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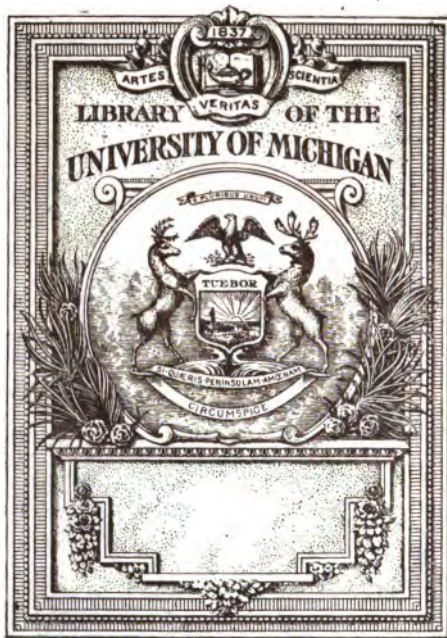
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J. C. L. Clark, Esq.  
From  
Bertram Dobell

The Test of Love

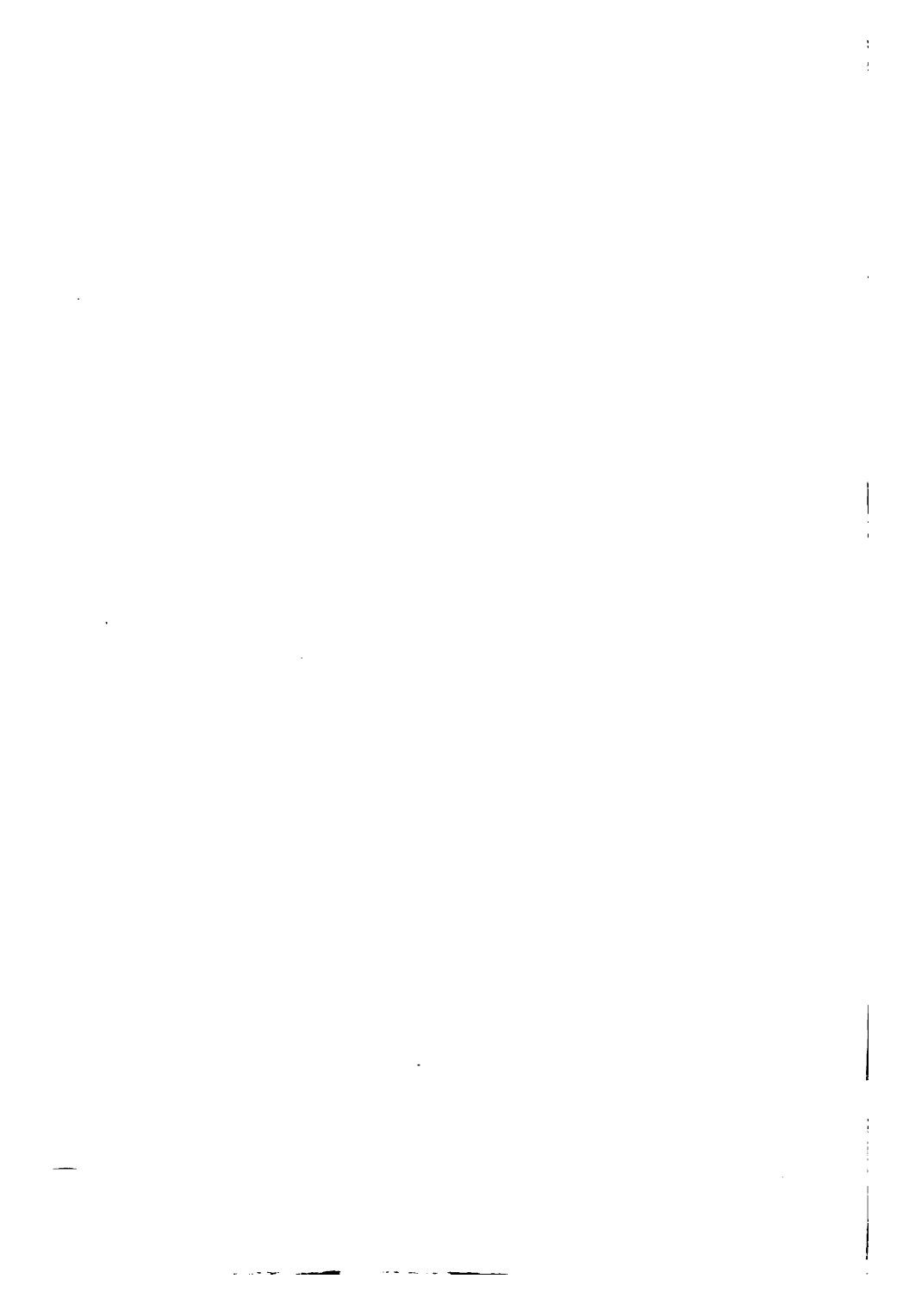
Possession is of love the test,  
(If not the only one the best,)  
For if it faithful be and real,  
Not founded on a false ideal,  
Possession but confirms its power,  
Which lasts whatever storms may lower:  
But false love quickly dies away  
Than sunshine on an April day,  
Leaving a rain of scalding tears,  
Reproaches, jealousies, & fears,  
Perpetual bickerings & strife  
That make a tragic phase of life.

Mar. 29, 1904









**ROSEMARY  
AND PANSIES**

*The salvage of vanished years,  
The record of moods passed by,  
Vain laughter and vainer tears,  
A smile followed fast by a sigh.*

*Ah yes ! I own much contradiction's here,  
And thought perchance not wholly sound or clear ;  
But youth with manhood's inconsistent still,  
And manhood mocks at age's cautious chill :  
Enough if through the whole there runs the thread  
Of a soul resolved where conscience leads to tread.*



# ROSEMARY AND PANSIES



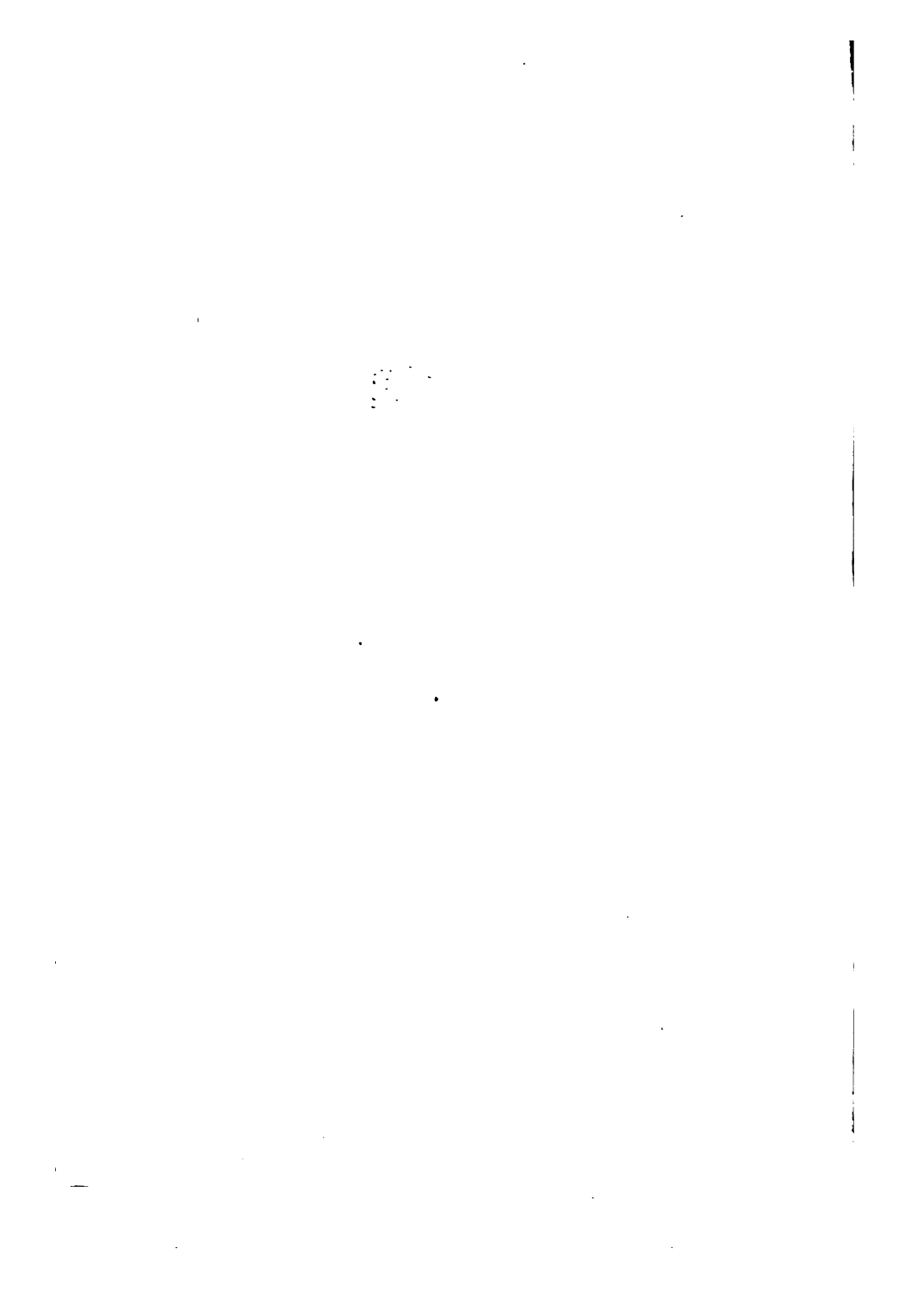
BY

BERTRAM DOBELL

*"There's rosemary for you, that's for  
remembrance: pray, love, remember:  
and there's pansies, that's for thoughts"*

*Hamlet, Act iv. Scene 4*

LONDON  
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR  
77 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C  
MDCCCIV



5-28-18. M. C.

TO  
ARTHUR H. BULLEN

I thought, old friend, a better gift to bring  
Than this poor garland, rather weeds than  
flowers,  
Not the rich product of calm leisured hours,  
But such as I from toil and haste could wring;  
Yet take it, since 'tis something of mine own,  
That bears at least the stamp of thought sincere,  
Which from no consequence recoils in fear,  
But seeks for truth unveiled—and truth alone.

Like yours it is my greatest happiness  
To delve within the ancient mines of gold  
And disinter from dust, decay, and mould,  
Long-buried treasures held in time's duress:  
But here, a modern of the modern time,  
A spirit that questions all is in my rhyme.

*All Nature's mirrored in the poet's eye,  
Wherein the pageant of the Universe  
Reflects itself in all its wondrous beauty,  
That he may set forth its sublimity,  
The unity beneath its transmutations,  
And shew his less imaginative fellows  
Something of that great vision he beholds.  
He gazes steadily at all things human,  
Ever intent to find the harmony  
Which underlies life's many seeming discords.  
He is an alchemist whose art indeed  
Transmutes base metal into shining gold,  
And in his brain's laboratory turns  
Thought's star-dust into worlds of light and splendour.  
He works more transformations than the gods  
Of Greece were feigned in fable to accomplish :  
From common things he lifts the veil which hides  
Their inner mystery from the eyes of men,  
And everywhere reveals the infinite.  
'Tis he alone through whom the immanent spirit  
That all creation vivifies and sustains  
Proclaims its oracles of deepest wisdom.*

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[NOTE.—Early in 1901 I printed, for private circulation, an edition of seventy-five copies only of a volume of poems with the same title as that of the present book. Many of the poems which were printed in that volume are included in this; but a few which appeared there have not been reprinted. On the other hand, the present volume contains a good many pieces which were not included in the issue of 1901. These new poems are distinguished in the above list by having a \* prefixed to them.]



## THE PAGEANT OF THE HOURS

### I

For ever do the Hours unfold  
The tale in Fate's great book enrolled,  
The tale for ever to be told,  
For ever new, yet ever old :  
They march for ever on their way  
Nor prayer nor threat their course can stay ;  
Impassive ministers of Fate,  
Unmoved alike by Love or Hate :  
    Yet are they friends, not foes, to man,  
    Could he their course with calmness scan.

### II

They bring us Life—ill-omened gift !  
And set us in the world adrift  
To struggle with it as we may,  
To triumph or become its prey :  
Indifferent on their path they go,  
Regardless of our joy or woe,  
Unenvious of our happiness,  
And pitiless to our distress ;  
    They furnish forth for us the stage,  
    But care not how we rant or rage.

### III

They give us love, good-fortune, joy,  
Yet as they give their gifts destroy ;  
Enchant with visions of delight,  
Then plunge us deep in starless night ;  
Our hopes for ever dash with fears,  
Our joys for ever drown in tears ;  
Never unmingled bliss bestow,  
Or give it but to overthrow ;  
    Man's soul a pipe whereon they play  
    What tunes they will, or grave or gay.

### IV

Tireless upon their way they sweep,  
Bearing their burdens to the deep  
Eternal sea from whose dim shore  
Return is barred for evermore ;  
All that we prize and all we fear  
They bear unto its waters drear,  
Which, though they seem so dark and cold,  
Nepenthe for all sorrows hold ;  
    A gift of all good gifts the best—  
    Eternal and undreaming rest.

### V

Unhindered on their way they keep,  
Nor ever pause nor ever sleep,  
Nor turn aside nor look behind,  
But tread the path to them assigned

**When Nature, born a Twin with Time,  
Assumed her attributes sublime,  
And entered on her glorious dower  
Of all-embracing rule and power :  
So till her sovereignty is past  
The Pageant of the Hours shall last.**

**1901**

## **" BEAUTY AND THE BEAST "**

### **AN IMPRESSION**

**(Alhambra, January 20, 1898)**

**A feast of colour gay and bright,  
A scene of unalloyed delight,  
A glad escape from drabs and greys,  
From racking thought and toilsome days ;  
A vision of a fairy land  
Where youth and beauty hand in hand  
Dance through radiant summer hours  
O'er verdant lawns bestrewn with flowers :  
Earth made a Paradise anew,  
The Golden Age again in view ;  
All thought of life's sad discords drowned  
In wave on wave of pulsing sound ;  
Beauty, enchantment, poetry,  
Motion harmonious, rhythmic, free ;  
Forms graceful, sinuous, and lithe,  
With gladsome animation blithe ;  
Houris for whose bewitching eyes  
Angels would forfeit Paradise ;  
All that the senses can delight,  
All that can wing time's heavy flight ;  
A show of loveliness supreme,  
A realised poetic dream ;**

All here exhilarates and gladdens,  
And not a thought intrudes that saddens ;  
A wild delirium of joy  
Without control, without alloy,  
Intoxicating and entrancing  
Till heart and brain and nerves are dancing !

\* \* \* \* \*

Ah ! with a sudden shock of pain,  
I'm thrown back on myself again—  
Descending on the final rally,  
The curtain falls upon—the Ballet !  
And leaves me once again to feel  
The disillusion of the real ;  
To pass into the gloomy night  
With no deceptive splendours bright ;  
To meditate how transitory  
Are all man's pleasures, all his glory ;  
How fast his happy moments fleet,  
While misery moves with leaden feet.

