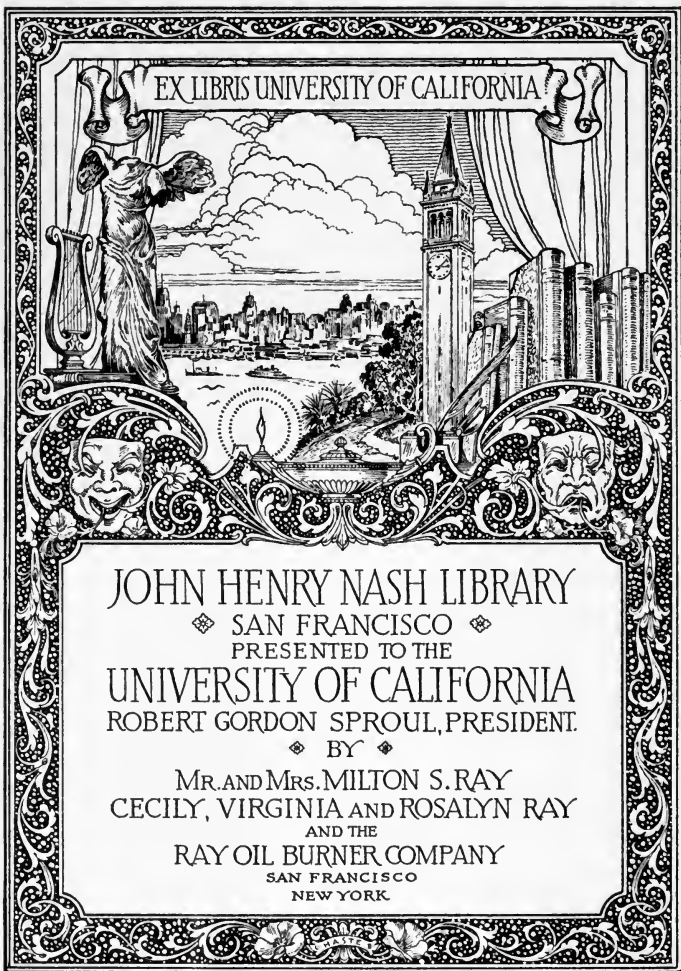


PEARL

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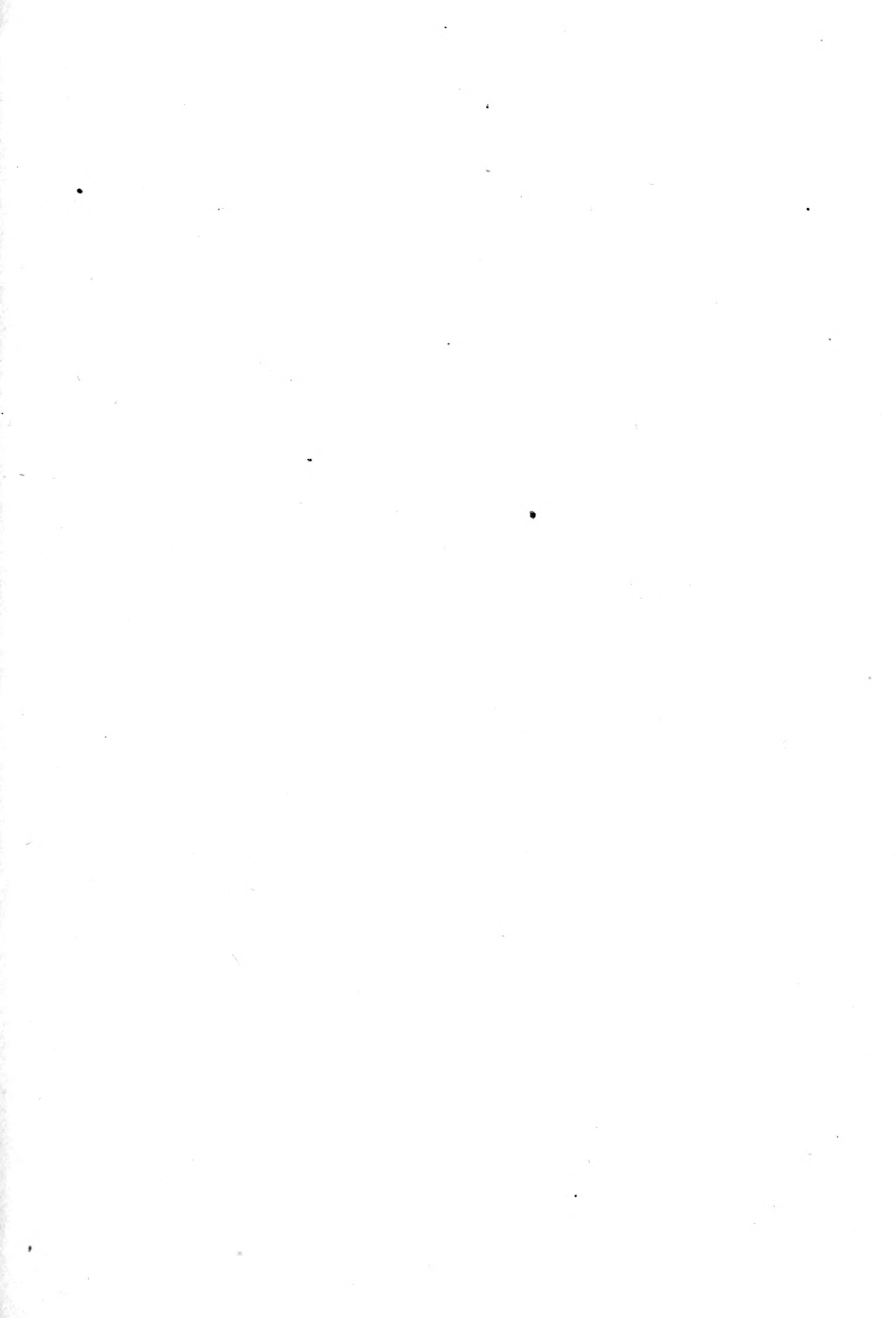
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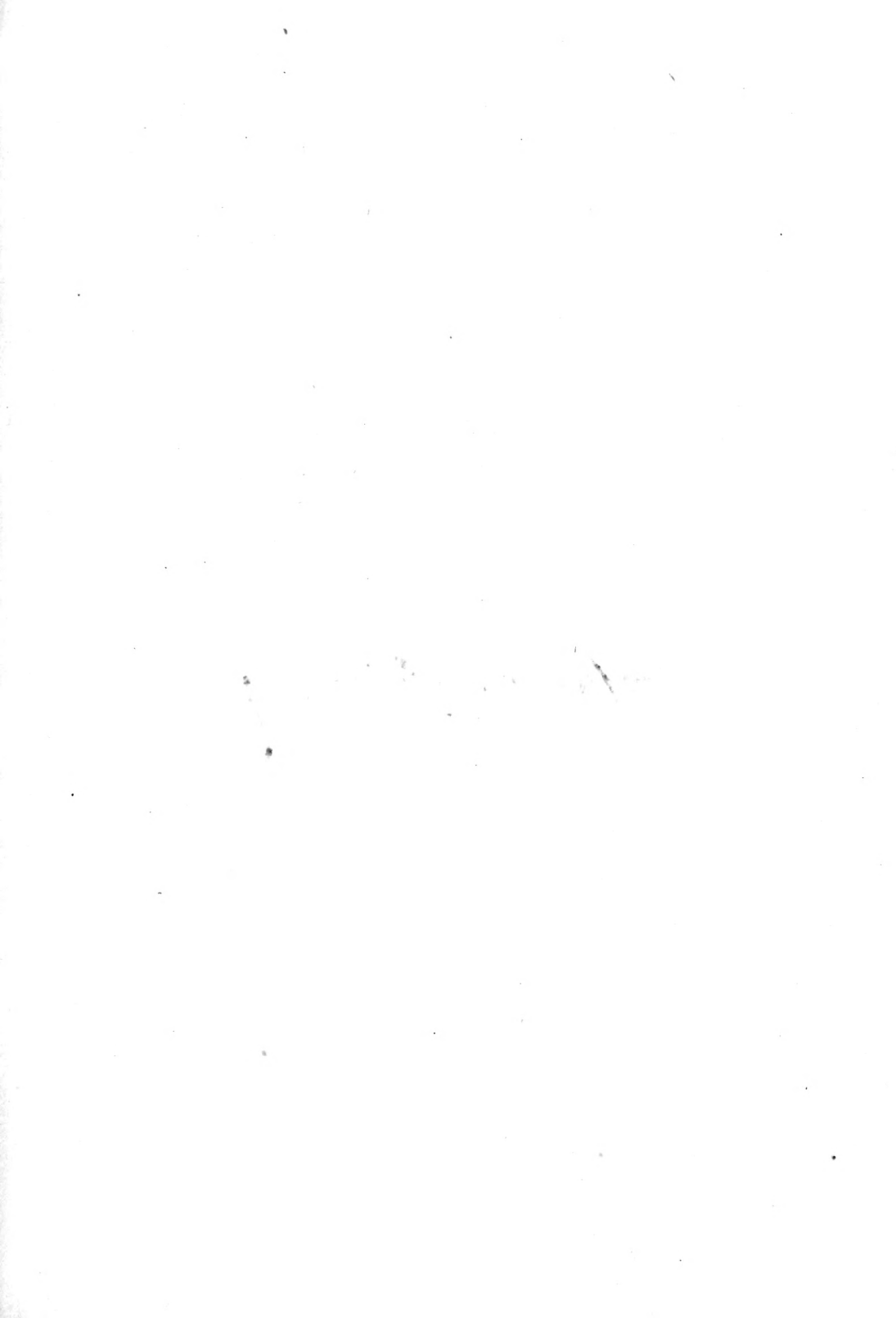


