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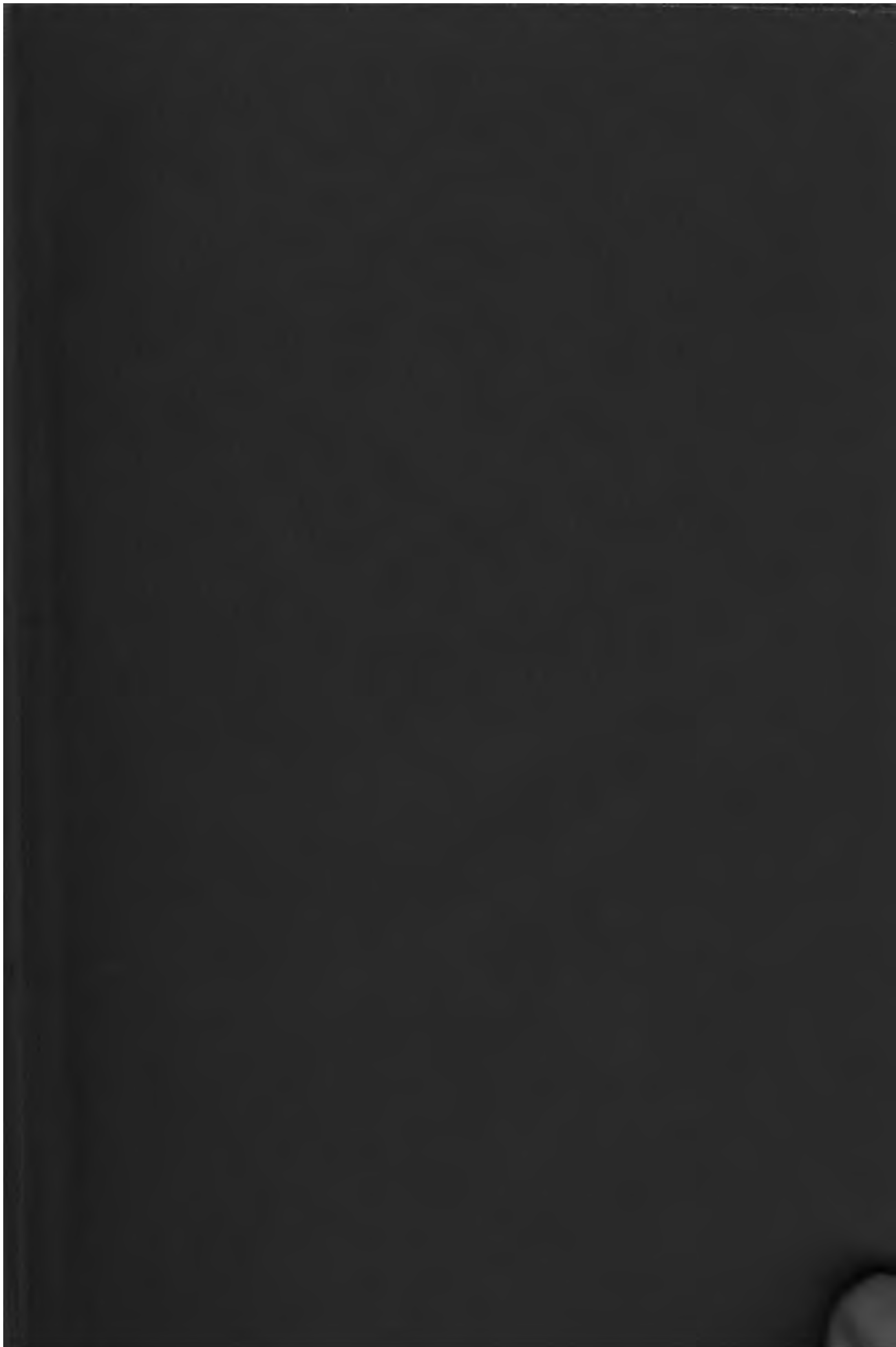


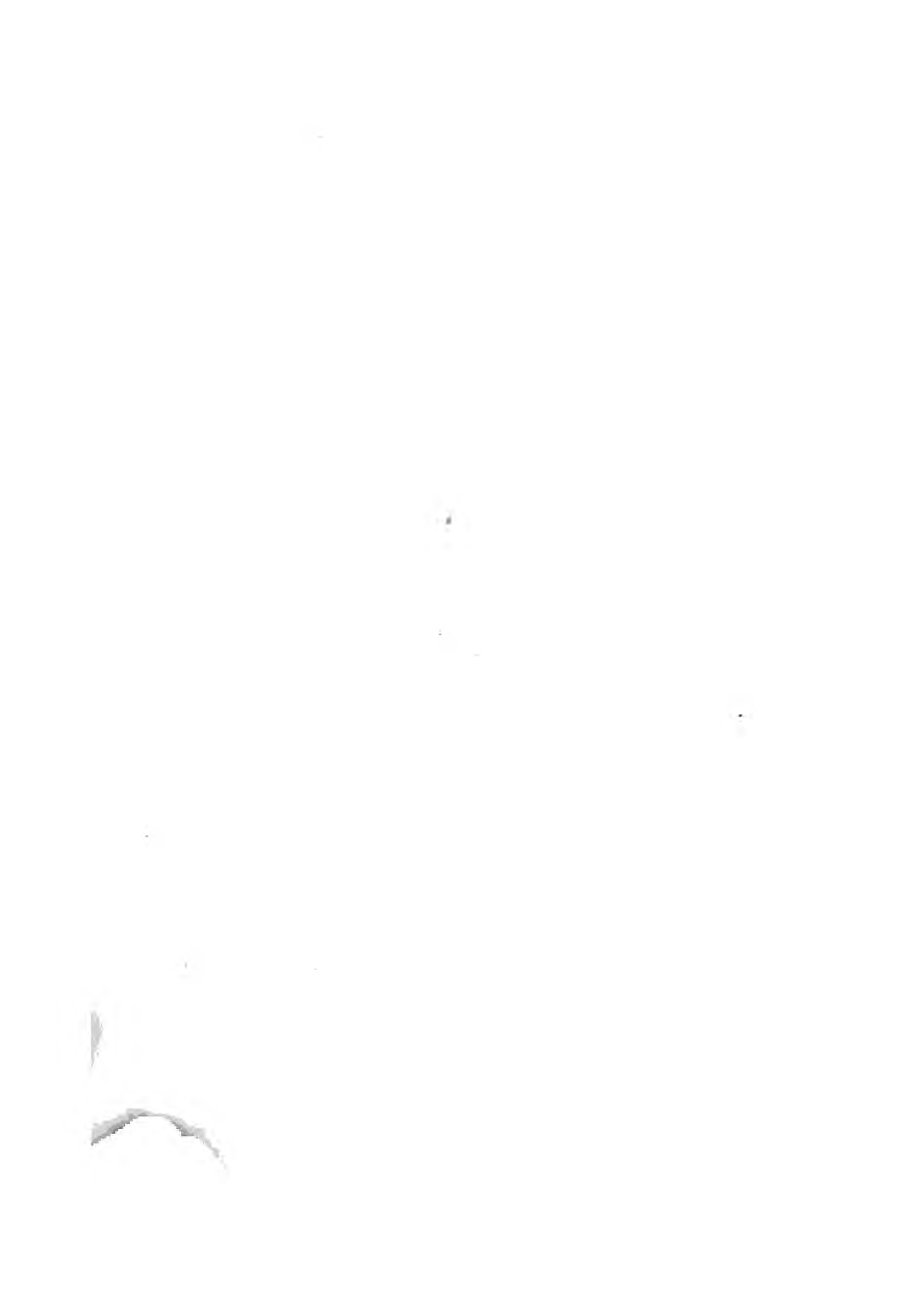
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S P I N D R I F T

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SPINDRIFT

BY

J. NOEL PATON

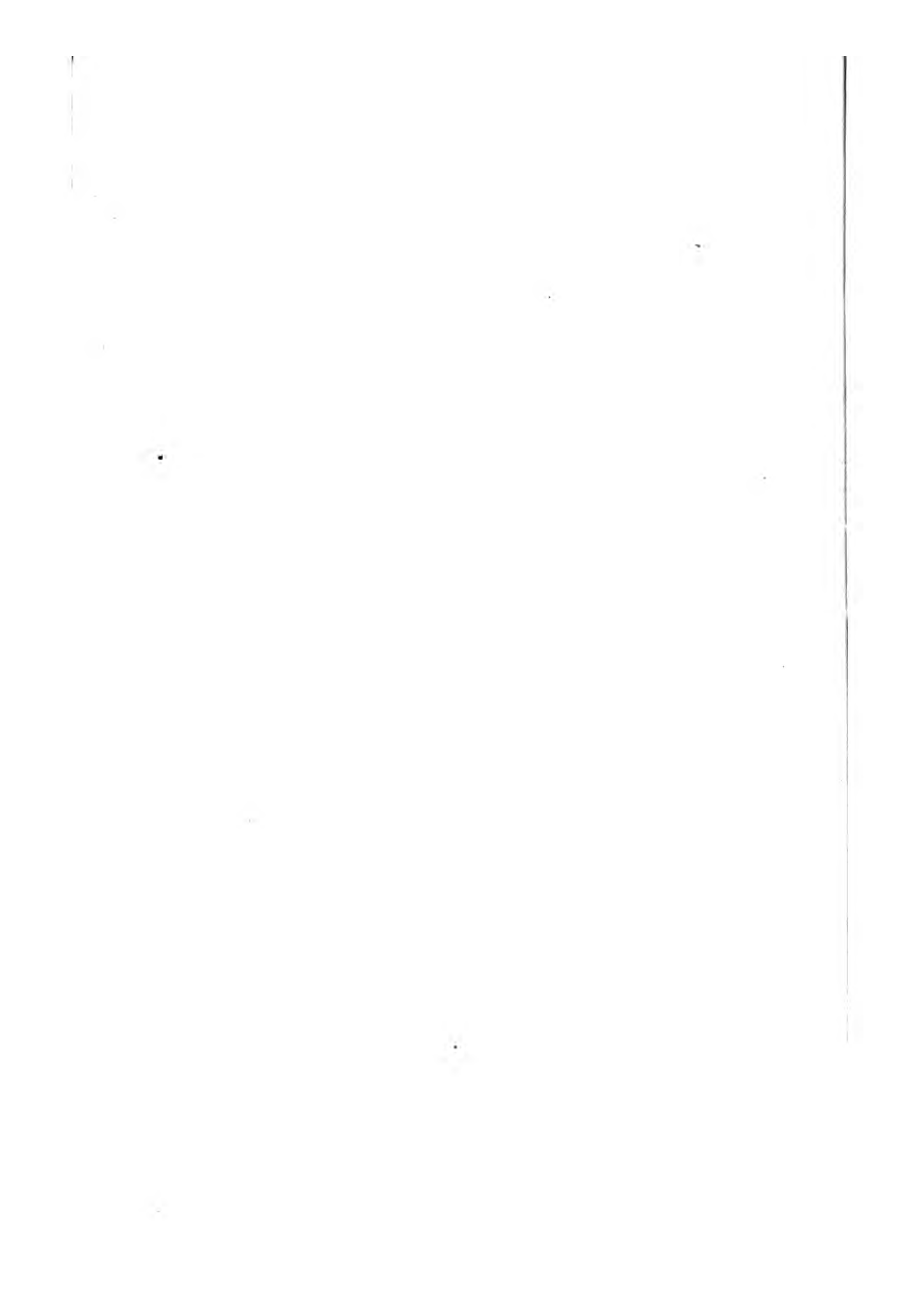


WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLXVII

280. m. 9.



TO MY WIFE.

*Like those pale-clustered flowers of barren spray
The restless sea-wind strews along the strand,
That strike no root into the thirsty sand,
But perish as they came: even such as they*

*Are the frail verse-wreaths I now offer thee,
Wov'n in waste hours of weariness or pain,
To soothe the trouble of the unresting brain
With dreams of what nor has been—nor may be:*

*Mere Spindrift, by the gusts of fancy blown
From the deep, clear, and silent sea of Life,
Where—peerless mother and most perfect wife—
Thou float'st in peace: my heart's true Halcyon.*

*Yet wilt thou take, and in thy bosom wear
The fragile blooms; that so by Love's fond breath
They may be saved awhile from frosts of death:
Finding a little space, life, warmth, and welcome—there.*

Dec. 10, 1866.



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P E R D I T A.



“ The tale I follow to its last recess
Of suffering or of peace, I know not which :
Theirs be the blame that caused the woe, not mine !”

—WORDSWORTH.

AND so you knew and loved, you say,
The Lost One, when, a bright-haired child,
A mother taught her lips to pray,
A father o'er her slumber smiled,

And Heaven seemed near her life to guard,
Lest sin should smirch or woe befall—
And now ! The riddle, friend, is hard
To read—but God is over all ! . . .

↘

I met her first at her uncle's place,
Up in the North, in the autumn time ;
And I felt, the moment I saw her face,
Rich with the hues of a sunnier clime—

Caught the first flash of her eyes' wild-fire,
Her great brown eyes, half bold, half shy,—
That here was the goal of my Life's desire :
That to win her love I could gladly die.

She was reading, and quickly raised her head,
With its dusky glory of chestnut hair,
As I entered ; and blushing a sudden red
From brow to bosom, rose from her chair—

Rose with a formal bow, nor cast
A second glance to where I stood,
But out betwixt the roses past,
Out through the roses into the wood.

I scarce knew how,—'twas like a dream !
But ere next night had reached its noon,
In silence by a silent stream
We stood together beneath the moon.

There was a sighing aloft in the pine,
A stirring below in the dewy grass,
As her eyes met mine in the dim moonshine,
And I felt their look like lightning pass

Through all my frame to the utmost tips
Of my very hair ; and, mad with the bliss
That glance foretold, against her lips
My heart leapt forth, and died in a kiss.

And all that could be was confest ;
And we plighted our love-troth kneeling there,
Her hot cheek pillowed on my breast,
My dim eyes hidden in her hair :

While overhead the wind grew loud,
And a moan came up from the midnight main,
And the moon set, quenched in watery cloud,
And the leaves fell fast with the falling rain,

And thunder woke with voice of dole
The mountain echoes far and wide ;
But heart to heart, soul blent with soul,
What recked we ! Rapt and glorified

Beyond mortality, afar
From earth, or touch of earthly care,
To some lone paradisal star,
Through gulfs of warm ambrosial air,

We seemed to float ; while new-born Love
Before us moved on plumes of flame ;
And unseen harps, around, above,
Broke into music where we came !—

The whole thing was foolish enough, good sooth !
Nay, mad—as such things are apt to be ;
Yet, better the generous frenzy of youth,
Than the ossified wisdom of such as we !

This head, old friend, is waxing grey,
The blood in these veins lags dull and slow ;
But I shall not forget till my dying day
That autumn midnight long ago ! . . .

Swift passed the hours, as hours will pass
With youth and love linked hand-in-hand ;
Time, crowned with roses, shook his glass,
With nectar flowing, not with sand.

Till one day a Viscount arrived from the south,
A cousin, or something, to banker Toots :
A small grey man with foxy mouth,
A padded waistcoat and stridulous boots ;

A sneering nostril, an eye like glass,
Whose look was an insult : as though it said,
“ Of course you are either rogue or ass,
For all men rank under either head ! ”

His wealth was unbounded, not so his wit.
Broad were his acres, but narrow his views ;
As I ventured to tell him across the *Lafitte* :
A *bêtise*, no doubt ; but I did not choose

To fall down and worship, as they seemed to do,
(Not she though) their beggarly golden calf,—
Their pinchbeck noble ; nor swallow in lieu
Of grain, his mildewed conventional chaff.

I bow to the Noble of noble birth
Whose sires have led us in peace and war ;
I bow to the Worker whose innate worth
Has won him coronet or star ;

But to him who enters by crime or stealth—
 And the like has been, or records lie—
 Or storms by the mere brute-force of wealth
 “The Palace of Honoure”—I’ faith, not I!

You can fancy his rage, through its thin disguise
 Of a “high-bred” smile—for he spoke not a word :
 You can guess how the scorn of avuncular eyes
 Transfixed the poor fool who could snub a lord!

You can picture the stately materteral form—
 A full-blown Atè, big with doom!
 As she rose from the board in a silken storm,
 And rustled tempestuous out of the room!

But I knew by the quick scared look She cast
 O’er her gleaming shoulder, as, still and pale,—
 Her lips in her bouquet,—she glided past,
 I had uttered truth that should bring us bale. . . .

That night the gibbous moon, in red
 And lurid vapour looming low,
 Its faint funereal radiance shed
 On two young faces blanched with woe.

For in the fir-wood we had met ;
And she had told how, but that morn,
My lord his brandnew coronet
Had proffered : how undowered, forlorn,

Scared by loud threats, by memories moved,
She durst not own our love, nor claim
Her right to wed but where she loved.
—They meant her well,—she would not blame,

—Yet, they were worldlings to the core,
She knew—had plotted, cringed, and lied,
That their fair ward should evermore
Be wretched, and this lordling's bride.

“Sooner, ah ! sooner death,” she cried,
“A thousand deaths, than such a fate !”
But yet they would not be denied,
And on the morrow would await

Her acquiescence. I implored,
While yet her soul from stain was free,
That she should snap the toils abhorred,
And, far away in Italy—

Far in the glorious land we loved
And sighed for, as a lover sighs
For the belovèd—safe removed
From “the world’s” atmosphere of lies ;

From fashion’s ignominious rule
Enfranchised—build a heavenward life :
Free, earnest, truthful, dutiful,—
Happy, although a poor man’s wife.