\* \* \* \* \*

What ! moralise in style so trite  
That Mawworms might your verses cite !  
Away with thoughts which, false or true,  
Are profitless and far from new ;  
'Tis much to gain an hour's delight,  
And wing with joy time's weary flight :  
To analyse our joys away  
Is but mere folly to display ;  
If all our joys are but illusions  
Our sorrows also are delusions :  
If nature cheats us into grief  
Should we not thank her for relief ?  
If life is a dissolving view  
Then death no more than life is true :

**Real are our visions while they last,  
Unreal as they seem when past :  
With every pleasant hour that's spent  
We cheat the fates malevolent,  
Who may indeed with martyrdom  
Afflict us in the time to come,  
But cannot those blest hours recall,  
When pleasure did our souls enthral.**



## THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

There lived a man in days long past,  
The happiest of his kind,  
Who kept unstained from first to last  
His pure and lucid mind.

Not of, though in the world he dwelt,  
Eventless was his life ;  
No greed, no lust, no hate he felt,  
With no man had he strife.

Ambition, wealth, and beauty sought  
To tempt him with their wares,  
But on his equal temper wrought  
In vain with all their snares.

They offered him a statesman's place,  
He held it for a time,  
But left it rather than abase  
His soul with statecraft's slime.

Reason was valued not, he found,  
By people or by prince,  
Who on his wisest measures frowned  
And at plain truth did wince.

But when by sad disasters tried,  
They sought his aid again,  
And begged he would the kingdom guide,  
And as their sovereign reign.

" Ah ! could I only think," he said,  
" Taught in affliction's school,  
That you the righteous path would tread  
Then would I o'er you rule.

" But nations never yet for long  
Have been by wisdom swayed,  
Reason than passion's far less strong,  
And truth's with treachery paid.

" As king I must my own soul lose  
To gain ingratitude,  
Wherefore the path of peace I choose,  
Where no false shows delude.

" Ambition's but a will o' th' wisp,  
Wealth's but a pedlar's pack,  
Beauty is but a shining lure  
The souls of men to wreck.

" Mine are the stars, the sun, the moon,  
Valleys and mountains mine ;  
All things yield up some precious boon  
To make my life divine.

" When morning breaks I greet the sun  
With ever-new delight,  
And still, when he his course has run,  
Welcome no less the night.



" An everlasting spring I see  
Of beauty and of love  
In earth, sea, rock, stone, flower, and tree,  
And in the heavens above.

" All natural things my soul sustain,  
Supplying all its needs ;  
From them that full content I gain  
Men vainly seek in creeds.

" Glories where'er I gaze appear  
Of colour, beauty, form ;  
The music of one Voice I hear  
Alike in calm and storm.

" All things transfigured in my sight  
A greater radiance gain,  
I see the very light of light,  
The heaven of heavens attain.

" One impulse ruling all I feel  
That in one chain doth bind  
What some call real and some ideal,  
Sense, substance, soul, and mind :

" The soul that unifieth all,  
And all doth animate ;  
That finds no grain of sand too small,  
No universe too great.

" Divine ideas all unsought  
My spirit apprehends :  
Ever the greatness of my thought  
My power of speech transcends.

**" Words cannot tell the sweet content  
That in my soul doth reign,  
Whose wealth the faster it is spent  
The richer doth remain.**

**" Stars crown me with their aureole,  
The sea flows through my veins,  
The heavens clothe me, and my soul  
Infinity contains.\***

**" I look beyond Earth's petty span,  
And worlds of light I see,  
Where, cleansed from sin and suffering, man  
Ascends to deity,**

**" Until, at variance no more  
With the eternal Will,  
I see him, strife and effort o'er,  
His destiny fulfil."**

1902

\* "You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself  
floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens  
and crowned with the stars."—Thomas Traherne.

## A POET'S GRIEVANCE

Yes, sir ! my name *is* Milton—Spenser Milton.  
Am I descended from the famous John ?  
I knew you'd ask *that*—everybody puts  
That question to me, making me sometimes  
Fit to blaspheme the poet's memory,  
By which I've all my life been handicapped.  
" Paradise Lost " I've often wished ' had been  
Lost literally and never more Regained.  
John Milton was John Milton, I'm myself :  
*He* had his special talent, *I* have mine :  
'Tis true indeed a family tradition  
(I care not for its authenticity)  
Asserts we *are* descended from the poet :  
But can you give me any reason why  
One family should not produce *two* poets ?  
I couldn't write a " Paradise " I'll own,  
And if I *could* I *would* not : but could John  
With all his genius have composed that song,  
So full of patriotic inspiration,  
Of foreign foes so scornfully defiant,  
So trumpet-like in its triumphant measure,  
Which the great MacMungo sang with such success  
At almost every Music Hall in England,  
And which so roused the spirit of the nation,

And I—yes ! I, your humble servant, wrote ?  
 I trow he could not : wherefore I contend  
 'Tis most unjust my corn to measure by  
 John Milton's bushel. Do you think that he,  
 Were he to come to life again, would choose  
 To write another " Paradise " ? Not he !  
 He was a man (considering the times  
 He lived in) of advanced opinions ; not  
 By any means a man to take unquestioned  
 His principles from masters and from pastors.  
 His Epic owes far more to his invention  
 Than to the Book which he professed to follow :  
 His Jesus and Jehovah were but Milton's  
 " Writ large," through whom the bard ventriloquised.  
 Did he live now and know the proved results  
 Of Biblical research in modern times,  
 He would be counted in the foremost ranks  
 Of those who have cast off the chains of dogma :  
 But that is scarcely what I meant to urge :  
 I dare say folks have no design to hurt  
 My feelings when they ask if I'm descended  
 From the great Milton. It's a natural question—  
 That is it's natural inconsiderate folk  
 (Most folk *are* inconsiderate) should ask it :  
 But don't you see (and here's the sting of it,)  
 Most people ask as though within their minds  
 There lurked the thought " A long descent indeed."  
 Now this is aggravating you must own :  
 I don't by choice bear so renowned a name ;  
 Could I have chosen my own patronymic  
 I'd have preferred Smith, Brown, Jones, Robinson,  
 Or any other undistinguished surname,  
 Which I perchance by merits of my own,  
 O'ershadowed by no famous ancestor,

Might then have made renowned and glorious.  
 Let me confide a secret to your ear :  
 Three tragedies I've written in a style  
 Never attempted by another poet,  
 Original in matter as in form,  
 And full of great sensational effects,  
 Which, were they once produced upon the stage,  
 Would rank me even with the Bard of Avon.  
 You smile, sir ! but I mean just what I say,  
 In fact I know not if I'm not too modest,  
 And should not claim a higher place than Shakespeare :  
 For what says Bernard Shaw ?—" Excepting Homer,  
 There is no famous writer I despise  
 So much as I despise the vaunted Shakespeare,  
 When I compare my intellect with his : "  
 (And that is just what I should say of Shaw,  
 Were I—but modesty restrains my speech.)  
 Buchanan too (I mean the famous Robert,  
 The author of—hang it ! I've clean forgotten  
 Their names—of countless poems, plays, and novels,)  
 He also thinks that Shakespeare's overrated,—  
 See ! here's his "Open Letter," where he shows  
 That the absurd idolatry of Shakespeare  
 Is but a superstition of the mob,  
 Who worship him for his faults and not his merits ;  
 (Robert, you see, is candid and allows  
 That Shakespeare has *some* merits) : Listen now—  
 " Shakespeare, of course, writing in barbarous times,  
 Wrote like a savage : he could do naught else !  
 But what is most amazing in his most  
 Amazing genius is the thorough-going  
 Consistency with which he ever seizes  
 The brutal and the barbarous side of things,  
 Be it the Trojan War or Jack Cade's rising,

His horrid caricature of hunchbacked Richard,  
Or his bestial libel on heroic Joan."  
Now, sir, I don't endorse all Robert says,  
(His pen, I fancy, masters him at times,  
And writes down things which no one is astonished  
More than their author is to see in print :)  
But I *do* think that if you take away  
His six or seven masterpieces, Shakespeare  
Falls to a level which may well be reached,  
Or overleaped even by your humble servant.  
But let that pass ; comparisons are odious,  
And I'm content posterity should judge  
Between me and the Elizabethan bard:  
That is, I should be well content could I  
But get my plays produced upon the stage,  
Or could I even find a publisher  
With enterprise enough to make them known  
To the great British public. Genius, sir,  
Both manager and publisher are blind to,  
And so my plays remain unknown, unacted,  
And I make but a poor precarious living  
By writing songs (at half a crown a time)  
For music-hall professionals. Dame Fortune  
Has never yet your humble servant favoured,  
And at the present moment worse than usual  
She's treating me. Behold ! my purse contains  
Not even a copper coin. I know not  
How to replenish it. I should be in luck  
If some kind soul would lend me half a crown.  
Thanks, friend ; my lucky star must rise some day,  
I shan't be always penniless, unknown,  
And down at heel ; depend on't I'll repay you.

1886-1899

## THE DREAM OF LIFE

“ —We are such stuff  
As dreams are made of, and our little life  
Is rounded with a sleep.”

Is all existence then a dream,  
Where midwife Fancy reigns supreme ?  
Are earth and ocean, sun and sky,  
Creations of mere Phantasy ?  
Are all the things that seem but vain  
Phantoms within a phantom brain ?  
Is Nature but a mirage bright  
On ancient Chaos' mask of night ?  
Are all we see and all we feel  
Alike phantasmal and unreal ?

Ah yes ! existence is but dreaming,  
However solid 'tis in seeming ;  
Dreams are our loves and hopes and fears,  
Ambitions, triumphs, smiles and tears ;  
In waking dreams we pass the day,  
And dreams the hours of darkness sway,  
(Day-dreams or night-dreams—who can guess  
Whether their truth is more or less ?)  
Perchance even Death is but a dream,  
And fleshless skulls with visions teem.  
The Gods we pray to and adore

Are shadows of our dreams—no more ;  
Heaven is a dream of yearning born,  
And hell the dream of the forlorn ;  
Angels are born from sunny skies,  
Devils from night and storm arise ;  
A vast phantasmagoric birth  
Is all our wondrous heaven and earth ;  
Space, Time, the Universe, are naught  
But shadows of that central Thought,  
Which mortals ne'er may comprehend,  
Whence issues all, where all doth end :  
O'er all is phantasy supreme,  
What most seems real is most a dream !

The visions that we dream to-day  
That seem such newness to display,  
Were dreamed in dim and long-past ages  
By patriarchs, poets, lovers, sages ;  
All that we feel and all we know  
Were felt and known long, long ago ;  
We think no thought, no passions feel  
Save such as nature did reveal  
To our first father, when this earth  
From fiery star-dust sprang to birth.  
We dream of progress gained by stages  
Successive through successive ages,  
But like a squirrel in a cage  
Never advance a single stage,  
Or like a horse to mill-wheel bound  
For ever travel round and round ;  
Condemned to think thoughts thought before,  
And wearily to travel o'er  
The barren realm of make-believe,  
And knowingly ourselves deceive



**With the old childish speculations  
And unexplaining explanations :  
Trusting in old worn-out traditions,  
Or newly-minted superstitions,  
Which prove to be, when tested, naught  
But bastard spawn of ancient thought ;  
Nothing we see in truth's pure light,  
But all in falsehood's hues bedight ;  
The cup from life's pure fount decline  
To drug ourselves with poisoned wine ;  
Curse fate which does but give us scope  
To hang ourselves with our own rope ;  
With all that we can use or need  
Grasping at more with sateless greed ;  
Ever, though mocked and mortified,  
Parading with a peacock's pride ;  
Matching brave words with coward deeds,  
Fettering our souls with craven creeds ;  
For ever forging chains to bind  
In straiter bondage heart and mind.**

**Dreams within dreams and dreams within them  
We spin and never cease to spin them,  
The victims ever of illusions,  
And mocking protean delusions :  
The playthings of ironic fate,  
Dreaming we live and love and hate ;  
Striving though strife brings naught but pain,  
Hoping though all our hopes are vain ;  
Seeking for what we may not find,  
Wayward and roving as the wind ;  
Shadows for ever we pursue,  
And still the bootless chase renew ;**

Prefer a Will o' the Wisp's false light  
To Reason's lanthorn clear and bright ;  
Heap follies upon follies till  
They overmaster mind and will,  
And, rendering us to reason blind,  
Perversity controls the mind ;  
For truth pretend to yearn, but when  
She shows herself, avert our ken  
In mortal fear her gaze so stern  
Will all our weaknesses discern,  
And all the errors that we cherish  
'Neath her too-piercing eyesight perish.

Soaring, alas ! how soon we tire,  
To sink yet deeper in the mire,  
Yet from our deepest degradation,  
Ascend to heights of exaltation,  
For still there shines a spark within  
That's never wholly quenched by sin.

Look through a microscope and see  
The countless animalculæ  
That in a drop of water dwell :—  
Think you the creatures do not swell  
With self-importance at the thought  
That the whole universe was wrought  
Solely to give them such a home,  
With space so vast in which to roam ?  
And who shall say they are not wise  
At a high rate themselves to prize ?  
Since in Dame Nature's wondrous scheme,  
Where miracles on all sides teem,

We know not what she may account  
Of her creations paramount ;  
Or rather say, her equal eye  
Doth all impartially descry,  
Nothing to her is great or small,  
Alike her bosom fosters all,  
Despises naught, loves none too well  
Of all that in her kingdom dwell,  
But gives to all whate'er they need  
Favouring no more the flower than weed.

What but a dream is all that's past ?  
The Future's but a dream forecast ;  
If aught that's not a dream can be  
'Tis what we in the present see,  
But that dissolves before our eyes  
Ere we its import realise ;  
Strive as we may to hold it fast,  
Naught that we see or feel may last ;  
As in a swiftly-moving train  
We motionless seem to remain,  
While the receding landscape flies  
So fast it mocks our straining eyes—  
So are we hurried on our way,  
No time to think, no power to stay ;  
With swifter and yet swifter pace,  
Onward, we know not where, we race,  
Until, amazed and out of breath,  
We reach the final station—Death.

So in a tangled maze of errors,  
Of sins, perplexities and terrors,

**Of rushings hither, flyings thither,  
And never knowing whence or whither,  
Seeking to find his soul for ever,  
But ever foiled in the endeavour ;  
A shuttlecock predestinate  
Created for the sport of fate ;  
An actor in an aimless plot—  
Such is man's ever-hapless lot :  
Consistent but in inconsistency,  
Such is, was, must be, his existence.**

**1901-3**

## UNSPOKEN PASSION

We never breathed of love a word,  
Yet we were both aware  
Of the deep passion newly stirred  
Which neither might declare.

We talked of things indifferent,  
And none our thoughts might guess,  
Though love to every accent lent  
A tone of tenderness.

Swift telegraphic messages  
Flashed forth from eye to eye :  
"I love, but must my love suppress"—  
"O cruel destiny."

"Ah! had we only met before,  
When we to love were free!"  
"Wretched we must be evermore,  
None so forlorn as we!"

"Our secret love our eyes alone,  
And not our lips may tell."  
"No need of words for what is known  
To both of us so well."

