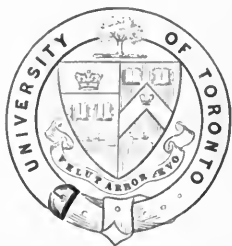




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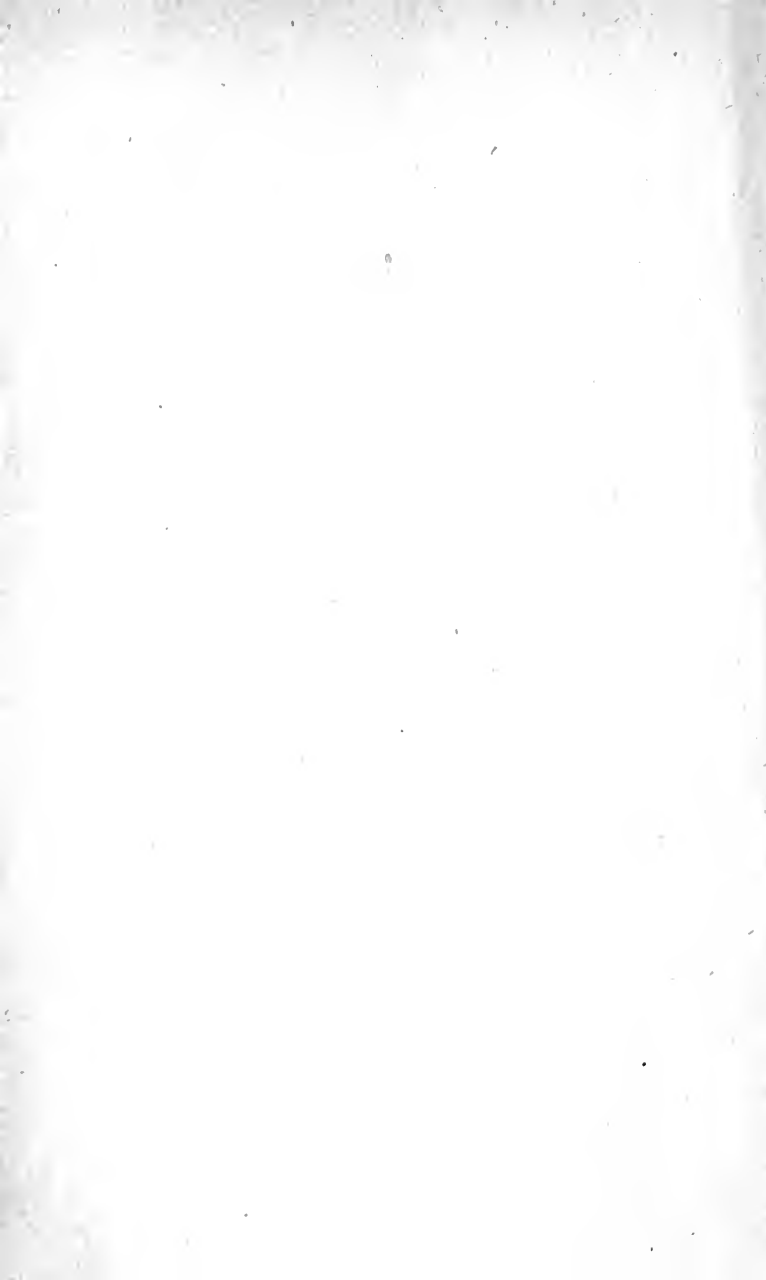


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THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING,
FROM
1826 to 1844.



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THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING,

FROM
1826 TO 1844.

EDITED,
WITH A MEMOIR,
BY
JOHN H. INGRAM.

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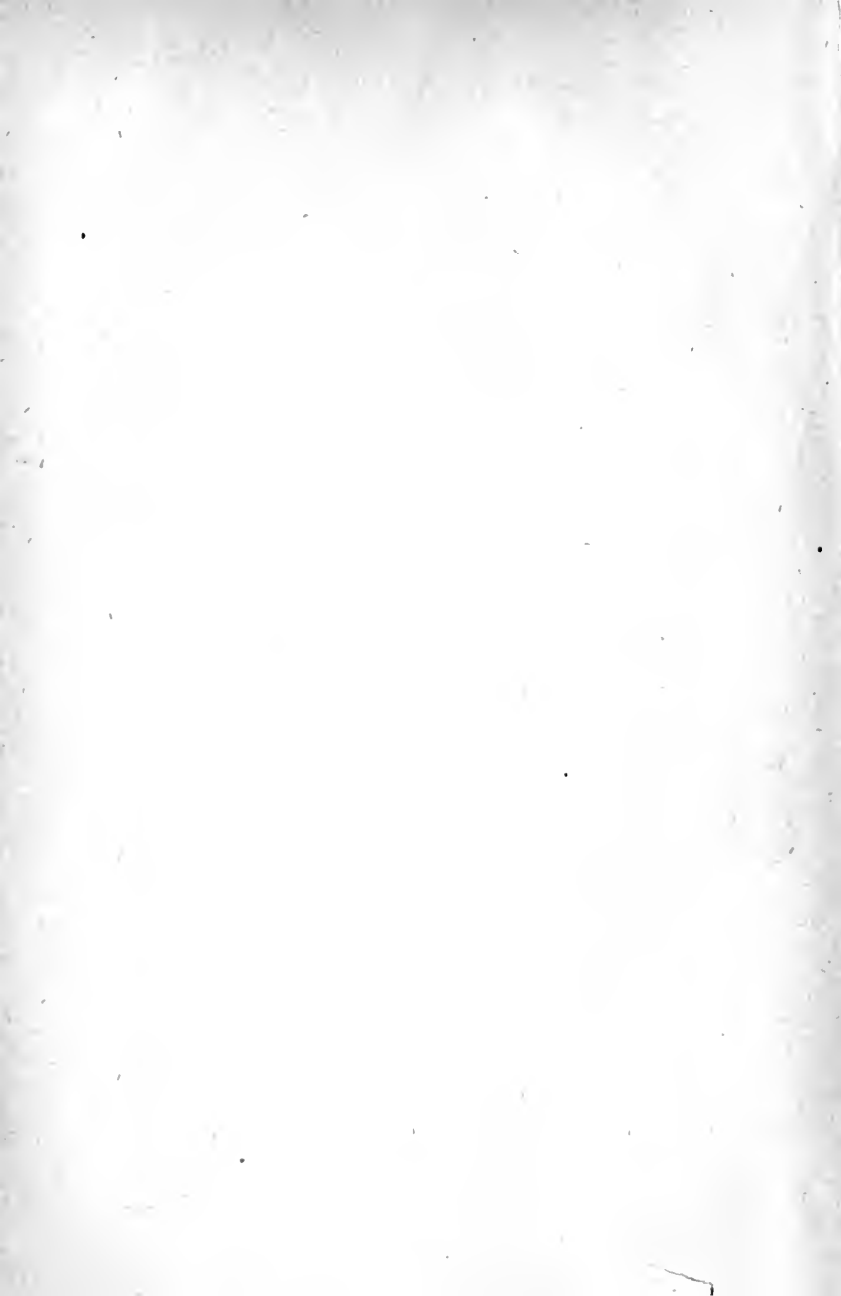
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MEMOIR OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

THE life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the greatest female poet England or any country has produced, remains to be written. Nothing even claiming to be a biography of her has been published in her native land, and such essays upon her personal history as have appeared, either in England or elsewhere, are replete with mistakes or misstatements. Within the limited space at my disposal a correct if short memoir shall be attempted.

Elizabeth Barrett Barrett was the eldest daughter of Edward Moulton-Barrett, otherwise Barrett-Moulton, a scion of a wealthy West Indian family. Mr. Barrett can have barely attained his majority when he married Mary, daughter of Mr. J. G. Clarke, of Fenham Hall, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, a lady several years his senior in age. Elizabeth, their second child, was born in London, on Saturday, the 4th of March, 1809.

Soon after the birth of their daughter the Barretts removed to Herefordshire, taking up their residence at Hope End, near Ledbury. Hope End, previously the country seat of Sir Henry Vane Tempest, was charmingly located in a secluded valley in the vicinity of the Malvern Hills. The adjacent hills; the picturesque pieces of water fronting the house, and the well-wooded deer park surrounding it, combined to render Hope End as beautiful as it was comfortable.

The convenient modern residence he found upon his newly-

acquired estate did not satisfy the semi-tropical taste of Mr. Barrett, so he had it pulled down and an oriental looking structure, bedecked with Turkish turrets and windows, erected in its stead. After a time this quaint dwelling reëchoed to the prattle of little tongues—the patter of little feet—for a large family of sons and daughters sprang up rapidly around the wealthy West Indian. Ever foremost of the flock, and first favourite of the father, was Elizabeth. Mr. Barrett was proud of his daughter's precocious talent and spared no means to foster it; indeed, it is not improbable that her chronic delicacy of constitution was increased if not engendered by overstudy, although Elizabeth in after life, attributed her own chronic ill health to the effects of a neglected cold.

Those who would gain an intimate knowledge of Miss Barrett's early life must study her works: they are filled with vivid glimpses of her happy but imaginative girlhood. Many are the autobiographical allusions to her home at Hope End made in "The Lost Bower" and other of her poems. The beauties of the country of her childhood made a lasting impression upon her mind and were often the theme of her later life, for,—

" Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played—
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade."

Among the few facts known of Elizabeth's youth is that she wrote verses at a very early age. "I wrote verses," she says, "at eight years old and earlier," and, what is noteworthy about the matter is that her father encouraged her poetic aspirations. Before she was eleven, inspired by a perusal of Pope's Homer, she composed an epic poem in four books on "The Battle of Marathon," and Mr. Barrett was so proud of his little daughter's achievement, that he actually had fifty copies of it printed!

From reading Homer paraphrased she longed to read him in his own tongue. "The love of Pope's Homer," she

remarks, "threw me into Pope on the one side and Greek on the other, and into Latin as a help to Greek." At first, it would appear, it was Pope who exercised the greater influence upon her plastic mind, and her earlier writings are little more than a reproduction of the see-saw metre of the Twickenham poet.

From writing birthday odes to her father and childish epics for the edification of friends, Elizabeth Barrett began to aspire to a larger audience. As early as 1825 she had contributed verses to periodicals, and in 1826 appeared her first published volume, "An Essay on Mind with Other Poems." Of this initial work little need be said; it is chiefly of interest as the earliest efflorescence of her genius. The "Essay" is fluently written, and not without some touches of talent, but, as an Edinburgh Reviewer has pointed out, is principally "remarkable for the precocious audacity with which she deals with the greatest names in the whole range of literature and science." Several of the "Other Poems" are made of more durable material, and are not unworthy of their author.

Reading, close and continuous, now became second nature with Miss Barrett. "I read," she says, "books bad and good," in fact, anything in the shape of a book. Her father may not have altogether encouraged this indiscriminate reading, but he certainly helped her to study, notwithstanding her feeble health which, as she told Mr. Horne, was so precarious that at fifteen she nearly died. It is said that Mr. Barrett was a man of intellect and culture and, therefore, able to direct his daughter's education, but, be that so or not, he obtained for her the tutorial assistance of the well-known Greek scholar, Hugh Stuart Boyd. Boyd, although blind, was not only a profound Hellenic scholar, but, also, a writer of fluent verse, and his influence and instruction doubtless confirmed Miss Barrett in her poetic aspirations. Her gratitude to this,—

"Steadfast friend

Who never did my heart or life misknow,"—

for his priceless aid in her studies, never ceased nor wavered.

Her first real trouble was the loss of her mother, who died, after a long continuance of ill health, on the 1st October 1828. This sorrow was speedily followed by another of a less irreparable but still trying character. Owing to a great decrease of income, attributed to the Emancipation of the Slaves, Mr. Barrett was forced to leave Hope End and reduce his style of living. His daughter bade farewell to her beloved Malvern Hills with a heavy heart, and for ever. "Beautiful, beautiful hills, they are!" she exclaims, "and yet, not for the whole world's beauty, would I stand in the sunshine and the shadow of them any more. It would be a mockery, like the taking back of a broken flower to its stalk."

From Hope End the Barretts removed to Sidmouth and spent two years there, during which time Elizabeth published, in 1833, her second volume of poems, "Prometheus and Other Poems." Thence they removed to London, where Mr. Barrett took a house in Gloucester Place. His daughter's health continued to fail, although she wrote incessantly for contemporary publications and, in 1838, collected and re-published much of her poetry in a new volume, as "The Seraphim and Other Poems." Her health was now so shattered that her medical adviser counselled immediate departure from London to a more southerly place.

Edward Moulton Barrett, the eldest of the family, and Elizabeth's favourite brother, gave up his own occupation to take charge of his invalid sister, and travelled with her to Torquay. For a time the warm breezes of the southern coast appeared to revive the young poetess, and hopes were entertained of her health's revival when a dreadful catastrophe took place and, in her own words, "gave a nightmare to her life for ever." Mr. Edward and two friends, accompanied by a sailor, went out for a few hours' sail. They did not return in the evening as expected, but it was not for some days that all hope of their safety was lost; at last the news was received and, ultimately, confirmed that the boat had been upset just off Teignmouth, by a sudden squall, and that all on board had perished. The long suspense and then the

terrible certainty of her loss had a most disastrous effect upon Miss Barrett. For months her own life was despaired of, and it was not until long after the expiration of another year that the medical advisers would permit of her removal from the now hateful sea-side being risked.

By easy stages Miss Barrett at last reached London, where a house in Wimpole Street had been purchased by her father, whose fortune had been considerably augmented by his accession to the property of his only brother Richard, for many years Speaker of the House of Assembly at Jamaica. For some few years after her return to London, Miss Barrett was confined to her room through feeble health, seeing very few persons beyond her nearest relatives, but continuing to take a lively interest in the literary and social subjects of the day.

In 1844 she collected such of her poetical writings as had not already appeared in book form and published them in two volumes. This collection, which contained much of her best and most matured work, increased her reputation considerably, in the United States as well as in the British Empire. Chief among the literary friends who assisted her with advice and aid was her cousin, John Kenyon, a literary man himself, and the personal friend of all worth knowing in the world of letters. Mr. Kenyon frequently introduced to Miss Barrett's personal notice the best new books and their authors, amongst the latter being Mr. Robert Browning, the son of an old school-fellow of his. A sympathy intenser than friendship rapidly sprang up between the two poets, and on the 12th September, 1846, Miss Barrett, whose health had been gradually improving for some time past, was married to Mr. Browning.

A warmer climate than England's being deemed requisite for the health of the poetess, her husband took her to Italy where, after some travelling, the congenially mated couple found a suitable residence in Florence. Mrs. Browning's subsequent history consists chiefly of the publication of various new poems, some of which, being more cosmopolitan than insular in their political view of things, exposed her to severe criticism in England, which, however, she soon lived down.

In March 1849, Mrs. Browning's only child Robert, now a well known artist, was born in Florence. In 1851, she issued a new edition of her poems in three volumes. In company with her husband she occasionally visited England, but the delicacy of her constitution forced her always to leave her native land at the approach of winter.

Mrs. Browning took intense interest in the struggles for freedom made by Italy, and most of her later poems refer to events in connection therewith. From this, however, must be excepted her longest production, "Aurora Leigh," a novel in verse, a work which, despite numerous defects, raised her contemporary reputation to a higher pitch than any of her other productions.

Early in 1861, Mrs. Browning's health gave way entirely, and in June of that year she died at Florence, in the Protestant cemetery of which city a massive tomb, designed by Sir Frederick Leighton, marks the spot where rests all that is earthly of England's great poetess.

JOHN H. INGRAM.

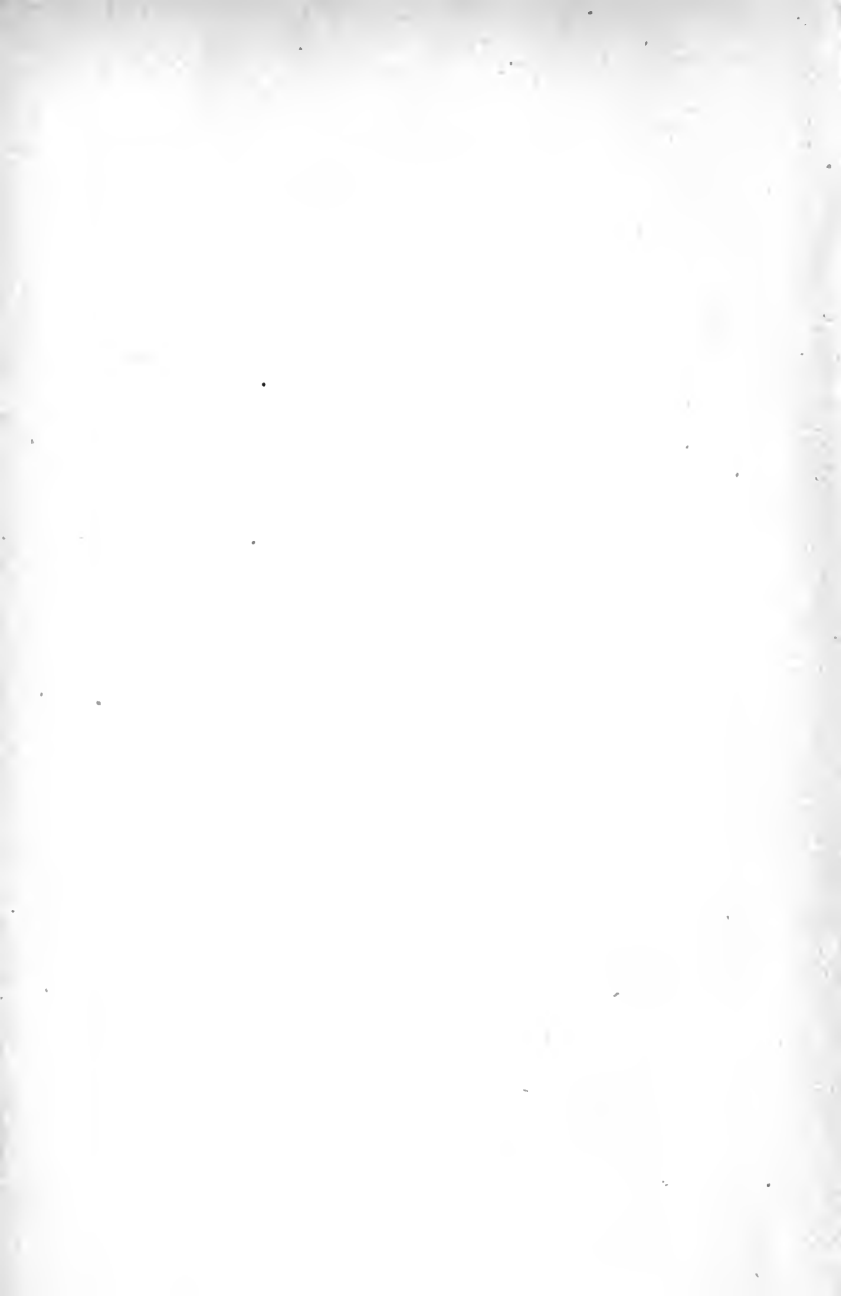
PART I.

THE SERAPHIM

AND

OTHER POEMS.

1838.



THE SERAPHIM.

"I look for angels' songs, and hear Him cry."

GILES FLETCHER

PART THE FIRST.

It is the time of the Crucifixion: and the Father of the Crucified has directed towards earth the angels of His heaven, of whom all have departed except the two Seraphim, Ador and Zerah. The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate. There stand the Seraphim. Ador the Strong has unfurled the thunder-cloud of his wing; but Zerah the Bright One lingers still, now looking backward to his heavenly habitation, and now upward to his brother's face.

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more!

Beside this gate of Heaven we stand alone.

Zerah. This gate of heaven!

Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—

Zerah. Are gone! the golden harps, as ne'er before,
Still burning from our clasp'd motion,
And tun'd breath of rapt devotion,
Lie without a touch or tone,
Or canopy of angel wing,
Upon the glass-sea shore!

Ador. Instead of sounding, glittering
In the shadow from the throne—

The shadow without form, that resteth on

The broad and crystal sea—

Awfuller than light derived,

And red with primal heats, whereby all life hath lived.

Zerah. Our visible God! our heaven! and we
Go thus!

Ador. Thus, now, beloved! unpausingly.

Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical—

The roar of whose descent hath died

To a still sound, as thunder into rain!

Th' immeasurabl' espace seems magnified

THE SERAPHIM.

With that thick life ; whereof we nought retain
 In visions, save the pale and eddying fall
 Of wings innumerable, brightly crossed
 By lines of hair that hath not lost
 The glitter of the God-smile shed
 Last, on the bow'd angel's head !
 And gleamed between by hands that fling
 Homages like upward rays,
 From constant habitude of praise
 And high instinct of worshipping.
Zerah. Rapidly they drop below us.
 Pointed palm and wing and hair,
 Indistinguishable, show us
 Only pulses in the air
 Throbbing with a fiery beat—
 As if a new creation heard
 (Late unhearing, still unseeing)
 Some divine and plastic word,
 And trembling at its proper being,
 Did waken at our feet.

Ador. *Zerah!* stand not lingeringly.
 His voice—the voice that thrills us so
 As we our harpstrings—uttered *Go*,
Behold the Holy in his woe—
 And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee !

Ador. I stood the nearest to the throne,
 What time the voice said *Go*.
 And whether I was shook
 By the storm-pathos of the tone
 Which swept thro' Heaven the alien name of woe,
 Or that the subtle glory broke
 Thro' my strong and shielding wings,
 Bearing to my finite essence
 Incapacious of their presence,
 Infinite imaginings—
 None knoweth save the Throned who spoke !
 But I, who, years ago, stood upright while th' eternal
 Breath did move,
 Shaping the words that lightened—" Let light be,"—
 Nor trembled but with love ;
 Now fell down tremblingly,
 My face upon the pavement floor ;
 Without the praise that evermore
 In music gusheth there !
 As if mine immortality
 O'erpowered by God's eternal were !

Thou—wherefore dost thou wait ?
 Oh ! gaze not backward, brother mine ;
 The deep love in thy mystic eyne
 Deepening inward, till is made
 A copy of the earth-love shade—
 Oh ! gaze not thro' the gate !
 God filleth heaven with God's own solitude
 Till all its pavements glow !
 His Godhead being no more subdued
 By itself, to glories low
 Which seraphs can sustain,
 What if thou in gazing so,
 Should behold but only one
 Attribute, the veil undone—
 And that the one to which we press
 Nearest, for its gentleness—
 Ay, His love !
 How the deep ecstatic pain
 Thy being's strength would capture !
 Without a language for the rapture,
 Without a music strong to come
 And set th' adoring free ;
 For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
 Amid the general chorus dumb—
 God-stricken in seraphic agony !—
 Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
 In vision bare should rise
 The life-fount whence His hand did gather
 With solitary force
 Our immortalities !—
 Straightway how thine own would wither,
 Falter like a human breath,—
 And *shrink into a point like death,*
 By gazing on its source !
 My words have mirrored dread.
 Meekly hast thou bent thine head,
 And o'er each dropp'd lid, hast bowed
 Another broader silver cloud,
 A languid wing—as if the glory
 Of the God's throne were before thee !
 Yet not—not so,
 O loving spirit and meek, dost thou fulfil
 All motions of the one pre-eminent Will
 Which stirreth unto will and act our natures
 As human souls do stir the fleshly creatures.
 Not for obeisance, but obedience,
 Give motion to thy wings ! Depart from hence—

The voice said "Go."

Zerah. Belovèd, I depart!

His will is as a spirit within my spirit;

A portion of the being I inherit—

His will is mine obedience. I resemble

A flame all undefilèd though it tremble—

I go and tremble! Love me, O beloved!

O thou, who stronger art,

And standest ever near the Infinite,

Pale with excelling light!

Love me, belovèd! me, more newly made,

More feeble, more afraid—

And let me hear with mine thy pinions moved,

As close and gentle as the loving are;

That love being near, heaven may not seem so far!

Ador. I am near thee, and I love thee!

Were I loveless, from thee gone,

Love still is round, beneath, above thee—

God, the omnipresent One.

Spread the wing, and lift the brow—

Well-beloved, what fearest thou?

Zerah. I fear, I fear—

Ador.

What fear?

Zerah.

The fear of earth.

Ador. Of earth, the God-create, the beautiful?

From whence the sweet-sea music hath its birth,

And vernal forests lift their leaves in tune

Beneath the gracious, water-leading moon?

Where every night, the stars do put away

Meekly its darkness dull,

And look their spirit-light into the clay?

Where every day, the kingly sun doth bless

More lovingly than kings,

And stir to such harmonious happiness

All leafed and reeded things,

It seems as if the joyous shout which burst

From angel lips to see him first,

Had left a silent echo in his ray?

Zerah. Of earth—the God-create but God-accurst:

Where man is, and the thorn!

Where winds and waves have borne,

Where sun and star can roll,

No tune, no shining to the human soul!

Where Eden's lapsing rivers all are dry,

And in their stead, do flow perpetually,

Do flow and flow hot streams of human tears—

Where Eden's tree of life no more upears

Its spiral leaves and fruit ; but in its stead
The cypress bows its melancholy head,
And all the undergrasses kills and seres !

Ador. Of earth, the very weak ?
Where men that faint, do strive for crowns that fade ;
And stoop to clasp metallic heaps conveyed
From the green sward their delving labour scars—
When upright they might stand, and view the stars !
Where, having won the winning that they seek,
They lie beside the sceptre and the gold,
With fleshless hands that cannot wield or hold ;
And the stars shine in their unseeing eyes ?

Zerah. Of earth the terrible !

Where the blind matter brings
An awful potency out of impotence,
And all the spiritual prostrated lies,
Before the things of sense :
Where the strong human will saith " ay " or " no,"
Because the human pulse is quick or slow—
Where stronger Love succumbeth unto Change,
Only his own memories, for revenge !
Where is the root of tears—the mystery of woe ;
And one yet fearfuller—

Ador. Thou meanest Death ?

Zerah. Nay ! Death is fearful ; but it hath
A sound more comprehensible.
That fearfuller thou knowest well,
Tho' its utterance be not for thee,
Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—
Ay ! the curs'd thing that moved
Its shadow of ill, long times ago,
Across our heaven's own shining floor !
And when it pass'd, some who were
On thrones of holy empire there,
Did reign—were seen—were—never more.—
Come nearer, O beloved !

Ador. I am near thee. Thou hast seen
This earth, whereof thy words have been ?

Zerah. I have seen it—I have trod—
When thrilling from the touch of God
It flow'd from His hand along
Its lustrous path with spheric song,
Woeless, deathless, errorless !
And fearless, angel feet did press
The grasses brightening with their feet—
For God's own voice did mix its sound
In a solemn confluence oft

With the rivers' flowing round,
 And the life-tree's waving soft.
 Beautiful new earth, and strange!

Ador. Hast thou seen it since—the change?

Zerah. Asketh thou? I fear—I fear—
 To look upon it now!

I have beheld the ruined things
 Only in the picturings
 Of angels sent on earthward mission!
 Strong one, e'en upon thy brow—
 When, with task completed, given
 Back to us from earthly vision,
 I have beheld thee silent stand,
 Abstracted in the seraph band—
 Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wert not one of those

Whom the loving Father chose,
 In pomps of dreams to sweep
 O'er Judæa's grassy places,
 O'er the shepherds and the sheep?
 The clear, calm starlight dimming,
 All except one secret star,
 With their brighter kinder faces;

And using heaven's own tune in hymning,—
 While deep response from earth's own mountains ran,—
 "Peace on earth—goodwill to man."

Zerah. "Glory to God!"—I said Amen afar.

And they who from that earthward mission are,
 Within mine ears have told,

That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold
 With such a sweet and prodigal constraint,
 The meaning yet the mystery of the song,
 The while they sang it, on their spirits strong;
 That, gazing down on earth's dark steadfastness,
 And speaking the new peace in promises,
 The love and pity made their voices faint
 Into that low and tender music, keeping
 The place in heaven, of what on earth is weeping!

Ador. Peace upon earth! Come down to it!

Zerah.

Ah me!

I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.
 Peace where the tempest—where the sighing is—
 And worship of the idol, 'stead of His?

Ador. Yea, peace, where *He* is.

Zerah. *He!*

Say it again.

Ador. Where *He* is.

Zerah. Can it be
 And is it sooth that earth retains a tree
 Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed
 By breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade ?
Ador. There is a tree !—it hath no leaf or root !
 Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit :

Its shadow lies on *Him*—
 But what if He, the crownèd Son,
 Hath left His crown upon His throne,—
 Walks earth in Adam's clay,
 Eve's serpent to confound and slay—

Zerah. In clay—in clay !

Ador. And walking in the clay which He created,
 Shall thro' it touch the death !
 What do I utter ? what, conceive ? Did breath
 Of demon howl it in a blasphemy ?
 Or was it mine own voice, informed, dilated,
 By the seven confluent Spirits ?—Speak—answer me !
Who said man's victim was his deity ?

Zerah. Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from
thee.

Thine eyes are rolling in tempestuous light,
 Above, below, around,
 As putting thunder-questions without cloud,
 Reverberate without sound,
 To universal nature's depth and height.
 The tremor of an unexpressèd thought
 Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,
 O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips :
 And while thine hands are stretched above
 As newly they had caught
 Some lightning from the Throne—or flashed abroad
 Some Eden-guarding sword—
 Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse
 And radiance—with contrasted wrath and love—
 As God had called thee to a seraph's part,
 With a man's quailing heart !
Ador. O heart—O heart of man !
 O ta'en from human clay,
 To be no seraph's, but Jehovah's own !
 Made holy in the taking,
 And yet unseparate
 From death's perpetual ban,
 And human feelings sad and passionate !
 Still subject to the treacherous forsaking
 Of other hearts, and its own steadfast pain !
 O heart of man—of God ! which God hath ta'en

From out the dust, with its humanity
 Mournful and weak and soft yet holy round it,
 And bade its many pulses beating lie
 Beside that incommunicable stir
 Of Deity wherewith He interwound it!
 O man! and is thy nature so defiled,
 That all that holy Heart's devout law-keeping,
 And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,
 And gushings pitiful of tender weeping
 For cruel ones who smote it into woe—
 That all could cleanse thee not—without the flow
 Of blood—the life-blood—*His*—and streaming *so*?
 O earth, the thundercleft, windshaken!—where
 The louder voice of "blood and blood" doth rise—
 Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?

O heaven—O vacant throne!

O crown'd hierarchies, that wear your crown
 When His is put away!

Are ye unsham'd, that ye cannot dim
 Your alien brightness to be liker Him,—
 Assume a human passion—and down-lay
 Your sweet secureness for congenial fears—
 And teach your cloudless ever-burning eyes

The mystery of His tears?

Zerah. I am strong, I am strong!

Were I never to see my heaven again,
 I would wheel to earth like the tempest rain
 Which sweeps there with exultant sound
 To lose its life in the reach'd ground.

I am strong, I am strong!

To mine inward vision waxeth dim
 The shining seat of my heavenly birth—
 I see but His, I see but Him—
 The Maker's steps on His cruel earth!
 Will the bitter herbs of earth grow sweet
 To me, as touch'd by His feet?

Will the vex'd, curst humanity,
 As worn by Him, begin to be
 A bless'd, yea, a holy thing,
 For love, and awe, and ministering?

I am strong, I am strong!

By our angel ken, shall we survey
 His loving smile through his woeful clay?

I am swift, I am strong—
 The love is bearing me along.—

Ador. My wings with thine! At once we go
 To see the Holy in His woe!

PART THE SECOND.

The place is mid-air, above Judæa. Ador and Zerah are a little apart from the visible Angelic Hosts.

Ador. BELOVED! dost thou see?—

Zerah. Thee,—thee!

Thy burning eyes already are
Grown wild and mournful as a star,
Whose occupation is for aye
To look upon the place of clay,
Whereon thou lookest now!

The crown is fainting on thy brow
To the likeness of a cloud—

Thy forehead's self, a little bowed
From its aspect high and holy,—
As it would in meekness meet
Some seraphic melancholy.

Thy very wings that lately flung
In heavenly airs, an outline clear,
Flicker in their glory here;
And wear to each a shadow hung,
Dropped across thy feet.

And in these strange contrasting glooms,
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,
Seraph faces, O my brother,
Show awfully to one another!

Ador. Dost thou see? dost thou see?

Zerah. Yea! our heaven's bright company;
Alone the memory of their brightness
Left in them, as in thee!

The circle upon circle, tier on tier—

The sea of living Ones, afar, anear,

Above us, and around!

Their songful lips divorc'd from all sound;
A darkness gliding down their silvery glances,—
Bowing their steadfast solemn countenances,
As if they heard God speak, and could not glow!

Ador. Look downward! dost thou see?

Zerah. And wouldst thou press *that* vision on
my words?

Hath not the chang'd Earth

A voice enough, of her own change, for thee—

Whose voice is in her waters, moaning ever

In every azure sea and silver river,

And all her leaping rills!

That break abruptly from their forc'd mirth,
 With a long sigh across the pastoral swards?
 Be satisfied! I see her vales, ungreen

Where steps of man have been!

Her thunder-riven hills,

That shake their piney heads, as who would say
 "We are too beautiful for our decay."

Shall seraphs speak of these things? Let alone
 Earth, to her earthly moan.

Voice of all things. Is there no moan but *hers*?

Ador. Hearest thou the attestation

Of the rous'd Universe,

Like a desert lion shaking

Dews of silence from its mane—

With an irrepresive passion,

Rising up and witness making

To the earth-commingled pain

Of Him who stands (O patience sweet!)

In His own hand-prints of creation,

With human, bleeding feet?

Voice of all things. Is there no moan but *ours*?

Zerah. O meek, insensate things!

O congregated matters! who inherit

Instead of motive powers,

Impulsions God-supplied—

Instead of vital spirit,

A clear informing beauty—

Instead of creature-duty,

A motion calm as rest!

Lights, without feet or wings,

In golden courses sliding!

Broad glooms! 'neath masses, hiding,

Whose lustrous heart away was prest

Into the argent stars!

Ye crystal, firmamental bars,

That hold the skyey waters free

From tide or tempest's ecstasy!

Airs universal! thunders lorn,

That wait your lightning in cloud-cave

Hewn out by the winds! O brave

And subtle Elements! the Holy

Hath charged me by your voice with folly.*

Enough! the mystic arrow leaves its wound!

Return ye to your silences inborn,

Or to your inarticulated sound!

Ador. Zerah!

* "His angels He charged with folly."—*Job* iv. 18.

Zerah. Wilt thou rebuke ?

God hath rebuked me, brother!—I am weak.

Ador. Zerah, my brother Zerah!—could I speak
Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

Zerah. Thy look
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face!—
Where shall I seek *Him*?—

I have thrown

One look upon earth—but one—
And therewith was sought and seen
Where her grasses show'd green,
Streaked with fairest flowers that grew;
And among her trees was hidden
Some remembrance of her Eden,
Wept over by the dew.

Beloved! He is not there!

Flowers, grasses, are too dull to bear,—

Feet, before which, bowed adown,
I would fain quench my starry crown
Upon the wormy clay.
Where shall I seek Him ?

No reply ?

Hath language left thy lips, to place

Its vocal in thine eye ?

Ador, Ador! are we come

To a double portent, that

Dumb matter grows articulate,

And songful seraphs dumb ?

Ador, Ador!—

Ador. I constrain

The passion of my silence. None

Of those places sweet and lone,

Are dull enow to fit His pain!

Unto Him, whose forming word

Gave to Nature flower and sward,

She hath given back again,

Instead of flowers, the thorn;

Instead of sylvan calms, the human scorn.

Still, still, reluctant Seraph, gaze beneath!

There is a city—

Zerah.

Could its throne remain,

(Those very clouds are motioned by our breath—)

And fade not to a dream, when He touch'd it ?

Ador.

Ah me! ah me!

The victim seeks no throne!—

And THOU who hangest mute of speech,

'Twixt heaven and earth, with forehead yet

Stain'd by the bloody sweat—
 God ! man ! Thou hast foregone thy throne in each !

Zerah. Ador ! thine eyes behold Him ?

Ador. Yea !

Track the gazing of mine eyes,
 Naming God within thine heart,
 That its weakness may depart,
 And the vision rise.

Seest thou yet, beloved ?

Zerah. I see

Beyond the city, crosses three,
 And mortals three that hang thereon,
 'Ghast and silent to the sun !

And round about them sweep and press
 Living multitudes, whose father
 Adam was—whose brows are dark
 With his Cain's corroded mark ;
 Who curse with looks. Nay—let me rather
 Turn unto the wilderness.

Ador. Turn not. God dwells with men.

Zerah. Above

He dwells with angels ; and they love.
 Can these love ? With the living's pride
 They stare at those who die : the streak
 O' the cross's shade on brow and cheek,
 Though falling there so wild and wide,
 Being not dark enow to hide—a triumph upon both—

Ador. The cross—the cross !

Zerah. A woman doth

Kneel the mid cross under—
 Meekly with her lips asunder,
 And a motion upon each :
 Too fast to show or suffer speech—
 With folded lids as close as sleep,
 Yet not tranquil—for the eyes
 That dream within have room to weep
 Drop after drop—

Ador. Weep blood ! Weep blood,

All women, yea ! all men !
 These water tears are vain—
 They mock like laughter !

Zerah. O passionate heaven-dweller !

Ador. Shall the flood
 Of curses salt, whose foam is darkness, roll
 Forward from 'parted years—
 And backward from the terrible hereafter—
 And upward from the present's bitter spring ;

Yea, downward, haply from the Father-King
To meet upon His soul?—

And men weep only tears?

Zerah. All-givers need no gifts.
And if that Voice said "Give," its sound would slay
Immortals, and its echo sweep away
The universe it made. What seraph lifts

A song so subtly wrought,

It is not in His hearing less than nought,
Or is more than a woman's weeping? So
Words soft as tears, above thee would I speak.
Thou woman, weep thy woe!
I, the tearless and pure, am but loving and weak.

Ador. Speak low—and not of love,
Or human or angelic! Rather stand
Before the throne of that Supreme above,
In whose infinitude, the secrecies
Of thine own being lie hid,—and lift thine hand
Exultant, saying, "Lord God, I am wise!"—
Than utter *here*, "I love."

Zerah. And yet thine eyes
Do utter it. They melt in tender light—
The tears of Heaven.

Ador. Of Heaven. Ah me!

Zerah. Ador!

Ador. Say on.

Zerah. The crucified are three.
Beloved, they are unlike.

Ador. Unlike.

Zerah. For one
Is as a man who sinned, and still
Doth wear contrastingly the wicked will—
The hard malign life-energy,
Stamped inward, in the parting soul's disdain,
On brow and lip that cannot change again.

Ador. And one—

Zerah. Is also a sinful man;
And yet, (O marvel!) of a spirit clear!
Death upon his face
Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made.
He seemeth dying in a blessed place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet
Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden and sweet.

Ador. And ONE!—

Zerah. And ONE—

Ador. Why dost thou pause?
Zerah. God! God!

Spirit of my spirit! who movest
 Through seraph veins in burning deity,
 To light the quenchless pulses!—

Ador. But hast trod
 The depths of love in Thy peculiar nature;
 And not in any Thou hast made and lovest
 In narrow seraph hearts!—

Zerah. Above, Creator!
 Within, Upholder!—

Ador. And below, below,
 The creature's and th' upholden's sacrifice!

Zerah. Why do I pause?—

Ador. There is a silentness

That answers thee enow;
 That like a brazen sound
 Excluding others, doth ensheathe us round:
 Hear it! It is not from the visible skies,

Though they are very still,
 Unconscious that their own dropped dews express
 The light of heaven on every earthly hill.
 It is not from the hills; though calm and bare

They, since their first creation,
 Through midnight cloud or morning's glittering air,
 Or the deep deluge blindness, up toward
 The place whence issued the creating word,

And whence again shall come
 The word that uncreates;

Have lift their brows in voiceless expectation
 It is not from the places that entomb
 Man's dead—though common Silence there dilates
 Her soul to grand proportions, worthily

To fill life's vacant room!
 Not there—not there!

Not yet within their chambers lieth He,
 A dead One in His living world! His south
 And west winds blowing over earth and sea,
 And not a breath on that creating Mouth!

But now,—in living pang—
 A silentness doth hang
 Upon the lips whose lightest word

Might in reverberate thunders roll abroad!
 Silent art Thou, O my Lord,
 Bowing down Thy stricken head!

Fearest Thou, a groan of Thine
 Would make the pulse of Thy creation fail

As Thine own pulse?—would rend the veil
Of visible things, and let the flood
Of th' unseen Light, th' essential God,
Rush in t' o'erwhelm the undivine?—
Thy silence, to my spirit, seems as dread!

Zerah. O silence!

Ador. Doth it say to thee—the NAME,
Slow-learning Seraph?

Zerah. I have learnt.

Ador. The flame

Perisheth in thine eyes.

Zerah. He opened His—

And looked.—I cannot bear——

Ador. Their agony?

Zerah. Their love. God's depth is in them. From
his brows

White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see
The lifted eyes unclose?

He is God, seraph! Look no more on me,
O God! *I am not God!*

Ador. The loving is

Made awful in them by the sorrowful.

In heaven we could sustain them.

Zerah. Heaven is dull,

Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light that burns
Unquenched along the crystal ocean;

The lifting of the golden harps between

The silver wings, outshaking lovely sound—

The winding, wandering music that returns

Upon itself, in starry course, self-bound

To praise, and praise, and praise, in blessed round—

The God-thoughts in our midst that intervene,

And glide like rays from out the supreme Throne,

More sensible than visible; each one

The separate presence of a new delight!

My heaven! my home of heaven! my fair and bright

Heaven-throne! what are ye to this dust and death,

This cloud, this cold, these tears, this failing breath,

Where God's immortal love is glorified

In this MAN'S mortal woe?

Ador. His eyes are very deep yet calm——

Zerah. No more

On me, Jehovah-man——

Ador. Calm-deep! They show

A passion which is silent. Grief is still,

By its own weight, within them. They are seeing

No earth, no heaven! no men, that slay and curse—

No seraphs that adore !
 Their gaze is on th' invisible, the dread—
 The things we cannot see or think or speak,
 Because we are too happy, or too weak !—
 The sea of ill, for which the universe,
 With all its pill'd space, can find no shore,
 With all its life, no living foot to tread !
 Sustains it with the strong Jehovah-being,

To bear the gaze adown,
 Conceive the vast despair,
 And feel the billowy griefs come up to drown,—
 Nor perish until all be finish'd.

Zerah. Thus, do I find thee thus ? My Lord, my Lord,
 The echoes are still tremulous along
 The heavenly mountains, of the latest song
 Thy manifested glory swept abroad,
 In rushing past our lips ! They echo aye

“ Creator, Thou art strong !—
 Creator ! Thou art bless'd over all.”
 By what new utterance shall I now recall,
 Unteaching the heaven-echoes ? Dare I say,
 “ Creator ! Thou art feebler than Thy work !
 Creator, Thou art sadder than Thy creature !

A man, and not a God—
 A worm, and not a man,—
 Yea, no worm—but a curse ? ”

I dare not, so, mine heavenly phrase reverse,
 Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle dark
 (Whose seed from Eve's fruit-plucking hand began
 To drop amid her garden and defeature)
 Be garnered darklier in Thy soul ! the rod
 That smites Thee never blossoming,—and Thou,
 Grief-bearer for Thy world, with unkinged brow—
 I have an angel-tongue—I know but praise.

Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-bought captives raise
 The passion-song of blood !

Zerah. And *we*, extend
 Our holy vacant hands towards the Throne,
 Crying “ We have no music ! ”

Ador. Rather, blend
 Our musics into one !

The sanctities and sanctified above
 Shall each to each, with lifted looks serene,
 Their shining faces lean,
 And mix th' adoring breath,

And breathe the sweet thanksgiving.

Zerah.

But the love—

The love, mine Ador!

Ador. Do we love not?

Zerah. Yea,

But not as man shall! not with life for death
New throbbing through the startled being! not
With strange astonished smiles, that ever may
Gush passionate like tears, and fill their place!
Nor yet with speechless memories of what
Earth's winters were, deepening th' eternal green

Of every heavenly palm,
Whose windless, shadeless calm

Moves only at the breath of the Unseen!
Oh! not with this blood on us—and this face,—
Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore
In our behalf, and tender evermore
With nature all our own,—toward us gazing!
Nor yet with these forgiving hands upraising
Their unreprouched wounds, alone to bless!
Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee less
Than mortals shall?

Ador. Amen! so let it be!

We love in our proportion—to the bound
Thine infinite, our finite, set around,
And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite
And worthy infinite love! And our delight
Is watching the dear love poured out to Thee,
From ever fuller chalice. Bless'd they,
Who love Thee more than we do! bless'd we,
Beholding that out-loving lovingness,
And winning in the sight, a double bliss,
For all so lost in love's supremacy!
The bliss is better! only on the sad

Cold earth, there are who say

It seemeth better to be great than glad.
The bliss is better! Love Him more, O man,
Than sinless seraphs can.

Zerah. Yea, love Him more.

Voices of the angelic multitude. Yea, more!

Ador. The loving word

Is caught by those from whom we stand apart:
For Silence hath no deepness in her heart,
Where love's low name low breathed, would not be heard
By angels, clear as thunder.

Angelic voices. Love him more!

Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er
The music which ye make!

Albeit to love, there were not ever given

THE SERAPHIM.

A mournful sound, when uttered out of heaven,
 Ye fitly would that angel-sadness take.
 Of love, be silent now ! we gaze adown
 Upon th' incarnate Love who wears no crown.

Zerah. No crown ! the woe instead
 Is heavy on His head,
 Pressing inward on His brain,
 With a hot and clinging pain,
 Till all tears are prest away,
 And clear and calm His vision may
 Peruse the long abyss !
 No rod, no sceptre is
 Holden in His fingers pale.
 They close instead upon the nail,
 Concealing the sharp dole—
 Never stirring to put by
 The fair hair streaked with blood,
 Drooping forward from the rood,
 Helplessly—heavily—
 On the cheek that waxeth colder,
 Whiter ever,—and the shoulder
 Where the government was laid !
 His glory made the Heavens afraid
 His pity makes His piteous state :
 Will He be uncompassionate
 Alone to His proper soul ?
 Yea ! will He not lift up
 His lips from the bitter cup,
 His brows from the dreary weight,
 His hands from the clenching rood—
 Crying, “ My Father, give to me
 Again the joy I had with Thee,
 Or ere this earth was made ? ”
 No stir—no sound—
 The love and woe being interwound,
 He cleaveth to the woe ;
 And putteth forth heaven's strength below—
 To bear.

Ador. And that creates His anguish now,
 Which made His glory there !

Zerah. Shall this indeed be so ?
 Awake, thou Earth ! behold !
 Thou, uttered forth of old,
 In all thy life-emotion,
 In all thy vernal noises ;
 In the rollings of thine ocean,
 Leaping founts, and rivers running ;

In thy woods' prophetic heaving,
 Ere the rains a stroke have given ;
 In thy winds' exultant voices
 When they feel the hills anear !
 In the firmamental sunning,
 And the tempest which rejoices
 Thy full heart with an awful cheer !
 Thou ! uttered forth of old
 And with all thy musics, rolled
 In a breath abroad,
 By the plastic Word !
 Awake He is here ! behold !—
 Even *thou*—

 beseems it good
 To thy vacant vision dim,
 That the deathly ruin should,
 For thy sake, encompass Him ?
 That the master-word should lie
 A silence—while His own
 Proceeded harmony—
 The faintest echo of His lightest tone
 Is sweeping in a choral triumph by ?—
 Awake ! emit a cry !
 And say, albeit used
 From Adam's ancient years
 To falls of briny tears,—
 To frequent sighs unloosed,
 Caught back to press again
 On bosoms zoned with pain—
 To corsees still and sullen
 The shine and music dulling
 With closed eyes and ears,
 That nothing sweet can enter—
 Commoving thee no less
 With that forced quietness,
 Than earthquakes in thy centre—
 Thou hast not learnt to bear
 This new divine despair !
 These tears that sink into thee,
 These dying eyes that view thee,
 This dropp'd blood from lifted rood,
 They darken and undo thee !
 Thou canst not, presently, sustain this corse !
 Cry, cry, thou hast not force !
 Cry ; thou wouldst fainer keep
 Thy hopeless charnels deep—
 Thyself a general tomb—

THE SERAPHIM.

Where first and second Deaths
 Sit gazing face to face,
 And mar each other's breaths—
 While silent bones through all the place,
 'Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten,
 And seem to lie and listen
 For the tramp of the coming Doom.

Is it not meet
 That they who erst the Eden fruit did eat,
 Should champ the ashes ?
 That they who wrapt them in the thunder-cloud,
 Should wear it as a shroud,
 Perishing by its flashes ?

That they who vexed the lion, should be rent ?
 Cry, cry—" I will sustain my punishment,
 The sin being mine ! but take away from me
 This visioned Dread—this Man—this Deity."

The Earth. I have groaned—I have travailed— I am
 weary—

I am blind with mine own grief, and cannot see,
 As clear-eyed angels can, His agony :
 And what I see, I also can sustain,
 Because His power protects me from His pain.
 I have groaned—I have travailed—I am weary,
 I am very dreary

Hearkening the thick sobs of my children's heart :
 And can I say " Depart,"

To that Atoner making calm and free ?
 Am I a God as He,

To lay down peace and joy as willingly ?

Ador. He looked for some to pity. There is none !
 All pity is within Him, and not for Him !

His earth is iron under Him ; and o'er Him

His skies are brass !

His seraphs cry ' Alas '

With hallelujah voice that cannot weep ;

And man, for whom the dreadful work is done—

Scornful voices from the Earth. If verily this be th'
 Eternal's Son—

Ador. Thou hearest !—man is grateful !
Zerah.

Can I hear,

Nor darken into man ? nor cease for ever

My seraph-smile to wear ?

Was it for such,

It pleas'd Him to overleap

His glory with His love, and sever

From the God-light and the throne,

And all angels bow'd down,
 For whom His every look did touch
 New notes of joy from th' unworn string
 Of an eternal worshipping ?

For such He left His heaven ?

There, though never bought by blood
 And tears, we gave Him gratitude !
 We loved Him there, though unforgive !

The light is riven

Above, around,

And downwardly, in lurid fragments flung,
 That catch the mountain pinnacle and stream,

With momentary gleam,

Then perish in the water and the ground !

River and waterfall,

Forest and wilderness,

Mountain and city, are together wrung

Into one shape, and that is shapelessness—

The darkness stands for all.

Ador. The pathos hath the day undone :

The death-look of His eyes

Hath overcome the sun,

And made it sicken in its narrow skies—

But not to death !—

Zerah. He dieth. Through the dark,

He still, He only, is discernible—

The bar'd hands and feet transfixed stark,—

The countenance of patient anguish white,

Do make, themselves, a light

More dreadful than the glooms which round them dwell,

And therein do they shine.

Ador. God ! Father-God !

Perpetual Radiance on the radiant throne !

Lift up the lids of inward Deity,

Flashing abroad

Thy burning Infinite !

Light up this dark, where there is nought to see,

Except the unimagined agony

Upon the sinless forehead of Thy Son !

Zerah. God ! tarry not ! Behold, enow

Hath He wandered as a stranger,

Groan'd as a victim. Thou,

Appear for Him, O Father !

Appear for Him, Avenger !

Appear for Him, just One and Holy One ;

For He is holy and just !

At once the darkness and the evil scatter,

And from His being strike and break
 And hurl aback to ancient dust,
 These mortals that make blasphemies
 With their made breath! this earth and skies
 That only grow a little dim,
 Seeing their curse on Him!
 But Him, of all forsaken,
 Of creature and of brother,
 Never wilt Thou forsake!

Thy living and Thy loving cannot slacken
 Their firm essential hold upon each other—
 And well Thou dost remember how His part
 Was still to lie upon Thy breast, and be
 Partaker of the light that dwelt in Thee
 Ere sun or seraph shone!

And how while silence trembled round the throne,
 Thou countedst by the beatings of His heart,
 The moments of Thine own eternity!

Awaken,

O right Hand with the lightnings! Again gather
 His glory to thy glory! What estranger—
 What ill most strong in evil, can be thrust
 Between the faithful Father and the Son?

Appear for Him, O Father!

Appear for Him, Avenger!

Appear for Him, just One and holy One!—

For He is holy and just.

Ador. Thy face, upturned toward the throne, is
 dark—

Thou hast no answer, Zerah.

Zerah. No reply,—

O unforsaking Father?—

Ador. Hark!

Instead of downward voice, a cry

Is uttered from beneath!

Zerah. And by a sharper sound than death,

Mine immortality is riven!

The heavy darkness which doth tent the sky,
 Floats backward as by a sudden wind—

But I see no light behind!

But I feel the farthest stars are all

Pierc'd and shaken—

And I know a shadow sad and broad,

Doth fall—doth fall

On our vacant thrones in heaven!

Voice from the Cross. MY GOD, MY GOD,

WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN?

The Earth. Ah me! ah me! ah me! the dreadful
why!

My sin is on Thee, sinless One! Thou art
God-orphaned, for my burden on Thy head.
Dark sin! white innocence! endurance dread!
Be still, within your shrouds, my buried dead—
Nor work with this quick horror round mine heart!

Zerah. He hath forsaken *Him!*—I perish—

Ador.

Hold

Upon His name! We perish not. Of old
His will —

Zerah. I seek it through the mysteries dim—
My God, my God! where is it? Doth that curse,
Reverberate, spare seraph or universe?

He hath forsaken Him.

Ador. And He is true!

Angel voices. We faint—we droop—

Our love doth tremble like fear—

Voices of Fallen Angels, from the earth. Do we pre-
vail?

Or are we lost;—Hath not the ill we did
Been heretofore our good?

Is it not ill, that One, all sinless, should
Hang heavy with all curses, on a cross?
Nathless, *that cry!*—with huddled faces hid
Within the empty graves which men did scoop
To hold more damnèd dead, we shudder through
Our triumph, or—our loss!

Voice from the Cross. IT IS FINISHED.

Zerah.

Hark, again!

Like a victor, speaks the Slain—

Angel voices. Finished be the trembling vain!

Ador. Upward, like a lovèd Son,

Looketh the erst orphaned One—

Angel voices. Finished is the mystic pain!

Voices of Fallen Angels. His deathly forehead at the
word,

Gleameth like a seraph sword!

Angel voices. Finished is the demon reign!

Ador. His breath, as living God, createth—

His breath, as dying man, completeth!

Angel voices. Finished work His hands sustain!

The Earth. In mine ancient sepulchres,
Mine Adam, dead six thousand years,
Unwakened by the universe's
Everlasting moan

THE SERAPHIM.

Aye his ghastly silence, mocking—
 Unwakened by his children's knocking
 'Gainst his old sepulchral stone—
 "Adam, Adam! thou didst curse us—
 Thy curse is on us yet!"—
 Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
 Wherewith they made his cerement wet—
 Starts with sudden life, and hears
 Through the slow dripping of the caverned eaves,—
Angel voices. Finished is his bane!
Voice from the Cross. FATHER! TO THINE HANDS MY
 SPIRIT IS GIVEN!

Ador. Hear the wailing winds that be
 By wings of unclean spirits made!
 They, in that last look, surveyed
 The love they lost in losing heaven,—
 And passionately flee!
 With a cry that threadeth clear
 The natural storms—though *they* are lifting
 God's strong cedar-roots like leaves—
 (What time from a hundred graves
 Gleamingly the Dead arise,
 Viewing, with their death-calmed eyes,
 The wild turmoil)—and downward rifting
 Mountain rocks to valley swards,
 There to meet the earthquake sound
 Hurling 'neath the hollow ground!—
 Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear!

Zerah. I hear alone *the memory of His words!*

 THE EPILOGUE.

My song is done!
 My voice that long hath faltered shall be still.
 The mystic darkness drops from Calvary's hill,
 Into the common light of this day's sun!

 I see no more Thy cross, O holy Slain!
 I hear no more the beat and turbulence
 Of startled elements,
 That felt thy countenance *too still*,—nor yell
 Of demons sweeping past it to their prison!

The skies, that turned to darkness with Thy pain,
 Make now a summer's day,—
 And on my chang'd ear, that Sabbath bell
 Recordeth CHRIST IS RISEN !

And I—ah ! what am I
 To counterfeit with faculty earth-darkened
 Seraphic brows of light,
 And seraph language never used or hearkened ?
 Ah me ! what word that Seraphs say, could come
 From mouth so used to sighs—so soon to lie
 Sighless, because then breathless, in the tomb ?

Bright ministers of God and grace !—of grace
 Because of God !—whether ye bow adown,
 In your own heaven, before the living face
 Of Him who died, and deathless wears the crown—
 Or whether at this hour, ye haply are
 Anear, around me, hiding in the night
 Of this permitted ignorance, your light,
 This feebleness to spare,—

Forgive that my low earthly heart should dare
 Shape images of unincarnate spirits,
 And lay upon their burning lips a thought
 Damp with the weeping which mine earth inherits !
 And while ye find in such hoarse music wrought
 To copy yours, a cadence all the while
 Of sin and sorrow—only pitying smile !—
 Ye know to pity, well !

I too may haply smile another day,
 At the far recollection of this lay,
 When God may call me in your midst to dwell,
 To hear your most sweet music's miracle,
 And see your shining faces ! May it be !
 For His remembered sake—the Slain on rood—
 Who rolled His earthly garment in red blood,
 That feeble ones, the frail and faint like me,
 Before His heavenly throne should walk in white !



THE POET'S VOW.

"O be wiser thou,
 Instructed that true knowledge leads to love."
 WORDSWORTH.

PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE.

I.

EVE is a twofold mystery—
 The stillness Earth doth keep ;
 The motion wherewith human souls
 Toward each other leap !
 As if all spirits, which Earth inherits,
 Foreknew they part in sleep.

II.

The rowers lift their oars to view
 Each other in the sea ;
 The landsmen watch the rocking boats,
 In a pleasant company ;
 While up the hill go gladlier still
 Dear friends by two and three.

III.