Upon her streaming eyes she prest
My hands ; and, “No—no—no,” she said ;
“Thine am I ; but to wait is best.
Why did they call the sacred dead

“To bend me to their will, and thwart
The holiest instincts of the soul !
Thine am I ! and though now we part,
We love and trust !—Let this control

“Our anguish !” . . . I will not betray
The secrets of that parting hour.
Enough—we parted. And ere day
Once more awakened bird and flower

About the woodlands, I had fled
My Eden, ne'er to view again,
Save when in dreams by memory led,
The glories of its bright domain. . . .

And She?—Ere long a blotted scroll—
Blotted, and blurred, and dank with tears—
Came, the blind anguish of her soul
Outpouring to the only ears,

She said, that under heaven's deaf cope
Could hear or pity. All, she said,
Was over : even the last frail hope
That He would spare. Escape or aid

Nowhere in all the desolate earth !
But weak, alone, she yet had striven,
As one who knew the priceless worth
Of all at stake, for earth and heaven.

In vain ! Too weak to stem the tide,
Her life lay wrecked ; and ah, the shame !
My darling was another's bride :
Could I forgive her ? With this came,

Bedded in moss, a long bright tress
 Of her soft hair. See, it is here,
 Old friend ; but gone its loveliness,
 And gone its perfume many a year !

But it is all remains of what
 She was ; and so—I let it lie
 Close to my heart ; and scorn me not
 If there you find it when I die.

* * * * *

Well, ere next April's moon had rolled
 Its course, the "joyous" marriage-bells
 Proclaimed the poor young creature sold—
 Sold, soul and body, at "All-Swells."

But a Christian bishop performed the rite ;
 And ladies great of spotless fame,
 And three live lords of mickle might—
 In short, the very *crème de la crème*,

As "Jenkins" phrased it—came to bear
 Their part in the splendid sacrifice,
 And drink "long life" to the happy pair
 In choice champagne sublimed in ice.

And over all his wide domains
 (Each bought "a bargain," safe and clear!)
The noble British peasant drains
 Their health in noble British beer.

And tradesmen (noble British) dress
 Their "fronts" in greens, and bunting gay
That flaunts its gaudiest, to express
 Their joy on "this auspicious day

Which sees united"—and so forth;
 While corporations puff in state,
With tenantry from south and north,
 To cheer them as they pass the gate,

All bows and smiles, to their marriage bowers,
 Where brass-bands blare, and cannon fire,
And the village children scatter flowers—
 What more could woman's heart desire?

What more?—She was only seventeen—
 A beauty—the wife of a wealthy peer—
With jewels that had been admired by the Queen,
 And a jointure of fabulous thousands a-year.

And yet, I fear it must be confessed,
That in vain the foolish creature strove
To stifle the hunger that gnawed her breast—
The want of a little human love.

So in midst of her splendours “my lady” pined ;
As in a dream her stately part
Enacting, with a wandering mind,
A languid eye, and a famished heart.

And he, the pitiful Sham, who had snared
This warm young Life to his groosum bed,
Wrapt in himself, nor knew, nor cared,
So her lip still smiled, how her lone heart bled :

He had bought his estates—his pedigree—
His rank. And a Lady, too, of course,
His grandeur required ; so, as we see,
He bought that also—for better, for worse.

And a good round price he had certainly paid—
As he told her ere long with venom'd sneers.
'Twas proved, too, he struck her before her maid,
One night when he found her ill and in tears,

When she should have been wreathing her rosiest smiles
 Round some great man down-stairs, with a *cordons-bleu*,
And a place to dispose of—trapped by his wiles
 To dine with the noble parvenu.

Yet she strove, poor outraged girl, to fulfil
 Her part of the compact ; but ever with worse
Success as her strength gave way.—Until
 The Tempter came—all good men's curse

On his cowardly head !—and she fell—she fell,
 In her beauty, her youth and her loneliness—
And no one to pity ! I need not dwell
 On the mournful Trial : our lynx-eyed press

Took care the world at large should see
 How step by step it had all come about :
In the cause of outraged morality
 And social purity—who can doubt !

And Society? Ah ! with an upturned eye
 It gathered its white robes rustling wide—
Too pure for such contact—and passed her by,
 Like the Pharisee, on the other side.

Or rather, with kidded fingers, piled
 Its own rank sins on her erring soul,
 And drove her with curses—a thing defiled—
 Forth into the wilderness. No goal,

No rest for her wounded feet, that yearn
 To tread life's "pastures green" once more.
 Alas!—for such there is no return,
 No resting-place but the Dead-sea shore.

Yet, however "shocking" the notion may be,
 I can't help thinking, that even for this
 Poor scapegoat of man's iniquity,
 Hunted to death by the Nemesis

That tracks the reeking slot of sin,—
 Near or more distant, but ever sure!—
 The blood of the crucified Lord may win
 ('Twas shed for All) the garment pure!

* * * * *

But my story flags; and I own I shrink
 From the terrible *worse* that yet remains;
 And linger, as mourners do at the brink
 Of a grave, ere resigning the ark that contains

Their dead to its dark and grisly fold.

I have kept the secret lockt in my heart ;
But the night wears apace, and it must be told,
Though voice may falter and tears may start. . . .

I was then in the East—had rushed abroad
At the time of the marriage, I scarce knew where ;
Driven on like a beast by the fiery goad
Of baffled passion. In blind despair

For three long years I wandered on—
By southern cape—by northern floe—
Through teeming city—o'er pampas lone—
As one might, stunned by mortal blow,

Round whom in dim phantasmal reel
Life, death, hope, passion, joy, and pain,
With deafening tumult rave and wheel,
But leave no impress on the brain.

Long had all selfish love been dead,
But tenderest pity wrung me still
For *her*. And one dark, shadowy dread,
Prophetic of impending ill,

Haunted my footsteps day and night,
And like a spectre ever stood
Between me and the blessed light
And warmth of life, chilling my blood

With horror, till I even feared
The insensate wind that passed me by ;
As though each babbling gust I heard
Bruited aloud her infamy.

What! no more wine? I must, though. Well,
It reached me at last on the Upper Nile,—
The tale of her ruin. Warm sunlight fell—
I see it now!—on the sacred isle

Where, under obelisk, pillar, and palm,
That from the lake like a vision rise,
Lone-lapt in everlasting calm
Asleep divine Osiris lies ;

While by his couch, where none intrude
Of mortal race, two shadows vast—
Silence and Darkness—ever brood
O'er awful memories of the past.

The unearthly beauty of the spot
With magic balm had touched my brain ;
Till—all the fleeting *now* forgot—
I felt the young world rise again

Around me : huge majestic shades
Of gods, and godlike kings who built,
Slew, died ; proud queens, dark-bosomed maids
For whose fierce love men's blood was spilt

Like rain, on blazing Libyan sands,
Or wastes of Kush ; swift chariot-swarms
Rolling o'er desolated lands
With neigh of steed and clash of arms ;

Mysterious rites in temples dim,
Of Thoth or Phtha ; voluptuous dance
Of Ethiop girls, with lithesome limb
And dark imperial countenance ;

Far moanings of barbaric horn,
Low silver-thrills of lyre and lute,
Clear sistrum-clang, and wail forlorn,
Round mystic Ark of voice and flute.

Like billows o'er a vapoury sea,
They came and flitted o'er my soul,
As backward from eternity
The vanished ages seemed to roll,

Teeming with warm tumultuous life :
Pride's haughty flush, the glow and stress
Of anger, the exultant strife
Of hate, love's dewy tenderness.

But as a wretch condemned, from dreams
Of youth's fair dawn awakes to hear
The hammering of his scaffold beams,
And the grim deathsmen shuffling near :

So, with sick pause and mortal pang
Of heart, from Fancy's dream I woke,
Stung by a voice that gaily rang,
Though each light syllable it spoke

Clove deep, as with an edge of flame,
My life's red core, and did devour
Its essence. O, my God ! the shame,
The anguish of that wakening hour !

And there, in ducks and sportsman's hat,
Puffing his perfect weed in peace
Up the blue heaven, the speaker sat
(He had come all that way to shoot some geese—

The fratricide!—from England fresh,
And moral quagmires of the town),
Unravelling blandly, mesh by mesh,
The net of doom that had dragged her down.

I listened—questioned, calm and cold,
Though fire was raging in heart and brain ;
Nor, when the ghastly tale was told,
Betrayed by word or look my pain.

But when at last the long day died,
O'er hot Sahara's quivering sand,
And from the zenith, starry-eyed,
The night looked down serene and grand,

I—well, amongst other things, I packed
My traps for home; got under way
My boat—by grumbling fellahs tracked
Against a head-wind—long ere day.

And, the breeze lulling with the light,
Down-hurrying with the hurrying stream,
Kom-ombos, ere the second night,
Loomed shadowy o'er our starboard beam.

And ever down, through day and dark,
With wind, or stream, or groaning oar,
Swiftly or slowly slid our bark,
Silent and sad, as though it bore

O'er mournful Acherusian waves
A soul to judgment. All unseen
High temples—immemorial graves
Of kings, as though they had not been ;

Or noted but as points to log
Our course by. Down, unresting, down,
Through noon's mirage, through midnight's fog,
By glimmering desert and gleaming town.

Each morn, from Araby the blest
The young dawn danced with golden hair ;
Each eve, adown the gorgeous west
The love-star swooned in rosy air.

Night after night, through violet gloom
The fair moon climbed with silver feet,
Shedding o'er river, tower, and tomb,
Her mystic radiance, faint and sweet.

I only saw one pale, sad face,
That with unearthly glory burned,
Through darkness of its dire disgrace :—
One pale, sad, sinful face, that yearned

Across the desolate waste of years,
And shame, and woe—two ghostly eyes
Gleaming on mine through blinding tears,
With the wild gaze of one who dies

Repentant of some mighty wrong,
But unconfessed and unforgiven ;
And with a passionate pity, strong
As death, I prayed all-pitying Heaven,

Even yet, from those fair erring lips,
To dash sin's hideous kava-bowl,
And save, even in its dark eclipse
Of hope, her poor bewildered soul.

So night and day, my swarthy band
Of oarsmen toiled—alas ! in vain ;
For, ere I well had got to land
At Cairo, fever took my brain.

And there for weeks I raving lay,
'Mid stifling heat and odours foul :
Hearing the pest-fly buzz by day ;
Hearing the dogs at midnight howl.

Still haunted by the monstrous shapes
Demonic, of the infant world ;
Mummies of men, bulls, reptiles, apes
Obscene, in gusty darkness whirled,

'Mid thundrous voices of the gods,
And shriek of ghosts despairing, hid
In dim Amenti's drear abodes,
Under Night's rayless pyramid.

And ever, through the huge dismay
And anguish of some nameless woe,
Her voice would call me—far away—
In piteous wailings, wild and low.

As through a subterranean sea,
 Cumbered with shoals of pallid dead,
Dumb-weltering in my agony,
 I seemed to follow where she led—

To reach her never ! But at last,
 All helpless as a stranded wreck,
I found myself—the fever past—
 Stretched on a schooner's breezy deck,

Steering for England ; by my side
 A dear old schoolmate, Harry Wylde—
Rich, but as gentle as a bride ;
 High-born, yet simple as a child.

He had heard of my troubles when with his yacht
 At Paphos ; and, dashing at once across,
Lugged me on board at Damiat,
 Like the good fellow he ever was.—

He fell at the Alma—rest his soul ! . . .
 And O ! what joy it was to feel
Once more the sleek hull's heave and roll,
 And the long lithe bound of the quivering keel !

What joy to hear the wind once more
Sing loud in tackle and snowy sail ;
To hear the big sea's rush and roar ;
To feel the stress of the gathering gale,

That, blow where it listeth, must bear us on !
To catch from the plunge of the shearing prow,
The soft, salt spindrift swiftly blown,
Like sea-nymphs' tresses, o'er lip and brow !

To feel, through all one's tingling veins,
The kingly joy that danger gives,
When the gunwale dips and the strong mast strains ;
O ! then—'tis then, one knows he lives !

Too weak as yet in mind and frame
For aught beyond the sole, sweet sense
Of life new-found, morn went and came,
Nor stirred the Elysian indolence

That held my being thrall'd, as though
Nepenthè I had drunk, or fed
On lotos. All the gathered woe
Of years—the shame, the fear—had fled,

As, through the gusty Cyclades,
 We tacked and veered, day after day ;
Fanned by the same Ægæan breeze,
 That wont in Homer's locks to play,

While, the great Epos yet unsung,
 He trimmed the sail or plied the oar,
A keen-eyed mariner, bold and young,
 Roving from sunny shore to shore.

My thirsting fancy—drinking in,
 As ether light, all hues, all forms,
All sounds of nature—in the din
 Of traffic, in the voice of storms,

The hush of starry midnight—caught
 Heroic tones from days of old ;
The great sea sang me, wonder-fraught,
 Majestic music manifold ;

While, by his genius, captive drawn,
 I seemed in visionary trance
To float for ever, on and on,
 Through golden cycles of romance :

Till the far, rosy depths of morn,
Grew quick with Presences divine ;
The sunny squall in splendour borne
Athwart the purple hyaline

Revealed the white unveilèd shape
Of Thetis with her Nereid band ;
The clouds of sunset, cape o'er cape,
Piled up the west, serene and grand,

Became the dædal palaces
Of Gods, or Islands of the Blest,
Where, amaranth-crowned in dreamful ease,
The Heroes from their wanderings rest.

Thus on, by many a bluff and bay,
Rich with the dower of patriot fame ;
By shrines where yet the Gods hold sway ;
By isles whence many a godlike name,

While the long ages come and pass,
Will dominate the pulse, the thought
Of man, I dreamed :—my quest, alas !
Abandoned—shamefully forgot.

But when beneath the morning star,
 Athwart the sunless waste of sea,
Uploomed before me, faint and far,
 The mountain-peaks of Italy,—

As the poor Indian, who in sleep
 Has drifted down, with tranquil breath,
Within Niagara's doomful sweep,
 Starts up, full-nerved, at grips with death,

I started ; for with whelming roar,
 As of a cataract gathering fast,
Rushed in upon my heart once more
 The long-pent memories of the past :

The sweet, sad memories of my love—
 My youth's one love, so wild—so vain !
And her, the poor, lost, homeless dove,
 Even now, beneath the frozen rain

Of "the world's" cold and selfish scorn,
 By her own passionate heart's despair
Driven forth, perchance, with pinion torn,
 To perish ! or, O God ! to bear

Life to which bitterest death were sweet
As a babe's slumber! With a pang
Of self-abasement to my feet,
Girt for my task once more, I sprang,

As though I would outspeed the gale
That bore us, from the living grave
Now yawning in her path to hale
And save her—if I yet might save!

We parted at Marseilles, on board
The schooner,—ne'er to meet again.
Poor Hal! the world could ill afford
His loss! Thence home I rushed by train.

Home! what a mockery seemed the name
To me, for whom no household Lar
Expectant stood—no vestal flame
Burnt on the hearth :—life's guiding star,

Round which the infinite heaven of love
Might circle,—as around the pole
The wide-orbed spheres unwavering move—
At once love's starting-point and goal!

I sate within my dreary room,
 Its hearth for three long years a-cold ;
And in the chill sepulchral gloom
 Felt myself grown so grey and old.

While all around me, mouldering lay
 Shards of my shattered dream of life.
And yet, it seemed but yesterday
 Like a young athlete stript for strife

I stood there, resolute to bow
 Earth—heaven to my control !—to clutch
Fame's topmost branch, and round Her brow
 To wreath it ! 'Twas not over much,

Methought, for strength, youth, love like mine
 To compass. And had She been true,
Who knows !—But now, you will divine,
 'Twas other work I had to do ! . . .

A weary time ! From place to place
 I hunted England up and down ;
But of her footsteps caught no trace.
 And only when all hope seemed flown,

And I despaired, by strangest chance
I found that, scarce two months before
I landed, she had fled to France—
Alone. I gathered this—no more ;

But 'twas enough. Remembering how
The smiles would brighten round her mouth,
How dark eye flasht and flusht the brow
At maiden memories of the South,

I felt that, as a stricken hind
Seeks homewards in its mortal pain,
She, lost, forlorn, the track would find
To those pure scenes of youth again.

And so it was. Where mountain Var
Speeds broad and brattling to the brine,
A white-walled *cabane* gleams afar
Through olive boughs and trellised vine.

Thither the fugitive had come,
Alone, way-weary, sorrow-wild ;
There found for three calm weeks a home,
Nursing the housewife's dying child

With such sad tenderness as brought
Tears to the rude eyes round the hearth ;
While still some ring or garment bought
The babe new comforts ; till the earth

Had closed above him. Then, they said,
“ She grew quite strange,” and night by night
Haunted the garden of the dead
Alone ; where, robed in spectral white,

Kneeling beside the little grave,
She writhed in silent agony ;
Seeming from heaven some boon to crave,
All vainly. Then with haggard eye,

Like an unhoucelled ghost, would flit
I' the grey dawn homewards—not to sleep ;
But in her darkened room to sit
Apart the long day through, and weep. . . .