And still we talked of this and that,  
Scarce knowing what we said ;  
But through our disconnected chat  
There ran a subtle thread—

A subtle underlying thread  
Of pleasure mixed with pain,  
A mingled ecstasy and dread  
That thrilled through heart and brain.

And left us with a yearning sense  
Of sorrow and regret,  
And of a mighty difference  
Since we that night had met.

1899

## LOST IDENTITY

I had a curious dream last night,  
So odd it set me pondering :  
Its lesson how to read aright  
My thoughts afar went wandering.

Methought by evil planet crossed,  
Or destiny unkind,  
That I myself myself had lost,  
And strove in vain to find.

I wandered here, I wandered there,  
Poor weary-footed elf !  
But found no traces anywhere  
Of my unlucky self.

I asked of every one I met  
If they had seen me lately ;  
A man, said I, well made and set,  
Though not so very stately.

But none in country or in town  
Could tell where I had wandered,  
And so at last I sat me down,  
And o'er the puzzle pondered.

I've searched in every likely place  
Where he most oft is seen,  
Said I, but find of him no trace :  
What may this portent mean ?

Every old bookshop hereabout  
In search of him I've entered,  
For that is where (without a doubt)  
His thoughts are chiefly centred.

To concert hall and theatre  
I've also gone—but vainly—  
Although 'tis there, his friends aver,  
He spends his leisure mainly.

Brown, Jones, and Robinson all say  
That they nowhere have seen him,  
Men of good faith and honour they,  
Who wouldn't lie to screen him.

He'd no misfortunes to lament,  
Nor ways nor means was tasked for :  
If cash he'd wanted I'd have lent  
Whatever sum he asked for.

And still the more for light I sought  
The mystery seemed to thicken,  
Till suddenly a brilliant thought  
Did in my cranium quicken :

*He* by some magical device  
As *I* was masquerading,  
And by this shabby artifice  
On *my* good name was trading.



But here the tangle grew too great  
To hope for its untying :  
I woke and found both *him* and *me*  
Upon the sofa lying.

(That "lying" comment doth invite,  
And 'tis indeed suggestive,  
But I'm not fibbing—honour bright !  
Nor had I been *too* festive.)

'Tis usual when a fable's told  
With a moral to equip it ;  
So I my moral will unfold  
For you to read—or skip it.

Most men, departing from the *roles*  
Nature for them intended,  
Have wandered widely from their goals,  
And to worse things descended.

So, in a sense, they lose themselves  
(They may or may not know it)  
And go about—poor witless elves—  
Like your bewildered poet.

Few are the lucky folk whose lines  
Are cast in places pleasant,  
On whom benignant fortune shines  
With lustre ever crescent.

Alas ! of these I am not one,  
But spend my life in groping  
After a path and finding none,  
Yet always vainly hoping.

On many paths I've sought to tread,  
But still turned back defeated ;  
With countless projects in my head  
Have never one completed.

And now a life I feel was meant  
Some good deed to achieve,  
Can scarce do aught (so far 'tis spent)  
Its promise to retrieve.

Oh ! that myself I might but find  
Ere fate rings down the curtain,  
And no more wander, sick and blind,  
Where naught is plain or certain !

1897

## A BOOKWORM'S CONFESSION

E'en in my youth I knew the bookworm's passion ;  
I felt it ere I well had learned to read :  
While cakes and sweets my comrades spent their cash on,  
I to the bookshop with my pence would speed.

Ever the passion more and more controlled me,  
Absorbing all my thoughts, my cash, my time ;  
'Twas vain for parents or for friends to scold me,  
My ears were shut to reason or to rhyme.

More than the fondest lover loves the maiden  
Whose spell is on him ne'er to be o'erthrown,  
I loved my books, which gratefully repaid in  
A thousand ways the favour to them shown.

Old tomes I love most with their time-worn covers,  
Quaint printing and dark paper stained with age ;  
About them a peculiar magic hovers  
Such as I find not in the modern page.

I love the odd, the quaint, and the fantastic ;  
All that your men of "common sense" decline ;  
Such treasures with a joy enthusiastic  
I greet and prize as connoisseurs old wine.

My crowded bookroom gives me greater pleasure  
Than misers from their money-bags can gain ;  
Upon its shelves rests many and many a treasure  
Sought for long years before I could obtain.

Therein I'm king—all elements contentious  
Are there subdued and dwell in perfect peace ;  
Mohammed there rests quietly by Mencius ;  
There Pope and Protestant their warfare cease.

Old plays are there, old poems, old romances,  
Things that the busy world has long forgot ;  
Books full of strange and undigested fancies  
By brains half-mad and half-inspired begot.

All kinds of useless knowledge in it slumber ;  
Lamb's " books that are no books " there find no rest ;  
Few of its tomes would be allowed to cumber  
Their shelves who chatter of " the hundred best."

It holds a thousand volumes none would value,  
Save such another " dryasdust " as I,  
Though why I love them I could scarcely tell you—  
Lover ne'er loved who knew the reason why.

Treasures I see, wherever fall my glances,  
If not unique of rarity extreme,  
Each with a curious history which enhances  
Its value past all price in my esteem.

I know wise worldlings look on me with wonder,  
As one beneath a strange obsession's sway,  
Though they perchance the influence are under  
Of passions which to countless ills betray,

The bookworm's passion brings no keen repentance,  
And if he spends he still retains his wealth ;  
Indulgence in it never yet did sentence  
A man to vain regrets and ruined health.

Name a pursuit as pleasure-fraught and harmless,  
Giving as many hours of calm delight,  
And I'll at once abandon mine as charmless :  
Till then I'll love it in the world's despite.

Let who will blame, my dear old books I'll cherish,  
Since they for all my troubles make amends ;  
'Twill be my greatest sorrow when I perish  
That I no more can guard my silent friends.

## HYMN OF THE PANTHEIST

Wondrous essence, Being's stay,  
Light that shineth night and day ;  
Power that doth all uphold,  
Spirit that doth all enfold ;  
Heart of peace in maddest strife,  
Joy of Joy and Life of Life ;  
Soul of Nature ! let me rest  
Childlike on thy loving breast,  
Shadow me beneath thy wings  
From Despair's envenomed stings.

Let me, when I wake at morn  
Render thanks that I was born ;  
Let me, ere I sink to rest,  
Ever own how much I'm blest ;  
Let me always grateful be  
For the joy I have in Thee !  
Ever, ever thank the Power  
Gave me such a splendid dower ;  
All my thoughts thanksgivings be  
Till I at last return to Thee !

*February 1903*

## THE DEAD SOUL

[Thomas Cooper, in his Autobiography, gives an account of William Thom, whose fate was a very sad one. Coming to London, he fell into dissipated habits, and consequently into distress. "Again and again," says Cooper, "I carried invitations to him from Douglas Jerrold to contribute to the 'Shilling Magazine,' and from William Howitt to contribute to his periodical, but it was in vain. 'Nay, nay,' he used to say with an air of wretchedness, 'I can do nae such thing as they ask, although they promise me siller for it. I threw off my liits o' the heart in auld times when I had a heart, but I think I've none left noo.'"]

The following poem was suggested by the above story; but it is intended to have a general application rather than to be understood as relating to William Thom.]

Oh ! where's the heart I once possessed,  
With fire poetic filled,  
With which my fervent youth was blessed,  
Ere disillusion chilled :  
Oh then what glorious visions came  
My spirit to delight !  
How did Life's pure aspiring flame  
Burn ever clear and bright !

How wondrous fair did all things seem,  
My soul how great its scope !  
I wandered in a blessed dream,  
Bathed in the light of hope ;  
A Paradise I found where'er  
Were seen blue sky, green earth,  
An angel was each maiden fair ;  
Fresh joys each hour had birth.

Rich in the alchemy of thought  
Base metal turned to gold ;  
Bright inspirations came unsought,  
Earth all its secrets told :  
I dwelt with saints and sages dead,  
And made their raptures mine ;  
A luxury was common bread,  
And water was as wine.

Shakespeare my master was and friend,  
Shelley upon me smiled ;  
Burns did his fiery spirit lend  
Keats ravished and beguiled :  
I heard the minstrels of all time  
One wondrous chorus singing,  
Whose dominant recurrent rhyme  
With love and joy was ringing,

Too glowing was the fire, or I  
Unworthy of its flame ;  
And now I shiver, faint and die,  
Lost every noble aim :  
The glorious palace of my soul  
Is now a prison drear ;  
Darkly I burrow like a mole,  
Ghostlike I linger here.



Oh ! might the fire burn up once more !  
But oh ! that hope how vain !  
The corse long dead to life restore,  
Bid roses bloom again !  
When once the summer-time is o'er  
Winter will have his reign,  
But my lost summer never more  
Shall I, like earth, regain.

The poet lives on love and hope,  
And they his muse inspire ;  
When they have fled his soul is dead,  
And silent is his lyre ;  
One burst of anguish and despair  
May from his spirit come,  
Then he his grievous cross must bear,  
Heart-broken, soulless, dumb !

1902

## CRADLE SONG

Little laughing, crowing sprite,  
Mother's ever-new delight !  
How I love thee can I show  
By word or action ? No, no, no !  
Smile, my darling, smile again !  
Far from thee be care and pain !  
All the joys of life be thine,  
Boundless love and pride be mine !

Gladdest of all living things,  
Happier than queens or kings !  
In thy little cot upcurled,  
Sweetest creature in the world !  
Wealth or glory for a night  
Or a day may give delight,  
Day and night and night and day  
Lasts a mother's joy alway.

## OMAR-FITZ-GERALDICS

You laugh To-day, the Preacher said, but know  
Salt tears To-morrow from your eyes shall flow :

Bah ! he's a fool who, fearing future ills,  
Doth this day's mirth and happiness forego.

Let Fate inflict what future ills it may,  
It cannot touch the joy enjoyed To-day :

The deed accomplished shuts the door on Fate :  
The Past has passed for ever from its sway.

We know e'en while the Summer boasts its flowers  
That 'twill be followed by bleak Winter hours,—

Why then its beauties let us value more,  
And sport more freely in its pleasant bowers.

Let Ravens croak as hoarsely as they will,  
'Tis not for them Fate's mandates to fulfil ;

Perchance it treats more gently you and me  
Than those weighed down by fear of future ill.

Since life at best provides small store of joy,  
I hold 'tis base that little to destroy :

The Preacher with Damnation on his lips  
Is in the Devil's, not in God's employ.

He whose black robe denotes his gloomy soul,  
Which burrows in dark subways like a mole,  
Is but a stunted and abortive thing,  
And not a man with nature sound and whole.

Let us endure and suffer when we must,  
But never mirth and happiness mistrust :  
Without them what a dreary path we tread !  
They are the oil of life, which else would rust.

1900

**LINES WRITTEN AFTER READING  
PEPYS'S DIARY**

**Delightful, quaint old diarist,  
Most ruthless self-anatomist !  
He guessed not how those pages  
Wherein he bared his inmost soul,  
So egotistic, naïve, and droll,  
Would render up so rich a toll  
Of spoil to after ages.**

**Unto his artless pen we owe  
What ne'er another one doth show,  
(Save as by farthing candle,)  
A living picture of the ways,  
(Vivid as 'neath electric rays,)  
Of life in Charles the Second's days,  
That time of riant scandal.**

**Clearly his world before us looms,  
Though covered with the heavy glooms.  
Two centuries cast o'er it :  
We see him at his work and play,  
Dancing and singing, grave and gay,  
Kissing his maids—a fie-fie trait !  
We must, of course, deplore it.**

Kings, courtiers, "statesmen"—save the name !  
Bold Duchesses, more void of shame  
    Than playhouse Moll or Nelly ;  
Intriguing placemen—all the crew  
Of ladies frail, false lords, we view,  
Gazing Pepys's magic-lantern through  
    From dust and ashes sally !

Our diarist was not a saint,  
He did not 'scape the age's taint,  
    In him was naught heroic :  
A bribe he scrupled not to touch,  
He loved fair women far too much,  
His gormandising too was such  
    As would have shocked a stoic.

We know him as none else we know—  
Far better even than Rousseau,  
    Spite of his strange revealings ;  
Not Byron's self we know so well,  
From what he did and did not tell,  
(His soul a mingled heaven and hell !)  
    Confessions and concealings.

Few have, like Pepys, the pluck to own  
E'en to their very selves alone  
    Their little peccadilloes ;  
Though quick our neighbours' faults to find,  
We're to our own worse failings blind,  
Nor to confess them are inclined  
    E'en to our friendly pillows.

We know he'd sins both great and small  
To answer for, but, after all,  
    Pray tell me who's without them ?

The man was human through and through,  
His faults belong to me and you,  
'Tis well if we've his good points too,  
And make no fuss about them.

Could we to life but call him back  
He would not a warm welcome lack  
If with us he'd foregather :  
How should we hang upon his chat,  
His anecdotes and stories pat  
Of rakish Earls and Ladies that  
Had slipped from virtue's tether !

Yet were he here in person, he  
Could scarcely help us more to see  
His age's form and pressure  
Than in his diary unique  
(You'll vainly such another seek !),  
He shows it with unvarnished cheek,  
Than Lely's colours fresher !

A sad and shameful time we own  
Was his : yet could the truth be known  
Is *our* age much more moral ?  
A nineteenth-century Pepys may be  
Is now at work to prove that we  
Have very little warranty  
With Charles's time to quarrel !

1893

## A SONG OF YEARNING

Our eyes are dim with watching for the dawning of the  
day,  
The yearned-for day that's coming when our griefs  
shall melt away :  
Oh ! shall we never, never, of that dawn perceive a  
ray ?

Must we ever wait in vain ?

Must clashing interests evermore humanity divide ?  
Shall unjust might as in the past defenceless right o'er-  
ride ?  
Have all in vain our heroes fought, in vain our martyrs  
died ?

Is the better day a dream ?

Shall the world be ruled for ever by sophistries and  
lies ?  
Shall idle wealth for ever filch lean industry's fair  
prize ?  
Shall kings and priests for ever o'er the nations tyrannise ?

Shall wrong for ever reign ?



Oh no! a day is coming with blessings in its train,  
When no man to his brother man shall act the part of  
Cain,  
And none from others' loss shall seek unhallowed  
wealth to gain :

Oh haste, most blessed dawn !

Then no man's interest apart from that of all shall be,  
Nations no more in battle-shock shall meet on land or  
sea,

And universal Love shall make mankind one Family  
Come soon, oh blessed dawn !

Might we but live to see the day when ancient wrong  
departs,

And man no more contends with man save in the  
peaceful arts !

Oh what a thrill of love and joy would glad our wearied  
hearts

On such a blessed dawn !

It is a dawn we'll hope for still, ev'n though we hope  
in vain ;

We will not think the world was made for naught but  
care and pain ;

We'll still believe we shall at last a Golden Age attain,  
And every dawn be blessed !

1895

## AFTERWARDS

### I

When I am dead do not weep,  
For death is the least of all ills,  
But say—Let him tranquilly sleep  
The sleep that all agony stills ;  
He watched the strange pageant of life  
Through many wonderful years ;  
He has done now with passion and strife,  
He has done now with hopes and with fears.