The peasant's wife hath looked without
 Her cottage door and smiled ;
 The peasant, 'stead of scythe or spade,
 Doth clasp his youngest child,
 Which hath no speech, but its hands can reach
 And stroke his forehead mild.

IV.

A poet sate that eventide
 Within his hall alone,
 As silent as its ancient lords
 In their coffined place of stone ;
 When the bat hath shrunk from the praying monk—
 And the praying monk is gone.

V.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
 Beneath the cerement's roll :

His lips seemed carved to an endless thought
 No language dared controul :
 And his steadfast eye burnt inwardly,
 As gazing on his soul.

VI.

You would not think that brow could e'er
 Ungentle moods express :
 Yet seemed it in this troubled world,
 Too calm for gentleness !
 The very star, that shines from far,
 Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

VII.

It lacked—all need—the softening light
 Which other brows supply :
 We should conjoin the scath'd trunks
 Of our humanity,
 That each leafless spray entwined may
 Look softer 'gainst the sky.

VIII.

None gazed within the poet's face—
 The poet gazed in none !
 He threw a lonely shadow aye
 In light of moon and sun,
 Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling creatures
 With wrong to nature done.

IX.

Yea, and this poet daringly,
 The nature at his heart,
 And that quick tune along his veins
 He could not change by art,
 Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
 Unto a lonely part.

X.

He vow'd not in fear, or wrath,
 Or grief's fantastic whim ;
 But when the weights and shows of things
 Too closely compassed him,
 On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid,
 And made its vision dim.

THE POET'S VOW.

XI.

He held his soul above his clay
 'Twixt earth and sea and sky,
 T' imbue with shade and wave and cloud
 Its immortality—
 But the mortal things
 Fell from its wings
 And left them hot and dry.

XII.

He cried—"O touching, patient Earth,
 That weepest in thy glee!
 Whom God created very good,
 And very mournful, we!
 Thy voice of moan doth reach His throne,
 As Abel's rose from *thee*.

XIII.

"O deep unsensual sea of thought,
 That darkenest to and fro—
 Whose waters are unsilent clouds
 Where eagles dare not go!
 O motion wild! O wave defiled!
 Our curse hath made thee so.

XIV.

We! and *our* curse! Do *I* partake
 The dreary, cruel sin?
 Have *I* the apple at my lips?
 The money-lust within?
 Do *I* human stand with the wronging hand,
 To the blasting heart akin?

XV.

"Thou solemn pathos of all things!
 Ye things of sense and mind!
 Behold! subdu'd to your cause,
 An holy wrath I find;
 And for your sake the bondage break,
 That knits me to my kind.

XVI.

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
 His pleasant yea and no—

His riot on the piteous earth
 Whereon his thistles grow—
 His changing love—with stars above!
 His pride—with graves below!

XVII.

“Hear me forswear his roof by night—
 His bread and salt by day—
 His talkings at the lighted hearth—
 His greetings by the way—
 His musing looks—his systemed books—
All man, for aye and aye!

XVIII.

“That so my purged, once human heart,
 From all the human rent,
 May gather strength to pledge and drink
 Your wine of wonderment;
 While you pardon me, all blessingly,
 The woe mine Adam sent.

XIX.

“And I shall feel your unseen smiles
 Innumeros, fixèd, deep,
 As soft as haunted Adam once,
 Though sadder, round me creep;
 As slumbering men have mystic ken
 That others watch their sleep.

XX.

“And ever, when I lift my brow
 Toward the setting sun,
 No voice of woman or of child
 Recording ‘Day is done,’
 Your silences shall a love express,
 More deep than such an one!”

THE POET'S VOW.

PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DECLARED.

I.

THE poet's vow was inly sworn—
 The poet's vow was told :
 He parted 'mong his crowding friends
 The silver and the gold.
 They clasp'd bland his gift,—his hand,
 In a somewhat slacker hold.

II.

They wended forth, the crowding friends,
 With farewells smooth and kind—
 They wended forth, the solaced friends,
 And left but twain behind :
 One loved him true as brothers do,
 And one was Rosalind,

III.

He said—" My friends have wended forth,
 With farewells smooth and kind.
 Mine oldest friend ! my plighted bride,
 Why linger ye behind ?
 For Roland, let my fair bride be
 And mine house and lands of ancestry
 A dower for Rosalind.

IV.

" And when beside your wassail board
 Ye own a bless'd lot,
 I charge you, that the giver be
 In all his gifts forgot !
 Or alone of all his words recall
 The last,—Lament me not."

V.

She look'd at him silently,
 With her large, doubting eyes,
 Like a child that never knew but love,
 Whom words of wrath surprise ;
 Till the rose did break from either cheek,
 And the sudden tears did rise.

VI.

She lookèd at him mournfully,
 While her large eyes were grown
 Yet larger with the steady tears ;
 Till, all his purpose known,
 She turnèd slow, as she would go—
 The tears were shaken down.—

VII.

She turnèd slow as she would go,
 Then quickly turned again ;
 And gazing in his face to see
 Some little touch of pain—
 " I thought," she said,—but shook her head,—
 The trièd speech was vain—

VIII.

" I thought—but I am half a child,
 And very sage art thou—
 That looking on the heaven and earth
 Did keep us soft and low.
 They have drawn *my* tears, i' the springs of years,
 Or ere I wept—as now.

IX.

" But now that in thy face I read
 Their cruel homily,
 Before their beauty I would fain
 Untouched, unloving be,—
 Could I look upon the senseless sun,
 As *thou* canst look on *me*.

X.

" And couldst thou as calmly view
 Thy childhood's far abode,
 Where little footsteps mixed with thine
 Upon the grassy sod ?
 And thy mother's look on holy book
 Fell, like a thought of God ?

XI.

" O brother !—called so, ere her last
 Explaining words were said !

O fellow-watcher in her room,
 With hush'd voice and tread !
 What friend did stand with clasp'd hand
 In thine, beside the dead ?

XII.

" I will not live Sir Roland's bride,—
 Nor rule that castle old !
 Thus crush I 'neath my parting feet,
 The deeds of hill and wold.
 The tears I weep, are mine to keep,
 And worthier than thy gold."

XIII.

The poet and Sir Roland stood
 Alone, each turned to each ;
 Till Roland brake the silence left
 By that soft-throbbing speech—
 " Poor heart ! " he cried, " it vainly tried
 The distant heart to reach !

XIV.

" And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
 That climbest up so high.
 To wrap and blind thee with the snows
 That cause to dream and die—
 What blessing can, from lips of man,
 Approach thee with his sigh ?

XV.

" Ayl what, from earth—create for man,
 And moaning in his roan ?
 From mystic truths revealed to man,
 That use his human tone ?
 Where the Spirits seven,
 That show in heaven,
 A MAN upon the throne ?—

XVI.

" A man on earth HE wandered once,
 All meek and undefiled :
 And those who loved Him, said He wept—
 None ever said He smiled ;
 Yet there might have been
 A smile unseen,
 As He clasped that bless'd child.

XVII.

"And now HE pleadeth up in heaven
 For our humanities,
 Till the ruddy light on seraph's wings
 In pale emotion dies.
 They can better bear His Godhead's glare,
 Than the pathos of His eyes !

XVIII.

"I will go pray that God in man,
 With bow'd face and knee,
 To teach thee on the earth HE made,
 His finger's print to see ;
 But plainer yet
 The blood-stain wet
 His manhood left for *thee* !

XIX.

"So, for the sake of that dear blood
 God shed, and human e'er,
 Tears, like it, moist and warm with love,
 Thy reverent eyes may wear,
 To see i' the face of Adam's race
 The nature God doth share."

XX.

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice
 As dimly as thy breath !
 It sounded like the noise of life
 To one anear his death—
 Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
 Sere leaf they roll beneath.

XXI.

"For while it sounded, I was 'ware,—
 Stretched round me like a mist
 Of white cold palms of creatures nigh,
 Confused and never wist !
 O'er mine heart they bowed
 Their foreheads proud,
 And stilled it while they kist.

XXII.

The castle and its lands are thine—
 The poor's—thy wish be done !
 Go, *man* ! go, Roland ! I abide

THE POET'S VOW.

I' the ruined hall, alone—
 The wind and rain have washed the stain
 Men work'd in its stone."

PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT.

I.

HE dwelt alone, and sun and moon,
 Perpetual witness made
 Of his repented humanness ;
 Until they seemed to fade.
 His face did so ; for he did grow
 Of his own soul afraid.

II.

The self-poised God may dwell alone .
 In inward glorying ;
 But raptest angel waiteth for
 His brother's voice to sing.
 And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
 It is an awful thing !

III.

Ee'n to himself an awful thing,
 While many years did roll,—
 He bore that crushing solitude—
 A part beneath the whole—
 That pressure of God's infinite
 Upon his finite soul.

.

IV.

The poet at his lattice sate,
 And downward look'd he :
 Three Christians pass'd by to prayers,
 With mute ones in their ee.
 Each turned above a face of love,
 And call'd him to the far chapelle
 With voice more tuneful than its bell—
 But still they wended three !

V.

There passèd by a bridal pomp,
 A bridegroom and his dame—
 She speaketh low for happiness,
 She blusheth red for shame,—
 But never a tone of benison
 From out the lattice came !

VI.

A little child with inward song,
 No louder noise to dare,
 Stood near the wall to see at play
 The lizards green and rare—
 Unblessed the while for his childish smile
 Which cometh unaware !

 PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE KEEPING OF THE VOW.

I.

IN death-sheets lieth Rosalind,
 As white and still as they ;
 And the old nurse that watcheth her bed,
 Rose up with " Well-a-day !"
 And oped the casement to let in
 The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
 Which droppeth from the grass and bough
 Sans wind and bird—none knoweth how—
 To cheer her as she lay.

II.

The old nurse started when she saw
 Her sudden look of woe !
 But the quick wan tremblings round her mouth
 In a meek smile did go ;
 And calm she said, " When I am dead,
 Dear nurse, it shall be so !

III.

" But now, shut out those sights and sounds,
 And pray God pardon me,
 That I without this pain, no more

THE POET'S VOW.

His bless'd works can see !
 And lean beside me, loving nurse,
 That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,
 What thy last love must be."

IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,
 As white she lay beneath ;
 The old eyes searching—dim with life—
 The young ones dim with death,
 To read their look, if sound forsook
 The trying, trembling breath.

V.

"When all this feeble breath is done,
 And I on bier am laid,
 My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
 My body in shroud arrayed ;
 Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
 As if that still I prayed.

VI.

"And heap beneath mine head the flowers
 I lov'd when a child,—
 The little white flowers from the wood,
 Which grow there thick and wild—
 Which I plucked for *thee*,
 And thy gramercy,
 The pleasant toil beguiled

VII.

"Weep not ! *I* weep not. Death is strong ;
 The eyes of Death are dry ;
 But lay this scroll upon my breast
 When hushed its heavings lie ;
 And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
 Which shineth presently.

VIII.

"And when it shineth, straightway call
 Thy youngest children dear,
 And bid them gently carry me
 Barefac'd on the bier—
 But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
 That waveth long anear.

IX.

“And up the bank where I used to sit
 And dream what life would be,
 Along the brook, with its sunny look
 Akin to living glee ;
 O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,
 Let them gently carry me.

X.

“And when they near the ruined hall,
 In silence let them lay
 The bier before the barrèd door,
 And silent wend away.
 For there, alone with the lifeless one,
 The living God must stay.”

The old nurse lookèd in her eyes,
 Whose mutual look was gone :
 The old nurse stoopèd to her mouth,
 Whose answering voice was done.
 And nought she heard, till a little bird
 Upon the casement's woodbine swinging,
 Broke out into a loud sweet singing
 For joy o' the summer sun !
 “Alack ! alack !”—she watched no more—
 With head on knee she wailèd sore ;
 And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
 For joy o' the summer sun !

PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

I.

THE poet oped his barrèd door,
 The midnight sky to view,
 A spirit-feel was in the air
 Which seemed to touch his spirit bare
 Whenever his breath he drew :
 And the stars a liquid softness had,
 As alone their holiness forbade
 Their falling with the dew,

THE POETS VOW.

II.

They shine upon the fix'd hills,
 Upon the running tide ;
 They shine upon the forest leaves,
 And the little mosses pied !
 They shine on every lovely place—
 They shine upon the corpse's face,
 As *it* were fair beside.

III.

It lay before him, humanlike,
 Yet so unlike a thing !
 More awful in its shrouded pomp
 Than any crown'd king !
 All calm and cold, as it did hold,
 Some secret, glorying.

IV.

A heavier weight than of its clay
 Clung to his heart and knee !
 As if those join'd palms could strike,
 He staggered groaningly,
 And then o'erhung, without a groan,
 The meek close mouth that *smiled alone*,
 Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

" I LEFT thee last, a feeble child,
 In those remembered years :
 I come to thee, a solemn corpse,
 Which neither feels nor fears !
 They laid the death-weights on mine eyes,
 To seal them safe from tears.

" Look on me with thine own calm look—
 I meet it calm as thou !
 No look of thine can change *this* smile,
 Or break thy sinful vow.
 My silent heart
 Of thine earth, is part—
 It cannot love thee now.

" Put out alas ! these words are writ
 By a living, loving one,

Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life,
 The human tears do run.
 Ah, let th' unloving corpse controul
 Thy thought toward the loving soul,
 Whose place of rest is won !

" I have prayed for thee with the wailing voice,
 Thy memory drew from me !
 I have prayed for thee with moveless lips,
 In the anguish none could see !
 They whispered off, ' She sleepeth soft '—
 But I only prayed for thee.

" Go to ! I pray for thee no more—
 The corpse's tongue is still :
 Albeit its palms may point to heaven,
 They point there stiff and chill !
 No farther woe,
 From the sin below
 Its tranquil heart can thrill.

" I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
 The corpse's silentness,
 To wring from out thy proper soul,
 A prayer our God shall bless !
 Lest the heaven palm droop within my hand,
 And pale among the saints I stand,
 A saint companionless."

 v.

Bow lower down before the throne,
 Triumphant Rosalind !
 He boweth on thy corpse his face—
 He weepeth as the blind.
 'Twas a dread sight to see them so—
 For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro,
 With the wail of his living mind.

vi.

But dreader sight, could such be seen,
 His inward mind did lie ;
 Whose long-subjected humanness
 Gave out its lion cry,
 And fiercely rent its tenement
 In a mortal agony !

THE POET'S VOW.

VII.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,
 'Twould haunt you in court and mart,
 And in merry feast, until you set
 Your cup down to depart—
 That weeping wild of a griev'd child
 From a proud man's broken heart.

VIII.

O broken heart! O broken vow,
 That wore so proud a feature!
 God, grasping as a thunderbolt
 His own renounc'd nature,
 Smote him therewith—i' the presence high
 Of his so worshipp'd earth and sky
 That looked on all with silent eye—
 A wailing human creature.

IX.

Yea! and a human one too weak
 To bear his human pain—
 (May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace
 To his dying heart and brain!)
 For when they came at dawn of day
 To lift the lady's corpse away,
 Her bier was holding twain.

X.

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
 For both one dwelling deep:
 And after many years were done,
 Sir Roland brought his little son
 To watch the funeral heap.
 And, when the happy boy would rather
 Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
 The wood-doves nodding from the tree—
 "Nay, boy, look downward," said his father;
 And hold it in thy constant ken,
 That God's own everlastingness
 (One making one with strong compress)
 Man's sympathies doth keep!
 Thou mayst not *smile* like other men,
 Yet, like them, thou must *weep*."



THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

"Can my affections find out nothing best,
But still and still remove?"

QUARLES.

I.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
The cypress leaf will suit;
But when its shade is o'er you laid,
Turn ye and pluck the fruit!
Now reach my harp from off the wall
Where shines the sun aslant:
The sun may shine and we be cold—
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaunt,
Margret, Margret.

II.

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river side,
Which runneth on with a merry tone,
Her merry thoughts to guide.
It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found
A way more pleasant still.
Margret, Margret.

III.

The night is in her hair
And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight, on her forehead white,
Like a spirit's hand is laid:
Her lips part with a smile,
Instead of speakings done—
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none!
Margret, Margret.

IV.

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings:
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Apart from her living things.

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

That dream, by that ladyè,
 Is certes unpartook ;
 For she looketh up to the high cold stars,
 With a tender human look !
 Margret, Margret.

V.

The ladye's shadow lies
 Upon the running river :
 It lieth no less in its quietness,
 For that which resteth never :
 Most like a trusting heart
 Upon a passing faith,—
 Or as upon the course of life,
 The steadfast doom of death !
 Margret, Margret.

VI.

The ladye doth not move—
 The ladye doth not dream,—
 Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
 In rest upon the stream !
 It shaketh without wind ;
 It parteth from the tide ;
 It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight—
 It sitteth at her side.
 Margret, Margret.

VII.

Look in its face, ladye,
 And keep thee from thy swound !
 With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,
 And hear its voice's sound !
 For so will sound thy voice,
 When thy face is to the wall ;
 And such will be thy face, ladye,
 When the maidens work thy pall—
 Margret, Margret.

VIII.

“ Am I not like to thee ? ”—
 The voice was calm and low—
 And between each word, there seem'd heard
 The universe's flow !
 “ *The like may sway the like !*
 By which mysterious law,

Mine eyes from thine, my lips from thine.
 The light and breath may draw.
 Margret, Margret.

IX.

"My lips do need thy breath,
 My lips do need thy smile,
 And my pale deep eyne, that light in thine,
 Which met the stars erewhile;
 Yet go with light and life,
 If that thou lovest one
 In all the earth, who loveth thee
 More truly as the sun,
 Margret, Margret."

X.

Her cheek had waxed white,
 As cloud at fall of snow;
 Then like to one at set of sun,
 It waxed red also!
 For love's name maketh bold,
 As if the loved were near!
 And sighd she the deep long sigh
 Which cometh after fear.
 Margret, Margret.

XI.

"Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
 Shall never fear thee now!"
 (And a noble sight was the sudden light
 Which lit her lifted brow!)
 "Can earth be dry of streams;
 Or hearts, of love?" she said—
 "Who doubteth love, can know not love:
 He is already dead!"
 Margret, Margret.

XII.

"I have" . . . and here her lips
 Some word in pause did keep;
 And gave the while a quiet smile,
 As if they paused in sleep!—
 "I have . . . a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame!

I broidered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name.
 Margret, Margret.

XIII.

"I fed his grey goss hawk ;
 I kissed his fierce bloodhoùnd ;
 I sate at home when he might come,
 And caught his horn's far sound ;
 I sang him songs of eld,
 I poured him the red wine—
 He lookèd from the cup and said,
I love thee, sister mine !"
 Margret, Margret.

XIV.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter !
 The sounding river which rollèd ever,
 Stood dumb and stagnant after.
 "Brave knight thy brother is !
 But better loveth he
 Thy pourèd wine than chanted song,
 And better both, than thee !"
 Margret, Margret."

XV.

The ladye did not heed
 The river's silence, while
 Her own thoughts still, ran at their will,
 And calm was still her smile.
 "My little sister wears
 The look our mother wore !
 I smooth her locks with a golden comb—
 I bless her evermore !"
 Margret, Margret.

XVI.

"I gave her my first bird,
 When first my voice it knew ;
 I made her share my posies rare,
 And told her where they grew :
 I taught her God's dear name
 God's worthy praise, to tell—

She looked from heaven into my face,
 And said, *I love thee well.*"
 Margret, Margret.

XVII.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 You could see each bird, as it woke and stared
 Through the shrivelled tree leaves after !
 " Fair child thy sister is !
 But better loveth she
 Thy golden comb than thy posied flowers—
 And better both, than thee !
 Margret, Margret."

XVIII.

The lady did not heed
 The withering on the bough !
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while
 A little pale her brow.
 " I have a father old,
 The lord of ancient halls :
 An hundred friends are in his court,
 Yet only me he calls.
 Margret, Margret.

XIX.

" An hundred knights are in his court,
 Yet read I by his knee ;
 And when forth they go to the tourney show,
 I rise not up to see.
 'Tis a weary book to read—
 My tryst's at set of sun !
 But, dear and loving 'neath the stars,
 His blessing when I've done."
 Margret, Margret.

XX.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 And moon and star, most bright and far,
 Did shrink and darken after.
 " High lord thy father is !
 But better loveth he

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

His ancient halls than his hundred friends,—
 His ancient halls, than thee,
 Margret, Margret."

XXI.

The ladye did not heed
 That the far stars did fail :
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while—
 Nay !—but she is not pale !
 " I have a more than friend
 Across the mountains dim !
 No other's voice is soft to me,
 Unless it nameth *him*."
 Margret, Margret.

XXII.

" Though louder beats mine heart,
 I know his tread again !
 And his far plume, aye, unless turned away,
 For tears do blind me then.
 We brake no gold, a sign
 Of stronger faith to be ;
 But I wear his last look in my soul,
 Which said, *I love but thee !*"
 Margret, Margret.

XXIII.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter ;
 And the wind did toll as a passing soul
 Were sped by church-bell after !
 And shadows, 'stead of light,
 Fell from the stars above,
 In flakes of darkness on her face
 Still bright with trusting love !
 Margret, Margret.

XXIV.

" He *lovèd* none but thee !
 That love is transient too.
 The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
 I' the mouth that vowed thee true.
 Will he open his dull eyes,
 When tears fall on his brow ?

Behold! the death-worm to his heart
 Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
 Margret, Margret.

XXV.

Her face was on the ground—
 None saw the agony!
 But the men at sea did that night agree
 They heard a drowning cry.
 And when the morning brake,
 Fast rolled the river's tide,
 With the green trees waving overhead,
 And a white corse lain beside.
 Margret, Margret.

XXVI.

A knight's bloodhound and he
 The funeral watch did keep:
 With a thought o' the chase, he stroked its face,
 As it howled to see him weep.
 A fair child kissed the dead,
 But shrank before the cold.
 And alone yet proudly, in his hall,
 Did stand a baron old.
 Margret, Margret

XXVII.

Hang up my harp again—
 I have no voice for song!
 Not song but wail, and mourners pale
 Not bards, to love belong!
 O failing human love!
 O light by darkness known!
 O false, the while thou treadest earth!
 O deaf, beneath the stone!
 Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

“— so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.”

SHAKESPEARE.

To rest the weary nurse has gone ;
An eight-day watch had she,
Rocking 'neath the sun and moon
The baby on her knee :
Till Isobel its mother said
“The fever waneth—wend to bed—
And mine the watch shall be.”

Wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and dreamed.
And as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flame across her face,
In her dream the poplars seemed,
The dark tall poplars on the hill,
To clasp the sun in a weird constraint
Till his rays dropped from him, pined and still
As blossoms in frost :
And he wanëd faint
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass !
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see,
Not for a moment the babe on her knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be chill
And lay too heavily.

She only dreamed: for all the while
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby; and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Full of love's unmeted weight,
And red as rose of Harpocrate
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lid to cheek in that sweet rest !

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled !
 Against the lattice, dull and wild,
 Drive the heavy droning drops,
 Drop by drop, the sound being one—
 As momentarily time's segments fall
 O' the ear of God who hears through all,

Eternity's unbroken monotone.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled !
 The wind in intermission stops
 Down in the beachen wood,
 Then crieth aloud
 Self-stung, self-driven,
 And riseth upward to its tops,
 Stiffening erect the branches bowed ;
 Dilating with a tempest-soul
 Of gathered sound, the trees that break
 Through their own outline with dark hands, and roll
 A shadow, massive as a cloud,
 Vocal as thunder-clouds in heaven,
 Across the castle lake.

And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well ;
 She knew not that she smiled—
 She knew not that the storm was wild.
 Through that uproar she could not hear
 The castle clock which struck anear—
 She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

O sight for wondering look !
 While th' external nature broke
 Into such abandonment ;
 While the very mist, heart-rent
 By the lightning and the shadow,
 Shed distortedly above
 Sloping hill and lake and meadow,
 Seem'd as they all did move
 Against nature, with a din—
 A sense of silence seem'd to come
 From things without, and enter in
 The human creature's room.

So motionless she sate,
 The babe asleep upon her knees,
 You might have dreamed their souls had gone

Away to things inanimate,
 To work in such, to live a life and moan ;
 And that their bodies had ta'en back,
 In mystic change, all silences
 That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
 Or haply dwell beneath the ground
 In waters safe from their own sound.

Only she wore
 The deepening smile I named before,
 And *that* a deepening love expressed—
 And who at once can love and rest ?

In sooth the smile that then was keeping
 Watch upon the baby sleeping,
 Floated with its tender light
 Downward from the dropp'd eyes,
 Upward from the lips apart,
 Over cheeks which had grown white
 With an eight-day weeping.
 All smiles come in such a wise,
 Where tears shall fall, or have of old—
 Like northern lights that shoot athwart
 The heavens to token cold !

Motionless she sate :
 The hair had fallen by its weight
 On either side the smile, and lay
 Very blackly on the arm
 Where the baby nestled warm ;
 Pale as baby carved in stone
 And seen by glimpses of the moon
 In a dark cathedral aisle !
 But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell
 Upon the child of Isobel—
 I ween you saw it by the ray
 Alone of her still smile.

'Tis aye a solemn thing to me
 To look upon a babe that sleeps—
 Wearing in its spirit-deeps
 The unreveal'd mystery
 Of its Adam's taint and woe,
 Which, when they reveal'd be,
 Will not let it slumber so :
 Lying new in life beneath
 The shadow of the coming death,

With that soft, low, quiet breath,
 As if it felt the sun!
 Knowing all things by their blooms,
 Not their roots; yea,—sun and sky,
 Only by the warmth that comes
 Out of each;—earth, only by
 The pleasant hues that o'er it run;
 And human love, by drops of sweet
 White nourishment still hanging round
 The little mouth so slumber-bound.
 All which broken sentiency
 Will gather and unite and climb
 To an immortality
 Good or evil, each sublime,
 Through life and death to life again!
 O little lids, now closèd fast,
 Must ye learn to drop at last
 Our large and burning tears?
 O warm quick body, must thou lie,
 When is done the round of years,
 Bare of all the joy and pain?
 Dust in dust, thy place upgiving
 To creeping worms in sentient living?
 O small frail being wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand,—
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes,
 Dilated by sublimest destinies,
 In endless waking? Thrones and Seraphim,
 Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
 Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise—
Thy look alone on Him?—
 Or else, self-willèd to the Godless place,
 (God keep thy will!) feel thine own energies,
 Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,
 The sleepless deathless life within thee, grasp?
 While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
 With foe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere,
 And overcome thee with thine own despair?

More soft, less solemn images
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart,
 Silently as snow:
 She had seen eight days depart
 Hour by hour, on bended knees,
 With pale-wrung hands and prayings low
 And broken—through which came the sound
 Of tears that fell against the ground,

Making sad stops:—"Dear Lord, dear Lord!"
 She aye had prayed—(the heavenly word,
 Broken by an earthly sigh!)
 "Thou, who didst not erst deny
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,
 Bless'd in the bless'd child,
 Harkening in meek babyhood
 Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
 To all that music interfused
 In breasts of angels high and good!
 Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
 Oh, take not to thy songful heaven,
 The pretty baby thou hast given;
 Or ere that I have seen him play
 Around his father's knees, and known
 That *he* knew how my love hath gone
 From all the world to him.
 And how that I shall shiver, dim
 In the sunshine, thinking e'er
 The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
 Still cheeks! and feel at every tread
 His little body which is dead
 And hidden in the turfy fold,
 Doth make the whole warm earth a-cold!
 O God, I am so young, so young—
 I am not used to tears at nights
 Instead of slumber—nor to prayer
 With shaken lips and hands out-wrung:
 Thou knowest all my prayings were
 'I bless thee, God, for past delights—
 Thank God!' I am not used to bear
 Hard thoughts of death. The earth doth cover
 No face from me of friend or lover:
 And must the first who teacheth me
 The form of shrouds and funerals, be
 Mine own first-born belov'd? he
 Who taught me first this mother-love?
 Dear Lord, who spreadest out above
 Thy loving, pierc'd hands to meet
 All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—
 Pierce not my heart, my tender heart,
 Thou madest tender! Thou who art
 So happy in thy heaven away,
 Take not mine only bliss away!"

She so had prayed! And God, who hears
 Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,

From that belovèd babe had ta'en
 The fever and the beating pain.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—
 She knew not that she smiled !
 Until the pleasant gradual thought
 Which near her heart, the smile, enwrought,
 Soon strong enough her lips to reach,
 Now soft and slow, itself did seem
 To float along a blessèd dream,
 Beyond it, into speech !—

“ I prayed for thee, my little child,
 And God hath heard my prayer !
 And when thy babyhood is gone,
 We two together will kneel down
 Upon His earth which will be fair
 To both of us not covering thee :
 And give Him thankful praise.”

The rain drives dull and wild !
 Against the lattice it drives.

“ I thank Him now, that I can think
 Of those same future days,
 Nor from the harmless image shrink
 Of what I there might see—
 Strange babies on their mothers' knees,
 Whose innocent soft faces might
 From off mine eyelids strike the light,
 With looks not meant for me !”

A sound from sound outlives—
 Know ye the wind from the rain ?

“ But now, together, baby mine,
 We turn this hope of ours again
 To sun's 'neath which we shall entwine
 Our spirits, and so teach each other
 The blessèd loves of child and mother !—
 Two human loves make one divine.”

A sound from sound outlives—
 Know ye the rain from the thunder ?

" My little child, what wilt thou choose ?
 What gladness, from the gladnesses
 Futurity is spreading under
 Thy gladsome sight ? Beneath the trees,
 Wilt thou sit all day and lose
 Thy spirit with the river, seen
 Intermittently between
 The winding beechen alleys ?
 Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
 Thou, with only thoughts to keep
 Which no bound will overpass,
 And which are innocent as those
 That feed upon the dewy grass
 Among Arcadian valleys ? "

The large white owl that with age is blind,
 That hath sate for years in the old tree hollow,
 Is carried away in a gust of wind !
 His wings could bear him not as fast
 As he goeth now the lattice past—
 He is borne by the winds ! the rains do follow !
 His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
 He hooteth in going,
 And in the lightnings coldly glitter
 His round unblinking eyes !

" Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
 To be eloquent and wise ?
 One upon whose lips the air
 Turns to solemn verities,
 For men to breathe anew, and win
 A deeper-seated life within ?
 Wilt be a philosopher,
 By whose voice the earth and skies
 Shall speak to the unborn ?
 Or a poet, broadly spreading
 The golden immortalities
 Of his own soul on natures lorn
 And poor of such ; them all to guard
 From their decay ? beneath his treading,
 Earth's flowers being streaked by hues of Eden ;
 And stars, drawn downward by his looks
 To shine more brightly in his books ? "

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,
 How it screams to the lightning, with its wet

Jagged plumes o'erhanging the parapet !
 And at the lady's door the hound
 Beateth with a crying sound !

" But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
 Close, fast upon thy cheek !
 And not a dream of power and sheen
 Can make a passage up between :
 Thy heart is of thy mother's made,—
 Thy looks are very meek !
 And it will be their chosen place
 To rest on some belovèd face,
 As these on thine—and let the noise
 Of the whole world go on, nor mar
 The tender silence of thy joys ;
 And when the silentnesses are
 Too tender for themselves, the same
 Yearning for sound,—to look above,
 And utter their one meaning, LOVE,—
 That *He* may hear His name !"

No wind—no rain—no thunder !
 The waters dropped not slowly,
 The thunder was not spent,
 The wind died not away !
 No wind—no rain—no thunder !
 Their noises dropped asunder
 From th' earth and firmament,
 Abrupt and echoless,
 As ripe fruits on the ground, unshaken wholly—
 As life in death !
 And like a stroke the sudden silentness
 Sudden and solemn fell,
 It starts the shut heart of Isobel,
 As tempests could not, from its dreams !
 Against the door doth pant the breath
 O' the hound whose cry is still—
 And *she* uplifts the lidded gleams
 Of her clear eyes, and see the moon
 Looking out of heaven alone
 Upon the poplared hill !
 Seeming a calm of God, made visible
 That men might find it fair !

The moonlight on the baby's face
 Falleth clear and cold.
 The mother's looks are falling there—

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

Because the beauty of the skies,
 Have not power long to hold
 Our loving human eyes !
 We still revert to this dark place,
 And weep our natures into light

The moonlight on the baby's face
 Cold and clear remaineth !
 The mother's looks do shrink away,
 The mother's looks return to stay,
 As charm'd by what paineth.
 Is it dream or is it sight ?
 Hath the change upon the wild
 Elements, that signs the night,
 Passed upon the child ?
 It is not dream, but sight !—

The babe hath awakened from sleep,
 And toward the gaze of its mother,
 Bent over it, turned another !
 Not the baby-looks that go
 Unaimingly to and fro ;
 But an earnest gazing deep,
 Such as soul gives soul at length,
 When through work and wail of years,
 It hath won a solemn strength,
 And mourneth as it wears !
 A strong man could not brook
 With pulse unstirred by fears,
 To meet that baby's look
 O'er glazed by manhood's tears—
 The tears of the man full grown,
 With the power to wring our own,
 (The silent power) that lie
 In the eyes all undefiled
 Of a little three months' child !
 To see that babe-brow, wrought
 By witnessings of thought,
 And the small soft mouth unweaned,
 (By mother's kiss o'erleaned
 To put the sound of loving
 Where no sound else was moving,
 Except the speechless cry)
 Carv'd to mind's expression,
 Shaped to articulation—
 Yea ! speaking words—yea ! naming woe
 In tones that with it strangely went,

Because so baby-innocent,
As the child spake to the mother so!—

“O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!
Christ's name hath made it strong!
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
With its most loving cruelty,
From floating my new soul along
The blessèd heavenly air!
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod!—
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!—
Mine angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God.*

“Mother, mother! can I dream
Beneath your earthly trees?
I had a vision and a gleam—
I heard a sound more sweet than these
When lifted by the wind!
Did you see the Dove, with wings
Overdropt with glisterings
From a sunless light behind,
Falling on mine heart from sky,
Soft as mother's kiss, until
I seemed to leap, and yet was still?
Saw you how his love-large eye
Lookèd on me mystic calms,
Until the power of his divine
Vision was indrawn to mine?

“Oh, the dream within the dream!
I saw celestial places even.
Oh, the high and vista'd palms,
Making finites of delight
Through the heavenly infinite—
Lifting up their green still tops
To the heaven of Heaven!
Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
Shade like light across the river
Glorified in its for ever
Flowing from the Throne!
Oh, the shining holinesses

* “For I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. xviii. 10).

Of the thousand, thousand faces
 God-sunned by the throned ONE!
 Overspread with such a love,
 That though I saw them turned above,
 Each, loving, seemed for also me!
 And, oh, th' Unspeakable! the HE,—
 The manifest in secrecies,
 Yet of mine own heart partaker!
 With the overcoming look
 Of one who hath been once forsook,
 And blesseth the forsaker!
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Toward the face that looketh so!
 Through the mystic, living Four
 Whose are inward, outward eyes
 Dark with light of mysteries,
 And the restless evermore
 "Holy, holy,"—through the crowned
 Stately elders, white around,—
 Through the sworded Seraphim—
 Suffer me to go to Him!

"Is your wisdom very wise,
 Mother, on the narrow earth?
 Very happy, very worth
 That I should stay to learn?
 Are these air-corrupting sighs
 Fashioned by unlearned breath?
 Do the students' lamps that burn
 All night, illumine death?
 Mother, albeit this be so,
 Loose thy prayer and let me go
 Where that bright chief angel stands
 Apart from all his brother bands,
 Too glad for smiling! having bent
 In angelic wilderment
 O'er the depths of God, and brought
 Reeling, thence, one only thought
 To fill his whole eternity!
 He the teacher is for me!—
 He can teach what I would know—
 Mother, mother, let me go!—

"Can your poet make an Eden
 No winter will undo?
 And light a starry fire, in heeding

His hearth's is burning too?
 Drown in music the earth's din?—
 And keep his own wild soul within
 The law of his own harmony?
 Mother! albeit this be so,
 Let me to mine Heav'n go!
 A little harp me waits thereby—
 A harp whose strings are golden all,
 And tuned to music spherical,
 Hanging on the green life-tree,
 Where no willows ever be.
 Shall I miss that harp of mine?
 Mother, no!—the Eye divine
 Turned upon it, makes it shine—
 And when I touch it, poems sweet
 Like separate souls shall fly from it,
 Each to an immortal fyte!
 We shall all be poets there,
 Gazing on the chiefest Fair!

“And love! earth's love! and *can* we love
 Fixedly where all things move?
 Can the sinning love each other?
 Mother, mother,
 I tremble in thy close embrace—
 I feel thy tears adown my face—
 Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—
 O dreary earthly love!
 Loose thy prayer, and let me go
 To the place that loving is,
 Yet not sad! and when is given
 Escape to *thee* from this below,
 Thou shalt see me that I wait
 For thee at the happy gate;
 And silence shall be up in heaven,
 To hear our meeting kiss!”

The nurse wakes in the morning sun,
 And starts to see beside her bed,
 The lady, with a grandeur spread
 Like pathos, o'er her face; as one
 God-satisfied and earth-undone!—
 The babe upon her arm was dead!
 And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—
 She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

"Wake, nurse!"—the lady said:
 "We are waking—*he* and I—
 I, on earth, and he, in sky!
 And thou must help me to o'erlay
 With garment white, this little clay
 Which needs no more our lullaby.

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,
 And bowed my meekened face, and prayed
 That God would do His will! and thus
 He did it, nurse! He parted *us*.
 His sun is showing on mine arm,
 The dead calm face:—and *I* am calm.

"This earthly noise is too anear,
 Too loud, and will not let me hear
 The harp new stricken! Death will soon
 Make silence!"

And a sense of tune,
 A satisfied love, meanwhile,
 Most like the lost one's living smile,
 Sang on within her soul!

Oh ye!
 Earth's tender-hearted! may ye be
 Made confident, to yield your love
 To the so Named, who throned above
 Shall all its ends fulfil;
 Breaking the narrow prayers that may
 Befit your narrow hearts, away
 In, His broad, loving will!



A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

“When thy light perisheth,
That from thee issueth,
Our life evanisheth.”

TENNYSON.

THEY stand beneath the midnight,
Beside the river-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white around
The shadow of the tree.
The moon and earth are face to face,
And earth is trancēd deep!
The wave-voice seems the voice of dreams
That wander through her sleep.
The river floweth on.

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
Beside the river-sea?
They bring that human heart, wherein
No nightly calm can be—
That droppeth never with the wind,
Nor drieth with the dew—
Oh, calm it, God! *Thy* calm is broad
To cover spirits, too.
The river floweth on.

The maidens lean them over
The waters, side by side,
And shun each other's deepening eyes,
And gaze adown the tide:
And each within a little boat
A little lamp hath lit;
If bright it move, her loved doth love,
And love doth fail with *it*—
The river floweth on.

The stars are strong above us,
To symbolise the soul;
Whereby a tempest-wind may rush,
Nor dim them as they roll.
And yet the soul, by instinct sad,
Doth stoop to symbols low—
To that small flame, whose very name,
Breathed o'er it, shakes it so.
The river floweth on.

Go, little boats, go softly,
 And guard the symbol spark !
 The little boats go soft and safe
 Across the waters dark.
 And Luti's eyes have caught the fire
 They watch ; and unawares,
 That bless'd while, she lets a smile
 Creep silent through her prayers !
 The river floweth on.

The smile—where hath it wanderd ?—
 She riseth from her knee ;
 She holds her dark, wet locks away—
 There is no light to see !
 She cries a quick and bitter cry—
 “ Nuleeni, launch me thine !
 We must have light abroad to-night,
 For all the wreck of mine ! ”
 The river floweth on.

“ I do remember watching
 Anear this river-bed,
 When on my childish knee was laid
 My dying father's head.*
 I turn'd mine, to keep the tears
 From falling on his face—
 What doth it prove, when Death and Love
 Choose out the self-same place ? ”
 The river floweth on.

“ They say the dead are bless'd,
 The death-change here receiving.
 Who, say—ah, me !—do *any* say
 Where bless'd are the living ?
 Thy boat, Nuleeni !—look not sad—
 Light up the waters rather !
 I weep no faithless lover where
 I wept a loving father ! ”
 The river floweth on.

“ My thought was of his falsehood,
 Ere my flame had wax'd dim ;
 And though I closed mine eyes to dream
 That one last dream of *him*,

* The Hindoos carry their dying friends to the banks of the Ganges, believing in the after-blessedness of those who die there.

They shall not now be wet to see
 The shining vision go.
 From earth's cold love, I look above
 To the holy house of snow."
 The river floweth on.

"Come *thou*—thou never knewest
 A grief, that thou shouldst fear it—
 Thou wearest still the happy look
 That feels another's near it!
 Thy humming-bird is in the sun,†
 Thy cuckoo in the grove;
 And all the three broad worlds, for thee,
 Are full of wandering love."
 The river floweth on.

The little maiden cometh—
 She cometh shy and slow—
 I ween she seeth thro' her lids,
 They drop adown so low!
 Her tresses near her small feet bare--
 She stands, and speaketh nought;
 Yet blusheth red, as if she said
 The name she only thought.
 The river floweth on.

She kneelèd by the water—
 She lighteth up the flame—
 And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
 The trembling radiance came.
 Go, little boat; go, soft and safe,
 And guard the symbol spark!
 Soft, safe, doth float the little boat
 Across the waters dark.
 The river floweth on.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded—
 The light they cannot reach—
 She turneth with that sudden smile
 She learnt before her speech.
 "I do not hear his voice; the tears
 Have dimmed my light away;
 But the symbol light will last to-night—
 The love will last for aye."
 The river floweth on.

* *Hama*deva, the Indian god of Love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

Then Luti spake behind her—
 Out spake she bitterly :
 “By the symbol light that lasts to-night,
 Wilt vow a vow to me ?”
 She gazeth upward in her face ;
 Soft answer maketh she :
 “By loves that last when lights are past,
 I vow that vow to thee.”
 The river floweth on.

An earthly look had Luti,
 Tho’ her voice was deep as prayer.
 “The rice is gathered from the plains,
 To cast upon thine hair.*
 And when *he* comes, his marriage band
 Around thy neck to throw ;
 Toward his gaze thy bride-smile raise,
 And ask of . . . *Luti’s woe.*”
 The river floweth on.

“And when, in seasons after,
 Thy young bright-facéd son
 Shall lean against thy knee, and ask
 What deeds his sire hath done ;
 Press deep adown thy mother-smile
 Upon his ringlets long—
 View deep his pretty childish eyes—
 And tell of—‘*Luti’s wrong.*’”
 The river floweth on.

She lookéd up in wonder,
 Yet softly answered she—
 “By loves that last when lights are past,
 I vowed that vow to thee !
 But why glads it thee, that a bride-day be
 By a word of woe defiled—
 That a word of wrong take the cradle song
 From the ear of a sinless child ?”
 “*Why !*” Luti said, and her laugh was dread—
 Her laugh was low and wild—
 “That the fair new love may the bridegroom prove,
 And the father shame the child !”
 The river floweth on.

* The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

"Thou flowest still, O river!
 Thou flowest 'neath the moon—
 Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,
 Thy charm'd lute a tune! *
He mixed his voice with thine—and *his*
 Was all I heard around!
 But now, beside his chosen bride,
 I hear the river's sound!"
 The river floweth on.

"I gaze upon her beauty,
 I feel her happy breathing:
 The light above thy wave is hers;
 And mine, the rest beneath them.—
 Oh! give me back the dying look
 My father gave thy water!
 Give back!—and let a little love
 O'erwatch his weary daughter!"
 The river floweth on.

"Give back!" she hath departed—
 The word is wandering with her,
 And the stricken maidens hear afar
 The step and cry together.
 O symbols! none are frail enow
 For mortal joys to borrow!
 While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,
 She weepeth, dark with sorrow!
 The river floweth on.

* The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left, a lute.



THE ISLAND.

"Pleasing myself with phantasms sweet
Methinks the time runs very fleet."

BURTON'S *Abstract of Melancholy*.

"All goeth but Goddis will."

ANON.

A BOON, O world, a boon of thee!
Now turn away thy face,
And loosen from thy clasp mine hand,
And let me dream a space!
A little space! Mine after years
May pay thee all the price, in tears.

I crave it by thy forehead's crown
Thine hands conceal'd dart;
By the sweet honey of thy speech,
The fierce sting of thine heart—
Thy darksome palls from shining looms,
Thy mincing steps on hollow tombs—

Thy wreath'd form of aconite,
Thy smile of poison worse—
Yea! by thy soft-toned benison
That curseth more than curse!
Fair world! my dreams shall cease to be,
And I, have bitterer tears for thee!

My dream is of an island place
The distant seas are folding;
And over which, the only watch
Those troop'd stars are holding.
Those bright still stars! they need not seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream!

Hills questioning the heavens for light—
Ravines too deep to scan!
As if the wild earth mimick'd there
The wilder heart of man:
Only it shall be greener far
And gladder, than hearts ever are.

More like, perhaps, some mount sublime
 Of starry paradise,
 Disrupted to an hundred hills,
 In falling from the skies—
 Bringing within it, all the roots
 Of heavenly trees, and flowers, and fruits.

For saving where yon spectral heights
 Denude their rocky whiteness,
 Or ragged fissures, miser-like,
 Hoard up some fountain brightness—
 (And e'en in them—stoop down and hear—
 Leaf sounds with water in your ear!)

Around, above, the plum'd trees
 Their gracious shadows throw ;
 Through whose clear fruit and blossoming,
 Whene'er the sun may go,
 The ground beneath he deeply stains,
 As shining through cathedral panes.

But little needs the ground beneath,
 That shining from above her,
 When many Pleiades of flowers
 (Not one lost) star her over :
 The rays of their unnumbered hues
 Being refracted by the dews.

Wide petalled plants, that boldly drink
 Th' Amreeta of the sky ;
 Shut bells, all heavy with delight,
 Whose faces earthward lie—
 I cannot count them : but between,
 Is room for grass, and mosses green,

And rapid brooks, that bear all hues
 Reflected in disorder !
 Or, gathering up their silver lengths
 Beside their winding border,
 Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,
 By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

Nor think each arch'd tree with each
 Too closely interlaces,
 T' admit of vistas opening broad,
 And sweet sun-basking places,

Upon whose sward the antlered deer
View their own image long and clear.

Unless they fainer would behold
That image on the seas,
Whene'er's a way through shelving rocks,
And over branching trees,
Whose doves from half-closed lids espy
The green and purple fish go by.

One mateless dove is answering
The water every minute,
Thinking such music could not be
Without *his* cooing in it!
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

My soul in love bounds forwarder,
To meet the bounding waves!
Beside them is the home for me,
Within the coral caves—
And near me two or three may dwell,
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

High winding caverns! not unleft
In all their sparry ceilings;
Through which may shine the earnest stars,
In prophet-like revealings,
And down their slanted glory, move
Scents from the flowers that grow above.

I said that two or three might choose
Their caves beside mine own:
Those who would change the din of man,
For Nature's nobler tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

And we to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part:
Her beautiful shall ne'er surprise
The monstrous at our heart—
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

Yet shall she not our mistress be,
As is the moon of ocean;

Though gently as the moon she give
 Our thoughts a sheen and motion!—
 More like a harp of many lays,
 Moving its master while he plays.

* * * *

No sod in all that island hath
 Been opened for the dead—
 No island wind hath borne a sound
 Of sorrow utterēd—
 We cannot say by water clear
 Or spreading tree—"I suffered *here!*"

Our only "farewell" shall be breathed
 Toward the setting light,
 When every star by day concealed,
 Will make us welcome night:
 Our only use of tears—'t' express
 The sense of too much happiness.

Our fancies shall their plumage take
 From fairest island birds
 'That shine and dart from earth to heaven!
 And then in turn, our words
 Unconsciously shall take the dyes
 Of those encolored fantasies.

Yea! soon, no consonant unsmooth
 Our smile-tuned lips shall reach,
 But softer than Hellenic sounds
 Shall glide into our speech—
 (What music did you ever find
 So soft as voices glad and kind?)

And often by the joy without
 And in us, overwrought,
 We shall sit voicelessly, and read
 Such poems in our thought,
 As Pindar might have writ, if he
 Had tended sheep in Arcady!

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
 He died in, longer knowing—
 Or Homer, had he heard no tone
 More loud than Meles flowing—
 Or poet Plato, had th' undim
 Unsetting Godlight broke on him!

Choose me the loftiest cave of all,
 To make a place for prayer ;
 And I will choose a praying voice
 To pour our spirits there.
 How silverly the echoes run—
Thy will be done—Thy will be done !

Gently yet strangely uttered words !—
 They lift me from my dream.
 It perisheth—the island place
 That did no more than seem !
 The streams are dry, no sun could find—
 The fruits are fallen, without wind !—

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth !
 Yet softly breaks an idle dream
 The morning light subdueth ;
 And happier 'tis, to see the sun,
 Than sleep, and dream a brighter one.

Perchance my happy island dream
 Was made of foolishness !
 Why every thought of earthly joy
 Is foolish, not the less ;
 Our thoughts being stain'd ! Lord, with **THEE**
 Were innocence and agony.

Shall I go backward to the World,
 When Thou art very nigh ?
 And pay the price I promised her
 For vision pass'd by,
 What time Thy covenant's controul
 Would break all others from my soul ?

Nay ! I endure : but not because
 The World imposeth woe ;
 But rather that Thine hands perform
 The thing appointed so ! *
 Those kindly wounding hands did brave,
 Themselves, a deeper wound—to save.

We must endure—but not because
 The World imposeth woe.
 Prayers hold a better power than dreams
 And leave her far and low :

* " He performeth the thing that is appointed for me : and many such things are with Him " (Job xxii. 15).

We cannot meet her cruel eyes,
When ours are lifted to the skies—

When ours are lifted to the cross,
The love-in-sorrow reading!
Lord! teach Thy will *beside Thy cross*;
That while our hearts are bleeding,
The droppings of Thy blood may fall
Still faster on them, soothing all!

That when Thy lips, grown pale for us,
Have taught we dream in vain
Of happiness beneath a sun
Which darkened with Thy pain,—
They still may tell us, "You shall be
Anon in Paradise with Me!"



THE DESERTED GARDEN.

"Since that I saw this gardine wasted."

SPENSER.

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun,
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;
And wheresoe'er had fallen the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature led,
To sanctify her right.

I callèd it my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I.
The sheep looked in, the grass t' espy,
And passèd ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me!
I crept beneath the bough, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar tree.

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in—
 Bedropt with roses waxen-white,
 Well satisfied with dew and light,
 And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
 When all the garden flowers were trim,
 The grave old gardener prided him
 On these the most of all ;

And Lady, stately overmuch,
 Who movèd with a silken noise,
 Blushed near them, dreaming of the voice
 That likened her to such !

And these to make a diadem,
 She may have often plucked and twined ;
 Half smiling as it came to mind,
 That few would look at *them*.

Oh ! little thought that Lady proud,
 A child would watch her fair white rose,
 When buried lay her fair white brows,
 And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener, full of scorns
 For men unlearn'd and simple phrase,
 A child would bring it all its praise,
 By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,
 Though never a dream the roses sent
 Of science or love's compliment.
 I ween they smelt as sweet.

Nor ever a grief was mine, to see
 The trace of human step departed—
 Because the garden was deserted,
 The blyther place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken
 Hath childhood 'twixt the sun and sward !
 We draw the moral afterward—
 We feel the gladness then !

And gladdest hours for me did glide
 In silence at the rose-tree wall :
 A thrush made gladness musical
 Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
 To mar or pluck the blossoms white—
 How should I know but that they might
 Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
 I brought clear water from the spring
 Praised in its own low murmuring,—
 And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought my likeness grew,
 (Without the melancholy tale)
 To gentle hermit of the dale,
 And Angelina too!

For oft I read within my nook
 Such minstrel stories ! till the breeze
 Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
 And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write,
 I hear no more the wind athwart
 Those trees !—nor feel that childish heart
 Delighting in delight !

My childhood from my life is parted ;
 My footstep from the moss which drew
 Its fairy circle round : anew
 The garden is deserted !

Another thrush may there rehearse
 The madrigals which sweetest are—
 No more for me !—myself afar
 Do sing a sadder verse !

Ah me ! ah me ! when erst I lay
 In that child's nest so greenly wrought,
 I laugh'd to myself and thought
 " The time will pass away."

I laugh'd still, and did not fear
 But that, whene'er was past away
 The childish time, some happier play
 My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away—
 And yet beside the rose-tree wall,
 Dear God !—how seldom, if at all,
 I look'd up to pray !

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

The time *is* past!—and now that grows
 The cypress high among the trees,
 And I behold white sepulchres
 As well as the white rose—

When wiser, meeker thoughts are given,—
 And I have learnt to lift my face,
 Remembering earth's greenest place
 The colour draws from heaven.—

It something saith for earthly pain,
 But more for Heavenly promise free,
 That I who was, would shrink to be
 That happy child again!



THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

I DWELL amid the city.
 The great humanity which beats
 Its life along the stony streets,
 Like a strong unsunn'd river
 In a self-made course, is ever
 Rolling on, rolling on!—

I sit and hear it as it rolls,
 That flow of souls!
 The infinite tendencies,
 In the finite, chafed and pent,—
 In the finite, turbulent!—
 The long, drear monotone,
 Made of many tones that rise
 Each to each as contraries!—
 The rich man's ambling steeds—
 Lolling their necks as the chariot comes
 With its inward gleam of the eddying plumes!—
 The poor man's abject needs—
 The feet that wearily, wearily roam,
 Unquickened by thoughts of the fire at home—
 The cry of the babe unheard of its mother,
 Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the other
 Laid yesterday in tomb!—

The whine of voices that have made
 Their own grief's sacredness a trade—

The curse that ringeth hollowly
 The crime against the misery—
 The haggling talk—the organ's grinding—
 The grinder's face being o'er it leant,
 Most vacant even of woe,—
 While the children's hearts leap so
 At the merry music's winding!—
 The rapid pace of the business men
 Whose eyes do glitter cold,
 As still they saw the gold!—
 The funeral's long slow train
 Plum'd black, beside
 Many a house where the rioters laugh
 And count the beakers they shall quaff
 At the morrow's festivals—
 Many a house where sits a bride
 Trying the morrow's coronals,
 With a red blush, ev'n today!—
 Slowly creep the funerals,—
 As none should hear the noise and say,
 The living, the living, must go away
 To multiply the dead!
 Hark! an upward shout is sent!
 In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
 The bells ring out—
 The trumpets sound, the people shout,
 The young Queen goes to her parliament!—
 She turneth round her large blue eyes,
 More bright with childish memories
 Than royal hopes, upon the people—
 On either side, she bows her head
 Lowly, with a queenly grace,
 And smile most trusting-innocent,
 As if she smil'd to her mother!
 The thousands press before each other
 To bless her to her face—
 And booms the deep majestic voice
 Through trump and drum—"May the Queen rejoice,
 In the people's liberties!"
 I dwell amid the city,
 And hear the flow of souls!
 I do not hear the several contraries—
 I do not hear the separate tone that rolls
 In act or speech,
 For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly—
 I hear the confluence and sum of each,

And that is melancholy !—
 Thy voice is a complaint, O crown'd city,
 The blue sky covering thee, like God's great pity !—

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
 Of places where I used to see
 Its vast unbroken circle thrown
 From the far pale peak'd hill
 To the last verge of the ocean—
 As by God's arm it were done
 Then first, or as it felt th' emotion
 Of that first impulse on it still !—
 Oh, we spirits fly at will ;
 Faster than the wing'd steed
 Whereof in our book is read,
 With the sunlight foaming back
 From him to a misty track,
 And his nostril reddening proud
 As he breasteth the steep thundercloud !
 Smoother than Sabrina's chair
 Gliding up from wave to air,
 While she smileth debonair
 Yet holy, coldly, and yet brightly,
 Like her own mooned waters nightly,
 Through her dripping hair !

Very vast and smooth we fly,
 Spirits, though the flesh be by,
 All looks feed not from the eye,
 Nor all hearings from the ear :
 We can hearken and espy
 Without either ! we can journey,
 Bold and gay, as knights in tourney ;
 And though we wear no visor down
 To dark our countenance, the foe
 Shall never chafe us as we go.

I am gone from peopled town !
 It passeth its street-thunder round
 My body ; wakening not to sound—
 Its palace splendour, gloom of prison
 And mart-throng ; wakening not to vision !
 For now another sound, another
 Vision, my soul's senses have.
 O'er a hundred valleys deep,
 Where the hill's tall shadows sleep,—
 Scarce known because the valley trees
 Cross their mountain images—

O'er a hundred hills, each other
 Watching to the western wave—
 I have travelled,—I have found
 The silent, lone, remembered ground.

I have found a hollow green,
 From the hill top, which doth lean
 Toward the sea,—as if the hill
 Had dropt his brow in reverence
 Of the grandeur seen from thence—
 A little nook, the cloud would fill,
 Which sometimes lieth by the moon
 To beautify a night of June—
 A nook that openeth unto
 The glorious ocean's steadfast view ;
 Being most closely shut from all
 Its kindred earth's sweet pastoral !—
 And yet its banks (too smooth and steep
 To be o'erbrowz'd by the sheep)
 Withal are slanted very greenly ;
 And flowers and grasses so serenely
 Grow up them, that I ween the sea
 Whereunto their dewed faces be,
 Doth serve them for another sky,
 As warm and blue as that on high !—

And in this hollow is a seat ;
 And when that you have crept to it,
 Sit adown the banks that are
 Fashioning that quaintest chair—
 Do not think—though at your feet
 The cliff disrupts—you shall behold
 The line where earth and ocean meet.
 You can hear them as they greet !
 You can hear that evermore
 Distance-softened noise, more old
 Than Nereid's singing—the wave leant
 And joining soft up till the shore
 In harmony of discontent !
 Nathless you sit too high to gaze
 Save on each separate element—
 On earth, that nearly round you lays
 Green guardianship—and ocean broad
 To the next side o' the world o'erflowed :
 Earth, ocean—seeming as they were
 Each one a separate hemisphere,
 Scarce more than earth and sky, anear !

But when you hearken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in their communion,
Albeit you witness not their union!

