sweltering thunders roll,
And summer noons shall leave thee cool and strong.

Across the desert, 'mid thy thirsty kind,
Thy healthy heart shall move apace and calm,
Nor yearning trace the horizon far behind,
Where rests the fountain and the lonely palm.

II.

I had a home wherein the weariest feet
 Found sure repose ;
And Hope led on laborious day to meet
 Delightful close !
A cottage with broad eaves and a thick vine,
 A crystal stream,
Whose mountain-language was the same as mine :
 —It was a dream !

I had a home to make the gloomiest heart
 Alight with joy,—
A temple of chaste love, a place apart
 From Time's annoy ;
A moonlight scene of life, where all things rude
 And harsh did seem
With pity rounded and by grace subdued :
 —It was a dream !

III.

To search for lore in spacious libraries,
And find it hid in tongues to you unknown ;
To wait deaf-eared near swelling minstrelsies,
Watch every action, but not catch one tone ;—
Amid a thousand breathless votaries,
To feel yourself dry-hearted as a stone,—
Are images of that, which, hour by hour,
Consumes my heart, the strife of Will and Power.

The Beauty of the Past before my eyes
Stands ever in each fable-haunted place,
I know her form in every dark disguise,
But never look upon her open face ;
O'er every limb a veil thick-folded lies,
Showing poor outline of a perfect grace,
Yet just enough to make the sickened mind
Grieve doubly for the treasures hid behind.

Through great memorials wandering to and fro,
Waves of old Time about me seem to roll,
Most like a tune heard somewhere long ago,
Whose separate notes have left upon my soul

Some footmarks as they past, and though I know
That memory's hardest toil can raise the whole
Into continuous being, never again,
I still strive on as one in love with pain.—

O Thou ! to whom the wearisome disease
Of Past and Present is an alien thing,
Thou pure Existence ! whose severe decrees
Forbid a living man his soul to bring
Into a timeless Eden of sweet ease,
Clear-eyed, clear-hearted,—lay thy loving wing
In Death upon me,—if that way alone
Thy great Creation-thought thou wilt to me make known.

ROME. 1834.

IV.

Her heart is sick with thinking
Of the misery of her kind,
Her mind is almost sinking,
That once so buoyant mind ;—
She cannot look before her
On the evil-haunted way,—
Uphold her, oh ! restore her
Thou Lord of Night and Day !—

She cries, " These things confound me,
They settle on my brain,
The very air around me
Is universal Pain.
The earth is damp with weeping,
Rarely the sun shines clear
On any but those sleeping
Upon the quiet bier.
I envy not hard hearts, but yet
I would I could *sometimes* forget ;
I would, though but for moments, look
With comfort into Nature's book,
Nor read that everlasting frown,
Whose terror bows me wholly down.
I cannot meet each pang I see
With gratefulness that not on *me*
Has fallen that rod,
And make my fellow's agony
The measure of my love to God.
I bear an earnest Christian faith ;
I never shrunk at thought of death ;
I know the rapturous light of Heaven,
To man's unscalèd vision given ;—
My spirit is not blind ; but when
The tortures of my brother men,
The famine of gray hairs,
The sick-beds of the poor,

Life's daily stinging cares
That crowd the proudest door,
The tombs of the long-loved,
The slowly-broken heart,
Self-gloated power unmoved
By Pity's tenderest art,
Come thronging thick about me,
Close in the world without me,—
How should I not despond ?
How can I stretch my sight so far
As where things blest and holy are ?
My mortal nature is too frail
To penetrate the sable veil,—
I cannot *see* beyond ! ”

v.

Ye Roses of November,
Ye are no joy to me ;
The roses I remember
Are other than ye be !
Your cordial kindred summer
Has gone by long before,
And Winter, the new-comer,
Is a Lover fierce and frore.

At sight of ye I tremble,
As ye in this bleak air ;
I read a fearful symbol
In what ye are and were ;
How all that 's best and fairest,
When past a petty reign,
To those, who hold them dearest,
Are Pain and only Pain.

Beauty is always Beauty,
Her essences divine
The Poet, in his duty,
May labour to combine ;
But Beauty wed to sorrow
Is sad, whate'er we say,—
Sad thinking for to-morrow,
Sad presence for to-day !

VI.

Why wilt Thou ever thus before me stand,
Thou ghostly Past ?
Always between me and the happy land
Thy shade is cast.

Thou art no midnight phantom of remorse,
That I would lay :—
My life has run a plain unnoted course,
In open day.

I would enjoy the Present, I would live
Like one new-born :
I value not the gifts Thou hast to give—
Knowledge and Scorn.

I would, for some short moments, cease to judge—
Reckon—compare :
And this small bliss Thou wilt persist to grudge,
Still haunting there.

Thou makest all things heavy with regrets ;
Too late—too soon :
My mind is like a sun that ever sets,
And knows no noon :

I am become the very fool of time,—
The world for me
Has no sure test of innocence or crime ;
All things may be :

For every notion that has filled my brain
Leaves such a trace
That every instant it may rise again
And claim its place.

Faces and fancies I have cursed or cherished
 Throng round my head ;
 In vain I call on thee to leave the perished—
 To hide the dead.

Confused and tost on this ideal sea,
 I hardly keep
 A sense of weak and maimed identity,
 More than in sleep :

Save when the Future wins my yearning gaze,
 That shore where still
 Imagination resolutely stays
 The tide of ill.

THE CURSE OF LIFE.

ALL that flesh doth cover,
 Souls of source sublime,
 Are but slaves sold over
 To the Master Time,
 To work out their ransom for the ancient crime.

Some go meet the morrow
 With industrious will,—

Others toil in sorrow,
Though their hands be still ;
Man must toil for good or he shall toil for ill.

Grasping at one pleasure,
We let others fall :
Yet how scant the measure
If we sum them all,—
Honey-drops scarce tasted in a sea of gall.

Did but tears and sighs
Teach our minds to see,
With clear-piercing eyes,
Into Heaven's decree,
By this time, how wise this world of ours would be !

Knowledge worn by sadness
Grows too faint to rise,—
Anguish fathers madness,—
Labour brutifies :
If high feelings live, the Man a Martyr dies.

Sleep of freshest childhood
Hears the voice of doom ;—
Rambling in the wild wood,
Culling every bloom,
Tender brows are chilled by mist from out the tomb.

Gazing on Creation
With a first love's eye,
Panting exaltation
Sinks into a sigh,—
For we learn so soon that what we love must die.

Then we try to smother
The Love-fire in our heart ;
Nature, our sweet Mother,
Can no balm impart,
For she too is sick with all the self-same smart.

She would fain relieve us,
Fain our grief beguile,—
She cannot deceive us
By her outward smile,
For we know that Death torments her all the while.

In the green bud's bosom
There is secret pain,
Bees to the same blossom
Come not back again,—
Waters weep, that seem to sing a happy strain.*

* " We know that the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."—ST. PAUL.

The Gem of Love was shattered
Long before our birth,
Sparkles still are scattered
Over the broad Earth,—
Which some seek in vain, tho' some know not their worth.

Some may find and hold them,
Never to let go,
Hearts that would enfold them
In their vital glow,—
When Circumstance comes in and works them double woe :

Circumstance that ever
Uses wicked skill
All fond ties to sever,
Bind them as we will,
Till our broken being in Death is hushed and still.

THE PALSY OF THE HEART.

I SEE the worlds of earth and sky
 With beauty filled to overflow ;
 My spirit lags behind the eye—
 I know, but feel not as I know :
 Those miracles of form and hue
 I can dissect with artist skill,
 But more than this I cannot do,—
 Enjoyment rests beyond the will.

Round me in rich profusion lie
 Nectareous fruits of ancient mind,
 The thoughts that have no power to die
 In golden poesy enshrined :
 And near me hang, of later birth,
 Ripe clusters from the living tree,
 But what the pleasure, what the worth,
 If all is savourless to me !

I hear the subtle chords of sound,
Entangled, loosed, and knit anew ;
The music floats without—around—
But will not enter and imbue :
While harmonies diviner still,
Sweet greetings, appellations dear,
That used through every nerve to thrill
I often hear, and only hear.

O dreadful thought ! if by God's grace
To souls like mine there should be given
That perfect presence of his face,
Which we, for want of words, call Heaven,—
And unresponsive even there
This heart of mine could still remain,
And its intrinsic evil bear
To realms that know no other pain.

Better down nature's scale to roll,
Far as the base unbreathing clod,
Than rest a conscious reasoning soul,
Impervious to the light of God ;—
Hateful the powers that but divine
What we have lost beyond recal,
The intellectual plummet-line
That sounds the depths to which we fall.

THE WORLD'S EXILE.

WELL, I will tell you, kind adviser,
 Why thus I ever roam
 In distant lands, nor wish to guide
 My footsteps to the fair hill-side
 Where stands my sacred home.

My home ! I seem to write that word,
 In characters more clear
 Than other words,—more slowly round
 I draw my pen, to keep the sound
 Still lingering in my ear.

For were my wearied life allowed
 To choose that quiet bourne,
 I should be met by straining eyes,
 Welcoming tears, and grateful sighs,
 To hallow my return.

But between me and that blest place,
 There lies a bar, I feel,
 More hard to pass, more girt with awe,
 Than any power of injured law,
 Or front of bristling steel,—

Or the proud world's anathema,
Or high imperial ban ;
I know it would be sacrilege
For me to touch that threshold's edge,—
I am an unclean man !

Not that, in things of Man's esteem,
I bear a mark of shame,
Wealth fairly won, and never turned
To sordid use or wrong, has earned
My honourable name.

But where has been my walk of life ?
Have I not grown half grey
Within the lazar-house, and there
Have fed upon the envenomed air,
Unconscious day by day ?

How long ago the poisonous rain
Distilled its deadly cold
Upon my warm and panting youth,
That had no instinct but for truth,
No thought of self or gold !

How the hard leprous scales defiled
The bloom so fresh before,
How soon they taught my virgin eyes
To unlearn the glorious mysteries
They saw so clear of yore !

And in their place came vexèd thoughts,
And hopes without a goal,
Unjust regards, and false esteems,
And worship of fantastic dreams,
To paralyse my soul.

Perchance, if I were placed once more
Within the ancient pale
Of Home and homely things, once more
Beheld beside the rustic door
The bowery rose down-trail,—

And saw the bed at whose low side
I prayed, a thankful boy,
Where I have read, by stealthy light,
Some marvellous tale, till past midnight,
In deep and trembling joy ;

The casement too, with light wood latch,
Where 'twas my happy wont
To push the ivy half away,
And let the unchecked moon-stream play
Over my thirsty front ;

And when I felt a parent's kiss
Lie warm upon my cheek,—
Such sympathies so long foregone
Would make, in their sweet guerison,
The veriest savage meek.