### II

Rejoice that I lived if you will,  
But oh ! for my death never grieve,  
For then naught can touch me that's ill,  
And no loss can my spirit bereave :  
While we live joy is shadowed with fear,  
And pleasure is purchased with pain ;  
Whatever to us is most dear  
Fate forbids us to reach or retain.

### III

When I am dead make no moan  
O'er my unfulfilled hopes of renown,  
Nor regret that the seeds I had sown  
Never grew, or by storms were struck down ;  
You may say that I kept to the last  
My hate of oppression and wrong ;  
That to faith in the truth I held fast,  
And loved ever the wise, not the strong.

### IV

Yet when I am dead you may weep  
If you will, a few tears of relief,  
Not too bitter, or burning, or deep—  
Just a sign of un murmuring grief :  
And then you shall say—Let him rest ;  
He strove though he did not attain ;  
He suffered, yet was not unblest :  
Unflinching he fought life's campaign.

*July 1901*

## A PRAYER FOR LIGHT

Father ! our eyes are blind ; we cannot see,  
Though earnestly we seek, the path to Thee !

Through the blank darkness vainly do we grope,  
And see no kindly light, no ray of hope !

Long, long the night has lasted : will the day  
Never arise and chase the clouds away ?

Father ! our ears are deaf ; we cannot hear  
Even though a voice of doom is sounding near :

Fain would we hear its message—but in vain  
We strive to catch the thunder-spoken strain :

Must we be deaf for ever ; never hear  
Thy voice proclaiming that relief is near ?

Father ! our tongues are tied ; we cannot speak  
Our heart-felt yearnings, howsoe'er we seek.

Our throats swell with the words we fain would say ;  
In murmurs hoarse and thick they die away.

When will our dumb and dark despair be o'er,  
And like a rushing stream our fervent pray'rs outpour ?

**We cannot though we would believe in Thee ;  
How may Time's creatures know Eternity ?**

**So straitly bound in time and space, how raise  
Our lowly thoughts to sing Thy fitting praise ?**

**Oh ! give us light life's mysteries to explain ;  
Let our sad souls some certitude attain.**

**Doom us not ever thus to dwell in night ;  
We are Thy children—and art Thou not Light ?**

**But oh ! with no false dawn deceive our eyes ;  
With no kind rhetoric the truth disguise.**

**Reveal the truth—and we will bear it, though.  
It plunge us yet in deeper depths of woe !**

**When will the season of deliverance come,  
And we no longer be blind, deaf, and dumb ?**

**1875?**

## TO A FRIEND

The tie of kinship oft we find  
Doth not in love or friendship bind ;  
Brothers and sisters, to their shame,  
Are oft related but in name ;  
Husband and wife how oft we see  
In bitterest animosity ;  
Mothers and children even, bound  
By no firm ties of love are found.

But there are ties no kinship makes,  
Nor force nor interest ever breaks,  
That o'er the heart bear changeless sway,  
And know not rupture nor decay ;  
Time's best and purest gift to man,  
Wherein no base alloy we scan,  
The perfect spiritual union  
That binds two souls in blest communion.

Such, friend ! our union ; it began  
Because in the eternal plan  
It was decreed your soul and mine  
Should in a league of love combine,

So that such perfect unison  
Exists we are not two but one ;  
Or like two harps—touch one, you make  
The spirit of its fellow wake.

Love 'twixt the sexes scarce may be  
From all attainment of passion free ;  
But ours is love without desire,  
A pure and unconsuming fire :  
With no base element's alloy  
No surfeit can its power destroy,  
Which lasts, with full assurance crowned,  
Like light and heat together bound.

1867

## THE PILGRIMS' HALT

Oh ! a weary way we've marched,  
We are footsore, faint and parched,  
And we've fallen into woeful disarray ;  
Let us linger here awhile,  
Where all around doth smile,  
And drink to those who've fallen by the way !

How numerous was our clan  
When our pilgrimage began,  
What a long unending column did our blithesome ranks  
comprise !  
But it dwindled day by day  
As the hardships of the way  
Subdued our ardent spirits and no Pisgah blessed our  
eyes.

Still on and on we strode,  
Though more toilsome grew the road,  
And our hearts grew faint within us and our sanguine  
spirits fled ;  
For we nowhere found a sign  
That the land for which we pine  
Shall at last make glad our vision and echo to our  
tread.



'Tis not hard to bear the brunt  
Of the foe's assault in front,  
'Tis harder much our doubtings and our fears to sub-  
jugate ;  
But we never will despair,  
We will dare and ever dare,  
Till our constancy and courage win at last the smile of  
fate !

Then a bumper let us drain  
To our many comrades slain ;  
'Tis no shame if to our eyes the tear-drops start :  
We'll keep silence for a space,  
Tracing o'er each vanished face,  
Then once more, refreshed and strengthened, on our  
pilgrimage depart.

1885 ?

## REST

Rest ! Is there any word that may compare  
With that most blessed sound ?  
Can Love, Joy, Hope, or even Rapture share  
Its blissfulness profound ?  
Love's fickle, Joy lasts not, and Hope deceives,  
Redoubled sadness ever follows Rapture :  
'Tis Rest alone that perfect peace achieves,  
And Eden doth recapture.

Time was I gloried in the thought of strife,  
And with a dauntless breast  
Opposed myself to all the storms of life—  
But now I ask but Rest !  
Best gift man may receive or fate bestow,  
The only one that never can deceive ;  
The anodyne that every pain and woe  
Is fitted to relieve.

Rest ! yea, if only in the grave is Rest,  
Still would I seek it there,  
To gain a boon beyond all blessings blest,  
So far beyond compare :  
For there alone no sorrow can molest,  
No fearful dreams affright,  
No cancer-passion prey upon the breast,  
No evil fortune smite.

## ON RECEIVING A PRESENT OF ROSES

Roses to one so old and grey,  
So worn with toil and thought and time !  
Surely the gift has gone astray,  
For 'tis with youth that roses rhyme ;  
I'm no Anacreon in sooth  
That can time's ravages defy ;  
Too well I know the time of youth,  
Of mirth and roses has gone by !

Yet no ! a gift like this brings back  
Some portion of the olden fire,  
And, heedless of the almanac,  
Lost hopes again my soul inspire :  
Time, do thy worst ! thou shalt not break  
My spirit with thy heavy hand  
Till gifts like these no more can make  
My heart with gratitude expand.

1899

## THE POET'S HEART

Time was when I a poet's name  
Ambitiously did seek ;  
But ah ! no more I crave for fame,  
My spirit's bent and weak :  
Alas ! to will is not to do,  
To strive not to attain ;  
How many start to climb—how few  
Parnassus' summit gain !

To feel poetic sympathies  
Doth not a poet make,  
But oh ! 'tis hard we can't reveal  
Our rapture or heartache ;  
Sad to be dumb when we would fain  
Pour out our joy or woe—  
The rich reward, the priceless gain  
That poets only know—

Of hearing said in grateful words  
By youth or maiden fair,—  
" Ah ! in that verse my heart that bled  
In helpless dumb despair  
Has found its voice at last, and pours  
Out in a flood its grief ;  
My woe that grovelled now outsoars  
Itself, and gains relief ! "

Or, in the verse the lover finds  
His rapturous love portrayed  
So wondrously, he cries—"What minds  
These poets have—some aid  
Supernal they must needs obtain,  
Else how could they display  
The thoughts that folded in my brain,  
Hopeless of utterance, lay?"

Ah! had I but the poet's heart  
All else would I forego,  
And bear with patience every smart  
Fate might on me bestow :  
No other gift so rich and rare  
Can mortal man obtain,  
E'en though 'tis linked with carking care,  
And with the world's disdain.

When vain is philosophic speech  
And reason pleads in vain,  
Even then the poet's words will reach  
The heart and soothe its pain :  
There's no dark corner of the soul  
The poet may not scan—  
Philosophers see part—the whole  
Only the poet can.

## THE LOST SON

Oh cruel waves, tyrant waves ! where is my son ?  
With my brave boy, my gallant boy, what have ye  
done ?

Long, long, have I watched for his coming in vain,  
But surely, oh surely, he'll come back again.

Ah ! the waves they are moaning in grief-laden tones,  
As though they re-echoed my sighs and my groans ;  
Deep, deep he is buried beneath the salt spray,  
And the winds and the waves chant his funeral lay.

He is lying at rest and no dreams vex his sleep,—  
Ah ! would I were sleeping as sound and as deep :  
Gold, jewels, and treasures unnumbered are there,  
But the sea holds no treasure with him can compare.

The clouds become blacker, more stormy the main,  
And the wild wind is blowing a mad hurricane ;  
They are seeking fresh victims, but cannot destroy  
Another so fair and so brave as my boy.

**Cruel waves, ye have robbed me of all I held dear,  
And there's nothing on earth I can love now or fear :  
Ah ! would ye but bear me to where he lies low  
I would bless ye, and ban ye no more as a foe !**

[I print the above, not because I am blind to its defects, but because it was the first poem I wrote, and the first piece of mine which was printed. It appeared in 1863 in a periodical called "The Key."]

## SIMPLICITY

My pretty little maid, said I,  
May I your sweetheart be ?  
Oh, that you may ! was her reply,  
You're my infinity.

Affinity, you mean, I cried.  
Fair maiden, is't not so ?  
I mean, she artlessly replied,  
I badly want a beau !

1899



## ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD

Thou cam'st to us a precious gift—  
Which we with joy received,  
And all our sorrows and our joys  
With thine were interweaved.

Still with thy growth our love increased,  
And still we watched with pride  
Thy body and thy mind expand—  
Oh ! that thou shouldst have died !

We knew we loved thee much, but yet  
How much we could not tell,  
Till brimming eyes and deep-drawn sighs  
Informed us all too well.

Thy tender childish prattle still  
Doth echo in our ears ;  
Oh ! never more shall voice so sweet  
Awake our smiles or tears.

" Mother, I want to sleep," thou saidst,  
Ev'n with thy latest breath ;  
Alas ! that sleep we could not give  
Was given to thee by death !

**Calmly thou sleepest now, but we  
Whose hearts to breaking swell,  
Must ever weep at thought of thee—  
Farewell! dear lamb, farewell!**

*October 4, 1877*

## THE BALLADIST PARSON

I'll sing you a song of a Parson to-night,  
Who in black-letter broadsides doth chiefly delight :  
You'll not find another so learned as he  
In all that relates to song, ballad and glee.

His head is a storehouse of curious lore  
About old romances and ballads of yore ;  
He delights in them hugely and carols them too,  
And can write them besides when he's in the right cue.

Of course he is poor, for he never could stoop  
In formality's bands his fine spirit to coop :  
So by patrons and squires he's been left in the lurch—  
He's too much of a man to get on in the church !

But that doesn't vex him—he cares not for pelf,  
And he thinks of all else ere he thinks of himself ;  
With his ballads and books he's more happy, I ween,  
Than if they had made him a Bishop or Dean.

There's one dogma he finds very hard to believe—  
He can't think that sin was created through Eve :  
Like a knight of old times he'll her honour attest,  
And Adam, he thinks, was a sneak at the best.

For the lasses he's ever a greeting and smile,  
And to see a sweet face he'll go many a mile :  
Towards them he lets no distinction appear,  
If it's dairymaid Nell or my Lady De Vere.

I grant you he's done some odd things in his time,  
Which would sound very drolly if hitched into rhyme :  
Folks call him eccentric, but all will admit  
His heart is quite sound though they question his wit.

Then here's to the Parson, and may he live long  
To cheer us with mirthful discoursing and song ;  
May his ridicule long gall the puritan gang,  
And as for his enemies let them go hang !

#### ENCORE VERSES

Since with kindly applause you this ditty receive,  
I'll sing you a verse or two more, by your leave,  
For such a good subject but seldom is found,  
In whom wit, mirth and learning so greatly abound.

He's a right down good fellow, as I have made clear,  
And I wish that we had him in company here,  
For the night then would spin on with laughter and song,  
And we unto morn should our revels prolong.

Then let's chorus " A jolly good fellow is he"  
(A better you'll go a month's march ere you see ;) )  
And wind up with hip ! hip ! hurrah ! three times o'er—  
And now I'll leave off, or you'll think me a bore.

TO J. W. E.

Ah yes ! you have suffered, for that is the measure,  
Meted out to each luckless descendant of Eve,  
But have you not also known exquisite pleasure  
Such as no grubbing worldling could ever achieve ?

Believe me your life is not useless or wasted,  
Seen in proper perspective you've nothing to rue ;  
How few of life's nectar so deeply have tasted,  
How few own a spirit so tender and true !

In yourself you've a spring of delight ever-flowing ;  
Ever youthful in heart and in mind you remain ;  
In your spirit so fervent there burns ever-glowing  
That love for the lovely which never can wane.

Leave 'success' to the sordid and 'slim' money-spinner,  
His wealth is the price of the sale of his soul ;  
If your gifts you weigh justly 'tis you are the winner,  
And he is the loser with whom to condole.

## THRENODY

Hush ! tread softly in the gloom  
Of the closely-curtained room :  
Though our hearts with grief are torn  
Silently alone we'll mourn :  
Shallow grief alone is shrill,  
Deep our grief shall be and still :  
We should wrong her did we make  
Loud lamentings for her sake ;  
Grief enough in life she had,  
Now no more will she be sad,  
Never more will suffer pain—  
Death to her is naught but gain.

Life brought strife and bitterness,  
Death brings kind forgetfulness :  
Life brought never-ending woes,  
Death brings endless calm repose ;  
Life was one long martyrdom,  
Death all ills hath overcome ;  
Life was but an evil dream,  
Death has given her rest supreme ;  
She has reached the eternal shore  
By mortals christened Nevermore,  
That Haven ever calm and blest  
Which no dark dreams of ill molest.

## A JEALOUS LOVER

My dearest, do you really, truly love me,  
Or do you but allow me to love you ?  
And can you, since you shine so far above me,  
Remain, when time reveals my failings, true ?

By jealousies and fears my soul's tormented,  
I see a thousand rivals at your feet ;  
Most sure assurance leaves me discontented,  
Some gall I find in every cup of sweet.

Oh ! pardon me these doubts, misgivings, fancies,—  
Who would not fear to lose a Koh-i-noor ?  
In you my heart, my soul, life's whole romance is,  
Without you all my life's bare, bleak, and poor.

Yet if you love me not, ah ! still deceive me,  
And feign the tenderness you do not feel :  
Despise me, scorn me, but ah ! do not leave me ;  
Indifferent, strive indifference to conceal.

But oh how vain to ask you to dissemble !  
Your white soul never could a falsehood stain ;  
Spite of yourself the very truth would tremble  
On those sweet lips, howe'er they sought to feign.

**Forgive me, dear ! my doubts and fears I'll banish,  
And wholly in your love and truth confide ;  
Here in your noble presence needs must vanish  
All thoughts save those from evil purified.**

**1898**



## HAIKAIS\*

### I

You laughed while I wept,  
Yet my tears and your laughter  
Had only one source.

### II

Yes! I was startled,  
For I saw there beside you  
Love's apparition!

### III

Our lips spoke no word,  
Yet we talked long together,  
Eye answering eye.