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which when you cull
By utterances, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
As long and deep as thought, and roll
With a soul's strength above your soul!
And as they touch your soul, they borrow
As of its grandeur, of its sorrow,
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness away.

Alway! alway! must this be?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity?
Green visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,
May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd?—mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
And fit it to our straightest mood?
O fair, fair Nature! Are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,—
Among thy fulnesses that still
Leave us vacant and defiled,
And wailing like a kissèd child,
Kissèd soft against his will?

God, God!—

With a child's voice I cry,

Weak, sad, confidingly—

God, God!

Thou knowest eyelids raised not always up
Toward Thy love (as none of ours are) droop,
As ours, o'er many a tear!
Thou knowest, though Thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all!—
Thou knowest—Thou, who art so prodigal
Of beauty—we are oft but stricken deer.

Expiring in the woods—that care for none
Of those delightsome flowers they die upon !

O blissful mouth, which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls ! (self-spoilt !) by that strong passion
Which paled thee once with sighs—by that strong death
Which made thee once unbreathing—from the wrack,
Themselves have called around them, call them back
Toward Thee in continuous aspiring !

For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly ; vainly pass
From city pavement to untrodden sward,
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass
Unswept of its last dew !—Yea, very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls of men,
Unless they travel upward to Thy Throne !
There sittest THOU, the satisfying ONE,
With blood for sins, and holy perfectings
For all requirements—while th' archangel, raising
Toward Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings !



MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

BACK-LOOKING Memory

And Hope prophetic sprang from out the ground !
One, where the flashing of Cherubic sword
Fell downward, sad and broad ;
And one, from Eden earth, within the sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse was said—
“Thy seed shall bruise his head.”

II.

Memory is very wild,
As moonstruck by Cherubic flashings near
When she was born. Her deep eyes shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by year.
With sweetest scents she mixeth things defiled—
She trampleth down earth's grasses green and sweet.
With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
 Their beauty on her bosom's coldness killing.
 She teacheth every melancholy sound
 To winds and waters round.
 She droppeth tears with seed where man is tilling
 The rugged soil in yet more rugged hours.
 She smileth—ah me! in her smile doth go
 A mood of deeper woe

IV.

Hope seemed of happier sprite.
 Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw not fade,
 She went a-nodding through the wilderness
 With brow that shone no less
 Than sea-bird's wings, by storm more frequent made,—
 Searching the treeless rock for fruits of light ;
 Her white feet being armed from stones and cold,
 By slippers all of gold.

V.

And Memory did her wrong,
 And, while she dreamed, her slippers, stole away !
 But still she wended on with mirth unheeding,
 The while her feet were bleeding,
 Until she met her on a certain day,
 And with her evil eyes did search her long
 And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground
 In a stark deadly swound.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
 Had it not been that THOU wert standing near,
 Oh Thou! who saidest, " Live," to spirits lying
 In their own blood, and dying !
 For Thou her forehead to Thine heart did'st rear
 And make its silent pulses sing again.—
 Pouring a new light o'er her darkened eyne,
 With tender tears from Thine !

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
 From out her swound and gazed upon Thy face !
 And meeting there that soft subduing look
 Which Peter's spirit shook,

Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
 Thy pierc'd hands and feet with kisses close,
 And prayed Thee to assist her evermore
 To "reach the things before."

VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile
 Whence angel-wings thrill quick like summer lightning ;
 Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she never
 From Love and Faith may sever !
 Whereat the Eden crown she saw not whitening
 A time ago, though whitening all the while,
 Reddened with life, to hear the Voice which talked
 To Adam as he walked !

 THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.

WHEN from thee I did part away,
 And from my land for years,
 I did not think to come again
 With those same parting tears.
 I come again to hill and lea,
 Weeping for thee !

II.

Thine hand was clasp'd warm in mine
 When I was standing last
 Upon the shore of cheerful green,
 Our vessel neareth fast.
 I shall be there—no longer *we*—
 No more with thee !

III.

Had I beheld thee still and dead,
 I might more clearly know,
 How heart of thine could turn as cold
 As hearts by nature so ;
 How change could touch the falsehood-free
 And changeless *thee* !

THE SLEEP.

IV.

But, now thy last-seen tender looks
 Within my soul remain,
 As it is hard to think that *they*,
 Will shine no more again!
 That I shall vainly wait—ah me!
 A word from thee!

V.

I could not bear to look upon
 That mound of funeral clay,
 Where one sweet voice is silentness
 And one fair brow decay.
 Where all thy mortal I might see,
 But never thee!

VI.

For thou art where the loving are,
 Whose parting pain is o'er!
 And I, who love and weep alone.
 Where thou wilt weep no more,
 Weep bitterly not selfishly,
 For *me*, not *thee*!

VII.

I know that thou canst never know
 The anguish which I feel;
 Because upon no brows in Heaven,
 An earthy grief may steal—
 And grief thou knewest mine would be
 Still shared by thee!

 THE SLEEP.

“He giveth His beloved sleep.”—PSALM cxxvii. 2.

I.

OF all the thoughts of God that are
 Borne inward unto souls afar,
 Along the Psalmist's music deep,
 Now tell me if that any is,
 For gift or grace, surpassing this—
 “He giveth His beloved, sleep”?

II.

What would we give to our beloved ?
 The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
 The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
 The senate's shout to patriot vows
 The monarch's crown, to light the brows ?—
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

III.

What do we give to our beloved ?
 A little faith all undisproved,
 A little dust to overweep,
 And bitter memories to make
 The whole earth blasted for our sake !
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

IV.

"Sleep soft, beloved!" we sometimes say,
 But have no tune to charm away
 Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep.
 But never doleful dream again
 Shall break the happy slumber when
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises !
 O men, with wailing in your voices !
 O delv'd gold, the wailers heap !
 O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall !
 God makes a silence through you all,
 And giveth His beloved, sleep.

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill ;
 His cloud above it saileth still,
 Though on its slope men sow and reap !
 More softly than the dew is shed,
 Or cloud is floated overhead,
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VII.

Yea ! men may wonder while they scan
 A living, thinking, feeling man
 In such a rest his heart to keep ;
 But angels say, and through the word
 I think their bless'd smile is *heard*—
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
 Most like a tired child at a show,
 That sees through tears the jugglers leap,
 Would now its wearied vision close,
 Would childlike on His love repose,
 Who giveth His beloved, sleep!

IX.

And, friends! dear friends,—When it shall be
 That this low breath is gone from me,
 And round my bier ye come to weep,
 Let one, most loving of you all,
 Say, 'Not a tear must o'er her fall';
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep."

◆

 MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
 Did look upon the earth and say:
 "Shining cloud, the hill-top folding—
 Kingly hills the valleys holding—
 Valleys, with the streams among you—
 Streams, with trees that grow along you—
 Trees, with many birds and blossoms—
 Birds, with music-trembling bosoms—
 Blossoms, casting dews that wreathe you,
 To your fellow flowers beneath you—
 Flowers, that bring down stars on earth—
 Earth, that shakest to the mirth,
 Of the merry Titan ocean,
 All his shining hair in motion!—
 Why am I thus the only one
 Who can be dark beneath the sun?"

What time the summer day was past,
 He looked to Heaven, and smiled at last!
 Self answered so:

"Because, O cloud,
 Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
 Heavily on mountain top—
 Hills that almost seem to drop,
 Stricken with a misty death,
 To the valleys underneath!—

Valleys, sighing with the torrent—
 Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—
 Branchless trees, that shake your head
 Wildly, o'er your blossoms spread,
 Where the common flowers are found!—
 Flowers with foreheads to the ground—
 Ground, that shriekest while the sea
 With his iron smitest thee—
 I am, besides, the only one,
 Who can be bright *without* the sun."



THE SEA-SIDE WALK.

WE walked beside the sea
 After a day which perished silently
 Of its own glory—like the Princess weird
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared—
 Uttered with burning breath, "Ho! victory!"
 And sank adown, an heap of ashes pale:
 So runs the Arab tale!

The sky above us showed
 An universal and unmoving cloud
 On which the cliffs permitted us to see
 Only the outline of their majesty,
 As master-minds when gazed at by the crowd!
 And, shining with a gloominess the water
 Swang as moon had taught her.

Nor moon nor stars were out;
 They did not dare to tread so soon about,
 Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun:
 The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
 Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,
 And silence's impassioned breathings round
 Seemed wandering into sound.

O solemn beating heart
 Of Nature! I have knowledge that thou art
 Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever;
 And, what time they are slackened by him ever,
 So to attest his own supernal part,
 Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
 The slackened cord along:

THE SEA-MEW.

For though we never spoke
 Of water colourless and the shaded rock,
 Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
 Into the plaintive speaking that we used
 Of absent friends and memories unforsook ;
 And had we seen each other's face, we had
 Seen haply each was sad.



THE SEA-MEW.

"And me they found (O wofull tale to tell)
 Whose harmlesse hart perceivde not this deceit."
GASCOIGNE & Steele Glas.

How joyously the young sea-mew
 Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
 Whereon our little bark had thrown
 A forward shade—the only one—
 (But shadows aye will man pursue !)

Familiar with the waves, and free,
 As if their own white foam were he:
 His heart upon the heart of ocean,
 Learning all its mystic motion,
 And throbbing to the throbbing sea !

And such a brightness in his eye,
 As if the ocean and the sky,
 Within him had lit up and nurst
 A soul God gave him not at first,
 To comprehend their majesty.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
 His white wing from the blue waves under,
 And bound it—while his fearless eyes
 Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
 As deeming us some ocean wonder !

We bore our ocean bird unto
 A grassy place where he might view
 The flow'ers bending to the bees,
 The waving of the tall green trees,
 The falling of the silver dew.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
 Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim ;

And when earth's dew around him lay,
He thought of ocean's winged spray,
And his eye waxed sad and dim.

The green trees round him only made
A prison, with their darksome shade :
And drooped his wing, and mourned he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade !

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move,
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing !

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky,
That hath no waves !) because, alas !
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.



THE LITTLE FRIEND.

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH SHE MADE AND SENT TO ME.

“—το δ' ἤδη ἐξ ὀφθαλμῶν ἀπεληλυθεν.”

MARCUS ANTONINUS.

THE book thou givest, dear as such,
Shall bear thy dearer name ;
And many a word the leaves shall touch,
For thee who form'dst the same !
And on them, many a thought shall grow
'Neath memory's rain and sun,
Of thee, glad child, who dost not know
That thought and pain are one !

Yes ! thoughts of thee, who satest oft,
A while since, at my side—
So wild to tame,—to move so soft,
So very hard to chide :
The childish vision at thine heart,
The lesson on the knee ;
The wandering looks which *would* depart
Like gulls, across the sea !

THE LITTLE FRIEND.

The laughter, which no half-belief
 In wrath could all suppress ;
 The falling tears, which looked like grief,
 And were but gentleness :
 The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,
 As Eden's were not done—
 Mistaking still the cherub's sword
 For shining of the sun !

The sportive speech with wisdom in't—
 The question strange and bold—
 The childish fingers in the print
 Of God's creative hold :
 The praying words in whispers said,
 The sin with sobs confest ;
 The leaning of the young meek head
 Upon the Saviour's breast !

The gentle consciousness of praise
 With hues that went and came ;
 The brighter blush, a word could raise,
 Were *that*—a father's name !
 The shadow on thy smile for each
 That on his face could fall !
 So quick hath love been, *thee* to teach,
 What soon it teacheth all.

Sit still as erst beside his feet !
 The future days are dim,—
 But those will seem to thee most sweet,
 Which keep thee nearest *him* !
 Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,
 And let him see arise
 A clearer sun and greener earth
 Within thy loving eyes !—

Ah loving eyes ! that used to lift
 Your childhood to my face—
 That leave a memory on the gift
 I look on in your place—
 May bright-eyed hosts your guardians be
 From all but thankful tears,—
 While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,
 Ye meet th' advancing years !

TO MISS MITFORD

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
 Benignant friend! I will not proudly say,
 As better poets use, "These *flowers* I lay;"
 Because I would not wrong thy blossoms sweet,
 By spoiling so their name. Yet think it meet—
 Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
 With heart as open to love as theirs to dew,—
 That even my verse like them, if nature-true
 Low-rooted may attain some heavenly heat!
 Ah, friend! *without* that word, it must seem good
 That women in their songs be mindful oft
 Of thee, whose genius walketh mild and soft
 As Una's lion, chainless though subdued,
 Beside thy purity of womanhood!



THE STUDENT.

MY midnight lamp is weary as my soul,
 And being unimmortal, has gone out.
 And now alone yon moony lamp of heaven,
 Which God lit and not man, illuminates
 These volumes, others wrote in weariness
 As I have read them; and this cheek and brow,
 Whose paleness burn'd in with heats of thought,
 Would make an angel smile to see how ill
 Clay thrust from Paradise consorts with mind—
 If angels could, like me, smile bitterly.

"Yet must my brow be paler! I have vowed,
 To clip it with the crown which cannot fade,
 When *it* is faded. Not in vain ye cry,
 O glorious voices that survive the tongues
 From whence was drawn your separate sovereignty—
 For I would reign beside you! I would melt
 The golden treasures of my health and life
 Into that name! My lips are vowed apart
 From cheerful words; my ears, from pleasant sounds;
 Mine eyes, from sights God made so beautiful,—
 My feet, from wanderings under shady trees;

Mine hands, from clasping of dear loving friends—
 My very heart, from feelings which move soft!
 Vowed am I from the day's delightsomeness,
 And dreams of night! And when the house is dumb
 In sleep, which is the pause 'twixt life and life,
 I live and waken thus; and pluck away
 Slumber's sleek poppies from my pain'd lids—
 Goading my mind with throngs wrought by herself,
 To toil and struggle along this mountain-path
 Which hath no mountain-airs; until she sweat
 Like Adam's brow, and gasp and rend away
 In agony, her garment of the flesh!"

And so his midnight lamp was lit anew,
 And burned till morning. But his lamp of life
 Till morning burned not! He was found embraced
 Close, cold, and stiff, by Death's compelling sleep;
 His breast and brow supported on a page
 Charactered over with a praise of *fame*,
 Of its divineness and beatitude—
 Words which had often caused that heart to throb,
 That cheek to burn; though silent lay they now,
 Without a single beating in the pulse,
 And all the fever gone!

I saw a bay
 Spring verdant from a newly fashioned grave.
 The grass upon the grave was verdanter,
 That being watered by the eyes of One
 Who bore not to look up toward the tree!
 Others looked on it—some, with passing glance,
 Because the light wind stirr'd in its leaves;
 And some, with sudden lighting of the soul
 In admiration's ecstasy!—Ay! some
 Did wag their heads like oracles, and say,
 "'Tis very well!"—but none remember'd
 The heart which housed the root, except that one
 Whose sight was lost in weeping!

Is it thus,

Ambition, idol of the intellect?
 Shall we drink aconite, alone to use
 Thy golden bowl? And sleep ourselves to death—
 To dream thy visions about life? O Power
 That art a very feebleness!—before
 Thy clayey feet we bend our knees of clay,
 And round thy senseless brow bind diadems
 With paralytic hands, and shout "A god,"

With voices mortal hoarse ! Who can discern
 Th' infirmities they share in ? Being blind,
 We cannot see thy blindness : being weak,
 We cannot feel thy weakness : being low,
 We cannot mete thy baseness : being unwise ,
 We cannot understand THINE idiocy !



A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,
 Thou golden-haired and silver-voic'd child,—
 With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's defiled,
 With eyes unknowing how tears dim the sight,
 And feet all trembling at the new delight,
 Treaders of earth to be !

II.

Ah no ! the lark may bring
 A song to thee from out the morning cloud ;
 The merry river from its lilies bowed ;
 The brisk rain from the trees ; the lucky wind,
 That half doth make its music, half doth find !
 But I—I may not sing.

III.

How could I think it right,
 New-comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou art,
 To bring a verse from out an human heart
 So heavy with accumulated tears ;
 And cross with such amount of weary years,
 Thy day-sum of delight ?

IV.

E'en if the verse were said ;
 Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands to hear
 The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,
 Would'st, at that sound of sad humanities,
 Upturn thy bright uncomprehending eyes
 And bid me play instead.

STANZAS.

V.

Therefore no song of mine !
 But prayer in place of singing ! prayer that would
 Commend thee to the new-creating God,
 Whose gift is childhood's heart without its stain
 Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—
 That gift of God be thine !

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
 In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow
 And pretty winning accents make thee now.
 Yea ! sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
 (How sweet !) of "father," "mother," shall be found
 The ABBA on thy tongue !

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
 Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble
 Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
 Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
 Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
 The Ever-loving's face !

 STANZAS.

I MAY sing ; but minstrel's singing
 Ever ceaseth with his playing.
 I may smile ; but time is bringing
 Thoughts for smiles to wear away in.
 I may view thee, mutely loving ;
 But *shall* view thee so in dying !
 I may sigh ; but life's removing,
 And with breathing endeth sighing !
 Be it so !

When no song of mine comes near thee,
 Will its memory fail to soften ?
 When no smile of mine can cheer thee,
 Will thy smile be used as often ?
 When my looks the darkness boundeth,
 Will thine own be lighted after ?
 When my sigh no longer soundeth,
 Wilt thou list another's laughter ?
 Be it so !

THE YOUNG QUEEN.

"This awful responsibility is imposed upon me so suddenly, and at so early a period of my life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that Divine Providence which has called me to this work, will give me strength for the performance of it."—*The Queen's Declaration in Council, 1837.*

THE shroud is yet unspread
To wrap our crown'd dead ;
His soul hath scarcely hearkened for the thrilling words of
doom :

And Death that makes serene
Ev'n brows where crowns have been,
Hath scarcely time to meeten his for silence of the tomb.

St. Paul's king-dirging note
The city's heart hath smote,—
The city's heart is struck with thought more solemn than the
tone !

A shadow sweeps apace
Before the nation's face,
Confusing in a shapeless blot, the sepulchre and throne.

The palace sounds with wail—
The courtly dames are pale—
A widow o'er the purple bows, and weeps its splendour dim :
And we who hold the boon,
A king for freedom won,
Do feel eternity rise up between our thanks and him.

And while all things express
All glory's nothingness,
A royal maiden treadeth firm where *that* departed trod !
The deathly scented crown
Weighs *her* shining ringlets down ;
But calm she lifts her trusting face, and calleth upon God.

Her thoughts are deep within her :
No outward pageants win her
From memories that in her soul are rolling wave on wave—
Her palace walls enring
The dust that was a king—
And very cold beneath her feet, she feel's her father's grave.

And One, as fair as she
Can scarce forgotten be,—
Who clasped a little infant dead. for all a kingdom's worth !

The mourn'd, bless'd One,
 Who views Jehovah's throne,
 Aye smiling to the angels, that she has lost a throne on earth.

Perhaps our youthful Queen
 Remembers what has been—
 Her childhood's rest by loving heart, and sport on grassy sod—
 Alas! can others wear
 A mother's heart for her?
 But calm she lifts her trusting face, and calleth upon God.

Yea! call on God, thou maiden
 Of spirit nobly laden,
 And leave such happy days behind, for happy-making years!
 A nation looks to thee
 For steadfast sympathy:
 Make room within thy bright clear eyes, for all its gathered
 tears.

And so the grateful isles
 Shall give thee back their smiles,
 And as thy mother joys in thee, in them shalt *thou* rejoice;
 Rejoice to meekly bow
 A somewhat paler brow,
 While the King of kings shall bless thee by the British
 people's voice!



VICTORIA'S TEARS.

“O MAIDEN heir of kings!
 A king has left his place!
 The majesty of Death has swept
 All other from his face!
 And thou upon thy mother's breast,
 No longer lean adown—
 But take the glory from the rest,
 And rule the land that loves thee best.”
 The maiden wept;
 She wept to wear a crown!

They decked her courtly halls—
 They reined her hundred steeds—
 They shouted at her palace gates,
 “A noble Queen succeeds!”
 Her name has stirred the mountain's sleep,
 Her praise has filled the town!

And mourners God had stricken deep,
 Looked hearkening up, and did not weep.
 Alone she wept,
 Who wept to wear a crown !

She saw no purples shine,
 For tears had dimmed her eyes ;
 She only knew her childhood's flowers
 Were happier pageantries !
 And while her heralds played the part,
 For million shouts to drown—
 "God save the Queen," from hill to mart,—
 She heard through all her beating heart,
 And turned and wept ;
 She wept to wear a crown !

God save thee, weeping Queen !
 Thou shalt be well beloved !
 The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,
 As those pure tears have moved !
 The nature in thine eyes we see,
 That tyrants cannot own—
 The love that guardeth liberties !
 Strange blessing on the nation lies,
 Whose Sovereign wept—
 Yea ! wept to wear its crown !

God bless thee, weeping Queen,
 With blessing more divine !
 And fill with happier love than Earth's,
 That tender heart of thine !
 That when the thrones of earth shall be
 As low as graves brought down ;
 A pierc'd hand may give to thee
 The crown which angels shout to see !
 Thou wilt not *weep*,
 To wear that heavenly crown !

◆

VANITIES.

'From fading things, fond men, lift your desire.'
DRUMMOND.

COULD ye be blest in hearkening
 Youth's often danced-to melodies—
 Hearing it pierc'd, the midnight darkening
 Doth come show the starry skies,—

To freshen garden-flowers, the rain ?
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Could ye be very blest in urging
A captive nation's strength to thunder
Out into foam, and with its surging
The Xerxean fetters break asunder ?
The storm is cruel as the chain !
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Could ye be very blest in paling
Your brows with studious nights and days,
When like your lamps your life is failing,
And sighs, not breath, are wrought from praise ?
Your tombs, not ye, that praise retain—
It is in vain, it is in vain !

Yea ! but ye *could* be very blest,
If some ye nearest love were nearest ?
Must *they* not love when lov'd best ?
Must *ye* not happiest love when dearest ?
Alas !—how hard to feel again,
It is in vain, it is in vain !

For those ye love are not unsighing,—
They are unchanging least of all :
And ye the loved—ah ! no denying,
Will leave your lips beneath the pall.
When passioned ones have o'er it sain—
"It is in vain, it is in vain !"



BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some Belov'eds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonied fell, and could not pray,
A thought within me to myself did say,
"Is God less God, that *thou* art mortal, sad ?
Rise, worship, bless Him ! in this sackcloth clad,
As in that purple !"—But I answer, nay !
What child his filial heart in words conveys,
If him for very good his father choose
To smite ? What can he, but with sobbing breath
Embrace th' unwilling hand which chasteneth ?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in silent tears, both prayer and praise.

CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken! there are left behind
 Living Belovēds, tender looks to bring,
 And make the daylight still a blessēd thing,
 And tender voices, to make soft the wind.
 But if it were not so—if I could find
 No love in all the world to answer me,
 Nor any pathway but that rang hollowly,
 Where "dust to dust" the love from life disjoined—
 And if with parchēd lips, as in a dearth
 Of water-springs the very deserts claim,
 I uttered to those sepulchres unmoving
 The bitter cry, "Where are ye, O my loving?" . . .
 I know a Voice would sound, "Daughter, I AM.
 Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for earth?"

—◆—
 A SUPPLICATION FOR LOVE.

HYMN I.

GOD, namēd Love, whose fount thou art,
 Thy crownless Church before thee stands,
 With too much hating in her heart,
 And too much striving in her hands!

O loving Lord! O slain for love!
 Thy blood upon thy garments came—
 Inwrap their folds our brows above,
 Before we tell Thee all our shame!

"Love as I loved you," was the sound
 That on Thy lips expiring sate!
 Sweet words, in bitter strivings drowned!
 We hated as the worldly hate.

The spear that pierced for love thy side,
 We dared for wrathful use to crave;
 And with our cruel noise denied
 Its silence to thy blood-red grave!

Ah blood! that speaketh more of love
 Than Abel's!—could we speak like Cain,
 And grieve and scare that holy Dove,
 The parting love-gift of the Slain?

Yet Lord, thy wrong'd love fulfil!
 Thy Church, though fallen, before Thee stands—
 Behold, the voice is Jacob's still,
 Albeit the hands are Esau's hands!
 Hast Thou no tears, like those besprent
 Upon Thy Zion's ancient part?
 No moving looks, like those which sent
 Their softness through a traitor's heart?
 No touching tale of anguish dear;
 Whereby like children we may creep,
 All trembling, to each other near,
 And view each other's face, and weep?
 Oh, move us—THOU hast power to move—
 One in the One Beloved to be!
 Teach us the heights and depths of love—
 Give THINE—that we may love like THEE!

THE MEDIATOR.

HYMN II.

"As the greatest of all sacrifices was required, we may be assured that no other would have sufficed."

Boyd's Essay on the Atonement.

How high Thou art! our songs can own
 No music Thou couldst stoop to hear!
 But still the Son's expiring groan
 Is vocal in the Father's ear.
 How pure Thou art! our hands are dyed
 With curses, red with murder's hue—
 But He hath stretched His hands to hide
 The sins that pierced them from thy view.
 How strong Thou art! we tremble lest
 The thunders of Thine arm be moved—
 But He is lying on Thy breast,
 And Thou must clasp Thy best Beloved!
 How kind Thou art! Thou didst not choose
 To joy in Him for ever so;
 But that embrace Thou wilt not lose
 For vengeance, didst for love forego!
 High God, and pure, and strong, and kind!
 The low, the foul, the feeble, spare!
 Thy brightness in His face we find—
 Behold our darkness only *there!*

THE WEeping SAVIOUR.

HYMN III.

Whether his countenance can thee affright,
Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light.”

DONNE.

WHEN Jesus' friend had ceased to be,
Still Jesus' heart its friendship kept—
“Where have ye laid Him?”—“Come and see!”
But ere His eyes could see, they wept.

Lord! not in sepulchres alone,
Corruption's worm is rank and free;
The shroud of death our bosoms own—
The shades of sorrow! Come, and see!

Come, Lord! God's image cannot shine
Where sin's funereal darkness lowers—
Come! turn those weeping eyes of Thine
Upon these sinning souls of ours!

And let those eyes, with shepherd care,
Their moving watch above us keep;
Till love the strength of sorrow wear,
And as Thou weepedst, *we* may weep!

For surely we may weep to know,
So dark and deep our spirit's stain;
That had Thy blood refused to flow,
Thy very tears had flowed in vain.

THE MEASURE.

HYMN IV.

“He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure.”—ISAIAH xl.
“Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure.”—PSALM lxxx.

I.

GOD, the Creator, with a pulseless hand
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man in one
Measure, and by one weight,
So saith His holy Book

COWPER'S GRAVE.

II.

Shall we, then, who have issued from the dust,
 And there return,—shall we, who toil for dust,
 And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,
 Say, "No more tears, Lord God!
 The measure runneth o'er"?

III.

Oh, Holder of the balance, laughest Thou?
 Nay, Lord! be gentler to our foolishness,
 For His sake who assumed our dust and turns
 On Thee pathetic eyes
 Still moistened with our tears.

IV.

And teach us, O Father, while we weep,
 To look patiently upon earth and learn—
 Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last
 These tearful eyes be filled
 With the dry dust of death.



COWPER'S GRAVE:

I.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying—
 It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying—
 Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low as silence, languish;
 Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her
 anguish.

II.

O poets! from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless
 singing!
 O Christians! at your cross of hope, a hopeless hand was
 clinging!
 O men! this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
 Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye
 were smiling.

III.

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears
 his story,
 How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory,
 And how, when one by one, sweet sounds and wand'ring
 lights departed,
 He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted.

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
 And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration ;
 Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken ;
 Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath
 taken.

V.

With sadness that is calm, not gloom I learn to think upon
 him,—
 With meekness that is gratefulness on God, whose heaven hath
 won him,
 Who suffered once the madness-cloud towards his own love
 to blind him,
 But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could
 find him ;

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic
 senses !
 As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences.
 The pulse of dew upon the grass, his own did calmly number,
 And silent shadows from the trees fell o'er him like a slumber.

VII.

The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's chill
 removing,
 Its women and its men became, beside him, true and loving !
 And timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home-
 caresses,
 Uplooking in his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses.

VIII.

But while, in blindness, he remained unconscious of the
 guiding,
 And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,
 He testified this solemn truth, though phrenzy desolated,
 —Nor man nor nature satisfy whom only God created.

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
 blesses,
 And droppeth on his burning brow the coolness of her
 kisses ;
 That turns his fevered eyes around—"My mother! where's
 my mother?"—
 As if such tender words and looks could come from any
 other!—

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending o'er
 him,
 Her face all pale from watchful love, th' unwearied love she
 bore him!—
 Thus, woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever
 gave him,
 Beneath those deep pathetic eyes, which closed in death, to
 save him.

XI.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth could image that
 awaking,
 Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him
 breaking;
 Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,
 But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—“*My Saviour! not*
deserted!”

XII.

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in dark-
 ness rested,
 Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love was manifested?
 What frantic hands outstretched have e'er th' atoning drops
 averted?
 What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should
 be deserted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence
 rather;
 And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son
 and Father.
 Yea! once, Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe hath
 shaken—
 It went up single, echoless, “*My God, I am forsaken!*”

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost creation,
 That of the lost, no son should use those words of desola-
 tion;
 That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar not
 hope's fruition,
 And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a vision!

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

WHICH is the weakest thing of all
 Mine heart can ponder ?
 The sun, a little cloud can pall
 With darkness yonder ?
 The cloud, a little wind can move
 Where'er it listeth ?
 The wind, a little leaf above,
 Though sere, resisteth ?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green,
 My days were gladder ;
 Now on its branch each summer-sheen
 May find me sadder !
 Ah me ! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
 My lips asunder—
 Then is mine heart the weakest thing
 Itself can ponder !

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined
 And drop together ;
 And at a blast which is not wind,
 The forests wither ;
Thou, from the darkening deathly curse,
 To glory breakest,—
 The Strongest of the universe
 Guarding the weakest !

THE NAME.

“—— the name
 Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.”
 MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes*

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
 Uncadenced for the ear,
 Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
 Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
 The solemn font anear,

THE NAME.

II.

It never did, to pages wove
 For gay romaunt, belong.
 It never dedicate did move
 As "Sacharissa," unto love—
 "Orinda," unto song.

III.

Though I write books, it will be read
 Upon the leaves of none,
 And afterward, when I am dead,
 Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
 Across my funeral-stone.

IV.

Whoever chanceth it to call,
 May chance your smile may win ;
 Nay, do not smile ! mine eyelids fall
 Over mine eyes, and feel withal
 The sudden tears within !

V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
 Where summer meadows bloom,
 But gathereth the winter snows,
 And changeth to the hue of those,
 If lasting till they come ?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
 But time encrusteth round
 With sad associate thoughts the same ?
 And so to me my very name
 Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
 When we were children twain ;
 When names acquired baptismally
 Were hard to utter, as to see
 That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
 Of chesnuts from the hill—

And through the word our laugh did run
 As part thereof ! The mirth being done,
 He calls me by it still !

IX.

Nay, do not smile ! I hear in it
 What none of you can hear !
 The talk upon the willow seat,
 The bird and wind that did repeat
 Around, our human cheer !

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
 My sisters' woodland glee,—
 My father's praise, I did not miss,
 What time he stoop'd down to kiss
 The poet at his knee,—

XI.

And voices—which, to name me, aye
 Most tender tones were keeping—
 To some I never more can say
 An answer, till God wipes away
 In heaven these drops of weeping !

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears,
 No murmurs cross my mind.
 Now God be thanked for these thick tears,
 Which show, of those departed years,
 Sweet memories left behind !

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
 With love which softens yet !
 Now God be thanked for every thought
 Which is so tender it has caught
 Earth's guerdon of regret !

XIV.

Earth may embitter, not remove,
 The love divinely given ;
 And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
 The immortality of love,
 And lead us nearer Heaven !

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD
JESUS.

" But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest."

MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One !
My flesh, my Lord ! What name ? I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,
Too far from me or Heaven.
My Jesus, *that* is best ! that word being given
By the majestic angel, whose command
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One !

And art Thou come for saving, baby-browed
And speechless Being ? Art Thou come for saving ?
The palm that grows beside our door is bowed
By treadings of the low wind from the south,
A restless shadow through the chamber waving :
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun,
But Thou, with that close slumber on Thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary One ?

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul
High dreams on fire with God ;
High songs that make the pathways where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs ; and visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad upliftings
Of any seraph wing !
Thus, noiseless, thus ! Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One !

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart, to all its shiftings
Of sensual life, bringing contrarioussness
In a great calm. I feel I could lie down
As Moses did, and die,*—and then live most.

* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
 That stand with your peculiar light unlost,—
 Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,
 Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware. Ye throw
 No shade against the wall! How motionless
 Ye round me, with your living statuary,
 While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,
 Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
 Like light's soul in itself! I bear, I bear
 To look upon the dropped lids of your eyes,
 Albeit their outward shining testifies
 To that beatitude within which were
 Enough to blast an eagle at his sun!
 I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—
 I look on His! I know
 My spirit which dilateth with the woe
 Of His mortality,
 May well contain your glory!
 Yea, drop your lids more low—
 Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me!
 Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem;
 The dumb kine from their fodder turn'd them,
 Soften'd their horn'd faces
 To almost human gazes
 Toward the newly Born:
 The simple shepherds from the starlit brooks
 Brought visionary looks,
 As if in their astonied ears were rung
 The strange, sweet angel-tongue:
 The Magi of the East, in sandals worn,
 Knelt reverent, sweeping o'er
 With long pale beards, upon the floor,
 And myrrh and heap'd gold
 These baby hands were impotent to hold:
 So let all earthlies and celestials wait
 Upon Thy royal state.
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

I am not proud—meek angels, put ye on
 New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest
 On mortal lips,—“I am not proud”—*not proud!*
 Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
 Albeit over Him my head is bowed
 As others bow before Him, still mine heart
 Bows lower than their knees! O centuries

That roll in vision your futurities
 My grave athwart,
 Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep
 Watch o'er this sleep,
 Say of me as the Heavenly said—"Thou art
 The blessedest of women!" blessedest,
 Not holiest, not noblest, no high name
 Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame
 When I sit meek in heaven!

For me—for me—
 I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
 Among the lonely hills of Galilee,
 Whose summits looked heaven-laden,
 Listening to silentness that seemed to be
 God's voice, so soft yet strong, so fain to press
 Upon my heart as Heaven did on the height,
 And waken up its shadows by a light,
 And show its vileness by a holiness.
 Then I knelt down as silent as the night,
 Too self-renounced for fears,
 Raising my small face to the boundless blue,
 Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears:
 God heard *them* falling after with His dew.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
 This Incorruptible now born of me,
 This fair new Innocence no sun did chance
 To shine on erst (for Adam was no child)
 Created from my nature all defiled,
 This mystery, from out mine ignorance,
 Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more
 Than others do, or I did heretofore?
 Can hands wherein such burden pure has been
 Not open with the cry, "Unclean! unclean!"
 More oft than any else beneath the skies?

Ah King! ah Christ! ah Son!
 The kine, the shepherds, the abas'd wise,
 Did all less lowly wait
 Than I upon Thy state.
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His universe,
 Come, crown me Him a King!
 Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
 Their light where fell a curse,
 And make a crowning for this kingly brow!
 What is my word? The stars roll on afar—

The crowning is unmade—
The child-brow keepeth its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One !

Unchildlike shade ! No other babe doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.
No small babe-smiles my watching eyes have seen
To float like speech the speechless lips between ;
No dovelike cooing in the golden air ;
No quick short joys of leaping babyhood.

Alas ! our earthly good,
In heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee :
And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword : a sword ?
That smites "the Shepherd." Then I think aloud,
The words "despised"—"rejected"—every word,
Recoiling into darkness as I view

The Loving on my knee !
Bright angels, move not, lest ye stir the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity !
I must not die, with mother's work to do,
And could not live—and see !

It is enough to bear
This aspect still and fair ;
This holier in sleep
Than a saint at prayer ;
This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled ;
This sadness most like love,
A love than love more deep,
Wandering like a smile,
(*Sans* its joy meanwhile,)
Meek and mystical above
The gentle, sleeping face !
Awful is this watching place !
Awful what I see from hence—
A weakness, which my strength doth part
From me, like omnipotence !
A king without his throne—
A child without the leaping heart
That smiles the lips asunder !
Yea ! a Creator, cast away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying—Son !

That tear fell not on Thee,
Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in Thy slumbers !

MY DOVES.

Thou, stirring not at all the merry numbers
 Of tree summer and bird
 Hast Thou so quickly heard
 A tear fall silently?
 Wak'st Thou, O loving One?



MY DOVES.

My little doves have left a nest
 Upon an Indian tree,
 Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
 Or motion from the sea;
 For, ever there, the sea-winds go
 With sunlit paces, to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
 The tropic stars looked down;
 And there my little doves did sit
 With feathers softly brown,
 And glittering eyes that showed their right
 To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
 Of water far, and wind,
 And lifted leaf, to interpose
 Their chanting voices kind;
 Interpreting that love must be
 The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,
 Theirs hath the calmest sound—
 Their living voice the likest moves
 To lifeless noises round—
 In such sweet monotone as clings
 To music of insensate things!

My little doves were ta'en away
 From that glad nest of theirs,
 Across an ocean foaming aye,
 And tempest-clouded airs.
 My little doves, who lately knew
 The sky and wave by warmth and blue.

And now, within the city prison,
 In mist and chillness pent,

With sudden upward look they listen
 For sounds of past content,
 For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
 Or nut-fruit falling from the trees !

The stir without the glow of passion—
 The triumph of the mart—
 The gold and silver's dreary clashing
 With man's metallic heart—
 The wheelèd pomp, the pauper tread—
 These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
 Their fearless heads they lean,
 And almost seem to understand
 What human musings mean
 (With such a plaintive gaze their eyne
 Are fastened upwardly to mine !)

Their chant is soft as on the nest,
 Beneath the sunny sky :
 For love that stirred it in their breast
 Remains undyingly,
 And 'neath the city's shade can keep
 The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
 With pastoral memories ;
 All echoings from out the hills,
 All droppings from the skies,
 All flowings from the wave and wind,
 Remembered in their chant I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
 My little doves ! to move
 Along the city ways, with heart
 Assured by holy love,
 And vocal with such songs as own
 A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
 More hard, in Babel's street !
 But if the soulless creatures deem
 Their music not unmeet
 For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
 Who wear immortal wings, within !

To me, fair memories belong
 Of scenes that erst did bless,

For no regret—but present song
 And lasting thankfulness,
 And very soon to break away,
 Like types, in purer things than they!

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
 For flowers the valley yields—
 I will have humble thoughts instead
 Of silent, dewy fields!
 My spirit and my God shall be
 My seaward hill, my boundless sea!



STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF MRS. HEMANS.

(TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER POEM ON THE SAME
SUBJECT.)

I.

THOU bay-crown'd living One, that o'er
 The bay-crown'd Dead art bowing!
 And o'er the shadeless, moveless brow,
 The vital shadow throwing—
 And o'er the sighless, songless lips,
 The wail and music wedding—
 Dropping above the tranquil eyes
 The tears not of their shedding!

II.

Go! Take thy music from the dead,
 Whose silentness is sweeter!
 Reserve thy tears for living brows,
 Where all such tears are meeter;
 And leave the violets in the grass
 To brighten where thou treadest,
 No flowers for her! no need of flowers—
 Albeit "bring flowers," thou saidest.

III.

Yes! flowers to crown the "cup and lute,"
 Since both are nigh to breaking:
 Or flowers, to greet the "bride"—the heart's
 Own beating works its aching;

Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight,
 From earth's free bosom gathered,
 To mind him of his earthly hope,
 Then wither as it withered.

IV.

But bring not near her solemn corse
 The type of human seeming!
 Lay only dust's stern verity
 Upon her dust undreaming!
 And while the calm perpetual stars
 Shall look upon it solely,
 Her spherèd soul shall look on *them*
 With eyes more bright and holy.

V.

Nor mourn, O living One, because
 Her part in life was mourning.
 Would she have lost the poet's fire
 For anguish of the burning?
 The minstrel harp, for strained string?
 The tripod, for th' afflated
 Woe? or the vision for those tears
 In which it shone dilated?

VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's
 Cold hand her brow was wreathing:
 But never wronged that mystic breath
 Which breathed in all her breathing,
 Which drew from rocky earth and man,
 Abstractions high and moving—
 Beauty, if not the beautiful—
 And love, if not the loving!

VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight!
 The Saviour she descrieth,
 And little reck *who* wreathed the brow
 Which on His bosom lieth!
 The whiteness of His innocence
 O'er all her garments flowing;
 There learneth she the sweet "new song"
 She will not mourn in knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crown'd and living One !
 And as thy dust decayeth,
 May thine own England say for thee,
 What now for Her it sayeth—
 "Albeit softly in our ears
 Her silver song was ringing,
 The footfall of her parting soul
 Is softer than her singing."

 NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,
 With a somewhat paler brow
 Than she giveth to the ocean ?
 He without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands,
 Lifting his invoking hands
 Like a seer before a sprite,
 To catch her oracles of light,
 But thy soul out-trembleth now
 Many pulses on thy brow.
 Where be all thy laughter clear,
 Others laughed alone to hear ?
 Where thy quaint jests, said for fames ?
 Where thy dances, turned with games ?
 Where thy buxom companies,
 Mooned o'er with ladies' eyes,
 All more bright for thee, I trow ?
 'Neath my moon what doest thou ?

THE MERRY MAN.

I am digging my warm heart
 Till I find its coldest part ;
 I am digging wide and low,
 Deeper than a spade will go,
 Till that when a pit is shaped
 Large enow that shall be heaped
 Therein present pain and past
 Joys, dead things that look aghast
 By the daylight—now 'tis done.
 Throw them in, one by one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun !

Memories—of fancy's golden
 Treasures which my hands have holden,
 Till the chillness made them ache ;
 Of childhood's hopes that used to wake
 If birds were in a singing strain,
 And for less cause, sleep again ;
 Of the moss-seat in the wood
 Where I trysted solitude ;
 Of the hill-top, where the wind
 Used to follow me behind,
 Then in sudden rush to blind
 Both my glad eyes with my hair,
 Made the gladder for the snare !
 Of the cawing of the rooks—
 Of the dreaming 'neath the oaks
 Which retain beneath them now
 Only shadow of the bough ;
 Of the lying on the grass
 While the clouds did overpass,
 Only they, so lightly driven,
 Seemed between me and heaven ;
 Of the little prayers serene,
 Murmuring of earth and sin ;
 Of large-leaved philosophy
 Leaning from my childish knee ;
 Of poetic book sublime
 Soul-kissed for the first dear time,
 Greek or English !—ere I knew
 Life was not a poem too :—
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun !

Of the glorious ambitions
 Yet unquenched by their fruitions ;
 Of the labouring out the nights ;
 Sweet as slumber's lost delights ;
 Of achievements less descried
 By a dear few than magnified ;
 Of praises from the many earned
 When praise from love was undiscerned ;
 Of the sweet reflecting gladness
 Softened by itself to sadness :—
 Throw them in by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun !

What are these ? More, more than these !
 Throw in dearer memories !—

Of voices whereof but to speak
 Mak's mine own all sunk and weak ;
 Of smiles the thought of which is sweeping
 All my soul to floods of weeping ;
 Of looks whose absence fain would weigh
 My looks to the ground for aye ;
 Of clapsing hands—ah me, I wring
 Mine, and in a tremble fling
 Downward, every passioned paining !
 Partings, with the sting remaining,
 Meetings with a deeper throe
 Since the joy is altered so,
 Changes with a fiery burning,
 (Shadows upon all the turning!) .
 Thoughts of—with a storm they came—
Them I have not breath to name :
 Downward, downward, be they cast
 In the pit ! And now at last,
 My work beneath the moon is done,
 And I shall laugh, at rising sun !

But let me pause or ere I cover
 All my spoilings darkly over :
 I will speak not in thine ears,
 Only tell my beaded tears
 Silently, most silently !
 When the last is calmly told,
 Let that same moist rosary
 With the rest sepulchred be,
 Finish'd now ! The darksome mould
 Sealeth up the darksome pit.
 I will lay no stone on it,
 Grasses I will grow instead,
 Fit for Queen Titania's tread ;
 Flowers encoloured with the sun,
 And *ai ai* written upon none ;
 Thus, whenever saileth by
 The Lady World of dainty eye,
 Not a grief shall here remain,
 Silken shoon to damp or stain :
 And while she lisps, " I have not seen
 Any place more smooth and clean."
 Here she cometh ! Ha, ha ! Who
 Laughs as loud as I can do ?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.

The Earth is old ;
 Six thousand winters make her heart a-cold :
 The sceptre slanteth from her palsied hold.
 She saith, " 'las me ! God's word that I was ' good '
 Is taken back to heaven,

From whence when any sound comes, I am riven
 By some sharp bolt. And now no angel would
 Descend with sweet dew-silence on my mountains,
 To glorify the rivers and the fountains

That gush along their side :
 I see O weary change ! I see instead
 This human, mournful pride,
 These thrones and tombs, their tearfulness and blood ;
 And bitter words are poured upon mine head—

" O Earth ! thou art a stage for tricks unholy,
 A church for all remorseful melancholy ;
 Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had
 An Eden in thee *wert thou not so sad.*"
 Sweet children, I am old ! ye, every one,
 Do keep me from a portion of my sun.

Give praise in change for brightness !
 That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
 Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
 To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth.*

Whereupon a child began,
 With spirit running up to man
 As by angel's shining ladder,
 (May he find no cloud above !),
 Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
 All his days than now—
 Sitting in the chestnut grove,
 With that joyous overflow
 Of smiling from his mouth o'er brow
 And cheek and chin, as if the breeze,
 Leaning tricky from the trees
 To part his golden hairs, had blown
 Into a hundred smiles that one.

" O rare, rare Earth ! " he saith,
 " I will praise thee presently ;
 Not to-day ; I have not breath !
 I have hunted squirrels three—
 Two ran down in the furry hollow
 Where I could not see nor follow,

One sits at the top of the alder-tree,
 With a yellow nut and a mock at me !
 Presently, presently—
 When I see which way those two have run,
 When the mocking one at the alder-top
 Shall leap adown and beside me stop,
 Then, rare Earth ! rare Earth !
 Will I pause in all my mirth,
 To say ! all good of thee ! ”

Next a lover, with a dream
 'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
 And a frequent sigh unbidden,
 And an idlesse all the day
 Beside a wandering stream,
 And a silence that is made
 Of a word he dares not say,
 Shakes slow his pensive head :
 “ Earth, Earth ! ” saith he,
 “ If spirits, like thy roses, grew
 On one stalk, and winds severer
 Could but only blow them nearer,
 To share each other's dew ;—
 If, when all the summers be
 Verduring the hills, I knew
 Looking off them I might see
 Something beauteous too—
 Then Earth, ” saith he,
 “ I would praise—nay, nay—not *thee* ! ”

Will the pedant name her next ?
 Crabbèd, with a crabbèd text,
 Sits he in his study nook,
 With his elbow on a book,
 And with stately-crossèd knees,
 And a wrinkle deeply thrid
 Through his droppèd brow,
 Caused by making proofs enow
 That Plato in *Parmenides*
 Meant the same Spinoza did,—
 Or, that an hundred men like him
 Himself, had made one Homer,
Homeros being a misnomer.
 What hath *he* to do with praise
 Of Earth or aught ? Whene'er the sloping
 Sunbeams through his window dim
 To his cold eyes the learned prose,
 Straight he draws the curtain close.

May abstraction keep him dumb !
 Were his thin lips to open,
 "Derivatum est" would come.

Then a mourner moveth pale
 In a silence full of wail,
 Raising not his sunken head,
 Because he walkèd last that way
 With that one beneath the clay :
 Weeping not, because that one,
 The only one who would have said,
 "Cease to weep, beloved !" has gone
 Whence returneth comfort none.
 The silence breaketh suddenly,—
 "Earth, I praise thee !" crieth he,
 "Thou hast a grave for also *me*."

Ha, a poet ! Know him by
 The ecstasy-dilated eye,
 Not uncharged with tears that ran
 Upward from his heart of man ;
 By the cheek, from hour to hour,
 Kindled bright or sunken wan
 With a sense of lonely power ;
 By the brow uplifted higher
 Than others, for more low declining ;
 By the lip which words of fire
 Overflowing burnèd white,
 While they gave the nations light :
 Ay, in every time or place
 Ye may know the poet's face
 By the shade or shining.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
 Spreading his impassioned hands.
 "O God's Earth !" he saith, "the sign
 From the Father-soul to mine
 Of all beauteous mysteries,
 Of all perfect images
 Which, divine in His divine,
 In my human only are
 Very excellent and fair !
 And in thy Maker almost nought
 If not suggestive unto thought !
 Think not, Earth, that I would raise
 Weary forehead in thy praise,
 (Weary, that I cannot go
 Farther from thy region low,)

If were struck no richer meanings
 From thee than thyself. The leanings
 Of the close trees o'er the brim
 Of a sunshine-haunted stream
 Have a sound beneath their leaves,
 Not of wind, not of wind,
 Which the poet's voice achieves :
 The faint mountains, heaped behind,
 Have a falling on their tops,
 Not of dew, not of dew,
 Which the poet's fancy drops :
 Viewless things his eyes can view,
 Driftings of his dream do light
 All the skies by day and night,
 And the seas that deepest roll,
 Carry murmurs of his soul.
 Earth, I praise thee ! praise thou *me* !
 God perfecteth His creation
 With this recipient poet-passion,
 And makes the beautiful to be.
 I praise thee, O beloved sign,¹
 From the God-soul unto mine !
 Praise me, that I cast on thee
 The cunning sweet interpretation,
 The help and glory and dilation
 Of mine immortality !”

There was silence. None did dare
 To use again the spoken air
 Of that far-charming voice, until
 A Christian resting on the hill,
 With a thoughtful smile subdued
 (Seeming learnt in solitude)
 Which a weeper might have viewed
 Without new tears, did softly say—
 And look'd up to heaven alway
 While he prais'd Earth—

“ O Earth !

I count the praises thou art worth,
 By thy waves that move aloud,
 By thy hills against the cloud,
 By thy valleys warm and green,
 By the copses' elms between,
 By their birds which, like a soul
 Scattered in a strong delight
 Into fragments musical,
 Stir and sing in every bush ;

By thy silver founts that fall,
 As to 'tice the stars at night
 To thine heart; by grass and rush,
 And little weeds the children pull,
 Mistook for flowers!

“ Oh, beautiful
 Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
 Than in heaven is callèd good!
 Good to us, that we may know
 Meekly from thy good to go;
 While the holy, crying blood
 Puts its music kind and low
 'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
 And thine ancient curse!

“ Praisèd be the mosses soft
 In thy pathways very oft,
 And the thorns, which make us think
 Of the thornless river-brink
 Where the heavenly tread!
 Praisèd be thy sunny gleams,
 And the storm, that worketh dreams
 Of calm unfinishèd:
 Praisèd be thy cheerful days,
 When by household faggot's blaze,
 In God's dear book we read,
 ‘*No night shall be therein:*’
 Praisèd be thy dwellings warm,
 Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
 Pauseth oft the merry din,
 Save the babe's upon the arm
 Who croweth—learning his first mirth
 And laughter from the crackling hearth!
 Yea, praisèd be thy dwellings cold,
 Underneath the churchyard mould,
 Where the bodies of the saints,
 Separate from earthly taints
 Lie adown in blessing bound,
 Waiting for the trumpet's sound
 To *free* them into blessing! None
 Weepeth more beneath the sun,
 Be graven words of human love
 Be graven very near, above!

“ Earth, let Christians praise thee thus!
 Even for the change that comes
 With a grief from thee to us:

STANZAS TO BETTINE.

For thy place of tombs !
 For the pleasant corn and wine
 And summer green ; and also for
 The frost upon the sycamore
 And hail upon the vine !
 But the praise that best shall win thee,
 Is—to praise thy Maker in thee !”



STANZAS TO BETTINE,

THE FRIEND OF GOETHE.

“I have the second sight, Goethe !”—*Her Letters.*

I.

OUR Goethe's friend, Bettine,
Hadst thou the second sight—
 Upturning worship and delight,
 So lovingly and sheenly,
 Toward his face, as women will ;
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelid still ?

II.

Before his shrine to doom thee,
 Using the same child's smile,
 That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
 For the first time, won from thee ;
 Ere star and flower, grew dim and dead,
 Save at his feet, and o'er his head !

III.

Digging thine heart and throwing
 Away its childhood's gold ;
 That so its woman-depth might hold
 His spirit's overflowing !
 For surging souls no worlds can bound,
 Their channel in the heart have found.

IV.

O child, to change appointed,
 Thou hadst not second sight !
 What eyes the future view aright
 Unless by tears anointed ?
 Yea ! only tears themselves can show
 The burning ones that yet shall flow.

V.

O woman, deeply loving,
 Thou hadst not second sight!
 The star is very high and bright,
 And none can see it moving.
 Love looks around, below, above,
 Yet all his prophecy is—love.

VI.

O changing child and woman,
 Thou hadst not second sight!
 Or bending down thy forehead white,
 The human to the human,
 The idol's shadow would have made
 Its light to vanish like a shade.

VII.

Thy spirit was foreknowing
 Change to the patriot dead;*
 The changing of their battle bed
 For meadows ever blowing;
 But ne'er a vision didst thou see
 Of death and change to *him* and thee!

VIII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine!
 What chanceth with thee now?
 The funeral stone is on his brow,
 The funeral earth between ye!
 And, haply, he who left the sun,
 For thee hath left a funeral one.

IX.

I never shall behold thee—
 Thou hast the stranger's face!
 Thy smile may keep its ancient place,
 And living loves enfold thee;
 Yet dost thou change, as others must,
 Whose souls have been baptized in dust.

X.

I ween thy smile is graver—
 Paler thy cheek, I ween:
 For thou the mystic sight hast seen,
 Which maketh quail the braver—
 The crowned and loved go naked down
 Without the love, without the crown!

* The patriot Tyrolese.

. XI.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope, came back to thee
Without a leaf. Art laying
Its wet cold wing, no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom, secretly ?

XII.

Or hast thou found another :
With plumes thy God hath given,
To leave the wave and meet in heaven
(As brother meeteth brother)
Th' eternal Dove who downward flings
His glory on its mounting wings ?

XIII.

Such glory rest upon thee,
Our Goethe's chang'd friend !
For earth's, that cometh to an end,
Hath faded and foregone thee—
And thou, the worshipper, hast spread
Thine idol's ashes o'er thine head !

A DRAMA OF EXILE.

Persons of the Drama.

ADAM.		Angels.
EVE.		Eden Spirits.
GABRIEL.		Earth Spirits and
LUCIFER.		Phantasms.

CHRIST in a Vision.

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with clouds. from the depth of which revolves the sword of fire self-moved. A watch of innumerable angels, rank above rank, slopes up from around it to the zenith; and the glare, cast from their brightness and from the sword, extends many miles into the wilderness. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance, flying along the glare. The ANGEL GABRIEL and LUCIFER are beside the gate.*

Lucifer. Hail, Gabriel, the keeper of the gate!
Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,
I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.

Gabriel. Angel of the sin,
Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear light
Which rounds the rebel's work with Maker's wrath,—
Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls;—
A monumental melancholy gloom
Seen down all ages; whence to mark despair,
And measure out the distances from good!
Go from us straightway.

Lucifer. Wherefore?

Gabriel. Lucifer,
Thy last step in this place, trod sorrow up.
Recoil before that sorrow, if not this sword.

Lucifer. Angels are in the world—wherefore not I?
Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I?
The cursed are in the world—wherefore not I?

Gabriel. Depart.

Lucifer. And where's the logic of "depart"?
Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt

To fix my postulate better. Dost thou dream
Of guarding some monopoly in heaven
Instead of earth? Why, I can dream with thee
To the length of thy wings.

Gabriel.

I do not dream.

This is not Heaven, even in a dream; nor earth,
As earth was once,—first breathed among the stars,—
Articulate glory from the mouth divine,—
To which the myriad spheres thrilled audibly,
Touched like a lute-string,—and the sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this
Is earth, not new created, but new cursed—
This, Eden's gate, not opened, but built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream?
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent! this the sword
(This sword, alive with justice and with fire!)
That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer
The angel! Wherefore, angel, go . . . depart—
Enough is sinned and suffered.

Lucifer.

By no means.

Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on!
It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse;
It holds, like mine immortal. Presently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves as green
Or greener, certes, than its knowledge-tree—
We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
More eminent for shadow—for the rest
We'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,
And temples, if it please you:—we'll have feasts
And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,
Till blood and wine shall mix and run along
Right o'er the edges. And good Gabriel,
(Ye like that word Heaven!) I too have strength—
Strength to behold Him, and not worship Him;
Strength to fall from Him, and not cry on Him;
Strength to be in the universe, and yet
Neither God nor His servant. The red sign
Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,
Is God's sign that it bows not unto God;
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth
Can bear more curse.

Gabriel.

O miserable earth,

O ruined angel!

Lucifer.

Well! and if it be,

I CHOSE this ruin: I elected it

Of my will, not of service. What I do,
 I do volitent, not obedient,
 And overtop thy crown with my despair.
 My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to Heaven;
 And leave me to the earth which is mine own
 In virtue of her misery, as I hers,
 In virtue of my ruin! turn from both,
 That bright, impassive, passive angelhood;
 And spare to read us backward any more
 Of your spent hallelujahs.

Gabriel. Spirit of scorn!

I might say, of unreason! I might say,
 That who despairs, acts; that who acts, connives
 With God's relations set in time and space;
 That who elects, assumes a something good
 Which God made possible; that who lives, obeys
 The law of a Life-maker . . .

Lucifer. Let it pass!

No more, thou Gabriel! What if I stand up
 And strike my brow against the crystalline
 Roofing the creatures,—shall I say for that,
 My stature is too high for me to stand,—
 Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou*.

Gabriel. I kneel.

Lucifer. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy heaven.
 And leave my earth to me.

Gabriel. Through heaven and earth
 God's will moves freely; and I follow it,
 As colour follows light. He overflows
 The firmamental walls with deity,
 Therefore with love: His lightnings go abroad,
 His pity may do so; His angels must,
 Whene'er He gives them charges.

