

A
A
0
0
0
3
6
4
6
8
6
6

PR
4028
A824e











Evangeline Stirling

with Anna Sabie's love.

March 2nd 1881.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

EDITH

OR

LOVE AND LIFE IN CHESHIRE



EDITH

OR

LOVE AND LIFE IN CHESHIRE

A POEM

BY T. ASHE

AUTHOR OF 'THE SORROWS OF HYPSELYE' 'PICTURES' &c.

LONDON

HENRY S. KING & Co.

65 CORNHILL & 12 PATERNOSTER ROW

1873

(All rights reserved)

PR
4028
A 824 e

CONTENTS.

Part I.—LOST.

	<i>Page</i>
i. <i>The Rector's Child</i>	3
ii. <i>Home</i>	10
iii. <i>The Stranger</i>	17
iv. <i>Flight</i>	28

Part II.—FOUND.

i. <i>Berthold</i>	43
ii. <i>Over Sea</i>	53
iii. <i>Little Ethel</i>	62

Part III.—BACK TO THE NEST.

i. <i>Waiting and Watching</i>	75
ii. <i>Up the Brook</i>	87
iii. <i>Village Bells</i>	97

Part IV.—ALL WELL.

<i>All Well</i>	103
---------------------------	-----



PART I.

LOST.



1.

THE RECTOR'S CHILD.

Edith Trevor closed the door of the rectory gently ;
 Linger'd in the porch, and twirl'd the string of her bonnet ;
 Slowly pluck'd a flower from jasmine near her, by habit ;
 Slowly, lost in dreams, her fingers nervously twitching,
 Leaf by leaf broke off, and did not know that she did it.
 Edith, you grown sad, the romp and joy of the household ?

On the right you heard the anvil ring in the village ;
 Heard the ass's bray, the mastiff's surly rejoinder ;
 Heard the waggon-wheels, and lusty whip of the carter.
 Starting blithe away, refresh'd, from door of the Heron.
 Greenly water-meadows were spread below in the hollow,
 Sweet with new-mown grass ; and cattle, hither and
 thither,
 Slowly roam'd, at peace, or loved to wade in the water.
 On the left, the garden, in all the glory of summer.

Now she stood so long, the swallow carelessly twitter'd,
 Neath the eaves o'erhead, no longer scared with her pre-
 sence ;
 Then she heard a foot, and quickly, shunning the village,
 Edith slipp'd away, and crossed the lawn, and was hidden :

Yet she still sped on, beneath the arbutue and laurel;
 On by warm south wall, and fruit-trees loaded with promise,

Plum and sunny peach, until she came to the orchard.
 There the daffodils, by gnarl'd roots yellow with lichen,
 Held and charm'd her eye, when March winds sang in the
 woodlands.

Strangely she forgot; nor slack'd her flight, till the
 wicket

Turn'd its ill-hung hinge, and brought the air of the
 meadows.

Down the meads she went, amid the joy of the daisies;
 Buttercups, and clover, red and white, and the grasses;
 Till she gain'd the bridge and little stream, with its
 shadows

Nestling mid the cress and weeds that trail on the gravel.
 Then she lean'd and dream'd, with half-shut eyes; and
 the minnows

Gleam'd and glanced in vain; and you could tell she was
 weeping.

She let grief have way, when none were by to behold her;
 Oozed the bright hot tears beneath the fringe of her eye-
 lids.

Will the strangers smile? sweet is the climate of England!
 Sweet, the English summer, in the woods and the valleys!
 On the hills and uplands, and in the willow valleys!
 In this spot, if any, the Cheshire hamlet of Orton!
 June! O June! how soft, with wood-doves!—why is she
 weeping

Berthold Trevor, her cousin, she has promised to marry,—
Him, the old playmate,—but at the word of a father.

O what dreams she had of lovers' words and the wooing!

O what dreams she had! and are they faded and vanish'd?

Nay, was she not worth the little pain of the winning?

Well she loves her friend, but it is pain to be slighted.

With the golden beams and gentle winds of the summer

Quickly dry the tears from cheeks and eyes of a maiden.

Cheeks, so fair, unwrinkled,—soon the wing of the angel,

Hope, youth's guardian, crown'd with budding roses and
lilies,

Brushes them as he passes, and strikes a ruddier colour.

She was but eighteen, and ever gay as a cricket,

Till, to-day, the rector, from the eyes of his daughter

Drew sweet fancy's veil, which tints with colours of Heaven

Womanhood and manhood and all the shadowy future.

Still for Edith Trevor, all so used to be happy,

Dimly shone the eyes of demon care in the darkness.

Long she could not hear the rippling sound of the water,

Feel the wind blow on her, and still be heavy and sorry.

Soon it passed away,—her troubled dream,—as a shadow

From the hillside passes, when the morning is sunny.

Things became less strange; and, with a glimmer of
humour,

She could laugh, and say, half pert, "Who knows what
may happen?"

So with buoyant foot, and with a song, as of old time,

Past the fields she went, to pluck the flowers on the hill-
side;

Toil'd and climb'd an hour through brushwood up to the
beacon ;

Stay'd to rest awhile neath elm more tall than his fellows.
Locks blown loose and wild, as fresh as wandering Dian,
Seem'd beneath her, then, the Cheshire plains as a garden ;
Spread in peace beside the winding silvery river,
Stretch'd right on to sea or soft blue hills in the distance.
Then she wander'd down the green hillside by the quarry,
Down the sandy lane, with sunbeams fair and the shadows,
Sweet with golden gorse, and with the songs of the linnets.

Where the high road meets the road that leads to the
village

Stands a wayside cross ; a clear spring bubbles beside it.
Pious hands, long since, with love remembered in Heaven,
Raised the cross for sign, and made a trough for the crystal ;
Minding Him who cried in Holy Land to the people,
“ Come to Me and drink.” The cross is fallen and broken :
But the spring flows still ; for He remembers, forgotten.
He look'd from His glory, and as a woman for pity,
Led on Edith's feet to find the poor and the friendless.
White and still she lay,—the footsore, wandering stranger ;
White and still she lay, and Edith wept to behold her ;
White and still she lay, beneath the sign of His passion,
As the dead, when sadness dies away from their faces.
Edith, used to aid the sick and poor in their sorrow,
Gently drew away the sleeping child from her bosom ;
Laid it soft beside a lad, who, heedless and happy,
Made a chain with stalks of dandelions and daisies.
Then she dipp'd her hands, and sprinkled coolly the water
Over breast and brow, and chafed the palms of the woman.

She revived at length, but she was slow to recover.

“ You must still keep quiet,” Edith said, “ You have
fainted ;

“ You were very tired, and rested here in the shadow ;

“ You will soon be strong.” A little can in a bundle,

In the grass lay near, and Edith saw, and she took it ;

Raised the cool spring lymph to lips that pined for its
freshness.

Did He smile in heaven ? her whisper’d “ Where are you
going ? ”

Surely it was kind ! The woman heard it with wonder.

Tears well’d in her eyes, and glisten’d bright, as she
answer’d :—

“ We are bound for London, and then are going to Dover,

“ There to join my husband, William : he is a soldier.”

“ You must come with me,” said Edith, “ on to the village ;

“ You must rest to-night, for you are tired and exhausted.”

Strangely smiled her friend, and drew her hand through
the ringlets

Round the sweet brown eyes, that look’d so tenderly on her.

Soon the weak limbs rallied :—how good is kindness at
healing !—

Soon the heart took hope, the lips a healthier colour.

Edith mark’d the change, and, neatly folding the bundle,

Took the child, and rose, and led the way to the village.

She was glad to feel the chubby hand of the baby

Touch her neck and mouth, and pull and play with her
ringlets.

’Mid the motley group she glided, fair as an angel,

Down the dusty road, across the shade and the sunshine.

Sweetly honeysuckle and bindweed climb'd in the hedge-
row ;

Sweetly sang the birds ; and rustling noise of the poplars
Seem'd like April showers in leafy gloom of the copses.

Soon they pass'd the bridge, the pride and glory of Orton,
Built by Lord de Vaux, the genial lord of the manor.

She could face the people, not afraid of a duty ;
Stepping bravely on, she did not quail at the glances.
Old men bared their heads, and women nodded a welcome,
Children paused, and smiled, and slipp'd behind her and
follow'd.

Bow'd the landlord sleek, with face as round as an apple,
Idling in his porch, to give the law to a neighbour :
Grandly raised the smith the smutty cap from his fore-
head,

Wiped his sweat-stain'd brow, and stood to gaze with the
others ;

Quite forgot his task, forgot the shoe in the ashes,
For the sunny face of Edith, friend of the people.
Tears rose in her eyes, the tears that heal us and help us,
When for once we gain the meet reward of an action ;
When, in this sad world, this world so cold and untender,
We do others good, and feel and know that they love us.

Down the leafy lane that wound along to the churchyard,
Past the rectory gate, the children eyed her no longer.

All at last was still but hum of bees in the limetrees :
She was glad to miss the village noise and the gossip.
Yet, as ship, that braves the rough mid sea and the cyclone,
Strikes a reef unmapp'd, and drifts a wreck in the harbour,

Here, when near the house, when safe well nigh in the
haven,

Edith blush'd as red as summer cloud in the sunset.

Viot Paul De Vaux rode gaily by with his kinsman,

Foulque Alphonse Dubois, a Frenchman, bearded and
handsome.

Viot saw the blush, but did not show that he mark'd it ;

Gravely raised his hat, though tickled inly with laughter.

“Who was that ?” Foulque said : “by Zeus, a girl with
a spirit.”

Laughing, turn'd De Vaux,—“Yes, you were lucky to see
her ;

“That is Edith Trevor, the only child of the rector.”

“Such a face as that,” the other carelessly answered,—

Shew'd his fair white teeth,—“can linger only in England.

“What a blush to waste and fade away in a village !

“I would give my wolf-hound but to see such another !”

“Nay, then,” answer'd Paul, “the hound is mine,—you
have said it,—

“If your will still hold, for we will call there to-morrow.

“With a blush as sweet she will remember the meeting.”

Edith grew more sad to hear the sound of their horses

Echo on the bridge, and die away in the distance.

Old grief woke anew ; she said, in dreamy half-whisper,

“Who was that with Viot ? He had the eye of a soldier.”

Often fancy's brush had limn'd the shadowy lover

Who should woo and win her, and she grew harden'd to

Berthold.

II.

HOME.

When the rector saw the troop arrive, from the window,
All his heart was stirr'd to speak in praise of his daughter.
“She is brave,” he said, to Mary Trevor, his sister;
“Yes, a brave true girl; I would she were not so way-ward.”

“Impulse leads her still,” his sister soothingly answer'd;
“Leads, and looks a grace, nor is it always a danger.
“Impulse leads her still, as Lot was led by the angels:
“She will 'scape the snares, and still be wise in the issue.”
Quickly both arose, and met them all in the doorway.

“See what guests I bring,” said Edith: “claim on your
shelter,
“For my footsore friends will not be hard to establish.
“They will rest to-night, and wake with eyes that are
brighter:
“Be more fit to bear a longer journey to-morrow.”
Still the old gay smile, too soon to fade and be darken'd!
Pleased the elders look'd, and softly murmur'd approval.
Gentle Mary Trevor,—it was a boon to behold her;
Locks now touch'd with grey, and fingers tender for pity;

Eyes as stars at dusk, that glitter clear in the heaven ;
 Mother, nurse, physician, in the hamlet of Orton.
 When she took the child, she kiss'd it, bending as kindly
 As the Master, once, o'er little ones, when He bless'd them.

To the housekeeper's room : the rector stole to his study.
 He was not adept at handling, save in a sermon,
 Grievs that love the touch and healing eye of a woman.
 Kind and soft at heart, and yearning over his people,
 He was stiff and cold, and somewhat hard in his manner.
 He stole back to con the musty lore of his volumes.
 Soon the matron spread a grateful table before them,—
 Butter, cheese and ale, and milk new-drawn from the udder.
 Restless grew the hands and eager eyes of the children :
 She had little heart to touch the food that was offer'd.
 " She had swoon'd," said Edith, speaking low to the sister.
 " Come," the hostess said, " and rest awhile from your
 journey ;
 " We will make a couch in easy chair in the corner.
 " You will wake refresh'd : and soon the day will be cooler :
 " Pleased shall we be then to hear the whole of your
 story."
 When the meal was done, her head propp'd up with a
 pillow,
 She was fast asleep in little more than a minute.

Now, to please the two, did Edith find in the larder
 Apples, ripe, and yellow as primroses by the water ;
 Then she tripp'd away, and still the hand of the elder
 Closed as pleased in hers as in the hand of a sister.

In the orchard grass, which for the boughs of the fruit-trees,

Fear'd no heat all day, the harmless darlings were bappy.

Edith lay and dream'd : she read the words of the singer,

Writ in golden book of women, noble as any ;

Loved of all, and crown'd of singing women the highest ;

Hid neath Florence flowers, to leave us lonely for ever.

Edith lay and dream'd ; and as at times on her dreaming

Broke the children's laugh or happy sound of their prattle,

Strangely stray'd her thoughts to afterdays and to Berthold ;

Strangely gleam'd through all the look and eyes of the Frenchman.

Come away, on wings of song and fancy to wander ;

Soar we high in air, across the lands and the rivers ;

O'er snug hamlets still, and busy noise of the cities ;

Over heath-spread hills, and ceaseless ring of the quarry ;

O'er the sad black country, grim ghenna of labour,—

Stars with glare made dark, day with the grime, of the terror ;

Over streams how gracious, in the dells and the meadows ;

Over many a lawn, and oak and deer in the woodlands ;

O'er the million-peopled, ruling, merciless city ;

Over sleepy Kent, to cliffs and harbour of Dover.

Who is that,—a speck, high up,—who gazes to seaward ?

Does he see the gulls that wheel or ride on the billow ?

Does he think of foes in harbours over the Channel ?

Does he watch the buoy dip with the aim of the gunners ?

No ; the white sails glide before his eyes, as a vision,

While he dreams and sighs, and thinks of those that are absent.

In the orchard now how sweetly twilight is falling.
Sunbeams, slanting, climb the knotted stems of the fruit-
trees.

Now the lichen's frond is beaten gold, and the even
Softer, cool, more still: dumb is the lay of the linnet.
Now the nightingale, alert, his song is beginning;
Holding night awake, and lovers silent, to listen.
Would he sang more often! He sings but seldom in
'Cheshire.

They are met together, the children quietly sleeping:
Softly watchful steps move to and fro in the chamber.
See the rustic seat,—oak branches, gnarl'd and entwisted
Into quaint device, the leisure-toil of the master.
By the soldier's wife is seated kindly the hostess:
Fast the socks she knits that will be worn in the morning.
Like some gypsey's joy, the sunbeams falling upon her,
Musing Edith lies, vex'd with the gaze of her cousin.
Laughs the soft brown hair, that ripples down on her
shoulder,

In the gold sunlight, and he is charm'd with her beauty.
He, lean'd on the bough, mid apple-leaves,—he is happy,
In his sweet brunette, nor thinks of anger and mischief.
Well she knows he dreams of blissful days and a wedding.
Near, with book, apart,—do you believe he is reading?—
Solemn, ill at ease, the rector carefully listens.
Now, with smile or sigh, the woman labours her story.

“ We were fourteen years in India: he is a soldier.

“ He was kind and good, and life was easy and welcome.

“ Clothes were dear enough, but then you wanted but little.

“ I was ill from the baby when he was ordered to England.