### IV

The music fills me  
With passionate yearnings—  
Where art thou, loved one?

\* "A Haikai is a Japanese form of verse, consisting of three unrhymed lines of five, seven, and five syllables respectively, or seventeen syllables in all. Hitherto they have not, we believe, been written in English."—*The Academy*, April 8, 1899.

V

Passion of laughter  
Convulsed me, but then followed  
Passion of weeping.

VI

'Twas winter weather  
When you bloomed forth before me—  
Then summer flourished !

VII

Beauty's in all things !  
Morn is lovely, but also  
Lovely the night is.

VIII

The snow fell and robed  
London's great guilty city  
In purity's garb.

IX

I heard my love sing :  
She knew not that I heard her,  
Nor saw how I trembled.

X

Sunshine or tempest,  
Desperation or triumph,  
Come at *her* summons !

**XI**

**O my beloved one !  
My tears flow when I think that  
Mortal our love is !**

**XII**

**Ah ! what a fragment,  
Though to fourscore extended,  
The life of a man is !**

**1899**

## DIRGE

Hark ! from the organ's mighty throat  
Issues a sad and wailing note,  
Tender, appealing and intense,  
Breathing a sorrow so immense,  
Such hopeless woe, such wild regret  
As none who hear it may forget :  
With accents mournful, solemn, slow,  
How doth it speak our utter woe !

Joy visits us and hastes away,  
Grief only by our side doth stay :  
No joy that all may share is known,  
We may unite in grief alone :  
Through laughter's loudest outburst clear  
The wail of anguish you may hear ;  
Youth oft enough to sorrow bows,  
To age no respite it allows.

We grieve for vanished joys of yore,  
We grieve for friends that are no more,  
We grieve for husbands, children, wives,  
Whose loss leaves bare and bleak our lives :

**We grieve for health and vigour lost,  
We grieve for age's torpid frost ;  
But most, when dead are minds and hearts,  
We grieve that power to grieve departs.**

**1890**

## FAREWELL

Farewell ! there's music in the sound,  
It fits full well the poet's metre ;  
It wakens thoughts the most profound ;  
No other on fair lips sounds sweeter.

The sweetest and the saddest word !  
How much of meaning it compresses,  
How the soul's depths are by it stirred,  
What infinite pathos it possesses !

Think what the simple word may mean—  
An end of passion and endeavour ;  
A sudden shifting of the scene  
From bright To-day to dark For-ever :

The loss of all we hold most dear,  
The loss of love and warm caresses,  
The end alike of hope and fear,  
The end of all that soothes or blesses !

Yet lightly oft the word we say,  
And from it no forebodings borrow,  
As though life were a summer's day,  
Unvexed by care or pain or sorrow.

**Alas ! how many sad Farewells  
Even in a happy life are taken !  
How often sound Death's tolling bells  
Our sorrow and regret to waken !**

**Yet who would choose to be unmoved  
When death our dearest from us rendeth ?  
Or not to love or be beloved  
Since all our love in sorrow endeth ?**

**1899**

## MIRIAM'S LOVERS

"I love the maiden passing well,"  
Said Smith ; "her figure's neat ;  
You may go far a prettier belle  
Before you chance to meet."

"A devilish pretty girl," said Scott,  
"She's just as sweet as honey,  
But then two things she lacks : she's got  
Neither good birth nor money."

"She's *chic*," said White, "and I in her  
Each day new charms discover ;  
Most truthfully I can aver  
That, next myself, I love her."

"Somehow the girl my fancy takes,  
Though why I cannot tell :  
But there are plenty more," said Raikes,  
"I like *almost* as well."

"Few maids there are," said Jones, "whom I  
So fervently admire,  
But I have noticed in her eye  
A leopard's tameless fire."



"I want a wife," said Brown, "and since  
I've jilted been by Fanny,  
To make the faithless creature wince  
I'll Miriam wed—or Annie."

Said Robinson, "No other maid  
Such passion can inspire ;  
A frenzy not to be gainsaid,  
That fills my veins with fire."

Said Black, "The maiden I adore  
As with a saint's devotion  
The sacredest of shrines before,—  
A still and rapt emotion."

"She's full of wild caprice," said Green,  
"And strange and fitful fancies,  
But in her alone of all I've seen  
A spirit of romance is."

"Ah me ! I love her much," sighed Page,  
"But then a bird so gay  
Would need a gorgeous golden cage,  
And ever sing ' pay, pay. ' "

"She's of her sex the perfect flower,"  
Said Harrison, "about her  
There's such a strange magnetic power  
Life's nothing worth without her."

Guess now, of all who bent the knee,  
Who finally enchained her ?  
Alas ! I can't but fear that he  
Who least deserved her gained her.

LADY CLARA VERE DE VERE'S  
REPLY

Thomas Nehemiah Briggs,  
You write as though most strangely vexed,  
But I am at a loss to know  
With what offences I am taxed :  
"I smiled, but you were unbeguiled"—  
But where's the snare a smile discovers ?  
Upon a man a maid may smile  
Surely, although they are not lovers ?

Thomas Nehemiah Briggs,  
Your own conceit led you astray,  
You twisted civil words I said  
To sweet ones such as lovers say :  
What you would hide I soon espied,  
Your snobbishness and self-conceit,  
Your foolish vanity and pride—  
And treated you as it was meet.

Thomas Nehemiah Briggs,  
A woman loves a *man* although  
He may be but of humble birth,  
But *you*—tut, tut, too well I know

You're but the shadow of a man,  
With shallow brain and half a heart,  
Too weak and vain for life's campaign,  
A true King Arthur's counterpart :

Not Mallory's hero, stern and rough,  
But that insufferable bore,  
That preaching, plaster, bloodless saint,  
Anæmic girls so much adore :  
That simulacrum stuffed with bran,  
Whom Tennyson (so much a bard  
He was so much the less a man,)  
Most sadly in the making marred.

Thomas Nehemiah Briggs,  
Is't possible the grapes were sour,  
Which reached, you'd quickly said Goodbye  
To your sweet maiden in her flower ?  
Why all this heat and fury if  
Your self-love had not felt a wound ?  
You seek to hide a blow to pride,  
Or why so angry and untuned ?

Trust me, Nehemiah Briggs,  
You know naught of a woman's soul,  
Which, light and fickle though it seem,  
A true man always can control :  
She gives herself without reserve  
When once her true lord she discovers,  
But 'tis not such as you deserve  
To be her favoured friends or lovers.

## DESPONDENCY

Racked by care and pain and anguish,  
In what utter woe I languish !  
Fruitless all the seed I've sown,  
Every project overthrown,  
Sport of ever-adverse fate,  
Helpless, hopeless, desolate !  
Wherefore do I linger here,  
Naught to hope for, all to fear ?  
Disarmed, defeated, comfort gone,  
Why await another dawn ?

Courage then and end thy woe. . . .  
Cease, my soul, to murmur so :  
Patience, fortitude, endurance,  
In the end shall bring assurance  
Of a blest surcease from pain,  
Hope its empire shall regain :  
Victorious over pain and strife  
I shall joy again in life,  
Or at worst time's tireless flight  
Soon shall sink my noon in night.

When my spirit faints again,  
Let me think, amid my pain,  
On the heroes of the past,  
Whose firm spirits to the last,  
Tried by fire, by rack, by halter,  
Never once did faint or falter !  
Matched with theirs how light my grief,  
My sufferings how mild and brief !  
Dare I ask to live at ease  
Remembering the lot of these ?

1884 ?

## THE WINE OF LIFE

When Love offers  
Thee his wine  
Ne'er mistrust  
Its purple shine ;  
Quaff it boldly,  
Drink it up,  
Life's best nectar's  
In the cup.

Doubts are traitors,  
Fears are foes ;  
They will bring thee  
Naught but woes :  
Love's of life  
The very breath,  
Want of Love  
Is life-in-death.

Ever say  
A thankful grace  
When thou see'st  
A lovely face ;  
When she sings  
A song divine  
Adore as at  
A holy shrine.

Love of all things  
Is the best,  
Bid it welcome  
As thy guest ;  
Who would miss it,  
Missing all  
Happiness  
That can befall !

He who loves not  
Loveliness  
Forfeits wholly  
Life's best bliss :  
Grace and beauty,  
Eyes of fire,  
No true man  
But must desire.

The richest gifts  
From nature's loom  
Are youth and beauty  
In their bloom :  
Priceless treasures !  
Seize and hold,  
Better far  
Than wine or gold !

Say not beauty  
Will decay,  
Say not youth  
Soon flies away :  
Could but youth  
And beauty stay,  
Who would value  
Them, I pray ?

**Boldly venture  
Then your all,  
Let not fear  
Your heart appal :  
Beauty is  
The prize supreme,  
Substance of  
The poet's dream !**

**1898**



## THE INFANT'S GRAVE \*

Dark and gloomy is the night,  
Not a star rays forth its light ;  
But no light I need to show  
Where my little one's laid low :  
Blindfold I can thread my way—  
Tears may blind but do not stay :  
Straight as arrow from a bow  
To thy resting-place I go.

Little angel pure as light  
From the farthest star of night !  
Only treasure of my heart,  
Sole joy in which I claimed a part !  
Darling whose bright presence made  
All my care and sorrow fade,  
And in a web of gloom enwrought  
Threads of bright and happy thought !

Of all other comforts reft  
Thou alone to me wert left ;  
Joy was mine embracing thee,  
Thou wert all in all to me !

\* This poem was suggested by a newspaper paragraph,  
which told the story of the discovery of the dead body of a  
mother upon the grave of her child.

He whom once I loved so well  
Lured away by evil spell—  
With naught else to fill my heart  
I lived in thee—and dead thou art !

Tyrant death ! couldst thou not spare  
A flower so young, so sweet, so fair ?  
If thou needs must take one, why  
For her sake might I not die ?  
Then some mercy hadst thou shewn,  
Nor left me desolate, alone,  
A childless mother, homeless wife,  
To linger out a death-in-life.

Reft of all that gives delight,  
Day's as wearisome as night ;  
Earth's a barren desert drear,  
With no Mount of Promise near ;  
Hope's by dull despair devoured,  
All joy's slain, all sweetness soured ;  
Where'er I turn I see alone  
A frowning sky, a face of stone.

Night so dark can have no dawn ;  
I'll follow thee where thou art gone ;  
I cannot linger in this drear,  
Homeless, hopeless, evil sphere :  
Calls my darling, *Come away!*  
Broken heart, your beating stay !  
Merciless you struck before,  
Death ! in mercy strike once more !

1890

## A RHYMER'S COMPLAINT

Surely no other language that is known  
So handicaps poor rhymers as our own,  
Or causes them so much to sweat and swear  
When seeking for the rhyme that is not there :  
By this at every turn the poet's baffled,  
As I am now—for how to bring in 'scaffold'  
Would puzzle even Swinburne—so would 'raffled'  
And these are all the rhymes that you can use—  
A pretty choice to set before the muse !  
If you're in love you have to lug in 'dove,'  
'Her glove,' or else appeal to 'heaven above,'  
There's no alternative, alas ! but 'shove,'  
For 'move' and 'prove' are makeshifts at the best,  
Though you must oft with them contented rest.  
Suppose you write of something that doth gladden,  
To find your choice is limited to 'sadden'  
Or 'madden' makes you mad as any hatter,  
And fit your head against the wall to batter :  
Then too when you have said your love's a pattern,  
It's hard to find that you must drag in 'slattern' ;  
'Tis Hobson's choice ; as also 'tis with amorous,  
To which the only rhyme, alas ! is 'clamorous.'  
When you are praising Amaryllis' beauty  
What can you do with 'sooty,' or with 'duty' ?

Or when you've said your love is quite obdurate,  
How in the world are you to bring in 'curate' ?  
Sometimes a lovely line that ends in silver  
I've written, but to find no word like 'dilver'  
Or 'quilver' doth exist—so must forego it,  
A sacrifice to vex the mildest poet !  
Suppose you write about your mistress' window,  
The only rhyme that you will find is 'Lindo,'  
And though an actor of some little fame  
Owns that cognomen—Frank is his front name—  
To bring him in it would the cleverest tease,  
Except in rhymes like Ingoldsby's—or these.  
As hard the case is when you talk of chimney,  
For what's the use of such a rhyme as 'Rhydney' ?  
Or such a makeshift as a 'slim-or-trim-knee' ?

Sometimes the rhymes, though numerous enough,  
All your attempts to couple them rebuff,  
For 'tis a fact all poets are aware of  
In fifty rhymes you may not find a pair of  
Them which will fitly chime with one another,  
Choose which you will, one seems at odds with t'other.  
As oft with man and wife, they take delight  
In showing off their mutual scorn and spite.

But here I'll own that 'tis not always so—  
Sometimes your rhymes will come without a throe,  
For they'll present themselves both apt and numerous,  
Sorted together in a way quite humorous :  
What could be better than such rhymes as 'drunk,  
Sunk, bunk,' *et cetera*, not forgetting 'monk,'  
On all of which the changes you can ring  
Just like—just like—oh, just like anything !

Then when you chance to end a line with 'fumble,'  
A splendid choice you have in 'mumble, tumble,'  
And several others, not forgetting 'Bumble.'\*  
The very words have such a humorous pathos—  
(A contradiction is it? well, say bathos)  
That even a tyro in the rhyming art  
Easily finds the first rhyme's counterpart,  
And feels at once that he's a heaven-born poet,  
And vows the ignorant world shall quickly know it,  
Taking for inspiration what is due  
To the rhymes alone—but so perhaps would you.

"Well, sir! now you've described the rhymer's woes,  
What remedy for them do you propose?  
Would you our native tongue Italianate  
Unskilful rhymers to accommodate?  
Rob it of all its rugged strength and power  
To make it fitter for a lady's bower?  
Create new rhymes to ease the poet's task,  
His laziness and emptiness to mask?"

No, my good friend! our language rough and strong  
No equal owns for music and for song  
When handled by a true son of Apollo!  
What matter though it soundeth harsh and hollow  
When poetasters use it! 'Twas my end  
In seeming to decry it, to commend,  
As lovers will sometimes each other rally  
With many a bantering and witty sally,

\* (But you must not forget the muse decrees  
In serious verse you can't use words like these;  
There's something in their very sound to tickle us,  
And render the most solemn verse ridiculous.)

**Their tender accents all the time revealing  
The love that lurks beneath their words' concealing.—  
I want no better, more expressive tongue  
Than that in which our master, Shakespeare, sung ;  
Give me a spark of his immortal fire  
And 'tis the only favour I'll desire ;  
The fates whate'er they will may then deny,  
And I their bounty still will magnify.**

**1899**

## THE RHYMER'S PETITION TO THE CRITIC

Herewith my little book of rhymes I send,  
For you to exercise your critic skill on't :  
Do as you will with it—or praise or read—  
'Tis yours to work whate'er may be your will on't :  
But one small favour I would fain entreat,  
One little mercy pritheee deign to show it—  
Don't style me (be your verdict sour or sweet),  
A Minor Poet.

