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THE  
LOVER'S TALE



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THE  
LOVER'S TALE

BY  
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1879

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## THE LOVER'S TALE.



THE original Preface to 'The Lover's Tale' states that it was composed in my nineteenth year. Two only of the three parts then written were printed, when, feeling the imperfection of the poem, I withdrew it from the press. One of my friends however who, boylike, admired the boy's work, distributed among our common associates of that hour some copies of these two parts, without my knowledge, without the omissions and amendments which I had in contemplation, and marred by the many misprints of the compositor. Seeing that these two parts have of late been mercilessly pirated, and that what I had deemed scarce worthy to live is not allowed to die, may I not be pardoned if I suffer the whole poem at last to come into the light—accompanied with a reprint of the sequel—a work of my mature life—'The Golden Supper'?

*May 1879.*

### *ARGUMENT.*

JULIAN, whose cousin and foster-sister, Camilla, has been wedded to his friend and rival, Lionel, endeavours to narrate the story of his own love for her, and the strange sequel. He speaks (in Parts II. and III.) of having been haunted by visions and the sound of bells, tolling for a funeral, and at last ringing for a marriage ; but he breaks away, overcome, as he approaches the Event, and a witness to it completes the tale.

I.

HERE far away, seen from the topmost cliff,  
Filling with purple gloom the vacancies  
Between the tufted hills, the sloping seas  
Hung in mid-heaven, and half-way down rare sails,  
White as white clouds, floated from sky to sky.  
Oh! pleasant breast of waters, quiet bay,  
Like to a quiet mind in the loud world,  
Where the chafed breakers of the outer sea  
Sank powerless, as anger falls aside  
And withers on the breast of peaceful love;  
Thou didst receive the growth of pines that fledged  
The hills that watch'd thee, as Love watcheth Love,

In thine own essence, and delight thyself  
To make it wholly thine on sunny days.

Keep thou thy name of ' Lover's Bay.' See, sirs,  
Even now the Goddess of the Past, that takes  
The heart, and sometimes touches but one string  
That quivers, and is silent, and sometimes  
Sweeps suddenly all its half-moulder'd chords  
To some old melody, begins to play  
That air which pleased her first. I feel thy  
breath ;

I come, great Mistress of the ear and eye :  
Thy breath is of the pinewood ; and tho' years  
Have hollow'd out a deep and stormy strait  
Betwixt the native land of Love and me,  
Breathe but a little on me, and the sail  
Will draw me to the rising of the sun,  
The lucid chambers of the morning star,  
And East of Life.

Permit me, friend, I prythee,  
To pass my hand across my brows, and muse  
On those dear hills, that never more will meet  
The sight that throbs and aches beneath my  
touch,

As tho' there beat a heart in either eye ;  
For when the outer lights are darken'd thus,  
The memory's vision hath a keener edge.  
It grows upon me now—the semicircle  
Of dark-blue waters and the narrow fringe  
Of curving beach — its wreaths of dripping  
green—

Its pale pink shells—the summerhouse aloft  
That open'd on the pines with doors of glass,  
A mountain nest—the pleasure-boat that rock'd,  
Light-green with its own shadow, keel to keel,  
Upon the dappled dimplings of the wave,  
That blanch'd upon its side.

O Love, O Hope !

They come, they crowd upon me all at once—  
Moved from the cloud of unforgotten things,  
That sometimes on the horizon of the mind  
Lies folded, often sweeps athwart in storm—  
Flash upon flash they lighten thro' me—days  
Of dewy dawning and the amber eves  
When thou and I, Camilla, thou and I  
Were borne about the bay or safely moor'd  
Beneath a low-brow'd cavern, where the tide  
Plash'd, sapping its worn ribs ; and all without  
The slowly-ridging rollers on the cliffs  
Clash'd, calling to each other, and thro' the arch  
Down those loud waters, like a setting star,  
Mixt with the gorgeous west the lighthouse shone,  
And silver-smiling Venus ere she fell  
Would often loiter in her balmy blue,  
To crown it with herself.

Here, too, my love

Waver'd at anchor with me, when day hung  
From his mid-dome in Heaven's airy halls ;  
Gleams of the water-circles as they broke,  
Flicker'd like doubtful smiles about her lips,  
Quiver'd a flying glory on her hair,  
Leapt like a passing thought across her eyes ;  
And mine with one that will not pass, till earth  
And heaven pass too, dwelt on my heaven, a face  
Most starry-fair, but kindled from within  
As 'twere with dawn. She was darkhair'd, darkeyed :  
Oh, such dark eyes ! a single glance of them  
Will govern a whole life from birth to death,  
Careless of all things else, led on with light  
In trances and in visions : look at them,  
You lose yourself in utter ignorance ;  
You cannot find their depth ; for they go back,  
And farther back, and still withdraw themselves

Quite into the deep soul, that evermore  
Fresh springing from her fountains in the brain,  
Still pouring thro', floods with redundant life  
Her narrow portals.

Trust me, long ago  
I should have died, if it were possible  
To die in gazing on that perfectness  
Which I do bear within me : I had died,  
But from my farthest lapse, my latest ebb,  
Thine image, like a charm of light and strength  
Upon the waters, push'd me back again  
On these deserted sands of barren life.  
Tho' from the deep vault where the heart of Hope  
Fell into dust, and crumbled in the dark—  
Forgetting how to render beautiful  
Her countenance with quick and healthful blood—  
Thou didst not sway me upward ; could I perish



While thou, a meteor of the sepulchre,  
Did'st swathe thyself all round Hope's quiet urn  
For ever? He, that saith it, hath o'erstept  
The slippery footing of his narrow wit,  
And fall'n away from judgment. Thou art light,  
To which my spirit leaneth all her flowers,  
And length of days, and immortality  
Of thought, and freshness ever self-renew'd.  
For Time and Grief abode too long with Life,  
And, like all other friends i' the world, at last  
They grew weary of her fellowship:  
So Time and Grief did beckon unto Death,  
And Death drew nigh and beat the doors of Life;  
But thou didst sit alone in the inner house,  
A wakeful portress, and didst parle with Death,—  
'This is a charmed dwelling which I hold;'  
So Death gave back, and would no further come.  
Yet is my life nor in the present time,

Nor in the present place. To me alone,  
Push'd from his chair of regal heritage,  
The Present is the vassal of the Past :  
So that, in that I *have* lived, do I live,  
And cannot die, and am, in having been—  
A portion of the pleasant yesterday,  
Thrust forward on to-day and out of place ;  
A body journeying onward, sick with toil,  
The weight as if of age upon my limbs,  
The grasp of hopeless grief about my heart,  
And all the senses weaken'd, save in that,  
Which long ago they had glean'd and garner'd up  
Into the granaries of memory—  
The clear brow, bulwark of the precious brain,  
Chinked as you see, and seam'd—and all the while  
The light soul twines and mingles with the growths  
Of vigorous early days, attracted, won,  
Married, made one with, molten into all

The beautiful in Past of act or place,  
And like the all-enduring camel, driven  
Far from the diamond fountain by the palms,  
Who toils across the middle moonlit nights,  
Or when the white heats of the blinding noons  
Beat from the concave sand ; yet in him keeps  
A draught of that sweet fountain that he loves,  
To stay his feet from falling, and his spirit  
From bitterness of death.

Ye ask me, friends,  
When I began to love. How should I tell you ?  
Or from the after-fulness of my heart,  
Flow back again unto my slender spring  
And first of love, tho' every turn and depth  
Between is clearer in my life than all  
Its present flow. Ye know not what ye ask.  
How should the broad and open flower tell

What sort of bud it was, when, prest together  
In its green sheath, close-lapt in silken folds,  
It seemed to keep its sweetness to itself,  
Yet was not the less sweet for that it seem'd?  
For young Life knows not when young Life was born,  
But takes it all for granted: neither Love,  
Warm in the heart, his cradle, can remember  
Love in the womb, but resteth satisfied,  
Looking on her that brought him to the light:  
Or as men know not when they fall asleep  
Into delicious dreams, our other life,  
So know I not when I began to love.  
This is my sum of knowledge—that my love  
Grew with myself—say rather, was my growth,  
My inward sap, the hold I have on earth,  
My outward circling air wherewith I breathe,  
Which yet upholds my life, and evermore  
Is to me daily life and daily death:

For how should I have lived and not have loved ?  
Can ye take off the sweetness from the flower,  
The colour and the sweetness from the rose,  
And place them by themselves ; or set apart  
Their motions and their brightness from the stars,  
And then point out the flower or the star ?  
Or build a wall betwixt my life and love,  
And tell me where I am ? 'Tis even thus :  
In that I live I love ; because I love  
I live : whate'er is fountain to the one  
Is fountain to the other ; and whene'er  
Our God unknits the riddle of the one,  
There is no shade or fold of mystery  
Swathing the other.