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PEARL: AN ENGLISH POEM OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY RE-SET IN MODERN ENGLISH BY PROF. I. GOLLANCZ, LITT.D., PUBLISHED ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY AND THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM IN ENGLAND, AND SOLD ENTIRELY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THEIR FUND. IMPRINTED BY GEO. W. JONES AT THE SIGN OF THE DOLPHIN IN LONDON.

PEARL: AN ENGLISH POEM OF
THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY
RE-SET IN MODERN ENGLISH
BY ISRAEL GOLLAN CZ.

IMPRINTED & PUBLISHED BY GEO. W. JONES
AT THE SIGN OF THE DOLPHIN IN GOUGH
SQUARE, FLEET STREET, LONDON, & SOLD
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH RED
CROSS. MCMXVIII.

Five hundred and fifty years ago, while Chaucer at Court was charming noble dames with his ballades and rondels, there lived, remote from London life, somewhere in the West-Midlands, perchance not far from Wordsworth's home, a gracious poet whose very name has been forgotten, though, happily, Time has not destroyed the magic of his words.

Preserved in a single manuscript, one of the treasures of the Cottonian collection in the British Museum, four poems bear the impress of his genius. Two of these, on the themes of "Cleanness" and "Patience," are vivid didactic homilies, poetical paraphrases from the Scriptures, written in the old alliterative metre, then revived, the versification of the ancient poets of England before the Conquest.

The two other poems—the Arthurian romance of "Gawain and the Green Knight" and "Pearl"—reveal him as a poet who can perhaps best be appraised as the precursor of Edmund Spenser. More wondrously than any previous English poet, he harmonized the quest for the beautiful, in imagery, word, and music, with spiritual exaltation and moral purpose.

His grief for a beloved child, whom he had probably named Margaret or Marjory, his "pearl of price," found expression in verse. A heavenly vision of his lost jewel brought him comfort and taught him resignation.

In a hundred and one twelve-line stanzas, blending a not too rigorous system of alliteration with a difficult scheme of end-rhymes (ab, ab, ab, ab, bc, bc; the rhyming word of the twelfth line being caught up in the first line, and repeated as the rhyme in the last line, in five successive stanzas), he produced an elegiac poem, which, though less monumental, has much in common, in movement and feeling, with a stately sonnet-sequence. The flow and ebb of the sonnet's octave and sestet are heard more lightly and with more lyrical cadence in the octave and quatrain of the "Pearl" stanza.

The English in which the poet wrote belonged to some district where there had been a strong infusion of Scandinavian elements, and where, although Norman settlers had mingled with the English stock, the old national tradition was predominant. In addition to his masterly use of his native mother-words, he gives evidence of a scholarly knowledge of Latin and French. The dialect is characteristic in vocabulary and idiom, and perhaps, as the late Sir James Murray held, more difficult than that of any other writings in Early English. The problems of interpretation are still further complicated by the fact that we are dependent in this case on the work of one scribe whose crabbed handwriting was not faultless.

The tender beauty of the poem transcends all questions of

theology and dogma; and the elemental and personal note makes it unnecessary, to my mind, to controvert the view that "Pearl" should be read as an exposition of certain theological problems, exemplified by means of a symbolical allegory.

A like sorrow befell the poet's great Italian contemporary Boccaccio; and he, too, sought solace in song. While there is no clear evidence of any indebtedness on the part of the author of "Pearl" to Boccaccio's "Olympia," it is a fascinating study to compare the two poems. Such parallels as may be discovered may well be due to common knowledge, ideas, and beliefs. In my edition of "Olympia," with an English rendering, to commemorate the six hundredth anniversary of Boccaccio's birth (printed at the Florence Press, London, and published by Messrs. Chatto & Windus, 1913), I wrote as follows concerning the two poets:—

"The one—a pioneer of the Renaissance—characteristically, under the influence of his great Italian Master, harmonized Virgilian form with Christian belief. The other—a didactic English poet, far from the new literary currents—bethought him of the Pearl of the Gospel, and found his inspiration in the visionary scenes of the New Jerusalem, coloured by mediaeval allegory. In his poem, 'the river from the Throne' of the Apocalypse met 'the waters of the wells,' devised by Sir Mirth for the Garden of the Rose.

“In accordance with theological fancy, in each poem the transfigured child, grown in wisdom, appears as matured also in age, ‘joined in Eternal Spousal.’ No longer the children they were, they teach with bold authority lessons of resignation and the mystic properties of Heaven—Pearl more particularly, who in her argumentative skill recalls the figure of Reason in the ‘Romaunt.’ Yet, at the same time, to the dreamer she is still ‘my little queen,’ and, for all ‘her royal array,’ his treasure ‘so small and sweetly slight.’ So, too, Olympia’s voice and image are those of Violante—‘*virguncula mea.*’ The child angelic, matured in Heaven—‘for spousal fit’—is still the child for dreamer and poet. In the Kingdom all are as children. And so even to Dante, in the hour of his imperilled loyalty to her memory, Beatrice first appears ‘*con quelle vestimenta sanguigne, colle quali apparve prima agli occhi miei, e pareami giovane, in simile etade a quella in che prima la vidi.*’”

The present rendering of “Pearl” into modern English is a revised version, largely rewritten, of the translation which faced the original text in my edition of the poem, published by David Nutt in 1891. During all these years my understanding of the poem has deepened, and I think I may now feel some confidence in my interpretation. This rendering, unaccompanied by text or notes, may be taken by scholars

who are acquainted with the problems at issue as representing my present views on contested words and passages. It is detached from a new annotated edition, long in preparation and already set up in type, which will be published in due course. My ever-revered friend Holman Hunt has given "Pearl" a noble place in English art by the beautiful picture with which he graciously enriched my edition, which had the further honour of the commendation of Tennyson. The lines he sent me, prefixed to the present rendering, were among the last he wrote.