Ah, yes ! I know them—all that brilliant band  
Whose works are issued from the street of Vigo,  
'Neath Messrs. Lane or Mathews' fostering hand,  
Whose tomes when out of print so very high go : \*  
Yet since they're mostly branded with the brand  
Of minor minstrelsy, I'd fain forego it—  
I mean the honour with those bards to stand,  
A Minor Poet.

Poor Shakespeare Biggs ! I knew him in his prime,  
When flushed with hope the midnight oil he wasted,  
Until at last came forth his book of rhyme  
And he to read the critics' verdicts hasted.

\* These verses were written some years ago, when there was a temporary "boom" in minor minstrelsy. Most of the volumes which fetched such high prices then are to be had, I fancy, cheaply enough now.

Alas ! he from that hour ne'er smiled again,  
But took to drink and evil ways—such woe it  
Caused him when branded with that mark of Cain  
' A Minor Poet.'

Call me a scribbler of the lowest class,  
Say that in merest commonplace I revel,  
Insinuate that I'm an utter ass,  
Unable e'en to reach bard Tupper's level ;  
But spare, oh ! spare me one last crowning jeer—  
Say I'm but fit to plough a field, or hoe it,  
But, oh ! don't say that I'm—ah word of fear !  
A Minor Poet.

1890 ?



## ON BERNARD SHAW

Shaw wrote a brilliant article,  
And every one did smile,  
Which made him tear his hair, for he  
Was serious all the while.

He wrote again in jesting mood,  
But laughter there was none of it,  
His wit had such a serious mask  
That none could see the fun of it.

## ON "THE PERFECT WAGNERITE"

In 'The Ring' folks believed that a secret profound  
Was hid, which when known all the world would  
astound ;  
But, alas ! if the truth Bernard Shaw has revealed,  
No more than a mare's-nest was in it concealed !

## SHAW *VERSUS* SHAKESPEARE

Shaw says that when he pits himself  
Against our greatest poet  
The bard proves but a feeble elf—  
I only wish he'd show it !

Only one little thing prevents  
His triumph o'er our Will—  
Nature, that gave him wit and sense,  
Denied the poet's skill !

A FRAGMENT FROM AN UNFINISHED  
SATIRE

Not his the poet's gift—yet, to be fair,  
Of talent no man has a larger share ;  
His brain's a radium battery charged with wit,  
Which it doth inexhaustibly emit,  
And in it too both light and heat combine,  
And with a lustre never-darkened shine.  
The world's his football which he kicks about,  
Devoid alike of reverence or doubt ;  
Nothing's too serious to be made a jest of,  
No cause so much advanced he's not abreast of ;  
No paradox so great he'll not defend it,  
Nothing so holy that he will not end it :  
And though you at his strange gyrations blink,  
He forces you, spite of yourself, to think,  
And that's a service than which none is greater,  
Though dull men hate so rough an educator.  
I find in him, I own, full many a flaw,  
Yet say most heartily—Thank heaven for Shaw !

## A REPLY

Thou tell'st me from the wrath to come to flee,  
" 'Tis safest to believe " thy coward's plea :  
What ! dost thou think my spirit's poor as thine ?  
Such doctrines are for bond-slaves, not the free.

What's true is true, what's false is false, and I  
Refuse for gain to palter with a lie :  
The truth in scorn of consequence I seek,  
And dare to ask of God or Devil Why ?

Such Truth as will to reach it may attain,  
Such certitude as studious toil may gain,  
This do I seek, and having found hold fast,  
Though it bring bitter sorrow in its train.

The creeds are many, there is but one Truth :  
Art sure thou hast discovered it in sooth ?  
Thou that hast taken thy beliefs on trust,  
And putt'st thy faith in Merry-Andrew Booth !

Though Truth's clear face may not be manifest,  
'Tis easy to bring Falsehood to the test ;  
Easy its vain pretensions to expose  
When in the scales of reason 'tis assessed.

The Truth of Truths perchance man ne'er may know,  
Yet he the search for it may not forego :

'Tis good to climb the mountain's craggy side,  
Though we reach not its pinnacle of snow.

Falsehood's a harlot with seductive smile,  
Practised in every loose and wanton wile ;

To every temper she doth suit herself  
By flattery, cajolery, or guile :

But Truth all art or artifice disdains,  
No painting uses, no false beauty feigns ;

Cares not though men regardless pass her by,  
And all-sufficient to herself remains.

Though she may seem to wear a frowning face,  
Shrink not, but dare approach her and embrace,

And then her veil falls off and you behold  
Imperial beauty and celestial grace.

1899

## JONES'S PROGRESS

Jones was a Socialist when he'd naught to lose,  
And passionately did the rich abuse :  
When he became a well-paid overseer  
By Radical lights he did his conduct steer :  
In business for himself and well-to-do  
The Liberal cause he did with favour view :  
But as his wealth grew daily more and more,  
He, as a Whig, his former faith forswore :  
Then, having bought a title, could his story  
End otherwise than by leaving him a Tory ?

Before you blame him, ask yourself if you  
In his place would not the same course pursue ?

## FRAGMENTS

In many brilliant colours Falsehood's decked,  
Its churches with vast multitudes are packed ;  
But Truth's white light shines ever bright and clear  
Though at its shrine few worshippers appear.

---

What is life's saddest tragedy ? I think  
It is the sinking of a noble spirit,  
Full of high thoughts and generous aspirations,  
To the low level of the life about him.

---

We go from one illusion to another,  
And wander in a maze of endless windings ;  
This path, we say, leads to the goal at last,  
The goal which we so long have sought in vain for ;  
But 'tis but one more passage leading nowhere :  
And when our Mecca comes at last in sight  
We fall exhausted by the journey's hardships.

---

The happiest fortune that a man can greet  
But transient pleasure to his soul doth yield :  
The worst of ills 'tis possible to meet  
Calmly, and find in fortitude a shield.

## THE FALL OF THE LEAVES \*

(From the French of Millevoye)

Autumn had strewn on field and vale  
The dead leaves from the forest reft :  
Naked the mournful groves were left,  
And silent was the nightingale.  
Oppressed with melancholy thought  
An invalid, in years but young,  
But by long suffering unstrung,  
The wood beloved in boyhood sought.  
Dear wood, he said, adieu ! adieu !  
Like me you mourn your hapless fate ;  
Forlorn and all disconsolate,  
In yours my own sad doom I view.  
A messenger of final doom  
Each leaf in falling seems to say,  
Soon thou like us shalt pass away,  
Thy fate like ours is steeped in gloom :  
Around thee close the shades of death ;  
Wanner than autumn's wannest leaf  
Soon must thou yield thy latest breath,—  
No respite hope, however brief.

\* "Millevoys 'Chute des Feuilles' has been called not unhappily 'La Marseillaise des Mélancholiques.' His other poetical work is never likely to be generally read."—*George Saintsbury*.

Yes! I must die! my spring has fled  
Long ere its time, and winter's frost  
Withers me with its icy breath,  
And warns me that all hope is lost.  
Laid low by unrelenting death,  
Sweet flowers and herbs my corse shall deck,  
But ah! my sad and frustrate life  
Fruitage of deeds must ever lack.  
Descend, ye leaves ephemeral,  
And cover me as I am dying,  
Let not my mother's vision fall  
Where breathless, motionless, I'm lying:  
But if my love comes hither, when  
Fate can inflict no further sorrow,  
To weep my hapless lot—oh! then  
Some comfort shall my spirit borrow.

No more he said, but thence departed,  
His wanderings there for ever o'er.  
When from the tree the last leaf started  
Destiny tortured him no more.  
Beneath an oak his corse was laid;  
But she whom he had loved so dearly  
Came not the silence to invade  
Which reigned about his grave austere;  
Save when the shepherd went his round  
The solitude was void of sound.

1895



## THE RETURN OF THE GOLDEN AGE

(From the French of Le Président Hénault)

Wherefore that Golden Age regret  
When love alone was Lord of all ?  
Let us love faithfully and yet  
We may that Golden Age recall.  
Let love resume his ancient reign,  
The Golden Age returns again.

The flowers that in the fields are seen  
Bloom brightly as they bloomed before,  
The rose is still the garden's queen,  
The birds sing as they sang of yore.  
Let love resume, &c.

Still in the springtime Philomel  
Renews her unforgotten strain ;  
The streams in happy murmurs tell  
Of love and love's delightful pain.  
Let love resume, &c.

Zephyr, filled with the ancient fire,  
As eagerly doth Flora court ;  
The bee yet shews his old desire  
With lilies in the morn to sport.  
While love is present in the heart  
The Golden Age can ne'er depart.

## AUTUMN SONG

(From the French of Paul Verlaine)

The autumn gale  
Doth sob and wail  
Like viols eerie ;  
Its monotone,  
So like a groan,  
My soul doth weary.

And hark ! a bell  
That's like a knell  
For dead hope tolling !  
Then sorrows past  
Arise and fast  
The tears are rolling !

Sad sport of grief,  
Like a dead leaf  
I shrink and wither ;  
No refuge nigh  
I vainly fly  
Hither and thither.

## EPIGRAMS

### THE RELIGION OF POETS

Poets, you say, are irreligious. No !  
Their creed is Love. Can you a better show ?

### CLAUDIO THE RESPECTABLE

Claudio, you say, is without vices—True !  
But then he's destitute of virtues too.

### BACON *VERSUS* SHAKESPEARE

"The works of Shakespeare," said Miss Delia Bacon,  
"Lord Bacon wrote, unless I'm much mistaken ;"  
But Leslie Stephen has her theory shaken,  
By proving that 'twas Shakespeare who wrote Bacon.

**EPIGRAMS TRANSLATED FROM THE  
FRENCH**

**TO A BORE**

You say that when you come to me  
You quite forget your dull ennui ;  
But tell me, Tomkins, is it fair  
To leave me your ennui to bear ?

**REASON AND LOVE INCOMPATIBLE**

To excuse your folly, friend, you need not seek—  
Who knows not Love is strong and Reason weak ?

**A HUSBAND TO HIS WIFE**

Virtuous and fair you are—and by my life  
I should adore you—were you not my wife.

**TO A SCANDAL-LOVING COQUETTE**

I marvel, Maud, that you're so fond of scandal,  
Since you yourself give to it such a handle.

**TO A JEALOUS MAN**

Seduce your wife ! Nay, friend, your fears are vain—  
D'ye think my taste so bad ? she's far too plain.

### LOVE AND REASON

Love once in Heaven reigned and Reason reigned on  
earth,  
But Reason now has gone above since Love had here  
her birth.

### BEAUTY WITHOUT WIT

Phyllis ! a deaf man you should wed,  
Because your beauty he would see,  
And, hearing not the things you said,  
Would never disenchanted be.

### ON A VERY FAT LADY

They say I take no exercise,—but that is idle talk,—  
Around Emilia, fair and fat, three times a day I walk.

### TO THE BEAUTIFUL HORTENSE, ABSENT

Return, dear maid, my longing heart to bless ;  
I'm dying of desire to die of happiness.

### ON A COQUETTE

Blanche says she loves me : that is true no doubt :  
She loves all men—and doesn't leave me out.

### TO THE VICIOUS CLARICE

Nothing you love but evil—tell us why  
You show to virtue such antipathy ?  
Why when you see it show so much alarm ?  
Virtue has never done you any harm.

**THE DISINHERITED SON**

**Dad's dead and left me nothing in his will—  
I shouldn't care if he were living still.**

**ON THE DEATH OF COUNT GRAMMONT**

**(Author of the famous Memoirs)**

**Another Condé we may see,  
Turenne may come again,  
But for another Grammont we  
Must ever look in vain.**

**LOUISA AND I**

**Louisa says that I'm her beau,  
So I suppose it must be so ;  
But till she said so I must own  
The fact to me was quite unknown.**

**ON A PHYSICIAN**

**" My patients never of my skill complain,"  
Said a physician, ignorant and vain :  
" That I can understand," a jester said  
" For no complaints are uttered by the dead."**

**EPITAPH ON AN ENGLISHMAN**

**Here lies John Smith—a tear afford him—  
Who hung himself because life bored him.**

### LIBERTY ?

When most for liberty the people shout  
There's usually the least of it about :  
It means most oft that every one is free  
With the misguided millions to agree.

### WHEN TRUTH SHOULD BE TOLD

Should we the truth on all occasions tell ?  
Say, should the sun each morn the darkness quell ?

### LOVE LIKE THE MOON

Love's like the changing moon, whose figure  
Grows smaller if it grows not bigger.

### LOVE *VERSUS* REASON

What reason have I for my love, you ask ?  
Alas ! to answer were too hard a task :  
Affection from the reason does not flow,  
The heart has reasons reason does not know.

### THE ONLY HAPPINESS

At happiness in prospect do not jeer,  
Since 'tis the only pleasure we have here.

### LOVE NOT TO BE WILLED

To love or not to love we cannot will ;  
A greater will our will o'erruleth still.

## DESIRE AND POSSESSION

He whom desire doth make a slave,  
Possessed, as tyrant will behave.

## ON FORLIS

What ! here alone, dear Forlis ! What's amiss ?  
You do not oft shun company, I wis.  
" I was engaged communing with myself."  
Alas ! how bored you must have been, poor elf !

## ON MAUPOU

Titus counted as lost the day  
Unsignalised by some good deed ;  
But Maupou counts the other way,  
And mourns the day from evil freed,—  
And yet he mourns but few indeed.

## BENSERADE ON THE DEATH OF CARDINAL RICHELIEU

Here lies the famous Cardinal Richelieu,  
Whose grave with tears I constantly bedew :  
If you should think my grief too great appears  
Know with him died my pension : hence these tears.

## ON THE PORTRAIT OF A GREAT TALKER

Since Bufo's picture never says a word  
To call it a good likeness is absurd.



### A HUSBAND'S GRIEF

"Robbers and thieves ! how dare they cheat me so ?  
Charge twenty crowns for burying my wife !  
The rascals mean to give me cause for woe—  
I almost wish her back, upon my life !"

### ON A COURTESAN

"A true chameleon, Chloris can assume  
All the bright colours known in nature's loom."  
"What, all the colours ?" "Well, the truth to speak,  
I've never seen a blush upon her cheek !"

### EPITAPH ON A FRIEND

"He who lies here was faithful, good and kind,  
Search where you will no better friend you'll find :  
He clung to me when I was fortune's prey."  
"A man of men !" "Ah no ! 'twas my dog Tray."

### MARRIAGE À LA MODE

Why don't you wed ?—I like my present state.—  
I know a maiden—Guard me from her, fate !—  
Charming : I'm sure she'll please you.—There you're  
out.—  
Fifteen.—Too young.—Most witty.—Pert, I doubt.—  
Discreet.—Dissembler.—Pretty.—Oft a curse !—  
Well born.—Proud as a peacock.—Loving.—Worse !—  
Much talent.—Far too much, I fear, for me.—  
Wealthy.—Enough : to marry I agree.

**EPITAPH ON REGNIER, 1613**

Death, in stopping my breath  
Was unfair, you'll agree,  
Since I ne'er thought of Death  
Why should he think of me ?

**THE FEMALE SMOKER**

I own I hardly like it, though  
Such clouds of smoke you see me blow ;  
In fact I should not care for it a bit,  
But that my husband has forbidden it :  
Therefore my smoking is incessant,  
To aggravate him—not because it's pleasant.