The passion of that influence
Could not be vain to me,
The tide of love would be so strong,
I might perchance be borne along,
And be one moment free.

That could not last,—the Mammon King
Would be indeed too blind,
Thus to give up his long-won prey,
And loose the chains, in one short day,
It took him years to bind.

The heart, that with its luscious cates
The world has fed so long,
Could never taste the simple food
That gives fresh virtue to the good,
Fresh vigour to the strong.

What witchery, to a blunted spirit,
Can give the rapid sense
Of all that 's true, and just, and kind,
And beautiful, that lights the mind
Of dauntless innocence ?

The very health of these pure lives,
To my distempered sight,
Would wear a rude unseemly guise,—
Oh ! shame that darkness dare despise
The Ministers of light !—

I could not join their honest mirth,
Nor share their artless plays,
Each earnest laugh would come to me,
Freighted with bitterest mockery,
Out of my early days.

The plain old songs, all known by heart,
The merry-chorused round,
The imperfect notes, that childhood sings
For its own glee, would now be things
Of faint and rapid sound.

The evening hymn, when every voice
After our father prayed,
Oldest with youngest richly blent,
Followed the simple instrument
My gentle Mother played.

That herald of their happy rest,
Closing their happy day,
Would chase from me all thought of sleep,—
Alas! I might not even weep,
For the bliss I had thrown away.

But discontent and dark unrest
Would thicken all the air,
Envy, of thwarted conscience born,
Envy, that cloaks itself in scorn,
Would haunt me everywhere.

I might blaspheme the holy joys
From which my soul is riven,
And wroth to find my heart so dumb,
While theirs were sweetly-voiced, become
A Demon in that heaven.

At last, I feel, I might grow mad,
For my distorted brain
Would faint beneath the hideous rack—
Force me in ten-fold misery back
To the waste world again.

Then let me linger where I am,
An exile if you will,—
But, Friend, remember, if I flee
To my old home, I there must be
A greater exile still.

THE
BOOK OF DEATH.



ON ———.

GENTLY supported by the ready aid
Of loving hands, whose little work of toil
Her grateful prodigality repaid
With all the benediction of her smile,
She turned her failing feet
To the soft-pillowed seat,
Dispensing kindly greetings all the while.

Before the tranquil beauty of her face
I bowed in spirit, thinking that she were
A suffering Angel, whom the special grace
Of God intrusted to our pious care,
That we might learn from her
The art to minister
To heavenly beings in seraphic air.

There seemed to lie a weight upon her brain,
That ever pressed her blue-veined eyelids down,
But could not dim her lustrous eyes with pain,
Nor seam her forehead with the faintest frown :
She was as she were proud,
So young, to be allowed
To follow Him who wore the thorny crown.

Nor was she sad, but over every mood,
To which her lightly-pliant mind gave birth,
Gracefully changing, did a spirit brood,
Of quiet gaiety, and serenest mirth ;
And thus her voice did flow,
So beautifully low,
A stream whose music was no thing of earth.

Now long that instrument has ceased to sound,
Now long that gracious form in earth has lain
Tended by nature only, and unwound
Are all those mingled threads of Love and Pain ;
So let me weep and bend
My head and wait the end,
Knowing that God creates not thus in vain.

'Tis right for her to sleep between
Some of those old Cathedral walls,
And right too that her grave is green
With all the dew and rain that falls.

'Tis well the organ's solemn sighs
Should soar and sink around her rest,
And almost in her ear should rise
The prayers of those she loved the best.

'Tis also well this air is stirred
By Nature's voices loud and low,
By thunder and the chirping bird,
And grasses whispering as they grow.

For all her spirit's earthly course
Was as a lesson and a sign
How to o'errule the hard divorce
That parts things natural and divine.

Undaunted by the clouds of fear,
Undazzled by a happy day,
She made a Heaven about her here,
And took how much ! with her away.

THE BROTHERS.

'Tis true, that we can sometimes speak of Death,
 Even of the Deaths of those we love the best,
 Without dismay or terror ; we can sit
 In serious calm beneath deciduous trees,
 And count the leaves, scarce heavier than the air,
 That leave the branch and tremble to the ground ;
 Or out at midnight in a gliding boat
 Enjoy the waning moon and moralize,
 And say that Death is but a Mediator
 Between the lower and the loftier Life.
 Thus it may be with those, who only know
 The great Invader, as he sometimes comes
 Dismantled of his full ferocity,
 Taking almost a grace of gentleness
 From the surrounding atmosphere of Love,
 Seeming to pity what himself inflicts,
 When with soft touch he draws away the chair
 From the familiar circle, and lays down
 The suffering burden on an easy bed,

More like a weary traveller seeking sleep
Than the weak victim of a Tyrant's will.
For then Affection has a thousand moods,
With which to soothe the black necessity,
And form his rigid features to a smile ;—
There are the tender dues of every hour,
The pillows nightly smoothed by hands just kissed,
The active care that guards the wakening eye,
The cautious thoughtfulness of earnest love,
The sedulous record of each smallest word,
The looks whose pain is steeped in balmy tears,
The tones, that growing weaker day by day
Keep strong in love as ever, to the last,—
All after-treasures of consoling wealth,
For the heart's casket of departed things.
But when, like the Malay who, mad for blood,
And raving onward, deals on either side
Precipitate blows of unaccounted rage,
The Evil seems to meet us ; when he strikes,
In some unwonted, strangely-cruel, way,
Which even in fiction would have foully jarred
Against the regular calm of daily thought,
And broken, like a crash of lawless war,
On our mind's peace ; and when, to point the sting,
Some simplest instrument of common use
Conveys the poison, then the Demon wears
His native horror,—Death is Death indeed !

To read some twenty words in black and white,
And be made wretched for one's life to come !
To be laid senseless by a certain form
Of syllables pronounced in a low voice !
To see a cloud of gathering agony
Upon the forehead of a trusty friend,
And almost ere the name has passed his lips,
The name of some one that we both adore,
To know *that One* is dead, is gone, is dead,
When, how, we do not know, we do not ask,
Wrapped up in that immense idea of "dead,"
And sensible to nothing else or more !
I know not which is worse,—this stunning shock,
This sudden transformation of our being
Into one whole of pain, or that thick coil
Of expectation, presages, and fears,
Which winds itself so close about our heart,
When first the barely-possible event
Of such a loss takes substance in the mind,
And then, as every languid-lingering day
Brings fear more nigh to desolate certainty,
Tighter and tighter draw the racking bonds,
Till anguish can no longer be contained,
But bursts into loud passion, to sink down
Into dumb stupor.

Reader ! the hard fates
Of those, who in these tributary lines

May find some shield from a forgetting world,
Tried with this double strain of Misery,
The souls of those who loved them ; Reader ! pray
That this exceeding sorrow may not fall
Back to its hell, barren of holy fruit,—
That through these two deep rents which woe has made
In their most sacred feelings, they may see
Into the peaceful Heaven that lies beyond.

There were two Brothers, of near kin to me,—
We've played together many a summer eve,
In that short maidenhood of Life when eve
Can find the heart no heavier than at morn,
And day and darkness are all one in joy ;
They grew together from the self same stem,
Of little different heights, together drank
The dews of love and close domestic care,
Together sprouted out their vigorous green
As Nature's secret will devised the way.
And when the birthright Beauty, bold and free,
Of high-born English boys, was ripening fast
Upon them, home, its halls, and groves, and fields,
Were silent of those two accustomed voices,
Nearly at the same time,—how soon to be
Silent of them for ever ! They went forth
Into the distances of land and sea,
One far away, then nearer, then more far,

The roving comrade of the roving waves,—
The other, by the duty of the sword,
Taken to pleasant places, where the arm
Of British power extends its guardian strength
O'er stranger lands too weak to stand alone.
Thus after various changes, wanderings,
And hard experiences of manly life,
In that delicious spot, whose central charms
Embrace the eastern and the western earth,
The fairest of the fair Ionian isles,
The Brothers met once more ;—the other's face
Each looked upon, nor knew it was his brother's ;—
For in our mortal spring the craftsman Time
Is active to destroy and recreate,
Both in the inner and the outer Man ;
But joyous recognition soon came on,
First by degrees, then in a rapid flash,
And the old chain of kind fraternity
Was linked afresh, and, for some few short days,
The Nature of that island-paradise
Witnessed their love, witnessed their social sports,
And interchange of happiest memories.
Beneath the olive-grove's fine-fretted vault,
They spoke together of the beechen shades,
Spread in broad masses round their distant home ;—
On that cliff-platform, where the large sea-bird
Floats level by, and the sail-studded strait

Lies like a lake within that crescent coast
And the full breast-work of Albanian hills,
They talked of that dear terrace whose smooth length
Is stretched before their childhood's lordly home,
Above the lawny green befringed with flowers,
And sleepy stream and swelling meads beyond.
Into the gulf of the absorbing past,
Those lightly-pinioned hours past one by one ;
And then the Soldier and the Sailor stood,
For the last time, together on the deck,
While slow the sails expanded their white breasts
In the caresses of the lover breeze.

I am a student of the Heart of Man,
And thus 'tis not in curious wilfulness,
That I would know, whether some deeper sense
Than of mere pain at parting did not pass
Athwart their spirits, as they turned away ?
Whether did not a stern presentiment
Of many-folded evil hanging round
The personality of their two lives
Cast a dense shade upon the paths that led
Over the Future's hope-illumined plain,
And make the words of sweet encouragement
Faint on their mutual lips, and string their hands
With a convulsive force in that last grasp,
And dim with sudden mist their tearless eyes ?

To tell the sum of this sad tale, few words
Are best and all-sufficient ;—to display
The forms of pain and death and misery,
With an elaborate anatomic skill,
And mould the stark realities of ill
Into fantastic shapes of speech and thought,
Is not the Poet's function, must not be :—
He knows the fineness of his music-strings,
The tender fibres of all-human love,
And will not strike them with a reckless hand,
As if he beat upon a savage drum.
Enough, that ere the earth its annual round
Had many times accomplished, those bright boys
Had met strange deaths, both strange tho' different :—
The one, from all his comrades singled out
By a mysterious hazard, the sure aim
Of an assassin's hand broke off the bough
Of his full fragrant promise,—he is laid
In that warm foreign dust,—rude soldier tears
Have dropped upon his decorated tomb.
The other, ere this wound unhealable
Had lost the first intenseness of its sore,
Perished without a trace, without a sign,
In the huge ocean-deserts of the North,
He, and his fellows, and their dwelling-place,
One doom for all,—one darkness undisturbed,—
One desolation for affection's shrine.