In far-off days, in the midst of the incessant wars that harassed people in the reign of Edward III, an unknown poet placed on the grave of his little child a garland of song, blooming yet after the lapse of so long a time. In these latter days of stress and strain and tribulation, "Pearl" still symbolizes things of the spirit outliving the vesture of decay. I am glad to think that, linking the ages, the poet of "Pearl" is hereby associated with the beneficent works of mercy of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John. He adds, as it were, his Pearl of price to the Red Cross Necklace of "Pearls: In Memory":—

“Sunder'd from the shell they shine,
Souls translucent, pearls of price;
Yearning hearts their worth ensbrine;
Pearl of pearls is Love's device.” I.G.

WE LOST YOU—FOR HOW LONG A TIME—
TRUE PEARL OF OUR POETIC PRIME !
WE FOUND YOU, AND YOU GLEAM RE-SET
IN BRITAIN'S LYRIC CORONET.

—TENNYSON.

TO
THE BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY
AND
THE ORDER OF ST. JOHN
THIS RE-SETTING OF "PEARL"
IS DEDICATED
IN REVERENT GRATITUDE
AND ADMIRATION.

*"Mercy and Grace must pilot them;
The Grace of God is great enough."*

I

PEARL, all-pleasing, Prince's treasure,
In-set, too pure, in purest gold!
From out the Orient, I aver,
Ne'er proved I pearl its precious peer;
So round, so royal in each array,
So sweetly small, so wondrous smooth;
Where'er I judged of joyous gems,
I placed my Pearl apart, supreme.
I lost it—in a garden—alas!
Through grass to earth it glanced from me.
I pine, by Despot Love despoil'd
Of Pearl, mine own, without a spot.

II

There, in that spot, since hence it sped,
I often wait, and watch, and wish
For what was wont to vanquish woe,
And raise my hap and all my weal.
It doth but pierce my heart with pangs,
My breast in bale but boil and burn;
Yet ne'er me seem'd so sweet a song,
As that still hour to me let steal.
Many a thought, forsooth, flow'd there,—
To think of its charm so clad in clay!
O earth! thou marrest a merry theme,—
Pearl, mine own, without a spot.

III

From spot where' such rich treasure wastes
Fragrant spice must needs spring forth;
Blossoms white and blue' and red
Shine there' full sheer against the sun;
Flower and fruit shall know no flaw
Where it down drave to earth's dark mould.
For from dead grain each blade' must grow,
No wheat were' else brought ever home.
Yea, good from good is aye' begun;
So seemly a seed can never fail;
Ne'er fragrant spice' shall cease to spring
From that precious Pearl without a spot.

IV

Unto the spot I picture forth
I enter'd in that garden green:
'Twas August, at a festal tide,
When corn is cut with keen-edg'd hook.
The mound my Pearl had roll'd adown
With herbs was shadow'd, beauteous, bright,—
Gilvers, ginger, and gromwell-seed,
And peonies powder'd aye between.
But if the sight was sweet to see,
Fair, too, the fragrance floating thence,
Where dwelleth that glory, I wot full well,
My precious Pearl without a spot.

V

Before that spot my hands I clasp'd,
For care full cold that caught my heart;
Wild grief made tumult in my breast,
Though reason bade me be at peace.
I plain'd my Pearl, imprison'd there,
With wayward words that fiercely fought;
Though Christ Himself the comfort show'd,
My wretched will work'd aye in woe.
I fell upon that flowery plat;
Such fragrance flash'd into my brain,
I slid into a slumber-swoon
O'er that precious Pearl without a spot.

VI

THENCE from that spot my spirit sprang,
My body lay in trance on mound;
My soul, by grace of God, had fared
Adventuring, where marvels be.
I knew not where that region was;
I was cast, I knew, where cliffs rose sheer.
Towards a forest I set my face,
Where rocks so rich were to descry
That none can trow how rare the light,
The gleaming glory glinting thence,
For ne'er a web that mortals wove
Was half so wondrously bewrought.

VII

Wondrously the hill-sides shone
With crystal cliffs of clearest hue,
And all about were holt-woods bright,
With boles as blue as blue of Inde,
And close-set leaves on every branch
As burnish'd silver sway'd and swung;
When glided 'gainst them glinting gleams,
Splendent they shone with shimmering sheen.
The gravel I ground upon that strand
Were precious pearls of Orient;
The sunbeams were but dim and dark,
If set beside that wondrous light!

VIII

'Mid the magic of those wondrous hills
My spirit soon forgot all grief;
Flavours of fruit so fresh were there,
As food full well they strengthen'd me:
Birds in the wood together flew,
Of flaming hues, both small and great;
Nor citole-string, nor citherner,
Could e'er re-tell their goodly glee;
For, when those birds did beat their wings,
They sang with such a sweet accord,
No rapture' could so stir a man
As to hear and see that wonderment.

IX

All was so dight in wondrous wise,
No tongue of man hath power to tell
The beauty of that forest-land,
Where fortune led me, on and on.
Still forth I press'd, in blissful mood;
No hill, though high, might hinder me.
Deeper in wood, more fair arose'
Plains and plants and spice and fruits,
Hedgerows and paths, and rivers rich;
As fine gold-thread were their steep banks.
A stream I reach'd that cleft the strand,—
Lord, how wondrous was the sight!

X

The marvels of that wondrous stream!
Beauteous its banks with beryl bright;
With music sweet its waters swept;
With whispering voice it wander'd on.
And in the depths lay gleaming stones;
As light through glass they glimmer'd and glow'd;
As streaming stars in the welkin shine
On a winter night, when dalesmen sleep.
Each pebble set there in that stream
Was an emerald, sapphire, or goodly gem,
That all the water glisten'd with light,—
The glamour was so wondrous rare!

XI

THE wondrous gleam of down and dale,
Of water, wood, and noble plain,
Stirr'd in me bliss, my bale allay'd,
Scatter'd sorrow, pain destroy'd.
Along a stream I wended in joy,—
Slowly it flow'd,—my mind was full:
The farther I follow'd those watery vales,
The mightier joy constrain'd my heart.
Fortune fareth where she listeth,
Sends she solace, or sends she care';
The wight on whom her will she worketh
Hath ever chance of more and more.

XII

More was of wealth there, of this kind,
Than I could tell, were leisure mine,
For earthly heart might not attain
Unto the tenth of that glad Joy.
Certes, methought that Paradise
Lay there beyond, o'er those broad banks.
The stream, I trow'd, was some device
Sir Mirth had made, between great wells;
Beyond the brook, by hill or dale,
The castle-bounds, I trow'd, were mark'd;
But the water was deep, I durst not wade,
And ever long'd I, more and more.

XIII

More and more, and yet still more,
I long'd to see beyond the brook;
For if 'twas fair where I then pass'd,
Far fairer was the farther land.
About me stumbled I, and stared;
To find a ford full hard I sought;
But perils more, iwis, there were,
The farther I stalk'd along the bank;
And ever methought I could not flinch,
Afeard, where wealth so winsome was;
When new delights were nigh at hand,
That moved my mind, e'en more and more.

XIV

More marvels then did daunt my soul;
I saw beyond that merry mere
A crystal cliff that shone full bright,
Many a noble ray stood forth;
At the foot thereof there sat a child,—
So debonair,—a maid of grace;
Glistening white was her array,—
I knew her well, I had seen her ere.
As gleaming gold, refin'd and pure,
So shone that glory'neath the cliff;
Long toward her there I look'd,—
The longer, I knew her more and more.