**THE TRUE TEMPTERS**

Women alone true tempters are to man,  
The devil cannot tempt as women can.

**A GOOD BARGAIN**

You wish to make a good round fortune ? Well,  
Here's a receipt will bring you in much pelf—  
Buy Gilbert at his proper value : sell  
Him at the rate he estimates himself.

# SONNETS

## THE ARTIST

Is't hope of fame induces you to write ?

Oh no ! long since I have renounced that hope.

Maybe 'tis gain that doth your pen incite ?

To think of that would end soon in a rope.

Why spend yourself then in a bootless toil ?

Is't to please man the nightingale doth sing,

Or shines the sun because it loves earth's soil ?

Beauty from things external doth not spring,

Nowhere doth it exist save in the soul.

Art is the artist's only aim and end,

Creation is his all-sufficient goal :

All boundaries his daring thoughts transcend :

Let him but chant his song and paint his dream

What cares your Blake though all the world blaspheme ?

## INSPIRATION

Not often do I feel that glow of thought  
That fuses in its fire words, sense and soul  
Into a living and triumphant whole,  
Such as mere craftsmanship hath never wrought :  
Yet in propitious hours that glow I feel,  
And thoughts and words come freely and unbidden,  
Such as I dreamed not in my mind were hidden,  
And to myself a self unknown reveal :  
Then do I know I've laboured not in vain,  
And that what's written thus must needs endure,  
Though evil fate may for a time obscure,  
Or shallow critics slight it or disdain.  
Vanity? No ! *That* doth its own commend :  
I speak of that which doth myself transcend.

## THE POET'S APOLOGY

" Why of yourself do you for ever write,  
Tiring us with your dreams, your loves and woes ?  
Your petty thoughts and passions are too slight  
On which to raise a structure so verbose."  
My friend, when I can wander in the sun  
Divested of my shadow, then will I  
Seek from myself and mine own thoughts to run,  
And strive new worlds of fancy to descry.  
The poet, though a Shakespeare, is a man,  
And mirrors all men in his plastic mind,  
And so, if but successfully he can  
Express himself, expresses all mankind :  
'Tis only when he's to himself untrue  
That Nature and the Muse bid him adieu.

## DEPRESSION

How sad his fate who labours with the thought  
That all his effort must successless prove !  
And such is mine, since never yet I wrought  
Aught that my calmer judgment might approve.  
To form great projects only to discover  
How weak and all inadequate my powers :  
To know the muse, though fervently I love her,  
Condemns me to the toil of wasted hours—  
Is there a fate more full of woe than this,  
Or tragedy that holds a deeper sadness ?  
No hell he fears (so far removed from bliss)  
Who may not hope his gloom shall end in gladness :  
Yet will I choose, however ill I fare,  
Effort in vain rather than blank despair,

## EXALTATION

Lapped in a peace profound my spirit lies,  
Its perfect calm no passions agitate ;  
No ghosts from out the past or present rise  
To threat me with the wrath of hostile fate :  
The future—ah ! I care not what it brings,  
It cannot this great present bliss destroy ;  
No jarring note doth fret my soul, which sings  
A song of perfect and unmingled joy.  
The world before has never seemed so fair,  
No murmur of its miseries I hear :  
Can I have reached a nobler region where  
There is no sorrow, suffering, or fear ?  
  
Yet were I blessed still more, if *all* were blessed,  
And in such peaceful perfect calm could rest.

## TWILIGHT LIFE

I live a twilight life—not dark, but yet  
Enjoying but a dim uncertain light ;  
Not glad nor sad, no victim of regret,  
But ever not so near to day as night :  
Pleasure's intoxication now no more  
Can fill me with its rapture—for I know  
Earthward we fall at last though high we soar,  
And time shall soon all gladness overthrow :  
Yet now I feel not sorrow's bitterness  
Crushing me down as once with leaden weight,  
For that same fate that makes our pleasures less,  
The pressure too of misery doth abate :  
So now I rest content, whate'er befall,  
To live or die—"the readiness is all."

## RESIGNATION

To form vast projects which a dozen lives  
To carry out would be by far too short,  
Though each were as a Cromwell's or a Clive's,  
And fate disposed to favour, not to thwart :  
To long for action yet feel impotent  
To act were action offered to my hand ;  
To mourn for ever over time misspent,  
While runneth out my life's fast-falling sand :  
Could fate a sadder destiny devise  
When most disposed to humble human pride ?  
And yet no longer now it mortifies,  
And I in patient fortitude abide :  
For yet I am myself and would not be  
Another even for an empire's fee.

## AFTERWARDS

Some day the sun will rise, but I shall rise  
No more its warmth and radiance to enjoy,  
But lie, a cold unconscious sacrifice  
To treacherous time's fierce passion to destroy :  
And shall the world when I am gone proceed  
All heedlessly on its accustomed way ?  
Forlorn of me shall it not feel some need,  
Some presage dim of failure and decay ?

Perish such mean and childish thoughts as these !  
The taper's use is o'er when sinks its light :  
Gladly shall fall my worn-out energies  
Into the bosom of the infinite :  
Enough for me that for a time I've been  
An actor on so vast and strange a scene !

## LIFE-WEARINESS

Last night, much tired with work and anxious thought,  
When I at last upon my couch reclined,  
Discouragement so evilly had wrought  
On throbbing heart and overwearied mind,—  
'Twere well, I said, if I woke nevermore  
From that deep slumber which will soon be mine,  
For in life's combat, until all is o'er,  
Aid comes not, either human or divine :  
What solace or delight doth fate provide  
For the expense of so much painful breath,  
Since all must reach at last oblivion's tide,  
And good and ill alike are paid with death !  
And then I slept and dreamt a happy dream  
Of a sunny landscape and a murmuring stream.

## SLEEP AND DEATH

Slumber doth oft transfigure : I have seen  
Plain faces grow quite beautiful in sleep :  
Death too doth render comely and serene  
Faces whereon dwelt frowns and wrinkles deep.  
In sleep our better selves to us return,  
Untroubled by the passionate desires,  
The evil thoughts that in the daytime burn,  
And eat our hearts out with their baleful fires.  
O infinite pathos of man's hapless life,  
That only when unconscious may he gain  
A truce from that corroding cruel strife  
That makes of life a synonym for pain !  
Then is not death of all good things the best ?  
Sleep brings short solace, death unending rest.

## THE GREAT NORTHERN EXPRESS

It rushes on, the embodiment of Force,  
Devouring Distance and defeating Time,  
Majestically carving out its course  
With calm assurance, confidence sublime.  
Water and Fire, most serviceable friends,  
Though each may prove man's most malignant Foe,  
Are yoked together here to serve his ends,  
And to his will a proud obedience show.  
'Tis thus that Suns and Planets rush through Space,  
Their course marked out even to a hair's-breadth  
line,  
But at the bidding of what Power they race,  
What energy Dæmonic or Divine  
Controls them, or if blind stern Law doth rule,  
We may not learn in any earthly school.



## THE CRY OF HUMANITY

Oh what a weary pilgrimage I've paced  
In learning only that I've nothing learned !  
What will o' th' wisps and shadows have I chased !  
For what unworthy objects have I yearned !  
How vainly searched for truth in falsehood's mines !  
What trust I've given only to be betrayed !  
What pagan altars ta'en for holy shrines !  
What vain fantastic prayers have I prayed !  
What mirage-like illusions have I cherished !  
In what blind alleys hoped a path to find !  
My faith, my love, my hope, how have they perished !  
For what imagined vices have I pined !  
And in all ways what skill I've shown (poor elf !)  
In finding means to plague and curse myself !

## THE WASTE OF LIFE

How much doth run to waste of human life !  
What dreary controversies, profitless  
And inessential, fruitful but of strife,  
Engage our thoughts, fill us with bitterness !  
We fritter thus the precious hours away,  
As though infinity of time were ours,  
In serious trifling or in idle play,  
Mistaking chaff for corn and weeds for flowers ;  
Wisdom we scorn and follies we pursue,  
And such fantastic actions perpetrate,  
We lose the power to tell the false from true,  
And all our nature grows sophisticate :  
Such has been, is, and—must I say ?—shall be  
The tragic lot of poor humanity.

## DESIRE AND POSSESSION

What strange necessity compels mankind  
To yearn for objects not to be attained ?  
To all their benefits and blessings blind  
Nothing will please but what can ne'er be gained,  
Or which when gained will give but little pleasure,  
Like a child's toy, the plaything of an hour,  
Then cast aside, no longer thought a treasure—  
Reach them or reach them not, the grapes are sour :  
This all men prove, and yet by proof untaught,  
For ever chase new objects of desire,  
Whose unsubstantial value's but in thought,  
And whose huge cost beggars the foolish buyer :—  
Yet are they not in seeming folly wise,  
Since in the chase at least some pleasure lies ?

## MAN AND NATURE

Here is the source of man's unhappiness :—  
That he regards himself as nature's crown,  
To pleasure whom Fate should relax its stress,  
And humbly to his needs or whims bow down.  
How small his part upon the Eternal Stage,  
What petty passions rage within his breast,  
His microscopic vision cannot gauge,  
But magnifies his actions worst and best  
To huge proportions. Will he learn at last  
He's but a bubble on the ocean wave,  
A grain of sand upon the seashore vast ?  
Learn this, all's learned ; for then he will not crave  
What cannot be awarded ; but will bend  
His reason to achieve its proper end.

## MAN'S GREATNESS AND LITTLENESS

His home a speck in a vast Universe,  
He a mere atom on that tiny speck,  
Victim of countless evils that coerce  
And force him onward on a pathless track ;  
And yet a being made to dominate  
O'er all things else by mind's controlling power :  
Spoiled favourite at once and sport of fate,  
Football of fortune, time's consummate flower !  
To him alone did nature's self impart  
A spark of her divinest energy,  
With power to create the world of Art,  
And intellect to solve all mystery :  
So great and yet so little ! blessed and cursed,—  
Nature's most noble offspring—yet her worst !

## PASSION *VERSUS* REASON

Wherefore is man to sensual thoughts a slave,  
And beauty but a bait to tempt to lust ?  
Tell me why reason such small power should have,  
That can but say " You ought " to Passion's " must " ?  
We strive to root the seeds of evil out,  
And steer our course by virtue's steady light,  
Make resolutions of resistance stout  
To all the assailing powers of appetite :  
Then, when we rest of victory most assured,  
A gust of fierce desire assails the soul,  
O'erturns the guards with which it seemed secured,  
And gone is all our boasted self-control !  
Hard fate of man, thus wrecked on Passion's shelf,  
That ne'er may be the master of himself.

## KNOWLEDGE NOT WISDOM

Along the path of science as we go  
Each day some new discovery repays  
Our eager quest, that searches high and low,  
And ever grows more skilled in nature's ways :  
No star so distant it escapes our ken,  
No atom which we cannot analyse,  
No element we drag not from its den  
To yield its secret to our prying eyes,—  
Yes, yes, all this is so, and, if you please,  
'Tis proper we much jubilation show,  
But yet with all this marvellous increase  
Of knowledge do we better, wiser grow ?  
Small is the measure of our boasted gain,  
If knowledge bring not wisdom in its train.

## TRUTH'S GUIDING STAR

In the dim twilight of our troubled life,  
Where none may see with vision wholly clear,  
And most must tread a path with pitfalls rife,  
Where scarce a star their gloomy path doth cheer ;  
And those who loudliest do themselves proclaim  
As sole custodians of the keys of truth,  
Most oft are hollow windbags skilled to frame  
Poor sophistries or specious falsehoods smooth,—  
I find no better guidance than is found  
In the assurance that whate'er may chance  
A soul resolved truth's heights and depths to sound  
Fearless, nor viewing consequence askance,  
Is armed against sick thoughts and narrow creeds,  
And all the ills that morbid fancy breeds.

## CONSOLATION ?

What consolation doth a brave man need  
Who has lived out a full and active life ?  
In living it he has received his meed  
Of happiness, and so may rest from strife  
Content that consciousness is his no more.  
Life is at best a gift of doubtful good ;  
" Call no man happy till his life is o'er,"  
One said who deeply felt and understood :  
But for the mass whose lives are but a scene  
Of endless care, misfortune, and distress,  
Death cometh like a lovely and serene  
Sun-setting after storm to calm and bless :  
The happy by their happiness are paid,  
Th' unhappy at the least their ills evade.

## TO A DEVOTEE

Rise from your knees, sick-thoughted sufferer !  
Prayer doth but serve to emasculate the soul,  
To morbid thoughts holding it prisoner,  
And sinking it in ever-deeper dole.  
Mistrust of self is cowardice at best,  
Prayer unavailing adds but to your pain :  
'Tis active work, not passive prayer, makes blest,  
Your sin's the figment of a brooding brain.  
Stand up and be no more a suppliant slave :  
Is God a Genghiz Khan or Tamerlane ?  
All nature thunders forth one precept brave—  
*Courage alone the prize of life shall gain.*  
Weakness above all else the fates despise,  
The fearless-hearted only are the wise.

## MAN'S NATURAL RULERS

How few there are with natures whole and sound,  
In harmony with themselves and fortune too,  
Whose outlook no contracted limits bound,  
And ever wisdom's forthright path pursue :  
Such are the suns and stars of humankind,  
The natural kings and rulers of the earth,  
If men were not to truth and wisdom blind,  
And could distinguish worthlessness from worth :  
For it is part of life's strange tragedy  
That men (who must some bolder spirits follow)  
So seldom know who their true leaders be,  
And choose instead some idol false and hollow :  
So is it nations into ruin run,  
By want of noble counsellors undone.

## PERVERSTY

Ah how malignant was the fate that ruled  
O'er the creation of poor humankind !  
That sent him forth with passions fierce, unschooled,  
Of warnings heedless and to danger blind.  
Around him swarm a thousand enemies  
Whom he with weapons all too weak must fight :  
Once beaten down how seldom doth he rise !  
How few escape the world's corroding blight !  
Yet may he triumph over every foe  
While yet he faithful to himself remains ;  
But 'tis his greatest, most peculiar woe  
That in himself a traitor lives and reigns,  
A spirit of Perverseness that misleads,  
And ever with its mischief taints his deeds.

## A POET'S OPTIMISM

He who derives much happiness from life,  
Which here and there a favoured one may do,  
Should he look coldly on the seething strife  
Of the unfavoured mass who struggle through  
An ever-anxious and care-laden lot,  
And blandly thus address them, " Look at me  
And take example ! Wherefore do you not  
Cease to complain and life's full glory see :  
I grant you *seem* most wretched ; but in truth  
If you *are* so, why God and I can find  
Excellent reasons for it : in good sooth  
He who denies all's well is deaf and blind."  
Fine preaching ! but methinks I've heard such lore  
From many a fat-paunched alderman before.