We all have read and loved the lovely plaint,
In which the Lyrist, whose most grateful blooms
Spring from the root of purest womanhood,
Has hymned the "Household's" widely scattered
"Graves ;"

There's not a verse but has been wept upon ;—
And I could wish this not dissimilar theme
Had found such skill to work it to such end ;
But my faint strain expects no stranger tears,—
It is the homage of a kinsman's grief
Written for kindred, nor has other claim :
They will inform the vague imperfect frame
With inward-flowing music of their own,
The melodies of mournful recollections,
The supplement of personal interest,
The sympathies that come far out to meet you,
And other judgment I acknowledge none.

ON THE DEATH OF — — —.

I'm not where I was yesterday,
 Though my home be still the same,
 For I have lost the veriest friend
 Whom ever a friend could name ;
 I'm not where I was yesterday,
 Though change there be little to see,
 For a part of myself has lapsed away
 From Time to Eternity.

I have lost a thought that many a year
 Was most familiar food
 To my inmost mind, by night or day,
 In merry or plaintive mood ;
 I have lost a hope, that many a year
 Looked far on a gleaming way,
 When the walls of Life were closing round,
 And the sky was sombre grey.

For long, too long, in distant climes
 My lot was cast, and then,
 A frail and casual intercourse
 Was all I had with men ;

But lonely in distant climes
I was well content to roam,
And felt no void, for my heart was full
O' the friend it had left at home.

And now I was close to my native shores,
And I felt him at my side,
His spirit was in that homeward wind,
His voice in that homeward tide :
For what were to me my native shores,
But that they held the scene,
Where my youth's most genial flowers had blown,
And affection's root had been ?

I thought, how should I see him first,
How should our hands first meet,
Within his room,—upon the stair,—
At the corner of the street ?
I thought, where should I hear him first,
How catch his greeting tone,—
And thus I went up to his door,
And they told me he was gone !

Oh ! what is Life but a sum of love,
And Death but to lose it all ?
Weeds be for those that are left behind,
And not for those that fall !

And now how mighty a sum of love
 Is lost for ever to me
 . . . No, I'm not what I was yesterday,
 Though change there be little to see.

ON A BROTHER AND SISTER.

A BROTHER and a Sister,—these two Friends,
 Cast by fond Nature in one common mould,
 And waited on by genial Circumstance
 In all their history of familiar love,
 After a parting of not quite four years,
 Are peacefully united here once more.

He first, as best beseemed the manly mind,
 Tried the dark walk, which has (or seems to have)
 No portion in the pleasant sun or stars,
 The breath of flowers or morning-song of birds,
 The hand of Friendship or the lips of Love.
 Whether her sad and separated soul
 Received some token from that secret place,
 That she might follow him and meet him there,
 Or whether God, displeased that anything
 Of good or evil should so long divide
 Such undefiled and sacred sympathies,

Has made them one again before his face,
Are things that we perhaps shall never know.

Say not, O world of short and broken sight !
That these died young : the bee and butterfly
Live longer in one active sunny hour
Than the poor tortoise in his torpid years :
The lofty flights of Thought thro' clear and cloud,—
The labyrinthine ways that Poesy
Leads her beloved, the weary traverses
Of Reason, and the haven of calm Faith,
All had been theirs ; their seamless brows had known
The seal of pain, the sacrament of tears ;
And, unless Pride and Passion and bold Sin
Are all the rule and reckoning of our Being,
They have fulfilled as large a task of life
As ever veteran on the mortal field.

Thus they, who gave these favoured creatures birth,
Deem it no hard infraction of the law
Which regulates the order of our race,
That they above their offspring raise the tomb,
And with parental piety discharge
The duties filial love delights to pay :
They read the perfect sense of the design
In that which seems exception, and they mourn,
Not that these dear ones are already gone,
But that *they* linger still so far behind.

TO A MOURNER.

SLEEP not—you whose hope is dust,
 Love-deserted man !
 Or, if feeble body must,
 Seldom as it can.

Sleep is kin to Death they tell,
 You for this might love it well,
 But it is a kinsman poor,
 Hardly gets beyond the door,—
 Never fairly dwells within
 Where they rest and weep not
 Who are safe from Pain and Sin ;
 Sleep not, Mourner, sleep not.

Misery spent revives in Sleep,
 Will has no resistance,
 Anguish delves abysses deep
 In that dream-existence.
 Then we wake and half-believe,
 That we may ourselves deceive,

That the loss our souls deplore
May be but a dream the more ;—
Till, at one sharp start, we know,
 Though we shriek and weep not,
Our *reality* of woe,—
 Therefore, brother, sleep not !

But let Sleep some wayward change
 Bring upon our being,
Let sweet fancies freely range
 With calm thoughts agreeing :
Let sad memory be abused
By the pleasure circumfused,
And dear forms no more below
Softly round us come and go ;
Or let time be buried quite,
 And the moments creep not,—
Though oblivion be delight,
 Still, poor mourner, sleep not !

For an Agony will come,
 In the instant waking,
Like a dagger driven home,
 Like a nerve in breaking ;
Consciousness recovering life
But confounds us in the strife,
Wholly yielded up to Pain,
As when drowned men feel again ;

In that rush of gasping thought,
Woe for them that weep not !
Too, too, dearly may be bought
Such repose—oh ! sleep not !

Rather think the Evil down,
Rather weep it out ;
Certain grief remits its frown
Easier than doubt.

There are strong yet gentle powers
In the growth of many hours ;
Sorrow longer-lived will gain
Something more of peace than pain,
Such as God's still works possess,
Things that sow or reap not
In the world of more and less,
Live and die, but sleep not.

TO THE MEMORY OF G. V. C.

THOU too art gone, and yet I hardly know
 Why thou didst care to go :
 Thou wert so well at heart, so spirit clear,
 So heavenly-calm, though here ;
 But thus it is ; and, it would seem, no more
 Can we, who on the shore
 Of the loud world still walk, escape the din,
 And lie awhile within
 The quiet sunlight of thy filmless mind
 And rise refreshed, refined ;
 Yet am I mild and tempered in my grief,
 Having a sure relief ;—
 For these dear hours on life's dull length were spent
 By rarest accident,
 And *now* I have Thee by me when I will,
 Hear thy wise words, and fill
 My soul with thy calm looks ; *now* I can tame
 Ill thoughts by thy mere name.
 Death, the Divorcer, has united us
 With bands impervious
 To any tooth of Time, for they are wove
 Of the same texture as an Angel's Love

Feb. 23, 1835.

TWO VISITS TO A GRAVE.


I STOOD by the grave of one beloved,
On a chill and windless night,—
When not a blade of grass was moved,
In its rigid sheath of white.

The starry armament looked down,
From the glassy waste the while,
Perchance they could not seem to frown,
But they did not seem to smile.

Long time had past since they laid him there,
But I heeded not of time,
I knew the stone, tho' blank and bare,
Unmarked by line or rhyme.

Madly I wept that I had been
Over the wild wild sea,
When he had found in this last scene,
A home and a privacy.

The gloomy stillness of the hour
Came coldly to my heart,
And Faith and Hope grew weak in power
To soothe the sinner's smart ;

I almost cursed the good great God,—
And vowed that I would be
Even as he beneath the sod,
Tho' I had not lived as he.

I left the tomb,—I ceased to weep,—
But grisly forms of pain
Came thronging from the fields of sleep,
And forced me back again.

That morn the hoar-frost still was there,
In place of balmy dew,—
Unshaken was the silvered hair
Of the old church-yard yew.

I heard a company of birds
Their grateful carol troll,
And a sense of prayer, too much for words,
Arose within my soul.

The web of early mist was gone,
Fresh-wove in nature's loom,
For the sun, like a bold free spirit, shone
Clear on the glistening tomb.

I worshipped, as the gold flood poured
 On the scene, before so dim ;
 And when the Beautiful I adored,
 My thoughts were still of him.

I thought, I prayed, and thus became
 More full of sweet content,
 Watching the sun-beams gently frame
 The earth to merriment.

I was not happy, but I prayed,
 At heart, that I might *not* be
 As he who in that grave was laid,
 Till I had lived as he.

LIFE IN DEATH.

INDEED you do me wrong,—I merit not
 Those hard censorious eyes and dull regards,
 Because I have not wept, or sighed, or raved,
 Or sat in a mute madness, though I knew
 That she, whom we so loved, is gone away.
I have lost nothing, why then should I weep ?
 She is to *me* the same she ever was,
 A never-ceasing presence, a life-light,

In the dark watches of the pleasant night,
Or some far darker passages of day.

If I would weep, or mourn her fancied loss,
The azure fire, that wells from her calm eyes,
Laps up my tears, and tells me she is here ;
If I am sick at heart, she sits beside me,
And lays the velvet back of her white hand
Upon my cheek, to ask if all be well,
Or parts the hair upon my heated brows.
Since that one instant, in itself a life,
When, as commissioned messengers, my eyes
Went to her, and brought back into my soul
A gift, the greatest of all possible gifts,
Which God-empowered Man can give to Man,
A notion of the absolute Beautiful,
Since then, all nature has been one to me,
One Form impregnated with her sole Spirit :
I feel the ambient sweetness of her breath
In flowering rosiers and the woods of spring ;
Her voice is gushing from the nightingale ;
There 's not a cloud that walks the unsullied air,
But takes from her its majesty of gait,
For Space was made to show how she could move.
I do not say, that when I saw her lie
Hushed to cold sleep by Nature's lullabies,
(The same that plaintive Nurse eternally

Sings as she rocks to rest her dearly-loved,)
 I did not for one moment stare aghast,
 And know the blood stood still about my heart ;
 But soon the wailers left me there alone,
 And in the quiet of the gloom I saw
 The blessèd image, moving, ministering,
 By me, about me,—just as heretofore.

O ye ! who talk of Death, and mourn for Death,
 Why do you raise a phantom of your weakness,
 And then shriek loud to see what ye have made ?
 There is no Death, to those who know of Life—
 No Time, to those who see Eternity.

DEATH IN LIFE.

“ Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge,
 Die Seelen, denen ich die ersten sang ;
 Mein Lied ertönt der unbekanntten Menge,
 Ihr Beifall selbst macht meinem Herzen bang.” GÖTHE.

I PRAY you, dearest friend, urge me no more,
 To clothe my thoughts in melody and rhyme,
 And lay them out, upon the open shore,
 To catch the breezes of this wayward time.

For you, who know the sum of my sad fate,
Should be the last to urge so hard a suit ;
When the heart reels beneath misfortune's weight,
Oh ! let the hand be still, the lips be mute.

