

# POEMS

DONALD F. GOULD JOHNSON

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*P O E M S*

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*Donald F. Gold Johnson*

# P O E M S

BY

DONALD F. GOULD JOHNSON

1919

WITH A PREFATORY NOTE BY

P. GILES, LITT. D.,

*Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge*

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## P R E F A C E

THE poems in this book are all that remains of one who had hardly begun his work in literature when he had to leave it for the grimmer tasks of the European war. Many of the poems included here were written at the front, some even in the trenches on the battlefield whence the author did not return. Hence there are no doubt some things in these verses which the author, if he had lived longer, would have liked to alter. But there is little either in matter or in manner which he would have been forced to change.

Donald Fredric Goold Johnson was a son of the Manse. Born on March 6th, 1890, he received his school education from twelve to seventeen at Caterham. His home was at Saffron Walden and it is perhaps not too fanciful to detect in his love for describing quiet rural scenes with streams and woodland the influence of the landscape which he knew most intimately, even though the scene professes to be laid in Thessaly or some other classical land which, except in imagination, he was never destined to see.

As he was the youngest of four brothers it was necessary that he should be a teacher for some years before he could proceed to the University. In 1911 he came into residence at Cambridge, having been elected to a sizarship at Emmanuel College, and

read for the Historical Tripos during his first two years. He was musical and was soon elected to a Choral Scholarship. Modest as to his own abilities at first he did not talk much or take any conspicuous part in College life. But by and bye he became better known, spoke at the Union, and took an increasingly important place in College societies. After Part I of the Historical Tripos he elected to read for the English section of the Medieval and Modern Languages Tripos. He was not a good examination candidate, though his teachers were sure that he had the root of the matter in him. Literature to him was a part of life, not knowledge to be pursued for gain. But though he took only a low place in the Tripos, he won the Chancellor's Medal for English Verse in 1914. Captain Scott's expedition was then much in men's minds and the poem is that headed *The Southern Pole*.

Johnson wished to make a special study of the text of Chaucer in the year after he graduated and to investigate carefully some of the less well-known manuscripts; and for this purpose his College provided him with the necessary means. But the war was at hand. By the end of the year it was clear to him that the country needed his help and he joined up. Soon he was posted to the Manchester Regiment and in the end of 1915 he went to France. He had previously joined the Roman Catholic Church, and so

some of the poems show perhaps a clearer understanding than is common of the point of view of the village priest behind the lines and of his congregation. Ever susceptible to the beauty of the quiet countryside, Johnson delighted in the little French villages in which he found himself while he was still far behind the battle line.

In the struggle of 1916 he played his part as a brave soldier and a gallant officer. A trench had to be held at all costs and the Germans prevented from advancing. Johnson without hesitation undertook the task but bade his friends good-bye, fully certain that he should not return.

‘First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.’ What harvest Donald Johnson might have reaped in the fulness of time no man can tell; only a tiny sheaf of the firstfruits remains. And yet from this the reader may augur what the full grain would have been.

P. GILES.

11 *April* 1919.





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## MOTHER AND SONS

*(Cambridge, Easter Term, 1915)*

WE who have loved thee in days long over,  
Mistress immortal and Queen of our hearts ;  
With the passionate strength of a youthful lover,  
Take, ere for ever the glow departs,  
Ere the flaming glead of our heart's devotion  
Flicker and fail as the night blows chill,  
The homage that stirs no mock emotion  
'Tis thine, our Mother, to claim it still.

Dear to remember, the high June weather!  
(Soft thro' the shadows the boat glides on),  
Rich are the dreams we have gathered together  
From the long hours of rapturous sun:  
Tho' now with echoes of warfare sounding,  
Thy groves remember the cries of old ;  
And still, with their distant peace surrounding,  
Thy sons to thy bosom those arms enfold.

Then whether the sharp death face us daily,  
Thy youthful warriors lov'd of thee,  
Thy tow'rs and palaces smiling gaily,  
In vision, our wishful eyes may see:  
For all the hours of life and pleasure,  
For all the beauty by thee made known,  
We pay thee in no stinted measure,  
But gladly lay our young lives down.

## RESURGIT

THEY said that strength had passed from off the earth  
    With the last blazon of dead Chivalry;  
    That Faith had dipped its lance to Revelry,  
And God been banished to the strains of mirth.  
I think not that the blood of them that die  
    Lifts to the stars an empty sacrifice,  
    That prayers but batter a closed Paradise,  
That heaven can answer not the hearts that cry  
Upward for comfort; clearer now there ring  
    The song of faith triumphant over death,  
    The sound of praises thro' a mist of tears:  
And not in vain they make their offering  
    Who, spent and shattered, clutch their dying breath;  
    Behold, the Son of Manhood reappears!

SPRING, 1915

Look long on the last lilac ere it fade;  
So soon it dies; and when it flowers again  
Thy body in the still earth will be laid,  
Asleep to memory, and numb to pain;  
Deaf to earth's music; and for thee no more  
The crocus-shower'd laburnum shall awake,  
And to the dawn its dancing tresses shake—  
Tresses more radiant than Apollo wore.  
Next year these shall renew their youth, but thou  
No more may'st look upon the bursting flow'rs,  
Nor daze thy senses with the breaths of Spring:  
Silent thou'lt lie throughout the endless hours;  
And all the pangs of earth's awakening  
Shall not uncalm the stillness of thy brow.

## RUPERT BROOKE

O WHAT fair death could greet him fairer yet  
Than to be gathered where the sweet sea smiles  
Lapping so tenderly the Grecian isles?—  
Too sad for speech: too beauteous for regret—  
His mother, England, shall not soon forget  
Her youngest singer, lovely as the sea:  
Within the glades of her deep memory  
His name, his love, his glory she shall set.  
The flowers are waking in her quiet fields,  
The woods are robing for their festival,  
By hedge and stream again the dear birds sing:  
And all the beauty that the fresh earth yields,  
And all the springtime's maiden coronal,  
Shall be to him a silent offering.

## JUSTITIA VICTRIX

‘England shall ne’er be poor if England strive  
Rather by virtue than by wealth to thrive.’

DEKKER’S *Old Fortunatus*, v. 2.

‘SEE how my brave English fight!’  
So our last Stuart spake, that day  
When on the battle’s issue lay  
His claim to rule of sacred right.

Yea, tho’ he faced an English foe  
Whose gain would mean a fallen crown,  
Not this might keep the triumph down,  
Nor could his blood its pride forgo.

Two hundred years have passed anon  
Since in Saint Germain’s gloomy pile,  
’Mid empty pomp of royal style,  
His soul unto its King is gone.

To-day those hostile banners fly  
Blown by one breeze and side by side,  
One common purpose flames the pride  
For which their warriors strike and die.

And still the claim of heavenly right  
Flaunts o’er the armies of their foe,  
To cover up a traitor’s blow,  
To mask the wounds of hell’s despite.

We mock not thus the Lord of Hosts,  
Make Him a vassal to our praise,  
Nor echo in earth's stricken ways  
Demonic taunts and godless boasts.

Not thus self-satisfied we stand  
To face the lords of lust and blood,  
But as in ancient days we stood  
With Freedom's banner in our hand.

Strong in the panoply of Truth  
With iron will we take the field,  
Justice our Captain, Faith the Shield  
Girding the flower of Britain's youth.

On Belgian fields the slaughter'd dead  
Cry out with louder voices now  
That their dear land shall never bow  
To Tyranny her laurell'd head.

Low lie the victims on the plain,  
And smoulder'd cities echo still  
Their tale of woe from hill to hill:  
No hand can e'er restore again.

Their mighty works of skill and grace—  
Tow'rs, halls and temples which the dead  
Had reared, and Time had garlanded  
With beauty none can now replace.



March! march! brave comrades, march again!  
Strike still to crush the vandal horde,  
Till Justice bid you sheathe the sword,  
And Victory stay your blood and pain.

Till beautiful the flow'rs of peace  
Break from their buds so long up-seal'd,  
Till Truth shall triumph in the field,  
And all the red contention cease.

And they whose bones for ever lie  
Deep in that earth whose face grew red  
With the brave blood these heroes shed—  
Can human hearts more nobly die?

Praise is no idle gift, the praise  
Of lands and races that their might  
Frees from the menace and the blight  
Of feckless woes and servile days.

Their glorious names shall be adored;  
Great was their love and great their worth;  
Their fame shall purify the earth,  
And Honour be their dear reward.

CHARLES LAMB

THERE are who win on tented fields the prize  
Of glory, and achieve a moon of fame:  
By fearless deeds these consecrate a name,  
Gaining an added grace in Beauty's eyes.  
And some there are for whom stern duty lies  
In paths obscure, lit by no perilous flame;  
Whose simple worth no plauding lips proclaim,  
Nor voice of after ages glorifies.  
Thy path was humble, and thy load of care  
No fancied burden lightly to appraise;  
Yet while Fame lives thy memory shall remain!  
Rich was thy store of wit and genius rare,  
And great shall be the harvest of the days  
Ere kindlier heart than thine can beat again.