Many, many years,  
(For they seem many and my most of life,  
And well I could have linger'd in that porch,  
So unproportion'd to the dwelling-place,)

In the Maydews of childhood, opposite  
The flush and dawn of youth, we lived together,  
Apart, alone together on those hills.

Before he saw my day my father died,  
And he was happy that he saw it not ;  
But I and the first daisy on his grave  
From the same clay came into light at once.  
As Love and I do number equal years,  
So she, my love, is of an age with me.  
How like each other was the birth of each !  
On the same morning, almost the same hour,  
Under the selfsame aspect of the stars,  
(Oh falsehood of all starcraft !) we were born.  
How like each other was the birth of each !  
The sister of my mother—she that bore  
Camilla close beneath her beating heart,  
Which to the imprison'd spirit of the child,

With its true-touchéd pulses in the flow  
And hourly visitation of the blood,  
Sent notes of preparation manifold,  
And mellow'd echoes of the outer world—  
My mother's sister, mother of my love,  
Who had a twofold claim upon my heart,  
One twofold mightier than the other was,  
In giving so much beauty to the world,  
And so much wealth as God had charged her with—  
Loathing to put it from herself for ever,  
Left her own life with it; and dying thus,  
Crowned with her highest act the placid face  
And breathless body of her good deeds past.

So were we born, so orphan'd. She was motherless  
And I without a father. So from each  
Of those two pillars which from earth uphold  
Our childhood, one had fallen away, and all

The careful burthen of our tender years  
Trembled upon the other. He that gave  
Her life, to me delightedly fulfill'd  
All lovingkindnesses, all offices  
Of watchful care and trembling tenderness.  
He waked for both : he prayed for both : he slept  
Dreaming of both : nor was his love the less  
Because it was divided, and shot forth  
Boughs on each side, laden with wholesome shade,  
Wherein we nested sleeping or awake,  
And sang aloud the matin-song of life.

She was my foster-sister : on one arm  
The flaxen ringlets of our infancies  
Wander'd, the while we rested : one soft lap  
Pillow'd us both : a common light of eyes  
Was on us as we lay : our baby lips,  
Kissing one bosom, ever drew from thence



The stream of life, one stream, one life, one blood,  
One sustenance, which, still as thought grew large,  
Still larger moulding all the house of thought,  
Made all our tastes and fancies like, perhaps—  
All—all but one ; and strange to me, and sweet,  
Sweet thro' strange years to know that whatso'er  
Our general mother meant for me alone,  
Our mutual mother dealt to both of us :  
So what was earliest mine in earliest life,  
I shared with her in whom myself remains.

As was our childhood, so our infancy,  
They tell me, was a very miracle  
Of fellow-feeling and communion.  
They tell me that we would not be alone,—  
We cried when we were parted ; when I wept,  
Her smile lit up the rainbow on my tears,  
Stay'd on the cloud of sorrow ; that we loved  
The sound of one-another's voices more

Than the gray cuckoo loves his name, and learn'd  
To lisp in tune together ; that we slept  
In the same cradle always, face to face,  
Heart beating time to heart, lip pressing lip,  
Folding each other, breathing on each other,  
Dreaming together (dreaming of each other  
They should have added), till the morning light  
Sloped thro' the pines, upon the dewy pane  
Falling, unseal'd our eyelids, and we woke  
To gaze upon each other. If this be true,  
At thought of which my whole soul languishes  
And faints, and hath no pulse, no breath—as tho'  
A man in some still garden should infuse  
Rich atar in the bosom of the rose,  
Till, drunk with its own wine, and overfull  
Of sweetness, and in smelling of itself,  
It fall on its own thorns—if this be true—  
And that way my wish leads me evermore

Still to believe it—'tis so sweet a thought,  
Why in the utter stillness of the soul  
Doth question'd memory answer not, nor tell  
Of this our earliest, our closest-drawn,  
Most loveliest, earthly-heavenliest harmony ?

O blossom'd portal of the lonely house,  
Green prelude, April promise, glad new-year  
Of Being, which with earliest violets  
And lavish carol of clear-throated larks  
Fill'd all the March of life !—I will not speak of thee ;  
These have not seen thee, these can never know thee,  
They cannot understand me. Pass we then  
A term of eighteen years. Ye would but laugh,  
If I should tell you how I hoard in thought  
The faded rhymes and scraps of ancient crones,  
Gray relics of the nurseries of the world,  
Which are as gems set in my memory,  
Because she learnt them with me ; or what use

To know her father left us just before  
The daffodil was blown? or how we found  
The dead man cast upon the shore? All this  
Seems to the quiet daylight of your minds  
But cloud and smoke, and in the dark of mine  
Is traced with flame. Move with me to the event.

There came a glorious morning, such a one  
As dawns but once a season. Mercury  
On such a morning would have flung himself  
From cloud to cloud, and swum with balanced wings  
To some tall mountain: when I said to her,  
'A day for Gods to stoop,' she answered, 'Ay,  
And men to soar:' for as that other gazed,  
Shading his eyes till all the fiery cloud,  
The prophet and the chariot and the steeds,  
Suck'd into oneness like a little star  
Were drunk into the inmost blue, we stood,  
When first we came from out the pines at noon,

With hands for eaves, uplooking and almost  
Waiting to see some blessed shape in heaven,  
So bathed we were in brilliance. Never yet  
Before or after have I known the spring  
Pour with such sudden deluges of light  
Into the middle summer ; for that day  
Love, rising, shook his wings, and charged the winds  
With spiced May-sweets from bound to bound, and  
blew  
Fresh fire into the sun, and from within  
Burst thro' the heated buds, and sent his soul  
Into the songs of birds, and touch'd far-off  
His mountain-altars, his high hills, with flame  
Milder and purer.

Thro' the rocks we wound :

The great pine shook with lonely sounds of joy  
That came on the sea-wind. As mountain streams

Our bloods ran free : the sunshine seem'd to brood  
More warmly on the heart than on the brow.  
We often paused, and, looking back, we saw  
The clefts and openings in the mountains fill'd  
With the blue valley and the glistening brooks,  
And all the low dark groves, a land of love !  
A land of promise, a land of memory,  
A land of promise flowing with the milk  
And honey of delicious memories !  
And down to sea, and far as eye could ken,  
Each way from verge to verge a Holy Land,  
Still growing holier as you near'd the bay,  
For there the Temple stood.

When we had reach'd  
The grassy platform on some hill, I stoop'd,  
I gather'd the wild herbs, and for her brows  
And mine made garlands of the selfsame flower,

Which she took smiling, and with my work thus  
Crown'd her clear forehead. Once or twice she told me  
(For I remember all things) to let grow  
The flowers that run poison in their veins.  
She said, 'The evil flourish in the world.'  
Then playfully she gave herself the lie—  
'Nothing in nature is unbeautiful;  
So, brother, pluck, and spare not.' So I wove  
Ev'n the dull-blooded poppy-stem, 'whose flower,  
Hued with the scarlet of a fierce sunrise,  
Like to the wild youth of an evil prince,  
Is without sweetness, but who crowns himself  
Above the secret poisons of his heart  
In his old age.' A graceful thought of hers  
Grav'n on my fancy! And oh, how like a nymph,  
A stately mountain nymph she look'd! how native  
Unto the hills she trod on! While I gazed,  
My coronal slowly disentwined itself

And fell between us both; tho' while I gazed  
My spirit leap'd as with those thrills of bliss  
That strike across the soul in prayer, and show us  
That we are surely heard. Methought a light  
Burst from the garland I had wov'n, and stood  
A solid glory on her bright black hair :  
A light methought broke from her dark, dark eyes,  
And shot itself into the singing winds ;  
A mystic light flash'd ev'n from her white robe  
As from a glass in the sun, and fell about  
My footsteps on the mountains.