“ Parting, then, seem'd hard, when he must go with the others :

“ We were left to follow : there was no room in the vessel.

“ In Bombay we stay'd ;—our ship was slow with its lading ;—

“ Will, my first, and Ann, the little boy, and the baby.

“ Will, he sail'd before : a captain, friend of my husband,

“ Found us in the port, and took him on for the voyage.

“ Sailing bravely thro' the blue and beautiful water,

“ All at first went well, though it was far in the season.

“ There are sunny isles, made green and gay with the palm-trees ;

“ Flowers of all the colours of a rainbow in heaven.

“ Soon the strange-shaped hills were lost in haze of the distance :

“ Blew the wind North-East, and fast we plow'd through the billows.

“ No mishap I fear'd ; and Ann, my girl, she was ailing ;

“ With the heat made ill, and with the roll of the ocean.

“ All at first went well : but when we came to the Channel,—

“ Names so soon go by me,—winds arose from the Southward :

“ Still they beat us back, and night and day they were howling,

“ Like the roar of cannon, and we were blind with the lightning.

“ Toss'd and beat and whirl'd, and drifting on to the
breakers,

“ We could bear no sail, and we despair'd of the vessel.

“ Then with tears and shrieking did I pray the Almighty:

“ But He took the child, He took the child He had given.

“ Now I heard no more the rush and roar of the water:

“ I had died, I know, but for the aid of the others.

“ All to me grew vain, and all that I can remember

“ Was the poor thin body going down in the water.

“ Days, weeks, months,—but all; a blank! To me it was
only

“ Still the dull, dead woe, and helpless blindness of anguish.

“ ‘What will William say?’ my heart was crying and
asking;

“ ‘What will William say?’ But he will not blame me.
he will not.

“ So when I grew strong the ship was toiling and sailing

“ On through bright green weeds, that stretch'd for miles
o'er the ocean.

“ Loud the sailors cheer'd to greet the shadowy mountains.

“ As the ship drew home, and we had favouring weather.

“ Oh! it seem'd a dream to anchor there in the Mersey!

“ Five long months and more the ship had been on the
voyage.

“ We have friends in London, and we are going to find
them:

“ Miss, the kind God bless you; and you, too, lady, her
mother.”

“ She is my brothor's daughter,” sweetly answered the
hostess.

“ Much, indeed, you suffer’d, and you have borne it with patience.

“ We are very glad that we were able to help you.”

Stars were peering forth, as, looking round her, she added,—

“ It is chilly, Edmund ; you can see in the valley

“ How the mists curl up and wander over the hillside.

“ Do you think it wise to linger here in the orchard ? ”

She arose, and took the rector’s arm, as she ended :

Moving toward the house, they chatted kindly together.

III.

THE STRANGER.

Active, up betimes, the rector, proud of his garden,
Bound the gadding rose, or set a nail to his peaches;
Wander'd round his lawn, and to the gardener near him
Noted leaf or weed with watchful eye of a master.
So, well pleased, went in; and while the steam of the
kettle

Sang, and grateful scent of the Arabian berry
Fill'd the room, he read the solemn words of the Gospel.
Low and grave his voice, and brief and able the comment.
Then they kneel'd in prayer: the woman kneel'd with the
household.

Quickly pass'd the meal, with talk of day and its duties.
Edith rose and Berthold, as, in his bounty, the rector
Gave his nephew gold to help the three on their journey.
Said the good man, laughing, as he gave it with pleasure,
"Truly, when I ask, the land is bound to repay it."
So the three, light-hearted, in the charge of the cousins,
Left the happy region, to them a Garden of Eden.
Soon the carrier, waiting by the door of the Heron,
In his van made room, and briskly drove to the station.

Down the village street the cousins wander'd together.
 Many words they had at cottage doors by the wayside :
 Of the sick they thought, and of the old and the cripple ;
 Bade the wife goodmorrow, and gave the labourer greeting ;
 At the schools look'd in, to cheer the soul of the mistress.
 " When will they be wed ? " the people said in a whisper.
 Yet what danger frown'd beneath the smiles and the
 chatting !

He, as shy as flowers, she as a bird by the sea-shore,
 Pluming wings to flee to bliss unknown in the dreamland.

Deep as truth his love, his spirit noble and manly ;
 But in book-dreams lapp'd, and oversadden'd with study.
 Childish seem'd to him the craft and cooing of lovers,
 Him, in love unlearn'd, and all the ways of a maiden.
 Edith loved him well ; she had been wholly contented,
 Had he had the will to grasp the prize and to win it.
 Now since yestermorn her heart had harden'd against him,
 Taking thus his own, thus, at the hand of another.
 She was shamed and vex'd that she had promised to wed
 him,

All unask'd, unwoo'd, and she rebell'd in her anger.

" When will they be wed ? " the people said in a whisper.
 Yet as clouds unseen o'erhead will silently mingle,
 Each at heart quick fire, and swiftly follows the thunder,
 So, 'neath talk, still calm, her subtle anger was hidden.
 As a wild thing rear'd, and pleased awhile to be fondled,
 By the warm fireside, lets peer a gleam of its nature,
 O'er the lawn she sprang, and through the door, which
 was open ;

Long her scornful laugh rang in the ear of the father.

“Edith, child! my child!” the rector cried in amazement.

Now the damsel blush'd as sweetly fair as the morning:
For the twain she met rose up and smiled, as she enter'd.
Viot's hand she took, and with a bow to the stranger,
Thus she spake, quick-witted in a moment to answer:—

“You will deem me child, indeed: I pray you to pardon
One who has not learn'd to be so grave as a statue.”

Thus she said, and shook her locks, and musical laughter
Curved the little lips, and made the room as a garden.

“Hold it yet no crime,” he answered:—“I was a gainer:—

“Hold it yet no crime to be as birds on the branches:

“Nay, if it should chance that in the days, that are
shadows,

“We should meet again, may I again be so happy.

Quickly Viot turn'd to meet the gaze of the rector.

“We would see your church: my friend, a stranger in
England,

“Little knows our customs; he loves the sight that is
novel.”

Well the rector caught the covert aim of his meaning.

“We shall feel a pleasure,” said he, smiling, “to show
him

“All we have of strange, or what is strange to another.”

Low the Frenchman bow'd, with restless eyes on the
maiden:

“It is good,” he said; “and you will go with us also.”

Berthold brought the keys; then went the five on their
mission,

Edith, Foulque Dubois, the cousin, Paul, and the rector.

So, through wicket small, hid in the green of the laurels,
By the graves they went, the leaning stones, and the
 hillocks :

Marking quaint device men used of old to delight in,
Toothless scull, or scythe, or seraph wing, or the cross-
 bones.

Nature, she grows here half sad and strange, with the
 meanings

We have wrapp'd around her mystic forms of expression :
Grass and short-lived flowers, and fading wreaths of the
 mourners,

Told of grief and joy, of one that dies as the other.

“ We,” the rector said, and linger’d proudly to shew it,
“ Boast a cross, you see, and you must pause and admire it.
“ Beautiful it is, though ruthless hands have defaced it !
“ Beautiful it is, with daisies round, and the eyebright !
“ It is grey and old, of other days : it is broken.
“ Symbol once of faith, now it is rather an emblem
“ Of the zeal and rancour that are the bane of religion.
“ Truth is hard to fix, and if it fall that we differ,
“ We should still forbear : so much we learn of the Master.”

In the porch they paused, with ivy climbing about it ;
Saw the rustic church, which had an air that was olden ;
Pews and desk of oak, and sculptured font by the doorway ;
Benches near the desk for old ones, eager to gather
Smallest crumb of the Word ; and a tablet over the altar.
“ We,” said Foulque Dubois, “ we love the daubs of the
 artists :

“ Some are good, no doubt, but most are vile as an inn-
 sign.

"Priests go to and fro in gold and scarlet and crimson,
 "Though it well may hap that I may err in the colour.
 "Soft the incense curls, and candles flame on the altar.
 "We have toy-shop shrines, and crosses, banners, pro-
 cessions :
 "Gilded saint or two, and not unseldom a dozen ;
 "Bones and curious scraps of folk forlorn and forgotten.
 "I should miss at first the vain display of my country.
 "I will call it vain :—I do not say, in the minsters,
 "If a king be crown'd or holy day be to honour :
 "But how much of plaster, how much art and imposture !
 "What a power of paint, how little power of religion !
 "In the minsters sits some woman weird, in a corner,
 "With her wares spread out, as huckster vile by her basket :
 "You but risk the coin, she sets you burning a taper,
 "Cheers your comrade's soul deep in the regions infernal.
 "Too much trash, I say it ; and, of the Saints and
 Apostles,
 "Half the gems are paste, the bones are those of a puppy.
 So spake Foulque Dubois, with careless twirl of his
 whisker :
 Still his tone rang false, and it offended the rector.
 Vex'd and grieved he walk'd, as back they saunter'd
 together.

Laugh'd the Frenchman, then, and in the eyes of the
 maiden
 Look'd as one that sees the sudden gleam of a treasure.
 Shafts of crafty praise but little able to parry
 She was all too gay, held in the snare of his glances.
 Still she heard his talk, as thirsty ground in the summer

Drinks the welcome rain, and chatted on, and was happy.
 With what ease she read the sullen anger of Berthold!
 With what ease she read the grief and rage of the father!
 Yet was inly glad, and still a devil within her
 Made her eye more bright, and added art to her laughter.
 Foulque Alphonse divined the mischief born of his presence ;

Shaped his subtle speech to be as oil to the burning.
 She was sad as Viot and the stranger departed.
 Here at least was one who deem'd her worthy of honour.
 How would he despise her, yielding tamely to Berthold
 Love's sweet flower, unask'd, too little prized to be gathered!

Ah, the dreams of youth, the simple dreams of a damsel!
 Sweet to her his words and looks, the heralds of passion.
 Fresh, the drops of rain, that set the lilies aripple
 On the tranquil lake, that fall in van of the thunder :
 Bright the little spark, that fires the silent savannah,
 Soon to rage as a fury, leaving round it a desert.

As, with sense of guilt, but stronger rage at oppression,
 One from sunshine steps into the air of a dungeon,
 Edith gain'd the parlour, and met the gaze of the rector.
 All his pent-up wrath rush'd into words in a moment :—
 “ Have I seen so bold, so light and free with a stranger,
 “ Gentle Edith, my daughter ? Is it a dream, a delusion ?
 “ Am I dizzy with fever ? Does a spirit of evil
 “ Flit before my eyes ; one on the stage, or a dancer ?
 “ Was it such I gave my nephew, calling him happy ? ”
 “ Let him claim his own,” said Edith, burning with anger.
 “ You,—so kind ! so good !—the gift, before it is given,

“ Be assured is yours ! Is it so noble in England
 “ Thus to yield a woman, as a slave or a chattel ?
 “ Men with self-love blinded ;—it is truly a fever !
 “ Dare a woman venture from the sages to differ ?
 “ She is but a toy, and handed one to another :
 “ Fondled, laid away ! ” She went in scorn and defiance.
 Then the rector bow'd his head, and broke into weeping.

There is not a God for the saint, and one for the sinner :
 Not a law for the priest, another law for the people.
 Still, 'tis well the priest, who is a guide and a father,
 Rule and lead his own to be to others a model.
 But, if strict himself, as one who yearns to be spotless,
 Gladly yielding tithes of mint and anise and cummin,
 He should still be tender to the failings of others ;
 Speaking words in season, not afraid of his duty,
 Yet not out of season speak a word, nor in anger.
 Good and kind was the rector, but he was formal and
 stately ;
 Just and blameless still, but often hard on his people.
 Him all held in honour, and yet the villagers rather
 Loved his sister's foot within the door of a cottage.
 Children when he pass'd would often hide in the hedge-
 rows.

Edith loved him well, but she was wayward and wilful :
 Like a bird, new-fledged, with wings for soaring atremble :
 She despair'd to please one ever chiding and scolding,
 Fear'd his watchful eye, and fretted under his anger.
 Then the woman's will began to tremble within her ;
 But his plans were all to him, and child of his brother ;
 Loved and rear'd his own, the scholar, hope of the future.

It is hard for the old, but the priest to-day was a learner.
 As the lightning's flash reveals the road that we traverse,
 Makes the night like day, and us aware of a danger,
 So the past he read, and he remember'd the lesson.

Gentle Mary Trevor, with accents tender with sorrow,
 Softly laid her hand upon the hand of her brother.
 Berthold, shamed, surprised, stung with the taunt un-
 expected,

With a little pang of conscience writhing within him ;
 Mad for such sweet scorn, yet love more fondly than ever
 Grasping her he lost ;—O women, fairer in anger !—
 By the graves went, blind, to lull in roll of the organ
 All the restless storm and tossing pain of his anguish.
 Many a passer-by would linger, silent, to wonder.

Crash and jar of sounds, like evil demons awrestle :
 Sounds, subdued to fervour, as of a wild imprecation,—
 “ Lord, heal with Thy love the bitter wrong and the
 passion : ”

Sounds most sweet and glad, as with the joy of forgiveness.
 Long he dream'd and plann'd, but, scarcely daring to face
 her,

Shielded round with night he penn'd the words of a
 letter :—

“ Dear my friend, my sister,—I may call you a sister,—
 “ We were dear companions, we were playmates together :
 “ Was my love a dream, did I but dream that you loved
 me ?

“ I can hardly believe it : the awaking is bitter.

“ It is only a cloud that passes, hiding the sunshine :

- “ Surely, I was awake, and it is now I am dreaming.
 “ You, my thought in the morning, ere my eyelids were
 open!
 “ You, my own good angel, even near in the silence!
 “ At my books, alone, your face illumined the pages:
 “ Still the fame was yours that I was striving to compass.
 “ What are fame and learning to the love of a woman,
 “ Who is noble, as you are, who is winning and tender?
 “ It were more, your hand upon my brow, that is throbbing,
 bing,
 “ Than the greenest bays, and all the fame of the sages.
 “ Midnight folds me now, and yet a night that is deeper
 “ Shadows all my soul, and veils the dawn of the future.
 “ Once I dream’d you loved me: was it sighing and toying
 “ You would fain have had? I will not dare to believe it.
 “ Strangers’ arts! ah, me!—and could I need them, to win
 you?
 “ You I held above the tinsel words of a fawner;
 “ Held you,—yea, you are: my faith can never be
 shaken:—
 “ One to woo with the wooing of a soul that is noble;
 “ When a man is manly, and, ever loyal and faithful,
 “ Reads the little signs, and does the will of his mistress,
 “ With reward still ample in her silent approval;
 “ Weeds his soul of lies, and scouts a sordid endeavour,
 “ Ever climbing higher, above the soil and the baseness;
 “ Girds the sword of duty, to be worthy to win her,
 “ Taking self-respect for spotless robe of his raiment.
 “ Was it thus I lost you, my goddess, Edith, my sister?
 “ Well I knew our father.—I will call him a father,—
 “ Toward the future look’d, and will’d to join us together;

- “Scheming bonds more firm, and planning all that was
happy
- “For the child he loved, and for the child of his brother.
- “He said this to me: I was aware that you knew it.
- “But you wrong’d me, sweet, if you could deem, for a
moment,
- “I knew all: yea, more,—to bind your soul with a pro-
mise,
- “That was foolish-wise; for if is needed a fetter,
- “Love is fled before, who brooks but roses to bind him.
- “Bound? Nay, what means this? Love, I disown and
disclaim you.
- “You are free as a bird:—see, thus the compact is
broken:
- “Loosed, the bond unblest, by simple word of a letter.
- “Now, come back; come, sweet; come back, on wings of
the longing:
- “Dove, come back, and find the nest, forlorn for your
cooing.
- “I, why should I mourn, and be unhearten’d for ever;
- “Waste in youth, and pine as hapless flower in the
winter?
- “With the storm still toss, no star to shine and to guide
me;
- “Never love and know the children’s eyes and the
prattle?
- “Like some exile here on earth awhile shall I wander,
“Till I claim, you, sweet, until I claim you in heaven?
- “Nay, come back, come, bring the bliss and day of exist-
ence.”