## VICTOR VICTIMA

O sov'REIGN Body broken on the tree,  
Mine is the traitor kiss that hangs Thee there:  
Yea, and the garden of Thy pale despair  
My heart's Gethsemane,

That garden where, upon the darkling sward  
Drunk with the greed of hell, the wage of death,  
Stealing upon Thee, with her treacherous breath  
My soul betrays her Lord.

Lo! mine the anguish of Thy piercéd side,  
My malice is that spear that woundeth Thee;  
Yet for Thy recreant lover, Lord, for me,  
In silence Thou hast died.

Still move Thy gentle lips to love and rue,  
While round Thee mock the children of Thy pain,  
'Forgive them, Father, for their hearts' disdain,  
They know not what they do.'

Breathe now, dear Jesus, as Thy darkness falls  
The peace no terrors quench, no pains dismay;  
Bring me, all-crucified, with Thee to-day  
Into Thy Father's halls.

## ADVENT SONG

Jesu! sweet Fruit of that glad Tree  
That God Himself did bless  
With heavenly pure caress,  
When Gabriel hailed with high decree  
Our Lady full of grace,  
Whose stainless heart Thyself didst fill;  
Smile with Thy childish face  
Free us from all peril.

Make Thou our hearts so to increase  
In lowly purity,  
That ever they may flee  
The things that are not of Thy peace;  
But Thou our spirits sway  
With Thy dear love that may control,  
Each hour of night or day,  
Our wantonness of soul.

Guard us, dear Saviour, with Thy hand  
That piercéd was for us;  
So, led and fostered thus,  
We find at last Thy pleasant land,  
Where, purged and purified,  
We too may dwell within Thy bow'rs  
With all the sanctified  
Thro' the eternal hours.

H. M. J.

*(Died July 24th, 1915)*

God fashions for the hearts of men  
To love, rare souls whose radiant light  
Thrills like a meteor thro' our ken  
    Streaking the greyness of the night.

Not theirs the slow long-numbered years  
    That smoulder without heat or flame;  
With fiercer joys and sadder tears  
    These weave a glory for their name.

Such light was hers, whom Beauty lent  
    So sweet a temple for the soul;  
Freely for others it was spent,  
    Till, deepening, the shadows stole.

There where beneath the Indian sky,  
    By banks the Ganges' waters lave,  
Among the swampy rice-fields lie  
    The homes of them she lived to save.

Youth, beauty, charm, and strength and health—  
    She laid them at the feet of Love,  
Gaining a far diviner wealth  
    That pain and death could not remove.

After her labour and her pain  
    She tastes the fountains of delight,  
Counting her human loss but gain:  
    The handmaid in her Master's sight.

## YOUTH AND WAR

Among the windy spaces  
The star-buds grow to light;  
With pale and weeping faces  
The day-hours bow to night;  
Where down the gusty valleys  
A blast of thunder dies,  
And in the forest alleys  
A startled night-bird cries.

Not pain but bitter pleasure  
Surrounds my spirit here,  
For life's supernal treasure  
Is garlanded with fear;  
Bright trees delight the garden  
About my love's glad home,  
But all the flower-roots harden  
Under the frost of doom.

Like the bright stars above me  
My youthful hopes were set!  
Yearning for lips that love me;  
O how can I forget  
The boyish dreams that brought me  
To the high azure gate  
Of heaven, where beauty sought me,  
And love was satiate?

Now honour lets me dally  
No longer with desire,  
But goads me to the valley  
Of death, and pain, and fire;  
Not love but hate constraining  
The soldier in the field,  
Honour alone remaining  
Of virtue for a shield.

Yet who dare doubt, resigning  
The joys that mortals prize—  
Beyond the heart's repining,  
Behind the sightless eyes—  
For all the tears and anguish,  
The piteous dismay—  
True love at length shall vanquish,  
And crown the dawning day?

## LES PAUVRES MORTS

At evening thro' the garden ground I strayed  
Among the peasant graves of years gone by,  
Where now too many of our youth are laid,  
The dear, dead flowers of English soldiery;  
And there an ancient village dame who prayed  
And wept for that strange-harbour'd argosy  
I saw, beside a row of mounds new made,  
Sobbing her mother's heart so piteously.  
Not for her own she wept; for she could care  
For their quiet heritage from day to day;  
But for the mothers whose sad hearths are bare,  
Whose poor dear sons find rest so far away  
From home and England and their Mother's tears,  
To sleep so lonely through the silent years.



## ODE ON THE RESURRECTION

Out from the womb of Time,  
The young day came to birth,  
Startling with praise sublime  
The silence of the earth;  
Till all the skies around  
Trembled to shimmering light and soft harmonious sound.

This is the day designed  
Thro' all the tale of years,  
When He whom death confined  
In triumph reappears,  
To claim His glorious crown,  
Hell vanquished, and the might of Satan beaten down.

Where pale light crowns the hills  
With the first flush of dawn,  
Whose gradual bounty fills  
The spaces of the morn,  
Against the eastern skies  
One awful picture greets the fearful watchers' eyes.

Above dark Calvary  
A lonely rood-tree shows  
Its hateful imagery,  
Its panoply of woes:  
And there the Lord of Love did die;  
O bitter were the tears of Mary standing by!

How tenderly they bare  
That Body from the tree,  
With looks of wan despair,  
And speechless misery;  
To the cool garden cave  
Whose depths should serve the King of Glory for a grave.

How lovingly they dressed  
The wounds that Love had borne;  
How reverently caressed  
Those features so forlorn;  
Smoothed back the tussled hair,  
Anointing each pale limb with oils and spices rare.

The guardian tomb was sealed  
With the Imperial sign,  
But breaking day revealed  
No shackles might confine,  
Nor watch nor ward restrain  
The Prince of Life who rose to glorious life again.

When early in the morn  
Of that expected day  
Ere the first light was born  
On dim hills far away,  
Those two disciples came  
Breathing in hopeless hope that sorrow-shrouded name.

O what celestial sight  
Struck their sad murmurs dumb,  
Of angels radiant bright  
Guarding an empty tomb?  
(No silent body there,  
Only the linen clothes of costly texture fair.)

‘What seek ye here?’ they cry,  
‘Have ye so soon forgot?  
Behold The Day is nigh,  
Give praise and sorrow not;  
Your Master, risen indeed,  
Goeth to Galilee; speed ye where He doth lead.’

As sadly they had come,  
O'erborne with doubt and fear,  
Thro' the cool garden gloom  
To that dark sepulchre,  
Now each heart leaps and thrills  
With wild delight, and song each soul exultant fills.

The dull relentless skies  
Break into hues of dawn,  
The sleepy flowers arise  
And curtsy to the morn,  
Where thro' the garden way  
The cluster'd dew lies fresh, catching the fires of day

And one alone who came—  
Ere the first morning glow  
Had sparkled into flame—  
In bitterness of woe;  
And doubtingly espied  
Before the cavernous tomb the great stone rolled aside:

As she with breaking day  
Thro' the wet garden fares,  
She meets upon her way  
Her Master unawares,  
And questions Him if He  
Can tell her where the body of her Lord may be.

Then He in answer sweet  
That puts to flight her fear  
Doth her, all-wond'ring, greet,  
And make His presence clear:  
'Mary'—He saith, and she—  
'Master' amazed replies, and bendeth low the knee.

'Arise, arise, Mary,  
And love shall be your speed,  
Tell them that mourn for me  
Their Lord is risen indeed'—  
Heaven's purpose is fulfilled,  
Death may no longer keep the God whom sin had killed.

'Twas thus the Prince of Love  
From rueful death did rise,  
And bore His wounded shape  
Immort to Paradise;  
Where now He stays in bliss,  
Till every soul that is  
Endued with mortal flesh  
No more shall seek the bitterness of sin,  
But, clarified within,  
May potent rise and break the fowler's mesh.  
Then when the souls made true  
Do seek the heavenly floor,  
And Michael with his fiery sword  
Guarding the flaming door  
Doth those proud gates unfurl,  
That gracious Prince of Love shall stand,  
Gold-rob'd, and crown'd with diadems of pearl;  
And stretching wide each wounded hand,  
Shall greet with smiling face  
Each soul to that dear place.

## REIMS

THY altars smoulder, yet if Europe's tears  
Can stay the doom of malice, they are thine  
To quench the fires that lick thy sacred shrine,  
And scar the treasures of thy glorious years.  
Yet nought can salve the heart's despairing fears  
That knows its Head dishonour'd, while rapine  
Thunders upon His citadel divine,  
Till all its ancient splendour disappears.  
But courage! tho' no hand can raise again  
Thy perish'd glories, garlanded by Time,  
The arm yet faileth not that ruleth all!  
And God Himself the guilty shall arraign,  
Bidding them answer their inhuman crime  
Before His everlasting doom shall fall.