You know what I have won, what I have lost,
You saw the glory, see you not the gloom ?
Are not my hairs all blanched with misery's frost,
Do I not breathe the vapours of the tomb ?

But even were I, as I would be, calm,—
Thought I, where she is gone, that I could go,—
Had Hope and Memory full store of balm,
To heal the ceaseless soreness of the blow :

Even then, in this my solitary lot,
With every fibre of my soul unstrung,
How should I sing to those who know me not.
How would they listen while the Stranger sung ?

In truth I do not hate the general world,—
I hold my brother mortals far too dear
To watch unhurt the critic's lip upcurled,
To meet with smiles the pedant's silent sneer.

And if perchance my wavering spirit swerved,
Or failed in words to reach the imagined aim,
How would they judge the penalty deserved ?
How would they weigh the pity and the blame ?

I am too faint to scorn when they reprove,
Too broken to confront their rigid law,
Who have no mantle of familiar love,
To shield the frailty, and conceal the flaw.

It was not thus, when She was by my side,
Under whose eye the current of my song,
In all the power and bliss of peaceful pride,
Transparent with her beauty, flowed along.

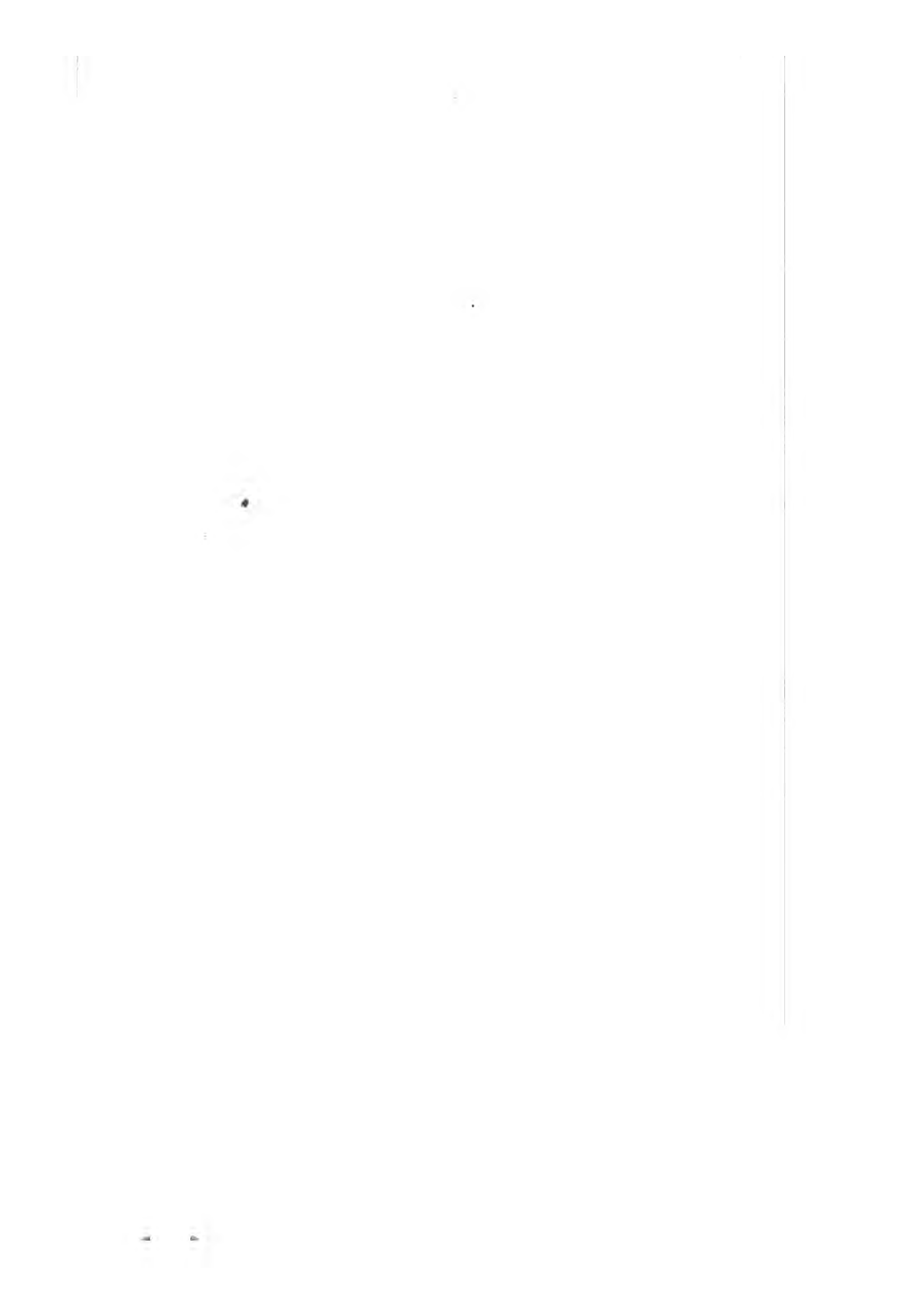
How little recked I then what others thought,
What others said, the many and the cold !
Her dear content was all the praise I sought,
And with her smile what craven were not bold ?

That is all gone,—but her immortal part
Still holds communion with its former home,
That inmost chamber of the lover's heart,
Where even you and friendship cannot come ;

And when this image of my glory fled
Attunes the discord to its holy will,
Though not a word be writ or utterèd,
It matters not,—I am the Poet still.

So let me rest,—nor think that you can bless
My joyless life with hope of other fame,
Than that the memory of her loveliness
May live in union with my humble name.

SONNETS.



I.

THE PAINS OF YOUTH.

A SHADOW, a light cloud, an April rain,
And twenty other vain similitudes,
Betoken that fast-springing Youth eludes
The full impression of continuous pain.
Strange fallacy! when all that then we feel
Strikes home,—the veriest trifles how profound!
When there is something in each precious wound
That searing Manhood almost fails to heal.
But let the harshnesses of daily life
And all the blunt world's businesses have set
A seal upon the fountain of the heart,
Then tangled in the party-coloured strife,
We throb with Love or Hate, we meet or part,
Sigh, tremble, weep, pass onward and forget.

II.

HAPPINESS.


BECAUSE the Few with signal virtue crowned,
The heights and pinnacles of human mind,
Sadder and wearier than the rest are found,
Wish not thy Soul less wise or less refined.
True that the small delights which every day
Cheer and distract the pilgrim are not theirs ;
True that, though free from Passion's lawless sway,
A loftier being brings severer cares.
Yet have they special pleasures, even mirth,
By those undreamt of who have only trod
Life's valley smooth ; and if the rolling earth
To their nice ear have many a painful tone,
They know, Man does not live by Joy alone,
But by the presence of the power of God.

III.

THE SAME.

—◆—

A SPLENDOUR amid glooms,—a sunny thread
Woven into a tapestry of cloud,—
A merry child a-playing with the shroud
That lies upon a breathless mother's bed,—
A garland on the front of one new wed,
Trembling and weeping while her troth is vowed,—
A school-boy's laugh that rises light and loud
In licensed freedom from ungentle dread ;
These are ensamples of the Happiness,
For which our nature fits us ; more and less
Are parts of all things to the mortal given,
Of Love, Joy, Truth, and Beauty. Perfect Light
Would dazzle, not illuminate, our sight,—
From earth it is enough to glimpse at Heaven.

IV.

THE SPRING AND THE BROOK.

It may be that the Poet is as a Spring,
That, from the deep of being, pulsing forth,
Proffers the hot and thirsty sons of earth
Refreshment unbestowed by sage or king.
Still is he but an utterance,—a lone thing,—
Sad-hearted in his very voice of mirth,—
Too often shivering in the thankless dearth
Of those affections he the best can sing.
But Thou, O lively Brook! whose fruitful way
Brings with it mirror'd smiles, and green, and flowers,—
Child of all scenes, companion of all hours,
Taking the simple cheer of every day,—
How little is to thee, thou happy Mind,
That solitary parent Spring behind!

v.

GOOD INTENTIONS.


FAIR thoughts of good, and fantasies as fair !
Why is it your content to dwell confined
In the dark cave of meditative mind,
Nor show your forms and colours elsewhere ?
Why taste ye not the beautiful free air
Of life and action ? If the wintry wind
Rages sometimes, must noble growth be pined,
And fresh extravagant boughs lopped off by care ?
Behold the budding and the flowering flowers,
That die, and in their seed have life anew ;
Oh ! if the promptings of our better hours
With vegetative virtue sprung and grew,
They would fill up the room of living Time,
And leave the world small space to nourish weeds of crime.

VI.

GRAVE TEMPERAMENTS.

—♦—

To live for present life, and feel no crime—
To see in life a merry-morrice craft,
Where he has done the best who most has laughed,
Is Youth's fit heaven, nor thus the less sublime :
But not to all men, in their best of prime,
Is given by Nature this miraculous draught
Of inward happiness, which, hourly quaffed,
Seems to the reveller deep beyond all time.
Therefore encumber not the sad young heart
With exhortations to impossible joy,
And charges of morose and thankless mood ;
For there is working in that girl or boy
A power which will and must remain apart—
Only by Love approached and understood.

VII.

ACTION AND THOUGHT.
—♦—

THERE is a world where struggle and stern toil
Are all the nurture of the soul of man—
Ordain'd to raise, from life's ungrateful soil,
Pain as he must, and Pleasure as he can.
Then to that other world of thought from this
Turns the sad soul, all hopeful of repose,
But round in weirdest metamorphosis,
False shapes and true, divine and devilish, close.
Above these two, and resting upon each
A meditative and compassionate eye,
Broodeth the Spirit of God : thence evermore,
On those poor wanderers cast from shore to shore,
Falleth a voice, omnipotent to teach
Them that will hear,—“ Despair not ! it is I.”

VIII.

PRAYER.
—•—

IN reverence will we speak of those that woo
The ear Divine with clear and ready prayer ;
And, while their voices cleave the Sabbath air,
Know their bright thoughts are winging heavenward too.
Yet many a one,—“ the latchet of whose shoe ”
These might not loose,—will often only dare
Lay some poor words between him and despair—
“ Father, forgive ! we know not what we do.”
For, as Christ pray'd, so echoes our weak heart,
Yearning the ways of God to vindicate,
But worn and wilder'd by the shows of fate,
Of good oppressed and beautiful defiled,
Dim alien force, that draws or holds apart
From its dear home that wandering spirit-child.

IX.

LESSON TO POETS.
—◆—

TRY not, or murmur not if tried in vain,
In fair rememberable words to set
Each scene or presence of especial gain,
As hoarded gems in precious cabinet.
Simply enjoy the present loveliness ;—
Let it become a portion of your being ;
Close your glad gaze, but see it none the less,
No clearer with your eye, than spirit, seeing.
And, when you part at last, turn once again,
Swearing *that* beauty shall be unforgot :
So in far sorrows it shall ease your pain,
In distant struggles it shall calm your strife,
And in your further and serener life,
Who says that it shall be remember'd not ?

x.