XV

The more I scann'd her face so fair,
Her beauteous form when I had found,
Such gladd'ning glory came to me,
As rarely had been mine before.
Longing me seized to call her name,
But wonder dealt my heart a blow;
I saw her in so strange a place,
Well might the shock mine heart appal.
Then lifted she her visage fair,
As ivory pure her face was white;
It thrill'd mine heart, struck all astray,
And ever the longer, more and more.

XVI

MORE than my longing was now my dread;
I stood full still; I dared not speak;
With open eyes and fast-closed mouth,
I stood as meek as hawk in hall.
I took it for a ghostly vision;
I dreaded what might there betide,
Lest what I saw should me escape
Ere I it held within my reach;
When, lo! that spotless child of grace,
So smooth, so small, so sweetly slight,
Arose in all her royal array,—
A precious piece, bedight with pearls.

XVII

Choicest pearls, of sovereign price,
Favour'd mortal there might see,
When all as fresh as a fleur-de-lys
Adown that bank she came anon.
Gleaming white was her rich robe,
Open at sides, and nobly edged
With pearls, the loveliest, I trow,
That e'er I saw yet with mine eyes.
Long were the sleeves, I ween and wot,
With double braid of pearl bedeck'd;
Her kirtle all of self-same sheen,
With precious pearls bedight around.

XVIII

A crown that maiden wore, bedight
With margarites, and no stone else;
High pinnacled, with clear white pearls,
With figured flowers wrought thereon.
No other gem was on her head;
Her hair, too, hung about her neck;
Her look was grave, as duke's or earl's;
Whiter than whale-bone was her hue.
Bright as pure gold her tresses shone,
Loose on her shoulders they softly lay;
Though grave her beauty, nought it lack'd
Of precious pearls on broid'ry dight.

XIX

The hems, the wristbands, were bedight,
At the hand, at sides, at openings,
With white pearl, and none other gem;
And burnish'd white was her array.
But a wondrous pearl, without a flaw,
Amid her breast was firmly set;
Soul of man would surely fail
Ere mortal mind might mete its worth.
No tongue might e'er avail, I trow,
That sight to tell in fitting word,
So fair was it, and clear, and pure,
That precious pearl, where it was dight.

XX

Bedight with pearls, that precious thing
Came down the shore beyond the stream;
From here to Greece no gladder man
Than I, when she was at the brink.
She was me nearer than aunt or niece;
Wherefore my joy was much the more.
Proffer'd me speech that creature rare,
Inclining low in womanly wise;
Her crown of richest worth she doff'd,
And hail'd me with obeisance blithe;
Well was me that e'er I was born,
To answer that Sweet, in pearls bedight.

XXI

“O PEARL!” quoth I, “bedight in pearls,
Art thou my Pearl that I have plain’d,
Bewept by me, so lone, a-night?
Much longing have I borne for thee,
Since into grass thou hence didst glide;
Pensive, broken, forpin’d am I;
But thou hast reach’d a life of joy,
In the strifeless home of Paradise.
What fate hath hither brought my jewel,
And me in dolorous plight hath cast?
Since we were sunder’d and set apart,
A joyless jeweller I have been.”

XXII

That jewel there, so fair begemm'd,
Up-rais'd her face, her eyes so grey,
Put on her crown of Orient pearl,
And thus full gravely then she spoke:
"Sir, thou hast misread thy tale,
To say thy Pearl is all perdue,
That is in chest so well secured
As in this garden of grace and glee;
For ever to dwell and play herein,
Where miss and mourning come never nigh;
This were thy treasure-hold, i' faith,
Wert thou a gentle jeweller.

XXIII

“But, gentle sir, if thou must lose
Thy joy for a gem that thee was dear,
Thou’rt set, methinks, on mad intent,
And carest for too brief a cause:
What thou didst lose was but a rose,
That flower’d and fail’d, as Nature bade;
Through the casket’s grace, enclosing it,
It now is proved a pearl of price.
And thou hast call’d thy fate a thief,
That ought from nought hath made for thee;
Thou blamest the balm of all thine ill,
Thou art a graceless jeweller.”

XXIV

A jewel to me was then this guest,
And jewels were her gentle words.
“Indeed,” quoth I, “blest dearest mine,
My dire distress away thou draw’st:
I make request to be excused;
I trow’d my Pearl had pass’d from Day;
But now ’tis found, I shall hold fast,
And dwell with it in radiant groves,
And praise my Lord and all His laws,
Who hath brought me this bliss anigh.
Were I with thee beyond these waves,
I were a joyful jeweller!”

XXV

“Jeweller!” said that purest gem,
“Why jest ye men? So mad ye are!
Three words thou spakest at one time;
Thoughtless, forsooth, were all the three;
Thou knowest not what one doth mean;
Surely thy words outrun thy wit.
Thou sayest, thou deemest me in this dale,
Because thou seest me with thine eyes;
Again, thou sayest, that in this land
Thyself wilt dwell with me e’en here;
Thirdly,—this stream would’st freely pass;
This may no joyful jeweller.

XXVI

“I HOLD that jeweller little to praise’
That trusteth what with eye he seeth,
And much to blame and graceless be
That thinketh our Lord would speak a lie,
Who leally promised to raise thy life,
Though fortune gave thy flesh to death:
Widdishbins dost thou read His words,
That trowest nought but what thou seest:
And ’tis an overweening thing,
That ill beseems each righteous man,
To trow no tale be trustworthy,
Save his mere reason deem it so.

XXVII

“Deem now thyself, if thou hast dealt
Such words as man to God should lift.
Thou sayest thou wilt dwell in this burgh;
’Twere meet, methinks, first to ask leave;
And yet thou mightest miss the boon.
Thou wishest, too, to cross this stream;
First must thou reach another goal,—
Thy corse full cold must cling in clay;
’Twas marr’d in the grove of Paradise;
Our forefather ill guarded it;
Through dreary death each man must pass,
Ere God deem right he cross this flood.”

XXVIII

“Dookest thou me,” quoth I, “my Sweet,
To dolour again, I pine away.
Now have I found what I had lost,
Must I it forfeit, ere I cease?
Why must I it both meet and miss?
My precious Pearl doth me great pain!
What serveth treasure but tears to make,
If one must lose it soon with woe?
Now reck I ne'er how low I droop,
How far men drive me from my land;
If in my Pearl no part is mine,
What is my doom but endless moan?”

XXIX

“Thou deem’st distress is nought but moan;”
Said then that maid: “why dost thou thus?
By din of dole for losses small
Many a man oft loseth more.
Thou shouldest better hold thee blest,
And praise aye God, in woe and weal;
Anger avails thee not a cress;
Who needs must bow, be not so bold.
For though thou dance as any doe,
Chafe and cry in fiercest ire,
Since, to or fro, no way thou mak’st,
Thou must abide what He shall deem.

XXX

“Doom thou the Lord! Arraign Him still!
He will not swerve a foot from the way.
Thy mending ’mounteth not a mite,
Though thou, for grief, be never blithe.
Stint from thy strife, and cease to chide,
And seek His grace full swift and sure;
Thy prayer may His pity touch,
And Mercy may show forth her craft.
His solace may thy sickness soothe,
Thy loss may lightly glide away;
For, marr’d or made, mourning and mirth,
All lieth in Him, as He deem fit.”

XXXI

THEN deem'd I to that damosel:
"Let not my Lord be wroth with me,
If wildly rave I, rushing in speech;
My heart with mourning all did melt,
As bubbling water goeth from well;
I put me in His mercy aye.
Rebuke me ne'er with cruel words,
My dear adored, e'en though I stray;
But show me kindly comforting,
Piteously thinking upon this,—
Of care and me thou madest accord,
That wast of all my bliss the ground.