## LOVE IN WAR

O FOR your mouth's vermilion stain,  
To watch and love thro' night and day,  
To sip and taste and drink again,  
Fragrant as gardens after rain  
On golden nights of May!

I long to steep my eager sight  
In your young limbs' deliciousness,  
Their naked beauty, soft and white,  
Yielding its grace for my delight,  
To cure my vain distress.

But lips to crush and limbs to bind  
In silent rapture of desire—  
Youth's crowning joys—I've left behind:  
Yet who to death would be resigned  
Whose heart love sets afire?

When life is free and fighting's done,  
Will love be sweeter than before?  
(Hope will not think of you left lone),  
But when the crowning triumph's won  
Will ever peace restore

Those precious dreams that silent came  
To soothe my troubled sleep at night?  
Will love burn with as fierce a flame,  
And only to repeat your name  
Bring as secure delight?

## L'INCONNUE

I who have lived for beauty  
And found strange comfort so,  
Since love is all my duty  
O what can I bestow  
Save love, unsought, unheeded,  
As incense for your grace,  
A gift of adoration  
For love's dear face.

'Thro' spring-time dawns of singing,  
In sunset flowers of flame,  
I hear for ever ringing  
The wonder of your name,  
The magic charm that bears me  
Behind the fires of dawn,  
Beyond the sunset silence,  
All love-forlorn.

'Tho' other lips shall kiss you  
And quaff my wine of love,  
Shall savour the soft tissue  
Of lips the fairies wove;  
'Tho' round your fragrant body  
Twine limbs of living fire,  
They will not know the passion  
Of my desire.



Pure as the crystal beaker  
That but reflects the wine,  
Your spirit is the liquor  
With which those bright eyes shine;  
With half the world to flatter,  
And all the world to praise,  
Unspoiled, you taste the rapture,  
Of youthful days.

O gay light-hearted singer  
Whose song no tremor shows  
That death with chilly finger  
Lurks in the shadows close;  
Wise, you refuse to hearken  
For whispers of his call;  
But oh, the heavens would darken  
If Love should fall!

Ah many are the faces  
That I have fairest found,  
In strange and distant places  
I've sought the long world round;  
Yours now, the last and rarest,  
Of beauty's grace the crown,  
The gayest and the fairest,  
I love unknown.

## BATTLE HYMN

LORD God of battle and of pain,  
Of triumph and defeat,  
Our human pride, our strength's disdain  
Judge from Thy mercy-seat;  
Turn Thou our blows of bitter death  
To Thine appointed end;  
Open our eyes to see beneath  
Each honest foe a friend.

Give us to fight with banners bright  
And flaming swords of faith;  
We pray Thee to maintain Thy right  
In face of hell and death.  
Smile Thou upon our arms, and bless  
Our colours in the field,  
Add Thou, to righteous aims, success  
With peace and mercy seal'd.

Father and Lord of friend and foe  
All-seeing and all-wise,  
Thy balm to dying hearts bestow,  
Thy sight to sightless eyes;  
To the dear dead give life, where pain  
And death no more dismay,  
Where, amid Love's long terrorless Reign,  
All tears are wiped away.

## JUNE

SWEET month of love and roses, hail!  
Queen of all joys that never fail;  
    The grasping fingers of fern are open,  
The may still blossoms adown the vale.

And all thy bevy of maiden flow'rs  
Blush and bloom thro' the golden hours,  
    Where pink, full-blown rhododendron bushes  
Make on the green lawn fairy bow'rs.

Softly thy ev'ning sunbeams play,  
Thine are the iris nights that are day,  
    Thine are the love-born hearts that blossom,  
Kissing the languorous hours away.

O June, Queen June, thy reign is here!  
In the palace of days thou hast never a peer;  
    For the voices of bird-throats richly mellow  
Hail thee as Queen of the garland year.

## COMBIEN APRÈS ?

It may be, in the after-years,  
Our souls shall touch across the space,  
It may be, on my heart of tears  
Shall break the music of thy grace;  
But who can make again for me  
That perfect form, that maddening glee?

It may be that thy voice shall speak  
Across a universe unknown,  
Like some gold-flecker'd sunset streak  
That crowns one moment's bliss alone;  
But shall I know in Paradise  
Thy godly lips and hands and eyes?

It may be, in that heavenly land  
All priests and prophets have foretold,  
That spectre beings hand in hand  
The great white throne of God enfold;  
But shall I *feel* and *see* thee there,  
And kiss the flowers of thy hair?

It may be, Sweet, that love shall live  
Beyond the shadow-hours of Death,  
That Hope some comfort still shall give  
When this fond body yields its breath;  
But could I know that I should see  
Thy glorious lips, all fear would flee.

It may be, in another world  
Far from the sorrowings of this,  
I still shall watch thy lips shy-curl'd  
And taste their beauty in a kiss;  
It *may* be—but the very *may*  
Takes half the glorious hope away.

'Then, Darling, kiss me while the light  
Shines on thy hair and radiant form,  
This day at least the sun is bright  
And bodes no darkness of the storm;  
Come, let us join our sweet lips fast  
Tho' this same hour should be our last.

## SUNT LACRIMAE RERUM

O to think that Beauty liveth  
Such a little while,  
All the sweets of joy it giveth,  
Kiss and glance and smile,  
Fading like the fallen day,  
Dying evermore away.

O to think that Love can ever  
Feel the ice of Death,  
That the earth it spurns can sever  
Mingling lips and breath;  
Cold and sad it lieth still,  
Once so glowing, now so chill.

O to think that Thou my fairest  
Far away shall fly,  
And the angel form thou wearest  
Droop to earth and die;  
O what joy can overweigh  
Such deep burdens of dismay?

O to think that Beauty dieth  
Like a thing of dross,  
Broken in the grave-way lieth  
Under leaf and moss,  
All its passion and delight  
Quench'd amid the voiceless night.

## A VISION

As down from out the flaming quire,  
The white-cloth'd singers pass'd,  
And from the carven organ's throat  
Echo'd a trumpet blast,

I saw thy winsome, graceful form  
Thread the slow-pacing throng,  
And turn to climb the ancient stair,  
My sweet-mouth'd child of song.

And then into my heart there came  
A strange and sudden glee:  
I saw an angel pass to heav'n,  
And thou thyself wert he.

## ST DYMAS

HOT was the noon and weary was the road,  
Dusty and spent the travellers thereon,  
The Father walking by the ass's head  
The Mother with her Son.

Down into Egypt fleeing from the wrath  
Of the fierce king who fear'd a rival's birth  
A lowly babe in Mary's arms He passed  
Whose Name should rule the earth.

So faint and weary to a well-head came,  
That tiny band of travellers at last,  
And paused to rest until the heat of day  
Should all be overpast.

A woman drawing water there they meet  
Who smiles a kindly smile upon the Child,  
Which sweetly He gives back, and turns in glee  
Unto that Mother mild.

Then Mary to the village maiden spake:  
'Give me, I pray thee, of thy water there,  
For we are hot and parch'd and travel-sore  
Under this burning air.'



Then gave the woman water in her bowl,  
And Mary drank, and wash'd the babe, and spake  
Sweet words of blessing to the peasant girl  
Who gave, their thirst to slake.

Then they moved onward, while the woman stood  
And watched them till the three had pass'd from sight;  
When homewards gaily singing she did go,  
A song of glad delight.

And took the self-same water in the bowl  
Wherein the Holy Mother bath'd the Child,  
For pure and clear and bright it sparkled still  
A fountain undefil'd.

And plac'd therein her own poor leprous babe,  
Dymas his name, and leprous from his birth:  
Some said as penance for his sire's ill-fame,  
A robber nothing worth.

And she, poor mother, laid him with a sigh  
Of wondrous pitying love within the bowl;  
A leper-babe she sprinkled, but drew out  
A babe all cleans'd and whole.

## NOX BENIGNA

THRO' the midst of the starlight you came to my soul  
To lie once again on my breast,  
And dreams of thy rapturous loveliness stole  
Across the dark veil of my rest.

I saw thee, I touch'd thee, my arms did entwine  
Thy body of gossamer flesh,  
I kissed thy soft hair, than spun silk-thread more fine,  
Thy lips than dew-roses more fresh.

I search'd thy deep eyes for the tale of thy love,  
Those eyes of so wondrous a hue,  
For ne'er in the sea nor the star-space above  
Was seen so enchanted a blue.

I kiss'd thy clear cheek, thy soft neck, thy white hands,  
And mingled thy breath with my own,  
I bound thy soft arms like sweet osier-bands  
To the breast where my passion is sown.

I awoke! and the night that was kindled with light  
Was turn'd to the darkness of day;  
Thy body had pass'd from my touch and my sight,  
Thy beauty had vanish'd away.

O rapture of God that was mine for an hour,  
And taken as swiftly as giv'n,  
O bring me again with my blossoming flow'r  
The bliss of the angels of heav'n.

## THE RIVER-BRIDGE

THE sacred hour again! O silent years,  
Scarce may I feel how far Time's feet have run  
Since this dear place I hallow'd first with tears.  
Still over lawn and meadow plays the sun,  
As on that blessed even long ago  
It deck'd my love and glorified my woe.