At length broke on her solitude
A man, whose presence seemed to kill
The little life left in her blood ;
At whose stern voice her faltering will

Cowered like a chamois when it hears
The rifle's deadly echoes ring ;
Beneath whose haughty glance her tears
Shrank frozen back upon their spring ;

Even from whose touch with creeping dread
Her very dress would blench—as though
An asp had hissed, the housewife said,—
Her noisy patois quavering low,

As if for fear. Yes, well I knew
Each trait of the detested face :
The brow's pent wrath : the eyes' cold blue :
The full, red mouth's abhorrent grace :

The sensuality, the scorn,
The treacherous calm of every line.—
Oh! if a devil e'er was born
In human shape, that shape was thine,

Seducer! Passive, white, and cold,
He bore her off. The woman wept
As for a daughter, while she told
The piteous tale. And scarce I kept

In fitting check, the ruth, the rage,
The futile agony that tore
My heart-strings, as his narrow cage
A wild beast tears. An hour or more

Beside the small white-curtained bed
Within her husht and vacant room
I leant: while latest sunset shed
Its roseate light, and faint perfume

Of orange flower and violet
In at the open casement stole.—
Ah, friend ! it was an hour to set
Its seal of fire upon the soul

For ever ! When I rose to leave
The blameless roof that in her woe
Had sheltered her, the flush of eve
Had paled, and in the lingering glow

Above the purple Estrelles hung
The rich full moon, that o'er the sea
A veil of solemn glory flung ;
While the soft night-wind silently

Breathed benediction and a peace
Ineffable o'er all. But not
To me the hour could bring surcease
Of suffering ! They had gone, 'twas thought,

To Nice. To Nice I pressed on foot
Through the warm night. —Again too late !
That morning they had left, *en route*
For Genoa ; and I had to wait

Chafing a whole long day, to have
My passport *visé* ; she, meanwhile,
I would have given my life to save,
Speeding from succour, mile by mile. . . .

But wherefore should you care to know,
Or I to tell, how, fruitlessly,
I tracked their footsteps to and fro
Under the blazing southern sky ?

For as the shadow of the moon
Before the furrowing prow recedes,
Or flits the bright mirage of noon
From the parched caravan that speeds

Through burning wastes to drink and lave,
They fled me ever. Till, at last,
Where breaks the long Ionian wave
On wild Calabria's shore, I cast

Hope to the winds ; and in such mood
As tempts the desperate heart to spurn
At heaven, and in its own life-blood
To quench the girding flames that burn

And bite into its core, again
I turned me northwards : even as one
Stricken to death and blind with pain
From a lost battle-field, alone,

Crawls forth to die. At Rome, of course,
I paused—no need for hurry now !
And being there, by simple force
Of habit climbed the terraced brow

Of Pincio daily—thence to watch
The sun behind the aërial dome
Of Angelo descend, and catch
Eve's last sad smile, as o'er the tomb

Of the world's empire like a queen
She bowed in widowed beauty, crowned
With the young moon and solemn sheen
Of stars ; with darkness curtained round,

And robed in the majestic calm
Of desolation, where no more
Fear's outworn pang, hope's futile balm
Might come, to trouble as of yore.

And there beneath an ilex cast,
Sick with my sorrow's cureless ache,
I watched the glittering crowd roll past—
Prince, prelate, prig, lorette and rake.

Watched them as one might watch a cloud
Of emmets dancing o'er a stream ;
Or the dust-galaxies that crowd
And glorify some stray sunbeam :—

Dust-atoms—ephemerides,
That buzzed and stung, danced, loved and died ;
What were those flutterers more than these,
For all their pomp and all their pride ?

To *me* no more ! Dear Lord in heaven !
That hour avenged the impious sin
Of scorn for aught that Thou hadst given
Thy blessed blood to wash and win !

For lo ! as through the starry spaces
Flashes and fades a meteor's glare,
From out the press of alien faces
One pale face flashed—unearthly fair !

The white lips moved, like lips that pray,
But the eyes—the wide, wild, weary eyes—
Gleamed to the west with the blank dismay
Of Eve's, when back on Paradise

She gazed from out the gathering gloom,
And heard within the guarded door
The archangel's awful words of doom :
“ Thou shalt re-enter never more ! ”

'Twas she ! 'twas she ! and by her side,
Sullen and sated, the Beast of Prey ;—
Even then, as I knew, at home a bride,
Young, innocent, highborn, fair as day,

Was waiting to crown his infamous brows
 With her virgin wreath; for the miscreant owned
 Rich acres enow, and could give his spouse
 High place—so *his* errors were soon condoned.

“Arm sin in rags,”—you recollect—
 “A pigmy’s straw doth pierce it;” but
 “Plate it with gold!”—one can’t expect
 Even Virtue’s self should afford to cut

The wearers of such! So this reprobate,
 Heartless and brainless, might stretch his hand,
 Rank with pollution, and pluck for mate
 The snowiest flower of our Christian land.

I leapt, as they tell us people leap
 When caught by a bullet right in the heart;
 Then, with a rush in my ears, the sweep
 Of a tideway, and sudden edgèd smart

As of steel, the whole hot blood in my frame
 Converged; my brain in a sickly whirl
 Grew blank, and, I own it, ev’n now, with shame,
 I swooned on the spot, like a fledgling girl

Who has prickt her finger. When past the swoon,
The crowd with the twilight brief and bright
Had vanished, and the soft young moon
Was silvering with divinest light

Statue and terrace, roof and tower,
And the dim Tiber winding slow
From bridge to bridge. 'Twas vesper hour,
And from the campaniles below

Rang forth those chimes so few can hear
Unmoved. That night they seemed to fall
With dreamier sweetness on my ear,
With tenderer pathos seemed to call

My heart to turn in love to her,
The mother of the Son of God,
Who by the cross and sepulchre
Bore in her weakness all that load

Of pitying anguish. Scarce I checked
The "Ave Mary!" as I rose,
And down the dark stairs, moonbeam-flecked,
Crawled homewards,—not to seek repose,

Though, certes, in as wretched case
As well could be. That night, once more
Began the intermitted chase,—
But luckless now as heretofore !

Few English then were in Rome, and of these
Their names were not (I afterwards found
They had travelled as Germans). But the police,—
Too busy burrowing under ground

For the widespread roots of the sacred tree
Of freedom, then quickening after years
Of wintry blight—now, gloriously
Watered with patriot blood and tears,

Stretching its sheltering arms abroad
O'er a happy people ; ere long to spread
Yet broader, I trust, by the blessing of God !—
Those wretched Sbirri, as I have said,

Would give no help. Still, undeterred,
I plied my quest ; and when nearly a week
Had flown, from passing strangers heard
Of her. They had seen her with hectic cheek

And feverous eye, just three days before,
At Civita Vecchia, bound (alone,
As was clear from her scanty baggage, which bore,
However, nor *his* name nor her own)

For Paris. . . . For Paris! what should she there,
Poor castaway, in her loneliness? Why,
As well might a lamb to the wolf's red lair,
Or a dove to the falcon's eyrie fly!

For Paris! that glittering maelstrom, that sweeps
With its soul-spume sheer o'er hell's abyss!
That golden palace, where Circe keeps
Her loathliest revels! Is this, then—*this!*—

The end? Ah, no! that awful look,
(As of one who dreads, but yet must gaze
Right in th' Eternal Eyes, that brook
No paltering, but with lightning-blaze

Search the dark soul, nor leave one spot
Where a sin may shelter—even as His,
From the shuddering breast of Iscariot,
Tore the dread secret smile nor kiss

Could hide, in dim Gethsemane)
 That look of dumb beseeching woe
 From hopeless eyes, that seemed to see,
 Far in the solemn sunset-glow,

The river of Life like crystal rolled
 From the throne of God and of the Lamb;
 And, in robes washed white, and crowns of gold,
 With golden harps and branches of palm,

The ransomed, who gaze on the Saviour's face
 And weep no more!—it bade me trust
 That yet, even yet, His holy grace
 Might reach, and raise her from the dust,

Where, in her sin's drear solitude,
 Polluted, outcast, lost, she lay:
 Reach, raise, and in His stainless blood
 Wash even her scarlet stains away.

* * * * *

Ah, hopes that died so long ago!
 To-night ye rise, and bring again
 Around me all that coil of woe:
 Those prayers, alas! so wild—so vain!

Yet were they heard in heaven ! and now,
Even now, the doomful hour drew near
That brought God's answer !—Brought !—but how ?
And how shall I the shame—the fear

Of that wild night and ghastly morn
Recall, when—Nay ! I must not scritch,
Like him whom, last night, Lydia's scorn
Made ripe for Bedlam—or a switch.

Forgive me ! . . . Well, 'twas a night in June ;
The air was faint with breath of flowers ;
Lutetia laughed beneath the moon,
And the solemn shade of her minster towers :

Laughed, as with flaunting robes in the mire,
And loose locks tangled with rose and vine,
And eyes ablaze with lust's wildfire,
And bright cup brimming with poisoned wine,

She led the godless revelry
Through glittering *salon* and glaring street ;
Shouting between the silent sky
And the silent graves beneath their feet :

“ Eat, drink, and be merry, for life is fleet,
And death, as we know, is the end of all ;
And thought is bitter, and sin is sweet !
Eat, drink, and be merry, though heaven should
fall ! ”

Thus rang the devils' Carnival—
Brief prelude, alas ! to an endless Lent !—
From Père-la-Chaise to the Arc de l'Etoile
Far echoing, as my steps I bent

Towards my lodging. It was late,
And I dead-weary from the day's
Vain quest, when, through a stately gate,
I caught a silken stir—the blaze

Of million-coloured lamps, half hid
In blossoms—the voluptuous moan
Of music, muffled deep amid
Exotic umbrage. It was one

Of those fair by-paths to the broad
Avernian way, where sin's descent
Is made so smooth it needs no goad ;
For there all arts profusely blent—

Even nature's innocent loveliness,
Polluted thus to hateful ends,—
With specious blandishments, caress
Frail fancy, that too gladly lends

Her aid to subjugate the sense,
Debase the heart, and lead the soul—
Cozened by many a fond pretence—
Whither, we know ! I paid the toll

And entered. But you know the place.
Who does not? You have heard and seen
Those orgies, where, with faultless grace
Of phrase, and majesty of mien,

Hetaira spreads her toils ; and where,
With smiling lips and lampant eyes,
Coiled sleek within her flowery lair,
The snaky Lamia watching lies :

Whom even to look upon is shame ;
Whom but to touch is death ; to love,
Perdition. Where, with lips a-flame,
Youth, deaf to whisperings from above,

Bartering youth's glorious heritage
For sin's illusive cup—tastes, drinks,
And perishes ; where grizzly age—
O sight abhorred !—even as he sinks

To the long sleep he fondly deems
Eternal, strives, with palsied clutch,
To grasp the unhallowed bliss that gleams
Before, but still eludes his touch

In mockery! . . . What a scene ! Flowers, lights,
The music, the gay dancers, whirled
Like dead leaves on autumnal nights ;
Or, liker the lost spirits hurled

By that fierce wind, with shriek and moan,
Through the Dantean darkness. So,
By the wild storm of music blown,
The dance wheels madly to and fro :

Round and round, with silken sound
Of robes that glitter, and feet that gleam ;
With bright arms bare, and floating hair ;
With jest, and laugh, and wanton scream !

While fiercer and faster it eddies and coils
 In its rhythmic rage ; as a waterfall,
In the rush of its frenzy, seething boils—
 And the deep calm heaven looked down o'er all.

I watched, in half-oblivious trance,
 The pageant that before me moved,
Till, by some—must I call it, *chance* ?
 The music changed to an air She loved

In that sweet season when our moon
 Of love was crescent, and undreamed
The storm that quenched it, all too soon !—
 How long ago ! and yet it seemed

To-night so near ! as up the black
 And starless vault the music rolled
Its passionate surges, that trembled back
 In diamond rillets and showers of gold.

I felt almost as though I leant
 Once more beside her ; heard once more
Enrapt, heart, voice, and instrument
 Commingle, as in days of yore.

While the white-owl flitted, the beetle whirred,
And Hesper blazed o'er the shadowy Ben,
And the curlew's wail from the shore was heard,
And the mist came creeping down the glen ;

And She, with the lingering light on her brow,
And the gathering gloom in her musky hair ;
With her great brown eyes that gleamed below,
Like pools in the Garry when nights are fair,

And the planet of love lies mirrored there—
Appeared a spirit to whom were given
The vials of rapture and despair,—
Whose frown was hell, whose smile was heaven !

And now ! ah, now ! With stifled breath
And tear-blind eyes I fled the spot—
A grip at my heart like the grip of death,
Or the fang of " the worm that dieth not."

But wildered by the glare, the din,
The turmoil round me, and the throng
Of memories gathering dark within—
I missed the exit ; and along

An alley, curtained from the light
By odorous shrub and trellised flower,
Staggered as one in nightmare might,
Who knows he dreams, yet has no power

To snap the spell. So stumbling on
I sped with introverted eye ;
Till, by a half-articulate moan
Arrested—a low quivering sigh

Of abject woe ; so close, it seemed
The echo of my own despair.
I turned ; and lo ! before me gleamed,
In the sharp moonshine—by the glare

Of lamps no more obscured—a young,
Slight woman. To the sculptured base
Of a white Artemis she clung
As if in agony. Her face

Was buried in her clinging hands ;
But could I doubt 'twas She, at length—
The fugitive, through many lands
Till now so vainly sought ! My strength,

Worn as it was, could scarce sustain
The quick tumultuous joy—the pang
Of hope's new birth—like mortal pain
That stung me, as I forward sprang,

Intent to grasp her—lest again
She should escape me. But in dread
Of what dire mischief to a brain
So worn, and heart so sore bestead

As hers, the act might wreak—awed, too,
By the lone spirit wrestling there
With God—I paused, and backwards drew
A little space in silent prayer.

Then softly—calmly as I might
For grief's pent breathing—did I call
Her name. Like sleeper by a light
Perturbed, she stirred—was still ; then all

Her queenly height uplifting slow,
Raised her wan brow to heaven, and seemed
To listen. O'er her cheek the glow
Of some sweet memory passed ; and gleamed

One instant in her eye the pride
Of sinless years ; across her lips
Trembled a rapturous smile, and died.
Then all her face in cold eclipse

Darkened and shrivelled. Yet once more
I called her by her old home-name,
And stood beside her. Swiftly o'er
Her aspect, as our eyes met, came

A terrible change—as though dusk flame
Had flared upon her : neck, cheek, brow
Purpling with agony of shame
And blank abasement. Stretching now

My hands towards her, “ Come, poor child,”
I whispered ; “ yet there's hope.” Her eye
One moment softened—then grew wild
And lowering ; and a bitter cry

Burst from her : a long wailing shriek
Of infinite despair—“ Too late !—
Too late !” she gasped. “ In vain you seek
To save me ! Sin must expiate

“ Its guilt. And never more, O friend !
May we two meet, till both have trod
Life’s pathway to the desolate end :—
Henceforth I am alone with God !—

“ And so, farewell ! ” I wildly strove
To hold her ; softly did invoke
The memory of our youth—our love—
To soothe her. From my grasp she broke

With the insuperable force
Of madness, and was gone. I fled
In swift pursuit. As if a corse
In ghastly cerements of the dead

Had passed before them, in their place
Paused the flusht dancers, and abashed
Stood silent ; even a moment’s space
The music faltered, as I dashed,

Calling her name, athwart the glare,
And in the gloom revanished. Then
Uprang into the shuddering air
Yells of derisive mirth, as when

The devils grow orgillous, and all
The infernal vault their fiendish scorn
Reverberates. . . . Why should I recall
That night's dread vigil? How, till morn

In maiden loveliness blushed forth,
And the gay city donned again
Her bravery—as though the earth
Knew not a care—with eyes a-strain,

By starry glimmer, by murky gleam
Of lamps, from shadowy bridge and quay
I watched the melancholy stream,
Dark-winding on its doomful way.

For a nameless terror now had caught
My fancy : and in every swirl
Of pallid spume I saw in thought
The dead, drowned face of the homeless girl—

Ah ! still but a girl!—and, numb with fear,
In each low intermittent sigh
Of the wandering night-wind seemed to hear
The wail of her dying agony. . . .

Thus passed the night, like a troubled ghost
To his grave, each moment horror-quick ;
When the Quai du Marché Neuf I crost—
Reeling, I knew, like a drunkard—sick

As unto death, and blind with tears
That welled within, but would not flow.—
Even now, beneath the ice of years,
A silent Phlegethon of woe,

They gather, as that awful hour
Returns and looks me in the eyes ;
With more than dread Medusa's power,
Thicking the blood! . . . Ay! there she lies

Before me now, as in that place
Of horror which I dare not name—
The unblushing sunlight broad on her face
And foam-white form. Oh bitter shame!

And overhead the dress she wore
Last night, yet freshly dripping hangs!—
The Morgue? Yes, yes ; but of that no more,
“For that way madness lies!” Ah, the fangs

Of the ancient woe yet clutch me here
At the foolish heart!—No, no more wine!
Well—somewhat too much of myself, I fear,
In this long yarn; but to untwine

The strands of a fate so closely knit
As ours, were hard. So if I prose—
And age is garrulous—bear with it
For our lost darling's sake. The close

Is near. And you, who are the first
To hear the story of her doom,
Shall be the last: for worlds I durst
Not call the dead Past from its tomb

To show its gaping wounds again! . . .
Yes, there I found her: Her—and There!
Washed up like a noisome weed from Seine,
Whose drops yet oozed from her madid hair.

O, drowned Parthenopè not more fair!
What wonder the crowd of ribald men
And brazen women—come to stare
And bandy jests in that charnel-den

O'er any new horror bequeathed by night
To the shuddering day—fobore their jeers,
Husht with unwonted awe by a sight
Of such dread beauty. What wonder tears

O'er many a cheek to tears unused,
Were falling as they turned away—
Or that one poor soul whose eyes refused
That tribute, cowered aside to pray!