‘Last we came

To what our people call ‘The Hill of Woe.’

A bridge is there, that, look'd at from beneath

Seems but a cobweb filament to link

The yawning of an earthquake-cloven chasm.

And thence one night, when all the winds were loud,



A woeful man (for so the story went)  
Had thrust his wife and child and dash'd himself  
Into the dizzy depth below. Below,  
Fierce in the strength of far descent, a stream  
Flies with a shatter'd foam along the chasm.

The path was perilous, loosely strown with crags :  
We mounted slowly ; yet to both there came  
The joy of life in steepness overcome,  
And victories of ascent, and looking down  
On all that had look'd down on us ; and joy  
In breathing nearer heaven ; and joy to me,  
High over all the azure-circled earth,  
To breathe with her as if in heaven itself ;  
And more than joy that I to her became  
Her guardian and her angel, raising her  
Still higher, past all peril, until she saw  
Beneath her feet the region far away,  
Beyond the nearest mountain's bosky brows,

Burst into open prospect—heath and hill,  
And hollow lined and wooded to the lips,  
And steep-down walls of battlemented rock  
Gilded with broom, or shatter'd into spires,  
And glory of broad waters interfused,  
Whence rose as it were breath and steam of gold,  
And over all the great wood rioting  
And climbing, streak'd or starr'd at intervals  
With falling brook or blossom'd bush—and last,  
Framing the mighty landscape to the west,  
A purple range of mountain-cones, between  
Whose interspaces gush'd in blinding bursts  
The incorporate blaze of sun and sea.

At length

Descending from the point and standing both,  
There on the tremulous bridge, that from beneath  
Had seem'd a gossamer filament up in air,

We paused amid the splendour. All the west  
And ev'n unto the middle south was ribb'd  
And barr'd with bloom on bloom. The sun below,  
Held for a space 'twixt cloud and wave, shower'd down  
Rays of a mighty circle, weaving over  
That various wilderness a tissue of light  
Unparallel'd. On the other side, the moon,  
Half-melted into thin blue air, stood still,  
And pale and fibrous as a wither'd leaf,  
Nor yet endured in presence of His eyes  
To indue his lustre; most unloverlike,  
Since in his absence full of light and joy,  
And giving light to others. But this most,  
Next to her presence whom I loved so well,  
Spoke loudly even into my inmost heart  
As to my outward hearing: the loud stream,  
Forth issuing from his portals in the crag  
(A visible link unto the home of my heart),

Ran amber toward the west, and nigh the sea  
Parting my own loved mountains was received,  
Shorn of its strength, into the sympathy  
Of that small bay, which out to open main  
Glow'd intermingling close beneath the sun.  
Spirit of Love! that little hour was bound  
Shut in from Time, and dedicate to thee:  
Thy fires from heaven had touch'd it, and the earth  
They fell on became hallow'd evermore.

We turn'd: our eyes met: hers were bright, and  
mine

Were dim with floating tears, that shot the sunset  
In lightnings round me; and my name was borne  
Upon her breath. Henceforth my name has been  
A hallow'd memory like the names of old,  
A center'd, glory-circled memory,  
And a peculiar treasure, brooking not

Exchange or currency : and in that hour  
A hope flow'd round me, like a golden mist  
Charm'd amid eddies of melodious airs,  
A moment, ere the onward whirlwind shatter it,  
Waver'd and floated—which was less than Hope,  
Because it lack'd the power of perfect Hope ;  
But which was more and higher than all Hope,  
Because all other Hope had lower aim ;  
Even that this name to which her gracious lips  
Did lend such gentle utterance, this one name,  
In some obscure hereafter, might inwreath  
(How lovelier, nobler then !) her life, her love,  
With my life, love, soul, spirit, and heart and  
strength.

‘ Brother,’ she said, ‘ let this be call'd henceforth  
The Hill of Hope ;’ and I replied, ‘ O sister,  
My will is one with thine ; the Hill of Hope.’  
Nevertheless, we did not change the name.

I did not speak : I could not speak my love.  
Love lieth deep : Love dwells not in lip-depths.  
Love wraps his wings on either side the heart,  
Constraining it with kisses close and warm,  
Absorbing all the incense of sweet thoughts  
So that they pass not to the shrine of sound.  
Else had the life of that delighted hour  
Drunk in the largeness of the utterance  
Of Love ; but how should Earthly measure mete  
The Heavenly-unmeasured or unlimited Love,  
Who scarce can tune his high majestic sense  
Unto the thundersong that wheels the spheres,  
Scarce living in the Æolian harmony,  
And flowing odour of the spacious air,  
Scarce housed within the circle of this Earth,  
Be cabin'd up in words and syllables,  
Which pass with that which breathes them ? Sooner  
Earth

Might go round Heaven, and the strait girth of Time  
Inswathe the fulness of Eternity,  
Than language grasp the infinite of Love.

O day which did enwomb that happy hour,  
Thou art blessed in the years, divinest day !  
O Genius of that hour which dost uphold  
Thy coronal of glory like a God,  
Amid thy melancholy mates far-seen,  
Who walk before thee, ever turning round  
To gaze upon thee till their eyes are dim  
With dwelling on the light and depth of thine,  
Thy name is ever worshipp'd among hours !  
Had I died then, I had not seem'd to die,  
For bliss stood round me like the light of Heaven,—  
Had I died then, I had not known the death ;  
Yea had the Power from whose right hand the light  
Of Life issueth, and from whose left hand floweth

The Shadow of Death, perennial effluences,  
Whereof to all that draw the wholesome air,  
Somewhile the one must overflow the other ;  
Then had he stemm'd my day with night, and  
driven

My current to the fountain whence it sprang,—  
Even his own abiding excellence—  
On me, methinks, that shock of gloom had fall'n  
Unfelt, and in this glory I had merged  
The other, like the sun I gazed upon,  
Which seeming for the moment due to death,  
And dipping his head low beneath the verge,  
Yet bearing round about him his own day,  
In confidence of unabated strength,  
Steppeth from Heaven to Heaven, from light to  
light,  
And holdeth his undimmed forehead far  
Into a clearer zenith, pure of cloud.



We trod the shadow of the downward hill ;  
We past from light to dark. On the other side  
Is scoop'd a cavern and a mountain hall,  
Which none have fathom'd. If you go far in  
(The country people rumour) you may hear  
The moaning of the woman and the child,  
Shut in the secret chambers of the rock.  
I too have heard a sound—perchance of streams  
Running far on within its inmost halls,  
The home of darkness ; but the cavern-mouth,  
Half overtrailed with a wanton weed,  
Gives birth to a brawling brook, that passing  
lightly  
Adown a natural stair of tangled roots,  
Is presently received in a sweet grave  
Of eglantines, a place of burial  
Far lovelier than its cradle ; for unseen,  
But taken with the sweetness of the place,

It makes a constant bubbling melody  
That drowns the nearer echoes. Lower down  
Spreads out a little lake, that, flooding, leaves  
Low banks of yellow sand; and from the woods  
That belt it rise three dark, tall cypresses,—  
Three cypresses, symbols of mortal woe,  
That men plant over graves.

Hither we came,  
And sitting down upon the golden moss,  
Held converse sweet and low—low converse sweet,  
In which our voices bore least part. The wind  
Told a lovetale beside us, how he woo'd  
The waters, and the waters answering lisp'd  
To kisses of the wind, that, sick with love,  
Fainted at intervals, and grew again  
To utterance of passion. Ye cannot shape  
Fancy so fair as is this memory.