Here by this crumbling parapet I stood  
Beneath the drooping willow's veil of June,  
Teaching my eyes to sound the dreamy flood  
Whose depths just mirror'd the awak'ning moon,  
Like a pale spectral spirit of the sky  
To mark how soon the golden hour must fly.

The golden hour! how could my heart foretell  
That this one heedless hour should shine alone?  
Like some green isle where syren-voices dwell,  
With rose-strewn lawns and dreamy bowers sown,  
Where Love and I might dwell for evermore  
Nor heed the moaning breakers on the shore.

I knew not that the sun-bath'd hour should be  
Like this enchanted bridge where yet I stand—  
And then we stood—for all eternity  
My stream of life flowing on either hand  
Of that still hour, as here the river's flow  
Beneath these spandrel'd arches deep doth go.

For Thou didst come, and there we two alone  
Drank deep of heaven thro' our trembling eyes;  
The tender lips I gazed on sought my own,  
Rich-scented, luscious fruits of Paradise;  
And thy white arms were mine to fondle there,  
Thy godly beauty food for love's despair.

Few words were ours, for lips have better use  
Than empty words to murmur, while our eyes  
Sang ever each to each in songs profuse  
Of passion's worship and love's high emprise;  
Yet only for a moment my delight,  
The gates of heaven clos'd as you pass'd from sight.

One long look back thou gavest that must feed  
My hopeless longing through all future days,  
Till light and life before death's self recede;  
No more upon thy beryl eyes to gaze!  
No more to sip the may-dew of thy mouth!  
Thro' the long world to bear my quenchless drouth.

Yet, for slow years of ceaseless wandering  
All up and down the pain-encumber'd earth,  
One moment would suffice again to bring  
Our dead but unforgot delight to birth;  
One moment of thy presence, one dear smile  
From thy sweet mouth, should pay this weary while.

O I shall find thee, tho' I know not where!

O I shall greet thee, tho' I know not when!

Kiss first the whispering fragrance of thy hair,

Thy shy pale face and tremulous hands, and then

On thy full lips' rich blossom stay my own,

Till mouth to mouth in one soft flow'r is grown.

## MY LADY OF THE JOUST

*(XIV Century)*

LADY, my lance is bended low  
Before thy flower-encircled brow,  
With all my strength to praise thee, I  
Ride forth to triumph or to die.

Where is the fame that tempts my pride?  
In thy pure heart it doth abide;  
My gage to honour thee is thrown,  
To flaunt no favour but thine own.

Thyself the guerdon of my might,  
Thy love is armour for the fight,  
Thine is the cause, the victory,  
Yea, all the praise is unto thee.

Fresh as snowdrop and aconite  
When first in spring they break to sight,  
Shall mocking lust pollute the breath  
Those dear lips breathe, and not taste death?

Nay, I will triumph, and thy shame  
Fling in the teeth where thro' it came:  
Beauty and love must sure avail  
To cause this devil's wiles to fail.

Then smile, dear lady, as I ride  
Into the lists, to spur my pride:  
My valour thus shall strike and win  
To break this malison of sin.

Here is thy fillet, at my heart,  
'They two not Life nor Death shall part:  
If by hell's spite I fall, thy tear  
At least may grace thy lover's bier.

## A MEMORY

COULD I but see thy face again  
A moment's space,  
Its young, delightful mock-disdain,  
Its wooing grace;  
Could I but kiss thy wilful hair,  
That restless hand,  
Would you divine how dear you were  
And understand?

Why was it when our hearts were near  
They would not speak?  
What barrier of love's shy fear  
Could we not break?  
When all my living was thy love  
My lips were dumb,  
Only when chance and place remove  
The accents come.

In those sweet days my daily bread  
Was seeing thee;  
Richly my heart with love was fed,  
And poesy.  
Now others love where I have loved,  
And taste their fill,  
So far away is that removed  
I worship still.



Now for the garden of thy lips  
I only sigh;  
My sun of life dark clouds eclipse  
Thwart all the sky;  
O in thy new-won paradise  
Wilt thou recall  
The love that found in thy young eyes  
The sum of all?

## A WISH

LET me not pass through life's brief days  
Loving yet loved not with desire!  
Keep not for me the shadowy ways  
Of indolent dreams, without real fire  
Of mutual love's amaze.

Let me not sing of others' joy,  
Nor shape my verse to imaged dreams  
Of tender love 'twixt girl and boy,  
While from a lover's eyes no gleams  
My passionate eyes employ!

Let me not in pale thought alone  
Cherish the body of my bride;  
But, living lips upon my own,  
In trembling joy be satisfied,  
Crown'd upon Love's high throne!

## TO A SUNDIAL

SET IN AN OLD ENGLISH GARDEN

STILL, silent, gentle reckoner of the hours  
That mark the never-pausing steps of Time,  
A visitor from some immortal clime  
Thou seem'st, with tidings from the eternal pow'rs.  
Autumn and spring, gay sunshine and soft show'rs,  
And summer's heat and winter's glistering rime  
Pass o'er thy brow, and morn and ev'ning chime  
Make music for thee still among the flow'rs.  
Thou know'st the charm of all the halcyon days,  
And youth and Love's soft pleasures, and hast seen  
Youth changed to Age, and Love to pale Regret.  
Time casts its shadow o'er thy patient face  
And on man's joy, and all earth's royal sheen.  
Yet Man not Time shall triumph even yet.

‘CHILD-FORM OF FLESH AND BLOOD’

Child-form of flesh and blood whose love outweighs  
All the world's ills, and makes the bare earth heaven ;  
To thee these tribute songs of love are given :  
Nought but a lover's coronal of praise,  
Fresh budding blossom of the flowery days  
When love is young in perfect loveliness,  
And hearts know nought of sorrow or distress,  
Nor all the sadness of the lonely ways.  
Life is not all such gladness, tho' the heart  
Knows a far deeper meed of joy than pain,  
Pain that but heightens all the holy thrill  
Of beauty and of love that life doth fill,  
Like some dark tonic show'r of summer rain  
That brighter leaves the sun when clouds depart.

## THREE AGES

*To-day I saw a picture of mankind  
Set in the beauty of an autumn sky ;  
And while the sun lay softly on the woods  
That mock'd its colour, and the querulous rooks  
Flew slowly homeward o'er the sleepy fen,  
I wove the human picture into song.*

### I. YOUTH

SINGING gaily in the meadows  
Merrily as the dancing shadows,  
All the wealth of life is unto thee,  
Shepherd Boy ! whose smiles are dearer  
Than the dawn ; whose voice is clearer  
E'er than silver Pan-pipe's tune could be.

Nought of joy shouldst thou be missing ;  
Thy red lips are ripe for kissing,  
All of love lies at thy hand to-day ;  
Ne'er a girl so shyly pretty  
But would love thy merry ditty,  
And the mouth that wove its tune so gay.

While the sun is bright around thee  
Nought of sorrow can confound thee ;  
Life is light, and youth is lithe and fleet.  
Live thy song while life is tender,  
Dream not that its thread is slender,  
Life for thee is gay, and beauty sweet.

## II. MANHOOD

As I journey'd on I saw  
One who drove his beasts before ;  
Soberly he trudged along,  
From his lips there flowed no song.

But his steps were stiff and slow  
Little joy had they to go,  
And his pace was dull and set  
Not with age but with regret.

Life had seemed so rich a thing  
With his darling in the spring,  
When in boyhood he had strayed  
Wooing in the forest glade.

But he, as the years drop by,  
Sees her beauty pale and die ;  
And their children ail and need,  
Whom he scarce can clothe and feed.

So they die, and clouds obscure  
Life that once was bright and pure ;  
Till he wonders in his toil  
If its light be worth the oil.

### III. AGE

Then in the simple beauty of a lane  
Where silence steep'd my heart in balm again,  
Leaning upon a gate, gazing away  
Over the fields and woods that golden lay  
Beneath the autumn sunlight, I espied  
An aged man, deep-wrinkled and dim-eyed.  
Motionless there he stood as if he grew  
As the proud elms and nodding poplars do ;  
And tho' his face was aged, yet it wore  
A long lost brightness it had known of yore—  
Some echo of glad youth and wild surprise  
That glimmer'd in his tender boyish eyes  
When first his heart enkindled with love-fire  
And lips and limbs were mingled in desire.  
But now the joys of passion long are past,  
His wearied limbs their labour fail at last.  
And what of life remains when youth and love  
With all their deeps of joy and grace remove ?

After the heat and clangour of the day  
Does all the glow and splendour die away  
To leave the chill of night with no repay ?  
I see the mark of peace upon his face,  
Of pensive quiet and a wintry grace,

The calm of lonely forest pools, the gleam  
Of winter sunsets in still fields, that dream  
Lull'd by the murmur of the flooded stream  
Beneath a placid sky ; and there is set  
The sober joy that vanquishes regret  
Upon his patient brow ; and in his soul  
The balm to make his wounded spirit whole.