For death the poor dishonoured clay
Had touched with consecrating hand ;
And o'er her brow and eyelids lay
A light as from the spirit-land.

And O ! the smile of peace that round
Her wan, sweet mouth enraptured hung !
Of anguish past, of mercy found
It spoke, as with an angel's tongue.

What marvel they should weep ! But I
Stood cold, impassive as a stone :
Nor wept, nor prayed ; for still the sigh
Of Nor'land pines, the far-heard moan

Of billows in my vacant brain
 Made weary descant : o'er and o'er
Re-echoing that wild cry of pain,
 “ Alone with God, for evermore ! ” . . .

I claimed my dead : mine only, now !
 And bore her home with reverent care ;
And as I kissed the icy brow,
 And knelt alone beside her there,—

As on the vext Judæan wave
 Fell the calm “ Peace, be still ! ”—there came
A whisper from beyond the grave—
 The whisper of a Saviour's name !

And then I felt,—If love like mine,
 Earth of the earth, thus held her fast
Through sin and shame, the Love Divine
 That made, would hold her till the last.

God's ways—what man hath found them out ?
 But in that dark, woe-wildered hour
He heard her cry—I dare not doubt :—
 Was near her soul with saving power. . . .

—Poor girl ! about her neck they found
A locket I had fastened there
The night we parted ; and close wound
Within, a ring of withered hair

She had cut with cold and trembling hand
In the gloom of the pine wood, while the bore
Of the dim Atlantic swept the land,
And the black waves boomed on the echoing shore.

They found a book, too, in her breast,
She was wont to love, in her strange wild way,
And read for hours in a woodland nest
That caught the sunset over “ the bay ”—

'Twas her mother's Bible. These, unmoved,
I gave her back ; and, still and cold,
Around the form so vainly loved
Smoothed the white death-robcs, fold by fold.

Without a tear I saw her laid
Within her dark, dishonoured bed ;
With horrible calm I heard the spade
Heave “ dust to dust ” upon her head.

Nor till I turned that night to cast
My farewell look on the darkling mound
Of alien earth that hid her last
Lone resting-place, my sorrow found

Its natural outlet, and I wept—
As men but once in a lifetime weep ;
Prayed—as he only prays who has kept
Vigil where youth, hope, passion, sleep,

As mine did in that nameless tomb,
Where all that had made life dear went down. . .
But there is light beyond the gloom,
And the Son of Man will not disown

In heaven His earthly pledge, “to save
That which was lost.”—And in the end,
Shall not the blood He freely gave
Redeem even her? . . . So now, my friend,

You know her story ; know, too, how
My life, thus poisoned at the root,
All warped and withered, bole and bough,
Has borne, alas ! such bitter fruit.

Yet not resultless all those years
Of lonely being : I have grown
To tenderer pity for the tears
Of others, gazing through my own.

So, too, the loving sympathy
With hopes and joys I may not share
Has deepened, in the memory
Of my own youth—so glad, so fair.

But chiefly, I have come to feel
That God is just whate'er befall ;
That when He wounds, 'tis but to heal :
For He hath " made and loveth all."

I N C Y P R U S.

(AN ALLEGORY.)

I WAS a block of marble, white and cold,
Hidden in flowers upon the sunward side
Of high Olympus. 'Twas a little dell,
Mossy and silent, shut on every side
By wildest tanglery of root and stem,
Close-mantling leaves and intertwining trails
Of downward blossoms, from the stir of wind
Or pry of man ; only o'erhead the blue,
The deep blue Cyprian heaven divine looked down,
By sunshine and by starlight, through the boughs
On my green sanctuary. A tiny stream,
Fed from the breezy summits high aloof,
Near, though unseen, within its hollow grot
For ever sang its drowsy monotone ;
And close beside me (where a fairy beach
With glimmering jaspers paved and golden sand,

Curved like the young moon between twilight leaves,
Three lilies' length into the thymy marge
Lay gleaming,—overhung by ancient roots
Of olive, lichen-tinct of many a hue,
And formless as Chimæra), silently
Stole in beneath the boscage, scattering
A thousand tremulous lunes along my side,
And up athwart the o'erarching greenery—
Stole silent in, and silent stole away.
And here through unremembered eons, lulled
On the Great Mother's bosom, like a babe
Unborn, and all unconscious of itself :
Of all unconscious, save the tender pulse
Beating in mystic cadence with its own
Of the warm mother-heart—I lay asleep ;
Nor dreamed ; while round the venerable earth
The seasons led their dance from year to year ;
On high the old dominion of the gods
Was shaken ; and beneath, the turbulent race
Of men, like billows on the windy shore,
Came, broke, and vanished ;—but I lay asleep.
Till on a day—ah, beating heart, be still !
A bright warm day of spring it was, what time,
Responsive to the wooing of the sun,
Earth deckt herself with garlands like a bride

Upon her marriage morn—I was aware
That near me was a Presence, and a voice—
A lonely voice, tender and deep and low,
Such as nor bird nor bee among the blooms,
Streamlet, nor vernal breezes in the boughs
Had ever wakened,—singing to itself
Of love and beauty : how that beauty lay
At heart of all things, was the forming soul
Of universal being : root at once
And flower of the great Cosmos : the divine
Forthshadowing of the inmost thought of God—
And *that* was love ! eternal love ! first—last
Of things : the primal want, the thirst supreme,
That craves and draws all beauty to itself—
Drinks and still thirsts—centre alike and bourne
Of all we know, or feel, or dream of good !
O joy ! O marvel ! waking thus to sense
Of outward and of inward life ! as one
Slowly from death-cold lethargy awakes
To loving voices and dear sounds of home,
But opens not his eyelids, loath to lose
The first sweet doubt even in the sweeter joy
Of certainty. Thus in my stony trance
Listening I lay ; whileas the wondrous voice
Came nearer, nearer, and aside my veil

Of clinging flowers was drawn, and then a touch
As of a sunbeam on my surface fell ;
And still the stream of melody flowed on
In golden undulations of low sound ;
And this its burthen : “ Here, with folded wings
And pulseless bosom, my soul’s Psyche lies,
Locked in enchanted slumber—heaven and earth—
The universal heart of nature void,
Because she is not !—but the hand of Love
Shall set her free ! ” Love ! love ! The very word
Thrilled my cold veins—like the portentous flame
That flashes when the Immortals in their ire
Make the crags tremble and the forests groan—
One instant, and then ceased ; and once again
Around my loneliness the desolate waves
Of silence closed. But I—I slept no more !
For evermore the deep majestic tones
Of the lost voice would haunt me,—with the sound
Of waters and of leaves, the midnight plaint
Of nightingales low in the myrtle woods,
The noontide hum of bees about the comb,
And whir of insects in the setting sun,
The wind among the cedars overhead,
And the far ocean’s mighty diapase
Commingling, in one web of melody—

One many-chorded web of magic song—
That ever closer wound me ; echoing still
The mystic promise, “ Love shall set her free ! ”
How long I wist not—time, like life, for me
As yet was tideless : hours, nor days, nor years
Rippling the depths of immemorial calm
That wrapt me—but unrestingly it stirred
Within me, this new sense, so sweet, so strange !
Stirred, as the life upfolden in a seed,
Within the sacred bosom of the earth,
Stirs at the first warm presage of the spring,
And slowly wakens from Lethean sleep
To the glad sense of being—root and stem,
Sun-lighted leaf, and flower, and fruit to come,
Foreshadowed in its dim delicious dreams.
How long I knew not—but the blossoming woods
Yet rang with love-songs of the happy birds,
And from the folded valleys faintly came
The bleat of yeanling kids—when once again,
Around me—through me, the sweet agony crept :
The wonder and the fear, divinely strange !
A balmier zephyr sighed among the boughs ;
The streamlet with a silv’rier cadence fell ;
The flowers breathed sweeter perfume—’twas the
time

Of lilies!—Philomel within the brake
Poured with a wilder ecstasy her song
Of passionate yearning; and above her brood
The nestling stockdove cooed with holier joy;
The wavering flecks of light and emerald shade
Danced round me with new gladness; the warm air
That laved me, the cool earth on which I lay,
Glowed with strange rapture; all my being throbb'd
And flushed, as at the coming of a god—
And then I knew that He would come!

He came!

And with him—as with morning warmth and light—
Came life! with all life's infinite desires;
Warm sympathies with earth, and heavenward thoughts
On whose rare plumes it soars beyond the earth
To bask in purer ether—godlike joys
And godlike woes, that knit the universe
Of being in one sacred brotherhood
Of hope and love! But words, alas! are vain:—
Such words as ye of mortal lineage strive
To clothe the ethereal nurslings of the soul
Withal, that haply for a little while
They may abide with you, nor wholly die,
Leaving you desolate—ay, words are vain

To tell how, slowly, sweetly, day by day,
The marvel of my individual life
Grew up within me, through mysterious gyres
Of consciousness ; and from within, without,
Gathered completeness, as in the breath of spring
A bud grows—gathering from the dews of heaven
And gentle nurture of all-loving earth
Loveliness, sweetness, to the perfect flower.
As tenderly he cleft the stony rind
That prisoned me, with impact of keen steel,
Through which I felt the thoughts that in his breast
Were burning, permeate my own like fire.
Morn after morn, ere yet the awakening birds
Began to twitter in their dreams, or paled
The torch of Phosphor in the kindling dawn,
I heard his voice, far-echoing as he came
Up the steep flowery paths ; and hearing, thrilled
Through all my marble bulk ; for still his song
Was “ Love shall set her free—shall set her free ! ”
White morn would brighten into noon, blue noon
Fade into golden eve, the golden eve
Deepen to night, and still, in that lone dell,
The rapt artificer toiled on, nor tired :
For Love—in whom and by whom all things are—
Was there to aid. . . . Until at last I lay,

Between the sunset and the crescent moon :—
Half in the roseate flush of evening bathed,
Half in the moonshine white and virginal—
A naked miracle of loveliness,
Beneath his gaze ; rose-tinct, but icy cold
As yon far peaks of inaccessible snow
That gleam like flame towards the gleaming west ;
Fair as his fondest dreams—the faultless child
Of his soul's passionate travail ; but, alas !
Soulless to him and passionless ! Awhile,
With impotent locked fingers—even as one
Who feels the deck that bears him to his home
After long weary years of wandering,
Sink from beneath his feet in sight of land—
He stood in silent anguish, gazing down
On the fair, futile creature he had made,
Couched there amid the flowers.

At length a bird

Far in the odorous cedar-gloom burst forth
In sudden song, that through the aching hush
Pulsed for two troubled heart-beats, and then died,
Leaving its echoes all about the dells.
He wept ! I felt the great tears' fiery fall
Upon the crispèd volutes of my hair,
Upon my cheeks, my eyelids and my brow,

As, kneeling by my side, he raised his face
Towards the Hesperian star, and stretched his arms
Into the deepening twilight, with the fierce
Imperious gesture of a drowning man,
Who, hopeless of escape, with frantic hands
Yet clutches at the wave that whelms him ; so,
Clutching the impassible air, he called aloud,
Hoarse with despairing passion, “ Give her life,
Astartè ! Give her life, or let me die ! ”
Then sank upon my bosom ; his hot lips
Upon my lips, that burnt beneath their touch,
And strove—ah me ! how vainly !—to give back
Their clinging kisses. But as yon grey cloud
That coldly floats towards the sinking sun,
Caught in his splendour, grows a cloud of flame,
So the chill Shape, that yet was all of me,
Drew from His warm embrace the ethereal fire
Of love, and so became a Living Soul !
For she, divine Astartè, from afar
Heard and fulfilled his prayer ! . . .

A low, warm wind
Fluttered the sleeping roses overhead—
It was the time of roses—shaking down
A shower of dew and dewy petals, bright
As the flame-flowers young Eos from her hair

Down the steep orient scattered in the path
Of coming Day. It passed ; and lo, on high
In the flusht ether shone the morning star ;
And over all the shadowy mountain slopes,
And the far purple of the slumbering sea,
Brooded a breathless calm ; and in our hearts
A peace ineffable ! And, lying there,
Under the silent dome of heaven, we knew
That we were One !—ever, for ever One !
We spoke not : for unutterable joy
In rapture of apocalyptic dream
Held us entranced.—Till softly, from the pines
That crowned with solemn shade the sunward crags,
A stockdove cooed ; from the thick underwood
The small birds 'gan to jargle ; and afar
The sea-mews shrilly babbled of the dawn. . . .
Slowly, with fond delaying, we unwound
Our plighted arms. But ere, with reverent hands,
He raised me (for, I knew not why, released,
I turned from him, in the crushed moss and flowers
Hiding my face that burnt beneath his gaze,
And almost prayed that to unconscious stone
I might return), unclasping from his neck
The kingly mantle, round my form, that glowed
With shame of its own loveliness, he drew

The veiling purple. Then erect I stood,
And looked him in the face with fearless eyes—
A perfect Woman ! from the mystic font
Of sacramental rapture, pure and calm ! . . .

And here, within our palace-home, afar
From the lewd city's hideous revelry,
Where an insensate race with rites impure
Worship the Holy Ones unholily,
We dwell in peace from golden year to year ;
Upon the sacred altars of the gods
Offering with grateful heart and innocent hands
The gift most dear to heaven—a blameless life.

A VALEDICTION.

LIFE'S garden stretched around you fair and wide,
 Joy's clustered fruit to lure on every side,
 Nor fruit nor flower to grasp of yours denied,—

Go, my fair Lydia, live your fleeting day ;
 Youth's cup of rapture, quaff it while you may ;
 Win love and waste it—who shall say you nay ?

Some hearts may ache for't ; but are you to blame ?
 If daddy-long-legs with the taper's flame
Will dally—his the sorrow, hers the fame !

Yet in the giddy acme of success,
 The vacant bosom may perchance confess
 That pleasure is not always happiness.

And when, the vernal bloom of beauty sped,
And prudence whispers 'tis the time to wed,
Some noble roué waves you to his bed,

Remember—nay, as best you can, *forget!*
Why should one tear of impotent regret
Dim the fine lustre of a coronet

So dearly bought? Yet, certes, after all,
Great though it seem, the price may be but small:
Your heart!—Has charming Lydia heart at all?

And yet, ah, yet, there was a time you seemed
A creature sweet as ever Fancy dreamed:
So pure—so wise! You were not what I deemed.

At least, you are not: shrunk the empyreal springs
Of thought and feeling; crushed the Psyche-wings
Of genius in the jar of vulgar things.

And you, the young Egeria of my heart,
Once shrined in vestal purity apart,
Now hustle Clodia in her chosen mart.

While I who loved, and knew you, stand aside
And mark the flush of jealousy or pride
With which that now unshrinking cheek is dyed,

If but some *blasé*, many-clodded bore—
To whose dulled sense even You are nothing more
Than the frail flutterer of the ball-room floor

You strive to seem (and but too well succeed!),
Withholds or yields you the contemptuous meed
Of his devotion. “Sorry sight,” indeed!

You, whose plumed spirit in youth’s age of gold
Dwelt with the immortals: deigning scarce to hold
A moment’s parle with one of meaner mould

Than those king-priests of wisdom, art, and song—
God’s suffragans—who rule, serene and strong,
The sacred regions that to thought belong;

Whose words, far-echoing down the changeful years,
Mould the world’s heart, that like a dreamer hears,
And answers in its sleep with shouts and tears,—

Answers, and stirs, and rises in the might
Of noble purpose,—kindled by the light
Of some great thought—some poet's dream of right !

But you have made your choice. Your future lies
Apart from these : why should I scrutinise
Your weakness with such microscopic eyes ?

Why, as in triumph, ring the passing bell
Of your life's promise ? Why, in mockery, dwell
On what you were—and are not ? So, farewell !

Farewell, farewell ! The past was all so sweet,
I needs must grieve to see ignoble feet
Trample it thus ; as in the roaring street

Some rosebud that a lover's lips had prest,
Yet warm and dewy from a maiden's breast,
Is crushed to mire. Yet so, perchance, 'tis best :

Had the ideal memories of the past
Retained their magic splendour to the last,
Life must have withered in the shade they cast.

And so, once more, farewell ! The maddening whirl
Of fashion drowns you—drinks you down, fair girl,
As Egypt's frenzied queen the priceless pearl

In her insatiate pride. So let it be !
In the "great world" fulfil your destiny—
Dead to your nobler self—dead evermore to me !

THE GOLDEN HOUR.

“ Sweet Nature’s pomp, if my deficient phrase
 Hath stained thy glories by too little skill,
 Yield pardon.” —ROBERT GREENE.

PRELUDE.*

IN youth’s fair season, when the blood
 Begins to stir in heart and brain,
 As stirs the sap within the bud,
 Or virtue in the quickened grain ;

When the expanding nature glows
 With some strange sweetness yet to be,
 And all it hopes, or feels, or knows,
 Takes shape in dreams of poesy ;

* These stanzas refer to the original draft of the following poem.

One balmy morn awake I lay
For very joy—what time the bloom
Was whitening on the hawthorn spray,
And winds grew wanton with perfume.

Awake I lay an hour ere dawn,
And through my ivied window gazed
On night's dusk legions slow withdrawn,
And on the morning star that blazed

Broader and brighter as he neared
The western mountains, purple-dark,—
And held my breath, and thought I heard
Far notes of mavis or of lark.

And then, when first the rosy gleam
Of sunrise caught the upland firs,
Across my spirit came a dream
Of joy and beauty, such as stirs

The being to its depths, and wakes
Within the wondering soul a thirst
No earthly fountain ever slakes—
Not even those deathless springs that burst

In music, 'mid the sacred shades,—
 Untrod by pleasure's vulgar throng !
Where with the loved Pierian maids
 Wander the laurelled kings of song.