Tears were on his face, and dimm'd his eyes, as he ended.
To the room he stole where often, hours, in the summer,
She would lean and catch the jasmine scent at the lattice.
Straight the shelf he gain'd on which she hoarded the
singers ;
Mid her sibyl's leaves conceal'd his woe and his letter.

IV.

FLIGHT.

Strange and not so happy was the meal in the morning.
Edith spake no word, but quickly rose and departed.
Sad and pale for one who once would charm with her
 laughter

Many a morn from gloom, she wore the veil of her anger.
Berthold, he, too, rose, and was unwilling to linger .
With the two, whose eyes were not the eyes of a lover ;
Lest, if she were blamed, or even named, in her absence,
He should seem untrue, or seem to side with the others.

Grave and stern was the rector, and little sign of forgive-
 ness

In his look you read, and little sign of emotion.
Mary Trevor knew it would be hard for his nature
First to bend and yield : and she was wounded for Edith :
But if parent err, yea, if to wrong and injustice,
Still the child does well to suffer all and be silent.
“ Leave her now,” she said, “ so changed and blind with
 her passion :
“ She has never shown a spirit wrong and unruly.

"Nay, another sun will scarce go down on her anger :
 "Soon, remembering all, she will be troubled and sorry :
 "She will see the wrong, and will be fain to be pardon'd.
 "You will pardon her, Edmund?" His lips were pale, as
 he answer'd ;
 Twitch'd and trembled, saying, "Gladly I will forgive
 her ;
 "Ask of her forgiveness for the wrong that I did her."
 Low the sister bent, in silence, hiding her wonder ;
 Stoop'd and touch'd his brow with lips that sign'd bene-
 diction.

Edith, will she find, so much a novice in passion,
 Stranger eyes so bright, if she discover the letter ?
 Be the child of old, with Berthold changed to a lover ;
 With a sire too glad to cancel all and forgive her ?
 Had she known ! but known ! She is away in the wood-
 land.

On the hill-top grew the pines in silence together ;
 Grand trunks, straight and tall, that flush'd blood-red in
 the sunset ;
 Yet the sun, in splendour flashing down from the zenith,
 Could not pierce the dense and twisted screen of their
 branches :
 They, that rock'd in storm, and madly howl'd in the
 winter,
 Now were calm and still, or only sway'd in a whisper.
 Sweet the gloom and coolness, as in a mighty cathedral.
 Black below the spurs, and wither'd leaves and the pine-
 cones,

Yielded neath the foot, as softly laid as a carpet.

Here a road wound down to warmth and day, and, descending,

On each hand laid bare the dull red wall of the sandstone ;

Silent now, forlorn, cut long ago to the quarry ;

By woodcutters used, or still at times by a huntsman.

Steep the winding road : a little way from the summit,—

Where the winds would lull on rudest days, and the roaring

Of the pines in storm seem but a song, in the distance,—

On the left, the stone, scoop'd out and worn to a cavern,

Made a dripping well. The trickling drops of the water,

Oozing through the roof, were shaped to pearls in the darkness ;

Then, unseen, they fell, to gather fair in a basin,

Pure and clear as twilight, after rain, in the autumn.

Drop fell after drop, with a solemn cadence and mournful ;

Long and charm'd you listen'd, yet still the ear would be startled.

Smooth and moist the cave with matted green of the mosses :

While, in rocky cleft, and by the sway of the ripple,

Campions throve, and ferns, and fairy leaves of the cranesbill.

Brooding Edith sat, upon a stone by the entrance.

Many a morning here, a book her silent companion,

She had dream'd and stay'd, her spirit tranquil and happy ;

Pleased with linnet's song, pleased with the sound of the water,

With a fern, or flower. Now, that is over, for ever.

Youth, outworn, inverts his mystic wand o'er the dream-
land :

All is fled, like dreams ; and he is fled, and the glamour.
Love, a lord more strong, rules in the throne of the other.
Dull is reason's ear: now love and anger together
Scare the brooding peace, the morning calm of her spirit,
As the winds swoop down on sleeping tarn in the moun-
tains.

She remembers her father, she remembers her cousin ;
Darkly feels she wrong'd them in the rage of her answer :
Yet they seem as dreams of long ago and forgotten ;
But as leaves that fall on restless whirl of a torrent.
Anger hot with love, and love aflame with the anger :—
Is it love in a day ? It is a strange fascination.

Here, with alien foot, amid the gloom of the pinewood,—
Foulque Alphonse Dubois,—why is it, now, that he
wanders ?

What would he, then, here ? What in his brain is he
planning,

Full of evil schemes, and ever ready for mischief ?
Dewy dawn of a life, you haunt him now with your beauty :
He is charm'd with the grace and guileless eyes of a
maiden.

There are some who love to pluck the flower by the way-
side ;

Love to wear the flower a little while for their pleasure :
Careless who may pine to miss it there in the shadow :
When its sweetness tires, but little pain'd if it wither.
He is vex'd and cross'd, who is not wont to be thwarted :
Used to have his will, though it be sordid and evil.

Can he well be plotting ill and harm for the damsel,
 Since he leaves ere morn the English hall and his kins-
 folk ?

It is but a sigh, a wish, a fancy to meet her,
 Once, ere all grow dark, that lures him over the upland.

Foulque Dubois, as a god, who beats the woods for a dryad,
 Stroll'd and toy'd an hour, and then grew tired and im-
 patient :

At the wood-dove fired, in leafy elms by the quarry ;
 Vex'd, he scarce knew why, to hear the sound of its cooing :
 Seem'd for sign to take it, when the bird, as an arrow,
 Through the green tree-tops fled to the gloom of the forest.
 By the lane he turn'd. What weaves the snare, that en-
 tices

Us to ill we would, but know not how to accomplish ?
 Is it chance, ill-luck ? No, but the Father in Heaven,
 Shaping good and evil, to mould the souls of His children.

Step by step he came : she, with a strange divination,
 Heard his foot draw near. Each drop that fell in the
 cavern

Made her cheek grow pale, and flush again with the colour
 Of a new-blown rose. She was as maiden, the demons
 Wall in towers of dreams, in mediæval romances.

He, as one well pleased, who meets a friend unexpected,
 Stay'd his foot, to greet her ; and soon was standing be-
 side her.

As one inly glad, awhile in silence beholding,—
 Musing, lean'd on his gun,—the heighten'd charm of her
 beauty,

Low he laugh'd, to note the little feet, and the colour
 Of her cheek, sunbrown'd as nut of hazel in autumn ;
 Till her lids dropp'd down, abash'd, and she would have
 risen :

Then his eye read all, the dream, the joy, and the passion.
 "Nay, not yet," he whisper'd, and she in silence obey'd him.
 "I am as," he said, "the old Thuringian princes ;
 "Who would ride, unwitting, and by the marge of a
 fountain
 "Find, in glades deep-hid, the damsel more than a mortal."
 But he was as one who, mid the gleams of the moorlands,
 Sees the bright bird flutter from the blue of the heaven,
 Flutter down, and stain more deep the hue of the heather.

As a foe, well-skill'd, if he beleaguer a city,
 Climbs not yet the wall, but makes secure the approaches ;
 Seizes points of vantage, and finds the coign that is
 weakest ;

So with skill and guile began the siege of the maiden.
 "Now I speak," he said, "but as a stranger to England :
 "Yet 'twere hard to find in this your land, or in any,
 "Such another spot to linger in and be happy.
 "You have chosen it well, and with the eye of an artist.
 "What do birds say to you, that sing for you in the
 branches ?
 "Can the wood-doves utter all the joy and the longing ?
 "Read me, now, the runes, writ on the ground by the
 sunbeams ;
 "Still so fresh, so old, the mystic hieroglyphics.
 "Nay, speak not, but listen, to the strange admonition.
 "In the water dripping, to be unstain'd as the angels."

Half she smiled, through tears. A touch of tenderest pity
 For herself stirr'd in her, and she remember'd the blisses
 Of the past, so sweet ; and she recall'd in a moment
 All the lost day-dreams, that seem'd a glory for ever.
 Fell his words like dew, or as the rain in the summer.

“ Nay,” he said, “ you weep ? What is it ? Only the
 sadness

“ Of a heart too happy, that loves with sorrow to dally.

“ You have known no sorrow, and on the stream of exist-
 ence

“ Rest your days, as lilies on a meandering water.

“ Weep not yet !—what, still ! Then love’s bewildering
 trouble

“ Mixes sweet and bitter in your heart as a chalice.

“ Is it so ? Is it so ? I touch the wound that was hidden.

“ Then the sweet hill air, the laughing sheen of the sum-
 mer ;

“ Then the leaves, the birds, the rillet’s wandering babble ;

“ Then the joys of home, the tender words of a brother ;

“ Will help you no more, but be as straws in the balance,

“ Till you clasp his neck who deems you more than a sister.”

Edith, like a child, for she could bear it no longer,
 Sobb'd and press'd her face between her hands, for a
 moment :

Then he touch'd her hands, and, sitting boldly beside her,
 Gently drew them down : nor did she feign to withhold
 them.

“ Trust me now,” he said,—and half he sighed, as he
 murmur'd,—

“ Me, till death your friend ; there is not, Edith, another,
 “ Not in all the world, more glad to aid and to guard you.”
 Then one hand she loosed, to put the hair from her fore-
 head :

Stay'd her tears, half smiling, looking tenderly on him.
 Longing deep fell on her to rest her head on his bosom.
 So she told her wrong ; the heartless ways of her cousin ;
 All the bitter shame of the unwilling betrothal :
 All the old man spake in thoughtless spleen of his anger :
 Half a dream, half true : but not a word of the stranger.

“ What ! ” he said,—his eyes flash'd with a feign'd indig-
 nation,—

“ Given, unmask'd, unglad, to one who fails of the courage

“ Even to woo and win you, he is so mean and unmanly !

“ Will you yield, be led, as victim bound, to the altar ?

“ Do you dream your life with him could ever be happy ?

“ You would be his slave ; yea, justly he would despise you,

“ So unmeet to own the honour'd name of a woman.

“ Flee away ! yea, flee ! what, will you stay ? will you
 bear it ?

“ Would you ever dare endure the gaze of the people ?

“ Could you brook their scorn, and whisper'd words of
 derision ?

“ Flee away, to crown some other soul, that is noble,

“ With the wreaths of love, that will not tarnish or wither

“ Flee away, begone, ere fate enchain you for ever.”

Seem'd but one chance left to pluck the flower of existence ;

Seem'd the old scheme, then, a cruel snare of the father.

What ! return ? ah, doom ! then all were sorrow for ever !

So, grown bold, grown blind, she plunged, to save from
the eddy

Love, to keep still glad the sunny days with his laughter.
"Nay," she said, "flee whither?" Her look was tender,
her fingers

Softly moved in his, and still her eyes were upon him:
Then she laid, half coy, and half confiding, beseeching,
On his breast, her head, that throbb'd and burn'd with its
fancies.

He had won: so, low he whisper'd, bending above her,
"Yes, I love you for ever: yes, you know that I love you.
"Shall I pray, beseech you, kneeling low for an answer?
"I have known, I have seen: will you deny that you love
me?"

She deny? Nay, why? So simple, guileless and happy!
Red as fresh rose bud the lips she raised to his kisses.
So the ripe fruit dropp'd with little stir of the branches:
So she half woo'd him, and it was easy to win her.

Sweet are lovers' ways, in youth's bright May and his
morning:

Every gleam of light that glances, every shadow,
Nestling soft, for foil, it is a pleasure to follow.
Yet 'twould grieve our hearts with these a moment to
linger.

Swift the hours flew by: the plans were laid and completed.
All seem'd strange, but well, as Edith pass'd through the
village,

Through the well-known street, and by the door of the
hostel;

All estranged, with dreams ; like one who, silent, uncon-
scious,

Moves in sleep among the old familiar faces.

Scarcely remembering, changed, she to the rectory house-
hold,

To the three she met, who sat in silence beside her,

Speechless, when she came, nor raising eyes, that were
heavy

With tears shed and unshed, seem'd as one unforgotten,

Who is dead, but roams, a pensive ghost, in the places

Dear of old, well-known, till all are used to its presence ;

Till it somehow fails to be a fear and a wonder.

“ Speak not yet,” they said : “ let uncontrollable passion,

“ Flood-like, spend its strength. She will be sane in the
morning.”

But that morning never broke with its dawn and its healing.

In the hush of midnight all were silent and sleeping.

Edith lit a lamp, nor made a sound in the chamber.

She on tip-toe moved, and putting slowly together

This and that, she chose what suited well for a journey.

Not a book, ah, me ! She did not dream of the letter,

As she trod the stair, and loosed the door, in a flutter.

With a little glance, a tearful glance at her lattice,

Strange with vague regret to leave the chamber, so happy

Once, in days now gone, she fled away in the darkness.

Night gleam'd fair with stars, and God was silent in Heaven.

Many a winter eve, in little bar of the Heron,

Worthies croon'd together about the story of Edith.

When the North wind howl'd, and hail beat hard at the
window,

They would nod and wink, and love to hear it repeated.

“Roughish night, my lads!” would be the word of the landlord,

Stirring back to a blaze the logs beginning to smoulder :

“Where is she, I wonder !” and no one needed to ask him,

“Who ?” for all remember’d ; all the villagers loved her.

“She was wild :—nay, miller, never take me to mean it,

“She was bad : God help us ! I believe her an angel :

“Yet, I say it, too flighty.” Then the miller would answer :

“Parson kept her strict. Though it is well for a parson,

“You may do too much : girls cannot always be praying.

“Nephew shows, I think, but little now in the village.”

“Where is she ?” said the landlord, knocking slowly the ashes

From his pipe, and peering in the glow of the embers.

“Often, as I linger at my door in the morning,

“I look up the street, and ask it over and over.”

“France,” a gruff voice growl’d. The landlord smiled, in his cunning.

“Aye, John, aye : we know. Now, you have mended a coulter ;

“When you strike it hard, you know the ring of the metal.

“I have eyed that Frenchman : mark me, he was a scoundrel :

“Monkey-faced, cat-whisker’d. I ask only, where is she ?”

“Lives, they say, in Avranches,” the doctor said : “I remember

“Passing through it once, when I was only a student.

“Little town in Normandy, nestled high on a hill-top.

“Well I recollect the jingling bells of the horses,

“As we toil’d beside them up the road to the summit.