## THE GARDEN OF PEACE

HAIL, oh ! hail to thee ! Spirit of Quiet,  
Child of the Muses, thy charms never cease.  
Hail to thee ! Hail to thee ! Haven of Beauty,  
Harbour of Solitude, Garden of Peace.

Far from the babbling in Cities of Tumult,  
Far from the clashing of armies in strife,  
Sweet-breathing, flower-strewn garden of England,  
Ah ! in thy shades is the wisdom of life.

Sweet are the breezes that breathe in thy flowers ;  
Soft come the voices of choristers here ;  
Softly and sweet from thy Chapel of Shadows  
Pealings of Music, majestic and clear.

Many the hours of silence and pleasure  
Spent in thy cloistral, familiar shades ;  
Oh ! may their mem'ry ne'er leave me for ever,  
Living when all but life's happiness fades.

Peace to thee ! Peace to thee ! arbour of melody,  
Ne'er may the balm of thy solitude cease.  
Neighbour'd and hallow'd by Temple of sanctity,  
Sleep in thy loveliness, Garden of Peace !

## PERSEPHONE

### PROLOGUE

*Boy.* O FATHER, I am tir'd with play ;  
The night is hot, no breeze doth stir  
Thro' the tall pine-tops on the hills  
And all the boys are gone away  
Back to their homes to cool themselves.  
Thy work is done, come tell to me  
Out here upon the cool hillside  
As is thy wont on summer eves,  
An ancient tale of Gods and men.

*Father.* The Gods are gracious,  
The Gods are just ;  
From Olympus their dwelling,  
The home of immortals,  
They look upon all men  
The Children of Earth.  
The strong and the mighty,  
The frail and the helpless,  
The good and the godless,  
They care for us all.  
Nor least doth the Mother  
Of fulness and plenty,  
Demeter, sweet goddess  
Of corn and of wine—  
Of her will I tell thee,  
Of her and her daughter  
Fairest Persephone,

Queen of Immortals  
Save Aphrodite  
Goddess of Beauty  
Of Beauty and Love.

'Twas summer in the fields of Sicily  
Long, long ago when yet the earth was young.  
And that fair footstool of proud Italy  
Knew not, as yet, the poet's magic tongue ;  
Still were immortals seen by stream and glen,  
Nor veil'd their faces from the eyes of men.  
There came to those glad vales of summer sun  
Demeter sweet, and fair Persephone,  
The fairest of immortal maids save one  
E'er mortal or immortal eye did see.  
No necklet ever knew such radiant pearls  
As that sweet maiden with her train of girls.  
In Enna's fields at break of day they pass,  
Thro' lily cups and ringing daffodils  
And violets among the shining grass,  
To cull the white narcissus from the hills.  
Persephone with all her girlish train.  
Alas ! this way she ne'er shall pass again.  
For far within his darksome realm below,  
In murky climes that never know the sun,  
Proud Hades sadly wanders to and fro ;  
Forth to the earth his wistful gazes run.  
He sees its Princes gaily wed but he  
For ever there in loneliness must be.

Since no immortal maid to be his bride  
    Would leave the sunshine and the summer air,  
For those sad shades where mortals that have died  
    Make constant moan and wailing ever there.  
Dark is the cloudy barrier that shields  
That land from Heroes in Elysian fields.

There Hades reigns alone in sad complain  
    That he alone must reign for evermore,  
Till Hermes hears his solitary strain  
    And speeds his flight to that forgotten shore—  
Swift Hermes, winged messenger of heav'n,  
By whom the edicts of the Gods are giv'n.

To him he tells the cause of all his woe,  
    How love to him for ever is denied.  
For no immortal girl would ever go  
    To Erebus profound, his willing bride ;  
And mortal maiden could he never wed,  
Nor seek a bride among the ghostly dead.

But Hermes bids him cheer his troubled breast  
    And stem the tide of all his galling fears.  
For gods have strength to aid a god's behest,  
    And dry the fountain-heart of all his tears.  
As thus he spake he cast his gaze above  
To that sweet vision of immortal love.

Thro' garland glades their sweet way gaily wend  
Persephone and all her maiden band ;  
They sing a song of love that hath no end  
And pass the fresh-pull'd flowers from hand to hand.  
These Hermes sees upgazing from below,  
And doleful Hades from that land of woe.

‘ Behold a queen among immortal maids  
Sweet goddess blossom-cy'd Persephone,  
Whose fairy foot thro' Enna's sunny glades  
Makes music in a flow'ry symphony.  
No fairer wilt thou gain to be thy bride  
Tho' thou shalt cross the world from side to side.’

Thus Hermes spake and straightway thence did fly  
Back to the gardens and the halls of heav'n ;  
And Hades watch'd his going, with a sigh  
Of blessing for the comfort he had giv'n.  
Then turn'd again his gaze to earth above  
And fill'd his spirit with the thoughts of love.

Then by his magic art he caused to grow  
Up from the bosom of the radiant earth,  
Where that sweet goddess walk'd with footsteps slow,  
The fairest flower e'er beauty brought to birth ;  
A perfect narcissus of stainless hue  
Full in her path was sudden brought to view.

For Narcissus was once a mortal boy  
Who lay beside the marge of a fair lake  
And saw his image clear ; with wond'ring joy  
He tried but fail'd to reach ; and for its sake  
He pin'd away with sorrow from that hour  
And him the gods chang'd to a lovely flower.

She darted forward with a merry cry  
To pluck a bloom of loveliness so rare.  
Alas ! no guardian form was standing by,  
No heavenly warning shook the upper air !  
And so in girlish innocence she took  
The fateful flower, whereat the whole earth shook.

The earth was parted at her very feet,  
And forth a fiery chariot did spring  
With horses wild, whose breath was burning heat  
And deadly vapour overpowering ;  
And Hades in the chariot did ride  
And snatch'd the unwilling goddess to his side.

Then quick as he had come they disappear  
From the sad gaze of all her girlish train,  
Who fill with bitter groans the callous air  
With lamentation deep and loud complain ;  
But sad Persephone with stiff'd breath  
Is borne to darkness and the land of death.

Oh ! loudly mourned Demeter for her child,  
Nor ever might her heart be comforted ;  
No longer to the silver morn she smiled,  
But with a dark cloak gather'd o'er her head  
Nine days she wander'd all the world around,  
Holding a flaming torch to scan the ground.

Yet still no traces of Persephone  
Her watchful eyes espied ; but on the morn  
Of the tenth day, the maiden Hecate  
She chanc'd to see among the golden corn :  
Sweet Hecate, the maid of ankle rare,  
If she might haply lighten her despair.

She had but seen the chariot to pass  
Nor knew or whence it came or whither fled,  
But the great sun-god, fiery Helius,  
View'd all things from his flaming palace dread,  
And he could tell her where her child was gone  
And by whose hand the hateful deed was done.

Thus Hecate. Demeter forth doth wend  
Her sad way to the palace of the Sun,  
If Helius might any comfort lend  
Or give her tidings of her truant one ;  
He in his lofty chariot is set  
Where all the streaking flames of dawn are met.

He tells her all the melancholy tale :

How it had been ordained of Father Zeus  
Persephone to Erebus' dark pale

Should be betrayed by Hades' cunning ruse ;  
And what great Zeus ordaineth it must be,  
For he is Lord of Man and Deity.

Demeter sad forsook the halls of Heaven,

Nor sweet ambrosia tasted any more,  
But wander'd thro' the earth, her sad heart riv'n,  
Nor knew the gladness she had known before ;  
Thro' ways untrod by men and paths unknown  
And silent wilderness she pass'd alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

In golden Attica one sunny morn

In sweet Eleusis 'neath a crystal sky  
By a cool well Demeter sat forlorn

And bitterly, oh bitterly did cry  
For her lost child in Erebus' dim shade,  
With weeping she did mourn and looks dismay'd.

Forth to the well-side came at early morn

The daughters of the King of that bright land ;  
They see an ancient dame with look forlorn,

But nought of her true race they understand,  
For she had veil'd her divinity  
In garb of eld and looks of misery.



Their pitchers fill'd they ask her to repair  
Unto their Father's home and there to rest,  
For that the sun had scorch'd the parched air,  
And there she might find comfort for her breast.  
Then gladly with them doth she leave the well  
A season in that kindly home to dwell.

Now Celeus was the King of that brave land,  
And Metaneira was his gentle queen ;  
A fair-fac'd boy they had, of visage tann'd  
Where the fierce sun and blue sea's kiss had been,  
A Prince in heart and limb and spirit mild,  
And him the goddess lov'd as her own child.

Demophoön his name, and him she lov'd  
And sought to make immortal, but the fear  
Of his own mother Metaneira prov'd  
A let to cause the goddess many a tear,  
For, sleeping, she had plac'd him in the fire  
With mutter'd charm and incantation dire.