INDIRECT BEAUTY.

POET and Artist think and care not whether
Things hold in truth the glory that they show ;
Beauty and beauteous thoughts will go together,
While to one scene a thousand memories flow ;
Long spirit-strains from one wild note shall grow,
Magnificent tempests from one cloudy feather,
From one bright ray the sunset's perfect glow,
Hymettian thyme-beds from one plant of heather.
Into one scene a thousand memories flow !
Held we but this reflection at our hearts,
And Beauty never past without regard,
No place would lack illuminated parts,
And inward grace with outer mingle so,
That Nature should be never dark or hard.

XI.

TO CHARLES LAMB.

THEE I would think one of the many Wise,
Who in Eliza's time sat eminent,
To our now world, his Purgatory, sent
To teach us what true English Poets prize.
Pasquilant froth and foreign galliardize
Are none of thine ; but, when of gay intent,
Thou usest staid old English merriment,
Mannerly mirth, which no one dare despise.
The scoffs and girds of our poor critic rout
Must move thy pity, as amidst their mime,
Monk of Truth's Order, from thy memories
Thou dost updraw sublime simplicities,
Grand Thoughts that never can be wearied out,
Showing the unreality of Time.

XII.

TO A CERTAIN POET.

—•—

AT Beauty's altar fervent acolyte,
And favored candidate for priestly name,
In object as in force adore aright,
Nor waste one breath of thy rare gift of flame ;
Nature, Artistic Form, Music,—all these
Are shapes where partial Beauty deigns to lie,
And mediate, as with types and images,
Between frail hearts and perfect Deity.
From Thee a purer faith is due,—to find
The Beauty of Life,—the Melody of Mind,—
Which the true Poet's quest never eludes :
Speed Thou Philosophy's straight-onward flight,
Aiming thy wings at that serenest height,
Where Wordsworth stands, feeding the multitudes.

XIII.

LOVE WITHOUT SYMPATHY.
—♦—

YES, I will blame thy very height of heart,
I will conjure thee to remember still
That things above us are not less apart,
And mountains nearest to the sun most chill !
Well hadst thou held sublime and separate rank,
Martyr or heroine of romantic times,
When Woman's life was one poor cloudy blank,
Lit by rare-gleaming virtues, loves, and crimes.
But now that every day for thee and me
Has its own being of delight and woe,
Come down, bright star ! from thy perennial vault,
My earthly path's companion-light to be ;
And I will love thee more for every fault
Than for perfections that the angels show.

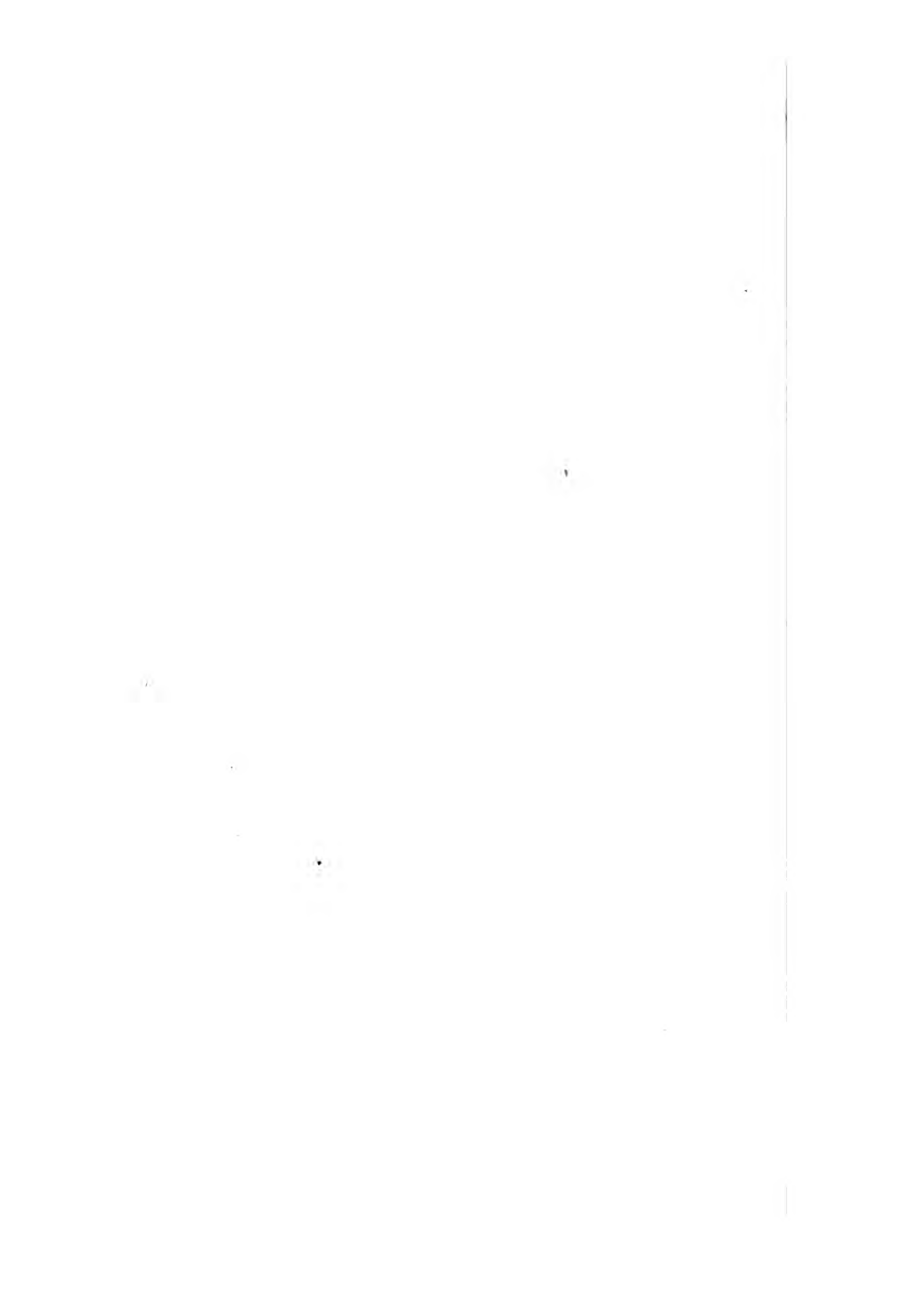
XIV.

ON A NOBLE CHILD,

EARLY DEAD.

FAREWELL to thee, thou swift-departed Stranger,
Weary with little stay,—farewell to thee !
There hung a picture in thy nursery
Of the God-boy, who slumbered in the manger,—
And oft I feared, lest Thou should'st meet the danger,
For pride of wealth or lusted empery,
Of losing that which I so loved to see,
Thy likeness to that picture, lovely Stranger.
Thou hast gone back all pure,—thy every feature
Faithful to what the limner's sacred eye
Pourtrayed the Son of God ; most blessed creature !
Thy brow unknit by passion, pain, or scorn,
Thine is the special privilege to have borne
The Cross of Love without the Agony.

SPECIMENS
OF
POETRY OF THE PEOPLE.



I.

LABOUR.

HEART of the People ! Working men !
Marrow and nerve of human powers ;
Who on your sturdy backs sustain
Through streaming Time this world of ours ;
Hold by that title,—which proclaims,
That ye are undismayed and strong,
Accomplishing whatever aims
May to the sons of earth belong.

Yet not on ye alone depend
These offices, or burthens fall ;
Labour for some or other end
Is Lord and master of us all.
The high-born youth from downy bed
Must meet the morn with horse and hound,
While Industry for daily bread
Pursues afresh his wonted round.

With all his pomp of pleasure, He
Is but your working comrade now,
And shouts and winds his horn, as ye
Might whistle by the loom or plough ;
In vain for him has wealth the use
Of warm repose and careless joy,—
When, as ye labour to produce,
He strives, as active to destroy.

But who is this with wasted frame,
Sad sign of vigour overwrought ?
What toil can this new victim claim ?
Pleasure, for Pleasure's sake besought.
How men would mock her flaunting shows,
Her golden promise, if they knew
What weary work she is to those
Who have no better work to do !

And He who still and silent sits
In closèd room or shady nook,
And seems to nurse his idle wits
With folded arms or open book :—
To things now working in *that* mind,
Your children's children well may owe
Blessings that Hope has ne'er defined
Till from his busy thoughts they flow.

Thus all must work—with head or hand,
For self or others, good or ill ;
Life is ordained to bear, like land,
Some fruit, be fallow as it will :
Evil has force itself to sow
Where we deny the healthy seed,—
And all our choice is this,—to grow
Pasture and grain or noisome weed.

Then in content possess your hearts,
Unenvious of each other's lot,—
For those which seem the easiest parts
Have travail which ye reckon not :
And He is bravest, happiest, best,
Who, from the task within his span,
Earns for himself his evening rest
And an increase of good for man.

II.

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE.

Who is this man whose words have might
To lead you from your rest or care,
Who speaks as if the earth were right
To stop its course and listen there ?
Where is the symbol of command
By which he claims this lofty tone ?
His hand is as another's hand,—
His speech no stronger than your own.

He bids you wonder, weep, rejoice,
Saying,—“ it is yourselves, not I ;
I speak but with the People's voice,
I see but with the People's eye.”—
Words of imposing pride and strength,
Words that contain, in little span,
The secret of the height and length
Of all the intelligence of man.

Yet, Brothers ! God has given to few,
Through the long progress of our kind,
To read with eyes undimmed and true
The blotted book of public mind ;
To separate from the moment's will
The heart's enduring real desires,
To tell the steps of coming ill,
And seek the good the time requires.—

These are the Prophets, these the Kings,
And Lawgivers of human thought,
Who in our being's deepest springs
The engines of their might have sought :
Whose utterance comes, we know not whence,
Being no more their own than ours,
With instantaneous evidence
Of titles just and sacred powers.

But bold usurpers may arise
Of this as of another's throne ;
Persuasion waits upon the wise,
But waits not on the wise alone :
An echo of your evil self
No better than the voice can be,
And appetites of fame or pelf
Grow not in good as in degree.

Then try the speaker, try the cause,
 With prudent care, as men who know
 The subtle nature of the laws
 By which our feelings ebb and flow :
 Lest virtue's void and reason's lack
 Be hid beneath a specious name,
 And on the People's helpless back
 Rest all the punishment and shame.

 III.

 THE PATIENCE OF THE POOR.