" You look down on the sea: the place is airy and pleasant."
 Each man sipp'd his glass, and all deferr'd to the doctor.
 But the landlord, ruffled,—“ She could tell us a story,
 “ Alice Dean, poor girl! Now I could swear it, her bantling
 “ Has his lip and eyes. All of us know what his lordship,
 “ In his quiet way, said, on the morning the rector
 “ Rode his lazy roan in such a foam to the mansion.
 “ ‘ He is gone,’ he said: ‘ he came to us with a letter:
 “ ‘ Was my first wife’s cousin: I, I saw him but little.’
 “ I know what I know; the man, I say, was a scoundrel.’
 So the landlord fill’d his pipe anew, and another
 Would tell how they found the little chamber so empty,
 Where she slept; and how the rector bridled and saddled,
 All himself, his roan; and how a woman at Dover,
 Whom he knew, a tramp, had seen them sail in the vessel:
 Then discuss the stranger, who, a friend of the rector,
 Kept the village straight, when he was ill with a fever:
 How his face was thinner, and all his manner more gentle,
 When, at last, he mended: and all the tales and the gossip:
 Till the clock struck midnight, in the corner, to warn them.
 Winter thaw’d to spring, and autumn faded to winter,
 Still again, and again; and still the story was fondled
 With the same old love; but nothing heard of the lost one.



PART II.

FOUND.



1.

BERTHOLD.

Seven long years, and winter:—the planet journeys for
ever,

Wreathed with snow and summer, down the silent abysses ;
Yet to man come surely newer cares and surprises.

Add, then, yet a spring: it is the time of the Passion.

Much is changed and unchanged in the hamlet of Orton.

New-cut names, new mounds, beside the tower or the
chancel.

Some, long sad, are happy ; some are sad, who were merry.

Bells of joy, of dole, have thrill'd the air of the valley.

Feet, now many a day tired of the stones and the plodding,

Rest at last, and ache not, beneath the green of the
hillocks ;

Feet of small new-comers roam in the* green of the
meadows.

Come, and let us see the little house of the curate.

Is it hard to find? Nay, you, in bloom of the morning,

See the church-tower shadow softly falling across it.

Through the holly hedge, into the garden before it,
 From the garden of God, you slip at once by a wicket.
 Fair it fronts the road, and looks on all that is passing.
 It is quaint, old-fashion'd: the roof is low; and the
 swallows

Now are hard at work, beneath the eaves, by the windows;
 Windows, old, once latticed, deep in gloom of the ivy,
 Framed in square-cut stones, the sombre stone of the
 quarries.

Half the benches fill the rustic porch, and about it
 Shine the green new leaves the roses hide in the summer.
 Mark the tiny lawn, all in a flame with the crocus:—
 Four trim little beds, with box edged round; and the
 hollies,

Carved to shapes fantastic, in defiance of nature,
 Quaint as antique prints made of the Garden of Eden.
 Broad and flagg'd, the path between the door and the
 gateway;
 Fringed with London-pride, and white and red of the
 daisies.

Many a passer-by will linger, eyeing the pleasance,
 O'er the white wood railing painted fair for the summer.
 Now the sun is setting and longer growing the shadows.
 Look again; you see him; in the porch he is sitting:
 It is Berthold Trevor, the curate, idol of Orton.

Here he lives alone in his little bachelor cottage.
 Do you deem him happy? Even now, as he muses,
 He, with lifelong grief, so all absorbing, so bitter,
 Bends beneath his load, and he is weary to bear it.
 Even as one, unsound, and in the springs of existence

Hurt, past cure,—who knows not,—little heeds or regards
 it,
 Feeling pain sometimes; and then is well, and forgets it;
 Deems life strong in him, and lays his plans, and is merry;
 Then some keener pang reveals the whole of the danger,
 Speaks the truth too clearly, dashing all his endeavour;
 So love gnaw'd the heart, and vex'd the brain, of the
 scholar.

Thus in thoughts bewilder'd giving rein to his trouble,
 He arose and lean'd on the little rail of his garden.
 “‘Be unhearten'd for ever:’ it was the word of the letter.
 “Is it true? I think it. All my spirit is broken.
 “All my life is void, and fruitless all its ambition.
 “Life, how fair, with promise! How will it be, in the
 future?
 “As a tree, men plant, brought from a clime that is sunny,
 “Pining, dwarf'd, regretting the congenial region.
 “If she were but dead! or if I knew she were happy!”

Then the noiseless voice of reason pleaded within him.
 “I am mad,” he mutter'd, “giving way to the folly
 “Of this love, this frenzy, this unreasoning passion.
 “What! again! sick fancies! after all the resistance!”
 He heard not the daws, that hover'd nigh in the church-
 yard,
 Building nests all day, and wrangling over the plunder.
 Gentle Rolf, his dog, the tawny friend of the children,
 Squeezing through the doorway, patter'd silently to him;
 Rubb'd his curly coat against the knee of his master,
 Looking up in vain, with longing tender and human.

Hurt, he slunk away, to grieve alone in his kennel.
Then, again, the master mutter'd low, in his anguish :—

“ Does she give me a thought, there, in her home o'er
the water ?

“ Is she well ? Is she happy ? It is strange she has
written,

“ Yet, no line, no word. Still all the change of the
seasons,

“ Winter, springtide, summer ; still the bountiful autumn,

“ Adding fruit to blossom ; yet no sign of my sister.

“ It is strange ! it is strange ! for she was always good-
hearted ;

“ Sparing needless pain to us who tenderly loved her.

“ Yea, God, how we loved her ! Can we be wholly for-
gotten ? ”

“ When,” he said, “ at Oxford, often, morning or even,

“ Shone her face in glory, gleam'd her eyes in their beauty,

“ All the page grew dim, the winged words of the masters,

“ Honey-mouth'd by Ilissus, hoarded grain of the ages,

“ Were as chaff winds drive. Yet soft as breezes of
August

“ Came love's breath, as airs blow to you over the roses.

“ Did I yield ? Nay, never ! Still I cried, ‘ it is folly.’

“ Swallow,” said he, “ flying from the home of the summer,

“ Did she greet you kindly, in the land of the poplars,

“ With a little sigh to see the eyes of her people ? ”

“ Now,” he said, “ I feel it : all in vain is the struggle.

“ Work ? Nay, love, I sicken. Love, I can bear it no
longer.

- “ Once I cried, ‘ O soul, I give my all to the mission
 “ ‘ Of the Love Eternal: I will arise, and be girded
 “ ‘ With the zeal of the Lord, and I will go on His errand,
 “ ‘ Nor be slack; and then, how will this joy of a mortal.
 “ ‘ This weak human passion, be a grain in the balance?’
 “ Ah, can two brief years so quench the zeal of the spirit?
 “ Frail is man, at his best; gross is the soul of the people.
 “ In the name of the Lord I issued forth to the battle.
 “ Then I seem’d as he, whose lips an angel of heaven
 “ Touch’d with coal from the altar; all the fire and the
 wonder
 “ Of His Truth seem’d, then, to cleave its way, as the
 flashes
 “ From the cloud, ere thunder rends the air with its terror.
 “ ‘ Yea,’ I cried, ‘ they listen: they will turn, and be holy.
 “ ‘ See! the beautiful Christ! Now they will cling, in a
 rapture,
 “ ‘ To His skirts, and follow, as blind of old in Judæa.’
 “ Yet they hear, and heed not: me they praise, in their
 folly:
 “ But the Lord, the Master?—they have harden’d their
 faces.
 “ All is as before,—the sin, the greed, and the meanness.
 “ Lord, their hearts Thou knowest. When, to the cry of
 Hosanna,
 “ Thou didst ride of old to the celestial city,
 “ Over garments strewn, and with the palms of the
 people
 “ Making fair the day, as with the joy of a triumph,—
 “ What a triumph then, to Thee, who heardest, as ever,
 “ From the dawn of time, another cry they would utter?

“Work?” he sigh’d, “I sicken: work is no longer a passion.

“The old dream comes back: now weak I grow to resist it.”

Little children three, who wander’d home to the village,
Bearing osier wands crown’d with the spoil of the wood-lands,

Dropp’d a curtsy quaint, to win the smile of the curate.
Fondly reason stray’d in magic sandals of dreaming.

“What,” he said, “have we to match the eyes of the children?”

“What were our sad days without their musical voices,

“Sweeter far to me than songs of birds in the copses?”

“Touch of tiny hands, I think the power of the Master

“Lives on still in you, and mystic wonder of healing.

“You are hillside dew, and as the flowers in the chamber

“Of the sick, O children! You again to the aged

“Bring their youth, long lost. You are the verdant oases

“Where the pilgrim rests, who journeys on in the desert

“Of this bitter world unto the home everlasting.

“Children?—Where are mine? Where do you hide in the darkness?”

“Will you never sit upon my knee in the even?”

“Will you never listen to the wonderful stories

“I so long to tell you, amid the gleam of the embers?”

Thus, anew, love’s pain, a fever raging within him,
Beat in trembling lip, and breast that heaved as a woman’s.

“I am ill,” he mutter’d, “and I can bear it no longer.

"I will go away :—a little change :—there is healing
 "In new scenes, new faces : I will go on a ramble,
 "On through grass and gorse, and heal the wound of the
 spirit.
 "Nature's touch and look have skill to charm, as a
 mother's,
 "Evil demons hiding within the souls of her offspring.
 "Whither, then?—no matter. But I will go: it is
 better."

"Once to see her," he sigh'd, "and but to know she is
 happy!"

With a subtle smile, as one who harbours a secret
 None can e'er read clear, he pass'd the homes of the
 sleepers.
 Greenly gleam'd the graves in level ray of the sunset.

In good heart he gain'd the little room of the rector ;
 Call'd his study, still : yet seldom now would he ponder
 Baxter, Taylor, Hall, the gilded tomes of the learned.
 By the fire, burnt low, the two were dreaming together.
 Dimly show'd the room in twilight's lingering glamour,
 Dim had grown their eyes with age and many a sorrow.
 She had laid her work a little while in the basket,
 He had closed his book. The curate paused, as he enter'd :
 What he came to say his heart misgave him to utter.

"They are growing older :"—thus he mused, as the faces
 Turn'd to greet him, lighted with a halo of welcome :—
 "She has changed of late ; her face is paler and sadder.
 "He has grown more childlike : one sees seldom or never,

“Now, the old stern look, which used to frighten the people.

“Now they love him, all, and children gather about him.

“He is twice as gentle as in the days of the trouble.”

Thus he mused; then spake, half of his journey repenting:—

“Widow Jolliffe call'd : her son is ill, and the doctor

“Thinks his end is come : and she has no one to look to.”

But with kindly talk, and helpful plans for the widow,
He regain'd his ease, and soon unfolded his project.

“I am not so well :—there, aunt, not ill : it is nothing :

“Only tired a little. It is with reading, I fancy,

“Rather too much, lately. Yes, I know I am foolish.

“I get out of spirits. I have not had, since the summer,

“Any change, you know ; I mean to go on a ramble,

“On through grass and gorse, and breathe the balm of
the heather.

“Greene has ask'd me, often, to come and see him in
Hampshire.

“With new scenes, new faces, with the sound of the
billows,

“I shall soon grow gay : a chat of times that are vanish'd,

“What could I have better ?—dear old days, by the Isis !

“I may even try a little sail in the Channel ;

“Touch the coast of France ; and come back strong as a
lion.”

At the word they started, looking hard at each other :

Then the rector rose, and would have tried to dissuade him.

But his sister spake, “Yes, I believe it is better

“He should go. Yes, Edmund. You have thought he was looking

“Scarce so strong of late.” “When do you go?” said the rector.

“I had thought, to-morrow,” he. Again at each other Look’d the two, but spoke not : in his soul he was troubled.

“I must do,” he said, “some little things in the village.” Sad and slow he left them, and of his journey repenting.

“What mad scheme is this?” the rector said ; and she answer’d,

Softly, sighing inly, “Do not seem to observe him.

“Edmund, do not check him : it would only confound him,

“If he deem’d we knew the hidden cause of his sadness.

“Now he thinks us blind ; he uses guile, as the ostrich

“Puts its head in the sand, and thinks, the while, it is hidden.

“Love must have its way. Now he is full of a longing

“But to set his feet within the land of his cousin.

“Once again to flame bursts up his smouldering passion.”

She read all, felt all ; and thus advised, in her wisdom.

But, to hide his tears, the old man turn’d to the window.

Mary Trevor watch’d him, grieving over her brother.

“Fast his hair grows grey, his limbs,” she murmur’d,
“are weaker :

“He begins to stoop,—I have observed it,—a little.”

When, as morn grew bright, they stood and saw, on the
doorstep,

Him they loved depart, his knapsack over his shoulder,
Tears were on their faces, yet in words they were silent :
Silent not in heart, as each in fervour to heaven
Breathed a prayer, God heard, that He would guide him
and heal him.

II.

OVER SEA.

Who is this who roams the peaceful shore of Newhaven,
Mid the white chalk boulders, wreck and wear of the
winter;

Casting wistful looks across the sea, as it whispers,
Creeping toward his feet, and seems to lure and invite
him ?

It is Berthold Trevor. "Shall I go ?" he is saying.

"Go not : it is frenzy," is the chiding of reason.

Yet, when midnight sounds, he is away on his journey ;

Leaning o'er the prow, to watch the shadowy water.

Soon Dieppe's grey cliffs, in lifting haze of the morning ;

Soon the jingling bells, and busy quays, and the shipping.

But he did not tarry to wander down by the shingle.

Still, no rest : still onward, heart, so nigh to be broken.

It is eve. It is Rouen. Stars are clouded in heaven.

Dark the moonless night ; no placid silvery glimmer

On the broad Seine river, as it flows in the darkness.

Him no Rouennais sees, as he roams, as a phantom,

Past the ships, moor'd black, amid the dreams of the
sleepers ;

Past the lamp-lit quays, or reedy marge, where the poplars
 Whisper, sad for day, along the gloom of the valley.
 Then the night brought dreams, and bitter shame for his
 weakness.

Then, when dawn broke fair, and he arose from his slumber,
 "Fool!" he cried, "forget her?" "Yea," he sighed, "I
 will follow,

"For awhile, for pleasure, hill and vale, and the sweetness
 "Of this Norman land; then will return, and for ever
 "Banish dreams too empty, and this idiot folly."

Through the sunny morning, making show to be happy,
 In the tiny steamer, on, away, on his journey,
 Went the curate up the smoothly-wandering river.
 And, if nature could make well the wounds of a lover,
 She had done it then, with soft aerial distance,
 With white inland cliff, and willow fringe, and the quiet
 Of the green Seine isles, and sweetly-hovering beauty.

By and bye they gain'd a little town, on the margin
 Of the stream, and landed. Then he strolls in the market.
 In among the mills he goes, with curious glances:
 But the wheels are still; it is the morning of Easter.
 Well he liked to note the workmen's serious faces,
 Lined with thought, and quiet. "Work," he murmur'd,
 "is noble.

"I, why am I idle? Work is holiest duty.

"Yea, and bliss comes with it; so we learn, if we try it.

"Comes oblivion, too: De Balzac, wisely you figure

"Toil a demi-god dipp'd in the water of Lethe.

"Yea," again he asked, as if in anger, impatient,

"Why am I here idle?" Nought he murmur'd in answer.

And, ere noon, he wander'd, restless, far from the river,
 Over wooded hills ; until he gain'd, in the silence
 Of the vales, a hillside, where the graves, with their crosses,
 Look'd to South, but caught the fading glow of the sunset.
 Near is Louviers, and here awhile he will linger.

In the even roaming,—it was the day, when the Master
 Rose, and angels chanted, looking down from the crystal,—
 On the air he heard the sweet Gregorian music.

Through the street he went, and into gloom of the Minster
 Pass'd, by saints in stone, that stood in guard in the portal.
 Dim and old, the place : it seem'd a dream and a relic
 Of the years long dead. But living forms of the people.—
 Snow-white Norman caps, bare heads, and many a bon-
 net,—

Fill'd each bench and aisle. And soon the holy procession
 Moved with lingering tread among the shadowy pillars.
 Worn and grey with time, and looking strange with the
 season.