But when those magic rites were all but done  
And all his mortal parts were purg'd away,  
To that dread room the fearful queen did run  
And 'Lack a day !' she cried 'O lack a day !'  
By mortal speech the awful spell was broke  
And, mortal still, the hapless boy awoke.

Then all the earth was stricken for her woe,  
For ever did she mourn Persephone,  
Nor corn, nor fruitful herb, nor flow'r did grow,  
Nor leafy veil put on a single tree ;  
But all the earth did mourn in visage sad  
And sombre garb of death and winter clad.

Then had the race of mortals perish'd quite  
From off the earth and vanish'd utterly,  
Yet Father Zeus had pity on their plight  
And hearken'd to their cry of misery,  
And Hermes sent across the haleyon seas  
If he the goddess' sorrow might appease.

He proffer'd all the glory, all the fame  
That to immortal soul could e'er be giv'n,  
And wondrous wealth of riches in the name  
Of Zeus the Father and the King of Heaven,  
Would she but cease to mourn and freely yield  
Her balm of life again to grove and field.

But ever she in lonely misery  
With many a broken sigh and many a moan  
Calls softly for her child Persephone ;  
Not wealth nor fame she seeks, but her alone,  
Her daughter, her sweet maid, her lily fair  
With flow'ry eyes and flower-encirel'd hair.

So Zeus did promise her her child again,  
If she had tasted nought of food below ;  
Then lost the goddess all her mighty pain  
And dried her heart of all its tears of woe.  
And Hermes cross'd again the sullen strand  
That bounds the borders of that twilight land,

And bade proud Hades yield again his bride  
To the pure sunlight and the mellow air,  
Who at the bidding of dread Zeus complied  
Tho' dearly did he love his lady fair,  
And she at length had listen'd to his suit  
And, parting, ate with him a pledge of fruit.

Then upwards to her mother's arms she sped ;  
Yet for that she had tasted food below,  
For half the year among the ghostly dead  
To Erebus' dark shadows she must go ;  
Then back to earth she comes to stray in glee  
For ever thro' the vales of Sicily.

## HYLAS

GREAT Heracles was lord of limb and might.  
A merry boy was master of his heart :  
His name was Hylas, whom the hero lov'd  
With a great love of noble purity.  
Winsome was his beauty as the light  
That streams from off the very throne of Zeus ;  
His hair as sunbeams ; and his eyes as blue  
As the soft waters of the Midland Sea  
That shine beneath the star-light and the moon ;  
His lips as rich in beauty as the line  
Of tender, chaster'd flame, that mounts and makes  
Olympus shrouded in a veil of fire.  
Ever were they together, morn and night,  
And thro' the long hot day ; and Heracles  
Taught the fair youth all prowess and delight  
In manly deeds of arms and ventry.  
So he could box and wrestle with the boys  
Of his own age and beat them, with the skill  
That he had learn'd of Heracles ; and swim  
Thro' the cool waters of the mountain pools  
Swifter than they ; and chase the soft-ear'd hare  
With feet as light and nimble as a hound,  
Or dapple-breasted fawn ; so gay was he.  
And he was lov'd and honour'd by the boys  
Who own'd him as their leader in all games  
Of woodland skill and daring ; and the girls

Eyed him with blushes, and all lov'd him well.  
But he lov'd Heracles, and oft with him  
Roam'd thro' the silent passes of the hills  
In purest love and highest happiness  
That mortal souls may know.  
And when the good ship Argo started forth  
With bright-ey'd Jason and the heroes all  
To fetch the Golden Fleece, and Heracles  
Sailed with them, Hylas followed; and the life  
Of all the ship was he; and when the toil  
And hardships of the voyage overweighed  
The hearts of doughty heroes with the thought  
That they should see their country nevermore,  
Nevermore see the blue hills in the sun,  
Or hear the voices of the Grecian girls  
Laughing in merry welcome, then the boy  
Hylas bore up their heavy hearts with song  
Sweeter than any sky-lark's, in the spring,  
That circles to the sun. And now at length  
To the Propontine shores the heroes come,  
And stop to rest and fresh their limbs awhile  
After their weary rowing; for the way  
Was long and full of danger and distress.  
The rocks were green with mosses and the turf  
Softer than any bed of down, and there  
They lay and slept, and dream'd of the fair land  
Whence they had come, and of the noble prize  
To which they went: and on the morrow morn  
Rose up renewed in strength of heart and limb  
To face the sea again; yet ere they sail'd

They stay'd for one last meal on the firm land,  
And to refill their cruses from the springs  
That bubbled soft and fresh within the woods  
Girding the quiet shore; and Heracles  
Apart with Hylas sat and Telamon,  
The steadfast hero and the lovely boy,  
To take his meal; but Hylas soon arose  
And fetch'd his pitcher from the ship and went  
Off to a little pool within the woods  
That bubbled with fresh water cool and clear,  
That Heracles might drink and 'suage his thirst,  
And live again rejoicing in his strength.  
Slowly he went his way, and on a pipe  
Blowing a merry air of youth and glee;  
Heracles watch'd his going, and a smile  
Of pleasure in his beauty lit his face  
With happiness and love. And now the boy  
To the green margin of the pool is come,  
Green with all tender growths and gay with flowers  
That mirror back the sun, and to the pool  
His pitcher now he dips, and stooping low  
Watches the water sparkle as it fills  
With a deep gulping sound; when suddenly  
From the still water at his very feet  
He sees a fairy form rise up, and then  
Another and another till the pool  
Is fill'd with laughing Naiads; all about  
His feet they play and blush with rosiness;  
Bright, radiant forms of youth, and beauteous  
As anything in earth or heaven above.

They wind their soft white arms about his neck,  
And kiss his ruddy lips, and bear him down,  
Down to their sandy palace far beneath  
The glittering water : for his beauty rare  
Had stol'n their hearts ; and nevermore could they  
Lose sight of him again. But Hylas, he  
Cried bitterly and struggled in their arms,  
For he, poor boy, was loth to leave the sun  
And the free sky and air, and Heracles  
And all the hero band ; but nought avail  
His piteous cries ; alone for answer came  
The ripple of the water overhead,  
Stirr'd by the breeze, and softly splash'd across  
The rocks that lay beside the clear pool's rim  
Half hidden in the rushes and the sedge.  
And now the water-nymphs have borne him down,  
Down in their white arms to the depths below.  
And now they seek to comfort him, in vain ;  
All, all in vain ; his tears and bitter cries  
For help avail not, for they only rise  
As plaintive whispers to the upper air.  
But Heracles had miss'd the boy and comes  
To seek him thro' the woodlands ; but in vain  
He shouts his name, for only echoes come.  
' Hylas ' he cries, and only ' Hylas ' comes,  
An empty voice to mock him where he stands.  
Then over hill and vale the hero goes  
Crying aloud ; but only to his ear  
The sound of the soft trickling water comes  
To answer his despair. Oh nevermore

Those happy lovers there shall meet again.  
Then all the heroes mourn'd for Hylas lost.  
But the good Argo longs to be away,  
Nor may they longer stay ; but on again,  
On to the toil and glory of the quest  
That they have sworn to seek. But Heracles  
Passes alone in sadness and dismay,  
Over the desolate shore and on alone.  
Nor heeds he in his grief the world around,  
Hunger, or thirst, or pain ; but comes, at last,  
After long toils, and many a weary day,  
To the wide Phasis and the far Colchian shore.



## THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

In Tenebros above the purple seas,  
Upon a throne of beryl and of pearl,  
High in a mount whose brow pierced to the stars  
Sat Solomon, the Wisdom of the world,  
The Prince of Men, and all about him lay  
His Kingdom, the far reaches of the Earth.  
Pillar and pinnacle and tow'r and town  
Stretch'd to the sky's pale margin, many a plain  
Travers'd by cattle and a thousand flocks  
Lay there beneath the dawn ; for he was lord  
Of Earth and mortal creatures, birds and flow'rs,  
Fish of the sea, beasts of the forest, all  
Held him for ruler and his voice obey'd,  
From that dread hour when in the still midnight  
God had held up the balances of fate  
Before his dreamy eyes, wherein he saw  
On this side all the wealth of Earth's desire,  
Riches and length of days and pow'r and fame,  
And all of worldly glory ; and on that,  
Like to a single gem of costliest price,  
Outweighing all, eternal wisdom lay ;  
Whose light alone can pierce beyond the world  
And taste on earth the blessedness of heaven.  
Then Solomon chose wisdom, and for this,  
Since neither human joys nor gloried fame  
Enticed his heart, the Lord of Heaven decreed  
These also should be added unto him.  
So kingly now he sat and ruled the world,

While round him rolled the panoply of heaven,  
White mist and floating vapours gossamer  
In wreaths of cloud majestic ; but his throne  
Shone with the purple splendour of a dawn  
In high midsummer ; for whose canopy  
Tendrils of creeping plants and languorous flow'rs  
Wove a cool bow'r upon the mountain side :  
Frail honeysuckle and pink eglantine  
And Posidonian roses drenched with dew,  
Where all around a radiant galaxy  
Of youthful forms, glowing with slender grace,  
Shone like pale stars across a summer night ;  
And many an ancient sage and warrior scarr'd  
Stood round their lord in counsel, while above,  
His merry-throated courtiers of the sky  
Offered their praise of ceaseless symphony.