Rising, I flung my casement wide ;
 And through the verdure all unshorn
Came floating in from every side
 Sweet sounds and odours of the morn.

I took a pen, and kneeling there,
 Bathed in the freshness and the sheen—
The young wind dancing in my hair—
 Wrote down the vision I had seen.

With heart elate and trembling hand,
 The ready numbers as they came
I penned ; nor doubted all the land
 Eftsoons would echo with their fame !

My vision of "The Golden Hour" !
 I read it *now*—Ah, well-a-way !
How poor and vapid !—like a flower
 Kept from some long-past festal day,

Which, scentless, hueless though it be,
We cherish for those bygone times.
So the fond light of memory
Endears those weak, incondite rhymes !

Till each poor faded character—
The very paper, soiled and worn—
A phasmal glory seems to wear,
Shed from that tranced summer morn,

When first—ah, fancy sweet as vain !—
I dreamed that haply even I,
Some noble task achieved, might gain
The meed of immortality ! . . .

Nor let us with too cold a sneer
Rebuke those lofty dreams of youth :
They serve to keep the spirit clear
From sordid aims ; and are, in sooth,

But flutterings of the prisoned soul
That yet shall spread immortal wings,
And, victor at a loftier goal,
Wake music from celestial strings.

THE GOLDEN HOUR.

HIGH-HEARTED minstrel of the morn,
Who singest all unseen
Up the steep eastern sheen,
Towards the gates of pearl enraptured borne.
O for those wings of thine !
O for those tones divine,
That circling upwards float
From thine inspirèd throat,
Like viewless incense round a sacred shrine !
So faint, so sweet, so crystal clear,
The listening heart must weep, or break to hear.

Or, O swart bird, that thou,
Who from the topmost twinkling aspen bough,
In strains that seem to well
Through gurgling oinomel,
Pourest thy passionate love-song all abroad ;

And yet couldst not unload,
Till midnight didst thou try,
That throbbing breast of its sweet agony !
O passionate bird ! that thou
Wouldst be my tutor now,
And to my yearning heart and brain
Reveal the secret of thy magic strain !

So might I give Her welcome meet,
Who, with rosy-glancing feet,
With locks of gold, and pinions sapphire-blue,
Begemmed with starry dew,
Glides hither o'er the eastern sea,
Warbling aërial melody,
And breathing myrrh and spice
From isles of Paradise,
Laved by the stream of ocean, deep withdrawn
Under the cloud-built palace-domes of dawn.

But not to me belong,
Or lark's aërial song,
Or merle's rich melody amid the boughs !
Yet though my lips refuse
Music's melodious dues,
My glad heart sings ! Then may my rustic vows,

Mingling with nature's nobler harmonies
Unblamed, though tuneless all, to greet her now
arise !

Hail to thee, Golden Hour !
Ethereal playmate of the morning star,
Immortal sister of the king of day,
And of the virgin queen who rules the night ;
First-born and fairest daughter of the light,
Who from thy rosy bower,
On this fresh morn of May,
Com'st brightening in thy beauty from afar ;
Sweet as a new-made bride,
Blushing and ardent-eyed :
Youth, joy, and love, and loveliness thy dower—
Hail to thee, Golden Hour !

Up the dappled orient,
See her silvery veil outstreaming !
On the mountain summits gleaming,
See her young feet, dew-besprent !
While from their radiant track on every side,
O'er the awakening landscape far and wide,
The Day-spring, like a fountain, showers amain
Its golden rain :—

O'er the folded upland valleys ;
O'er the sudden silver sallies
Of the rainbow-bright cascade,
Fitful flashing through the shade
Of pensile birch and oak's young green,
That mingling hide the grey ravine ;
O'er the tarn—a diamond set
In an emerald carcanet !
O'er the coppice, up the wold,
O'er the meadow's budded gold ;
O'er the chimneys, clustering tall,
Of the many-centuried hall ;
O'er its twinkling turret vanes,
O'er its curtained lattice panes ;
O'er the silent terraces,
And the dreaming chestnut trees,
Where, half asleep, the rooks begin
To flit and wheel with drowsy din ;
O'er the shining, shingly reaches
 Of the river winding down,
 Through the wavering darkness thrown
By the boughs of mighty beeches,
That, with shadows long-outdrawn
'Thwart the billowy pasture-lawn,

Stand to guard the fair demesne—
Dewy sunlight all between !
And there, where, half-way up the hill,
Hid in bosky hollow, sleeps
The brown-roofed hamlet, round the mill
With its black reposing wheel,
And gable white with ancient meal,
Which the alder oversweeps—
Soft the vapoury splendour creeps !
O'er the hoary village church,
With its dark and vacant porch ;
O'er its ivy-hooded spire,
O'er its cross of steadfast fire,
And chancel windows all ablaze
With ruby, sapphire, chrysoprase ;
O'er the grassy mounds below,
Ranked in sad and solemn row,
O'er stooping headstones, mossy-green,
And many a cypress darkly seen,
'Twixt giant girths of oak and elm,
That round the consecrated realm
Of death and silence ever shed
A pensive gloom, a holy fear ;
As though the spirits of the dead,
In the mute air were hovering near.

How brightly shines the dædal earth !
As bright and fair as when the sea
To angel anthems gave it birth,
Half-down in the depths of eternity ;
And from emerald valley and mountain grey
The lingering darkness rolled away,
As from the cave of night
The young Morn, robed in rosy light,
Like a beautiful dream came forth ;
And down the eastern steeps, as now,
Gazed on the slumbering sphere below,
Till upwards in her joyous eyes
It smiled with fond and sweet surprise,
As a babe who starts from dreams of fear
May smile to find his mother near !

Nor sweeter rang of old,
To heavenly harps of gold,
Creation's morning hymn from seraph throats,
Than, now, her matin song,
The blossoming woods along,
And all the happy plains, enraptured floats ;
While wakening bird, and rill, and vernal breeze
Answer her airy notes with glad antiphonies !

For down the slanting sunlight, see !
She glides in bright ubiquity,
'Mid the flickering shine and shade,
By the beaded branches made ;
Through many a bowery woodland way,
White with odorous wreaths of may,
And rich with many a tangled twine
Of the budding honeybine—
Sweet paramour of half the grove :
Lovely, and lavish of her love !—
A glimmering Shape of golden air !
A hovering Radiance, dewy-fair !
A Presence of keen joy, felt everywhere !

O radiant Shape ! O Dream Elysian !
Fade not from my raptured vision !
Fade not till my pencil trace
The unearthly sweetness of thy face,
Thy form's unearthly grace,
 That draws yet still eludes the eye,
 As in the evening sky
The young moon, when she trembles through
 A cloud of vapoury dew,
That dims, but cannot all repress
The light of her maiden loveliness—

Even as translucent verse may fold
Its woven music round a thought of gold !

But ah ! as vain the assay
To make the dewdrop stay
Upon the rose's cheek, nor heavenward fly ;
Or fix the wavering glow
Of yonder tinted bow,
That spans the sunward cataract's wreathed spray !—
For as the woven chords
Of loud-stringed instruments and warbled words,
By music's mightful magic tost
Through rhythmic intertangement, are lost
In one subduing storm of harmony ;
Or as the prised rays
That in the iris blaze,
Commingled, lose themselves in hueless light ;
So thy fair lineaments evade the sight :
Lost in the dazzling atmosphere
That from thy presence, wheresoe'er
Thou comest, overflows,
Like splendour from a star, or fragrance from a rose !
A diviner alkahest,
That all its touches doth invest

With its own glorious attributes :
That basest things, if such there be, transmutes
 Into ethereal gold—
More precious, ay, a thousandfold,
Than that the pale adept sought, frenzy-eyed,
And finding not, an empty beggar died :
 Than that which, this fair hour,
While all creation, saving *him* alone,
 Grows affluent by thy dower,
Man digs for in his dreams with weary moan ;
And wakes to battle for ; and winning, grows
Ten times a beggar, if his heart disown
The truer, nobler wealth, thy loveliness bestows !

A balmy wind breathes low
 Out of the brightening west,
And the plumèd brackens, all a-glow,
Swale in its breathing to and fro ;
And the hawthorn blossoms are showered like
 snow
 On the green rath's mossy breast.
And wherever She cometh comes the wind,
Leaving a golden track behind,
And all around a silvery sound
Of whispering leaves and waving grasses ;

And of twinkling dewdrops tinkling,
All her airy vesture sprinkling,
On her bright way as she passes.
Soft as sunshine is the beat
Of her swift, unsandaled feet—
Soft as sunshine, or the fall
Of a jasmine leaf when all
The summer winds are whist, and noon
Lies slumbering in the lap of June ;
But the starry windflower knows
Their coming, and with rapture glows
And blushes to her crimson tips ;
And the kingcup's fervid lips
Curl to kiss them silently ;
And her meek and pensive eye
Opes the wild wood-violet,
In her covert, dewy-wet,—
Like virgin sweetness lowly born,
From a heart that wastes, love-lorn,
Breathing breath that poets love,
And maidens dream of ; and above,
Like sun-flecks fallen in the place,
The primrose lifts her angel face—
Purest, sweetest, loveliest she
Of all May's flowery progeny :

Her look an *ave*, and her breath
A *benediction*;—while, beneath
Many a lichened rock, half hid
 In fairy boscaige deep and dern
 Of the rough unfolding fern,—
Where clings the dreaming chrysalid,—
That shy sylph as moonlight pale,
The green-robed lily of the vale
Laughs through all her elfin bells;
And the golden asphodels
Toss their crested heads to greet
The Morn with welcome dewy-sweet!

And still her sweet song singeth she—
A magic song of glamourie!
 From their dreams awakening
 Birds of every hue and wing,
In bush, in brake, in greenwood tree!
 “*Tirra lirra!*” far and near
 They answer her with merry cheer;
While from the farm upon the wold,
Like a champion stout and bold,
 Winds his bugle chanticleer!
 And see! like fairy “*gondelay*”
That o’er a charmèd river holds its way,

“Withouten oare or pilot it to guide,”
From her nest among the sheaves
Of bulrush and narcissus leaves—
Golden beak and silver plume
Mirrored in the liquid gloom—
Gleams the swan in silent pride !
And hark ! within the shadowy aisles
Of the pinewood sweetly wails
The culver—but of joy, I trow,
Not sadness, she is murmuring now !—
And all strange creatures of the wood,
Wild, tame, or beautiful, or rude,
Fragrant of thyme, leap up to hear
The wondrous descant ringing clear.—
Through the budding meadowsweet
The yeanling bounds with dewy feet ;
The great-eyed kine beneath the trees
Glower, hid in bracken to the knees ;
And o’er the cowslip-tufted mead
In giddy circles wheels the steed,
With head erect and nostril wide
And streaming mane and quivering side—
Shrill as the blast of woodland horn
Neighing proud welcome to the Morn !

In her presence, see! forth flash
The dragonflies with ireful clash—
Like paladins in listed field,
With helm and hauberk, lance and shield!
And lo! like foam-beads on a stream,
Or sun-stars over sultry seas,
Around her pathway whirl and gleam
The fire-plumed ephemerides;
And see! the blazoned butterfly—
Prankt in every selcouth dye
Known in Elvan armoury—
Through the warm air winnowing,
Flutters wide on wanton wing;
And hark! with haughty minstrelsy,
Sudden booms the bearded bee
From the nodding foxglove bell,
In whose twilight-folden cell
Belated, all the balmy night
He hath slumbered in the light
Of honey-dreams—like bard of old,
In lone, enchanted bower of gold,
By viewless lips caressed, and fanned
As by the gales of Fairyland!—
Now, too, familiar signs are rife
Of reawakening human life:

“ Man to his labour goeth forth
Till eve ;” and from the teeming earth,
As from an altar, heavenward rise
The sounds of prayer and sacrifice :—
Labour, the prayer God loveth best ;
A loving heart, the offering blest
By Him most surely ! Far and near
They make low music in the ear ;
While sights of gladness to the eye
Bring tears of yearning sympathy.
Blest tears !—like desert springs, that start
Too rarely from man’s arid heart ;
But clothe with sweetness evergreen
The bosom where they once have been !

Once more from yonder bastioned wall
Shrills the heart-stirring bugle-call ;
And through the thick wood faintly come
The muffled sounds of fife and drum—
Awaking many a memory
Of “ derring-do ” by land and sea !
And far and near from thorp and hall
The white smoke rises ; and the hum
Of life grows loud in all the ways.
While overhead the chattering jays

Wheel, as the solemn church-bell rings,
And clear the village anvil sings
Its lusty song of joyous toil ;
And ruddy daughters of the soil,
Striding a-field, flout merrily
The stalworth mower jingling by
Behind his team of snorting greys,
To fetch the grass from upland lays ;
And the mill-wheel's liquid noise ;
And the shouts of truant boys
Plunging in the glassy weir ;
And the milkmaid's treble clear,
Calling " Daisy " to the pail ;
And the hollow-thumping flail
Diverberant through wood and vale,
Make the quick blood within me dance
With a pulse of the general jubilation !

From the green strath, rich and wide,
Up the white-scarred mountain-side
Slow the gathered mists are curled,
Like fantastic flags unfurled
In the pageant of a dream ;
And round the faint peaks, all a-gleam

With splendours of the breaking day,
Silently they melt away!—
And listen to the far blue sea!
How he shouts aloud for glee,
How he shakes his hoary mane—
Blue-eyed Morn is come again!
Thou but raised thy face and smiled,
Spirit beautiful and mild!
And lo! as savage creatures flee
Glance of maiden purity,
Night and sadness fled from thee!

Fled from thee!—But where art thou,
Ethereal Presence?—Even now
Earth, sea, and utmost heaven were thine,
And from thy deep and dewy eye
Drank beauty; from thy voice divine
Sweet madness—like enchanted wine!
And now thou art not!—Past away
Even as a morning dream; and lo! once more,
'tis DAY!

S T E R O P È.

CHILLY the white mist creeps,
 The dank wind sobs and weeps,
 Heavily fall the dead leaves from the tree ;
 All starless overhead
 The murky heavens are spread,
 The muffled moon looms o'er the weary sea ;
 While by the midnight shore
 I listen to the roar
 Of ebbing waves, and sadly muse on Thee.

On thee, and that far time
 When, like a silvery chime
 Of wedded bells, faint-heard through summer air—
 Or Heaven-inspired words
 Blent with majestic chords
 Of music, where a people bow in prayer,
 Our hearts in unison—
 Diverse, though still as one !—
 Wove golden concords round us everywhere.

Till God's fair universe—
 As though the primal curse
 For us had ceased—appeared a glorious fane,
 Where, rapt in ecstasy
 Of worship, thou and I
 Knelt, all enfranchised from the touch of pain ;
 While softly from above
 Stooped the white angel Love,
 To link our lives in one with flowery chain.

The wondrous pageantry
 Of air and earth and sea :
 Shadows of lovelier—of diviner things !
 The starry hopes that guide
 Man's spirit through the wide
 And perilous wastes of life, to truth's pure springs :
 Echoes that downward float
 From the high heaven of thought
 Where soar the kings of song on sunlit wings.

These still did minister
 To holy joy, and stir
 All noblest passions :—even corporeal sense
 Subliming in the flame
 Of love, till it became

The spotless handmaid of fair Innocence ;
 Whose calm and candid eyes
 Filled all our paradise
With their own splendour—stainless and intense.

 But in the blessed hour
 When least I feared his power
The snake slid in, and at thy slumbering ear
 Hissed his sleek blasphemies,
 Glozed in such honied lies
As cozened even *thy* soul, serene and clear.
 And now—I walk apart
 With solitary heart
Mourning my Eden lost, with many an unshed tear.

 Yet not for self alone
 I mourn the glory gone :
Life, though obscured, is still for me divine :
 My spirit keeps its faith,
 And shall unto the death !
But what, frail heart, can ere restore to thine
 Its birthright lost ?—its high
 Communion with the sky ?—
Its priceless pearls downcast under the feet of
 swine ?

Hark ! from the hollow north
A wind comes trampling forth ;
The cloudy cope is rent, and far above
Tempest and rack, the pole
Shines steadfast. O, my soul,
Accept the presage ! The Eternal Love
Who formed, will still sustain :
Will to the fold again
Lead back his blood-washed lamb, though wide and
far she rove !

ULYSSES IN OGYGIA.

Was it in very deed, or but in dream,
I, King Odysseus, girt with brazen spears,
Princes, and long-haired warriors of the Isles,
Sailed with the dawn from weeping Ithaca,
To battle round the god-built walls of Troy
For that fair, faithless Pest—so long ago?
So long ago! It seems as many lives
Had waxed and waned, since, bending to our oars,
And singing to our singing sails, we swept
From high Aëtos, down the echoing gulf
Towards the sunrise; while from many a fane
Rose the white smoke of sacrificial fires,
And the wild wail of women:—for they knew
We should return no more. Long years have past:
Long, weary years;—yet still, when daylight fades,
And Hesper from the purple heaven looks down,

And the dim wave moans on the shadowy shore,—
From out the awful darkness of the woods,
From out the silence of the twilight air,
In unforgotten accents fond and low,
The voices of the dead seem calling me ;
And through the mist of slowly gathering tears
The faces of the loved revisit me :
Thine, my Penelope, and his, our child,
Our fair Telemachus—wearing the dear home-smiles
They wore of old, ere yet the Atridæ came,
Breathing of Eris, to our peaceful shores,
And our bold hearts blazed up in quenchless fire
And irrepressible lust of glorious war.
Ai me ! what recked we then the streaming tears
Of wife or virgin, and their clinging hands !
Exulting in our strength we scorned the lures
Of Aphroditè—scorned the ignoble ease
Of grey ancestral honours. Deathless names
We, too, the sons of Heroes, should achieve
Among the brass-mailed Greeks ! A thousand deaths
Too slight a price for immortality !