Lucifer. Verily,

I and my demons—who are spirits of scorn—
 Might hold this charge of standing with a sword
 'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
 As the benignest angel of you all.

Gabriel. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.
 If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
 This morning for a moment, thou hadst known
 That only pity fitly can chastise,
 While hate avengeth.

Lucifer. As it is, I know

Something of pity. When I reeled in Heaven,
 And my sword grew too heavy for my wrist,
 Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce

So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne ;
 When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—
 The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,
 And that thought of the infinite of God,
 Drawn from the finite, speeding my descent ;
 When countless angel-faces, still and stern,
 Pressed out upon me from the level heavens,
 Adown the abysmal spaces ; and I fell,
 Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind
 By the sight in your eyes ;—'twas then I knew
 How ye could pity, my kind angelhood !

Gabriel. Yet, thou discrowned one, by the truth in me
 Which God keeps in me, I would give away
 All,—save that truth, and His love over it,—
 To lead thee home again into the light,
 And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars ;
 When their rays tremble round them with much song,
 Sung in more gladness !

Lucifer. Sing, my morning star !
 Last beautiful—last heavenly—that I loved !
 If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,
 What were it to this angel ?

Gabriel. What love is !
 And now I have named God.

Lucifer. Yet, Gabriel,
 By the lie in me which I keep myself,
 Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,
 What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts
 To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,
 Thou and I have not solved his problem yet
 Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—
 That red-clay and a breath ! who must, forsooth,
 Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
 With beauty and music waving in his trees
 And running in his rivers, to make glad
 His soul made perfect ; if it were not for
 The hope within thee, deeper than thy truth,
 Of finally conducting him and his
 To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
 Which affront heaven with their vacuity ?

Gabriel. Angel, there are no vacant thrones in heaven
 To suit thy bitter words. Glory and life
 Fulfil their own depletions : and if God
 Sighed you far from Him, His next breath drew in
 A compensative splendour up the skies,
 Flushing the starry arteries !

Lucifer. With a change .

So, let the vacant thrones, and gardens too,
 Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,
 As ye translate that word, to the dethroned
 And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,
 That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,
 Am here, and will not go; while there, along
 The light to which ye flash the desert out,
 Flies your adopted Adam! your red clay
 In two kinds, both being flawed. Why, what is this?
 Whose work is this? Whose hand was in the work?
 Against whose hand? In this last strife, methinks,
 I am not a fallen angel!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
 Aught of those exiles?

Lucifer. Ay: I know they have fled
 Wordless all day along the wilderness;
 I know they wear, for burden on their backs,
 The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
 And faces of the marshalled cherubim
 Shining against, not for them! and I know
 They dare not look in one another's face,
 As if each were a cherub!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
 Aught of their future?

Lucifer. Only as much as this:
 That evil will increase and multiply
 Without a benediction.

Gabriel. Nothing more?

Lucifer. Why so the angels taunt! What should be more?

Gabriel. God is more.

Lucifer. Proving what?

Gabriel. That He is God,

And capable of saving. Lucifer,
 I charge thee by the solitude He kept
 Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!

Lucifer. My foot is on the earth, firm as my sin!

Gabriel. I charge thee by the memory of heaven
 Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to God!

Lucifer. My sin is on the earth, to reign thereon.

Gabriel. I charge thee by the choral song we sang,
 When up against the white shore of our feet,
 The depths of the creation swelled and brake,—
 And the new worlds, the beaded foam and flower
 Of all that coil, roared outward into space
 On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to God.

Lucifer. My woe is on the earth, to curse thereby.

Gabriel. I charge thee by that mournful Morning Star

Which trembleth . . .

Lucifer. Hush! I will not hear thee speak
Of such things. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest, drops its weight of snows
By a night's growth, so, growing toward my ends
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!
Watch out thy service; I assert my will.
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men bend slow their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere
To ruffle their smooth manhood, and break up
With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS

*(Chanting from Paradise while ADAM and EVE fly across
the Sword-glare).*

Hearken, oh hearken! let your souls, behind you,
Lean, gently moved!
Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,
O lost, beloved!
Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled angels,
They press and pierce:
Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—
Voice throbs in verse!
We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden,
A time ago—
God gave us golden cups; and we were bidden
To feed you so!
But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,
No work to do;
The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining
The whole earth through;
And all those stains lie clearly round for shewing
(Not interfused!)
That brighter colours were the world's foregoing,
Than shall be used.
Hearken, oh hearken! ye shall hearken surely,
For years and years,
The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,
Of spirits' tears!
The yearning to a beautiful, denied you,
Shall strain your powers:—
Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,
Resumed from ours!

In all your music, our pathetic minor
 Your ears shall cross ;
 And all fair sights shall mind you of diviner,
 With sense of loss !
 We shall be near, in all your poet-languors
 And wild extremes ;
 What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,
 Or light with dreams !
 And when upon you, weary after roaming,
 Death's seal is put,
 By the foregone ye shall discern the coming,
 Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,
 Slow and solemn to your hearing !
 Plane and cedar, palm and fir,
 Tamarisk and juniper,
 Each is throbbing in vibration
 Since that crowning of creation,
 When the God-breath spake abroad,
 Peeling down the depths of Godhead.
Let us make man like to God.
 And the pine stood quivering
 In the Eden-gorges wooded,
 As the awful word went by ;
 Like a vibrant chorded string
 Stretched from mountain-peak to sky !
 And the cypress did expand,
 Slow and gradual, branch and head ;
 And the cedar's strong black shade
 Fluttered brokenly and grand !—
 Grove and forest bowed aslant
 In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
 In dim movements to the leaves
 Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
 In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
 In the sunlight and the moonlight
 Greenly sifted through the trees.
 Ever wave the Eden trees
 In the nightlight, and the noonlight,
 With a ruffling of green branches
 Shaded off to resonances ;
 Never stirred by rain or breeze !
 Fare ye well, farewell !

The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door!
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.
 Farewell! the trees of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-spirits.

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—
 Hark the flow!
 How the silence round you shivers,
 While our voices through it go
 Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,—
 Of the banks
 Where the green palms and red deer
 Crowd in intermingled ranks,
 As if all would drink at once,
 Where the living water runs!
 Of the fishes' golden edges
 Flashing in and out the sedges:
 Of the swans on silver thrones,
 Floating down the winding streams,
 With impassive eyes turned shoreward,
 And a chant of undertones,—
 And the lotos leaning forward
 To help them into dreams.
 Fare ye well, farewell!
 The river-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door!
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye heard before:
 Farewell! the streams of Eden,
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
 That singeth in Eden after you;
 And I am singing loud and true,
 And sweet,—I do not fail!
 I sit upon a cypress bough,
 Close to the gate; and I fling my song
 Over the gate and through the mail
 Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—
 Over the gate and after you!
 And the warden angels let it pass,
 Because the poor brown bird, alas!
 Sings in the garden, sweet and true.

And I build my song of high pure notes,
 Note over note, height over height,
 Till I strike the arch of the Infinite ;
 And I bridge abysmal agonies
 With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—
 And something abides, and something floats,
 In the song which I sing after you :
 Fare ye well, farewell !

The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some cadence which ye heard before.
 Farewell ! the birds of Eden,
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-spirits.

We linger, we linger,
 The last of the throng !
 Like the tones of a singer
 Who loves his own song.
 We are spirit-aromas
 Of blossom and bloom ;
 We call your thoughts home, as
 Ye breathe our perfume.
 To the amaranth's splendour
 Afire on the slopes ;
 To the lily-bells tender,
 And grey heliotropes ;
 To the poppy-plains, keeping
 Such dream-breath and blee,
 That the angels there stepping
 Grew whiter to see !
 To the nook, set with moly,
 Ye jested one day in,
 Till your smile waxed too holy,
 And left your lips praying !
 To the rose in the bower-place,
 That dripped o'er you sleeping ;
 To the asphodel flower place,
 Ye walked ankle-deep in !
 We pluck at your raiment,
 We stroke down your hair,—
 We faint in our lament,
 And pine into air.
 Fare ye well, farewell !

The Eden scents no longer sensible,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before.
Farewell! the flowers of Eden,
Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark ANGEL passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this outer edge,
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,
Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?

Eve. I have strength to look upward to thy face!

Adam. We need be strong: yon spectacle of cloud
Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
Is God's seal in a cloud. There seem to lie
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;
And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
From side to side,—in pendulous horror slow,—
Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat
On the intermediate ground from that to this,
In still reflection of still splendour. They,
The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
Thrones, dominations, pryncedoms, rank on rank,
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
On either side, and overhead the gate,—
Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
Set in an apex. That their faces shine
Betwixt the solemn claspings of their wings,
Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—
We only guess from hence, and not discern.

Eve. Though we were near enough to see them shine,
The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
To me, at least,—than could appear their light.

Adam. What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily
In a heap earthward; and thy body heaves
Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,
Seeing that I confess myself thy death
And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
Together with my name! Sweet, punish me!

O Love, be just ! and, ere we pass beyond
 The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
 Into the dark which earth must be to us,
 Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said
 My seed shall the first tempter's ! strike with curse,
 As God struck in the garden ! and as HE,
 Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
 Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—
 Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil
 To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord !
 I, also, after tempting, writhe on ground ;
 And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
 As suits me, O my tempted !

Adam. My beloved,
 Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
 For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
 My blessed life and light ! If we have fallen,
 It is that we have sinned,—we : God is just ;
 And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
 It must be that His balance holds the weights
 Of first and last sin on a level. What !
 Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
 Among the hills of Eden, here assume
 To mend the justice of the perfect God,
 By piling up a curse upon His curse,
 Against thee—thee ?

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God
 Might take thee into grace for scorning me ;
 Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
 Of inward abrogation of the sin !
 And so, the blessed angels might come down
 And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—
 Because I was not near to make them sad,
 Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
 If last in the transgression.

Eve. Thou !

Adam. If God,
 Who gave the right and joyance of the world
 Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,
 The best gift last ; the last sin was the worst,
 Which sinned against more complement of gifts
 And grace of giving. God ! I render back
 Strong benediction and perpetual praise
 From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,
 Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),
 That Thou, in striking my benumbed hands,

And forcing them to drop all other boons,
Of beauty, and dominion, and delight,—
Hast left this well-beloved Eve—this life
Within life—this best gift between their palms,
In gracious compensation

Eve. Is it thy voice?
Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden?

Adam. O my God!
I, standing here between the glory and dark,—
The glory of Thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall; the dark of our distress,
Which settles a step off in that drear world—
Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*,
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise;—
With angel looks and angel songs around,
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
And make society full desertness,
Without the uses of her comforting.

Eve. Or is it but a dream of thee, that speaks
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from heaven, which doth accuse me,
And look up from the earth which doth convict me,
Into her face; and crown my discrowned brow
Out of her love; and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds;
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart;
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—
Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath,
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides,
But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed.
My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;
The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend
This human love, I shall not be afraid
Of any human death; and yet because
I know this strength of love, I seem to know
Death's strength, by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
To shut the door close on my rising soul,—
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,
And leave thee lonely!

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,

Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay! and the tears
Running, as it might seem, my life from me,
They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
And weep so,—as if in a dream or prayer,—
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought
Which clipped my heart, and showed me evermore
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance, cast by swords
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,
Rocking against each other—‘O Lord God!’
(‘Twas so I prayed), I ask Thee by my sin,
And by Thy curse, and by Thy blameless heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from Thy face,
And from the face of my beloved here,
For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away
Into the new dark mystery of death!
I will lie still there; I will make no plaint;
I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word;
Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun,
Where peradventure I might sin anew
Against Thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
O death, whate’er it be, is good enough
For such as I.—For Adam—there’s no voice,
Shall ever say again, in heaven or earth,
It is not good for him to be alone.

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. ‘Twas an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more!
And God did use it for a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer;
Love makes it strong: and since I was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
I feel a music which comes slant from Heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—

But the love-angels who came erst to us,
 And when we said "GOD," fainted unawares
 Back from our mortal presence unto God,
 (As if He drew them inward in a breath)
 His name being heard of them,—I think that they
 With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,
 Invisible, but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
 Go upon your travel!
 Heaven assist the Human
 Smoothly to unravel
 All that web of pain
 Wherein ye are holden.
 Do ye know our voices
 Chanting down the Golden?
 Do ye guess our choice is,
 Being un beholden,
 To be harkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal
 God hath shut between us;
 Us, His shining people,—
 You, who once have seen us,
 And are blinded new!
 Yet, across the doorway,
 Past the silence reaching,
 Farewells evermore may,
 Blessing in the teaching,
 Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
 Day on day succeeding,
 With our presence glowed.
 We came as if the Heavens were bowed
 To a milder music rare!
 Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
 Treading down the steps of cloud;
 While our wings, outspreading
 Double calms of whiteness,
 Dropped superfluous brightness
 Down from stair to stair,

Second semichorus.

Or, abrupt though tender,
 While ye gazed on space,
 We flashed our angel-splendour
 In either human face !
 With mystic lilies in our hands,
 From the atmospheric bands,
 Breaking, with a sudden grace,
 We took you unaware !
 While our feet struck glories
 Outward, smooth and fair,
 Which we stood on floorwise,
 Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Oft, when Heaven-descended,
 Shut up in a secret light
 Stood we speechless in your sight,
 In a mute apocalypse !
 With dumb vibrations on our lips,
 From hosannas ended ;
 And grand half-vanishings
 Of the foregone things,
 Within our eyes, belated !
 Till the heavenly Infinite
 Falling off from our Created,
 Left our inward contemplation
 Opening into ministration.

Chorus.

Then in odes of burning,
 Brake we suddenly,
 And sang out the morning
 Nobly up the sky,—
 Or we drew
 Our music through
 The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
 And taught them our intense Divine !
 With our vital fiery notes
 All departed hither, thither,
 Trembling out into the æther,—
 Visible like beamy motes !—
 Or, as twilight drifted
 Through the cedar masses,
 The massive sun we lifted,
 Trailing purple, trailing gold
 Out between the passes
 Of the mountains manifold,
 To anthems slowly sung !

While he, aweary and in swoon,
 For joy to hear our climbing tune
 Pierce the faint stars' concentric rings,—
 The burden of his glory flung
 In broken lights upon our wings.

[*Chant dies away confusedly, and enter LUCIFER.*]

Lucifer. Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,
 Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed
 Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree;
 Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam! hold
 My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer—
 And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
 Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
 And leave us to the desert thou hast made
 Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime
 Athwart this path kept holy to our tears;
 Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

Lucifer. Curse freely! curses thicken. Why, this Eve
 Who thought me once part worthy of her ear,
 And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—
 Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
 The light of which is throbbing in and out
 Around their continuity of gaze,—
 Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,
 And, down from her white heights of womanhood,
 Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear
 To wager such an apple as she plucked,
 Against one riper from the tree of life,
 That she could curse too—as a woman may—
 Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly!
 I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—
 For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt.
 Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
 For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn;
 Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
 As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
 He could speak wisdom.

Lucifer. Our new gods, methinks,
 Deal more in thunders than in courtesies.
 And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon
 I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery,
 From all the wandering visions of the world,—
 May show worse railing than our lady Eve

Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.
But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both!

Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

Lucifer. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—
Who stung there, not so poorly! [*Aside.*]

Eve. Hold thy wrath,

Beloved Adam! let me answer him;

For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,

And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,

In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!

And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,

As freely as the streams of Eden flowed,

When we were happy by them. So, depart;

Leave us to walk the remnant of our time

Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek

To harm us any more or scoff at us,

Or ere the dust be laid upon our face

To find it the communion of the dust

And issue of the curse.—Go!

Adam. At once, go!

Lucifer. Forgive! and go! Ye images of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this?
What words are these to use? By what a thought
Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—a snake!
To-day—what?

Adam. A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel,—Who shall say!

Lucifer. Who told thee, Adam?

Adam. *Thou!* The prodigy

Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes,

Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.

I think that thou hast one day worn a crown

Under the eyes of God.

Lucifer. And why of God?

Adam. It were no crown else! Verily, I think
Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
Said it so surely; but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin!

Lucifer. A crown, by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me! now I know more than I knew.
Now I know thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent.

Lucifer. Because?

Adam. Because
A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million years,
Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
Such as this Adam.

Lucifer. Who is high and bold—
Be it said passing!—of a good red clay
Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong lower
Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh!
It is not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names) that spirits should rise
Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.
The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
Whoever riseth must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Lucifer. Ha, my clay-king!
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
The after generations. Earth, methinks,
Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs!
Classing these present dogmas with the rest
Of the old-world traditions—Eden fruits
And saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more!
We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
We would be alone,—Go!

Lucifer. Ah! ye talk the same,
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart!
In Heaven they said so, and at Eden's gate,—
And here, reiterant, in the wilderness!
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair!
None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet!
And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Lucifer. Nothing more?

Eve. I think no more.

Lucifer. False Heart—thou thinkest more!
Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,
Unwillingly but fully, that I stand

Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
 Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*
 Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word
 Which thrilled around us—God Himself being moved
 When that august work of a perfect shape,
 His dignities of sovran angel-hood,
 Swept out into the universe,—divine
 With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,
 And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings.
 Whereof I was, in motion and in form,
 A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,
 This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
 As God's voice is not here; nor even my crown—
 I do not know. What is this thought, or thing
 Which I call beauty? is it thought, or thing?
 Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
 Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?
 Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
 Under my own breath: my perceptions reel
 For evermore around it, and fall off,
 As if it too were holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty I call love.
 The attribute, the evidence, and end,
 The consummation to the inward sense,
 Of beauty apprehended from without,
 I still call love. As form, when colourless,
 Is nothing to the eye; that pine-tree there,
 Without its black and green, being all a blank;
 So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
 In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
 What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,
 And what collateral love moves on with thee;
 Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Lucifer. Love! what is love? I lose it. Beauty and love!
 I darken to the image. Beauty—Love!

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*]

Adam. Thou art pale, *Eve.*

Eve. The precipice of ill
 Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—
 And, hark! the starry harmony remote
 Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen so. By the hope
 And aspiration, by the love and faith,
 We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is, by the death!

Adam. Or rather, by the life of the Lord God!

How dim the angel grows, as if that blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

[*The music is stronger, gathering itself
into uncertain articulation.*]

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet, and strange! With every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

Adam.

Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it proceeds.

Mine orb'd image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks,
Back from me, back from me.

O my light-bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee?

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
I loved thee, with the fiery love of stars,
Who love by burning, and by loving move,
Too near the throned Jehovah, not to love.

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!
Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars,
Pale-passioned for my loss.
Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Mine orb'd heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee,
As fell thy grace of old
Down from me, down from me.

O my light-bearer,
Is another fairer
Won to thee, won to thee?
Ai, ai, Heosphoros,
Great love preceded loss,
Known to thee, known to thee.

Ai, ai!
Thou, breathing thy communicable grace
Of life into my light,
Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,
Hast inly fed,

And flooded me with radiance overmuch
From thy pure height.

Ai, ai!

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both ways spread,
Erect, irradiated,

Didst sting my wheel of glory

On, on before thee,

Along the Godlight, by a quickening touch!

Ha, ha!

Around, around the firmamental ocean,
I swam expanding with delirious fire!

Around, around, around, in blind desire

To be drawn upward to the Infinite—

Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the motion
To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,—
To a blind whirl of rapture and delight,—
I wound in girant orbits, smooth and white

With that intense rapidity!

Around, around,

I wound and interwound,

While all the cyclic heavens about me spun!
Stars, planets, suns, and moons, dilated broad,
Then flashed together into a single sun,

And wound, and wound in one;

And as they wound I wound,—around, around,
In a great fire, I almost took for God!

Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks

Down from me, down from me—

My beauty falls, methinks,

Down from thee, down from thee!

O my light-bearer,

O my path-preparer,

Gone from me, gone from me!

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not Thou:
All things are altered since that time ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know—

I am strange—I am slow!

Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me.

Ai, ai!

When, having wept all night, at break of day,
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey.

Ai, ai !

And gazing on me, such shall comprehend
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even,
And melancholy leaning out of Heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss !

Ai, ai, Heosphoros !

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen
vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, grey and ghaſt,
And ſtare with blank ſignificance of loſs
Right in our faces ! Is the wind up ?

Eve.

Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and the junipers
Rock ſlowly through the miſt, without a noiſe ;
And ſhapes, which have no certainty of ſhape,
Drift duſkly in and out between the pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
Shadows without a body, which contract
And lengthen as we gaze on them.

Eve.

O Life

Which is not man's nor angel's ! What is this ?

Adam. No cauſe for fear. The circle of God's life
Contains all life beſide.

Eve.

I think the earth

Is crazed with curſe, and wanders from the ſenſe
Of thoſe firſt laws affixed to form and ſpace
Or ever ſhe knew ſin !

Adam.

We will not fear :

We were brave ſinning.

Eve.

Yea, I plucked the fruit

With eyes upturned to Heaven, and ſeeing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter ſaid,—not God..
My heart, which beat then, ſinks. The ſun hath ſunk
Out of ſight with our Eden.

Adam.

Night is near.

Eve. And God's curſe, neareſt. Let us travel back,
And ſtand within the ſword-glare till we die ;
Believing it is better to meet death
Than ſuffer deſolation.

Adam.

Nay, beloved !

We muſt not pluck death from the Maker's hand,

As erst we plucked the apple : we must wait
 Until He gives death, as He gave us life ;
 Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift,
 Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah ! Dost thou discern what I behold ?

Adam. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes,
 From their dilated orbits, bound before
 To meet the spectral Dread !

Eve. I am afraid—

Ah, ah ! The twilight bristles wild with shapes
 Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
 And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,
 Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.
 How near they reach . . . and far ! How grey they move—
 Treading upon the darkness without feet,—
 And fluttering on the darkness without wings !
 Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground ;
 Some keep one path, like sheep ; some rock like trees ;
 Some glide like a fallen leaf ; and some flow on,
 Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire—
 And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah ! Dost thou pause to say
 Like what ?—coil like the serpent, when he fell
 From all the emerald splendour of his height,
 And writhed,—and could not climb against the curse,
 Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—
 I think it is God's will to make me afraid ;
 Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place
 Of His beloved angels—gone from us,
 Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,
 That didst permit the angels to go home,
 And live no more with us who are not pure ;
 Save *us* too from a loathly company—
 Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
 As *we* are in the purest ! Pity us—
 Us too ! nor shut us in the dark, away
 From verity and from stability,
 Or what we name such, through the precedence
 Of earth's adjusted uses,—evermore
 To doubt, betwixt our senses and our souls,
 Which are the most distraught, and full of pain,
 And weak of apprehension.

Adam. Courage, Sweet !
 The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop
 With slow concentric movement, each on each,—
 Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed

In lines more definite for imagery
 And clearer for relation ; till the throng
 Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
 Distinguishable phantasms, vague and grand,
 Which sweep out and around us vastly,
 And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale shadow ! there are twelve.
 Thou, who didst name all lives, hast names for these ?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,
 Which rounds us with its visionary dread,—
 Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,
 In fantasmic apposition and approach,
 To those celestial, constellated twelve
 Which palpitate adown the silent nights
 Under the pressure of the hand of God,
 Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,
 Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven !
 But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
 The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—
 Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,
 In twelve colossal shades, instead of stars,
 Through which the ecliptic line of mystery
 Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,
 Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,
 Do we see this ?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high
 By reason of the passion of our grief,—
 And, from the top of sense, looked over sense,
 To the significance and heart of things
 Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life
 As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved !
 By stricter apprehension of the sight,
 Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
 Thy terror of the shadows ;—what is known
 Subduing the unknown, and taming it
 From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,
 Presents a lion,—albeit, twenty times
 As large as any lion—with a roar
 Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
 And a strange horror stirring in his mane !
 And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—
 Good against ill, perchance ; and there, a crab
 Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
 Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,

Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself ;
 A bull stands horned here with gibbous glooms ;
 And a ram likewise ; and a scorpion writhes
 Its tail in ghastly slime, and stings the dark !
 This way a goat leaps, with wild blank of beard ;
 And here, fantastic fishes dusky float,
 Using the calm for waters, while their fins
 Throb out slow rhythms along the shallow air !
 While images more human —

Eve. How he stands,
 That phantasm of a man—who is not *thou* !
 Two phantasms of two men !

Adam. One that sustains,
 And one that strives !—resuming, so, the ends
 Of manhood's curse of labour.* Dost thou see
 That phantasm of a woman ?—

Eve. I have seen—
 But look off to those small humanities,†
 Which draw me tenderly across my fear,—
 Lesser and fainter than my womanhood,
 Or yet thy manhood—with strange innocence
 Set in the misty lines of head and hand
 They lean together ! I would gaze on them
 Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,—
 As the stars do in watching anything,—
 Should light them forward from their outline vague,
 To clear configuration—

Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic nature, arise from the ground.

But what Shapes
 Rise up between us in the open space,—
 And thrust me into horror, back from hope !

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,—
 With a disconsolate, blank majesty
 Set in their wondrous faces !—with no look,
 And yet an aspect—a significance
 Of individual life and passionate ends,
 Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound !
 O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound !
 How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,
 Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail,

* Adam recognises in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combatting,—the passive and active forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

† Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Around the cyclic zodiac ; and gains force,
 And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,
 On the wan faces of these images
 We see before us ; whereby modified,
 It draws a straight line of articulate song
 From out that spiral faintness of lament—
 And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth ;
 God spake me softly out among the stars,
 As softly as a blessing of much worth,—
 And then, His smile did follow unawares,
 That all things, fashioned, so, for use and duty,
 Might shine anointed with His chrim of beauty—

Yet I wail !

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
 Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall—
 Individual aspect and complexity
 Of giratory orb and interval,
 Lost in the fluent motion of delight
 Towards the high ends of Being, beyond sight—

Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I am the Spirit of the harmless beasts,
 Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming ;
 Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
 That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming,
 And tasted, in each drop within the measure,
 The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—

Yet I wail !

What a full hum of life, around His lips,
 Bore witness to the fulness of creation !
 How all the grand words were full-laden ships ;
 Each sailing onward, from enunciation,
 To separate existence,—and each bearing
 The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing !—

Yet I wail !

Eve. They wail, beloved ! they speak of glory and God,
 And they wail—wail. That burden of the song
 Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
 Into the lap of silence !

Adam.

Hark, again !

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
 My joy stood up within me bold and glad,
 To answer God ; and, when His work was full,
 To "very good," responded "very glad !"

Filtered through roses, did the light inclose me ;
 And bunches of the grape swam blue across me—
 Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers ! I rejoiced
 In my young tumbling lions, rolled together !
 My stag—the river at his fetlocks—poised,
 Then dipped his antlers, through the golden weather,
 In the same ripple which the alligator
 Left in his joyous troubling of the water—
 Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood—
 What wordless triumph did your voices render !
 O mountain-summits, where the angels stood,
 And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendour ;
 How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
 Accept the Heavenly—knowing ye were worthy !
 Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes !
 My horses—my ground eagles, for swift fleeing !
 My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,—
 My calm cold fishes of a silver being,—
 How happy were ye, living and possessing,
 O fair half-souls, capacious of full blessing.
 Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Now hear my charge to-day,
 Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers,
 By God's sword at your backs ! I lent my clay
 To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers :
 And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me
 The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—
 And I wail !

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Behold ye that I fasten
 My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured ?
 Accursed transgressors ! down the steep ye hasten,—
 Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it downward
 Unto your ruin. Lo ! my lions, scenting
 The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—
 And I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Do ye hear that I wail ?
 I had no part in your transgression—none !
 My roses on the bough did bud not pale—

My rivers did not loiter in the sun.
 I was obedient. Wherefore, in my centre,
 Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter?—
 And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! I shriek in the assault
 Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded!
 My nightingales sang sweet without a fault,
 My gentle leopards innocently bounded;
 We were obedient—what is this convulses
 Our blameless life with pangs and fever-pulses?
 And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His angels' swords
 To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
 Let us pass out and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
 This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
 Curles round us, like a river cold and drear,
 And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

First Spirit.

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners, strike
 A sense of death to me, and undug graves!
 The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling, like
 The ragged foam along the ocean-waves:
 The restless earthquakes rock against each other;—
 The elements moan 'round me—"Mother, mother"—
 And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;
 Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.
 Why have ye done this thing? What did we do
 That we should fall from bliss, as ye from duty?
 Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,
 Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—
 And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit, of the harmless earth—
 To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives—
 Inferior creatures, but still innocent—
 Be salutation from a guilty mouth,
 Yet worthy of some audience and respect
 From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
 God hath rebuked us, who is over us,
 To give rebuke or death; and if ye wail
 Because of any suffering from our sin,
 Ye, who are under and not over us,
 Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
 And pass out from our presence in such peace

As we have left you, to enjoy revenge,
Such as the Heavens have made you. Verily,
There must be strife between us, large as sin.

Eve. No strife, mine Adam! Let us not stand high
Upon the wrong we did, to reach disdain,
Who rather should be humbler evermore,
Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall I speak—
I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud?
I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—
My king, if not the world's?

Adam.

Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—

. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!

I pray you humbly in the name of God;
Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
From the wronged to the wronger; this and no more;
I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,
That absolute pardon is impossible
From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
And that I cannot evermore, as once,
With worthy acceptance of pure joy,
Behold the trances of the holy hills
Beneath the leaning stars; or watch the vales,
Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy;
Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between
Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells
Work out their bubbling lengths beneath the ground,—
And all the birds sing, till, for joy of song,
They lift their trembling wings, as if to heave
The too-much weight of music from their heart,
And float it up the æther! I am 'ware
That these things I can no more apprehend,
With a pure organ, into a full delight;
The sense of beauty and of melody
Being no more aided in me by the sense
Of personal adjustment to those heights
Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,—
But rather coupled darkly, and made ashamed,
By my perceiving of sin and fall,
And melancholy of humilient thoughts.
But, oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this
Your accusation must confront my soul,
And your pathetic utterance and full gaze

Must evermore subdue me : be content—
 Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,
 Not to say loving ! let my tears fall thick
 As watering dews of Eden, unreproached ;
 And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,
 Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,
 And peradventure better, while more sad.
 For look to it, sweet Spirits—look well to it—
 It will not be amiss in you who kept
 The law of your own righteousness, and keep
 The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—
 To pity me twice fallen,—from that, and this,—
 From joy of place, and also right of wail,—
 “ I wail ” being not for me—only “ I sin.”
 Look to it, O sweet Spirits !—

For was I not,

At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
 When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs
 Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
 All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God
 Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,
 The lady of the world, princess of life,
 Mistress of feast and favour ? Could I touch
 A rose with my white hand, but it became
 Redder at once ? Could I walk leisurely
 Along our swarded garden, but the grass
 Tracked me with greenness ? Could I stand aside
 A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
 But all the leaves did tremble as alive,
 With songs of fifty birds who were made glad
 Because I stood there ? Could I turn to look
 With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,
 Now good for only weeping,—upon man,
 Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced
 Because I looked on him ? Alas, alas !
 And is not this much woe, to cry “ alas ! ”
 Speaking of joy ? And is not this more shame,
 To have made the woe myself, from all that joy ?
 To have stretched mine hand, and plucked it from the tree,
 And chosen it for fruit ? Nay, is not this
 Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,
 And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,
 Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy ?

Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Harken, Spirits !
 Our God, who is the enemy of none,
 But only of their sin,—hath set your hope
 And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.

Show reverence, then,—and never bruise her more
 With unpermitted and extreme reproach ;
 Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down
 Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift to us,
 Of sovranly by reason and freewill ;
 Sinning against the province of the Soul
 To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate,
 And pass out from her presence with no words.

Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart,—
 O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of reverence,—
 And let me speak ; for, not being innocent,
 It little doth become me to be proud ;
 And I am prescient by the very hope
 And promise set upon me, that henceforth,
 Only my gentleness shall make me great,
 My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
 Be witness that I stand in your reproof
 But one sun's length off from my happiness—
 Happy, as I have said, to look around—
 Clear to look up !—And now ! I need not speak—
 Ye see me what I am ; ye scorn me so,—
 Because ye see me what I have made myself
 From God's best making ! Alas,—peace foregone,—
 Love wronged,—and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
 Upon all, vainly ! Alas, me ! alas,
 Who have undone myself from all that best,
 Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest,
 Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down—
 What word metes absolute loss ? let absolute loss
 Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived
 Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
 Wander to-day beneath the roofless world !
I, reigning the earth's empress, yesterday,
 Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers !
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,
 Composed and glad, as singing-birds the sun,
 Might shriek now from our dismal desert, " God,"
 And hear Him make reply, " What is thy need,
 Thou whom I cursed to-day ? "

Adam.

Eve !

Eve.

I, at last,

Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
 Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
 And curse-mete for him ! And, so, pity us,
 Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
 And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
 Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow

With boughs on both sides. In the shade of which,
 When presently ye shall behold us dead,
 For the poor sake of our humility,
 Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
 And drop your twilight dews against our brows ;
 And stroking with mild airs, our harmless hands
 Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
 Distilling through your pity over us,
 And suffer it, self-reconciled to pass.

LUCIFER rises in the circle.

Lucifer. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
 Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
 Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?
 Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
 And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
 My docile Eve! I teach you to despond,
 Who taught you disobedience. Look around ;—
 Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you talk, unmoved,
 As if ye were red clay again, and talked!
 What are your words to them? your griefs to them?
 Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause
 For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
 That they should pause for *you*, in hating you?
 Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
 Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,
 Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
 And cannot expiate for it.

Adam.

It is true.

Lucifer. Ay, it is true. The clay-king testifies
 To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer.

And certes, *that* is true.

Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
 Could wail among you. O thou universe,
 That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ai, ai, Heosphoros!

Earth Spirits.

I wail, I wail.

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from grief to God,
 And could not see Him ;—wretched Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an angel!

Earth Spirits.

I wail—wail!

Lucifer (after a pause). Dost thou remember, Adam, when
 the curse
 Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
 Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering

In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour
 A lion couched,—part raised upon his paws,
 With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
 And his mane listening. When the ended curse
 Left silence in the world,—right suddenly
 He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,
 As if the new reality of death
 Were dashed against his eyes,—and roared so fierce,
 (Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat
 Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)—
 And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
 Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down the vales
 To distant silence,—that the forest beasts,
 One after one, did mutter a response
 In savage and in sorrowful complaint
 Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,
 He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height,
 Hid by the dark-orbed pines.

Adam. It might have been.

I heard the curse alone.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. That lion is the type of what I am!
 And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
 And roared, O Adam—comprehending doom;
 So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
 I cry out here, between the Heavens and earth,
 My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
 Which damn me to this depth!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail—O God!

Lucifer. I scorn you that ye wail,
 Who use your petty griefs for pedestals
 To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
 And deal in pathos of antithesis
 Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are;—
 I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry,
 I, too, would drive up, like a column erect,
 Marble to marble, from my heart to Heaven,
 A monument of anguish, to transpierce
 And overtop your vapory complaints
 Expressed from feeble woes!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. For, O ye Heavens, ye are my witnesses,
 That I, struck out from nature in a blot,
 The outcast, and the mildew of things good,
 The leper of angels, the excepted dust
 Under the common rain of daily gifts,—

I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
 To whom the highest and the lowest alike
 Say, Go from us—we have no need of thee,—
 Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
 He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair;
 Ask, if I caught not fair and silvery
 His blessing for chief angels, on my head,
 Until it grew there, a crown crystallised!
 Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as “Gabriel”—
Lucifer—soft as “Michael!” while serene
 I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
 Answered “my Father,” innocent of shame
 And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,
 White angels in your niches,—I repent,—
 And would tread down my own offences, back
 To service at the footstool? *That's* read wrong:
 I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
 Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep
 Against the sides of this prodigious pit,
 I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail
 On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
 And to attest it in the ecstasy
 And exultation of a woe sustained
 Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along

Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny griefs,
 In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed
 To your own conscience, by the dread extremes
 Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
 It is a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath
 Strewn woolly soft with promise; if ye have sinned,
 Your prayers tread high as angels! if ye have grieved,
 Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
 And power to die disproveth right to grieve.
 Go to! ye call this ruin? I half-scorn
 The ill I did you! Were ye wronged by me,
 Hated and tempted, and undone of me,—
 Still, what's your hurt to mine, of doing hurt,
 Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
 This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through
 The hand that wields it.

Go—I curse you all.

Hate one another—feebly—as ye can;
 I would not certes cut you short in hate—
 Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!
 I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth.

As wintry blasts may breathe on wintry leaves,
 And, lifting up their brownness, show beneath
 The branches very bare.—Beseech you, give
 To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love
 For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
 An answer rather fitting to the sin
 Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I trow,
 For justice' sake, gave their's.

I curse you both,
 Adam and Eve! Say grace as after meat,
 After my curses. May your-tears fall hot
 On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—
 And yet rejoice. Increase and multiply,
 Ye and your generations, in all plagues,
 Corruptions, melancholics, poverties,
 And hideous forms of life and fears of death;
 The thought of death being always eminent
 Immovable and dreadful in your life,
 And deafly and dumbly insignificant
 Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,—
 Whichever of you lieth dead the first,—
 Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!
 My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
 And HE find no redemption—nor the wing
 Of seraph move your way—and yet rejoice!
 Rejoice,—because ye have not set in you
 This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate
 Which glares without, because it burns within—
 Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,
 Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
 To God and His reflex beatitudes,
 Moan ever in the central universe,
 With the great woe of striving against Love—
 And gasp for space amid the Infinite—
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness—
 Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
 To kingship of resistant agony
 Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,
 And willing to hate good and to hate love,
 And willing to will on so evermore,
 Scorning the Past, and damning the To come—
 Go and rejoice! I curse you! [LUCIFER *vanishes*.

Earth Spirit.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon
 Which can lean to you aright!
 When your bodies take the guerdon
 Of the death-curse in our sight,

Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend you.
 Then ye shall not move an eyelid
 Though the stars look down your eyes ;
 And the earth, which ye defiled,
 She shall show you to the skies,—
 “Lo ! these kings of ours—who sought to comprehend
 you.”

First Spirit.

And the element shall boldly
 All your dust to dust constrain ;
 Unresistedly and coldly,
 I will smite you with my rain !
 From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
 To assume a royal part,
 He shall reign, crowned and ancinted,
 O'er the noble human heart !
 Give him counsel against losing of that Eden !

Adam. Do ye scorn us ? Back your scorn
 Toward your faces grey and lorn,
 As the wind drives back the rain,
 Thus I drive with passion-strife ;
 I who stand beneath God's sun,
 Made like God, and, though undone,
 Not unmade for love and life.
 Lo ! ye utter words in vain !
 By my free will that chose sin,
 By mine agony within
 Round the passage of the fire ;
 By the pinings which disclose
 That my native soul is higher
 Than what it chose,—

We are yet too high, O spirits, for your disdain.
Eve. Nay, beloved ! If these be low,
 We confront them with no height ;
 We stooped down to their level
 In working them that evil :
 And their scorn that meets our blow,
 Scathes aright.
 Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly,
 When ye lie beneath the sward ?
 There, my lily shall grow stately,
 Though ye answer not a word—
 And her fragrance shall be scornful of your silence !

While your throne, ascending calmly,
 We, in heirdom of your soul,
 Flash the river, lift the palm tree,
 The dilated ocean, roll
 With the thoughts that throbb'd within you—round the
 islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
 Your significance of will :
 With the grandeur of your spirit,
 Shall our broad savannahs fill—
 In our winds, your exultations shall be springing.
 Even your parlance which inveigles,
 By our rudeness, shall be won :
 Hearts poetic in our eagles,
 Shall beat up against the sun,
 And pour downward, in articulate clear singing.
 Your bold speeches, our Behemoth,
 With his thunderous jaw, shall wield !
 Your high fancies shall our Mammoth
 Breathe sublimely up the shield
 Of St. Michael, at God's throne, who waits to speed him
 Till the heavens' smooth-grooved thunder
 Spinning back, shall leave them clear ;
 And the angels, smiling wonder,
 With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,
 Shall cry, "Ho, ye heirs of Adam ! ye exceed him !"

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet, from the dreary ground.
 Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
 But not by *these*.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in *these*.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God foredoomed despair,
 He had not spoken hope. He may destroy,
 Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose !
 I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
 This morning as I went forth ; and my heart
 Hath beat against its petals all the day.
 I thought it would be always red and full,
 As when I plucked it—*Is* it ?—ye may see !
 I cast it down to you that ye may see,
 All of you !—count the petals lost of it—
 And note the colours faded ! ye may see :
 And I am as it is, who yesterday
 Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth !
 I almost, from my miserable heart,
 Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,
 Which will not let me, down the slope of death,

Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins around the earth-zodiac; and filling the circle with its presence, and then waiving off into the east, carries the flower away with it. EVE falls upon her face. ADAM stands erect.*

Adam. So, verily,
The last departs.

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both. Love said to me, "Do not die,"
And I replied. "O Love, I will not die.
I exiled and I will not orphan Love."
But now it is no choice of mine to die—
My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back.
Death's consummation crowns completed life,
Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee
For others; if for others, then for thee,—
For thee and me.

[*The wind revolves from the east, and round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden-flower, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.*

Let thy soul shake its leaves,
To feel the mystic wind—Hark!

Eve. I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive,
Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into,
From the heart and from the brain,—
Something strange, that overmuch is
Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches,
In a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we achieve,
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which, with pulses manifold,
Strikes the heart out full and fair—

Active doer, noble liver,
 Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,—
 Though the vessel's prow will quiver
 At the lifting of the anchor :
 Yet do we strive in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we conceive
 Is a clear thing and a fair,
 Which we set in crystal air,
 That its beauty may be plain :
 With a breathing and a flooding
 Of the heaven-life on the whole,
 While we hear the forests budding
 To the music of the soul—
 Yet is it tuned in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we perceive,
 Is a strong thing and a grave,
 Which for others' use we have,
 Duty laden to remain.
 We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
 Of the right against the wrong,—
 We are earnest-hearted teachers
 Of the truth which maketh strong—
 Yet do we teach in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we relieve,
 Is a low thing and a light,
 Which is jested out of sight,
 And made worthy of disdain !
 Strike with bold electric laughter
 The high tops of things divine—
 Turn thy head, my brother, after,
 Lest thy tears fall in my wine ;—
 For is all laughed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing,—of grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,—
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward main.
I hear life—life!

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched
Scarlet to paleness: and thine eyes drink fast
Of Glory from full cups; and thy moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
Whether to utter words, or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the coming life?
Hear the steep generations, how they fall
Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near;
Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.
[*EVE SINKS DOWN AGAIN.*]

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we believe,
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily,
To view God without a stain:
Till, recoiling where the shade is,
We retread our steps again,
And descend the gloomy Hades,
To taste man's mortal pain.
Shall it be climbed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart,
Which we love in, heart to heart
Until one heart fitteth twain.
“Wilt thou be one with me?”
“I will be one with thee!”
“Ha, ha!—we love and live!”
Alas! ye love and die!
Shriek—who shall reply?

For is it not loved in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly.

Though it be all in vain.

Old voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we receive,

Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which, consummated in grief,

Leaveth ashes for all gain.

Is it not *all* in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly.

Though it be *all* in vain.

[Voices *die away*.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Humanity

Die off ;—so let me die.

Adam.

So let us die,

When God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. O spirits ! by the gentleness ye use

In winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,—

In gliding waters under lily-leaves,—

In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush

A bird makes in her nest, with feet and wings,—

Fulfil your natures ! Do not any more

Taunt us or mock us—let us die alone.

Earth Spirits.

Agreed ; allowed !

We gather out our natures like a cloud,

And thus fulfil their lightnings ! Thus, and thus !

Hearken, O hearken to us !

First Spirit.

As the east-wind blows bleakly in the norland,—

As the snow-wind beats blindly from the moorland,—

As the simoom drives wild across the desert,—

As the thunder roars deep in the Unmeasured,—

As the torrent tears an ocean-world to atoms,—

As the whirlpool grinds fathoms below fathoms,—

Thus,—and thus !

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison chilly,—

As the tiger, in the jungle, crouching stilly,—

As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of anger,—

As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering clangour,—

As the vultures that scream against the thunder,—

As the owlets that sit and moan asunder,—
Thus,—and thus!

Eve. Adam! God!

Adam. Ye cruel, cruel, unrelenting Spirits!
By the power in me of the sovran soul,
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the angels' march,
I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of you!

Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha! thou art king!
With a sin for a crown,
And a soul undone!
Thou, who antagonised,
Tortured and agonised,
Art held in the ring
Of the zodiac!
Now, king, beware!
We are many and strong,
Whom thou standest among,
And we press on the air,
And we stifle thee back,
And we multiply where
Thou wouldst trample us down
From rights of our own,
To an utter wrong—
And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
O forlorn!
We shall spring up like corn,
And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee! I make appeal
Unto Thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,
O sinned against, great God!—My seed, my seed,
There is hope set on THEE—I cry to Thee,
Thou mystic Seed that shalt be!—leave us not
In agony beyond what we can bear,
And in debasement below thunder-mark
For Thine arch-image,—taunted and perplex:
By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
Whom thou, Lord, rulest alway. O my Seed,
Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick
Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy face,
Let me have token! for my soul is bruised
Before the serpent's head.

[*A vision of CHRIST appears in the midst of the zodiac,
which pales before the heavenly light. The Earth
Spirits grow greyer and fainter.*

CHRIST. LO, I AM HERE!

Adam. This is God!—Curse us not, God, any more.

Eve. But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,
Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy feet!
Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—
To the low height of some good angel's feet,—
For such to tread on, when he walketh straight,
And Thy lips praise Him.

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the reproach
And cruel and unmitigated blame
Ye cast upon your masters. True, they have sinned;
And true, their sin is reckoned into loss
For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence,
Which of you praises? since God made your acts
Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands
With instincts and imperious sanctities,
From self-defacement? Which of you disdains
These sinners, who, in falling, proved their height
Above you, by their liberty to fall?
And which of you complains of loss by them,
For whose delight and use ye have your life
And honour in creation? Ponder it!
This regent and sublime Humanity,
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun,—
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,—
Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,
Lay flat your forests, master with a look
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this rule
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast
Devouring; tree by tree, with strangling roots
And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
And mutter, "Why, God, hast Thou made us thus?"
And, pining to a sallow idiocy,
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life;
Then stagnate into rottenness, and drop
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal down
The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore, over you,
Accept this sceptre; therefore be content
To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite
And service in you, to this sceptred hand.
Be ye to man as angels be to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,

Suggesters to his soul of higher things
 Than any of your highest. So, at last,
 He shall look round on you, with lids too straight
 To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well ;
 And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
 And praise you when he sings his open songs,
 For the clear song-note he has learnt in you,
 Of purifying sweetness ; and extend
 Across your head his golden fantasies,
 Which glorify you into soul from sense !
 Go, serve him for such price. That not in vain ;
 Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
 My word here for an oath, Mine oath for act
 To be hereafter. In the name of which
 Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
 I bless you through the hope and through the peace,
 Which are Mine,—to the Love, which is Myself.
Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit Thou bless me not
 In set words, I am blessed in hearkening Thee—
 Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—
 It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
 Take heart before this Presence. Rise, aspire
 Unto the calms and magnanimities,
 The lofty uses, and the noble ends,
 The sanctified devotion and full work,
 To which thou art elect for evermore,
 First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
 Whereby sin dieth ! Raise the majesties
 Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
 And front with level eyelids the To come,
 And all the dark o' the world. Behold ! my voice,
 Which, naming erst the creatures, did express,—
 God breathing through my breath,—the attributes
 And instincts of each creature in its name ;
 Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves
 Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,—
 A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
 Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, woman, rise
 To thy peculiar and best altitudes
 Of doing good and of enduring ill,—
 Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
 And reconciling all that ill and good
 Unto the patience of a constant hope,—

Rise with thy daughters ! If sin came by thee,
 And by sin, death, the ransom-righteousness,
 The heavenly life and compensative rest
 Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
 Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
 An angel of the woe thou didst achieve ;
 Found acceptable to the world instead
 Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
 Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied ;
 Something thou hast to bear through womanhood—
 Peculiar suffering answering to the sin ;
 Some pang paid down for each new human life ;
 Some weariness in guarding such a life—
 Some coldness from the guarded ; some mistrust
 From those thou hast too well served ; from those beloved
 Too loyally, some treason ; feebleness
 Within thy heart, and cruelty without ;
 And pressures of an alien tyranny,
 With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
 And stronger sinews. But, go to ! thy love
 Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,
 After its own life-working. A child's kiss,
 Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad :
 A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich ;
 An old man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong ;
 Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
 Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
 I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
 With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear
 Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
 From all the generations which succeed.
 Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close ;
 Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close,—
 I bless thee in the name of Paradise,
 And by the memory of Edenic joys
 Forfeit and lost ;—by that last cypress-tree
 Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out ;
 And by the blessed nightingale, which threw
 Its melancholy music after us ;—
 And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
 Did follow softly, plucking us behind
 Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
 And fourfold river-courses :—by all these,
 I bless thee to the contraries of these ;
 I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
 To the elemental change and the turbulence,
 And to the roar of the estranged beasts,

And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
To each one of these ends,—and to this END
Of Death and the hereafter!

Eve. I accept
For me and for my daughters this high part,
Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest ;
And in the place of Eden's lost delight,
Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;
While on my longest patience there shall wait
Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
That humbleness may keep it in the shade.
Shall it be so ? Shall I smile, saying so ?
O seed ! O King ! O God, who *shalt* be seed,—
What shall I say ? As Eden's fountains swelled
Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
Betwixt Thy love and power !

And, sweetest thoughts
Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first time
Since God said " Adam," walking through the trees,
I dare to pluck you, as I plucked erewhile
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope,
So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,—
And throw you forward on the outer earth
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

Adam. As Thou, Christ, to illumine it, holdest Heaven
Broadly above our heads.

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*]

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun.

Adam. We worship in Thy silence, Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe,—
Diviner, with the possible of Death !
We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour Christ.

Adam. How do Thy clear, still eyes transpierce our souls,
As gazing *through* them toward the Father-throne,
In a pathological, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air
Straight on each other.

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon.

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God ;
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes,
And grand dim lips, that murmur evermore

God, God, God! while the rush of life and death,
 The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,—
 The avalanches of the ruining worlds
 Tolling down space,—the new worlds' genesis
 Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth
 Of the ancient atoms, and first forms of earth,
 The slow procession of the swathing seas
 And firmamental waters,—and the noise
 Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
 All these flow onward in the intervals
 Of that reiterant, solemn sound of—**GOD!**
 Which **WORD**, innumerable angels straightway lift
 High on celestial altitudes of song
 And choral adoration, and then drop
 The burden softly! shutting the last notes
 Hushed up in silver wings! I' the noon of time,
 Nathless, that mystic-lipped Eternity
 Shall wax as silent-dumb as Death himself,
 While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,
 "God! why hast Thou forsaken Me, My God?"
 And not a voice in heaven shall answer it.

[The transfiguration is complete in sadness.]

Adam. Thy speech is of the Heavens; yet, O, Christ,
 Awfully human are Thy voice and face!

Eve. My nature overcomes me from Thine eyes.

CHRIST. Then in the noon of time, shall one from
 Heaven,

An angel fresh from looking upon God,
 Descend before a woman, blessing her
 With perfect benediction of pure love,
 For all the world in all its elements;
 For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea;
 For all men in the body and in the soul,
 Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship Thee!
 I thank Thee for that woman!

CHRIST.

For, at last,

I, wrapping round Me your humanity,
 Which, being sustained, shall neither break nor burn
 Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,
 And ransom you and it, and set strong peace
 Betwixt you and its creatures. With My pangs
 I will confront your sins: and since your sins
 Have sunken to all Nature's heart from yours,
 The tears of My clean soul shall follow them,
 And set a holy passion to work clear
 Absolute consecration. In My brow

Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned anew
 Your discrowned human nature. Look on Me
 As I shall be uplifted on a cross
 In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,
 So shall I lift up in My pierced hands,
 Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
 But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,
 The whole creation. Henceforth in My name
 Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope !
 Your graves shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,
 Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts ;
 And, one step past them, a new Eden-gate
 Shall open on a hinge of harmony,
 And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall
 No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
 Any more from it. In which hope, move on,
 First sinners and first mourners. Live and love,—
 Doing both nobly, because lowlily ;
 Live and work, strongly,—because patiently !
 And, for the deed of death, trust it to God,
 That it be well done, unrepented of,
 And not to loss. And thence, with constant prayers
 Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
 The smile of your heroic cheer may float
 Above all floods of earthly agonies,
 Purification being the joy of pain !

[*The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade, as the stars, star by star, shine out in the sky ; and the following chant from the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep back into the zodiac and disappear with it) accompanies the process of change.*

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
 Both for living and for dying,
 We, our homage-oath once broken,
 Fasten back again in sighing ;
 And the creatures and the elements renew their covenanting.
 Here, forgive us all our scorning ;
 Here, we promise milder duty ;
 And the evening and the morning
 Shall re-organise in beauty,
 A sabbath day in sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
 May be strong to overcome us ;

If this mortal and unholy,
 We still fail to cast out from us,—
 And we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark influences ;
 If ye tremble, when surrounded
 By our forest pine and palm trees !
 If we cannot cure the wounded
 With our marjoram and balm trees ;
 And if your souls, allmournfully, sit down among yoursenses,—
 Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,—
 We are gentle in our languor ;
 And more good ye shall have near us,
 Than any pain or anger ;
 And our God's refracted blessing, in our blessing, shall be given !
 By the desert's endless vigil,
 We will solemnise your passions ;
 By the wheel of the black eagle
 We will teach you exaltations,
 When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in Heaven.

 Ye shall find us tender nurses
 To your weariness of nature ;
 And our hands shall stroke the curse's
 Dreary furrows from the creature,
 Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death, and straight and
 slumberful :
 Then, a couch we will provide you,
 Where no summer heats shall dazzle ;
 Strewing on you and beside you
 The thyme and the sweet basil—
 And the cypress shall grow overhead, to keep all safe and cool

 Till the Holy blood awaited
 Shall be chrisms around us running,
 Whereby, newly-consecrated,
 We shall leap up in God's sunning,
 To join the spheric company, where the pure worlds
 assemble ;
 While, renewed by new evangels,
 Soul-consummated, made glorious,
 Ye shall brighten past the angels—
 Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious ;
 And the rays around His feet, beneath your sobbing lips, shall
 tremble.

*[The phantastic vision has all passed; the earth-zodiac
 has broken like a belt and dissolved from the desert.
 The Earth Spirits vanish; and the stars shine out
 above, bright and mild.]*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

While ADAM and EVE advance into the desert, hand in hand

Hear our heavenly promise,
 Through your mortal passion !
 Love, ye shall have from us,
 In a pure relation !
 As a fish or bird
 Swims or flies, if moving,
 We, unseen, are heard
 To live on by loving.
 Far above the glances
 Of your eager eyes,
 Listen ! we are loving !
 Listen, through man's ignorances—
 Listen, through God's mysteries—
 Listen down the heart of things,
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings
 Rustle with our loving !
 Through the opal door,
 Listen evermore
 How we live by loving !

First semichorus.

When your bodies therefore,
 Lie in grave or goal,
 Softly will we care for
 Each enfranchised soul !
 Softly and unlothly,
 Through the door of opal,
 We will draw you soothly
 Toward the Heavenly people.
 Floated on a minor fine
 Into the full chant divine,
 We will draw you smoothly,—
 While the human in the minor
 Makes the harmony diviner :
 Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.

Then a sough of glory
 Shall your entrance greet ;
 Ruffling, round the doorway,
 The smooth radiance it shall meet.
 From the Heavenly throned centre
 Heavenly voices shall repeat—
 "Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter ;
 For the chrim on you is sweet."

And every angel in the place
 Lowly shall bow his face,
 Folded fair on softened sounds,
 Because upon your hands and feet
 He thinks he sees his Master's wounds :
 Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our angels of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin !
 Their wings shall stream upon the flame
 As if incorporate of the same,
 In elemental fusion ;
 And calm their faces shall burn out,
 With a pale and mastering thought,
 And a steadfast looking of desire,
 From out between the clefts of fire,
 While they cry, in the Holy's name,
 To the final Restitution !
 Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
 To the thick graves accompted ;
 Awaking the dead bodies,
 The angel of the trumpet
 Shall split the charnel earth
 To the roots of the grave,
 Which never before were slackened ;
 And quicken the charnel birth,
 With his blast so clear and brave ;
 Till the Dead all stand erect,—
 And every face of the burial-place
 Shall the awful, single look, reflect,
 Wherewith he them awakened.
 Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death !
 He will leap up wild at the clamour
 Above and beneath ;
 And where is his Tamer
 On that last day,
 When he crieth, Ha, ha !
 To the trumpet's evangel,
 And paweth the earth's Aceldama ?
 When he tosseth his head,
 The drear-white steed,

And champeth athwart the last moon-ray,—
 Oh, where is the angel
 Can lead him away,
 That the living may rule for the Dead ?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found !
 One more bright than seraph crowned,
 And more strong than cherub bold :
 Elder, too, than angel old,
 By his grey eternities,—
 He shall master and surprise
 The steed of Death,
 For He is strong, and He is fain ;
 He shall quell him with a breath,
 And shall lead him where He will,
 With a whisper in the ear,
 Which it alone can hear—
 Full of fear—
 And a hand upon the mane,
 Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades, where the souls assemble,
 HE will guide the Death-steed, calm between their ranks ;
 While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble
 To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering flanks.
 Through the flats of Hades, where the dreary shade is,—
 Up the steep of Heaven, will the Tamer guide the steed—
 Up the spheric circles—circle above circle,
 We, who count the ages, shall count the tolling tread—
 Every hoof-fall striking a blinder, blanker sparkle
 From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed, with muffled hoofs, shall travel,
 Ashen grey the planets shall be motionless as stones ;
 Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,—
 Stagnant in the spaces shall float the pallid moons ;
 And suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their level,
 Shall run back on their axles, in wild, low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,
 Shall the horse's nostrils steam the blurting breath ;
 Up between the angels pale with silent feeling,
 Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the horse of Death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,
 Will the Tamer lead Him straightway to the Throne :
 " Look out O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,

With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who am Thy Son.”
 Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest, flaming,
 On the horse-eyes feeding, shall burn out their fire :
 Blind the beast shall stagger, where It overcame him,—
 Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless in desire—
 Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—
 And, by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

A Voice. Gabriel, thou Gabriel !

Another Voice. What wouldst thou with me ?

First Voice. I heard thy voice sound in the angels song ;
 And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me.