WHEN leisurely the man of ease
 His morning's daily course begins,
 And round him in bright circle sees
 The comforts Independence wins,
 He seems unto himself to hold
 An uncontested natural right
 In Life a volume to unfold
 Of simple ever-new delight.

And if, before the evening close,
 The hours their rainbow wings let fall,
 And sorrow shakes his bland repose,
 And too continuous pleasures pall,

He murmurs, as if Nature broke
Some promise plighted at his birth,
In bending him beneath the yoke
Borne by the common sons of earth.

They starve beside his plenteous board,
They halt behind his easy wheels,
But sympathy in vain affords
The sense of ills he never feels.
He knows he is the same as they,
A feeble piteous mortal thing,
And still expects that every day
Increase and change of bliss should bring.

Therefore, when he is called to know
The deep realities of pain,
He shrinks, as from a viewless blow,
He writhes as in a magic chain :
Untaught that trial, toil, and care,
Are the great charter of his kind,
It seems disgrace for him to share
Weakness of flesh and human mind.

Not so the People's honest child,
The field-flower of the open sky,
Ready to live while winds are wild,
Nor, when they soften, loth to die ;

To him there never came the thought
That this his life was meant to be
A pleasure-house, where peace unbought
Should minister to pride or glee.

You oft may hear him murmur loud
Against the uneven lots of Fate,
You oft may see him inly bowed
Beneath affliction's weight on weight :—
But rarely turns he on his grief
A face of petulant surprise,
Or scorns whate'er benign relief
The hand of God or man supplies.

Behold him on his rustic bed,
The unluxurious couch of need,
Striving to raise his aching head,
And sinking powerless as a reed :
So sick in both he hardly knows
Which is his heart's or body's sore,
For the more keen his anguish grows
His wife and children pine the more.

No search for him of dainty food,
But coarsest sustenance of life,—
No rest by artful quiet wooed,
But household cries and wants and strife ;

Affection can at best employ
Her utmost of unhandy care,
Her prayers and tears are weak to buy
The costly drug, the purer air.

Pity herself, at such a sight,
Might lose her gentleness of mien,
And clothe her form in angry might,
And as a wild despair be seen ;
Did she not hail the lesson taught,
By this unconscious suffering boor,
To the high sons of lore and thought,
—The sacred Patience of the Poor.

—This great endurance of each ill,
As a plain fact whose right or wrong
They question not, confiding still,
That it shall last not overlong ;
Willing, from first to last, to take
The mysteries of our life, as given,
Leaving the time-worn soul to slake
Its thirst in an undoubted Heaven.

IV.

ALMS-GIVING.

WHEN Poverty, with mien of shame,
 The sense of Pity seeks to touch,—
 Or, bolder, makes the simple claim
 That I have nothing, you have much,—
 Believe not either man or book
 That bids you close the opening hand,
 And with reproving speech and look
 Your first and free intent withstand.

It may be that the tale you hear
 Of pressing wants and losses borne
 Is heaped or color'd for your ear,
 And tatters for the purpose worn ;
 But surely Poverty has not
 A sadder need than this, to wear
 A mask still meaner than her lot,
 Compassion's scanty food to share.

It may be that you err to give
What will but tempt to further spoil
Those who in low content would live
On theft of others' time and toil ;
Yet sickness *may* have broke or bent
The active frame or vigorous will,—
Or hard occasion may prevent
Their exercise of humble skill.

It may be that the suppliant's life
Has lain on many an evil way
Of foul delight and brutal strife,
And lawless deeds that shun the day ;
But how can any gauge of yours
The depth of that temptation try ?
—What man resists—what man endures—
Is open to one only eye.

Why not believe the homely letter
That all you give will God restore ?
The poor man *may* deserve it better,
And surely, surely, wants it more :
Let but the rich man do his part,
And whatso'er the issue be
To those who ask, *his* answering heart
Will gain and grow in sympathy.

—Suppose that each from Nature got
Bare quittance of his labour's worth,
That yearly-teeming flocks were not,
Nor manifold-producing earth ;
No wilding growths of fruit and flower,
Cultured to beautiful and good,
No creatures for the arm of power
To take and tame from waste and wood !—

That all men to their mortal rest
Passed shadow-like, and left behind
No free result, no clear bequest,
Won by their work of hand or mind !
That every separate life begun,
A present to the past unbound,
A lonely, independent, One,
Sprung from the cold mechanic ground !

What would the record of the past,
The vision of the future be ?
Nature unchanged from first to last,
And base the best humanity :
For in these gifts lies all the space
Between our England's noblest men,
And the most vile Australian race
Outprowling from their bushy den.

Then freely as from age to age,
Descending generations bear
The accumulated heritage
Of friendly and parental care,—
Freely as Nature tends her wealth
Of air and fire, of sea and land,
Of childhood's happiness and health,
So freely open you your hand !

—Between you and your best intent
Necessity her brazen bar
Will often interpose, as sent
Your pure benevolence to mar :
Still every gentle word has sway
To teach the pauper's desperate mood,
That Misery shall not take away
Franchise of human brotherhood.

And if this lesson come too late,
Woe to the rich and poor and all !
The maddened outcast of the gate
Plunders and murders in the hall ;
Justice can crush and hold in awe,
While Hope in social order reigns,—
But if the myriads break the law,
They break it as a slave his chains !

V.

“ Beg from a beggar—Deark d'on dearka.”—IRISH PROVERB.

THERE is a thought so purely blest,
 That to its use I oft repair,
 When evil breaks my spirit's rest,
 And pleasure is but varied care ;
 A thought to gild the stormiest skies,
 To deck with flowers the bleakest moor,—
 A thought whose home is paradise,—
 The charities of Poor to Poor.

It were not for the Rich to blame,
 If they, whom Fortune seems to scorn,
 Should vent their ill-content and shame
 On others less or more forlorn ;
 But, that the veriest needs of life
 Should be dispensed with freer hand,
 Than all their stores and treasures rife—
 Is not for *them* to understand.

To give the stranger's children bread,
Of your precarious board the spoil—
To watch your helpless neighbour's bed,
And, sleepless, meet the morrow's toil ;—
The gifts, not proffered once alone,
The daily sacrifice of years,—
And, when all else to give is gone,
The precious gifts of love and tears !

What record of triumphant deed,
What virtue pompously unfurled,
Can *thus* refute the gloomy creed
That parts from God our living world ?
O Misanthrope ! deny who would—
O Moralists ! deny who can—
Seeds of almost impossible good,
Deep in the deepest life of Man.

Therefore, lament not, honest soul !
That Providence holds back from thee
The means thou might'st so well control—
Those luxuries of charity.
Manhood is nobler, as thou art ;
And, should some chance thy coffers fill,
How art thou sure to keep thine heart,
To hold unchanged thy loving will ?

Wealth, like all other power, is blind,
And bears a poison in its core,
To taint the best, if feeble, mind,
And madden that debased before.
It is the battle, not the prize,
That fills the hero's breast with joy ;
And industry the bliss supplies,
Which mere possession might destroy.

VI.

RICH AND POOR.

—◆—
WHEN God built up the dome of blue,
And portioned earth's prolific floor,
The measure of his wisdom drew
A line between the Rich and Poor ;
And till that vault of glory fall,
Or beauteous earth be scarred with flame,
Or saving love be all in all,
That rule of life will rest the same.

We know not why, we know not how,
Mankind are framed for weal or woe—
But to the Eternal Law we bow ;
If such things are, they must be so.
Yet, let no cloudy dreams destroy
One truth outshining bright and clear,
That Wealth abides in Hope and Joy,
And Poverty in Pain and Fear.

Behold our children as they play !
Blest creatures, fresh from Nature's hand ;
The peasant boy as great and gay
As the young heir to gold and land ;
Their various toys of equal worth,
Their little needs of equal care,
And halls of marble, huts of earth,
All homes alike endeared and fair.

They know no better !—would that we
Could keep our knowledge safe from worse ;
So Power should find and leave us free
So Pride be but the owner's curse ;
So, without marking which was which,
Our hearts would tell, by instinct sure,
What paupers are the ambitious Rich !
How wealthy the contented Poor !

Grant us, O God ! but health and heart,
And strength to keep desire at bay,
And ours *must* be the better part,
Whatever else besets our way.
Each day may bring sufficient ill ;
But we can meet and fight it through,
If Hope sustains the hand of Will,
And Conscience is our captain too.

SONGS.



I.

A CHILD'S SONG.

—◆—
 "I see the Moon, and the Moon sees me,
 God bless the Moon, and God bless me."—OLD RHYME.

LADY Moon, Lady Moon, where are you roving ?
 Over the sea.

Lady Moon, Lady Moon, whom are you loving ?
 All that love me.

Are you not tired with rolling, and never
 Resting to sleep ?
 Why look so pale, and so sad, as for ever
 Wishing to weep ?

Ask me not this, little child, if you love me ;
 You are too bold ;
 I must obey my dear Father above me,
 And do as I 'm told.

Lady Moon, Lady Moon, where are you roving ?
 Over the sea.

Lady Moon, Lady Moon, whom are you loving ?
 All that love me.

II.

FROM THE VENETIAN OF BURATTI.

I.

PLEASANT were it, Nina mine !
 Could our Hearts, by fairy powers,
 Renovate their life divine,
 Like the trees and herbs and flowers.

So might we, in fond accord,
 As the fresh ripe Hearts appear :
 Each the other's Love reward,
 With the first-fruits of the year.

Fragrance from that wondrous plant
 Might your giddy sex restrain,—
 Such refreshment would enchant
 The most faithless back again.

But in restless pleasure using
 One poor Heart, from year to year,
 We shall both our Hearts be losing,—
 Worn to nothing,—Nina dear !

II.

OH! what a May-day,—what a dear May-day!

Feel, what a breeze, love,

Undulates o'er us,—

Meadow and trees, love,

Glisten before us,—

Light, in all showers,

Falls from the flowers,

Hear, how they ask us, “Come and sit down.”—(*Bis.*)

Well, let us rest with them,—well let us rest with them,

Two other blossoms,

Quiet and lonely,

While from their bosoms

Nightingales only

Secrets revealing,

We shall be stealing

Things that most surely the world doesn't know.—(*Bis.*)

Guess, my own Nina,—guess, my own Nina,

What they are singing!

That a deep passion,

Rooted and clinging

I' the right fashion,

Never can measure

Fulness of pleasure,

But when together alone,—all alone!—(*Bis.*)

Fare you well, old world !—fare you well, old world !

This one is ours,
 Shepherds,—May-weather,—
 We and the flowers
 Blooming together,—
 Where, never jealous,
 Nightingales tell us

What they know, oh ! how much, better than we !—(*Bis.*)

III.