XXXII

“My bliss, my bale, thou hast been both;
But much the more my moan hath been;
Since thou wast banish’d from every path,
I wist not where my Pearl was gone;
Now I it see, now less’ neth my loss;
And when we parted, at one we were;
God forbid we be now wroth!
We meet so seldom by stock or stone.
Though thou canst speak full courteously,
I am but dust, and manners lack;
The mercy of Christ, and Mary, and John,
These are the ground of all my bliss.

XXXIII

“I see thee blithely link’d with bliss,
And I a man with mourning marr’d;
Thereof thou takest little heed,
Though baleful harms befall me oft;
But now, before thy presence here,
I would beseech, without demur,
That thou wouldst tell, with gentle grace,
Early and late what life thou lead’st.
For I am glad that thine estate
Is all so changed to worth and weal;
The high-way this of all my joy;
It is the ground of all my bliss.”

XXXIV

“Now bliss betide thee, noble sir,”
Said she, so fair of form and face,
“And welcome here to bide and walk,
For dear to me is now thy speech.
Masterful mood and mighty pride,
I tell thee, are bitterly hated here;
My Master loveth not to blame,
For meek are all that dwell Him nigh:
And, when in His place thou shalt appear,
In humbleness be deep devout;
My Lord the Lamb such cheer aye loveth;
He is the ground of all my bliss.

XXXV

“A blissful life thou say’st I lead,
And thou wouldst know the state thereof:
Well know’st thou, when thy Pearl fared forth,
Of tender age, full young, was I;
But, through His Godhead, my Lord the Lamb
Took me in marriage unto Himself;
Crown’d me Queen, to revel in bliss,
In length of days that ne’er shall wane;
And dower’d with all His heritage
His Bride is: I am wholly His;
His praise, His price, His peerless rank,
Of all my bliss are root and ground.”

XXXVI

“BLISSFUL,” quoth I, “may this be so?
Speak I amiss, be not displeased.
Art thou the Queen of heavens blue,
Whom all this world must honour now?
We believe in Mary, from whom sprang grace,
Who bore a child from virgin flower,
And who can take from her the crown,
Save she excel her in some worth?
But, for her peerlessness of charm,
Phoenix of Araby we her call,
The bird immaculate of form,
Like to that Queen of Courtesy.”

XXXVII

“Courteous Queen,” said then that joy,
Kneeling to earth, her face enveil’d,
“Matchless Mother, Merriest Maid,
Blessed Beginner of every grace!”
Then rose she up, and there she paused,
And spake toward me from that spot:—
“Sir! folk find here the prize they seek,
But no usurpers bide herein:
That Empress in her empire hath
The heavens all and earth and hell;
From heritage she driveth none,
For she is Queen of Courtesy.

XXXVIII

“The Court of the Kingdom of Living God
Hath in itself this property,—
Each one that may arrive therein
Is king or queen of all the realm,
And yet shall not deprive another;
But each is glad of others’ weal,
And would their crowns were worth five such,
Were their enhancing possible.
But my Lady, from whom Jesu sprang,
She holdeth empire high o’er all;
And this displeaseth none of our host,
For she is Queen of Courtesy.

XXXIX

“By courtesy, as saith Saint Paul,
We all are members of Jesu Christ;
As head and arm and trunk and leg,
Trusty and true, their body serve,
So is each Christian soul a limb
That to the Lord of Might belongs.
Lo now, what hatred or ill-will
Is fast or fix'd between thy limbs?
Thy head hath neither spleen nor spite,
On arm or finger though thou bear ring.
So is it with us in love and joy,
By courtesy, to King and Queen.”

XL

“Courtesy,” quoth I, “I grant,
And charity great dwell in your midst;
But pardon if my speech doth grieve;
Methinketh now thy words full wrong,
Raising thyself in heaven too high,
To make thee Queen that wast so young.
What greater honour might he win,
Who suffer’d bravely in this world,
And lived in lifelong penance here,
With bodily bale to purchase bliss?
What greater glory might he have
Than king be crown’d by courtesy?”

XLI

“THIS courtesy is all too free,
If it be sooth that thou hast said;
Thou livedst not two years in our land,
God thou couldst not please or pray,
And never knewest Pater nor Creed;
Yet on the first day made a Queen!
I may not trow, so speed me God,
That He would work so all amiss.
As countess, damosel, par ma fay,
’Twere fair in heaven to hold estate,
Or as a lady of lower degree,
But Queen,—it is too high a goal.”

XLII

“No goal, no end, His goodness bath,”
Then said to me that noble gem,
“For all is just where He doth lead;
He can do nought but what is right.
As Matthew in thy Missal saith,
In God Almighty’s Gospel true;
A parable he telleth well;
To Heaven bright He likeneth it.
‘My realm on high,’ He saith, ‘is like
To a lord that had a vineyard once;
And, lo! the time of year was come
When vintage was the season’s goal.”

XLIII

“The season’s goal his household knew;
And up full early rose the lord
To hire more workmen for his vines,
And to his purpose findeth some;
They enter in agreement then,
For a penny a day, and forth they go;
They strain and strive and do great toil,
They prune and bind and fasten firm.
Ere noon the lord the market sought,
And idle men found standing there.
‘Why stand ye idle?’ said he to them,
‘Or know ye for this day no goal?’

XLIV

“ ‘Ere dawn of day we hither came’;
So gave they answer, one and all;
‘We have stood here since rose the sun,
And no man biddeth us do aught.’
‘Enter my vineyard; do what ye can’;
Said then the Lord, and made it sure,—
‘What hire is fair, by fall of night,
I will you pay, in thought and deed.’
They went unto his vines, and work’d;
And thus all day the lord went forth,
And new men to his vineyard brought,
Well-nigh till day had pass’d its goal.

XLV

“‘At goal of day, at evensong,
One hour before the sun should set,
Strong men he saw stand idle there,
And said to them, with earnest voice:—
‘Why stand ye idle the livelong day?’
Nowhere, said they, was hire for them.
‘Go to my vineyard, yeomen young,
And work, and do as best ye can.’
Soon the world grew burnish’d brown;
The sun was down, and it waxed late.
To take their pay he summon’d them;
The day was done, its goal was pass’d.

XLVI

“THE day was done, the master knew,—
Called to his reeve: ‘Sir, pay the men;
Give them the hire that I them owe;
And further, that none may me reprove,
Set them all in one long line,
And give a penny to each alike;
Begin at the last that standeth low,
And so until thou reach the first.’
The first began then to complain,
And said that they had sorely toil’d;
‘These but an hour have strain’d their strength,
Seemeth to us we should take more.

XLVII

““More have we deserved, we think,
That here have borne the heat of day,
Than these that have not work'd two hours,
And thou dost make them equal us.’
Then said the lord to one of them:—
‘Friend, I would not do thee wrong;
Take what is thine own and go.
Hired I thee for a penny withal,
Why beginnest thou now to chafe?
Was not a penny thy covenant then?
More than agreed one must not claim.
Why shouldest thou then ask for more?’

XLVIII

““ Moreover,—Is it my right to give,
To do with mine what so I please,
Or is it thine eye is bent on ill,
Since I am good, and none defraud?
Thus shall I, quoth Christ, ‘ordain:
The last shall be the first to go,
And the first the last, be he ne’er so swift;
For many are called, though few be great.”
Thus do the poor their portion take,
Though they come late, and low their place;
Though, little done, their toil is spent,
The mercy of God is much the more.

XLIX

“More have I here of joy and bliss,
Of ladyship great and bloom of life,
Than all the men in the world might win,
Ask’d they award by way of right.
Though, well-nigh now, I late began,
At even to the vineyard came,
First of my hire my Lord bethought;
I was paid anon the payment full.
Others were there who had to wait,
Who sweated long before, and toil’d;
Yet nothing got they of their hire,
Nor will perchance a whole year more.”