First Voice. Why have I called thrice to my morning star
 And had no answer ? All the stars are out,
 And round the earth, upon their silver lives,
 Wheel out the music of the inner life,
 And answer in their places. Only in vain
 I cast my voice against the outer rays
 Of my star, shut in light behind the sun !
 No more reply than from a breaking string,
 Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star ?
 Where *is* my star—my star ? Have ye cast down
 Her glory like my glory ? Has she waxed
 Mortal, like Adam ? Has she learnt to hate
 Like any angel ?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee :
 All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

Chorus. Live, work on, O Earthy !

By the Actual's tension,
 Speed the arrow worthy
 Of a pure ascension !
 From the low earth around you,
 Reach the heights above you ;
 From the stripes that wound you,
 Seek the loves that love you !
 God's divinest burneth plain
 Through the crystal diaphane
 Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel !

Second Voice. What wouldst thou with me ?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown
 Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims ?
 That HE claims THAT too ?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile from His Heaven,
 To lead those exiles homeward ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile by His will,
As I by mine election!

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That I shall stand sole exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel!

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient star will give
Her name of "Bright and Morning-Star" to HIM,—
And take the fairness of His virtue back,
To cover loss and sadness?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Untrue, Untrue! O morning-star! O MINE!
Who sittest secret in a veil of light,
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue!*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
To Tyrrhene waters! I am Lucifer—

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*]

All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

Chorus. Exiled Human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger!
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's,
God is the Discharger;
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus. Calm the stars and golden,
In a light exceeding:
What their rays have measured

Let your hearts fulfil!
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden;
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still.

Chorus. Future joy and far light
Working such relations,—
Hear us singing gently—
Exiled is not lost!
God, above the starlight,
God, above the patience,
Shall at last present ye
Guerdons worth the cost,
Patiently enduring,
Painfully surrounded,

Listen how we love you—
Hope the uttermost—
Waiting for that curing
Which exalts the wounded
Hear us sing above you—
EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

*[The stars shine on brightly, while ADAM and EVE
pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is
sound through the silence, as of the falling tears
of an angel.]*

SONNETS.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound,
 I strive and struggle to deliver right
 That music of my nature, day and night
 With dream and thought and feeling, interwound :
 And inly answering all the senses round
 With octaves of a mystic depth and height,
 Which step out grandly to the infinite
 From the dark edges of the sensual ground !
 This song of soul I struggle to outbear
 Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
 And utter all myself into the air :
 But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
 Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh would perish there,
 Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
 God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate Heaven
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest !
 The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven ;
 Before the naughty world soon self-forgiven
 For wronging him ; and in the darkness prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory ! Heaven is high—
 Sing, poet with the sorrow ! Earth is low !
 The universe's inward voices cry
 " Amen " to either song of joy and woe—
 Sing seraph,—poet,—sing on equally.

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY
R. B. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. *He*, with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,—
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens! A noble vision free,
Our Haydon's hand hath flung out from the mist!
No portrait this, with Academic air—
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
Saith no grace after meat. My wine hath run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled! Yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food.
Dear Christ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see;
Singing within myself as bird or bee,
When such do field-work on a morn of May:
But now I look upon my flowers,—decay

Hath met them in my hands, more fatally,
 Because more warmly clasped; and sobs are free
 To come instead of songs. What do you say,
 Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
 Back straightway to the fields, and gather more?
 Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I!
 My heart is very tired—my strength is low—
 My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
 Held dead within them till myself shall die.

 TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
 More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
 That is light grieving! lighter, none befell,
 Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
 Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
 The mother singing: at her marriage-bell,
 The bride weeps: and before the oracle
 Of high-faned hills, the poet hath forgot
 That moisture on his cheeks. Commend the grace,
 Mourners, who weep? Albeit, as some have done,
 Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert place,
 And touch but tombs,—look up! Those tears will run
 Soon, in long rivers, down the lifted face,
 And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

 GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless—
 That only men incredulous of despair,
 Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
 Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
 In souls, as countries, lieth silent-bare
 Under the blenching, vertical eye-glare
 Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
 Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death;
 Most like a monumental statue set
 In everlasting watch and moveless woe,
 Till itself crumble to the dust beneath!
 Touch it! the marble eyelids are not wet—
 If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some beloved voice that was to you
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
 And silence against which you dare not cry,
 Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
 What hope? what help? what music will undo
 That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh—
 Not reason's subtle count! Not melody
 Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew—
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales,
 Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress trees
 To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric laws
 Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet All hails,
 Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of these.
 Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
 Who art not missed by any that entreat.
 Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet—
 And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
 Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
 In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
 In humanest affection—thus in sooth
 To lose the sense of losing! As a child,
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth;
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
 He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand;
 Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
 Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
 In sad perplexed minors. Deathly colds
 Fall on us while we hear and countermand

Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land,
 With nightingales in visionary wolds.
 We murmur,—“Where is any certain tune
 Or measured music, in such notes as these?”—
 But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
 Are not so minded! their fine ear hath won
 The issue of completed cadences;
 And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

 WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to toil—
 Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
 For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
 And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
 God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
 To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
 All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
 For younger fellow-workers of the soil
 To wear for amulets. So others shall
 Take patience, labour, to their heart and hands,
 From thy hands, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
 And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
 The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand,
 And share its dew-drop with another near.

 FUTURITY.

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call, because erelong
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song
 We sang together softly, to enrich
 The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,—
 Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
 The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
 In Heaven to hold our idols! and albeit
 He brake them to our faces, and denied
 That our close kisses should impair their white,—
 I know we shall behold them raised complete,—
 The dust shook from their beauty,—glorified
 New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
 Like pulses, in the Church's brow and breast ;
 And, by them, we find rest in our unrest,
 And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
 God's fellowship, as if on Heavenly seat.
 One is, AND JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
 And sweetest waters on the record sweet :—
 And one is, where the Christ denied and scorned
 LOOKED UPON PETER ! Oh, to render plain,
 By help of having loved a little, and mourned,—
 That look of sovran love and sovran pain,
 Which HE who could not sin, yet suffered, turned
 On him who could reject, but not sustain !

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word—
 No gesture of reproach ! The Heavens serene,
 Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
 Their thunders that way ! The forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
 What that look was ; none guess : for those who have
 seen
 Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
 Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
 Have missed Jehovah at the judgment call !
 And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
 “ I never knew this man ”—did quail and fall,
 As knowing straight THAT GOD,—and turned free
 And went out speechless from the face of all,
 And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
 “ Thou Peter ! art thou then a common stone
 Which I at last must break My heart upon,
 For all God's charge, to His high angels, may
 Guard My foot better ? Did I yesterday
 Wash *thy* feet, My beloved, that they should run
 Quick to deny Me 'neath the morning sun,—

And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?—
 The cock crows coldly.—Go and manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear?
 For when thy deathly need is bitterest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—
 My voice, to God and Angels, shall attest,—
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear."

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.*

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
 To die alone, with none beside thy bed
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
 Then pray alone—"O Christ, come tenderly!
 By Thy forsaken Sonship,—and the red
 Drear wine-press,—and the wilderness outspread,—
 And the lone garden where Thine agony
 Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
 No earthly friend being near me, interpose
 No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine;
 But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
 And smile away my mortal to Divine."

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
 A pleasant chant, ballad, or barcarolle;
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
 Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
 With quick adjustment, provident controul,
 The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
 To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
 Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
 Thus, swift and steadfast; thus, intent and strong;
 While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
 Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
 The better for the sweetness of our song.

* Written at the request of my friend Miss Cockell, to whom it is inscribed.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
 And drew around it other thoughts like bees
 For multitude, and thirst of sweetnesses :
 Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
 Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
 Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
 That I might hive with me such thoughts, and please
 My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
 Of a weak man's vain wishes ! While I spoke,
 The thought I called a flower, grew nettle-rough—
 The thoughts called bees, stung me to festering.
 Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke),
 Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
 And they will all prove sad enough to sting !

AN APPREHENSION.

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
 Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
 That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
 For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
 To bring my own heart nakedly below
 The palm of such a friend, that he should press
 Motive, condition, means, appliances,
 My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
 Out full to light and knowledge. I should fear
 Some plait between the brows—some rougher chime
 In the free voice. . . . O angels, let your flood
 Of bitter scorn dash on me ! Do ye hear
 What *I* say, who bear calmly all the time
 This everlasting face-to-face with God ?

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
 And ruffled without cause ; complaining on—
 Restless with rest—until, being overthrown,
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
 Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
 Of our ripe peach ; or let the wilful sun

Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
 A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.
 But what time through the heart and through the brain
 God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
 Attain to a calm ! Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
 We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore ;
 And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy main,
 God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

"O DREARY life !" we cry, "O dreary life !"
 And still the generations of the birds
 Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
 Serenely live while we are keeping strife
 With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
 Against which we may struggle. Ocean girds
 Unslackened the dry land : savannah-swards
 Unweary sweep : hills watch, unworn ; and rife
 Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest trees,
 To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass
 In their old glory. O thou God of old !
 Grant me some smaller grace than comes to *these* ;—
 But so much patience, as a blade of grass
 Grows by contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
 In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
 Of yon grey blank of sky, we might be faint
 To muse upon eternity's constraint
 Round our aspirant souls. But since the scope
 Must widen early, is it well to droop,
 For a few days consumed in loss and taint ?
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road—
 Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
 To meet the flints ?—At least it may be said,
 "Because the way is *short*, I thank Thee, God !"

EXAGGERATION.

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
 Imagination, given us to bring down
 The choirs of singing angels overshone
 By God's clear glory,—down our earth to rake
 The dismal snows instead ; flake following flake,
 To cover all the corn. We walk upon
 The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
 And pant like climbers. Near the alderbrake
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
 O brothers ! let us leave the shame and sin
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
 The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein,
 That, by the grief of ONE, came all our good.

ADEQUACY.

Now by thy verdure on thy thousand hills,
 Belov'd England,—doth the earth appear
 Quite noble enough for men to overbear
 The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
 We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
 Ingloriously its course ; nor that the clear
 Strong stars, without significance, insphere
 Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills
 Heap up against this good ; and lift a cry
 Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
 As if ourselves were better certainly
 Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
 I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
 Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
 Self-called George Sand ! whose soul, amid the lions
 Of thy tumultuous senses, moans, defiance,
 And answers roar for roar, as spirits can :
 I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
 Above the applauded circus, in appliance

Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,—
 Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
 From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
 With holier light! That thou to woman's claim,
 And man's, might join beside the angel's grace
 Of a pure genius sanctified from blame;
 Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace,
 To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman! dost deny
 Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
 And break away the gauds and armlets worn
 By weaker women in captivity?
 Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
 Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn:—
 Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
 Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
 Disproving thy man's name. And while before
 The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
 We see thy woman's-heart beat evermore
 Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and
 higher,
 Till God unsex thee on the spirit-shore;
 To which alone unsexing, purely aspire!

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years,
 Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
 And the great breath of all things summer-mute
 Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
 As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres,
 Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at! Nature's lute
 Sounds on behind this door so closely shut,
 A strange, wild music to the prisoner's ears,
 Dilated by the distance, till the brain
 Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine;
 While ever, with a visionary pain,
 Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
 Streams, forests, glades,—and many a golden train
 Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
 Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
 Along my pulses, yearning to be free
 And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
 To the individual, true, and the universe,
 In consummation of right harmony!
 But, like a dreary wind against a tree,
 We are blown against for ever by the curse
 Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is
 weak—
 The effluence of each is false to all;
 And what we best conceive, we fail to speak.
 Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall!
 And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
 Fit peroration, without let or thrall.

 THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

“The trustiest, loving’st, and the gentlest boy,
 That ever master had.”

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds,
 And a young page at his side,
 From the holy war in Palestine,
 Did slow and thoughtful ride,—
 As each were a palmer, and told for beads,
 The dews of the eventide.

“O young page,” said the knight,
 “A noble page art thou!
 Thou fearest not to steep in blood
 The curls upon thy brow;
 And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
 Didst ward me a mortal blow.”—

“O brave knight,” said the page,
 “Or ere we hither came,
 We talked in tent, we talked in field,
 Of the bloody battle-game:
 But here, below this greenwood bough,
 I cannot speak the same.

“ Our troop is far behind,
 The woodland calm is new ;
 Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
 Tread deep the shadows through :
 And in my mind, some blessing kind
 Is dropping with the dew.

“ The woodland calm is pure—
 I cannot choose but have
 A thought, from these, o’ the beechen-trees
 Which, in our England, wave ;
 And of the little finches fine,
 Which sang there, while in Palestine
 The warrior-hilt we drave.

“ Methinks, a moment gone,
 I heard my mother pray !
 I heard, Sir Knight, the prayer for *me*
 Wherein she passed away ;
 And I know the Heavens are leaning down
 To hear what I shall say.”

The page spake calm and high,
 As of no mean degree ;
 Perhaps he felt in nature’s broad
 Full heart, his own was free !
 And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
 Then answered smilingly :—

“ Sir Page, I pray your grace !
 Certes, I meant not so
 To cross your pastoral mood, Sir Page,
 With the crook of the battle-bow ;
 But a knight may speak of a lady’s face,
 I trow, in any mood or place,
 If the grasses die or grow.

“ And this, I meant to say,—
 My lady’s face shall shine
 As ladies’ faces use, to greet
 My page from Palestine :
 Or, speak she fair, or prank she gay,
 She is no lady of mine.

“ And this, I meant to fear,—
 Her bower may suit thee ill !
 For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
 Thy *talk* was somewhat still ;
 And fitter thine hand for my knightly spear,
 Than thy tongue for my lady’s will.”

Slowly and thankfully

The young page bowed his head :
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
Until he blushed instead ;
And no lady in her bower, pardiè,
Could blush more sudden red—
“ Sir Knight,—thy lady’s bower to me,
Is suited well,” he said.

Beati, beati, mortui !

From the convent on the sea,—
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary.
And the fifty tapers burning o’er it,
And the Lady Abbess dead before it,
And the chanting nuns whom yesterweck
Her voice did charge and bless—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath,
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the dead than upon death !

Beati, beati, mortui !

Now the vision in the sound
Wheeletth on the wind around—
Now it sweeps aback, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun.

Mortui !—away at last,—

Or ere the page’s blush is past !
And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

“ A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I servèd thee !
Though thou art a knight, and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me—
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved, or loved aright,
Be the face of thy ladye.”

Gloomily looked the knight ;—

“ As a son thou hast servèd me:
And would to none, I had granted boon,
Except to only thee !
For haply then I should love aright,—
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye.

“ Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue,
 To grudge that granted boon !
 That heavy price, from heart and life,
 I paid in silence down :
 The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
 My father's fame ! I swear by mine,
 That price was nobly won.

“ Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
 He was my father's friend ;
 And while I rode the lists at court,
 And little guessed the end,—
 My noble father in his shroud,
 Against a slanderer lying loud,
 He rose up to defend.

“ Oh, calm, below the marble grey,
 My father's dust was strown !
 Oh, meek, above the marble grey,
 His image prayed alone !
 The slanderer lied—the wretch was brave,—
 For, looking up the minster-nave,
 He saw my father's knightly glaive
 Was changed from steel to stone.

“ But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
 With a brave old hand to wear it !
 And dashed the lie back in the mouth
 Which lied against the godly truth
 And against the knightly merit !
 The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
 Struck up the dagger in appeal
 From stealthy lie to brutal force—
 And out upon that traitor's corse,
 Was yielded the true spirit !

“ I would mine hand had fought that fight,
 And justified my father !
 I would mine heart had caught that wound,
 And slept beside him rather !
 I think it were a better thing
 Than murdered friend, and marriage-ring,
 Forced on my life together.

“ Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
 His true wife shed no tear—
 She lay upon her bed as mute
 As the earl did on his bier :

Till—' Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
 ' And bring the avengèd's son anear !
 Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee ;
 For white of ble, with waiting for me,
 Is the corse in the next chambère.'

" I came—I knelt beside her bed—
 Her calm was worse than strife—
 ' My husband, for thy father dear,
 Gave freely, when thou wert not here,
 His own and eke my life.
 A boon ! Of that sweet child we make
 An orphan for thy father's sake,
 Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

" I said, ' My steed neighs in the court ;
 My bark rocks on the brine ;
 And the warrior's vow, I am under now,
 To free the pilgrim's shrine :
 But fetch the ring, and fetch the priest,
 And call that daughter of thine ;
 And rule she wide, from my castle on Nyde,
 While I am in Palestine.'

" In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
 Ye wis, I could not see ;
 But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest
 fast prayed,
 And wedded fast were we.
 Her mother smiled upon her bed,
 As at its side we knelt to wed ;
 And the bride rose from her knce,—
 And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
 Or ever she kissed me.

" My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
 That the tears run down thy face ?"—
 " Alas, alas ! mine own sistèr
 Was in thy lady's case !
 But *she* laid down the silks she wore
 And followed him she wed before,
 Disguised as his true servitor,
 To the very battle-place."

And wept the page, and laughed the knight,—
 A careless laugh, laughed he :
 " Well done it were for thy sistèr,
 But not for my ladyè !

My love, so please you, shall requite
 No woman, whether dark or bright,
 Unwomaned if she be."

The page stopped weeping, and smiled cold—
 "Your wisdom may declare
 That womanhood is proved the best
 By golden brooch and glossy vest
 The mincing ladies wear:
 Yet is it proved, and was of old,
 Anear as well—I dare to hold—
 By truth, or by despair."

He smiled no more—he wept no more,—
 But passionate he spake,—
 "Oh, womanly, she prayed in tent,
 When none beside did wake!
 Oh, womanly she paled in fright,
 For one belovèd's sake!—
 And her little hand defiled with blood,
 Her tender tears of womanhood,
 Most woman-pure, did make!"

"Well done it were for thy sistèr—
 Thou tellest well her tale!
 But for my lady, she shall pray
 I' the kirk of Nydesdale—
 Not dread for me, but love for me,
 Shall make my lady pale!
 No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
 It shall have room to trickle clear
 Behind her woman's veil."

"But what if she mistook thy mind,
 And followed thee to strife;
 Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
 As Paynims ask for life?"
 "I would forgive, and evermore
 Would love her as my servitor,
 But little as my wife.

"Look up—there is a small bright cloud
 Alone amid the skies!
 So high, so pure, and so apart,
 A woman's glory lies."
 The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
 A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
 Betwixt it and his eyes:

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
 From welkin unto hill—
 Ha! who rides there?—the page is 'ware,
 Though the cry at his heart is still!
 And the page seeth all, and the knight seeth
 none,
 Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
 And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
 "Ride fast, my master, ride,
 Or ere within the broadening dark
 The narrow shadows hide!"
 "Yea, fast, my page; I will do so;
 And keep thou at my side."

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
 Thy faithful page precede!
 For I must loose on saddle-bow
 My battle-casque, that galls, I trow,
 The shoulder of my steed;
 And I must pray, as I did vow,
 For one in bitter need.

"Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
 Now ride, my master, ride!
 Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
 To mortals too beloved to leave,
 I shall be at thy side."
 The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
 And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
 No smile the word had won!
 Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
 I ween he had never gone!
 Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
 I ween he had turned anon!
 For dread was the woe in the face so young;
 And wild was the silent geste that flung
 Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-sprung,
 And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands, as if to hold
 His soul's great agony—
 "Have I renounced my womanhood,
 For wifehood unto *thee*?
 And is this the last, last look of thine,
 That ever I shall see?"

"Yet God thee save, and may'st thou have
 A lady to thy mind ;
 More woman-proud, and half as true
 As one thou leav'st behind !
 And God me take with HIM to dwell—
 For HIM I cannot love too well,
 As I have loved my kind."

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
 The hopeful Heavens to seek !
 That little cloud still floateth there,
 Whereof her Loved did speak.
 How bright the little cloud appears !
 Her eyelids fall upon the tears,—
 And the tears, down either cheek.

* * * * *

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
 The Paynims round her coming !
 The sound and sight have made her calm,—
 False page, but truthful woman !
 She stands amid them all unmoved :
 The heart, once broken by the loved,
 Is strong to meet the foeman.

"Ho, Christian page ! art keeping sheep,
 From pouring wine-cups, resting ?"—
 "I keep my master's noble name,
 For warring, not for feasting :
 And if that here Sir Hubert were,
 My master brave, my master dear,
 Ye would not stay to question."

"Where is thy master, scornful page,
 That we may slay or bind him ?"—
 "Now search the lea, and search the wood,
 And see if ye can find him !
 Nathless, as hath been often tried,
 Your Paynim heroes faster ride
 Before him than behind him."

"Give smoother answers, lying page,
 Or perish in the lying."—
 "I trow that if the warrior brand
 Beside my foot, were in my hand,
 'Twere better at replying."
 They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
 They cleft her golden ringlets through :
 The Loving is the Dying.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
 And met it from beneath,
 With smile more bright in victory
 Than any sword from sheath,—
 Which flashed across her lip serene,
 Most like the spirit-light between
 The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco !

From the convent on the sea,
 Now it sweepeth solemnly !
 As over wood and over lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St. Mary,
 And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
 And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
 And the weary nuns, with hearts that faintly
 Beat along their voices saintly—

Ingemisco, ingemisco !

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
 Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,
 Page or lady, as we said,
 With the dews upon her head,
 All as sad if not as loud !

Ingemisco, ingemisco !

Is ever a lament begun
 By any mourner under sun,
 Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one* ?



THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

“Go thy ways. I did not think to have shed one tear for thee, but thou hast made me water my plants spite of my heart.”

WITCH OF EDMONTON.

FIRST PART.

“ONORA, Onora”—her mother is calling—
 She sits at the lattice and hears the dew falling
 Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
 With dew as with blossom—and calls home the maiden—
 “Night cometh, Onora.”

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
 To the limes at the end, where the green arbour is—

"Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found her,
While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
Night cometh—Onora!"

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles, when the anthem is done,
And the choristers, sitting with faces aslant,
Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
"Onora, Onora!"

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
"Onora, art coming?"—what is it she seeth?
Nought, nought, but the grey border-stone that is wist
To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
"My daughter!"—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
She is 'ware of her little son playing below:
"Now where is Onora?"—He hung down his head
And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
"At the tryst with her lover."

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
"As thou play'st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
And the saints know above that she loveth but one,
And will ne'er wed another?"

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a fair sight, yet sad,
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
He stamped with his foot, said—"The saints know I lied,
Because truth that is wicked, is fittest to hide!
Must I utter it, mother?"

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
"Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosarie,
At nights in the ruin!

"The old convent ruin, the ivy rots off,
Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof;
Where no singing-birds build; and the trees gaunt and grey,
As in stormy sea-coasts, appear blasted one way—
But is *this* the wind's doing?"

"A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—

And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
The old abbess fell back and swooned unto death
With an Ave half-spoken.

"I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground!
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
And the wolf thought the same, with his fangs at her throat,
In the pass of the Brocken.

"At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
With the brown rosarie never used for a prayer?
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
At dawn and at even!

"Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*,
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosarie,
And a face turned from Heaven?

"St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams: and erewhile
I have felt through mine eyelids, the warmth of her smile—
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
She whispered—'Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora!
The Tempted is sinning.'"

Onora, Onora! they heard her not coming—
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming!
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor,
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning!

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes:
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred
Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;
While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound
Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound,
And floats through the chamber.

"Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother," said she,
"I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me!

And I know by the hills, that the battle is done—
That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,
 'Neath the eyes that behold thee !”

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss ;
But the boy started up, pale with tears, passion-wrought,—
“O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought !
 If he cometh, who told thee ?”

“I know by the hills,” she resumed calm and clear,
“By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear !
Did they ever look *so* since he bade me adieu ?
Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
 As St. Agnes in sleeping.”

Half-ashamed and half-softened, the boy did not speak,
And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek :
She bowed down to kiss him—Dear saints, did he see
Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARIE—
 That he shrank away weeping ?

PART SECOND.

A bed. ONÓRA sleeping. Angels, but not near.

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair ?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.

And she so mild ?

Second Angel.

As spirits, when

They meeken, not to God but men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who bring
Good dreams for saintly children, might
Mistake that small soft face to-night,
And fetch her such a blessed thing,
That, at her waking, she would weep
For childhood lost anew in sleep !
How hath she sinned ?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—

God's love—for man's !

First Angel.

We may reprove

The world for this ! not only her !—

Let me approach, to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—

Who never, praying, wept before:
While, in a mother undefiled,
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: Is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!

THE PLACE IS FILLED.

[Angels vanish.

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream! too near to Heaven
it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet
fiend!

Evil Spirit.

It is a thought.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good—
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it would.
I say in it no holy hymn—I do no holy work;
I scarcely hear the Sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me *dream* at least!

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast—
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—

I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so!

For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirk-yard
stone,—

Oh, deep and straight ; oh, very straight ! they move at nights
alone :

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,—
“ Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields
with me ! ”

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied ! my word shall answer thine.
I hear a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying ;
I see the poppies in the corn, I used to sport away in !—

What shall I do—tread down the dew, and pull the blossoms
blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowen ?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still ! Stand up where thou
dost stand,

Among the fields of Dreamland, with thy father, hand in hand,
And clear and slow, repeat the vow—declare its cause and
kind,

Which, not to break in sleep or wake, thou bearest on thy
mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of wicked kind, a vow for mournful cause !

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the spirits laughed
applause !

The spirits trailed, along the pines, low laughter like a
breeze,

While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared
to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to me, why such a vow was
made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death, and I shrank back afraid !
Have patience, O dead father mine ! I did not fear to die ;—
I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company !

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
And wearing only a kiss of thine, upon my lips that smiled !
The linden-tree that covers thee, might, so, have shadowed
twain—

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain.
Love feareth death ! I was no child—I was betrothed that
day ;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips, I could not give away !

How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel my own Betrothed go by—alas! no more mine
own,—

Go leading by, in wedding pomp, some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were
cold in grave?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that else he loveth none?
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he spake,
As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might
take—

That *her's*, forsooth, are heavenly eyes—ah, me! while very dim
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven!) would darken
down to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wert called to death?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee—
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide
thee;

And ever he flapped his heavy wing, all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping
beak!

I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay
forlorn,

Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud, in ghastly
fragments torn!

And through the night, and through the hush, and over the
flapping wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly Gate, the angels murmuring:—
We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the days to
seven,

And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of Heaven:

And yet He grants the evil ones that purpose to defer,

For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of *her*."

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,—
"I count upon my rosarie brown, the hours thou hast to stay!
Yet God permits us evil ones to put by that decree,
Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of *thee*—
And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily
Thy true love, gazing on thy face, shall guess what angels be—
Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . . Alas!—my father's
hand's a-cold—

The meadows seem . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told!

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown, this string of antique beads,
By charnal lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds—
This rosarie brown which is thine own,—lost soul of buried
nun,—

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all soul alike un-
done;—

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown,—and, till such vow should
break,

A pledge always of living days, 'twas hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosarie (Dead father, look not so!),
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . .

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love! I felt him near again!

I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the plain!
Was this no weal for me to feel?—is greater weal than this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels heard
but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done!

Onora in sleep.

Ay me! the sun . . . the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—
Ay me! how dread can look the Dead!—Aroint thee, father
mine!

She started from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through the
night!

There is nought! The great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor;
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and free
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARIE.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the green-wood that skirts the chapelle;
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides that fair companie,
The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,—

Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
 All the maids sigh demurely, and think for the nonce,
 "And so endeth a wooing!"

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
 With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say:
 Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,—
 And the little quick smiles come and go with her breath,
 When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
 From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,—
 Till in nearing the chapel, and glancing before,
 She seeth her little son stand at the door,—
 Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander innocent-wild,
 And sublimed with the sadness unfitting a child!
 He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,
 And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
 On his head like a glory.

"O fair-featured maids, ye are many!" he cried,—
 "But, in fairness and vileness, who matcheth the bride?
 O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom,
 For the courage and woe, can ye match with the groom,
 As ye see them before ye?"

Out spake the bride's mother—"The vileness is thine,
 If thou shame thine own sister a bride at the shrine!"
 Out spake the bride's lover—"The vileness be mine,
 If he shame mine own wife at the hearth or the shrine,
 And the charge be unprovéd.

"Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it aloud—
 Let thy father and her's, hear it deep in his shroud!"
 —"O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—
 How she wears on her bosom a *brown rosarie*,
 O my father beloved!"

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
 Both maidens and youths, by the old chapel wall—
 "So she wareth no love-gift, kind brother," quoth he,
 "She may wear, an she listeth, a brown rosarie,
 Like a pure-hearted lady!"

Then swept through the chapel, the long bridal train!
 Though he spake to the bride she replied not again:
 On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went,
 Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
 Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed between them and her,
 And calmly knelt down on the high altar stair—
 Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view,
 That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue,
 As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white,
 That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
 With a look taken up to each iris of stone
 From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
 From the face of a mother.

"In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
 Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for Heaven!
 But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
 Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead—
 O shrive her and wed not!"

In tears, the bride's mother,—“Sir priest, unto thee
 Would he lie, as he lied to this fair companie!”
 In wrath, the bride's lover,—“The lie shall be clear!
 Speak it out, boy! the saints in their niches shall hear—
 Be the charge proved or said not?”

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
 And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place—
 “Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
 How she wears on her bosom *a brown rosarie!*
 Is it used for the praying?”

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
 And the maidens' lips trembled with smiles shut within:
 Quoth the priest—“Thou art wild, pretty boy! Blessed she
 Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosarie
 To a worldly arraying!”

The bridegroom spake low and led onward the bride,
 And before the high altar they stood side by side:
 The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun—
 They have knelt down together to rise up as one—
 Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,—
 The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound;
 And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
 Gazing cold at the priest, without gesture of prayer,
 As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
 He felt a power on him, too strong for his will ;
 And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
 His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
 Or the air could not hold it.

“I have sinnēd,” quoth he, “I have sinnēd, I wot”—
 And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought ;
 They dropped fast on the book ; but he read on the same,—
 And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
 As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done,
 They who knelt down together, arise up as one :
 Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,—
 But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosarie,
 No saint at her praying !

What aileth the bridegroom ? He glares blank and wide—
 Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the bride—
 His lips stung her with cold : she glanced upwardly mute :
 “ Mine own wife,” he said, and fell stark at her foot
 In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,—
 And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine, and grey.
 Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
 Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor ;
 Let his bride gaze upon him !

Long and still was her gaze, while they chafēd him there,
 And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her !
 But when they stood up—only *they* ! with a start
 The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—
 She has lived, and foregone him !

And low on his body she droppeth adown—
 “ Didst call me thine own wife, belovēd—thine own ?
 Then take thine own with thee ! thy coldness is warm
 To the world’s cold without thee ! Come, keep me from harm
 In a calm of thy teaching ! ”

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth
 There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his mouth ;
 And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
 “ Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me !—
 God, hear my beseeching ! ”

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay ;
 She was 'ware of a presence that withered the day—
 Wild she sprang to her feet,—“ I surrender to *thee*
 The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed rosarie,—
 I am ready for dying ! ”

She dashed it in scorn to the marvel-paved ground,
 Where it fell mute as snow ; and a weird music-sound
 Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
 As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers' hymn,
 And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk :
 “ I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk !
 “ I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—
 Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below ;—
 All things are the same but I ;—only I am dreary ;
 And, mother, of my dreariness, behold me very weary.

“ Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
 And smiled to think I should smile more upon their gathering.
 The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them dearest
 mine,
 And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes' shrine.”
 —Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in the
 spring,
 And her and them, all mournfully, to Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint, and gently shook her
 head—

“ The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,” she said :
 “ The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may lay,
 For those are used to look at Heaven,—but *I* must turn away,—
 Because no sinner under sun, can dare or bear to gaze
 On God's or angel's holiness, except in Jesu's face.”

She spoke with passion after pause—“ And were it wisely
 done ?—

If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone ?
 If we whose virtue is so weak, should have a will so strong,—
 And stand blind on the rocks, to choose the right path from
 the wrong ?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and
 Heaven,—

A single rose, for a rose tree, which beareth seven times seven ?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the breast,
 Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best ! ”
 Then breaking into tears,—“ Dear, God,” she cried, “ and must
 we see

All blissful things depart from *us*, or ere we go to THEE ?
 We cannot guess Thee in the wood, or hear Thee in the wind ?
 Our cedars must fall round us, ere we see the light behind ?
 Aysooth, we feel too strong in weal, to need Thee on that road ;
 But woe being come the soul is dumb, that crieth not on
 ‘ God.’ ”

Her mother could not speak for tears ; she ever musèd
 thus—

“ *The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left for *us* ?
 But her young brother stayed his sobs, and knelt beside her
 knee,

—“ Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word for
 me ? ”

She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his
 cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath that lay on shrine that day, at vespers bloomed
 no more—

The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour before !
 Both perished mute, for lack of root, earth’s nourishment to
 reach ;—

O reader, breathe (the ballad saith), some sweetness out of
 each !



THE MOURNFUL MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND).

DOST thou weep, mournful mother,
 For thy blind boy in grave ?
 That no more with each other,
 Sweet counsel ye can have ?—
 That *he* left dark by nature,
 Can never more be led
 By thee, maternal creature,
 Along smooth paths instead ?
 That thou canst no more show him
 The sunshine, by the heat ;
 The river’s silver flowing,
 By murmurs at his feet ?

THE MOURNFUL MOTHER.

The foliage, by its coolness ;
 The roses, by their smell ;
 And all creation's fulness,
 By Love's invisible ?
 Weepst thou to behold not
 His meek blind eyes again,—
 Closed doorways which are folded,
 And prayed against in vain—
 And under which, sate smiling
 The child-mouth evermore,
 As one who watcheth, wiling
 The time by, at a door ?
 And weepst thou to feel not
 His clinging hand on thine—
 Which now, at dream-time, will not
 Its cold touch disentwine ?
 And weepst thou still ofter,
 Oh, never more to mark
 His low soft words, made softer
 By speaking in the dark ?
 Weep on, thou mournful mother !

But since to him when living,
 Thou wert both sun and moon,
 Look o'er his grave, surviving,
 From a high sphere alone :
 Sustain that exaltation—
 Expand that tender light ;
 And hold in mother-passion,
 Thy Blessèd, in thy sight.
 See how he went out straightway
 From the dark world he knew,—
 No twilight in the gateway
 To mediate 'twixt the two,—
 Into the sudden glory,
 Out of the dark he trod,
 Departing from before thee
 At once to light and GOD !—
 For the first face, beholding
 The Christ's in its divine,—
 For the first place, the golden
 And tideless hyaline ;
 With trees, at lasting summer,
 That rock to songful sound,
 While angels, the new-comer,
 Wrap a still smile around !

Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
 His happy voice he tries,—
 Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
 Than others, o'er his eyes,—
 Yet still, in all the singing,
 Thinks haply of thy song
 Which, in his life's first springing,
 Sang to him all night long,—
 And wishes it beside him,
 With kissing lips that cool
 And soft did overglide him,—
 To make the sweetness full.
 Look up, O mournful mother ;
 Thy blind boy walks in light !
 Ye wait for one another
 Before God's infinite !
 But *thou* art now the darkest,
 Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
 Content that it be so ;—
 Until ye two *be* meeting
 Where the great Heaven-gate is,
 And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
 As once thou leddest *his* !
 Wait on, thou mournful mother !



A VALEDICTION.

God be with thee, my belov'd,—God be with thee !
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,—
 Moor and pleasance, all around thee and beneath thee,
 Looking equal in one snow !
 While I who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow,
 With the farewell and the hollo,
 And cannot reach thee so.
 Alas ! I can but teach thee.—
 God be with thee, my belov'd,—God be with thee !

Can I teach thee, my belov'd,—can I teach thee ?

Ye. If I said, "Go left or right,"

And you take the counsel would be

blackly for of all that poets pass their mournful star.

As presence

notes

'Tis the eyes that

them on.

My right would show like left ;
 My raising would depress thee,—
 My choice of light would blind thee,—
 Of way, would leave behind thee,—
 Of end, would leave bereft !
 Alas ! I can but bless thee.—

May GOD teach thee, my belov'ed,—may GOD teach thee !

Can I bless thee, my belov'ed,—can I bless thee ?

What blessed word can I,
 From mine own tears, keep dry ?

What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee ?

My good reverts to ill ;
 My calmnesses would move thee,—
 My softnesses would prick thee,—
 My bindings up would break thee,—
 My crownings, curse and kill.
 Alas ! I can but love thee.—

May GOD bless thee, my belov'ed,—may GOD bless thee !

Can I love thee, my belov'ed,—can I love thee ?

And is *this* like love, to stand
 With no help in my hand,

When strong as death I fain would watch above thee ?

My love-kiss can deny
 No tear that falls beneath it :
 Mine oath of love can swear thee
 From no ill that comes near thee,—
 And thou diest while I breathe it,
 And I—I can but die !

May GOD love thee, my belov'ed,—may GOD love thee !



LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A Poet writes to his Friend. Place—A room in Wycombe Hall. Time—Late in the evening.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit
 o'er you !

Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run
 at will !

I am humbled who was humble ! Friend,—I bow my head
 before you !

You should lead me to ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{lock} ~~lock~~ ^{measants} ~~measants~~ !—but their face
 too still. ^{angels, I}

wrap a still s.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter; she is proud and she is noble;
 And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the perfumed air;
 And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to trouble;
 And the shadow of a monarch's crown, is softened in her hair.

She has halls and she has castles, and the resonant steam-eagles

Follow far on the directing of her floating dove-like hand—
 With a thundrous vapour trailing, underneath the starry vigils,
 So to mark upon the blasted heaven, the measure of her land.

There be none of England's daughters, who can show a prouder presence;

Upon princely suitors suing, she has looked in her disdain:
 She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English knights;

What was I that I should love her—save for feeling of the pain?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
 As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.

Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,

In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings!

Many vassals bow before her, as her chariot sweeps their doorways;

She hath blest their little children,—as a priest or queen were she!

Oh, too tender or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
 For I thought it was the same smile, which she used, to smile on me.

She has members in the commons, she has lovers in the palace—

And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine:
 Even the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the red wine and the chalice:

Oh, and what was I to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her—I was born to poet uses—
 To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair!

And ye hills of old Parnassus mountain, we are wont to call the

blackly-
 As present climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

notes

'Tis the eyes to
 them on.

And because I was a poet, and because the people praised me,
 With their critical deductions for the modern writer's fault ;
 I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that
 raised me,
 Still suggested clear between us, the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence ;—" Will your book
 appear this summer ? "
 Then returning to each other—" Yes, our plans are for the
 moors ; "
 Then with whisper dropped behind me—" There he is ! the
 latest comer !
 Oh, she only likes his verses ! what is over, she endures.

" Quite low born ! self-educated ! somewhat gifted though by
 nature,—
 And we make a point of asking him,—of being very kind ;
 You may speak, he does not hear you ; and besides, he writes
 no satire,—
 These new charmers keep their serpents with the antique
 sting resigned."

I grew colder, I grew colder, as I stood up there among them,—
 Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorned
 my brow ;
 When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, overrung
 them,
 And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her ! With a calm and regnant
 spirit,
 Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before
 them all—
 " Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that, able to confer
 it,
 You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe
 Hall ? "

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her
 speaking ;
 But because a silence followed it, blushed scarlet, as for shame ;
 Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—" I am
 seeking
 More distinction than these gentlemen think we
 claim.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman,"—

(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her mouth)

"But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming,

Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

"I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no hive for worldly speeches—Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first—

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,

I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human world at worst."

Then, she smiled around right childly, then, she gazed around right queenly ;

And I bowed—I could not answer! Alternated light and gloom—

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely, She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the bless'd woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,

With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind !

Oh, the curs'd woods of Sussex! Oh, the cruel love that bound me

Up against the boles of cedars, to be sham'd where I pined !

Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where the hunter's dart has found me,

When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind !

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the numerous guests invited,

And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet ;

And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted

All the air about the windows, with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,

Which the floating orbs of curtains, did with gradual shadow

Ye. sweep ;

And you the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress, blackly downward through their snowy wings, at music in

An presence c.

notes

'Tis the eyes that

them on.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing,
 Till the finches of the shrubberies, grew restless in the dark ;
 But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight
 ringing,
 And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the
 park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-
 corded speeches,
 To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the
 jest,—
 Oft I sate apart and, gazing on the river, through the beeches,
 Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice
 o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh
 of rider,
 Spread out cheery from the courtyard, till we lost them in the
 hills ;
 While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
 Went a-wandering up the gardens, through the laurels and
 abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded—with
 the flowings
 Of the virginal white vesture, gathered closely to her throat ;
 With the golden ringlets in her neck, just quickened by her
 going,
 And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above
 her,
 And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the
 skies,—
 As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love
 her,
 And to study the deep meaning of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smiled constantly : her lips had serious
 sweetness,
 And her front was calm—the dimple rarely rippled on her
 cheek :
 But her deep blue eyes smiled constantly,—as if they had
 fitness
 Won the secret of a happy dream, she did not !

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden:

And I walked among her noble friends, and could not keep behind;

Spake she unto all and unto me—"Behold, I am the warden,
Of the birds within these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

"But here, in this swarded circle, into which the lime-walk brings us—

Whence the beeches rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear,—

I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us
Which the lilies round the basin, may seem pure enough to hear.

"And the air that waves the lilies, waves this slender jet of water,

Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint!
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping! (Lough the sculptor wrought her)

So asleep, she is forgetting to say *Hush!*—a fancy quaint.

"Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between them lingers!

And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek:

And the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack within the fingers,—

Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not speak!

"That the essential meaning growing, may exceed the special symbol,

Is the thought, as I conceive it: it applies more high and low—
Your true noblemen will often, through right nobleness, grow humble,

And assert an inward honour, by denying outward show."

"Yes, your Silence," said I, "truly holds her symbol-rose but slackly,

Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken!

And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly

As presence of the social law, as most ignoble men.

notes

'Tis the eyes that
them on.

"Let the poets dream such dreaming! Madam, in these
British islands,
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that
exceeds:
Soon we shall have nought but symbol! and for statues like
this Silence
Shall accept the rose's marble—in another case, the weed's."

"I let *you* dream," she retorted, "and I grant where'er you go,
you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for
honour clear;
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book, which now reads drily, and sit down with
Silence here."

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation;
Her friends turned her words to laughter, while her lovers
deemed her fair,—
A fair woman—flushed with feeling, in her noble lighted
station,
Near the statues white reposing—and both bathed in sunny
air!—

With the trees round, not so distant, but you heard their
vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward
move;
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be
warmer,
And recoiling backward, trembling with the too much light
above—

'Tis a picture for remembrance! and thus, morning after
morning,
Did I follow as she drew me, by the spirit, to her feet—
Why, her greyhound followed also! dogs—we both were dogs
for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it, and her path lay
through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of oath, and spite of
sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed
along;
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-
morrow,—
Or to teach the hill-side echo, some sweet Tuscan in a son

Ay, and sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in
the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before ;
And the river running under ; and across it, from the rowans,
A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the air it
bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various, of our
own ;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle inter-
flowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is
folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-dew, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut deep
down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity !—

Or I read there sometimes, hoarsely, some new poem of my
making—
Oh, your poets never read their own best verses to their
worth,—
For the echo, in you, breaks upon the words which you are
speaking,
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate, through which you
drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence round
us flinging
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the
breast,—
She would break out, on a sudden, in a gush of woodland
singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is
divinest—
For her looks sings too—she modulates her gestures on the
tune ;
And her mouth stirs with the song, like song ; and when the
notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light, and seem to swell
them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so cadenced
 in the talking,
 Made another singing—of the soul! a music without bars—
 While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where
 we were walking,
 Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always
 thought them—
 And had sympathies so ready, open, free as bird on branch,
 Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought
 them,
 In the birchen wood a chirrup, or a cockcrow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks
 lightly;
 And she has a grace in being gay, which mourners even
 approve;
 For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so
 rightly,
 As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked truly! upon all things—
 substance—shadow—
 Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the
 corn—
 Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through
 the meadow—
 Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its
 scorn!

So of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher
 stature,
 And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear!
 So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into
 nature,
 Yet will lift the cry of “progress,” as it trod from sphere to
 sphere.

And her custom was to praise me, when I said,—“The Age
 culls simples,
 With a broad clown’s back turned broadly, to the glory of the
 stars—
 We are gods by our own reck’ning,—and may well shut up
 the temples,
 And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our
 cars.

"For we throw our acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
 With, at every mile run faster,—'O the wondrous wondrous age!'
 Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,—
 Or if angels will commend us, at the goal of pilgrimage.

"Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources,
 But the child's most gradual learning to walk straightly without bane?—
 When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic white horses,
 Are we greater than the first men, who led black ones by the mane?

"If we sided with the eagles, if we struck the stars in rising,
 If we wrapped the globe intensely, with one hot electric breath,
 'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power conferring—
 And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death."

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—loved her certes,
 As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
 As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,—
 In a Love content with writing his own name, on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so purely!—thought, no idiot Hope was raising
 Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sate alone—
 Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
 With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
 But she rose above them, smiling down, as Venus down the waves—
 And with such a gracious coldness, that they could not press their futures
 On that present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

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LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought
serene—

For I had been reading Camoëns—that poem you remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking
from it

A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,—
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would over-
come it,

Springs up freely from his clasping, and goes swinging in the
sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew
longer—

Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Geraldine, you
would!"

And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that
matched his station—

Of a soul complete in lordship—might and right read on his
brow:

Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less
expression

Than resistance,—coldly casting off the looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips, which seem to taste pos-
session,

And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distract.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing by his
order

With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of arts, and letters too;
Just a good man, made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks
that border

A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help
the harkening:

In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all
sides, darkening,

And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet
that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for
wealth, position, . . .

For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
And she answered, answered gently—"Nay, my lord, the
old tradition

Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is,
should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in his he
either drew it,

Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—

"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best
eschew it,

And pass on, like friends, to other points, less easy to
decide."

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow
scorn—

'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be
noble,

Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was
born."

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept through
me into fever,

And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang, full-statured in
an hour!

Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimes to
power?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded!—waved a flame
about my body,

Whence conventions coiled to ashes! I felt self-drawn out,
as man,

From amalgamate false natures; and I saw the skies grow
ruddy,

With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits
can!

I was mad—inspired—say either! anguish worketh inspira-
tion!

Was a man, or beast—perhaps so; for the tiger roars, when
speared;

And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never
feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—

But for *her*—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet and grew pale:

Oh, she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man or woman,

In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in 'among its forest-brothers,

Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—

And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others!
L, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted, though leaf-verdant,—

Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purples and the gold,

And the "landed stakes" and lordships—all that spirits pure and ardent

Are cast out of love and reverence, because chancing not to hold.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I love you, Madam,—

But for better souls, that nearer to the height of yours have trod—

And this age shows to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam, Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

"Yet, O God" (I said), "O grave" (I said), "O mother's heart and bosom,

With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!

We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing!

We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled!

"Learn more reverence, Madam, not for rank or wealth—*that* needs no learning;

That comes quickly—quick as sin does! ay, and often works to sin;

But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,

With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within.

“What right have you, Madam, gazing in your shining mirror
 daily,
 Getting so, by heart, your beauty, which all others must
 adore—
 While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow
 gaily, . . .
 You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing
 more.

“Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—
 the sweetest woman
 Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
 Which would seem too near to vanish, if its smile were not
 so human,—
 And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to
 grace :

“What right *can* you have, God's other works, to scorn,
 despise, . . . revile them
 In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men,
 forsooth,—
 But as *Parias* of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them,
 In the hope of living—dying,—near that sweetness of your
 mouth?

“Have you any answer, Madam? If my spirit were less
 earthy—
 If its instruments were gifted with more vibrant silver
 strings—
 I would kneel down where I stand, and say—‘Behold me! I
 am worthy
 Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as a king.’

“As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain
 upon her—
 That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you
 again,
 Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your
 dishonour—
 To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!”

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need
 not write them fuller;
 And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of
 tears—

Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! Why, a beast had scarce
 been duller,
 Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the
 spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with
 thunder,
 Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like
 a call.
 Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked up as
 if in wonder,
 With tears beaded on her lashes, and said "Bertram!" it was
 all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with
 queenly bearing,
 Which at need is used by women, she had risen up and said,
 "Sir, you are my guest, and therefore, I have given you a full
 hearing—
 Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less,
 instead"—

I had borne it!—but that "Bertram"—why, it lies there on
 the paper
 A mere word, without her accents,—and you cannot judge the
 weight
 Of the calm which crushed my passion! I seemed swimming
 in a vapour,—
 And her gentleness did shame me, whom her scorn made
 desolate.

So, struck backward, and exhausted with that inward flow of
 passion
 Which had passed, in deadly rushing, into forms of abstract
 truth,—
 With a logic agonising through unfit denunciation,—
 And with youth's own anguish turning grimly grey the hairs
 of youth,—

With the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
 wisely,
 I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake, indeed was
 true—
 To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there weighing
 nicely
 A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I
 could do!—

With such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and
 occasioned,—
 As a wild horse, through a city, runs with lightning in his
 eyes,
 And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,
 impassioned,
 Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and
 dies—

So I fell, struck down before her! Do you blame me, friend,
 for weakness?
 'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her like
 a stone;
 Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels
 of blackness!
 When the light came I was lying in this chamber—and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly
 burden,
 And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond* the
 gate—
 She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
 Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write
 this letter—
 How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life
 undone!
 I shall leave this house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were
 better—
 And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the
 sun.

When the sun has dyed the orient, I depart with no last
 gazes,
 No weak moanings—one word only, left in writing for her
 hands,—
 Out of reach of her derisions, and some unavailing praises,
 To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign
 lands.

Blame me not, I would not squander life in grief—I am
 abstemious;
 I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wing may soar again!
 There's no room for tears of weakness, in the blind eyes of a
 Pheonius:
 Into work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till*
then.

CONCLUSION.

BERTRAM finished the last pages, while along the silence
ever

Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell his tears on every leaf:
Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips that
quiver

From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of
grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a dream—a dream of
mercies!

'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and
pale!

'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
Sent to sweep a patient quiet, o'er the tossing of his wail.

“Eyes,” he said, “now throbbing through me! are ye eyes
that did undo me?”

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning
torrid,

O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?”

With a murmurous stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale
brows;

While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever,
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's
slant repose.

Said he—“Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there
steady!

Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the cheeks of calm expression—there, the lips of silent
passion,

Curv'd like an archer's bow, to send the bitter arrows out.”

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured
pace;

With her own white hands extended, as if praying one
offended,

And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—“Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir
of vesture;

Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine!

No approaching—hush! no breathing! or my heart must swoon to death in

The too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of Geraldine!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and tenderly;

"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far above me,

Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a one as I?"

Said he—"I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,

Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea;
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full completeness,—

Would my heart of life flow onward—deathward—through this dream of THEE!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling,—
While the shining tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks;

Then with her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks."

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her—

And she whispered low in triumph—"It shall be as I have sworn!

Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble—noble, certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing, that men call him lowly born!"

A VISION OF POETS.

"O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great power?"

Echo. Power. Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spray?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.

Echo. In Heavens aye. In Heavens aye.
In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?

Echo. By paine. Show me the paine, it shall be undergone;
I to mine end will still go on.

Echo. Go on."
BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night:

And thus he rose disquieted,
 With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
 And in the forest wander'd ;

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
 The moon had drawn long colonnades,
 Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver : pavement fair,
 The antique Dryads scarce would dare
 To footprint o'er, if such were there,

But rather sit by breathlessly,
 With tears in their large eyes to see
 The consecrated sight. But HE—

The poet—who with spirit-kiss
 Familiar, had long claimed for his
 Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
 A Beauty passing the earth's store,
 Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
 Like a babe's hand, without intent,
 Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument.

Nor jarred it with his mood when as,
 With a faint stirring down the grass,
 An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
 But all things fair and strange did chime
 With his thoughts then—as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
 Dropping from Heaven's encyclic rim
 To breathe from glory in the Dim—

Much less a lady, riding slow
 Upon a palfrey white as snow,
 And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,—
 "What, ho, sir poet ! dost thou pace
 Our woods at night, in ghostly chace

"Of some fair Dryad of old tales,
 Who chaunts between the nightingales,
 And over sleep by song prevails ?"

She smiled : but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone : " Now, nay,"
He answered,— " slumber passed away,

" Compelled by instincts in my head,
That I should see to-night instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake :—" The moon's regality
Will hear no praise ! she is as I.

" She is in heaven, and I on earth ;
This is my kingdom—I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that mourned—
" To their worth, lady ! They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

" To their worth ! Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold ; and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

" The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief, whose mortgage of renown
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

" Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets !—why should I be moved
In saying both are more beloved ?"

" The south can judge not of the north ;"
She resumed calmly—" I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

" Yea, sooth ! and to anoint them all
With blessed oils, which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

" As sweet," the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, " as flowers do sprung
Out of their graves when they die young !

" As sweet as window eglantine—
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse plucketh at their sign !

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud,
Which the fair Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet!
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

"Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who, having lived, dies well,—
And holy sweet the asphodel,

"Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is,
Into the world of souls from this!

"Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless death,—and even before:
Sweet, consecrated evermore!

"What! dost thou judge it a strange thing,
That poets, crowned for conquering,
Should bear some dust from out the ring?

"Come on with me, come on with me;
And learn in coming! Let me free
Thy spirit into verity."

She ceased; her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went,—
'Twas a bee's hum—a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did, far and fair,
O'er-swim the masses everywhere:

Save where the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory! You may see
The trees grow rarer presently,—
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with night,—

A fiery throb in every star,
 With burning arteries that are
 The conduits of God's life afar,—

A wild brown moorland underneath,
 Low glimmering here and thither, with
 White pools in breaks, as blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
 A dead tree in set horror stood,
 Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood ;

Since thunder stricken, years ago,
 Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
 Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree . . . alone,
 That will not bend, if tempest-blown,
 But break off sudden like a stone,—

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
 Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
 The star rays quiver while they strike.

“Drink,” said the lady, very still—
 “Be holy and cold.” He did her will,
 And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto,
 Was bare of trees : there, only grew
 Straight flags and lilies fair to view,

Which sullen on the water sate,
 And leant their faces on the flat,
 As weary of the starlight-state.

“Drink,” said the lady, grave and slow,
 “*World's use* behoveth thee to know.”
 He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,
 And flaunting weeds, and reeds and rushes
 That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
 By a slow slime ; the starlight swound
 Over the ghastly light it found.

“Drink,” said the lady, sad and slow—
 “*World's love* behoveth thee to know.”
 He looked to her, commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-cast

From yew and cypress, and from trails
Of hemlock clasping the trunk-scales,
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who dareth stoop
Where those moist branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up :

He hears a silent, gliding coil—
The snakes breathe hard against the soil—
His foot slips in their slimy oil :

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Right in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek :
" Must I drink *here* ? " he questioned meek
The lady's will, with utterance weak.

" Ay, ay," she said, " it so must be "—
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
" Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*."

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth,
As if from rivers of the south.

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like—rose and sank,—

And he swooned backward to a dream
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme.

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole,
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this :
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread !
The moonshine seemed dishevellèd

In her sleek tresses manifold ;
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold !

But SHE was holy, pale, and high—
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

“Rise up!” said she, with voice where song
Eddied through speech—“rise up, be strong !
And learn how right avengeth wrong.”

The poet rose up on his feet :
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament, with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace.

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a pure light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,

Broke full against the archèd roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,—
Then, poising the white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave.

And now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering white,
Seemed leading out to Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they showed,
 In the pale shifting incense-cloud
 Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
 And the whole temple, at the end,
 With its own incense to distend ;

The arches, like a giant's bow,
 To bend and slacken,—and below,
 The niched saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scene,
 That central altar stood serene
 In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
 Of a chief angel standing there
 Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
 That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw
 Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's Law

They could enunciate, and refrain
 From vibratory after-pain ;
 And his brow's height was sovereign—

On the vast background of his wings
 Arose his image ! and he flings
 From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
 Or less, the angel-heart !) before,
 And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes :
 While at his side, 'twixt lights and glooms,
 The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
 And angel, right and left-way bent
 The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
 And toward the altar,—pale and crowned,
 With sovran eyes of depth profound.

Deathful their faces were ; and yet
 The power of life was in them set—
 Never forgot, nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified ;

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint, in risen rest !

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirit seemed to sink in him,
Then like a dolphin change and swim

The current—These were poets true
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were—of iron rule,
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakspeare ! on whose forehead climb
The crowns o' the world ! Oh, eyes sublime—
With tears and laughters for all time !

Here, Æschylus,—the women swooned
To see so awful when he frowned
As the gods did,—he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child

Right in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which down the trees,
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban ! Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind, and deaf, and cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls ! and bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear,
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul !
And Sappho crowned with aureole

Of ebon curls on calmed brows—
O poet-woman ! none forgoes
The leap, attaining the repose !

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks !

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil ! shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high !—
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius—nobler than his mood !
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe, and said " No God,"

Finding no bottom ! he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side,

By grace of God ! his face is stern,
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he could not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed ;
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engenderèd)

On Aristo's, till they ran
Their locks in one !—The Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn,

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-willed
Boiardo,—who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm! And not without
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso! bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine,—and grave Corneille—
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple! And Petrarch pale,

Who from his brainlit heart hath thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each perfumed with the name of One.

And Camoëns, with that look he had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,

With murmurs of a purple ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse! And while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Between the bright curls blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon!

And bold De Vega,—who breathed quick
Song after song, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetorick.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't,—
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine—
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim!
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

A VISION OF POETS.

God for sole vision ! Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles they drew
From outward Nature, to renew
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben—
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows when
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind ; and Keats the real
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as grave
And salt as life ! forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dark he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and other more)
The lighted altar booming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule !

All, still as stone, and yet intense ;
As if by spirit's vehemence
That stone was carved, and not by sense.

All still and calm as statue-stone !
The life lay coiled unforegone
Up in the awful eyes alone,

And flung its length out through the air
Into whatever eyes should dare
To front them—Awful shapes and fair !

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their feet,

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant,—as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard;—

“*World's use* is cold—*World's love* is vain,—
World's cruelty is bitter bane;
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

“Hearken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood! Dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

“His organ's pedals strike along
These poets' hearts, which metal-strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

“From which foundation he can guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified!