O golden dreams ! O god-like rage of youth !
Quenched in black blood, or the remorseless brine,
Alas, so soon. Yet ere They sorrowing went,

All-beauteous, to the shadowy realms of Death
And unsubstantial Hades, their young souls,
Amid the clang of shields and rush of spears,
Beneath the deep eyes of the watchful Gods,
Drank the delirious wine of Victory !
Thrice happy they, by whom the agony
Of withered hopes, of wasted life, of long
And vain endeavour after noble ends,
Was all unproved. What different doom is mine !
On barren seas a wanderer, growing old,
And full of bitter knowledge, best unknown.
Ah, comrades, would that in the exultant hour
Of triumph, when, our mighty travail o'er,
The towers of Ilion sank in roaring flame,
I, too, had perished ;—or in that wild flash
Of vengeance for the herds of Phoibos slain,
When the black ship went down, and I alone
Of all was left. But the high Gods are just,
The Fates inscrutable ; and I will bear
My portion unsubdued until the end.
Greatly to do is great, but greater still
Greatly to suffer. So with steadfast mind
I wait the issues. But the doom is hard :
Far from the councils of illustrious men,
Far from my sea-girt realm, and god-like toils

Of governance,—from noble uses far,
 And wife, and child, and honourable rest,
 To waste inglorious all these golden years ;
 Nursing one sickly hope—more like despair—
 That the blest Gods will hear me, and restore
 My life, thus dead to duty.—As he told,
 The eyeless phantom, on that night of fear
 In Orcus, when around the bloody trench,
 From out the Stygian gloom, with shriek and groan,
 Crowded the dim idolons of the dead,
 And with my naked sword I held them back,
 Till each pale mouth, drinking the reeking gore,
 Answered my quest, and vanished.

Shall it be ?—

Or now, while yet my arm is strong to wield
 The kingly sceptre and avenge its wrongs ?
 Or when, bowed down with years and many woes,
 My deeds forgotten and my dear ones dead,
 The children of my slaves shall jeer at me,
 Mocking my powerless limbs, and strangers ask,
 Is *this* the Great Odysseus ?—But I wait.

Man is the puppet of the Gods : they mould
 His destiny, and mete him good or ill—
 Lords of his fate, from whom, alas, in vain

He seeks escape. But he to whom nor good
Brings insolence, nor ill abasement, stands
Whole in himself—lord of his own firm heart.
The sword may drink his blood ; the irascible sea
May overwhelm him ; life bitterer than many deaths
May lead his steps to Hades ; still his soul
Unconquered stands ; and even among the Shades
Shall win the reverence haply here denied.

Hark ! from the myrtle thickets on the height
Divine Calypso calls me ; to her lute
Singing the low, sweet song I made for her—
A low, sweet song of passionate content—
When weary from the inexorable deep,
Weary and lone, I touched this woody isle,
And found a haven in her circling arms,
And all Elysium on her bounteous breast.
Cease, cease, Divine One ! in my yearning ear
Another song is echoing : one more meet
For me to hearken. Out beneath the stars—
The old companions of my wanderings—
Far out at sea, amid the deepening dark
The winds are shouting, as a gathering host
Shouts on the eve of battle ; and the gulls—
Lovers of tempest and my mates of old !

Flit, dive, and, screaming, summon me once more
To plough the unfruitful wastes of weltering brine—
The mid-sea's moaning solitudes,—to where,
Somewhere beyond the trackless waters, lie
The bights and bluffs and blue peaks of my home.—
For my heart tells me that the hour draws near !

ANNIE'S GRAVE.

THE mournful billows burst along the solitary shore,
The night-wind answers fitfully their sad and ceaseless
 roar ;
But quietly the moonbeams creep, and softly, softly
 sighs
The night-wind round the lonely mound where in her
 youth she lies.

No vulgar marble marks the spot of her unnoted rest,
But the wild rose blossoms at her head, the violet on
 her breast,
And soft green moss haps tenderly her cold and stirless
 feet ;
Ah ! fitting such a grave, for one so young, so pure,
 so sweet !

Since Annie died long years have past of mingled joy
and pain,
But one so fair I have not found, nor shall I find
again,
Till, by the Crystal Sea, once more I clasp her gentle
hand ;—
O, I shall know thy face, Annie, 'mong all the shining
band !

For, as the morning fills with light a sphere of lily-dew,
That pale, pellucid face of thine the soul shone ever
through :—
A soul as free from worldly guile, as pure from earthly
stain,
As ever pined for mortal love—and pined, alas ! in
vain.

But, Annie, we were both so young in that sweet time
of sighs !
And though by fits I caught the deep, sad meaning of
thine eyes,
A spell was on my heart and brain—a spell I could
not break,
Until I read the wild *Too Late* on thy cold, uncon-
scious cheek.

Yet, if the heart-corroding rain of penitential tears,
The sorrow and the sacrifice, of long and lonely years,
Can expiate the unconscious wrong I did thy virgin
love—

Thou wilt not turn away, Annie, when I meet thee
there above ! . . .

One rosebud from thy grave, Annie,—as though with
tears, 'tis wet !—

One tiny tuft of velvet moss, one sweet-souled violet,
One sigh for “auld lang syne,” Annie,—for youth,
and love, and thee ;

And I must leave thee evermore to thy rest beside
the sea.

U N A ' S B R I D A L .

I.

MAID UNA was the sweetest flower
That ever pined in loveless bower ;
And when the moon was in the wane,
Singing sate she, bird alane—

 O the fair lily !

Alfar-sweet she sings, I trow,
To her cithern soft and low ;
But what she singeth none may know.

 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

II.

This night the elves o'er all the land
Weave their weird circlets, hand in hand ;
And o'er men's fate—as sagas say—
Dominion hold till break of day ;

 (O the fair lily !)

And to-morrow with the light
Comes Jarl Mord the grisly knight,
To bear away that bird so bright ;
 For the white lily is fairest of flowers !

III.

Even now, beneath the lapsing moon,
His long-haired billmen's rowing tune
Rolls in towards the slumbering shore,
To the slow cadence of the oar.

(O the fair lily !)

Rich gifts the haughty bridegroom brings—
Scarlets and furs, and torques and rings :
The spoils of war, the gift of kings ;
 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

IV.

But two more welcome gifts, I wot,
The grimly Jarl hath all forgot :
Nor gentle heart, nor courtesy
Brings he with him o'er the sea,
 For the fair lily !
So in the ghostly midnight air,
With loosened locks and swan-breast bare,

Sings she in her soul's despair ;—
 O the white lily is fairest of flowers !

v.

A wild, sweet song of magic power :
 A wierd Troll-rune, until this hour
 Sung by none of mortal breath ;
 Nor kenneth she the words she saith—
 O the fair lily !
 In a sweven they were taught her,
 By a Neck in Torfa-water,
 For his love who vainly sought her ;
 For the white lily is fairest of flowers !

vi.

But to-night, she kenneth well,
 Is a moment when their spell
 Deftly woven, to her breast
 Will bring whate'er she loveth best ;
 (O the fair lily !)
 And so she weaves the live-night-long
 The mystic meshes of her song,
 To guard her virgin troth from wrong ;
 For the white lily is fairest of flowers !

VII.

It is near the dawn of day :
All the east grows silvery-grey ;
And westward o'er the moorlands brown,
In golden haze the moon goes down ;
 (O the fair lily !)
On the meer its wan light sleeps—
O'er the willowy marish creeps—
O'er the tears Maid Una weeps ;
 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

VIII.

It dips—is gone !—and through the room
Pass a whisper and a gloom ;
But with great eyes gleaming wide
On the dark on either side,
 O the fair lily !
Stints she not her rune forlorn—
Till, hark ! the echoes of a horn
Up the valley faintly borne !
 O the white lily is fairest of flowers !

IX.

Weird murmurs on the night-wind came—
And one low whisper breathed her name !

She ceased, and over cheek and brow
Airs as from Asgard seemed to blow,

O the fair lily !

And through the glimmering window-space,
The morning star shone on her face,
And flusht it with unearthly grace.

O the white lily is fairest of flowers !

x.

From her siege upriseth she,
In her maiden majesty ;
Whispering, " Right the runes have sped :
At dawn the Jarl will find me dead !"

(O the fair lily !)

Then once again, and nearer borne,
A wild mot of the woodland horn
Rung echoing through the darksome morn—

And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

xI.

And, as in answer, from the shore
The salt wind came with gathering blore ;
And on its blast, abrupt and strong,
She heard the Viking's galley-song—

O the fair lily !

Then, shuddering as with mortal dread,
She flitted to her silken bed,
And on the pillow laid her head ;
 O the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XII.

On either side with dainty care
She spread her veil of amber hair.
She clasped her hands upon her breast,
And crossed her maiden limbs to rest—
 O the fair lily !
Murmuring in the dim star-shine,
With a waning voice divine,
“ Love of my dreams, I shall soon be thine ! ”
 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XIII.

As the soft warm summer moon
Steals upon the dark of June,
Through the chamber husht and holy,
Stole a splendour, softly, slowly ;
 (O the fair lily !)
And in its midst beside her stood,
A belted ranger of the wood—
No huntsman he of mortal brood !
 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XIV.

A radiant form, a shape of light,
 Such as on weird midsummer-night
 From wandering meteors have their birth,
 Between the trancèd heaven and earth—
 (O the fair lily !)
 Or 'mid those magic isles that lie
 In purple depths of western sky,
 When throbs the gloaming-star on high ;
 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XV.

Round her streamed the splendours golden—
 Still she lay in trance upfolden ;
 While he knelt and o'er her smiled,
 As one may o'er a sleeping child,
 (O the pale lily !)
 Then, shedding from her forehead fair
 The rippling glory of her hair,
 A long, fond kiss imprinted there ;
 For the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XVI.

Faint as the first warm tinge that tells
 Of dawn along the winter Fells,

O'er all her death-white visage came
A tremulous flush of rosy flame ;
 O the fair lily !
His hand upon her heart he laid,
And " Wake, my love, my bride ! " he said—
" Awake and come—the wad is paid ! "
 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XVII.

Slowly her languid lids she raised,
And upwards in his deep eyes gazed,
With that long, passionate look—above
All words !—that says, " I trust—and love ! "—
 O the fair lily !
Then with a stifled cry of fear
She started—for distinct and clear
Was heard the clang of chanticleer !
 O the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XVIII.

She started—rose ; as o'er the sea
The young moon riseth quietly,
And on her moveless image there
Looks sweetly down—so sad, so fair
 (O the pale lily !)

She seemed, as with reverted head
 She hung above the silent bed,
 Where lay her earthly shadow—dead.

And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XIX.

“ Spirit to spirit—clay to clay !”
 He whispered. “ Come, O come away,
 While yet the Alfar hold their power—
 It passes with the dawning hour !”

(O the fair lily !)

Then, as twin stars at morning fade,
 Fairy knight and phantom maid
 Vanished in the ebbing shade.

And the white lily is fairest of flowers ! . . .

XX.

Up the breezy welkin, hark !
 Sweetly shrills the joyous lark ;
 The wood-dove at her window-pane
 Taps and coos, and taps again ;

O the fair lily !

Her white fawn waits her in the brake ;
 Her swans beside the sedgy lake ;
 Her hooded falcon calls “ awake !”

For the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XXI.

Round her chamber-door the gleemen
Singing throng with all her women ;
And in courtyard, by his steed
Stands her sire in festal weed ;
 O the fair lily !
For in the sun, betwixt the jags
Of the outmost skerry-crags,
Flap the bridegroom's galley-flags ;
 And the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XXII.

And now he comes, with clang of horsemen,
And the tramp of mailèd oarsmen,
Bearing on their shoulders broad
Many a blood-won buckler-load,
 For the fair lily !
And loudly as he leaps from sell,
Swears the Jarl, " By heaven and hell,
My bonny bride loves her pillow well !"
 But the white lily is fairest of flowers ! . . .

XXIII.

And they found her lying dead,
On her white, unruffled bed—

Lying still, and pale, and cold,
 In her bride-gear stiff with gold ;
 O the fair lily !
 Folded limb and claspèd palm—
 Wan lip smiling icy-calm—
 Bright locks breathing airs of balm !
 For the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XXIV.

Wept that stern, red-handed Jarl—
 Wept each bearded kemp and karl—
 Wept her bower-maidens all,
 As they wrapt in funeral pall
 The fair, pale lily !
 And at sundown laid her weeping—
 Gold and amber round her heaping—
 Where her warrior sires were sleeping :
 (For the white lily is fairest of flowers !)

XXV.

Long-locked Vikings, Baresarks grim,
 Stark of shoulder, huge of limb—
 Sleeping as in stricken field,
 With brand and byrnie, helm and shield,
 To guard the fair lily !

With harnessed horse and guardant hound,
Each beneath his grassy mound,
Till Heimdall's doomful trumpet sound ;
 But the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XXVI.

And there all night till break of morn
Wound echoes of a woodland horn,
With carols such as minstrels sing,
To grace the bridal of a king ;
 (O the fair lily !)
Sweet-warbled in a selcouth tongue,
To unseen harps that wildly rung ;
And over all a glory hung ;
 For the white lily is fairest of flowers !

XXVII.

And still on summer nights, they say,
Folks that to Althing ride that way
Draw rein, and hold their breath to hear
The unearthly music floating clear.
 (O the fair lily !)
And whisper when the wondrous light
Beholding, " 'Tis the blessèd spright
Of Unna and her fairy knight !"
 And the white lily shall be my flower !

UNDER THE SHADOW.

MUTTERS and moans the pine wood as in pain ;
 Heavily falls the rain ;
From out the hoary mist the breakers hoar
 Rush in upon the shore ;
Down from the drift of vapoury gloom that hides
 The white-scarred mountain-sides,
Abrupt and fierce the foam-white cataract falls
 Betwixt its jagged walls ;
And past my feet, a river broad and brown
 Sweeps to the ocean down.

No ray of light, no gleam of Summer's blue
 The day-dark brightens through ;
Nor comes one air of her ambrosial breath
 O'er the dim wastes of heath.
And yet I know, could I but pierce the cloud
 That folds me like a shroud,
I should behold her beauty, as she smiles
 O'er sea and sea-girt isles ;

Should hear, about the blooms, her blissful voice,
And in her joy rejoice.

Fond dream !—The shadows that to-day obscure
Earth's brightness, must endure
While the dim elements that form this sphere
Of sense—this I—cohere ;
Part of myself, they may not be “ put by ”
At smiling of the sky :
But, as night's ghostly presence since the birth
Of time has clung to earth,
Must they through storm and sunshine cling to me,
Till time hath ceased to be.

Then, haply, by the Eternal Love up-drawn
Through ever-brightening dawn,
Towards the Fountain of Primeval Light,
Where never comes the night,—
My soul, released from its polluted tomb
Of flesh, beyond the gloom
Of earthly life may rise ; and, purified
From earthly stains, abide
For ever in the presence of the Lord—
Doing His Holy Word.

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

(A CONCEIT.)

SWEET ! in the flowery garland of our love,
Where fancy, folly, frenzy interwove,
Our diverse destinies, not all unkind,
A secret strand of purest gold entwined.

While bloomed the magic flowers we scarcely knew,
The gold was there. But now their petals strew
Life's pathway; and instead, with scarce a sigh,
We see the cold but fadeless circlet lie.

With scarce a sigh !—and yet the flowers were fair,
Fed by youth's dew and love's enchanted air :
Ay, fair as youth and love ; but doomed, alas !
Like these and all things beautiful, to pass.

But this bright thread of unadulterate ore—
Friendship—will last though Love exist no more ;
And though it lack the fragrance of the wreath,—
Unlike the flowers, it hides no thorn beneath.

THE COUSINS.

“ Rota in medio rotæ.”

HE is coming ! he is coming ! but I must not seem
to know,
Though my voice is all a-tremble, and my cheeks are
all a-glow,
And my heart beats faint with sweetness as I bend
above my book ;
While *she* sits in the window,—and I dare not, dare
not look.

He is coming ! he is coming ! and *her* breath grows
fast and thick ;
And I hear the creak of tackle, for a maiden's ears
are quick !
And that—it was the anchor ! But I pore upon my
book,
And con the dim page as I may,—but dare not, dare
not look.

He is coming ! he is coming ! his foot is on the stair,
He stands within the chamber, as with grand and
gracious air

She rises to salute him ; and *I* bend above my book,
Though I know his eye hath found me,—but I dare
not, dare not look.

But when the balmy midnight hath wrapt the world
in sleep,
And *she* lies proudly dreaming, to my window he will
creep,
Through the shadowy jasmine curtains, and then I'll
close my book,
And clasp him—him ! my own ! my own !—nor fear,
at last, to look.

PROSCRIBED : 1690.

I.

LONG are the clouds this night above us, dear :
 Long are the clouds !
 Few now on earth the hearts that love us, dear ;
 Foemen in crowds !
 But while thy loving heart,
 Weak maiden as thou art,
 Beats warm and true,
 Friendship may pass me by,
 Life bring but infamy—
 Nothing I rue !

II.

Cold is the wind this night around us, dear ;
 Cold is the wind !
 Colder the words of hate that wound us, dear—
 False as unkind.