Methought all excellence that ever was  
Had drawn herself from many thousand years,  
And all the separate Edens of this earth,  
To centre in this place and time. I listen'd,  
And her words stole with most prevailing sweetness  
Into my heart, as thronging fancies come  
To boys and girls when summer days are new,  
And soul and heart and body are all at ease :  
What marvel my Camilla told me all ?  
It was so happy an hour, so sweet a place,  
And I was as the brother of her blood,  
And by that name I moved upon her breath ;  
Dear name, which had too much of nearness in it  
And heralded the distance of this time !  
At first her voice was very sweet and low,  
As if she were afraid of utterance ;  
But in the onward current of her speech,  
(As echoes of the hollow-banked brooks

Are fashion'd by the channel which they keep),  
Her words did of their meaning borrow sound,  
Her cheek did catch the colour of her words.  
I heard and trembled, yet I could but hear ;  
My heart paused—my raised eyelids would not fall,  
But still I kept my eyes upon the sky.  
I seem'd the only part of Time stood still,  
And saw the motion of all other things ;  
While her words, syllable by syllable,  
Like water, drop by drop, upon my ear-  
Fell ; and I wish'd, yet wish'd her not to speak ;  
But she spake on, for I did name no wish.  
What marvel my Camilla told me all  
Her maiden dignities of Hope and Love—  
' Perchance,' she said, ' return'd.' Even then the stars  
Did tremble in their stations as I gazed ;  
But she spake on, for I did name no wish,  
No wish—no hope. Hope was not wholly dead,

But breathing hard at the approach of Death,—

Camilla, my Camilla, who was mine

No longer in the dearest sense of mine—

For all the secret of her inmost heart,

And all the maiden empire of her mind,

Lay like a map before me, and I saw

There, where I hoped myself to reign as king,

There, where that day I crown'd myself as  
king,

There in my realm and even on my throne,

*Another!* then it seem'd as tho' a link

Of some tight chain within my inmost frame

Was riven in twain : that life I heeded not

Flow'd from me, and the darkness of the grave,

The darkness of the grave and utter night,

Did swallow up my vision ; at her feet,

Even the feet of her I loved, I fell,

Smit with exceeding sorrow unto Death.

Then had the earth beneath me yawning cloven  
With such a sound as when an iceberg splits  
From cope to base—had Heaven from all her doors,  
With all her golden thresholds clashing, roll'd  
Her heaviest thunder—I had lain as dead,  
Mute, blind and motionless as then I lay ;  
Dead, for henceforth there was no life for me !  
Mute, for henceforth what use were words to me !  
Blind, for the day was as the night to me !  
The night to me was kinder than the day ;  
The night in pity took away my day,  
Because my grief as yet was newly born  
Of eyes too weak to look upon the light ;  
And thro' the hasty notice of the ear  
Frail Life was startled from the tender love  
Of him she brooded over. Would I had lain  
Until the plaited ivy-tress had wound  
Round my worn limbs, and the wild briar had driven

Its knotted thorns thro' my unpaining brows,  
Leaning its roses on my faded eyes.

The wind had blown above me, and the rain  
Had fall'n upon me, and the gilded snake  
Had nestled in this bosom-throne of Love,  
But I had been at rest for evermore.

Long time entrancement held me. All too soon  
Life (like a wanton too-officious friend,  
Who will not *hear* denial, vain and rude  
With proffer of unwished-for services)  
Entering all the avenues of sense  
Past thro' into his citadel, the brain,  
With hated warmth of apprehensiveness.  
And first the chillness of the sprinkled brook  
Smote on my brows, and then I seem'd to hear  
Its murmur, as the drowning seaman hears,  
Who with his head below the surface dropt

Listens the muffled booming indistinct  
Of the confused floods, and dimly knows  
His head shall rise no more: and then came in  
The white light of the weary moon above,  
Diffused and molten into flaky cloud.  
Was my sight drunk that it did shape to me  
Him who should own that name? Were it not well  
If so be that the echo of that name  
Ringing within the fancy had updrawn  
A fashion and a phantasm of the form  
It should attach to? Phantom!—had the ghastliest  
That ever lusted for a body, sucking  
The foul steam of the grave to thicken by it,  
There in the shuddering moonlight brought its face  
And what it has for eyes as close to mine  
As he did—better that than his, than he  
The friend, the neighbour, Lionel, the beloved,  
The loved, the lover, the happy Lionel,



The low-voiced, tender-spirited Lionel,  
All joy, to whom my agony was a joy.  
O how her choice did leap forth from his eyes !  
O how her love did clothe itself in smiles  
About his lips ! and—not one moment's grace—  
Then when the effect weigh'd seas upon my head  
To come my way ! to twit me with the cause !

Was not the land as free thro' all her ways  
To him as me ? Was not his wont to walk  
Between the going light and growing night ?  
Had I not learnt my loss before he came ?  
Could that be more because he came my way ?  
Why should he not come my way if he would ?  
And yet to-night, to-night—when all my wealth  
Flash'd from me in a moment and I fell  
Beggar'd for ever—why *should* he come my way  
Robed in those robes of light I must not wear,

With that great crown of beams about his  
brows—

Come like an angel to a damned soul,  
To tell him of the bliss he had with God—  
Come like a careless and a greedy heir  
That scarce can wait the reading of the will  
Before he takes possession? Was mine a  
mood

To be invaded rudely, and not rather  
A sacred, secret, unapproached woe,  
Unspeakable? I was shut up with Grief;  
She took the body of my past delight,  
Narded and swathed and balm'd it for herself,  
And laid it in a sepulchre of rock  
Never to rise again. I was led mute  
Into her temple like a sacrifice;  
I was the High Priest in her holiest place,  
Not to be loudly broken in upon.

Oh friend, thoughts deep and heavy as these well-  
nigh

O'erbore the limits of my brain : but he  
Bent o'er me, and my neck his arm upstay'd.  
I thought it was an adder's fold, and once  
I strove to disengage myself, but fail'd,  
Being so feeble : she bent above me, too ;  
Wan was her cheek ; for whatso'er of blight  
Lives in the dewy touch of pity had made  
The red rose there a pale one—and her eyes—  
I saw the moonlight glitter on their tears—  
And some few drops of that distressful rain  
Fell on my face, and her long ringlets moved,  
Drooping and beaten by the breeze, and brush'd  
My fallen forehead in their to and fro,  
For in the sudden anguish of her heart  
Loosed from their simple thrall they had flow'd  
abroad,

And floated on and parted round her neck,  
Mantling her form halfway. She, when I woke,  
Something she ask'd, I know not what, and ask'd,  
Unanswer'd, since I spake not ; for the sound  
Of that dear voice so musically low,  
And now first heard with any sense of pain,  
As it had taken life away before,  
Choked all the syllables, that strove to rise  
From my full heart.

The blissful lover, too,  
From his great hoard of happiness distill'd  
Some drops of solace ; like a vain rich man,  
That, having always prosper'd in the world,  
Folding his hands, deals comfortable words  
To hearts wounded for ever ; yet, in truth,  
Fair speech was his and delicate of phrase,  
Falling in whispers on the sense, address'd

More to the inward than the outward ear,  
As rain of the midsummer midnight soft,  
Scarce-heard, recalling fragrance and the green  
Of the dead spring : but mine was wholly dead,  
No bud, no leaf, no flower, no fruit for me.  
Yet who had done, or who had suffer'd wrong ?  
And why was I to darken their pure love,  
If, as I found, they two did love each other,  
Because my own was darken'd ? Why was I  
To cross between their happy star and them ?  
To stand a shadow by their shining doors,  
And vex them with my darkness ? Did I love her ?  
Ye know that I did love her ; to this present  
My full-orb'd love has waned not. Did I love her,  
And could I look upon her tearful eyes ?  
What had *she* done to weep ? Why should *she* weep ?  
O innocent of spirit—let my heart  
Break rather—whom the gentlest airs of Heaven

Should kiss with an unwonted gentleness.

Her love did murder mine ? What then ? She deem'd

I wore a brother's mind : she call'd me brother :

She told me all her love : she shall not weep.

The brightness of a burning thought, awhile  
In battle with the glooms of my dark will,  
Moonlike emerged, and to itself lit up  
There on the depth of an unfathom'd woe  
Reflex of action. Starting up at once,  
As from a dismal dream of my own death,  
I, for I loved her, lost my love in Love ;  
I, for I loved her, graspt the hand she lov'd.  
And laid it in her own, and sent my cry  
Thro' the blank night to Him who loving made  
The happy and the unhappy love, that He  
Would hold the hand of blessing over them,  
Lionel, the happy, and her, and her, his bride !