L

Then said I more, and boldly spake:—
“Thy tale me seemeth reasonless:
God’s right is ready, raised eterne,
Or Holy Writ is but a fable:
In Psalter is said a verse full clear,
Putting, as point determin’d, this:—
‘Each Thou requitest as his desert,
Thou High King, fore-ordaining all!’
Now he who all day steadfast stood,—
If thou to payment come ere he,
Then the more the pay, the less the work,
And ever so the less the more.

LI

“TWIXT more and less in God’s own realm,”
That Gentle said, “lies no debate;
For there is each man paid alike,
Whether little or much be his reward.
That gentle Chieftain is no niggard,
Whether His dole be hard or soft;
He poureth His gifts as water from weir,
Or streams of the deep that never turn.
Large is his Freedom who hath fear’d
Fore Him that rescueth in sin.
No bliss shall be withheld from such;
The grace of God is great enough.

LII

“Yet now thou mootest, to checkmate me,
That I my penny have wrongly ta'en:
Thou sayest that I, who came too late,
Am not worth so great a wage.
Where knewest thou any man abide,
Ever so holy in his prayer,
Who ne'er, in some way, forfeited
The meed, some time, of heaven bright?
And aye the oft'er, the older they were,
Left they the right and wrought amiss;
Mercy and Grace must pilot them;
The grace of God is great enough.

LIII

“But grace enough have innocents:
As soon as they are born, by rule
In the water of baptism they descend;
Then are they to the vineyard brought.
Anon the day, with darkness fleck’d,
Unto Death’s might doth make them bow
Who ne’er wrought wrong, ere thence they went.
The gentle Lord His folk then payeth;
They did His will; they were therein.
Why should He not allow their hire,
Yea, pay them at the first day’s close?
The grace of God is great enough.

LIV

“Enough is known, how mankind great
First was wrought for perfect bliss;
Our forefather it forfeited,
Through an apple that he bit upon;
And for that morsel were we damn’d
To die in dolour, afar from joy,
And thence to fare to heat of hell,
There to abide, with respite none.
But soon there came the antidote:
On rood so rough ran richest blood
And winsome water: then, in that plight,
The grace of God wax’d great enough.

LV

"Enough from out that well there flow'd,
 Blood and water, from wound so wide:
 From bale of hell the blood us bought,
 And ransom'd us from second death;
 The water is baptism, sooth to say,
 That follow'd the glaive so grimly ground,
 That washeth away the guilt so fell,
 That Adam drown'd us with in death.
 Now is there nought in this round world
 Twixt us and bliss: all He withdrew;
 Bliss was restored in one fair hour.
 The grace of God is great enough.

LVI

“GRACE enough a man may have
That sinneth now, if he repent;
He must it crave with sorrow and sighs,
And bide the pain thereto is bound:
But Reason, straying not from right,
Saveth the innocent evermore;
For’tis a doom that God ne’er gave,
That ever the guiltless should be shamed.
The guilty may contrition find,
And be by Mercy led to Grace;
But into guile who glided ne’er,
In innocence, is saved by right.

LVII

“Right well I know of this same thing,
Two kinds to save is good and just,—
The righteous man His face shall see,
The harmless one shall come Him nigh.
Thus saith the Psalter in a verse,—
‘Lord, who shall climb Thy lofty hill,
Or rest within Thy holy place?’
Himself to answer He is not slow,—
‘Whose hands in malice ne’er did hurt,
He that is clean and pure of heart,
There shall his step stand ever firm.’
The innocent is saved by right!

LVIII

“Verily, eke the righteous man
Approach shall be that noble place,—
Who taketh not his life in vain,
His neighbour cheateth not with guile.
Of such saw Solomon clearly once,
How well our Wisdom welcomed him;
He guided him by ways full straight,
Shew’d him awhile the realm of God,
As who should say, ‘Lo, yon fair land!
Thou may’st it win, if thou be brave.’
But, without peril, be thou sure,
The innocent is saved by right.

LIX

“Ament the righteous saith another,
David in Psalter. Hast it seen?—
‘Thy servant, Lord, draw never to doom;
None living is justified ‘fore Thee.’
So, when thou comest to the Court,
Where all our causes shall be cried,
Renounce thy right, thou mayest come in,
By these same words that I have cull’d.
But He that bloodily died on rood,
Whose hands were pierced so grievously,
Grant thee to pass, when tried thou art,
By innocence and not by right!

LX

“Who knoweth to read the Book aright,
Let him look in, and learn therefrom
How Jesus walk’d once on a time,
And folk their bairns press’d near to Him:
To touch their children they Him besought,
For hap and health that from Him came.
His disciples sternly bade them cease;
And at their words full many stay’d.
Then Jesus sweetly said to them:—
‘Not so; let children draw to Me;
For such is heaven’s realm prepared.’
The innocent is aye saved by right!

LXI

“JESUS call'd to Him His meek,
And said, no man might win His realm,
Save he came thither as a child;
Else might he never therein come;
Harmless, undefiled, and true,
With ne'er stain nor spot of sapping sin,
When such come knocking on that place,
Quickly for them the bolt is drawn.
There is the bliss that cannot fade,
The jeweller sought 'mong precious gems;
And sold his all, both linen and wool,
To purchase him a spotless pearl.

LXII

“‘This spotless pearl, so dearly bought,
The jeweller gave his all therefor,
Is like the realm of Heaven bright;’
So said the Father of field and flood;
For it is flawless, bright, and pure,
Endlessly round, and blithe of cheer,
And common to all that righteous were.
Lo, midmost on my breast ’twas set!
My Lord the Lamb, who shed His blood,
He set it there in token of peace.
I rede thee, forsake the world so wild,
And get for thee thy spotless pearl.”

LXIII

“O spotless Pearl, in pearls so pure,
That bearest,” quoth I, “the pearl of price,
Who form’d for thee thy figure fair?
He was full wise that wrought thy robe;
Thy beauty never from Nature came;
Pygmalion painted ne’er thy face;
Nor Aristotle, with all his lore,
Did tell the properties of thy kind;
Thy colour passeth the fleur-de-lis;
Thy angel-bearing so debonair!
Tell me, Brightest, what plighted troth
Beareth as token this spotless pearl?”

LXIV

“My spotless Lamb, Who can better all,”
Quoth she, “my Destiny so dear,
Chose me His bride, though all unfit
The Spousal might a while well seem.
When I went forth from your wet world,
He call’d me to His Goodliness:—
‘Come hither to me, my truelove sweet,
For stain or spot is none in thee.’
He gave me strength and beauty too;
In His blood, on the Throne, He wash’d my weeds;
And, crownèd clean in maidenhood,
With spotless pearls He me adorn’d.”

LXV

“Why, spotless Bride, that shinest bright,
With regal glories rich and rare,
What, forsooth, may be the Lamb,
That thee as wife to Him would wed?
O'er all the rest thou hast climb'd high,
With Him to lead so queenly a life.
Many a fair, 'neath maiden crown,
For Christ in mickle strife hath lived;
Those dear ones hast thou all out-driven,
And from that marriage all hast held,
All save thyself, so strong and stiff,
Matchless maid, immaculate!”

LXVI

“IMMACULATE,” said that merry queen,
“Unblemish’d I am, without a stain;
And this may I with grace avow;
But ‘matchless queen’—that said I ne’er.
We all in bliss are Brides of the Lamb,
A hundred and forty thousand in all,
As in the Apocalypse it is seen;
Saint John beheld them in a throng.
On the Hill of Zion, that beauteous spot,
The Apostle beheld them, in dream divine,
Array’d for the Bridal on that hill-top,—
The City New of Jerusalem.