But while those gentle eyes,
Scorning the world's loud lies,
 Look in my face
Faith-full, as now they look,
Lightly my pride may brook
 Any disgrace.

III.

Dark is the way this night before us, dear :
 Dark is the way !
No kindly star in the black heaven o'er us, dear,
 To lend its ray.
But thou art by my side :
Thy love my trusty guide :
 Thou my life's star,
Lighting my woe-worn soul
On to death's quiet goal—
 Still—ah ! so far !

ACTÆON IN HADES.

HEAR me, thou mournful River of the Dead,
Dark-flowing Acheron ; for thou, like me,
Hast known the sweetness of the upper air,
The joy and glory of the light. O hear !
For I am desolate and all alone,
Like thee ;—a Shadow in a shadowy world,
Whom no blest dues of sepulture, no prayer
Of pious lips, no touch of kindred hands—
Nor oil, nor wine, nor purifying fire—
White robe, nor wreath, nor sprinkled earth have sped
Down the irremeable way, to the fair fields
And blissful fountains of oblivion,
Where dwell in peace eterne the happier dead,
Beyond thy darksome bourne. But here, transformed
To likeness of a brute, eternally
I bear unbearable anguish ; by a troop
Of spectral hounds pursued, with vengeful yell
And fangs inexorable, through these blind wastes

And thick-breathed solitudes of awful night.
No hope—no rest—save when, a space, as now,
Worn out with toil and drunk with blood, they couch
Around, unseen but heard, in hideous sleep.

Hearken, thou joyless River of the Dead !
I was a prince of Thessaly—the child
Of heaven-sprung Aristæus and the fair
Autonoè. Nor shone the all-seeing sun
On fairer form, or goodlier strength than mine,
When, with my tough spear o'er the windy cliffs
Of broad-backed Pelion, right into the sea
I hurled the shrieking boar, and all the woods
Loud-echoing shrieked. Nor saw the watchful moon
A warier hunter, when, at dead of night,
I watched and slew the lion at the springs
Watching the antelopes, and bore his spoils
To Chiron, where, before his seaward cave,
Under the white gleam of the morning star,
The blameless Centaur to Actæan Zeus
Poured out libations. Not unknown my crest
Among the heroes, where, by land or wave,
Rang the fierce music of the fight, and spears
Grew red with slaughter. And, O sea ! O sky !
O sun ! and thou, sacred all-bearing earth

That I shall see no more ! what am I now ?
Monstrous, deform ; from haunts of living men—
Even from the peaceful mansions of the dead
An outcast ! . . . Yet I curse her not ; nor curse
The doomful hour when, as a levin-bolt
Smites death through all the green boughs of an oak,
Her beauty smote and blasted me. For still—
Hearken, thou voiceless River !—even here,
In darkness, and in terror, and in woe—
As I have seen the warm full-orbèd moon
Burn through the triple night of ancient pines,
Till silvan creatures woke as if 'twere day—
The glory of that vision floods my soul
With light ineffable ; and through my veins,
Chill with the breath of Hades, throbs and burns
Its unforgotten sweetness.—Hush ! they stir,
The hell-dogs—hunting me even in their dreams !

O hear, dim River, for the time is brief !—
'Twas noon on high Cithæron. Over all
His flowery dells and pine-dark slopes, the breeze,
Heavy with odour, swooned to murmurous rest.
Above, the golden lizard basked ; below,
Whirred the dry tettix in the thymy grass ;
About the pendent flower-tufts of the lime

Hummed the innumerable bees ; and far away,
Dim seen through sultry haze, betwixt the crags
And woody spurs to the west, without a breath
The deep Euripus gleamed like molten brass ;
And, bright as flame on flame, against the sky
Eubœa lay athirst ; and overhead
The immeasurable depths of summer heaven
Quivered with heat. Within the grateful gloom
Of a steep rock—crested and over-trailed
With greenest ivy, with fantastic growth
Of many-tinted moss and lichenous crust
Damasked, and flecked with tremulous light and
shade—

Panting amidst my panting dogs I lay,
Hot from the chase. And, lying there, I heard,
In the deep noontide hush of earth and sky,
My loud heart beating ; and, from scalp to heel,
Felt the blood pause and tingle, with a sweet
Mysterious languor—a divine unrest—
A supreme yearning, till that hour unknown.
While from the slumbrous whispering of the woods
That ridge o'er ridge up the aërial steeps,
Clomb vast and verdurous—from the honey-breath
Of the crushed wild-flowers where I lay—from hum
And whir of insects—from the silent gulfs

Of inaccessible ether—from the far
And many-peopled cities—from the sense
Of my own being, and my loneliness,
Ungrew within my soul, divine and strange—
Like echoes of some half-forgotten song
Heard in old summers, and in dream recalled—
Dim dreams of unimagined bliss to be :
Of love ; and how in other years the gods—
For had not I within my mortal veins
The Olympian ichor !—from their sacred seats
Descended, and, 'mid earthly groves, by stream,
Mountain, and ocean marge, in equal bliss
Mingled with mortals. As I mused, a breeze
Passed sighing like a spirit through the boughs ;
And with it came, blent with the muffled flow
Of streams in hollow rocks, the silvery tones
Of virgin laughter. Starting from my trance,
I held my breath to listen. Once more it came !
Sweeter than sweetest flute, or liquid thrill
Of harp-strings heard at evening from the white,
Far-glimmering temples of the gods, and wild
As Dithyrambic bells, when, by the moon,
Mœnad and Panisk, Faun and Bassarid,
Through the dim valley reel at vintage time
With torch and timbrel, round the panther-car.

Hear me, lone River of the Dead ; O hear
And pity ! from the flowery verge of life,
Love-blighted, like a leaf with honeydew—
While yet my lips, wet with youth's oinomei,
But touched the grape of promise—hurried down
To ever-during darkness, and the paths
Of loveless death ! . . .

I listened, hunter-wise,
Against the wind ; and softly to my feet
Uprising, drew the pleached boughs aside,
Forth peering, and with javelin in hand
Descended,—by the enchanted echoes led,
My stanch hounds following,—round me as I trod
Showering the wild-rose petals and rathe blooms
Of honey-bine, through bedded hyacinths
Knee-deep, and root-entangled undergrowth,
To where a laurel thicket overlooks
The lone Gargaphian fountain, deep embowered
Within the silence of the woods. And there,
O hearken, awful River of the Dead !
Disrobed, unbuskined—quiver and bow thrown by,
Under the emerald shade of vaulted boughs
And pensile trail of cistus and wild vine—
Breast-deep in the green wave ; or stretched at rest,
Half hid in asphodels and melilote,

Beside their gleaming garments and their hounds,
I saw the nymphs of Artemis !—lithe-limbed,
Small-bosomed, rosy-brown with sylvan toil.
And, taller by the shoulders, in their midst,
White, slender, luminous as the crescent moon,
Seen in the purple depths of twilight air—
Lo ! the incarnate Splendour, the divine,
Unsullied Presence of the Huntress Queen !
Upon the fountain-marge, straight as a spear,
She stood in lustrous shadow ; but the light,—
Shot upwards from the water,—o'er her limbs,
O'er her ambrosial bosom, and o'er her hair,
That brightly veiled her, as a golden mist
Veils but not hides a star—rippled and played
In glimmering disks and wavering rings of gold.

Hearken, thou dolorous River of the Dead !
I gazed one moment, all my heart sent forth
In one low moan of passion : soul and sense
At stretch to grasp the visioned loveliness,
And so be blest for ever. But, the next,
A hound impatient from my nerveless grip
Sprang to the stream a-thirst. . . . One quick, shrill
cry
Of many voices ; one wild, fiery flash

Of wrathful eyes ; pale faces turned in fear ;
Commotion, as of browsing fawns that flee
When the keen hounds break cover ; a swift rush
Of virginal fair limbs and sinuous forms
To veil with wreathèd arms and floating hair
The Inviolatè Sweetness ! *She* nor blushed nor stirred ;
But drawn to all her godlike height, her eyes,
Intolerable, inevitable, fierce
As hate, and beautiful as heaven ! she bent
Full upon mine. Blind frenzy stung my brain :
Swift agony, as of a thousand shafts
Of arrowy fire, maddened my hurrying blood.
I turned and fled ; and as I fled my shape
Changed like a monstrous dream : my forehead felt
The antler's weight : each human lineament
Roughened into the brute : and the strong heart,
To which the name of fear had been unknown,
Melted within me, as upon my track,
Loud-throated, fell, they came ; through foam-white
 jaws
Yelling implacable rage : the generous hounds
That I had reared, and with no loveless hands
Cherished and fed !—as now, as now, once more
The phantom hell-dogs, famished from their sleep,
Surround, pursue me ! . . . O eternal Night,

Mother of Shadows, shield me !—Hide me, hide,
O sacred Darkness !—Woe, woe, woe is me !
Nor Night nor Darkness from those fiery fangs
Can shelter ; nor from those unpitying eyes
Divine, that wheresoe'er I turn still dart
Their vengeful lightnings through me !—Woe, ah, woe !
No rest—no hope for ever ! woe, ah, woe !

R E Q U I E M.

WITHERED pansies faint and sweet,
O'er his breast in silence shed,
Faded lilies o'er his feet,
Waning roses round his head,
Where in dreamless sleep he lies—
Folded palms and sealèd eyes,—
Young Love, within my bosom—dead.

Young Love that was so fond, so fair,
With his mouth of rosy red,
Argent wing and golden hair,
And those blue eyes, glory-fed
From some fount of splendour, far
Beyond or moon, or sun, or star—
And can it be that he is dead?

Ay ! his breast is cold as snow :
Pulse and breath for ever fled ;—
If I kist him ever so,
To my kiss he were as lead ;
If I clipt him as of yore
He would answer me no more
With lip or hand—for he is dead.

But breathe no futile sigh ; no tear
Smirch his pure and lonely bed.
Let no foolish cippus rear
Its weight above him. Only spread
Rose, lily, pale forget-me-not,
And pansies round the silent spot
Where in his youth he lieth—dead.

“ THE FLOWER.”

Inscribed, with every sentiment of reverence and affection, to
A GREAT POET.

FROM the forest old,
From the haunted mere,
From the silent wold,
From the river clear,

From far purple hills,
From billowy fields of wheat,
From a thousand rills
Came a whisper sweet :

Whisper of a breeze
On its wings that bore
Golden memories
Of the bards of yore :

"The Flower."

"Seeds" that, scattered wide,
Struck root on every hand ;
Grew and multiplied
Over all the land ;

Under shine and shower
Blossomed all abroad—
Call them "weed" or "flower,"
Both are dear to God !

On the rough highway
Some frail rootage found,
Some in dullest clay,
Some in outworn ground ;

One, more blest, was borne
To a "garden-bower"
Where in life's fresh morn
Dwelt a Seer of power :

Gentle, wise, and strong ;
Nor loveless—though apart,—
Weaving magic song
To chain the human heart.

In that hour of gold
 He caught with reverent care,
And in virgin mould
 "Cast" it fondly there.

Fell a quickening dew
 From the stars above,
With influence sweet and new
 Of the Eternal Love!

Shot a tender glow
 From the heart of earth,
Where with many a throe
 She gave a New Age birth!

While from founts of Thought
 Primeval—kenned by few!
Sacred lymph he brought
 To feed it; till it grew

A stately flower and tall,
 With glorious beauty crowned:
The joy—the pride of all
 The wondering valleys round!—

"The Flower."

Yes, "splendid *is* the flower,"
Dear Poet whom we prize,
That from thy garden bower
Breathes airs of Paradise.—

Yet say not all are "Thieves"
To whom the winds have blown
The magic seed, whose leaves
Claim kindred with thine own.

Their blooms are "poor indeed,"
Perhaps, when matched with thine ;
But all are of one seed—
A seed that is divine.

Nor need'st Thou grudge how wide
Soe'er such germs may fall :—
Heaven's light is not less bright
Because 'tis shared by all.

SONG.

THERE is a wail in the wind to-night,
A dirge in the plashing rain,
That brings old yearnings round my heart,
Old dreams into my brain,
As I gaze into the wintry dark
Through the blurred and blackened pane :
Far memories of golden hours
That will not come again,—
Alas !
That never will come again.

Wild woodland odours wander by—
Warm breath of new-mown hay—
I hear the broad, brown river's flow
Half-hid in bowering may ;

While eyes of love look through my soul,
As on that last sweet day ;
But a chilly Shadow floats between
That will not pass away—
Ah, no !
That never will pass away.

LIGHT AND SHADOW.

LIFE, thou wert once so sweet, so bright,
I grudged each hour that slumber stole
From happy Day—though happy Night
Brought ever dreams of new delight
To haunt the chambers of my soul.

Now thou art all so dark, so drear,
I pray for sleep to drown the pain,
Though in his grisly train appear
A thousand phantom-shapes of fear
To wring the heart and sere the brain.

MIDNIGHT.

“—To be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain.”

I.

DEEP and low in the forest sear
By weary fits the wind is sighing.
Hush! 'tis the voice of the widowed Year
Mourning above her children's bier:
“My life is lonely, the world is drear—
Linger a while, my children dear,
I, too, am dying;
Let us together hand in hand
Journey down to the shadow-land.”—
The dry leaves rustled to my tread,
And earthward low I bowed my head,
As I thought of life so soon grown old,
Of friendship changed and love a-cold,

Of faith beneath the churchyard mould,
And hope on her deathbed lying.

II.

But, clear and high, in the cloudless sky
I saw the great stars gleam and quiver —
I dashed the tear-mist from my eye
And checked the weak, desponding sigh,
As I thought of the love that cannot die,
Of the faith that blooms eternally,
Where—safe for ever
From earthly change—they lie at rest,
Pillowed upon the Saviour's breast—
The Dear Ones of my youth, who died
Ere human folly, sin, or pride,
The white-flower of their love could stain—
Flower that once blighted ne'er again
May bloom! Ah, in this hour of pain,
When faith I leant on with a trust
Supreme has crumbled into dust—
When eyes so loving-kind of yore
Gleam through the dark all blank and frore,
And life's best life seems dead—be near,
Ye blessed ghosts, my soul to cheer

With gentle memories of youth,
And youth's sweet dream of trust and truth.
Nor let my heart, thus mocked, grow dry
With that worst infidelity
That doubts all human faith, and holds all love a lie.

A M A T H E A.

(FROM AN EPIGRAM OF THEON OF SAMOS.)

I GAZED into her deep, dark eyes :
Gazed down, I thought, into her soul :
And my heart leapt with glad surprise
As through their limpid darkness stole

A starry radiance—like the gleam
Of Hesper, when at blush of even
Fond Psyche first in raptured dream
Clasped her young Eros fresh from heaven.

I took the glowing hand that played
In dusky tangles of her hair ;
I drew her closer—half afraid
Her form would melt in rosy air.

You love me, O my queen!—I cried.
She stared with wide eyes, cold and dead;
Then with a low, soft laugh of pride,
Turned from me.—I arose and fled,

In wrath and shame.—The dawning light
Of love that in those dark eyes shone,
With such sweet presage of delight—
Was but the reflex of my own!

Yet still their baleful splendour burns
To lure me, moth-like, as of yore:
I hate,—and love, alas! by turns;
But they shall fool me never more!

F R A G M E N T.

EVEN as a strain of glorious music swoons
 From rapture into rapture, till it dies
 Of its own ecstasy, and, dying, leaves
 The husht air all a-tremble with delight,
 And faint with yearning ;—so the glorious Day—
 The long midsummer Day—had sunk to rest,
 Through labyrinthine splendours manifold ;
 Leaving o'er heaven and earth the breathless hush—
 Half joy, half sadness : glory writ on gloom—
 That holds the nations when a Hero dies
 For freedom on some nobly stricken field.
 And the midsummer Night, like a proud queen,
 Flusht, breast and brow, with passionate tenderness,—
 Throned on the solemn purple of the hills,
 In roseate darkness robed, and crowned with stars,—
 Bent o'er his bier with fathomless eyes of love—

Dim with unwhispered memories of the Past :
Fond memories of the irrevocable Past !
While earth and sky and ocean held their breath
In reverence. Only by fits the sea,
As though impatient of the enchanted calm,
Like a chained monster in reluctant rest,
Gave out a weary moan.

How still it was !—

The prisoned night-moth in the blazoned pane
Had ceased to fret. And where the moonlight barred
The floor with gules and azure—for the moon,
Like a sweet thought within the brain, had bloomed
Upon the midnight—frisked the pattering mouse ;
And in the belfroy overhead the click
Of the great clock meted with muffled throb
The pulse of silence.

TO ÆGERIA.

THOUGH no "great Poem" o'er Ægeria's name
Shed the cold lustre that the world calls Fame,
Her Life, if so she will, itself may be
A Poem that shall last eternally.

So let her—gathering close from vulgar stain
Her maiden robe—the Bard's high port maintain ;
And strong in truth, love, virtue's gentle might,
Live the grand Epic that she will not write.

RIME OF THE GOLDEN HOUR.

FROM flowery bed
I raised my head
As the grey cock faintly crew,
And shook from my hair
Through the breezy air
A shower of odorous dew.
In the welkin aboon
The waning moon
Yet hung with a star or two ;
But the star-gleams failed
And the pale moon paled
When my locks shone brightening
through
The vapoury bar
That, eastward far,
Girdled the liquid blue.

But, from slumber beguiled,
The green earth smiled
Old welcome—ever new !