White-robed children pass'd, with childish wandering
 glances ;

Wreathed with roses, singing : in the light of the tapers,
 As they moved, or paused by shrine of saint or apostle,
 Flash'd as brandish'd sword the silver gleam of the crosses.
 Rose and died the chorus ; and the refrain of the voices,
 All the antique hymn, the tender lingering cadence,
 Moved his soul to tears. What dreams he ? Why is he
 melted ?

What strange echo wakes amid the gloom of his fancy ?
 Nay, he must away : he cannot bear it : he wanders,
 Restless, through the night, to cool the fire of his yearning.

So he gain'd a city, and, past the shivering poplars,
Through the noiseless streets, crept on, footsore, to the
hostel.

Morning streak'd the east behind the silent cathedral,
Like the gleam of truth behind the forms of religion.
Long he heard in dreams the sweet bewildering music.

He awoke, ere noon, and bat-wing'd care on his eyelids
Hung; and daylight frown'd. To him, in joy of the
morning,

Hither, thither, now, was little spirit to wander,
Pleased with cap and kirtle, and with the cries of the
hawkers.

He, ere long, sore-footed, in the yard of the hostel,
Slung his knapsack on. What does he say? Do you
hear him?

He is muttering low, unheeding eyes of the damsels:—
“Tired are grown my feet; I will away to the cities
Which the sea-breeze freshens, built on hills of the
granite.”

Self-deceived, he yearns to reach the goal of his longing.

Fast the wheels speed o'er the iron road of the moderns.
On, by lingering stream, by hill and dell, and the blossom
Of the orchards, hinting all the guerdon of autumn:
Past the fields made rich with easy toil of the oxen;
Many a nestling town, and rill, and many a ruin:
Past Bernay, Lisieux; and, mid your willowy meadows,
You, grey spires of Caen, which catch the brine of the
ocean.

Now, the red-ribb'd rock, and old St. Lô, and the Minster,
Pointing heavenward still, above the cry of the valleys.

Will he linger?—See! he stands, in wane of the sunset,
On the hill, and watches mists that rise in the hollow.
There the people cower, in houses huddled together,—
Grim, lean faces, pallid,—when the daylight is over.
Still in misery true, as one they toil and they suffer;
Souls brim-full of curses, but ever kind to each other.
Denser coils the mist with smoke of many a cottage,
Stretch'd from hill to hill; until the shadowy valley
Seems a storm-spread sea. The sunset draws, for an omen,
Wild weird blood-red streaks above the gloom of the hill-
side.

Strange it seems, unreal, as he beholds in the silence;
Like a dream of hell. And still he gazes, and voices
Come, at times, forlorn, as of the souls in perdition.
All the misery, then, of this world rose in his vision:
Phantom dreams of bliss, that are despair, and the crying
Of the souls, unheard by rulers hiding their faces:
Sadness, none can utter: all man bears of his fellow:
All the waste of toil, the sweat and grime of the foreheads
Of the poor, held down, as with a stone, by the masters:
All the needless woe, in eyes too sad to be lifted
Upward toward the sun, in hearts o'erburden'd and broken.
Then within him trembled sudden pain and a passion
To behold the sea, and hide away from his kindred.
Nay, not here will peace come to his soul, that is wounded.

Morning. Jingling bells. Is it for bells he is happy?
Crack the whip: away! Awake the horn, with its echoes.

See, the beauteous spires of Coutances, calm on the
summit

Of the granite hill! Awake the horn, with its echoes.
Crack the whip: away! And, now, the silvery glitter
Of that rock-strewn sea, and busy noise of the seaport.

Lingering, 'mid the shells. The lisp of waves that are
quiet.

Sea-beat rocks, fantastic, with the wear of the ages.
Sunset. Glamour. Stars. The mystic murmurs of
nature.

Unresolved resolve, and nigh-won goal of his wishes.

Morning. Jingling bells. Is it for bells he is happy?
Crack the whip: away! It is a wild fascination.
Little bells, ring gaily! ring, O bells of the horses!
Ring, o'er long-back'd hills, and ring in many a hollow:
Bells, to him too sweet! The heart beats loud in his bosom.
Noon: they climb the steep. It is the hill of the doctor,
Oft so well recall'd in friendly bar of the Heron.

He is here: yea, me! Thus reason panders to folly.
They,—but folly's foils; sea-longing, smile of the land-
scape;
Misery's haunted eyes, the music's lingering sadness.
He is here: yea, me! Thus folly parleys with reason.

Fool! if he should meet her!—what is it then he is seeking?
Does he know? does he ask? His look is fever'd and
restless.

On, through square and street, he wanders hither and
thither.

Every woman's face strikes through his soul, as he wanders,
Indefinable hope and indefinable terror.

Is she changed? Will tears rise in her eyes to behold him?
Will she be alone? Will she go by as a stranger?
Will the ancient wrong flush up again in her forehead?
Will she, looking sad, with looks that crave his forgiveness,
Press his hand, and ask him "how are all in the village?"
Is she dead?—What dreams! what dreams in dreams!
but she comes not.

Daylight wanes apace; he stands alone on the terrace
Of the people's garden, anigh the boughs of the lindens.
Far beneath the tide is dropping low in the river.
Sounds of hoofs, far off, come up to him from the valley:
Or some damsel's song, or vesper bell; or the whistle
Of a bird. More still, more sweet for all, is the silence.
Clear and calm the air; and o'er the stream and the
ocean,

Dazzling eyes too sad, the light, of many a colour,
Gleams and burns and dies. You seem to hear in the stillness
Waves lap Mount St. Michel, but that is only a fancy.
Look again, all changes: thick are falling the shadows
O'er the new-leaved woods, that stretch away, in their
beauty,

Far as eye can wander, hiding many a chateau.
One shows yet, aflame with gold in every window:
Strange his eye should note it: even now it is darken'd.

Near the gardener stole :—"Saw you, Sir, now, in your
journeys,

"Many a scene like that?" Then, he,— "Not many a sweeter
Have I seen : scarce one." A little smile, at the answer,

Lit the old man's mouth : he said, "Not many a sweeter
Would you see, young man, if you should journey for ever."

Round his eye roved still : "Who lives," he said, "in the
chateau,

"Where the sunset flames?" And then he carelessly noted

Women down below, who spread the nets of the boatmen

On the small stream's marge, and scarce remember'd his
question.

But his face grew hot, his lips were pallid, and quiver'd,

As he heard once more the hated name of the Frenchman.

"Leastways, his the chateau," said the gardener, eyeing

But the dense dew falling : "though I say that he lives
there,

"That he scarcely does. They stay awhile, in the summer,

"Wife and he, sometimes, to make a change for the
children.

"He is southern blood. He lives away by the Garonne ;

"Like a prince, they tell." The old man, ready to chatter

Till the stars grew bright, stared in amaze, when the
stranger

Forced a cold "good-even," and slunk away from the
garden.

"Is she well? Is she happy?" She is well : she is happy.

What then, now?—Nay, weeping? Is there more, in the
future,

He would fain unravel? While the stars in the heavens

Moved in mystic dance to the celestial music,
 He, with love-led feet, about the shadowy mansion
 Moved; and saw the blinds drawn as for death, and the
 faces
 Of shy phantom children peer, and round by the laurels
 While skirts glance and flee; and still at times, in the
 darkness,
 Rang and died away the mocking semblance of laughter.

Morn; he will be gone. Why linger more? It is over.
 Nay, return! No more his feet are eager to wander
 In the pleasant land. And nothing, now, that he looks on,
 Will to him bring joy. Has he a thought? it is only
 But to gain once more the little house of the curate,
 Where his dog will miss him. Hill and wandering river,
 Tinkling rill and wood. He leans, forlorn, in the twilight,
 By the blasted keep, that dreams of glittering battle,
 While the Vire, impatient, roars below in the valley,
 By its mills, as when, beside it, many a chorus
 Roar'd, more loud, for you, and died in many an echo,
 Jolly Basselin. Night, with its wildering phantoms:
 Fleckless morn, again. All as before: and the falling
 Of the dark: and Caen; and spires, and bells; and the
 jostle
 Of the thronging folk: but he forlorn. And the breaking,
 Like tale told too often, of golden day: and the steamer
 Down the Orne: and nets; and sunny sea; and the head-
 lands.
 So the Seine-mouth bar, and peaceful harbour of Honfleur.

III.

LITTLE ETHEL.

It is nigh flood tide: fresh comes the breeze from the
river:

Bright the sun looks down on the little harbour of Hon-
fleur.

Now it yields to Berthold a bitter pleasure to linger
Still awhile in her land, before he leave it for ever.

All the morn he wander'd,—and it is pleasant to wander
In that peaceful region,—along the shore or the hillsides.
There are winding vales, the wind lulls in, by the orchards
White with apple bloom, around the homes of the peasant.
There are shady lanes, the chaffinch loves, and the linnet.
There are wooded hollows, you may find, and be lost in,
Where the birds sing best, and wood-doves murmur con-
tented;

Where, through some blue gap, as blue as wing of the
swallow,

Ships go by, to bear their freight o'er many a billow.

There are wind-swept heights, with whin in bloom, and
the heather,

Where you dream, and hear the grey gull's cry o'er the
water.

Thus awhile there stole a softer humour upon him,
 Nature touch'd his heart ; as sunbeams, falling in winter,
 Touch the ice, and melt it into tears for a season.
 Seem'd his love, a moment, but as the dream of a dreamer.
 He, but half unblest, and pleased, returning, to linger,
 Sat content awhile, a little tired with his ramble.
 Not a sweeter spot could he have chosen to rest in.

From the town you climb, beneath the frown of the
 houses,
 Till at last they end : then you must toil in ascending.
 But fair elm-trees keep the heat away, and the hill-side
 On the left hand shields you, as you climb to the summit.
 You are glad to gain the pleasant goal, and be quiet,
 Cool with elm and beech, and dim in glare of the noonday.
 All is fair green sward, half wood, half lawn, and the
 benches,
 Placed by many a bole, are cut and carved by the pilgrims.
 Many pilgrims seek the little shrine of the Chapel
 Of our Lady of Grace, you see mid green of the branches.
 Women sit here, knitting, by their wares,—for the pious.
 Crosses, rosaries, books, and shells and toys for the chil-
 dren.
 On the steep slope edge, to catch the eye of the seamen,
 As they drop down tide, to fish, or fare o'er the ocean,
 Stands the Calvaire : hither mothers come, with the
 loved ones ;
 Teach the little hands to make the sign of religion ;
 Teach the little knees to kneel, awhile, in devotion
 To the Lord, the Son, and Mary, Israel's Lily.
 Here you sit, and watch the sails go by, and the water

Murmurs far below, and blue and calm is the river ;
 And the sunshine gleams on white cliffs over the channel,
 And Le Havre, dimly, meets the eye in the distance ;
 While to left away, and smooth'd of every ripple,
 Spreads the fair pale light and dim horizon of ocean.

Here he sat, and dream'd of dim-grown days, and the
 changes

Time will bring about ; and, now and then, in his
 dreaming,

Mark'd a child of seven, a little girl, by the beeches,
 Peering round for flowers : and she was clad in the home-
 spun

Which the poor folk wear, but had an air that was
 gentle.

By and bye, as taking little heed of his presence,
 To the bench she stole ; and soon spread o'er it her
 plunder,—

Violets, windflowers, and primroses, and the treasure
 Which the spring-tide hoards in woods and shadowy places.

She began to sort them, neatly binding together
 Those not soil'd or broken, and laid them where he was
 seated :

Then, with voice as sweet as birds that sadden at even,
 Spake, not looking up, as if she knew that he watch'd
 her :—

“ These are for mamma : I am so glad : what a number !

“ Violets, of all things ! for you must know that she loves
 them

“ Best of all. How lucky ! Now mamma will be happy.”

With a glad surprise he bent an ear to the music
 Of his English tongue, heard in the land of the stranger.
 So he took the flowers, and, leaning o'er them, he an-
 swer'd,—

“Does she? so do I.” “O yes,” she said, “and I wonder
 “Who does not! what scent!” then with her delicate
 fingers

Pluck'd the heads off many laid beside her, rejected ;
 Shaping letters with them. “There!” she said, “do you
 know it?

“Do you know my name? you must be quiet a minute :

“I will make it for you. Letter E,—that begins it :

“T, H, E, then L. But, yes, I know you can spell it.

“That is all : now read it : there it is: LITTLE ETHEL.”

Then she left the flowers, and came and lean'd with her
 elbows

On his knees, and scan'd his pale face o'er, and was silent.
 Deep her thoughts, awhile ; and he was charm'd with the
 strangeness

Of the large brown eyes, so sad and dreamy and absent :

All too sad and absent, for a child, for the summers

She had known, so few. Soon, with her survey con-
 tented,

Little Ethel smiled : she said,—“I knew you were English.

“So are we. Mamma is. I am, too.—Did I tell you?

“My papa is dead. Is yours?” He tenderly kiss'd
 her :

“Yes,” he said ; and, thinking, scarcely seem'd to re-
 member

When he knew her first, he seem'd so long to have known
her.

“That is why you are sad,” with look of sorrow she
whisper'd.

Berthold did not answer, but with his hand, that was
gentle

As a woman's, softly smooth'd away from the forehead
Of his new-found friend the loose brown hair, for it
wander'd

Wild, and seldom heeded. “Yes,” he thought, “you are
pretty,

“Care-worn little face;” and mused awhile to remember
Such a face, but could not. Then, because she was silent,
He began to chatter, asking many a question,

For he lov'd to hear the sweet low voice, as it murmur'd
This and that, confiding. “Do you know how I like it,
“Talking here?” she said. “We are so dull. You have
never

“Come before up here, or I should surely have seen you;

“For I come here often. And, yes, indeed, it is lovely.

“And it makes me well, mamma says. Now, I must tell
you,

“I am not so strong, and ill sometimes in the winter.

“I come all myself: she sits at home with her knitting,

“All day long. She paints. O you should look at the
pictures

“Which she does: such dear ones; full of roses and lilies!”

He awhile was happy with the smiles and the prattle
Of his tiny friend. The bitter load of his burden

Still a child could lessen. He was not wholly forsaken
Of the God who keeps His dear ones tender and simple.

Thus the noon wore on ; and by and bye little Ethel
Thought of home. She said, " I must go, now. Are you
sorry ?

" I believe you are. And I am, too.—Are you going ?

" Which way ? This ? Come, then." She took the hand
of the curate ;

And, beside him skipping, never silent a moment,
Led him down the hill. And when they came to the
houses,

Down the street she pointed :—" that is where we are
living,"

Ethel said, " three steps, and such a crazy old window.

" It is poor, you know ; but we shall live in a better,

" When mamma grows rich. I wonder, when." So he
kiss'd her

On the thin small lips, and made as though he would
leave her.

" Good-bye, then," she said, " but come again in the
morning.

" Will you ? " " Yes," he promised, and yet the promise
was broken.

Why ? Well, hear. He follow'd. It was a whim or a
fancy ;

Idle. Yet he follow'd. She disappear'd through the
doorway.

He was sadder, then ; yet but as one who is sadder

When the sunshine hides too soon in rainy November.

Not a thought had he of nearing change, of the blossom
 Of his fate, to open into flower in a moment.
 Not a pulse beat faster, not a stir or a tremor
 Of the soul, fore-hinting. All was cloud in his future ;
 Not a touch of colour relieved the grey of existence,
 As he saw by chance the sidelong face through the window.
 Yet he knew it,—well. How many changes of seasons,
 Pass'd o'er it! what care! what unread pain! Yet he
 knew it.