Let them so love that men and boys may say,  
'Lo! how they love each other!' till their love  
Shall ripen to a proverb, unto all  
Known, when their faces are forgot in the land—  
One golden dream of love, from which may death  
Awake them with heaven's music in a life  
More living to some happier happiness,  
Swallowing its precedent in victory.  
And as for me, Camilla, as for me,—  
The dew of tears is an unwholesome dew,  
They will but sicken the sick plant the more.  
Deem that I love thee but as brothers do,  
So shalt thou love me still as sisters do;  
Or if thou dream aught farther, dream but how  
I could have loved thee, had there been none else  
To love as lovers, loved again by thee.

Or this, or somewhat like to this, I spake,

When I beheld her weep so ruefully ;  
For sure my love should ne'er indue the front  
And mask of Hate, who lives on others' moans.  
Shall Love pledge Hatred in her bitter draughts,  
And batten on her poisons ? Love forbid !  
Love passeth not the threshold of cold Hate,  
And Hate is strange beneath the roof of Love.  
O Love, if thou be'st Love, dry up these tears  
Shed for the love of Love ; for tho' mine image  
The subject of thy power, be cold in her,  
Yet, like cold snow, it melteth in the source  
Of these sad tears, and feeds their downward flow.  
So Love, arraign'd to judgment and to death,  
Received unto himself a part of blame,  
Being guiltless, as an innocent prisoner,  
Who, when the woful sentence hath been past,  
And all the clearness of his fame hath gone  
Beneath the shadow of the curse of man,



First falls asleep in swoon, wherefrom awaked,  
And looking round upon his tearful friends,  
Forthwith and in his agony conceives  
A shameful sense as of a cleaving crime—  
For whence without some guilt should such grief be?

So died that hour, and fell into the abysm  
Of forms outworn, but not to me outworn,  
Who never hail'd another—was there one?  
There might be one—one other, worth the life  
That made it sensible. So that hour died  
Like odour rapt into the winged wind  
Borne into alien lands and far away.

There be some hearts so airily built, that they,  
They—when their love is wreck'd—if Love can  
wreck—

On that sharp ridge of utmost doom ride highly

Above the perilous seas of Change and Chance ;  
Nay, more, hold out the lights of cheerfulness ;  
As the tall ship, that many a dreary year  
Knit to some dismal sandbank far at sea,  
All thro' the livelong hours of utter dark,  
Showers slanting light upon the dolorous wave.  
For me—what light, what gleam on those black ways  
Where Love could walk with banish'd Hope no more ?

It was ill-done to part you, Sisters fair ;  
Love's arms were wreath'd about the neck of Hope,  
And Hope kiss'd Love, and Love drew in her breath  
In that close kiss, and drank her whisper'd tales.  
They said that Love would die when Hope was gone,  
And Love mourn'd long, and sorrow'd after Hope ;  
At last she sought out Memory, and they trod  
The same old paths where Love had walk'd with Hope,  
And Memory fed the soul of Love with tears.

## II.

FROM that time forth I would not see her more ;  
But many weary moons I lived alone—  
Alone, and in the heart of the great forest.  
Sometimes upon the hills beside the sea  
All day I watch'd the floating isles of shade,  
And sometimes on the shore, upon the sands  
Insensibly I drew her name, until  
The meaning of the letters shot into  
My brain ; anon the wanton billow wash'd  
Them over, till they faded like my love.  
The hollow caverns heard me—the black brooks  
Of the midforest heard me—the soft winds,  
Laden with thistledown and seeds of flowers,

Paused in their course to hear me, for my voice  
Was all of thee : the merry linnet knew me,  
The squirrel knew me, and the dragonfly  
Shot by me like a flash of purple fire.  
The rough briar tore my bleeding palms ; the hemlock  
Brow-high, did strike my forehead as I past ;  
Yet trod I not the wildflower in my path,  
Nor bruised the wildbird's egg.

Was this the end ?

Why grew we then together in one plot ?  
Why fed we from one fountain ? drew one sun ?  
Why were our mothers' branches of one stem ?  
Why were we one in all things, save in that  
Where to have been one had been the cope and crown  
Of all I hoped and fear'd ?—if that same nearness  
Were father to this distance, and that *one*  
Vauncourier to this *double* ? if Affection

Living slew Love, and Sympathy hew'd out  
The bosom-sepulchre of Sympathy ?

Chiefly I sought the cavern and the hill  
Where last we roam'd together, for the sound  
Of the loud stream was pleasant, and the wind  
Came wooingly with woodbine smells. Sometimes  
All day I sat within the cavern-mouth,  
Fixing my eyes on those three cypress-cones  
That spired above the wood ; and with mad hand  
Tearing the bright leaves of the ivy-screen,  
I cast them in the noisy brook beneath,  
And watch'd them till they vanish'd from my sight  
Beneath the bower of wreathed eglantines :  
And all the fragments of the living rock  
(Huge blocks, which some old trembling of the world  
Had loosen'd from the mountain, till they fell  
Half-digging their own graves) these in my agony

Did I make bare of all the golden moss,  
Wherewith the dashing runnel in the spring  
Had liveried them all over. In my brain  
The spirit seem'd to flag from thought to thought,  
As moonlight wandering thro' a mist: my blood  
Crept like marsh drains thro' all my languid limbs;  
The motions of my heart seem'd far within me,  
Unfrequent, low, as tho' it told its pulses;  
And yet it shook me, that my frame would shudder,  
As if 'twere drawn asunder by the rack.

But over the deep graves of Hope and Fear,  
And all the broken palaces of the Past,  
Brooded one master-passion evermore,  
Like to a low-hung and a fiery sky  
Above some fair metropolis, earth-shock'd,—  
Hung round with ragged rims and burning folds,—  
Embathing all with wild and woful hues,  
Great hills of ruins, and collapséd masses

Of thundershaken columns indistinct,  
And fused together in the tyrannous light—  
Ruins, the ruin of all my life and me!

Sometimes I thought Camilla was no more,  
Some one had told she was dead, and ask'd me  
If I would see her burial: then I seem'd  
To rise, and through the forest-shadow borne  
With more than mortal swiftness, I ran down  
The steepy sea-bank, till I came upon  
The rear of a procession, curving round  
The silver-sheeted bay: in front of which  
Six stately virgins, all in white, upbare  
A broad earth-sweeping pall of whitest lawn,  
Wreathed round the bier with garlands: in the dis-  
tance,  
From out the yellow woods upon the hill  
Look'd forth the summit and the pinnacles

Of a gray steeple—thence at intervals  
A low bell tolling. All the pageantry,  
Save those six virgins which upheld the bier,  
Were stoled from head to foot in flowing black ;  
One walk'd abreast with me, and veil'd his brow,  
And he was loud in weeping and in praise  
Of her, we follow'd : a strong sympathy  
Shook all my soul : I flung myself upon him  
In tears and cries : I told him all my love,  
How I had loved her from the first ; whereat  
He shrank and howl'd, and from his brow drew back  
His hand to push me from him ; and the face,  
The very face and form of Lionel  
Flash'd thro' my eyes into my innermost brain,  
And at his feet I seemed to faint and fall,  
To fall and die away. I could not rise  
Albeit I strove to follow. They past on,  
The lordly Phantasms ! in their floating folds



They past and were no more : but I had fallen  
Prone by the dashing runnel on the grass.

Alway the inaudible invisible thought  
Artificer and subject, lord and slave,  
Shaped by the audible and visible,  
Moulded the audible and visible ;  
All crisped sounds of wave and leaf and wind,  
Flatter'd the fancy of my fading brain ;  
The cloud-pavilion'd element, the wood,  
The mountain, the three cypresses, the cave,  
Storm, sunset, glows and glories of the moon  
Below black firs, when silent-creeping winds  
Laid the long night in silver streaks and bars,  
Were wrought into the tissue of my dream :  
The moanings in the forest, the loud brook,  
Cries of the partridge like a rusty key  
Turn'd in a lock, owl-whoop and dorhawk-whirr

Awoke me not, but were a part of sleep,  
And voices in the distance calling to me  
And in my vision bidding me dream on,  
Like sounds without the twilight realm of dreams,  
Which wander round the bases of the hills,  
And murmur at the low-dropt eaves of sleep,  
Half-entering the portals. Oftentimes  
The vision had fair prelude, in the end  
Opening on darkness, stately vestibules  
To caves and shows of Death: whether the mind,  
With some revenge—even to itself unknown,—  
Made strange division of its suffering  
With her, whom to have suffering view'd had been  
Extremest pain; or that the clear-eyed Spirit,  
Being blunted in the Present, grew at length  
Prophetical and prescient of whate'er  
The Future had in store: or that which most  
Enchains belief, the sorrow of my spirit

Was of so wide a compass it took in  
All I had loved, and my dull agony,  
Ideally to her transferr'd, became  
Anguish intolerable.