“Whereat God's blessing . . . IBARAK
Breathes back this music—folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack:

“And men walk in it, crying ‘Lo!
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so!

“‘The stars walk statelier round the edge
O' the silver spheres, and give in pledge
Their light for nobler privilege.

“‘No little flower but joys or grieves—
Full life is rustling in the sheaves;
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves!’

“So works this music on the earth!
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To add another worth to worth—

“A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuncful sounds.

"Now hearken!" Then the Poet gazed
 Upon the angel glorious-faced,
 Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
 Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
 With no touch but with influences.

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound
 Of shapeless noises wandering round
 A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were mixed,
 Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbb'd betwixt
 The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were heard
 In mighty musings, inly stirred,
 And struggling outward for a word.

Until these surges, having run
 This way and that, gave out as one
 An Aphroditè of sweet tune,—

A harmony that finding vent,
 Upward in grand ascension went,
 Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward I like a saint who strips
 The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
 And rises in apocalypse I

A Harmony sublime and plain
 Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
 Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
 Of pèrplext chords, and soared at once,
 And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves, as
 It passed to God! The music was
 Of divine stature—strong to pass!

And those who heard it, understood
 Something of life in spirit and blood—
 Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls
 Did thrill as racers at the goals,
 And burn in all their aureoles.

But she, the lady, as vapour-bound,
 Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
 Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which fell,
 Again, alone grew audible,
 Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
 His hand, and spake out sovranly—
 "Tried poets, hearken and reply!

"Give me true answers. If we grant
 That not to suffer is to want
 The conscience of the Jubilant,—

"If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance; and mortals miss
 Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

"If as two colours must be viewed
 In a seen image, mortals should
 Need good and evil, to see good,—

"If to speak nobly, comprehends
 To feel profoundly—if the ends
 Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

"If poets on the tripod must
 Writhe like the Pythian, to make just
 Their oracles, and merit trust,—

"If every vatic word that sweeps
 To change the world, must pale their lips,
 And leave their own souls in eclipse—

"If to search deep the universe
 Must pierce the searcher with the curse,—
 Because that bolt (in man's reverse),

' Was shot to the heart o' the wood, and lies
 Wedged deepest in the best!—if eyes
 That look for visions and surprise

"From marshalled angels, must shut down
 Their lids, first upon sun and moon,
 The head asleep upon a stone,—

"If ONE who did redeem you back,
 By his own lack, from final lack,
 Did consecrate by touch and track

" Those temporal sorrows, till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

" If all the crowns of earth must wound—
With prickings of the thorns He found—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

" What say ye unto this?—refuse
This baptism in salt water?—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

" Or, oh ye gifted givers ! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me,
To make the world this harmony,—

" Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help ?"—

The Spirits bent

Their awful brows and said—" Content !"

Content ! it sounded like *Amen*,
Said by a choir of mourning men—
An affirmation full of pain

And patience !—ay, of glorying,
And adoration,—as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad, until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white,
And arches crossed, being clear to sight,

As if the roof were off, and all
Stood in the noon-sun,— " Lo ! I call
To other hearts as liberal.

" This pedal strikes out in the air !
My instrument hath room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter:

" Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

"What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift!"

So asked the angels. Straight the while
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest,
As if the world were dispossessed—
And One did pillow chin on breast.

Right languid—an as he should faint!
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralised on worldly taint.

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods! or—not to think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow,
If *they* walked to, instead of fro.

And some with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony.

And some composing sudden sighs,
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear.

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid—the wrinkling of the brow,—
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So, mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
 With Homer's forehead—though he lacked
 An inch of any! And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,—
 As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
 Were pent behind it. One, his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate,
 Like Æschylus—and tried to prate
 On trolling tongue, of fate and fate!

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
 Any light woman's! one forbore
 Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
 His hard shut lips, And one, that drew
 Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
 Of most unnatural jollities,
 Because Anacreon looked jest-wise.

So with the rest.—It was a sight
 For great world-laughter, as it might
 For great world-wrath, with equal right!

Out came a speaker from that crowd,
 To speak for all—in sleek and proud
 Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel.—“Thus,
 O angel, who hast called for us,
 We bring thee service emulous,—

“Fit service from sufficient soul—
 Hand-service, to receive world's dole—
 Lip-service, in world's ear to roll

“Adjusted concords—soft enow
 To hear the wine-cups passing, through,
 And not too grave to spoil the show.

“Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
 O sapient angel, leanest o'er
 The window-sill of metaphor.

“To give our hearts up! fie!—That rage
 Barbaric, antedates the age!
 It is not done on any stage.

" Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back—must ours be bent ?

" We are not pilgrims, by your leave,
No, nor yet martyrs ! if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to—summer eve.

" And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie."

More yet that speaker would have said,—
Poising between his smiles fair-fed,
Each separate phrase till finish'd ;

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn—

Ay, jettèd such brave fire, that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away,
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth ! A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power at last
Took them up mutely—they had passed !

And *he*, our pilgrim-poet, saw
Only their places, in deep awe,—
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison.

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the Angel's feet,
Saying—" If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it.

" For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door,
To pay shortcomings evermore.

" Accept me therefore—Not for price,
And not for pride, my sacrifice
Is tendered ! for my soul is nice,

" And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn if he succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

" I soar—I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud! So high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark!

" I ask no wages—seek no fame!
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

" I only would have leave to lose
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use.

" I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance—but not in vain,
Upon the sweetness of that strain,—

" Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound,—

" Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past!"

The angel's smile grew more divine—
The mortal speaking—ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir note fine,

Till the broad gloriole, round his brow,
Did vibrate with the light below;
But what he said I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, glossing down
Their eyes capacious of renown.

My soul, which saw these things, was blind
By what it looked on! I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command,

Straight through the haze—And so, as erst,
A strain, more noble than the first,
Mused in the organ, and outburst.

With giant march from floor to roof,
Rose the full notes ; now parted off
In pauses massively aloof,

Like measured thunders ; now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind,
Which won together sense and mind !

Now flashing sharp on sharp along,
Exultant, in a mounting throng,—
Now dying off into a song

Fed upon minors,—starry sounds
Moved on free-paced, in silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds.

And every rhythm that seemed to close,
Survived in confluent underflows,
Symphonious with the next that rose :

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backwards (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought ! and as a roll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnised and crowned—
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly, like the rack
O' the moon, in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory, with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
She melted, as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted—slow!

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
Beyond her—far as memory!

Then he looked round: he was alone—
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that seared the ground,—

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips—
World's cruelty attaints his lips;

And still he tastes it—bitter still—
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill!

Yet rising calmly up and slowly,
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
And mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood,
And prayed along the solitude,
Betwixt the pines,—“O God, my God!”

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,—
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood,
 He prayed along the solitude,—
 "THOU, Poet-God, art great and good!

"And though we must have, and have had
 Right reason to be earthly sad,—
 THOU, Poet-God, art great and glad."

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart—
 We press too close in church and mart,
 To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down
 That same green forest where had gone
 The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps! From the east
 A red and tender radiance pressed
 Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
 While up the leafiness profound
 A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
 I turned that way; and now and then
 The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
 Of dew which slideth droppingly
 From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and bird
 So sweet a silence ministered,
 God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run
 In all things, as the least had won
 A joyous insight of the sun.

And no one looking round the wood
 Could help confessing, as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good!

But hark! a distant sound that grows!
 A heaving, sinking of the boughs—
 A rustling murmur, not of those!

A breezy noise, which is not breeze!—
 And white-clad children by degrees
 Steal out in troops among the trees ;

Fair little children, morning-bright,
 With faces grave, yet soft to sight,—
 Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
 And others leapt up high to catch
 The upper boughs, and shake from each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
 The child who held the branch let go,
 And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
 The children laughed—but the laugh flew
 From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song-bird ; and a child
 Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
 “ Hush ! keep this morning undefiled.”

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres ;
 His soul upon his brow appears
 In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
 “ What are your palms for ? ” — “ To be spread,”
 He answered, “ on a poet dead.

“ The poet died last month ; and now
 The world, which had been somewhat slow
 In honouring his living brow,

“ Commands the palms—They must be strown
 On his new marble very soon,
 In a procession of the town.”

I sighed and said, “ Did he foresee
 Any such honour ? ” “ Verily
 I cannot tell you,” answered he.

“ But this I know,—I fain would lay
 Mine own head down, another day,
 As *he* did,—with the fame away.

“ A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
 Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
 As deep down as a bee had sucked ;

“ Then turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

“ With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on his iris broad,
The images of things bestowed

“ By the chief Poet. ‘ God ! ’ he cried,
‘ Be praised for anguish, which has tried ;
For beauty, which has satisfied :—

“ ‘ For this world's presence, half within
And half without me—sound and scene—
This sense of Being and Having been.

“ ‘ I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world ! Both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul,—Body, to tomb !

“ ‘ I am content to be so weak,—
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

“ ‘ I am content to be so bare
Before the archers ! everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

“ ‘ I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That Images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

“ ‘ I am content to feel the step
Of each pure Image !—let those keep
To mandragore, who care to sleep.

“ ‘ I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

“ ‘ Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

“ ‘ Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive !
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

“ ‘ In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

"*I know*—is all the mourner saith,—
 Knowledge by suffering entereth ;
 And Life is perfected by Death !"

The child spake nobly. Strange to hear,
 His infantine soft accents clear,
 Charged with high meanings, did appear,—

And fair to see, his form and face,—
 Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
 From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew :
 An orient beam, which pierced it through,
 Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,
 Traced on its brightness, up and down
 In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown

Guido might paint his angels so—
 A little angel, taught to go,
 With holy words to saints below.

Such innocence of action yet
 Significance of object met
 In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
 Did round in rosy reverence stand,
 Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

"And so he died," I whispered ;—"Nay,
 Not so," the childish voice did say—
 "That poet turned him, first, to pray

"In silence ; and God heard the rest,
 'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
 Then he called one who loved him best,

"Yea, he called softly through the room
 (His voice was weak yet tender)—'Come,'
 He said, 'Come nearer ! Let the bloom

"Of Life grow over, undenied,
 This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
 I shall be soon at the other side.

"Come, kiss me !' So the one in truth
 Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,
 Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth.

"And in that kiss of love, was won
Life's manumission! All was done—
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone!*

"But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think by His,
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled—his lips shook,
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates, though it is not struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved,
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?"

"*I,*" softly said the child; and then,
"*I,*" said he louder, once again:
"*His son,*—my rank is among men.

"And now that men exalt his name,
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

"He did not die alone; nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
Saying, *come nearer!*—and I come.

"Glory to God!" resumed he,—
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears, which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—
"That poet now hath entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs, in troops,
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companied by diviner hopes."

"But *thou,*" I murmured,—to engage
The child's speech farther—"hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage."

"Glory to God—to God!" he saith—
"KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH;
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH!"

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

In the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,—
Toll slowly!

And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is music for the Dead,
 When the rebecks are all done."

Six abeles i' the kirkyard grow, on the north side in a row,—
Toll slowly!

And the shadows of their tops, rock across the little slopes
 Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste,—
Toll slowly!

And between the river flowing, and the fair green leaves
 a-growing,
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow grey :—
Toll slowly!

Through the rain of willow branches, I could see the low
 hill-ranges,
 And the river on its way.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,—
Toll slowly!

While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the solemn
 noises,—
 Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There, I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the
 time

Toll slowly!

And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged—
Toll slowly!

And three hundred years had stood, mute adown each hoary
 wood,
 Like a full heart, having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly!

And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
 In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt, large and red, on the towers of Linteged,—
Toll slowly!
 Lance and spearhead on the height, bristling strange in fiery
 light,
 While the castle stood in shade.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly!
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire,
 When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,—
Toll slowly!
 And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights
 had stood,
 And to-night, anears its fall.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did
 come,—
Toll slowly!
 One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the
 doors,
 "May good angels bless our home."

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,—
Toll slowly!
 Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of
 youth
 Did light outward its own sighs.

'Twas a duke's fair orphan-girl, and her uncle's ward, the Earl,
Toll slowly!
 Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry
 gold,
 To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of woman-
 hood,—
Toll slowly!
 Unto both those lords of Leigh, spake she out right sovrانly,
 "My will runneth as my blood."

"And while this same blood makes red this same right
 hand's veins," she said,—
Toll slowly!
 "'Tis my will, as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,
 But Sir Guy of Linteged."

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth,—

Toll slowly!

“ Good my niece, that hand withal, looketh somewhat soft and small,
For so large a will, in sooth.”

She, too, smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold and fine,—

Toll slowly!

“ Little hand clasps muckle gold: or it were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine !”

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,—

Toll slowly!

“ He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death.”

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise,—

Toll slowly!

“ Thy hound's blood, my lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,” quoth she,
“ Though he moans not where he lies.”

“ But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward !”

Toll slowly!

“ By that grave, my lords, which made me, orphaned girl and dowered lady,
I deny you wife and ward.”

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with lofty tread,—

Toll slowly!

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridle train, along the night-storm rode amain:—

Toll slowly!

Wild the steeds of lord and serf, struck their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train, along the storm pursued
 amain—

Toll slowly!

Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling, hoof
 on hoof,
 In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight, on his red-roan steed of
 might,—

Toll slowly!

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no harm,
 Smiling out into the night.

“Dost thou fear?” he said at last;—“Nay!” she answered
 him in haste,—

Toll slowly!

“Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind.
 Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!”

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and
 fetlocks spread,—

Toll slowly!

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered—
 down the banks,
 To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed
 about,—

Toll slowly!

In the courtyard rose the cry—“Live the Duchess and Sir
 Guy!”

But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropt her check, kissed his mane and
 kissed his neck,—

Toll slowly!

“I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,”
 Were the words which she did speak.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-
 day,—

Toll slowly!

When five hundred archers tall, stand beside the castle wall,
 To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back,—

Toll slowly!

And a fortnight's siege is done.—and except the Duchess, none
 Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eye so grey of
blee,—

Toll slowly!

And thin lips, that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing
of his teeth,

Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

Cried aloud—"So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess
May!"—

Toll slowly!

"Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

"Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning of
the hound?"—

Toll slowly!

"Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance-
oath,

And the other may come round.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past com-
pare,"—

Toll slowly!

"Yet thine old love's faulchion brave, is as strong a thing to
have,

As the will of lady fair.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If a wife's name thee
behave,"—

Toll slowly!

"Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid
the sorrow

Of thy last ill-mated love.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back
troth,"—

Toll slowly!

"He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
'I forbid you—I am loth!'

"I will wring thy fingers pale, in the gauntlet of my mail,"—

Toll slowly!

"'Little hand and muckle gold' close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did to prevail."

O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly!

O and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—
Toll slowly!

“Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my lord
of Leigh,—
But thou boastest little wit.”

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly,—
Toll slowly!

She blushed half from her disdain—half, her beauty was so
plain,
“Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh!”

Straight she called her maidens in—“Since ye gave me blame
herein,”—

Toll slowly!

“That a bridal such as mine, should lack gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.

“It is three months gone to-day, since I gave mine hand
away.”—

Toll slowly!

“Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride-state
in them,
While we keep the foe at bay.

“On your arms I loose mine hair; comb it smooth and crown
it fair,”—

Toll slowly!

“I would look in purple-pall, from this lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that’s there!”

O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly!

On the tower the castle’s lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean down passionate,—
Toll slowly!

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there-
withal,
With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered—snapped upon the
stone,—

Toll slowly!

“Sword,” he thought, with inward laugh, “ill thou servest for
a staff.
When thy nobler use is done!

"Sword, thy nobler use is done!—tower is lost, and shame begun:"—

Toll slowly!

If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.

If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,"—

Toll slowly!

"But if *I* die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

"Five true friends lie for my sake—in the moat and in the brake,"—

Toll slowly!

"Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the breast,
And none of these will wake.

"And no more of this shall be!—heart-blood weighs too heavily,"—

Toll slowly!

"And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

"Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,"—

Toll slowly!

"Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,
Though never a word she saith—

"These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too heavily:"—

Toll slowly!

"And if *I* die here apart,—o'er my dead and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

"When the foe hath heard it said—'Death holds Guy of Linteged,'"—

Toll slowly!

"That new corse new peace shall bring: and a blessed, blessed thing,
Shall the stone be at its head.

"Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,"—

Toll slowly!

"Then my foes shall sleek my pride, soothing fair my widowed bride,
Whose sole sin was love of me.

"With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her
and entreat:"—

Toll slowly!

"And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting
head,

While her tears drop over it.

"She will weep her woman's tears, she will pray her woman's
prayers,"—

Toll slowly!

"But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring
again

By the suntime of her years.

'Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my
belief,"—

Toll slowly!

"That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in
completeness!

Now my May-day seemeth brief."

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown strange
and dim,—

Toll slowly!

Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there face
to face

With the foe instead of him.

"One last oath, my friends, that wear faithful hearts to do
and dare!"—

Toll slowly!

"Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—swear me service
worth the cost."

—Bold they stood around to swear.

"Each man clasp my hand, and swear, by the deed we
failed in there,"—

Toll slowly!

"Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-
night!"—

Pale they stood around—to swear.

"One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to
do and dare!"—

Toll slowly!

"Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before
you all,—

Guide him up the turret-stair.

"Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height!"—

Toll slowly!

"Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong and fat,—
He shall bear me far to-night."

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so,—

Toll slowly!

—"Las! the noble heart," they thought,—“he in sooth is grief-distraught.—
Would we stood here with the foe!”

But a fire flashed from the eye, 'twixt their thought and their reply,—

Toll slowly!

"Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here, must ride fast,
As we wish our foes to fly."

They have fettered the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,—

Toll slowly!

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors;
But they goad him up the stair.

Then from out her bower-chambère, did the Duchess May repair,—

Toll slowly!

"Tell me now what is your need," said the lady, "of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair?"

Calm she stood! unbodkined through, fell her dark hair to her shoe,—

Toll slowly!

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

"Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like yesterday,"—

Toll slowly!

"One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows wild of speech.—
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

"In the east tower, high'st of all,—loud he cries for steed
from stall,"—

Toll slowly!

"'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

"And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof
did fall."

Toll slowly!

"Wifely prayer meets deathly need! may the sweet Heavens
hear thee plead,
If he ride the castle-wall."

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on
the floor,—

Toll slowly!

And tear after tear you heard, fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

"Get thee in, thou soft ladië! here is never a place for thee!"

Toll slowly!

"Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its
moan
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh."

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,—

Toll slowly!

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems
to look
Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in with pride, her own tears i' the stone
beside,—

Toll slowly!

"Go to, faithful friends, go to!—Judge no more what ladies
do,—
No, nor how their lords may ride!"

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss
and stroke:—

Toll slowly!

Soft he neighed to answer her; and then followed up the stair,
For the love of her sweet look.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,—

Toll slowly!

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her
treading,
Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof
did fall,—

Toll slowly!

Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall!

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up
silently,—

Toll slowly!

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her
eyes,

Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet saints
bless thy life!"—

Toll slowly!

"In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed—
But not of my noble wife."

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under
sun:"—

Toll slowly!

"But by all my womanhood,—which is proved so, true and
good,

I will never do this one.

"Now by womanhood's degree, and by wifehood's verity,"—

Toll slowly!

"In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*."

"By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardiè."—

Toll slowly!

"If this hour, on castle-wall, can be room for steed from
stall,

Shall be also room for *me*.

"So the sweet saints with me be," (did she utter solemnly)—

Toll slowly!

"If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*."

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter-
well,—

Toll slowly!

"Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other
eves,

To hear chime a vesper-bell?"

She clung closer to his knee—"Ay, beneath the cypress tree!"—

Toll slowly!

"Mock me not; for elsewhere, than along the greenwood fair,

Have I ridden fast with thee!

"Fast I rode, with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman's house!"—

Toll slowly!

"What! and would you men should reckon, that I dared more for love's sake,

As a bride than as a spouse?

"What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,"—

Toll slowly!

"That a bride may keep your side, while through castle-gate you ride,

Yet eschew the castle-wall?"

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her suing,—

Toll slowly!

With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

Twice he wrung her hands in twain; but the small hands closed again,—

Toll slowly!

Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed along his track,

With a frantic clasp and strain!

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window and door,—

Toll slowly!

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of "kill!" and "flee!"

Strike up clear the general roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—but they closed and clung again,—

Toll slowly!

Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,

In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute,—with her shuddering
lips half-shut,—

Toll slowly!

Her head fallen as in swoond,—hair and knee swept on the
ground,—

She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

Back he reined his steed, back-thrown on the slippery coping-
stone,—

Toll slowly!

Back the iron hoofs did grind, on the battlement behind,
Whence a hundred feet went down.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank
bestrode,

Toll slowly!

“Friends, and brothers! save my wife!—Pardon, sweet, in
change for life,—

But I ride alone to God!”

Straight as if the Holy name did upbreathe her as a flame,—

Toll slowly!

She upsprang, she rose upright!—in his selle she sate in
sight;

By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one at
rest,—

Toll slowly!

“Ring,” she cried, “O vesper-bell, in the beechwood’s old
chappelle!

But the passing-bell rings best.”

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw loose
—in vain,—

Toll slowly!

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in
air,

On the last verge, rears amain.

And he hangs, he rocks between—and his nostrils curdle in,—

Toll slowly!

And he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam fall off;
And his face grows fierce and thin!

And a look of human woe, from his staring eyes did go,—

Toll slowly!

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
Of the headlong death below.—

And "Ring, ring, thou passing-bell," still she cried, "i' the old chapel!"—

Toll slowly!

Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung out to wrack,

Horse and riders overfell!

.

O, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly!

And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the kirkyard, while the chime

Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run,—

Toll slowly!

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,

Here, where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree, I a little grave did see,—

Toll slowly!

Where was graved,—"HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD,

"EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-THREE."

Then, O spirits—did I say—ye who rode so fast that day,—

Toll slowly!

Did star-wheels and angels-wings, with their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way?

Though in passions ye would dash, with a blind and heavy crash,

Toll slowly!

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the field,—

Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now, your will is all unwilling—now, your pulses are all stilled,—

Toll slowly!

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,—

Whose small grave to-day was filled.

THE LADY'S YES.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now,—

Toll slowly!

And the children might be bold to pluck the kingscups from
your mould,

Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing, in the alder near, in spring,—

Toll slowly!

Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong; cold and heat ye take not
wrong:—

Toll slowly!

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

O, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly!

And I said in underbreath,—all our life is mixed with
death,—

And who knoweth which is best?

O, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly!

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our
incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE LADY'S YES.

“YES!” I answered you last night;

“No!” this morning, Sir, I say!

Colours seen by candle-light,

Will not look the same by day.

When the tabors played their best,

Lamps above, and laughs below—

Love me sounded like a jest,

Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No*!

Call me false, or call me free—

Vow, whatever light may shine,

No man on thy face shall see

Any grief for change on mine.

Yet the sin is on us both—
 Time to dance is not to woo—
 Wooer light makes fickle troth—
 Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*!

Learn to win a lady's faith
 Nobly, as the thing is high;
 Bravely, as for life and death—
 With a loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
 Point her to the starry skies,
 Guard her, by your truthful words,
 Pure from courtship's flatteries.

By your truth she shall be true,
 Ever true, as wives of yore—
 And her *Yes*, once said to you,
 SHALL be *Yes* for evermore.



THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway!

While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine.
 There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear, than any song of thine!"

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting;
 "Now wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?"

"I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
 Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun."

The poet went out weeping,—and died abroad, bereft there—
 The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails!—

Yet when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
 Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's!

THE LOST BOWER.

In the pleasant orchard closes,
 "God bless all our gains," say we ;
 But "May God bless all our losses,"
 Better suits with our degree.—

Listen gentle—ay, and simple ! Listen children on the knee !

Green the land is where my daily
 Steps in jocund childhood played—
 Dimpled close with hill and valley,
 Dappled very close with shade ;

Summer-snow of apple blossoms, running up from glade to
 glade.

There is one hill I see nearer,
 In my vision of the rest ;
 And a little wood seems clearer,
 As it climbeth from the west,

Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
 And, completing the ascent,
 Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
 Thrills in leafy tremblement :

Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through
 content.

Not a step the wood advances
 O'er the open hill-top's bound :
 There, in green arrest, the branches
 See their image on the ground :

You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad
 with sound.

For you hearken on your right hand,
 How the birds do leap and call
 In the greenwood, out of sight and
 Out of reach and fear of all ;

And the squirrels crack the filberts, through their cheerful
 madrigal.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
 The slant grass and daisies pale ;
 And five apple-trees stand, dropping
 Separate shadows toward the vale,

Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their "All
 hail !"

Far out, kindled by each other,
 Shining hills on hills, arise ;
 Close as brother leans to brother,
 When they press beneath the eyes
 Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

While beyond, above them mounted,
 And above their woods also,
 Malvern hills, for mountains counted
 Not unduly, loom a-row—
 Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions, through the sunshine and
 the snow.*

Yet in childhood little prized I
 That fair walk and far survey :
 'Twas a straight walk, unadvised by
 The least mischief worth a nay—
 Up and down—as dull as grammar on an eve of holiday !

But the wood, all close and clenching
 Bough in bough and root in root,—
 No more sky (for over-branching)
 At your head than at your foot,—
 Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a glamour past dispute !

Few and broken paths showed through it,
 Where the sheep had tried to run,—
 Forced, with snowy wool to strew it
 Round the thickets, when anon
 They with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

But my childish heart beat stronger
 Than those thickets dared to grow :
 I could pierce them ! I could longer
 Travel on methought, than so !
 Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children climb and creep
 where they would go.

And the poets wander, said I,
 Over places all as rude !
 Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
 Sate to meet him in a wood—
 Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
 Through a forest by a well,

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langlande's visions ; and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

He had never dreamt nor marvelled
 At those ladies fair and fell
 Who lived smiling without loving, in their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
 And took courage from their song,
 Till my little struggling fingers
 Tore asunder gyve and thong
 Of the lichens which entrapped me, and the barrier branches
 strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
 With a fawn's heart debonair,
 Under-crawling, overleaping
 Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
 I stood suddenly astonished—I was gladdened unaware!

From the place I stood in, floated
 Back the covert dim and close;
 And the open ground was suited
 Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
 And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightening
 All adown its silver rind;
 For as some trees draw the lightning,
 So this tree, unto my mind,
 Drew to earth the blessed sunshine, from the sky where it was
 shrined.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
 An old hawthorn also grew;
 And wood-ivy like a spirit
 Hovered dimly round the two,
 Shaping thence that bower of beauty, which I sing of thus
 to you.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter,
 Than for any woodland wide!
 Though a fresh and dewy glitter
 Struck it through, from side to side,
 Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning
 plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
 Hooded fairly like her hawk,
 With a book or lute in summer,
 And a hope of sweeter talk,—
 Listening less to her own music, than for footsteps on the walk.

But that bower appeared a marvel
 In the wildness of the place!
 With such seeming art and travail,
 Finely fixed and fitted was
 Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
 Was inwrought with eglantine;
 And the wild hop fibred closely,
 And the large-leaved columbine,
 Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly entwine.

Rose-trees, either side the door, were
 Growing lithe and growing tall;
 Each one set a summer warder
 For the keeping of the hall,—
 With a red rose, and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the
 wall.

As I entered—mosses hushing
 Stole all noises from my foot;
 And a round elastic cushion,
 Clasped within the linden's root,
 Took me in a chair of silence, very rare and absolute.

All the floor was paved with glory,—
 Greenly, silently inlaid,
 Through quick motions made before me,
 With fair counterparts in shade,
 Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

“Is such pavement in a palace?”
 So I questioned in my thought:
 The sun, shining through the chalice
 Of the red rose hung without,
 Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

At the same time, on the linen
 Of my childish lap there fell
 Two white may-leaves, downward winning
 Through the ceiling's miracle,
 From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

Down to floor and up to ceiling,
 Quick I turned my childish face;
 With an innocent appealing
 For the secret of the place,
 To the trees which surely knew it, in partaking of the grace.

Where's no foot of human creature,
 How could reach a human hand ?
 And if this be work of nature,
 Why is nature sudden bland,
 reaking off from other wild work ? It was hard to understand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
 Of the bramble and the thorn ?
 Did she pause, in tender rueing,
 Here, of all her sylvan scorn ?
 Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness worn ?

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
 Be the work of Dryad strong ;
 Who, surviving all that chanced
 In the world's old pagan wrong,
 Lay hid, feeding in the woodland, on the last true poet's song ?

Or was this the house of fairies,
 Left, because of the rough ways,
 Unassoiled by Ave Marys
 Which the passing pilgrim prays,—
 And beyond St. Catherine's chiming, on the blessed Sabbath
 days ?

So, young muser, I sate listening
 To my fancy's wildest word—
 On a sudden, through the glistening
 Leaves around, a little stirred,
 Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than
 heard.

Softly finely, it inwound me—
 From the world it shut me in,—
 Like a tountain falling round me,
 Which with silver waters thin
 Clips a little marble Naiad sitting smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who knoweth ?
 I know nothing. But indeed
 Pan or Faunus never bloweth
 So much sweetness from a reed,
 Which has sucked the milk of waters, at the oldest river-head.

Never lark the sun can waken
 With such sweetness ! when the lark,
 The high planets overtaking
 In the half-*evanished* Dark,
 Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

Never nightingale so singeth—
 Oh ! she leans on thorny tree,
 And her poet-soul she flingeth
 Over pain to victory !

Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me !

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
 Nor small finches sing as sweet,
 When the sun strikes through the bushes.
 To their crimson clinging feet,

And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens
 complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seem'd
 Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
 He of green and azure dream'd,
 While it sate in spirit-ruth

On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

If it *were* a bird !—ah, sceptic,
 Give me "Yea" or give me "Nay"—
 Though my soul were nympholeptic,
 As I heard that virëlay,

You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

I rose up in exultation
 And an inward trembling heat,
 And (it seemed) in geste of passion,
 Dropped the music to my feet,

Like a garment rustling downwards!—such a silence followed it.

Heart and head beat through the quiet,
 Full and heavily, though slower ;
 In the song, I think, and by it,
 Mystic Presences of power

Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to
 the Hour.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
 Straightway from the bower I past ;
 Foot and soul being dimly drifted
 Through the greenwood, till, at last,

In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all consciously was cast.

Face to face with the true mountains,
 I stood silently and still ;
 Drawing strength for fancy's dauntings,
 From the air about the hill,

And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair goodwill.

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
 Witnessed there, before my youth,
 To the truth of things, with praises
 To the beauty of the truth ;
 And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,
 I have found a bower to-day,
 A green lusus—fashioned half in
 Chance, and half in Nature's play—
 And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

Henceforth, I will be the fairy
 Of this bower, not built by one ;
 I will go there, sad or merry,
 With each morning's benison ;
 And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have won.

So I said. But the next morning,
 (—Child, look up into my face—
 'Ware, O sceptic, of your scorning !
 This is truth in its pure grace !)
 The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed
 the place.

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
 And upon it swear me true—
 By the wind-bells swinging slowly
 Their mute curfews in the dew—
 By the advent of the snowdrop—by the rosemary and rue,—

I affirm by all or any,
 Let the cause be charm or chance,
 That my wandering searches many
 Missed the bower of my romance—
 That I nevermore upon it, turned my mortal countenance.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
 Never bower has seemed so fair—
 Never garden creeper crossed it,
 With so deft and brave an air—
 Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.

Day by day, with new desire,
 Toward my wood I ran in faith—
 Under leaf and over brier—
 Through the thickets, out of breath—
 Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as
 death.

But his sword of mettle clash'd,
 And his arm smote strong, I ween ;
 And her dreaming spirit flash'd
 Through her body's fair white screen,—
 And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys
 green.

But for me, I saw no splendour—
 All my sword was my child-heart ;
 And the wood refused surrender
 Of that bower it held apart,
 Safe as *Ædipus's* grave-place 'mid *Colone's* olives swart.

As *Aladdin* sought the basements
 His fair palace rose upon,
 And the four-and-twenty casements
 Which gave answers to the sun ;
 So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up, and I looked down.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
 As the little bower did then :
 And you call it tender folly
 That such thoughts should come again ?
 Ah ! I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother-
 men !

For this loss it did prefigure
 Other loss of better good,
 When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
 And in ripened womanhood,
 Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure—
 Many a hope, and many a power—
 Studious health and merry leisure—
 The first dew on the first flower !
 But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
 And the other dream of Done—
 The first spring in the pursuing,
 The first pride in the Begun,—
 First recoil from incompletion, in the face of what is won—

Exultations in the far light,
 Where some cottage only is—
 Mild dejections in the starlight,
 Which the sadder-hearted miss ;
 And the child-cheek blushing scarlet, for the very shame of bliss.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
 Which the thunder could not break ;
 Something too of the strong leaping
 Of the staglike heart awake,
 Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to take.

Some respect to social fictions
 Hath been also lost by me ;
 And some generous genuflexions,
 Which my spirit offered free
 To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

And my losses did I tell you,
 Ye, perchance, would look away ;—
 Ye would answer me, " Farewell ! you
 Make sad company to-day ;
 And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you say."

For God placed me like a dial
 In the open ground, with power ;
 And my heart had for its trial,
 All the sun and all the shower !
 And I suffered many losses ; and my first was of the bower.

Laugh ye ? If that loss of mine be
 Of no heavy-seeming weight—
 When the cone falls from the pine-tree
 The young children laugh thereat ;
 Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be great :

One who knew me in my childhood,
 In the glamour and the game,
 Looking on me long and mild, would
 Never know me for the same !
 Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes over-
 came !

On this couch I weakly lie on,
 While I count my memories,—
 Through the fingers which, still sighing,
 I press closely on mine eyes,—
 Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
 Stroked with light adown its rind—
 And the ivy-leaves serenely
 Each in either intertwined,
 And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown
 nor pined !

From those overblown faint roses,
 Not a leaf appeareth shed,
 And that little bud discloses
 Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,
 For the winters and the summers which have passed me over-
 head.

And that music overfloweth,
 Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves;
 Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
 Fay or Faunus—who believes?
 But my heart still trembles in me, to the trembling of the
 leaves.

Is the bower lost, then? Who sayeth
 That the bower indeed is lost?
 Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
 Through the solstice and the frost,—
 And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and utter-
 most—

Till another open for me
 In God's Eden-land unknown,
 With an angel at the doorway,
 White with gazing at His Throne;
 And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—"ALL IS LOST
 . . . and *won!*"



A CHILD ASLEEP.

How he sleepeth! having drunken
 Weary childhood's mandragore!
 From his pretty eyes have sunken
 Pleasures, to make room for more—
 Sleeping near the withered nosegay, which he pulled the day
 before.

Nosegays! leave them for the waking!
 Throw them earthward where they grew;
 Dim are such, beside the breaking
 Amaranths he looks unto—
 Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
 From the palms they sprang beneath,

Now perhaps divinely holden,
 Swing against him in a wreath—
 We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of
 his breath.

Vision unto vision calleth,
 While the young child dreameth on.
 Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
 With the glory thou hast won!
 Darker wert thou in the garden, yestermorn, by summer sun.

We should see the spirits ringing
 Round thee,—were the clouds away!
 'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
 In the silent-seeming clay—
 Singing!—Stars that seem the mutest, go in music all the way.

As the moths around a taper,
 As the bees around a rose,
 As in sunset, many a vapour,—
 So the spirits group and close
 Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
 With their diadems of youth
 Striking on thy ringlets sheenly,—
 While thou smilest, . . . not in sooth
Thy smile . . . but the overfair one, dropt from some ætherial
 mouth.

Haply it is angels' duty,
 During slumber, shade by shade
 To fine down this childish beauty
 To the thing it must be made,
 Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see it
 fade.

Softly, softly! make no noises!
 Now he lieth dead and dumb—
 Now he hears the angels' voices
 Folding silence in the room—
 Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as
 they come.

Speak not! he is consecrated—
 Breathe no breath across his eyes;
 Lifted up and separated
 On the hand of God he lies,
 In a sweetness beyond touching,—held in cloistral sanctities.

Could ye bless him—father—mother ?
 Bless the dimple in his cheek ?
 Dare ye look at one another,
 And the benediction speak ?
 Would ye not break out in weeping, and confess yourselves
 too weak ?

He is harmless—ye are sinful,—
 Ye are troubled—he, at ease !
 From his slumber, virtue windful
 Floweth outward with increase—
 Dare not bless him ! but be blessed by his peace—and go in
 peace.



THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

“φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδερκεσθε μ' ομμασῶς τεκνα.”

MEDEA.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
 Ere the sorrow comes with years ?
 They are leaning their young heads against their
 mothers,—
 And *that* cannot stop their tears.
 The young lambs are bleating in the meadows ;
 The young birds are chirping in the nest ;
 The young fawns are playing with the shadows ;
 The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,
 They are weeping bitterly !—
 They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
 In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow
 Why their tears are falling so ?—
 The old man may weep for his to-morrow
 Which is lost in Long Ago—
 The old tree is leafless in the forest—
 The old year is ending in the frost—
 The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest—
 The old hope is hardest to be lost :
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,
 Do you ask them why they stand
 Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers
 In our happy Fatherland ?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
 And their looks are sad to see,
 For the man's grief abhorrent, draws and presses
 Down the cheeks of infancy—
 "Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary;"
 "Our young feet," they say, "are very weak!
 Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
 Our grave-rest is very far to seek!
 Ask the old why they weep, and not the children,
 For the outside earth is cold,—
 And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
 And the graves are for the old!"

"True," say the young children, "it may happen
 That we die before our time!
 Little Alice died last year—the grave is shapen
 Like a snowball, in the rime.
 We looked into the pit prepared to take her—
 Was no room for any work in the close clay;
 From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
 Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
 If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
 With your ear down, little Alice never cries!—
 Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
 For the smile has time for growing in her eyes,—
 And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
 The shroud, by the kirk-chime!
 It is good when it happens," say the children,
 "That we die before our time!"

Alas, the wretched children! they are seeking
 Death in life, as best to have!
 They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
 With a cerement from the grave.
 Go out, children, from the mine and from the city—
 Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do—
 Pluck you handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty—
 Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
 But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
 Like our weeds anear the mine?
 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
 From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
 And we cannot run or leap—
 If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
 To drop down in them and sleep.

Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping—
 We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
 For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
 Through the coal-dark, underground—
 Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

“ For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—
 Their wind comes in our faces,—
 Till our hearts turn,—our heads, with pulses burning
 And the walls turn in their places—
 Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling—
 Turns the long light that droppeth down the wall—
 Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling—
 All are turning, all the day, and we with all!—
 And all day, the iron wheels are droning ;
 And sometimes we could pray,
 ‘ O ye wheels’ (breaking out in a mad moaning),
 ‘ Stop ! be silent for to-day ! ’ ”

Ay ! be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing
 For a moment, mouth to mouth—
 Let them touch each other’s hands, in a fresh wreathing
 Of their tender human youth !
 Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
 Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—
 Let them prove their inward souls against the notion
 That thy live in you, or under you, O wheels !—
 Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
 As if Fate in each were stark ;
 And the children’s souls, which God is calling sunward,
 Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
 That they look to Him and pray—
 So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
 Will bless them another day.
 They answer, “ Who is God that He should hear us,
 While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred ?
 When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
 Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word !
 And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
 Strangers speaking at the door ;
 Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
 Hears our weeping any more ?

" Two words, indeed, of praying we remember ;
 And at midnight's hour of harm,—
 ' Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
 We say softly for a charm,*
 We know no other words, except ' Our Father,'
 And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
 God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
 And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
 ' Our Father !' If He heard us, He would surely
 (For they call Him good and mild)
 Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
 ' Come and rest with me, my child.' "

" But, no ! " say the children, weeping faster,
 " He is speechless as a stone ?
 And they tell us, of His image is the master
 Who commands us to work on.
 Go to ! " say the children,— " Up in Heaven,
 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find !
 Do not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving—
 We look up for God, but tears have made us blind." "
 Do ye hear the children weeping and disproving,
 O my brothers, what ye preach ?
 For God's possible is taught by His world's loving—
 And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you ;
 They are weary ere they run ;
 They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
 Which is brighter than the sun :
 They know the grief of men, but not the wisdom ;
 They sink in the despair, without the calm—
 Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,—
 Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—
 Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievably
 No dear remembrance keep,—
 Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly :
 Let them weep ! let them weep !

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
 And their look is dread to see,

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his mission. The name of the poet of " Orion " and " Cosmo de' Medici " has, however, a change of associations ; and comes in time to remind me (with other noble instances) that we have some brave poetic heat of literature still,—though open to the reproach, on certain points, of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.

For you think you see their angels in their places,
 With eyes meant for Deity ;—
 " How long," they say, " how long, O cruel nation,
 Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,
 Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
 And tread onward to your throne amid the smart ?
 Our blood splashes upward, O our tyrants,
 And your purple shows your path ;
 But the child's sob curseth deeper in the silence
 Than the strong man in his wrath !"

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face she bent
 Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
 To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it
 might

Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight—
 To erase it with a solemn vow,—a princely vow—to rule—
 A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful,—
 A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness,
 And with the law and for the land!—so God the vower
 bless!

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
 And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled
 scene.

The priests stood stoléd in their pomp, the sworded chiefs in
 theirs,

And so, the collared knights, and so, the civil ministers,—
 And so, the waiting lords and dames—and little pages best
 At holding trains—and legates so, from countries east and
 west—

So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright,
 Along whose brows the Queen's, new crowned, flashed coro-
 nets to light!—

And so, the people at the gates, with priestly hands on high,
 Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty !

And so the DEAD—who lie in rows beneath the minster floor,
 There, verily an awful state maintaining evermore—

The statesman, whose clean palm will kiss no bribe whate'er
 it be—

The courtier, who, for no fair queen, will rise up to his
 knee—

The court-dame, who, for no court-tire, will leave her shroud behind—
 The laureate, who no courtlier rhyme than "dust to dust" can find—
 The kings and queens who, having made that vow and worn that crown,
 Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown!
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them?—what meaning can it have?—
 The King of kings, the rights of death—God's judgment and the grave!
 And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair Queen had vowed,
 The living shouted "May she live! Victoria, live!" aloud—
 And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between,
 "The blessings happy monarchs have, be thine, O crown'd Queen!"

But now before her people's face she bendeth her's anew,
 And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness thereunto.
 She vowed to rule, and in that oath, her childhood put away—
 She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.
 O lovely lady! let her vow! such lips become such vows,—
 And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal brows!
 O lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea, let her vow to love!—
 And though she be no less a queen—with purples hung above,
 The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
 The woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to ground,—
 Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
 While loving hopes, for retinues, about her sweetness wait!—
 SHE vows to love, who vowed to rule—the chosen at her side—
 Let none say, God preserve the Queen!—but rather, Bless the bride!—
 None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate the dream
 Wherein no monarch, but a wife, she to herself may seem!
 Or if ye say, Preserve the Queen!—oh, breathe it inward low—
 She is a *woman*, and *beloved*!—and 'tis enough but so!
 Count it enough, thou noble prince, who tak'st her by the hand,
 And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady of the land!—
 And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
 And true to truth and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg were,—

We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts, and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing !

And now, upon our Queen's last vow, what blessings shall we
pray ?

None straitened to a shallow crown, will suit our lips to-day.
Behold, they must be free as love—they must be broad as
free—

Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity !
Long live she !—send up loyal shouts—and true hearts pray
between,—

“The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crown'd
Queen !”

CROWNED AND BURIED.

NAPOLÉON !—years ago, and that great word,
Compact of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword,
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

Napoleon ! Nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse ; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame—
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
Near their last silence, uttered it for God's.

Napoleon ! Sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem : children small
Leapt up to greet it as at manhood's call :
Priests blessed it from their altars overstoopt
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid !
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose
In search of eyries : and the Ægyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand “For ever.”

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
 Egyptian tombs, whose mummied habitants,
 Packed to humanity's significance,
 Motioned it back with stillness! Shouts as idle
 As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice,
 Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

The world's face changed to hear it! Kingly men
 Came down, in chidden babes' bewilderment,
 From autocratic places—each content
 With sprinkled ashes for anointing!—then
 The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
 To see one throne a composite of thrones.

Napoleon! and the torrid vastitude
 Of India felt, in throbbings of the air,
 That name which scattered by disastrous blare
 All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood!
 Napoleon—from the Russias, west to Spain!
 And Austria trembled—till ye heard her chain.

And Germany was 'ware—and Italy,
 Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
 High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked,—
 Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
 To serve a newer!—Ay! and Frenchmen cast
 A future from them, nobler than her past:

For, verily, though France augustly rose
 With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
 The purple of the world,—none gave so much
 As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
 Whose hands, to freedom stretched, dropped paralysed
 To wield a sword, or fit an undersized

King's crown to a great man's head! And though along
 Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent streams
 Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams,
 Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
 No dream, of all so won, was fair to see
 As the lost vision of her liberty.

Napoleon! 'twas a high name lifted high!
 It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
 Our compassing and covering atmosphere,
 And open a clear sight, beyond the sky
 Of supreme empire! this of earth's was done—
 And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at home,—
 And finding the long-invoked peace
 A pall embroidered with worn images
 Of rights divine, too scant to cover doom
 Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn that grew
 Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo !

A deep gloom centred in the deep repose—
 The nations stood up mute to count their dead—
 And *he* who owned the NAME which vibrated
 Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes,
 When earth was all too grey for chivalry—
 Died of their mercies, 'mid the desert sea.

O wild St. Helen ! very still she kept him,
 With a green willow for all pyramid,—
 Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
 A little more, if pilgrims overwept him
 And parted the lithe boughs to see the clay
 Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

Nay ! not so long !—France kept her own affection,
 As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
 Until dilated by such love's remorse
 To a new angel of the resurrection,
 She cried, "Behold, thou England ! I would have
 The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave."

And England answered in the courtesy
 Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—
 "Take back thy dead ! and when thou buriest it,
 Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me."
 Amen, mine England ! 'tis a courteous claim—
 But ask a little room too . . . for thy shame !

Because it was not well, it was not well,
 Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
 Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
 To bind and bare, and vex with vulture fell.
 I would, my noble England ! men might seek
 All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek !

I would that hostile fleets had scarred thy bay,
 Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
 Until thy princely purpose was assured,
 Then left a *shadow*—not to pass away—
 Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun
 Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done !

And since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust,
 We fain would pay back something of our debt
 To France, if not to honour, and forget
 How through much fear we falsified the trust
 Of a fallen foe and exile!—We return
 Orestes to Electra . . . in his urn!

A little urn—a little dust inside,
 Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
 To-day, a four-years child might carry it,
 Sleek-browed and smiling “Let the burden ’bide!
 Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
 Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down,

And run back in the chariot marks of Time,
 When all the people shall come forth to meet
 The passive victor death-still in the street
 He rode through ’mid the shouting and bell-chime
 And martial music,—under eagles which
 Dyed their ensanguined beaks at Austerlitz!

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne home
 Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
 Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
 Majestically moaning. Give him room!—
 Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
 And grave deep, ’neath the cannon-moulded column!*

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
 From roar of fields! provided Jupiter
 Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
 His bolts!—And this he *may*! For, dispossessed
 Of any godship, lies the godlike arm—
 The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm!

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
 Shakes the old casements of the world! and we
 Look out upon the passing pageantry,
 Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
 To a Gaul grave,—another kingdom won—
 The last—of few spans—by Napoleon!

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth!
 But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
 And high-rayed light. He was a tyrant—granted!
 But the *avros* of his autocratic mouth
 Said yea i’ the people’s French! he magnified
 The image of the freedom he denied.

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply,
 "Ye have my glory!"—and so, drawing round them
 His ample purple, glorified and bound them
 In an embrace that seemed identity.
 He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but none
 Were ruled like slaves! Each felt Napoleon!

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed,
 For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee, unbent—
 His hand, unclean—his aspiration, pent
 Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why, let him have
 The justice to be honoured in his grave.

I think this nation's tears, poured thus together,
 Nobler than shouts! I think this funeral
 Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all!
 I think this grave stronger than thrones! But whether
 The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
 Be better, I discern not—Angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

LOVING friend, the gift of one,
 Who, her own true faith, hath run,
 Through thy lower nature; *
 Be my benediction said
 With my hand upon thy head,
 Gentle fellow-creature!

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
 Flow thy silken ears adown
 Either side demurely,
 Of thy silver-suited breast
 Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

Darkly brown thy body is,
 Till the sunshine, striking this,
 Alchemise its dulness,—

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, according to my perception, in the bald head.

When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,—
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curvetting,
Leaping like a charger.

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light ;
Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes.
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty sportive friend,
Little is't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness !
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears,
And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unwearied,—
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning—
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone,
Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing—

This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied,
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
“Come out!” praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour!
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore, and for ever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often, man or woman,—
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,—
Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motions fail
Nevermore, to pat thee!

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping!

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
 No man break thy purple cup,
 Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats aointed flee—
 Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
 Cologne distillations !
 Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
 And thy feast-day macaroons
 Turn to daily rations !

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
 Tears are in my eyes to feel
 Thou art made so straightly,
 Blessing needs must straighten too,—
 Little canst thou joy or do,
 Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be bless'd to the height
 Of all good and all delight
 Pervious to thy nature,—
 Only *loved* beyond that line,
 With a love that answers thine,
 Loving fellow-creature!



THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

WHEN ye stood up in the house
 With your little childish feet,
 And, in touching Life's first shows,
 First, the touch of Love, did meet,—
 Love and Nearness seeming one,
 By the hearthlight cast before,—
 And, of all Belovèds, none
 Standing farther than the door—
 Not a name being dear to thought,
 With its owner beyond call,—
 Nor a face, unless it brought
 Its own shadow to the wall,—
 When the worst recorded change
 Was of cherry dropped from bough,—
 When love's sorrow seemed more strange
 Than love's treason can seem now,—

Then, the Loving took you up
 Soft, upon their elder knees,—
 Telling why the statues droop
 Underneath the churchyard trees,
 And how *ye* must lie beneath them,
 Through the winters long and deep,
 Till the last trump overbreathe them,
 And ye smile out of your sleep . . .
 Oh ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
 A tale of fairy ships
 With a swan-wing for a sail!—
 O, ye kissed their loving lips
 For the merry, merry tale!—
 So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
 Of the men of long ago—
 Of the pale bewildering glories
 Shining farther than we know,—
 Of the heroes with the laurel,
 Of the poets with the bay,
 Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
 For that beauteous Helena,—
 How Achilles at the portal
 Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,
 And his strong heart, half immortal,
 Met the *keitai* with a cry,—
 How Ulysses left the sunlight
 For the pale eidola race
 Blank and passive through the dun light,
 Staring blindly on his face!
 How that true wife said to Pœtus,
 With calm smile and wounded heart,—
 "Sweet, it hurts not!"—how Admetus
 Saw his blessèd one depart!—
 How King Arthur proved his mission—
 And Sir Roland wound his horn,—
 And at Sangreal's moony vision
 Swords did bristle round like corn,—
 Oh! ye lifted up your head, and it seemed the while ye read,
 That this death, then, must be found
 A Valhalla for the crowned—
 The heroic who prevail!
 None, be sure, can enter in
 Far below a paladin
 Of a noble, noble tale!—
 So, awfully, ye thought upon the Dead.

Aye! but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
 As a child that wakes at night
 From a dream of sisters speaking
 In a garden's summer light,—
 That wakes, starting up and bounding,
 In a lonely, lonely bed,
 With a wall of darkness round him,
 Stifling black about his head!—
 And the full sense of your mortal
 Rushed upon you deep and loud,
 And ye heard the thunder hurtle
 From the silence of the cloud—
 Funeral-torches at your gateway
 Threw a dreadful light within;
 All things changed! you rose up straightway,
 And saluted Death and Sin!
Since,—your outward man has rallied,
 And your eye and voice grown bold—
 Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
 With her saddest secret told!
 Happy places have grown holy:
 If ye went where once ye went,
 Only tears would fall down slowly,
 As at solemn sacrament;
 Merry books, once read for pastime,
 If ye dared to read again,
 Only memories of the last time
 Would swim darkly up the brain!
 Household *names*, which used to flutter
 Through your laughter unawares,—
 God's Divine one, would ye utter
 With less trembling in your prayers!
 Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
 On your own hearts in the path
 Ye are called to in His wrath,—
 And your prayers go up in wail!
 —“Dost Thou see, then all our loss,
 O Thou agonized on cross?
 Art thou reading all its tale?”
 So, mournfully, ye think upon the Dead!

 Pray, pray, *thou* who also weepst,
 And the drops will slacken so;—
 Weep, weep!—and the watch thou keepst,
 With a quicker count will go.
 Think!—the shadow on the dial
 For the nature most undone,

Marks the passing of the trial,
 Proves the presence of the sun!
 Look, look up, in starry passion,
 To the throne above the spheres,—
 Learn! the spirit's gravitation
 Still must differ from the tear's.
 Hope! with all the strength thou uscest
 In embracing thy despair!
 Love! the earthly love thou lovest
 Shall return to thee more fair.
 Work! make clear the forest-tangles
 Of the wildest stranger-land;
 Trust! the blessed deathly angels
 Whisper, "Sabbath hours at hand!"
 By the heart's wound when most gory,
 By the longest agony,
 Smile!—Behold, in sudden glory
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*
 And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,
 "My Belovèd, is it so?
 Have ye tasted of my woe?—
 Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!"
 He stands brightly where the shade is,
 With the keys of Death and Hades,
 And there, ends the mournful tale!—
 So, hopefully, ye think upon the Dead!

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

WRITTEN 1839.

MY lonely chamber next the sea,
 Is full of many flowers set free
 By summer's earliest duty;
 Dear friends upon the garden-walk
 Might stop amid their fondest talk,
 To pull the least in beauty.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
 That learnt, by gazing on the sun,
 To counterfeit his shining—
 Within whose leaves the holy dew
 That falls from heaven, hath won anew
 A glory . . . in declining.

Red roses, used to praises long,
 Contented with the poet's song,
 The nightingale's being over :
 And lilies white, prepared to touch
 The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
 Of dreamer turned to lover.

Deep violets you liken to
 The kindest eyes that look on you,
 Without a thought disloyal :
 And cactuses, a queen might don,
 If weary of her golden crown,
 And still appear as royal !

Pansies for ladies all ! I wis
 That none who wear such brooches, miss
 A jewel in the mirror :
 And tulips, children love to stretch
 Their fingers down, to feel in each
 Its beauty's secret nearer.

Love's language may be talked with these
 To work out choicest sentences,
 No blossoms can be meeter,—
 And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
 Young maids may wonder if the flowers
 Or meanings be the sweeter.

And such being strewn before a bride,
 Her little foot may turn aside,
 Their longer bloom decreeing !
 Unless some voice's whispered sound
 Should make her gaze upon the ground
 Too earnestly—for seeing.

And such being scattered on a grave,
 Whoever mourneth there may have
 A type that seemeth worthy
 Of a fair body hid below,
 Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
 Then perished as the earthy.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
 Across the brimming cup some guest
 Their rainbow colours viewing,
 May feel them,—with a silent start,—
 The covenant, his childish heart
 With nature, made,—renewing.

No flowers our gardened England hath,
 To match with these in bloom and breath,
 Which from the world are hiding
 In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
 A nunnery of cloistered hills,—
 The elements presiding.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
 That meet one gifted lady's care
 With prodigal rewarding ;
 But Beauty is too used to run
 To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
 To light her through the garden !

And *here*, all summers are comprised—
 The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
 Before the priestly moonshine !
 And every wind with stolid feet,
 In wandering down the alleys sweet,
 Steps lightly on the sunshine ;

And (having promised Harpocrate
 Among the nodding roses, that
 No harm shall touch his daughters)
 Gives quite away the noisy sound,
 He dares not use upon such ground,
 To ever-trickling waters.

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do,
 But make the leaves more brightly shew
 In posies newly gathered ?—
 I look away from all your best !
 To one poor flower unlike the rest,—
 A little flower half-withered.

I do not think it ever was
 A pretty flower,—to make the grass
 Look greener where it reddened :
 And now it seems ashamed to be
 Alone, in all this company,
 Of aspect shrunk and saddened !

A chamber-window was the spot
 It grew in, from a garden-pot,
 Among the city shadows :
 If any, tending it, might seem
 To smile, 'twas only in a dream
 Of nature in the meadows.

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

How coldly, on its head, did fall
 The sunshine, from the city wall,
 In pale refraction driven !
 How sadly plashed upon its leaves
 The raindrops, losing in the eaves
 The first sweet news of Heaven !

And those who planted, gathered it
 In gamesome or in loving fit,
 And sent it as a token
 Of what their city pleasures be,—
 For one, in Devon by the sea
 And garden-blooms, to look on.

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,
 With a grave passion innocent
 Receiving what was given,—
 Oh ! if her face she *turnèd then*, . . .
 Let none say 'twas to gaze again
 Upon the flowers of Devon !

Because, whatever virtue dwells
 In genial skies—warm oracles
 For gardens brightly springing,—
 The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
 Ah sweetest friends, to mine supplies
 A beauty worthier singing !



THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

"THERE is no God," the foolish saith,—
 But none, "There is no sorrow ;"
 And nature oft, the cry of faith,
 In bitter need will borrow :
 Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
 By wayside graves are raised ;
 And lips say, "God be pitiful,"
 Who ne'er said, "God be praised."
Be pitiful, O God

The tempest stretches from the steep
 The shadow of its coming—
 The beasts grow tame, and near us creep,
 As help were in the human—

Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
 We spirits tremble under!—
 The hills have echoes; but we find
 No answer for the thunder.

Be pitiful, O God!

The battle hurtles on the plains—
 Earth feels new scythes upon her :
 We reap our brothers for the wains,
 And call the harvest . . . honour,—
 Draw face to face, from line to line,
 One image all inherit,—
 Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
 Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.

Be pitiful, O God!

The plague runs festering through the town,—
 And never a bell is tolling ;
 And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
 Nod to the dead-cart's rolling !
 The young child calleth for the cup—
 The strong man brings it weeping ;
 The mother from her babe looks up,
 And shrieks away its sleeping.

Be pitiful, O God!

The plague of gold strikes far and near,—
 And deep and strong it enters :
 This purple chimar which we wear,
 Makes madder than the centaur's.
 Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange ;
 We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
 Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
 And marked, like sheep, with figures.

Be pitiful, O God!