White his lips as ashes, as fast he fled, with the terror
 Of a strange new fear,—lest she should flee, and escape
 him.

But she did not see him. And now he knew little Ethel,—
 All the mournful story. It flash'd on him as the lightning.
 Yea, perchance he wrong'd her, who in soul was as spotless
 As the Maiden Mother. But in his heart he forgave her
 All things, done and undone. Love is a god in forgive-
 ness.

So this letter sped, neath moon and stars, o'er the billows,
 Like a flame, to thrill the weary silence of Orton :—
 “She is here. Come quickly. She does not know I have
 seen her.”

Thus it was the curate broke the word of his promise.

Much he long'd to go ; he long'd to see little Ethel ;
 Long'd to hear her prattle, and in its sound to remember
 Sounds of other days ; to see again, in the glitter
 Of her sweet sad eyes, a light now faded for ever.
 But he dared not ; thinking, “it may be that the mother
 “May come, too, to look at this mysterious stranger.”
 So all day, till dusk, along the shore of the river,

Roam'd he, southward, shunning any chance of a meeting.
 On the shingly beach he sat, and play'd with the pebbles,
 Like a child, content, and watch'd the curve of the ripple,
 Dreaming happy dreams of better days in the future.

But at night, when darkness screen'd him well,—as a
 lover

Is more happy, knowing he is near to his mistress,—
 Paced he, breathing quicker, to and fro by the window :
 Yet in soul was loyal, never pausing a moment
 By the ill-drawn blind, bright with the flare of the lamp-
 light.

What would he have seen ? He would have seen little
 Ethel,

Watching woodlogs blaze upon the hearth, with her elbows
 On her knees, her face between her hands, and her forehead
 Hid with dark brown hair : there, on her stool in the corner,
 Deeply pondering why he did not hold to his promise ;
 Sad for love so wrong'd, and hardly learning endurance :
 And the mother sitting, with a tear on her eyelid,
 As she work'd, with thinking of the Spring in the village,
 Making glad the woods around the home of her girlhood.

Morn once more, and noon, and sailors' cries, and the
 vessel

From Le Havre, bringing all the curious faces :
 So, wayworn, sad-hearted, the rector landed in Honfleur.

Till the dark they stay'd : but when the tide in the harbour
 Lapp'd the piers, fast-rising, when the lights of the vessel,
 Mix'd with moonlight, shone, and made a show of departure,
 Then the rector, quickly, pass'd alone by the houses ;

Found the one, and enter'd ; at the door of the lodger
 Paused, and held his breath ; then, gently turning the
 handle,
 Unannounced, pass'd in : he stood there, smiling, and
 looking
 Like some heavenly saint, with mild wide eyes, in a
 picture ;
 Stood there, saying only, softly murmuring, " Edith."

Starting up to her feet, as if a moment she doubted,
 One wild look she gave him, full of strangeness and terror.
 Then a sudden change pass'd o'er her face, as she saw him
 Moving towards her, smiling, very silent, and holding
 Both hands wide, to clasp her as a child to his bosom.
 She, with joyful cry, fell on her knees by the father ;
 Hid her face in her hands, and sobb'd, " I pray you, forgive
 me !"

And the deep sobs shook her, and she trembled and shiver'd,
 As one out of whom goes forth a demon of evil.

Gently then he raised her ; he kiss'd her, tenderly saying,—
 " I am come for you. The steamer stays in the harbour.
 " Come, the tide is full. You must not linger a minute."

Edith did not speak ; she calm'd herself with an effort.
 Now once more she put a little bundle together ;
 Drew some money forth, and, from a niche by the curtain
 Of the bed, a brooch, and folded all in a letter ;
 Then, with pencil, quickly, wrote the name of the woman
 Of the house, who loved her, and left it there on the
 table ;

Quickly clad herself, and clad the child, and was ready.
Softly forth they stole, and crept along through the
shadows.

Moonlight on the sea : the stars are fair, and a softness
In the air broods light and full of promise of summer.
Berthold leans, and dreams, and still beside him, in silence,
Little Ethel wonders at the roll of the water.
Edith sleeps below ; the rector silently watches.
Berthold has not seen her, and yet she knows he is with
them.

“ Speak now,” Ethel whisper’d, “ tell me, where are we
going ? ”

Berthold said, “ To England.” In a moment she answer’d,

“ O I am so glad ! for I have wanted so often

“ To see England. Shall we,—do you know ? will you tell
me ?—

“ Shall we see the church, and pretty graves, and the lady,

“ In the little village where mamma was so happy ? ”

“ Yes,” he said. Then, Ethel,—“ Shall we see uncle
Berthold ? ”

What a sweet surprise ran through his veins as he listen’d

Weeping fast, he answer’d, with a quiver of pleasure,

“ I am uncle Berthold : ”—sobbing low, in the darkness.

She, in France, unfriended, had thought of him as a
brother



PART III.

BACK TO THE NEST.



I.

WAITING AND WATCHING.

Weeks go by, and May : and June is near : and the singing
Of the birds grows still, in leafy lanes and the woodlands.
Fair with morning smiles the peaceful hamlet of Orton,
White with apple-blossom : but Edith lies in her chamber.
'Tis the selfsame room where, in the magical season
Of her youth, she caroll'd at the morning's awaking :
Where, at night,—bare feet,—she, in a tremor of wonder,
Watch'd the pole-star's gleam, and mystic splendour of
 heaven :

Now she scarcely thinks if it be morning or even.
When, in France, so long, through bitter years of her trial,
All seem'd lost,—when, often, even craving of hunger
Gnaw'd her,—it was hard : there was a struggle within
 her :

Yet her heart bore up, and she was harden'd to bear it ;
As one, wreck'd, swims on, and battles slow with the
 breakers.

But as that one, hurt, and overstrain'd with his effort,
Grasps the land at last, and, senseless, falls on the shingle,

So, nigh crazed, outworn, she touch'd the shore of her
country.

Then, when home, again, with hands enfolded about her,
Thaw'd the ice-cold breast, her blood ran wild into fever.
Week by week she lay, and toss'd, a waif, on the billow
Of bewildering dreams, and terror fell on the household.
Death, with listening ear, stood by the door of the
chamber.

But not all in vain the wind had blown in her tresses,
On the hills, long since ; and life was hardy within her.
Now the worst is past, and she begins to recover.

Dreamy, vague, sad eyes, what is it hides in the strange-
ness

Of the light that floats beneath the gloom of her lashes ?
Would she rather die ? What is it saddens the pallor
Of the pain-blanch'd cheek, that rests forlorn on the
pillow ?

Sunshine falls in vain, and songs of birds, and the music
Of the winsome tongue, that speaks, sometimes, in a
whisper.

Do we need to tell you who is there by the curtain ?
But she seems to listen, when at times, through the
window,

Bark or laugh betrays Rolf at his gambols with Ethel ;
While her eye will rove, perplex'd a moment, and linger
On the fair wild flowers on the little table beside her.

Leave the sick room : come ; and let us find little Ethel.
Here she sits, beside the cross so dear to the rector,
On the step, content, her feet in flowers of the daisies.

Change and freedom make her cheeks like roses already :
 Now the old sad look has quicken'd into a brighter.
 She has wreathed Rolf's neck with chains of flowers for a
 collar.

On one tiny shoe he rests his nose, as he watches
 Every whim and look and sudden smile of his mistress ;
 Knows the flowers for him, and wags his tail, acquiescing.
 See, she drops the flowers : she lifts a finger, and listens ;
 While the clock begins its sleepy tale in the steeple.

“ One : two : three : ”—she counts : and up she springs,
 and is eager ;

Gives the dog a hug, as if to rouse him to action.

“ Rolf, yes, that is ten : we must be there in a second.

“ Come, quick ! do you hear ? ” She gives the flowers, in
 the ribbon

Of her neat straw hat,—the while she turns it, coquette-
 like,—

Just a glance, a touch, to have it all that is perfect :

'Neath pert little chin she ties the strings like a woman :

Then they run, and gain the curate's garden together.

“ Hush ! ” she says : “ Now, stop ! ” and, creeping round
 to the window,

Taps, though it is open. Then she cowers, and is quiet.

Next, she stands on tip-toe, peering in through the case-
 ment ;

Pulls her slim self up, and puts her head through the
 lattice.

“ It is ten, you know. We cannot stay. Are you ready ?

“ It has struck. Where are you ? You are under the
 table.

“Come from under, there. I see your coat, uncle Berthold.

“I will take your hat.” But quick he sprang to the rescue :

Seized it first, and laugh'd, and soon was round in the garden.

So the two together, through the wall of the holly,
Go, and by the graves, and o'er the lawn, to the orchard ;
Hand in hand run down the green incline of the meadows.

Edith heard their feet, she heard them pause neath the window,

Whispering who lay there, in soften'd tones of compassion.

Now she lifts her head a little while from the pillow,

Bends her ear to catch the voice of one unforgotten :

Shuddering, knows it well : and, as it dies in the distance,

With lost look sinks back, and shuts her eyes, and is silent.

Weary dreams she has, like ghosts that roam o'er a water.

Seem her thoughts like those who, setting sail from the harbour,

In some ship well-built, to cross the curve of the ocean,

Come no more to land, but bleach in vales that are sunless.

Strange !—Now he is calm ; his work is all that he wishes.

Life a new lease takes :—is she not here in the village ?

He has faith to trust the unread scroll of the future.

On the bridge they paused, and, looking down at the minnows,

Soon the curate's stick drops, as a challenge, among them.

Fast the scared things hide, neath roots and leaves of the cresses.

Rolf is in : he has it : now he is scouring the meadows,
 Baffling all their craft, and still retaining the trophy.
 When, the long fields pass'd, they reach'd the wood and
 the copses,
 Up the hill they climb'd, and hid from Rolf in the
 thickets.

Still they took the way that Edith chose, on the morning
 When the dull-eyed care first set his sign on her forehead ;
 When life's angel first join'd with the angel of sorrow,
 In a league, to make her spirit strong by endurance.

Now the curate strove to please his friend, little Ethel :
 Pleased himself, withal ; for he was childlike and simple.
 Whom the dewdrops please has double chance to be noble :
 He that weighs a star may still be charm'd with a pebble.
 These a blackbird's nest made glad awhile on the hillside :
 Nestling primrose root, as good as gold to the children :
 Wind-flowers, past their best, and pungent leaves of the
 sorrel,

With its shy pale flowers, by elm-tree bole, mid the
 mosses.

When the failing wood left bare hill-sward to the
 summit,—

Save the tangling fern,—they raced to climb to the
 beacon :

'Twas a merry morn : they, breathless, gain'd it together :
 Saw the far blue hills, and the meandering river :

So, at last, descended, scrambling down through the
 bracken.

Now their mirth and laugh ring in the gloom of the quarry,
 While the rabbit, chased, flees in alarm to his burrow :

While the magpie makes the wood alive with his chatter.

Now, the pine-grove's night, they linger fondly within it :
Find the dripping well, and call aloud through the
cavern ;

Break, with dipping lips, their mirror'd forms in the
water.

So, the road, the bridge, the busy stir of the village ;
So the lane, the limes, the little wall, and the laurels.

At the rectory gate the curate emptied his pockets
Of the green pine-cones, and kiss'd the child, and departed.

Then the child, half wild, ran up the stairs, to the
chamber ;

But she check'd her foot, when, at the door, she re-
member'd.

“ Dear mamma is ill,” she thought, “ and I shall awake
her :

“ Now she sleeps, perhaps : ”—and softly stole, like a sun-
beam,

To the white bed foot, and met the smile of the mother.

So she moved more near, and spake, and lean'd on her
elbows,

While the mother smooth'd the soft brown hair from the
forehead.

“ See, mamma, what flowers ! ” she said, and show'd, in
her basket,

Gems the hill-top loves : and Edith smiled to behold
them,

As one will, who finds some lost thing, wholly forgotten :—

“ Yellow mountain pansies ! You have been to the beacon !

“ These I know so well ! they only grow by the beacon.

“Who has been with you?” And Ethel said, “Uncle Berthold.

“They are all for you, because he knows that you love them.”

Edith bent her cheek to Ethel’s brow, for the colour flush’d up in it, strange, at simple words of her prattle.

“He is good,” she said: “you must do all that he bids you.

“You are grown great friends, but do not teaze or annoy him.”

“No, indeed!” she laugh’d: “he likes to run in the meadows.

“Rolf, he goes with us; and you shall go with us, also:

“Uncle Berthold says. Make haste, mamma, to be better:

“Now you are so weak, you could not climb to the beacon.”

Edith closed her eyes, and thoughts grew burning within her.

Mary Trevor watch’d each fitful change of expression;
Saw the pain, and lured the little seer from her presence.
In the glass she set the drooping gems of the hill-top.

“Amnt,” at last she said, “why did he gather the pansies?”
Look’d the sweet face up, but only smiled, for an answer.
Now, give ear, awhile; now, let us try if the scalpel
Of a singer’s wit can touch the cause of her trouble.

Fell a time, long since, when, yet unlearn’d to distinguish
Love that flaunts in light from love that hides in the
shadow;

When, ungentle grown,—with wounded pride, and the
folly

Of a damsel's dreams,—to childhood's tenderer passion ;
Still her heart was ripe for love, and words of a lover.

Then, to reason blind, by skilful hand of the spoiler,
As a bird, new-fledged,—with love and anger together,—
She was snared, ah, me! she, grasping only the sem-
blance,

Seem'd to seize love's bliss, and slip the doom that awaited.
Sweet illusion, strange ! So one, neath blaze of the tropic,
When the gourd is dry, pricks on, apine for the water ;
Finds the fair-spread lake is but the sand of the desert.

Ere a week grew old she knew the gold from the glitter.
Then her heart fled back, on wings of yearning and pity,
Beating 'gainst the past, as frighten'd bird at a window.
Then she felt his worth ; she knew she tenderly loved
him ;

Weigh'd, with blank despair, the loss and gain of her
madness.

But, since sighs were vain, she bent her mind to the
present ;

Strove to love her lord, and look but on to the future.

Best love comes by use : she might have grown to be
happy.

Yet love's bud was nipp'd ; for he grew tired of the sweet-
ness

Of the wayside flower, he wore awhile, for his pleasure :
Ere a month no more his foot was heard on the threshold.
Soon, too soon, she learn'd she was betray'd and forsaken.
Then she fled :—what hate ! what bitter scorn ! and a
passion,

Which the angels wept to see recorded in heaven.

Now the old lost love, with double power, was upon her :

Now she check'd it not, and this upheld her in weakness.

So the months went by, and then was born little Ethel.

So the years went by, and still she toil'd and endured
them.

Ne'er she dream'd again to see the friend of her child-
hood,

Ne'er again to gain the peaceful hamlet of Orton :

Yet, in lonely hours,—hers all were so,—and in sorrow,—

Had she, then, aught else ?—she loved and brooded upon
him.

She recall'd his love, his winning ways, and his kindness.

She forgave what seem'd a little cold in his manner ;

Even that deep slight,—for it she tender'd excuses.

And, as all this love was but a dream, it was sweeter ;

So she never tried to live it down, or subdue it :

Kept it, as one keeps a lock of hair, for a relie

Of some loved one, dead, who will not claim it or miss it.

This was all her bliss, amid the toil and endurance :

As, in Alpine hills, some little spur of the granite

Shines with laughing flowers, mid sullen flow of the ice-
stream.