The day waned ;

Alone I sat with her : about my brow  
Her warm breath floated in the utterance  
Of silver-chorded tones : her lips were sunder'd  
With smiles of tranquil bliss, which broke in light  
Like morning from her eyes—her eloquent eyes,  
(As I have seen them many a hundred times)  
Filled all with pure clear fire, thro' mine down rain'd  
Their spirit-searching splendours. As a vision  
Unto a haggard prisoner, iron-stay'd  
In damp and dismal dungeons underground,  
Confined on points of faith, when strength is shock'd  
With torment, and expectancy of worse

Upon the morrow, thro' the ragged walls,  
All unawares before his half-shut eyes,  
Comes in upon him in the dead of night,  
And with the excess of sweetness and of awe,  
Makes the heart tremble, and the sight run over  
Upon his steely gyves ; so those fair eyes  
Shone on my darkness, forms which ever stood  
Within the magic cirque of memory,  
Invisible but deathless, waiting still  
The edict of the will to reassume  
The semblance of those rare realities  
Of which they were the mirrors. Now the light  
Which was their life, burst through the cloud of  
thought  
Keen, irrepressible.

It was a room

Within the summer-house of which I spake,

Hung round with paintings of the sea, and one  
A vessel in mid-ocean, her heaved prow  
Clambering, the mast bent and the ravin wind  
In her sail roaring. From the outer day,  
Betwixt the close-set ivies came a broad  
And solid beam of isolated light,  
Crowded with driving atomies, and fell  
Slanting upon that picture, from prime youth  
Well-known well-loved. She drew it long ago  
Forthgazing on the waste and open sea,  
One morning when the upblown billow ran  
Shoreward beneath red clouds, and I had pour'd  
Into the shadowing pencil's naked forms  
Colour and life: it was a bond and seal  
Of friendship, spoken of with tearful smiles;  
A monument of childhood and of love;  
The poesy of childhood; my lost love  
Symbol'd in storm. We gazed on it together

In mute and glad remembrance, and each heart  
Grew closer to the other, and the eye  
Was riveted and charm-bound, gazing like  
The Indian on a still-eyed snake, low-couch'd—  
A beauty which is death; when all at once  
That painted vessel, as with inner life,  
Began to heave upon that painted sea;  
An earthquake, my loud heart-beats, made the ground  
Reel under us, and all at once, soul, life  
And breath and motion, past and flow'd away  
To those unreal billows: round and round  
A whirlwind caught and bore us; mighty gyres  
Rapid and vast, of hissing spray wind-driven  
Far thro' the dizzy dark. Aloud she shriek'd;  
My heart was cloven with pain; I wound my arms  
About her: we whirl'd giddily; the wind  
Sung; but I clasped her without fear: her weight  
Shrank in my grasp, and over my dim eyes,

And parted lips which drank her breath, down-hung  
The jaws of Death : I, groaning, from me flung  
Her empty phantom : all the sway and whirl  
Of the storm dropt to windless calm, and I  
Down welter'd thro' the dark ever and ever.

## III.

I CAME one day and sat among the stones  
Strewn in the entry of the moaning cave ;  
A morning air, sweet after rain, ran over  
The rippling levels of the lake, and blew  
Coolness and moisture and all smells of bud  
And foliage from the dark and dripping woods  
Upon my fever'd brows that shook and throbb'd  
From temple unto temple. To what height  
The day had grown I know not. Then came on me  
The hollow tolling of the bell, and all  
The vision of the bier. As heretofore  
I walk'd behind with one who veil'd his brow.  
Methought by slow degrees the sullen bell



Toll'd quicker, and the breakers on the shore  
Sloped into louder surf: those that went with me,  
And those that held the bier before my face,  
Moved with one spirit round about the bay,  
Trode swifter steps; and while I walk'd with these  
In marvel at that gradual change, I thought  
Four bells instead of one began to ring,  
Four merry bells, four merry marriage-bells,  
In clanging cadence jangling peal on peal—  
A long loud clash of rapid marriage-bells.  
Then those who led the van, and those in rear,  
Rush'd into dance, and like wild Bacchanals  
Fled onward to the steeple in the woods:  
I, too, was borne along and felt the blast  
Beat on my heated eyelids: all at once  
The front rank made a sudden halt; the bells  
Lapsed into frightful stillness; the surge fell  
From thunder into whispers; those six maids

With shrieks and ringing laughter on the sand  
Threw down the bier ; the woods upon the hill  
Waved with a sudden gust that sweeping down  
Took the edges of the pall, and blew it far  
Until it hung, a little silver cloud  
Over the sounding seas : I turn'd : my heart  
Shrank in me, like a snowflake in the hand,  
Waiting to see the settled countenance  
Of her I loved, adorn'd with fading flowers.  
But she from out her death-like chrysalis,  
She from her bier, as into fresher life,  
My sister, and my cousin, and my love,  
Leapt lightly clad in bridal white—her hair  
Studded with one rich Provence rose—a light  
Of smiling welcome round her lips—her eyes  
And cheeks as bright as when she climb'd the hill.  
One hand she reach'd to those that came behind,  
And while I mused nor yet endured to take

So rich a prize, the man who stood with me  
Stept gaily forward, throwing down his robes,  
And claspt her hand in his: again the bells  
Jangled and clang'd: again the stormy surf  
Crash'd in the shingle: and the whirling rout  
Led by those two rush'd into dance, and fled  
Wind-footed to the steeple in the woods,  
Till they were swallow'd in the leafy bowers,  
And I stood sole beside the vacant bier.

There, there, my latest vision—then the event!

## IV.

## THE GOLDEN SUPPER.

*(Another speaks.)*

HE flies the event : he leaves the event to me :  
Poor Julian—how he rush'd away ; the bells,  
Those marriage-bells, echoing in ear and heart—  
But cast a parting glance at me, you saw,  
As who should say 'Continue.' Well, he had  
One golden hour—of triumph shall I say ?  
Solace at least—before he left his home.

Would you had seen him in that hour of his !  
He moved thro' all of it majestically—  
Restrain'd himself quite to the close—but now—

Whether they *were* his lady's marriage-bells,  
Or prophets of them in his fantasy,  
I never ask'd : but Lionel and the girl  
Were wedded, and our Julian came again  
Back to his mother's house among the pines.  
But these, their gloom, the mountains and the Bay,  
The whole land weigh'd him down as *Ætna* does  
The Giant of Mythology : he would go,  
Would leave the land for ever, and had gone  
Surely, but for a whisper, ' Go not yet,'  
Some warning—sent divinely—as it seem'd  
By that which follow'd—but of this I deem  
As of the visions that he told—the event  
Glanced back upon them in his after life,  
And partly made them—tho' he knew it not.

And thus he stay'd and would not look at her—  
No not for months : but, when the eleventh moon

After their marriage lit the lover's Bay,  
Heard yet once more the tolling bell, and said,  
Would you could toll me out of life, but found—  
All softly as his mother broke it to him—  
A crueller reason than a crazy ear,  
For that low knell tolling his lady dead—  
Dead—and had lain three days without a pulse :  
All that look'd on her had pronounced her dead.  
And so they bore her (for in Julian's land  
They never nail a dumb head up in elm),  
Bore her free-faced to the free airs of heaven,  
And laid her in the vault of her own kin.

What did he then ? not die : he is here and hale—  
Not plunge headforemost from the mountain there,  
And leave the name of Lover's Leap : not he :  
He knew the meaning of the whisper now,  
Thought that he knew it. ' This, I stay'd for this ;

O love, I have not seen you for so long.  
Now, now, will I go down into the grave,  
I will be all alone with all I love,  
And kiss her on the lips. She is his no more :  
The dead returns to me, and I go down  
To kiss the dead.'