The curse of gold upon the land,
 The lack of bread enforces—
 The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
 Like more of Death's White horses !
 The rich preach "rights" and future days,
 And hear no angel scoffing !
 The poor die mute—with starving gaze
 On corn-ships in the offing.

Be pitiful, O God!

We meet together at the feast—
 To private mirth betake us—

We stare down in the wine-cup, lest
 Some vacant chair should shake us !
 We name delight, and pledge it round—
 “It shall be ours to-morrow !”
 God’s seraphs ! do your voices sound
 As sad in naming sorrow ?
 Be pitiful, O God !

We sit together, with the skies,
 The steadfast skies, above us :
 We look into each other’s eyes,—
 “And how long will you love us ?”—
 The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
 The voices, low and breathless—
 “Till death us part !”—O words, to be
 Our *best* for love the deathless !
 Be pitiful, O God !

We tremble by the harmless bed
 Of one loved and departed—
 Our tears drop on the lips that said
 Last night, “Be stronger-hearted !”
 O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
 And yet to feel so lonely !—
 To see a light on dearest brows,
 Which is the daylight only !
 Be pitiful, O God !

The happy children come to us,
 And look up in our faces :
 They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
 When we were in their places !—
 We cannot speak :—we see anew
 The hills we used to live in ;
 And feel our mother’s smile press through
 The kisses she is giving.
 Be pitiful, O God !

We pray together at the kirk,
 For mercy, mercy, solely—
 Hands weary with the evil work,
 We lift them to the Holy !
 The corpse is calm below our knee—
 Its spirit, bright before Thee—
 Between them, worse than either, we—
 Without the rest or glory !
 Be pitiful, O God !

We leave the communing of men,
 The murmur of the passions ;
 And live alone, to live again
 With endless generations.
 Are we so brave ?—The sea and sky
 In silence lift their mirrors ;
 And, glassed therein, our spirits high
 Recoil from their own terrors.
 Be pitiful, O God !

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
 Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding !
 The sun strikes, through the farthest mist,
 The city's spire to golden.
 The city's golden spire it was,
 When hope and health were strongest,
 But now it is the churchyard grass,
 We look upon the longest.
 Be pitiful, O God !

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
 Men whisper, " He is dying :"
 We cry no more, " Be pitiful !"—
 We have no strength for crying !—
 No strength, no need ! Then, Soul of mine,
 Look up and triumph rather—
 Lo ! in the depths of God's Divine,
 The Son adjures the Father—
 BE PITIFUL, O GOD !

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

—"discordance that can accord."
 ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
 A garden April-green,
 In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
 And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate,
 On a tall bough and straight !
 Early comer, early comer,
 Never waiting for the summer.

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

Her pretty gesses did win
 South winds to let her in,
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
 All the fairer for that oneness.

"For if I wait," said she,
 "Till times for roses be,—
 For the musk-rose and the moss-rose,
 Royal-red and maiden-blush rose,—

"What glory then for me
 In such a company?—
 Roses plenty, roses plenty,
 And one nightingale for twenty?"

"Nay, let me in," said she,
 "Before the rest are free,—
 In my loneliness, in my loneliness,
 All the fairer for that oneness.

"For I would lonely stand,
 Uplifting my white hand,—
 On a mission, on a mission,
 To declare the coming vision.

"Upon which lifted sign,
 What worship will be mine?
 What addressing, what caressing!
 And what thank, and praise, and blessing!"

"A windlike joy will rush
 Through every tree and bush,
 Bending softly in affection
 And spontaneous benediction.

"Insects, that only may
 Live in a sunbright ray,
 To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
 Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

"And every moth and bee,
 Approach me reverently;
 Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
 Coronals of motioned glory.

"Three larks shall leave a cloud;
 To my whiter beauty vowed—
 Singing gladly all the moontide,—
 Never waiting for the suntide.

"Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me.—
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

"I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me,
With my starry aspect dreamy!

"And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,—
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling."

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her lonesness, in her lonesness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah!—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green;
Scarcely having, scarcely having,
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,—
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce strong enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so;
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses!

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence!

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both;
Doing honour, doing honour,
To the honey-dews upon her.

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE

The skies looked coldly down,
 As on a royal crown ;
 Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
 They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
 To waken from a dream,
 Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
 Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose—" Ha, Snow !
 And art thou fallen so ?
 Thou, who wert enthronéd stately
 All along my mountains, lately ?

" Holla, thou world-wide snow !
 And art thou wasted so ?
 With a little bough to catch thee,
 And a little bee to watch thee ? "

—Poor Rose to be misknown !
 Would she had ne'er been blown,
 In her lonesness, in her lonesness,—
 All the sadder for that oneness !

Some word she tried to say—
 Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway !
 But the passion did o'ercome her,
 And the fair frail leaves dropped from her—

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
 Close to a poet's foot,
 Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
 As at something sad yet holy :

Said, " Verily and thus
 It chanceth eke with *us*
 Poets singing sweetest snatches,
 While that deaf men keep the watches—

" Vaunting to come before
 Our own age evermore,
 In a lonesness, in a lonesness,
 And the nobler for that oneness !

" Holy in voice and heart,—
 To high ends, set apart !
 All unmated, all unmated,
 Because so consecrated !

“ But if alone we be,
Where is our empery ?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can praise our lofty nature ?

“ What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone ?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimèd ringing ?

“ What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim ?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration !

“ And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season ?

“ Drop leaf—be silent song—
Cold things we come among !
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

“ Howbeit ” (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit's inward burning)—

“ Something, it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty !

“ Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be in soul or pleasance,
The Chief Beauty's sign of presence !

“ Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us !

“ Though none us deign to bless,
Blessed are we, natless !
Blessed still, and consecrated,
In that, rose, we were created.

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

" Oh, shame to poet's lays
 Sung for the dole of praise,—
 Hoarsely sung upon the highway
 With that *obolum da mihi*.

" Shame, shame to poet's soul,
 Pining for such a dole,
 When heaven-chosen to inherit
 The high throne of a chief spirit !

" Sit still upon your thrones,
 O ye poetic ones !
 And if, sooth, the world decry you,
 Let it pass, unchallenged by you !

" Ye to yourselves suffice,
 Without its flatteries.
 Self-contentedly approve you
 Unto HIM who sits above you,—

" In prayers—that upward mount
 Like to a fair-sunned fount
 Which, in gushing back upon you,
 Hath an upper music won you,—

" In faith—that still perceives
 No rose can shed her leaves,
 Far less, poet fall from mission—
 With an unfulfilled fruition !

" In hope—that apprehends
 An end beyond these ends ;
 And great uses rendered duly
 By the meanest song sung truly !

" In thanks—for all the good,
 By poets understood—
 For the sound of seraphs moving
 Down the hidden depths of loving,—

" For sights of things away,
 Through fissures of the clay,
 Promised things which *shall* be given
 And sung over, up in Heaven,—

" For life, so lovely-vain,—
 For death, which breaks the chain,—
 For this sense of present sweetness,—
 And this yearning to completeness !

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

Put the broidery-frame away,
 For my sewing is all done!
 The last thread is used to-day,
 And I need not join it on.
 Though the clock stands at the noon,
 I am weary! I have sewn
 Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

Sister, help me to the bed,
 And stand near me, Dearest-sweet,
 Do not shrink nor be afraid.
 Blushing with a sudden heat!
 * No one standeth in the street?—
 By God's love I go to meet,
 Love I thee with love complete. *

Lean thy face down! drop it in
 These two hands, that I may hold
 'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
 Stroking back the curls of gold.
 'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
 Larger eyes and redder mouth
 Than mine were in my first youth!

Thou art younger by seven years—
 Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,
 That the lashes, hung with tears,
 Grow too heavy to upraise?
 I would wound thee by no touch
 Which thy shyness feels as such—
 Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

Have I not been nigh a mother
 To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
 Have we not loved one another
 Tenderly, from year to year;
 Since our dying mother mild
 Said with accents undefiled,
 "Child, be mother to this child"?

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
 Stand up on the jasper sea,
 And be witness I have given
 All the gifts required of me;—

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
 Love, that left me with a wound,
 Life itself, that turneth round !

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
 Thou art standing in the room,—
 In a molten glory shrined,
 That rays off into the gloom !
 But thy smile is bright and bleak. ✱
 Like cold wayes—I cannot speak ;
 I sob in it, and grow weak.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
 One hour longer from my soul—
 For I still am thinking of
 Earth's warm-beating joy and dole !
 On my finger is a ring
 Which I still see glittering,
 ✱ When the night hides everything.

Little sister, thou art pale !
 Ah, I have a wandering brain—
 But I lose that fever-bale,
 And my thoughts grow calm again.
 Lean down closer—closer still !
 I have words thine ear to fill,—
 And would kiss thee at my will.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
 Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
 When we all went gathering
 Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
 Do not start so ! think instead
 How the sunshine overhead ✱
 Seemed to trickle through the shade.

What a day it was, that day !
 Hills and vales did openly
 Seem to heave and throb away,
 At the sight of the great sky :
 And the Silence, as it stood
 In the Glory's golden flood,
 Audibly did bud—and bud !

Through the winding hedgerows green,
 How we wandered, I and you,—
 With the bowery tops shut in,
 And the gates that showed the view—

How we talked there! thrushes soft
Sang our pauses out,—or oft
Bleatings took them, from the croft.

Till the pleasure, grown too strong,
Left me muter evermore;
And, the winding road being long,
I walked out of sight, before;
And so wrapt in musings fond,
Issued (past the wayside pond)
On the meadow-lands beyond.

I sate down beneath the beech
Which leans over to the lane,
And the far sound of your speech
Did not promise any pain:
And I blessed you full and free,
With a smile stooped tenderly
O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

But the sound grew into word
As the speakers drew more near—
Sweet, forgive me that I heard
What you wished me not to hear.
Do not weep so—do not shake—
Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
Good true answers for my sake.

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed with hasty claim?
That was wrong perhaps—but then
Such things be—and will, again!
Women cannot judge for men.

Had he seen thee, when he swore
He would love but me alone?
Thou wert absent,—sent before
To our kin in Sidmouth town.
When he saw thee who art best,
Past compare, and loveliest,
He but judged thee as the rest.

Could we blame him with grave words,
Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
Flying straightway to the light:

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

Mine are older.—Hush!—Look out—
Up the street! Is none without?
How the poplar swings about!

And that hour—beneath the beech,
When I listened in a dream,
And he said, in his deep speech,
That he owed me all *esteem*,—
Each word swam in on my brain
With a dim, dilating pain,
Till it burst with that last strain.

I fell flooded with a Dark,
In the silence of a swoon—
When I rose, still cold and stark,
There was night,—I saw the moon
And the stars, each in its place,
And the May-blooms on the grass,
Seemed to wonder what I was.

And I walked as if apart
From myself, when I could stand—
And I pitied my own heart,
As if I held it in my hand,—
Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
Of fulfilled benevolence,
And a “Poor thing” negligence.

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only *heard* the dew
Dripping from me to the floor:
And the flowers I bade you see,
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth, for me.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
It was best as it befell!
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me! Only blood
Runs so faint in womanhood!

Then I always was too grave,—
Liked the saddest ballad sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
In our faces, who die young.

I had died, Dear, all the same—
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

We are so unlike each other,
Thou and I; that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant, verily, to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

I am pale as crocus grows
Close beside a rose-tree's root!
Whoso'er would reach the rose,
Treads the crocus under foot—
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree—
Thou, like merry summer-bee.
Fit that *I* be plucked for *thee*!

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns—
I have lived my season out,—
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry! How the light
Comes and goes! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

Are there footsteps at the door?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay? So best!—So angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,—
Not to cross the sight of God.

Colder grow my hands and feet—
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,—
That if any friend should come,
(To see *thee*, sweet!) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

And dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.

THAT DAY.

Let me wear it out of sight,
 In the grave,—where it will light
 All the Dark up, day and night.

On that grave, drop not a tear !
 Else, though fathom-deep the place,
 Through the woollen shroud I wear,
 I shall feel it on my face.
 Rather smile there, blessed one,
 Thinking of me in the sun—
 Or forget me—smiling on !

Art thou near me ? nearer ? so !
 Kiss me close upon the eyes,—
 That the earthly light may go
 Sweetly as it used to rise,—
 When I watched the morning-grey
 Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
 He was sure to come that day.

So,—no more vain words be said !
 The hosannas nearer roll—
 Mother, smile now on thy Dead,—
 I am death-strong in my soul !
 Mystic Dove alit on cross,—
 Guide the poor bird of the snows
 Through the snow-wind above loss !

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
 Love's divine self-abnegation,—
 Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
 And absorb the poor libation !
 Wind my thread of life up higher,—
 Up through angels' hands of fire !—
 I aspire while I expire !—

 THAT DAY.

FOR MUSIC.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
 And there is but one shadow to darken the flood :
 And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
 Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
 One forlorn since that day.

The flowers of the margin are many to see,
 For none stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me;
 The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,
 For my low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
 As thy vow did that day!

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—
 Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be *thou*!
 I leave the flower growing—the bird, unreprieved,—
 Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,
 And my loving that day?

Go! be sure of my love—by that treason forgiven,—
 Of my prayers—by the blessings they win thee from
 Heaven,—
 Of my grief (guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)—
 By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's,—
 Go,—be clear of that day!



LOVED ONCE.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
 Earth's lamentable sounds; the welladay,
 The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
 The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller;—
 But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure despair,
 Than these words—"I loved ONCE."

And who saith, "I loved ONCE?"
 Not angels, whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,
 Love through eternity!
 Who, by To Love, do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown-name,—casting
 A light too broad for blasting!
 The great God changing not from everlasting,
 Saith never, "I loved ONCE."

Nor ever the "Loved ONCE,"
 Dost THOU say, Victim-Christ, misprized friend!
 The cross and curse may rend;
 But, having loved, Thou lovest to the end!

It is man's saying—man's! Too weak to move
 One sphered star above,
 Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
 With his No More, and Once.

How say ye, "We loved once,"
 Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold enow,
 Mourners, without that snow?
 Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each other so?
 And could ye say of some, whose love is known,
 Whose prayers have met your own,
 Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone,
 Such words, "We loved them ONCE?"

Could ye, "We loved her once,"
 Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight?
 When hearts of better right
 Stand in between me and your happy light?
 And when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
 Ye find my colours fade,
 And all that is not love in me, decayed?
 Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

Could ye "We loved her once,"
 Say cold of me, when further put away
 In earth's sepulchral clay?
 When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?—
 Not so! not then—*least* then! when life is shriven,
 And Death's full joy is given,—
 Of those who sit and love you up in Heaven,
 Say not, "We loved them once."

Say never, ye loved ONCE!
 God is too near above, the grave below,
 And all our moments go
 Too quickly past our souls, for saying so!
 The mysteries of Life and Death avenge
 Affections light of range—
 There comes no change to justify that change,
 Whatever comes—Loved ONCE.

And yet that word of ONCE
 Is humanly acceptive! Kings have said,
 Shaking a disrowned head,
 "We ruled once,"—idiot tongues, "We once bested,"—
 Cripples once danced i' the vines—and bards approved,
 Were once by scornings, moved!
 But love strikes one hour—LOVE. Those *never* loved,
 Who dream that they loved ONCE.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."

POEMS ON MAN, by *Cornelius Mathews*.*

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange!
 We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery,
 Which smiles with a change!
 But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces;
 The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
 And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
 And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth!
 And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
 The apple of Life which another has found:—
 It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
 And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four—
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore!

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther:
 We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
 And the lilies look large as the trees;
 And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,—
 And the birds sing like angels, so mystical fine;
 And the cedars are brushing the archangel's feet;
 And time is eternity,—love is divine,
 And the world is complete!
 Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond.
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
 And the earth rings again!
 And we breathe out, "O beauty!"—we cry out, "O truth!"
 And the bloom of our lips drops with wine;
 And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline,—
 The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
 What is this exultation, and what this despair?
 The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
 And we drop from the Fair, as we climb to the Fair,
 And we lie in a trance at its feet;
 And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
 Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon;

* A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable, in thought and manner, for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder.

And we think him so near, he is this side the sun !
 And we wake to a whisper self murmured and fond,
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
 Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
 Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures,
 Which hideth the soul !

And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
 And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
 And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
 And the joy which is in us, flies out with a wound ;
 And we shout so aloud, " We exult, we rejoice,"
 That we lose the low moan of our brothers around,—
 And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
 We are deaf to God's voice—

And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears,
 Yet we are not ashamed :

And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
 Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.

Help us God ! trust us man, love us woman ! " I hold
 Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
 Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
 'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
 That watch the eternity strong in the troth—

I love thee, I leave thee,—
 Live for thee, die for thee !
 I prove thee, deceive thee,—
 Undo evermore thee !

Help me, God ! slay me man !—one is mourning for both !"
 And we stand up, though young, near the funeral sheet
 Which covers the Cæsar and old Pharamond ;
 And death is so nigh us, Life cools from its heat—
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Art thou fair,—art thou sweet ?

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up erect—
 We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness steeds ;
 We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked ;
 We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,—
 Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
 Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole,—
 Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder roll !
 While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
 Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn ?

"Let us sit on the thrones
 In a purple sublimity,
 And grind down men's bones
 To a pale unanimity !

Speed me, God !—serve me, man !—I am god over men !
 When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again—
 'Neath the stripe and the bond,
 Lie and mourn at my feet !"
 O thou Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we grow into thought,—and with inward ascensions,
 Touch the bounds of our Being !

We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
 With our sensual relations and social conventions,—
 Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound

Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
 Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides,
 With its infinite tides,

About and above us,—until the strong arch
 Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
 And through all the dim rolling, we hear the sweet calling
 Of spirits that speak, in a soft under-tongue,
 The interpretive sense of the mystical march :

And we cry to them softly, "Come nearer, come nearer,—
 And lift up the lap of this Dark, and speak clearer,
 And teach us the song that ye sung."

And we smile in our thought, if they answer or no,—
 For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know !

Wonders breathe in our face,
 And we ask not their name ;
 And Love takes all the blame
 Of the world's prison place.

And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud ;
 And we send up the lark of our music that cuts

Untired through the cloud,
 To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts :
 Yet the angels look down, and the mortals look up,

As the little wings beat,
 And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
 'Twixt the Heavens and the earth, *can* a poet despond ?

O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
 And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken ;
 And bringing our lives to the level of others,

Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
 " Help me, God ! love me, man ! I am man among men,—

And my life is a pledge
 Of the ease of another's ! "

From the fire and the water we drive out the steam,
 With a rush and a roar, and the speed of a dream !
 And the car without horses, the car without wings,

Roars onward and flies
 On its pale iron edge,

'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes—
 And the hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
 Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies—
 And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
 Draws under the world, with its turmoils and pothers ;
 While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
 By Humanity's hum at the root of the springs !
 And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps

Of the souls of our brothers,

And teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
 " God," " Liberty," " Truth,"—which they hearken and think,
 And work into harmony, link upon link,
 Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
 Shedding sparks of electric response intense

On the dark of eclipse.

Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
 As from shores of a star

In aphelion,—the new generations that cry
 In attune to our voice and harmonious reply,
 " God," " Liberty," " Truth ! "

We are glorious forsooth,—

And our name has a seat,

Though the shroud should be donned !

O Life, O Beyond,

Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

Help me, God ! help me, man ! I am low, I am weak—
 Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins ;
 My body is cleft by these wedges of pains,

From my spirit's serene ;

And I feel the externe and insensate creep in

On my organised clay.

I sob not, nor shriek,

Yet I faint fast away !

I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
 I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,

On the Heaven-heights of Truth !

Oh, the soul keeps its youth—

But the body faints sore, it is tired in the race,—
 It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal ;
 It is weak, it is cold,
 The rein drops from its hold—
 It sinks back, with the death in its face !
 On, chariot—on, soul,—
 Ye are all the more fleet
 Be alone at the goal
 Of the strange and the sweet !

Love us, God ! love us, man ! we believe, we achieve—
 Let us love, let us live,
 For the acts correspond—
 We are glorious—and DIE !
 And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
 That smiles with a change,
 Here we lie !
 O DEATH, O BEYOND,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange !

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

“Do you think of me as I think of you?”

(From her Poem written during the Voyage to the Cape.)

“Do you think of me as I think of you,
 My friends, my friends?”—She said it from the sea,
 The English minstrel in her minstrelsy ;
 While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
 Her heart grew dark,—and groped there, as the blind,
 To reach across the waves friends left behind—
 “Do you think of me as I think of you ?”

It seemed not much to ask—as *I of you ?*—
 We all do ask the same. No eyelids cover
 Within the meekest eyes, that question over,—
 And little, in the world, the Loving do,
 But sit (among the rocks ?) and listen for
 The echo of their own love evermore—
 “Do you think of me as I think of you ?”

Love-learnéd, she had sung of love and love,—
 And, like a child, that, sleeping with dropt head

Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
 Whatever household noises round him move,
 Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
 Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
 All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,—
 When nightly gesses and courtly pageantries
 Were broken in her visionary eyes,
 By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
 Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
 She asked not,—Do you praise me, O my land?—
 But,—“Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?”

Hers was the hand that played for many a year,
 Loves' silver phrase for England,—smooth and well!
 Would God, her heart's more inward oracle
 In that lone moment, might confirm her dear!
 For when her questioned friends in agony
 Made passionate response,—“We think of *thee*,”—
 Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
 Was she content—content—with ocean's sound,
 Which dashed its mocking infinite around
 One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
 Those stars, content,—where last her song had gone,—
They, mute and cold in radiant life,—as soon
 Their singer was to be, in darksome death?*

Bring your vain answers—cry, “We think of *thee*!”
 How think ye of her? warm in long ago
 Delights?—or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
 None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,—
 With all her vision unfulfilled, save one—
 Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in the sun—
 And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

“Do ye think of me as I think of you?”—
 O friends,—O kindred,—O dear brotherhood
 Of all the world! what are we, that we should
 For covenants of long affection sue?
 Why press so near each other, when the touch
 Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,
 Is this “Think of me as I think of you.”

* Her lyric on the Polar star, came home with her latest papers.

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
 A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
 Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
 A vocal pathos rolls! and HE who drew
 All life from dust, and for all, tasted death,
 By death and life and love, appealing, saith,
Do you think of me as I think of you?

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
 For my thoughts to live in ;
 When for earth too fancy-loose,
 And too low for Heaven.
 Hush ! I talk my dream aloud—
 I build it bright to see,—
 Build it on the moonlit cloud,
 To which I looked with *thee*.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
 Faced with amber column,—
 Crowned with crimson cupola
 From a sunset solemn !
 May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
 Pale and glimmering ;
 With a sunbeam hid in each,
 And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,
 Darkening and eke brightening,—
 Of a riven thunder-cloud,
 Vein'd by the lightning !
 Use one with the iris-stain,
 For the door within ;
 Turning to a sound like rain,
 As we enter in !

Enter a broad hall thereby,
 Walled with cloudy whiteness :
 'Tis a blue place of the sky,
 Wind-worked into brightness ;
 Whence such corridors sublime
 Stretch, with winding stairs—
 Praying children wish to climb
 After their own prayers.

In the mutest of the house,
 I will have my chamber:
 Round its door I keep for use
 Northern lights of amber.
 Silence gave that rose and bee
 For the lock, in meteness;
 And the tuning of the key
 Goes in humming sweetness.

Be my chamber tapestried
 With the showers of summer,
 Close but soundless,—glorified
 When the sunbeams come here—
 Wandering harpers, harping on
 Chorded drops, as such,—
 Drawing colours, for a tune,
 With a vibrant touch.

Bring a shadow green and still
 From the chestnut forest,—
 Bring a purple from the hill,
 When the heat is sorest,—
 Spread them out from wall to wall,
 Carpet-wove around,—
 Whereupon the foot shall fall
 In light instead of sound.

Bring the fantastic cloudlets home,
 From the noontide zenith;
 Ranged, for sculptures, round the room,—
 Named as Fancy weeneth:
 Some be Junos, without eyes—
 Naiads, without sources—
 Some be birds of paradise,—
 Some, Olympian horses.

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
 Waking in the hedges,—
 Those too, perfumed for a proof,
 From the lilies' edges:
 From our England's field and moor,
 Bring them calm and white in,—
 Whence to form a mirror pure,
 For Love's self-delighting!

Bring a grey cloud from the east,
 Where the lark is singing,—
 Something of the song at least,
 Unlost in the bringing:

That shall be a morning chair,
 Poet-dream may sit in,
 When it leans out on the air,
 Unrhymed and unwritten.

Bring the red cloud from the sun !
 While he sinketh, catch it—
 That shall be a couch,—with one
 Sidelong star to watch it,—
 Fit for poet's finest thought,
 At the curfew-sounding,—
 Things unseen being nearer brought
 Than the seen, around him.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh !
 'Las, they come together !
 Cloudy walls divide and fly,
 As in April weather !
 Corridor and column proud,
 Chamber bright to see—
 Gone !—except that moonlit cloud,
 To which I looked with *thee* !

Let them ! Wipe such visionings
 From the Fancy's cartel—
 Love secures some fairer things
 Dowered with his immortal !
 Sun may darken,—heaven be bowed—
 Still, unchanged shall be,—
 Soul-deep,—*here*—that moonlit cloud,
 To which I looked with *THEE* !



CATARINA TO CAMOËNS ;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM
 IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

ON the door you will not enter,
 I have gazed too long—adieu !
 Hope withdraws her peradventure—
 Death is near me,—and not *you* !
 Come, O lover,
 Close and cover
 These poor eyes, you called, I ween
 “Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.”

CATARINA TO CAMOËNS.

When I heard you sing that burden
 In my vernal days and bowers,
 Other praises disregarding,
 I but hearkened that of yours,—

 Only saying
 In heart-playing,
 "Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
 If the sweetest, HIS have seen!"

But all changeth! At this vesper,
 Cold the sun shines down the door!
 If you stood there, would you whisper
 "Love, I love you," as before,—

 Death pervading
 Now, and shading
 Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
 As the sweetest, ever seen?

Yes! I think, were you beside them,
 Near the bed I die upon,—
 Though their beauty you denied them,
 As you stood there, looking down,
 You would truly
 Call them duly,
 For the love's sake found therein,—
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

And if *you* looked down upon them,
 And if *they* looked up to *you*,
 All the light which has foregone them
 Would be gathered back anew!
 They would truly
 Be as duly

Love-transformed to Beauty's sheen,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

But, ah me! you only see me
 In your thoughts of loving man,
 Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
 Through the wavings of my fan,—
 And unweeting
 Go repeating,
 In your reverie serene,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

While my spirit leans and reaches
 From my body still and pale,
 Fain to hear what tender speech is
 In your love, to help my bale—

O my poet,
 Come and show it !
 Come, of latest love, to glean
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

O my poet, O my prophet,
 When you praised their sweetness so,
 Did you think, in singing of it,
 That it might be near to go ?
 Had you fancies
 From their glances,
 That the grave would quickly screen
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

No reply ! The fountain's warble
 In the courtyard sounds alone !
 As the water to the marble
 So my heart falls with a moan,
 From love-sighing
 To this dying !
 Death forerunneth Love, to win
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

Will you come ? when I'm departed
 Where all sweetnesses are hid—
 When thy voice, my tender-hearted,
 Will not lift up either lid.
 Cry, O lover,
 Love is over !
 Cry beneath the cypress green—
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

When the angelus is ringing,
 Near the convent will you walk,
 And recall the choral singing
 Which brought angels down our talk ?
 Spirit shriven
 I viewed Heaven,
 Till you smiled—"Is earth unclean,
 Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

When beneath the palace-lattice,
 You ride slow as you have done,
 And you see a face there—*that* is
 Not the old familiar one,—
 Will you oftly
 Murmur softly,
 "Here, ye watched me morn and e'en,
 Sweetest eyes, were ever seen !"

CATARINA TO CAMOËNS.

When the palace ladies sitting
 Round your gittern, shall have said,
 "Poet, sing those verses written
 For the lady who is dead,"—
 Will you tremble,
 Yet dissemble,—
 Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?"

Sweetest eyes! How sweet in flowings,
 The repeated cadence is!
 Though you sang a hundred poems,
 Still the best one would be this,
 I can hear it
 'Twixt my spirit
 And the earth-noise, intervene—
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

But the priest waits for the praying,
 And the choir are on their knees,—
 And the soul must pass away in
 Strains more solemn high than these!
Miserere
 For the weary—
 Oh, no longer for Catrine,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

Keep my riband! take and keep it—
 I have loosed it from my hair; *
 Feeling, while you overweep it,
 Not alone in your despair,—
 Since with saintly
 Watch unfaintly,
 Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

But—but *now*—yet unremov'd
 Up to Heaven, they glisten fast—
 You may cast away, Belov'd,
 In your future, all my past;
 Such old phrases
 May be praises
 For some fairer bosom-queen—
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
 Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss,

* She left him the riband from her hair.

If a tear be of your showing,
 Dropt for any hope of HIS !
 Death hath boldness
 Besides coldness,
 If unworthy tears demcan
 " Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

I will look out to his future—
 I will bless it till it shine !
 Should he ever be a suitor
 Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
 Sunshine gild them,
 Angels shield them,
 Whatsoever eyes terrene
 Be the sweetest HIS have seen !



A PORTRAIT.

" One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her !
 Ten times have the lilies blown,
 Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear—
 Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty
 To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks, encoloured faintly,
 Which a trail of golden hair
 Keeps from fading off to air !

And a forehead fair and saintly,
 Which two blue eyes undershine,
 Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
 Though too calm, you think, and tender,
 For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
 Frank, obedient,—waiting still
 On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,—
 As young birds, or early wheat
 When the wind blows over it.

Only free from flutterings
 Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
 Taking love for her chief pleasure !

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
 Which come softly—just as *she*,
 When she nestles at your knee !

Quiet talk she liketh best,
 In a bower of gentle looks,—
 Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
 As a silver stream may run,
 Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
 As if drawn from thoughts more far
 Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
 He would sing of her with falls
 Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
 He would paint her unaware
 With a halo round her hair.

And if reader read the poem,
 He would whisper—"You have done a
 Consecrated little Una !"

And a dreamer (did you show him
 The same picture) would exclaim,
 "'Tis my angel, with a name !"

And a stranger,—when he sees her
 In the street even—smileth stilly,
 Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
 Soften, sleecken every word,—
 As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
 The hard earth whereon she passes,
 And the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love her !"—
 Ay, and certes, in good sooth,
 We may all be sure He *DOETH*.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
 Tired of all the playing,—
 Sleep with smile the sweeter for
 That, you dropped away in !
 On your curls' full roundness, stand
 Golden lights serenely—

One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
 Folds the dimple inly :
 Little head and little foot
 Heavy laid for pleasure,
 Underneath the lids half-shut,
 Slants the shining azure ;—
 Open-souled in noonday sun,
 So, you lie and slumber !
 Nothing evil, having done,
 Nothing can encumber.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
 Shall I sigh to view you ?
 Or sigh further to foretell
 All that may undo you ?
 Nay, keep smiling, little child,
 Ere the sorrow neareth,—
I will smile too ! Patience mild
 Pleasure's token weareth.
 Nay, keep sleeping, before loss ;
I shall sleep though losing !
 As by cradle, so by cross,
 Sure is the reposing.

And God knows, who sees us twain,
 Child at childish leisure,
 I am near as tired of pain
 As you seem of pleasure ;—
 Very soon too, by His grace
 Gently wrapt around me,
 Shall I show as calm a face,
 Shall I sleep as soundly !
 Differing in this, that *you*
 Clasp your playthings sleeping,
 While my hand shall drop the few
 Given to my keeping ;

WINE OF CYPRUS.

Differing in this, that *I*
 Sleeping, shall be colder,
 And in waking presently,
 Brighter to beholder !
 Differing in this beside
 (Sleeper, have you heard me ?
 Do you move, and open wide
 Eyes of wonder toward me ?)—
 That while I, you, draw withal
 From your slumber, solely,—
 Me, from mine, an angel shall,
 With reveillie holy !



WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, ESQ., AUTHOR OF "SELECT
 PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC., TO WHOM
 THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

IF old Bacchus were the speaker,
 He would tell you with a sigh,
 Of the Cyprus in this beaker,
 I am sipping like a fly,—
 Like a fly or gnat on Ida
 At the hour of goblet-pledge,
 By queen Juno brushed aside, a
 Full white arm-sweep, from the edge !

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler,
 When the drink is so divine ;
 And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
 Would become your Cyprian wine !
 Cyclop's mouth might plunge aright in,
 While his one eye over-leered—
 Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
 Drinking rivers down his beard.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
 That his ears alone pricked out ;
 Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
 Each one pointing to his throat !
 While the Naiads like Bacchantes,
 Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
 Cry—" O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
 Springs to keep, of such a taste !"

But for me, I am not worthy
 After gods and Greeks to drink ;
 And my lips are pale and earthy,
 To go bathing from this brink !
 Since you heard them speak the last time,
 They have faded from their blooms ;
 And the laughter of my pastime
 Has learned silence at the tombs.

Ah, my friend ! the antique drinkers
 Crowned the cup and crowned the brow !
 Can I answer the old thinkers
 In the forms they thought of, now ?
 Who will fetch from garden-closes
 Some new garlands while I speak,
 That the forehead, crowned with roses,
 May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

Do not mock me ! with my mortal,
 Suits no wreath again, indeed !
 I am sad-voiced as the turtle,
 Which Anacreon used to feed :
 Yet as that same bird demurely
 Wet her beak in cup of his,—
 So, without a garland, surely
 I may touch the brim of this.

Go !—let others praise the Chian !—
 This is soft as Muses' string—
 This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
 This is rapid as its spring,—
 Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
 Light as ever trod her feet !
 And the brown bees of Hymettus
 Make their honey, not so sweet.

Very copious are my praises,
 Though I sip it like a fly !—
 Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
 Change before me suddenly—
 As Ulysses' old libation
 Drew the ghosts from every part,
 So your Cyprian wine, dear Græcian,
 Stirs the Hades of my heart.

And I think of those long mornings
 Which my Thought goes far to seek,
 When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
 Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

Past the pane, the mountain spreading,
 Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling noise,
 While a girlish voice was reading,—
 Somewhat low for *ai's* and *oi's*!

Then what golden hours were for us!—
 While we sate together there,
 How the white vests of the chorus
 Seemed to wave up a live air!
 How the cothurns trod majestic
 Down the deep iambic lines?
 And the rolling anapæstic
 Curled, like vapour over shrines!

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous!
 How he drove the bolted breath
 Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
 In the gnarled oak beneath.

Oh, our Sophocles, the royal!
 Who was born to monarch's place—
 And who made the whole world loyal,
 Less by kingly power than grace.

Our Euripides, the human—
 With his droppings of warm tears;
 And his touches of things common,
 Till they rose to touch the spheres!
 Our Theocritus, our Bion,
 And our Pindar's shining goals!—
 These were cup-bearers undying,
 Of the wine that's meant for souls.

And my Plato, the divine one,—
 If men know that gods aright
 By their motions as they shine on
 With a glorious trail of light—
 And your noble Christian bishops,
 Who mouthed grandly the last Greek:
 Though the sponges on their hyssops
 Were distent with wine—too weak!

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
 With his glorious mouth of gold—
 And your Basil, you upraised him
 To the height of speakers old:
 And we both praised Heliodorus
 For his secret of pure lies!—
 Who forged first his link'd stories
 In the heat of lady's eyes.

And we both praised your Synesius,
 For the fire shot up his odes,
 Though the church was scarce propitious,
 As he whistled dogs and gods.—
 And we both praised Nazianzen,
 For the fervid heart and speech !
 Only I eschewed his glancing
 At the lyre hung out of reach.

Do you mind that deed of Até,
 Which you bound me to, so fast,—
 Reading " De Virginitate,"
 From the first line to the last ?
 How I said at ending, solemn,
 As I turned and looked at you,
 That St. Simeon on the column
 Had had somewhat less to do ?

For we sometimes gently wrangled ;
 Very gently, be it said,—
 For our thoughts were disentangled
 By no breaking of the thread !
 And, I charged you with extortions
 On the nobler fames of old—
 Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
 Stained the purple they would fold.

For the rest !—a mystic moaning,
 Kept Cassandra at the gate !
 With wild eyes the vision shone in—
 And wide nostrils scenting fate !
 And Prometheus, bound in passion
 By brute Force to the blind stone,
 Showed us looks of invocation
 Turned to ocean and the sun.

And Medea we saw, burning
 At her nature's planted stake !
 And proud Œdipus, fate-scorning,
 While the cloud came on to brake—
 While the cloud came on slow—slower,
 Till he stood discrowned, resigned !—
 But the reader's voice dropped lower,
 When the poet called him BLIND !

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,
 And more learned, and a man !—
 Yet that shadow,—the enfolder
 Of your quiet eyelids,—ran

Both our spirits to one level;
 And I turned from hill and lea
 And the summer-sun's green revel,—
 To your eyes that *could not see*.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
 Which goes shining night and day!
 May the flowers which grow in sunlight
 Shed their fragrance in your way!
 Is it not right to remember
 All your kindness, friend of mine,—
 When we two sate in the chamber,
 And the poets poured us wine?

So, to come back to the drinking
 Of this Cyprus!—it is well—
 But those memories, to my thinking,
 Make a better œnomet!
 And whoever be the speaker
 None can murmur with a sigh,—
 That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
 I am sipping like a fly!



THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

"So the dreams depart,
 So the fading phantoms flee,
 And the sharp reality
 Now must act its part."
 WESTWOOD'S "BEADS FROM A ROSARY."

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
 Mid the beeches of a meadow,
 By a stream-side, on the grass:
 And the trees are showering down
 Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
 On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by;
 And her feet she has been dipping
 In the shallow water's flow—
 Now she holds them nakedly
 In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
 While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,—
 And the smile she softly useth
 Fills the silence like a speech ;
 While she thinks what shall be done,—
 And the sweetest pleasure, chooseth,
 For her future within reach !

Little Ellie in her smile
 Chooseth . . . " I will have a lover,
 Riding on a steed of steeds !
 He shall love me without guile ;
 And to *him* I will discover
 The swan's nest among the reeds.

" And the steed shall be red-roan,
 And the lover shall be noble,
 With an eye that takes the breath,—
 And the lute he plays upon,
 Shall strike ladies into trouble,
 As his sword strikes men to death.

" And the steed it shall be shod
 All in silver, housed in azure,
 And the mane shall swim the wind
 And the hoofs, along the sod,
 Shall flash onward in a pleasure,
 Till the shepherds look behind.

" But my lover will not prize
 All the glory that he rides in,
 When he gazes in my face !
 He will say, ' O Love, thine eyes
 Build the shrine my soul abides in ;
 And I kneel here for thy grace.'

" Then, ay, then—he shall kneel low,—
 With the red-roan steed anear him
 Which shall seem to understand—
 Till I answer, ' Rise, and go !
 For the world must love and fear him
 Whom I gift with heart and hand.'

" Then he will arise so pale,
 I shall feel my own lips tremble
 With a *yes* I must not say—
 Nathless, maiden-brave, ' Farewell,'
 I will utter and dissemble—
 ' Light to-morrow with to-day.'

" Then he will ride through the hills,
 To the wide world past the river,
 There to put away all wrong!
 To make straight distorted wills,—
 And to empty the broad quiver
 Which the wicked bear along.

" Three times shall a young foot-page
 Swim the stream, and climb the mountain,
 And kneel down beside my feet—
 'Lo! my master sends this gage,
 Lady, for thy pity's counting!
 What wilt thou exchange for it?'

" And the first time, I will send
 A white rosebud for a guerdon,—
 And the second time, a glove!
 But the third time—I may bend
 From my pride, and answer—'Pardon—
 If he comes to take my love.'

" Then the young foot-page will run—
 Then my lover will ride faster,
 Till he kneeleth at my knee!
 'I am a duke's eldest son!
 Thousand serfs do call me master,—
 But, O Love, I love but *thee!*'

" He will kiss me on the mouth
 Then, and lead me as a lover,
 Through the crowds that praise his deeds!
 And, when soul-tied by one troth,
 Unto *him* I will discover
 That swan's nest among the reeds."

Little Ellie, with her smile
 Not yet ended, rose up gaily,—
 Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe—
 And went homeward, round a mile,
 Just to see, as she did daily,
 What more eggs were with the *two*.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
 Winding by the stream, light-hearted,
 Where the osier pathway leads—
 Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.
 Lo! the wild swan had deserted—
 And a rat had gnawed the reeds!

Ellie went home sad and slow !
 If she found the lover ever,
 With his red-roan steed of steeds,
 Sooth I know not ! but I know
 She could show him never—never,
 That swan's nest among the reeds !

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

“ To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.”
 LOWELL.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever-golden !
 Cankered not the whole year long !
 Do ye teach us to be strong,
 Howsoever pricked and holden
 Like your thorny blooms, and so
 Trodden on by rain and snow,
 Up the hillside of this life, as bleak as where ye grow ?

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms !
 Do ye teach us to be glad
 When no summer can be had,
 Blooming in our inward bosoms ?
 Ye, whom God preserveth still,
 Set as lights upon a hill,
 Tokens to the wintry earth, that Beauty liveth still !

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
 From that academic chair
 Canopied with azure air,
 That the first fruit Wisdom reaches
 Hath the hue of childly cheek ?
 Ye, who live on mountain peak,
 Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meck !

Mountain gorses ! since Linnæus
 Knelt beside you on the sod,
 For your beauty thanking God,—
 For your teaching, ye should see us
 Bowing in prostration new,—
 Whence arisen,—if one or two
 Drops be on our cheeks—O world ! they are not tears, but
 dew.

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's "Götter Griechenlands," and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ("De Oraculorum Defectu"), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude.—
E. B. B.

GODS of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

In what revels are ye sunken
In old Æthiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,—
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corscs
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

"Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,"
Said the old Hellenic tongue;
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung!

Have ye grown deaf in a day ?
 Can ye speak not yea or nay—
 Since Pan is dead ?

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
 All alone, O Naiades,
 While your drench'd locks dry slow in
 This cold feeble sun and breeze ?—
 Not a word the Naiads says,
 Though the rivers run for aye ;
 For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak wood,
 O ye Dryads, could ye flee ?
 At the rushing thunderstroke, would
 No sob tremble through the tree ?—
 Not a word the Dryads say,
 Though the forests wave for aye ;
 For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places,
 Oreads wild, for other tryst ?
 Shall we see no sudden faces
 Strike a glory through the mist ?
 Not a sound the silence thrills,
 Of the everlasting hills.
 Pan, Pan is dead.

Of twelve gods of Plato's vision,
 Crowned to starry wanderings,—
 With your chariots in procession,
 And your silver clash of wings !
 Very pale ye seem to rise,
 Ghosts of Grecian deities—
 Now Pan is dead !

Jove ! that right hand is unloaded,
 Whence the thunder did prevail :
 While in idiocy of godhead,
 Thou art staring the stars pale !
 And thine eagle, blind and old,
 Roughs his feathers in the cold.
 Pan, Pan is dead.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
 Of thy regal look and tread ?
 Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
 On thy dim, straight, golden bed ?

THE DEAD PAN.

Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid ?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Ha, Apollo ! Floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands ;
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands ?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou !

Pan, Pan is dead.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,—
And no hero take inspiring
From the god-Greek of her lips ?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it ?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus ! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own vines !
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,—
" Evohe—ah—evohe !—"

Ah, Pan is dead.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone :
And old Pluto, deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun.
Ceres smileth stern thereat,—
" We *all* now are desolate—

Now Pan is dead."

Aphrodite ! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art ;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart !
Ai Adonis ! at that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another,—huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,—

As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan is dead.

What, and Hermes! Time enthralleth
All that cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay! Pan is dead.

Crown'd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head:
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, un-fed:
Scornful children are not mute,—
"Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
Since Pan is dead!"

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

Gods! we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign:
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine!
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
Calls the obolus outworn:
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn—
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

Gods bereav'd, gods belated,—
With your purples rent asunder,
Gods dis-crowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!

THE DEAD PAN.

Now, the goats may climb and crop
 The soft grass on Ida's top—
 Now, Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
 When a cry more loud than wind,
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
 From the piled Dark behind :
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,
 Breathed against by the great wail—
 “ Pan, Pan is dead.”

And the rowers from the benches
 Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
 While departing Influences
 Struck a cold back through the place :
 And the shadow of the ship
 Reeled along the passive deep—
 Pan, Pan is dead.

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
 And sank slowly through the air ;
 Full of spirit's melancholy
 And eternity's despair !
 And they heard the words it said—
 PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
 PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross—
 When His brow was chill with dying,
 And His soul was faint with loss ;
 When His priestly blood dropped downward,
 And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
 Then, Pan was dead.

By the love He stood alone in,
 His sole Godhead stood complete :
 And the false gods fell down moaning,
 Each from off his golden seat—
 All the false gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity—
 Pan, Pan was dead.

Wailing wide across the islands,
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine !
 And a darkness and a silence
 Quenched the light of every shrine :

And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only,
Pan, Pan was dead.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,
Her lost god's forsaking look,
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook—
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice
Whence libations ran of yore.
See! the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must!—
Since Pan is dead.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades, call you back,—
Or instruct us to weep all—
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan is dead.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses,
Through your falsehood, at the True,—
We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth:
And those debonair romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run!
Look up, poets, to the sun!
Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for bless'd mysteries.

THE DEAD PAN.

And a Priest's Hand, through creation,
 Waveth calm and consecration—
 And Pan is dead.

Truth is fair : should we forego it ?
 Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
 God Himself is the best Poet,
 And the Real is His song.
 Sing His truth out fair and full,
 And secure His beautiful.

Let Pan be dead.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
 Scarce embraces half we be.
 Shame ! to stand in His creation
 And doubt Truth's sufficiency !—
 To think God's song unexcelling
 The poor tales of our own telling—
 When Pan is dead.

What is true and just and honest,
 What is lovely, what is pure—
 All of praise that hath admonisht,—
 All of virtue, shall endure,—
 These are themes for poets' uses,
 Stirring nobler than the Muses—
 Ere Pan was dead.

O brave poets, keep back nothing ;
 Nor mix falsehood with the whole !
 Look up Godward ! speak the truth in
 Worthy song from earnest soul
 Hold, in high poetic duty,
 Truest Truth the fairest Beauty !
 Pan, Pan is dead.

EARLY POEMS.

1826—1833



TO MY FATHER ON HIS BIRTHDAY.

"Causa fuit Pater his."—HOR.

AMIDST the days of pleasant mirth,
That throw their halo round our earth ;
Amidst the tender thoughts that rise
To call bright tears to happy eyes ;
Amidst the silken words that move
To syllable the names we love ;
There glides no day of gentle bliss,
More soothing to the heart than *this* !
No thoughts of fondness e'er appear
More fond, than those I write of here !
No name can e'er on tablet shine,
My father ! more belov'd than *thine* !
'Tis sweet, adown the shady past,
A lingering look of love to cast—
Back th' enchanted world to call,
That beamed around us first of all ;
And walk with Memory fondly o'er
The paths, where Hope had been before—
Sweet to receive the sylphic sound
That breathes in tenderness around,
Repeating to the listening ear
The names that made our childhood dear—
For parted Joy, like Echo, kind,
Will leave her dulcet voice behind,
To tell, amidst the magic air,
How oft she smiled and lingered there.
Oh ! let the deep Aonian shell
Breathe tuneful numbers, clear and well,
While the glad Hours, in fair array,
Lead on this buxom Holiday ;
And Time, as on his way he springs,
Hates the last bard who gave him wings ;

SPENSERIAN STANZAS.

For 'neath thy gentleness of praise,
 My Father ! rose my early lays !
 And when the lyre was scarce awake,
 I lov'd its strings for *thy* lov'd sake ;
 Woo'd the kind Muses—but the while
 Thought only how to win thy smile—
 My proudest fame—my dearest pride—
More dear than all the world beside !
 And now, perchance, I seek the tone
 For magic that is more its own ;
 But still my Father's looks remain
 The best Mæcenas of my strain ;
 My gentlest joy, upon his brow
 To read the smile, that meets me now—
 To hear him, in his kindness, say
 The words,—perchance he'll speak to-day !



SPENSERIAN STANZAS

ON A BOY OF THREE YEARS OLD.

CHILD of the sunny lockes and beautifull brow !
 In thoughtfull tendernesse I gaze on thee—
 Upon thy daintie cheek Expression's glow
 Daunceth in tyme to thine heart's melodie ;
 Ne mortall wight mote lovelier urchin see !
 Nathlesse it teens this pensive brest of mine
 To think—belive the innocent revelrie
 Shall be eclipsed in those soft blue eyne—
 Whenso the howre of youth no more for thee shall shine.

Ah me ! eftsoons thy childhood's pleasaunt dais
 Shall fly away, and be a whilome thing !
 And sweetest mearimake, and birthday lais
 Be reck'd not of, except when memories bring
 Feres to their embers with awaking wing,
 To make past love rejoyce thy tender sprite,
 Albeit the toyles of daunger thee enring !
 Child of the way lockes, and brow of light—
Then be thy conscience pure, as *now* thy face is bright.

VERSES TO MY BROTHER.

"For we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill."—LYCIDAS.

I WILL write down thy name, and when 'tis writ,
 Will turn me from the hum that mortals keep
 In the wide world without, and gaze on it!
 It telleth of the past—calling from sleep
 Such dear, yet mournful thoughts, as make us smile, and
 weep.

Belov'd and best! what thousand feelings start,
 As o'er the paper's course my fingers move—
 My Brother! dearest, kindest as thou art!
 How can these lips my heart's affection prove?
 I could not speak the words, if words could speak my love.

Together have we past our infant hours,
 Together sported Childhood's spring away,
 Together cull'd young Hope's fast budding flowers,
 To wreath the forehead of each coming day!
 Yes! for the present's sun makes e'en the future gay.

And when the laughing mood was nearly o'er,
 Together, many a minute did we wile
 On Horace' page, or Maro's sweeter lore;
 While one young critic, on the classic style,
 Would sagely try to frown, and make the other smile.

But now alone thou con'st the ancient tome—
 And sometimes thy dear studies, it may be,
 Are cross'd by dearer dreams of me and home!
 Alone I muse on Homer—thoughts are free—
 And if mine often stray, they go in search of thee!

I may not praise thee *here*—I will not bless!
 Yet all thy goodness doth my memory bear,
 Cherish'd by more than Friendship's tenderness—
 And, in the silence of my evening prayer,
 Thou shalt not be forgot—thy dear name shall be there!

STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF LORD BYRON.

“——— λέγε πᾶσιν ἀπέλωτο.”—BYRON.

“——— I am not now
That which I have been.”—CHILDE HAROLD.

HE *was*, and *is* not ! Græcia's trembling shore,
Sighing through all her palmy groves, shall tell
That Harold's pilgrimage at last is o'er—
Mute the impassioned tongue, and tuneful shell,
That erst was wont in noblest strains to swell—
Hush'd the proud shouts that rode Ægæa's wave !
For lo ! the great Deliv'rer breathes farewell !
Gives to the world his mem'ry and a grave—
Expiring in the land he only lived to save !

Mourn, Hellas, mourn ! and o'er thy widow'd brow,
For aye, the cypress wreath of sorrow twine ;
And in thy new form'd beauty, desolate, throw
The fresh-cull'd flowers on *his* sepulchral shrine.
Yes ! let that heart whose fervour was all thine,
In consecrated urn lamented be !
That generous heart where genius thrill'd divine,
Hath spent its last most glorious throb for thee—
Then sank amid the storm that made thy children free !

Britannia's Poet ! Græcia's hero, sleeps !
And Freedom, bending o'er the breathless clay—
Lifts up her voice, and in her anguish weeps !
For *us*, a night hath clouded o'er our day,
And hush'd the lips that breathed our fairest lay.
Alas ! and must the British lyre resound
A requiem, while the spirit wings away
Of him who on its strings such music found,
And taught its startling chords to give so sweet a sound !

The theme grows sadder—but my soul shall find
A language in these tears ! No more—no more !
Soon, 'midst the shriekings of the tossing wind,
The “dark blue depths” he sang of, shall have bore
Our *all* of Byron to his native shore !
His grave is thick with voices—to the ear
Murm'ring an awful tale of greatness o'er ;
But Memory strives with Death, and lingering near,
Shall consecrate the dust of Harold's lonely bier !

MEMORY.

MY Fancy's steps have often strayed
 To some fair vale the hills have made ;
 Where sparkling waters travel o'er,
 And hold a mirror to the shore ;
 Winding with murmurings in and out,
 To find the flowers which grow about.
 And there, perchance, in childhood bold,
 Some little elf, four summers old,
 Adown the vales may chance to run,
 To hunt his shadow in the sun !
 But when the waters meet his eyes,
 He starts and stops with glad surprise,
 And shouts, with merry voice, to view
 The banks of green, the skies of blue,
 Th' inverted flocks that bleating go,
 Lilies, and trees of apple blow,
 Seeming so beautiful below !
 He peeps above—he glances round,
 And then looks down, and thinks he's found
 Reposing in the stream, to woo one,
 A world ev'n lovelier than the true one.

Thus, with visions gay and light,
 Hath Fancy lov'd my page to dight ;
 Yet Thought hath, through a vista, seen
 Something less frivolous I ween :
 Then, while my chatting pen runs on,
 I'll tell you what she dreamt upon.

Memory's the streamlet of the scene,
 Which sweeps the hills of Life between ;
 And, when our walking hour is past,
 Upon its shore we rest at last ;
 And love to view the waters fair,
 And see lost joys depicted there.

My —, when thy feet are led
 To press those banks we all must tread—
 May Virtue's smile, and Learning's praise,
 Adorn the waters to thy gaze ;
 And, o'er their lucid course, be lent
 The sunshine of a life well spent !
 Then, if a thought should glad thy breast
 Of those who loved thee first and best,
 My name, perchance, may haunt the spot,
 Not quite unprized—nor all forgot,

TO ———

TO ———

MINE is a wayward lay ;
 And, if its echoing rhymes I try to string,
 Proveth a truant thing,
 Whensome names I love, send it away !

For then, eyes swimming o'er,
 And clasp'd hands, and smiles in fondness meant,
 Are much more eloquent—
 So it had fain begone, and speak no more !

Yet shall it come again,
 Ah, friend belov'd ! if so thy wishes be,
 And, with mild melody,
 I will, upon thine ear, cadence my strain—

Cadence my simple line,
 Unfashion'd by the cunning hand of Art,
 But coming from my heart,
 To tell the message of its love to thine !

As ocean shells, when taken
 From Ocean's bed, will faithfully repeat
 Her ancient music sweet—
 Ev'n so these words, true to my heart, shall waken !

Oh! while our bark is seen,
 Our little bark of kindly, social love,
 Down life's clear stream to move
 Toward the summer shores, where all is green—

So long thy name shall bring,
 Echoes of joy unto the grateful gales,
 And thousand tender tales,
 To freshen the fond hearts that round thee cling !

Hast thou not look'd upon
 The flowerets of the field in lowly dress ?
 Blame not my simpleness—
 Think only of my love !—my song is gone,

STANZAS.

OCCASIONED BY A PASSAGE IN MR. EMERSON'S JOURNAL, WHICH STATES, THAT ON THE MENTION OF LORD BYRON'S NAME, CAPTAIN DEMETRIUS, AN OLD ROUMELIOT, BURST INTO TEARS.

NAME not his name, or look afar—
 For when my spirit hears
 That name, its strength is turned to woe—
 My voice is turned to tears.

Name me the host and battle-storm,
 Mine own good sword shall stem;
 Name me the foeman and the block,
 I have a smile for *them*!

But name *him* not, or cease to mark
 This brow where passions sweep—
 Behold, a warrior is a man,
 And as a man may weep!

I could not scorn my Country's foes,
 Did not these tears descend—
 I could not love my Country's fame,
 And not my Country's Friend.

Deem not his memory e'er can be
 Upon our spirits dim—
 Name us the generous and the free,
 And we must think of *him*!

For his voice resounded through our land
 Like the voice of liberty,
 As when the war-trump of the wind,
 Upstirs our dark blue sea.

His arm was in the foremost rank,
 Where embattled thousands roll—
 His name was in the love of Greece,
 And his spell was on her soul!

But the arm that wielded her good sword,
 The brow that wore the wreath,
 The lips that breathed the deathless thoughts—
 They went asleep in death.

Ye left his HEART, when ye took away
 The dust in funeral state ;
 And we dumbly placed in a little urn,
 That home of all things great.

The banner streamed—the war-shout rose—
 Our heroes played their part !
 But not a pulse would throb or burn—
 Oh ! could it be *his* heart !

I will not think—'tis worse than vain
 Upon such thoughts to keep ;
 Then, Briton, name me not his name—
 I cannot choose but weep !



THE PAST.

THERE is a silence upon the Ocean,
 Albeit it swells with a feverish motion ;
 Like to the battle-camp's fearful calm,
 While the banners are spread, and the warriors arm.

The winds beat not their drum to the waves,
 But sullenly moan in the distant caves ;
 Talking over, before they rise,
 Some of their dark conspiracies.

And so it is in this life of ours,
 A calm may be on the present hours,
 But the calmest hour of festive glee
 May turn the mother of woe to thee.

I will betake me to the Past,
 And she shall make my love at last ;
 I will find my home in her tarrying-place—
 I will gaze all day on her deathly face !

Her form, though awful, is fair to view ;
 The clasp of her hand, though cold, is true ;
 Her shadowy brow hath no changefulness,
 And her numbered smiles can grow no less !

Her voice is like a pleasant song,
 Which we have not heard for very long,
 And which a joy on *our* souls will cast,
 Though we know not where we heard it last.

She shall walk with me, away, away,
 Where'er the mighty have left their clay;
 She shall speak to me in places lone,
 With a low and holy tone.

Ay! when I have lit my lamp at night,
 She will be present with my sprite;
 And I will say, what'er it be,
 Every word she telleth me!



THE PRAYER.

METHOUGHT that I did stand upon a tomb—
 And all was silent as the dust beneath,
 While feverish thoughts upon my soul would come,
 Losing my words in tears: I thought of death;
 And prayed that when my lips gave out the breath,
 The friends I loved like life might stay behind:
 So, for a little while, my name might eath
 Be something dear,—spoken with voices kind,
 Heard with remembering looks, from eyes which tears
 would blind!