## THE POWER OF WILL

Why do we shrink from those appointed tasks  
Which 'tis our urgent duty to fulfil,  
Even when to do them no stern effort asks,  
And all that's wanting is the firm-set will ?  
Aye there it is,—lacking the will we lack  
The spring that all our powers in action sets,  
Whence they in useless idleness lie slack  
Till that stirred spring their potency begets.  
Not those of deepest wisdom, keenest wit,  
The highest prizes, greatest triumphs gain,  
But those whose wills to lesser powers knit  
Endure unto the end of the campaign.  
Will's wit, but wit, alas ! is oft not will,  
And thus is wit poor and unhappy still.

## CHRISTMAS DAY, 1897

A filthy fog, foul-smelling, pungent, cold,  
Clammy and greasy, eye-offending, thick ;  
A misery that must multiply tenfold  
The sufferings of the homeless poor, the sick,  
And all who in life's battle buffeted  
Most need the ministration of the sun,  
His light and heat benevolently shed,  
Lest they by cold and hunger be undone :  
A day to make the stoutest-hearted sad,  
To overcast the merriest face with gloom,  
To make alone the undertaker glad,  
And all to ponder on the final doom :  
Satan ! henceforth your fuel spare in hell,  
A London fog will serve your turn as well !

## THEME FOR A DRAMA

Oh how dost thou my simple words distort  
To meanings which were never in my mind,  
And make my deeds with such suspicions sort  
As naught but mere perversity could find !  
How far apart are we that live together,  
What worlds removed in spirit and in aim !  
Shackled by bonds worn willingly by neither  
How every casual spark breaks forth to flame !  
And yet we should not quarrel were love dead :  
Some compensation in indifference lies,  
For then we care not what is done or said,  
And jealousy no trifle magnifies ;  
This is the hell of our unhappy fate—  
That we at once each other love and hate.



## ANOTHER

Love not if you desire a quiet life ;  
Love not if you would soundly sleep at night ;  
Love not if you would shun perpetual strife ;  
Love not—or take your leave of all delight ;  
For Love is ever man's most cruel master,  
The source of every trouble, every woe,  
A fountain of perpetual disaster  
From whence alone the deepest sorrows flow :—

Thus do I rail on love, and yet I love,  
And cannot from love's tyranny break free,  
Prizing a faithless woman's smile above  
All blessings else—for I my weird must dree :  
Man born of woman needs must her adore,  
And as she doth command him sink or soar.

## LOVE'S COMPENSATIONS

Love ! how unhappy in his fate is he  
Who never hath thy wondrous power confessed.  
Or never ventured on thy stormy sea,  
Fearing too much to break his quiet rest :  
Perchance he so escapes much bitter pain,  
Yet had he loved with fearless heart and soul,  
Surely in that there had been priceless gain,  
Outweighing far whate'er might be of dole.  
Expansive, not repressive, is true life,  
Man passionless is scarcely man at all,  
We win our way to peace through toil and strife,  
Nectar he shall not taste who shuns life's gall :  
They never truly live who love disown—  
A truth to poets and to lovers known.

**SUGGESTED BY SHAKESPEARE'S SEVENTY-  
FIRST SONNET**

Who mourned for the great poet when he died  
And left the universe without his peer ?  
Not England, heedless of her greatest pride,  
Nor he whom most he loved and praised, I fear.  
His fellows, his relations, and a friend,  
Or two perchance, his coffin gathered round,  
But no high-stationed patron saw the end,  
Or sent a token of his grief profound.

He, destined to preserve his country's name  
When all its other glories are forgot,  
Here begs, in deep humility and shame,  
To be, even by his friend, remembered not :  
But while that friend compounded is with clay,  
All Time is now our poet's endless day.

**SHELLEY**

Noblest and bravest of the sons of song !  
Most selfless and most single-hearted friend  
Of the unfriended sufferers of wrong :  
Too eager for his peace the world to mend :  
Alas ! he knew not men, how hard of heart,  
How dim of apprehension, slow to move,  
How vain it was to think he could impart  
To them his zeal for truth, his boundless love !  
His life was but a brief and fevered dream,  
But such a dream as he alone could know :  
And wisdom at the end began to stream  
Upon him with a mild and steady glow :  
Alas ! that death should then his victim claim,  
Even in that hour when he *himself* became !

JAMES THOMSON (" B.V.")

Thou wert the poet-laureate of Despair,  
And much I mourned o'er thy unhappy fate,  
Which in its toils so cruelly did snare  
Thy soul, by death and grief made desolate :  
But now that more than twenty years have passed  
No longer does the thought of thee bring pain,  
For that same fate that so thy life did blast,  
Is now thy friend and shall thy friend remain.  
Time to a precious pearl hath turned thy woe,  
Britain at length shall glory in thy name,  
Thy fame shall ever with the ages grow,  
And none shall censure thee but to their shame ;  
Not Omar's—or FitzGerald's—name shall shine  
More brightly in the years to come than thine !

WRITTEN AFTER READING A  
MEMOIR OF CLOUGH

Arthur Hugh Clough ! How pleasant sounds the name !  
What wholesome thoughts and memories it doth wake !  
How clear of every shadow is its fame,  
(Not clearer thine, dear Artist-Poet Blake !)  
'Tis such as he restore our faith in man,  
When human baseness makes us most despair,  
Lifting our thoughts—how few are those who can !—  
Into a purer and diviner air.  
Sincerer soul on earth was never known ;  
Content where knowledge might not be to stay—  
Without vain murmur, or unmanly moan—  
In the soul's twilight, clamouring not for day.  
Whene'er with cheerless thought too much oppressed  
His memory gives my troubled spirit rest.

## MATTHEW ARNOLD

He looked around upon a world of wrong  
With sorrowing spirit, pity infinite ;  
He saw the weak made victims of the strong,  
And obscene darkness triumph over light :  
He saw that men unmoved by argument,  
Who turned away with scorn from wisdom's school,  
Shrank from the lash of satire's chastisement,  
And feared the laughing lips of ridicule :  
He saw the falseness of the common creeds  
And cared not to conceal his deep disdain,  
Yet from himself could not root out the weeds  
Convention had implanted in his brain ;  
And so he failed to see 'twas a vain task  
To pour new wine into an outworn cask.

## THE POET OF THE FUTURE

Shall time to come another Shakespeare breed,  
Gifted as he who doth our past illumine,  
Or who shall ev'n his wondrous powers exceed,  
And so th' Arch-Poet's rank and fame assume ?  
Yes ! her past exploits nature can repeat,  
Though she loves best new miracles to prove,  
And howsoe'er she seems our hopes to cheat  
Doth ever forward to new victories move.  
The Poet of the coming time shall own  
A Shakespeare's wisdom, wit, sublimity,  
With finer qualities before unknown  
That might not in an age half-barbarous be.  
One bard the spirit of the Past expressed,  
The next the Future shall make manifest.

## MUSIC AND POETRY

### I

Two stars there are by which my course I steer—  
Two stars which fadeless ever must remain,  
Which, while I follow, save me from all fear  
Of foundering on life's tempestuous main.  
To me they are the source of all delight,  
They comfort me when all around is dark,  
My soul inspiring with their influence bright,  
As air and sun inspire the mounting lark :

Music and poetry ! brightest-shining pair  
That shed their beams on thankless humankind,  
For ever youthful, fresh, and debonnair,  
Best solacers and healers of the mind :  
Benignant powers, all other powers above,  
Or only rivalled by divinest Love !

### II

Whene'er to words of kindness or of love  
The tongue is tuned music is in our speech,  
And then we rise our baser selves above,  
And the blest Eden of our visions reach.  
Perchance in planets happier than ours  
All speech is music, and all music speech,  
And there no discords vex the golden hours,  
Nor curse nor shriek the destinies impeach :  
Life there to blithest symphonies is set,  
No evil passions there its concords stain,  
No clashing elements are there to fret,  
No force compels and no conventions chain :  
No need of heaven is there, no fear of hell,—  
Such wondrous power in harmony doth dwell.

## MOZART AND WAGNER

Th' old master's music steals upon the sense  
With all-pervading and persuading power :  
We listen ever with delight intense,  
And drink it in as drinks the dew the flower :  
The hours go by and yet we sit entranced,  
And rise at last unwearied and unsated,  
Our joy in life rekindled or enhanced,  
In spirit and in senses recreated.

But Wagner like a rushing whirlwind storms us,  
And like a despot fealty doth demand,—  
Perchance to faithful subjects he transforms us—  
Yet some so rude a summons will withstand :  
And though we own his genius is vast,  
Yet he exhausts and wearies us at last.

## GOUNOD'S "FAUST"

A magic greater than thou ownest none  
Can boast when amorous passion is the theme,  
And here thy genius reaches its supreme  
Expression, scarce by Mozart's self outdone.  
A tribute grand to Love's omnipotence,  
Thy music floats so buoyantly along  
It seems th' embodied heart and soul of song,  
Pulsing with passion's fervid eloquence.  
Unfailing and unfaltering, thy store  
Of melody wells forth as from a spring  
Exhaustless, whose bright waters soar and sing,  
And all around their sparkling jewels pour.  
Gounod ! immortal needs must be thy strains  
While Love in men's and maidens' hearts remains.

## BACH'S SECOND CONCERTO\*

What fresh and breezy joyousness is here,  
What youthful spirit, what rapture of delight,  
What scorn of baseness, what contempt of fear !  
How doth it put all sombre thoughts to flight !  
Once more the world is full of old romance,  
Once more the jarring keys are all in tune,  
Once more in woodland scenes the fairies dance,  
And desolate winter turns to glorious June !  
Ah ! could man's life to such a tune be set,  
Its dull beat changed for these exultant strains,  
What room were there for sorrow or regret,  
Or who could doubt that God exists and reigns ! . . .  
The music dies—and I am sad again,  
But with a tenderer grief, a milder pain.

## AFTER A CONCERT

'Tis o'er—and where has gone the melody  
That filled my soul with such supreme delight ?  
Have golden chords like these fled utterly  
Into the still and unresponsive night ?  
Will they no more my drooping thoughts upstay  
In days to come when dark despondence reigns ?  
Will they no more illumine life's dull grey,  
No more bring solace for its many pains ?  
Content thyself : two golden hours is much  
To snatch from out the niggard hands of fate ;  
Ask not for more lest it exact for such  
Of dull discouragement a double rate :  
Yet to you shall a melody be known  
From memory drawn : a dulcet undertone.

---

\* This Concerto belongs to a set written at Coethen in

## MADAME CALVE

Unmatched as actress, unsurpassed in song,  
The heroines of the lyric stage in thee,  
(Shadows most oft a world of shades among)  
As creatures full of fiery life we see:  
Thine own strong soul thou usest to inform  
These scenic puppets with the breath of life,  
So that we see them, passion-breathing, warm,  
Through all the gamut of their nature's strife ;  
Carmen thou art, and Carmen thou alone ;  
All Marguerites but thine are shadows dim ;  
Ophelia, Messaline, Santuzza, shewn  
By thee no wreck of memory can dislimn :  
Yet these we feel are but a little part  
Of thy so splendid gifts of mind and heart.

## SOUTH AFRICA, 1899

The brave must needs honour and love the brave,  
Though they are ranked against themselves in fight,  
And only cowards at those foemen rave  
Who manfully do blow for blow requite :  
Shame then on those who libel the brave men  
Who fight for all that is to them most dear ;  
Even though, to our ' patriot's ' enlightened ken,  
They're worthy only of a Briton's sneer.  
Theirs is to them a just and sacred cause,  
Ours at the best is not so just or clear,  
But that, however ably pleaded, flaws  
Will in our strongest arguments appear :  
Oh evil fate ! to make us thus contend  
Against a State which should be most our friend !

---

1721 for the Margraf of Brandenburg, and known consequently as "The Brandenburg Concertos."



## THE RELIEF OF LADYSMITH

In deep suspense we waited, fear with hope  
Contending and commingling in our souls,  
Striving in vain to read fate's horoscope,  
Or weigh the forces which the event controls :  
More and more sombre grew our spirits, while  
Defeat with grim persistence dogged our arms,  
And we, so apt in danger's face to smile,  
Were shaken by a thousand false alarms.  
Could it be true ? Had fate at last relented,  
And crowned once more our efforts with success ?  
Thus warring passions in our minds fermented,  
Till full assurance came to calm and bless.  
Once more we breathe ! Our arm is mighty yet—  
Not now shall Britain's sun in darkness set !

## HOMAGE TO A FOE

De Wet ! we own thee for a doughty foe  
In whose red blood no craven drop has place,  
Whose courage in defeat doth greater grow,  
Fearing no evil but submission base.  
Adversity has tried thee as by fire,  
And proved thy mettle to be sterling gold,  
And we, the while we suffer, must admire  
A spirit formed in such heroic mould.  
'Tis our misfortune that with men like thee  
An-evil fate has forced us to contend ;  
Brothers in aims and arms we ought to be,  
And then the world against us could not bend  
Or break us, but should give us service meek—  
Ah why our valour on each other wreak !

DECEMBER 31, 1900

The century that began with blood and tears,  
'Mid blood and tears and vague unrest goes out :  
Is it towards the rocks the good ship steers ?  
Men ask each other with a troubled doubt.  
Is Britain's star declining in the sky,  
By younger rivals driven from her sphere ?  
Are we among the nations doomed to die ?  
Must we the fate of Rome and Venice fear ?

Let the new century answer ; and meanwhile  
Let us resolve that, be it as it may,  
Ere foemen can shout Victory ! o'er our isle,  
They too shall fall death-stricken in the fray :  
If Britain falls she falleth Samson-like,  
And ere she fall a mortal blow shall strike.

#### THE PARADOX-MONGER

With gay assurance he will undertake  
To prove all's right in heaven and on earth,  
That no such thing as evil e'er had birth,  
Or if it had 'twas born for goodness' sake :  
He'll bring a godless nation back to God,  
The devil too he'll rehabilitate,  
And either at your choice will vindicate  
With logic much like Gilbert's and as odd :  
Questions of fate, necessity, free-will,  
He settles easily as A B C ;  
Of every mystery he holds the key ;  
A nostrum he can find for every ill :  
But while he thus deals out his meal of chaff  
How welcome were a Rabelaisian laugh !

## THE DEMAGOGUE

I listened to his smooth insidious tongue,  
So artfully adapted to his crowd  
Of uninstructed hearers, who with loud  
Applause received the phrases deftly strung  
To flatter them and to their greed appeal.  
Their ignorance and prejudices he  
(Taught by long practice) played on skilfully,  
Yet to the wise did all the while reveal  
His inmost nature, false and insincere ;  
Spite of himself his vulgar soul he shows,  
Which to no great ideal allegiance owes,  
But ever doth by self's mean compass steer :  
So self-convicted and condemned he stands,  
Despite the multitude's loud-clapping hands.

## TO THE CRITIC

What's written's written ; whether good or bad  
I know not, and must leave you to assess :  
'Tis done, and even if you condemn, no less  
That it *is* done shall I henceforth be glad ;  
For in it, not too thickly veiled or clad,  
My verse doth much of what I am express,  
Although to read it needs some wariness  
Not to mistake its message gay or sad.

Whether the verse attract you or repel  
In it you'll find no posing insincere ;  
And if no powerful inspiration swell  
Its music to a note divine and clear,  
It may be something in its verse doth dwell  
That will to some kind hearts the bard endear.

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