THE OLD MANORIAL HALL.

WHEN she was born I had been long the gardener of the
 Hall,
 The shrubs I planted with my hand were rising thick
 and tall ;
 My heart was in that work and place, and little thought
 or care
 Had I of other living things than grew and flourished
 there,
 Beneath the happy shelter of
 The old Manorial Hall.

At first she came a rosy child, a queen among my flowers,
And played beside me while I worked, and prattled on
for hours ;
And many a morning, in the plot of ground she called
her own,
She found an unexpected show of blossoms freshly blown,
And sent her merry echoes through
The old Manorial Hall.

Thus fifteen summers, every day, I tended her and them,
I watched the opening of the bud, the shooting of the stem ;
And when her childly laughter turned to silent maiden
smiles,
I felt in Heaven whene'er she passed, and scarce on earth
the while.

How could I ever think to leave
The old Manorial Hall !

One day when Autumn's last delights were nipped by
early cold,
It fell like Death upon mine ear that she was bought and
sold ;—
That some rich lord, she hardly knew, had come to bear away
The pride of all the county round—the poor man's hope
and stay—

The Glory and the Darling of
The old Manorial Hall.

I heard her plight to him the troth she could not understand,
I saw her weeping turn her head and wave her parting hand ;
And from that hour no thing has gone with me but wrong,
And soon I left the Garden and the Home I loved so long :

It was a haunted house to me,
That old Manorial Hall.

And now I wander up and down, I labour as I can,
Without a wish for rest or friends, a sorry-hearted man ;
Yet at the bottom of my thoughts the saddest lies, that she,
With all her wealth and noble state, may none the happier be
Than I, the poor old Gardener of
The old Manorial Hall.

IV.

I WANDERED by the brook-side,
I wandered by the mill,—
I could not hear the brook flow,
The noisy wheel was still ;
There was no burr of grasshopper,
No chirp of any bird,
But the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard

I sat beneath the elm-tree,
I watched the long, long, shade,
And as it grew still longer,
I did not feel afraid ;
For I listened for a footfall,
I listened for a word,—
But the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard.

He came not,—no, he came not,—
The night came on alone,—
The little stars sat one by one,
Each on his golden throne ;

The evening air passed by my cheek,
The leaves above were stirr'd,—
But the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard.

Fast silent tears were flowing,
When something stood behind,—
A hand was on my shoulder,
I knew its touch was kind :
It drew me nearer—nearer,—
We did not speak one word,
For the beating of our own hearts
Was all the sound we heard.

v.

SHE never loved but once,
And then her love did seem
Like the opening of the tomb
Or the weaving of a dream ;—
A premature betrothing
To immortal things,—
A momentary clothing
With an angel's wings.

She never loved but once,
And then she learnt to feel
The wounds that Love inflicts,
That love alone can heal :
For as that light of life
Slowly faded by,
She calmed her spirit's strife,
In her wish to die ;

Yet lived, and Memory drew
Some joy from all the pain—
Her heart was kind to all
But never loved again.
She bid it cease to beat,
Till in yon skies above,
Love with love should meet,
First and only Love !

VI.

GRIEF sat beside the fount of tears,
And dipt her garland in it,
While all the paly flowers she wears
Grew fainter every minute.

Joy gamboled by the other side,
In gay and artless guise,
And to her gloomy sister cried,
With laughter in her eyes—

“ Oh ! prithee leave that stupid task,
That melancholy fountain ;
I go in Pleasure’s sun to bask,
Or dance up Fancy’s mountain.”

“ Insolent fooler !—go—beware,”
Said Grief, in moody tone,
“ How thus you frivolously dare
Approach my solemn throne !”

And then, on Joy’s fair wreath she threw,
With sideward glance of malice,
Some drops of that embitter’d dew
Fresh from a poison’d chalice.

But Joy laugh’d on ;—“ In vain, in vain
You try to blight one flower ;
That which you meant for fatal bane
Shall prove my brightest dower :—

“ Friendship and Love on every leaf
Shall wear the pearly toy,
And all, who shrink from tears of Grief,
Shall pray for tears of Joy.”

VII.

A LAMENT.

I HEAR them upbraid you,—they mingle your name
 With lightness and folly and almost with shame ;
 And they, who have crouched at the bend of your brow,
 With familiar indifference prate of you now.

Where now is the fountain of beauty and joy,
 That thrilled through the heart of the care-hating boy ?
 With love, and with music, that fountain plays on,—
 But the spirit, that basked in its freshness, is gone.

Oh ! were it stern Science that led you away,
 Or a flow of dark feeling that made you less gay,
 I should mourn that so early the shadows were cast,
 But the path *might* have led into sunlight at last.

Not so, now the world, with its gilding and glare,
 Has bid you to pleasure, and prisoned you there ;
 And the blazoned saloon, and the mirth-breathing hall,
 And silver-sweet flatteries, hold you in thrall :

For the friends of your boyhood—the innocent few,
 Whose hearts knew you well, and whose hearts you too
 knew,
 From their home in your breast have been forced, one by
 one,—
 And in that bleak place can I linger alone ?

I too must begone,—with those who have seen
 The manifold promise of what you have been,
 Though they who so loved will still gaze from afar,
 If it be but to weep, when they see what you are.

VIII.

SONG OF THOUGHTS.

—♦—

LET the lays from poet-lips
 Shadow forth the speech of heaven,—
 Let melodious airs eclipse
 All delight to senses given ;
 Yet to these my notes and words
 Listen with your heart alone,
 While the Thought that best accords
 Makes a music of its own.

Ye that in the fields of Love
Feel the breath and bloom of spring,
While I sing, securely rove,—
Rest in safety, while I sing.
Ye that gaze with vain regret
Back towards that holy ground,
All the world between forget,
Spirit-rocked from sound to sound.

All indifference, all distrust,
From old friendships pass away !
Let the faces of the just
Shine as in God's perfect day !
Fix the faintest, fleetest, smile,
E'er athwart your path has gleam'd,—
Take the charm without the wile,—
Be the Beauty all it seem'd !

'Mid the flowers you love the best,
Summer pride or vernal boon—
By your favourite light caressed,
Blush of eve or glow of noon,—
Blend the strains of happiest days
With the voices held most dear ;
Children cast on weary ways !
Rest in peace and pleasure here.

Be the Future's glorious page
 In my tones to youth revealed ;
 Let the ruffled brow of age
 With eternal calm be sealed ;
 High as Heaven's ethereal cope,
 Wide as Light's rejoicing ray,
 Thoughts of memory ! Thoughts of hope !
 Wander, wander, while ye may.

 IX.

 THE OLD MAN'S SONG.

AGE is not a thing to measure
 By the course of moon or star ;
 Time 's before us—at our pleasure
 We may follow near or far :
 Strength and Beauty he has given,
 They are his to take away,
 But the Heart that well has striven
 Is no slave of night or day.

See upon yon mountain-ridges
 How the fir-woods, spread between,
 Reconcile the snow-clad edges
 With the valley's vernal green ;

So the lines of grave reflection,
You decipher on my brow,
Keep my age in glad connexion
With the young that flourish now.

Not that now poetic fire
Can along my life-strings run,
As when my Memnonian lyre
Welcomed every rising sun ;
Though my heart no more rejoices
In the flashes of my brain,
In the freshness of *your* voices
Let me hear my songs again.

Did I love ?—let Nature witness,
Conscious of my tears and truth ;
Do I love ?—O fatal fitness !
Still requiring youth for youth !
Yet, while thought the bliss remembers,
All delight is not gone by ;
Warm your spirits o'er my embers,
Friends ! and learn to love as I.

O my children ! O my brothers !
If for self I lived too much,
Be my pleasures now for others,
Every passion now be such :

Be the chillness life-destroying,
That could make me slow to feel,
To enjoy with your enjoying,
To be zealous with your zeal.

Grant me not, ye reigning Hours !
Virtues that beseem the young,
Vigour for my failing powers,
Music for my faltering tongue :
Let me, cheerful thoughts retaining,
Live awhile, nor fear to die,
Ever new affections gaining,
Such as Heaven might well supply.

JUNE, 1843.

GHAZELES.

GHAZELES.

I.

SISTER ! I will go with Thee ;
 How can I not go with Thee ?
 What am I for, but to share
 Thought, and joy, and woe with Thee ?
 I have known the unstainèd peace
 Children only know—with Thee ;
 I have watched the chequered blooms
 Of my fortune blow—with Thee ;
 I must part the scanty hope
 Our low fates bestow—with Thee ;
 Wish I with the great to live,
 With the wealthy ? No ! with Thee ;
 Nature's hand has mated us,—
 Who but I can go with Thee ?

II.

THERE are few to whom, expiring, I would say, Forget
me not ?

The busy world, the many-minded,—why should it for-
get me not ?

I have never worn its honours, never won its open shame,
Never bent before it, never wooed it to forget me not ;

But if e'er my hand has wakened grateful hearts to yearn
to mine,

If I ever earned kind friendship, let those friends forget
me not.

And for Her who was and is my soul of soul—my life of
life—

'TWOULD be wicked doubt to ask it—Leila will forget me
not.

Then mayst *thou* of all remembrance—thou whose know-
ledge only sleeps

In the free-will of thy justice—Father—thou—forget me
not !

III.

WRITTEN AT AMALFI.

It is the mid-May Sun, that, rayless and peacefully
gleaming,
Out of its night's short prison, this blessèd of lands is
redeeming ;
It is the fire evoked from the hearts of the citron and
orange,
So that they hang, like lamps of the day, translucently
beaming ;
It is the veinless water, and air unsoiled by a vapour,
Save what, out of the fullness of life, from the valley is
steaming ;
It is the olive that smiles, even he, the sad growth of the
moonlight,
Over the flowers, whose breasts triple-folded with odours
are teeming ;
Yes, it is these bright births, that to me are a shame and
an anguish,
They are alive and awake,—*I* dream, and know I am
dreaming ;
I cannot bathe *my* soul in this ocean of passion and
beauty,—

Not *one* dew-drop is on me of all that about me is
streaming ;
Oh ! I am thirsty for Life,—I pant for the freshness of
Nature,
Bound in the World's dead sleep—dried up by its trea-
cherous seeming.

 IV.

 TO ———.

WHEREVER Beauty is, I find thee there,—
Through every veil and guise, I find thee there :
Where the low zephyr dreams among thick flowers,
Embalmer of sweet thoughts ! I find thee there ;
Where full cascades leap down with curvèd steps,
Form of essential Grace ! I find thee there ;
In the broad mirror of the summer-sea,
Crystal entire of Truth ! I find thee there ;
In the unshaded presence of the sun,
Illuminating Mind ! I find thee there ;
In the mild splendours which enjoy the night,
Radiance of gentlest Love ! I find thee there ;
In the ecstatic realms that Prayer reveals,
There, Humble Holiness ! I find thee there.