Then thro' the haze that heralded the splendour  
Of the triumphant pageant of the sun,  
Riding in golden glory o'er the earth,  
Father of life and lord of hearts that kindle  
With the deep fire of love, there broke to sight,  
Sudden and awful like a cloud of fear  
That breaks upon a heedless merriment,  
A phantom hand whose fingers bore aloft  
A chalice of cool jasper, wherein flamed  
Deep lustrous wine as crimson as the lips  
Of young Adonis ; clearer than the dew,  
And fragrant as the passion-kindled breath  
Of youthful lovers kissing like twin flow'rs

'Thro' all a summer night ; so sweet it rose  
Upon the mountain air, till all the throng  
'That smelt its beauty felt their drowsy hearts  
Wake to such life each pulse was ecstasy :  
While tender music seemed to fill their ears  
'Till all their being throbb'd to wondrous love  
'That knew not baseness nor impure desire.  
Then from the mist an airy voice uprose  
In song that dazed the echoes with delight ;  
In tones as softly precious as the shower  
Of crystal music springing from the lips  
Of some fresh-throated singing-boy, whose praise  
Soars to the rafters of a chapel bow'r,  
In rich unclouded beauty, till the heart  
Sinks into dreams of rapture ; so the burden  
Trailed now upon the summer-honey'd air,  
In accents magical—'To thee, great King,  
From the dread Warden of the world I bring  
This precious cup and still more precious potion  
Fairer than wine, more mighty than old ocean  
To work man weal or sorrow ; if in truth  
Thy heart desireth an eternal youth  
Of strength and joy and love's soft ravishment,  
Of supple grace and beauty's blandishment—  
If thou dost yearn for an immortal Spring,  
Flowers that fade not, birds that ever sing,  
Lift this enchanted beaker to thy lips,  
Sweet is its savour and whoever sips  
Never shall feel his joyous life decay,  
But heaven shall crown him with immortal day,

Still shall he feel his blood kindle and glow  
 With love's warm dalliance; still his spirits flow  
 In floods of rapturous music at the thrill  
 Of youthful beauty, and his being fill  
 With all the tender yearnings of desire,  
 With all the heat of passion's restless fire;  
 For tho' the forms he cherish pass away,  
 New loves shall spring like blossoms of the May  
 For each succeeding year; the choice is thine—  
 Drink for thy pleasure and no more repine  
 At thoughts of passing life, and the dark night,  
 Whose shades up-gather that must quench delight,  
 And hide the beauty that thine eyes adore  
 In clouds of darkling sorrow evermore.'

So sang the voice and ceased, and sound was still.  
 Then Solomon sighed deeply, for the choice,  
 True love and death, life and the passing light  
 Of fleeting whims, lay heavy at his heart.  
 So sweet the morn! so dear the leaping tide  
 Of days that sweep life with them to the sea  
 Whence no belated mariner returns  
 To breathe a murmur of the lonely shore  
 In eager ears that mourn for lost delight!  
 So sweet the pomp, so glorious the power,  
 To rule in splendour over hosts of men  
 That answer to his sway; and still the doubt—  
 'True-love may die beyond the bourn of death,'  
 Throbs ever at the portals of his brain,  
 Seeking for entrance, and what then avail  
 The troth and faith of lovers, if the dead

Feel not the glow of beauty, nor can hear  
The precious music of fulfilled desire ?

Then took he counsel of the sons of men,  
And all the mortal children of the earth,  
That still must die and perish, still must see  
The lovely hues of beauty pale anon  
To bloodless age, and passionate limbs decay  
From strength and grace, to weakness, and the slow  
Living corruption, mocking in its sadness  
The ghastly face of death, and the dark tomb.

Then spake those hollow servitors whose lips  
Echo but flattery and ignoble thoughts—  
That think not of true counsel nor the words  
Of guileless friendship, but of their own ends,  
Which they to serve strive ever, yet would seem  
But offering still the tribute of their love—  
'Yea, drink, dear lord,' they cry, 'for not alone  
Hangeth thy fate upon the solemn choice,  
Fear for the passing of thy glorious life  
All nature and all races doth dismay :  
For who like thee can sway the peopled earth,  
Who shall arise to grasp with mighty hand  
Thy sov'reign sceptre, thy imperial crown ?  
Nay, drink, dear lord, nor fear the charmed cup,  
'Tis but a presage from the eternal God  
To try thee if thy heart repineth now :  
If all the care and labour of the world,  
And loss of friends, and the sore wounds of love,

Wrenched from thy sorrowing heart by greedy Death,  
Can tempt thee to forgo thy furnished power,  
And reign of His vicegerent upon Earth ;  
Can draw thy heart away from that high trust  
Thy God bestoweth ever upon thee,  
With dreams of quiet and obscure repose,  
To seek a paradise of idle rest.'

Thus said they all, yet had their specious words  
No power to beguile their wary king ;  
He saw the cautious mockery of their hearts  
And double-speechéd tongues, and could descry  
Beneath their open counsel and loud praise,  
The laughter of their self-encumbered souls.

Next spake the preying beasts whose hearts obey  
Nought but high Wisdom and her master, Love ;  
No fear they knew of Solomon, for he,  
Alone of mortal beings, could discern  
The secrets of their souls ; alone could read  
The darkness of their passion and their pain,  
And draw them with love's fetters to himself  
Out of the mists and perils of that life  
God had ordainéd for them ; and could soothe  
Their querulous moods and passionate, fierce breasts  
To gentleness and trust, and bid dismay  
Be absent at their coming among men.  
So calm they came as servants to his hest  
And licked with docile tongues his outstretch'd hands,  
To pay their homage to the king of earth,  
Ready to do his bidding, and obey

The teachings of his mouth, with that shy rev'rence  
Of turbulent creatures tamed to human pow'r ;  
And all the pathos of their lonely pride,  
And all the wonder of their glorious strength,  
Spake to the wistful heart of Solomon.  
For these were children of the Prince of Heaven,  
Living to praise him after their desire  
With all the beauty of their supple limbs  
And restless woodland grace, and tenderness  
For their young, helpless offspring : to fulfil  
Their ordered life ; and tread the paths none fixed  
But the all-seeing eye and burning breast  
Alone of that unfathomable Love.  
Then spake they each to Solomon their king—  
The crested lion in his lowering pride,  
The tiger with her cunning, pard and bear,  
And solemm elephant, and wolf and ape,  
And all the fierce-eyed strangers of the wild,  
Gave counsel to their Sov'reign in his hour  
Of gloom and doubt, and dark perplexity.  
Yet, for the bonds that drew them were not wrought  
Of Reason but the braided strands of Love,  
Their speech came from the chambers of the heart  
That brooks not cession of the thing beloved,  
And thus they also counselled him to drink  
Of the distilled enchantment, that could yield—  
If the veil'd voice spake truth—undying life  
On the familiar earth ; with all its deeps  
Of joy, and the quick pulse of dear desire,  
Yearning to be fulfilled with love's intent.

So spake they, and again the illumined eye  
Of Solomon, lit with ineffable  
Clear radiance of wisdom, viewed their minds,  
And read the pathos of their simple trust.  
And fiercer yet the dark enticement came,  
For now the doubt shot over the still deeps  
Of reason whether verily the choice  
Were proffered him of God or that fell power  
That striveth e'er for man's allegiance.

Then lastly called he to him from the depths  
Of a great forest where the sun's masked fire  
Slants chastenedly across the lonely glades,  
His aery agent, Bontimar the dove,  
Faithful thro' years of quiet confidence,  
By gentle life proved seemly and sedate  
To weigh a matter and adjust the scale,  
And strike a balance between heart and soul :  
But Bontimar flew sadly to her lord  
Knowing the truth and gauging in its light  
The strife of spirit for the victory :  
And all the weary combat of the heart  
'Twixt present gladness and the uncertain gloom  
That flits so fitfully o'er the hills of death.  
And sorrowfully she spake as if in fear  
Lest all the earthly glamour should prevail  
Against her single rede, lest at the last  
The heavenly seed might perish, lest the tares  
That choked it, for true fruit be garnered in.  
'Master,' she softly spake—'though joy is dear,



And for man's life as the clear sparkling wine,  
Gladding the heart and lifting up the soul  
From its frail diaphane of petulant flesh,  
Yet whence doth flow this liquor of delight?  
From what full-swelling grapes, from what sweet vines,  
That trellis the fair hills of heart's desire,  
Do such founts spring? Love is alone the source  
Of that deep magic wine of joy, for Love  
Swelleth beneath the sunny hours of life,  
Clinging with burning tendrils to that vine  
Whose leaves are beauty and whose branches grace;  
And love, true love, no years can bring again  
Strong as the bands that bind the heart of youth,  
When life is grace, and beauty is desire;  
For thou hast known the mantling of the cheek,  
And all the blissful sorrow that attends  
The first full rush of love; the secret speech  
Eyes teach each other, and the deep content  
Born of that precious madness of delight  
When lips of love seek beauty from thy own.  
Then wish not the dull years of deathless life,  
While all that made life sweetest must decay  
And draw beyond the impenetrable shade  
That masketh pleasure from the eyes of light.  
Thou hast drunk deeply of the wine of love,  
Drink not then of this other, but await  
(Tho' the long years yield sadness, and tho' fear  
Grippeth the bravest at the touch of doom)  
That silent last adventure, that shall bring  
Thee with thy dearest to the glades of peace,

Where joy undying reigneth evermore.'