The fancy stirr'd him so

He rose and went, and entering the dim vault,  
And, making there a sudden light, beheld  
All round about him that which all will be.  
The light was but a flash, and went again.  
Then at the far end of the vault he saw  
His lady with the moonlight on her face ;  
Her breast as in a shadow-prison, bars  
Of black and bands of silver, which the moon  
Struck from an open grating overhead  
High in the wall, and all the rest of her  
Drown'd in the gloom and horror of the vault.

‘It was my wish,’ he said, ‘to pass, to sleep,  
To rest, to be with her—till the great day  
Peal’d on us with that music which rights all,  
And raised us hand in hand.’ And kneeling there  
Down in the dreadful dust that once was man,  
Dust, as he said, that once was loving hearts,  
Hearts that had beat with such a love as mine—  
Not such as mine, no, nor for such as her—  
He softly put his arm about her neck  
And kissed her more than once, till helpless death  
And silence made him bold—nay, but I wrong him,  
He reverenced his dear lady even in death;  
But, placing his true hand upon her heart,  
‘O, you warm heart,’ he moan’d, ‘not even death  
Can chill you all at once:’ then starting, thought  
His dreams had come again. ‘Do I wake or sleep?  
Or am I made immortal, or my love  
Mortal once more?’ It beat—the heart—it beat:



Faint—but it beat : at which his own began  
To pulse with such a vehemence that it drown'd  
The feebler motion underneath his hand,  
But when at last his doubts were satisfied,  
He raised her softly from the sepulchre,  
And, wrapping her all over with the cloak  
He came in, and now striding fast, and now  
Sitting awhile to rest, but evermore  
Holding his golden burthen in his arms,  
So bore her thro' the solitary land  
Back to the mother's house where she was born.

There the good mother's kindly ministering,  
With half a night's appliances, recall'd  
Her fluttering life : she rais'd an eye that ask'd  
'Where?' till the things familiar to her youth  
Had made a silent answer : then she spoke  
'Here! and how came I here?' and learning it

(They told her somewhat rashly as I think)

At once began to wander and to wail,

'Ay, but you know that you must give me back :

Send! bid him come ;' but Lionel was away—

Stung by his loss had vanish'd, none knew where.

'He casts me out,' she wept, 'and goes'—a wail

That seeming something, yet was nothing, born

Not from believing mind, but shatter'd nerve,

Yet haunting Julian, as her own reproof

At some precipitance in her burial.

Then, when her own true spirit had return'd,

'O yes, and you,' she said, 'and none but you.'

For you have given me life and love again,

And none but you yourself shall tell him of it,

And you shall give me back when he returns.

'Stay then a little,' answer'd Julian, 'here,

And keep yourself, none knowing, to yourself ;

And I will do your will. I may not stay,

No, not an hour ; but send me notice of him  
When he returns, and then will I return,  
And I will make a solemn offering of you  
To him you love.' And faintly she replied,  
' And I will do *your* will, and none shall know.'

Not know ? with such a secret to be known.  
But all their house was old and loved them both,  
And all the house had known the loves of both ;  
Had died almost to serve them any way,  
And all the land was waste and solitary :  
And then he rode away ; but after this,  
An hour or two, Camilla's travail came  
Upon her, and that day a boy was born,  
Heir of his face and land, to Lionel.

And thus our lonely lover rode away,  
And pausing at a hostel in a marsh,

There fever seized upon him : myself was then  
Travelling that land, and meant to rest an hour ;  
And sitting down to such a base repast,  
It makes me angry yet to speak of it—  
I heard a groaning overhead, and climb'd  
The moulder'd stairs (for everything was vile)  
And in a loft, with none to wait on him,  
Found, as it seem'd, a skeleton alone,  
Raving of dead men's dust and beating hearts.

A dismal hostel in a dismal land,  
A flat malarian world of reed and rush !  
But there from fever and my care of him  
Sprang up a friendship that may help us yet.  
For while we roam'd along the dreary coast,  
And waited for her message, piece by piece  
I learnt the drearier story of his life ;  
And, tho' he loved and honour'd Lionel

Found that the sudden wail his lady made  
Dwelt in his fancy : did he know her worth,  
Her beauty even ? should he not be taught,  
Ev'n by the price that others set upon it,  
The value of that jewel he had to guard ?

Suddenly came her notice and we past,  
I with our lover to his native Bay.

This love is of the brain, the mind, the soul :  
*That* makes the sequel pure ; tho' some of us  
Beginning at the sequel know no more.  
Not such am I : and yet I say, the bird  
That will not hear my call, however sweet,  
But if my neighbour whistle answers him—  
What matter ? there are others in the wood.  
Yet when I saw her (and I thought him crazed,  
Tho' not with such a craziness as needs

A cell and keeper), those dark eyes of hers—  
Oh! such dark eyes! and not her eyes alone,  
But all from these to where she touch'd on earth,  
For such a craziness as Julian's look'd  
No less than one divine apology.

So sweetly and so modestly she came  
To greet us, her young hero in her arms!  
'Kiss him,' she said. 'You gave me life again.  
He, but for you, had never seen it once.  
His other father you! Kiss him, and then  
Forgive him, if his name be Julian too.'

Talk of lost hopes and broken heart! his own  
Sent such a flame into his face, I knew  
Some sudden vivid pleasure hit him there.

But he was all the more resolved to go,

And sent at once to Lionel, praying him  
By that great love they both had borne the dead,  
To come and revel for one hour with him  
Before he left the land for evermore ;  
And then to friends—they were not many—who lived  
Scatteringly about that lonely land of his,  
And bade them to a banquet of farewells.

And Julian made a solemn feast : I never  
Sat at a costlier ; for all round his hall  
From column on to column, as in a wood,  
Not such as here—an equatorial one,  
Great garlands swung and blossom'd ; and beneath,  
Heirlooms, and ancient miracles of Art,  
Chalice and salver, wines that, Heaven knows when,  
Had suck'd the fire of some forgotten sun,  
And kept it thro' a hundred years of gloom,  
Yet glowing in a heart of ruby—cups

Where nymph and god ran ever round in gold—  
Others of glass as costly—some with gems  
Moveable and resettable at will,  
And trebling all the rest in value—Ah heavens!  
Why need I tell you all?—suffice to say  
That whatsoever such a house as his,  
And his was old, has in it rare or fair  
Was brought before the guest: and they, the guests,  
Wonder'd at some strange light in Julian's eyes  
(I told you that he had his golden hour),  
And such a feast, ill-suited as it seem'd  
To such a time, to Lionel's loss and his,  
And that resolved self-exile from a land  
He never would revisit, such a feast  
So rich, so strange, and stranger ev'n than rich,  
But rich as for the nuptials of a king.

And stranger yet, at one end of the hall



Two great funereal curtains, looping down,  
Parted a little ere they met the floor,  
About a picture of his lady, taken  
Some years before, and falling hid the frame.  
And just above the parting was a lamp :  
So the sweet figure folded round with night  
Seem'd stepping out of darkness with a smile.

Well then—our solemn feast—we ate and  
drank,  
And might—the wines being of such nobleness—  
Have jested also, but for Julian's eyes,  
And something weird and wild about it all :  
What was it ? for our lover seldom spoke,  
Scarce touch'd the meats ; but ever and anon  
A priceless goblet with a priceless wine  
Arising, show'd he drank beyond his use ;  
And when the feast was near an end, he said :

‘There is a custom in the Orient, friends—  
I read of it in Persia—when a man  
Will honour those who feast with him, he brings  
And shows them whatsoever he accounts  
Of all his treasures the most beautiful,  
Gold, jewels, arms, whatever it may be.  
This custom——’

Pausing here a moment, all  
The guests broke in upon him with meeting hands  
And cries about the banquet—‘Beautiful!  
Who could desire more beauty at a feast?’

The lover answer’d, ‘There is more than one  
Here sitting who desires it. Laud me not  
Before my time, but hear me to the close.  
This custom steps yet further when the guest  
Is loved and honour’d to the uttermost.