Line after line
Of the red sunshine
From the marge came gushing o'er ;
Like wine brimming up
In a golden cup,
Or waves on a golden shore.
No time had I
My zone to tie,
But, bounding forth in glee,
With bosom bare
And streaming hair
And footsteps swift and free,
With wings outspread
And arms o'erhead
I lit on the sleeping sea ;
While ever behind
Came the wanton Wind
Chasing me merrily !

Through my locks of fire,
As through a lyre,

He played wild reveillé ;
And aloud I sang,
Till the dim cope rang
And the waves in Titan-play
With joyous sound
From their caves profound
Leapt to my roundelay.
And the nymphs of the deep
Uprose from sleep
And danced through the pearly spray ;
While rosy-red
Loomed bluff and head
O'er many a shadowy bay !

I bridged the brine
With a glittering line
Of topaz and chrysolite,
To the utmost verge
Where—a mighty gurge
Of incandescent light—
The flaming sphere
Burst broad and clear
From the caverns of the night.
And there in the blaze
Of his bickering rays

I sang my matin hymn—
While burning clouds
Hung round like crowds
Of fire-winged seraphim.

Wider and higher
The fountains of fire
Scattered their golden rain !
I stooped and quaft
A glowing draught,
Till each ethereal vein,
With flame-blood filled,
Delirious thrilled
With rapture keen as pain !
In the fire-lymph now
I laved my brow ;
Then spread my plumes again,
And swift as dream,
Or a meteor's gleam,
Shot up the east amain !

As a bright swan may swim
Up a shadowy stream
I clove my shining way ;
And before the light

Of my radiant flight,
In their shrouds of murky grey,
Night's vapoury hosts,
Like frightened ghosts,
Fled cowering west-away.
And wandering forth
Through the sky and the earth—
As a happy child might stray—
O'er mountain and wood,
O'er valley and flood,
In the path of coming day
I scattered flowers,
For my sister hours
To wreath in garlands gay!

But ere noon rides high
In the windless sky,
And my dewy pinions fail,
I flit unseen
Through the forests green
To some enchanted vale,
Where all day long
I dream to the song
Of the dreaming nightingale.

And when day is sped,
And overhead
The summer moon shines pale,
I leave my lair
And forth on the air
Like a noiseless night-moth sail,
With odours sweet
On my folded feet
From many a flowery dale.

The spirits of eve
Their bright shrouds weave
In the depths of the glowing west;
The planet of love
In the ether above
Uplifts his lambent crest ;
And bathed in the balm
Of a breathless calm
Earth turns her to her rest,
And Heaven bends down
With his starry crown
And folds her to his breast ;—
While down the tide
Of the breeze I glide
A spirit lone and blest ;

Till beyond the main,
Like a sea-bird, again
I find my secret nest.

There, lulled to sleep
By the murmuring deep
And the night-wind's voice divine—
While the vapours are curled
Round the slumbering world,
And the starry legions twine
Their mystic dance
O'er the dim expanse
Of the deep heaven crystalline,
I weave sweet dreams
Of glades and streams,
Of shadow and sheen and shower,—
Till Phosphor awakes
And his bright torch shakes
Abroad from his airy tower ;
Then again I arise
And fill the skies
With joy of the Golden Hour !

TO STELLA.

I.

NAV, Lady ! vainly shall we seek
Oblivion of those blissful hours,
When, heart to heart and cheek to cheek,
In the old forest's haunted bowers,
In love's Elysian dream we lay
Through many a golden summer day,
Pillowed on moss, and screened by downward-trailing
flowers.

II.

As well might yonder queenly rose
Forget the sunlight whence she drew
Her perfume, and the blush that glows
In ever-deepening splendour through

Her dewy petals ; or this wine
The clusters of his mother-vine,
And the warm southern moons that watched them
where they grew.

III.

Yes—all too beautiful they were ;
And well for us they ne'er had been !
But evermore our hearts must bear
Their impress ; henceforth every scene
Of life's stern tragedy confess
Some touch of their young tenderness :
Some trace of that lost Fairy-land where thou wert
queen :

IV.

Fair phantoms of youth's lost delight,
That o'er the joyless years must shed
A mournful glory—like the light
O'er Alpine steeps at evening spread,
Till each lone peak of desolate snow
Becomes a funeral-torch—a-glow
With memories of day—while day lies cold and dead !

v.

Then one more kiss, dear, ere we part—
Not coldly, thus, on cheek and brow :
But on my thirsting lips and heart
Let the old passionate sweetness flow
Unstinted !—let me realise
Ere yet I flee, the sacrifice
By which my love redeems my friendship's sacred vow.

T O M Y R T I S.

(FROM THE ANTHOLOGY OF DIOGENIANUS OF
HERACLEIA.)

NOR ask I love, fair Myrtis, nor may give ;
This only do I crave—nor thou deny :
That thou in sight of the high gods may live
A life so godlike, that unblamed I

May dedicate to thee a sacred shrine
Of silent adoration in my heart,
Where thy clear image, robed in light divine,
May dwell, from earthly passion far apart.

While every aspiration of my soul,
Each impulse of my being—purified
From “ mortal grossness ”—owns the sweet control
Of thy white maidhood, with submissive pride ;—

To Myrtis.

167

Even as beneath Selene's quiet eye
The fierce Euripus bows his foamy crest ;—
So shall my discord in thy harmony,
My turmoil in thy maiden calm find rest.

UNDER A LATTICE.

SLEEP'ST thou, my love?—The blushing moon
Steals to her Latmian cave,
The balmy midnight wind of June
Sleeps on the sleeping wave ;
Around, the shadowy woodlands sleep,
Sleeps every garden flower ;—
I only wake—my tryste to keep
Beside thy linden bower.
Sleep'st thou, my love?

Awake, dear heart ! too soon the dawn
Will rouse the jealous day ;
And ere the starry veil be drawn
I shall be leagues away !
For night alone is ours.—Alas !
The once warm love grows cold,

Or thus the moments should not pass,
Nor thou those lips withhold :
Awake, dear heart !

Yet sleep, dear, sleep !—and as I breathe
Towards thy veilèd shrine
Music for incense—to enwreath
Thy soul with thoughts divine—
My image on the charmèd stream
Of song may thither soar,
And, mingling with thy maiden dream,
Be exiled thence no more :—
Then sleep, dear, sleep !

THE
PRINCE-CONSORT MEMORIAL.

(A CAVEAT : *January* 14, 1865.)

NOR Theban obelisk, nor Attic fane,
Perched far from men in solitary pride,
On inaccessible crag or bleak hill-side,
Swathed half the year in mist and blinding rain !—
He loved the people—for the people toiled—
Lived 'mongst the people—in whose grateful heart
The memory of his goodness lives : a part
Of each man's life. Let not such love be foiled
In its due utterance. Be his monument
Reared in our midst, where ever ebb and flow
The human tides : that eyes unborn may grow
Familiar with each noble lineament
Of the True Man, beside whose sterling worth
As merest tinsel seemed earth's loftiest state and
birth.

SONNET:

WRITTEN ON HEARING OF THE DEATH OF
JAMES, EARL OF ELGIN.

STRONG head, clear eye, warm heart, and ready hand;
 Each tried—none failing, in the perilous hour;
 Calm with the well-won consciousness of power;
 True Noble: wise to guide, strong to command;
 Still in life's flush, though with unresting toil
 For human weal in many regions, grey;
 By hopeful millions hailed but yesterday;—
 Now cold in death!—far from the Scottish soil
 Thou so didst love.—Yet, by affection's tear
 Thy grave was hallowed: and we have thy fame!
 And though full many a lofty, generous aim
 Has died with thee,—thy brief, brave life will bear
 Immortal fruitage. Fit thy destiny:
 To die in harness—as a Bruce should die.

January 1864.

SONNET.

How sweet to troubled heart and weary brain
 The holy silence of the Sabbath morn.
 How sweet the chimes that to the sacred fane
 Summon once more lofty and lowliest born—
 There brothers ! Sweet the psalm that heavenward
 swells
 Triumphant, bearing the rapt soul above
 Earth and its sorrows. Sweet his voice who tells
 Anew the story of the Saviour's love.—
 Yet not by man's polluted lips alone,
 'Neath echoing arches of elaborate stone,
 God speaks to man :—the heavens proclaim His
 Power ;
 His Love is breathed by every wayside flower ;
 And where a sinner kneels in heartfelt prayer
 The place is hallowed—and God's house is there.

March 1863.

S O N N E T.

WHAT, and shalt thou, presumptuous worm, aver
 That where *thou* speak'st not, God must needs be
 mute?

Shalt thou the atheist's infamy impute
 To Christian men, who simply dare prefer
 The living voice of Nature to the dry,
 Galvanic croak of dead theology :
 The rhetoric of God's works to words of thine?
 If thou, indeed, be minister of Him,
 The meek and lowly, pray that He may bless
 Thy heart with something of His lowliness—
 Thy judgment, passion-warped and rancor-dim,
 With something of His charity benign ;—
 Then, haply, men may find their Sabbath hours
 As "profitably" spent with thee as with the flowers.

March 1863

SONNET.

(TO THE REV. W. C. S.)

THUS, ever thus—since in its impious rage
Jerusalem stoned the prophets,—ever thus
Since Paul with wild beasts fought at Ephesus,
And brother Christians, in a later age,
Washed out their baptism in each other's blood—
Who casts unwonted light along the path
That leads earth heavenward, must endure the wrath
And persecution of night's eyeless brood :
Blind guides, who will not—because *they* perforce
Must grope in darkness—tolerate that he
Who knows the Truth, and in the Truth is free,
Should by its radiance only, steer his course.
“The heathen rage!”—Yet, courage, good my friend :
Christ's champion thou—and He will guide thee to
the end.

October 3, 1866.

VOX POPULI VOX DEI.

(TO J. S. B.)

"Vox populi vox Dei," do they say?
 Alas, quite otherwise!—and he who first
 Mouthed the crude sophism sowed a seed accurst,
 To choke the growth of Truth, and bar man's way
 To Freedom with rank jungle—fruitful but
 Of rottenness. All history proves this true:
 God speaks not by the Many, but the Few.
 And in all ages,—since "The People" shut
 With the blank seal of death the inspirèd lips
 Of Socrates,—since that yet darker hour
 When blood-stained Calvary owned their "sovereign
 power,"
 And nature groaned in earthquake and eclipse—
 Has that fierce Voice at some loud babbler's nod
 Been lifted in blind rage against the Voice of God.

S O N N E T.

WHAT time the flaming arrows of the dawn
Scatter the starry cohorts of the night,
And in her leafy covert far withdrawn
Warbles the nightingale her soul's delight,—
From golden visions of my love I start—
As some spent wanderer stretched on Libyan
sand
Wakes, with sick pause and tumult of the heart,
From dreams of fountains in a flowery land,
Yet raises not his eyes—because he knows
Nor stream nor shade through all the desert lorn
May greet them. So against the light I close
My desolate eyes, because henceforth nor morn
Nor eve, through all the desert years, may bring,
Now She is lost, surcease of sorrowing.

A U T U M N.

THE air is chill with winter's rimy breath,
Birds silent cower apart on shrivelled spray,
Darkness invades the azure realms of Day,
All life seems over-blowing into Death.
Yet on the wall the plum grows dark and mellow,
On orchard paths red apples patter down,
The chestnut in the dank wood gathers brown,
And on the hill the stooks gleam golden-yellow.
Autumn once more has crowned the vading year
With fulness, and in joy brings home her sheaves,
Nor for the buried blooms of summer grieves.—
But I—with whom, too, life is in the sear—
Can *I* rejoice—springtime and summer gone,
And on my barren boughs but withered leaves
alone?

TWO FRAGMENTS.

LOWLY breathe and softly tread,
 Bow the heart with holy fear
 By the still, white-curtained bed ;
 For in silence deep and dread
 Death and Life are watching here !
 And a new-made father keeps
 Vigil, wrapt in speechless prayer,
 And by her new-born babe, a-weary, sleeps
 A mother young and fair.
 While around the chamber dim,
 Ears to whom the power is given—
 Eyes illumed by light from Heaven
 Hear and see them where they stand—
 Bended head and folded hand—
 Cherubim and Seraphim ;
 Singing as of old they sang
 When the new-created earth

On its path of glory sprang,
And all the ethereal depths with crystal echoes
rang !

But now their solemn anthems roll,
To hail a nobler—a diviner birth—
Nobler, diviner far
Than flower-crowned earth, or glory-girded star !
For here, since set of sun,
A new Creation Day hath been ;
And angel eyes with awful joy have seen
For an Immortal Human Soul
A new Eternity begun !

* * * * *

Now the fevered vigil's done ;
Let our loud lamenting cease,
For our Darling is at peace :
Life—not Death, the prize hath won !

Round the still form, white and cold,—
Stainless temple where so late
A blessed Soul held earthly state,—
Smooth the grave-robe's icy fold.

Other mansion hath She now ;
Other, purer garment wears ;
Other sound than weeping hears,
With Christ's kiss upon her brow !—

One more look into the face !
Dear, dead face, that ever seemed
As though some distant star had gleamed
Upon it, with supernal grace.

One more touch of those pure lips,—
And then farewell, thou sweet, pale clay !
Whence She we loved is rapt away
In Death's divine apocalypse.

THE CHIEFTAIN'S CORONACH.

Edinburgh, September 1866.

FAR from his mountain-peaks and moorlands brown,
Far from the rushing thunder of the Spey,
Amid the din and turmoil of the town
A Highland Chieftain on his death-bed lay ;
Dying in pride of manhood, ere to grey
One lock had turned, or from his eagle face
And stag-like form Time's touch of slow decay
Had reft the strength and beauty of his race :
And as the feverish night drew sadly on,
“ Music ! ” they heard him breathe, in low beseeching
tone.

From where beside his couch she weeping leant,
Uprose the fair-haired daughter of his love,
And touched with tremulous hand the instrument,
Singing, with tremulous voice that vainly strove

To still its faltering, songs that wont to move
His heart to mirth in many a dear home-hour ;
But not to-night thy strains, sweet, sorrowing dove,
To fill the hungering of his heart have power !
And hark ! he calls—aloud—with kindling eye,
“ Ah ! might I hear a pibroch once before I die ! ”

Was it the gathering silence of the grave
Lent ghostly prescience to his yearning ear ?
Was it the pitying God who heard, and gave
Swift answer to his heart's wild cry ?—For clear,
Though far, but swelling nearer and more near,
Sounded the mighty War-pipe of the Gaël
Upon the night-wind ! In his eye a tear
Of sadness gleamed ; but flusht his visage pale
With the old martial rapture. On his bed
They raised him. When it past—the Mountaineer
was dead !

Yet ere it past, ah ! doubt not he was borne
Away in spirit to the ancestral home
Beyond the Grampians, where, in life's fresh morn,
He scaled the crag and stemmed the torrent's foam ;
Where the lone corrie he was wont to roam,
A light-foot hunter of the deer ! But where,

The Chieftain's Coronach. 183

Alas ! to-day, beneath the cloudless dome
Of this blue autumn heaven, the clansmen bear
His ashes, with the coronach's piercing knell,
To sleep amid the Wilds he loved in life so well.

DE PROFUNDIS.

IN the unsullied Eden of my youth
Fearless I walked with angels, side by side,
Hearing the rivers of Eternal Truth
Pour their celestial music, far and wide.

But sin, the serpent, beautiful and vile,
Stole in among the lilies while I slept,
And when I woke the heavens had ceased to
smile,
The streams were songless, and the angels
wept.

Gathered from every side—above—beneath,
A silence, heavy with the voice of Fate;
And utter darkness on my soul like death
Descended, as I groped towards the gate

In shame and fear. It opened—shut. And now
Outcast I lie; while through the rayless gloom,
With silvery sibilations bland and low,
The subtle Tempter lures to deadlier doom.

Oh, treacherous heart ! Oh, weak, inconstant will !
Oh, heaven-born soul, with earth-polluted wings !
Listening thou loath'st, but loathing listenest still
To the insidious song the reptile sings :

“ The world hath Pleasure—Glory—Wealth to give ;
Stretch forth your hands and grasp them while you
may :

For the night cometh. Quaff while yet you live
The wine of life—nor trust a future day ! ”

But—like a silver larum-bell that rings
High o'er a wreck-strewn coast—my spirit hears,
Above the serpent-song, far whisperings
Of angel voices from departed years.

And through the lessening darkness, from above
I feel the warm touch of a wounded hand,
And see a thorn-wreathed brow and eyes of love
Bent o'er me ; and can dimly understand

Their mystic import—as the frozen earth,
Touched by the sun, of coming flowers may
dream,—

So the sweet presage of some wondrous birth
Flushes my soul with iridescent gleam.

And from its depths ascends the anguished cry :
“ Draw me, O Lord, and I will follow Thee ;
I cannot rise : in triple chains I lie—
Come Thou, O Holy One, and set me free ! ”

D E I G R A T I A.

As one who, journeying through a shadowy land,
 Sees from above the clouds some Alpine height—
 Throned on immensity and crowned with light—
Look o'er the world, with aspect lone and grand ;

So had I watched Her long, in plenitude
 Of greatness and of virtue, draw the eye
 And heart of nations,—while proud Loyalty
Stirred with the strength of passion in my blood.

But now,—as he, drawn near the mountain base,
 Sees flowery vales unfolding to the sun,
 Hears laughing streams by happy hamlets run—
I see the pure, sweet Woman's household grace :

Behold Her starlike in Her orbit move,
Blessing and blest : benignant, wise, serene !
And henceforth hail Her, more — not less than
Queen,
Though Loyalty is swallowed up of Love.

WINDSOR, *December* 1863.

THE END.