These lines may remind the German scholar of one of Göthe's most exquisite and most untranslatable Poems.

v.

MY own friend, my old friend !
Time 's a soldier bold, friend !
Of his lofty prowess
Many a tale is told, friend !
Nations are his puppets,
To be bought and sold, friend !
He can mock the conqueror,
Rase his strongest hold, friend !
Fool the stern philosopher,
Win the miser's gold, friend !
But though earthly nature
Has so frail a mould, friend !
What the tyrant cannot do
Is to make *us* cold, friend !

VI.

I 'VE a Friend, a staunch Friend ; listen, listen, Mary,
mine !

There 's none such wherever Phœbus winds his airy line ;
When I rise at morn-time, — ere the grass his dewy tears
Dries away, she meets me, beckoning oft with wary sign,
That I tread discreetly, while she shows how round about
With marigolds and violets she has pranked her dairy fine, —
That the milk, fresh steaming, may be sweeter to my lips,
Crowned with glowing blossoms, — so too is it, faery mine !
When at eve out-wearied I approach, she brings me down
What her own white hands have pressed — a flask of chary
wine.

There it is, — the nectar ! where then is the Friend I mean ?
Where but here, beside me ? kiss me, bless me, Mary mine !

VII.

SHADE not the light within thine eyes,
The wondrous light within thine eyes ;
The Sun is all too fierce to hold
Light such as that within thine eyes,—
Yet is the passion of his warmth
Less deep than that within thine eyes ;
The Moon is all too cold to wear
Light such as that within thine eyes,—
Yet is her flame less silver-clear
Than that which glows within thine eyes.
Thou art my Heaven ; my Sun and Moon
Are the mere light within thine eyes ;
Nature, that gave the world those orbs,
Gave me the light within thine eyes ;—
I, and I only, can repose
Within the light within thine eyes ;
Oh ! Leila, what would be my gloom,
Without the light within thine eyes ?

VIII.

ALL things once are things for ever ;
Soul, once living, lives for ever ;
Blame not what is only once,
When that once endures for ever :
Love, once felt, though soon forgot,
Moulds the heart to good for ever ;
Once betrayed from childly faith,
Man is conscious man for ever ;
Once the void of life revealed,
It must deepen on for ever,
Unless God fill up the heart
With himself for once and ever :
Once made God and man at once,
God and man are one for ever.

TRANSLATIONS.



DANTE'S VISION.

FROM THE "VITA NUOVA."

WITH a deep sigh, I whispered to myself,
 "It must be in Necessity, one day,
 That the most gentle Beatrice shall die ;"
 And instantly such utter loss of sense
 Came on me, that my eyes were closed,—my mind
 Began to work, like one delirium-bound,
 And its imaginations thus to frame.
 In the first wandering of my phantasy,
 Came certain female faces, with long hair
 Dishevelled, telling me, "Thou too shalt die."
 Then certain faces after these appeared,
 Different,—terrible to gaze upon,—
 Which same addressed me, saying, "Thou art dead."
 Thus, from my phantasy's first wanderings,
 I came at last to be—I knew not where,
 And beheld ladies walking, with long hair
 Dishevelled—walking marvellously sad ;
 I saw the sun grow dark, so that the stars

Appeared, and of such tint, that I could judge,
They were lamenting over some one dead,
And mighty earthquakes were about to be.
In such imaginations wondering,
And not without a sense of fear, I thought
Some friend came to me, saying, "From this world
Thy admirable Ladie has passed away."

Then I began to weep right piteously ;
And not alone in phantasy I wept,
But with my eyes bathed in their own true tears.
While Heaven-ward I imagined that I gazed,
And seemed to see an Angel-multitude
Returning upwards, and before them spread
Was a small cloud of the most perfect white ;
It seemed to me, I heard those Angels sing
Gracefully sweet, and of the words they spoke,
I listened these,—“ Osanna in excelsis ! ”
Other than these I did not seem to hear.
Then said to me the heart so full of love,
“ Is the thing true,—lieth our Ladie dead ? ”
For this, it seemed, I went to see the form
In which had dwelt that noblest blessèd soul.
My wandering phantasy, become so strong,
Showed me that Ladie dead,—while ladies seemed
To cover up her head with a white veil :
Such gentle aspect bore her face, methought

It said " I look upon the Prince of Peace."
Thus thinking, such deep lowliness of spirit
Seized on me, that, to see my Ladie again,
I called on Death to come and take me, saying,
" Come thou to me, who yearneth earnestly
For thee, and see I wear thy colour now."
And when I had beheld consummated
All mournful offices, which for the dead
Use sanctions, I returned, it seemed to me,
Into my room, and there looked straight to heaven ;
And such was that imaginative force,
That I began, loud wailing, to exclaim,
" Most beauteous Spirit ! how blest is he who sees Thee !"

SONNETS.

 MICHEL AGNOLO.

I.

I READ deep mysteries in thy loveliness,
 With my thought's eye, unutterable here ;
 I trace a soul, though bound in fleshly dress,
 Alive with beauty, and to God most near ;
 And if the ribald crowd, the base or vain,
 At one who is not of them point and jeer,
 I have not less my glory and my gain,
 Strong will,—pure love,—and loyalty sincere.
 To that blest source, whence Man and Nature flow,
 All beauty bears affinity—this below,
 More than aught else, to seek becomes the wise ;
 Nor other heav'n-dropped fruit, nor mightier sign,
 Is granted us,—but Love, and Love like mine,
 Lifts us to God, and makes Death Paradise.

 II.

Now to old feelings I come back,
 With age of heart and years opprest,
 As all things from a wandering track,
 Turn to their centre's natural rest.

In heaven's own hand, the keys I found
An entrance to her heart to win,
While Love the gentle lock turned round,
To let the pure Adorer in.
All ill desires she chases far,
And, where the few and godlike are,
Though all outworn, she bids me speed ;
Such graces on her presence wait,
So precious-sweet, so marvellous-great,
That Death for Her is Life indeed.

TO THE VIRGIN.

NOVALIS.

IN thousand forms, Eternal Maid,
Has pious Art imagined Thee,
But never wert thou so pourtrayed,
As once, that once, Thou cam'st to me.
I only know that since that sight
I take no thought of night or day,
And all the world's material might
Flees like a shamèd child away.
Thou bad'st me drink, and since full deep
I drained the cup thy hand had given,
A perfect rest, that was not sleep,
Passed to my soul, and made it Heaven.

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

GÖTHE.

EYES, my heart and fancy tasking
All your beauty to express,
Say, what say you ? and confess
That while telling, you are asking.

Yet I think I can discover
How beneath those eyes transparent
Rests a heart, with truth apparent,
Love, but love without the lover.

And that heart must throb with pleasure,
'Mid the many dull and blind,
One such look at last to find
As its depth and worth can measure.

So let me my labour plying
All those ciphers right to read,
Your sweet spirit gently lead
To discern what I 'm replying.

ART AND FAITH.

 WERNER.

Art. For what is the longing that heaves in thy breast ?
Oh ! tell me.

Faith. The Hyacinth flower.

Art. But the Phosphor-stone, with a lovely light,
Comes through the darkness redly bright,—
The May-night's glorious dower.

Faith. What is it that blesses thy bosom with peace ?
Oh ! tell me.

Art. The Phosphor-stone.

Faith. But the wingèd child of the air and dew,
The Hyacinth, breathes in the day's young hue,
And makes the glory her own.

Art. Art Thou my longing,—thou Phosphor-stone ?
Is it *Thou* ?

Faith. I am passing away.

Art. Then I and my bloom must go with Thee,
For where Thou beamest—my flower must be,
Alone I cannot stay.

Faith. Art Thou my peace,—thou Hyacinth-plant ?
Is it *Thou* ?

Art. I thine,—thou mine.

Faith. Then I, and my glow, must go with Thee,
When I shine from above below Thou must be,
Thy odour for my moonshine.

Art and Faith. What Faith beholds does Art inform ?
Yes ! in the morning's eternal void ;—
Her life is to love, her day-work to blow,
But when knowledge is ripe, away she must go,
For *here* the Love-dream can never abide.

A VISION.



HEINE.

HIGH in the heavens stood the sun, beset
With white and wavy clouds ; the sea was still,
And I beside the rudder thoughtful lay
Dreamily thoughtful,—not indeed asleep
Nor yet awake ; and in that middle life
I beheld Christ, the Saviour of the world.—
In white and wavy robes o'er earth and sea
He walked colossal, in the loftiest sky
Moving his head, and stretching out his hands
In boundless blessing over earth and sea :

And in his breast, as his own heart, he bore
The sun, the crimson fire-engendering sun,
And from this flaming heart his beams of grace,
Nourishing warmth, illuminating light,
He shed profusely over earth and sea.

Then sounds of bells most mild and musical,
Solemnly swaying, drew the gliding ship,
Like swans by roses harnessed to the prow,
Drew it delighted to the fresh green shore,
Where men in towering busy cities dwell.

O miracle of Peace ! how still the town !
Still the deep hum of hot and babbling crowds,
The crush of trade, the noisy nothingness ;
And everywhere through the clear echoing streets
Went men in snow-white garments, bearing palms ;
And when two met, into each other's eyes
They gazed, with perfect inward knowledge, till
Trembling with sweetest self-denying love,
They kissed each other's foreheads, and looked up,
Up to the Saviour and his Heart of Sun,
That poured its radiant reconciling blood
O'er all that lay below, and then they spoke
Enraptured—"Glory unto Christ our Lord !"

FROM CHAUCER.

FLY from the world and dwell with Truthfulness ;
 Sufficient be thy wealth, albeit small ;
 Avarice hath hate, ambition carefulness,
 And praise despite, yet good is mixed with all :
 Taste no more sweets than to thy share may fall :
 Counsel thyself, that well can'st counsel give,
 And fear not Truth shall teach thee how to live.

Trouble thee not each error to redress,
 Or steady her that turneth as a ball ;
 Great rest abides in little business ;
 To kick against a nail may oft befall,
 Or fight as a poor pitcher with a wall ;
 Judge then thyself, that well can'st judgment give,
 And fear not Truth shall tell thee how to live.

All that is sent thee take with cheerfulness,—
 The wrestling of this world requires a fall :
 Here is no home—here is but wilderness ;

Pilgrim, advance ! Poor beast ! desert thy stall ;—
Look up on high, and thank thy God for all !
Forsake thy lusts, and with thy spirit strive,
And fear not Truth shall save thy soul alive.

THE END.

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