For after he hath shown him gems or gold,  
He brings and sets before him in rich guise  
That which is thrice as beautiful as these,  
The beauty that is dearest to his heart—

“O my heart's lord, would I could show you,” he  
says,

“Ev'n my heart too.” And I propose to-night  
To show you what is dearest to my heart,  
And my heart too.

‘But solve me first a doubt.

I knew a man, nor many years ago ;  
He had a faithful servant, one who loved  
His master more than all on earth beside.  
He falling sick, and seeming close on death,  
His master would not wait until he died,  
But bade his menials bear him from the door,  
And leave him in the public way to die.

I knew another, not so long ago,  
Who found the dying servant, took him home,  
And fed, and cherish'd him, and saved his life.  
I ask you now, should this first master claim  
His service, whom does it belong to? him  
Who thrust him out, or him who saved his life?'

This question, so flung down before the guests,  
And balanced either way by each, at length  
When some were doubtful how the law would hold,  
Was handed over by consent of all  
To one who had not spoken, Lionel.

Fair speech was his, and delicate of phrase.  
And he beginning languidly—his loss  
Weigh'd on him yet—but warming as he went,  
Glanced at the point of law, to pass it by,  
Affirming that as long as either lived,

By all the laws of love and gratefulness,  
The service of the one so saved was due  
All to the saver—adding, with a smile,  
The first for many weeks—a semi-smile  
As at a strong conclusion—‘body and soul  
And life and limbs, all his to work his will.’

Then Julian made a secret sign to me  
To bring Camilla down before them all.  
And crossing her own picture as she came,  
And looking as much lovelier as herself  
Is lovelier than all others—on her head  
A diamond circlet, and from under this  
A veil, that seemed no more than gilded air,  
Flying by each fine ear, an Eastern gauze  
With seeds of gold—so, with that grace of hers,  
Slow-moving as a wave against the wind,  
That flings a mist behind it in the sun—

And bearing high in arms the mighty babe,  
The younger Julian, who himself was crown'd  
With roses, none so rosy as himself—  
And over all her babe and her the jewels  
Of many generations of his house  
Sparkled and flash'd, for he had decked them out  
As for a solemn sacrifice of love—  
So she came in :—I am long in telling it,  
I never yet beheld a thing so strange,  
Sad, sweet, and strange together—floated in—  
While all the guests in mute amazement rose—  
And slowly pacing to the middle hall,  
Before the board, there paused and stood, her breast  
Hard-heaving, and her eyes upon her feet,  
Not daring yet to glance at Lionel.  
But him she carried, him nor lights nor feast  
Dazed or amazed, nor eyes of men ; who cared  
Only to use his own, and staring wide

And hungering for the gilt and jewell'd world  
About him, look'd, as he is like to prove,  
When Julian goes, the lord of all he saw.

'My guests,' said Julian: 'you are honour'd now  
Ev'n to the uttermost: in her behold  
Of all my treasures the most beautiful,  
Of all things upon earth the dearest to me.'  
Then waving us a sign to seat ourselves,  
Led his dear lady to a chair of state.  
And I, by Lionel sitting, saw his face  
Fire, and dead ashes and all fire again  
Thrice in a second, felt him tremble too,  
And heard him muttering, 'So like, so like;  
She never had a sister. I knew none.  
Some cousin of his and hers—O God, so like!'  
And then he suddenly ask'd her if she were.  
She shook, and cast her eyes down, and was dumb.

And then some other question'd if she came  
From foreign lands, and still she did not speak.  
Another, if the boy were hers: but she  
To all their queries answer'd not a word,  
Which made the amazement more, till one of  
    them

Said, shuddering, 'Her spectre!' But his friend  
Replied, in half a whisper, 'Not at least  
The spectre that will speak if spoken to.  
Terrible pity, if one so beautiful  
Prove, as I almost dread to find her, dumb!'

But Julian, sitting by her, answer'd all:  
'She is but dumb, because in her you see  
That faithful servant whom we spoke about,  
Obedient to her second master now;  
Which will not last. I have here to-night a guest  
So bound to me by common love and loss—



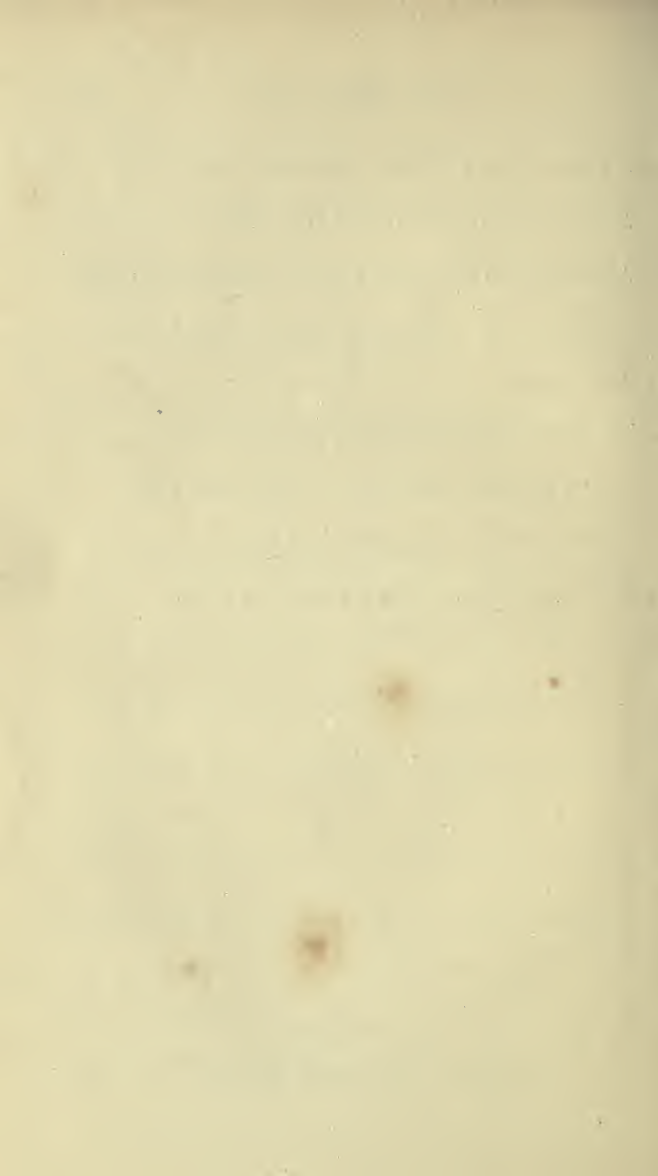
What ! shall I bind him more ? in his behalf,  
Shall I exceed the Persian, giving him  
That which of all things is the dearest to me,  
Not only showing ? and he himself pronounced  
That my rich gift is wholly mine to give.

‘ Now all be dumb, and promise all of you  
Not to break in on what I say by word  
Or whisper, while I show you all my heart.’  
And then began the story of his love  
As here to-day, but not so wordily—  
The passionate moment would not suffer that—  
Past thro’ his visions to the burial ; thence  
Down to this last strange hour in his own hall ;  
And then rose up, and with him all his guests  
Once more as by enchantment ; all but he,  
Lionel, who fain had risen, but fell again,  
And sat as if in chains—to whom he said :

'Take my free gift, my cousin, for your wife;  
And were it only for the giver's sake,  
And tho' she seem so like the one you lost,  
Yet cast her not away so suddenly,  
Lest there be none left here to bring her back:  
I leave this land for ever.' Here he ceased.

Then taking his dear lady by one hand,  
And bearing on one arm the noble babe,  
He slowly brought them both to Lionel.  
And there the widower husband and dead wife  
Rush'd each at each with a cry, that rather seem'd  
For some new death than for a life renew'd;  
Whereat the very babe began to wail;  
At once they turn'd, and caught and brought him in  
To their charm'd circle, and, half-killing him  
With kisses, round him closed and claspt again.  
But Lionel, when at last he freed himself

From wife and child, and lifted up a face  
All over glowing with the sun of life,  
And love, and boundless thanks—the sight of this  
So frightened our good friend, that turning to me  
And saying, ‘It is over: let us go’—  
There were our horses ready at the doors—  
We bade them no farewell, but mounting these  
He past for ever from his native land;  
And I with him, my Julian, back to mine.



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