Found,—brought home,—all chang'd : then she could hold
him no longer

For her love, her own, though but in dreams in the mid-
night.

Now she dared not fan the hidden flame of her passion,

Dared to keep no more her tender memories of him.

All her bliss became a bitter pain, in a moment.

In her inmost heart glad, even now, that she loved him

More than all the world, she fed despair with his presence.

As a weird light plays, in fitful gleams, on the fringes
Of some ink-black storm, that blots the day with its
passing,

Gleams of feverish hope play'd on the cloud of her sorrow;
When he loved the child, or pluck'd the flowers of the
woodside,

Or the sister spake in stealthy praise of his goodness.
Then she seem'd a fool, and would not harbour the solace.
So, with blank despair, with bitter gall of the hoping,
She grew well-nigh mad; and, tossing there on the
pillow,

Wished for Honfleur back, where she could dream and be
happy.

Now, she long'd,—she dreaded: yet she long'd,—to behold
him;

Shrank to breathe his name, yet never tired of his praises.

So it was she said, “why did he gather the pansies?”
Feeling blindly out, as one who, whirl'd in the eddy,
When some ship goes down, spreads out his arms for a
rescue.

Then, when Mary Trevor only smiled for an answer,
“Why not come?” she thought. Then she recall'd how
he found her;

How she went away. A sudden tremor of horror
Thrill'd her soul with fear: her lips grew white, and con-
tracted.

“Aunt, how good you are! You do not care to remember
“All I did,” she said. “What thinks he now? Is it
only

“ Good you deem of me, or something harder to pardon ?
 “ God forbid your thoughts have added shame to the
 folly ! ”

Edith wrong'd them now, for not of shame, for a minute,
 Had the true hearts dream'd a touch had fallen upon her :
 Though they guess'd, too well, the wrong that made her
 a mother.

“ Aunt, come near,” she said, “ and hear the tale, and
 have pity.

“ I, why did I go ? Is it a dream, which the illness

“ Leaves, to vex the brain, or did it really happen ?

“ Nay, I think, no dream ; for we were wedded in Calais :

“ Then by Avranches dwelt, by winding Sée, in the
 chateau.

“ Anger cool'd, betimes, and passion cool'd, with the anger.

“ Disillusion, then : remorse, and tenderer fancies

“ Of the friends, left sad. But he, he silently hated

“ Me, to see me weep, and hard I strove to be happy ;

“ Strove to love him well, and think him all that was
 noble.

“ But I fail'd,—was glad, when left alone for a season.

“ Day by day went by, but not a word or a letter,

“ Sent he me : I said, ‘ My lord is grown to be cruel.’

“ Weary weeks I had, and, going hither and thither,

“ Heard the house-folk laugh, and whisper strangely to-
 gether.

“ Then my wit grew sharp, a nameless fear was upon me.

“ One I made my friend, who seem'd more kind than the
 others :

“ Thus a bribe did all ; I quickly learn'd he was wedded.

“ Then, what hate! ah, me! I could have slain him,
believe me ;

“ Bitten through his throat : but never more would I see
him.

“ Tears? I shed no tears : I fled away in the midnight :

“ Lived, obscure, unknown, in Honfleur, dreaming of
England.

“ When the ships would sail my heart would burn with a
longing

“ For the white chalk cliffs, but dream'd no more to
behold them.

“ Aunt, all this is true : now tell him all, for you know it.

“ Not that he may love, but may not hold to be wicked

“ One he once loved well. Now rest for me, it is only

“ Neath the churchyard grass : would I were laid by the
others!”

Then, the smile,—so strange! and, for the tender expres-
sion,

You might well have deem'd her thoughts were all that
is pleasant :

As on Orinoco, rolling down through the forests,

Rafts of upturn trees float gay, with flowers, as a garden.

Mary Trevor stoop'd, and kiss'd her brow, as she ended.

“ Child, be still,” she said : “ now, sleep : I know that he
loves you ;

“ Better, yea, than when the days were fair, ere the
sorrow.”

“ Nay, aunt, nay,” she said, “ it cannot be : it is foolish.”

Then she hid her face, and like a child, broken-hearted,
Sobb'd ; and tears oozed fast ; and in awhile she was
sleeping.

II.

UP THE BROOK.

Sleep brings dreams. Such dreams, as she would chide,
on awaking,

Found her then. Thence, often. Touch of kindlier colour
In her cheek at morn, a softer smile in the even.

Rest the vague sad thoughts, that drifted vainly, for ever,
Round the dim wanhope. Now there is more in the
future.

So the shifting denes, if held and bound by the marram,
Grow to green sea-cliffs, and bear the spires and the
houses.

But she knew not this, or would not own that she knew it.

Now the days went by, and she began to be stronger.
So, one day, she sat, to catch the warmth of the morning,
In the little room she loved in days that were happy.

Here she used to dream, or softly sing at her knitting.
Here she used to sit, and draw the flowers, for her pleasure,
Which she drew, heart sore, when Ethel praised them, in
Honfleur.

In the well-known room was nothing changed in her
absence.

Glass, for flowers, work-basket, cushion'd chair by the
window,

Books, long shut,—she laugh'd: she checked the tears
with an effort:

Thinking how so long their hearts had silently waited,
Thinking all so long they should have yearn'd, and been
hopeful.

Then she lean'd, again, a little while, by the lattice,
Looking toward the brook, or looking down at the garden ;
Till it seem'd as if she had but been, for a moment,
Down the village street. Could it be all a delusion ?

Childhood's guileless hours, the bridge, the pines, and the
beacon,

Seem'd so fresh, it seem'd but yesternorn that she dallied
On the bridge, to weep. Then she remember'd the woman,
Whom she found ; the child. And she remember'd the
meeting,

By the gate ; and blush'd, to think of all that had hap-
pen'd.

So, the dreams came back, that once she dream'd in the
orchard :

So, the book she read. She, looking round for the
volume,—

Writ by her who sleeps beneath the soil of the stranger,
Who, with Adonais, and him who sang Adonais,
Makes the Southland wind come as a sigh o'er the water,—
Found the page, where one, with love re-born, in a rapture
Sings love's mystic chrism. And 'twixt the leaves was a
letter.

Edith's heart beat fast. She knew the hand that had writ it :

Read with feverish haste the love-wing'd words of her cousin.

Still she read, through tears, and all the words, in confusion,

Mix'd and ran together, till she could read them no longer.

Then she heard a foot, and hid away, in her bosom,

Even from Mary Trevor, the pleading fervid and tender.

"What! have you been weeping? what, again?" said the sister,

Taking Edith's hand: "what is it, now, that has happen'd?"

"Come, now you are well: you must begin to be cheerful."

"Aunt, he wrote a letter," Edith dreamily answer'd.

Half she drew it forth, and trusted her, that, in sorrow

Or in joy, had ever been as a friend to be trusted:

Yet conceal'd it still:—"See, it was here that I found it:

"Here, between these leaves. Too late! too late! it is only

"Silly dreams, no doubt; and he will hardly remember.

"But I wrong'd him, aunt, and I can only be happy,

"When I hear him say the foolish wrong is forgiven.

"He would come, you think? Would it were now! for to-morrow

"Seems, indeed, too long, to wish and pine for his pardon."

Then, as one who wins, and vastly pleased with her mission, Mary Trevor smiled: said, "It is easy to find him.

"You'll stay here? you will?" So Edith made her a promise,

Bold, with sweet desire, to meet the doom of his glances.
Then the strength of youth stir'd in the limbs of the
elder :

Then she almost ran ; for she had yearn'd, as a mother,
O'er the two, so long. She found him laid in the orchard ;
On the wide-spread rug stretch'd with his friend little
Ethel ;

Stringing gall-nuts black, and green pine-cones, for a
basket.

“ She has ask'd for you,” the sister said ; and he answer'd
With a look, and rose. His look was calm ; but a flutter,
Half love, half dismay, moved in the soul of the curate.
So, with hearts too full to speak a word of the matter,
Side by side they reach'd the house in silence together.

“ You'll not stay too long,” she whisper'd low, “ nor excite
her.”

“ No,” he said, “ no, aunt.” What thoughts have all, as
they enter ?

Now the twain once more look in the eyes of each other.

He, his look was firm : it did not waver a moment ;
Soft, with sweet content. She did not rise at his coming.
Half the old wild self came back to her, with the cousin.
One quick glance she shot, beneath the fringe of her
lashes,

Like the lightning's gleam, on sultry eve, in the summer :
Then she dropp'd her eyes. He stood in silence before her.
But she stretch'd to him her thin white hand, and he
took it,

Muttering, “ all too long you have delay'd to be better.”

“ Yes,” she said. Then, he,—“ Now June is here, and the iris,

“ In the mili-slauce, bright. Will you delay? And the crocus,

“ Dead, long since! Come, haste: and pluck the bloom of the season.

“ Scarce the flowers should miss your feet to wander among them.”

“ No,” she said, grown sad: ’twas then he saw where the letter

On her lap lay spread: she caught the change of expression.

“ Yes, how long,” she said, “ the letter stay’d for the owner!”

“ Yes, ’tis found, though late: how grieved am I that I wrong’d you!

“ All the wrong I did I meekly pray you to pardon.”

“ Yours the wrong,” he said: “ but now let wrongs be forgotten.

“ We forget the night, when day breaks fair with his splendour.

“ All the past is lived: now let us live in the future.

“ Now I think it is day, for us, with joy of your presence.

So he spake, heart-full, a little pleased with the figure.

But in her bright eyes flash’d up a glimmer of mischief,

As she laugh’d, and said, with lifted finger, to warn him.—

“ You are courtier grown: now I shall hold you a stranger,

“ If you use the arts you so much scorn in the letter.”

So they talk’d, content, as will, half strange to each other.

Friends, well-pleas’d to meet; recalling all that was pleasant

In the old lost days, the old familiar places;

Scanning, each, in stealth, the other's bearing and manner;
 Noting every change, each look and tone that was alter'd;
 Wondering time could touch a thing so dear as a lover:
 Till the sister said, "now it is time I should part you:
 "I am truly grieved to have so painful an office;
 "Parting such good friends, so long estranged and divided."
 Edith seem'd as one round whom a chamber is darken'd,
 Listening, till she heard his foot no more on the gravel.

Now we near the goal, and we to gain it are eager.
 Now our little ship is soon to ride in the harbour.
 Make the fire-side bright, to welcome those that we bring
 you.

With fresh hope, fresh life. Then she would stroll in the
 garden;
 Half for love, half aid, would take the arm of the father.
 Had there been, then, blame, and bitter pain, and division?
 These, they made no sign, but clung, for silence, the closer.
 Day by day wore on, to yield a change for the better.
 When the morn look'd in, with laughing eyes, through
 the lattice,
 He would come to talk, and tell the tales of the village:
 In the room she loved sit, oftentimes, in the even;
 Read some singer's lay, and plead his cause, in another's;
 Till the dusk would fall, and each could see, in the dark-
 ness,
 Eyes grow bright as stars. But yet he wisely avoided
 On his love to touch. And she was shy. But his presence
 Grew so dear, the note, the cuckoo-note of her sighing,—
 That "can never,"—ceased to be a knell to her passion.

Listen. All goes well. Now it is well with the curate.
 Days wore on : she ceased to feel ashamed at his coming.
 She would chat, and sit among them all, as of old time.
 Half she seem'd, once more, the Edith childish and happy,
 Who would jump the brook, or sing her songs in the
 meadow.

She became more like. A little silent and quiet,
 Now her wit would flash, and break, at times, into laughter.
 Now she fill'd again, with gleam and charm of her nature,
 All the dull old house, so long forlorn with her absence.

Morn by morn knit fast a closer league and a friendship.
 Now the two grow old, and, with the will to be busy,
 Keep but half the strength that once they spent for the
 Master.

On the young man fell the trust and toil of the parish,
 For the damsel still increased the cares of the household.
 Love was knit more strong with sense and labour of office.

Now the past grew dim : a tender glamour of distance
 Took the lines, too hard, and soften'd all with its colour.
 Now the three, good friends,—the curate, Edith, and Ethel,
 Roam'd the woodlands through, as children vow'd to be
 happy.

Now the meads, the brook, the breezy haunts of the beacon,
 Knew their wandering feet, and winding lanes of the
 village.

Now 'twas sweet to haunt the old familiar places ;
 In the schools to look, and praise the care of the master.
 Now they found old friends ; but some were hard to re-
 member.

“When will they be wed,” the people said in a whisper.
 So the landlord’s face flamed into kind recognition ;
 So the smith, again, stood still, and bow’d, at his shutter.
 Love was knit more strong than on the morn of the
 promise.

Now it fell, on a morn, they went a ramble together.
 Past the limes they went, and by the doors of the houses :
 Till they reach’d the bridge, the pride and glory of Orton,
 Built by Hugh de Vaux, for use and gain of the village.
 It they did not cross, but went along by the glitter
 Of the treeless brook, that flash’d with sheen of the
 morning.

They the mill-bridge gain’d, and lean’d awhile, for their
 pleasure,

By the quaint old mill, above the noise of the water ;
 Heard the grumbling wheel, and watch’d the foam, and
 the eddies ;

While around lay cool the dusty gloom of the gables,
 Built, half brick, half elm, grotesque, a relic of Cheshire ;
 Painted white and black, and huddled strangely together.
 With their ears half deaf they left the murmur, reluctant ;
 Pass’d the bridge, and cross’d the whiten’d yard of the
 miller.

Doves’ red pattering feet had wander’d hither and thither,
 Crack’d old mill-stones lean’d against the wall, by the en-
 trance.

By the still mill-sluiice they paused again for the lilies,—
 Mid their broad green leaves,—the water-reeds, and the
 iris :

Then, by poplar trees, along the green of the margin,

Still went wandering on. And so they came where the
 rover

Has its own wild will ; now running noisy and shallow ;
 Now smooth-lingering by in still deep pools by the alders.
 By and bye they found a little weir, where the water,—
 Smooth above, damm'd up,—runs down in foam and in
 music ;

Gurgling its sweet tune o'er rough-cut stones, and the
 hurdles,

Staked with rude green wood, and twisted firmly together.
 But the brook, at foot, makes many streams in the hollow,
 Tiny streams, that wind round little islands of gravel ;

While the islands gleam with yellow wands of the willow :
 Haunt the blue bird loves, that cleaves the air as an arrow.
 Here, by ash-tree root, made soft and brown with the
 mosses,

Edith sat, to hear the pleasant roar of the water.

At her feet he lay ;—and Ethel roam'd in the meadow :—

But when friendly talk began to languish a little,
 Rose, and laugh'd, and pluck'd a sprig of leaves from the
 ash-tree :

Then lay down, and propp'd his head on knees of his cousin.

“ Look ! ” he said, “ look here ! now count the leaves :
 they are even.

“ Yes, a sign ! a sign ! why dally more ? Shall it be, then ? ”

“ You'll accept the sign, the Cheshire quaint divination ? ”

“ Yes,” she said, so low ; and smooth'd the hair from his
 forehe ad

With her soft small hand ; and met his eyes, and was silent.

“ When ? say, when.” “ Nay, when you will,” she said :
 and she trembled :

But she took his face between her hands, and she kiss'd
him.

No word more. Her tears were near to fall, as they wander'd

By the brook-side back, and seem'd upborne into heaven.

III.

VILLAGE BELLS.

It is late September, and fresh and clear is the morning,
Soft and clear and still, as ever morning in autumn.
Dew hangs on the grass: you see the day will be sunny.
Many a leaf is sere, and through the boughs of the chest-
nut
Rustling falls, at times, the fruit that shines as the jasper.