LXVII

“Of Jerusalem is now my speech:
If thou wouldst know what kind is He,
My Lamb, my Lord, my dearest Jewel,
My Joy, my Bliss, my noble Love,
The prophet Isaiah spake of Him,
In pity of His gentleness,—
‘The Glorious Guiltless whom they killed,
With ne’er a cause of evil deed.
As a sheep to the slaughter He was led;
As lamb the shearer taketh a-field,
He closed His mouth ’gainst questioning,
When Jews Him judg’d in Jerusalem.’

LXVIII

“In Jerusalem was my Truelove slain,
And rent on rood by boist’rous churls;
Full ready all our bales to bear,
He took on Him our cares so cold.
With buffets was His face all flay’d,
That was so fair to look upon;
For sin He set Himself at nought,
That ne’er had sin to call His own
For us He let Him beat and bend,
And bind upon a rugged rood;
As meek as lamb that made no plaint,
For us He died in Jerusalem.

LXIX

“Jerusalem, Jordan, and Galilee,
Where baptized folk the good Saint John,—
His words accorded with Isaiah’s.
When Jesus was come a-nigh to him,
He spake of Him this prophecy:—
‘Behold God’s Lamb, as true as stone,
Who doth away the endless sins
That all this world hath ever wrought.
Yet He Himself wrought never one,
Though on Himself all sins He laid.
His generation who can tell,
That died for us in Jerusalem?’

LXX

“In Jerusalem thus my Truelove sweet
Twice was taken there as lamb,
By record of true prophets twain,
So meek His mood and all His mien.
The third time well befits thereto,
As written in Apocalypse.
A-midst the Throne, where sat the Saints,
The Apostle John Him clearly saw,
Opening the Book with pages square,
With seven seals set forth thereon;
And at that sight the doughty quaked,
In Hell, in Earth, and Jerusalem.

LXXI

“THIS Lamb of Jerusalem had no speck
Of other hue save winsome white,
That ne'er a stain or spot might touch,
So white the wool, so rich and rare;
Wherefore each soul that hath no taint
Is to that Lamb a wife ador'd;
And though each day a many He bring,
Nor strife nor stress among us comes,
Save that we would each one were five;
The more the merrier, so bless me God!
Our love can thrive in company great;
Our honour more and never less.

LXXII

“Less of bliss may none us bring,
This pearl who bear upon our breasts,
For ne'er a thought of sin know they
The crown who bear of spotless pearls.
And though our corsers cling in clay,
And ye for ruth cry ceaselessly,
We knowledge have full well of this,—
From one death cometh all our hope.
Us gladd'neth the Lamb; our care is cast;
He maketh mirth at every meal;
Of each the bliss is bravest and best,
And no one's honour is yet the less.

LXXIII

“But lest thou deem my tale less true,
In Apocalypse is writ a verse:—
‘I saw,’ saith John, ‘where stood the Lamb,
On the Mount of Zion, thriven and strong,
And with him maidens a hundred thousand,
And four and forty thousand more;
On all their foreheads writ I found
The Lamb’s own name, His Father’s eke.
A voice from heaven heard I then,
Like many floods’ roar, a-rushing on;
As thunder hurleth against pale peaks,
That sound, I trow, was none the less.

LXXIV

“ ‘Nevertheless, though sharp the shout,
Though loud the voice that echoed there,
A note full new I heard them raise;
To list thereto was blissful joy.
As harpers harp upon their harps,
That new song sang they tunefully;
One maiden led in accents clear;
Sweetly in chorus they caught the strain.
And e’en before the Throne of God,
And those four beasts that Him obey,
And the Elders all, so grave of mien,
Their song they sang there ne’er the less.

LXXV

“Nevertheless was none so skill’d,
For all the crafts that e’er he knew,
That of that song might sing a note,
Save all the host that follow the Lamb.
They are redeem’d, remov’d from earth,
As first-fruits wholly due to God,
And to that gentle Lamb enjoin’d,
As like to Him in hue and look;
For never a lie nor tale untrue
Had touch’d their tongues, for any pain.
To spotless Lord the spotless host
Shall nearest be, and never less.”

LXXVI

“And none the less my thanks have thou,”
Quoth I, “my Pearl, though yet I ask;
I should not try thy noble mind,
Who chosen to Christ’s chamber art;
I am but earth and dust a-while,
And thou so rich a royal rose,
And bidest by this blissful bank,
Where life’s delight may ne’er be lost.
Now, Lady,—simple wast thou once,—
I fain would ask thee but one thing;
And, though I be boist’rous as a boor,
Let, ne’ertheless, my prayer avail!

LXXVII

“I NONE the less beseech thee fair,
If thou canst see it may be done,
As thou art glorious, free from fault,
My rueful prayer deny not thou.
Have ye no homes in castle-walls?
No manor where ye may meet and bide?
Thou namest Jerusalem, rich and royal,
Where David dear was dight on throne:
But by these holts it cannot be;
’Tis in Judea, that noble place;
As ye are spotless beneath the moon,
All spotless so should be your homes.

LXXVIII

“This spotless band thou speakest of,
This throng of thousands, such a host,
A city vast, so many ye are,
Without a doubt, ye needs must have.
So comely a pack of joyous jewels
’Twere perilous to lodge without;
But, where I tarry by these banks,
I see no dwelling anywhere.
I trow ye but linger here and walk
To look on the glory of this fair stream.
If elsewhere thou hast dwellings firm,
Now lead me to that merry spot.”

LXXIX

“The spot thou meanest, in Jewry land,”
That wonder rare then said to me,
“The city it is the Lamb did seek,
To suffer there sore, for sake of man,—
The Old Jerusalem, to wit,
For there the old guilt was assoil’d;
But the New, come down by God’s own word,—
The Apostle’s theme in Apocalypse,—
’Tis there the Lamb, with no black stain,
Thither hath borne His beauteous throng;
And, as His flock is without fold,
Moatless His mansion in that spot.

LXXX

“Of these twain spots to speak aright,
And yet hight both Jerusalem,
Which, know thou, meaneth nothing else
But City of God, or Sight of Peace,—
In the one our peace was made betimes;
The Lamb chose there to suffer pain;
In the other is nought but peace to glean,
That aye shall last unceasingly.
This is the bourne whereto we press,
Soon as our flesh is laid to waste.
There glory and bliss shall e'er increase
Unto the host without a spot.”

LXXXI

“Spotless maid, so meek and mild,”
Then said I to that flower full fair,
“Bring me to that blest abode,
And let me see thy blissful bower.”
That glory said: “God this forbiddeth:
Within His tower thou may'st not come;
But from the Lamb I welcome thee
To a sight thereof, by His great grace.
That cloister clean may'st see without;
Within—thy vigour availeth not
To enter in its street one foot,
Save thou wert clean in spotlessness.

LXXXII

“SHALL I to thee this spot reveal,
Bend thou toward this river's head,—
I, opposite, upon this bank,
Shall follow, till thou reach a hill.”
No longer would I tarry then,
But stole 'neath boughs, 'neath lovely leaves,
Till, as I hasted on my way,
I espied a hill, and saw the Burgh,
Deep set from me, beyond the brook;
With rays it shone, than sun more bright.
In Apocalypse is found its form,
As pictureth the Apostle John.

LXXXIII

As John the Apostle saw it then,
Saw I that City of noble fame,—
Jerusalem, new and royally dight,
As it was come from Heaven adown.
The Burgh was all of burning gold,
Burnish'd bright as gleaming glass,
With glorious gems beneath it set,
With twelve steps rising from the base,
Foundations twelve, with tenons rich,
And every slab a special stone;
As in Apocalypse this same Burgh
John the Apostle pictureth well.