I prayed that I might sink into my rest,
 (O foolish, selfish prayer!) before them all;
 So I might look my last on those loved best—
 So never would my voice repining call,
 And never would my tears impassioned fall
 On one familiar face turning to clay!
 So would my tune of life be musical,
 Albeit abrupt—like airs the Spaniards play,
 Which in the sweetest part, break off, and die away.

Methought I looked around! the scene was rife
 With little vales, green banks, and waters heaving;
 And every living thing did joy in life,
 And every thing of beauty did seem living—
 Oh, then, life's pulse was at my heart reviving;
 And then I knew that it was good to bear
 Dispens'd woe, that by the spirit's grieving,
 It might be wean'd from a world so fair!—
 Thus with submissive words mine heart did close its
 prayer.

ON A PICTURE OF RIEGO'S WIDOW,

PLACED IN THE EXHIBITION.

DAUGHTER of Spain ! a passer by
 May mark the cheek serenely pale—
 The dark eyes which dream silently,
 And the calm lip which gives no wail !

Calm ! it bears not a deeper trace
 Of feelings it disdained to show ;
 We look upon the Widow's face,
 And only read the Patriot's woe !

No word, no look, no sigh of thine,
 Would make *his* glory seem more dim ;
 Thou would'st not give to vulgar eyne
 The sacred tear which fell for HIM.

Thou would'st not hold to the world's view
 Thy ruined joys, thy broken heart—
 The jeering world—it only knew
 Of all thine anguish—that thou WERT !

While o'er *his* grave thy steps would go
 With a firm tread,—stilling thy love,—
 As if the dust would blush below
 To feel one faltering foot above.

For Spain, *he* dared the noble strife—
 For Spain, he gave his latest breath ;
 And he who lived the Patriot's life,
 Was dragged to die the traitor's death !

And the shout of thousands swept around,
 As he stood the traitor's block beside ;
 But his dying lips gave a free sound—
 Let the foe weep !—*THY* brow had *pride* ;

Yet haply in the midnight air,
 When none might part thy God and thee,
 The lengthened sob, the passionate prayer,
 Have spoken thy soul's agony !

But silence else, thou past away—
 The plaint unbreath'd, the anguish hid—
 More voiceless than the echoing clay
 Which idly knocked thy coffin's lid.

Peace be to thee ! while Britons seek
 This place, if British souls they bear,
 'Twill start the crimson in the cheek
 To see Riego's widow THERE !



SONG.

WEEP, as if you thought of laughter !
 Smile, as tears were coming after !
 Marry your pleasures to your woes ;
 And think life's green well worth its rose !

No sorrow will your heart betide,
 Without a comfort by its side ;
 The sun may sleep in his sea-bed,
 But you have starlight overhead.

Trust not to Joy ! the rose of June,
 When opened wide, will wither soon ;
 Italian days without twilight,
 Will turn them suddenly to night.

Joy, most changeful of all things,
 Flits away on rainbow wings ;
 And when they look the gayest, know,
 It is that they are spread to go !



THE DREAM.

A FRAGMENT.

I HAD a dream !—my spirit was unbound
 From the dark iron of its dungeon, clay,
 And rode the steeds of Time ;—my thoughts had sound,
 And spoke without a word,—I went away
 Among the buried ages, and did lay
 The pulses of my heart beneath the touch
 Of the rude minstrel Time, that he should play
 Thereon, a melody which might seem such
 As musing spirits love—mournful, but not too much !

I had a dream—and there mine eyes did see
 The shadows of past deeds like present things—
 The sepulchres of Greece and Hesperly,
 Ægyptus, and old lands, gave up their kings,
 Their prophets, saints, and minstrels, whose lute-strings
 Keep a long echo—yea, the dead, white bones,
 Did stand up by the house whereto Death clings,
 And dressed themselves in life, speaking of thrones,
 And fame, and power, and beauty, in familiar tones !

I went back further still, for I beheld
 What time the earth was one fair Paradise—
 And over such bright meads the waters welled,
 I wot the rainbow was content to rise
 Upon the earth, when absent from the skies !
 And there were tall trees that I never knew,
 Whereon sate nameless birds in merry guise,
 Folding their radiant wings, as the flowers do,
 When summer nights send sleep down with the dew.

* * * * *

Anon there came a change—a terrible motion,
 That made all living things grow pale and shake !
 The dark Heavens bowed themselves unto the ocean,
 Like a strong man in strife—Ocean did take
 His flight across the mountains ; and the lake
 Was lashed into a sea where the winds ride—
 Earth was no more, for in her merrymake
 She had forgot her God—Sin claimed his bride,
 And with his vampire breath sucked out her life's fair
 tide !

Life went back to her nostrils, and she raised
 Her spirit from the waters once again—
 The lovely sights, on which I erst had gazed,
 Were *not*—though she was beautiful as when
 The Grecian called her " Beauty "—sinful men
 Walked i' the track of the waters, and felt bold—
 Yea, they looked up to Heaven in calm disdain,
 As if no eye had seen its vault unfold
 Darkness, and fear, and death !—as if a tale were told !

And ages fled away within my dream ;
 And still Sin made the heart his dwelling-place,
 Eclipsing Heaven from men ; but it would seem
 That two or three dared commune face to face,
 And speak of the soul's life, of hope, and grace—
 Anon there rose such sounds as angels breathe—

For a God came to die, bringing down peace—
 "Pan *was not*;" and the darkness that did wreath
 The earth, past from the soul—Life came by death!

* * * * *



RIGA'S LAST SONG.

I HAVE looked my last on my native land,
 And over these strings I throw my hand,
 To say in the death-hour's minstrelsy,
 Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

I have looked my last on my native shore;
 I shall tread my country's plains no more;
 But my last thought is of her fame;
 But my last breath speaketh her name!

And though these lips shall soon be still,
 They may now obey the spirit's will;
 Though the dust be fettered, the spirit is free—
 Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

I go to death—but I leave behind
 The stirrings of Freedom's mighty mind;
 Her voice shall arise from plain to sky,
 Her steps shall tread where my ashes lie!

I looked on the mountains of proud Souli,
 And the mountains they seemed to look on me;
 I spoke my thought on Marathon's plain,
 And Marathon seemed to speak again!

And as I journeyed on my way,
 I saw an infant group at play;
 One shouted aloud in his childish glee,
 And showed me the heights of Thermopylæ!

I gazed on peasants hurrying by,—
 The dark Greek pride crouched in their eye;
 So I swear in my death-hour's minstrelsy,
 Hellas, my country! thou *shalt* be free!

No more!—I dash my lyre on the ground—
 I tear its strings from their home of sound—
 For the music of slaves shall never keep
 Where the hand of a freeman was wont to sweep!

And I bend my brows above the block,
 Silently waiting the swift death shock ;
 For these lips shall speak what becomes the free—
 Or—Hellas, my country ! farewell to thee !

He bowed his head with a Patriot's pride,
 And his dead trunk fell the mute lyre beside !
 The soul of each had past away—
 Soundless the strings—breathless the clay !

THE VISION OF FAME.

DID ye ever sit on summer noon,
 Half musing and half asleep,
 When ye smile in such a dreamy way,
 Ye know not if ye weep—

When the little flowers are thick beneath,
 And the welkin blue above ;
 When there is not a sound but the cattle's low,
 And the voice of the woodland dove ?

A while ago and I dream'd thus—
 I mused on ancient story,—
 For the heart like a minstrel of old doth seem,
 It delighteth to sing of glory.

What time I saw before me stand,
 A bright and lofty One ;
 A golden lute was in her hand,
 And her brow drooped thereon.

But the brow that drooped was rais'd soon,
 Showing its royal sheen—
 It was, I guessed, no human brow,
 Though pleasant to human een.

And this brow of peerless majesty,
 With its whiteness did enshroud
 Two eyes, that, darkly mystical,
 'Gan look up at a cloud.

Like to the hair of Berenice,
 Fetch'd from its house of light,
 Was the hair which wreathed her shadowless form—
 And Fame the ladye hight !

But as she wended on to me,
 My heart's deep fear was chidden ;
 For she called up the sprite of Melody,
 Which in her lute lay hidden.

When ye speak to well-beloved ones,
 Your voice is tender and low :
 The wires methought did love her touch—
 For they did answer so.

And her lips in such a quiet way
 Gave the chant soft and long,—
 You might have thought she only breathed,
 And that her breath was song :—

“ When Death shrouds thy memory,
 Love is no shrine—
 The dear eyes that weep for thee,
 Soon sleep like thine !
 The wail murmured over thee,
 Fainteth away ;
 And the heart which kept love for thee,
 Turns into clay !

“ But would'st thou remembered be,
 Make me thy vow ;
 This verse that flows gushingly,
 Telleth thee how—
 Linking thy hand in mine,
 Listen to me,
 So not a thought of thine
 Dieth with thee—

“ Rifle thy pulsing heart
 Of the gift, love made ;
 Bid thine eye's light depart ;
 Let thy cheek fade !
 Give me the slumber deep,
 Which night-long seems ;
 Give me the joys that creep
 Into thy dreams !

“ Give me thy youthful years,
 Merriest that fly—
 So the word, spoke in *tears*,
 Liveth for aye !
 So thy sepulchral stone,
 Nations may raise—
 What time thy soul hath known
 The *worth of praise !*”

THE TEMPEST.

She did not sing this chant to me,
 Though I was sitting by;
 But I listened to it with chain'd breath,
 That had no power to sigh.

And ever as the chant went on,
 Its measure changed to wail;
 And ever as the lips sang on,
 Her face did grow more pale.

Paler and paler—till anon
 A fear came o'er my soul;
 For the flesh curled up from her bones,
 Like to a blasted scroll!

Ay! silently it dropped away,
 Before my wondering sight—
 There was only a bleach'd skeleton,
 Where erst was ladye bright!

But still the vacant sockets gleamed
 With supernatural fires—
 But still the bony hands did ring
 Against the shuddering wires!

Alas, alas! I wended home,
 With a sorrow and a shame—
 Is Fame the rest of our poor hearts?
 Woe's me! for THIS is FAME!



THE TEMPEST.

A FRAGMENT.

"Mors erat ante oculos."

LUCAN, lib. ix.

* * * * *

THE forest made my home—the voiceful streams
 My minstrel throng: the everlasting hills,—
 Which marry with the firmament, and cry
 Unto the brazen thunder, "Come away,
 Come from thy secret place, and try our strength,"—
 Enwrap'd me with their solemn arms. Here, light
 Grew pale as darkness, scar'd by the shade
 O' the forest Titans. Here, in piny state,

Reign'd Night, the Æthiopian queen, and crown'd
The charm'd brow of Solitude, her spouse.

* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *

A sign was on creation. You beheld
All things encolour'd in a sulph'rous hue,
As day were sick with fear. The haggard clouds
O'erhung the utter lifelessness of air ;
The top boughs of the forest all aghast,
Stared in the face of Heav'n ; the deep-mouth'd wind,
That hath a voice to bay the arm'd sea,
Fled with a low cry like a beaten hound ;
And only that askance the shadows, flew
Some open-beak'd birds in wilderment,
Naught stirred abroad. All dumb did Nature seem,
In expectation of the coming storm.

It came in power. You soon might hear afar
The footsteps of the martial thunder sound
Over the mountain battlements ; the sky
Being deep-stain'd with hues fantastical,
Red like to blood, and yellow like to fire,
And black like plumes at funerals ; overhead
You might behold the lightning faintly gleam
Amid the clouds which thrill and gape aside,
And straight again shut up their solemn jaws,
As if to interpose between Heaven's wrath
And Earth's despair. Interposition brief !
Darkness is gathering out her mighty pall
Above us, and the pent-up rain is loosed,
Down trampling in its fierce delirium.

Was not my spirit gladden'd as with wine,
To hear the iron rain, and view the mark
Of battle on the banner of the clouds ?
Did I not hearken for the battle-cry,
And rush along the bowing woods to meet
The riding Tempest—skyey cataracts
Hissing around him with rebellion vain ?
Yea ! and I lifted up my glorying voice
In an " All hail ; " when, wildly resonant,
As brazen chariots rushing from the war,
As passion'd waters gushing from the rock,
As thousand crash'd woods, the thunder cried :
And at his cry the forest tops were shook

As by the woodman's axe ; and far and near
Stagger'd the mountains with a mutter'd dread.

All hail unto the lightning ! hurriedly
His lurid arms are glaring through the air,
Making the face of heav'n to show like hell !
Let him go breathe his sulphur stench about,
And, pale with death's own mission, lord the storm !
Again the gleam—the glare : I turn'd to hail
Death's mission : at my feet there lay the dead !
The dead—the dead lay there ! I could not view
(For Night espoused the storm, and made all dark)
Its features, but the lightning in his course
Shiver'd above a white and corpse-like heap,
Stretch'd in the path, as if to show its prey,
And have a triumph ere he pass'd. Then I
Crouch'd down upon the ground, and groped about
Until I touch'd that thing of flesh, rain-drench'd,
And chill, and soft. Nathless, I did refrain
My soul from natural horror ! I did lift
The heavy head, half-bedded in the clay,
Unto my knee ; and pass'd my fingers o'er
The wet face, touching every lineament,
Until I found the brow ; and chafed its chill,
To know if life yet lingered in its pulse.
And while I was so busied, there did leap
From out the entrails of the firmament,
The lightning, who his white unblenching breath
Blew in the dead man's face, discov'ring it
As by a staring day. I knew that face—
His, who did hate me—his, whom I did hate !

I shrunk not—spake not—sprang not from the ground !
But felt my lips shake without cry or breath,
And mine heart wrestle in my breast to still
The tossing of its pulses ; and a cold,
Instead of living blood, o'ercreep my brow.
Albeit such darkness brooded all around,
I had dread knowledge that the open eyes
Of that dead man were glaring up at mine,
With their unwinking, unexpressive stare ;
And mine I could not shut nor turn away.
The man was my familiar. I had borne
Those eyes to scowl on me their living hate,
Better than I could bear their deadliness :
I had endured the curses of those lips,
Far better than their silence. Oh constrain'd

And awful silence!—awful peace of death!
There is an answering to all questioning,
 That one word—*death*. Our bitterness can throw
 No look upon the face of death, and live.
 The burning thoughts that erst my soul illumed,
 Were quench'd at once; as tapers in a pit
 Wherein the vapour-witches weirdly reign
 In charge of darkness. Farewell all the past!
 It was out-blotted from my memory's eyes,
 When clay's cold silence pleaded for its sin.

Farewell the elemental war! farewell
 The clashing of the shielded clouds—the cry
 Of scath'd echoes! I no longer knew
 Silence from sound, but wandered far away
 Into the deep Eleusis of mine heart,
 To learn its secret things. When arm'd foes
 Meet on one deck with impulse violent,
 The vessel quakes thro' all her oaken ribs,
 And shivers in the sea; so with mine heart:
 For there had battled in her solitudes,
 Contrary spirits; sympathy with power,
 And stooping unto power;—the energy
 And passiveness,—the thunder and the death!

Within me was a nameless thought: it closed
 The Janus of my soul on echoing hinge,
 And said "Peace!" with a voice like War's. I bow'd,
 And trembled at its voice: it gave a key,
 Empower'd to open out all mysteries
 Of soul and flesh; of man, who doth begin,
 But endeth not; of life, and *after life*.

* * * * *

Day came at last: her light show'd gray and sad,
 As hatch'd by tempest, and could scarce prevail
 Over the shaggy forest to imprint
 Its outline on the sky—expressionless,
 Almost sans shadow as sans radiance:
 An idiocy of light. I waken'd from
 My deep unslumb'ring dream, but utter'd naught.
 My living I uncoupled from the dead,
 And look'd out, 'mid the swart and sluggish air,
 For place to make a grave. A mighty tree
 Above me, his gigantic arms outstretch'd,
 Poising the clouds. 'A thousand mutter'd spells
 Of every ancient wind and thun'drous storm,
 Had been off-shaken from his scathless bark.
 He had heard distant years sweet concord yield,

THE TEMPEST.

And go to silence ; having firmly kept
 Majestical companionship with Time.
 Anon his strength wax'd proud : his tusky roots
 Forced for themselves a path on every side,
 Riving the earth ; and, in their savage scorn,
 Casting it from them like a thing unclean,
 Which might impede his naked clambering
 Unto the heavens. Now blasted, peel'd, he stood,
 By the gone night, whose lightning had come in
 And rent him, even as it rent the man
 Beneath his shade : and there the strong and weak
 Communion join'd in deathly agony.

There, underneath, I lent my feverish strength,
 To scoop a lodgment for the traveller's corse.
 I gave it to the silence and the pit,
 And strew'd the heavy earth on all : and then—
 I—I, whose hands had form'd that silent house,—
 I could not look thereon, but turn'd and wept !

* * * * *
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Oh death—Oh crown'd Death—pale-steed'd Death !
 Whose name doth make our respiration brief,
 Muffling the spirit's drum ! Thou, whom men know
 Alone by charnel-houses, and the dark
 Sweeping of funeral feathers, and the scath
 Of happy days,—love deem'd inviolate !
 Thou of the shrouded face, which to have seen
 Is to be very awful, like thyself !—
 Thou, whom all flesh shall see !—thou, who dost call,
 And there is none to answer !—thou, whose call
 Changeth all beauty into what we fear,
 Changeth all glory into what we tread,
 Genius to silence, wrath to nothingness,
 And love—not love !—thou hast no change for love !
 Thou, who art Life's betroth'd, and bear'st her forth
 To scare her with sad sights,—who hast thy joy
 Where'er the peopled towns are dumb with plague,—
 Where'er the battle and the vulture meet,—
 Where'er the deep sea writhes like Laocoon
 Beneath the serpent winds, the vessels split
 On secret rocks, and men go gurgling down,
 Down, down, to lose their shriekings in the depth.
 Oh universal thou ! who comest aye
 Among the minstrels, and their tongue is tied ;—

Among the sophists, and their brain is still ;
 Among the mourners, and their wail is done ;
 Among the dancers, and their tinkling feet
 No more make echoes on the tombing earth !
 Among the wassail rout, and all the lamps
 Are quench'd ; and wither'd the wine-pouring hands !

My heart is arm'd not in panoply
 Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes
 The Stoic valour. 'Tis a human heart
 And so confesses, with a human fear ;—
 That only for the hope the cross inspires,
 That only for the MAN who died and lives,
 'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's royalty,
 With faintness of the pulse, and backward cling
 To life. But knowing what I soothly know,
 High-seeming Death, I dare thee ! and have hope,
 In God's good time, of showing to thy face
 An unsuccumbing spirit, which sublime
 May cast away the low anxieties
 That wait upon the flesh—the reptile moods ;
 And enter that eternity to come,
 Where live the dead, and only Death shall die.

A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION.

" Ut per aquas quæ nunc rerum simulacra videmus."
 LUCRETIUS.

Go, travel 'mid the hills ! The summer's hand
 Hath shaken pleasant freshness o'er them all.
 Go, travel 'mid the hills ! There, tuneful streams
 Are touching myriad stops, invisible ;
 And winds, and leaves, and birds, and your own thoughts,
 (Not the least glad) in wordless chorus, crowd
 Around the thymele* of Nature.

Go,
 And travel onward. Soon shall leaf and bird,
 Wind, stream, no longer sound. Thou shalt behold
 Only the pathless sky, and houseless sward ;
 O'er which anon are spied innumerable sails
 Of fisher vessels like the wings o' the hill,
 And white as gulls above them, and as fast.—
 But sink they—sink they out of sight. And now
 The wind is springing upward in your face ;

* The central point of the choral movements in the Greek theatre.

And, with its fresh-toned gushings, you may hear
 Continuous sound which is not of the wind,
 Nor of the thunder, nor o' the cataract's
 Deep passion, nor o' the earthquake's wilder pulse ;
 But which rolls on in stern tranquillity,
 As memories of evil o'er the soul ;
 Boweth the bare broad Heav'n.—What view you ? sea—
 and sea !

The sea—the glorious sea ! from side to side,
 Swinging the grandeur of his foamy strength,
 And undersweeping the horizon,—on—
 On—with his life and voice inscrutable.
 Pause : sit you down in silence ! I have read
 Of that Athenian, who, when ocean raged,
 Unchain'd the prison'd music of his lips,
 By shouting to the billows, sound for sound.
 I marvel how his mind would let his tongue
 Affront thereby the ocean's solemnness.
 Are we not mute, or speak restrainedly,
 When overhead the trampling tempests go,
 Dashing their lightning from their hoofs ? and when
 We stand beside the bier ? and when we see
 The strong bow down to weep—and stray among
 Places which dust or mind hath sanctified ?
 Yea ! for such sights and acts do tear apart
 The close and subtle clasping of a chain,
 Form'd not of gold, but of corroded brass,
 Whose links are furnish'd from the common mine
 Of every day's event, and want, and wish ;
 From work-times, diet-times, and sleeping-times ;
 And thence constructed, mean and heavy links
 Within the pandemonic walls of sense,
 Enchain our deathless part, constrain our strength,
 And waste the goodly stature of our soul.

Howbeit, we love this bondage ; we do cleave
 Unto the sordid and unholy thing,
 Fearing the sudden wrench required to break
 Those clasp'd links. Behold ! all sights and sounds
 In air, and sea, and earth, and under earth,
 All flesh, all life, all ends, are mysteries ;
 And all that is mysterious dreadful seems,
 And all we cannot understand we fear.
 Ourselves do scare ourselves : we hide our sight
 In artificial nature from the true,
 And throw sensation's veil associative
 On God's creation, man's intelligence ;

Bowing our high imaginings to eat
 Dust, like the serpent, once erect as they ;
 Binding conspicuous on our reason's brow
 Phylacteries of shame ; learning to feel
 By rote, and act by rule, (man's rule, not God's !)
 Until our words grow echoes, and our thoughts
 A mechanism of spirit.

Can this last ?

No ! not for aye. We cannot subject aye
 The heav'n-born spirit to the earth-born flesh.
 Tame lions *will* scent blood, and appetite
 Carnivorous glare from out their restless eyes.
 Passions, emotions, sudden changes, throw
 Our nature back upon us, till we burn.
 What warm'd Cyrene's fount ? As poets sing,
 The *change* from light to dark, from dark to light.

All that doth force this nature back on us,
 All that doth force the mind to view the mind,
 Engend'reth what is named by men, *sublime*.
 Thus when, our wonted valley left, we gain
 The mountain's horrent brow, and mark from thence
 The sweep of lands extending with the sky ;
 Or view the spanless plain ; or turn our sight
 Upon yon deep immensity ;—we breathe
 As if our breath were marble : to and fro
 Do reel our pulses, and our words are mute.
 We cannot mete by parts, but grapple all :
 We cannot measure with our eye, but soul ;
 And fear is on us. The extent unused,
 Our spirit, sends, to spirit's element,
 To seize upon abstractions : first on space,
 The which *eternity in place*, I deem ;
 And then upon eternity ; till thought
 Hath form'd a mirror from their secret sense,
 Wherein we view ourselves, and back recoil
 At our own awful likeness ; ne'ertheless,
 Cling to that likeness with a wonder wild,
 And while we tremble, glory—proud in fear.

So ends the prose of life : and so shall be
 Unlock'd her poetry's magnificent store.
 And so, thou pathless and perpetual sea,
 So, o'er thy deeps, I brooded and must brood,
 Whether I view thee in thy dreadful peace,
 Like a spent warrior hanging in the sun
 His glittering arms, and meditating death ;

Or whether thy wild visage gath' reth shades,
 What time thou marshall'st forth thy waves who hold
 A covenant of storms, then roar and wind
 Under the rocking rocks ; as martyrs lie
 Wheel-bound ; and, dying, utter lofty words !
 Whether the strength of day is young and high,
 Or whether, weary of the watch, he sits
 Pale on thy wave, and weeps himself to death ;—
 In storm and calm, at morn and eventide,
 Still have I stood beside thee, and out-thrown
 My spirit onward on thine element,—
 Beyond thine element,—to tremble low
 Before those feet which trod thee as they trod
 Earth,—to the holy, happy, peopled place,
 Where there is no more sea. Yea, and my soul,
 Having put on thy vast similitude,
 Hath wildly moan'd at her proper depth,
 Echoed her proper musings, veil'd in shade
 Her secrets of decay, and exercised
 An elemental strength, in casting up
 Rare gems and things of death on fancy's shore,
 Till Nature said, " Enough."

Who longest dreams,
 Dreams not for ever ; seeing day and night
 And corporal feebleness divide his dreams,
 And, on his elevate creations weigh
 With hunger, cold, heat, darkness, weariness :
 Else should we be like gods ; else would the course
 Of thought's free wheels, increased in speed and might,
 By an eterne volution, oversweep
 The heights of wisdom, and invade her depths :
 So, knowing all things, should we have all power ;
 For is not Knowledge power ? But mighty spells
 Our operation sear ; the Babel must,
 Or ere it touch the sky, fall down to earth :
 The web, half form'd, must tumble from our hands,
 And, ere they can resume it, lie decay'd.
 Mind struggles vainly from the flesh. E'en so,
 Hell's angel (saith a scroll apocryphal)
 Shall, when the latter days of earth have shrunk
 Before the blast of God, affect his heav'n ;
 Lift his scarr'd brow, confirm his rebel heart,
 Shoot his strong wings, and darken pole and pole,—
 Till day be blotted into night ; and shake
 The fever'd clouds, as if a thousand storms
 Throbb'd into life ! Vain hope—vain strength—vain flight !
 God's arm shall meet God's foe, and hurl him back !

A VISION OF LIFE AND DEATH.

MINE ears were deaf to melody,
 My lips were dumb to sound :
 Where didst thou wander, oh my soul,
 When ear and tongue were bound ?

“ I wander'd by the stream of time,
 Made dark by human tears :
 I threw my voice upon the waves,
 And *they* did throw me theirs.”

And how did sound the waves, my soul ?
 And how did sound the waves ?
 “ Hoarse, hoarse, and wild !—they ever dash'd
 'Gainst ruin'd thrones and graves.”

And what sight on the shore, my soul ?
 And what sight on the shore ?
 “ Twain beings sate there silently,
 And sit there evermore.”

Now tell me fast and true, my soul ;
 Now tell me of those twain.
 “ One was yclothed in mourning vest,
 And one, in trappings vain.

“ She, in the trappings vain, was fair,
 And eke fantastical :
 A thousand colours dyed her garb ;
 A blackness bound them all.

“ In part her hair was gaily wreath'd,
 In part was wildly spread :
 Her face did change its hue too fast,
 To say 'twas pale or red.

“ And when she look'd on earth, I thought
 She smiled for very glee :
 But when she look'd to heav'n, I knew
 That tears stood in her ee.

“ She held a mirror, there to gaze :
 It could no cheer bestow ;
 For while her beauty cast the shade,
 Her breath did make it go.

“ A harper's harp did lie by her,
 Without the harper's hest ;

A monarch's crown did lie by her,
Wherein an owl had nest :

" A warrior's sword did lie by her,
Grown rusty since the fight ;
A poet's lamp did lie by her :—
Ah me !—where was its light ? "

And what didst *thou* say, O, my soul,
Unto that mystic dame ?

" I ask'd her of her tears, and eke
I ask'd her of her name.

" She said, she built a prince's throne :
She said, he ruled the grave ;
And that the levelling worm ask'd not
If he were king or slave.

" She said, she form'd a godlike tongue,
Which lofty thoughts unsheathed ;
Which roll'd its thunder round, and purged
The air the nations breathed.

" She said, that tongue, all eloquent,
With silent dust did mate ;
Whereon false friends betray'd long faith,
And foes outspat their hate.

" She said, she warm'd a student's heart,
But heart and brow 'gan fade :
Alas, alas ! those Delphic trees
Do cast an upas shade !

" She said, she lighted happy hearths,
Whose mirth was all forgot :
She said, she tun'd marriage bells,
Which rang when love was *not*.

" She said, her name was Life ; and then
Out laugh'd and wept aloud,—
What time the other being strange
Lifted the veiling shroud.

" Yea ! lifted she the veiling shroud,
And breathed the icy breath ;
Whereat, with inward shuddering,
I knew *her* name was Death.

" Yea ! lifted she her calm, calm brow,
Her clear cold smile on me :
Whereat within my deepness, leap'd
Mine immortality.

" She told me, it did move her smile,
 To witness how I sigh'd,
 Because that what was fragile brake,
 And what was mortal died :

" As if that kings could grasp the earth,
 Who from its dust began ;
 As if that suns could shine at night,
 Or glory dwell with man.

" She told me, she had freed *his* soul,
 Who aye did freedom love ;
 Who now reck'd not, were worms below,
 Or ranker worms above !

" She said, the student's heart had beat
 Against its prison dim ;
 Until she crush'd the bars of flesh,
 And pour'd truth's light on him.

" She said, that they who left the hearth,
 For aye in sunshine dwell ;
 She said, the funeral tolling brought
 More joy than marriage bell !

" And as she spake, she spake less loud ;
 The stream resounded more :
 Anon I nothing heard but waves
 That wail'd along the shore."

And what didst thou say, oh my soul,
 Upon that mystic strife ?

" I said, that Life was only Death,
 That only Death was Life."



EARTH.

How beautiful is earth ! my starry thoughts
 Look down on it from their unearthly sphere,
 And sing symphonious—Beautiful is earth !
 The lights and shadows of her myriad hills
 The branching greenness of her myriad woods ;
 Her sky-affecting rocks ; her zoning sea ;
 Her rushing, gleaming cataracts ; her streams
 That race below, the wing'd clouds on high ;
 Her pleasantness of vale and meadow !—

Hush !

Meseemeth through the leafy trees to ring
 A chime of bells to falling waters tuned ;
 Whereat comes heathen Zephyrus, out of breath
 With running up the hills, and shakes his hair
 From off his gleesome forehead, bold and glad
 With keeping blythe Dan Phœbus company ;—
 And throws him on the grass, though half afraid ;
 First glancing round, lest tempests should be nigh ;
 And lays close to the ground his ruddy lips,
 And shapes their beauty into sound, and calls
 On all the petall'd flowers that sit beneath
 In hiding-places from the rain and snow,
 To loosen the hard soil, and leave their cold
 Sad idlesse, and betake them up to him.
 They straightway hear his voice—

A thought did come,
 And press from out my soul the heathen dream.
 Mine eyes were purg'd. Straightway did I bind
 Round me the garment of my strength, and heard
 Nature's death-shrieking—the hereafter cry,
 When he o' the lion voice, the rainbow-crown'd,
 Shall stand upon the mountains and the sea,
 And swear by earth, by heaven's throne, and Him
 Who sitteth on the throne, there shall be time
 No more, no more ! Then, veil'd Eternity
 Shall straight unveil her awful countenance
 Unto the reeling worlds, and take the place
 Of seasons, years, and ages. Aye and aye
 Shall be the time of day. The wrinkled heav'n
 Shall yield her silent sun, made blind and white
 With an exterminating light : the wind,
 Unchain'd from the poles, nor having charge
 Of cloud or ocean, with a sobbing wail
 Shall rush among the stars, and swoon to death.
 Yea, the shrunk earth, appearing livid pale
 Beneath the red-tongued flame, shall shudder by
 From out her ancient place, and leave—a void.
 Yet haply by that void the saints redeem'd
 May sometimes stray ; when memory of sin
 Ghost-like shall rise upon their holy souls ;
 And on their lips shall lie the name of earth
 In paleness and in silentness ; until
 Each looking on his brother, face to face,
 And bursting into sudden happy tears,
 (The only tears undried) shall murmur—" Christ !"

THE PICTURE GALLERY AT PENSHURST.

THEY spoke unto me from the silent ground,
 They look'd unto me from the pictured wall :
 The echo of my footstep was a sound
 Like to the echo of their own footfall,
 What time their living feet were in the hall.
 I breathed where they had breathed—and where they
 brought
 Their souls to moralise on glory's pall,
 I walk'd with silence in a cloud of thought :
 So, what they erst had learn'd, I mine own spirit taught.

Ay! with mine eyes of flesh, I did behold
 The likeness of their flesh! They, the great dead,
 Stood still upon the canvas, while I told
 The glorious memories to their ashes wed.
 There, I beheld the Sidneys :—he, who bled
 Freely for freedom's sake, bore gallantly
 His soul upon his brow ;—he, whose lute said
 Sweet music to the land, meseem'd to be
 Dreaming with that pale face, of love and Arcadie.

Mine heart had shrin'd these. And therefore past
 Where these, and such as these, in mine heart's pride,
 Which deem'd death, glory's other name. At last
 I stay'd my pilgrim feet, and paused beside
 A picture,* which the shadows half did hide.
 The form was a fair woman's form ; the brow
 Brightly between the clustering curls espied :
 The cheek a little pale, yet seeming so
 As, if the lips could speak, the paleness soon would go.

And rested there the lips, so warm and loving,
 That, they *could* speak, one might be fain to guess :
 Only they had been much too bright, if moving,
 To stay by their own will, all motionless.
 One outstretch'd hand its marble seal 'gan press
 On roses which look'd fading ; while the eyes,
 Uplifted in a calm, proud loveliness,
 Seem'd busy with, their flow'ry destinies,
 Drawing, for lady's heart, some moral quaint and wise.

She perish'd like her roses. I did look
 On her, as she did look on them—to sigh !

* Vandyke's portrait of Waller's Sacharissa.

TO A POET'S CHILD.

Alas, alas ! that the fair-written book
 Of her sweet face, should be in death laid by,
 As any blotted scroll ! Its cruelty
 Poison'd a heart most gentle-pulsed of all,
 And turn'd it unto song, therein to die :
 For grief's stern tension maketh musical,
 Unless the strain'd string break or ere the music fall

Worship of Waller's heart ! no dream of thine
 Reveal'd unto thee, that the lowly one,
 Who sate enshadow'd near thy beauty's shine,
 Should, when the light was out, the life was done,
 Record thy name with those by Memory won
 From Time's eternal burial. I am woo'd
 By wholesome thoughts this sad thought hath begun,
 For mind is strengthen'd when awhile subdued,
 As he who touch'd the earth, and rose with power
 renew'd.



TO A POET'S CHILD.

A FAR harp swept the sea above ;
 A far voice said thy name in love :
 Then silence on the harp was cast ;
 The voice was chain'd—the love went last !

And as I heard the melodie,
 Sweet-voic'd Fancy spake of thee :
 And as the silence o'er it came,
 Mine heart, in silence, sigh'd thy name.

I thought there was one only place,
 Where thou couldst lift thine orphan'd face :
 A little home for prayer and woe ;—
 A stone above—a shroud below ;—

That evermore, that stone beside,
 Thy wither'd joys would form thy pride ;
 As palm trees, on their south sea bed,
 Make islands with the flowers they shed.

Child of the Dead ! my dream of thee
 Was sad to tell, and dark to see ;
 And vain as many a brighter dream ;
 Since thou canst sing by Babel's stream !

For here, amid the worldly crowd,
 'Mid common brows, and laughter loud,
 And hollow words, and feelings sere,
 Child of the Dead ! I meet thee here !

And is thy step so fast and light ?
 And is thy smile so gay and bright ?
 And *canst* thou smile, with cheek undim,
 Upon a world that frown'd on *him* ?

The minstrel's harp is on his bier ;
 What doth the minstrel's orphan here ?
 The loving moulders in the clay ;
 The loved,—she keepeth holiday !

'Tis well ! I would not doom thy years
 Of golden prime, to only tears.
 Fair girl ! 'twere better that thine eyes
 Should find a joy in summer skies,

As if their sun were on thy fate.
 Be happy ; strive not to be great ;
 And go not, from thy kind apart,
 With lofty soul and stricken heart.

Think not too deeply : shallow thought,
 Like open rills, is ever sought
 By light and flowers ; while fountains deep
 Amid the rocks and shadows sleep.

Feel not too warmly : lest thou be
 Too like Cyrene's waters free,
 Which burn at night, when all around
 In darkness and in chill is found.

Touch not the harp to win the wreath :
 Its tone is fame, its echo death !
 The wreath may like the laurel grow,
 Yet turns to cypress on the brow !

And, as a flame springs clear and bright,
 Yet leaveth ashes 'stead of light ;
 So genius (fatal gift !) is doom'd
 To leave the heart it fired, consumed.

For thee, for thee, thou orphan'd one,
 I make an humble orison !
 Love all the world ; and ever dream
 That all are true who truly seem.

MINSTRELSY.

Forget ! for, so, 'twill move thee not,
 Or lightly move ; to be forgot !
 Be streams thy music ; hills, thy mirth ;
 Thy chiefest light, the household hearth.

So, when grief plays her natural part,
 And visiteth thy quiet heart ;
 Shall all the clouds of grief be seen
 To show a sky of hope between.

So, when thy beauty senseless lies,
 No sculptured urn shall o'er thee rise ;
 But gentle eyes shall weep at will,
 Such tears as hearts like thine distil.

 MINSTRELSY.

“ One asked her once the reason why,
 She hadde delyte in minstrelsie,
 She answerèd on this manèr.”

ROBERT DE BRUNNE.

FOR ever, since my childish looks
 Could rest on Nature's pictured books ;
 For ever, since my childish tongue
 Could name the themes our bards have sung ;
 So long, the sweetness of their singing
 Hath been to me a rapture bringing !
 Yet ask me not the reason why
 I have delight in minstrelsy.

I know that much whereof I sing,
 Is shapen but for vanishing ;
 I know that summer's flower and leaf
 And shine and shade are very brief,
 And that the heart they brighten, may,
 Before them all, be sheathed in clay !—
 I do not know the reason why
 I have delight in minstrelsy.

A few there are, whose smile and praise
 My minstrel hope, would kindly raise :
 But, of those few—Death may impress
 The lips of some with silentness ;
 While some may friendship's faith resign,
 And heed no more a song of mine.—
 Ask not, ask not the reason why
 I have delight in minstrelsy.

The sweetest song that minstrels sing,
 Will charm not Joy to tarrying ;
 The greenest bay that earth can grow,
 Will shelter not in burning woe ;
 A thousand voices will not cheer,
 When *one* is mute that aye is dear !—
 Is there, alas ! *no* reason why
 I have delight in minstrelsy ?

I do not know ! The turf is green
 Beneath the rain's fast-dropping sheen,
 Yet asks not why that deeper hue
 Doth all its tender leaves renew ;—
 And I, like-minded, am content,
 While music to my soul is sent,
 To question not the reason why
 I have delight in minstrelsy.

Years pass—my life with them shall pass :
 And soon, the cricket in the grass
 And summer bird, shall louder sing
 Than she who owns a minstrel's string.
 Oh then may some, the dear and few,
 Recall her love, whose truth they knew ;
 When all forget to question why
 She had delight in minstrelsy !



TO THE MEMORY OF

SIR UVEDALE PRICE, BART.

FAREWELL !—a word that human lips bestow
 On all that human hearts delight to know :
 On summer skies, and scenes that change as fast ;
 On ocean calms, and faith as fit to last ;
 On Life, from Love's own arms, that breaks away ;
 On hopes that blind, and glories that decay !

And ever thus, "farewell, farewell," is said,
 As round the hills of lengthening time, we tread ;
 As at each step, the winding ways unfold
 Some untried prospect which obscures the old ;—
 Perhaps a prospect brightly color'd o'er,
 Yet not with brightness that we loved before ;
 And dull and dark the brightest hue appears
 To eyes like ours, surcharged and dim with tears.

Oft, oft we wish the winding road were past,
 And yon supernal summit gain'd at last ;
 Where all that gradual change removed, is found
 At once, for ever, as you look around ;
 Where every scene by tender eyes survey'd,
 And lost and wept for, to their gaze is spread—
 No tear to dim the sight, no shade to fall,
 But Heaven's own sunshine lighting, charming all.

Farewell !—a common word—and yet how drear
 And strange it soundeth as I write it here !
 How strange that *thou* a place of death shouldst fill,
 Thy brain unlighted, and thine heart grown chill !
 And dark the eye, whose plausible glance to draw,
 Incited Nature brake her tyrant's law !
 And deaf the ear, to charm whose organ true,
 Mæonian music tuned her harp anew !
 And mute the lips where Plato's bee hath roved ;
 And motionless the hand that genius moved !—
 Ah friend ! thou speakest not !—but still to me
 Do Genius, Music, Nature, speak of *thee* !—
 Still golden fancy, still the sounding line,
 And waving wood, recall some word of thine :
 Some word, some look, whose living light is o'er—
 And Memory sees what Hope can see no more.

Twice, twice, thy voice hath spoken. Twice there came
 To us, a change, a joy—to thee, a fame !
 Thou spakest once,* and every pleasant sight,
 Woods waving wild, and fountains gushing bright,
 Cool copses, grassy banks, and all the dyes
 Of shade and sunshine gleam'd before our eyes.
 Thou spakest twice ; † and every pleasant sound
 Its ancient silken harmony unwound,
 From Doric pipe and Attic lyre that lay
 Enclasp'd in hands whose cunning is decay.
 And now no more thou speakest ! Death hath met
 And won thee to him ! Oh remember'd yet !
 We cannot *see*, and *hearken*, and forget !

My thoughts are far. I think upon the time,
 When Foxley's purple hills and woods sublime
 Were thrilling at thy step ; when thou didst throw
 Thy burning spirit on the vale below,
 To bathe its sense in beauty. Lovely ground !
 There, never more shall step of thine resound !

* Essay on the Picturesque.

† Essay on the Pronunciation of the Ancient Languages.

There, Spring again shall come, but find thee not,
 And deck with humid eyes her favourite spot ;
 Strew tender green on paths thy foot forsakes,
 And make that fair, which Memory saddest makes.
 For me, all sorrowful, unused to raise
 A minstrel song and dream not of thy praise,
 Upon thy grave, my tuneless harp I lay,
 Nor try to sing what only tears can say.
 So warm and fast the ready waters swell—
 So weak the faltering voice thou knewest well !
 Thy words of kindness calm'd that voice before ;
Now, thoughts of *them* but make it tremble more ;
 And leave its theme to others, and depart
 To dwell within the silence where thou art.

— ◆ —

THE AUTUMN.

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,
 And turn your eyes around,
 Where waving woods and waters wild
 Do hymn an autumn sound.
 The summer sun is faint on them—
 The summer flowers depart—
 Sit still—as all transform'd to stone,
 Except your musing heart.

How there you sat in summer-time,
 May yet be in your mind ;
 And how you heard the green woods sing
 Beneath the freshening wind.
 Though the same wind now blows around,
 You would its blast recall ;
 For every breath that stirs the trees,
 Doth cause a leaf to fall.

Oh ! like that wind, is all the mirth
 That flesh and dust impart :
 We cannot bear its visitings,
 When change is on the heart.
 Gay words and jests may make us smile,
 When Sorrow is asleep ;
 But other things must make us smile,
 When Sorrow bids us *wcep* !

The dearest hands that clasp our hands,—
Their presence may be o'er :
 The dearest voice that meets our ear,
That tone may come no more !
 Youth fades ; and then, the joys of youth,
 Which once refresh'd our mind,
 Shall come—as, on those sighing woods,
 The chilling autumn wind.

Hear not the wind—view not the woods ;
 Look out o'er vale and hill :
 In spring, the sky encircled them—
 The sky is round them still.
 Come autumn's scathe—come winter's cold—
 Come change—and human fate !
 Whatever prospect HEAVEN doth bound,
 Can ne'er be desolate.



THE DEATH-BED OF TERESA DEL RIEGO.

“—Si fia muta ogni altra cosa, al fine
 Parlerà il mio morire,
 E ti dirà la morte il mio martire.”

GUARINI.

THE room was darken'd ; but a wan lamp shed
 Its light upon a half-uncurtain'd bed,
 Whereon the widow'd sate. Blackly as death
 Her veiling hair hung round her, and no breath
 Came from her lips to motion it. Between
 Its parted clouds, the calm fair face was seen
 In a snow paleness, and snow silentness,
 With eyes unquenchable, whereon did press
 A little, their white lids, so taught to lie,
 By weights of frequent tears wept secretly.
 Her hands were clasp'd and raised—the lamp did fling
 A glory on her brow's meek suffering.

Beautiful form of woman ! seeming made
 Alone to shine in mirrors, there to braid
 The hair and zone the waist—to garland flowers—
 To walk like sunshine through the orange bowers—
 To strike her land's guitar—and often see
 In other eyes how lovely hers must be.
 Grew she acquaint with anguish ? Did she sever

For ever from the one she loved for ever,
 To dwell among the strangers? Ay! and she,
 Who shone most brightly in that festive glee,
 Sate down in this despair most patiently.

Some hearts are Niobes! In grief's down-sweeping,
 They turn to very stone from over-weeping,
 And after, feel no more. Hers did remain
 In life, which is the power of feeling pain,
 Till pain consumed the life so call'd below.
 She heard that he was dead!—she ask'd not how—
 For *he* was dead! She wail'd not o'er his urn,
 For *he* was dead—and in *her* hands, should burn
 His vestal flame of honor radiantly,
 Sighing would dim its light—she did not sigh.

She only died. They laid her in the ground,
 Whereon th' unloving tread, and accents sound
 Which are not of her Spain. She left behind,
 For those among the strangers who were kind
 Unto the poor heart-broken, her dark hair.
 It once was gauded out with jewels rare ;
 It swept her dying pillow—it doth lie
 Beside me, (thank the giver) droopingly,
 And very long and bright! Its tale doth go
 Half to the dumb grave, half to life-time woe,
 Making the heart of man, if manly, ring
 Like Dodonæan brass, with echoing.



TO VICTOIRE, ON HER MARRIAGE.

VICTOIRE! I knew thee in thy land,
 Where I was strange to all:
 I heard thee; and were strange to me
 The words thy lips let fall.

I loved thee—for the Babel curse
 Was meant not for the heart:
 I parted from thee, in such way
 As those who love may part.

And now a change hath come to us,
 A sea doth rush between!
 I do not know if we can be
 Again as we have been.

TO A BOY.

I sit down in mine English land,
 Mine English hearth beside ;
 And thou, to one I never knew,
 Art plighted for a bride.

It will not wrong thy present joy,
 With by-gone days to wend ;
 Nor wrongeth it mine English hearth,
 To love my Gallic friend.

Bind, bind the wreath ! the slender ring
 Thy wedded fingers press !
 May he who calls thy love his own,
 Call so thine happiness !

Be he Terpander to thine heart,
 And string fresh strings of gold,
 Which may out-give new melodies,
 But never mar the old !

And though I clasp no more thy hand
 In my hand, and rejoice—
 And though I see thy face no more,
 And hear no more thy voice—

Farewell, farewell !—let thought of me
 Visit thine heart ! There is
 In mine the very selfish prayer
 That prayeth for thy bliss !

 TO A BOY.

WHEN my last song was said for thee,
 Thy golden hair swept, long and free,
 Around thee ; and a dove-like tone
 Was on thy voice—or Nature's own :
 And every phrase and word of thine
 Went out in lisping infantine !
 Thy small steps faltering round our hearth—
 Thine een out-peering in their mirth—
 Blue een ! that, like thine heart, seem'd given
 To be, for ever, full of heaven !
 Wert thou, in sooth, made up of glee,
 When my last song was said for thee ?

And now more years are finish'd,—
 For thee another song is said.
 Thy voice hath lost its cooing tone;
 The lisping of thy words is gone:
 Thy step treads firm—thine hair not flings
 Round thee its length of golden rings—
 Departed, like all lovely things!
 Yet art thou still made up of glee,
 When my *now* song is said for thee.

Wisely and well responded they,
 Who cut thy golden hair away,
 What time I made the bootless prayer,
 That they should pause awhile, and spare.
 They said, "its sheen did less agree
 With boyhood than with infancy."
 And thus I know it aye must be.
 Before the revel noise is done,
 The revel lamps pale one by one.

Ay! Nature loveth not to bring
 Crown'd victims to life's labouring.
 The mirth-effulgent eye appears
 Less sparkling—to make room for tears:
 After the heart's quick throbs depart,
 We lose the gladness of the heart:
 And, after we have lost awhile
 The rose o' the lip, we lose its smile;
 As Beauty could not bear to press
 Near the death-pyre of Happiness.

This seemeth but a sombre dream?
 It hath more pleasant thoughts than seem.
 The older a young tree doth grow,
 The deeper shade it sheds below;
 But makes the grass more green—the air
 More fresh, than had the sun been there.
 And thus our human life is found,
 Albeit a darkness gather round:
 For patient virtues, that their light
 May shine to all men, want the night:
 And holy Peace, unused to cope,
 Sits meckly at the tomb of Hope,
 Saying that "she is risen!"

Then I

Will sorrow not at destiny,—
 Though from thine eyes, and from thine heart,

The glory of their light depart ;
 Though on thy voice, and on thy brow,
 Should come a fiercer change than now ;
 Though thou no more be made of glee,
 When my next song is said for thee.



REMONSTRANCE.

OH say not it is vain to weep
 That deafen'd bier above ;
 Where genius has made room for death,
 And life is past from love ;
 That tears can never his bright looks
 And tender words restore :
 I know it is most vain to weep—
 And therefore, weep the more !

Oh say not I shall cease to weep
 When years have wither'd by ;
 That ever I shall speak of joy,
 As if he could reply ;
 That ever mine unquivering lips
 Shall name the name he bore :
 I know that I may cease to weep,
 And therefore weep the more !

Say, Time, who slew mine happiness,
 Will leave to me my woe ;
 And woe's own stony strength shall chain
 These tears' impassion'd flow :
 Or say, that these, my ceaseless tears,
 May life to death restore ;
 For then my soul were wept away,
 And I should weep no more !

REPLY.

To weep awhile beside the bier,
 Whereon his ashes lie,
 Is well!—I know that rains must fall
 When clouds are in the sky :
 I know, *to die—to part*, will cloud
 The brightest spirit o'er ;
 And yet, wouldst *thou* for ever weep,
 When *he* can weep no more ?

Fix not thy sight, so long and fast,
 Upon the shroud's despair;
 Look upward unto Zion's hill,
 For death was also *there!*
 And think, "The death, the scourge, the scorn,
 My sinless Saviour bore—
 The curse—the pang, too deep for tears—
 That *I* should weep no more!"

EPITAPH.

BEAUTY, who softly walkest all thy days,
 In silken garment to the tunes of praise;—
 Lover, whose dreamings by the green-bank'd river,
 Where once she wander'd, fain would last for ever;—
 King, whom the nations scan, adoring scan,
 And shout "a god," when sin hath mark'd thee man;—
 Bard, on whose brow the Hyblan dew remains,
 Albeit the fever burneth in the veins;—
 Hero, whose sword in tyrant's blood is hot;—
 Sceptic, who doubting, wouldst be doubted not;—
 Man, whosoe'er thou art, whate'er thy trust;—
 Respect thyself in me;—thou treadest *dust.*

THE IMAGE OF GOD.

"I am God, and there is none like me,"
ISAIAH xlvi. 9.
 "Christ, who is the image of God."
2 COR. iv. 4.

THOU! art thou like to God?
 (I ask'd this question of the glorious sun)
 Thou high unwearied one,
 Whose course in heat, and light, and life is run?
 Eagles may view thy face—clouds can assuage
 Thy fiery wrath—the sage
 Can mete thy stature—thou shalt fade with age,
Thou art not like to God.

Thou! art thou like to God?
 (I ask'd this question of the bounteous earth)
 Oh thou, who givest birth
 To forms of beauty and to sounds of mirth?

In all thy glory works the worm decay—
 Thy golden harvests stay
 For seed and toil—thy power shall pass away.
Thou art not like to God.

Thou ! art thou like to God ?
 (I ask'd this question of my deathless soul)
 Oh thou, whose musings roll
 Above the thunder, o'er creation's whole ?

Thou art not. Sin, and shame, and agony
 Within thy deepness lie :
 They utter forth their voice in thee, and cry
 '*Thou* art not like to God.'

Then art THOU like to God ;
 Thou, who didst bear the sin, and shame, and woe—
 O Thou, whose sweat did flow—
 Whose tears did gush—whose brow was dead and low ?

No grief is like thy grief ; no heart can prove
 Love like unto Thy love ;
 And none, save only Thou,—below, above,—
 O God, is like to God !



THE APPEAL.

CHILDREN of our England ! stand
 On the shores that girt our land ;
 The ægis of whose cloud-white rock
 Braveth Time's own battle shock.
 Look above the wide, wide world ;
 Where the northern blasts have furl'd
 Their numb'd wings amid the snows,
 Mutt'ring in a forced repose—
 Or where the madden'd sun on high
 Shakes his torch athwart the sky,
 Till within their prison sere,
 Chain'd earthquakes groan for fear ?
 Look above the wide, wide world,
 Where a gauntlet Sin hath hurl'd
 To astonied Life ; and where
 Death's gladiatorial smile doth glare,
 On making the arena bare.

Shout aloud the words that show
 Jesus in the sands and snow;—
 Shout aloud the words that free,
 Over the perpetual sea.

Speak ye. As a breath will sweep
 Avalanche from Alpine steep,
 So the spoken word shall roll
 Fear and darkness from the soul.
 Are ye men, and love not man?
 Love ye, and permit his ban?
 Can ye, dare ye, rend the chain
 Wrought of common joy and pain,
 Claspings with its links of gold,
 Man to man in one strong hold?
 Lo! if the golden links ye sever,
 Ye shall make your heart's flesh quiver;
 And wheresoe'er the links are reft,
 There, shall be a blood-stain left.
 To earth's remotest rock repair,
 Ye shall find a vulture there:
 Though for others sorrowing not,
 Your own tears shall still be hot:
 Though ye play a lonely part;
 Though ye bear an iron heart;—
 Woe, like Echetus, still must
 Grind your iron into dust.

But children of our Britain, ye
 Rend not man's chain of sympathy;
 To those who sit in woe and night,
 Denying tears and hiding light.
 Ye have stretch'd your hands abroad
 With the Spirit's sheathless sword:
 Ye have spoken—and the tone
 To earth's extremest verge hath gone:
 East and west sublime it rolls,
 Echoed by a million souls!
 The wheels of rapid circling years,
 Erst hot with crime, are quenched in tears.
 Rocky hearts and waters pour,
 That were chain'd in stone before:
 Bloody hands, that only bare
 Hilted sword, are clasp'd in prayer:
 Savage tongues, that wont to fling
 Shout of war in deathly ring,
 Speak the name which angels sing.

Dying lips are lit the while
 With a most undying smile,
 Which reposing there, instead
 Of language, when the lips are dead,
 Saith,—“No sound of grief or pain,
 Shall haunt us when we move again.”

Children of our country! brothers
 To the children of all others!
 Shout aloud the words that show
 Jesus in the sands and snow;—
 Shout aloud the words that free,
 Over the perpetual sea!



IDOLS.

How weak the gods of this world are—
 And weaker yet their worship made me!
 I have been an idolater
 Of three—and three times they betray'd me!

Mine oldest worshipping was given
 To natural Beauty, aye residing
 In bowery earth and starry heav'n,
 In ebbing sea, and river gliding.

But natural Beauty shuts her bosom
 To what the natural feelings tell!
 Albeit I sigh'd, the trees would blossom—
 Albeit I smiled, the blossoms fell.

Then left I earthly sights, to wander
 Amid a grove of name divine,
 Where bay-reflecting streams meander,
 And Moloch Fame hath rear'd a shrine.

Not green, but black, is that reflection;
 On rocky beds those waters lie;
 That grove hath chillness and dejection—
 How could I sing? I had to sigh.

Last, human Love, thy Lares greeting,
 To rest and warmth I vow'd my years.
 To rest? how wild my pulse is beating!
 To warmth? ah me! my burning tears.

Ay, *they* may burn—though thou be frozen
 By death, and changes wint'ring on !
 Fame !—Beauty !—idols madly chosen—
 Were yet of gold ; but *thou* art STONE !

Crumble like stone ! my voice no longer
 Shall wail their names, who silent be :
 There is a voice that soundeth stronger—
 “ My daughter, give thine heart to *Me*.”

Lord ! take mine heart ! Oh first and fairest,
 Whom all creation's ends shall hear ;
 Who deathless love in death declarest !
 None else is beauteous—famous—dear !

 HYMN.

“ Lord, I cry unto Thee, make haste unto me.”
 PSALM cxli.

“ The Lord is nigh unto them that call upon Him.”
 PSALM cxlv.

SINCE without Thee we do no good,
 And with Thee do no ill,
 Abide with us in weal and woe,—
 In action and in will.

In weal,—that while our lips confess
 The Lord who “ gives,” we may
 Remember, with an humble thought,
 The Lord who “ takes away.”

In woe,—that, while to drowning tears
 Our hearts their joys resign,
 We may remember *who* can turn
 Such water into wine.

By hours of day,—that when our feet
 O'er hill and valley run,
 We still may think the light of truth
 More welcome than the sun.

By hours of night,—that when the air
 Its dew and shadow yields,
 We still may hear the voice of God
 In silence of the fields.

WEARINESS.

Oh! then sleep comes on us like death,
 All soundless, deaf and deep :
 Lord! teach us so to watch and pray,
 That death may come like sleep.

Abide with *us*, abide with *us*,
 While flesh and soul agree ;
 And when our flesh is only dust,
 Abide our souls with *Thee*.



WEARINESS.

MINE eyes are weary of surveying
 The fairest things, too soon decaying ;
 Mine ears are weary of receiving
 The kindest words—ah, past believing !
 Weary my hope, of ebb and flow ;
 Weary my pulse, of tunes of woe :
 My trusting heart is weariest !
 I would—I would, I were at rest !

For *me*, can earth refuse to fade ?
 For *me*, can words be faithful made ?
 Will *my* embitter'd hope be sweet ?
My pulse forego the human beat ?
 No ! Darkness must consume mine eye—
 Silence, mine ear—hope cease—pulse die—
 And o'er mine heart a stone be press'd—
 Or vain this,—“ Would I were at rest !”

There is a land of rest deferr'd :
 No eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard,
 Nor Hope hath trod the precinct o'er ;
 For hope beheld is hope no more !
 There, human pulse forgets its tone—
 There, hearts may know as they are known !
 Oh, for dove's wings, thou dwelling blest,
 To fly to *thee*, and be at rest !

THE END.









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