Thus spake she and grew silent, for her tongue  
Reck'd nought of eloquence, but spelt alone  
Her sweet untuned singleness of heart.  
And Solomon perceived the charity  
And blessing of his simple counsellor,  
Who sought not honey'd sentences, but framed  
Rude words to clothe the naked truths that thron'd  
Blunt and ill-pleasing thro' her patient soul ;  
And all the dear illusions vanish'd  
That he had sought to bind about his sight,  
And now again the beams of wisdom shone  
Scorning the mists of vanity and care  
For soft inglorious ease and dull content ;  
And all the love that smoulder'd in his soul  
Broke to fierce flame that rankled and consumed  
The pyre of dark inanity within.  
Then sorrowfully he spake, as feeling yet  
The sway of mortal pleasure, tho' his will  
Bowed as a vassal before Wisdom's throne,  
'O Bontimar, thou hast conquer'd, for my heart  
Rings with true music that thy words set free,  
There is for all a fearsome way to tread  
Thro' the dark distance, where no radiancy  
Shines on the path we traverse from the known  
Lost borders of the dear familiar land  
Whence we set out, nor any beacon light  
Glow to clear triumph from the land of joy  
Our spirits yearn to dwell in ; and for this,

We clutch at the last strands that bind our life  
To mortal dwellings, and the sweet caress  
Of friendly wayfarers whose ears as yet  
Hear not the heavenly summons ; yet for truth  
We snatch at empty phantoms that impede  
Our passage to the long eternal home :  
There shall we know the plenitude of love,  
There taste its perfect rapture, and receive  
The key that frees the secrets of desire.  
Take then, O mystic voice, thy answer now.  
Not for eternal youth and all the pride  
Of earthly pomp and glory, I forgo  
The boon of death that maketh ever new  
The hearts of mortals ; that alone can quench  
Their burning thirst for beauty and delight  
In the fresh fount of everlasting Love.'

He ceased, and on the sullen air there fell  
A deep and pregnant veil of quietness :  
Into the haze the flaming cup withdrew,  
And the mist trembled into tenuous day.

## THE SOUTHERN POLE

*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* (Ovid.)

### I

Ye climes of frozen silence and still deeps !

Ye wastes of voiceless waters armour'd o'er  
With crystal, for a path from shore to shore !

And you ye snowy steeps !

Voices of ageless mystery and fear

Whisper your secret to the echoing wind,  
Moaning and wailing as it travels on

To realms more smiled on by the blessed sun,  
To lands that bear the mark of human kind,

From ways forlorn and desolation drear.

### II

Thro' the long vigil of the dawnless night,

Thro' the pale twilight of the eveless day,

Wardens of solitude ! ye hold your sway

Far from all human sight.

Your kingdoms of sad silence and pale gloom

Rul'd by no human powers the years pursue ;

Your subjects are the strange sea-monster's brood,

Half fish, half beast, of loathly form endued,

And glossy seals with skins of silvery hue

That make the ice their lair, the sea their tomb.

### III

What far-off, echoing, syren-voices call ?  
What soft enchantment do your breezes blow ?  
What deathly-lures, what harbingers of woe  
Our human hearts enthrall ?  
Doth some live murmur touch our spirits still,  
Some long-forgotten human memory,  
From the far ages of man's early birth,  
When frozen glooms cover'd the fruitful earth,  
While towering ice-bergs sailed our English sea,  
And the snows thickened upon crag and hill ?

### IV

For still some strange irrefutable spell  
Draws human footsteps to your dreary shore !  
Thro' weary labour and privation sore  
The lonely hours they tell,  
Who far away from haunt of human-kind,  
The loves they cherish and the homes they prize,  
To that bleak barren world of silence go,  
Where, for their homeland, lies the eternal snow,  
For friendly welcome, but the cheerless skies :  
What guerdon meetly glorious can they find ?

## V

O Wisdom, glorious mistress of the soul !  
 And of such children doubly justified,  
 For thee they live ; thy glory all their pride,  
 Who to no fruitless goal  
 Press on in spite of hazard and distress,  
 Of numbing peril and of dread alarm,  
 To lay so rich a trophy at thy feet.  
 For thee they face the blinding blizzard's sleet,  
 For thee they seek the laurel and the palm,  
 And toil to feed thy flame thro' weariness.

## VI

And we whose life is wayward, whom shy Hope  
 Never hath lured across the trackless sea,  
 In some great emprise of high chivalry,  
 We who but blindly grope,  
 Till dull Convention's gloom our souls enslave,  
 Shot with no mystic visions of romance ;  
 Who follow the safe track our Fathers wore,  
 Nor feel the thirst to drink dark Wisdom's lore  
 In some uncharted fairyland of Chance,  
 What guerdon do we carry to the grave ?

## VII

Too often but the memory of life  
    Ill-spent, ill-founded ; with no certain goal  
To tempt with nobler dreams the unstrung soul ;  
    And thoughts of fruitless strife—  
Of battle with our friends instead of foes  
    For worthless trophies and ill-placed desires,  
'Midst cries of pain unheeded and forlorn.  
    And for this heritage our souls were born ?—  
To cringe and perish in these treacherous fires ?  
    Or win thro' blood and flame our heart's repose ?

## VIII

Yet still, Imperious Goddess, is thy throne  
    Set up on pedestals of fallen men,  
Who in the long march drop from human ken  
    To find their rest alone :  
In thy proud service stricken mortally,  
    Yet glorying in the battle and the pain :  
Willing in such dear emprise to be sped,  
    If so the lamp of Wisdom may be fed,  
And by their deeds flicker to life again ;  
    Then gladly would they droop to earth and die.

## IX

And thus to purge our listless, fever'd way,  
 Comes like a tonic show'r the glorious tale  
 (Truly the springs of Manhood shall not fail  
 While earth breeds such as they !)  
 Of that proud band of heroes and their prize  
 Of aching toil and martyr victory,  
 Of pain endured in silence, till life's breath  
 Falter'd and failed before remorseless Death,  
 Then one by one they laid them down to die  
 And he, their Captain, clos'd the frozen eyes.

## X

Then he too fared on that eternal quest,  
 On man's last, great adventurous voyage to go,  
 Far out upon the senseless wastes of snow,  
 Still with the same high zest  
 As e'er had marked his hours of mortal breath ;  
 Fearless, nor sad, for in his soul there shone  
 The steadfast Lamp of Truth, and in its light  
 Bravely he gat him out into the night  
 To face Time's last and fellest Champion,  
 And silence lorded o'er the Camp of Death.



XI

And what of him, their comrade who alone  
    Marched out to meet that silent Conqueror,  
If haply by his death he might restore  
    Lives loved above his own ?  
Shall his proud name die with the dying years ?  
    O rather shall his praise for ever ring  
Adown the ages for such Chivalry :  
    While men shall live his memory shall not die,  
His deed the lips of bards unborn shall sing  
    And that proud fate bewail with mournful tears.

XII

What went they forth to seek, and what to find ?  
    The tribute of pure fame for noble deed ?  
Alas ! a colder token was their meed,  
    Snow-wreaths their temples bind.  
The praise for worlds new-born to men ? or yet,  
    The knowledge of far lands their feet alone  
Of human limbs had trod since Time began ?  
    But other feet their luckless steps outran,  
O'er that drear waste another flag had flown :  
    Yet praise, with heroes, triumphs o'er regret.

### XIII

And yet I know they shall not wholly die,  
Still in the living memory of Time,  
Unchanged, undimmed, unchallenged, but sublime  
Their fame eternally  
Shall spread from out the fastness of their rest ;  
Not first nor chiefly of their triumphs won,  
Of new-found knowledge or their hapless doom,  
Of deathly perils and the lonely tomb ;  
But rather for heroic service done,  
Praise of all praise the noblest and the best.

### XIV

Weep not nor mourn for heroes that are dead,  
But rather, as Laconian mothers, sing  
A paean for their glory's heightening ;  
Their Spirit is not shed,  
But lives and stirs thro' all our human ways,  
And shall live ever while the earth may be  
A human dwelling place : their lustrous fame  
Time shall not pale. The splendour of their name  
Thrills round the glorious earth from sea to sea  
In one loud concert of triumphant praise.



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