LXXXIV

As John these stones named in his book,
I knew each name, as he doth tell.
Jasper hight the first gem there,
That on the first base I discern'd;
On lowest course it glisten'd green;
Sapphire held the second step;
The chalcedony then, without a spot,
On tier the third shone pale and pure;
The emerald fourth, so green of scale;
The fifth stone was the sardonyx;
The ruby sixth; in Apocalypse
John the Apostle discern'd it then.

LXXXV

To these join'd John the chrysolite,
Foundation-stone the seventh there;
The eighth the beryl, white and clear;
The twin-bued topaz ninth was set;
The chrysoprase came next, the tenth;
The gentle jacinth then, eleventh;
The twelfth, the goodliest withal,
The purple amethyst, blent with blue.
The wall, that rose above the steps,
Of jasper was, that gleam'd as glass;
I knew it, as he pictured it
In Apocalypse, the Apostle John.

LXXXVI

As John there pictured, saw I too,—
Broad and steep were these twelve steps;
Full square above the City stood,
In length as great as breadth and height;
The streets of gold, as clear as glass;
The wall of jasper; as amber it gleam'd.
The mansions were adorn'd within
With every kind of gem e'er found.
Then each side of that stronghold held
Twelve furlongs' space, ere ended it;
In height, in breadth, in length, four-square;
It measured saw the Apostle John.

LXXXVII

AS writeth John, yet saw I more,—
Three gates had each side of that place,
Yea, twelve in sequence I espied,
The portals deck'd with plates full rich,
And each gate of one margery pearl,—
A perfect pearl that fadeth ne'er.
Each bore thereon a name inscribed
Of Israel's children, in order of time,
That is to say, as their birth befell;
Ever the elder first was writ.
Such light there gleam'd in all the streets,
They needed neither sun nor moon.

LXXXVIII

Of sun or moon had they no need;
Their lamp-light was the very God;
The Lamb their lantern that never fail'd;
Through Him the City brightly gleam'd.
Through wall and mansion pierced my gaze;
All was so clear, nought hinder'd sight.
The High Throne might ye there behold,
Engirt with all its fair array,
As John the Apostle drew in words;
And thereon sat High God Himself.
A river from the Throne ran out;
'Twas brighter than both sun and moon.

LXXXIX

Nor sun nor moon so sweetly shone
As the flood that flow'd from out that floor;
Through every street it swiftly surged,
Free from filth and mud and mire.
Church therein was none to see,
Chapel nor temple that ever was set;
The Almighty was their minster meet,
The Lamb their sacrifice, there to atone.
The portals never yet were barr'd,
But evermore open at ev'ry lane;
None entereth there to take abode,
That beareth spot beneath the moon.

XC

The moon no might may there usurp;
 Too spotty is she; too grim her form.
 And, as night is not in that place,
 Why should the moon climb there her course,
 As 'twere with that rich light to vie,
 That shineth upon the river's bank?
 The planets' plight is all too poor;
 The very sun is far too dim.
 About that stream are trees full bright,
 That bear full soon twelve fruits of life;
 Twelve times each year they bravely bear,
 Their fruit renewing every moon.

XCI

Beneath the moon no heart of flesh
So great a marvel might endure,
As I, a-gazing on that Burgh;
So wondrous was the form thereof.
I stood as still as dazed quail,
For wonder of that faery scene;
Nor rest nor travail felt I then,
So ravish'd by that radiance rare.
For I, with conscience sure, dare say,
Had mortal bodily borne that bliss,
Though all our clerks had him in cure,
His life were lost beneath the moon.

XCII

AS when the mighty moon doth rise,
Ere thence the gleam of day may set,
So, suddenly, in wondrous way,
I was 'ware of a procession there.
This noble city of rich renown
Was suddenly, without summons, full
Of maidens, all in self-same guise
As was my Blissful beneath her crown;
And crownèd were they all alike,
Array'd in pearls and raiment white;
On each one's breast was fasten'd firm,
With great delight, the blissful pearl.

XCIII

With great delight they fared together
Through golden streets that gleam'd as glass;
Hundreds of thousands I wot there were,
As of one Order was their garb;
'Twas hard to choose the gladdest there.
Before them proudly pass'd the Lamb,
With seven horns of clear red gold;
His robe most like to praised pearls.
Toward the Throne they took their track;
Though they were many, none did press;
But, mild as modest maids at mass,
So drew they on, with great delight.

XCIV

Delight that there His coming brought,
Too much it were to tell thereof;
Those Elders all, when He approach'd,
Prostrate they fell before His feet;
Legions of angels, call'd together,
Scatter'd there incense of sweetest smell;
Then glory and glee pour'd forth anew;
All sang to laud that gladsome Jewel.
Through earth to hell the strain might strike,
That the Virtues of Heaven attune in joy;
To laud the Lamb, His host amid,
In sooth I long'd with great delight.

XCV

Delight, much marvel, moved my mind
To picture forth the Lamb aright;
Best was He, blithest, and most to prize,
That e'er I heard in speech set forth.
So wondrous white was His array,
Simple His looks, Himself so calm;
But a wound full wide and wet was seen,
Against His heart, through sunder'd skin;
From His white side His blood stream'd out.
Alas! thought I, who did that hurt?
Any breast should all have burnt in bale,
Ere it thereto had had delight.

XCVI

The Lamb's delight none dared to doubt;
Though He were hurt and wounded sore,
None could it in His semblance see,
His glance so glorious was and glad.
I look'd among His radiant host,
How they with life were fill'd and fraught;
Then saw I there my little queen,
I thought was nigh me in the glen.
Lord, much of mirth was it she made!
Among her peers she was so fair.
That sight there made me think to cross,
For love-longing and great delight.

XCVII

DELIGHT so drove me, eye and ear;
Melted to madness my mortal mind;
When I saw my Precious, I would be there,
Beyond the stream though she were held.
Nothing, methought, might hinder me
From running forward and taking breath;
And none should keep me from the start,
Though there I perish'd ere I cross'd.
But I was shaken from that thought;
To start a-stream as I wildly will'd,
I was recall'd from out that mood;
It was not pleasing to my Prince.

XCVIII

It pleased Him not I flung me thus,
So madly, o'er those wondrous meres;
Though on I rush'd, full rash and rude,
Yet quickly was my running stay'd;
For, as I sped me to the brink,
The strain me startled from my dream.
Then woke I in that garden green;
My head upon that mound was laid,
E'en where my Pearl had strayed below.
I roused me, and fell in great dismay,
And, sighing, to myself I said,
"Now, all be as that Prince may please!"

XCIX

Me pleased it ill to be out cast
So suddenly from that fair realm,
From all those sights so blithe and brave.
Sore longing struck me, and I swoon'd,
And ruefully then I cried aloud:—
“O Pearl,” quoth I, “of rich renown,
How dear to me was all that thou
In this true vision didst declare!
And, if the tale be verily true,
That thou thus farest, in garland gay,
So well is me in this dungeon dire,
That thou art pleasing to that Prince!”

C

That Prince to please had I still bow'd,
Nor yearn'd for more than was me given,
And held me there with true intent,
As the Pearl me pray'd, that was so wise,
Belike, unto God's presence drawn,
To more of His mysteries had I been led.
But aye will man seize more of bliss
Than may abide with him by right.
Wherefore my joy was sunder'd soon,
And I cast forth from realms eterne.
Lord, mad are they that 'gainst Thee strive,
Or 'gainst Thy pleasure proffer aught.

CI

To please the Prince, to be at peace,
 Good Christian hath it easy here;
 For I have found Him, day and night,
 A God, a Lord, a Friend full firm.
 Over yon mound had I this hap,
 Prone there for pity of my Pearl;
 To God I then committed it,
 In Christ's dear blessing and mine own,—
 Christ that in form of bread and wine
 The priest to us each day doth shew;
 He grant we be His servants leal,—
 Yea, precious Pearls to please Him aye!
Amen. Amen.

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