Can it be so early? There is a stir and a bustle
In the little hamlet, wont to be always so quiet.
Where? The village street is still as when, ere the day-
break,
Sleepy milkmaids call the cattle home to the shippen.
Not a sound at the forge, no beat of flail in the farmyard.
Even the old mill-wheel a little while, for a wonder,
Lets the brook reflect the dusty sheds of the miller.
Only here and there a passing villager quickens
Steps, unwilling laggard; and here and there in a cottage,
In the chimney nook, or on the straw of a pallet,
Stay the weary feet, no more to wander, for ever.
All save these are gone, and hearth and home are deserted.
Track these hob-nail'd shoes, that clatter loud on the
pavement.

Scarcely so many gather to hear the word of the Gospel,
 Drawn by Sabbath bell. Yes, here are all, by the church-
 yard.

All along the wall, lit with a vague expectation,
 Shine the country faces, as thick as ears in the harvest.
 Gaffer's rustic wit now you can hear, if you listen ;
 Sweet old-fashion'd gossip of Cheshire marketing women.
 Here they lean and read the solemn words on the tomb-
 stones ;

Here they cluster round the little porch and the gateway.
 Groups of mothers move among the graves of the lost ones,
 Who, in words well-meant, speak often, low, to each other.
 Yes, they all are here ;—it is a scene to remember ;—
 Glad or gruesome faces ; the strong, the hale, and the
 sickly :

Children at the breast, or holding hard by an apron :
 Troops of wandering dogs, and every rogue in the village.
 There are shepærd lads, with ribbons gay on the button :
 There are milkmaids, laughing, with a flower in the bonnet :
 Little cripples hobbling : old folk, worn and decrepit,
 Propp'd with stick, or crutch, or on the arm of a grand-
 child.

Close the ringers stand, and chatter gravely together :
 Beat their feet, or whistle, with their hands in their
 pockets.

Mark their look of office. A busy man is the sexton.

Who would all these greet ? You shall behold in a
 minute.

Stand aside : make room. They come the way of the
 garden.

Now they reach the porch. The village murmurs a welcome.

Every hat is off, and quick drops many a curtsey.
With a buzz of pleasure the people crowd through the doorway.

Silence! All is ready! and if a word, or a whisper,
Stir, the sexton frowns, and lifts, in warning, a finger.
Who are there? We note them, as they stand by the altar.
First, the white-robed priest: he is the friend of the rector,
Who,—do you remember?—took the care of the parish,
When the rector sicken'd, in the hour of his sorrow.
Now the rector gives the blushing bride to her lover,
For his heart would fail him to read a word of the service.
Bridesmaids?—if you will. Then you must say little Ethel.
She is all in white, and looks as fair as a spirit.
Children touch'd her, softly, for a charm, as she enter'd.
It is Mary Trevor who is standing beside her.
She is like some saint, that down the ladder of heaven
Glides, with willing feet, to breathe around us a blessing.
Read in that still face the runes of care, the endurance;
Scars of God upon her, won for her Lord, in His battles.
Groomsman?—Viot Paul: he, who is lord of the manor:
Every inch a lord; one we may own, and be manly.
'Tis his own free act, and gracious deed of atonement.
These are all. No other may touch the ark that is holy.
So 'I will' and 'I will,' and words of Isaae and Jacob,
And the mystic language of him who rode to Damascus.

They are gone. The children have scatter'd roses before them.

In the little porch, upon the air of the morning,
 Rose the deep ‘God bless you,’ with a fervour of meaning;
 Every rustic throat well-pleased to join in the chorus.
 They are gone: the landlord, standing now by the gate-
 way,

Smiling, flush’d, excited, accosts his neighbours around
 him:—

“What a sight! Lord bless me! What a sight for the
 village!

“Many a merry day we had, when I was a youngster,

“Many a gay time since; but once to see such a vision,

“Such a dream as this, it puts them all into shadow.

“You’ve an honest heart: come, John, shake hands, and
 I bless you.

“Would my Jane had lived to see this day in the village.

“Reach me, there, that rose, her foot trod on, as she
 pass’d us:

“Stick it in my coat: would it would never grow wither’d.

“Come, now, fellows, all: this is a time of rejoicing:

“Come, and drink a glass, to those we love and we honour.

“Come, come all: I care not: drink away, and be jolly;

“Till you cannot squeeze another drop in the cellar.

“What a day! God bless me! Who will see such an-
 other!”

So, a cheer for the landlord, and you will say that he
 earn’d it.

Then the crowd moved, hustling, on its way to the Heron;
 Troops of children, dogs, the young and old, in a hubbub;
 While the bells rang out their merry peal for the wedding.

But, when stars came forth, the lovers, silent and happy,
 Linger’d by the shore, and heard the roar of the ocean.

PART IV.

ALL WELL.



ALL WELL.

Seven long lingering years, and winter-time, and a summer.

Will you come to Orton, and look again on the faces
Of old friends, we loved ; since you have follow'd their
fortunes,

Grieved with them in their grief, and laugh'd with them
in their laughter ?

Dare you ? Things change so : you must be hardy to
hazard

Memories, true and tender, but for the gaze of a minute.
These are scarce the loved ones you have known in the
old time.

Think what days, gone over : leaves have faded and fallen ;
Year by year have budded fresh again ; and the spirit
Of a man knows change, as sapling grows in the forest.
Have you faith these friends have still grown worthier
loving ?

“ What ! ” I hear you say, “ do you believe, for a moment,
“ If a friend, long absent, come again from his travel,
“ We should meanly fear to clasp his hand as a brother ? ”
Come, then : you shall see these friends of old, you
remember ;

Changed, as bloom to fruit, which lived before in the
blossom.

Evensong is over : the people, wandering homeward,
 Two or three together, have chatted over the sermon.
 Some have turn'd aside, to roam awhile in the meadows,
 For the day grows cooler, and the coolness is pleasant.
 There are bigots, still, who look askance at the custom,
 Though the Lord of old would lead the Twelve through
 the cornfields.

Worthy of all honour, Master, Lord, for the greatness
 Of a spirit fearless, and humble only to heaven.
 These, with small misgiving, keep to the guidance of
 nature.

Children pluck the flowers that 'scaped the scythe of the
 mower ;

Search the hedgerows keenly, with an eye to the berries :
 Sauntering lovers, shyly, court the lanes that are quiet :
 They were babes in arms when first we came to the
 village.

Yes, it is the sabbath : hush'd is the murmur of labour :
 Toil lifts up its head, and breathes a moment, forgetful.
 It is summer, too, when it is hard to be wretched ;
 Which makes sad things gay, and heals the wounds of the
 winter.

Now the sun is low : elves of the twilight are making
 All things sweet and gracious, to greet the moon of the
 harvest.

Come, then : see the orchard. And have you wholly for-
 gotten

What a group we show'd you, seated here, in the twilight ?
 'Tis the selfsame seat, well-season'd now, with the sun-
 beams,

With rude March winds' bluster, with the rain, and the
snowflake.

Now the group is other, and in the room of the elders,
Bertie, Eddie, Paul, and queen of all, little Ethel.
Tiny Paul, contented, laughing over his pictures,
Sits on Ethel's lap, in mischief only a novice ;
But the two are busy with their plans for the morrow.
Rolf lies at their feet : now he grows tired of the gambols.

Did we say " little Ethel ? " She is as tall as her mother.
Yes, she will be taller. She is no more little Ethel.
Is it Edith still, as on the morn of the promise,
Vivid fancy limning, in the silence, a phantom ?
It is strangely like her : the eyes, the hair, and the sweet-
ness ;

All the ease of manner, the gracious bearing of Edith ;
All her love of fun ; but somewhat more of sedateness.
Still she stirs the old to fresh surprise, as she passes :
Rusties doff the hat : and women, surly to others,
Greet the Rectory Miss with softer word, or a curtsy.
Landlord's pet :—you hear him, as he stands by the door-
step,

Letting business pine, to have a word with the doctor.
" See that girl ! God bless me ! How she grows to a
beauty !

" I can see her mother for all the world such another.

" Lord, how fast one ages ! and yet how well I recall it !

" When I think, I shiver, and hear them nailing my coffin.

" Yes, our rector's wife had just the eyes of her daughter.

" What ! you smile ; eh, doctor ? You remember the
scoundrel ? "

Then the doctor laughs, and off he goes at a gallop.
See, the youngsters like her. They hug her rather too
roughly.

Which will prove the scholar? It would be hard to dis-
cover.

They are boys,—such romps. How they will harry the
meadows!

Break the farmer's fence, and be the plague of the village!

Leave them now, to find the seat that stands by the
window,

On the close-cut grass. It fronts the lawn and the valley.
Now the sunbeams redden among the pines on the hilltop.

Here the four are chatting after labour is over,

For the parson's sabbath is truly hardest of labour.

Little leisure brings it to the wife or the daughter,

Who must go to the school, and sing, and play on the
organ.

Who are these who linger, in the cool of the even?

Who are these, whose voices with the twilight are
soften'd?

This is Edmund Trevor, and this is Mary, his sister:

This is Edith, leaning on the arm of her husband.

These, what do they say? 'Twould little please you to
listen.

You would little care to hear the praise of the treble;

How the landlord nodded through the whole of the sermon;

Hear how Ethel laugh'd, then blush'd, ashamed of her
folly,

At the nursery song of little Paul on a hassock;

Hear the men discuss some knotty point of the preacher,
 Though his drift was plain, and suited well to the people.
 You would little care to hear the ways of a village,
 Talk of widow Jolliffe, or hymn too slow, or the sexton :—
 Dross love turns to gold, and duty moulds, at his pleasure,
 Into coin that bears the royal sign of the Master.

Mary Trevor ages, but sweet and sunny as ever
 Is the smile that hides the deeper lines in her forehead.
 Now a darker change has fallen over the rector.
 He, grown weak and childish, has as a child to be tended.
 He will preach sometimes, but it is painful to hear him ;
 Yet not all a pain : the people tenderly love him.
 He will sit and talk within the door of a cottage,
 Making old folk glad ; or speak a word to the children.
 So, they love him still ; but as he goes by the houses,
 Watch his feeble steps, and whisper sadly together,
 Thinking all too soon the weight of age is upon him.
 All his mind is changed. Once he was hard to be guided ;
 Deeming all should bow to what he held to be better :
 Now he will but seldom give advice in a matter.
 “ Ask my son : he knows,” now he will say : “ he will tell
 you : ”

Moulding all his will to beck and word of his nephew.
 “ Rector,” did we call him ? He is no longer the rector :
 He has laid away the fret and strain of the burden.
 “ I, in truth,” he said, “ have but the name of a rector.
 “ Then, why keep the name ? The people hold it in
 honour :
 “ They will set more store upon his word in the parish,
 “ If he rule for himself, not in the name of another.

"Let his will be free to scheme and plan for the future.
 "Now his house is small: how will it be, when the
 children
 "Make the little less, and vex the air with their babble?
 "He shall have this place, for we can need but a corner."
 So the old folk nestle by the fire of the younger.
 Still the good man loves to seem at times to be useful;
 Makes believe to teach the little boys of his nephew:
 But the lads, already, know the way to beguile him;
 Leave the books unconn'd, and lure him down to the
 meadows.

Still, for these, who stand, and in the eyes of the elders
 Look with reverent love, life keeps the bloom of its
 summer.

Berthold, he grows stout: he is no longer a dreamer:
 Bright with health, and happy, he has an air that is
 earnest.

Faith, by care made clear, and wisdom, moulded in action,
 Hold the room of dreams, and he is strong for the future.
 Kind, yet firm: grave-eyed; yet will his smile, in a
 moment,

Light a cottage up, till it is fair as a palace.
 Skilful is his touch to heal the wounds of the parish;
 Sharp his stern rebuke, and to the knavish a terror;
 Yet the worst would shrink to speak dispraise, or revile
 him.

Work he does, and plenty: "Trevor's school is a model,"
 Say the parsons round, and come and call, and admire it.
 Books he little studies, but the men and the women:
 For to him who fails to take the world for his study,

Books are wandering lights, that lead him wide in the
marish.

He is wise and wary in his words, as a teacher ;
Does not preach to the roof, but to the hearts of his
people ;

Holds a truth man lives as worth a bundle of dogmas.
Thus his days go by. Not often burden'd with leisure,
He, withal, finds time to love his boys as a father.
He would have them learn, but he is wiser than many ;
Sets them not to puzzle over words of a lesson ;
Lets them have their will, nor think it crime to be happy,
As one leaves a colt to gambol free in the paddock.
“ Let them laugh,” he says, “ and not a cloud or a shadow
“ Yet make dark their days with things before or to follow :
“ Let the branch grow strong ;—the fruit in time, and the
blossom.”

So they half run wild, and Edith, hardly persuaded,
Grows at times too cross, and frets, and scolds them a
little ;
Then will kiss away the tears that fall in contrition.

You will smile to note the matron bearing of Edith :
She has all the grace and nameless charm of a mother.
Her the years leave young, yet softly changed is her
beauty.

Calm and wise, she works : the village, proud of its mis-
tress,

In the rector's wife forgets the child of the rector.
She has yet a will, and she is able to manage
Not her house alone, but mostly all in the village :
For the parson's wife is often more than the parson.

Since the women gladly whisper all to a woman ;
 Nothing hide :—how vain ! she sees it all in a moment.
 Him they hold for blind, and freely lie to the parson.
 See !—the weeds of mourning ! Who has died ? Little
 Edith.

In the Spring they laid her mid the flowers by the chancel.
 Three years old ! not much ! but she was hard to surrender.
 Mary Trevor nursed her, grieving more than the mother :
 Yet the mother's tears fell unobserved in the darkness.

Twilight falls. Tread softly. Come away from the garden.
 All is well. They fade. We shall not wholly forget them.
 Still, awhile, their eyes will fill the silence about us.
 We shall roam in dreams along the lanes of the village,
 Oft in dreams regain the peaceful hamlet of Orton.

Grows their image dim, as we recall it, already ;
 Like a friend's loved face, we cannot clearly remember ?
 Say, how will it be, as years drop down the abysses ?

They will still live on, with chance and change of exist-
 ence.

Seasons still go by. We love, and dream, and are wedded.
 Then is love a child : he has not grown to the stature
 Of the god : he grows but with the care and the trial.
 'Tis not kisses bind, nor silken cords of the twilight :
 We must bear together and learn to bear with each other.

Sorrow roams the world, lest we should find it too happy :
 Lest the heart should cleave, when it is time to forsake
 them,—

Sounding not love's depths,—unto the shows that will
perish.

When the old folk pass a little while from the presence
Of the twain they love, so will it fare with the lovers.
They knew much already, ere the day, which the village
Held the crown of joy : much have they learn'd in the issue :
Shall, through change, through loss, be closer drawn, in
the future.

Death? There is no death. It is a dream, a delusion.
We shall still live on, with growth and change of existence.
Change! O mystic change! for us the law, which the
Maker

Rides, as steed of light, as once, it seem'd, on the whirl-
wind!

Aye, the sun o'erhead, it moves, it changes for ever :
Aye, the snow-capp'd hill melts as the snow on its summit.
Loves and lives still change, and creeds and words are as
vapour.

But the spark of God, that burns and trembles within us,
Shall not wane nor change. Let us endure, and be quiet.
We shall rest, as one, within the soul of the Father.



L 007 225 599 5

UIC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 364 686 6

